



A Stylistic Analysis of Ideological Language in “Animal Farm” by George Orwell

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Abstract

This study aims to provide a Critical Stylistic account of how ideological language is constructed in George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, grounded in the approach outlined by Jeffries (2010). This study focuses on two TEXTUAL-CONCEPTUAL FUNCTIONS: naming and describing and representing actions/events. This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design, which is supported by close readings of selected passages from Orwell’s *Animal Farm*. The findings reveal that the author manipulates naming practices such as “comrades,” “traitor,” and “leader” to ideologically construct positive and negative identities, create oppositions, and legitimize power. He also employs representational strategies to skew agency, rewrite past events, and normalize ideological paradoxes (“All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others”). In conclusion, this study draws ideological meaning from Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, which is more than just reading between the lines. Ideological messages are constructed through linguistic choices. Furthermore, this study clarifies ideological manipulation and promotes stylistic theory by applying Jeffries’ principles. It also foregrounds how stylistics can function as a pedagogical tool to better understand and read critically against political discourse.

Keywords: stylistics, ideology, critical stylistics, *Animal Farm*, linguistic manipulation.

1. Introduction

Language is a tool that can shape ideologies, perception, and social thinking. Ideological meaning can be inserted implicitly through lexical choice, repetition, naming practices, or syntactic patterning rather than stated entirely in language. Stylistics offers scholars robust and systematic tools for analyzing how texts are constructed and produce meaning through language use (Simpson, 2004). *Animal Farm* by George Orwell (1945) is a political satire that has garnered significant academic attention for its themes of power, corruption, and ideological control through language. The pigs in the novel use language to dominate the thought processes of other animals by convincing them of altered meanings. Semantic shifts can occur over time through slogans like “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.” In recent years, *Animal Farm* scholarship has focused primarily on critical discourse analysis, ideological manipulation, and power relations within the text (Khursheed et al., 2024; Merzah, 2024; Azizan et al., 2025). Language use within the novella reflects the domination and hegemony between the characters. However, many of these studies focus on macro-discursive strategies or broader sociopolitical topics, overlooking micro-stylistic processes that construct ideology through language, such as lexical or syntactic patterning.

Rationale for the Study

Existing studies on Orwell’s *Animal Farm* tend to focus on ideological interpretation and discourse-level analysis rather than conducting a close investigation into how linguistic form constructs meaning. Although power relations have been successfully explained through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), less research has been done on how Orwell stylistically encodes ideology on the lexical level through repetition, naming patterns, and representational habits. Pragma-stylistic and corpus-assisted studies on *Animal Farm* highlight connections between ideological meaning and repetition of slogans, lexical patterning (collocation), and polarization (Merzah, 2024; Khursheed et al., 2024). However, studies rarely attempt to stylistically isolate how Orwell’s text constructs ideology through language on the textual plane. Thus, the rationale for this study is that, instead of broadly interpreting the novella through ideology, this study focuses on the stylistic analysis of ideological language itself.

Problem Statement

Analyses of Orwell’s *Animal Farm* have touched on linguistic features of his novella. For example, Merzah (2024) performed a pragma-stylistic analysis on manipulative discourse by identifying scapegoating and historical negationism fallacies present in Squealer’s language. Another scholar, Azimova (2025), focused on metaphors and similes present in *Animal Farm*. These authors uncovered the ways figurative language deepens our understanding of the ideology present in the novella. Singh and Raskar (2025) complete similar work by discussing representation and manipulation via stylistic categories. These studies highlight stylistics’ ability to unpack *Animal Farm*, but they operate on isolated stylistic devices (e. g., fallacies and metaphors). None of these scholars systematically applied Jeffries’ (2010) Critical Stylistics to *Animal Farm*. Said differently, scholarship has yet to identify how Orwell’s ideological language operates through the textual- conceptual

functions of naming/describing and representing actions/events. This limits our ability to see how ideology is constructed at the micro-linguistic rather than thematic or discourse - level.

