



Nicolangelo Becce*

CURRENT GRAPHIC NOVEL ADAPTATIONS OF LITERARY WORKS: A CORPUS-BASED ANALYSIS

1. Introduction

The recent nomination of Nick Drnaso's graphic novel *Sabrina* for the Man Booker Prize, one of the most prestigious literary awards worldwide, strongly supports the idea that talking about the status of comics in relation to literature in 2018 might sound to many unnecessary. However, the very first lines of the introduction to a volume published a few months ago by the University Press of Mississippi and titled *Comics and Adaptation* offer a reminder of the fact that research on comic books still needs to deal with stereotypical assumptions related to the medium itself.¹ The volume edited by Benoit Mitaine, David Roche, and Isabelle Schmitt-Pitiot echoes Christopher Pizzino's assumptions described in *Arresting Development*, where he states that "this claim to legitimacy [of comics] is proclaimed again and again without being established once and for all" (2016, 2). The title of Pizzino's book points out to the fact that the narrative about the growth from infancy to adulthood of comic books is deeply flawed:

The medium's story is not one of natural development from pulp infancy to literary adulthood. It is a history of conflict in which comics have continuously been read by adults, but have been banned, threatened with censorship, excluded from or subordinated to other media in educational settings, and otherwise pushed to the margins of culture. (2016, 2)²

This tendency at downgrading comics for decades, and then, recently, at compulsively justifying any scholarly interest in them, might have in fact affected the development of the genre. For example, a quick look at the history of graphic novel adaptations of literary works published since the 1940s can show how, until very recently, the concept itself of "graphic adaptation" was closely linked with the idea of "simplification." The most popular series of graphic adaptations of literary works, *Classics Illustrated*, regularly published between 1941 to 1971, and then again in the 1990s and 2000s by different publishing houses, represented for decades the standard in terms of comics adaptations of classic literature, and was explicitly marketed for younger reader.³ Other series, such as Saddleback's *Illustrated Classics*,⁴ *Campfire Classics Series*,⁵ and *Classical Comics*,⁶ follow the same concept, thus keeping the possibilities of the comic medium within the limits of an abridged, simplified adaptation of literary classics for younger readers.

* Nicolangelo Becce is an Assistant Professor of English language and American literature at the School of Global and Community Studies, University of Fukui (Japan). He earned his Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from "L'Orientale" University, Naples (Italy) in 2010, and he published on *Modern Spiritualism and Victorian ghost stories, Henry James, and contemporary American TV series*. He is currently focusing on corpus linguistics and graphic novels as well as CEFR-based language assessment.

¹ "Many critical, historical, and theoretical studies devoted to comics state their intention to defend the medium as soon as the opening lines. This book abides by that tradition: studying comics remains, today, an act of aesthetic and political legitimization, of which the insistent usage of the term 'ninth art' by fans and scholars is just one of the many symptoms. It is only proper to acknowledge it." (Roche et al. 2018, 3).

² For an overview of the development of the critical discourse about graphic novels in the United States, see also Bavaro and Izzo 2009, 7-26.

³ Stein reports that, "[a]ccording to paratextual notes, the intention was to introduce especially young readers to the world of great literature," and that "[t]he [Classics Illustrated] paratexts underscore the idea that the volumes were not meant to be read as substitutes for the originals but as instructive vehicles preparing for future reading." (2013, 397-398). See also Booker 2010, vol. I, 100 ff.

⁴ The Saddleback *Illustrated Classics* series is described, on the official website, in the following terms: "These literary masterpieces are made easy and interesting. This series features classic tales retold with color illustrations to introduce literature to struggling readers. Each 64-page softcover book retains key phrases and quotations from the original classics." (See <http://www.sdlback.com/illustrated-classics>. Last visited October 28, 2018).

⁵ Published by Random House, the *Campfire Classics Series* is described on its website as "Timeless literature faithfully adapted for today's readers. Campfire titles retain the flavor of the era and much of the



Classical Comics might represent the state of the art in terms of comic adaptations of literary works, since it publishes different versions of the same graphic novels tailored to accommodate a readership as vast as possible. The following image shows three different versions of a panel from a volume based on Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and it shows the kind of textual changes often made in graphic novel adaptations of literary works: The "Original Text" version reports the original words from the play, while the "Plain Text" and the "Quick Text" versions offer two different degrees of simplification of the language used in Shakespeare's tragedy.



