

An Stylistic Analysis of The Great Gatsby through the Application of Leech and Short's Four Categorization Framework

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Abstract: “The Great Gatsby”, F. Scott Fitzgerald's masterpiece, known as “The Great American Novel”, exquisitely embodies the essence of the American myth and the alluring Dream of the Jazz Age. Fitzgerald masterfully portrays the unquenchable thirst for wealth and success, while simultaneously unraveling the novel's core theme—the disillusionment of the American Dream. This magnificent literary firmly establishes Fitzgerald as a preeminent figure in American literature. The present study endeavors to delve into the literary excellence of The Great Gatsby by adopting Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short's four-fold linguistic categories: lexical choices, grammatical patterns, rhetorical devices, and cohesion and context. On one hand, this analysis aims to provide objective evidence of the story's artistic merit, shedding light on Fitzgerald's poetic sensibility and stylistic nuances. On the other hand, it seeks to empower readers with a deeper understanding and appreciation of the novel's thematic significance and aesthetic value.

1. Introduction

The Great Gatsby is indeed a pinnacle of American fiction that narrates the profound journey of a young, impoverished man striving for success. Fitzgerald's depiction of this main character goes beyond just one person, capturing the shared story of America as a whole. Gatsby's dream, fundamentally, is the American Dream, and his triumphs and setbacks mirror those of the nation as a whole. The central theme revolves around the corruption of this dream during 1920s, where the allure of material wealth overshadowed moral values, leading many to believe it could bring them happiness and serve as a replacement for morality.^[1]

In the Chapter nine of novel, the main character James Gatsby has been dreaming of getting the wealth in order to certify his success. At seventeen, he begins to come true his dream. Firstly, he worked in a military camp near Louisville, Kentucky, where his officer's uniform gives him the chance to the world of Daisy Fay. In the novel of Fitzgerald, Daisy Fay symbolizes the Gatsby dream.^[2] Gatsby make all his efforts to pursue his “golden girl”. However, the so-called “golden girl” destroys his dream and finally leads to the death of Gatsby. Gatsby are tainted by disgusting materialism and corruption.

In Chapter Nine of the novel, the protagonist, James Gatsby, has always dreamed of amassing wealth as a means to validate his success. At the age of 17, he set out to make that dream a reality.

Initially, he served in a military camp near Louisville, Kentucky, where his officer's uniform let him into the world of Daisy Fay. In Fitzgerald's literary work, Daisy Fay represents the core of Gatsby's deepest desires and aspirations. Gatsby exerts every effort in his relentless pursuit of this "golden girl." However, this so-called "golden girl" ultimately shatters his dreams and tragically culminates in Gatsby's demise. Gatsby's journey is marred by the taint of disgusting materialism and corruption.

The author intends to employ the four categories proposed by Leech and Michael as a framework to analyze the stylistic features of *The Great Gatsby*, thereby revealing the distinctive writing style of F. Scott Fitzgerald. This analytical approach, in the long term, has the potential to significantly enhance readers' comprehension and appreciation of Fitzgerald's literary works.

2. Stylistic Features of Fitzgerald's *The great Gatsby*

Leech and Short identify four categories: lexical categories, grammatical categories, figures of speech, and cohesion and context.^[3] They contend that by categorizing these elements, they provide a systematic foundation for analyzing stylistic aspects within a particular genre. Consequently, the author intends to utilize this model as a framework to unravel the stylistic characteristics of *The Great Gatsby*, thereby offering insights into the masterpiece's style and F. Scott Fitzgerald's unique writing style.

2.1. Lexical Categories

One of the fundamental reasons underpinning the enduring status of *The Great Gatsby* as an American classic lies in Fitzgerald's masterful employment of figurative language. From a lexical perspective, Fitzgerald's frequent utilization of adjectives imparts a stylistic prominence that significantly enriches the textual landscape. An abundant of adjectives tends to evoke a profusion of vivid imagery, fostering an illusion whereby readers feel as if they are witnessing the events unfold through Gatsby's own eyes. In essence, Fitzgerald's use of adjectives fosters empathy in readers towards Gatsby, enabling them to emotionally resonate with his experiences. At the same time, it creates a romantic atmosphere and brings the scenes to life, making it easier to understand and appreciate the novel's main ideas and themes.

