

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
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**AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE USE OF METAPHOR AND
SIMILE EXPRESSING THE CONCEPT OF WEALTH IN
“THE GREAT GATSBY” BY FRANCIS SCOTT KEY
FITZGERALD**

Field: THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. RATIONALE

Literature serves as a method of transcending such barriers. Literature, besides being an art form used for expression, also preserves cultural ideals, customs, and morals. The written word gives us a deeper context into the lives and livelihood of people distinct from ourselves – this can be true of historical literature but is equally true of modern literature, as well. We can learn as much from William Shakespeare's time through his plays as we can from authors from a different mindset or place.

For years in our country, literature has been taught for foreign language majored students to make them get deeper acquisition of the language and stimulate them to greater interest, then for better learning. However, for most learners, one of the difficulties when analyzing the artistic values of a literary work is the confusion of identifying what stylistic devices are used. As a result, they fail to understand the work deeply.

In order to help Vietnamese learners of English overcome those challenges to become more successful in their learning, it is necessary to introduce them to some outstanding works of English literature and especially guide them how to evaluate the works' artistic merits. Due to the limited scope of this

research, however, I would like to focus on “The Great Gatsby” by F. Scott Fitzgerald because this is not only particular in artistic style but also attractive in content. The aim of the research is to examine metaphors and similes expressing the concept of wealth in the novel “The Great Gatsby” by Francis Scott Fitzgerald. The novel is one of the most outstanding works of the famous American writer, who gives the reader an idea of American Dream, and also persuades us that money cannot buy happiness. As we see, the concept of wealth is present throughout the entire novel. And to make it more expressive, Fitzgerald has applied numerous expressive means and stylistic devices, where metaphor and simile play leading roles.

1.2. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

1.3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1.4. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study is organized into five chapters as follows.

- **Chapter one** is the introduction of the study, involving the rationale, the justification, the scope of the study and the organization of the study.
- **Chapter two** consists of two parts. The first part is a review of previous studies related to the topic. The second one is concerned with theoretical background related to issues under study as well as the illustration of some examples,

summary, setting, plot and author of the novel “The Great Gatsby”.

- **Chapter three** describes the aims and objectives, the questions to solve, the intended process of study, which includes the method of the study and the steps that the study is to follow in the collecting and analyzing of data. The questions raised in this chapter are answered and analyzed in the next one.
- **Chapter four** highlights and discusses in detail the novel’s artistic merits and F. Scott Fitzgerald’s unique style, with the artistic merits created by metaphors and similes expressing the concept of wealth.
- **Chapter five** presents the suggestions for implicating in teaching and learning literature. It also put forward some limitations and unsolved problems for further studies.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

Since the early years of the pre-twentieth century, in Western countries, study on stylistics can be found in the works of Demetrius, “Demetrius’ On Style”. The roots of modern stylistics are seen uncovered in the work of Charles Bally (1865-1947) and Leo Spitzer (1887-1960). The description and analysis properties is stressed in Bally’s *Prescis de Stylistique Franscaise* (1946) and Marcel Cressot’s *Le Style et s`es Techniques* (1947). These works strongly influenced the formation of modern literary stylistics. At the same period of time, in Anglo-American linguistics, we can find a connection between literary stylistics and structural linguistic analysis. Nevertheless, Noam Chomsky discovered that the transformational-generative grammar appeared to be one of the main factors that signaled the establishment of stylistics as a discipline with independent, self-defined aim. Besides, the appearance of two journals in this field named “Style” (1967) and “Language and Style” (1968) contributed to the full arrival of stylistics as an academic discipline in Britain and America.

Later, there appeared a series of related works including Donal Freeman with his “Linguistics and Literary Style” (1970); Pierre Guiraud with “Essais de Stylistique” (1970); Seymour

Chatman with “Literary Style: A Symposium” (1971); Roger Fowler with “Style and Structure in Literature: Essays in the New Stylistics” (1975); Freeman “Essays in Modern Stylistics” (1981) and so on. Other linguists such as I.R. Galperin, H.G. Widdowson, Sara Thorne, David Crystal and Derek Davy, etc. focus on English stylistics.