Fig. 1: Three examples of graphic adaptation from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. *Classical Comics*, 28 Oct. 2018, <http://www.classicalcomics.com/education/>.

While graphic adaptations of classic literary works for younger readers are still widely popular, starting from the 2000s, a different type of graphic adaptations of literary works, this time not explicitly marketed to younger readers, has been published. This newer type of adaptations, of which the first example is Paul Karasik and David Mazzucchelli's graphic novel based on Paul Auster's *City of Glass* (2004), offers a new degree of complexity and sophistication that better reflects the potentialities of the medium adopted. However, being a graphic novel, it might be considered as inherently "inferior" to its literary counterpart and consequently fall victim to stereotyping as mentioned above. More specifically, contemporary graphic novel adaptations of literary works are possible victims of a double stereotype, first of all as comics, but also as adaptations. As Linda Hutcheon reminds her readers in *A Theory of Adaptation*, adaptation criticism "has tended to privilege or at least give priority (and therefore, implicitly, value) to what is always called the 'source' text or the 'original.'" (2013, XV).

The need for researchers approaching graphic adaptations of literary works is thus to be careful in order to avoid any prejudice against either comics or adaptations (or both) that might affect their scholarly inquiry.

This paper aims at understanding recent trends in graphic novel adaptations of literary works by focusing on a corpus of contemporary graphic novel adaptations and their literary counterparts. The analysis will concentrate on a comparison of the textual component of both literary texts and their graphic adaptations through the use of corpus linguistics methodologies. While, as Baker (2006) explains, corpus linguistics is still driven by the researchers' initial assumptions and thus cannot remove bias completely, a corpus-based

prose penned by some of the greatest writers of all time, while simplifying the language to make these works more reader friendly across a range of ages." (See <http://www.campfiregraphicnovels.com/classics.htm>).

⁶ Classical Comics is a British publishing company founded in 2007 and specialized in graphic novel adaptations of literary works for educational purposes.



analysis of the language employed in graphic novel adaptations compared with their literary counterparts can help illuminate at least some of the mechanisms in place when adapting literary works to the comic medium.

2. Corpus construction and methodology

While Mazzucchelli's first example of this new kind of graphic novel adaptations of literary works is already almost 15 years old, the number of published titles is actually limited, and this number becomes even smaller if only adaptations of literary texts originally written in English (which means that the adaptations did not involve any language translation) are considered. Moreover, some titles are out of print and difficult to purchase, and some others are adaptations of children's or young adult books. However, the real challenge is in the compilation of the corpus, especially in relation to the graphic novels. While it is possible to use optical character recognition technology (OCR) to generate text files that can be analyzed by corpus linguistics software, this kind of technology is practically useless with graphic novels. As a consequence, the text in the balloons and the captions of the graphic novels needs to be manually typed, a time-consuming activity that is also prone to spelling errors.

Another issue about creating the text files of the graphic novels is related to deciding, in each panel, what should be considered as textual component and what should be considered as graphic component. The general rule that was followed for the creation of this corpus was to transcribe only the content of the captions, the balloons and the chapter titles, in other words all the text that is supposed to be read; all the remaining text that can be found included in the pictures, like sound effects or other instances of text used as decoration (for example, the title of a book drawn in a panel that is ultimately readable, but at the same time is written upside down or in a twisted way) was not transcribed.

At the current stage of the research, the corpus consists in three graphic novels (titles 1-3 on the following list) and three literary counterparts, two novels (titles 4-5) and one short story (title 6):

- 1) Duffy, Damian and John Jennings. *Octavia E. Butler's Kindred: A Graphic Novel Adaptation*. New York: Abrams ComicArts, 2017;
- 2) Hamilton, Tim. *Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451: The Authorized Adaptation*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2009;
- 3) Hyman, Miles. *Shirley Jackson's The Lottery: The Authorized Graphic Adaptation*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2016;
- 4) Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003;
- 5) Butler, Octavia. *Kindred*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1988;
- 6) Jackson, Shirley. "The Lottery" (1948) from Ann Charters (ed.), *The Story and Its Writer. Ninth Edition*. Boston: Bedford / St. Martin's, 2015, 624-630.

