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Quantitative Analysis of However

There are many grammatical rules that exist for English. There are some that are useful, like having a subject and a verb that agree or using commas to aid in a reading rhythm. However, there are less useful ones, which are vague, petty, or just plain comical. For example, avoiding the passive voice or the usage of the word “however”. The problem with “however”, however, is that it can be used in many reasonable ways to suit the author’s needs. So, does “however” really need to be used however a style guide suggests, or can it be used however the author deems fit. In the past few sentences, the suggestions of the style guide being scrutinized are being ignored. This is to prove a point that “however” can be used however petty the situation and it will still read as not too abnormal. Which brings the discussion over to the styling of some small novelists that may or may not be recognizable.

The goal of this observation is to catch English authors using “however” and not using it a sole interjection. This lead to a program being written that counts all instances of “however” and instances of “However” or “however” after a comma or semicolon. However, this code only worked on single files, due to a bug that caused incorrect counts and is most likely very simple to fix and easy to spot, but c’est la vie. As each file was, manually, sent through the program for finding the desired counts, some interesting things became apparent. Jane Austen used “however” the most, but she had relatively similar quantities of “properly” used “however”s, as compared to the other authors in the data set. Mark Twain rarely used “however”, however, he seldom used it “correctly”. As the chart shows, all of the authors used “however” at least once, however, none of them used it “properly” in every instance of the word. Furthermore, the word seems to have only been used in the “desired” manner in only the minority of circumstances, based on the style guide’s specifications. Given that the percentages never reached above 25% in individual instances and that all of the authors used “however” in the “improper”

way consistently, it can be safe to assume that this is a dead rule or just a zombie rule that is situational in enforcement.

Overall, this seems to be a situation where the authors either did not care about the style concept or that it has only recently gained any semblance of traction. However, it is a rather limiting idea and reduces the meanings of a sentence, which is the style guide's reasoning for this. So, it seems that this rule is at best a suggestion for mindfulness that is simply a non-concern or it is a dead rule that has not had a foothold in literature, unlike the restrictive boycott on the passive voice. Thus, "however" is used "improperly" and it does not seem to detract from an author's usage of it.

#	Name of Work and Author	However "Proper" Usage	However Usage	HPU/HU %
1	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i> by Jane Austen	9	127	7.09%
2	<i>Great Expectations</i> by Charles Dickens	7	50	14%
3	<i>Emma</i> by Jane Austen	2	109	1.83%
4	<i>Nostromo: A Tale of Seaboard</i> by Joseph Conrad	5	37	13.5%
5	<i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> by Harriet Beecher Stowe	4	24	16.66...7%
6	<i>The War of the Worlds</i> by H. G. Wells	1	12	8.33...3%
7	<i>Dracula</i> by Bram Stoker	3	96	3.125%
8	<i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</i> by Mark Twain	0	15	0%
9	<i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> by Mark Twain	0	1	0%
10	<i>Frankenstein</i> by Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley	7	32	21.875%
11	<i>A Connecticut in King Arthur's Court</i> by Mark Twain	2	30	6.666...7%

Citations:

<https://web.sonoma.edu/users/f/farahman/subpages/utilities/however.pdf>

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