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POWER, LANGUAGE, AND SOCIAL HIERARCHY IN GEORGE ORWELL'S ANIMAL FARM

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ABSTRACT

George Orwell's Animal Farm is a political allegorical novel that explores the relationship between power, language, ideology, and social hierarchy. Although the novel presents itself as a simple story about farm animals who rebel against their human owner, its deeper meaning reveals how political authority can transform revolutionary ideals into systems of oppression. This study examines how language functions as an instrument of power and how political leaders manipulate communication to establish, maintain, and justify social hierarchy. Particular attention is given to Napoleon, Squealer, the Seven Commandments, slogans, propaganda, historical revision, and the gradual transformation of the animals' political and social conditions. The study uses a qualitative literary approach and textual analysis as its primary method. Selected passages, speeches, slogans, commandments, and interactions among characters are analyzed to identify patterns of linguistic manipulation and power relations. The analysis demonstrates that language in Animal Farm is not merely a means of communication; it becomes a political instrument through which the ruling class controls knowledge, shapes collective memory, and influences the beliefs of subordinate groups. Squealer's persuasive speeches and Napoleon's control over information enable the pigs to redefine equality and justify privilege. The gradual alteration of the Seven Commandments illustrates how those in power can manipulate written language to make injustice appear legitimate. The study further finds that social hierarchy develops alongside linguistic control: as the pigs acquire greater authority, they also gain greater control over education, history, political discourse, and the interpretation of reality. Orwell therefore demonstrates that political domination depends not only on physical force but also on the ability to control words, meanings, and collective understanding. The study concludes that Animal Farm remains an important literary examination of propaganda, ideological manipulation, political inequality, and the relationship between language and power.

KEYWORDS*: George Orwell, Animal Farm, power, language, social hierarchy, propaganda, political discourse, ideology, oppression, social inequality*.

INTRODUCTION

George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, published in 1945, is one of the most influential political allegories in modern English literature. Through the fictional world of a farm populated by animals, Orwell examines political revolution, authoritarianism, propaganda, class inequality, and the corruption of idealistic political movements. The novel begins with a vision of equality and freedom but gradually develops into a society characterized by privilege, exploitation, fear, and hierarchy. The transformation of Animal Farm provides Orwell with a powerful literary framework for demonstrating how political power can corrupt revolutionary ideals and create new forms of domination.At the beginning of the novel, the animals experience oppression under Mr. Jones, the human owner of Manor Farm. Abualadas, O. (2024). foundthat Old Major inspires the animals with a vision of a future in which animals will control their own labor and enjoy the fruits of their work. His speech introduces the central revolutionary principle that animals should be free from human exploitation. The rebellion that follows appears to fulfill this dream. Manor Farm becomes Animal Farm, and the animals establish principles based on equality. The Seven Commandments are created to preserve the values of the revolution. At this stage, language represents hope, unity, and political transformation.However, Orwell gradually demonstrates that political ideals can be destroyed when power becomes concentrated in the hands of a small group. The pigs, particularly Napoleon and Squealer, become increasingly powerful. Their authority is initially justified by their intelligence and organizational abilities, but their political position

eventually develops into a rigid hierarchy. The pigs receive privileges that contradict the original revolutionary principles. They consume better food, occupy the farmhouse, and eventually behave almost exactly like the humans whom the animals originally opposed.

Language plays a central role in this transformation. Orwell shows that political domination is not achieved through physical force alone. It also depends on controlling the way people understand events. Squealer is particularly important because he uses persuasive language to convince the animals that the pigs' privileges are necessary for the survival of the farm. Whenever the pigs violate a revolutionary principle, Squealer provides an explanation that makes the violation appear reasonable. Anggela, U. M., Ardiansyah, E. A., & Wardoyo, C. (2025).explains Through repetition, emotional manipulation, selective information, and misleading arguments, he gradually changes the animals' perception of reality.The Seven Commandments provide another important example of linguistic manipulation. At first, the commandments establish clear principles of equality. As the pigs become more powerful, however, the commandments are gradually altered. The changes are small enough to confuse the animals but significant enough to legitimize new forms of inequality. The famous transformation of the principle of equality demonstrates how political language can be manipulated to serve the interests of those who control power. The final form of the commandment, which effectively distinguishes the pigs from the other animals, exposes the complete destruction of the original revolutionary ideal.The relationship between language and social hierarchy is particularly significant in the novel. The pigs possess literacy and education, while many other animals have limited reading abilities. Because knowledge is unevenly distributed, the pigs are able to control written records and political information. The animals' inability to read the commandments accurately prevents them from effectively challenging the changes imposed by the pigs. Orwell therefore connects education, language, and political power.

