



# A Critical Stylistic Study of Ambivalence in Margret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale"

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## Abstract

Ambivalence is a term used by Homi K. Bhabha (1997) to present the conflict that individuals have when they are influenced by society. The two sides: good and bad about an issue appear and one of them is strengthened because of the conditions and effects of social influences.

Critical stylistics is a field that has been developed from the Critical Discourse Analysis by Lesley Jeffries (2010) to investigate the style that is used in literary and non-literary texts. Jeffries in her model gives the analysts strategies that can be followed to analyze any kind of text. The suggested strategies are ten, and each one of them concentrates on a different type of linguistic device that is used by the writer/speaker.

The study investigates the ambivalence theory, from a critical stylistic point of view, in a modern novel. The writer uses different types of styles to show the women's suffering and how the surrounding conditions affect their way of thinking and acting. Women's secondary position is faithfully mirrored in culture. Nothing defines culture as clearly as its language.

Naming and describing textual-conceptual function is analyzed in this study presenting its ideological effects and how this strategy reflects ambivalence.

**Keywords:** Critical, Ambivalence, Colonial

Received: 21/10/2023

Accepted: 30/11/2023



## Introduction

Critical stylistics is a new approach that is used to cover the textual meaning of discourse. Jeffries (2007) has provided ten strategies that can be used by analysts in analyzing any discourse, whether literary or non-literary

Ambivalence is defined as the point where the positive and negative attitudes are simultaneously strong and opposite in valence. It is being trapped between two opposing motivations reflecting strong attitudes that are opposite in direction.

### The Problem

Most individuals have two opposite thinking or beliefs about an issue. Those two beliefs influence the individual's personality, behavior and language. Language is the mirror through which we reflect our feelings, ideas and beliefs.

There is a need to shed light on this concept and how it affects the speech of the writer/speaker. Ambivalence is used widely in psychology and post-colonial studies. No one has investigated it through stylistics specifically critical stylists.

The researchers try to show readers how this psychological concept is reflected through the individual's speech, not his/her behavior.

### The Hypotheses

It has been hypothesized that:

Ambivalence, whether positive or negative, is strengthened by social circumstances.

Language reflects the ambivalent individuals and how they think and react. It shows the ambivalent individuals' conditions about a specific matter.

Critical stylistic strategies proposed by Jeffries, specifically naming and describing strategy, can be used to show how a writer/speaker uses language to express his/her ambivalent feelings.

## The Significance of the Study

This study has significant value because it gives the readers and the researchers an overview of two important concepts, ambivalence and critical stylistics. In addition, it presents the relation between language and a psychological concept, i.e., ambivalence.

## Ambivalence Defined

The term "ambivalence" is a combination of the Latin prefix "ambi-" and the term "valence," which is typically employed in the field of physical sciences in discussing electrons. Ambivalence is defined as the presence of conflicting emotions or impulses toward a single target. This term was adapted by Sigmund Freud from Eugen Bleuler's groundbreaking work on schizophrenia, "Dementia praecox oder der Gruppe der Schizophrenien" (1911), to describe a problem in the transference process known as resistance (Buchanan, 2018).



Several definitions of ambivalence have been proposed. Gardner (1987: 241), for example, defines it as “a psychological state in which a person holds mixed feelings (positive and negative) towards some psychological object”. Eagly and Chaiken (1998: 123) emphasize the cognitive inconsistency in ambivalence and define it as “the extent of beliefs’ evaluative dissimilarity (or inconsistency)”. Wegener and et.al (1995: 460) define ambivalence as “the extent to which one’s reactions to an attitude object are evaluatively mixed in that both positive and negative (unfavorable) elements are included.” Thompson and et.al (1995: 367) refer to ambivalence as an inclination to “give it [an attitude object] equivalently strong positive and negative evaluations”. The group of definitions is incomplete, but two key characteristics of ambivalence become obvious. First, positive and negative associations are needed. Second, these relationships may be relevant simultaneously. The researchers have distinguished between objective ambivalence (based on positive and negative association weights) and subjective ambivalence (based on conflict experience). Ambivalence refers to assessing an object or conduct both positively and negatively.

Ambivalence goes through various aspects in life such as the contradiction between man and society, race and sexuality, culture and class representing the deep psychological struggle in social reality.

Martinez and et.al (2005:3) add that ambivalence is not indifference or uncertainty about something. An ambivalent person has strong opinions about a subject and perhaps knows more about it than most experts, but still feels conflicted. An uncertain person does not have enough information to form a rational opinion but may arrive at one when provided with additional information. Indifference refers to a state of having neither positive nor negative attitudes towards a subject.

## Post-Colonial Studies and Ambivalence Theory

Post-colonialism theory is defined as that oppositional dynamic, the discourse of resistance to colonialism that emerges at the onset of colonization. This does not mean after colonialism, as that would apply to the end of the imperial process (Ashcroft et.al, 2002: 163). It means that colonialism is still working and the post-colonialism theory is written in resistance to colonialism.

