

Atrocity in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*: A Critical Discourse Approach

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Abstract—This paper examines the discursive tactics employed in *The Handmaid's Tale* to (re)produce social reality. Using critical discourse analysis, the study reveals the ideological polarization between a favorable self-presentation and a negative portrayal of the other. Through the analysis of excerpts and the application of Van Dijk's framework, the pervasive use of discursive techniques is uncovered, emphasizing the ideological division between a positive self-portrayal and a negative depiction of the other. Pronouns and adjectives play a crucial role in conveying optimistic self-representations and pessimistic other representations, highlighting the characters' struggle against the inherent sexism and patriarchy within legal systems. The findings demonstrate the significance of polarization, lexicalization, positive and negative representation tactics, and the proximity of contrasting stages, illustrating the tension between the individual and society. Considering these results, the paper recommends fostering awareness and critical analysis of discursive tactics, promoting diverse narratives to cultivate empathy and understanding, encouraging dialogue and critical engagement, and actively addressing and challenging gender inequality. These recommendations aim to deepen our understanding of how discursive tactics shape social reality and promote a more equitable and inclusive society. By recognizing and interrogating these discursive strategies, individuals can navigate and challenge the manipulation of language and narrative. The study's insights contribute to a broader understanding of the underlying gender inequality and societal tensions portrayed in *The Handmaid's Tale*, shedding light on the power dynamics and systemic oppression present in society.

Index Terms—discursive tactics, social reality, critical discourse analysis, ideological polarization, gender inequality

I. INTRODUCTION

Undoubtedly, conflict is an omnipresent theme in all literature. It surfaces when there are differing goals, values, perspectives, or experiences among individuals. Conflict can be understood as a clash involving parties who possess varying needs, beliefs, or objectives. As Perkins (2010) conceptualizes it, conflict emerges as a contest between antagonists and protagonists. A prevalent motif in literary narratives involves the tension between the individual and society. In 'Man vs. Society' situations, the protagonist encounters disagreements with a broader group; this could be a community, society, culture, etc. Here, the main character contests societal norms. Conflict has also been conceptualized as a state of adversarial opposition when there is a disagreement between two or more groups (Gibbs, 2015). This research scrutinizes five extracts from *The Handmaid's Tale* to gain deeper insight into the core issue of individual-society tension. Indeed, the theme of "conflict" has been probed through both sociological and psychological lenses (Jamieson, 2018). This research aims to critically unpack this concept in the novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, a

subject of growing scholarly interest. This study seeks to contribute to the current literature by analyzing the discursive strategies of the self-society conflict in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Highlighting this issue in texts enriches the study of language. Consequently, this analysis will enhance our understanding of language by shedding light on the linguistic tools a writer employs to generate intended perceptions. Investigating the theme of self-society conflict in literature is crucial as it expands the horizons of linguistic and critical studies. It, therefore, facilitates an understanding of the language utilized in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Both the fields of linguistics and literature stand to benefit from these fresh insights into the self-society conflict. This research applies critical discourse analysis to *The Handmaid's Tale* to glean a more nuanced understanding of the novel's discursive strategies. It closely examines five passages from *The Handmaid's Tale*, following the method suggested by Perkins (2010). The research primarily focuses on the juxtaposition between optimistic self-presentation and pessimistic other presentations. With that in mind, the aim is to answer:

1. How do the discursive strategies of the characters expose the ideologies they employ to sway the audience and influence their perceptions of them?
2. How are these strategies operationalized?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Conflict and Critical Discourse Analysis

The centrality of conflict is deeply embedded in Atwood's literary offerings. This centrality has been substantiated by recent research. For instance, Nguyen and Patel (2022) explored the role of conflict in contemporary literature, revealing its reflection on broader cultural and societal shifts. Similarly, Hamilton (2022) investigated the depiction of individual versus societal conflict in dystopian literature, concluding that its underlining of power dynamics and societal constructs contributed to the overarching themes.

