

SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF “NEWSPEAK” AS A SYMBOL OF MIND CONTROL IN THE NOVEL “1984” BY GEORGE ORWELL

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Abstract

This study analyzes Newspeak as a symbol of mind control in George Orwell's 1984, highlighting how totalitarian regimes manipulate language to restrict thought and control ideology. Using a qualitative content analysis based on Klaus Krippendorff's method, ten key Newspeak vocabularies were examined semiotically through Peirce's triadic model and interpreted via Wellek and Warren's sociology of literature. Findings reveal that Newspeak systematically simplifies language and eliminates alternative meanings to align consciousness with Party doctrine, serving as a subtle yet powerful tool for controlling thought, speech, and emotion. This study underscores Orwell's warning that controlling language equates to controlling the human mind.

Keywords: Newspeak, mind control, 1984

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is not just a means of communication; it is a powerful tool that can shape perceptions, control minds, and establish power. This idea is particularly relevant to George Orwell's novel *1984* (Nineteen Eighty-Four), published in 1949. In the novel *1984*, the world was divided into three main countries: Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia. These three countries depict a dystopian world divided by political conflict and endless war. This novel focuses on the country of Oceania, especially London, where the main character Winston Smith lives. Oceania is led by totalitarian regimes of Big Brother, whose face is printed on posters in various corners of the country with the slogan “BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU”. The government, called “Party”, exercises absolute power over all aspects of life. In George Orwell's *1984*, language is deliberately designed by the Party to limit people's freedom of thought and expression. The language is called “Newspeak”. *Newspeak* was the official language of Oceania and was designed to fulfill the ideological needs of Ingsoc, or English Socialism (Orwell, 2024). This phenomenon is particularly relevant in today's context, where we witness the increasing influence of media, propaganda, and information manipulation in everyday life.

The novel *1984* by George Orwell was chosen to explore how language limits individual freedom and controls thought, to examine *Newspeak* as a tool for manipulating language and personal freedom, and to highlight its warning about the dangers of controlling language and knowledge in modern society.

Several relevant studies have been conducted previously. Baimussina & Roziyeva (2022) compare *Newspeak* in Orwell's *1984* and Sorokin's *Day of the Oprichnik*, highlighting

language modification as a tool for public control and its impact on national identity. Abdu & Khafaga (2019) used Critical Discourse Analysis to reveal linguistic techniques like simplification, euphemism, and morphologization as mind control strategies in 1984. Walia & Chauhan (2024) examine *Newspeak*'s feasibility through Saussure's semiology, arguing that language development cannot be fully controlled due to its social nature. Gurung (2024) analyzes Orwell's political critique in 1984 and *Animal Farm*, emphasizing their ongoing relevance to issues of authority and civil liberties. Lastly, Wiyogo & Kumala (2023) apply Peirce's triadic semiotic model to Miyazawa Kenji's *Night on the Galactic Railroad*, demonstrating the model's effectiveness in literary analysis and supporting the theoretical basis of this study.

Semiotic Theory by Peirce

Semiotics, derived from Greek terms meaning sign and signified, is the science of studying signs that help humans understand and interact with their environment and society (Diputra & Nuraeni, 2022). Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory centers on a triadic relationship, which includes representamen (sign), object, and interpretant (meaning), called semiosis (Afisi, 2020). Peirce defines semiotics as the formal doctrine of signs, synonymous with logic (Ersyad, 2021). Signs create meaning through this interaction, exemplified by the *Newspeak* word *ungood*, where the word (representamen) signifies "bad" (object), and is understood as the opposite of "good" (interpretant). Peirce also classifies signs into icons (similarity-based), indices (causal or physical relation), and symbols (arbitrary, rule-based) (Liszka, 1996). Peirce's theory applies to *Newspeak* in 1984, where signs function as symbols altering meaning to control thought.

