

A Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis: Constructions of Identity and Power in Animal Farm by George Orwell

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ABSTRACT

This study incorporates a corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) methodology to analyse the way language in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* structure's identity and authority. Following Van Dijk's theory of ideological polarization and Fairclough's three-dimensional model, the study focuses on how stylistic components such as slogans, repetition, and collocations can reinforce binary distinctions between groups and ideological assertions. Given that *Animal Farm* has been extensively studied via political and allegorical viewpoints, little research has been put toward exploring the discursive significance of Orwell's linguistic choices in shaping both power and identity. By including AntConc corpus tools into the analysis, the study strengthens CDA clarity and empirical support. The findings suggest that phrases and collocations may disclose systematic approaches for building in-group legitimacy (the pigs) and out-group deviance (the other animals). The present study contributes a methodologically distinct contribution to the structure of sociolinguistics by researching how language is used to define identity and power in a fictional narrative. It indicates how corpus-assisted CDA assists in helping researchers comprehend the ideological aspects of discourse and how they intersect with social power relations. Moreover, the findings emphasize fiction's relevance as an acceptable domain for sociolinguistic study, and CDA may disclose the ideological mechanisms inherent to the narrative. The study provides both practical and theoretical additions to the fields of applied linguistics and the arts and humanities.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Identity Construction, Ideology, *Animal Farm*, Corpus Linguistics

INTRODUCTION

In the context of sociolinguistics, language is not just a means of communication but rather a dynamic social practice that serves to establish, maintain, and challenge ideologies, identities, and hierarchies (Van Dijk, 2006). The study of speech as an aspect of power struggle, where language can be utilized to establish dominance and resistance, constitutes one of the fundamental principles of sociolinguistic inquiry. An increasing number of researchers are researching how fictions and narratives embed ideological meaning, regardless of how a significant amount of this study has been done in the context of political speeches, media texts, and institutional discourse (Jeffries, 2010). Fiction provides an especially informative corpus for evaluating the ways in which language is utilized to imitate or challenge power hierarchies because of its stylized and regulated vocabulary.

Animal Farm (1945) written by George Orwell functions as a significant foundation for this study. The novel serves as an allegorical indictment of tyranny, sometimes regarded as a commentary on Russian Stalinism. The deceptively straightforward narrative focused on a collective of farm animals that revolt against their human farmer, only to encounter a different type of subjugation, offering significant material for analysing how language enables the formation of ideological power. Although many have focused on the novel's themes and allegorical dimensions (as mentioned by Rodden, 1999), a notable gap remains in linguistic research regarding the use of language in the novel as a means of ideological control. This is especially applicable in the area of methodologically rigorous, data-driven analysis grounded on sociolinguistic perspectives.

The study applies a corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to analyze how linguistic components in *Animal Farm* form social identities and reinforce ideological authority. This research adopts Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model, which evaluates textual, discursive, and cultural factors, alongside Van Dijk's (2006) theory of ideological polarization, to explore the application of stylistic devices like repetition, slogans, and collocations in encoding and standardizing the dynamics of power. Subsequently, this study employs a sociolinguistic framework to analyse how fiction resembles real-world discourse practices, presenting insights into the method by which that language shapes and reflects reality in society.

The present analysis is distinguished from existing literary or thematic assessments by using the application of a corpus linguistic tool, AntConc. According to Anthony (2019), AntConc is designed to computationally validate characteristics of language used in the novel. The corpus-assisted approach enables extensive and profound insights, supporting the observation of linguistic patterns that may be overlooked in an exclusively qualitative study. Therefore, the hybrid approach consisting of Critical Discourse Analysis and corpus linguistics has been found to strengthen methodological clarity and replicability, consequently reinforcing the validity of outcomes on the ideological significance of language within the source material (Mahlberg, 2013).

The study is embedded within a developing interdisciplinary framework in applied linguistics and sociolinguistics that regards fiction not primarily as a source of entertainment or cultural representation but also as a valid domain for critical language study. While extravagant in nature, fictional literature frequently utilizes the same discursive methods prevalent in political and institutional discourse. A few critical discourse studies have discussed how fiction uses discursive techniques equivalent to those in institutional and political literature, providing credence to this approach (Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018; Wodak, 2021). The research contextualizes *Animal Farm* within an analytical framework, enhancing the comprehension of how fictional narratives convey beliefs and revealing the various contexts in which language shapes power and identities.