The political significance of colonialism was raised by Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), which reveals how a colonized other is constructed and manipulated to legitimize colonialism. *The Location of Culture* (1994), by Homi K. Bhabha, shows the theoretical foundation of post-colonialism. Bhabha’s core ideas can be summed up with the four-word phrase: liminal, hybrid, mimicry, and ambivalent. They define how colonized people revolt against the colonizer’s rule, which is not as secure as it seems. It underlines the current situation in a world of violently proclaimed cultural diversity and intricate globalization networks. Bhabha shows how colonial histories and cultures perpetually interrupt the present, prompting us to rethink cross-cultural relations. Because dominant nations and ideas are usually defined by anxiety, the dominated can strike back.

In postcolonial studies, critics like Bhabha have used ambivalence to explain the situation of the subaltern subject, who is torn between the material benefits of colonization (e.g., jobs in colonial administration) and the crushing weight of the loss of national sovereignty (Bhabha, 1994:53). Bhabha has used this term to describe the mix of attraction and repulsion that characterized the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized.

In Bhabha’s theory, ambivalence leads to a controversial idea: since the colonial relationship is always ambivalent, it creates the seeds of its destruction. This is controversial because it means that the colonial relationship will be broken up, no matter what the colonized do to fight back or protest.



Literature, which frequently doubles, is essential to Bhabha's post-colonial perspective, which redefines the West and reminds it of its colonial past. Bhabha's methods are inspired by language in general, notably the premise that language is not a simple means of communication. Culture is not imposed by the colonizer. The colonized population can change the colonizers' cultural meanings, just like any literature. Cultural meaning is negotiated between the colonizer and the colonized (Huddart, 2006:2).

Bhabha's work investigates how language shapes identities when the colonizers and the colonized communicate, concluding that colonialism is characterized by a complex identity economy in which both depend on each other. His work emphasizes and develops the agency of colonized people, whose participation in the resistance to colonialism has frequently been underplayed when it does not meet our conventional notions of violent anti-colonial opposition. Importantly, he offers a language model of this agency (ibid).

Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale" is a post-colonial literary work that focuses on feminism and the role of women in Gilead society (a proposed radical society).

## "The Handmaid's Tale"

This novel shows the perils that women face in a society where they have been devalued and where being a woman is practically a crime. The tale depicts an unfair world in which women do not have equal rights. Women are portrayed as mere tools for males to use to satisfy their own basic needs. Through the use of this law, males have stripped women of all of the opportunities that would make life worth living. Women are forbidden in the Republic of Gilead from engaging in intellectual pursuits like reading, writing, or even listening to music. This is a privilege afforded solely to men. Love and romance, two of life's simple pleasures, are also off-limits to women.

In this novel, Offred is an example of this prohibition. Atwood shows the humiliation and fear of living in a future dictatorship controlled by Christian fanatics by narrowing the story's emphasis to one main character. The heroine is one of several "handmaids" who are imprisoned in a compound prison-like for controlled sexual intercourse with their "Commanders of the Faith" due to their "viable ovaries." Gilead, a church-state government, allows unorthodox practices to address a reproductive crisis in the Caucasian population, citing Old Testament polygamy as a source. As in Genesis, the Commander's Wife oversees sex sessions, forcing the handmaid, who is desexed and dehumanized, to partake. The handmaid's worst fate is exile to the colonies, where women are treated as slaves. The governmental policy in Gilead treats sex as a commodity for survival (Malak, 2001:3).

### 5.1 Critical Stylistics

Critical Stylistics (henceforth CS) was first introduced by Lesley Jeffries (2007) when she attempted to investigate the dominant power in hegemonic discourses on the female body in society to determine whether these hegemonic discourses successfully incorporate feminist ideologies.

According to Jeffries (2010), the way language embodies the world is entirely dependent on how the author depicts what he/she sees in a linguistic form. For her, all texts have ideological foundations. She goes on to say that it is not impossible to spell out the ideologies that a text constructs in an attempt for its readers to accept or reject it. She uses the British National Party as an example of a far-right political group and how their ideologies are reflected in their propaganda. Furthermore, such ideologies are clear for both proponents and opponents of such a text; without implying that the two groups will be equally affected by the same text.



In summary, CS is a method of finding the ideology in any text. It is concerned with investigating and revealing hidden ideologies in texts and thus in discourse, by offering a set of analytical tools to uncover these hidden ideologies without the need to subjectively look for them in order to verify preconceived assumptions.

## 5.2 The Construction of Textual Meaning

Textual meaning can be distinguished from the core propositional meaning on the one hand and from contextual, interpersonal meaning on the other.

