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Discourse Patterning in Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*: An Exploration

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Abstract

Every novel tells a story, and every story is a narrative – an ideological documentation of a sort. Francis Scott Fitzgerald published The Great Gatsby in 1925, a quintessential realist modernist novel that functions simultaneously as a satire, a historical artefact, a psychological portrait, and a sociocultural document of the American Jazz Age. These communicative effects are achieved through language. Literature, a primary field for linguistic exploration, is a discourse – an instance of language use. Discourse relates to how linguistic units contribute to the understanding of a message by correlating textual and contextual meaning. This research examines the discourse patterning in Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, exploring the logical arrangement of ideas and structural patterns that shape the novel's organisation and meaning potentials. The study draws from the twin principles of discourse analysis and literary interpretation. The analysis situates the classic centenary novel as a complete unit of discourse with multidimensional patterning that reflects the interplay between textual and contextual meaning.

Keywords: The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald, Discourse, Discourse Patterning, Language Use and Literature

Introduction

Background of the Author and His Literary Work

Francis Scott Fitzgerald was born on September 24, 1896, in Minnesota to Edward and Mary McQuillan Fitzgerald of Maryland. He attended Saint Paul's Academy, Newman Catholic School in New Jersey, and Princeton University, where his involvement with the university's literary publications shaped his writing ability and developed his reputation as a talented writer. He married Zelda Sayre in 1920 (Study.com). His background inspired his literary works. He wrote more than 150 short stories and completed four novels, of which *The Great Gatsby* (1925), his third, is considered the most brilliant, having received extensive scholarly attention after the Second World War. It is regarded today as "the great American novel" (Britannica).

The Great Gatsby: A Brief Summary

The Great Gatsby is a realist modernist novel that functions as both tragedy and satire. It is a fictional reflection, written at the end of the First World War, that captures American lifestyle, fashion, and traditions of the early twentieth century, especially the Jazz Age of the 1920s. The novel is set in New York in the early 1920s (Study.com). Its narrative structure explores the mysterious Jay Gatsby and his consuming desire to win back Daisy Buchanan (née Fay) (80), with whom he had a romantic relationship before her marriage to Tom Buchanan. Nick Carraway, the narrator and Daisy's cousin, relocates to Long Island's West Egg and becomes friendly with his neighbour, Jay Gatsby, who frequently throws

extravagant parties. With the help of Nick Carraway and Jordan Baker, Daisy's girlhood friend, Gatsby reunites with Daisy and rekindles their love affair. Tom Buchanan discovers the affair, confronts Gatsby, and probes his shady business dealings. Returning home from an outing with Gatsby, Daisy accidentally hits and kills Myrtle Wilson at the Valley of Ashes while driving Gatsby's car and does not stop. Devastated, George Wilson, Myrtle's husband, kills Gatsby, whom he believes killed his wife. Gatsby's funeral is poorly attended – none of his friends nor party guests attend except Nick Carraway.

Theoretical Framework

Discourse Analysis and Literary Interpretation

Discourse refers to actual instances of coherent language use – language that results from acts or events of communication such as conversations, interviews, political speeches, and academic papers (Richards and Schmidt 160; Johnstone 1). It differs from units such as phrases, clauses, and sentences. Discourse relates to how "linguistic facts" and environmental or societal factors contribute to the understanding of a message (Widdowson 10). Discourse analysis is a methodology that answers the questions of various disciplines "by analysing discourse" (Johnstone 4) – that is, by examining the features of language structure and function in use. It transcends analysing words and sentences to examining how language is used contextually to shape reality, social dynamics, and identity (Delvetool; Oxford Review).

Discourse patterning refers to "the logical arrangement of ideas" (Scribd) – the underlying structures that build the organisation and meaning of language in use. It examines how language creates meaning, constructs relationships, and shapes identities (Widdowson 27–33). Discourse patterning is a form of "semantic density" through which story units recur in various contexts (Akwanya 259).

Literary interpretation, on the other hand, is a critical process of analysing a literary text to uncover its deeper meanings, themes, and underlying assumptions. It considers style, structure, and how language conveys meaning, as well as authorial intention, textual context, and reader perspective (Scribd; Abrams and Harpham 158).