The three literary works were chosen as texts written in the twentieth century that did not include overly archaic or obscure vocabulary, as opposed to older literary classics, often the preferred choice in the case of the above-mentioned traditional (i.e. simplified) graphic novel adaptations. The selection was also based on some specific characteristics of the three graphic adaptations, starting from the fact that they were not marketed as simplified versions of literary texts for younger readers. In addition, they were described in the paratext as closely related to their literary counterparts in terms of both intrinsic quality and faithfulness of adaptation, as in the case of *Fahrenheit 451*, in which Bradbury wrote the introduction to the graphic novel and was directly involved in the publication process itself. In relation to Duffy and Jennings' adaptation of Butler's novel, the graphic novel has an introduction by Nnedi Okorafor, a popular Nigerian-American author of science fiction and fantasy, and the front page of the dust jacket of the volume has an endorsement quote by Dominican-American Pulitzer Prize author Junot Díaz. Both Díaz and Okorafor endorse the quality of the adaptation.⁷ Finally, the author of the graphic adaptation of "The Lottery," Miles Hyman, is Shirley Jackson's grandson, and this explains why, from a copyright point of view, the volume is labeled as the only "authorized graphic adaptation." In Hyman's words, his graphic novel "represents both a faithful rendering of the story

⁷ Díaz's quote refers to the graphic adaptation as "a glorious tribute" and "[e]xtraordinary." According to Okorafor, the story is "powerfully told in graphic-novel form," "the graphic-novel format will renew the story," and "[i]f you have not read Octavia Butler before, prepare yourself for an experience. You've chosen the perfect introduction to her work. *Kindred* will pull you right in." (2017, vi).



and a complete visual restructuring of its delicate architecture, a meticulous visual retelling of the story in what is ultimately an entirely new language” (2016, XV).

The corpus was initially analyzed using Laurence Anthony’s software AntWordProfiler, developed to understand the complexity of vocabulary in written texts. Thanks to AntWordProfiler, the text files were profiled through the use of the General Service List (GSL) developed by Michael West in 1953, which is a list of the approximately 2,000 most frequent words in English, and the Academic Word List (AWL), compiled by Averil Coxhead in 2000, which includes the 570 most common word families in academic English. Both lists are commonly used to determine the lexical difficulty of given texts, and they are also the default options available in AntWordProfiler.⁸

A second software, Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) was used to further analyze the corpus. LIWC compares the vocabulary used in a text against an internal dictionary of 6,400 words, word stems, and emoticons which are semantically labeled. The results of the analysis are based on around 90 different categories related to grammar and linguistic variables as well as psychological processes based on a semantic categorization of the words included in the internal dictionary.⁹

3. Data Analysis: Commonalities and Patterns

The following tables (1 to 3) show the results of the linguistic analysis of the corpus obtained through AntWordProfiler. The three tables offer the same information, and each of them refers to one of the three literary works of the corpus and their graphic counterparts.

	Vocabulary Lists	Tokens	%	Types	%	Families	%
Fahrenheit 451 (Novel)	1_gsl_1st_1000.txt	39361	83.05	1705	34.27	851	23.19
	2_gsl_2nd_1000.txt	3135	6.61	1029	20.68	642	17.49
	3_awl_570.txt	388	0.82	243	4.88	179	4.88
	Non-Level List	4511	9.52	1998	40.16	1998	54.44
	TOTAL	47395		4975		3670	
Fahrenheit 451 (Graphic Novel)	1_gsl_1st_1000.txt	9646	86.19	1042	51.69	635	41.69
	2_gsl_2nd_1000.txt	580	5.18	370	18.35	294	19.3
	3_awl_570.txt	116	1.04	91	4.51	81	5.32
	Non-Level List	850	7.59	513	25.45	513	33.68
	TOTAL	11192		2016		1523	

Table 1: Distribution of word tokens, types, and families for the novel version and the graphic novel version of *Fahrenheit 451*

	Vocabulary Lists	Tokens	%	Types	%	Families	%
Kindred (Novel)	1_gsl_1st_1000.txt	87564	87.32	1963	37.24	871	24.32
	2_gsl_2nd_1000.txt	5237	5.22	1176	22.31	659	18.4
	3_awl_570.txt	668	0.67	263	4.99	182	5.08

⁸ While new versions of the General Service List and the Academic Word List were developed in 2013 by Charles Browne, Brent Culligan and Joseph Phillips to reflect the changes in the English language as well as the availability of a much larger reference corpus (the Cambridge English Corpus, see <http://www.newgeneralservicelist.org>), many researchers still rely on the original General Service List developed by West and the Academic Word List by Coxhead because they have been used for many years and represent a standard of reference.