The main idea of CS is clarifying the meaning that occurs between the systematic meaning of language (or what Saussure called *Langue*) and the contextual meaning in use (or *Parole* as termed by Saussure). At the level of meaning, the text or utterance will use language resources to present a particular view of the world (whether the real world or the fictional world- as in the case of literature). Here, the analyst has to uncover what the text is doing and how it is presenting the world view (Jeffries, 2014: 409).

Textual-conceptual functions are the main tools of CS. They reflect the fact that texts can create specific types of meaning in a number of different ways as there is no single relationship between a linguistic form and its meaning or function in the textual production of meaning. Jeffries (2014: 409) states that “the idea of textual-conceptual functions, in general, is that they try to capture what a text is doing conceptually in presenting the world (or a fictional world in the case of literature) in a particular way”. These functions explain how the linguistic system resources are used to produce the conceptual meaning and this textual part of the process explains why this approach is defined essentially as stylistic. For example, texts contain linguistic features used to name items in the text world through a variety of naming mechanisms like nominalization or hypothesising about the world being presented in certain ways through a variety of modal or other structures (ibid). Thus, any linguistic theory adopted to analyze language demands, analysts, to study the meaning of texts first.

## 5.3 Textual-Conceptual Functions

Jeffries’ tools of analysis can be seen in the context of the ideational metafunction, i.e. they explain how language creates views of the world. Textual-conceptual functions, as defined by Jeffries, are “the different aspects of the text world which the text produces”. They include how the text’s producer names and describes things related to the topic; how s/he creates the world of the text hypothetically or definitively; how s/he implies or assumes things; how s/he prefers to present the events, actions, or states of beings to form the process of the text; and how the text’s producer makes people or things opposite or equivalent in the text’s world. To answer the question ‘what is the text doing?’ more textual-conceptual functions can be added and that is related to the emerging text world (Jeffries, 2014: 387).

Jeffries divides the tools into ten conceptual strategies to give the reader an idea about the kind of information each category addresses. The researchers present only definitions of each strategy except for the one that is going to be applied (naming and describing) to give the readers an overlook of the form of each one.

### 4.3.1 Naming and Describing

This tool illustrates how English texts designate the world, showcasing how authors and individuals select from the language’s standard resources to convey a particular worldview. Jeffries (2010: 17) says that in the case of names, the speaker/writer can use more than one reference to refer to the same thing.



Jeffries (2014: 413) considers naming as the primary role of texts, she says that texts name and describe objects in the world, whether they are animate, inanimate or abstract. This function can justify the choice of the text producers to describe a “politically motivated producer of violence” as a terrorist or freedom fighter.

Naming can create ideological meaning in three ways:

The choice of noun → to indicate referent

Nominalization → to package up ideological content in the head noun itself

Noun modification → to determine the nature of the referent

## 1. Choice of noun

When a speaker comes into contact with speakers from different dialects, the choice of words s/he uses may sometimes be influenced by the regional variations in which s/he grows up.

Another kind of choice in naming has a more obvious ideological potential. This choice is connected to words with “pejorative or ameliorative connection”. This indicates that the speaker is not only making references to something but it shows his/her opinion about that referent. For example, the facial expression’s evaluation differs between using the word “smile” to give a neutral evaluation or using “leer” to give a negative meaning as in:

Someone gave you a smile.

Someone gave you a leer.

(Jeffries, 2010: 20)

## 2. Nominalization

Jeffries (2010: 25) identifies another element termed “nominalization” or “nominalized verbs” that is utilized for packaging up ideological content in the head noun itself by using metaphorical mechanisms to turn a process into a state.

The main role of the nominal elements is naming an event participant in a clause that commonly relates to a person, place or thing, while the verb phrase describes the kind of process taking place between these participants (ibid).

Naming can impact a text’s ideological content by organizing concepts to be updated or labelled in numerous ways or by labelling an activity or process. Commercial and political texts use nominalization to confuse the public and those in power. Reification, “transforming the processes and qualities into a qualifiable variable” (Fowler, 1991: 800), is another ideological possibility of nominalization. Jeffries (2010: 35) provides an example. He said, “Ambition, imagination, drive, energy, determination, courage”. Finally, science specialists must use nominalization to communicate. Nominalization conveys the truth, not an assumption.

## 3. Noun Modification

Jeffries (2010: 17) explains the construction of noun phrases consisting of a head noun (or not) by pre- or



post-modifiers. In addition, adjectives are also categorized as attributive, pre-modifying as well and predicative adjectives functioning as complements with intensive verbs:

The two accused brothers, who cannot be named for legal reasons, each face the same four charges.

(Yorkshire Post, 15.04.2009)

The underlined part of the sentence is a noun phrase in which brothers is the head noun. This word refers to the two offenders by presenting their family relation. Choosing certain nouns in naming entities contributes to the construction of their meaning (Richardson, 2007: 49).