Literature as a work of art is "a communicative action" (Akwanya 248) – a piece of communication or discourse of its own kind (Widdowson 27). Literary writing functions as a form of communication (Widdowson 6), a type of art that employs language and discourse devices to transfer knowledge (Akwanya 191). Like all discourse, literature is interpreted by correlating linguistic and contextual meaning (Widdowson 27–37; Akwanya 250).

This work analyses discourse patterning in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* using the twin principles of discourse analysis and literary interpretation to establish the novel as a complete unit of discourse – "a self-contained whole" or "unit of communication" (Widdowson 54). The study discusses cohesive and coherence devices – discourse markers, rhetorical structures, pragmatic inferences, and literary devices – that create meaning in the text.

Textual Cohesion

Grammatical and Lexical Linking

Cohesion refers to the surface-level grammatical and lexical connections that bind a text together. This section examines how Fitzgerald uses specific cohesive devices to create textual unity and guide reader comprehension.

Repetition

Repetition of particular words, names, places, and events creates emphasis, thematic depth, and foreshadowing, ultimately contributing to cohesion. The recurring use of names — Gatsby, Daisy, Tom Buchanan, Nick Carraway, Jordan Baker, Myrtle Wilson, George Wilson — and places — West Egg, East Egg, the Valley of Ashes, New York — establishes a dense referential network that anchors the narrative. The name "Gatsby," for instance, appears four times on page four alone, the second page of the novel, firmly impressing the character in the reader's mind before his first physical appearance. This repetition foreshadows Gatsby's centrality to the plot and thematic structure. Terms like "bootlegger," "Oxford man," and "Negro" recur with ideological weight, each repetition reinforcing the social categories through which characters judge one another. Repetition thus does more than create textual cohesion — it builds a semantic field around class, identity, and perception that shapes the novel's meaning.

Ellipsis

Ellipsis refers to the omission of words or phrases that are recoverable from context, creating conciseness and implicating the reader in meaning-making (Richards and Schmidt 177; Crystal 166). Key instances from the text include:

- **"Well, you ought to see her. She's"** (12) — The omitted phrase "two years old" is recoverable from the preceding dialogue between Daisy and Nick about Daisy's daughter. The ellipsis directs attention to what is *not* said: Daisy's role as a mother is treated as an afterthought, hinting at her emotional distance from her child.
- **"I don't know a single"** (14) — The omitted "somebody there" is drawn from the context of Jordan Baker's conversation with Nick about knowing anyone from West Egg. The truncation signals social exclusivity — knowing no one from West Egg implies its social inferiority to East Egg.
- **"From Louisville. Our white girlhood was passed together there. Our beautiful white...."** (22) — The omitted word "girlhood" is contextually recoverable. The hesitation after "white" is significant: it draws attention to the word itself, foregrounding the racial exclusivity that underpins Daisy and Jordan's bond.

These elliptical gaps function as pragmatic signals. They leave information implied rather than stated, engaging readers in active interpretation and foregrounding what the speaker chooses *not* to articulate.

Anaphora

Anaphora — the use of pronouns or deictics to refer back to an earlier referent (Clark 57) — is pervasive in the novel and essential to its narrative flow. Consider the following passage:

Across the courtesy bay the white palaces of fashionable East Egg glittered along the water ... I drove over **there** to have dinner with the Tom Buchanans. **Daisy** was my second cousin ... and I'd known **Tom** in college. And just after the war I spent two days with **them** in Chicago.

Her husband, among various physical accomplishments, had been one of the most powerful ends that had ever played football at New Haven. **His** family were enormously wealthy — even in college **his** freedom with money was a matter of reproach — but now **he'd** left Chicago and came to the east in a fashion that rather took your breath away: **he'd** brought down a string of polo ponies from Lake Forest.

Why **they** came east I don't know. **They** had spent a year in France for no particular reason ... (8).

The pronoun chain operates at multiple levels: "them" refers to Tom and Daisy jointly; "Her" links the second paragraph to Daisy specifically; "His," "his," and "he'd" anchor the description to Tom; "they" returns to the couple. This anaphoric network creates textual cohesion while also performing narrative work — the rapid oscillation between "her" and "his" mirrors the asymmetrical marriage in which each partner is defined separately rather than as a unified pair. Anaphora thus serves both grammatical and thematic functions.

