
A Stylistic Analysis of Metaphorical Expressions in Non-Fictional Texts: A Study of Robert Greene's *The 48 Laws of Power*

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Abstract

The use of metaphors is a powerful stylistic tool that authors often employ to convey complex ideas and emotions. This paper presents a stylistic analysis of metaphors in Robert Greene's influential book, *The 48 Laws of Power*, showing how metaphorical expressions contribute to the book's stylistic impact. The study unravels the intricate process behind the creation, interpretation, and conceptualisation of metaphor in language use. It examines the stylistic choices made by the author in utilizing metaphors in the book, the type of metaphors used, and how the options are tailored to appeal to the readers' emotions and align with the book's central themes. Data were collected from the in-depth reading of the text and purposefully noting areas of stylistic interest to the study. The data collected were analysed qualitatively, using the descriptive approach. The linguistic levels analysis of Crystal and Davy (1969) that recommends that a particular text be discussed in terms of

several interrelated levels of description and the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SLF) theory of Halliday were used for data analysis and application. The study's findings reveal metaphors, are often used as powerful persuasive tools, which play a significant role in non-fictional books. Again, it shows that metaphors are not just persuasive tools or linguistic devices but also a cognitive process that shapes understanding of the world. And that metaphor helps readers internalise the messages communicated in both fictional and nonfictional books. The study concludes that metaphors are a universal language that effectively communicates concepts, unlocks hidden meaning within the text, bridges between concrete and abstract, paints vivid mental images and simplifies complex ideas.

Introduction

One of the key aspects of stylistics is the idea that language is not just a neutral tool for communication, but a form of artistic expression. Through analysing the stylistic choices made by a writer, insight is gained into the intentions and the effects of the writing. A writer might use a particular word or phrase to create a certain mood or evoke a specific emotion in the reader. The fundamental purpose of language is to facilitate communication, which is essential for meaningful interaction and understanding, and for fostering peaceful unity in addressing life's various issues. So, it is not hyperbolic to say that the essence of man is language. To this end, the speakers' expressions must be clear if cohesion and meaningful co-existence must be maintained in society. Therefore, style (the use of proper words in the proper places; that is, the ability to say the right things in the most effective way or appropriateness of usage, especially about the manner, mode of expression of

thought, tone or orientation in a discourse) and its study stylistics are very central to the study. Thus, considering this communicative aspect of language, as a way of enhancing language use is one of the major concerns of this study.

When a writer writes, what is paramount in his mind is how to convey the message with little or no ambiguity or distortion. To do this, a writer uses several extra-linguistic devices like aphorisms and figures of speech. A Figure of speech is a word, phrase, or clause used to produce a stylistic effect. In language use, words can be arranged and their meaning extended beyond the choices offered by the rules of grammar or standard usage. So, figurative expressions are commonly used for emphasis, clarity, variety, economy, expression of strong emotions, and achievement of certain aesthetic rhythms. Thus, metaphorical expressions are the most used figures of speech in fictional writing. Consequently, most metaphorical expression studies have focused on fictional writings. Very few studies have been done on non-fictional writings. Against this background, this study is set to study the linguistic analysis of metaphorical expressions in non-fictional texts.

Non-fiction texts are written works that are based on facts, real events, people, and places. These texts are meant to inform and educate readers about a particular subject or topic. They include autobiographies, biographies, history books, scientific articles, and textbooks. The primary purpose of non-fiction texts is to provide readers with accurate information about the real world.

Review of Related Literature

The 48 Laws of Power by Robert Greene is a classic exploration of power dynamics and strategies. Drawing on historical examples, philosophical principles, and psychological insights, Greene

examines the principles and tactics used by the most influential and powerful figures throughout history. Through storytelling and analysis, the book provides valuable lessons on navigating power dynamics, protecting oneself, and wielding power ethically. The book is divided into 48 laws, each law offers a unique perspective and strategic approach to understanding and exerting power. However, Greene's book is not a guide to moral behaviour, but rather an examination of the realities of power and how it operates in various contexts and an insight into human nature, manipulation, and the strategies employed by those seeking to acquire and maintain control.

