Body Language and Characterization: A Corpus Stylistic Approach to Stage Directions in Eugene O'Neill's Plays

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Abstract

The stage directions in O'Neill's plays have long been a subject of central interest in the field of stylistics. However, there exists a denial and neglect of the role played by body language in the stage directions and its potential value for characterization. This study adopts a corpus stylistic approach to examine the body language with the aid to use key clusters related to characters' body movements, gestures and facial expressions based on the Corpus of O'Neill's Plays and the Corpus of Modern English-American-Irish Plays. The results show that body language plays four kinds of roles in the plays: displaying characters' emotional states, relations, individuality, and participation in the text world. The findings confirm the significance of body language for O'Neill's characterization, and thus its potential value should not be overlooked.

Keywords

Eugene O'Neill's Plays; Stage Directions; Body Language; Corpus Stylistics.

1. Introduction

The study of stage directions in Eugene O'Neill's plays has long been a research topic of central interest among scholars [1]. Previous studies have focused on their linguistic features, artistic effects, stylistic value, etc., revealing that O'Neill's stage directions are a vitally essential part of his characterization [2, 3, 4]. So far, however, there has been little discussion about the role played by body language, one of the constituents of stage directions. A variety of studies in literary fields has indicated that body language [5, 6] remains crucial to successful literary works [7, 8, 9]. Furthermore, research from nonverbal communication has also demonstrated that body language can be of value both to the recognition and interpretation of the information in drama performance. For example, Matsumoto, Hwang, and Frank argue that nonverbal behaviors were not only indispensable for drama performance, but also required to be exaggerated by early theatre actors to communicate to a distant audience [10].

The present study attempts to fill this research gap by conducting a stylistic investigation into body language in O'Neill's stage directions. In this context, the Corpus of Eugene O'Neill's Plays and the Corpus of Modern English-American-Irish Plays were compared, with an aim of answering central questions regarding the body language in the stage directions in O'Neill's plays: (1) What is the role of the body language in O'Neill's stage directions? (2) Specifically, how does body language contribute to the characterization in O'Neill's plays? This study adopts a corpus stylistic approach which can facilitate complete analyses of texts.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Body Language

While 'body language' is a widely-used expression, it seems difficult to define the term. Some scholars, such as Matsumoto, Hwang, and Frank [10] argue that the term 'body language' gaining popularity among scholars was possibly due to Julius Fast's [6] book *Body Language,* and that the term was interchangeable with 'nonverbal communication'. If 'body language' could be considered the rewording of 'nonverbal communication', it seems possible to provide a definition of 'body language' by defining 'nonverbal communication'. Unfortunately, Eaves and Leathers argue that "[d]efining nonverbal communication is not a simple matter" [11]. Despite the difficulty, scholars still endeavoured to define nonverbal communication. For instance, Matsumoto, Hwang, and Frank defined nonverbal communication 'as the transfer and exchange of messages in any and all modalities that do not involve words' [10]. In general, nonverbal communication "consists of physical behaviour commonly referred to as body language as well as gestures, use of space, and use of voice" [12]. Morreale, Spitzberg, and Barge point out that body movement and posture can be called body language [12]. Likewise, Conley states that "[b]eing alert to one's facial expressions, gestures, and eye contact (or lack thereof) is all part of body language interpretation." [13] Therefore, body language is defined as the process of communicating what human beings are feeling or thinking by their body movement, gestures, and facial expressions in the present research.

2.2. Body Language and Drama

Research into body language has a long history and been involved in a variety of fields, such as philosophy, psychology, and literature. However, there is an imbalance in the study of body language in literature. For example, Korte claims that most studies of the use of body language in literature have only focused on fictional texts and its use in dramatic texts has traditionally received much less attention [14]. Also, research from nonverbal communication has demonstrated that body language can be of value both to the recognition and interpretation of the information in drama performance. Accordingly, no previous study has given sufficient consideration to body language in dramatic texts.

2.3. Previous Research on O'Neill's Stage Directions

The stage directions in O'Neill's plays have always been conceived as one of the linguistic devices that are peculiar and crucial to O'Neill's dramatic creation. It has attracted much attention from the scholarly community. Several highly relevant and important discussions of the O'Neill's stage directions will be presented chronologically in this section.

Shea examined the stage directions in O'Neill's play *Hughie*, showing that O'Neill's stage directions provide information vital to a complete understanding of the play or characters as the role of the Night Clerk in *Hughie* relied too much on the interior monologue written with stage directions [4]. Kong and Liu took the perspective of corpus stylistics to explore the quantity, complexity, emotional expressions, words for body parts, logico-semantic relation of clause complexes and readability of stage directions in O'Neill's six representative plays. They concluded that the stage directions could serve as an indicator of Eugene O'Neill's language style, which reflects the interaction between O'Neill's personal experiences, historical background, the playwright's concepts of playwriting, genre/register patterns and lexicogrammatical choices [15]. Rowen examined spoken stage directions and affective stage directions in O'Neill's plays, demonstrating that the spoken stage directions shared a similar function with the thought asides; that emotional stage directions functioned as a medium for characters or performers to display their feelings [1].