Cataphora

Cataphora — using a pronoun or phrase to refer forward to something yet to be explained (Clark 58) — creates anticipation and suspense. The most significant instance is Nick's introduction of Gatsby on page four:

... Only Gatsby, the man who gave his name to this book, was exempt from my reaction — Gatsby who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn. If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the pressures of life ... This responsiveness ... was an extraordinary gift of hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which is not likely I shall ever find again. 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 elations of men (4).

This paragraph functions cataphorically because it presents a dense cluster of evaluative claims — "gorgeous," "romantic readiness," "foul dust," "short-winded elations" — that the rest of the novel will progressively unpack. Each phrase anticipates specific revelations:

Cataphoric phrase

Later revelation

Cataphoric phrase	Later revelation
"something gorgeous about him"	Gatsby's charm and charisma (53, 120)
"extraordinary gift of hope"	His relentless pursuit of Daisy across years
"what preyed on Gatsby"	His inability to let go of the past
"foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams"	The corruption (bootlegging, Meyer Wolfsheim) entailed by his pursuit of wealth
"short-winded elations"	The transient, ultimately fatal nature of his dream

The cataphoric structure creates a hermeneutic gap: the reader must read forward to understand what the opening claims mean, making the entire novel an extended explication of Nick's initial judgment.

Written Discourse Markers

Discourse markers are sequentially dependent expressions that link units of discourse or ideas (Crystal 148; Richards and Schmidt 162). Fitzgerald employs several categories:

Additive markers. "And" appears with notable frequency to connect ideas and sustain narrative momentum. For instance: "And, it was from Cody that he inherited money — a legacy of twenty-five thousand dollars" (108). The initial "And" ties Gatsby's relationship with Cody to the preceding paragraph, creating a continuous narrative thread. Similarly, "And, after boasting this way of my tolerance, I come to the admission that it has a limit" (4) links Nick's self-assessment to his earlier claims about himself.

The additive marker "In addition" opens a paragraph cataloguing Gatsby's party guests: "In addition to all these I can remember that Faustina O'Brien came there once and the Baedeker girls and young Brewer ..." (68). The marker signals continuation of enumeration, but the very need for such a marker underscores the overwhelming, indiscriminate nature of Gatsby's guest list — anyone and everyone attends.

Causal markers. "Because" is the primary causal marker, used to explain character motivations. At Gatsby's party: "'Oh, no,' said the first girl, 'it couldn't be that, because he was in the American army during the war'" (48). The causal explanation reveals how Gatsby's guests construct narratives about him from fragmentary evidence, highlighting the theme of social performance and speculation.

Contrastive markers. "But" signals opposition between expectations and reality. In the passage describing Gatsby's early relationships with women:

He knew women early and since they spoiled him, he became contemptuous of them ... **But** his heart was in constant, turbulent riot. The most grotesque and fantastic conceits haunted him in his bed at night (105–106).

The "But" marks a crucial disjunction: Gatsby's outward contempt masks inner turmoil. This contrastive pivot foreshadows the central tension of his character – the gap between performed confidence and inner vulnerability.

Temporal markers. These signal the timing or sequence of events and are especially dense in Jordan Baker's narration of Daisy's past (80–84). The passage uses:

- **Specific dates:** "One October day in nineteen-seventeen," "in February," "In June," "in August" – anchoring events in historical time
- **Sequential markers:** "By the next year," "After that," "By next autumn," "Next day" – establishing chronological order
- **Duration markers:** "for several weeks," "a three months trip," "half an hour before," "six weeks ago" – specifying intervals
- **Terminal markers:** "until," "until then" – marking points of connection or realisation

This dense clustering of temporal markers in a single narrative passage is not accidental. Jordan's account compresses years of backstory into a few paragraphs, and the temporal markers are the scaffolding that prevents the narrative from becoming incoherent. They transform potentially disjointed episodes into a causally connected timeline, revealing how Daisy's past leads inexorably to the novel's present crisis.

Structural and Semantic Coherence

If cohesion concerns surface-level textual links, coherence concerns the deeper logical and interpretive unity that makes a text meaningful. Coherence "involves a level of interaction between the text and the reader" (Clark 70): the reader makes inferences and fills gaps based on real-world knowledge. This section examines the structural and semantic patterns that give *The Great Gatsby* its coherence.

Temporal Coherence: The Non-Linear Narrative

The Great Gatsby employs a non-linear narrative structure that unfolds through flashbacks, reflections, and Nick's retrospective narration. The novel's opening sentence – a flashback to Nick's father's advice – establishes this temporal disjunction immediately:

In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since (1).