Metaphors

Metaphors are used to convey complex ideas and emotions in literature. In non-fictional books, such as novels and poetry, metaphors are often employed to add depth and richness to the text, allowing readers to engage more deeply with the material. Miller (2023) and Black (2016) see metaphors as essential tools in the writer's toolkit and fundamental aspects of language and literature that evoke strong emotions create vivid imagery in the reader's mind and offer writers a powerful tool for expressing complex ideas and emotions (White 2018). Metaphors provide depth, complexity, and creativity to writing, allowing readers to interpret and appreciate the work on multiple levels. With metaphors, writers can evoke strong emotions, create lasting impressions, and imbue their work with beauty and meaning. As such, metaphors are essential for any writer seeking to communicate with depth, clarity, and creativity.

According to Eldridge (2007) in his article, *Metaphor and Art: Interactionism and Reference in the Verbal and Nonverbal Arts*.

Eldridge argues that metaphors in literature serve as a bridge between the verbal and nonverbal arts, allowing for a richer and more immersive aesthetic experience. In the 48 Laws of Power, Greene's use of metaphors compellingly conveys his ideas and creates a multi-sensory experience for the reader. Metaphors such as "Power as a Seductive Mistress" or "The 48 Laws of Power as a Chess Game" evoke images, emotions, and sensations that go beyond mere words on a page, drawing the reader into the world of power and strategy.

Additionally, literary scholar Sontag (1993), in *Metaphor as Disease*, explores the dual nature of metaphors, as both illuminating and potentially dangerous. Sontag argues that metaphors have the power to shape our understanding of the world and influence our actions, often in subtle and insidious ways. In *The 48 Laws of Power*, Greene's use of metaphors presents a similar duality. On one hand, the metaphors serve to elucidate his laws and make them more relatable and engaging for the reader. On the other hand, they also have the potential to shape the reader's perception of power and influence their actions and decisions in real life.

Handley, (2005) In the article, *The Role of Metaphors in the Construction of Reality*, explores the function of metaphors in shaping our understanding of the world. Handley argues that metaphors are not just linguistic devices, but rather powerful tools for constructing and shaping our reality. In the context of *The 48 Laws of Power*, Greene's use of metaphors constructs a reality in which power is the goal and the laws are the tools to attain it. For example, in *The 48 Laws of Power*, power is seen as *a War Strategy* or *Power as a Seductive Mistress*. So, Greene creates a vivid and compelling narrative that draws readers into his worldview. Metaphors can take many forms, from simple comparisons to more elaborate and extended metaphors (Brown2010). The use of

metaphors in *The 48 Laws of Power* serves to enrich the stylistic analysis of the text by providing a deeper understanding of the complex ideas presented by Greene. (Adam 2021) and (Garcia 2020) The metaphors contribute to the persuasive nature of the book and help to convey the principles of power in a compelling and impactful manner. Khasanov and Kasimova (2021) analyzed the use of metaphors in *The 48 Laws of Power* and their role in conveying complex ideas about power dynamics. The authors found that Greene's use of metaphors provides a deeper understanding of the principles of power and how they can be applied in real-world scenarios. They also noted that the metaphors used in the book are highly persuasive and contribute to the compelling nature of the text. In line with Khasanov and Kasimova's study, other researchers have also explored the use of metaphors in literature and their contribution to stylistic analysis. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that metaphors are not just literary devices but are fundamental to human thought and language. They suggest that metaphors are used to structure our understanding of the world and shape our perception of reality. This perspective can be applied to the analysis of metaphors in "48 Laws of Power" and how they influence the reader's interpretation of power dynamics and manipulation.

Types of Metaphors

There are several distinct types of metaphors, each with its unique characteristics and uses (Gibbs, 2015, Martinez, 2013), only five of them shall be discussed in this study, these include,

1. **Standard (direct) Metaphors:** These are direct comparisons between two unlike things. For example, "Time is a thief."
2. **Implied (indirect) Metaphors:** These suggest the comparison between two things without stating it directly. For example, "She

sailed through her exams," implies that she did very well, without directly saying that her performance was like a smooth sailing boat.

3. **Mixed Metaphors:** These combine different metaphors, often with humorous or confusing effects. For example, "He's got a heart of gold and legs that won't quit," mixes metaphors of value (heart of gold) and endurance (legs that will not quit).

4. **Dead Metaphors:** These are metaphors that have become so common and familiar in everyday language that their original figurative meaning is no longer apparent. These metaphors have become a standard part of speech and are used without conscious thought of their original meaning. For example, phrases like "time flies" or "heart of gold" are dead metaphors that are used to convey the passage of time or someone's kindness, without the speaker or listener necessarily recognizing them as metaphorical language. Dead metaphors are useful for adding colour and expression to our everyday speech, without requiring a conscious effort to create an analogy.