Research Gap

While many previous studies have analyzed *Animal Farm* within CDA paradigms (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998), recent publications still focus primarily on ideology, domination, and propaganda rather than linguistic techniques (Khursheed et al., 2024; Merzah, 2024; Azizan et al., 2025). Very few studies have systematically analyzed the encoding of ideology using Critical Stylistics (Jeffries, 2010) within *Animal Farm* through the linguistic phenomena of naming, representation, and presupposition. *Animal Farm* research does not appear to extend beyond thematic analysis to linguistic explication; few have dug deeper than Orwell's message to show how he used systematic language patterns to create ideological effects. A cohesive stylistic analysis of the linguistic realization of ideology in *Animal Farm* would fill this void.

Research Objectives

1. To examine how ideological meanings are constructed through stylistic language choices in *Animal Farm*.
2. To analyze the lexical and representational features used to express ideology in *Animal Farm*.

Research Questions

1. How are ideological meanings constructed through stylistic language choices in *Animal Farm*?
2. What lexical and representational features are used to express ideology in *Animal Farm*?

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is outlined. The study contributes to stylistic scholarship by illustrating how Critical Stylistics can be applied to literary texts in order to expose their linguistic encoding of ideology. Specifically, the study builds upon Jeffries' (2010) insights by taking previous scholarship beyond general considerations of ideological or political interpretations of texts to an analysis of the specific stylistic resources through which ideological meanings are constructed. The study also bridges a gap in previous scholarship; comparatively few critics have explored the novel from the perspective of how the textual-conceptual functions of naming/describing and representing actions/events interact and contribute to the linguistic expression of worldview throughout the novel. Findings are also significant to scholars, students, and teachers of English language and literature by offering one concrete example of how stylistic analysis can be practiced and modeling critical reading.

2.Literature Review

Stylistics and Ideology

Stylistics aims to study linguistic features of literary texts and how speakers use language to make meaning (Simpson, 2004). Stylistics has evolved from literary criticism; however, it focuses on incorporating linguistics in examining literary texts objectively (Leech & Short, 2007). Various studies have revealed how language constructs ideologies. Ideology can be defined as social and political beliefs, thoughts, and assumptions often embedded in discourse (van Dijk, 1998).

Critical stylistics evolved from stylistics to mainly study language and power relationships in texts from an ideological perspective. According to Jeffries (2010), no text can be analyzed as ideology-free because every text represents encoded ideologies through language. Critical stylistics explains how ideologies become 'naturalized' in a text through textual-conceptual functions. These functions include naming and describing facts about people or events in the world, representing actions/events, comparing, and contrasting elements/people, etc. According to recent studies, ideological meanings can be studied through stylistics as well. Nørgaard et al. (2018) argue that stylistics can be used to explain how language patterning leads readers to make sense of literary works as well as their positions on different ideologies. Giovanelli and Harrison (2021) posit that stylistic analysis allows us to understand how literary texts construct ideology and manipulate readers' interpretation of power relationships. Stylistics can also reveal ideological assumptions about literary texts and other forms of political literature (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010).

Moreover, ideology can be communicated through the repeated use of words and terminology, semantic choices, presuppositions, and representation structures (Toolan, 2014). Lexical choices can be analyzed to identify ideologies, mainly in literary political allegories where language is used to manipulate the audience. Therefore, stylistics should be used to analyze ideology in literary texts.

Previous Studies on Orwell

Animal Farm by George Orwell has gained a great number of research studies as the book represents a political parody. The majority of studies targeted political themes such as manipulation, abuse of power, and controlling ideology. Fairclough's (1995) approach to Critical

Discourse Analysis (CDA) and van Dijk's (1998) Ideological model were mostly used to research Orwell's take on the representation of domination and power inequalities in *Animal Farm*.

In their study of positive and negative presentation strategies in *Animal Farm*, Al-Asbahi and Khafaga (2020) utilized critical discourse analysis. They found that Orwell takes advantage of specific linguistic patterns to differentiate in-groups and out-groups. The research concluded that language in *Animal Farm* was used to legitimate power and social control.