Example 1:

Her face was sad and lovely with bright things in it, bright eyes and a bright passionate mouth-but there was an excitement in her voices that men.....

The paragraph describing Daisy often employs contrasting adjectives like "sad" and "lovely," revealing her complex character. Fitzgerald's use of these adjectives shows that Daisy, though appearing sorrowful, possesses an undeniable charm. Gatsby views her beauty as his lifelong dream, making her the brightest in his heart. The author opens by stating Gatsby's dream reflects a broader American aspiration for material wealth, often at the cost of morality. Daisy thus symbolizes this dream, an ordinary woman who embodies the bright promise of American life for many. The word "bright" stands out a lot in that paragraph. It usually means something that shines or glows, even in the dark. And it fits the story's theme well because back then, people were really focused on getting rich and making money. Fitzgerald talks about Daisy's voice like singing, and Gatsby says it's like she's made of money. That shows how much they cared about wealth and how it shaped their world.

Example 2:

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us.

The adjective "green" modifying "light" not only refers to color but also symbolizes hope, dreams, and unfulfilled aspirations. In many cultures, green is associated with positive things like hope, growth, and health. Here, it emphasizes Gatsby's yearning for a better life and relentless pursuit of his ideal world, shaping his character and setting the emotional tone for the story.

Gatsby's car depiction also attracts people attention. In the novel, the car symbolizes the wealth and it is far more a material object. Gatsby's "gorgeous car" is described in details:

It was a rich cream color, bright with nickel, swollen here and there in its monstrous length with triumphant hat-boxes and supper-boxes and tool-boxes, and terraced with a labyrinth of wind-shields that mirrored a dozen suns.....

Upon reading the paragraph, a vivid image of Gatsby's car emerges, suggesting it's a model associated with luxury and affluence. Fitzgerald employs an array of adjectives to paint a striking picture of the car, fostering a lasting impression in readers' minds. He also exhibits a unique style by pairing adjectives with seemingly incompatible nouns, like "monstrous length," which hints at Gatsby's ostentatious display of wealth. The word "monstrous," typically pejorative, implies the absurdity of Americans' relentless pursuit of riches. Similarly, "triumphant hat-boxes" underscores Gatsby's pride in his possession, reflecting his social and financial success. Ironically, the car, a symbol of wealth, ultimately contributes to Gatsby's tragic demise.

2.2. Grammatical Features

2.2.1. Negatives

The use of negation in literature can be categorized into two primary forms: implied negation and direct negation.^[4] Both of these techniques often serve to convey irony and a sense of comedy. In Chapter 1, there are several times keeping the Gatsby offstage.

Examples:

S1. *Only Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book, was exempt from my reaction-Gatsby who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn.*

S2. *No-Gatsby turned out all right at the end, it is what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elation of men.*

S3. *It was Gatsby's mansion. Or rather, as I did not know Mr. Gatsby it was a mansion inhabited by a gentleman of that name.*

S4. *"You must know Gatsby."*

"Gatsby?" demanded Daisy, "What Gatsby?"

S5. *When I looked once more for Gatsby he had vanished, and I was alone again in the unquiet darkness.*

Among these sentences, the use of implied negation "unaffected scorn" in S1 here emphasizes the narrator's disapproval or contempt for the things Gatsby represents, such as wealth, and the shallowness of the "new money" lifestyle. Similarly, "foul dust" in S2 reinforces the irony and critique of the American Dream and its corrupting influence. The phrase "as I did not know Mr. Gatsby" in S3 creates a sense of distance between the narrator and Gatsby, highlighting the social and emotional barriers that separate them. It also foreshadows the narrator's eventual understanding of Gatsby's true nature. "What Gatsby?" is a direct question that negates the idea that Daisy is familiar with Gatsby. "unquiet darkness" makes you feel uneasy, different from how Gatsby was described as relaxed earlier. His disappearing so suddenly shows he's not always in control, unlike how he seemed like a steady part of the story. It adds to the mystery and worry about Gatsby, and hints at problems to come. It also shows how wealth, success, and the American Dream can be short-lived.