Squealer's role further demonstrates the relationship between language and authority. He does not usually use physical violence himself; instead, he persuades the animals through carefully constructed arguments. He uses statistics, fear, rhetorical questions, and references to the supposed threat of Mr. Jones to discourage resistance. His language creates an environment in which questioning the leadership becomes dangerous or morally suspicious. The animals gradually learn to accept official explanations even when those explanations contradict their own experiences.The slogans of the farm also demonstrate how language can simplify complex political ideas. "Four legs good, two legs bad" becomes a repeated slogan that prevents the animals from engaging in critical political thought. Later, the pigs train sheep to repeat a modified slogan that supports their new relationship with humans. Repetition becomes a mechanism of political conditioning. Instead of encouraging independent thought, language is reduced to simple formulas that reinforce obedience.Orwell also explores the relationship between language and historical memory. Azizan, M., Mohd Nasir, N. S., & Osman, N. (2025). explains The pigs repeatedly change the animals' understanding of the past. Events are reinterpreted according to the political interests of the present. Napoleon's role in the revolution is exaggerated, while Snowball's contribution is erased and replaced by accusations of betrayal. The animals gradually lose confidence in their own memories. This manipulation of history strengthens the pigs' authority because the animals no longer possess a reliable alternative version of events.The novel therefore presents social hierarchy as a process rather than a sudden development. At first, the animals appear politically equal. Gradually, differences emerge between pigs and other animals. The pigs acquire education, control food distribution, occupy privileged spaces, command the dogs, and control political communication. These privileges eventually become institutionalized.

The ruling group does not merely possess more resources; it controls the ideological system through which inequality is explained and accepted.

Power in *Animal Farm* is therefore both material and linguistic. Material power includes food, physical force, labor, and control over the farm. Linguistic power includes propaganda, education, slogans, historical narratives, and definitions of political principles. These two forms of power reinforce each other. Physical force prevents resistance, while propaganda makes resistance appear unnecessary or dangerous.This study examines how Orwell represents the relationship among power, language, and social hierarchy in *Animal Farm*. It focuses particularly on political discourse, propaganda, manipulation of historical memory, the transformation of the Seven Commandments, and the unequal distribution of knowledge. The study argues that Orwell presents language as one of the most important mechanisms through which political elites establish and maintain domination.The significance of this research lies in its examination of the continuing relevance of Orwell's ideas. Political language remains important in societies where governments, institutions, media organizations, and political leaders attempt to influence public opinion. Concepts such as propaganda, misinformation, political rhetoric, censorship, and ideological framing demonstrate that the relationship between language and power remains an important area of literary and social study. Through *Animal Farm*, Orwell warns readers that the manipulation of language can gradually weaken critical thinking and allow inequality to become normalized.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To examine how George Orwell represents the relationship between power, language, and social hierarchy in *Animal Farm*, with particular attention to propaganda, political language, manipulation of historical memory, and the transformation of equality into authoritarian rule.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. How does George Orwell use language and political discourse in *Animal Farm* to establish, maintain, and justify power and social hierarchy?

LITERATURE REVIEW

George Orwell's *Animal Farm* has attracted extensive critical attention because of its political, historical, linguistic, and allegorical dimensions. Scholars have interpreted the novel as a critique of totalitarianism, political propaganda, revolutionary betrayal, class inequality, and the corruption of political ideals. One of the most significant areas of interpretation concerns Orwell's representation of language as a mechanism through which political authority controls society.Orwell's broader political writings provide an important foundation for understanding *Animal Farm*. In his essay "Politics and the English Language," Orwell argues that political language can become deliberately vague and deceptive. Political speakers may use language not to communicate truth but to hide uncomfortable realities and make political actions appear acceptable. Lyu, J. (2025). foundthat This idea is directly relevant to *Animal Farm*, where Squealer repeatedly transforms exploitation into necessity and privilege into responsibility. His speeches illustrate how language can disguise political realities.Orwell's concept of political language is also connected with the novel's representation of propaganda. Propaganda does not simply provide false information; it