In summary, previous research on the stage directions in O'Neill's plays has illustrated just how crucial the stage directions are in O'Neill's plays but overlooked the critical role played by body language in O'Neill's characterization. The present study seeks to understand and explain the role of the body language in O'Neill's characterization and addresses the research gap.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1. Corpus Stylistics

Corpus stylistics has been regarded as a new sub-discipline of stylistics. It can be defined as "the application of theories, models and frameworks from stylistics in corpus analysis." [16] Corpus stylistics has gained stylisticians' attention since its inception, for it could supply evidence for detailed stylistic analyses and can even capture distinctive linguistic features that are so diffused across a large amount of textual data that they might only be perceived subliminally [17].

Being an interdisciplinary field for stylistic analysis, corpus stylistics can employ corpus methods to aid the systematicity and objectivity in the analysis of literary texts [8, 18]. Corpus linguistic methods, such as key words, collocation, semantic prosody, and lexical bundles, are helpful to confirm or refute findings from many years of traditional studies or provide some new insights to previous literary criticism. Specifically, some corpus linguistic concepts have been naturally drawn on as applications for literary stylistic analyses, such as "key words" [19, 20], "key semantic domains" [21, 22, 23], "concordance" [24], "collocation" [18], "semantic prosody" [25], "cluster" [8], "lexical bundles" [8], "local textual functions" [26, 27], "narrative prospection model" [20], "speech-thought presentation model" [28], and "speech-writing-thought presentation model" [29], in addition, "characters speech" and "body language" [8] are also investigated under the umbrella of corpus stylistics.

3.2. Keyness Analysis in Corpus Stylistics

In corpus stylistics, keyness is a key concept, referring to 'a matter of being statistically unusual relative to some norm' [22]. Conducting analyses based on the notion of 'keyness' could be regarded as keyness analysis, which consists of multiple types, such as the analyses of keyword, key multiword (key clusters), key parts-of-speech and key semantic domain. Despite being relatively new, keyness analysis has been widely applied to literary analysis [22, 23, 30], which could be partially attributed to the presence of the program "KeyWords" of Mike Scott's *WordSmith Tools*. Hence, keyness analysis will be used to reveal the characteristics of body language in this study.

3.3. Body Language Clusters, Key Clusters, and Body Language

This study focuses on the role of body language in O'Neill's stage directions. Body language key clusters were explored with the assistance of corpus methods to achieve the research objective. Here, body language key clusters have been classified into two sub-categories: body language clusters and key clusters.

Body language clusters are clusters that not only contain body part nouns but also associate themselves with characters' body language (compare 'Body Part clusters', defined as clusters containing body part nouns, see Mahlberg [8]). This suggests that 'hide her face in' belongs to body language clusters, but 'there is a pause' are excluded from such category.

Key clusters are calculated through *WordSmith Tools* in the same way as 'key words' [30]. 'Key words' can be defined as those whose frequency is unusually high in comparison with a reference set of words usually taken from a large corpus of text [31]. By analogy, key clusters are clusters that are significantly more frequent in one text compared to another text or reference corpus.

Therefore, a working definition of body language key clusters is that they are clusters containing body part nouns, directly associated with characters' body language and significantly more frequent in one text compared to another text or reference corpus. As Mahlberg observes, key clusters are a useful tool for functional analysis of clusters [27]. In other words, it is feasible to reveal the role of body language by body language key clusters in this article.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Corpora

The major corpus is a diachronic collection of Eugene O'Neill's six plays, called the Corpus of O'Neill's Plays (COP), consisting of two subcorpora: one is composed of dialogues (COP-D); the other is composed of stage directions (COP-SD). The reference corpus is a diachronic collection of fifty-six dramatic texts of modern English-American-Irish playwrights, named the Corpus of Modern English-American-Irish Plays (CMEAIP). CMEAIP is also divided into two subcorpora: the corpora of dialogues (CMEAIP-D) and the corpora of stage directions (CMEAIP-SD). The division of COP and CMEAIP makes possible the contrastive analysis of body language in O'Neill's six plays.

WordSmith Tools version 7 [31], based on its default setting, is used in this research to produce the corpus statistics. The basic statistics of the corpora are presented in Table 1, showing that the ratio between the tokens of COP and those of CMEAIP is nearly 5 to 1; the ratio between the tokens of COP-SD and those of CMEAIP-SD is nearly 3.7 to 1; and thus, the two ratios between the major corpus and the reference corpus closely satisfy the quantity criterion.

Table 1. Basic Corpus Information

Corpus	Tokens (words)	Types (words)
COP	249,884	11,797
COP-D	174,428	8,365
COP-SD	75,606	6,456
CMEAIP	1,290,787	30,055
CMEAIP-D	1,013,115	25,433
CMEAIP-SD	277,326	15,063

4.2. Criteria for the Selection of Dramatic Texts

Based on the criteria that the selected plays must be complete and representative and that the time of play creation should cover O'Neill's three periods of creation as much as possible, COP consists of the following six plays, along a chronological axis: ①*Beyond the Horizon* (1918), ②*Anna Christie* (1920), ③*Desire Under the Elms* (1924), ④*Strange Interlude* (1928), ⑤*The Iceman Cometh* (1939), and ⑥*Long Day's Journey into Night* (1941). Of the six plays, ①, ②, ④, and ⑥ have won the Pulitzer Prize; ③ has won the Nobel Prize in Literature, and ⑤ is also an influential work in O'Neill's third period of creation. In addition, O'Neill's dedication to modern American drama could be divided into three periods: the early years (1913-1920), the middle years (1920-1934), and the late years (1934-1943). Thus, the six plays satisfy the three criteria to a great degree. The inclusion of these six plays would provide relatively reliable data for contrastive analysis.