The phrase "ever since" creates a temporal gap between the narrated event (the advice) and the narrating moment (the present of the telling). The entire novel exists in this gap, and the non-linear structure allows Fitzgerald to reveal information strategically.

Key flashbacks include:

Flashback	Function	Pages
Gatsby's time with Dan Cody	Explains his transformation from James Gatz to Jay Gatsby; reveals the origin of his wealth	106–108

Flashback	Function	Pages
Gatsby's humble origins	Establishes the distance between his origins and his performed identity	104–105
Jordan's narration of Daisy's past	Reveals Gatsby and Daisy's pre-war romance; explains Daisy's marriage to Tom	80–84
Gatsby's reunion with Daisy (Nick's flashback within the narrative)	Shows the emotional core of Gatsby's motivation	89–93

This non-linear structure creates suspense — the reader must piece together Gatsby's past from fragments — but it also mirrors the novel's thematic concerns. Gatsby himself is trapped in the past ("Can't repeat the past?... Why of course you can!" [116]), and the narrative form echoes this temporal obsession. The story cannot move forward in a straight line because its central character cannot escape what came before.

Causal Coherence: Motivation and Consequence

The novel's events are bound together by causal chains that link character motivation to action to consequence. Three interlocking causal sequences drive the plot:

Gatsby's causal chain: Desire for Daisy → pursuit of wealth (bootlegging, Cody's inheritance) → acquisition of status (mansion, parties, fabricated identity) → reunion with Daisy → conflict with Tom → Daisy's accidental killing of Myrtle → Gatsby's death

Tom's causal chain: Desire for control and dominance → affair with Myrtle → neglect of Daisy → Daisy's affair with Gatsby → confrontation at the Plaza Hotel → Myrtle's death → loss of mistress → (ironically) reinforced marriage to Daisy

Myrtle's causal chain: Desire for social mobility → affair with Tom → access to wealth and luxury → running into the road toward Tom's car → death

These causal chains overlap and intersect. Gatsby's death, for instance, is not the result of a single cause but the convergence of multiple causal sequences: Gatsby's pursuit of Daisy, Tom's vengeful disclosure about Gatsby's past, Myrtle's death, and Wilson's grief-fueled revenge. The novel's causal coherence lies in this layered, interdependent structure — no event occurs in isolation.

Thematic Coherence

The consistent analytical association of subject matters or ideas in a narrative creates thematic coherence. Several interlocking themes span the novel:

The elusive American Dream. The central theme — the promise of wealth, status, and fulfilment — runs throughout the novel and is revealed as illusory. Nick captures Gatsby's pursuit of this mirage:

... He stretched out his hand toward the dark waters in a curious way, and as far as I was from him, I could have sworn he was trembling. Involuntarily, I glanced seaward. ... When I looked once more for Gatsby he had vanished, and I was alone again in the unquiet darkness (24–25).

The gesture toward the green light is simultaneously hopeful and futile — Gatsby reaches for something that "had vanished" the moment he is not watched. The "unquiet darkness" that remains after he disappears foreshadows the novel's tragic conclusion.

Moral decay and the corrupting influence of wealth. Tom Buchanan's "enormously wealthy" family (8) and his "freedom with money" do not bring moral integrity. His infidelity with Myrtle Wilson (29–30), his reckless accident with a chambermaid in Santa Barbara (83), and his aggressive confrontation of Gatsby (138–143) all reveal wealth's corrosive effect. Fitzgerald does not merely depict wealth — he shows it as a moral solvent that dissolves responsibility.

Retribution and consequence. The novel operates on a principle of moral symmetry. George Wilson's discovery of Myrtle's infidelity "made him physically sick" (132); Tom's discovery of Daisy's affair with Gatsby leaves him "infuriated" (138). Both men experience the same betrayal, and both respond with violence — Wilson's outward, Tom's psychological. Gatsby's death, while unjust (he did not kill Myrtle), nonetheless closes a causal loop set in motion by his pursuit of another man's wife.

Self-reinvention and nostalgia. Gatsby's transformation from James Gatz to Jay Gatsby (104) represents the American belief in self-creation, yet this reinvention serves a nostalgic purpose: to win back Daisy and recover the past. The tension between forward-looking reinvention and backward-looking desire is the novel's central paradox. Fitzgerald suggests that some dreams — those that try to recapture what is lost — are "well-forgotten" (145), and carrying them forward leads only to destruction.