The result of this study aims to address methodological and qualitative insufficient contributions to the body of knowledge. Regardless of the wide range of applications of CDA to non-literary genres such as newspapers, political speeches, and policy documents (Wodak & Meyer, 2009), its implementation in literary texts, particularly when paired with corpus-based methodologies, remains limited. This study offers a distinctive contribution to sociolinguistic approach and the discourse analysis of literary fiction, corresponding with the objectives of applied language studies that encompass theory, method, and context in the analysis of language use.

In line with the aims, these research questions operate as the foundation for this study:

How does language adopted in Orwell's *Animal Farm* construct social identities and ideological power?

What stylistic and discursive strategies are employed in the novel to polarize in-groups and out-groups?

How can a corpus-assisted CDA approach provide empirical insights into the ideological discourse of the novel?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical Discourse Analysis and Power

The interconnection of language, ideology, and identity has traditionally served as an integral topic in sociolinguistics, notably within the context of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Within the core of CDA is its belief of how discourse constitutes a social practice through which power relations within society are implemented, contested, and sustained (Fairclough, 1995). This stance regards language not simply as an impartial carrier of meaning, but as an intentional and culturally integrated tool for shaping ideology and producing societal truths (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). The incorporated methodological focus on the inequality of power and its critical evaluation of language makes it particularly suitable for researching ideologically motivated novels like *Animal Farm* (1995).

Studies on Animal Farm and Ideology

The publication of Orwell's narratives has undergone extensive research from both literary and political

viewpoints, with scholars regularly highlighting its allegorical criticism of Stalinism and its ethical-philosophical dimensions (Gleason, 2018). Despite these interpretations helping clarify the overarching political message of the writing, a good portion often neglect the smaller-scale linguistic strategies that define power and identity (Grigoryan, 2020; Lazar, 2020). The most recent discourse-oriented studies are beginning to address this matter. Khafaga (2021) studied a pragma-stylistic analysis of persuasive discourse in *Animal Farm*, highlighting rhetorical devices comprising euphemism, assumption, and repetition. Additionally, Merzah (2024) explored the role of character dialogues in ideological persuasiveness. However, these studies typically rely on qualitative interpretation devoid of empirical assurance, therefore necessitating more methodologically robust, data-supported strategies.

Theoretical Framework: Fairclough's Model and Van Dijk's Model

The present research extends these foundations by utilizing Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis, which covers three analytical levels: textual, discursive practice, and social practice. It evaluates language attributes composed of vocabulary, grammar, coherence, and rhetorical devices on a textual basis. The discursive practice aspect focuses on the processes of composing texts and reception, whereas the social practice element establishes discourse within wider institutional and ideological frameworks. This triadic framework facilitates a comprehensive study of how discourse shapes and justifies social power. The combination of Fairclough's three-dimensional framework and Van Dijk's ideological square aligns with recent applications of CDA in studying ideological polarization in fictional literature (Reisigl, 2020).

This research also integrates Van Dijk's (2006) theory of ideological discourse structures, namely his definition of the "ideological square," together with Fairclough's model. This paradigm demonstrates how group polarization is discursively accomplished by emphasizing the positive characteristics of the in-group while downplaying or demeaning the out-group. In *Animal Farm*, this polarization is distinctively reinforced by the opposition of the ruling pigs and the other animals, with linguistic selections influencing hierarchical divisions. Van Dijk's model permits an in-depth comprehension of how these patterns correspond with the ideological portrayal of events and characters. There is a strong complementarity between the approaches which provides an integrated framework to address language and power issues. Fairclough's model allows for a multi-tiered analysis of how discourse functions at the micro-level of text, the meso-level of production and consumption, and the macro-level within broader sociocultural systems. Similarly, Van Dijk's ideological square offers a methodology for understanding discursive construction of polarization, by accentuating in-group virtues versus downplaying or discrediting out-group. These frameworks offer a more nuanced, critically informed and historically grounded analysis of the ways Orwell represents authoritarianism, marginalization and ideological manipulation as taking place through *Animal Farm*.

Corpus Linguistics in CDA

In lieu of the distinctions between the qualitative method and the study's potentials, corpus linguistics as a tool is applied to improve analytical precision and empirical underpinning. Corpus linguistics contributes a quantitative layer to discourse analysis by demonstrating patterns, frequencies, and collocations across extensive text databases (McEnery & Hardie, 2012). AntConc, a concordance software designed by Anthony (2019), allows the collection and visualization of these patterns. The study implements practices such as keyword analysis, collocation mapping, and concordance line assessment to transcend subjective interpretations and furnish systematic indication of ideological discourse structures throughout the novel. Some recent works also demonstrate that corpus-assisted CDA clarifies transparency and replicability in the analysis of ideological literature (Baker, 2021; Partington et al., 2018).