The six criteria for CMEAIP are as follows: (1) the plays must be complete; (2) the plays must be modern plays written in English; (3) the plays should include representative works as much as possible; (4) the with the consideration of the availability of electronic texts and balance, no more than three works of each dramatist should be included; (5) the size of CMEAIP is at least

five times larger than that of COP to guarantee that the use of stage directions in CMEAIP can be regarded as the norm; and (6) works by both male and female playwrights should be included.

Therefore, CMEAIP is composed of fifty-six modern plays written by thirty-five different modern English, American and Irish playwrights (for the general information on CMEAIP, see Appendix 1). Among these works, eleven plays have won prizes, accounting for 20% of the total. All the plays in the two corpora have been obtained from free-access websites, such as the Oxford Text Archive, Project Gutenberg and BookZZ. Then, all the electronic texts have been stored in the Unicode form for the convenience of the extraction procedure.

4.3.   Extraction of Stage Directions from Dramatic Texts

Dramatic texts can be divided into two parts: dialogue and stage directions. Stage directions are generally in italic print and always put in brackets or parentheses, which indicates that it is convenient to extract stage directions from dramatic texts through manual and automatic methods. Software EmEditor was used for the automatic extraction because it supports the use of regular expressions, and the regular expression "[\ ([] [\s\S] * [\))]" was utilized to extract the stage directions automatically from dramatic texts in this study.

4.4.   Research Procedures

It is necessary to set parameters for the sake of obtaining body language key clusters through using *WordSmith Tools* version 7 [31]. Three parameters were set as follows (all other parameters are based on the default setting):

(1) the p-value of 0.05 is set because the default p-value of 0.000001 finds few key clusters;

(2) the minimum frequency of a cluster is three;

(3) the break setting is to stop at punctuation.

Based on the above setting, *WordSmith Tools* generates 2,050 three-word clusters, 702 Four-word clusters and 176 five-word clusters in COP-SD; it also produces 6,605 five-word clusters, 1,903 Four-word clusters and 448 five-word clusters in CMEAIP-SD. Considering the frequency and characteristics of body language clusters, Four-word body language clusters will be investigated. Some samples are as follows: *face in her hands, his head in his, holding his head, hides her face in, covers her face with*.

Then, Four-word key clusters were calculated with the *KeyWords tool.* Finally, the selection of Four-word body language key clusters from Four-word key clusters was based on the body part category in *A Dictionary of Stage Directions in English Drama, 1580-1642* [32]. The lemmas involving characters' body in the category are: *arm, beard, body, bosom, brain, breast, cheek, chest, corpse, ear, eye, face, finger, foot, hair, hand, head, heart, heel, knee, lap, leg, limb, mouth, neck, nose, shoulder, side, skull, throat, thumb* and *tongue*.

5.   Results and Analysis

5.1.   Four-word Clusters in the Two Corpora

In the COP-SD, seven hundred and two different types of Four-word clusters occur for a minimum of three times compared to 1,903 clusters in the CMEAIP-SD. Then the calculation generates 500 'positive' key clusters, which means that they occur more often in O'Neill's stage directions than would be expected in comparison to the reference corpus. Table 2 presents the top 12 Four-word clusters in the two corpora, displaying the similarity and difference between O'Neill's stage direction and that of other dramatists. For example, four clusters in bold appear among the top 12 in both lists, which reveals the construction of dramatic text world.

Table 2. Top Twelve Four-word Clusters in COP-SD and CMEAIP-SD

	Cluster List						
N	Cluster in COP-SD	Freq.	%	Texts	Cluster in CMEAIP-SD	Freq.	%	Texts
1	as if he were	26	0.03	6	**there is a pause**	59	0.02	20
2	with a trace of	19	0.03	5	goes to the door	46	0.02	24
3	**he goes to the**	18	0.02	6	she goes to the	46	0.02	18
4	**there is a pause**	18	0.02	6	the middle of the	40	0.01	17
5	appears in the doorway	17	0.02	6	**he goes to the**	35	0.01	22
6	gets to his feet	17	0.02	6	for the first time	33	0.01	19
7	through the front parlor	17	0.02	1	in the middle of	31	0.01	17
8	to his feet and	17	0.02	6	the door of the	31	0.01	16
9	he is dressed in	15	0.02	5	look at each other	29	0.01	12
10	**in a low voice**	14	0.02	5	she looks at him	29	0.01	20
11	from one to the	13	0.02	6	by the actor playing	28	0.01	1
12	one to the other	13	0.02	6	**in a low voice**	28	0.01	19

5.2. Body Language and its Roles in O'Neill's Plays

5.2.1. Classification of Body Language Key Clusters

Eighty-four body language key clusters (see Appendix 2) were manually selected from the 500 'positive' key clusters in order to reveal the role of body language. These 84 key clusters fall into the following four groups according to their functions (see Table 3, 4 for more details):

Table 3. Statistics for Eighty-four Body Language Key Clusters

Category	Token (%) (body language key cluster)	Type (body language key cluster)
Emotion Display	121 (34.9%)	48
Relation Display	59 (17.0%)	27
Participation Display	164 (47.3%)	53
Individuality Display	3 (0.9%)	1
Total	347	84

1) displaying characters' emotional states, which involve obvious emotional arousal and are broadly treated from positivity and negativity. Here, positivity refers to 'happiness' embodied by characters' body language, while the negativity involves 'sadness' or 'anger'.