2.3. Figures of Speech

2.3.1. Symbolism

Harold Bloom, a well-known critic, once said, “Never has symbolism played a such a crucial part in the very foundation of a novel.” It really shows how powerful symbolism is in helping us understand the main ideas of a story.^[5] Fitzgerald’s use of symbolism is special because it lies in its seamless integration within the intricate plot and structural framework where every element contributes to the revelation of its underlying themes.

For example, “the green light” occurs several times throughout the novel. “Daisy’s dock” and “the green light” carry profound emotions and complex dreams in the novel. For Gatsby, it is not only a symbol of his love for Daisy but also a representation of his pursuit of a better life.^[6] However, as the story unfolds, the dream represented by this green light has actually been shattered, and Gatsby ultimately fails to grasp it. This enormous contrast between ideal and reality makes “Daisy’s dock” and its green light a memorable and profound symbol in the novel. It has meaning beyond the plot. The green light on the Buchanans’ dock across the bay symbolizes that Gatsby makes all efforts to win back Daisy’s heart. At the same time, his lover Daisy is the meaning of old money. Green light also reveals Gatsby’s hope and dreams for the future. Additionally, “The Valley of Ashes” symbolizes the moral and social decay caused by the unrestrained pursuit of wealth. In the novel, the rich indulge in their own pleasures, completely disregarding the well-being of others. This selfish behavior leads to the overall deterioration of society, and the Valley of Ashes is a visual manifestation of this decay. The most important symbols are the West and the East. They’re like two opposite things. The East means being bad or wrong, but the West still has good values and morals. Fitzgerald uses these differences to help tell the story’s main ideas and show how the final fight ends up.

2.3.2. Irony

Irony is a big part of Fitzgerald’s writing style in this novel. The title itself can make you think, like, “Is Gatsby really great? Why would he be called that?” It makes you want to find out if Fitzgerald really means it. But when you finish reading, you realize Gatsby isn’t really “great” in the usual sense. Instead, he’s more like a person with a lot of flaws, like pretending to have a British accent and being too friendly in an old-fashioned way. And his story doesn’t end well. Fitzgerald uses irony like this to grab readers’ attention and leave a strong impression.

In the whole novel, Nick uses an ironic voice to tell the whole story and his ironic stance is most prominent in his representation. Nick in the beginning of novel, describes Gatsby by saying “there was something gorgeous about him”. However, he admits that he is disappointed of Gatsby in the same paragraph that “Gatsby represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn.” That way of narrating also implied an ironic impression between Daisy and Gatsby:

She was the first “nice” girl he had ever known.

He knew that Daisy was extraordinary, but he did not realize just how extraordinary a “nice” girl could be

The word “nice” adds a quotation, and when Gatsby describes how gorgeous Daisy is, he has no idea. It reveals that description of the quality of Daisy is obscure, which forms an irony, especially Gatsby does not know whether Daisy is nice. It is evident that by employment of irony, the theme of novel can be better stated.-the American at that time overstates the material wealth, even they do not whether the dream of pursuing material wealth is their desire.

2.4. Cohesion and Context

“The whole novel is compactly put together, as much by repetition of images and symbols as by exposition and narrative.”

From the preceding discussion, it is known to us that the light is an emblem of Gatsby's dream for future life. Seeing from the whole novel, the light occurs three times. At the end of Chapter one, Nick has a glimpse of Gatsby standing in the lawn and trembling, stretching his arm against the green light across bay. His gestures reveals that he wants to approach the green light. In deep sense, he is in hard pursuit of the future wealth. The green light mentions in Chapter 5, when Gatsby and Daisy are reunited, Gatsby talks about the green light again. Nick guessed “Possibly, it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever.” In Chapter 9, as the novel concludes, Nick again evokes the light, which has claimed the betrayal of Daisy and Gatsby's destruction. The symbol of valley of ashes also occurs twice in the novel. For example, when Nick first meets Myrtle and knows affair with Tom and when Daisy kills Myrtle by running her down in Gatsby's car.