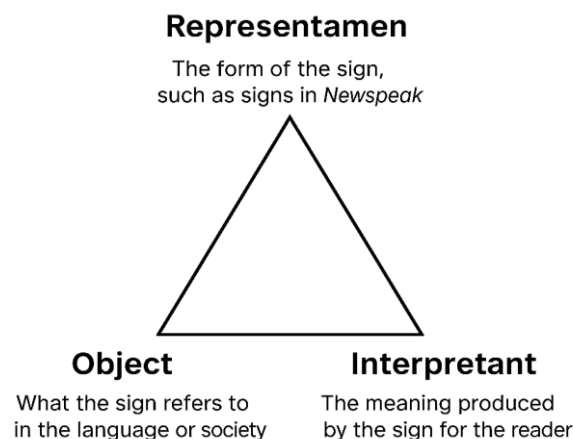


Figure 1. Peirce's Triadic Model

Sociology of Literature Theory

This field studies literature's relationship with society, focusing on how social, cultural, and political contexts influence literature and vice versa (Wellek & Warren, 1949). It includes analyzing the author's background and ideology. In 1984, *Newspeak* exemplifies language enforcing ideology and suppressing critical thought, warning about the dangers of controlling expression.

2. METHOD

This study is a qualitative approach with a specific focus on content analysis based on the framework proposed by Klaus Krippendorff. The fundamental characteristic of qualitative research is that it looks at how individuals interpret their own tangible, real-life experiences in their own words and thought processes and then analyzed using behavioral sciences like psychology, sociology, politics, education, health sciences, or, more recently, business and management, decision-making, or innovation, to name a few examples (Cropley, 2022). In addition, the content analysis method used in this study follows systematic steps, based on Klaus Krippendorff's method. The study technique called content analysis describes precise and repeatable results from texts (or other significant sources) in connection with the context in which they were used (Krippendorff, 2004). Through an accurate and structured analysis process, the writer can identify patterns, themes, and meanings contained in the text, as well as their implications for our understanding of mind control and power in totalitarian societies.

The data of this study were taken from the novel *1984*, with a particular focus on the concept of *Newspeak*. This novel is used as the primary data to analyze how language functions as a tool of social control in the context of totalitarianism. The writer collected data through several steps. First, a close reading of George Orwell's *1984* was conducted with a focus on identifying *Newspeak* vocabulary. Next, data reduction and selection were performed by choosing key *Newspeak* words that were ideologically significant and thematically relevant, based on their frequency, narrative impact, and connection to mind control, ideological control, and limiting freedom of thought. Finally, the selected vocabulary was grouped and coded according to the study's three research questions concerning *Newspeak*'s functions in mind control, restricting thought, and controlling ideology.

The data analysis in this study utilizes content analysis following Klaus Krippendorff's approach, which enables a systematic examination of symbolic and ideological meanings within texts (Krippendorff, 2004; Hardani et al., 2020). This method is appropriate for analyzing how *Newspeak* functions as a tool of control in George Orwell's *1984*. The process begins with unitizing, where the text is divided into manageable segments, including larger sampling units such as chapters or sections, specific recording or coding units like sentences or phrases that reflect *Newspeak* characteristics, and context units that provide additional meaning. Sampling is then conducted by selecting the most relevant parts of the novel that illustrate the use of *Newspeak* in relation to mind control and social manipulation, employing a relevance sampling technique. Following this, the recording and coding phase involves manually collecting pertinent quotes, noting their page numbers and contexts, and categorizing them according to predetermined themes such as mind control, restriction of thought, and ideological dominance. Finally, the data is reduced by simplifying and focusing on significant patterns and themes, eliminating irrelevant information to provide a concise and effective response to the research questions.

3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This section analyzes key *Newspeak* vocabulary from Orwell's *1984* using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic triadic model and linked to the sociology of literature theory by Wellek & Warren to reveal how language functions not only as communication but as a tool of mind control, limiting freedom of thought and ideology by the Party. The selected words, mostly from the B Vocabulary related to Party ideology and social control, but the writer took one word from the A Vocabulary because of its distinctive meaning and its role in simplifying language to the point of influencing thinking. The vocabularies are *Ungood*, *Doublethink*, *Unperson*, *Thoughtcrime*, *Facecrime*, *Crimestop*, *Goodthink*, *Backwhite*, *Duckspeak*, and *Thinkpol*. Each term is examined through Peirce's framework of representamen (the sign),

object (the referent), and interpretant (the meaning), illustrating how the Party manipulates language to shape and restrict thought.