### 5.3.2 Representing Actions, Events, and States

There are two transitivity notions to clarify this category. First, classical grammar distinguishes between verbs that require an object (transitive), two objects (ditransitive), and no object (intransitive) (Greenbaum & Nelson, 2009: 15). According to Halliday (1985) and Simpson (1993), the second concept of transitivity entails categorizing lexical verbs by the activity or state they depict (Jeffries, 2010: 40).

Transitivity realizes Halliday's ideational function in a way that is straightforward to apply to literary and non-literary texts. It reveals worldviews in texts/discourses via stylistics and critical linguistics. It also helps analyze power dynamics by seeing "who is doing what to whom" (Fowler, 1991; Jeffries, 2010; Simpson, 1993). Transitivity helps expose textual ideologies by studying syntactic devices (Coffey, 2013: 72).

### 5.3.3 Equating and Contrasting

English has a great number of synonyms compared to other languages due to its long history, lexical semantists still maintain that no two words have the same/identical meaning. A similar view exists with antonyms, where language professionals (English speakers, dictionary makers, and teachers) assume that some pairs of lexical items have a clear semantic link (Jeffries, 2010: 51).

#### 5.3.4 Exemplifying and Enumerating

These two textual functions seem to be related and it is difficult to differentiate between them linguistically. Consequently, the reader/hearer needs "pragmatic inferencing" to figure out which is relevant in a particular case. The only distinction between them can be assumed that enumerating lists all the cases of a category, while exemplifying does not.

### 5.3.5 Prioritizing

Generally speaking, the speaker/writer puts the new and important information at the end of the sentence so that the hearer/reader has the sense to look for the new and prominent information at the final position of a clause (Jeffries, 2006:151).



### 5.3.6 Implying and Assuming

The textual-conceptual function of implying and assuming is related to implicature in the field of pragmatics and presuppositions and in the field of Semantics respectively.

It can be argued that the two textual functions, assuming and implying, are similar superficially but different linguistically. Assuming is the presupposition which is easily defined and hard to deny and cannot be cancelled even when negating the sentence, whereas implicature is hard to identify and can be cancelled by negating. As the content and the context of the text change, the ideological effects of its presuppositions and implicatures change accordingly.

### 5.3.7 Negating

Negating refers to a larger conceptual practice rather than just negating the verb; it can be defined as a generic term with the capacity to generate, in the reader's/hearer's mind, a situation that contradicts the one confirmed in the text. Consequently, negating provides the writer/speaker with a chance to produce a "hypothetical version of reality" (unreal world) and the reader/hearer has to comprehend this "hypothetical situation" (Jeffries, 2010:106-107).

### 5.3.8 Hypothesizing

Hypothesizing is taking into account the hypothetical situations offered by modality. Modality reveals the text producers' viewpoints clearly, which may affect the recipients based on their perceived ideas of the producers. Therefore, "authoritative" news organizations such as the BBC and The Times may reliably report the facts. Similarly, doctors, teachers and politicians all have the credibility to offer plausible predictions about the future (Jeffries, 2010: 115).

### 5.3.9 Presenting Other's Speech and Thoughts

Using persuasive powers of language to convey the ideas and perspectives of other people is another method of presenting the world from a certain point of view (Jeffries, 2010:130).

The power of language to present the thoughts and words of other people is used to influence the producer's and recipient's ideology.

Presentation of speech and thoughts (discourse presentation) was the main concern of stylisticians in studying literary texts to show how a character's speech and thoughts may interact with the narrator's/author's attitudes and thoughts (Jeffries, 2015:396).

#### 5.3.10 Presenting Time, Space and Society

This is the last textual-conceptual step in Jeffries' CS framework. This function is useful for interpersonal communication, i.e., face-to-face interaction, because its linguistic model is regarded in the space-time and social dimensions of the real world through the use of deictic words and phrases of human language that refer to space (here, there), or time (now, then), or social structure or human relationships in society (sir) (Jeffries, 2015:398).





## 6.1. Data Analysis

Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale" is an example of dystopia. It combines the power with sexuality. Power uses nothing except the law of prohibition to address the issue of sexuality. The point is for sex to give up its own existence. The threat of a penalty that amounts to a ban on sexual activity is the tool it uses to achieve this goal.

The critical stylistic analysis is concentrated on the use of the naming and describing strategy (the first strategy in Jeffries' categories) and the aim here is to show how the characters use this strategy to reflect their own psychological state (i.e. ambivalence) towards a certain matter.

The naming and describing strategy is divided into three divisions:

The choice of the noun

Nominalization

Noun modification

Each one of these categories has its own linguistic form and ideological effect that the researchers show in their analysis of certain extracts.

The researchers depend on their choice of extracts on the following criteria:

The importance of the event is reflected through the speech of the character.

The change in the ideas and beliefs of the characters leads to the change of the psychological condition of the character.

The frequency of the category, which one is used more than the others.

Five extracts are analyzed to show the use of the choice of noun category, two extracts for the nominalization and the noun modification categories. The reason behind the variety in the number of the chosen extracts is the frequency of each category which is going to be presented later in this section.