⁹ For more information and examples for each category, see James W. Pennebaker et al., *The development and psychometric properties of LIWC2015*, Austin, TX: University of Texas at Austin, 2015. All the vocabulary examples for each LIWC category reported below are taken from this source.



	Non-Level List	6806	6.79	1869	35.46	1869	52.19
	TOTAL	100275		5271		3581	
Kindred (Graphic Novel)	1_gsl_1st_1000.txt	22084	87.12	1259	50.48	692	38.7
	2_gsl_2nd_1000.txt	1105	4.36	485	19.45	357	19.97
	3awl_570.txt	144	0.57	81	3.25	70	3.91
	Non-Level List	2015	7.95	669	26.82	669	37.42
	TOTAL	25348		2494		1788	

Table 2: Distribution of word tokens, types, and families for the novel version and the graphic novel version of *Kindred*

	Vocabulary Lists	Tokens	%	Types	%	Families	%
"The Lottery" (Short Story)	1_gsl_1st_1000.txt	2954	85.62	532	66.25	384	60
	2_gsl_2nd_1000.txt	184	5.33	111	13.82	97	15.16
	3awl_570.txt	25	0.72	20	2.49	19	2.97
	Non-Level List	287	8.32	140	17.43	140	21.88
	TOTAL	3450		803		640	
"The Lottery" (Graphic Novel)	1_gsl_1st_1000.txt	1304	86.76	357	73.91	262	67.88
	2_gsl_2nd_1000.txt	52	3.46	40	8.28	38	9.84
	3awl_570.txt	8	0.53	8	1.66	8	2.07
	Non-Level List	139	9.25	78	16.15	78	20.21
	TOTAL	1503		483		386	

Table 3: Distribution of word tokens, types, and families for the short story and the graphic novel version of "The Lottery"

The first column on the left side of each table reports the title of the text analyzed, while, from top to bottom, the second column reports the vocabulary lists used for profiling each text:

- 1) "1_gsl_1st_1000.txt" refers to the list of the 1,000 most common words according to the General Service List;
- 2) "2_gsl_2nd_1000.txt" refers to the list of the second 1,000 most common words according to the General Service List;
- 3) "3awl_570.txt" refers to the Academic Word List;
- 4) "Non-Level List" refers to all the words which are not included in any of the three previous lists. These words are typically low frequency words, proper nouns, interjections, or slang and informal language.
- 5) "TOTAL" refers to the sum of the four vocabulary lists per text in each column.

From left to right, the third column reports the number of tokens per list, and the fourth column the corresponding percentages; the fifth and sixth columns report, respectively, the number of unique words for each vocabulary list and the corresponding percentages; finally, the seventh and eighth columns report the number of word families per vocabulary list and the corresponding percentages. For example, if the words "play" and "plays" are included in one of the texts respectively 10 times and 15 times, they will be reported 25 times in the "Tokens" column, but only two times in the "Types" column, and one time in the "Families" column.

The three tables show that there is a consistency in terms of percentages of single tokens per vocabulary list, which suggests that the vocabulary of the graphic novel adaptations has not been intentionally simplified: in all the texts, from 83.05% to 87.12% of the words are included in the first 1000 words of the GSL list, from 3.46% to 6.61% of the words are included in the second 1000 words of the GSL list, from 0.53% to 1.04% of



the words are included in the Academic Word List, and from 6.79% to 9.25% of the words are included in the Non-Level List. However, the word ratio between novels and graphic adaptations is around 1 to 4 in the case of *Fahrenheit 451* and *Kindred*, and around 1 to 2 in the case of “The Lottery,” a difference that does not seem strange given that the latter is a short story and is not as long as a novel. The total number of words is important because it can explain why, in terms of word types (and, consequently, word families) the graphic novels have a lower number (which also means a lower variety) of words. While one might assume that the vocabulary of the graphic novel was not simplified on purpose, on the other hand it is clear that graphic novel adaptations offer less to read, and that one could say that the images in the graphic novels account for three quarters of the text of *Fahrenheit 451* and *Kindred* and half of the text of “The Lottery.”