“The novel develops, as importantly, through an elaboration of imagery, often as motif, in patterns of recurrence. Sharply focused images appear, only to reappear in a late scene, in a way that comments on the image ^[7].”

In Chapter one, Daisy and Jordan sat down on the Buchanans' cloud like couch “both in white” like goddesses. The image again is reproduced in Chapter 7, when Nick arrives with Gatsby at the Buchanans' house to find Daisy and Jordan in the same couch, their “white dresses against the singing breeze of the fans”. Another recurrence image is the rainfall. When Gatsby and Daisy reunited, rainfalls happened. And there is a rainfall again at Gatsby. Meanwhile, rainfall symbolizes the tragedy, and it implied that in initial meet with Daisy, it has rainfall, implying that Gatsby meets with Daisy is tragedy.

In the novel, “bird” has also reiterated several time. For example, “There is a bird on the lawn that I think must be a nightingale,” Daisy says, “come over on the Cunard or White Star line. He's singing away”. Especially when the Daisy and Gatsby reunited, the song of nightingale symbolizes the love motivation. As Daisy enter Gatsby's house the air is being full of “bird voices in the trees”. And bird appears again at the end, when Gatsby's dream has been destroyed. And the shadow of the tree “fell abruptly across the dew and ghostly birds began to sing”.

3. Conclusion

With the application of Leech and Short's four categories, the theme of the *Great Gatsby* is illustrated. Meanwhile, we can conclude the stylistic Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald's masterpiece *The Great Gatsby* adopts lots of stylistic devices, such as symbolism, irony and cohesion. Therefore, it is well known, one of the reason why the *Great Gatsby* can be called as “the American novel” is because the triumph of language. Fitzgerald's distinction in the novel is to have made language integrated itself and each word is related with the theme of the novel.

Author James Thurber recognized an effect of his mastery when he wrote in 1942, “Fitzgerald's perfection of style and form, as in ‘*The Great Gatsby*’, has a way of making something that lies between your stomach and your heart quiver little.” In *His Art and His Technique*, Miller mentioned that William Rose Benet's review summarized the extraordinary qualities of the work: “the *Great Gatsby* reveals thoroughly matured craftsmanship. It has high occasions of felicitous, almost magic, phrase. And most of all, it is out of the mirage.”

The thesis put emphasis on expressing the theme of *The Great Gatsby* from the literary stylistic point of view, i.e., how the stylistic features embody the theme of the work, which is not a content-oriented study. Thus, we are concerned how the influence is embodied through particular linguistic forms under the four categories of Leech and Short's four categories: the lexical categories, the

grammar categories, the cohesion and context, the part of speech.

At present, most of scholars study Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* from its content. However, the author of the thesis aims to emphasize the stylistic features of *The Great Gatsby*, with the purpose of figuring out the style of Fitzgerald and revealing the real theme. Therefore, the author adopts the Leech and Short's four categories to study the linguistic form of the masterpiece of Fitzgerald. It is evident that through analyzing the stylistic features, especially the most prominent features- the frequent employment of the symbolism, on the one hand, it will help reader notice the symbolic meaning rather than ignore it. On the other hand, full understanding of the symbolic meaning is beneficial for us to know the intention why Fitzgerald want to describe the object. For example, if the readers do not notice the symbolic meaning, they will get confused why the Fitzgerald describes the green light. Therefore, after finishing the novel, they just know the story of *Gatsby*, and they cannot figure out the mystery of the masterpiece.

All in all, the author adopts the four categories in order to help readers better understand the theme of *Gatsby*, and at the same, it will reveal the stylistic characteristics of Fitzgerald.

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