# Introducing the written BNC2014

Lancaster University @ Lancaster Castle
19 November 2021

# Intro

Vaclav Brezina

Lancaster University

Lancaster
University

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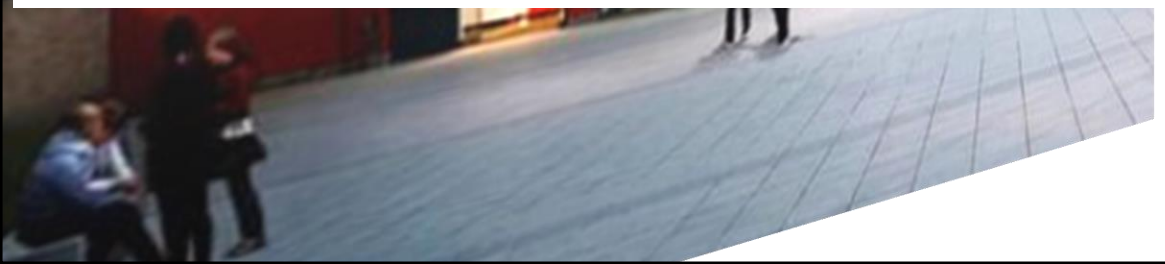
| | |
|---|---|
| 12.30 – 12.45 | **Vaclav Brezina** (Lancaster University): Welcome and Introduction to the event |
| 12.45 – 12.50 | **Elena Semino** (Lancaster University): Welcome from the Director of The ESRC Centre for Corpus Approaches to Social Science (CASS) |
| 12.50 – 12.55 | **Paul Connolly** (Lancaster University): Welcome from the Dean of Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) |
| 12.55-13.00 | **Break** |
| 13.00 – 13.15 | **Tony McEnery** (Lancaster University): The idea of the written BNC2014 |
| 13.15 – 13.30 | **Dawn Knight** (Cardiff University): Building a National Corpus: The story of the National Corpus of Contemporary Welsh |
| 13.30 – 13.45 | **Vaclav Brezina** (Lancaster University): Current British English |
| 13.45 – 14.00 | **Vaclav Brezina** and **William Platt** (Lancaster University): Exploring the BNC2014 using #LancsBox X |



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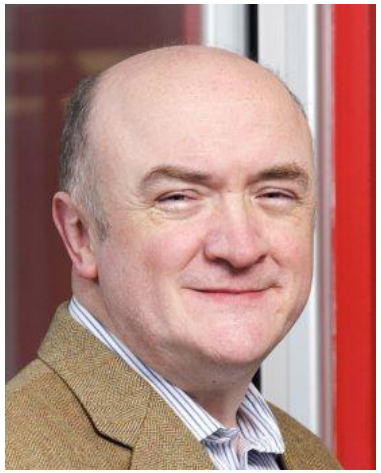
|---|---|
| 14.00 – 14.15 | **Randi Reppen** (Northern Arizona University): Corpora in the classroom |
| 14.15 – 14.30 | **Alice Deignan** (University of Leeds): Corpora in education |
| 14.30-14.45 | **Dana Gablasova** (Lancaster University): Corpus for schools |
| 14.45 – 15.00 | **Bas Aarts** (University College London): Plonker of a politicia NPs |
| 15.00 – 15.15 | **Break** |
| 15.15-15.30 | **Marc Alexander** (University of Glasgow): British English: A historical perspective |
| 15.30 -15.45 | **Michaela Mahlberg** (University of Birmingham): Corpora and fiction |
| 15.45 – 16.00 | **Martin Wynne** (University of Oxford): CLARIN – corpora, cor tools and collaboration |

# Official welcome

Professor Elena Semino
Lancaster University

Professor Paul Connolly
Lancaster University

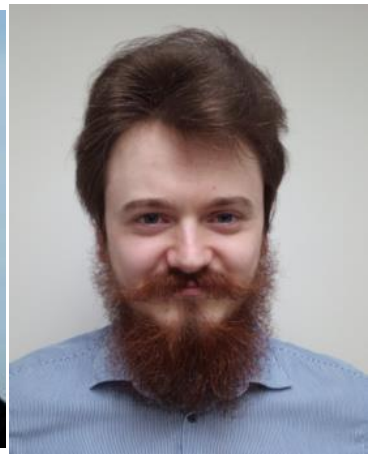
# Speakers



Lancaster University

Cardiff University

Lancaster University



Lancaster University

Northern Arizona University

University of Leeds

# Speakers

Lancaster University

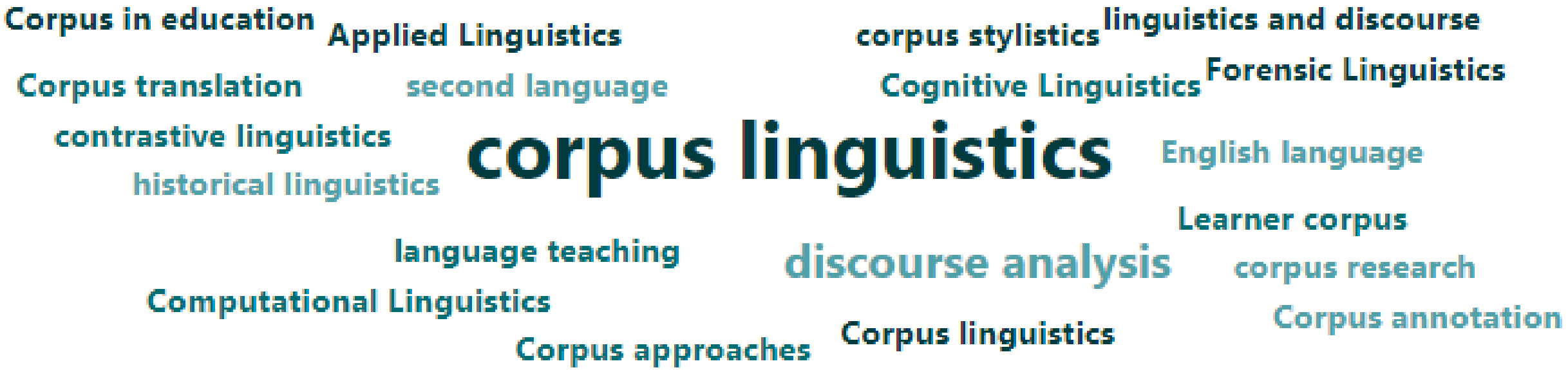
University College London

University of Glasgow

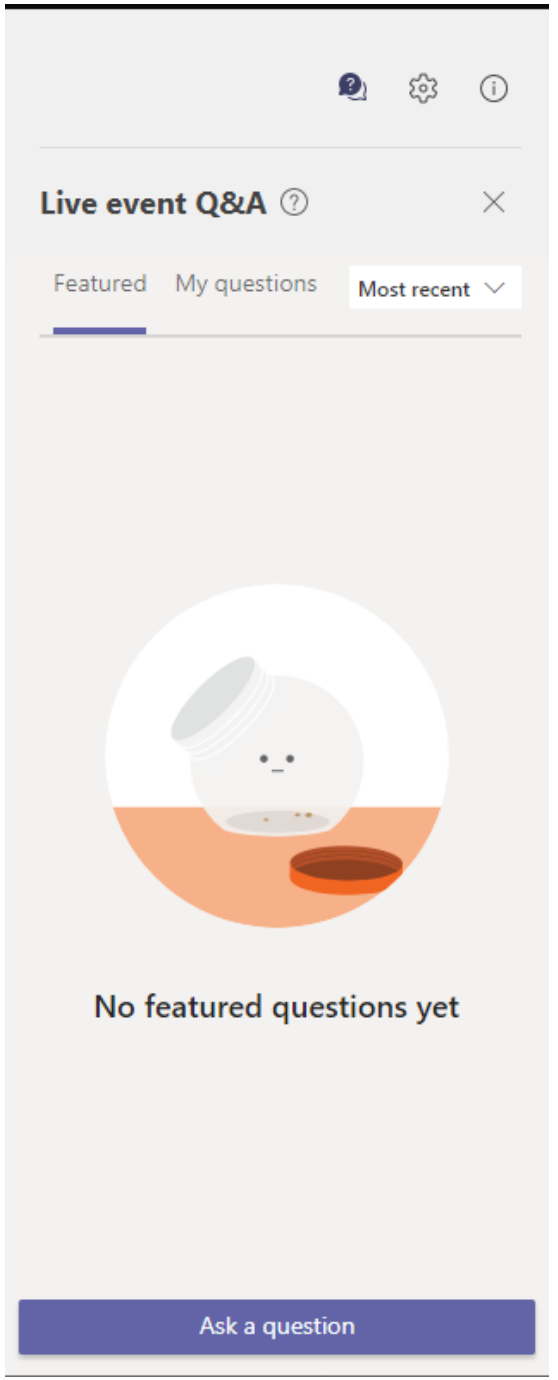
University of Birmingham

University of Oxford

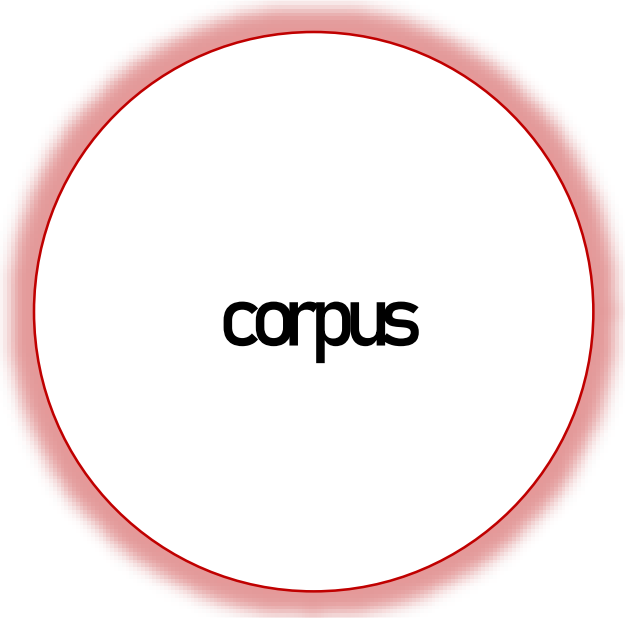
# Over 1,000 participants online



# Q&A


Live event Q&A
Featured
My questions
Most recent
No featured questions yet
Ask a question

# Corpus as a sample



# Corpus as a sample

Representative?
Balanced?
Unbiased?

BRITISH
NATIONAL
CORPUS
2014

BRITISH
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CORPUS
2014

BNC

BRITISH
NATIONAL
CORPUS
2014

BNC

BRITISH
NATIONAL
CORPUS
2014

# BNC2014 in a nutshell

100M words (90M writing, 10M speech)

88,171 files

current

robust

8 genres, 52 subgenres

balanced

7 years in making

representative

British English

# BNC

## BRITISH NATIONAL CORPUS 2014

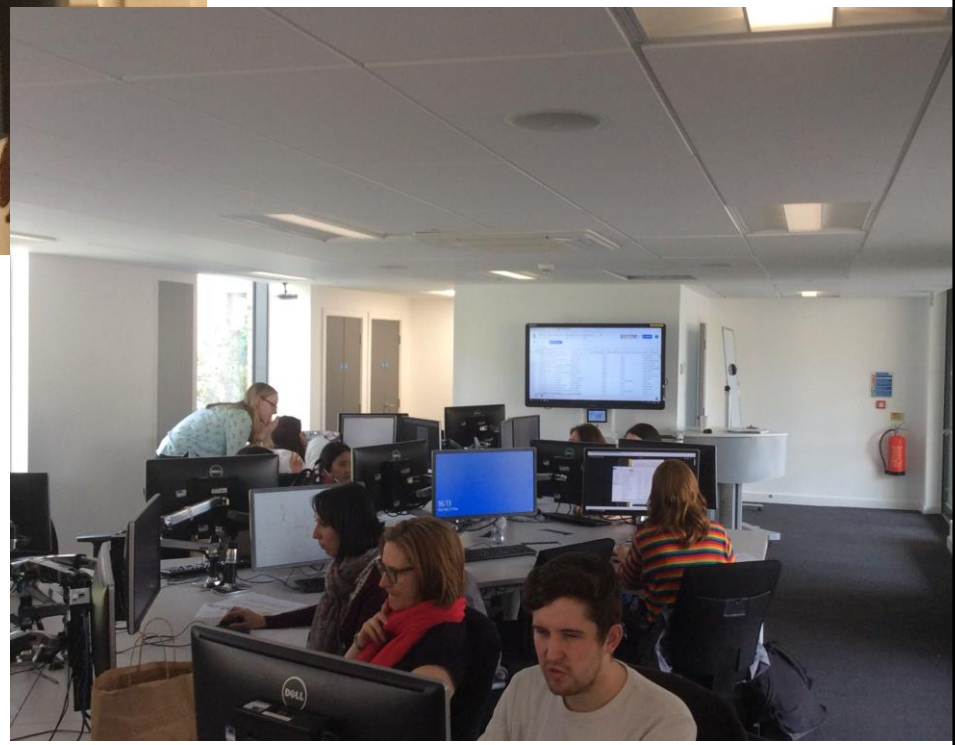
Lancaster University

**With the BNC2014 you can...**

**What?** 100 million words of written and spoken English.

**Why?** To analyse real language use and how it is evolving.

**Where?** #LancsBox X



# BNC

# BRITISH NATIONAL CORPUS 2014

Lancaster University

**With the BNC2014 you can...**

- SMS
- Reviews
- Media
- Newspapers
- Television
- Speech
- **EXPLORE**
- Magazines
- Blog posts
- Academic Writing
- Fiction
- @ Emails