Disagreement universally arises from human interaction, primarily due to the inherent diversity in perspectives, desires, perceptions, and needs. Conflict comes into being when two or more parties find themselves in disagreement, manifesting as a connection between entities unwilling or unable to compromise on their differences (Patzak, 2012; Wilmont, 2001; Diaz & Li, 2023). This discord could be real or perceived, involving both tangible and intangible resources. Avoiding confrontation is typically a human propensity. Conflict encompasses a vast array, from interpersonal discord to organizational disputes, intragroup to intergroup altercations, and so on (Al-Mamary & Hussein, 2019).

Self-society conflict is an issue pervading almost all nations. As inherently social beings, humans undergo a phase of socialization. A multitude of individuals and organizations within society offer myriad opportunities for interaction, ranging from one-on-one conversations to dialogues with small groups or larger organizations. As interactions unfold, disparities among individuals become increasingly discernible. Differences in religion, economic status, and social standing represent just a fraction of the numerous conflict triggers in contemporary society.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA), as defined by Van Dijk (1995), offers a method to examine and study both written and spoken communications (as cited in Akbar & Nawal, 2019). This discourse highlights the misuse of power, dominance, and inequality within social and political contexts (as cited in Gyollai, 2020). Recent studies by Klein and Johnson (2023) further underline this by analyzing power dynamics in political discourses using CDA. Brown (2023) also underscores the importance of using CDA for analyzing ideologies in literature.

As per Fairclough (1993), CDA extends beyond merely acknowledging the social dimensions of speech. Its fundamental objective is to illustrate how language impacts society and, subsequently, shapes our identities. CDA underscores the reciprocal relationship between language and society, acknowledging that language does not exist in isolation from its surrounding context. Ideology constitutes a crucial focus of CDA. It comprises three intertwined elements: discourse, social cognition, and society. Ideologies are formed and propagated through discourse, thus establishing language as the sociocognitive medium for enacting and reproducing them in daily life. Therefore, discourse aids in the spread and materialization of ideologies (Van Dijk, 2006). The central tenet of CDA is the development of "a critically contextualized approach to languages, "one that" highlights issues of ideology, power, and inequality" (Yusuf et al., 2018, p. 1).

III. PREVIOUS STUDIES

In his 2018 book, "A Case of Hate," Yusuf analyzed linguistic clashes and their settlements among the leaders of agitated groups in Nigeria. The purpose of this study is to learn how prejudiced language might stir up conflict across communities. A conflict scenario is generated by a combination of speech act theory and sociocognitive critical discourse analysis, both of which are used to analyze specific speeches made by members of a social group. The research shows that influential people in a community may utilize language as the de facto semiotic system to protect their interests, even if doing so is counterproductive to the group.

More recently, Chernenko (2019) investigated the idiosyncrasies of fiction's last phase of conflict interaction from a pragmatic perspective. This research intends to fill a theoretical gap in the study of conflict discourse by illuminating the gender differences in the last phase of conflict fiction discourse, as well as the linguistic and non-linguistic forms of

communication used by the protagonists and antagonists. Analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, as well as other techniques from the field of linguistics, are put to use here. Information is culled from British and American books written in the 20th and 21st centuries. From a pragmatic, structural, and contextual standpoint, the results indicate three types of communication situations: isolation, reconciliation, and accommodation of the speakers with elocutionary impact. Distinctions between the sexes in dispute resolution discourse may be shown through verbal and non-verbal modes of interaction. The use of emotional-evaluative language, taboo language, and qualifiers are all ways in which males and females differ in their conflict communication. Touch, smiling, crying, voice tone and eye contact are all forms of haptic communication that have distinct gender connotations.

Additionally, Abustan's (2020) research analyzes the protagonist's struggle in *The Human Comedy* by Saroyan. Analyzing the internal and external struggles that the novel's protagonist undergoes, the author classifies the many kinds of rivalry. This research looks at how much of the novel's variation the protagonist is responsible for. The author uses a methodical framework to investigate this topic. The structural approach to literature seeks to understand works by dissecting their parts. In this study, we found that the protagonist's troubles stem mostly from her surroundings. Homer, the protagonist, puts others' needs ahead of his own. At that point, he grows up. He is now a responsible adult thanks to your patience and care. In the story, the reader will learn the importance of taking responsibility for their actions.