Merzah (2024) analyzed *Animal Farm* from a pragmatist-stylistic perspective and discovered different types of manipulative discourse through Napoleon and Squealer's language. Through finding fallacies of reasoning and manipulative tactics such as scapegoating, Merzah (2024) proved that propaganda was constructed using linguistic devices. The study also pointed out that while *Animal Farm* is widely read, the pragma linguistic aspects of it are rarely analyzed.

Khursheed et al. (2024) analyzed linguistic manipulation as Orwell's way of ideological and hegemonic control over the individuals in *Animal Farm*. The researchers concluded that discourse was used as a tool for higher groups to manipulate the beliefs of others. Stylistic analysis was not an aspect of this research; it focused more on the ideology behind manipulation in the book.

Azizan et al. (2025) used corpus - assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to research how power and identity were built in *Animal Farm*. By using AntConc to study collocations, slogans, and repetition, the researchers concluded that Orwell utilized linguistic patterns to build in-groups and out-groups. This study used some stylistic aspects but was mainly focused on sociolinguistics and discourse.

Incorporating symbolism and Critical Discourse Analysis, Ben Khalifa (2026) showed how symbols and hierarchy construct asymmetrical relations of power in *Animal Farm*. Although the study used analysis of language, it did not focus on specific linguistic choices but rather symbolism and social power. To conclude, prior research has been conducted on *Animal Farm* from political views and using CDA. However, research focusing on the book from a stylistic perspective is rare.

3.Theoretical Framework

The present study draws upon Critical Stylistics, introduced by Jeffries (2010), as the framework for analysis. It is described as uniting ideas from stylistics and critical linguistics and analyses how ideology is conveyed via lexical selections. Critical Stylistics analyses texts like traditional stylistics; however, it aims to expose meanings and the ideology behind them rather than simply describing the features of texts.

Only two of Jeffries's six textual- conceptual functions are used in this study due to their applicability to ideological language used in *Animal Farm*.

Naming and Describing

This deals with who is being talked about/identified, and how people, groups, and names are being referred to. How we label others says a lot about them. The writer chooses specific labels that will position the reader to see the subjects in a certain way.

Representing Actions, Events, and States

This deals with what is happening in the text. How is language used to attribute agency, blame, or power?

Applications of Critical Stylistics

Jeffries (2010) forward brought Critical Stylistics. In the stylistic analysis of literary and non-literary texts, scholars turn to Critical Stylistics more and more often in an attempt to reveal concealed ideological readings. Critical Stylistics aims to reveal how ideology is encoded in text linguistically, while Critical Discourse Analysis tends to focus on how social contexts and political issues shape texts. Jeffries (2010) states that textual-conceptual functions include naming and describing; representing actions and events; equating and contrasting; exemplifying and enumerating; and assuming and implying.

According to Jeffries and McIntyre (2010), Critical Stylistics is helpful because it connects stylistics and critical discourse studies. Giovannelli and Harrison (2021) state that analysis from a critical stylistic perspective allows scholars to gain insights into how literary language constructs ideology and power relationships.

Analysis based on stylistic concepts has recently been used in studies concerning ideological discourse. Pragmatic and stylistic perspectives were combined by Merzah (2024) when attempting to reveal the rhetorical strategies of manipulation used in *Animal Farm*. A corpus-assisted discourse study revealed that repetition, collocation, and keywords, when put together, offer insight into how ideologies are represented (Azizan et al., 2025).

Studies show that Critical Stylistics has become a useful method for the study of language and ideology in literature.

Gap in the Linguistic Analysis of Animal Farm

Scholars have widely discussed animal Farm; however, most approaches focus on areas of allegory, symbolism, political context, or conducting Critical Discourse Analysis of the novel. Three recent studies by Merzah (2024), Khursheed et al. (2024), Azizan et al. (2025), and Ben Khalifa (2026) focus more intently on propaganda, construction of identity, and polarization of ideologies within the novel. Similar to other studies, these works focus on interpreting the novel on a discourse level and analyzing the broader sociopolitical themes at play.

Few scholars have taken a linguistic perspective in discussing how ideology is constructed in Animal Farm. Although previous analyses have used Critical Stylistics as their theoretical lens, they focus more on the areas of propaganda and identification with political figures rather than analyzing how language is used to name and label, represent specific concepts, and use systematic word choice to create ideological meanings. Little research using Critical Stylistics has been done on Animal Farm. This study aims to fill this gap by stylistically analyzing how language is used to construct and propagate ideology in the novel.

4. Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design. Qualitative designs are used for studies that aim to find or interpret the meanings contained in the text and languages working used in specific situations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, ideological meanings are interpreted as constructed through certain linguistic devices. Therefore, a qualitative design will allow the study to focus on the description of features found in the text and how they are used to construct meanings.

The methodology used in the study is text-based stylistic analysis of lexical and representational features used to convey ideology in Animal Farm. The study does not call for any statistical analysis. Instead, the researcher will concentrate on providing a close reading of the text to systematically interpret the ideologically-loaded language patterns displayed in the book, based on stylistic studies of literary discourse (Simpson, 2004).

Data Source

The main body of data used in this study is George Orwell's Animal Farm novella, which was first published in 1945. Animal Farm is an allegorical novel about political power in which animals suffer from totalitarianism and manipulation of their ideologies. Since Orwell used slogans and manipulative language in the novel frequently, it allows for a stylistic analysis of the text.

The data include excerpts from the novel that showcase ideological representation and sentence structures that depict power, manipulation, control, and regulation. Speeches made by leaders of animals such as Old Major, Napoleon, and Squealer are focused on, along with the Seven Commandments, slogans frequently repeated in the novel. These excerpts were chosen as data because they represent language being used as an ideology builder.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection method involved close reading of Animal Farm. Briefly explained, this procedure included several steps. At first, the researcher carefully read the Animal Farm novel to become familiar with its plot organization and ideological direction. Then, sentences including persuasion, slogans, descriptions, and statements connected with power and authority relationships were identified throughout the novel. Next, ideologically loaded extracts appropriate for further stylistic analysis were chosen, including speeches of Old Major, Napoleon, and Squealer, changes in the Seven Commandments, and common slogans used during the story, for example, "Four legs good, two legs bad" or "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."

Afterwards, chosen excerpts were grouped and distributed into categories of textual-conceptual functions defined by Jeffries (2010). Therefore, the data collection procedure allowed observing the linguistic realization of ideological markers.

Ethical issues: As the data source involved published literary work and no human subjects participated in this research project, concerns about consent for participation and confidentiality were not relevant.

Analytical Procedure

The data were analyzed using the qualitative framework of Critical Stylistics introduced by Jeffries (2010), focusing on Naming and Describing, and representing actions/events and states.

Analytical Justification

Critical Stylistics has been broadly defined as ‘a rigorous method of analysing how texts become ideologically encoded in language choices’ (Jeffries & McIntyre, 2010; Simpson, 2004). Different from Critical Discourse Analysis approaches that focus primarily on larger socio-political issues surrounding the production of a text (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998), Critical Stylistics is helpful when zooming into how naming choices, representations, and lexical patterning occur within a text. This linguistic analytical tool has been previously used to study literary texts, since many scholars agree that stylistic analysis can show how language has the power to construct ideological messages and manipulate reader understanding (Giovannelli & Harrison, 2021; Nørgaard et al., 2018). Because of this, choosing Critical Stylistics to analyse Orwell’s *Animal Farm* was academically sound.

5. Findings and Analysis

Naming and Describing: Construction of Ideology in *Animal Farm*

Naming and describing are textual-conceptual functions through which ideological meanings are constructed and negotiated (Jeffries, 2010: 117). Orwell utilizes labels and descriptions throughout *Animal Farm* to influence the way that individuals, groups, and events are viewed.

The Use of “Comrades” as an Ideological Label

The most recurrent lexical unit in the novel is the word “comrades.” Old Major begins his speeches to animals by saying, “Comrades, you have heard already...” (Orwell, 1945). Napoleon and Squealer also name animals repeatedly in the same manner. The naming technique presents animals as belonging to a single community. Moreover, frequent usage of the word “comrades” evokes equality, solidarity, and a sense of collectiveness. However, even though animals are called comrades, pigs earn privileges and distance themselves from others. Therefore, animals called comrades undergo ideological manipulation as inequality is masked behind false togetherness. From the Critical Stylistics point of view, such word choice aims to normalize authority and establish identity while distancing hierarchy.