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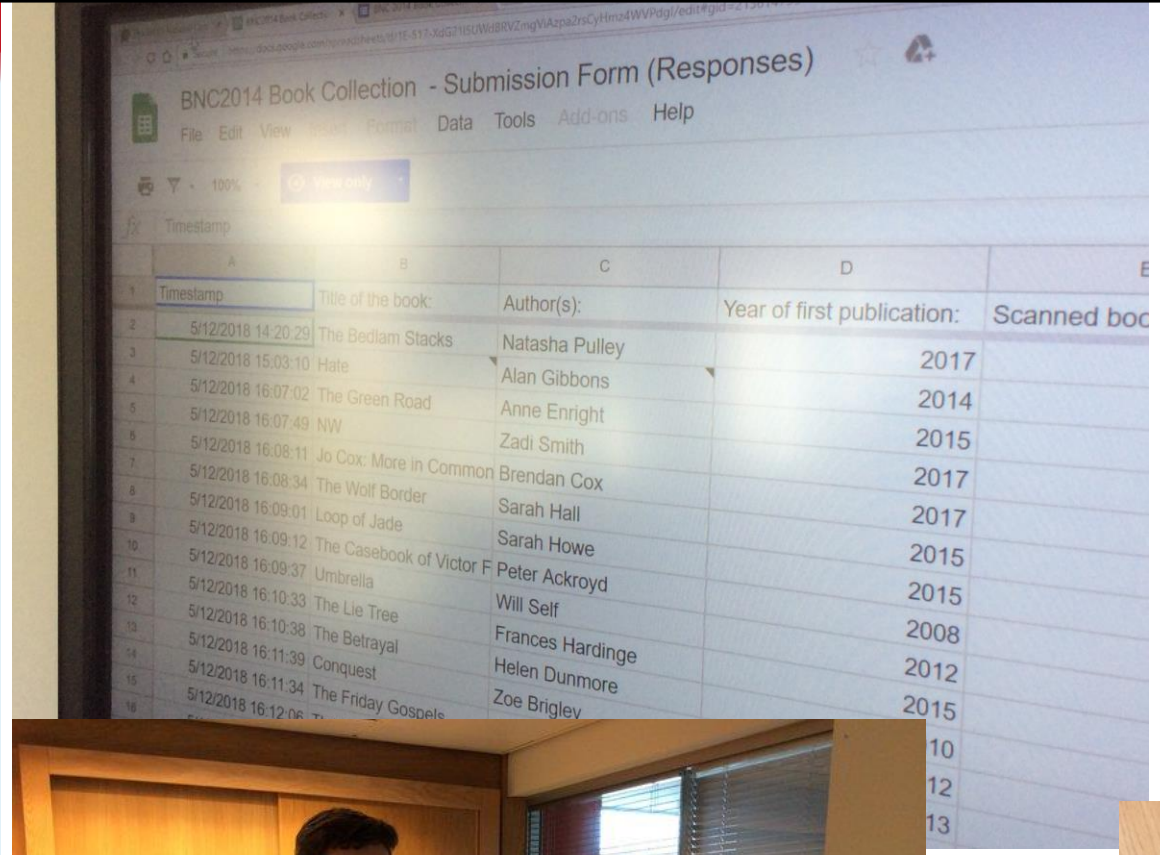

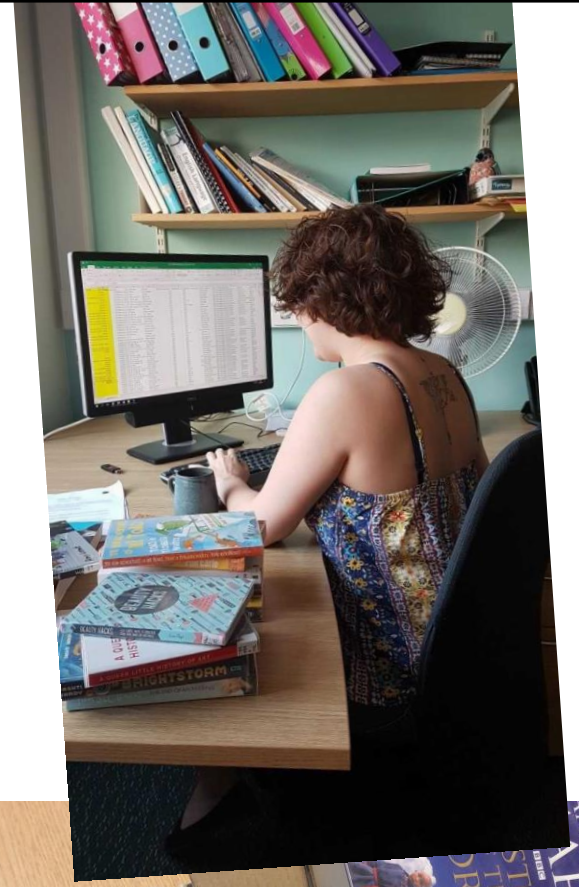

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank a number of researchers who helped collect data for the Written BNC2014, in particular Carmen Dayrell, who collected large amounts of data across different genres/registers. In addition, we would like to thank Zoe Broisson, Mathew Gillings, Andressa Rodrigues Gomide, Vasiliki Simaki, Matt Timperley, Isolde van Dorst and Pierre Weill-Tessier. William Platt, Hanna Schmueck and Maggie Mi assisted with data processing.

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# More info…

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## The Written British National Corpus 2014 – design and comparability

*Vaclav Brezina, Abi Hawtin and Tony McEnery*

From the journal Text & Talk
https://doi.org/10.1515/text-2020-0052

Cite this

## Abstract

The British National Corpus 2014 is a major project led by Lancaster University to create a 100-million-word corpus of present day British English. This corpus has been constructed as a comparable counterpart of the original British National Corpus (referred to as the BNC1994 in this article), which was compiled in the early 1990s. This article starts with the justification of the project answering the question of 'Why do we need a new BNC?'. We then provide a general overview of the construction of the Written British National Corpus 2014 (Written BNC2014); we also briefly discuss some issues of data collection before looking in detail at the design of the corpus. Compiling a large general corpus such as the Written BNC2014 has been a major undertaking involving teamwork and collaboration. It also required generosity on the part of the many individuals and organisations who contributed to the data collection.

Keywords: balance; BNC1994; comparability; corpus description; design principles; representativeness; sampling; Written BNC2014

## 1 Introduction

A synchronic corpus such as the British National Corpus 1994 (hereafter BNC1994) and the British National Corpus 2014 (hereafter BNC2014) provides a snapshot of language, and a window into social history, at the time of its compilation. Language and society, however, change over time. Consider the examples below. Example (1) is taken from the Written BNC1994, while example (2) represents a contribution to the Electronic language (E-language) subcorpus of the Written BNC2014.

BNC
BRITISH NATIONAL CORPUS 2014

Lancaster University

# The idea of the written BNC2014 (or how to build a corpus with nothing but hopes and wishes)


Tony McEnery

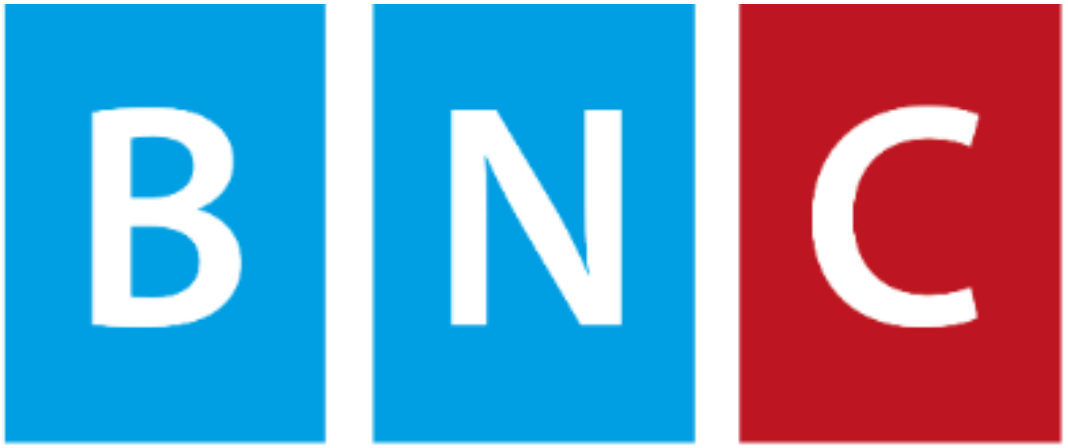
Lancaster University

@TonyMcEnery


The Queen's Anniversary Prizes
For Higher and Further Education
2015

http://cass.lancs.ac.uk

XI'AN JIAOTONG UNIVERSITY 1896




# WRITTEN

With a little help from my friends …..

## CHALLENGES

- Capture regional and social variation.
- Capture register variation.
- Enhance balance.
- Represent 'British English'.
- Capture change in language and society.
- Deal with copyright.
- Stay true to the original while not repeating mistakes
- To learn from the scholarship on the BNC1994

## OPPORTUNITIES

- Update the BNC.
- Improve on the original.
- Understand **current** British English.
- Rethink sampling issues.
- Offer statistical sophistication (Xaira v. #LancsBox).
- Provide a free resource for researchers for non-profit making research.
- Give due weight to new forms of communication

https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/text-2020-0052/html

# Corpus sampling: BNC2014

| Genre/register | Proportion (BNC1994) | Proportion (BNC2014) |
|---|---|---|
| Academic prose | 16.5% | 20% |
| Fiction | 16.6% | 20% |
| Newspapers (Serious, mass market and regional) | 9.6% | 20% |
| Magazines | 7.6% | 15% |
| E-language | 0.2% | 5% |
| Other | 39.5% | 10% |
| Spoken | 10% | 10% |

# Myths and Legends – the Written BNC

- A good proxy for British English as written in the early 1990s “The British National Corpus (BNC) is a 100 million word collection of samples of written and spoken language from a wide range of sources, designed to represent a wide cross-section of British English from the later part of the 20th century”
- 1,718,449 words (1960-1974)
- 4,625,456 words (1975-1984)
- 79,728,156 words (1985-1993)
- “The BNC suggests that in the 1990’s ….”

| | |
|---|---|
| 2010 | 2% |
| 2011 | 3% |
| 2012 | 5% |
| 2013 | 3% |
| 2014 | 22% |
| 2015 | 21% |
| 2016 | 19% |
| 2017 | 5% |
| 2018 | 2% |
| 2019 | 2% |
| 2020 | 1% |

Spoken
BNC2014

BNC2014
Baby +

Written
BNC2014

BNC 2014

for
god
thank
much
goodness
you

# Current British English

Vaclav Brezina (Lancaster University)

1994 2014

1994 2014

BRITISH NATIONAL CORPUS

1) Overall much more informal

2) Effect of elanguage

3) The case of declining modals

BNC BRITISH NATIONAL CORPUS 2014

# BNC214: AcaHumRa219

Faith As Extended Knowledge

You don't know that p unless it's on account of your cognitive abilities that you believe truly that p . Virtue epistemologists think there's some such ability constraint on knowledge. This looks to be in considerable tension, though, with putative faith-based knowledge. For at least on a popular Christian conception, when you believe something truly on the basis of faith this isn't because of anything you're naturally competent to do. Rather, faith-based beliefs are entirely a product of divine agency. Appearances to the contrary, I argue in this article that there's no deep tension between faith-based knowledge and virtue epistemology.