There are also some Vietnamese linguists doing research on Vietnamese stylistics. Cù Đình Tú, Đinh Trọng Lạc, Nguyễn Thái Hòa, Đinh Xuân Quỳnh, etc. have succeeded in their studies on various aspects of stylistic devices used in either foreign or national literary works. Besides, Nguyen Thi Dieu Tram (2005), in “An investigation into lexical stylistic devices in “Vanity Fair” by William Makepeace Thackeray”, investigated into the Metaphor and Irony in the novel *Vanity Fair* and highlighted the artistic merits of the novel as well as Thackeray’s unique style. Phan Thi Uyen Uyen (2006) investigated into some commonly used stylistic devices in advertising language in English and Vietnamese newspapers.

About “*The Great Gatsby*”, it has become a part of American high school curricula and numerous stage and film adaptations in the following decades. Today, “*The Great Gatsby*” is widely considered to be a literary classic and a contender for the title “Great American Novel”. The book is consistently ranked among the greatest works of American literature. In 1998 the Modern Library editorial board voted it the best American novel and the second best novel in the English language.

2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.2.1. Related concepts: Style, Stylistics, Stylistic Devices, Belles-lettres, Emotive Prose

a. Style and Stylistics

b. Belles – letter styles

c. Emotive prose

2.2.2. Lexical stylistic devices

a. Metaphor

b. Simile

c. Metaphor versus Simile

2.2.3. The Author Francis Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940)

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald is considered to be among the greatest twentieth-century American writers. He was born on September 24, 1896, in St. Paul, Minnesota. His first novel's success made him famous and let him marry the woman he loved, but he later descended into drinking and his wife had a mental breakdown. Following the unsuccessful *Tender is the Night*, Fitzgerald moved to Hollywood and became a scriptwriter. He died of a heart attack in 1940, at age 44, his final novel only half completed.

F. Scott Fitzgerald died believing himself a failure. None of his works received anything more than modest commercial or critical success during his lifetime. However, since his death, Fitzgerald has

gained a reputation as one of the pre-eminent authors in the history of American literature due almost entirely to the enormous posthumous success of *The Great Gatsby*. Perhaps the quintessential American novel, as well as a definitive social history of the Jazz Age, *The Great Gatsby* went on to become required reading for virtually every American high school student, and has had a transportive effect on generation after generation of readers.

2.2.4. The novel “The Great Gatsby”

The Great Gatsby, published in 1925, is hailed as one of the foremost pieces of American fiction of its time. It is a novel of triumph and tragedy, noted for the remarkable way its author captures a cross-section of American society. In *The Great Gatsby* Fitzgerald, known for his imagistic and poetic prose, holds a mirror up to the society of which he was a part. In 1925, however, the novel served as a snapshot of the frenzied post-war society known as the Jazz Age, while today it provides readers with, among other things, a portal through which to observe life in the 1920s. Part of Fitzgerald's charm in *The Great Gatsby*, in fact, is his ability to encapsulate the mood of a generation during a politically and socially crucial and chaotic period of American history.

a. Summary

b. Plot

c. Setting

CHAPTER 3

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

3.1. RESEARCH METHODS

An investigation of the frequency of occurrence of the two lexical stylistic devices, metaphors and similes expressing the concept of wealth, through the novel was carried first. At this stage, the number of metaphor and simile used in the novel was counted first. After that, the sentences containing metaphors and similes expressing the concept of wealth were considered, respectively, and compared with the total number. After that, all the data were arranged into a table. These tasks are done by using quantitative method.

Based on the quantitative data taken, the study was carried out. The qualitative method was applied to analyze the use of these two lexical stylistic devices in the novel.

