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Research Article

Diction, Sound and Tone in Marlowe's Doctor Faustus: A Stylistic Analysis of Act One and the Place of Close Reading in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

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Abstract

Introduction: Stylistics studies the linguistic features of a text in order to understand how a writer creates and transmits meaning. Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (A-text, 1604) is one of the best-known Elizabethan tragedies, yet its language has seldom been described systematically at more than one level of stylistic analysis.

Objective: This study examines the diction and tone of Act One of *Doctor Faustus* through graphological, grammatical/lexical, and phonological analysis and considers what this kind of close reading means at a time when artificial intelligence (AI) tools are increasingly used to analyze literary style.

Method: The study is qualitative. Act One (the Prologue and Scenes 1–4) of Kastan's edition of the A-text was read closely, and its features were identified and interpreted at three levels of stylistic analysis.

Results: At the graphological level, Act One contains 90 speaking turns; every verse line opens with a capital letter, and punctuation is used to list, to pause, to join clauses, to mark elision and possession, and to express strong feeling. At the grammatical/lexical level, Marlowe combines plain words with learned and Latin expressions, Early Modern verb forms, inverted word order and compounds such as *new-found* and *arch-regent*, and nouns dominate the opening soliloquy. At the phonological level, the serious scenes are written in blank verse (iambic pentameter) and the comic scenes in prose, with alliteration and assonance adding emphasis. The tone moves between ambition, satire and dark foreboding.

Conclusion: Marlowe's diction is learned and wide-ranging but direct, and his tone shifts with the moral situation of the scene. Many of the features described here could be counted by AI tools, but their meaning depends on context, period and performance, which still requires close human reading.

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Introduction

Language is our main means of communication, the system through which we express our thoughts and emotions. Language exists in spoken and written form, and in writing, sounds are represented by letters and other graphic symbols on the page. To make their meaning clear and effective, writers adopt different styles, relying on figurative language, choice of words and particular forms of expression. Because every writer's style is different, understanding it can be difficult for readers, and this is one reason why stylistics has gained importance in linguistics and literary studies [1].

Stylistic analysis is now widely used in the study of English literature by writers, critics, teachers and students alike. It helps to identify the distinctive style of a writer and can reveal both the weaker and the masterly techniques in a text [2]. The present study offers a stylistic analysis of Act One of *Doctor Faustus* (1604) by Christopher Marlowe.

Style and Stylistic Analysis

Style is a particular form of language used by individuals in particular circumstances and contexts. The language we use in a casual conversation with friends, for example, differs from the language of an official letter. Pronunciation, grammar and word choice all change with the context. The term style can therefore be applied to an individual writer, a genre, a period or a whole language [3].

Stylistics bridges the gap between linguistics and literature. Literature is commonly divided into three genres, prose, drama and poetry, and works within each genre can be distinguished by the style their authors adopt. Two plays may both meet the requirements of drama, yet it is style that makes one different from another.

Christopher Marlowe and Doctor Faustus

Christopher Marlowe was born in Canterbury, the son of a shoemaker, and was baptised on 26 February 1564, the same year as William Shakespeare. He was educated at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and is counted among the University Wits. His career as a dramatist lasted only about six years, from around 1587 until his violent death in 1593, yet in that time he wrote the plays that made him the leading tragic dramatist of his day and an important influence on Shakespeare. He is also widely believed to have worked as an agent for the government. His plays are known for their powerful blank verse and for heroes whose ambition leads to their destruction, and many critics have argued that, had he lived longer, his reputation might have rivalled Shakespeare's [4].

Marlowe's dramatic works are *Dido, Queen of Carthage* (published 1594), *Tamburlaine the Great* (two parts, both performed by 1587 and published in 1590), *The Jew of Malta* (written around 1589–90, published in 1633), *Edward II* (published 1594), *The Massacre at Paris* (around 1593) and *Doctor Faustus* (published 1604). Blank verse had already been used in English by the Earl of Surrey and, on the stage, in *Gorboduc* (1561), but it was Marlowe who turned it into a flexible and powerful dramatic medium [4]. *The Jew of Malta* and *Doctor Faustus* remain his most famous works.

Drama is the representation of events through dialogue and action performed before an audience. A play is written as a script for actors, and the playwright arranges the story so that it engages the feelings of the audience and keeps them in suspense about what will happen next. *Doctor Faustus* is a tragedy, a form built on dark themes such as disaster, death and human suffering, and which usually ends in sorrow.