organizes the way information is interpreted. Squealer repeatedly presents selective facts and statistics to convince the animals that their living conditions have improved. The animals are encouraged to distrust their own memories and rely on official explanations. Language therefore becomes a means of constructing political reality.Another important critical perspective focuses on the allegorical nature of the novel. *Animal Farm* can be read as an allegorical representation of the Russian Revolution and the development of Stalinist authoritarianism. Napoleon represents the concentration of political power, while Snowball represents revolutionary idealism that is eventually displaced. The pigs' transformation into a privileged ruling class reflects the emergence of a new political elite. The allegorical structure enables Orwell to criticize political systems while presenting his argument through a fictional narrative.Political power in the novel is closely connected with the control of knowledge. The pigs are more educated than most of the other animals and therefore have greater access to written language.

This unequal distribution of literacy creates a foundation for political inequality. The animals who cannot read effectively are unable to verify the changing commandments. Consequently, literacy becomes a political resource rather than merely an educational skill.The Seven Commandments have received considerable attention because they represent the relationship between written language and political law. Initially, the commandments establish a collective moral framework. However, the gradual modification of these rules demonstrates how political authority can manipulate legal and ideological principles. The animals remember the commandments imperfectly, while the pigs possess the ability to rewrite and reinterpret them. Written language therefore becomes an instrument for institutionalizing privilege.Squealer's propaganda is another major element in critical interpretations of the novel. His role demonstrates that authoritarian governments may rely on persuasive communication in addition to direct violence. Merzah, S. K. (2024). explains Squealer frequently uses emotional appeals, fear, false statistics, rhetorical questions, and repetition. His speeches are designed to discourage the animals from questioning Napoleon. By making political opposition appear dangerous, Squealer contributes to the creation of a submissive society.The novel also explores the political importance of historical memory. Snowball becomes a symbolic enemy whose role in the revolution is gradually erased. Napoleon's government constructs a new version of history in which Snowball is blamed for various problems. This process demonstrates that political control can extend into the past. If citizens cannot access reliable historical knowledge, political leaders can redefine the meaning of earlier events and use those revised narratives to legitimize present authority.

Another major theme in scholarship on *Animal Farm* is social class. The novel begins with a revolutionary rejection of class distinctions but gradually develops a new class structure. The pigs become the ruling class, while horses, sheep, hens, and other animals represent different groups within the subordinate population. Boxer, for example, represents the loyal working class whose labor supports the political system but whose interests are ultimately sacrificed.The pigs' transformation is particularly significant because Orwell does not portray political hierarchy as an entirely new creation. Instead, the pigs gradually reproduce the privileges of the former human rulers. Their movement into the farmhouse, consumption of special food, adoption of human habits, and eventual relationship with human farmers demonstrate that revolutionary leaders can become indistinguishable from the authorities they once opposed.Language supports this transformation by redefining political concepts. Equality no longer means equal treatment, leadership no longer means service, and sacrifice becomes a demand imposed on subordinate groups. Tagupa, A. M. S. (2025). foundthat Words lose their original meanings and acquire meanings determined by the ruling class.