2) displaying the characters' relation, which is dealt with by intimacy and distance. Here, the intimacy indicates that one character uses body language to create or maintain a close relationship with others, while the distance denotes the opposite. Both subcategories involve no obvious emotional arousal.

3) displaying the character's individuality, which means that body language can reveal characters' habitual behavior through its repetitive occurrence in dramatic texts.

4) indicating the character's participation, which means that characters use body language to show their participation in specific local text situations. This category consists of two subcategories: non-contact and contact. Both subcategories involve no obvious emotional arousal.

The classification of the four groups is functional, not formal. This suggests that the role of a cluster will vary according to the local textual situation.

Table 4. Top Ten Body Language Key Clusters

N	Key cluster	COP-SD Freq.	COP-SD Texts	CMEAIP-SD. Freq.	Log_L	P
1	gets to his feet	17	6	0	52.39	0.00
2	to his feet and	17	6	4	33.86	0.00
3	her arms around him	10	4	0	30.81	0.00
4	springs to his feet	13	6	3	26.06	0.00
5	his head on his	7	2	0	21.57	0.00
6	and closes his eyes	6	2	0	18.49	0.00
7	eyes are fixed on	6	3	0	18.49	0.00
8	jumps to his feet	6	3	0	18.49	0.00
9	him on the back	9	4	3	15.68	0.00
10	a hand on his	5	3	0	15.41	0.00

5.2.2. Body Language Key Clusters as a Means of Displaying Characters' Emotional States

Characters are endowed with emotions that can be conveyed by their body language in the dramatic text world. Table 5 displays the clusters denoting characters' positive or negative emotional states.

Table 5. Body Language Key Clusters for Emotion Display

N	Key cluster (Positive emotion)	Freq.	Key cluster (Negative emotion)	Freq.	Key cluster (Negative emotion)	Freq.
1	face lights up with	5	springs to his feet	7	to his feet with	2
2	him on the back	3	to his feet and	4	jumping to her feet	2
3	an arm around his	2	his fist on the	4	unsteadily to his feet	2
4	puts an arm around	2	table with his fist	4	fist on the table	2
5	brother on the back	2	her arms around him	3	hands on the table	2
6	gets to his feet	2	eyes are fixed on	3	on her knees beside	2
7	to his feet and	2	come to his eyes	3	his arm around her	1
8	jumps to his feet	2	and hides her face	3	her arms about his	1
9	his arm around her	1	hides her face in	3	into each other's eyes	1
10	her arms around him	1	gets to his feet	3	looks into his eyes	1
11	eye over his specs	1	springing to his feet	3	getting to his feet	1
12	looks into his eyes	1	herself on her knees	3	to his feet again	1
13	to his feet with	1	puts her arm around	2	her feet with a	1
14	his fist on the	1	puts his arm about	2	scrambles to his feet	1
15	fist on the table	1	and throws her arms	2	to her feet with	1
16	his head from his	1	eye over his specs	2	his head from his	1
17	arm about her waist	1	comes over his face	3	her head on his	1
18			face on his shoulder	2	arms about his neck	1
19			he hides his face	2	arm about her waist	1
20			her face on his	2	shoulder and shakes him	1
21			hides her face on	2		
22			jumps to his feet	2		
23			jumping to his feet	2		
Total		29		66		26

In the above table 5, the number of clusters signifying negative emotions is higher than that of clusters denoting positive emotions, which is consistent with the theme of O'Neill's tragedies. For example:

(1) Eben: (*unable to endure this, **springs to his feet** in a **fury**, threatening her, his twitching fingers seeming to reach out for her throat*) Ye lie! I never said. I never dreamed ye'd. I'd cut off my head afore I'd hurt his finger! (*Desire Under the Elms*)

(2) Anna: (*In anguish*) Mat! (*But he turns without another word and strides out of the doorway. ANNA looks after him wildly, starts to run after him, then **hides her face in** her outstretched arms, **sobbing**. CHRIS stands in a stupor, staring at the floor.*) (*Anna Christie*)

(3) Evans: ...*Nina comes in from the kitchen. She stops in amazement when she sees him on his knees. He jumps **to his feet and** takes her in his arms with confident **happiness** and kisses her.*) Oh, Nina, I love you so! And now I know you love me! I'll never be afraid of anything again! (*Strange Interlude*)

In example (1), the cluster '*springs to his feet*' reveals Eben's strong anger at Abbie, his step-mother and lover; in example (2), the cluster '*hides her face in*' indicates Anna's sadness. These two examples show how characters use their body language to express their negative feelings. In example (3), the cluster '*to his feet and*' as an element of '*jumps to his feet*' foreshadows Evans's joy of seeing Nina. Here, the body language in O'Neill's stage directions can make readers have a clear understanding of characters' emotional states and may provoke feelings in readers, which will promote empathetic response, like the example (2), possessing the possibility of eliciting sympathy for Anna from readers. In addition, the body language provides actors with clues about how to perform on the stage. Therefore, the occurrences of the emotional body language not only render readers to mentally experience the text worlds created by the playwright but also guide actors to display the text worlds he creates as precisely as possible. In other words, O'Neill endows emotional body language with the role of simultaneously revealing characters' emotions and directing readers and actors to mentally experience feelings of characters.