Previous studies have illustrated the potential of combining corpus methodologies with CDA. Baker et al. (2008) has shown that these approaches can improve the transparency and replicability of discourse analysis.

Mahlberg (2013) highlighted the relevance of corpus stylistics in the study of narrative prose, particularly in the writings of Charles Dickens. In spite of these advancements, a gap persists in corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis studies associated with Orwell's fiction, mainly within the Malaysian postgraduate research. This study thus aims to fill that gap by offering a data-driven, theoretically based review of *Animal Farm*.

The present paper leverages sociocognitive and structuralist approaches, with statistical methods from corpus linguistics, to further develop the interdisciplinary analysis of fictional texts as a socially significant discourse. It depicts *Animal Farm* not merely as a piece of literature, but as a sociolinguistic component that replicates and perpetuates ideological disputes. This method of study aligns with overarching patterns in applied language studies that emphasize methodological innovation and critical study of language as a means of social movement.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, a qualitative research design based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is applied and enhanced by corpus linguistics approaches to analyze how Orwell's *Animal Farm* establishes identity and authority through language, utilizing a methodologically robust and empirically validated framework. It supports the combination of interpretative sociolinguistic analysis with empirical data acquired via a corpus-assisted tool.

Corpus Selection and Preparation

This study utilizes the complete text of *Animal Farm* by George Orwell as the primary data source, which has been widely recognized for its ideological depth and linguistic simplicity. The text was sourced from a verified public domain version and formatted into plain text for compatibility with corpus analysis tools. To ensure accuracy, the text was cleaned to remove metadata, chapter headings, and extraneous punctuation that could distort frequency counts or collocation trends.

In the aftermath of cleaning, the text was uploaded into AntConc 3.5.8 (Anthony, 2019), a corpus analysis software specialized to measure lexical frequencies, collocations, keyword clusters, and concordance relationships. Considering its limited dimension, *Animal Farm*'s cohesive narrative and ideological depth provides appropriate results for focused study within a specific contextual study.

Analytical Framework

This study operates Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model of CDA in three phases:

Textual Analysis: The first phase entails an in-depth evaluation of linguistic characteristics, including word frequency, lexical repetition, pronoun usage, and significant collocations. A particular focus is placed on ideologically crucial terminology such as "comrade," "enemy," and "equal," whose interpretations vary throughout the narrative. The frequency and collocation functions of AntConc are employed to discern patterns that signify speech strategies.

Discursive Practice Analysis: The second phase addresses the production and consumption of written material within the fictional domain. For example, the persona of Squealer is studied for his role in propagating state ideology through linguistic manipulations. This phase additionally examines the dissemination of slogans and directives among the animals to internalize a shared identity.

Social Practice Analysis: The last phase explores the text within the broader ideological and sociopolitical framework; it symbolizes specifically the emergence of totalitarian leadership. This evaluation examines Orwell's application of discursive ambiguity and semantic inversion as evidence of how language is used to legitimize social inequity and exert authority.

Corpus Techniques and Tools

This section highlights the corpus methods and tools used in the analysis, which include frequency analysis, collocation analysis, and concordance analysis.

Frequency Analysis: This feature outlines the most frequently used phrases and terminologies associated with social categorization, authority, and compliance, presenting a comprehensive overview in the discursive context.

Collocation Analysis: In this component, it highlights lexical pairs and associative connections. The collocates of the character "Napoleon" are studied to identify the linguistic development of leadership.

Concordance Analysis: Through this analysis, micro-contextual insights by demonstrating key phrases within their immediate linguistic context will facilitate the comprehension of pragmatic meaning and semantic progression.

These three corpus techniques are implemented not separately but simultaneously with the sociolinguistic frameworks addressed in the literature review.

Ethical Considerations and Limitations

The data gathered in the study presents no concerns regarding ethical considerations since the study utilizes the material of fictional literature freely accessible in the public domain. Nevertheless, the only limitation is the corpus size, which constrains the generalizability of some quantitative points of view. Empirical analysis underscores high-frequency elements and discourse-relevant lexical patterns to help to minimize this by highlighting qualitative depth over statistical evaluation.

In summary, the methodology used assures a thorough, statistically backed analysis of how language in *Animal Farm* constitutes social meaning. It also offers novel possibilities on how works of literature into real-world language learning can be linguistically researched.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Previous corpus-assisted critical discourse studies of *Animal Farm* have highlighted a significant amount of identified patterns in Orwell's language strategies which influence ideological identity and power connections, which are also found in this study. Through employing frequency, collocation, and concordance assessment, three significant language methods were recognized: the reiteration of slogans, the polarization of group identities in collocational patterns, and the semantic manipulation of ideological phrases. The results have illustrated the discursive strategies Orwell draws on to describe authoritarian regimes and validate hierarchical power structures within the context of the novel.