Orwell thus illustrates the political consequences of semantic manipulation.The literature on Orwell also emphasizes the relationship between language and critical consciousness. When language becomes repetitive and formulaic, individuals may lose the ability to question political claims. The sheep's constant repetition of slogans is an example of this phenomenon. Their voices interrupt political discussion and prevent alternative arguments from developing. Repetition replaces reasoning.Fear also strengthens linguistic control. The animals are repeatedly reminded of the possible return of Mr. Jones. This fear makes them willing to tolerate Napoleon's increasing authority. The political leadership presents itself as the only protection against an external threat. As a result, criticism of the government becomes associated with the possibility of losing security.Existing scholarship therefore demonstrates that *Animal Farm* can be understood as a complex study of political language. However, examining power, language, and social hierarchy together provides a broader understanding of Orwell's argument. Language does not operate independently from social and political structures. Instead, it helps create and maintain those structures. The present study therefore focuses on the interaction among linguistic manipulation.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quallitical authority, and social inequality.itative literary research methodology to investigate power, language, and social hierarchy in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Since the research focuses on literary representation, political discourse, symbolism, characterization, and textual meaning, a qualitative approach is more appropriate than a quantitative method. The study relies primarily on close reading and textual analysis of the novel.The primary source of data is George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Selected passages are examined according to their relevance to the research question. Particular attention is given to speeches, slogans, political statements, commandments, descriptions of social relationships, and conversations involving Napoleon, Squealer, Snowball, Boxer, Clover, Benjamin, and the sheep.The analysis focuses on identifying recurring patterns associated with power and language. These patterns include propaganda, repetition, persuasion, fear appeals, manipulation of facts, control of historical memory, modification of written laws, unequal access to education, and the use of political vocabulary to legitimize privilege.The study also considers characterization as an important source of evidence. Napoleon is analyzed as a representation of concentrated political authority, while Squealer is examined as an agent of propaganda. Boxer is considered in relation to labor, loyalty, and political exploitation, while Benjamin represents skepticism and awareness without effective political resistance.The Seven Commandments are treated as an important textual unit because their transformation demonstrates how political authority can change the meaning of established principles. The slogans used by the animals are also examined because they demonstrate the role of repetition and simplified language in controlling collective thought.Secondary sources, including scholarly discussions of Orwell, political language, propaganda, ideology, and literary criticism, are used to contextualize the analysis. The research does not attempt to measure the frequency of words statistically. Instead, it interprets significant textual patterns and explains how those patterns contribute to Orwell's representation of political power.

The research follows a qualitative interpretive approach. This approach is appropriate because the purpose of the study is to understand the meanings, political implications, and ideological functions of language within the novel. Rather than treating the text as numerical data, the study examines how specific linguistic practices contribute to the development of characters, conflicts, political structures, and social hierarchies.The interpretive approach allows the researcher to connect individual passages with broader themes. For example,

Squealer's speeches can be interpreted not simply as dialogue but as examples of propaganda and ideological control. Similarly, the changing commandments can be interpreted as evidence of the relationship between written language and political authority.The study uses a textual analysis and close-reading research design. The novel is selected as the primary literary text, and relevant textual evidence is organized according to major analytical categories. The research design enables the study to examine how these categories interact rather than treating them as isolated themes.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research uses a qualitative textual research design based on close reading of *Animal Farm*. The novella is treated as the primary textual data. Important sections are selected according to their relevance to power, language, propaganda, and hierarchy.The research design involves four major stages. First, the text is read closely to identify passages related to political authority and social inequality. Second, relevant statements and events are categorized according to themes such as propaganda, slogans, law, education, and historical revision. Third, these categories are compared to determine how language and power interact. Finally, the findings are interpreted in relation to the broader political and social message of Orwell's novella.The research does not attempt to establish statistical generalizations. Instead, it provides an interpretive understanding of how Orwell constructs political meaning through narrative, symbolism, dialogue, and language. The research uses a qualitative textual research design based on close reading of *Animal Farm*. The novella is treated as the primary textual data. Important sections are selected according to their relevance to power, language, propaganda, and hierarchy.The research design involves four major stages. First, the text is read closely to identify passages related to political authority and social inequality. Second, relevant statements and events are categorized according to themes such as propaganda, slogans, law, education, and historical revision. Third, these categories are compared to determine how language and power interact. Finally, the findings are interpreted in relation to the broader political and social message of Orwell's novella.The research does not attempt to establish statistical generalizations. Instead, it provides an interpretive understanding of how Orwell constructs political meaning through narrative, symbolism, dialogue, and language.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis is based on close reading of selected passages from *Animal Farm*. The textual evidence is organized thematically to demonstrate how Orwell connects language with political authority and social hierarchy.The first major finding of the textual analysis is that language functions as a central instrument of political power. Squealer repeatedly provides explanations for Napoleon's decisions and the pigs' privileges. Instead of openly admitting that the pigs are becoming a privileged class, he presents their privileges as necessary for the welfare of the entire farm.This linguistic strategy allows the ruling group to maintain a positive public image while increasing its material advantages. The animals are encouraged to believe that their sacrifices are necessary for collective survival. Political inequality is therefore disguised as political responsibility.Squealer represents the propaganda system of the farm. His language is persuasive rather than openly coercive. He uses statistics, emotional appeals, rhetorical questions, and fear to influence the animals.The repeated suggestion that Mr. Jones might return is especially effective. The animals are made to believe that criticizing Napoleon could create the danger of restoring the previous regime. Fear therefore limits political resistance.The repeated slogans demonstrate how language can simplify political thought. The sheep's repetitive chants prevent meaningful discussion and