The full title of the play is *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*. Faustus, the protagonist, dominates all other characters, and his hunger for new learning reflects the spirit of the Renaissance. The play warns of the dangers of black magic and of turning away from God. Its main characters are Faustus; Mephistopheles, a devil who serves Lucifer; Lucifer, the prince of devils; and the Good and Evil Angels. Minor characters include Faustus's friends Valdes and Cornelius, his servant Wagner, the Pope and the Emperor Charles V.

Faustus is a respected German scholar who has mastered logic, medicine, law and divinity but is still not satisfied. Wanting something more, he turns to magic and summons Mephistopheles. He offers to surrender his soul to Lucifer in return for twenty-

four years in which Mephistopheles will serve him, and he signs the bond in his own blood. The Good Angel urges him to turn back, but Faustus listens to the Evil Angel instead. He questions Mephistopheles about heaven, hell and the fall of the angels, and then spends his years in pleasure and travel, playing tricks on the Pope in Rome while invisible, performing at the Emperor's court and summoning Helen of Troy. At the end he is overcome by fear and remorse and begs for God's mercy, but it is too late, and at midnight the devils carry him off to hell.

Significance of the Study

This study helps readers to understand the choice of words, the structure of the lines and the grammar used by Marlowe, and so to grasp more easily what he means by a particular word or construction. It also provides a model for applying several levels of stylistic analysis to an Elizabethan play, an area in which little work of this kind has been done on *Doctor Faustus*. Finally, by reflecting on how such an analysis compares with what AI tools can now do, it contributes to the current discussion about the place of close reading in literary studies.

Problem Statement

Elizabethan writers used a range of linguistic devices to convey meaning, much of which is not immediately visible to a modern reader. The diction, grammar and sound patterns of *Doctor Faustus* reflect both the language of the late sixteenth century and Marlowe's individual choices, but they have rarely been described together at the graphological, grammatical/lexical and phonological levels. At the same time, AI tools that claim to analyse literary style are now widely available, and it is not clear how far they can replace a careful human reading of a text such as this.

Research Questions

1. What kind of diction does Christopher Marlowe use in *Doctor Faustus*?
2. What is Marlowe's tone in *Doctor Faustus*?
3. What does a close stylistic reading of the play suggest about the strengths and limits of AI tools in literary stylistic analysis?

Research Objectives

1. To identify Marlowe's choice of diction in the selected text.
2. To describe Marlowe's tone in *Doctor Faustus*.
3. To discuss what the findings imply for the use of AI tools in stylistic analysis.

Literature Review

Style and Stylistics

Thinking about style goes back to classical rhetoric. Aristotle discusses style (*lexis*) in Book III of his *Rhetoric*, where he asks that it be clear and appropriate to its subject, and he links persuasion to three appeals: *logos* (argument), *pathos* (emotion) and *ethos* (the character of the speaker). Buffon famously declared that style is the man himself, a mirror in which a writer's personality can be seen, and Schopenhauer called style the physiognomy of the mind. In modern stylistics, style is understood as the result of choices among the options a language offers, and a writer's style is described through choices of vocabulary, sentence structure, figurative language and patterns of sound and rhythm, together with the effects these choices create [5].

Stylistics applies the methods and findings of linguistics to the analysis of texts, especially literary ones [5]. It is often called literary linguistics, since it combines linguistic analysis with literary criticism [3]. Wales stresses that the purpose of stylistic analysis is not simply to describe the formal features of a text but to show their significance for its interpretation. Simpson [6] puts it most directly: "stylistics is a method of textual interpretation in which primacy of place is assigned to language" (p. 2). Stylistics also examines how individuals and social groups choose among the resources of their language, and when language is treated in its social context the field overlaps with pragmatics, sociolinguistics and discourse analysis.

A central idea in stylistics is foregrounding. Features of a text become foregrounded when they stand out against the background of ordinary language, either because they deviate from a norm or because they are unusually repeated, and these prominent features are usually the ones that carry special meaning [2,5]. Empirical work has shown that

readers respond to foregrounded passages by reading them more slowly and finding them more striking and emotionally engaging [7]. Such deviation and repetition can occur at every level of language, from spelling and punctuation to sound, vocabulary and grammar, and this is the basis for analysing a text level by level [5,6]. Stylistics has a long history. In the classical period it was known as rhetoric and taught students how to structure an argument, use figurative language effectively and vary a speech for maximum impact. Rhetoric remained central in the medieval period, when it trained people for the Church, the law and public life, and during the nineteenth century it was gradually absorbed into linguistics, then known mainly as philology. Today stylistics studies not only literature but also texts from advertising, politics, religion and the law.