Table 1. Analysis of the Word *Ungood* in the Novel *1984*

Newspeak word	<i>Ungood</i>
Category	The A Vocabulary
Representament	Prefix “un-” + word “good”
Object	An idea or condition that is not good
Interpretant	An understanding that in <i>Newspeak</i> , the word “bad” is simplified into a single form of <i>ungood</i> to remove word variations and limit more complex ways of thinking.

The word *ungood* exemplifies how *Newspeak* reduces language in the novel *1984* by replacing various negative terms like “bad” or “terrible” with a single simplified form. According to Peirce’s semiotic theory, *ungood*’s representamen is the combination of the prefix “un-” and “good,” the object is the concept of something not good, and the interpretant is the understanding that “bad” is simplified to *ungood*. Orwell’s appendix explains that *Newspeak* aims to make heretical or rebellious thoughts literally unthinkable by eliminating linguistic complexity. The term *ungood* also appears in dialogue, highlighting how reducing vocabulary narrows the range of thought, preventing complex or critical ideas. Sociologically, this reflects literature’s role as a mirror of social and political power, showing how totalitarian regimes manipulate language to control consciousness and suppress resistance. Therefore, *ungood* symbolizes the deliberate destruction of linguistic diversity to enforce ideological uniformity, with its meaning shaped by the Party’s imposed reality, echoing broader concerns about totalitarianism and propaganda.

Table 2. Analysis of the Word *Doublethink* in the Novel *1984*

Newspeak word	<i>Doublethink</i>
Category	The B Vocabulary
Representament	The word of <i>Doublethink</i>
Object	The ability to hold two conflicting beliefs simultaneously and accept them as true.
Interpretant	An understanding that individuals must accept contradictions as truth for the sake of loyalty to the Party.

The term *doublethink* represents an extreme form of mind control by manipulating individuals to hold and accept contradictory beliefs simultaneously, reinforcing the Party’s doctrine and limiting freedom of thought. In Peirce’s semiotic theory, *doublethink* is the representamen, the object is the ability to believe conflicting ideas as true, and the interpretant is the acceptance of contradictions for Party loyalty. Orwell describes it as consciously inducing unconsciousness, making people accept slogans like “*War is peace*” without question. This system erases distinctions between truth and falsehood, enabling individuals to falsify reality without guilt. From a sociological literary perspective, *doublethink* reflects how totalitarian regimes suppress critical thinking and enforce obedience by using language as a tool of domination. Therefore, it functions both as a cognitive contradiction and a symbol of ideological manipulation, mirroring real-world propaganda and psychological control in totalitarian states.

Table 3. Analysis of the Word *Unperson* in the Novel *1984*

Newspeak word	<i>Unperson</i>
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Category	The B Vocabulary
Representament	The word of <i>Unperson</i>
Object	Someone who is considered an enemy by the Party and is erased from history, documents, and people's memories.
Interpretant	An understanding that the individual should not be mentioned, remembered, or recognized as having existed.

The term *unperson* refers to individuals erased from existence by the Party, not only physically eliminated but also removed from all records, history, and collective memory. Linguistically, it combines the prefix “un-” with “person,” transforming the word into a tool for total erasure of identity. In Peirce’s semiotic theory, the word *unperson* is the representamen, the object is the erased individual, and the interpretant is the understanding that such a person should be forgotten entirely. Orwell illustrates this through characters like Syme, who becomes an *unperson* as society pretends she never existed. From a sociological literary perspective, *unperson* critiques totalitarian regimes’ historical erasure practices, paralleling real-world examples like Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany. The term highlights literature’s role as a social mirror and warning, showing how language can be weaponized to control memory, identity, and reality under absolute power.

Table 4. Analysis of the Word *Thoughtcrime* in the Novel *1984*

Newspeak word	<i>Thoughtcrime</i>
Category	The B Vocabulary
Representament	The word of <i>Thoughtcrime</i>
Object	Any form of thought, such as doubting the Party, hating Big Brother, or even simply questioning the official narrative.
Interpretant	An understanding that even unspoken thoughts can be considered crimes and worthy of punishment by the state.