5.2.3. Body Language Key Clusters as a Means of Displaying Characters' Relation

The relation between characters is a key clue for understanding the plot of O'Neill's plays. Such a relation can be displayed through verbal and non-verbal communication. As an important method for non-verbal communication, body language is naturally associated with the demonstration of characters' relations. Table 6 presents the key clusters to denote intimate or distant relations between characters in O'Neill's plays.

From the above table 6, it can be seen that most key clusters containing body part nouns indicate a close relationship between characters or the intention that one character tries to maintain or build a close relationship with others. For example:

(4) Nina: (*controlling herself with a great effort comes to him, forcing a smile, puts **her arms around him** **affectionately***) Nothing, dear. Nerves, that's all. I've gotten over-tired, I guess. (*Strange Interlude*)

(5) Hickey: Yes, it's today at last, Jimmy. (*He pats **him on the back**.*) Don't be so scared! I've promised I'll help you. (*The Iceman Cometh*)

(6) Lewis: I shan't be coming back. Sorry to be leaving good old Harry and the rest of you, of course, but I can't continue to live under the same roof with that fellow. (*He stops, stiffening into **hostility** as Wetjoen enters from the hall, and pointedly **turns his back on** him. Wetjoen glares at him sneeringly....*) (*The Iceman Cometh*)

Table 6. Body Language Key Clusters for Relation Display

N	Key cluster (denoting intimacy)	Freq.	Key cluster (denoting distance)	Freq.
1	her arms around him	6	turns his back on	4
2	a hand on his	5	and turns his head	1
3	an arm around his	3		
4	her arm around him	3		
5	puts a hand on	3		
6	she takes his hand	3		
7	to shake hands with	3		
8	his head on her	3		
9	arm around his shoulder	3		
10	his arm around her	2		
11	puts her arm around	2		
12	her arms about his	2		
13	brother on the back	2		
14	her head on his	2		
15	arms about his neck	2		
16	puts an arm around	1		
17	puts his arm about	1		
18	and throws her arms	1		
19	him on the back	1		
20	and hides her face	1		
21	face on his shoulder	1		
22	her face on his	1		
23	hides her face on	1		
24	his head down on	1		
25	arm about her waist	1		
Total		54		5

In example (4), the cluster '*her arms around him*' indicates that Nina attempts to use intimate action to hide her suppressed extravagant exultance from her husband or present her stable mental state, which shows that Nina intends to maintain a close relationship with her husband. In example (5), the cluster '*him on the back*' suggests Hickey's comfort and encouragement to Jimmy, which implies a close relationship between the two characters. In example (6), the cluster '*turns his back on*' shows Lewis's hostility towards Wetjoen, which clearly displays that Lewis has no intention to build or maintain a close relationship with Wetjoen. These three clusters are similar as one character uses body language to show the relation he/she attempts to build, maintain, strengthen or weaken with others. This suggests that the details about characters' relation require body language and its role is to elaborate characters' verbal behaviors.

5.2.4. Body Language Key Clusters as a Means of Displaying Characters' Individuality

Characters are an element of a play. Each character maintains individual characteristics that can be embodied in many ways, such as accent, pet phrases, habitual behaviors, etc. As for O'Neill's characters, one of the basic techniques for displaying their individuality is the repetitive use of body language. For example:

(7) Hope: (*mechanically puts a **hand to his ear** in the gesture of deafness*) What's that? I can't hear you. (*then drowsily irascible*) .... Oh, I ain't as blind as you think. (*The Iceman Cometh*)

(8) Hope: (*puts his* **_hand to his ear_**, *angrily*) What's that? I can't hear you. (*The Iceman Cometh*)

(9) Hope: (*cupping his* **_hand to his ear_**) What's that? Can't hear you. (*sentimentally again but with desperation*) I remember now clear as day the last time before she… (*His voice breaks on a sob.*) (*The Iceman Cometh*)

In examples (7), (8) and (9), the clusters '*hand to his ear*' present Hope's habitual body movements, which implies his hearing impairment. These habitual body movements not only assure the characters' individuality but maintain diversity in O'Neill's characters, which is one of the roles of body language in the plays.

5.2.5. Body Language Key Clusters as a Means of Indicating Characters' Participation

The body language under discussion in this section is mainly used to denote the characters' participation in activities in the text world. It does not involve apparent emotional arousal, relation forming, and habitual behaviors. It falls into two subcategories: non-contact and contact, as shown in Table 7.

The non-contact body language indicates that a character's movement does not touch other characters' bodies, while the contact body language denotes a physical contact.