Social class and race. The novel's racial and class hierarchies are established through recurring lexical choices. Tom's racist rant about intermarriage (138–139), the narrator's description of "a pale, well-dressed Negro" (140), and Daisy's reference to "our white girlhood" (22) all reinforce a social order in which whiteness and wealth are the unmarked norm. The geographical stratification — East Egg (old money), West Egg (new money), Valley of Ashes (no money) — maps these hierarchies onto physical space. These thematic threads intertwine throughout the narrative, creating a rich, complex exploration of the American social landscape.

Symbolic Coherence

Symbols in the novel function as nodes of concentrated meaning that recur across contexts, creating what Akwanya terms "semantic density" (249–253). Each major symbol supports the novel's thematic architecture:

The green light. Gatsby's green light across the water (24, 123, 144) represents his longing for Daisy and the unreachable goal of winning her back. Its significance shifts over the course of the novel: initially a mysterious beacon, it becomes explicitly linked to Daisy,

and finally, in the novel's closing paragraphs, it expands to represent the human capacity for hope itself – the "orgastic future that year by year recedes before us" (189). The light's colour (green = money, growth, envy) condenses the novel's concerns with wealth, aspiration, and desire.

The Valley of Ashes. This "grotesque garden" (26) between West Egg and New York symbolises the human cost of wealth. Its inhabitants – George Wilson, Myrtle – are casualties of the economic system that elevates the Buchanans. The Valley literalises the hidden consequences of the Jazz Age's glittering surface.

The eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg. The giant eyes on the billboard (26, 170–171) function as a secularised symbol of divine judgment. George Wilson, in his grief, explicitly reads them as God: "God knows what you've been doing, everything you've been doing. You may fool me but you can't fool God!" (170). The irony is that the eyes are merely an advertisement – a commercial symbol mistaken for a moral one. This ambiguity captures the novel's spiritual vacuum: in the world of *The Great Gatsby*, God has been replaced by commerce.

Colour symbolism:

Colour	Significance	Examples
White	Purity, social status, but also moral vacancy	Daisy's "white girlhood," the "white palaces" of East Egg (8, 22)
Yellow/Gold	Wealth, corruption, ambiguity	Gatsby's car (yellow), Daisy's voice "full of money" (128)
Grey	Decay, lifelessness, numbness	The Valley of Ashes, George Wilson's "anemic" appearance (27–28, 146)
Crimson	Blood, violence, death	"Crimson" carpet in Gatsby's mansion (123)

These symbols create an interconnected web of meaning. The green light, the Valley of Ashes, and the Eckleburg eyes are not isolated motifs but parts of a coherent symbolic system that reinforces the novel's themes across different registers of the text.

Interpersonal Discourse Strategies: Characterisation, Dialogue, and Stylistic Devices

This section examines how Fitzgerald constructs character and manages reader-character relationships through discourse strategies including description, dialogue, speech acts, and orthographic choice.

Characterisation through Description and Discourse

Characters in the novel are developed through detailed physical description, dialogue, and the evaluative language of the narrator. The critical question for discourse analysis is not

simply *what* characters are described as, but *how* the descriptions position the reader in relation to each character.

Nick Carraway. As narrator, Nick controls all information the reader receives, making his discourse choices particularly significant. His opening statement – "I'm inclined to reserve all judgments" (1) – is immediately contradicted by the judgments that follow. This tension between claimed impartiality and actual evaluation creates an unreliable but engaging narrative voice. His self-description as "one of the few honest people" (65) is revealing: the narrator who protests his honesty most loudly may be the one whose perspective deserves closest scrutiny.

Jay Gatsby. Nick's descriptions of Gatsby oscillate between admiration and critique. The famous introduction – "there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity" (4) – is tempered by "Gatsby who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn." This dual framing means the reader never receives a stable evaluation of Gatsby. The instability is productive: Gatsby remains mysterious because the language used to describe him is conflicted.

Tom Buchanan. Nick's description of Tom uses physically aggressive language: "two shining arrogant eyes had established dominance over his face" and "a cruel body" (9). The metonymy – eyes that "establish dominance," a body described as "cruel" – attributes agency to body parts rather than the person, suggesting Tom is a collection of aggressive forces rather than a unified self. This linguistic choice distances the reader from Tom and positions him as a threatening presence.