According to Naji and Abbas (2022), "a gap can be observed in terms of (1) the absence of a contextual discursive interpretation of the techniques deployed and (2) the inability to address the ideological premises contained in creating discursive material, both of which are important for understanding the nature of conflict". This research seeks to fill this void by delving into critical discourse analysis levels of inquiry into discursive techniques. Its goal is to provide a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of the institutional production and use of conflict through critical interpretation.

A Tale Told with a Handmaid (1985) Throughout the *Handmaid's Tale*, readers are introduced to the totalitarian religious state of Gilead, where reproduction and gender hierarchy are prioritized above all else. Gilead uses religion as a whipping boy to control the handmaids, Martha, and the spouses of the men in power. Offred's story is told via a combination of flashbacks and recollections of her time spent married, raising children, and in captivity. Picking up young, fertile women like Offred and retraining them is a regular practice in Gilead. They must go through some kind of ritual every month before they can sleep with their assigned.

In conclusion, the cited research works provide valuable insights into various aspects of conflict and communication. Yusuf's study on linguistic clashes highlights the role of prejudiced language in generating conflicts within communities. Chernenko's investigation sheds light on gender differences in conflict fiction discourse and explores different forms of communication used by protagonists and antagonists. Abustan's research examines the struggles of the protagonist in *The Human Comedy* and emphasizes the importance of taking responsibility for one's actions. Furthermore, the critical discourse analysis approach aims to fill the gaps in understanding the nature of conflict by analyzing discursive techniques and their ideological premises.

Overall, these studies contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding conflict and communication, providing valuable insights for researchers and practitioners in the field. By examining language, context, and social dynamics, we can gain a better grasp of how conflicts arise and potentially find strategies for conflict resolution and mitigation.

IV. METHOD

The research paradigm used here is derived from van Dijk's (2006) discursive techniques. Van Dijk's ideological square provides the primary critical viewpoint, which stresses (1) our excellent characteristics while hiding our poor ones and (2) their horrible qualities while concealing our bad ones (e.g., van Dijk, 2006). Using critical discourse analysis levels, the deployment of discursive strategies is investigated in the qualitative analysis, while the frequency of the discovered discursive strategies is the subject of the quantitative analysis.

Van Dijk first introduced the concept of the "ideological square". During times of conflict, "positive self-presentation and negative other demonstration" traits "show not just how we dip into in-groups and out-groups but also how we portray ourselves and others" (Van Dijk, 2000). To show the range of possible debates over the ideological square, van Dijk uses several discursive methods (Van Dijk, 2000, 2006; Ajiboye, 2013). Due to constraints, only seven of these discursive activities could be explored in depth. The information is as follows: details about the actor's background (how discourse actors are portrayed: individually, as a group, negatively, positively, or indifferently). There are a variety of ways to express oneself, such as via the use of dictionaries, polarization, positive self-presentation, and negative other presentations. Lexicalization is the process of using a specific language to convey one's thoughts and opinions, whereas metaphor and topoi are types of evidence-based statements. According to Van Dijk (1989), the text is made up of several components that have a purpose. He cut it into thirds and put each one in the fridge. It's the first thing to do when trying to figure out how important something is. The next portion is the most elevated; it consists of the organization of a text as deduced from its linguistic patterns. The meaning of a little chunk of text, such as a phrase or a statement, is called its microstructure (as cited in Aini, 2019).

Discursive tactics are a set of linguistic techniques used by the communicator to gain the attention of the target audience in the context of the message's delivery (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). Using the same word, phrase, or sentence numerous times serves to emphasize the argument and draw the focus to the substance of the utterance. Actor

description, polarization, self-presentation, and other presentations, all with an ideological slant, are inextricably intertwined. Individual, group, negative, and positive representations of discourse actors are examples of actor description. This "we and them" dichotomy is a typical focal point of ideological disagreement. Consequently, the positive self-presentation and negative other presentation of the discourse actors are embodied in the polarization of the discourse players into "us" and "them" groupings that are commonly reflected in actor descriptions. Self-evident reasoning refers to the making of an argument using just the most obvious evidence. The use of a direct analogy between two things is what we call a metaphor. Use this tactic, for instance, if you need to back up your claims with hard proof.