Table 7. Body Language Key Clusters for Indicating Participation

N	Key cluster (non-contact)	Freq.	Key cluster (non-contact)	Freq.	Key cluster (contact)	Freq.
1	gets to his feet	12	her hands flutter up	3	him on the back	5
2	to his feet and	11	propped on his hands	3	him by the shoulder	3
3	and closes his eyes	6	he bows his head	3	shoulder and shakes him	2
4	springs to his feet	6	suddenly raises his head	3		
5	his head on his	7	head from his arms	3		
6	he shrugs his shoulders	5	head on his arms	3		
7	chin propped on his	4	jumps to his feet	2		
8	his chin propped on	4	springing to his feet	2		
9	to pat her hair	4	her feet with a	2		
10	holding his head in	4	scrambles to his feet	2		
11	from his arms and	3	to her feet with	2		
12	eyes are fixed on	3	his head from his	2		
13	into each other's eyes	3	and turns his head	2		
14	eyes fixed on her	3	his head down on	2		
15	he opens his eyes	3	side of his mouth	2		
16	he closes his eyes	3	looks into his eyes	1		
17	face is set in	3	and hides her face	1		
18	jumping to his feet	3	comes over his face	1		
19	getting to his feet	3	hides her face in	1		
20	to his feet again	3	he hides his face	1		
21	jumps to her feet	3	to his feet with	1		
22	rising to her feet	3	jumping to her feet	1		
23	hand as if to	3	unsteadily to his feet	1		
24	her hand as if	3	hands on the table	1		
25	hands flutter up to	3	on her knees beside	1		
Total		108		46		10

This can be illustrated by the following two examples:

(10) Robert: Yes. (*Ruth goes back to her chair. After a pause* **_he opens his eyes_** *and sits up in his chair. His face is flushed and happy.*) Then you will go, Ruth? (*Beyond the Horizon*)

(11) Cabot: ... (*He hears running footsteps from the left, immediately is himself again. Eben runs in, panting exhaustedly, wild-eyed and mad looking. He lurches through the gate. Cabot grabs* **_him by the shoulder_**. *Eben stares at him dumbly.*) Did ye tell the Sheriff? (*Desire Under the Elms*)

In examples (10) and (11), the clusters '*he opens his eyes*' and '*him by the shoulder*' indicate that the text world is full of vigor and the characters participate in activities in the text world. In addition, the proportion of this group is the largest among the four groups, which implies that most characters are alive and physically normal in the text world and that their behaviors bear a striking resemblance to those of people in the real world. In other words, O'Neill adopts some elements of the real world in his creation so that readers can easily understand his story worlds. Here we can see that denoting characters' participation in the story world is one of the roles of body language in O'Neill's stage directions.

6. Discussion

Our research questions investigated the role of the body language in O'Neill's stage directions and the findings suggest that body language contributes to O'Neill's characterization from four aspects, each of which provides detailed information about his characters and plays an irreplaceable role for O'Neill's characterization. This study confirms that body language is associated with drama characterization.

What is surprising is that the proportion of the body language achieving four functions varies dramatically. Specifically, the body language used for displaying characters' participation makes up the largest proportion of among the four, in contrast to the smallest proportion of displaying individuality. A possible explanation for this might be that body language is just seen as supplementary to O'Neill's drama characterization. Besides body language, characters' dialogues are also critical for the characterization. Dialogues can be primarily conducive to the characterizing of characters' emotional states, relations, and individuality. For example, characters' emotion can be conveyed by tone of voice which is naturally integrated into utterances. In other words, the proportion of body language displaying characters' emotional states, relations and individuality is supposed to be small.

The reason for the largest proportion of the body language used for displaying characters' participation is not clear but it may have something to do with foregrounding. According to the foregrounding theory [33, 34, 35], the deviation from the norms created within a text, like one linguistic form possessing a high unusual proportion in comparison to others, may engage readers' attention more easily when involving in the understanding of literary works. Foregrounding effect produced by the largest proportion of the body language used for displaying characters' participation in O'Neill's plays may be helpful for readers to understand plots and characters.

Therefore, our finding points to the importance for researchers to be aware of the distribution and proportion of linguistic resources used for drama characterization when examining drama characterisation.

7. Conclusion

In the current project, a corpus stylistic investigation of the body language in O'Neill's stage directions has been conducted, and the results indicate that body language plays a crucial role in O'Neill's characterization. The functions of the body language can be classified into four types: displaying characters' emotional states, relations, individuality, and participation in the text

world. The previous literature on body language in O'Neill's stage directions shows general neglect or denial of its potential value. This study confirms the importance of body language for O'Neill's characterization. More importantly, the findings clearly indicate that body language in dramatic narrative has not confined itself to directing performers' rehearsals, and it possesses the stylistic value of portraying characters. In other words, this study provides a new understanding of the use of body language in stage directions and expanding our understanding of how O'Neill depicts his characters with nonverbal forms. In addition, the findings highlight the potential usefulness of applying a corpus stylistic approach to stylistic analyses.