Daisy Buchanan. Her voice is described as "full of money" (128), a synaesthetic metaphor that fuses an auditory quality (voice) with a material substance (money). The metaphor does more than indicate wealth – it suggests that Daisy's very humanity has been commodified. Her attractiveness, her charm, her desirability are inseparable from her economic position. The metaphor's strangeness ("full of money") forces the reader to pause and consider what it means for a person to be so thoroughly defined by wealth.

Jordan Baker. Described as "incurably dishonest" (64) despite her "erect carriage" and appearance as "a young cadet" (14), Jordan embodies the gap between appearance and reality that pervades the novel. The discourse strategy here is contrastive: her physical description (military bearing, athleticism) creates expectations of integrity that her behaviour subverts.

George and Myrtle Wilson. George is "so dumb he doesn't know he's alive" (30), "anemic" (28), and passive (146). The language of illness and passivity positions him as a victim. Myrtle, conversely, is "smoldering" (29) – active, sensual, aspiring. The contrast in descriptive vocabulary (passive/ill vs. active/vital) mirrors the gender dynamics of their marriage and sets up the tragedy to come: the active, aspiring character is killed; the passive, resigned one becomes a killer.

Imagery and Description

Fitzgerald's descriptive language creates vivid sensory imagery that shapes the reader's emotional response. Environmental descriptions in particular carry significant interpretive weight:

The Valley of Ashes: "a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens where ashes take the forms of houses ..." (27)

The simile "ashes grow like wheat" inverts the natural order — in this landscape, decay, not life, is what grows. The "grotesque gardens" suggest a perversion of pastoral, a corrupted Eden. This is not a neutral description; it is an ideological one, encoding moral judgment of the economic system that produces such a landscape.

East Egg: "the white palaces of fashionable East Egg glittered along the water" (8)

The verb "glittered" suggests both beauty and superficiality — what glitters may not be gold. The "white palaces" evoke purity and power simultaneously, establishing East Egg as a space of seemingly effortless superiority.

Gatsby's parties: "men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars" (43)

The simile "like moths" is carefully chosen: moths are drawn to light (wealth, glamour) but are ephemeral and easily destroyed. The partygoers are not individuals but a collective, indistinguishable presence. Their artificial relationships are captured in the description of "enthusiastic meetings between men and women who never knew each other's names" (44). The discourse strategy is one of depersonalisation: the crowd is a "sea-change of faces and voices" (45), a fluid mass without stable identity.

Dialogue and Speech Acts

Dialogue in the novel serves multiple discourse functions: revealing character, advancing plot, and establishing social relationships. Speech act theory — the classification of utterances as declarations, directives, commissives, expressives, etc. — provides a framework for understanding how dialogue works.

Declaratives (statements of fact or belief). Nick's opening statement — "Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone ... just remember that all the people of the world haven't had the advantages that you've had" (1) — is a declarative that functions as advice. Its placement at the beginning of the novel establishes a framework for interpretation: the reader is encouraged to be charitable toward characters, even as the narrative provides ample reason for judgment. The tension between the declarative's content (be non-judgmental) and the narrative's practice (constant evaluation) creates an interpretive dilemma.

Tom's declarative — "I've got a nice place here" (10) — is a statement of fact that functions as a claim of status. The declarative form asserts confidence, but the need to assert it

suggests insecurity beneath the surface. Tom must *say* his place is nice because he needs others to acknowledge it.

Directives (commands, requests). Tom's order – "You two start on home, Daisy. In Mr. Gatsby's car" (144) – is a directive that asserts dominance. The command is notable for its specificity (which car, with whom) and its context (immediately after the confrontation at the Plaza). Tom is reasserting control after having his authority challenged.

Commissives (promises, threats). Tom's promise – "I'm going to take better care of you from now on" (142) – is a commissive that implies its own opposite: if he must promise to take better care of Daisy, he has not been doing so adequately. The speech act's pragmatic meaning undermines its literal content.

Expressives (statements of emotion). Daisy's "You know I love you" (123) and Tom's "You are crazy!" (140) to Gatsby are expressive utterances that reveal emotional states while advancing the narrative. Daisy's declaration, made under conditions of deception (her husband does not know she is with Gatsby), is rendered ambiguous – is it genuine love or the thrill of transgression? Tom's accusation of madness serves a double function: it expresses his anger and delegitimises Gatsby by framing his pursuit of Daisy as irrational.