# BNC214: AcaHumRa219

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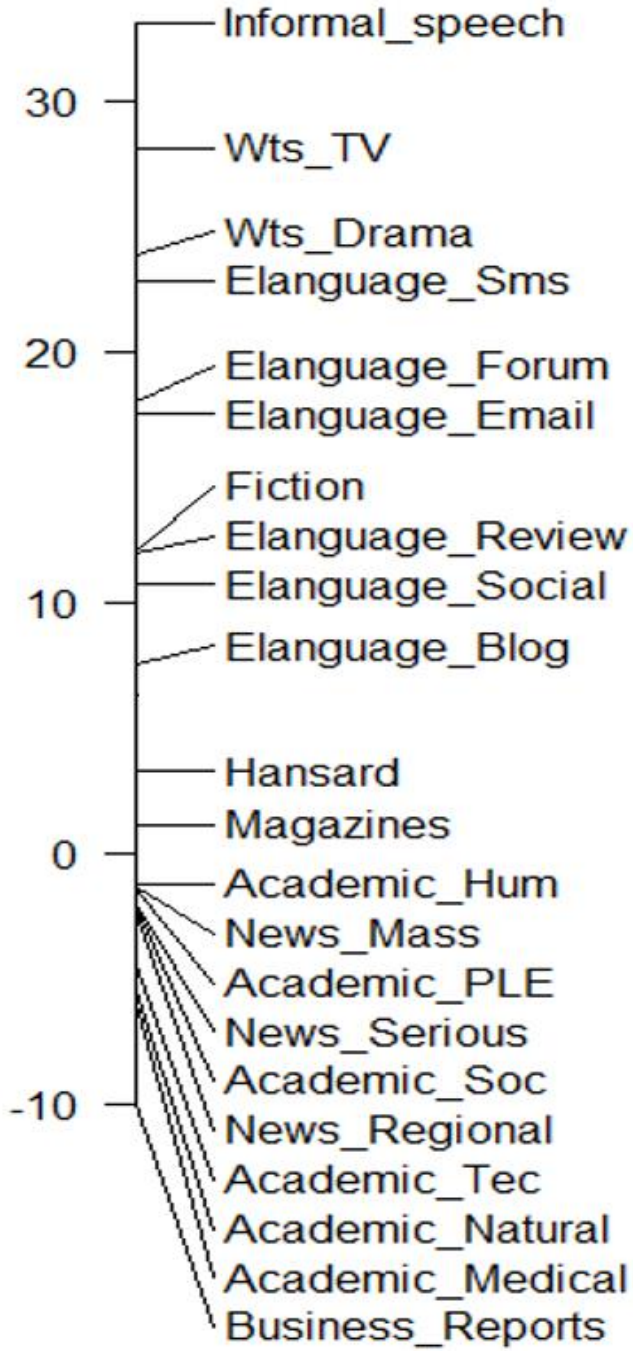
+ 28%

# Involved

Contractions, pronouns, private verbs, emphatics…

# Informational

Long words, nouns



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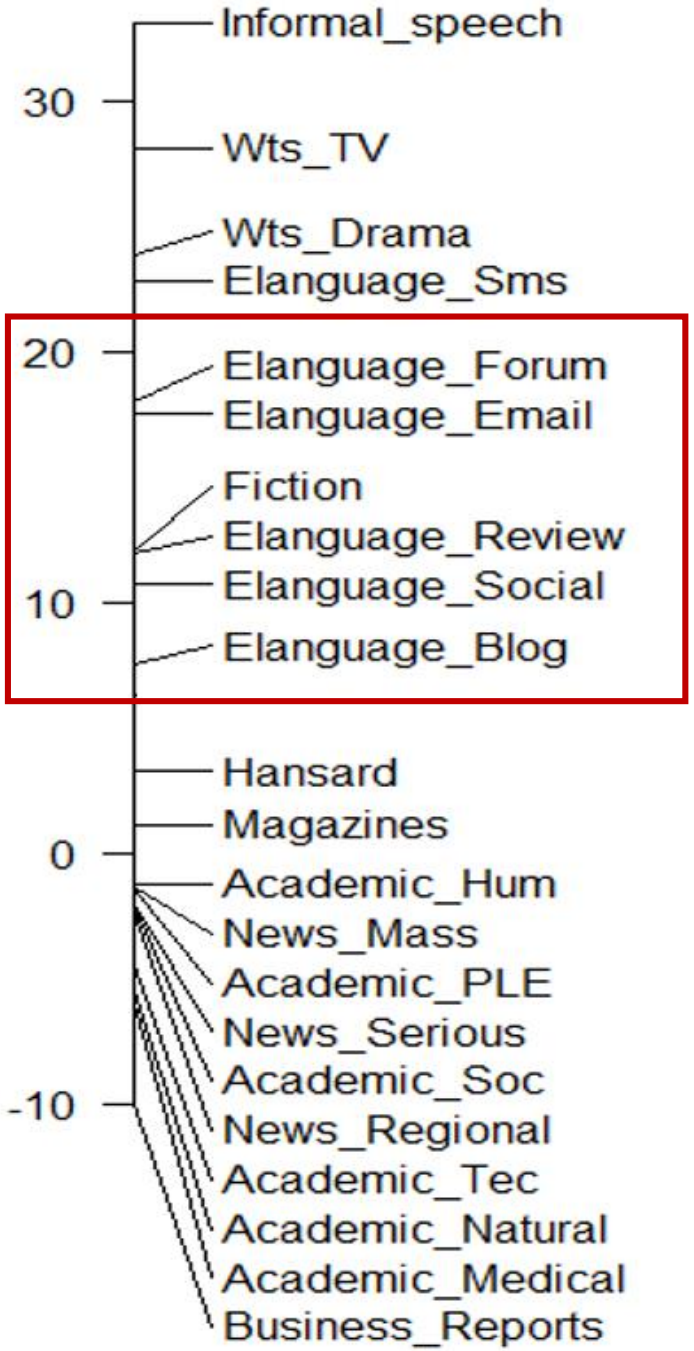


# Elanguage

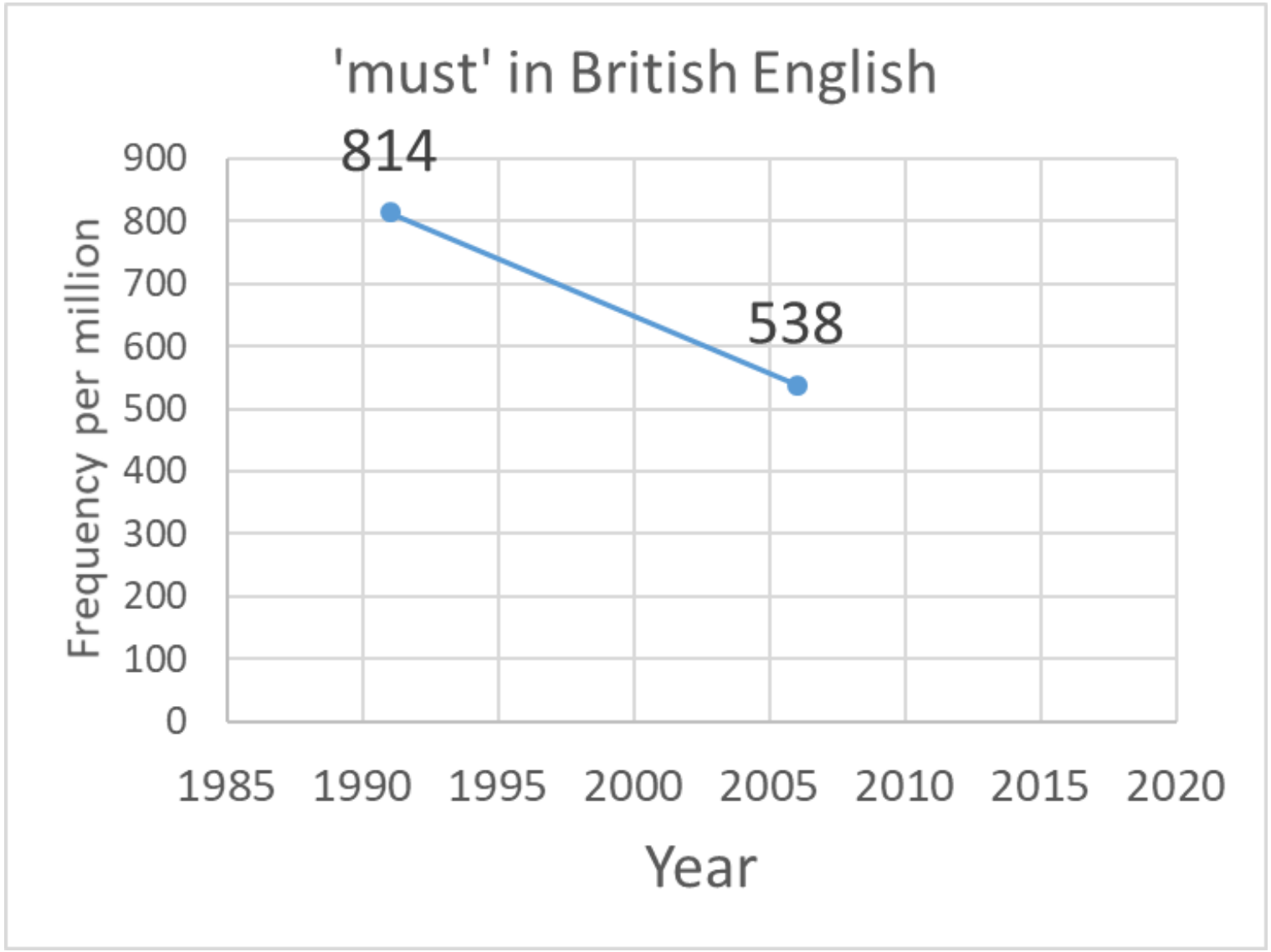
**Popular words in elanguage in BNC2014:** Alexa, App, Awesome, Blog, Congrats, Email, Fab, Facebook, Fitbit, Im, Instagram, ipad, iphone, Ive, Lol, Omg, Tbh, Tweet, Twitter and Website

BRITISH NATIONAL CORPUS

BNC BRITISH NATIONAL CORPUS 2014

Software → App

# Modals on decline (Brown-family: 1M)



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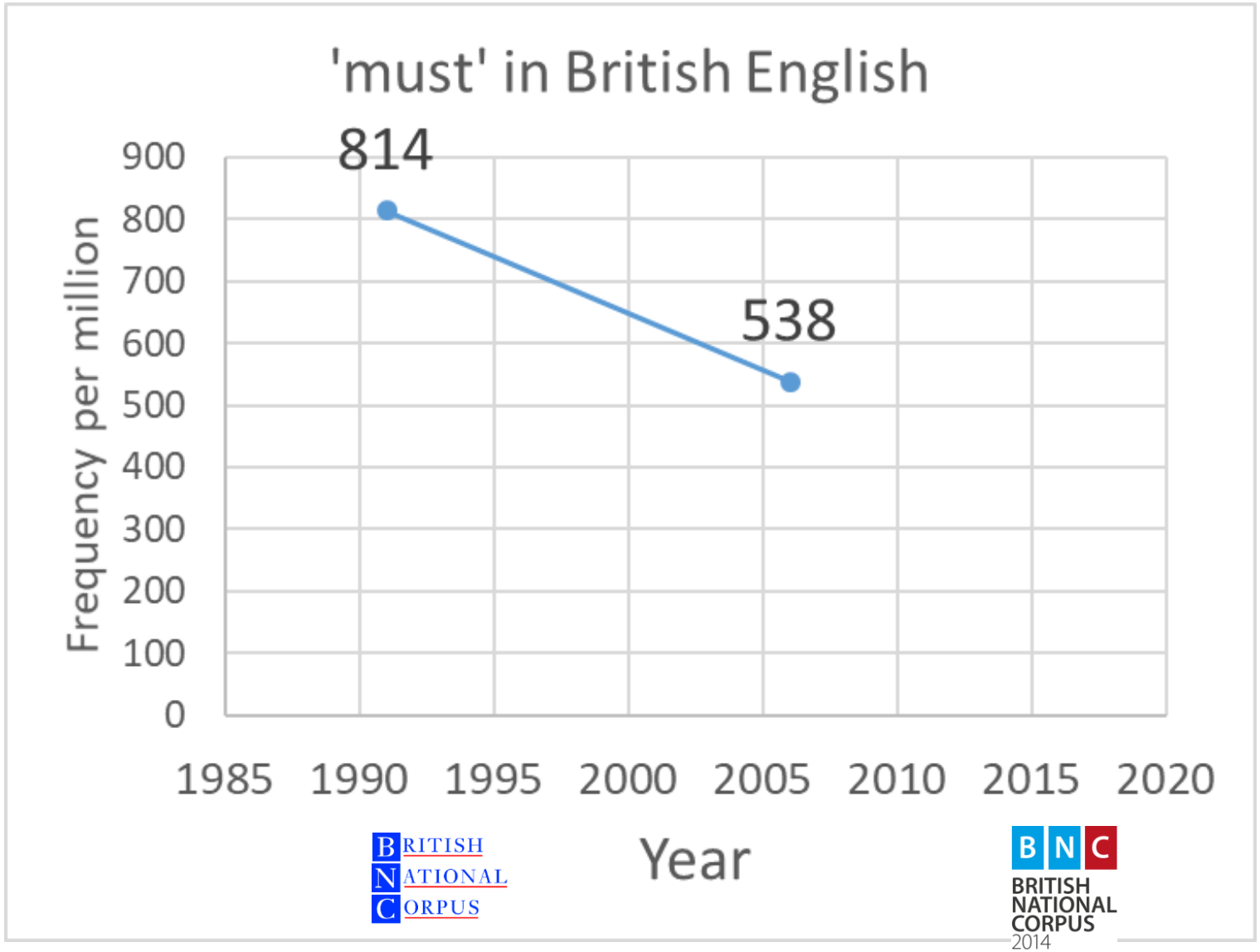