Thoughtcrime illustrates the Party’s extreme control over individuals’ mental lives by criminalizing any dissenting or independent thought. As part of the B Vocabulary, it combines technical and ideological elements to suppress free thinking. Based on Peirce’s semiotic theory, the representamen is the linguistic form of the word *thoughtcrime* itself, the object is any forbidden thought, and the interpretant is the understanding that even unspoken thoughts are punishable crimes. Orwell emphasizes this by equating *thoughtcrime* with death, showing how characters like Winston live in fear of their own minds. From a sociological literary perspective, *thoughtcrime* reflects historical totalitarian regimes that punished ideological dissent as harshly as physical crimes. Thus, it symbolizes absolute power that eradicates freedom of thought, turning the mind itself into a site of surveillance and control.

Table 5. Analysis of the Word *Facecrime* in the Novel *1984*

Newspeak word	<i>Facecrime</i>
Category	The B Vocabulary
Representament	The word of <i>Facecrime</i>
Object	Facial expressions, emotional reactions, or physical gestures that imply dissent towards the Party.
Interpretant	An understanding that even a wrong facial expression can be considered a form of crime and cause someone to be arrested.

The term *facecrime* is an extreme form of social control where even facial expressions or gestures that suggest dissent are punishable. As part of the B Vocabulary, it combines the

technical term “face” with the ideological concept of “crime.” In Peirce’s semiotic theory, the representamen is a linguistic form of the word *facecrime* itself, the object is dissenting facial or bodily expressions, and the interpretant is the understanding that such expressions can lead to arrest. Orwell illustrates how the Party surveils not only speech and actions but also involuntary bodily reactions, forcing citizens to constantly censor their expressions and live in anxiety. From a sociological literary perspective, *facecrime* reflects historical totalitarian practices where even subtle nonverbal cues could provoke suspicion and punishment. Thus, the term symbolizes a system that eradicates individual autonomy by turning the body itself into a site of surveillance and control, leaving no safe space, even in one’s own facial expressions.

Table 6.Analysis of the Word *Crimestop* in the Novel *1984*

Newspeak word	<i>Crimestop</i>
Category	The B Vocabulary
Representament	The word of <i>Crimestop</i>
Object	The ability to stop harmful thoughts before they are fully formed.
Interpretant	An understanding that thinking wrongly or questioning the Party is a crime, and preventing those thoughts from forming is a form of obedience.

Crimestop is a *Newspeak* concept ensuring absolute loyalty to the Party by halting any criminal or rebellious thought. It combines a technical term (crime) and an ideological function (stop), representing the instinctive ability to prevent dangerous thoughts. In Peirce's semiotic theory, the representamen is the linguistic form of the word *thoughtcrime* itself, the object is the ability to stop harmful thoughts, and the interpretant is the understanding that questioning the Party is a crime and must be prevented. In the novel *1984*, *crimestop* exemplifies extreme mind control, causing citizens to instinctively reject or fail to understand ideas opposing the Party, thus eliminating critical thinking. It establishes internal surveillance within individuals, making loyalty a matter of being unable to conceive rebellion, as shown by Parsons, who unquestioningly accepts his arrest for thoughtcrime. From Wellek and Warren’s sociological view, *crimestop* reflects literature as a social document revealing how totalitarian regimes reshape thought patterns to align individuals’ psychology with state ideology, eradicating dissent. Ultimately, *crimestop* symbolizes the highest ideological control, where "right" thinking instinctively stops at Party boundaries, embodying the ideal mental state in a totalitarian society.

Table 7.Analysis of the Word *Goodthink* in the Novel *1984*

Newspeak word	<i>Goodthink</i>
Category	The B Vocabulary
Representament	The word of <i>Goodthink</i>
Object	A mindset that is correct and in line with the Party's ideology.
Interpretant	An understanding that only Party-approved thoughts are considered correct and accepted.

Goodthink is a *Newspeak* term from the B Vocabulary that combines "good" and "think," meaning not just morally good thinking but strictly Party-approved, obedient, and uncritical thought. It rejects intellectual freedom, labeling any opposing ideas as *thoughtcrime*. In Peirce's semiotic theory, the representamen is a linguistic form of the word *goodthink* itself, the object is the Party-aligned mindset, and the interpretant is the acceptance that only Party-approved thoughts are correct. Orwell’s characters emphasize that orthodoxy

means unconsciousness and the inability to think independently, making individuals ideological tools. Sociologically, *goodthink* shows how literature reveals ideology shaping consciousness, where truth and morality are absorbed into loyalty. *Goodthink* symbolizes the internalized Party doctrine that transforms obedience into a virtue, eliminating free thought in Oceania.