### 6.1.1 The Choice of Noun

This category is widely used in the novel specifically when the characters want to describe a situation or a state in a metaphorical way and this is shown in the following extracts. The aim is to present the use of this category throughout the novel by shedding light on its ideological effects and the ambivalence occurrence in the language of the characters.

EXTRACT 1: "There was old sex in the room and loneliness and expectation of something without a shape or a name. I remember that yearning, for something that was always about to happen and was never the same as the hands that were on us there and then, in the small of the back, or out back, ...."

(Atwood, 1986)

The Linguistic Meaning: The extract starts with the dummy subject followed by the predicate consisting of the



subject complement and prepositional phrases. The word something is an inanimate entity which is described here as lacking of shape and name.

The Textual Meaning: The word something indicates a thing which is inanimate and does not have a shape or name to be described. She uses such construction to give the interpretation of the future, future of the whole country or area, which is vague and unclear. The aim of using this construction is not to make a reference of something but rather to show the speaker's opinion about that referent (future) which is supposed to be planned because naturally, we have plans for our future. In the case of Offred, she does not expect a good and bright future or at least a planned future, instead, she describes it as unclear, i.e., without a shape or name.

The ideological meaning of the choice of a noun is that the writer/ speaker gives his/her own opinion about the referent.

A strong ambivalence is reflected here. The objective ambivalence is clear because the belief in building a new country and society named Gilead is a general one. Because of the conflict between the slogans and ideas that Gilead society calls for and the reality that those who had to join this society have faced, the negative ambivalence appears and strengthens. Gilead society is calling for freedom and salvation from all old habits and beliefs that led the old society to collapse and destroy the nation. Ambivalence here is a consequence of the conflict that has emerged after Gilead's powerful members take control of the society.

EXTRACT 2: "Does each of us have the same print, the same chair, the same white curtains, I wonder? Government issue? Think of it as being in the army, said Aunt Lydia."

(Atwood, 1986)

The Linguistic Meaning: the extract starts with an imperative verb and this gives an indication that the speaker is someone with authority (Aunt Lydia).

The Textual Meaning is that Aunt Lydia convinces the handmaids that their rooms in the commanders' houses are just like a room in the army, honestly, Aunt Lydia trains the handmaids as soldiers because they are considered as the hidden army that fight for the continuity of the Gilead generation. The character, Aunt Lydia, uses the noun army in her description of the handmaid's room. She shows the handmaids that they are members of the Gilead army and their main aim is to create a new generation for the Gilead nation.

After Offred's descriptions of her room in the Commander's house, she remembers what Aunt Lydia told them. Lydia's words have two indications:

1. All the handmaids' rooms look the same.
2. The handmaids' rooms are not like any other rooms in that the windows cannot be opened and any tool that can be used to commit suicide is not available (as Offred mentions about the chandler). The rooms lack modernity and comfort. Just the basic things are provided. Lydia's speech shows the kind of life that these women have when they move to the Commanders' houses, just like in the army.

The conflict in Aunt Lydia's speech leads to ambivalent feelings. Aunt Lydia's statement indicates that the handmaids are not going to live a good life in the commanders' houses as they are supposed to be. Instead, the opposite happens, they are humiliated and treated as a vessel and if they fail to do their mission, they are going to go to the colonies to serve and suffer till they die. This kind of treatment leads to create negative ambivalence. Being serving



in the commanders' houses and doing the sacred mission, those women are supposed to be respected appreciating their sacrifice of their bodies for the sake of the revolution of the Gilead society. The negative ambivalence is going to be strengthened.

EXTRACT 3: "It isn't running away they are afraid of. We wouldn't get far. It's those other escapes, the ones you can open in yourself, given a cutting edge."

(Atwood, 1986)

The Linguistic Meaning: the narrator uses the dummy it which is used to show the personal opinion about something or someone. This extract summarizes the reasons behind the simple decoration of the handmaid's room which is to avoid the handmaid's reaction mainly committing suicide. Verbs are nominalized here (escapes and cutting) and the use of the demonstratives and others.

The Textual Meaning: this extract shows the ways of escaping that Gilead guards are afraid of, not physical escape but the escape from life, i.e. suicide. The textual-conceptual function is naming and describing namely choice of noun by the word escapes and modification of noun by the use of the word cutting before the noun edge.

The first noun escapes is a choice of noun, the narrator chooses this noun as a metaphoric tool, the noun escape has an abstract meaning because the narrator focuses on the other interpretation of this noun. Escaping is not just running away from one place to another. Escape is a kind of running away from life to death by committing suicide and this was usual among the handmaids this can be shown by the narrator's second clause in which she explains that the ones you can open in yourself.

The ideological effect of this strategy is to show the reader the other references to the word escape and to transfer the reader from the usual understanding of this word to another one.