Repetition and Ideological Internalization

A prevalent strategy highlighted through frequency analysis is the evident utilization of recurring slogans. The expressions "Four legs good, two legs bad" and "All animals are equal" appeared among the most frequently occurring phrases in the corpus, often utilized in substantial narrative and dialogic circumstances. Slogans like this function as language tools for ideological amplification. Their recurring application reflects actual political propaganda, aiming to reduce the complexity of reality, widespread ideological beliefs, and suppress dissenting perspectives (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). The overarching repetition of "Four legs good, two legs bad" develops a binary division which corresponds with the ideological square, underlining in-group cohesiveness and out-group animosity. The in-group and out-group discourse strategies are extensively documented in CDA studies on political propaganda (Machin & Mayr, 2023).

Additionally, repetition not only promotes in-group cohesion but also hampers critical thinking among the members of the group. The slogans modify into affirmations, decreasing linguistic diversity and thus restricting the animals' interpretive independence. This coincides with Fairclough's (1995) theory that

language is communicated ideologically through narrowing the possibilities to form meanings and comprehension and controlling societal cognition. Jeffries (2010) further observes that repetition and parallelism act as stylistic strategies that integrate ideological propaganda into a text, cultivating political authority into standard language.

Collocational Patterns and Group Polarization

The collocation analysis through AntConc recorded some of the specific lexical co-occurrences linked to important characters such as Napoleon and Snowball. The above is a typical example: Napoleon's name appears often together with words like "comrade," "leader," and "order," placing him in a semantic field of authority and ruling status. Snowball, on the other hand, is frequently mentioned with "traitor," "enemy," and "exile," even after he has been banished from the farm. Such collocational patterns serve to reinforce binary oppositions that correspond to actual propaganda strategies in the world, as proposed in Van Dijk (1998)'s model of ideological discourse.

Through the corpus analysis, the idea shows that the dichotomy between loyalty and dissent is a linguistic strategy. Pigs are pure or centred around positive traits that are naturalized as the exclusive purview of the in-group, with the dissenters or outsiders being assigned negative traits. For instance, the most Orwellian thing about Chapter 7 was that Napoleon uses the word "comrade" throughout every other sentence as he masterminds a purge. This strategic repetition of an apparently all-embracing word serves to numb violence and sustain false unity, thereby disguising the regime's oppressive use of force. Similarly, the near-constant use of the term "traitor" when Snowball becomes a target during the political purges demonstrates how language was used to redefine formerly revered individuals as existential threats. Such lexical framings indicate conscious efforts to construct group perception and discourage dissenting views. Such instances provide useful qualitative substantiation for the collocation analysis, and they serve as anchor points between abstract corpus patterns and recognizable stories. This not just builds a moral hierarchy but also justifies the authority of the ruling class. The intentional discursive constructions of loyalty and dissent mirror ideological polarization components discussed in CDA literature (Reisigl, 2020). Collocational profiles that encode implicit evaluative and ideological positions within discourse, also indicate the way characters are constructed discursively. This therefore illustrates that they can surface to function in a similar way (Simpson, 2004).

Lexical Framing and Ideological Shifts

An in-depth analysis of concordance lines comprising the word "equal" indicates Orwell's manipulation of ideological positioning. Initially implemented as an indicator of fairness and solidarity, "equal" progressively grows ambiguous and satirical as the story moves forward. The final use in the reformed slogan, "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others," suggests how language may be reinterpreted to promote opposition ideological agendas.

The preceding instance of semantic inversion displays Orwell's insight on the flexibility of political discourse. Fairclough (1992) clarifies that discourse deliberately reconstructs ideology by intentional recontextualization, instead of merely analyzing it. The varying usage of "equal" in *Animal Farm* depicts how dominant groups modify terminologies in accordance with expanding the hegemonic structures of power. This corresponds in line with Wales' (2014) findings that suggest ideological redefinition to frequently involve the distortion or ironic repurposing of significantly ideal agenda to justify shifts in hierarchy.

Discourse, Identity, and Social Practice

Repetition, collocation, and semantic framing are not considered independent discourse strategies. Alternatively, they become integrated into a broader framework of social and discursive practices which function as an allegorical critique of dictatorship. Orwell's linguistic choices act as an illustration of the way authoritarian discourse validates oppression and shapes perspectives on subjects.