3.2. SAMPLING

In this study, the samples are paragraphs, sentences, clauses and phrases (minimum of 5 words and maximum of 100 words) containing occurrences of the two lexical stylistic devices, metaphors and similes expressing the concept of wealth were collected from “The Great Gatsby” by F. Scott Key Fitzgerald.

3.3. DATA COLLECTION

We collected 105 samples of the two stylistic devices (62 similes, 43 metaphors) from the novel *“The Great Gatsby”* by F. Scott Key Fitzgerald. The data were collected at random, without distinguishing time and genres, so this study is very objective.

3.4. DATA ANALYSIS

After collecting the samples containing occurrences of simile, metaphor as well as metaphors and similes expressing the concept of wealth collected from *“The Great Gatsby”* by F. Scott Key Fitzgerald were examined, classified and analyzed.

Second, the frequency, statical number and percentage of the two lexical stylistic devices were shown in the table.

Finally, based on the data analysis, the conclusion and implications of applying them in teaching and learning English Literature.

3.5. RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The theoretical background of the study relies on the concern literature inherent in different resources as listed in the references.

The analysis of the two lexical devices, metaphor and simile, under investigation is based on Galperin’s theory.

The procedure was as follow:

(1) Collecting and classifying data: read the novel in width

and depth, take notes of examples and classify them by title (metaphor, simile).

(2) Investigating the frequency of occurrence of the lexical stylistic devices under investigation in the novel.

(3) Analyzing data: point out the contributions of each lexical stylistic device to the success of the novel.

(4) Putting forward some implications for the teaching and learning of literature.

3.6. RELIABILITY & VALIDITY

In terms of reliability, the study is required to be verified if there are inaccuracies and inconsistencies. Factually, inaccuracies and inconsistencies are the result of inadequate is also very important in the study.

In terms of validity, this research meets the following criteria: all data have to be collected from reliable sources such as printed sources, official websites and the data will be analyzed based on a reliable theoretical background.

In brief, the study strictly follows the research design and all the procedures are performed carefully in order to maintain qualitative validity and reliability of the study.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1. GENERAL STYLISTIC ANALYSIS ON “THE GREAT GATSBY”

This chapter is dedicated to the general stylistic analysis on “The Great Gatsby”. We aim at getting a general idea of Fitzgerald’s style after which we’ll start discussing the main topic of our research.

One of the simplest yet most profound reasons *The Great Gatsby* is considered as an American classic is its use of language. Fitzgerald’s language is figurative, which is full of images -- concrete verbal pictures appealing to the senses, by the employment of adjectives. Fitzgerald frequently uses adjectives to create romantic sensation and visualize the scene and hence heightens the theme.

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 voice that men who had cared for her found difficult to forget: a singing compulsion, a whispered “Listen”, a promise that she had done gay, exciting things just a while since and that there were gay, exciting things hovering in the next hour. [25p. 13]

This sentence is densely sparked with adjectives. It is interesting that Fitzgerald often links adjectives that seem contradictory, e.g. *sad* and *lovely*. But this technique visualizes the character Daisy, and the repetition of the next adjective “*bright*”

seems to imply that Daisy is bright. However, the word “*sad*” denies this by its meaning; thus the description gives us a suspicious impression.

Besides his extensive use of adjectives, another prominent characteristic of Fitzgerald’s use of adjectives lies in his linkage of apparently incompatible nouns and adjectives to produce startling but thematically evocative effects and his pattern of linking adjectives that seem contradictory. For example, the “*triumphant hat-boxes*” of Gatsby’s car and the “*blue gardens*” of his parties, both suggest the magnificent but unreality of his vision of self.

As theme is most dramatically expressed through character, Fitzgerald uses the people he created to convey his message to the reader. We can easily see how Fitzgerald uses such technique to depict the characters in the novel. When Nick arrives at the Buchanans for dinner, the three characters are described for the first time in terms that emphasize their physical presence. Here are Nick’s descriptions:

It was a body capable of enormous leverage -- a cruel body.