In this extract, the utilization of the pronouns "we" and "they" in this context can be seen as an embodiment of Bhabha's concept of self and other, which serves to illustrate the relationship between the native people (referred to as "natives" or "aliens") and the occupier's force (the Gilead Government). The ambivalence here is unconscious because the feelings are tuned to be the opposite. The depersonalization alienates is clear here, where the new identity appears, i.e., the masters and natives, i.e., the females who turned to be slaves and unhuman (handmaids). This concept is built on displacement and differentiation. The coercive power is used here, i.e., the violence power. This is why we can see the conflicted nouns appear. It seems that colonizers (presented by the Gilead government) have used their power to prevent the handmaids from getting their freedom and the handmaids are not able to take their choice and kill themselves. They have not been allowed to use their brains, only their bodies. This misuse of power leads to the appearance of ambivalence, and the negative feeling of committing suicide is understood. This negative feeling leads to negative ambivalence. The contradiction between what Gilead society calls for and what they do leads to a change in personal ideas and beliefs.

EXTRACT 4: "Where I am is not a prison but a privilege, as Aunt Lydia said, who was in love with either/or."

(Atwood, 1986)

The Linguistic Meaning: This extract starts with the wh-word used as a relative pronoun to indicate the place of Red Centre. The relative pronoun is followed by a subject and its predicate I am, the whole relative phrase func-



tions as the subject of the main clause here. Where I am given the indication of the place where Offred and other handmaids are trained, i.e, Red Centre. The relative phrase is followed by the predicate that consists of the copula verb is and the subject complements a prison and a privilege.

The Textual Meaning: Aunt Lydia has used the nouns prison and privilege in the same clause not to compare between them, but to convince the handmaids that their situation is not as bad as it is. Naming and describing textual-conceptual function is used here, specifically the choice of noun. The character's use of the nouns prison and privilege is a diplomatic choice. Aunt Lydia shows the handmaids that the Red Centre is not a prison where freedom is taken but they shall look at it as a privilege because they are prepared to perform a very holy role in Gilead society which is giving birth and building a new generation of leaders. The choice of noun comes from Aunt Lydia's presupposition that the handmaids consider Red Centre as a jail not a place for training.

The ideological effect of naming and describing strategy is that these nouns have a great deal of information about the Red Centre and how the handmaids shall think and feel about it.

If we look at the use of these two words prison and privilege and their psychological effect on the handmaids in general and on Offred in specific, Aunt Lydia is convinced that the Red Centre is not a prison as anyone may think, as the handmaids may think, but it is a privilege. The use of the word privilege gives the impression that those who have been chosen to be handmaids and trained in the Red Centre are unique and blessed and their uniqueness comes from their fertility. So, it is a privilege for them to have this higher rank in Gilead society. The aim behind using these words is to encourage the handmaids to bear the treatment of the Aunts because they are preparing them for something sacred. These words are enough to strengthen the positive ambivalence. According to Bhabha (1994: 53), subaltern subjects are torn between the material benefits of colonization and the crushing weight of the loss of national sovereignty. Here Aunts can be considered as colonizers because of the power they have and the handmaids are the colonized. The colonized are lost because of the situation they are living in, i.e, being treated as slaves using their bodies for the colonizers' sake and their holy roles as interpreted by the Aunts.

EXTRACT 5: "Late Victorian, the house is, a family house, built for a large rich family."

(Atwood, 1986)

The Linguistic Meaning: The extract starts with the subject Late Victorian and the substitute noun house, both of the words have the same reference. The extract consists of two predicates, the first one is a copula verb is and the subject complements a family house, while the second predicate consists of the intransitive verb build and the prepositional phrase for a large rich family.

The Textual Meaning: This extract is full of scathing irony and satire. It serves as a microcosm of the text and taken as a whole, embodies many of the novel's main ideas and themes. The idea of family or the lack of one is the first and perhaps most important thing in this extract. The dream of a perfect family is kept alive in Gilead. The commanders and wives of each family are seen as the best matriarchs (mothers) and patriarchs (fathers). The Handmaid's Tale, on the other hand, shows how a substitute mother is seen as nothing more than an incubator. Focusing on words like family, grandfather, and motherly in this text draws attention to a contradiction. Even though these things are in the house and are used to describe it, they are obviously missing from both society and the house. This shows that the text is meant to be funny. The choice of nouns, family, Late Victorian, grandfather, motherly, and large rich family, are all used by Offred to reflect what Gilead members want to show others and themselves. The reference to these nouns is abstract; there is no big family, no grandfather and no mother. These nouns are



used ironically to show how the appearance contradicts the reality. The ideological effect of this strategy is to show that these nouns lack their real reference. Offred uses these nouns to show the true scene of the commander's life not giving assumptions.