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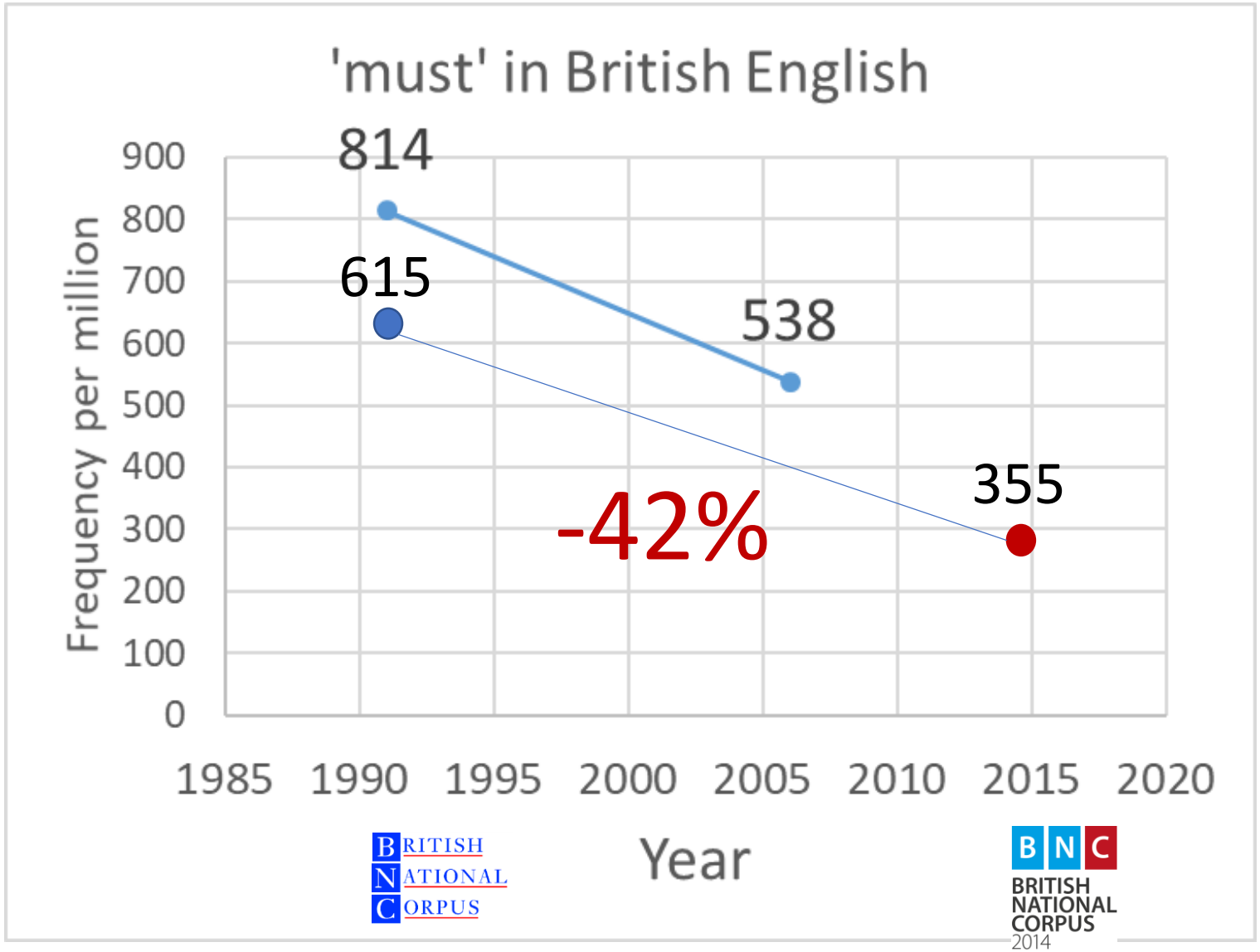

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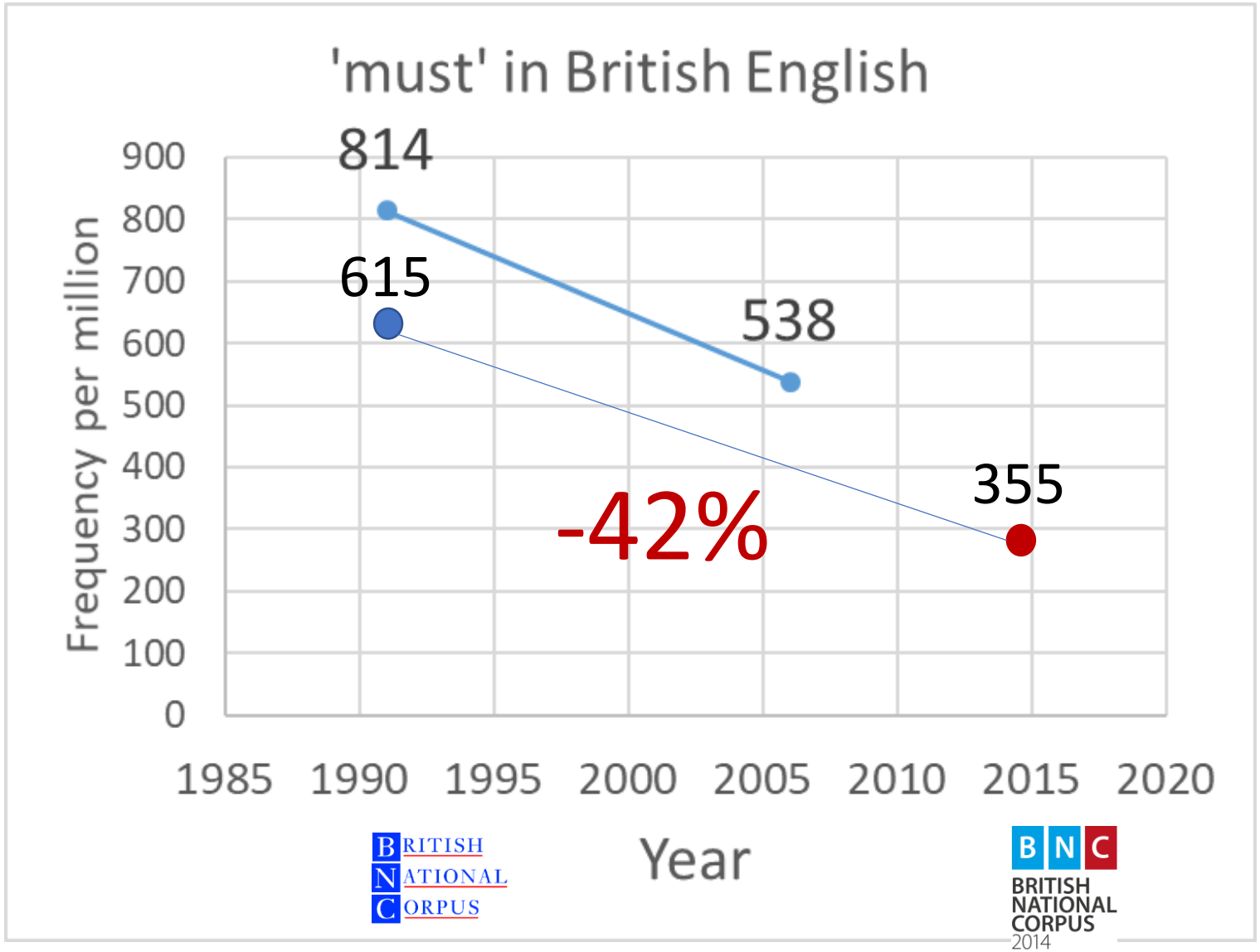


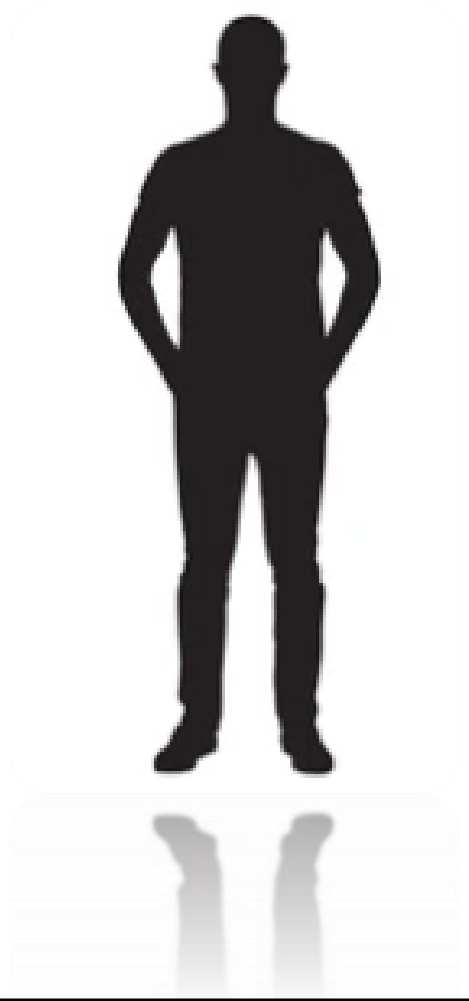

BRITISH NATIONAL CORPUS

BNC BRITISH NATIONAL CORPUS 2014

*May* -40%

*Shall* -60%

# Language development



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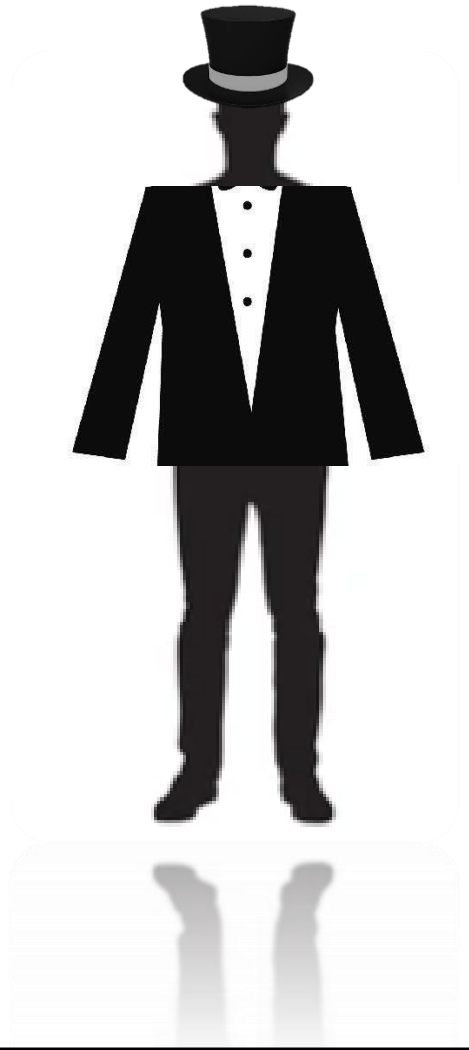