Table 8. Analysis of the Word *Blackwhite* in the Novel *1984*

Newspeak word	<i>Blackwhite</i>
Category	The B Vocabulary
Representament	The word of <i>Blackwhite</i>
Object	The ability to believe that black is white if the Party says so.
Interpretant	An understanding that truth is determined by the Party, regardless of objective facts.

Blackwhite is a *Newspeak* term from the B Vocabulary describing extreme totalitarian thinking, the ability to accept contradictory truths based solely on the Party's word. It combines "black" and "white," logically opposite concepts, symbolizing the ultimate conformity where personal logic aligns with Party doctrine despite reality. In Peirce's semiotic theory, the representamen is a linguistic form of the word *blackwhite* (a linguistic form that brings together the two oppositions of black and white), the object is believing black is white if the Party says so, and the interpretant is understanding that truth depends entirely on the Party. Unlike *doublethink*, *blackwhite* requires changing immediate perception to fit Party dictates. Wellek and Warren see it as literature exposing ideological domination by subordinating logic and reality to power. Historically, propaganda in Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia exemplifies *blackwhite* by forcing citizens to accept contradictory truths. Therefore, *blackwhite* represents the extreme of cognitive control where truth is defined solely by the Party, overriding senses and reason in Oceania.

Table 9. Analysis of the Word *Duckspeak* in the Novel *1984*

Newspeak word	<i>Duckspeak</i>
Category	The B Vocabulary
Representament	The word of <i>Duckspeak</i>
Object	An automatic act of speaking that is completely controlled by the Party doctrine, rather than based on independent thought.
Interpretant	An understanding that <i>duckspeak</i> is the highest form of loyalty and deserves praise, because someone who utters propaganda without thinking has completely merged with the Party's ideology.

Duckspeak is a *Newspeak* term with a double meaning: it can be positive or negative depending on who uses it and the speech content. It combines "duck" and "speak," symbolizing automatic, unthinking speech controlled by Party doctrine. In Peirce's semiotics, the representamen is the word *duckspeak* itself, the object is automatic speech without independent thought, and the interpretant is the understanding that *duckspeak* shows complete loyalty. Orwell explains that the Party's goal is speech without involving higher brain functions, making language a tool for repeating doctrine. Syme notes it is praise when used by loyalists but an insult when used against enemies. *Duckspeak* illustrates how language is designed to eliminate thinking, turning citizens into mere propagandists. Sociologically, view it as literature exposing totalitarian control over consciousness through corrupted language. Ultimately, *duckspeak* symbolizes the Party's success in eradicating individual thought, reducing language to pure propaganda.

Table 10.Analysis of the Word *Thinkpol* in the Novel *1984*

Newspeak word	<i>Thinkpol</i>
Category	The B Vocabulary
Representament	Combination of the words “think” and “pol” (police)
Object	The structure of a surveillance agency in a totalitarian society that has the power to punish someone for a <i>thoughtcrime</i> .
Interpretant	An understanding that there is no private space in a Party-controlled society, even one's innermost thoughts are under surveillance.

Thinkpol, short for Thought Police, is a *Newspeak* B Vocabulary term combining “think” and “pol(ice),” representing the Party’s secret force that monitors and punishes *thoughtcrime*, criminal thoughts, even before actions occur. In Peirce’s semiotics, the representamen is the word *thinkpol* itself, the object is the totalitarian surveillance agency punishing unspoken thoughts, and the interpretant is the understanding that no private thought is safe. Orwell highlights *Thinkpol*’s role in eliminating freedom of thought, punishing intentions as well as actions. Semiotically, *Thinkpol* shows how *Newspeak* shapes reality by merging thought and policing, erasing boundaries between private mind and public law. Wellek and Warren see this as Orwell’s critique of totalitarianism invading human consciousness, making surveillance limitless and inevitable.

This discussion connects the study’s findings on *Newspeak* in the novel *1984* with Wellek and Warren’s sociology of literature, showing how language functions as a tool of power in a totalitarian society. Using Peirce’s triadic semiotic model, the study analyzed *Newspeak* vocabulary and linked these signs to socio-political realities, focusing on three main aspects: *Newspeak* as a symbol of mind control, its role in limiting freedom of thought, and its function in controlling ideology.