The present study was subject to several potential methodological weaknesses. First and foremost, while body language in O'Neill's stage directions is considered critical to his characterization, we only investigate the body language key clusters. This leaves two questions open. Would the stage directions that describe body movements but do not contain body part nouns contribute to O'Neill's characterization? And are there other functions of body language in O'Neill's stage directions? Second, we only focus on the use of body language for O'Neill's characterization. In future research, it will be worthwhile to explore other methods of O'Neill's characterization systematically. Third, we employ key clusters to investigate the stylistic value of body language. Further research could explore other corpus methods for the stylistic analysis of body language in O'Neill's stage directions.

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Appendix 1

Metadata of the Corpus of Modern English-American-Irish Plays

1. Arthur Wing Pinero (UK), *The Second Mrs Tanqueray* (1893).

2. George Bernard Shaw (IR), *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1894).

3. Oscar Wilde (IR), *An Ideal Husband* (1898).

4. Oscar Wilde (IR), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1898).

5. Harley Granville-Barker (UK), *The Marrying of Ann Leete* (1899).

6. George Bernard Shaw (IR), *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1901).

7. James Matthew Barrie (UK), *Quality Street* (1901).

8. James Matthew Barrie (UK), *The Admirable Crichton* (1902).

9. Clyde Fitch (USA), *The Girl with the Green Eyes* (1905).

10. John Millington Synge (IR), *The Well of the Saints* (1905).

11 George Bernard Shaw (IR), *Major Barbara* (1907).

12. Harley Granville-Barker (UK), *Waste* (1907).

13. John Millington Synge (IR), *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907).

14. Booth Tarkington and Harry Leon Wilson (USA), *The Man from Home* (1908).

15. James Matthew Barrie (UK), *What Every Woman Knows* (1908).

16. Lady Gregory and William Butler Yeats (IR), *The Unicorn from the Stars* (1908).

17. Israel Zangwill (UK), *The Melting Pot* (1909).

18. Jerome Klapka Jerome (UK), *Fanny and the Servant Problem* (1909).

19. John Millington Synge (IR), *Deirdre of the Sorrows* (1910).

20. William Somerset Maugham (UK), *The Tenth Man* (1910).

21. William Somerset Maugham (UK), *Landed Gentry* (1910).

22. Lord Dunsany (Edward J. M. D. Plunkett, USA), *The Gods of the Mountain* (1911).

23. Aleister Crowley (UK), *Household Gods* (1912).

24. George Bernard Shaw (IR), *Pygmalion* (1912).

25. William Butler Yeats (IR), *The Countess Cathleen* (1912).

26. William Somerset Maugham (UK), *Penelope* (1912).

27. Gilbert Keith Chesterton (UK), *Magic* (1913).

28. Arnold Bennett (UK), *The Honeymoon* (1914).

29. Alice Gerstenberg (USA), *Alice in Wonderland* (1915).

30. Brighouse Harold (UK), *Hobson's Choice* (1916).

31. James Matthew Barrie (UK), *Dear Brutus* (1917).

32. Edna St Vincent (USA), *The Lamp and the Bell Millay* (1917).

33. Alan Alexander Milne (UK), *Mr. Pim Passes By* (1919).

34. David Herbert Richards Lawrence (UK), *Touch and Go* (1920).

35. Noël Coward (UK), *"I'LL Leave it to You"* (1920).

36. Lord Dunsany (Edward J. M. D. Plunkett, IR), *If* (1921).

37. William Somerset Maugham (UK), *The Circle* (1921).

38. Bayard Veiller (USA), *The Thirteenth Chair* (1922).

39. William Somerset Maugham (UK), *East of Suez* (1922).

40. George Bernard Shaw (IR), *Saint Joan* (1923), AWARDED.

41. Thornton Niven Wilder (USA), *Our Town* (1938), AWARDED.

42. Tennessee Williams (USA), *The Glass Menagerie* (1944), AWARDED.

43. Tennessee Williams (USA), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), AWARDED.

44. Arthur Miller (USA), *Death of a Salesman* (1949), AWARDED.

45. Arthur Miller (USA), *The Crucible* (1953), AWARDED.

46. Samuel Barclay Beckett (IR/FR), *Waiting for Godot* (1953), AWARDED.

47. Tennessee Williams (USA), *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955), AWARDED.

48. Harold Pinter (UK), *The Birthday Party* (1957).

49. Harold Pinter (UK), *The Dumb Waiter* (1957).

50. Harold Pinter (UK), *The Room* (1957).

