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The language of conspiracy in *House of Cards* series: A corpus-stylistic approach

ABSTRACT

This research explores the language of conspiracy in *House of Cards* through a corpus-stylistic approach, applying the transitivity model of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to analyze the monologues of Frank Underwood. The study examines the participants, processes, and circumstances within the monologues, focusing on how language constructs power, manipulation, and control in the context of political conspiracy. By breaking down Frank's monologues into mental, material, and relational processes, the analysis uncovers the linguistic strategies he employs to manipulate others, assert dominance, and navigate the political landscape. The findings reveal that material processes dominate Frank's speech, reflecting his action-oriented and manipulative nature. His speech consistently positions him as the central agent of control, taking decisive actions to manipulate and shape political events around him. Mental processes, though present, are secondary and primarily serve to reflect Frank's strategic thinking, while relational processes highlight his calculated evaluations of people and relationships, defining their value based on his political objectives. These linguistic features illustrate how Frank constructs power dynamics and manipulates those around him, solidifying his role as the mastermind behind the political conspiracy. Through this corpus-stylistic lens, the research highlights how language in *House of Cards* constructs a web of conspiracy, with Frank's speech as the central force driving manipulation and power. This approach contributes to a deeper understanding of how linguistic choices shape the narrative of conspiracy and power in political dramas.

لغة المؤامرة في مسلسل (House of Cards) نهج تحليل الأسلوب النصي للمدونات

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المُستخلص

تستكشف هذه الدراسة لغة المؤامرة في مسلسل House of Cards من خلال نهج تحليل الأسلوب النصي للمدونات ، مع تطبيق نموذج التعدية في اللغويات الوظيفية النظامية (SFL) لتحليل مونولوجات فرانك أندروود. تركز الدراسة على المشاركين والعمليات والظروف داخل المونولوجات، مع التركيز على كيفية بناء اللغة للسلطة والتلاعب والسيطرة في سياق المؤامرة السياسية. من خلال تحليل مونولوجات فرانك إلى عمليات عقلية و مادية وعلائقية، يكشف التحليل الاستراتيجيات اللغوية التي يستخدمها للتلاعب بالآخرين، وفرض السيطرة، والمناورة في الساحة السياسية. تكشف النتائج أن العمليات المادية تهيمن على خطاب فرانك، مما يعكس طبيعته الموجهة نحو الفعل والمناورة. خطابه يضعه باستمرار كشخص مسيطر ، يتخذ إجراءات حاسمة للتلاعب بالأحداث السياسية من حوله. العمليات العقلية، على الرغم من وجودها، تعد ثانوية وتخدم بشكل أساسي في عكس التفكير الاستراتيجي لفرانك، بينما تبرز العمليات العلائقية تقييماته المدروسة للأشخاص والعلاقات، مع تحديد قيمتهم بناءً على أهدافه السياسية. توضح هذه الخصائص اللغوية كيفية بناء فرانك لديناميكيات السلطة والتلاعب بمن حوله، مما يرسخ دوره كالعقل المدبر وراء المؤامرة السياسية. من خلال هذا النهج التحليلي للمدونات ، تسلط الدراسة الضوء على كيفية بناء اللغة في House of Cards الشبكة من المؤامرات، مع كون خطاب فرانك القوة المركزية التي تدير التلاعب والسلطة. يساهم هذا النهج في فهم أعمق لكيفية تأثير الاختيارات اللغوية في بناء سرد المؤامرة والسلطة في الدراما السياسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية : مؤامرة، مسلسلHouse of Cards ، تحليل الأسلوب النصي للمدونات ، اللغويات الوظيفية النظامية (SFL)، التعدية ، فرانك أندروود، السلطة، التلاعب، الخطاب السياسي

1 Introduction

In contemporary television, *House of Cards* stands as a quintessential portrayal of political maneuvering, manipulation, and ambition, largely driven by its central character, Frank Underwood. One of the key features that sets the show apart is the use of monologues, where Frank directly addressed the audience, breaking the fourth wall to reveal his innermost thoughts and political strategies. These monologues not only provided insight into Frank's character, but also allowed the audience to witness the ruthlessness and calculate the nature that defined his actions. Through this unique form of narrative, *House of Cards* invites viewers to see the world through Frank's eyes, a fifty-something Congressman from Georgia who is also the Majority Whip, i.e., the one in

charge of the party's discipline. From a very early age, Frank has been determined to climb the political ladder to the top, and he is willing to do anything to reach this goal. Boutet, M. (2015).

In the context of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the analysis of these monologues presents an opportunity to examine how language functions not only as a means of communication, but also as a tool for political manipulation and a psychological insight. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) proposed that the transitivity model of SFL offers a framework for analyzing the participants and processes in a text, allowing us to uncover the relationships between the speakers, the actions they perform, and the entities affected by those actions. In Frank Underwood's case, his monologues are laden with material, mental, and relational processes; each serves to further his political agenda, manipulate others, and justify his ambitious actions (Eggins, 2004).

Frank's monologues, often characterized by their direct speech, reflect his control over the narrative and his ability to articulate his thoughts and strategies without interruption. Through these extended speeches power is configured. The behavior patterns of the main character, Frank Underwood, were tracked to analyze his foundations, the means used, the scope and the type of power he wields. While mental processes allow Frank to think about his next move, it is the material processes that define his approach to power—emphasizing action, domination, and manipulation in the pursuit of political success. López Gutiérrez, M.ª L. & FloresIvich, L. G. (2022).