The next five tables were obtained with the other software mentioned above, Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC), and offer further information about the language used in the texts included in the corpus.

LIWC Categories	<i>Fahrenheit 451</i> (Novel)	<i>Fahrenheit 451</i> (Graphic Novel)	<i>Kindred</i> (Novel)	<i>Kindred</i> (Graphic Novel)	“The Lottery” (Short Story)	“The Lottery” (Graphic Novel)
Words per sentence	10.89	6.15	9.03	7.13	11.49	8.65
Words > 6 letters	13.38%	11.53%	11.37%	9.22%	15.13%	11.77%
Informal language	0.68%	1.04%	0.64%	1.33%	0.24%	0.42%

Table 4: Data analysis of average number of words per sentence, percentage of words with more than six letters, and percentage of informal language

The literary works are vertically paired with the graphic novels, and, in order to make the tables easier to read, the bold numbers correspond to the higher numbers of each pair. Apart from the first row, which shows the average number of words per sentence, all the following rows show the results in terms of percentage. More specifically, the words per sentence in the Novel *Fahrenheit 451* are on average 10.89, while the sentences in the graphic counterpart are made by 6.15 words on average. In a similar way, also the literary versions of both *Kindred* and “The Lottery” have on average more words per sentence compared to the respective graphic novel adaptations.

In the second row, the percentage of words with more than 6 letters is 13.38% for the novel *Fahrenheit 451*, while in the graphic novel adaptation it is 11.53%. The results obtained with LIWC are similar for the other two literary texts and their graphic novel adaptations. A similar pattern is also visible in the third row, this time reverted: all the graphic novel adaptations have higher percentages of informal language compared to the literary counterparts. LIWC considers as informal language the following words: swear words (for example, “fuck, damn, shit”), netspeak (“btw, lol, thx”) assent words (“agree, OK, yes”), “nonfluencies” (“er, hm, umm”) and fillers (“I mean, you know,” with the two pairs of words counted as single words.) Table 4 shows that, while with AntWordProfiler it seemed that the language was not simplified at the vocabulary level, according to the results obtained with LIWC the literary works have longer sentences and use longer words, while the graphic novels have more informal language. It might be possible to interpret the results by considering that in the graphic novel adaptations included in the corpus, while the language is not simplified on purpose, it is still characterized by more immediacy compared to the literary counterparts.

LIWC Categories	<i>Fahrenheit 451</i> (Novel)	<i>Fahrenheit 451</i> (Graphic Novel)	<i>Kindred</i> (Novel)	<i>Kindred</i> (Graphic Novel)	“The Lottery” (Short Story)	“The Lottery” (Graphic Novel)
Words per sentence	10.89	6.15	9.03	7.13	11.49	8.65
Words > 6 letters	13.38%	11.53%	11.37%	9.22%	15.13%	11.77%
Informal language	0.68%	1.04%	0.64%	1.33%	0.24%	0.42%



Affective processes	4.17%	5.32%	4.58%	5.01%	3.51%	3.46%
Positive emotion	2.06%	2.74%	1.95%	2.37%	1.86%	2.08%
Negative emotion	2.08%	2.58%	2.57%	2.6%	1.59%	1.25%

Table 5: Data analysis of words related to affective processes, positive emotions and negative emotions