A. Procedures

The purpose of this research is to use the CDA methodology to identify the manifestations of self-society conflict in *The Handmaid's Tale* and to theorize their significance. The researchers' analysis was put up as follows a methodology to identify the manifestations of self-society conflict in *The Handmaid's Tale* and to theorize their significance. The researchers' analysis was put up as follows: After reading the novel many times, the researchers identified recurrent themes related to the central conflict. Researchers choose statements that use a certain ideology and one or more critical discourse analysis methodologies from the pool of retrieved statements. The study's authors provided background information that put the excerpt in its right historical and cultural perspective. Scientists interpret the hidden meaning of texts and ideas because the language used in each excerpt reveals a unique perspective on the struggle between the individual and society.

B. Data Description

The study focuses on five different passages from *The Handmaid's Tale*. The words first appeared on paper in English. It wasn't until 1985 that they hit the shelves. Margaret Atwood's book is the source for the varying word counts. Any excerpts used for analysis must (a) be in the form of written texts and (b) be sufficiently indicative of the self-society conflict problem. To illustrate the tensions between the handmaids and the rest of Gilead society, the book *The Handmaid's Tale* was used. This is shown graphically in the corpus of the excerpts, which is shown in the tables below.

TABLE 1
THE ANALYSIS CORPUS

The Theme	No. of extracts	No. of words	The year	type
Conflict	1	78	1985	Book
Conflict	2	28	1985	Book
Self-Society Conflict	3	61	1985	Book
Conflict	4	68	1985	Book
Conflict	5	55	1985	Book
Total	5	290		

Naji and Abbas (2022)

C. Analysis

The analysis of the five extracts from *The Handmaid's Tale* shows a moderate-to-high frequency of discursive strategies, as presented in Tables 1 and 2.

TABLE 2
DISTRIBUTION OF DISCOURSE STRATEGIES IN *THE HANDMAID'S TALE*

Discursive Strategies	Frequencies	Percentage %
Metaphor	2	12.5 %
Polarization	4	25 %
Lexicalization	3	18.75 %
Actor Description	2	12.5 %
Repetition	2	12.5 %
Topio	1	6.25 %
Example	1	6.25 %
Vagueness	1	6.25 %
Total	16	100 %

"Aunt Lydia: "They made such a mess of everything. They filled the air with chemicals, radiation, and poison! So, God unleashed a special plague. The plague of infertility, as birth rates decreased, made things worse. They were dirty women. They were slobs. But you are special, girls. Fertility is a gift given by God. The world can be quite an ugly place. But we cannot wish that ugliness away. We cannot hide from that ugliness (p. 98)" (in Naji & Abbas, 2022).

Contextualization

The excerpt informs Aunt Lydia, a prominent female character who plays a crucial role in propagating the unjust regime of Gilead in the novel.

Linguistic Analysis

“The passage makes use of several discursive techniques. One is evident from the statement's usage of the word “them”. The use of “they” in the sentence “they made such a mess of everything” and “we” in the phrase “we cannot wish that ugliness away” throughout the whole excerpt above reflects a kind of ideological polarization of the characters into an in-group (the Handmaids)” (Naji & Abbas, 2022); and an out-group (the women of Gilead). This ideological split is a result of the author's use of both positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation methods. Another technique is called lexicalization. This method may be utilized to make a good or bad impression. They were filthy ladies who only served to make matters worse, thus the use of pejorative terminology such as “dirty,” “worse,” and “sluts” in the preceding sentence. Those sluts “to unfavorably characterize the women of Gilead while positively representing the handmaid via the use of a positive lexical word like “special” in the statement “But you are special ladies.” Discursive techniques such as providing examples and illustrations are still another option. To bolster an argument, this method is used. The following statement makes it quite clear: It was all in disarray because of them. They polluted the atmosphere with hazardous materials. To solve this problem, God created a new pandemic: infertility. The author provides an example of the reason why women in Gilead are sterile. God had to punish them since they created such a mess. Repetition, in which the same word or phrase is used many times, is another technique used to draw attention to the substance of the utterance. In these statements, this tactic is quite clear: “They really messed things up. They polluted the atmosphere with toxic chemicals, radiation, and other poisons. The use of repetition strengthens an argument. The word “they” is used frequently, reflecting the stereotypically negative portrayal of women in Gilead culture.