The Function of *Newspeak* as a Symbol of Mind Control

This study, grounded in Peirce’s triadic semiotic model and Wellek and Warren’s sociology of literature, reveals that *Newspeak* functions as a powerful symbol of mind control by simplifying language and restricting vocabulary to shape thought. Terms like *ungood*, *duckspeak*, *goodthink*, and *doublethink* illustrate how the Party manipulates mental processes, encouraging repetition of Party doctrine, conformity, and acceptance of contradictions. This aligns with prior research highlighting language as a tool of symbolic violence and ideological domination (Kaur et al., 2025; Al-hasnawi, 2021). *Newspeak*’s structural narrowing prevents expression of dissenting ideas, effectively engineering a uniform mindset and total submission without physical coercion. The comparison to English as a global language of power further underscores how language can enforce social control and cultural homogenization (Ashrafova, 2025). Therefore, *Newspeak* is not merely communicative but a subtle, effective weapon of ideological manipulation.

The Role of *Newspeak* in Limiting Freedom of Thought

The findings show that *Newspeak* restricts freedom of thought by eliminating vocabulary that enables critical or rebellious thinking. Concepts such as *thoughtcrime*, *facecrime*, *crimestop*, and *doublethink* demonstrate how the Party instills fear and mental self-censorship, training individuals to suppress dissent before it arises. This internalized control reflects a symbolic form of power that suppresses intellectual diversity and freedom, consistent with sociological perspectives on structural and symbolic domination (Khan et al., 2022; Temoukale & Bampini, 2022). Historical parallels with colonial language suppression (Kaur et al., 2025), reinforce how limiting language equates to limiting consciousness and human rights. The

study confirms Orwell's warning that controlling language equates to controlling thought, culminating in the loss of freedom to even acknowledge basic truths (Orwell, 2024).

The Role of *Newspeak* in Controlling Ideology in a Totalitarian Regime

This research highlights how *Newspeak* shapes and enforces ideology by erasing individuals (unperson), rewriting history, and controlling belief systems through terms like *thinkpol*, *blackwhite*, and *doublethink*. These mechanisms enable the Party to manufacture reality, normalize contradictions, and maintain absolute power, as supported by previous studies on language as a tool of social struggle and ideological control (Ali, 2023; Ilyas, 2024; Anriadi et al., 2021). The Thought Police's surveillance enforces conformity of thought to Party doctrine, while psychological manipulation via *doublethink* prevents alternative ideologies from emerging. The study concludes that *Newspeak* is a potent ideological instrument that monopolizes truth, erases diversity of thought, and secures totalitarian dominance, affirming Orwell's insight that controlling meaning is controlling reality itself.

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study concludes that *Newspeak* in George Orwell's *1984* plays a vital role in sustaining Oceania's totalitarian regime by controlling thought and ideology. Using Peirce's semiotic theory and Wellek and Warren's sociology of literature, the research shows that *Newspeak* functions as a symbol of mind control through vocabulary like *ungood*, *duckspeak*, *goodthink*, and *doublethink*, which simplify language and eliminate critical thinking. It limits freedom of thought by enforcing surveillance not only on actions but also on thoughts, as seen in terms such as *thoughtcrime*, *facecrime*, and *crimestop*, restricting mental space for dissent. Moreover, *Newspeak* controls ideology by erasing individuals (*Unperson*), enforcing thought surveillance (*thinkpol*), and manipulating truth (*blackwhite*, *doublethink*), making it an ideological tool that shapes reality according to Party doctrine. The novel reflects real post-World War II totalitarian regimes, warning of the dangers when language and thought are controlled by power. Ultimately, *Newspeak* symbolizes subtle yet powerful total control over how people think, speak, and feel, illustrating Orwell's message that controlling language equates to controlling the human mind.

Based on the study's findings, several suggestions are offered to maximize its benefits. Suggestions include using *1984* in teaching to enhance critical literacy and socio-political understanding; encouraging students to develop critical thinking and awareness of language as a tool of control; urging future researchers to expand analysis of *Newspeak* and its modern relevance; and reminding general readers that language can control the mind, highlighting the need for critical awareness and freedom of thought and speech.

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