The contradiction between appearance and reality leads to ambivalent feelings. Offred feels depressed when describing the house which is decorated to be suitable for a big family but the reality is that few members live in it without the presence of sons and daughters. The description of the house should strengthen the positive ambivalence but reality strengthens the opposite one. The affected category of consequences is shown here. Offred's feelings and attitude about the place where she lives are contradictory. She believes that big families live in big houses, but the opposite happens in Gilead society.

### 6.1.2 Nominalization

The character prefers to nominalize the verb to concentrate on another verb at the same time. The following extracts show the use of this category.

EXTRACT 1: "Thinking can hurt your chances, and I intend to last."

(Atwood, 1986)

The Linguistic Meaning: The word thinking is a nominal word that is derived from the verb think. The linguistic meaning is that thinking is the subject but not the doer of the action. The subject indicates that this is a process.

The Textual Meaning is the nominalizing of the verb because there is no need to mention the actor (who is Offred here). The role of the actor is not important but the nominalized word and the proposition (action) that follows it is more important. The use of nominalization is to concentrate on the action, not on the actor. The interpretation of this sentence is that Gilead society has prevented women from thinking, they are not asked or allowed to think and give their opinion (that is what we are going to focus on with more examples), and there is no need to use their brains because society needs only their bodies. Females are not allowed to use their intelligence because they are unable to make a decision, their main role is just to give birth for the commanders to build a new generation, a generation that is pure from every sin was used to occur previously.

If we want to discuss the case of ambivalence, we can see that Offred (who used to be a journalist) is not allowed to speak or think about anything. The negative ambivalence is clear here specifically when she says (I intend to last). She obeys the orders and rules of Gilead commanders who have used their power to control even the thinking of females. Offred decides to surround, she does not want to fight anymore, she only wants to survive. Power abuse leads to her surrounding and accepting the fate that Gilead has designed for her as a handmaid.

EXTRACT 2: "Frowning, she tears out three tokens and hands them to me. Her face might be kind if she would smile. But the frown isn't personal: it's the red dress she disapproves of and ..."

(Atwood, 1986)

The Linguistic Meaning: The extract starts with an introductory phrase; the participle form is used to show the character's feelings about Offred. The introductory phrase is followed by the clause that describes the action which happens after the frowning.



The Textual Meaning: Serena's reaction, frowning, is justified by Offred. Offred presupposes that Serena hates the red colour and what it represents and she does not hate Offred herself. The colour reminds Serena of her disability to procreate kids and she cannot fulfil a wife's key material role. The naming and describing strategy is used again namely nominalization frowning and the frown.

The ideological effect is to concentrate on the character's reaction and feelings. Offred justifies this reaction and changing the form of the word frowning from a participle to a definite noun phrase. The reason behind using the verb frown as frowning is because she wants to use this verb as a noun, an introductory phrase to show Serena's impression when she meets her, so the reader will conclude the opinion of Serena about having another handmaid in her house. The second use of the verb frown as the frown functioning as the subject of the sentence is to give the reason behind this feeling and describe it.

The behavior category of the ambivalent consequence appears here. Body movement is clear because Serena shows her reaction to reflect her attitude toward the handmaid of her house. Offred uses the coordinator before the frown to justify Serena's feelings by saying that Serena disgusts the colour not the handmaid herself. The subjective negative ambivalence shows the individual's feeling about a certain matter, the red colour here.

### 6.1.3 Noun Modification

The following extracts represent samples of the noun modification category that is used by certain characters in *The Handmaid's Tale*. This category is used to give the noun a full description by using adjectives before the head noun to describe it in a phrase. From the table above, the percentage of the use of this category throughout this novel of this category is the lowest one.

EXTRACT 1: "I can see his clothes in my mind, bright as lithography or a full-colour advertisement, from an ancient magazine, though not his face, not so well."

(Atwood, 1986)

The Linguistic Meaning: this extract contains a description of Offred's image of her husband. The underlined words and phrases represent the object complementing of the object his clothes. They describe the state of the object, i.e., the shape of Offred's husband's clothes. She imagines him and his shape and appearance after being separated months ago.

The Textual-Meaning: the naming and describing strategy is used, specifically the noun modification. The character describes how she imagines her husband now. She is trying to create a nice image of him to encourage herself to resist more and give herself the hope that he will come back and save her.

The ideological effect of noun modification is to give a full description of the appearance of Offred's husband. She shows that her husband is still that person who looks strong and handsome just like a model in an ancient magazine but still without a face. She tries to delete the ugly and sorrowful image that she has of him and his death in front of her. She tries to run away from her present and imagines the future hoping to be united with her family.

Here, ambivalent feelings are reflected. Offred knows that her husband has been killed when they were trying to pass the boundaries and ran away from the Gilead's army but she tries to make herself believe that her husband is still alive. We can see that she describes just his appearance without paying attention to his face and this is because she cannot remember his face. The only memory that she has of his face is of the day he was killed and that image



is ugly and unwanted because it makes her feel sad, empty and hopeless.