Contextualization

This sample from Offred's perspective showcases her philosophy of the gender-based polarization enforced by Gilead.

Linguistic Analysis

Offred, the protagonist of the preceding excerpt, has internal turmoil when she realizes that the legislation of Gilead culture is just another example of how women are used as scapegoats in that society. The subject of self-society conflict among women in Gilead's society is shown in the usage of the negative vocabulary elements “sterile” and “barren” in the utterances “Sterile, there is no such thing as a sterile man anymore” and “women who are barren, that's the law.” As a result, Offred is always fighting against the dictatorial norms of her society. This lexicalization reinforces the marginalization of women in Gilead culture. The negative adjective is used here to describe women adversely, whereas males are represented favorably. This is indicative of the pervasive racism in Gilead's culture. Since the handmaids are so clearly characterized, the positive descriptor “fruitful” is used, while the negative descriptor “barren” describes the Gilead women. This illustrates the novel's use of positive and negative actor description techniques. Offred: “I used to think of my body as an instrument of pleasure, a means of transportation, or an implement for the accomplishment of my will... Now, the flesh arranges itself differently. I am a cloud congealed around a central object, the shape of a pear, which is harder and more real than I am and glows red within its translucent wrapping” (Atwood, 1985, p. 73).

Contextualization:

The main character, Offred narrates this extract while resting in the bath. She reflects on how she used to perceive her body versus how she does now.

Linguistic analysis

Several strategies are used by the protagonist, Offred, to reflect her conflict with society in the above extract. “One of these strategies is the use of metaphor, like, “I used to think of my body as an instrument.” And, “Now the flesh arranges itself differently” through the expression “as,” Offred compares her body to an instrument of her desire before Gilead, but now she is just a mound of flesh surrounding a womb. Words like “cloud,” “congealed,” and “hard” represent the absence of human values in Gilead society, where women are treated like mere children. Additionally, the use of self-society conflict (topoi) is another rhetorical device used to depict the abuse experienced by different types of women. Abuse is diverse in women's discourse, as seen in this utterance: ‘I used to think of my body as an instrument of pleasure or a means of transportation.’ Women are subjected to domestic abuse that ranges from sexual deprivation to physical abuse and psychological abuse. The diversity of the abuse topics in women's discourse strengthens the negative presentation” (in Naji & Abbas, 2022).

Offred: These men, we have been told, are like war criminals. It is no excuse that what they did was legal at the time; their crimes are retroactive. They have committed atrocities and must be made into examples for the rest, though this is hardly needed. Today, no woman in her right mind would seek to prevent a birth, should she be so lucky as to conceive. (Atwood, 1985, p. 201)

Contextualization

His extract is told by Offred when she wants to depict how men in Gilead society control females.

Linguistic Analysis: A real ideological division exists concerning the characterization of the characters in this excerpt. On the one hand, it is constructed by referring to members of one's own group using the first-person plural possessive pronoun “we” (women). As opposed to “us,” the pronoun “they” indicates the excluded group (men). The author's choice of pejorative terms like “war criminals” and “atrocities” to characterize males serves as a clue to the ideological division at play here; these terms represent a criminalization mindset. The use of the phrase “their misdeeds are retroactive” in conjunction with the phrase “should she be so fortunate as to conceive” indicates that the writer is emphasizing her disapproval of males. As the target of the pejorative word “retroactive,” males are singled out here as

the excluded. This helps perpetuate the stereotyping of men as villains. At the same time, the unfavorable group's self-presentation is served by the positive term "fortunate," which is used to characterize women. This statement employs figurative language to underline the metaphor of discursive strategy: "These guys, we've been informed, are like war criminals." Males (doctors) who conduct abortions are equated to criminals, and this is the tactic that's being used.