Although stylistics developed largely through the study of poetry and prose, its methods have been extended to drama. Short [8] argued that the analysis of dramatic dialogue should draw on discourse analysis, treating turns, exchanges and the relations between speakers as part of a play's meaning, and later work has examined how dramatists create point of view and character through language [9,10].

Previous Stylistic Studies

Several studies have applied these methods to literary texts. Gul et al. [11] examined Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" and showed that its departures from linguistic norms at the graphological, morphological, syntactic and semantic levels, such as irregular spelling, unusual syntax and nonstandard punctuation, are deliberate and serve artistic ends. Rahim and Tanveer [12] analysed Wole Soyinka's poem "Telephone Conversation" at the phonological, graphological, morphological, lexico-semantic and syntactic levels and found that these devices work together to build its theme of racism, while repetition and sound patterning make the poem memorable. Amjad and Waheed [13] studied lexical and grammatical deviation in Moni Mohsin's novel *The End of Innocence*, showing how neologisms, code-mixing and shifts of word class create a distinctive narrative voice that reflects Pakistani identity and supports humour and parody.

Al-Khalili and Jameel [14] examined the register of George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*. They found that its language is complex and sophisticated, that its structure and vocabulary reflect the general theme of the play, and that an analysis of register makes Shaw's satirical ideas on war and society easier for readers to understand. These studies show that a level-by-level approach can reveal how a writer's choices of words, grammar and figures of speech create meaning, but none of them deals with Elizabethan drama.

Stylistics and Computational Approaches

Stylistic analysis has also been carried out by computer for several decades. Computational stylistics, or stylometry, measures features such as the frequency of common words, and the Delta method of Burrows [15] became a standard way of comparing the styles of different authors; its reliability has since been tested and refined [16]. Surveys of authorship attribution describe a wide range of such methods [17], and freely available tools now make them accessible to literary scholars [18]. Marlowe himself has been the subject of such work: computational studies have examined his possible share in plays usually attributed to Shakespeare [19], and analysis of word patterns has identified him as the most likely co-author of the three *Henry VI* plays [20]. More recently, large language models have been tested on literary style. Mikros [21] found that GPT-4o could reproduce some surface features of Hemingway's and Shelley's writing but did not capture the full depth of their stylistic signatures, and critics have warned that such models generate fluent text from statistical patterns without any grasp of meaning [22]. Computational methods are therefore good at measuring patterns across large amounts of text, while the interpretation of what a particular choice means in its context remains the task of close reading. The present study works at the level of close reading, and its findings are used to reflect on what AI tools can and cannot add.

Materials and Methods

Nature of the Study

The present research is qualitative. It is based on close reading and interpretation of the text, with stylistic analysis used as the method of analysis.

Text and Scope

The text analysed is the A-text (1604) of *Doctor Faustus* in the modern-spelling edition by Kastan [23]. Marlowe wrote the play in Early Modern English [24], and the edition provides modern spelling and explanatory notes. The study is limited to Act One, which consists of the Prologue and four scenes. Act One was chosen because it introduces the narrative, the main characters and the point of view of the play, and because Marlowe's style is fully displayed in it. All line references are to act, scene and line in this edition (for example, 1.1.50). The division of the A-text into acts and scenes, and much of its modern punctuation, is the work of later editors, and the A- and B-texts of the play differ considerably [25]; the graphological findings below therefore describe the text as readers meet it in this edition.

Theoretical Framework

Stylistic analysis can be carried out at several levels. Following Jeffries and McIntyre [5] and Simpson [6], three levels were selected for this study: the graphological level (layout, capitalisation and punctuation), the grammatical/lexical level (word classes, word formation, vocabulary and sentence structure) and the phonological level (metre and sound patterning). The analysis of these levels was used to answer the questions about Marlowe's diction and tone, and its results were then used to reflect on the role of AI tools (Figure 1).