Offred tries to reverse her negative ambivalence to a positive one, she tries to think positively so she keeps on her life and bears her current life.

EXTRACT 2: "He is surrounded by a smell, his own, the smell of a cooped-up animal in a dirty cage. I imagine him resting because I can't bear to imagine him at any other time."

(Atwood, 1986)

The Linguistic Meaning: the extract is a description of the doctor's smell as it is shown by the use of a cooped-up animal in a dirty cage. This phrase is a complement describing the noun smell. If this phrase is transformed it can be: the smell is a cooped-up animal in a dirty cage. The head noun is smell and the rest is the subject complement of that noun.

The Textual Meaning: the noun modification category is used to describe how the doctor smells according to Offred. Offred presents her opinion about the doctor who was examining her health situation. She does not like him and his offering to help her to get pregnant. She modifies the kind of smell that comes from him and this is done by using the indefinite article followed by the adjective cooped-up. This noun modification has two interpretations:

The doctor lives inside a place, which is probably the hospital where he works, and that place is so small and the doctors are not allowed to leave it and live in their own houses.

Offred feels that the doctor has this smell to indicate that his smell is just like his deeds, i.e., stinky and dirty because he has offered his illegal services to her without even being permitted by her. The doctor's smell is a symbol of illegal behavior.

The ideological effect of this category is that it gives the reader a full description of a certain noun by using only a phrase that describes the whole situation.

The ambivalence is clear in this extract, the conflict between the doctor's behavior and the ideal image that a doctor has is reflected in Offred's words. In this part of the novel, the doctor starts touching Offred while he is examining her, instead of doing his usual work, he starts flattering her, getting benefits from his job from one side and the misery of the handmaids from another side. The doctor's behavior leads to the negative ambivalence to be strengthened because Offred feels humiliated and her body is the only advantage that all want to get and use.

Table (1) The Frequency of the Used Categories of Naming and Describing Strategy

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Choice of Noun	25	43%
Nominalization	18	31%
Noun Modification	15	26%
Total	58	100%

Naming and describing strategy is used in 58 extracts throughout the novel. The researchers have chosen only 9 extracts as examples of the use of this strategy to show the readers the reasons behind using each category.



## 7. Findings and Discussions

From the percentages of the table above, the findings fulfil the main aim of the study which is analyzing the critical stylistic strategy, namely naming and describing, and its categories to show the ideological effects and the way that the linguistic devices are used to reflect ambivalence. It is clear that the characters in this novel intend to use the choice of nouns more than the other two categories.

The findings also verify the hypotheses of the study. It has been found that the use of the choice of noun category is more than the other categories because of its ideological effect and how it can be used to show ambivalent individuals and their use of language to reflect their feelings whether positive or negative. The choice of noun category is (43%). The reason behind this frequency is the ideological effect that this category offers. The ideological effects are either to show the other references of a certain noun and this reference depends on the situation in which that noun is used. The speaker also uses this category for metaphorical reasons, to make a joke or to show his/her opinion about something but that is done indirectly. The second category, nominalization has got (31%) and the third category has got (26%).

## 8. Conclusions

Naming and describing are widely used in the chosen novel and this is the reason behind choosing this strategy to be analyzed in this study. This strategy has three categories, each category has its representation. The speaker/writer uses each one of them according to his/her needs to reflect their feelings and thoughts. Each one of them has its ideological effects that differentiate it from the rest of the categories.

Any speaker/writer is elective when choosing a noun to express his/her feelings and thoughts. The noun does not have only one reference; the reference varies from one situation to another and from one individual to another. Through analyzing the extracts, the choice of a noun is very effective in describing the character's contradictory feelings, i.e., ambivalence.

Through the analysis, it has been realized that the use of the choice of noun category is used more than the others because of the various ideological effects that this category gives to the language users.

Ambivalence is not only reflected through the behavior such as facial gestures or body movements. Language is used to reflect ambivalence too by the use of linguistic devices.

The language used by ambivalent individuals is influenced by their societal context, hence reflecting this influence. The phenomenon of ambivalence, regardless of its polarity, is reinforced in accordance with contextual factors and societal influences. The character of Offred exhibits ambivalence as a result of the challenges and adversities she has encountered after her arrest by the Gilead society. These hardships include enduring torture and humiliation, the loss of her partner, and the abduction of her young daughter. The individual in question attempts to assimilate into the societal structure of Gilead, exhibiting a willingness to embrace her predetermined destiny. However, she finds herself unable to suppress the yearning for the sense of liberation she had before the establishment of Gilead and its regulatory framework. The presence of duality among the leaders and commanders in Gilead engenders a heightened sense of ambivalence. On one hand, they espouse principles of freedom and justice, rejecting the pre-existing societal norms. However, their actions contradict these professed ideals, as they subject women, including their spouses, to humiliation. Moreover, they exploit natural resources for personal gain, suppress dissenting voices, and actively resist revolutionary movements.





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