Naming Humans as Enemies

Old Major paints humans as villains and oppressors. He states that “Man is the only real enemy we have.” (Orwell, 1945) He also states that they eat without laboring and cause all of their suffering. He uses naming to create binary opposition between animals/humans. Negative connotation is behind man, and the animals are the victims of these evil doings. This type of naming creates stereotypes that allow for ideological opposition through revolt. Orwell is displaying how labeling and naming help form groupthink and ideological union.

Contrasting Descriptions of Snowball and Napoleon

Early in *Animal Farm*, Snowball is described as bright and vivacious. After Snowball is banished, however, his image is revised, and suddenly Snowball was “Jones’s secret agent all the time” (Orwell, 1945). This directly contrasts Snowball’s previous image as the hero of the Battle of the Cowshed. By demonizing Snowball and elevating Napoleon, we see how political power uses language to alter what is real. On the other side, Napoleon is described in hyper-glorified terms. Squealer constantly addresses him as “our Leader, Comrade Napoleon” (Orwell, 1945). Honorific titles and excessive praise put Napoleon on a pedestal higher than the rest of the animals and help breed his personality cult. Seeing how Snowball and Napoleon are described tells us that naming is an ideological tool that authorities can use to validate their power and demean enemies.

Describing Boxer as the Ideal Worker

Boxer is repeatedly described as diligent, loyal, and obedient. His personal motto is “I will work harder” (Orwell, 1945). Later in the story, he learns a second motto: “Napoleon is always right” (Orwell, 1945). The use of these mantras characterizes Boxer as representative of the working class and their blind loyalty, which is taken advantage of by those in power. Boxer has many good qualities, but he is not critical of political changes. Orwell uses Boxer’s characterization to show that ideology can take advantage of those who are blindly loyal to it.

Overall, the analysis discusses how Orwell shapes ideological meanings through names and descriptions. Orwell uses lexical labels such as ‘comrades’ and ‘traitor’, which are used to indoctrinate certain perceptions. Through name-calling, Orwell shows how certain names can influence thought to justify power.

Representing Actions and Events: Linguistic Construction of Power and Ideology

Another textual-conceptual function Jeffries (2010) highlights is that of acting ‘as representatives of actions, events and states’. Orwell uses this technique throughout *Animal Farm* to alter agency, rewrite history, and maintain political power.

Old Major's Speech and Revolutionary Agency

Old Major claims that animals suffer because humans oppress them. He explains that if humans were gone, there would be “no more root cause of hunger and overwork” (Orwell, 1945). Animals are given agency as the oppressed while humans are given agency as the oppressors. This positions animals as worthy of revolt and morally righteous. This gives way to the ideology that Animalism is built on. By manipulating who has agency in this passage, Orwell shows how discourse can create political awareness.

Napoleon's Rise to Power

As Napoleon builds up his power, Squealer frequently portrays him as omnipotent, bestowing knowledge and riches. Boxer eventually starts chanting “Napoleon is always right” (Orwell, 1945) himself, solidifying Napoleon's control. Napoleon is praised for success, and villainized animals are blamed for failure. This manipulation of information takes the blame off of leadership and makes his power feel more concrete. This pattern sees parallels to this sort of manipulation with language and feelings of power.

Rewriting History through Squealer's Propaganda

Snowball's contribution to the Battle of the Cowshed is erased by Squealer, who then claims Snowball collaborated with Jones. By changing history, Squealer can control memory and the production of truth. Something that was once praised is now deemed a threat. Shows how power can influence reality through discourse. Demonstrates Orwell's critique of totalitarian propaganda through manipulation of historical representation.

Modification of the Seven Commandments

Changing the Seven Commandments: One of Orwell's best instances of ideological manipulation is through changing the Seven Commandments. The last commandment reads: “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others” (Orwell, 1945). Obviously, this sentence is a paradox. However, since ideological discourse has been established, inequality seems normal to the animals. Orwell uses this paradoxical symbolism to illustrate how language can be altered to skew meanings and create privilege. Shift in ideals and corruption of revolution: The change in the commandments reflects a change in ideals. As Napoleon gains power, a new elite class is formed.