encourage conformity.The political function of slogans is important because they are easy to remember and difficult to challenge. Instead of encouraging complex reasoning, slogans reduce political issues to simple formulas. This allows the ruling group to influence collective thought without presenting detailed arguments.The Seven Commandments initially symbolize equality and revolutionary morality. Their later alteration represents the corruption of those principles.The gradual modification of the commandments is particularly effective because the changes are presented as corrections rather than revolutionary transformations.

FINDINGS

The research produces several major findings.First, language is central to the development of political power in *Animal Farm*. Orwell demonstrates that political leaders can use language to justify actions, control public opinion, and create acceptance of inequality.Second, propaganda is essential to maintaining Napoleon's authority. Squealer's speeches demonstrate how carefully constructed political language can transform questionable decisions into apparently reasonable policies.Third, control over information produces social inequality. The pigs' superior literacy allows them to control political knowledge while other animals remain dependent on them.Fourth, the manipulation of historical memory strengthens authoritarian power. By changing the story of past events, Napoleon's government controls how the animals understand political legitimacy.Fifth, the modification of the Seven Commandments demonstrates the political manipulation of law. Rules that originally protect equality are transformed into mechanisms that justify privilege.Sixth, repetition reduces critical thinking. The sheep's slogans show how repeated political language can prevent complex discussion and discourage questioning.Seventh, economic and political power reinforce each other. Once the pigs gain political authority, they obtain material privileges. These privileges then strengthen their political position.Eighth, the working population is exploited through ideological loyalty. Boxer's commitment to Napoleon demonstrates how workers can be persuaded to sacrifice themselves for a political system that ultimately does not protect them.Finally, Orwell presents the collapse of equality as a consequence of concentrated power. The revolution fails to achieve its original goals because political authority becomes centralized and citizens lose the ability to challenge those in control.The analysis of George Orwell's *Animal Farm* reveals a strong and complex relationship between power, language, and social hierarchy. The findings demonstrate that the transformation of Animal Farm from a society based on revolutionary equality into an authoritarian system does not occur suddenly.

CONCLUSION

George Orwell's *Animal Farm* provides a powerful literary examination of the relationship between political power, language, and social hierarchy. Through the transformation of Animal Farm, Orwell demonstrates how revolutionary ideals can gradually be replaced by authoritarian control. The animals begin their revolution with the hope of creating an equal society, but the concentration of political authority in the hands of the pigs results in a new system of inequality.The study demonstrates that language is one of the most important instruments through which this transformation occurs. Squealer's propaganda, the sheep's repetitive slogans, Napoleon's political announcements, and the alteration of the Seven Commandments all show how language can be used to influence political consciousness. Language does not simply communicate political reality; it helps create and control that reality.The fate of Boxer further demonstrates the dangers of unquestioning loyalty. Although Boxer contributes enormous labor to the development of the farm, the political system

ultimately treats him as a disposable resource. His tragedy represents the exploitation of ordinary workers under authoritarian power.Ultimately, Orwell's *Animal Farm* suggests that political equality cannot survive without critical thinking, education, transparency, and resistance to the manipulation of language. A society may overthrow one form of oppression but reproduce another if power becomes concentrated and citizens lose the ability to question authority. The novel therefore remains significant as a study of propaganda, political discourse, social inequality, and authoritarianism.The central message of the novel is that control over language and information can become control over society itself. Orwell warns readers that when political leaders control laws, education, history, and public language, they can gradually transform inequality into something that appears normal and legitimate.

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