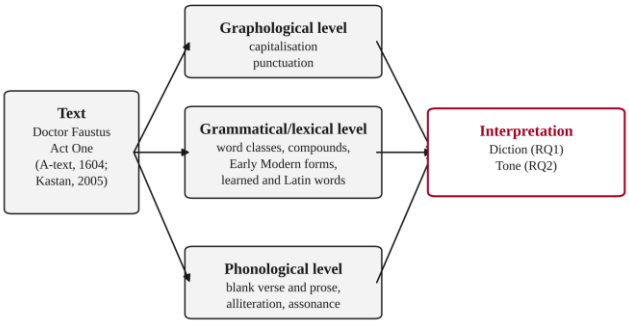


Figure 1: Analytical framework of the study

Procedure

Act One was read closely several times. Features at each of the three levels were identified, examples were recorded with their line references, and each feature was interpreted in terms of its effect on meaning and tone. The findings were then compared with earlier stylistic studies and with what is known about computational approaches to style.

Results

The Title

The play is usually known by the short title *Doctor Faustus*. The 1604 quarto calls it *The Tragicall History of D. Faustus*, and the 1616 text expands this to *The Tragicall History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*. Both titles announce a tragedy, so an Elizabethan audience might expect the rise and fall of a king or great battles. As soon as the play begins, however, the Chorus warns that this will be a different kind of tragedy, the story of a man whose "parents [were] base of stock".

Language of the Play

The play is written in Early Modern English, the language of late sixteenth-century England [24,26], and its style reflects both its period and the learning of its author. Some words look strange to present-day readers, and a modern reader needs a good dictionary or an annotated edition to follow the play fully. At the same time, Marlowe's language is lyrical, and it brings charm and sophistication to the play.

Graphological Level

Act One consists of five well-constructed parts: the Prologue and four scenes (Figure 2). The text contains 90 speaking turns shared among the major and minor characters: Doctor Faustus, the protagonist; Wagner, his servant; the Good and Evil Angels; Valdes and Cornelius, his friends; two Scholars; Mephistopheles; and the Clown. The act opens with Faustus's soliloquy, in which he reviews what he has achieved and looks for something greater, and it ends with the conversation between Wagner and the Clown. The act is rich in satire and imagery, and it uses a wide range of punctuation marks, sometimes in usual and sometimes in unusual ways.

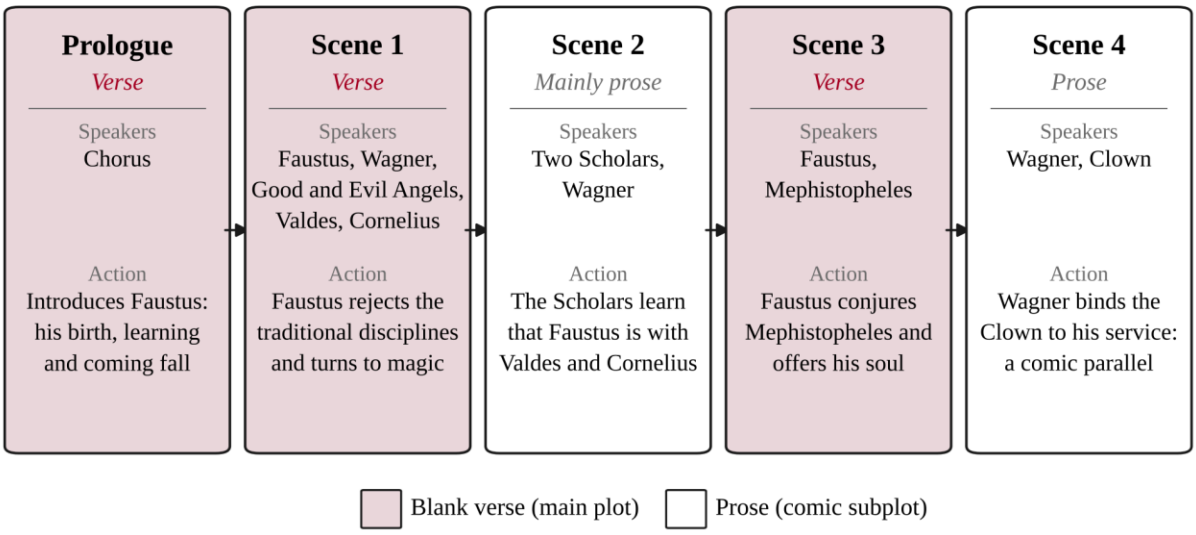


Figure 2: Structure of Act One: speakers, action and use of verse or prose

Capitalisation

Every verse line begins with a capital letter, as in 1.1.50–54:

O what a world of profit and delight,
Of power, of honour, of omnipotence
Is promised to the studious artisan!
All things that move between the quiet poles
Shall be at my command. Emperors and kings (1.1.50–54)

Capitals are also used within lines for proper nouns, such as "Justinian" (1.1.28), "Jerome's Bible" (1.1.38), "German Valdes and Cornelius" (1.1.99) and "Jehovah's" (1.3.9).