Representation of Boxer's Death

The death of Boxer could be one of the saddest deceptions in their propaganda. Boxer was sold to the knacker; however, Squealer tells everyone that Boxer died peacefully while receiving medical attention. Squealer tells the farm animals that Boxer's last words were how wonderful Animal Farm and Napoleon were (Orwell, 1945). This way, they hide their treachery and save face. Accountability is removed, and facts are altered to maintain power. A perfect example of turning exploitation into dedication and lies into facts. Overall, the analysis shows how Orwell chooses to portray events and actions to maintain ideological dominance. Agency is taken away and given, history is rewritten, and blame is shifted for political motives. The analysis demonstrates how language and power play into ideology.

6. Discussion

The purpose of this study is to explore the linguistic construction of ideology in *Animal Farm*. The Critical Stylistics framework by Jeffries (2010) is utilized for analysis. Two textual-conceptual functions are examined in this study: Naming and Describing and Representing Actions and Events. The results suggest Orwell strategically constructs, maintains, and exerts ideology throughout the novella through language.

Firstly, the study revealed that naming and descriptions influence the way we perceive others. Using the same label of “comrades” suggests unity and equality amongst individuals. However, negative labels like “traitor” or “enemy” marginalize others. Titles such as “our Leader, Comrade Napoleon” reinforce his authority as leader. Secondly, representations of actions and events also allow for ideological power. Agency is given or taken away to validate revolution, power, and corruption. History is also repeatedly altered, as shown through Snowball's changing character or the pigs' revisions of Boxer's death. Additionally, contradictory statements are made to seem normal, such as “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.” Overall, results show that Orwell's ideology is not only presented through content but also through form.

7. Conclusion

To sum up, this paper proved that *Animal Farm*'s ideological meaning is constructed through patterns of language use (stylistic choices) rather than direct narrative statements. Applying Critical Stylistics to the text demonstrated that language is used as a tool of ideological control. *Animal Farm*'s naming strategies established unity, division, and authority, while its representational strategies controlled truth, history, and perception. This showed how ideology is formed intricately through common uses of language to sustain systems of power as

both neutral and indisputable. Thus, *Animal Farm* is not only a political allegory, but also a piece that highlights how linguistic practices form ideologies.

8. Implications of the Study

This study has multiple implications. First, this study extends our knowledge in the stylistics field by suggesting that Critical Stylistics (Jeffries, 2010) could be a useful tool to examine ideological language use. It suggests that the notion of naming, representation, and opposition allows us to understand systematically how ideology is embedded linguistically in literary texts. Second, this study reaffirms the importance of conducting micro-linguistic analysis in literature. Instead of focusing only on themes or political interpretations, stylistic analysis reveals how meaning is constructed at the level of lexical and grammatical choice. Finally, the findings indicate that *Animal Farm* can be effectively used in language and literature classrooms to teach students how language shapes ideology. It also shows the usefulness of stylistics in improving critical reading skills.

9. Limitations of the Study

This study provides meaningful insights, but it also has certain limitations; firstly, it is limited to only two textual-conceptual functions of Critical Stylistics, namely naming and describing, and representing actions and events. Other functions such as presupposition, implication, and modality were not included due to scope restrictions. Secondly, this study is based only on qualitative textual analysis and does not incorporate quantitative or corpus-based methods, which could provide additional empirical support. Finally, the analysis is limited to only a single literary text, which restricts generalizability.

10. Recommendations

Future studies may expand this research in several directions: first, future research may apply other components of Critical Stylistics to *Animal Farm*, including presupposition, implication, and textual silence, to gain deeper insights into ideological construction. Then, comparative studies between *Animal Farm* and other hellish or allegorical novels could be conducted to explore similarities and differences in ideological language use. Next, future research may also use corpus-assisted stylistics to quantitatively examine lexical patterns and ideological repetition. Finally, researchers may extend this approach to non-literary political discourse, such as media texts or political speeches, to analyze how ideological language operates in real-world communication.

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