[25, p. 10]

It is interesting that the “*body*” is described as “*cruel*” here, for normally “*cruel*” is referred to a person and not to a body. Fitzgerald doesn’t describe that Tom is cruel but that his body is cruel, suggesting a separation between his body and himself, as if Tom’s cruel character may assert itself apart from his will.

In English, degrees of formality are indicated by linguistic features at phonological, lexical and grammatical/syntactic levels. Fitzgerald's syntactic formality is greatly demonstrated through his relatively long narrative sentence type. As a consequence, readers are likely to feel that Fitzgerald's style of writing is rather more demanding and appears more formal. This formal and serious register, the complexity of which is vivid in describing inner feelings and emotional changes, helps to highlight the narrator's complex feelings towards his era: his lament over the corruption of the American Dream and the moral decadence, and his admiration for Gatsby's romanticism and idealism.

For a while these reveries provided an outlet for his imagination; they were a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy's wing. [25, pp. 95-96]

This sentence begins with a time-adverbial, establishing duration and "reveries" as what is being talked about. Then through a second-start "they", it elaborates itself into apposition, which is syntactically unnecessary and surplus, but seemingly caused by sensitivity to words like "imagination" and "reverie". In the lush ending of the sentence occurs the "fairy's wing" that is connected directly to the embodiment of Gatsby's dreaming, Daisy Buchanan, whose maiden name is Fay. Nick hereby conveys a magical destiny to Gatsby's adventure.

To sum up, Fitzgerald has applied to the frequent use of adjectives, lexical clusters, appositional and prepositional phrases and language formality to create his imagination of American Dream and his “dreamers”.

4.2. THE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE OF METAPHOR AND SIMILE EXPRESSING THE CONCEPT OF WEALTH IN “THE GREAT GATSBY”

Table 4.1. Relative frequency (per total Metaphor and Simile) of Metaphor and Simile expressing the concept of wealth

Lexical stylistic devices	Raw Numbers	Percentages (%)
Metaphor expressing the concept of wealth	22	51.16
Simile expressing the concept of wealth	25	40.32

(Total metaphor: 43 and simile: 62)

4.3. METAPHORS AND SIMILES EXPRESSING THE CONCEPT OF WEALTH IN “THE GREAT GATSBY” BY F.S. FITZGERALD

This part contains the main aim and study field of our research. Here we have examined those metaphors and similes expressing the concept of wealth which we found more interesting

and eye-catching. Let's go through them trying to analyze each one very carefully.

On the very first chapter of the novel the reader gets introduced to the contrast between the West and the East. East Egg is shown as the “fashionable” side of the Long Island, while the West Egg is “less fashionable” and here “new money” people live.

(1) *“Instead of being the warm centre of the world, the Middle West now seemed **like the ragged edge of the universe**- so I decided to go East and learn the bond business”*. [25, p.3]

In the above sentence we have a simile, where the word “ragged” means old and shabby. Normally, we use this word to describe torn clothes, e.g.. But Fitzgerald, by implying this word into the sentence, opened up before us a scene of the West, being the poorest place to live in.

An interesting simile may be found in the passage below:

(2) *“One of the men was talking with curious intensity to a young actress, and his wife, after attempting to laugh at the situation in a dignified and indifferent way, broke down entirely and resorted to flank attacks — at intervals she appeared suddenly at his side **like an angry diamond**, and hissed: “You promised!” into his ear”*. [25, p.52]

Angry is usually used to qualify a person, and a diamond cannot be angry. But Fitzgerald wanted to show the pressing power of wealth.

A careful study needs the description of Gatsby's house. Fitzgerald used metaphor and simile to represent the reader the huge and luxurious place his hero lived in.