Punctuation

Marlowe's text uses punctuation to present ideas in different ways. Commas are used abundantly, both to mark the natural pauses of speech, as in "Be a physician, Faustus, heap up gold" (1.1.16), and to list items, as in "Lines, circles, scenes, letters, and characters" (1.1.48). Semicolons join independent clauses where a comma might be expected:

To sound the depth of that thou wilt profess;
Having commenc'd, be a divine in show (1.1.2–3)

Like lions shall they guard us when we please;
Like Almain rutters with their horsemen's staves (1.1.125–126)

Apostrophes are used for both possession and omission. Possession appears in "And live and die in Aristotle's works" (1.1.5); omission appears in "renown'd" (1.1.141), where the letter *e* is dropped, and in the contraction "Where's" (1.2.4). These elisions are not only spelling conventions but also adjust the number of syllables to the metre.

Quotation marks set off the many references and quotations in the act. Marlowe makes philosophical references, as in "Sweet Analytics, 'tis thou hast ravished me!" (1.1.6), which refers to Aristotle's works on logic; historical references, as in "Will be as cunning as Agrippa was" (1.1.110), recalling the German magician Cornelius Agrippa; mythological references, such as "Musaeus" (1.1.109); and biblical references. The clearest example is Faustus's reading of Jerome's Bible, where he quotes the Latin and translates it:

Jerome's Bible, Faustus, view it well.
Stipendium peccati mors est. Ha! *Stipendium*, &c.
"The reward of sin is death." That's hard.
Si peccasse negamus, fallimur, et nulla est in nobis veritas.
"If we say that we have no sin,
We deceive ourselves, and there's no truth in us." (1.1.36–42)

Exclamation marks express strong or sudden feeling and add emphasis, as in "Ha!" (1.1.38), "Thy head!"

(1.1.70) and "Alas, poor slave!" (1.4.6). Square brackets, used for stage directions such as [*Reads*], are an editorial convention of the modern edition rather than part of Marlowe's own text. Hyphens, question marks and other marks are also used to create and convey meaning.

Grammatical/Lexical Level

Marlowe's grammar is that of Early Modern English, and some of its features are difficult for modern readers. The second-person pronouns *thou* and *thee* and verb forms such as *wilt*, *hast* and *dost* appear throughout [26], and word order is often inverted to fit the metre or to place emphasis. In "O what a world of profit and delight, / Of power, of honour, of omnipotence / Is promised to the studious artisan!" (1.1.50–52), the long subject is placed before a delayed verb, building up to the climax of Faustus's ambition, and in "'tis thou hast ravished me" (1.1.6) the relative pronoun is left out. Some lexemes are hard to interpret, but in most lines Marlowe chooses simple, direct words. His lexis is striking and holds the reader's interest even where it is difficult.

Parts of Speech

Because it would be difficult to trace every part of speech in the whole act, this part of the analysis was limited to Act One, Scene 1. In this scene Marlowe uses mostly nouns, which give the verse a solid, concrete quality as Faustus names one field of learning after another. Words are generally used in their normal grammatical functions, but Marlowe sometimes shifts a word into an unexpected position or context. He also begins several lines with the interjection *O*, as in 1.1.50, to give them emphasis.

Compounding

Marlowe uses compounds in several places. *Lapland* (1.1.127) is a closed compound place-name, *new-found* (1.1.83) is a hyphenated compound adjective, and *arch-regent* (1.3.60) is a hyphenated compound noun formed with the prefix *arch-*.

Unfamiliar Expressions

The text is rich in expressions that are unfamiliar to modern readers. This is partly because the play belongs to the late sixteenth century and partly because Marlowe deliberately uses learned and scholastic phrases. Examples include "Have you any witness on't?" (1.2.12) and "is not he *corpus naturale*? And is not that *mobile*?" (1.2.15), which parodies the scholastic expression *corpus naturale seu mobile*, the term for the subject matter of physics.