5. **Visual Metaphors:** These use an image to convey a particular message. For example, a light bulb is often used as a visual metaphor for an idea.

Stylistics: An overview

Stylistics is a branch of linguistics that focuses on the study of style in language, including how language is used to create effects, convey meaning, and evoke emotions. It encompasses the analysis of linguistic features such as vocabulary, syntax, phonology, and discourse structure, as well as the study of how these elements contribute to the overall style and tone of written and spoken communication. (Leech and Short, 2007). It focuses on the study of style in language and examines how language is used in different contexts to create specific effects and convey meaning. It,

also, involves looking at the choices writers and speakers make in terms of vocabulary, sentence structure, and composition. Stylistics are broadly divided into two: Linguistics and literary stylistics. Linguistics focuses on the scientific study of language structure, usage, and meaning; literary stylistics is concerned with the analysis of literary texts and the stylistic devices used by authors to convey their message. Both linguistics and literary stylistics are concerned with the study of language and its use in communication. They both analyze the structure, usage, and meaning of language, albeit from different perspectives. Linguistics focuses on the scientific study of language, while literary stylistics is more concerned with the aesthetic and artistic aspects of language use in literature. Both fields employ similar methods of analysis, such as close reading, textual analysis, and linguistic analysis. They both rely on the use of linguistic theories and concepts to analyze language data and draw conclusions about its structure and meaning. The concern of this study is linguistic stylistics. Therefore, the key areas of stylistic analysis include:

1. Lexical Choices: Stylistic analysis often involves examining the specific words and phrases chosen by writers or speakers to convey a particular tone, mood, or attitude. This may include analyzing the connotations, associations, and semantic fields of the vocabulary used in a text.

2. Syntactic Structure: The structure of sentences, including their length, complexity, and syntactic patterns, can significantly impact the stylistic qualities

of a piece of writing or spoken discourse. Stylistic analysis may focus on the rhythm, flow, and emphasis created through varied sentence structures.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is based on linguistic levels analysis by Crystal and Davy (1969), recommending that a particular text be examined in relation to several interconnected levels of description. This approach involves analyzing the subject of study or a specific piece of language or text by examining its phonological, grammatical, lexical, and semantic aspects. In this framework, these levels are independently studied using techniques developed in linguistics. The order in which the levels are studied is not significant. In this study, two levels are examined, moving from the grammatical (syntactic) to lexical levels. The analysis is based on the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) theory's semiotic function and semantic metafunctions. SFL deals with the register in terms of three variables or parameters known as semiotic functions. These are Field, Tenor, and Mode (Halliday 1978).

The field is the area of external reality that the text deals with. The tenor is concerned with the relationships between those participating in the linguistic act. Mode is the means through which the communication takes place. The semantic component of the SFL model is explained in terms of three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. The ideational metafunction refers to the part of the meaning that concerns the way external reality is represented in the text. The interpersonal metafunction concerns the relationships that exist between the speaker and his addressee(s) and between the speaker and his message. The textual metafunction is that part of the meaning potential which makes a text into a text, as opposed to a simple string of words or clauses. It thus involves phenomena such as thematic structure, information structure, and cohesion.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative research design, enabling a close reading (carefully and attentively) of the text, identification, and categorization of the metaphors, and examining their underlying meanings and effects. After, identification, the metaphors are categorized according to their thematic and linguistic properties. That is, organizing the metaphors based on their subjects, such as power, manipulation, strategy, and ambition, as well as their types such as conceptual metaphor, dead metaphor, descriptive metaphors, and others.

After the categorization of the metaphors, then the examination of the underlying meanings and effects. The data used in the study were gathered from *The 48 Laws of Power* by Robert Greene. The sample of the study was based on what Crystal (1967) called purposive sampling. It is a non-probability sampling technique. That is, the selected texts were handpicked because they were considered typical of what the research needed. After a survey of many metaphorical expressions from the text, five were picked for analysis. In the analysis, only the syntactic and lexical levels were analysed. The other levels of analysis were left out for want of space.