This idea of language immediacy is also noticeable by looking at the data in table 5. Among the most popular LIWC categories used by researchers, positive emotions (for example, “love, nice, sweet”) and negative emotions (“hurt, ugly, nasty”) together with the overarching category titled “affective processes” (“happy, cried”), represent a clear example of language immediacy, and are preferred in the graphic novel adaptations of Bradbury and Butler’s novels. However, in the case of “The Lottery,” the results are different. In fact, the short story has more words related to affective processes and negative emotions than the graphic counterpart, while the latter has more words related to positive emotions than Jackson’s short story. A reason for this might be the sheer amount of data analyzed: In other words, “The Lottery” has only 3,450 words, while its graphic novel adaptation has 1,503 words, and with very short texts like these, even a very limited number of words can greatly affect the results, hence the reliability of the data analysis. On the other hand, “The Lottery” is also a short story with an unexpected ending, and the uncanny effect obtained by Jackson at the end of the story is built up thanks to the lack of information provided to the reader in the first part of the story itself. However, the visual component of Hyman’s graphic novel adaptation inevitably discloses a lot of information about the village and its own inhabitants from the very beginning, offering a visual description of the setting as a grim place where something unexpected might happen. For this reason, it might be possible to surmise that the written component of the graphic novel tries to counterbalance the effect obtained by the visual component. Therefore, the textual component seems to avoid the disclosure of too much information through a limited use of vocabulary related to affective processes and negative emotions, while still offering slightly more words related to positive emotions than the literary counterpart.

LIWC Categories	<i>Fahrenheit</i> 451 (Novel)	<i>Fahrenheit</i> 451 (Graphic Novel)	<i>Kindred</i> (Novel)	<i>Kindred</i> (Graphic Novel)	“The Lottery” (Short Story)	“The Lottery” (Graphic Novel)
Cognitive processes	9.28%	11.14%	12.41%	12.69%	6.02%	10.11%
Perceptual processes	6.09%	3.67%	4.48%	3.08%	5.96%	2.35%
Biological processes	2.89%	1.75%	2.45%	2.08%	1.53%	0.83%

Table 6: Data analysis of words related to cognitive, perceptual, and biological processes

Table 6 shows further vocabulary differences between the three pairs of texts in terms of cognitive processes (for example, “cause, know, ought”), perceptual processes (“look, heard, feeling”), and biological processes (“eat, blood, pain”). This time, the results are evidently based on the differences between the two media, since the graphic component of the graphic novel adaptations can more easily show both perceptual and biological processes. This means that, rather than being written, these words are often described through images. On the other hand, cognitive processes are intuitively harder to describe in a visual way. According to the data it might be easier (and possibly more immediate) to use those words in balloons and captions rather than trying to represent them visually.



LIWC Categories	<i>Fahrenheit 451</i> (Novel)	<i>Fahrenheit 451</i> (Graphic Novel)	<i>Kindred</i> (Novel)	<i>Kindred</i> (Graphic Novel)	“The Lottery” (Short Story)	“The Lottery” (Graphic Novel)
Past focus	6.9%	5.36%	10.43%	7.44%	10.44%	7.41%
Present focus	7.46%	12.34%	8.28%	12.48%	4.99%	11.63%
Future focus	1.11%	1.56%	1.35%	1.71%	0.94%	1.94%

Table 7: Data analysis of words that focus on past, present, and future

Another feature of the comic medium is its sense of immediacy in terms of narrated events. From page to page, readers of comic books can literally see what is happening in the story in a way that is simply impossible in literary texts. Table 7 shows that words focusing on past events (for example, “ago, did, talked”) are less common in the three graphic novels when compared to their literary counterparts, while vocabulary related to the present (“today, is, now”) and the future (“may, will, soon”) is more common in the graphic novels by Duffy and Jennings, Hamilton, and Hyman, than in the literary texts by Bradbury, Butler, and Jackson.

LIWC Categories	<i>Fahrenheit 451</i> (Novel)	<i>Fahrenheit 451</i> (Graphic Novel)	<i>Kindred</i> (Novel)	<i>Kindred</i> (Graphic Novel)	“The Lottery” (Short Story)	“The Lottery” (Graphic Novel)
Relativity	18.16%	16%	14.93%	13.47%	18.88%	18.49%
Motion	3.21%	2.82%	2.95%	2.78%	3.04%	2.84%
Space	9.93%	7.78%	7.23%	5.83%	8.38%	7.06%
Time	5.54%	5.74%	5.35%	5.43%	8.14%	9.07%

Table 8: Data analysis of words related to relativity, motion, space, and time

In the same vein, the four categories included in Table 8 show that, in the literary works comprised in the corpus, there is a prevalence for words about relativity at large (for example, “area, bend, exit”), while, more specifically, in terms of the three subcategories motion (“arrive, car, go”), space (“down, in, thin”), and time (“end, until, season”), the first two are more common in the three literary works compared to the graphic counterparts; on the opposite, words related to time are (however slightly) more common in the three graphic novel adaptations. The reason might be simple: comics can show motion and space while literary works can only describe them; however, time might be harder to represent visually, and the three graphic novels included in the corpus end up using those words even more often than their literary counterparts.