Phonological Level

Blank Verse

The serious parts of *Doctor Faustus* are written in blank verse: unrhymed lines of iambic pentameter, in which each line has ten syllables arranged as five pairs of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one. The opening lines of the Chorus, "Not marching now in fields of Thrasimene, / Where Mars did mate the Carthaginians" (Prologue 1–2), show the pattern clearly (Figure 3).

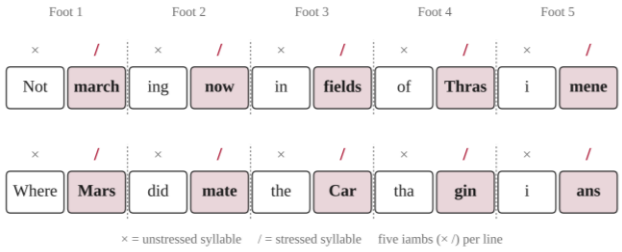


Figure 3: Iambic pentameter in the opening lines of the Prologue

Read aloud, these lines make the regular alternation of unstressed and stressed syllables easy to hear. Not all of the play is in verse, however. The comic scenes, such as the exchanges between Wagner and the Scholars in Scene 2 and between Wagner and the Clown in Scene 4, are written in prose (Figure 2). By moving between verse and prose, Marlowe separates the main plot of Faustus's fate from the comic subplot.

Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of the same consonant sound at the beginning of neighbouring words. Marlowe uses alliterative patterns throughout Act One to add emphasis and to bind phrases together:

- "Settle thy studies" (1.1.1)
- "that thou" (1.1.2)
- "such subject" (1.1.32)
- "circles, scenes" (1.1.48)
- "wonder what's" (1.2.1)
- "Franciscan friar" (1.3.21)

- "slave! See" (1.4.6)
- "Baliol and your Belcher" (1.4.26)

Assonance

Assonance is the repetition of a similar vowel sound in neighbouring words. Examples include "the end of every art" (1.1.4), with its repeated vowel in *end* and *every*, and "what a world of profit" (1.1.50), where *what* and *profit* share the same vowel. In both cases the repeated sound links words that carry the weight of Faustus's ambition.

Marlowe's tone in *Doctor Faustus* is striking, splendid and moving, and it changes from one part of the act to another. In Faustus's soliloquy it is ambitious and exultant, as in "O what a world of profit and delight" (1.1.50). In the scenes with Wagner and the Clown it becomes comic and satirical. Beneath both runs a dark and tragic tone, already heard when Faustus reads "The reward of sin is death" and dismisses it with "That's hard" (1.1.36–42). Because the play tells of a man who sells his soul to the devil and suffers for it, the overall tone is troubled and foreboding (Table 1).

Table 1: Summary of stylistic features in Act One of *Doctor Faustus*

Level	Feature	Examples	Effect
Graphological	Capitalised verse lines; proper nouns	O / Of / Is / All / Shall (1.1.50–54); Justinian (1.1.28)	Marks the verse form; highlights names of authorities
Graphological	Commas, semicolons, apostrophes, exclamation marks	Lines, circles, scenes (1.1.48); renown'd (1.1.141); Ha! (1.1.38)	Pauses, lists, metrical elision and emotional emphasis
Grammatical/lexical	Early Modern forms; inversion; ellipsis	thou wilt profess (1.1.2); 'tis thou hast ravished me (1.1.6)	Period flavour; emphasis and metrical fit
Grammatical/lexical	Learned and Latin vocabulary; compounds	Stipendium peccati mors est (1.1.36–42); corpus naturale (1.2.15); new-found (1.1.83)	Scholarly identity of Faustus; satire of scholasticism
Phonological	Blank verse and prose	Prologue 1–2; Scenes 2 and 4	Separates the tragic plot from the comic subplot
Phonological	Alliteration and assonance	Settle thy studies (1.1.1); what a world of profit (1.1.50)	Emphasis and cohesion
Tone	Shifting tone	1.1.50 (exultant); 1.4 (comic); 1.1.36–42 (foreboding)	Moves the audience between aspiration and dread

Discussion

The first research question concerned Marlowe's diction. The analysis shows a vocabulary that is wide-ranging and often learned, drawing on the language of logic, law, medicine, theology and magic, and mixing English with Latin. Yet most lines are built from plain, concrete words, especially nouns, so the learned terms stand out against a simpler background. In stylistic terms, these learned and Latin expressions are foregrounded [5]: they mark Faustus as a scholar and, in the comic scenes, allow Marlowe to mock scholastic jargon. The second research question concerned tone. The tone moves from ambition and delight in the opening soliloquy to satire in the prose scenes, with a constant undercurrent of foreboding. The shift between verse and prose supports these changes of tone, so the phonological level and the tone of the play work together.