(3) *“My house was at the very tip of the egg, only fifty yards from the South, and squeezed between two huge places that rented for twelve or fifteen thousand a season; the one on my right was **a colossal affair by any standard- it was a factual imitation of some Hotel de Ville in Normandy**, with a tower on one side, spanking new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and a marble swimming pool, and more than forty acres of lawn and garden; it was Gatsby's mansion”*. [25, p.5]

In contrast to it, he puts the house of Nick, an eyesore, even a **small** eyesore. Through this metaphor we have the image of their neighborhood: a bulky and beautiful mansion reminding of a royal palace and a little unnoticeable construction which resembles a hut.

(4) *“My own house was **an eyesore**, but it was **a small eyesore**, and it had been overlooked, so I had a view of the water, a partial view of my neighbor's lawn, and the **consoling proximity of millionaires- all for eighty dollars a month”***.

[25, p. 22]

Fitzgerald often used colors to symbolize this or that concept. The green light at the end of Daisy's dock is the symbol of hope. However, green may even suggest the money color.

(5) *"Involuntarily I glanced seaward- and distinguished nothing except **a single green light**, minute and far away, that might have been the end of a dock".* [25, p. 24]

(6) *"If it wasn't for the mist we could see your home across the bay," said Gatsby. "You always have **a green light that burns all night at the end of your dock**..... Possibly it had occurred to him that the **colossal significance of that light** had now vanished forever..."*[25, p. 30]

An interesting simile may be found in the passage below:

(7) *"One of the men was talking with curious intensity to a young actress, and his wife, after attempting to laugh at the situation in a dignified and indifferent way, broke down entirely and resorted to flank attacks — at intervals she appeared suddenly at his side **like an angry diamond**, and hissed: "You promised!" into his ear".*[25, p.52]

Angry is usually used to qualify a person, and a diamond cannot be angry. But Fitzgerald wanted to show the pressing power of wealth.

In many passages Fitzgerald made use of songs, lyrics of which are a part of wealth-theme in the novel. For example the passage below:

(8) “...*The sun had gone **down behind the tall apartments of the movie stars** in the West Fifties, and the clear voices of girls, already gathered like crickets on the grass, rose through the hot twilight:*

*“I’m the **Sheik of Araby.***

*Your **love belongs to me.***

At night when you’re asleep

Into your tent I’ll creep...”

[25, p. 87]

Another sample of Fitzgerald’s perfection is the following chain of metaphors:

(9) “***Her voice is full of money,**” he said suddenly.*

*That was it. I’d never understood before. It was full of money — **that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals’ song of it. . . . high in a white palace the king’s daughter, the golden girl. . . .***”

[25, p. 128]

Daisy’s voice is full of money. A voice actually can’t be full of it. So we have a tight metaphor here, plus the “golden girl” which

we can take both as a metaphor (made of gold) and a simile (having fair hair). Money jingles in her voice, like the cymbals' song. A very characteristic description is used for Daisy.

Gatsby dies burying his only dream by his side. Wealth doesn't bring him the happiness he wished to reach, and his most cherished dream-that is to get Daisy, stays undone forever. Anyway he leaves after him a huge amount of money and a kind of pride for his father:

(10) *“He had reached an age **where death no longer has the quality of ghastly surprise**, and when he looked around him now for the first time and **saw the height and splendor of the hall and the great rooms opening out from it into other rooms**, his **grief began to be mixed with an awed pride**”.*
[25, p. 179]

The novel ends up with Nick recalling his old days in the West, all happy and simple:

(11): *“I remember the **fur coats of the girls returning from Miss This-or-that’s and the chatter of frozen breath and the hands waving overhead as we caught sight of old acquaintances, and the matchings of invitations**: “Are you going to the **Ordways’? the Herseys’? the Schultzes’?**” and the long **green tickets clasped tight in our gloved hands**. And last **the murky yellow cars of the Chicago, Milwaukee and***

St. Paul railroad looking cheerful as Christmas itself on the tracks beside the gate.” [25, p. 187]

The last passage of the novel bears the same idea of American dream, and Nick wonders how Gatsby felt on seeing the green light at the end of Daisy’s dock:

(12) “...*And as I sat there brooding on the old, unknown world, I thought of Gatsby’s wonder when he first picked out the green light at the end of Daisy’s dock. He had come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.*

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that’s no matter — to-morrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther. . . . And one fine morning ...So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past”. [25, p. 193]

Jay had passed a long way to realize his dream, to reach to the **blue** lawn, as the author put (blue symbolizes dream), but he left it behind, in the “**dark fields**”, dark, and not green as it was in East Egg, but just in shabby place he was born in.