Capitalisation as a Stylistic Device

Fitzgerald uses capitalisation in dialogue to indicate emphatic stress, a device noted by Onuigbo (88) as the written representation of spoken emphasis. Key instances include:

Utterance	Speaker	Pragmatic Function
"Why CANDLES?" (14)	Daisy	Surprise/disapproval
"You DID do it" (15)	Daisy	Accusation, insistence
"And I KNOW" (20)	Daisy	Assertion of certainty
"Oh, you're JORDan Baker" (21)	Gatsby	Recognition, surprise
"SH!" (35)	Tom's husband	Command for silence
"Can't STAND them" (37)	Catherine	Emotional emphasis
"A bad driver not even TRYing!" (60)	Jordan	Criticism
"But the WHEEL'S off!" (61)	Jordan	Exclamation, crisis
"What day would suit YOU?" (88)	Gatsby	Correction, emphasis
"That huge place THERE?" (97)	Daisy	Excitement, pointing

The capitalised words consistently mark moments of heightened emotional involvement – surprise, accusation, insistence, excitement. The device is conventional (many novelists use capitalisation for emphasis), but its consistent application to emotionally charged

moments in the novel makes it a meaningful part of Fitzgerald's stylistic repertoire. It signals to the reader that these utterances carry particular interpersonal weight, and it adds a dimension of orality to the written dialogue – a reminder that these are spoken words meant to be heard.

Summary and Conclusion

This study has examined the discourse patterning in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, demonstrating how the novel functions as a coherent unit of communication through the interplay of cohesive devices, coherence structures, and interpersonal strategies.

The analysis of **textual cohesion** (Section 3) showed how repetition, ellipsis, anaphora, cataphora, and discourse markers create surface-level connections that guide reader comprehension and establish the novel's dense referential network. Cataphora, in particular, emerged as a significant device: Nick's anticipatory introduction of Gatsby creates an interpretive framework that the entire novel progressively fills in. Ellipsis, meanwhile, functions pragmatically to foreground what speakers choose not to say, implicating the reader in active meaning-making.

The examination of **structural and semantic coherence** (Section 4) revealed how the novel's non-linear narrative, causal chains, thematic interconnections, and symbolic system work together to create a unified interpretive whole. The non-linear structure mirrors the novel's thematic preoccupation with the past. The causal chains overlap in ways that make Gatsby's death the product of converging forces rather than a single cause. The thematic coherence – American Dream, moral decay, retribution, self-reinvention, class – gains density through its symbolic reinforcement: the green light, the Valley of Ashes, the eyes of Doctor T.J. Eckleburg, and the colour imagery form an interconnected system of meaning.

The analysis of **interpersonal discourse strategies** (Section 5) showed how characterisation, dialogue, speech acts, and capitalisation work together to construct the novel's social world. The descriptive language used for each character – the metonymic fragmentation of Tom, the synaesthetic metaphor for Daisy's voice, the depersonalising similes for Gatsby's partygoers – reveals Fitzgerald's deliberate linguistic choices in shaping reader response. Speech act analysis demonstrated that what characters *do* with their words (accuse, promise, command, express) is as important as what they *say*. Capitalisation, while a conventional device, consistently marks moments of heightened emotional involvement.

Limitations and future directions. This study is selective rather than exhaustive. It has not addressed, for instance, the patterning of turn-taking in dialogue, the use of free indirect discourse (the blending of Nick's voice with other characters' consciousness), or the discourse of gender as it emerges through conversational dynamics. Future research might examine these dimensions, or conduct comparative analysis of discourse patterning across Fitzgerald's four completed novels. Computational approaches – tracking the frequency and distribution of key lexical items across the text – could also complement the qualitative methods employed here.

In conclusion, *The Great Gatsby* demonstrates that discourse patterning is not merely a formal feature of literary texts but a meaning-making system that operates at multiple levels simultaneously. Grammatical choices (ellipsis, anaphora), structural decisions (non-linear narration, causal chains), symbolic networks (the green light, colour imagery), and interpersonal strategies (dialogue, speech acts, capitalisation) all converge to produce a novel that is, in Widdowson's terms, a "self-contained" unit of communication – one whose meaning emerges from the interplay of its linguistic and contextual dimensions.

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