Squealer, the regime's propagandist, possesses a fundamental position within this framework of authority. His dialogic discourse repeatedly implements rhetorical questions, modality, and hedging to conceal truth and shift

responsibilities, strategies that are extensively documented in real-world political rhetoric (Khafaga, 2021). By evaluating these patterns, this study expands the scope of sociolinguistic research by studying the ways in which fictional discourse may replicate the mechanisms behind ideological exploitation. Irony and metaphor also play a major role in the formulation of ideological positioning and identity in the novel. For example, the ironic message of that last commandment – “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others” — is a commentary on perverted egalitarianism. Another element that helps to draw current reality and satire closer concerns the figurative expressions in the story, for example, by focusing on pigs as a metaphor of leading politicians. Such devices feed into the tension between dialogism and manipulation (Dialogismus und Manipulation) and they accentuate that language that legitimates authorities is manipulative and in nature (Rodden, 1999; Jeffries, 2010) and therefore is a sign of oppressive discourse. One of the recent studies emphasizes the role of discourse in shaping group identities and sustaining power relations across both fictional and non-fictional discourse (Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018; Wodak, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The preliminary findings prove that Orwell's language choices correspond to precise alignment with sociolinguistic theories regarding authority and ideology. The patterns that have been identified, regardless of being restricted by the size and scope of the corpus, constitute a solid basis for future study that will be more extensive. A more thorough comprehension of the ideological function of discourse in literary texts may be obtained by continued analysis, which may reveal additional strategies such as interdiscursivity, modality, and metaphor.

For the purpose of discovering the method in which language in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* strengthens the structures of power hierarchy and develops ideological identity, this study implemented a corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) method. This research has identified fundamental discourse strategies, such as repetition, collocational framing, and semantic recontextualization, that provide to the textual realization of social dominance and identity within a group, illustrating on Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model and Van Dijk's (2006) theory of ideological polarization, complemented by corpus linguistics tools.

The preliminary results suggest that Orwell's usage of repeating slogans operates as an indicator of ideological internalization, while collocational analysis discloses recurrent binary depictions of in-group versus out-group elements. More importantly, concordance analysis highlights the semantic manipulation of ideological notions such as “equal” in order to justify inequity. These findings underscore Orwell's effective use of discourse in conveying the mechanisms of oppressive regimes, along with comprehensive sociolinguistic theories of how language validates and conceals power.

The research not only presents insights into Orwell's stylistic strategies but also fosters methodological innovation by exhibiting the efficient use of corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis in assessing literary texts. The combined methodology constitutes a reproducible integrated framework for discourse analysis in applied linguistics, particularly to support studies with the goal of combining empirical tools with theoretical perspectives. This method is consistent with recent advancements in corpus-assisted CDA that aim to enhance empirical rigor in discourse studies (Baker, 2021; Machin & Mayr, 2023). It questions the academic line between literary and sociolinguistic analysis, proposing for the incorporation of fiction as an appropriately valid and informative area for discourse study.

Pedagogically, the inclusion of corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can help facilitate a critical understanding of reading and language in different sites of education. It allows students to explore ideological meaning in text with the assistance of empirical evidence; by doing so it develops more sophisticated levels of analysis and interpretation both for linguistic and literary purposes. Not only do students learn to identify discourse patterns, but they also learn to interrogate how language shapes social worlds, power relations and group identities. This practice is consistent with pedagogical intentions to foster critical literacies and reflective reading of texts (Baker, 2006; Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018). Further studies could incorporate added assistance corpus tools or comparative analysis with other politically relevant literary texts to assess the generalizability of the findings. A more comprehensive corpus might identify patterns not immediately apparent in the existing dataset, prompting stronger theorization.

In fundamental terms, the findings verify that language, even in the context of fiction, is an effective tool to generate societal perceptions. Through its purposeful use of language, Orwell's *Animal Farm* demonstrates the ways ideological narratives are constructed, exchanged, and absorbed, consequently providing an essential framework for sociolinguistic study of the mechanics of power, identity, and opposition, reflecting hidden hegemonic social agenda and human expectations. This study also adds value to the field of applied linguistics in terms of providing a framework which can be used for teaching or commercial purposes, especially the promoting of critical discourse awareness among students. By combining theoretical knowledge and practical instruments, it provides the students with tools to critically analyse language use and identify discourse's ideological premises, and the teaching and learning process can be curated specifically to cater to the students according to their level of proficiency and understanding. It also offers a replicable and transferable model of deploying corpus tools in literary discourse studies for methodological training and interdisciplinary pedagogy across linguistics, literature and education (Wodak & Meyer, 2009; Baker, 2021).

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