Data Presentation and Analysis:

1. **What type and class of metaphors are used in Robert Greene's "The 48 Laws of Power," and how is the message conveyed through metaphor?**

Metaphor	Type/Class	Explanation
1. "Power is essentially a game of wits played in a world where one's liveliness is an extremely high-stakes game." (complex sentence)	Mixed metaphor/power	Power is portrayed as a game of intelligence, cunning and strategic thinking in a competitive challenge.
2. The world is the court of the ambitious man, and there are few laws in it that he must not transgress. (compound-complex)	Implied (indirect) metaphor/ ambition	The world is likened to a court where ambitious individuals navigate through rules and regulations just like courtiers seeking favour with the king.
3. A perfect courtier always has a good arsenal of stories and aphorisms at his disposal. (simple sentence)	Implied (indirect) /ambition Standard (direct) metaphor/ Appearance	
4. A great ban is our body. (simple sentence)	Standard (direct) metaphor/ Power	This metaphor compares the knowledge and the storytelling abilities of a courtier to a weapon arsenal, emphasizing the
5. Power is a kind of luxury cruise in which the passengers, enjoying the calm		

and serenity of the sea, remain blissfully ignorant of the fire ranging below the deck. (complex sentence)	Standard metaphor/power	power of effective communication.
6. The master of power is a spider, weaving a delicate web of influence to ensnare their prey. (simple sentence)	Visual metaphor/influence	There is a need to maintain and protect one's physical presence and health as a crucial aspect of power and influence.
7. The chameleon changes its colour to match the earth, the hare hides in the thicket, and the fish takes refuge in the depths of the ocean. Everywhere, the disguise. (compound)	Dead metaphor/power	This metaphor paints a vivid picture of a situation in which individuals are oblivious to imminent danger or chaos highlighting the power when people are kept in the dark.
8. Power is a double-edged sword. It can be used to protect or to harm, depending on who wields it. (compound-complex)		Power is a web that traps and controls its victims, here, the predatory nature of those who seek power is emphasized.

The metaphor highlights the adaptability and camouflage of various creatures, emphasizing the effectiveness of assuming different forms to evade detection and maintain influence.

This metaphor compares power to a weapon that can be used for both good and evil, highlighting its inherently dual nature.

2. Are there syntactic and lexical features of stylistic significance that mark the use of metaphors in the texts? If there are, what are they? Syntactic Analysis

The use of parallelism

Jakobson (1961) and Wales (2001) state that parallelism or parallel construction is syntactical

feature which refers to parallel linguistic constructions, that is, the similarity of the syntactical structure in two or more sentences or parts of a sentence in a close sequence. Example

*The chameleon changes its colour to match the earth,
the hare hides in the thicket, and the fish takes refuge.
in the depths of the ocean. Everything, then, is
disguise.*

The underlined group of words are parallel. They are in the simple present tense with transitive verbs. The sentence is a compound sentence with four main clauses with simple subjects of noun phrases and complex objects consisting of prepositional phrases. The last sentence, however, contains an intransitive verb, “Everything, then, disguise.”

The use of polysyndeton

Short (1989) refers to polysyndeton as the repetition of the connectives (mostly conjunctions and prepositions) between sentences, phrases, or words. Polysyndeton has a disintegrating function because it makes each member of a string of facts appear conspicuously. Example,

*“Power is a double-edged sword – it can.
be used to protect or to harm,
depending on who wields it.”*

The underlined words are instances of polysyndeton. The sentence is a compound-complex sentence with two main clauses and one subordinate noun clause.

The Use of Stylistic Inversion

Crystal defines inversion as a term used in grammatical analysis to refer to the process of or result of syntactic change in which a

specific sequence of constituents is seen as the reverse of another (Crystal, 1985). Word order is a crucial syntactic feature in many languages. Example,

*"The master of power is a spider,
weaving a delicate web of influence to ensnare its prey."*

Metaphor number four from the table: *"A great ban is our body."* This is a simple sentence with SVC *"A great ban"* - subject, *"is"* - verb, *"our body"* – complement.

"A false bottom in one's political style" is a noun phrase. Here the subject is implied.

Lexical Analysis

At the lexical level, analysis is done to ascertain the appropriateness and suitability of chosen lexical items to the communicative context. The lexical item is considered in terms of its collocation. Also, vocabulary is described considering whether they are foreign or outlandish words and the morphological process at work such as coinage, compounding, reduplication, or affixation. **The use of modifiers.** E.g.,

*"Power is a kind of **luxury** cruise in which the passengers,
enjoying the **calm** and **serenity** of the sea,
remain **blissfully** ignorant of the fire raging below deck."*

The highlighted words in the above metaphor are modifiers.