51. Lorraine Hansberry (USA), *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959).

52. Tom Stoppard (UK), *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1966).

53. David Mamet (USA), *American Buffalo* (1975).

54. Sam Shepard (USA), *Buried Child* (1978), AWARDED.

55. David Mamet (USA), *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1984), AWARDED.

56. Tony Kushner (USA), *Angels in America* (1993), AWARDED.

Appendix 2

Four-word Body Language Key Clusters

N	Body Language Key Cluster	BPW	Freq.	Texts	RC. Freq.	Log_L	P
1	an arm around his	arm	5	3	0	15.41	0
2	his arm around her	arm	4	3	0	12.33	0
3	puts her arm around	arm	4	2	0	12.33	0
4	her arm around him	arm	3	1	0	9.24	0
5	puts an arm around	arm	3	2	0	9.24	0
6	puts his arm about	arm	3	2	0	9.24	0
7	her arms around him	arms	10	4	0	30.81	0
8	and throws her arms	arms	3	3	0	9.24	0
9	from his arms and	arms	3	1	0	9.24	0
10	her arms about his	arms	3	2	0	9.24	0
11	him on the back	back	9	4	3	15.68	0
12	brother on the back	back	4	1	0	12.33	0
13	turns his back on	back	4	2	0	12.33	0
14	chin propped on his	chin	4	2	0	12.33	0
15	his chin propped on	chin	4	2	0	12.33	0
16	eye over his specs	eye	3	1	0	9.24	0
17	and closes his eyes	eyes	6	2	0	18.49	0
18	eyes are fixed on	eyes	6	3	0	18.49	0
19	into each other's eyes	eyes	4	3	0	12.33	0
20	come to his eyes	eyes	3	2	0	9.24	0

Note: BPW is the abbreviation of Body Part Word.

N	Body Language Key Cluster	BPW	Freq.	Texts	RC. Freq.	Log_L	P
21	eyes fixed on her	eyes	3	2	0	9.24	0
22	he closes his eyes	eyes	3	2	0	9.24	0
23	he opens his eyes	eyes	3	3	0	9.24	0
24	looks into his eyes	eyes	3	2	0	9.24	0
25	and hides her face	face	5	3	0	15.41	0
26	face lights up with	face	5	2	0	15.41	0
27	comes over his face	face	4	3	0	12.33	0
28	hides her face in	face	4	3	0	12.33	0
29	face is set in	face	3	2	0	9.24	0
30	face on his shoulder	face	3	2	0	9.24	0
31	he hides his face	face	3	3	0	9.24	0
32	her face on his	face	3	2	0	9.24	0
33	hides her face on	face	3	2	0	9.24	0
34	gets to his feet	feet	17	6	0	52.39	0
35	to his feet and	feet	17	6	4	33.86	0
36	springs to his feet	feet	13	6	3	26.06	0
37	jumps to his feet	feet	6	3	0	18.49	0
38	jumping to his feet	feet	5	3	0	15.41	0
39	springing to his feet	feet	5	3	0	15.41	0
40	getting to his feet	feet	4	3	0	12.33	0

Note: BPW is the abbreviation of Body Part Word.

N	Body Language Key Cluster	BPW	Freq.	Texts	RC. Freq.	Log_L	P
41	to his feet again	feet	4	4	0	12.33	0
42	to his feet with	feet	4	2	0	12.33	0
43	her feet with a	feet	3	2	0	9.24	0
44	jumping to her feet	feet	3	2	0	9.24	0
45	jumps to her feet	feet	3	3	0	9.24	0
46	rising to her feet	feet	3	1	0	9.24	0
47	scrambles to his feet	feet	3	3	0	9.24	0
48	to her feet with	feet	3	2	0	9.24	0
49	unsteadily to his feet	feet	3	1	0	9.24	0
50	his fist on the	fist	5	2	0	15.41	0
51	table with his fist	fist	4	3	0	12.33	0
52	fist on the table	fist	3	1	0	9.24	0
53	to pat her hair	hair	4	1	0	12.33	0
54	a hand on his	hand	5	3	0	15.41	0
55	hand as if to	hand	3	3	0	9.24	0
56	her hand as if	hand	3	3	0	9.24	0
57	puts a hand on	hand	3	3	0	9.24	0
58	she takes his hand	hand	3	3	0	9.24	0
59	hand to his ear	hand, ear	3	1	0	9.24	0
60	hands flutter up to	hands	3	1	0	9.24	0

Note: BPW is the abbreviation of Body Part Word.

N	Body Language Key Cluster	BPW	Freq.	Texts	RC. Freq.	Log_L	P
61	hands on the table	hands	3	3	0	9.24	0
62	her hands flutter up	hands	3	1	0	9.24	0
63	propped on his hands	hands	3	2	0	9.24	0
64	to shake hands with	hands	3	1	0	9.24	0
65	his head on his	head	7	2	0	21.57	0
66	his head from his	head	4	1	0	12.33	0
67	holding his head in	head	4	3	0	12.33	0
68	and turns his head	head	3	3	0	9.24	0
69	he bows his head	head	3	3	0	9.24	0
70	her head on his	head	3	3	0	9.24	0
71	his head down on	head	3	2	0	9.24	0
72	his head on her	head	3	3	0	9.24	0
73	suddenly raises his head	head	3	2	0	9.24	0
74	head from his arms	head, arms	3	1	0	9.24	0
75	head on his arms	head, arms	3	1	0	9.24	0
76	herself on her knees	knees	3	2	0	9.24	0
77	on her knees beside	knees	3	2	0	9.24	0
78	side of his mouth	mouth	2	1	0	9.24	0
79	arms about his neck	neck	3	2	0	9.24	0
80	arm around his shoulder	shoulder	3	2	0	9.24	0
81	him by the shoulder	shoulder	3	2	0	9.24	0
82	shoulder and shakes him	shoulder	3	1	0	9.24	0
83	he shrugs his shoulders	shoulders	5	3	0	15.41	0
84	arm about her waist	waist	3	2	0	9.24	0

Note: BPW is the abbreviation of Body Part Word