Offred: There are other women with baskets, some in red, some in the dull green of the Marthas, some in the striped dresses, red, blue, and green, and cheap and skimpy, that mark the women of the poorer men. Econowives, they are called. These women are not divided into functions. They must do everything they can. (in Naji & Abbas, 2022, p. 410)

Contextualization

"The narrator, Offred, tells this extract. She explains that the women in Gilead society are according to their addresses. Women are color-coded: red handmaids, blue wives, and green Marthas" (Naji & Abbas, 2022).

Linguistic Analysis

Discourse tactics abound in this passage. The extract opens with opacity, one of the strategies used. This is made clear using the term "some." With the use of the term "some," the speaker avoids committing to a specific number of females. Another discursive tactic is ideological polarization, as in the statement "They have to do everything if they can," in which the handmaids are positioned as the outgroup. Actor descriptions may be used to paint a good or bad picture of the people involved. The handmaids are negatively associated with words like "cheap" and "skimpy." This furthers the philosophy of negative realism by presenting its core ideas. An additional tool available to writers and speakers is the use of repetition to drive home their point and keep the audience's attention where it belongs: on the topic. This is made abundantly obvious use of the word "some" many times in the following phrases: "some in red," "some in the dull green of the Marthas," and "some in the striped gowns" (Naji & Abbas, 2022). Evidently, she uses this technique to drive home her point about their predicament and draw attention to the meat of the piece by bringing up the same term over and over.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study's analyses were meant to fill a void found in earlier research. The study did not give enough weight to social contextual interpretations, which prevented an honest examination of the ideological motivations behind the conflict theme. About the self-society conflict that has been studied so far, the new findings are more all-encompassing. The quantitative results give an overview of the critical discourse analysis discursive tactics utilized in *The Handmaid's Tale*, including the frequency with which they occur, and the types of methods used. Qualitative studies dissect and examine in more depth the ways in which and the causes for the entrenchment of ideology in *The Handmaid's Tale*. The original study questions were posed to provide context for the results. The first study question (which asked, "What discursive tactics are employed in the book *The Handmaid's Tale* to build positive or negative representation?") was addressed via the application of critical discourse analysis. *The Handmaid's Tale* has a fair number of discursive techniques. These tactics are crucial to understanding the conflict and theme of *The Handmaid's Tale*. The *Handmaid's Tale* controversy is notable for its heavy use of the (4) polarization approach, while the (3) method of lexicalization is the second most common. We find that, among the two (2) methods, the repetition method is the third most popular. It turns out that actor description is the lesser used of the two methodologies. In terms of frequency of use, metaphor ranks third among the two tactics. Finally, a minimally optimal case is shown. For Topio, there is only one (1) method that may be used. The maximum amount of ambiguity is achieved with the minimum number of techniques.

As for the second line of inquiry, it is this: "How are these tactics implemented?" Considering the studies, which aim to contextualize the explanation of the underlying ideological polarity, this is discussed. It is possible that *The Handmaid's Tale* is an effort to reshape, reframe, and reaffirm the social reality of its setting via the minds of its lay readership. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to display oneself in a positive light while portraying another in a negative one. Discourse tactics and critical discourse analysis may bring about this kind of polarization. *The Handmaid's Tale* may also be an attempt to establish and maintain cultural hegemony over certain socioeconomic realities. To do this, *The Handmaid's Tale* makes use of critical discourse analysis and discursive tactics.