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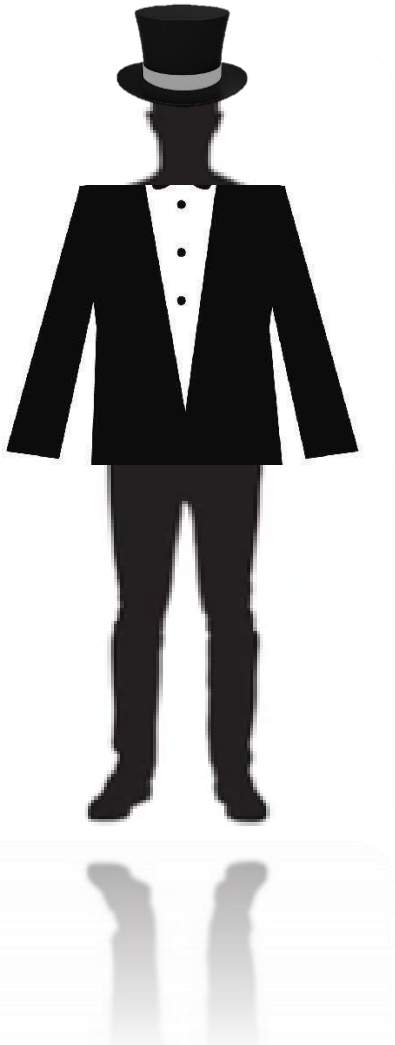

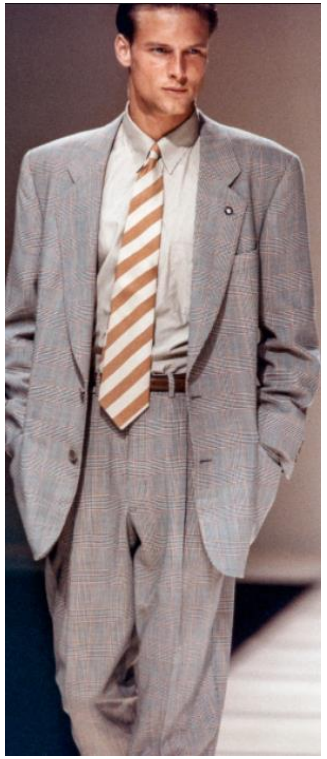

BRITISH
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CORPUS

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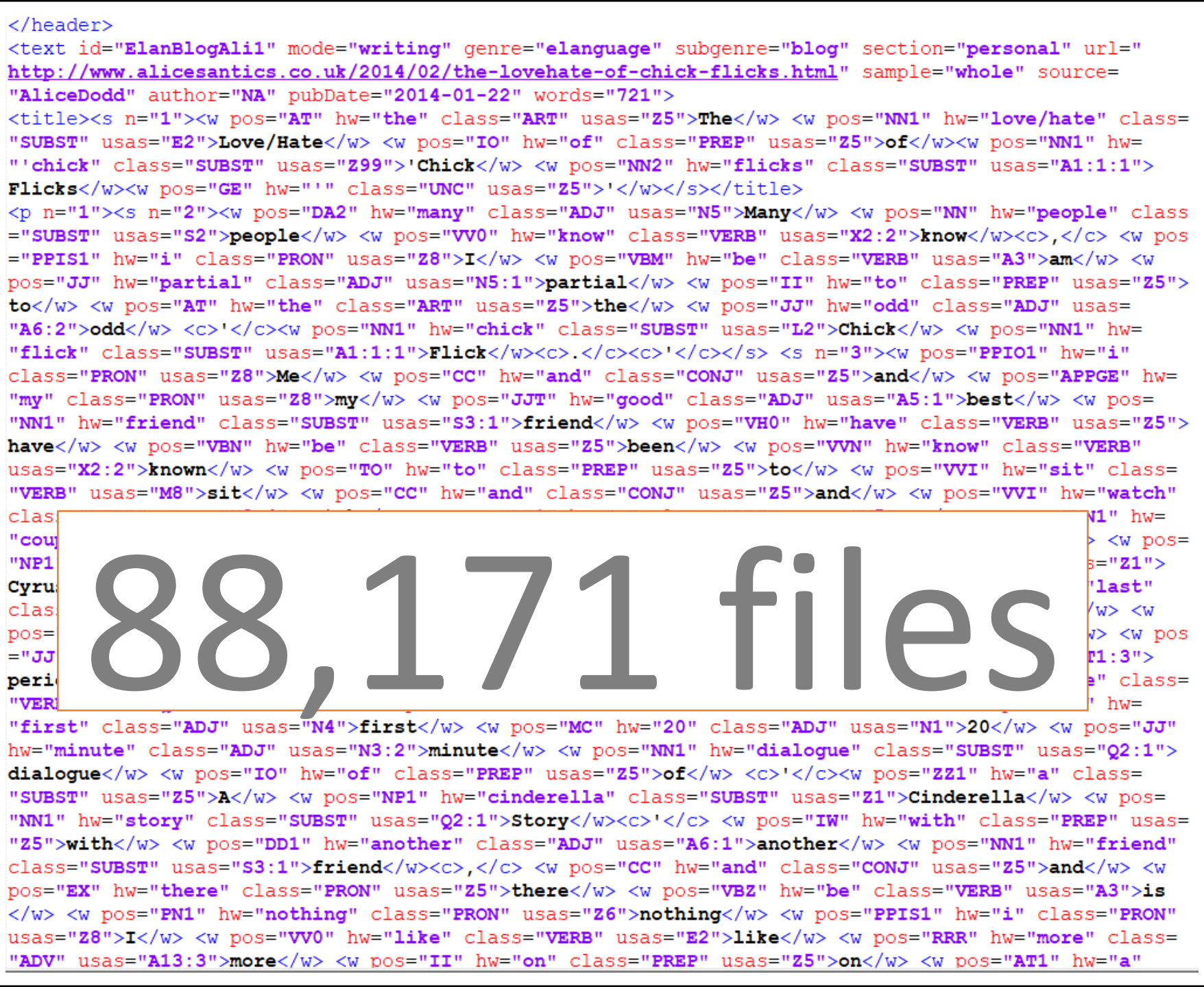
2014

# Exploring the BNC2014 using #LancsBox X

Vaclav Brezina & William Platt (Lancaster University)



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"'chick" class="SUBST" usas="Z99">'Chick</w> <w pos="NN2" hw="flicks" class="SUBST" usas="A1:1:1">
Flicks</w><w pos="GE" hw="'" class="UNC" usas="Z5">'</w></s></title>
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class="SUBST" usas="S3:1">friend</w><c>,</c> <w pos="CC" hw="and" class="CONJ" usas="Z5">and</w> <w
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usas="Z8">I</w> <w pos="VV0" hw="like" class="VERB" usas="E2">like</w> <w pos="RRR" hw="more" class=
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BNC
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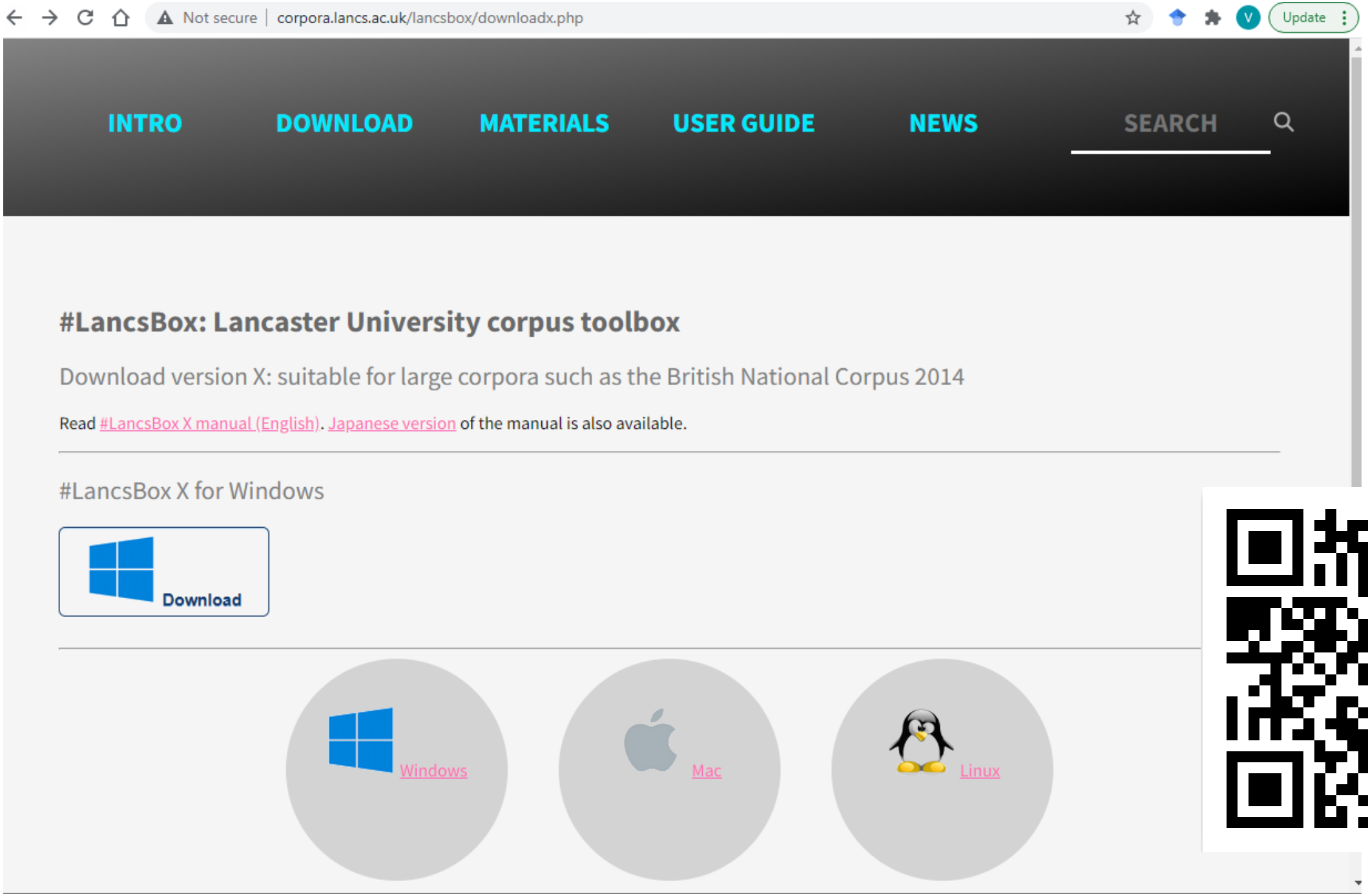
CORPUS
2014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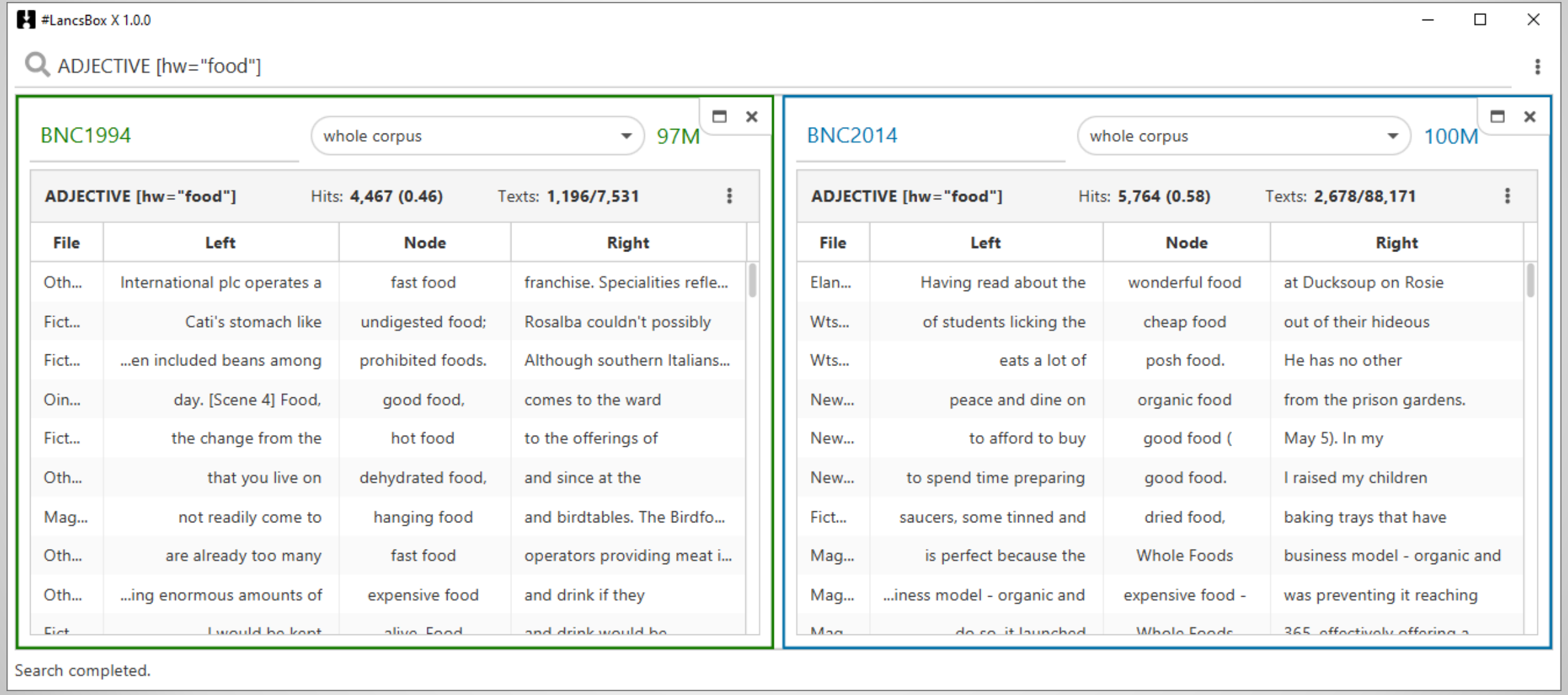
Update
INTRO
DOWNLOAD
MATERIALS
USER GUIDE
NEWS
SEARCH
#LancsBox: Lancaster University corpus toolbox
Download version X: suitable for large corpora such as the British National Corpus 2014
Read #LancsBox X manual (English). Japanese version of the manual is also available.
#LancsBox X for Windows
Download
Windows
Mac
Linux

INTRODUCING

# #LancsBox X



SMARTER.
SLEEKER.
FASTER.