Now as we are through with all the extracts, having metaphors and similes that express wealth, luxury and money, we come to the conclusion that Fitzgerald got what he wanted to create. He had many stylistic devices at his disposal, and he managed to send his most important message to the reader through them: money cannot buy happiness.

4.4. THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF METAPHOR AND SIMILE IN “THE GREAT GATSBY”

The analysis of theoretical and practical material concerning the problem of metaphor and simile and the examination of their use in “The Great Gatsby” to convey the concept of wealth helped us to come to conclusion that Fitzgerald made the best use of these two devices.

To make readers these values, F. Scott Fitzgerald does skillfully combined and apply the two lexical stylistic devices of metaphor and simile to make a great contribution to the success of the novel. They create strong expressiveness for every utterance and description of the novel. Without the two lexical stylistic devices, readers cannot comprehend the implication of the author. They require readers’ utmost effort in interpretation, to get more profound awareness of the expressions of wealth. Moreover, metaphors and similes play an important role in bringing the aesthetic-cognitive value to the novel, make it a masterpiece of art and literature, and distinctive from others.

4.5. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF LITERATURE

4.5.1. General implications

4.5.2. Implications for teachers of literature.

- Provide learners with sufficient awareness of the stylistics as well as the linguistics.

- Have a suitable strategy to help learners to overcome themselves, not take their hand to aim.

- Recognize the interest of learners.

- Provide learners with some helpful hints and help them to exploit the work more easily.

- Give students some further tasks as homework, to make learners study deeper into the lesson/work.

4.5.3. Implications for learners of English, especially English literature

- Know what you need to read

- Read

- Make notes along the way

- Study Groups are the way to go.

- Ask Questions

- Do some extra research

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. CONCLUSION

Under the light of stylistics, this study has carried out an investigation into lexical stylistic devices, and focused on the two devices metaphor and simile, which are the most frequently and distinctively used in the novel to express the meaning of wealth.

As a study of stylistics, the paper has adopted and mentioned some of the prior research of many scholars in the field, as well as the relevant study theories invented by those, in the Literature Review. Furthermore, basic history of F. Scott Fitzgerald and *The Great Gatsby* were also presented herein so as to provide reader with general impression.

As stated and illustrated in chapter 3 and 4, quantitative and qualitative methods are used to make the study a profound and descriptive analysis.

Before focusing on Metaphor and Simile used in the novel, I have analysed all the stylistic devices used in the novel. To get a clear picture of Metaphor and Simile expressing the meaning of wealth in the novel, I have found out and analyzed more than 40 examples of Metaphors and Similes expressing the concept of wealth in the novel.

Aiming at finding the most correct and the deepest answer to the research questions of the study, I have dealt with the metaphor and simile expressing the concept of wealth throughout the novel. This has led us to interest remarks on the two devices and their contributions on the success of the work.

Finally, as an investigation into lexical stylistic devices in a literary work, this study has given some implications for the teaching and learning of literature. For teachers of literature, they must have a suitable strategy to help learners to overcome themselves, not take their hand to aim. Besides, it is also significant to recognize the interest of learners. For learners of English, especially English literature, they are advised to read as much as possible, study in groups, do research and do not hesitate to ask questions.

5.3. UNAVOIDABLE LIMITATIONS

- The irony effect of the novel
- The aesthetic-cognitive effect created by other stylistics devices, or all the stylistic devices in combination.
- Comparison of the lexical stylistic devices between the original work and its translated version.
- The PUNS based on the lexical stylistic devices and their effect.