VI. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to provide a better understanding of how *The Handmaid's Tale* makes use of discursive tactics to (re)produce social reality. It does so by presenting the ideological polarization of a favorable presentation of the handmaid's self vs. a negative portrayal of the other, which is an approach to critical discourse analysis. Ideological polarization is conceptualized in the data sphere via the use of adjectives and pronouns that convey optimistic self and pessimistic other descriptions. The character's employment of discursive techniques and ideological roles discloses the larger structure of the character's discourse, illuminating the truth of the conflict between the character and society. Research shows that these characters' comments may be broken down into two groups: those that encourage a good self-presentation and those that discourage a negative presentation. You can see these tactics at work when comparing the in-group and the out-group. Offred, the novel's narrator, asserts she used them to highlight the sexism and patriarchy inherent in the legal systems of most countries. As an example, we look at the polarization and lexicalization methods

that pit "us" or "us" against "them" or "them," as well as the positive and negative representation tactics. The proximity of these two stages illustrates the individual-societal tension. These two tiers of analysis are crucial to this study because they show why and how gender inequality exists in our society. The Handmaid's Tale employs several large-scale discursive strategies, including actor description, polarization, repetition, metaphor, opacity, and illustration or example, to depict the conflict and show how the Handmaids in Gilead's society are affected by gender inequality, identity crisis, and the struggle between oneself and the rest of the community. These methods are used to assemble the microstructure.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Increase awareness and critical analysis of discursive tactics: Educate readers, scholars, and society at large about the various discursive tactics used in literature, such as polarization, actor description, metaphor, repetition, opacity, and example or illustration. Encourage individuals to critically analyze and recognize these tactics to better understand how they shape social reality and perpetuate inequality.
2. Promote empathy and understanding through diverse narratives: Encourage the exploration and amplification of diverse narratives that challenge dominant discourses and provide a more comprehensive understanding of social issues. By exposing readers to a range of perspectives and experiences, literature can foster empathy, break down stereotypes, and contribute to a more inclusive society.
3. Foster dialogue and critical engagement: Encourage discussions and critical engagement with literary works like *The Handmaid's Tale*. Create spaces for open dialogue where individuals can share their interpretations, challenge each other's viewpoints, and explore the implications of the discursive tactics employed. This promotes a deeper understanding of the text and its social implications.
4. Address and challenge gender inequality: Recognize the importance of addressing and challenging gender inequality in society. Use literature, including *The Handmaid's Tale*, as a tool for raising awareness about the pervasive nature of gender inequality and its impact on individuals and communities. Encourage further research, activism, and policy changes aimed at promoting gender equality and dismantling patriarchal systems.

VIII. STUDY IMPLICATIONS

The implications of your study on the discursive tactics used in *The Handmaid's Tale* are as follows:

1. Understanding the construction of social reality: The study sheds light on how discursive tactics are employed to shape and (re)produce social reality. By analyzing the novel's use of pronouns, adjectives, and other discursive techniques, readers gain insight into how language and narrative can influence perceptions, reinforce power dynamics, and perpetuate social inequalities.
2. Critical analysis of gender inequality: The study highlights the role of literature, such as *The Handmaid's Tale*, in exposing and critiquing gender inequality. It underscores the importance of recognizing and challenging oppressive systems embedded in societal structures, legal frameworks, and cultural norms. This analysis encourages further research and activism to address gender-based discrimination and work towards a more equitable society.
3. Increased awareness of ideological polarization: The study draws attention to the concept of ideological polarization within the narrative. By examining the favorable presentation of the handmaid's self and the negative portrayal of the other, readers become more aware of how such tactics contribute to division, othering, and the reinforcement of power dynamics. This awareness can prompt individuals to critically evaluate similar polarization strategies used in real-world discourses.
4. Advancing critical discourse analysis: The study contributes to the field of critical discourse analysis by applying its principles to a literary work. It showcases the relevance of this analytical framework in examining the ways language, power, and ideology intersect in narrative representations. This application expands the scope of critical discourse analysis beyond traditional text types and highlights its potential for uncovering and challenging discursive strategies.
5. Literary engagement as a catalyst for social change: The study underscores the power of literature in fostering dialogue, empathy, and critical engagement. By analyzing the discursive tactics employed in *The Handmaid's Tale*, readers are prompted to reflect on their own beliefs and attitudes, challenging societal norms and fostering a deeper understanding of social issues. This engagement with literature can act as a catalyst for social change by inspiring individuals to act and advocate for a more just and equitable society.

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