> **SMARTER.**
**SLEEKER.**
**FASTER.**

# X IS FOR XML

<u gender="male"/>

<pause/> within <u gender="male"/>

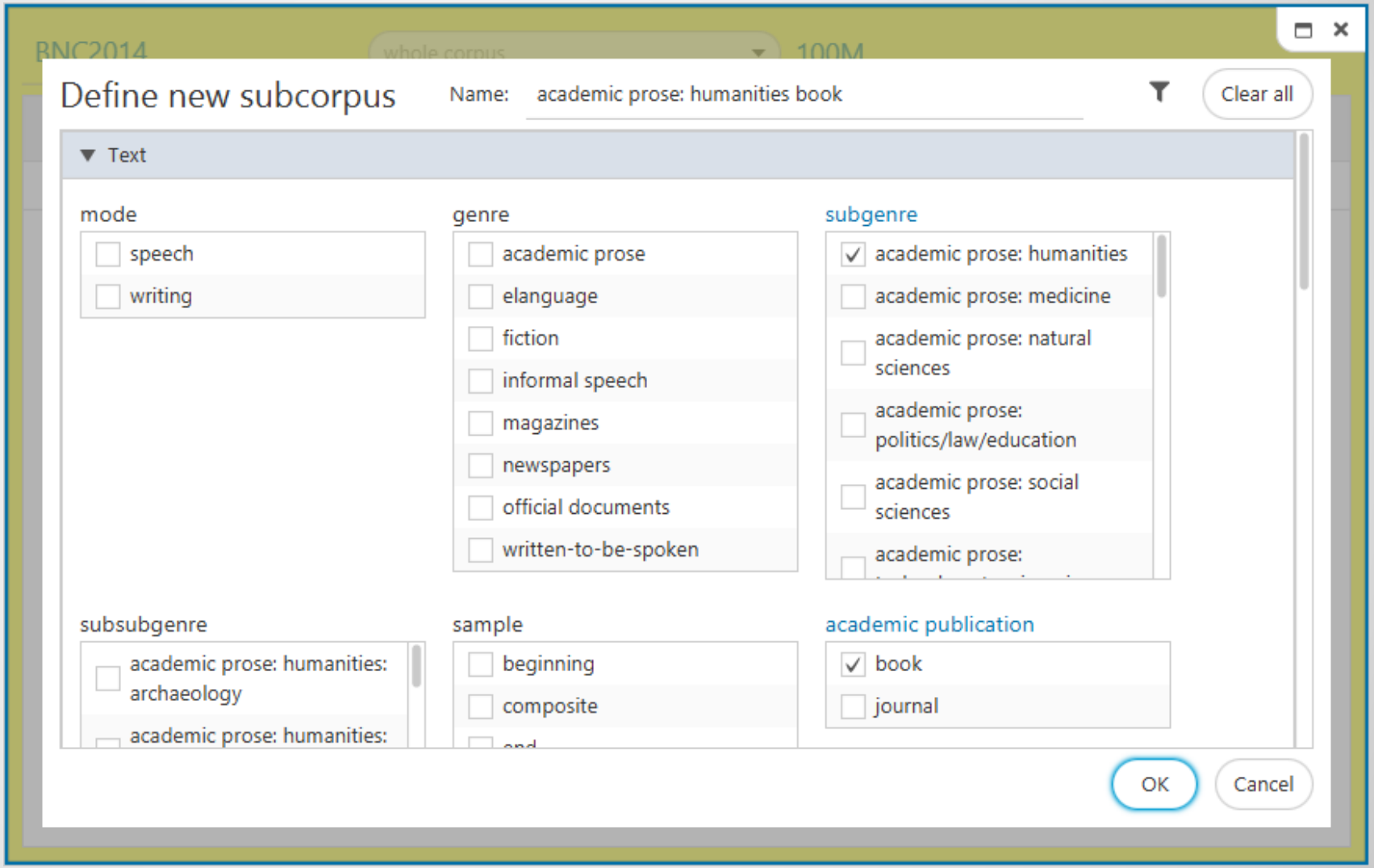
by within PREPOSITIONAL_PHRASE

<s/> within yes

(<s/> within yes) within <u gender="male"/>

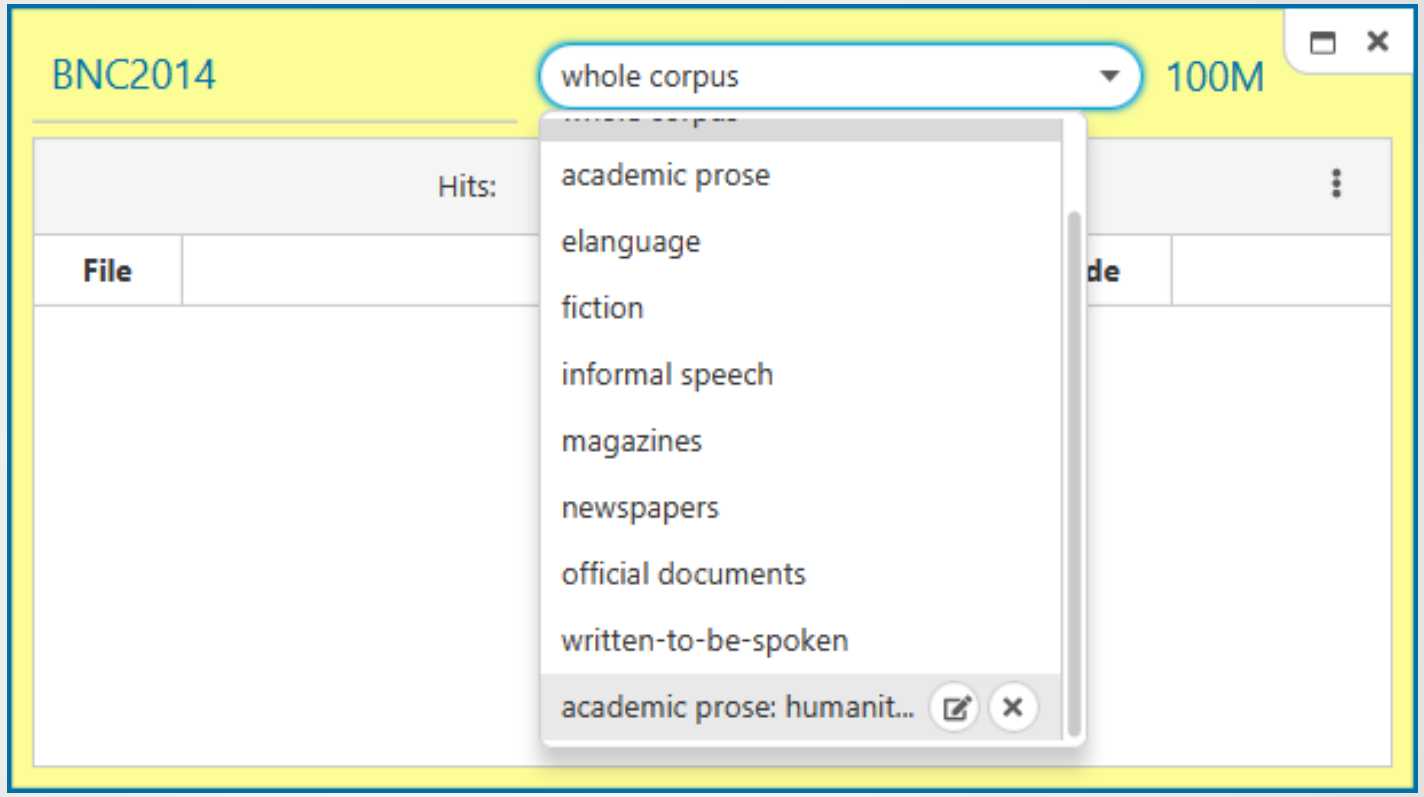
> **SMARTER.**
**SLEEKER.**
**FASTER.**

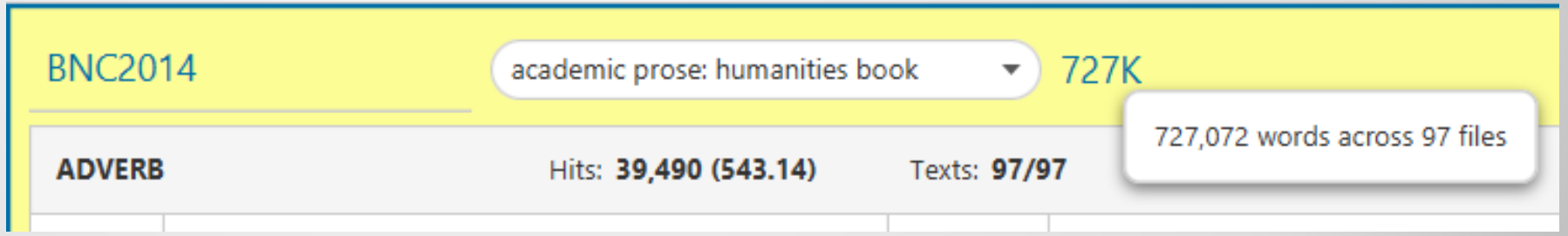
# SUBCORPORA



> **SMARTER.**
**SLEEKER.**
**FASTER.**

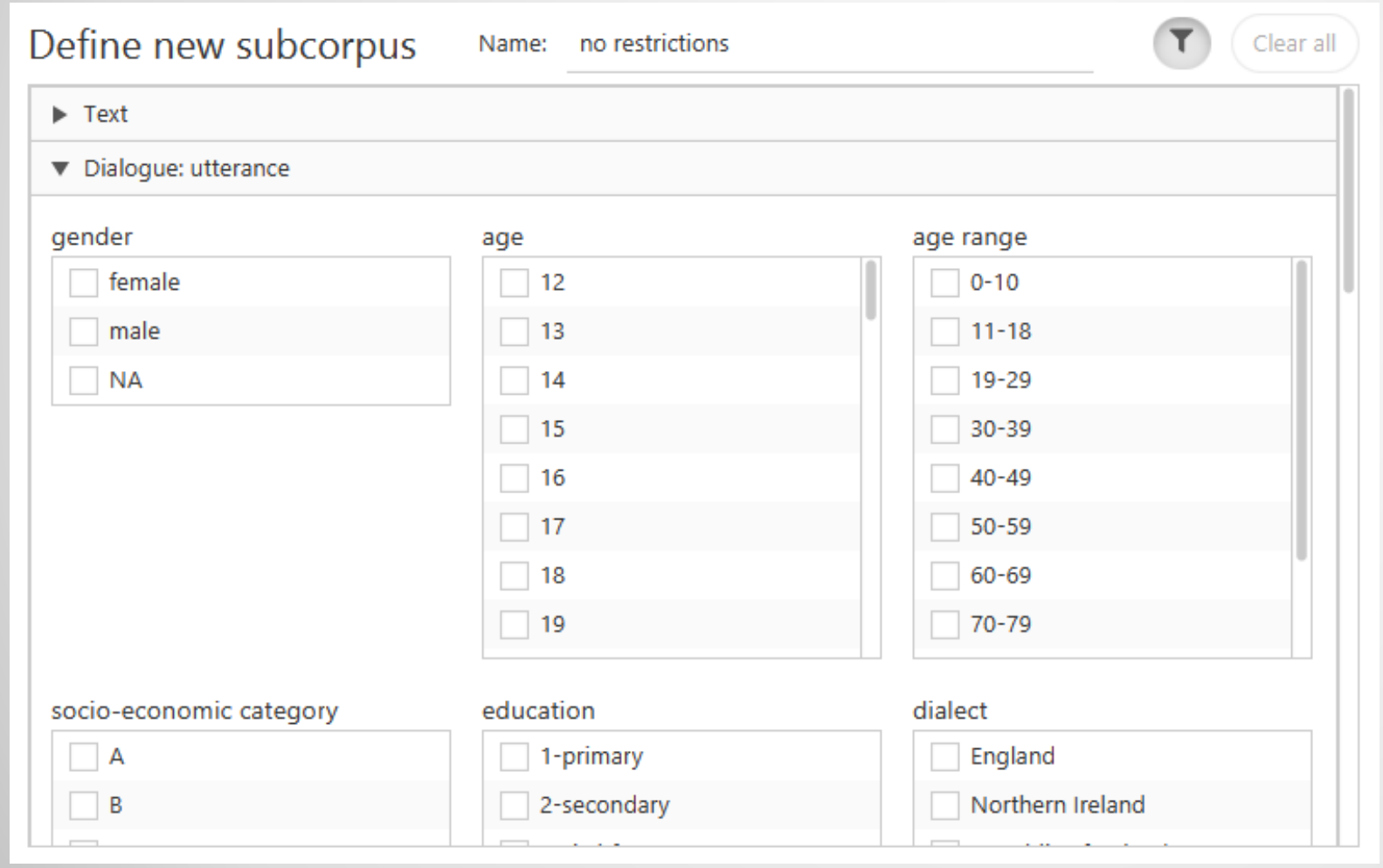
# SUBCORPORA

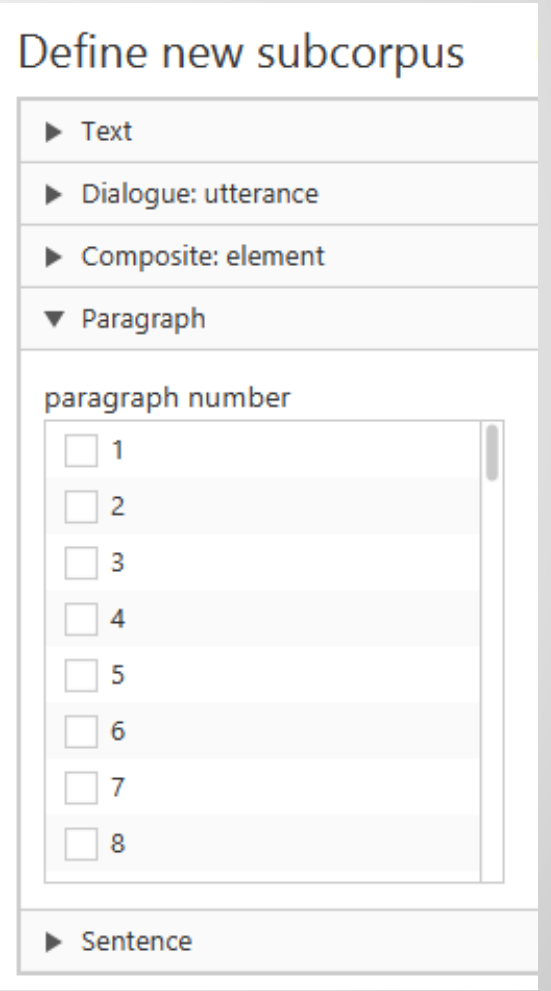


> SMARTER.
SLEEKER.
FASTER.

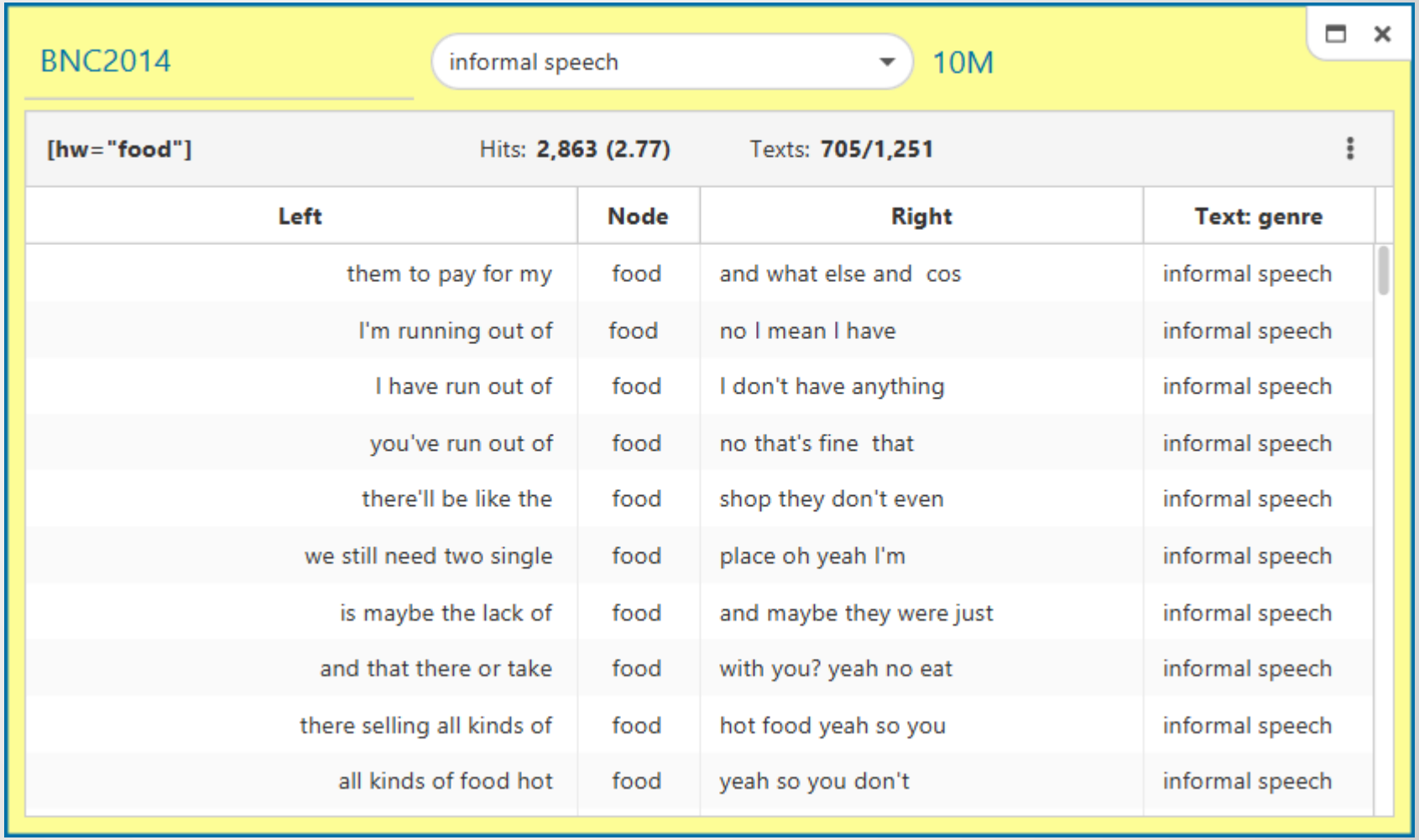
# SUBCORPORA



> SMARTER.
SLEEKER.
FASTER.

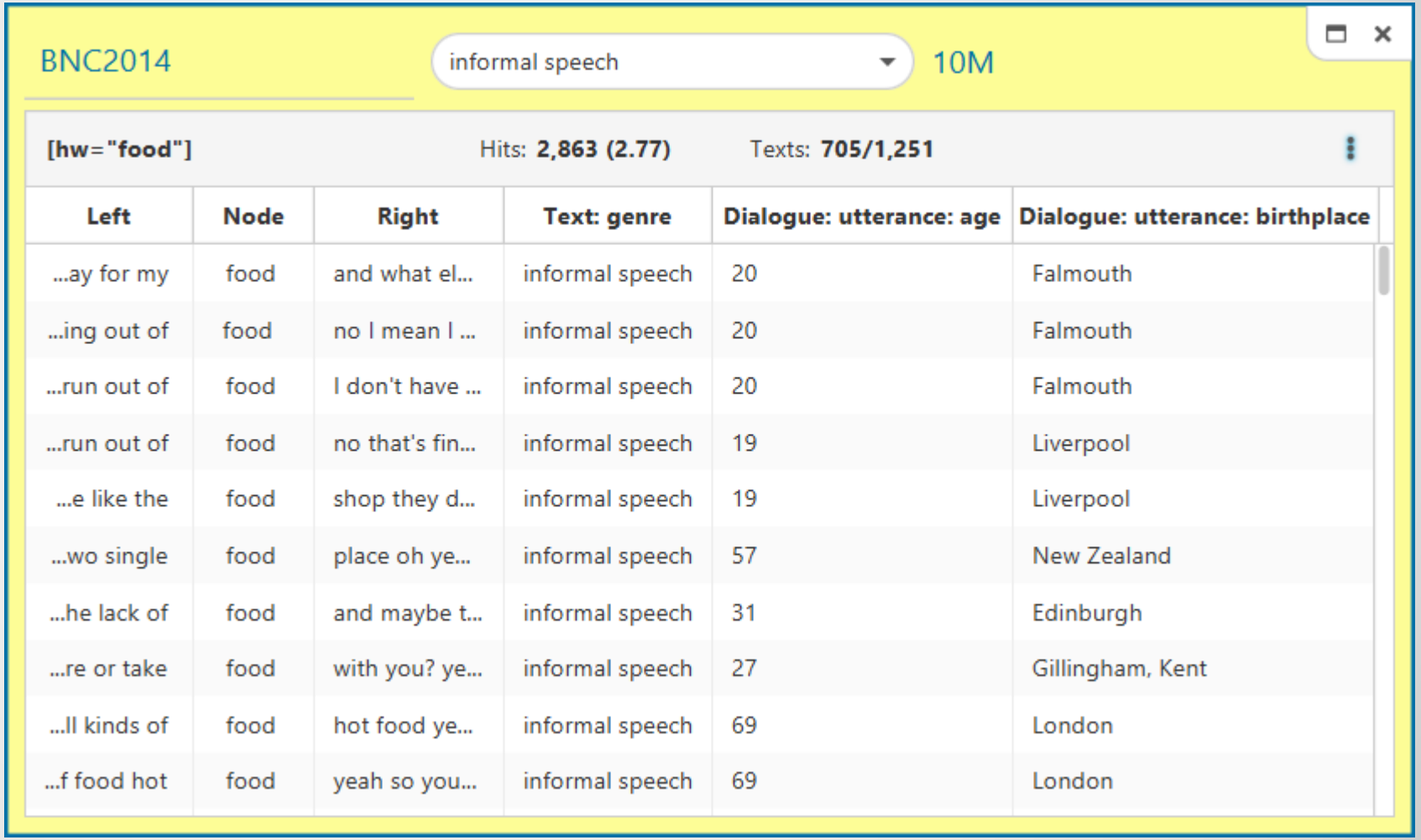
# Cool Columns




| Left | Node | Right | Text: genre |
|---|---|---|---|
| them to pay for my | food | and what else and cos | informal speech |
| I'm running out of | food | no I mean I have | informal speech |
| I have run out of | food | I don't have anything | informal speech |
| you've run out of | food | no that's fine that | informal speech |
| there'll be like the | food | shop they don't even | informal speech |
| we still need two single | food | place oh yeah I'm | informal speech |
| is maybe the lack of | food | and maybe they were just | informal speech |
| and that there or take | food | with you? yeah no eat | informal speech |
| there selling all kinds of | food | hot food yeah so you | informal speech |
| all kinds of food hot | food | yeah so you don't | informal speech |

> SMARTER.
SLEEKER.
FASTER.