4. Conclusion and further research

The goal of this research is to compare graphic novel adaptations and their literary counterparts with a special focus on language usage, and corpus linguistics represents a very useful tool to analyze commonalities and differences between the two media while limiting researcher bias. Thanks to corpus linguistics, it is possible to obtain quantitative data that can help researchers understand the degree to which, for example, the language employed in graphic novel adaptations is characterized in terms of immediacy compared to the literary counterparts. At the same time, the resulting changes seem to be also related to the inner characteristics of the comic medium, rather than being based on a conscious attempt made by the adapters at simplifying the textual component to please allegedly reluctant readers.

Apart from the two software programs, AntWordProfiler and LIWC, used for the current research, it is important to consider that there are many other tools developed for corpus linguistics. Using different kinds



of software can generate other useful results. However, in order for corpus linguistics analysis to be reliable, the rule of thumb is to have the largest possible corpus, and at this stage of the research, the corpus is still too small to verify a statistically significant difference between graphic novel adaptations and their literary counterparts. While an egregiously time-consuming activity, the corpus expansion could also include classic graphic adaptations to closely compare how the new kind of graphic novel adaptations analyzed in this research differs from its predecessors. In addition, this type of study can shed new light on the visual element of graphic novels and the stylistic choices made by graphic novel artists (for example, in terms of panel composition, color choice, camera).

Works cited

- Anthony, Laurence. *AntConc (Version 3.5.7) [Computer Software]*. Tokyo: Waseda University, 2018. Available from <http://www.laurenceanthony.net/software>.
- Baker, Paul. *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis*. New York: Continuum, 2006.
- Bavaro, Vincenzo and Donatella Izzo. "Comics, fumetti, graphic novels: dialogo intergenerazionale su un medium indisciplinato." *Il graphic novel negli Stati Uniti. Ácoma - Rivista Internazionale di Studi Nord-Americani* 38 (primavera 2009 – anno XVI): 7-26.
- Booker, Keith M. (ed.). *Encyclopedia of Comic Books and Graphic Novels (2 Vols.)*. Santa Barbara (CA): ABC-CLIO, 2010.
- Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003.
- Butler, Octavia. *Kindred*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1988.
- Drnaso, Nick. *Sabrina*. Montreal: Drawn and Quarterly, 2018.
- Duffy, Damian and John Jennings. *Octavia E. Butler's Kindred: A Graphic Novel Adaptation*. New York: Abrams ComicArts, 2017.
- Hamilton, Tim. *Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451: The Authorized Adaptation*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2009.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Theory of Adaptation*. Derby (UK): Routledge, 2013.
- Hyman, Miles. *Shirley Jackson's The Lottery: The Authorized Graphic Adaptation*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2016.
- Jackson, Shirley. "The Lottery" (1948), from Ann Charters (ed.) *The Story and Its Writer. Ninth Edition*. Boston: Bedford / St. Martin's, 2015, 624-630.
- Karasik, Paul and David Mazzucchelli. *City of Glass: The Graphic Novel*. New York: Picador, 2004.
- Mitaine, Benoit, David Roche, and Isabelle Schmitt-Pitiot, eds. *Comics and Adaptation*. Jackson (MS): University Press of Mississippi, 2018.
- Pennebaker, James W., et al. *Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count: LIWC2015*. Austin (TX): Pennebaker Conglomerates, 2015. Available from www.LIWC.net.
- . *The development and psychometric properties of LIWC2015*. Austin (TX): University of Texas at Austin, 2015.
- Pizzino, Christopher. *Arresting Development: Comics at the Boundaries of Literature*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016.
- Stein, Daniel and Jan-Noël Thon (eds.). *From Comic Strips to Graphic Novels*. Göttingen (DE): De Gruyter, 2013.
- Tabachnick, Stephen E. and Esther Bendit Saltzman (eds.). *Drawn from the Classics: Essays on Graphic Adaptations of Literary Works*. Jefferson (NC): McFarland & Company, 2015.