The word choice is full of imagery and symbolism. Certain animals (spiders, chameleons, hares, fish etc.) with unique characteristics are used to describe the dynamics of power in the text. For example,

*"The master of power is **a spider**,
weaving a delicate web of influence to ensnare its prey."*

Example of the use of concrete nouns

*"A perfect courtier always has a well-stocked **arsenal of stories**
and aphorisms at his disposal"*

Discussion of findings

There are varieties of sentences according to structure but according to function, there is only one type, that is, the declarative(statement). This shows that metaphorical expressions are declarative represented in a variety of sentence structures – simple, complex, compound and compound-complex. From the study, metaphorical expressions in the text are presented more in complex and simple sentences than in compound and compound-complex sentences. Out of the eight (8) metaphors selected from the text for analysis, five (3) are simple sentences and three (3) are complex while compound-complex sentences and compound sentences are one, respectively. This could be since metaphorical expressions are used to simplify complex phenomena.

Also, the use of metaphorical expressions usually invoke imagery. For instance, the term "**well-stocked arsenal**" in one of the metaphors, invokes imagery of a military or strategic resource, highlighting the planning and preparation that goes into being a successful courtier. The use of the word "**arsenal**" suggests that the courtier's stories and aphorisms are not just random anecdotes, but carefully selected and crafted tools that can be used strategically to influence and impress others. The choice of the word "**stories**" emphasizes the role of narrative in communication. Stories have the power to captivate an audience, evoke emotions, and convey complex messages in a compelling and meaningful way. A courtier who is adept at storytelling can engage and persuade others, making them more likely to listen and respond favourably to his words. Likewise, the use of the word "**aphorisms**" highlights the courtier's ability to distil wisdom and insight into concise and memorable

phrases. Aphorisms are often seen as pearls of wisdom, offering guidance and truth in a succinct and impactful manner. A courtier who can effortlessly draw upon a reservoir of aphorisms demonstrates not only his intelligence and depth of thought but also his ability to communicate complex ideas in a clear and accessible way.

Metaphors help to draw connections between disparate concepts, making them more accessible and relatable. One such metaphor that is particularly poignant is

*"The key to power, then, is the ability to judge
who is best able to further your interest in all situations?"*

In the metaphor above, power is likened to a key, suggesting that power is the proverbial tool that unlocks doors and opportunities. Just as a key grants access to locked spaces, power grants access to resources, influence, and control. The metaphor implies that possessing power is essential for success and progress in various situations. The key is also symbolic of agency and control. Just as a keyholder holds the power to decide who gains entry to a space, a person with power has the authority to make decisions and shape outcomes. The metaphor suggests that power confers a sense of autonomy and mastery over one's circumstances, allowing individuals to exert their will and influence over others.

Conclusion

The stylistic analysis of metaphors in *The 48 Laws of Power* by Robert Greene reveals the powerful impact metaphors have on shaping the book's message and engaging the reader. With metaphors, Greene constructs a compelling reality in which power is the goal, and the laws presented in the book are the means to attain it. The metaphors create a multi-sensory, immersive experience for the reader and have the potential to influence their perception of

power and their actions in real life. With the insights from scholars such as Handley, Eldridge, and Sontag, there is a deeper understanding of the transformative power of metaphors in literature, particularly in the context of *The 48 Laws of Power*. It creates vivid imagery, evokes emotions, and conveys complex ideas concisely and engagingly. From the study, Greene conveys timeless principles of power dynamics compellingly and memorably. Also, metaphorical expressions add depth and richness to the text, making it more engaging and thought-provoking for the reader. Through metaphors, Greene creates a powerful visual and emotional impact, drawing the reader into the world of power play and manipulation. Thus, the skilful use of metaphorical expressions in *The 48 Laws of Power* not only enhances the readability and accessibility of the book but also serves to underline the timeless and universal truths of power dynamics.

Contribution to knowledge

The study has revealed that metaphor is a universal language, enabling writers to bridge historical and cultural divides and effectively convey any concept, idea, or emotion to a global audience. Moreover, it has strengthened readers' comprehension, encouraging deeper engagement with the ideas presented in the text under examination. Furthermore, this study has added to the expanding body of knowledge on the role of language in shaping our understanding of the world.

Recommendations

Therefore, this study recommends that all linguistic analysis levels be studied whenever a non-fictional text is being analysed.

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