# Cool Columns




| Left | Node | Right | Text: genre | Dialogue: utterance: age | Dialogue: utterance: birthplace |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ...ay for my | food | and what el... | informal speech | 20 | Falmouth |
| ...ing out of | food | no I mean I ... | informal speech | 20 | Falmouth |
| ...run out of | food | I don't have ... | informal speech | 20 | Falmouth |
| ...run out of | food | no that's fin... | informal speech | 19 | Liverpool |
| ...e like the | food | shop they d... | informal speech | 19 | Liverpool |
| ...wo single | food | place oh ye... | informal speech | 57 | New Zealand |
| ...he lack of | food | and maybe t... | informal speech | 31 | Edinburgh |
| ...re or take | food | with you? ye... | informal speech | 27 | Gillingham, Kent |
| ...ll kinds of | food | hot food ye... | informal speech | 69 | London |
| ...f food hot | food | yeah so you... | informal speech | 69 | London |

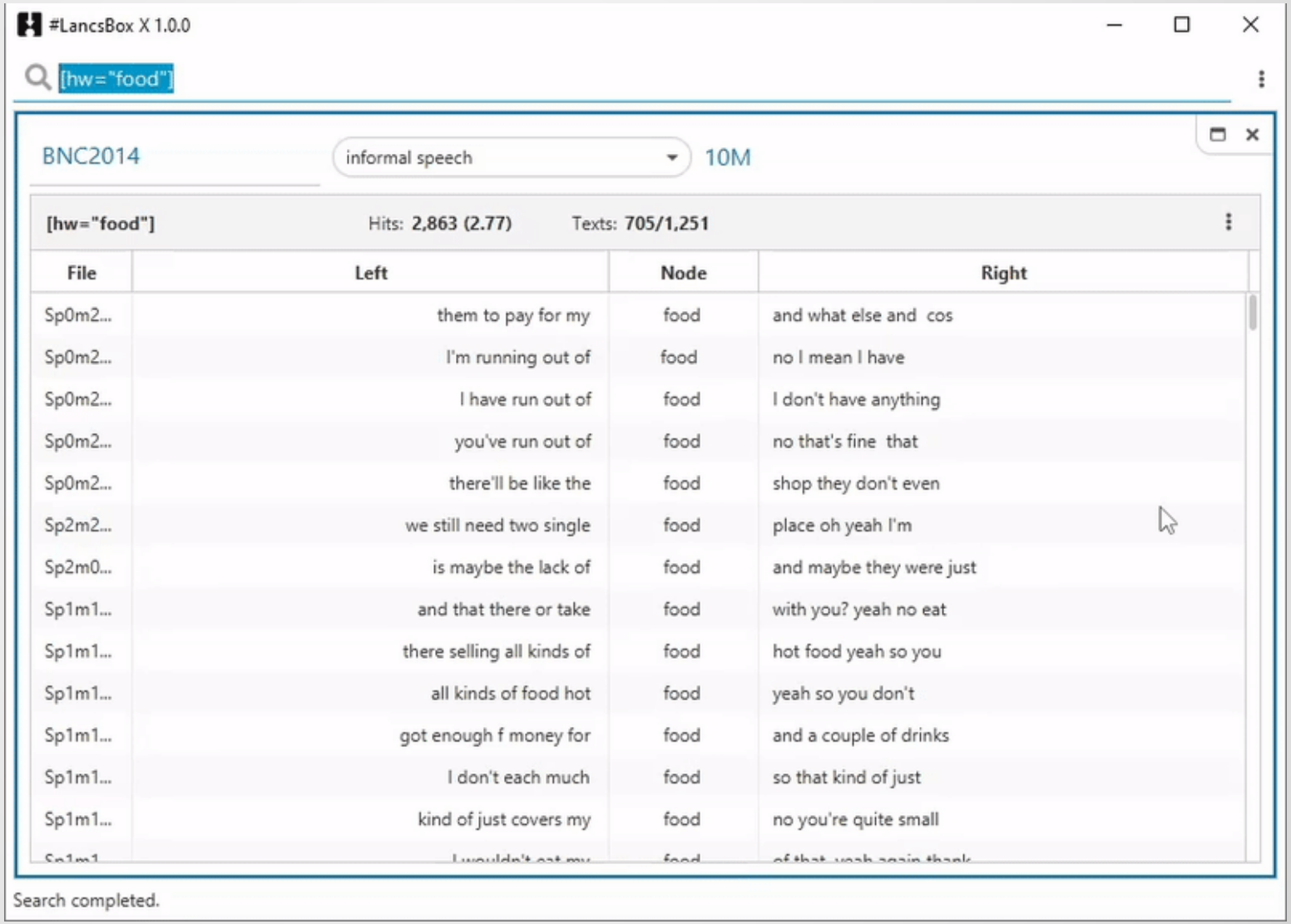
SMARTER.

> SLEEKER.

FASTER.

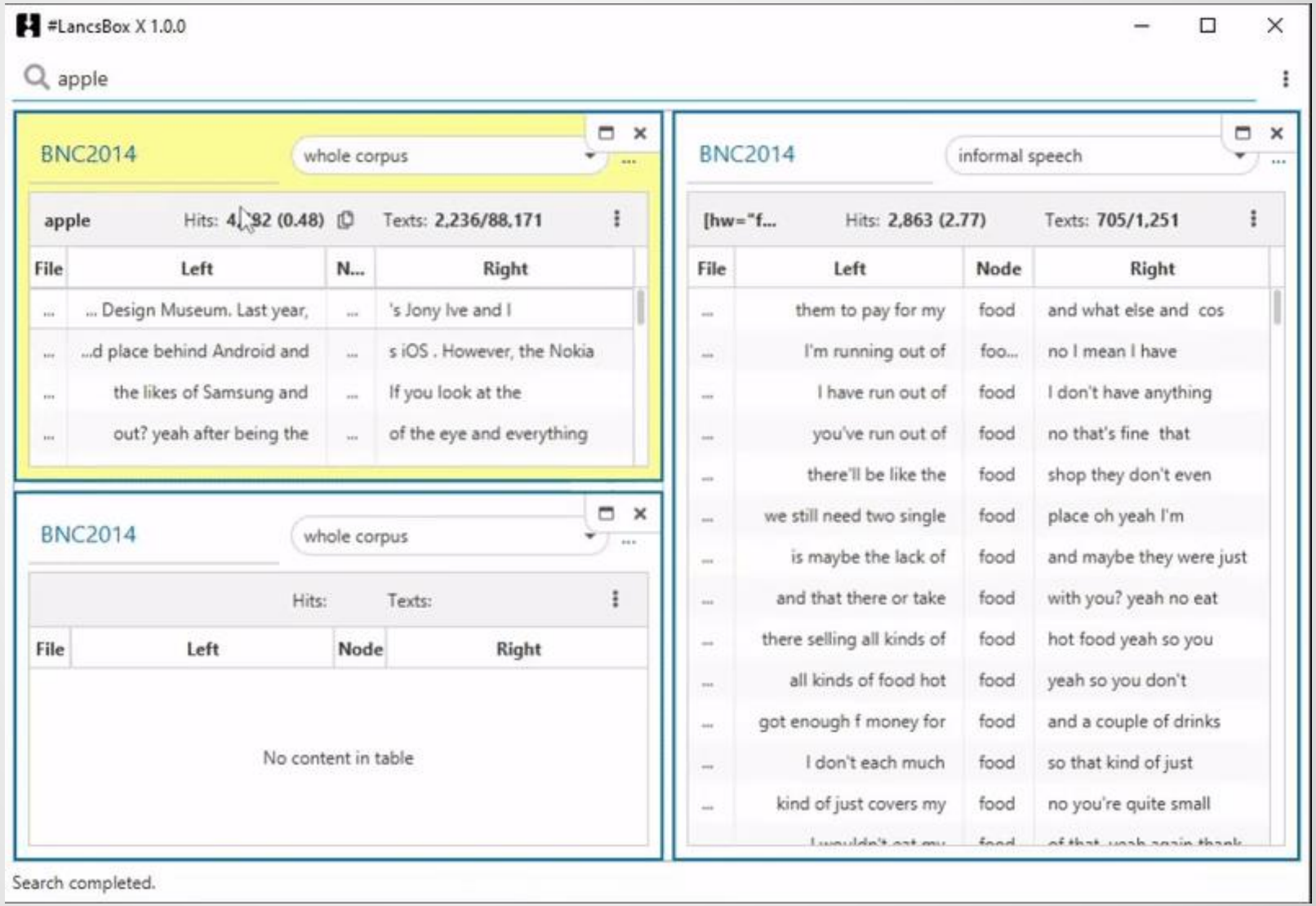
SMARTER.
> SLEEKER.
FASTER.

# SIDE-BY-SIDE TOOLS



SMARTER.
> SLEEKER.
FASTER.

# REARRANGE AND RESIZE



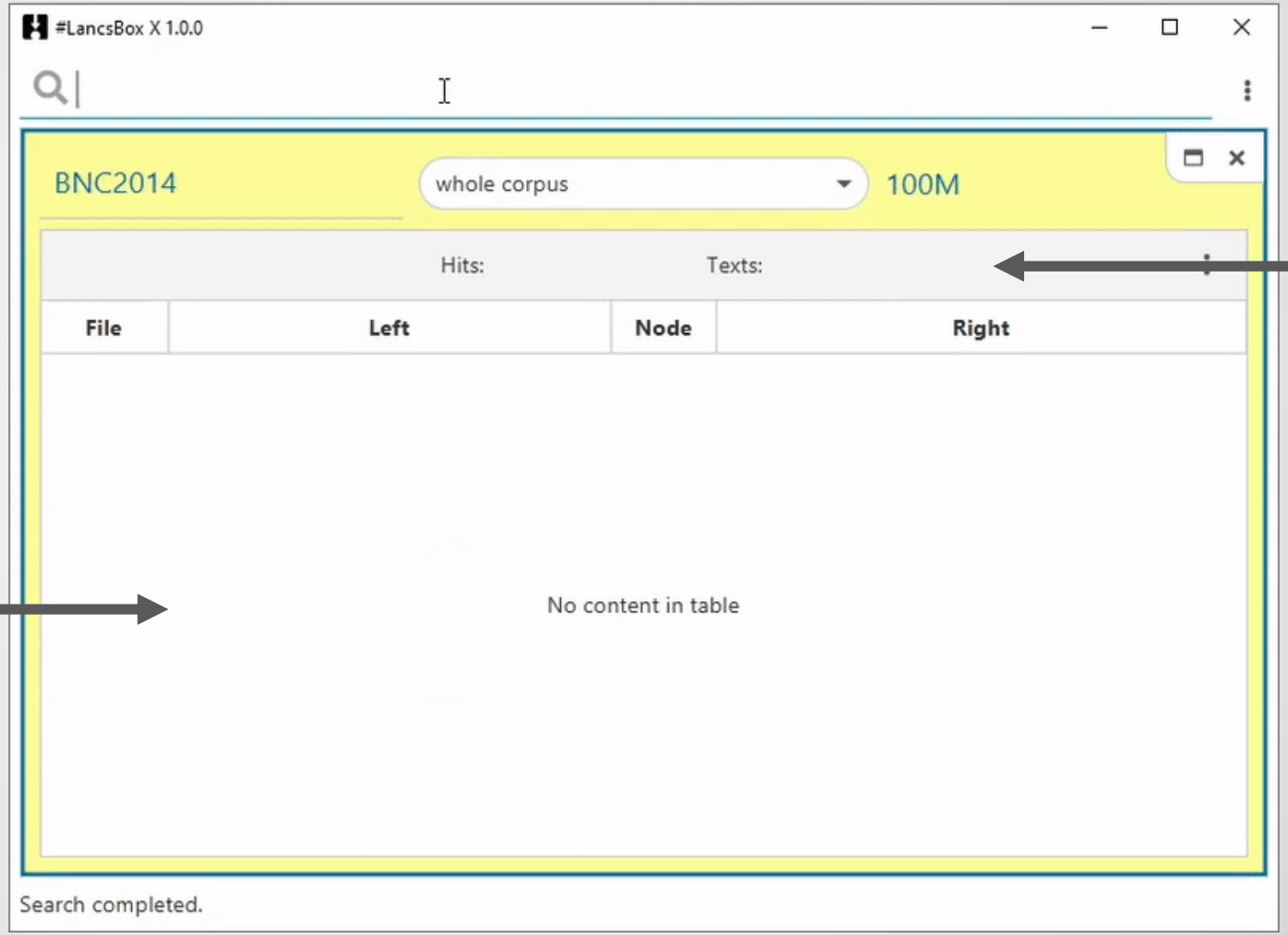
SMARTER.
SLEEKER.
> FASTER.

**SMARTER.**
**SLEEKER.**
**> FASTER.**

# FASTER RESULTS

No corpus loading

Real-time updates




Quick stats

SMARTER.
SLEEKER.
> FASTER.

# BIGGER CORPORA

Search times on the BNC2014:

| Word (freq. per 10K) | Time | |
|---|---|---|
| | Statistics | Full concordance |
| contextual (0.07) | < 1 sec | 1 sec |
| food (2.13) | 1 sec | 12 sec |
| be (54.02) | 1 sec | 1 min 30 sec |

Full times are most dependent on number of file matches, not whole corpus size, so even larger corpora are still fast for infrequent searches.

# Download

http://corpora.lancs.ac.uk/lancsbox/downloadx.php

SMARTER. SLEEKER. FASTER.

# “One more thing…”

BRITISH
NATIONAL
CORPUS