These findings agree with earlier studies that have used a level-by-level approach. Like Gul et al. [11] and Rahim and Tanveer [12], this study finds that graphological and phonological choices are not decorative but contribute to meaning, and like Al-Khalili and Jameel [14], it finds that a writer's

vocabulary reflects the central theme of the work. Where those studies examined poems, a novel and a modern play, the present study shows that the same approach can be applied to Elizabethan drama, provided that the period of the language and the role of later editors are taken into account.

Stylistic Analysis in the Age of AI

The third research question asked what this kind of analysis suggests about AI tools. Many of the features described above could, in principle, be counted automatically. A computer can list every punctuation mark in Act One, count nouns and verbs, or measure the frequency of common words, and computational stylistics has used such counts for decades [15,16]. In Marlowe's case, computational analysis has even helped to reshape the canon by identifying him as a likely co-author of the *Henry VI* plays [19,20]. AI tools could therefore make an analysis such as this faster and more complete, for example by checking every line of the play rather than selected examples.

The analysis also shows where such tools fall short. Most language technologies are trained on modern English, and *Doctor Faustus* contains Early Modern forms such as *thou*, *hast* and *'tis*, elisions such as *renown'd*, and whole lines in Latin, all of which are likely to be misread by a modern tagger, a problem well documented in work on historical texts [27]. The punctuation of the edition is partly editorial, so a machine that counted it would be measuring the editor's choices as much as Marlowe's. Most importantly, deciding why a feature matters requires interpretation. The exclamation "Ha!" in 1.1.38 has its force only because Faustus is dismissing a warning that the audience knows he should heed, and the shift from verse to prose matters because it separates the tragic plot from the comic one. Research on large language models points the same way: GPT-4o can imitate the surface of a literary style without capturing its deeper patterns [21], and fluent output is no guarantee of understanding [22]. The most useful approach is therefore a combined one, in which AI tools gather and count features across a whole text and the human reader interprets them in their context.

There is also a thematic link between the play and present debates about AI. Faustus is drawn to magic by the promise of "a world of profit and delight, / Of power, of honour, of omnipotence" (1.1.50–51), and he gives up his soul for knowledge and power he cannot finally control. The language in which Marlowe expresses this ambition, and the warning built into it, gives modern readers a way of thinking about the hopes and risks that surround powerful new technologies. Read in this way, the stylistic choices of Act One are not only historical facts about an Elizabethan play but part of a story that still speaks to its audience.

Strengths and Limitations

The study analyses the play at three levels and links its findings to diction and tone, and it relates close reading to current computational approaches. It also has limitations. Only Act One was analysed, and the analysis of parts of speech was limited to Scene 1. The study uses a single modern-spelling edition of the A-text, whose punctuation and act divisions are partly editorial. The analysis is qualitative and does not include counts of the features described, and no AI tool was applied to the text in this study.

Future Perspective

Future research could extend the analysis to the whole play and compare the A-text with the B-text of 1616, or compare *Doctor Faustus* with *Tamburlaine* and *The Jew of Malta*. It could also apply computational tools to the full text [18], for example to count word classes and punctuation, and test how far AI annotation agrees with a careful human reading of Early Modern English drama.

Conclusion

Christopher Marlowe enriched *Doctor Faustus* with a wide vocabulary, and his selection of words makes his style distinctive and plays a crucial role in constructing meaning. He uses exaggerated, hyperbolic language throughout, draws on many references and myths, and writes lines that take the audience into an imaginary world and invite the reader to become absorbed in the play. His tone changes with the situation, from ambition to satire to foreboding, and in this way the play shows the true nature of human desire. The analysis confirms that literary language differs from ordinary language in

the way its graphological, grammatical, lexical and phonological choices work together. AI tools may make it easier to find and count these choices, but understanding why they matter still depends on reading the text closely and in its context.

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