The crucial question this research seeks to answer is whether Frank's monologues can be classified as mental processes, as they are often framed as internal thoughts or self-dialogue, or if they should be seen as material processes, given their focus on action and manipulation. This analysis will explore how Frank uses language not merely for personal reflection, but also as a tool for external actions, such as: manipulating political rivals, consolidating power, or achieving his goals. By focusing on the transitivity model and identifying the key processes involved in Frank's monologues, one can better understand

the ways in which language becomes a tool for political maneuvering and personal ambition.

The aim of this research is to provide a comprehensive analysis of Frank Underwood's monologues in House of Cards, through examining the linguistic processes at play and investigating the relationship between the internal reflection and external actions. To sum up, this research will offer a new perspective on the role of language in political drama, focusing on how Frank Underwood used monologues to not only articulate his plans and strategies, but also to shape the audience's perception of his character. By analyzing the processes involved in Frank's speech, the researcher is to uncover the ways in which his monologues serve as a tool for both psychological exploration and political manipulation, reflecting the intricate dance of power, control, and personal ambition that defines Frank Underwood's journey in *House of Cards*.

2. Literature Review

This literature review will explore some key academic studies on monologues, Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), and transitivity in the context of language use in media and politics. The review will provide an understanding of how monologues function as a narrative device and how SFG and transitivity models are employed to analyze language, especially in the context of characters like Frank Underwood in *House of Cards*. The sections will discuss previous studies on monologues as a discourse feature, the application of Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) in political discourse, and the transitivity model as a framework for understanding the processes of power and manipulation. Moreover, Dishar (2025) stated that the American society of 1960s dealing with power and agency remained as it is. The writer of current research agree to a great extent that things have not been changed in the American culture although they claimed democracy. Actually, it is a matter of conspiracy and maneuvering that will never end; that is history repeats itself. The emotional depth in monologues is often much greater, as monologues examine the speaker's inner world unfiltered. Monologues are also typically longer and more focused, whereas normal speech is more fluid and tends to

jump between topics. Monologues also include stylistic features like rhetorical questions or dramatic pauses, which help emphasize key points, in other words, it is assumed that a specific utterance reveals its speaker not only through what is desired to include in it, but through what is sometimes unintentionally not said (Dariusz Kuncewicz & Dorota Kuncewicz, 2019). Ultimately, while normal speech is about interactions and exchanges, monologues are introspective, often used to deepen the audience.

Monologues are inherently one-way communications that provide the audience with access to Underwood's internal world, offering insight into his psychological state and philosophical outlook. For example, his statement, "The thing about power is... it's like a drug. And the more you get, the more you want," reveals his ruthlessness and unfiltered ambition (Underwood, 2013) On the other hand, normal speech involves two-way communication, where Frank interacts with others in a dynamic, dialogue-driven context. These exchanges are more functional, focusing on immediate political goals and relationship-building (Jones, 2012)

2.1 Monologues as a Narrative Device

A monologue is referred to as verbal thinking, covert self-talk, or "the little voice in the head" (Perrone-Bertolotti et al. 2014). It has recently attracted interests from psychologists and philosophers alike. It has been investigated in relation to executive functions, decision-making, reading, memory, as well as various psychopathologies (Alderson-Day and Fernyhough 2015). So, it is employed in the service of narrative self-understanding. Monologues in film, television, and literature have long been recognized as a powerful narrative tool, allowing characters to express their innermost thoughts and desires. Monologues serve to provide the audience with a direct insight into a character's psyches, motivations, and emotional states. Cited in Moreno-Cely, A., Cuajera-Nahui, D., Escobar-Vasquez, C.G. et al.(2019), Johannesen(1971, p. 377) states that monologues disguised as dialogue like the one under study seeks to command, coerce, manipulate, conquer, dazzle, deceive or exploit" to achieve the consensus of the audience. In House of Cards, Frank Underwood's monologues are a crucial element in conveying

his manipulative and strategic nature. These monologues were often delivered directly to the camera, breaking the fourth wall and engaging the audience as though they were part of the political games Frank played. According to Kress and Leeuwen (2001), monologues provide an opportunity for characters to articulate their self-awareness and reflect on their power—an aspect that is crucial in understanding Frank's pursuit of political dominance.

Previous studies have analyzed monologues in terms of their function in character development, arguing that they are pivotal for revealing the internal conflict or moral ambiguity of the character. Monologues indicate to a speaker's passion, sincerity, and empathy. It refers to the audience engagement, i.e., effectively conveying personal thoughts with emotion (Garil et al., 2024). Frank's monologues in *House of Cards*, however, went beyond the mere emotional reflection; they functioned as tools of manipulation and calculation that allowed him to navigate the political world by directing the audience's perception towards the events. This aligns with the work (Kvernbekk, 2012)who highlighted the advantages of monologues as allowing recipients freedom of interpretation . Monologues and normal speeches differ in structure, purpose, and function. They are considered extended, uninterrupted speeches where a single speaker reflects on their thoughts, emotions, or internal conflicts, often directed at an audience or themselves. These are typically one-way communications, where the speaker does not expect a real-time response. In contrast, normal speech is a dynamic, two-way exchange between speakers, where information is shared and responses are immediate (Moreno-Cely, A., Cuajera-Nahui, D., Escobar-Vasquez, C.G. et al. (2019).

2.2 Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) in Political Discourse

Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is a linguistic framework developed by Halliday (2004); it focuses on the social functions of language and how language constructs meaning in different contexts. SFG emphasizes three main components of language: ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions. The ideational function is concerned with how language represents reality, and it is within this function that the transitivity model

plays a significant role in understanding how individuals describe actions, events, and states. Transitivity, in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), is an important concept that explores how language constructs actions, processes, and participants. Halliday (2004) defined it as a grammatical system used to describe how actions are represented in language, focusing on the participants and their roles in the process. SFL transitivity model categorizes processes into six types: material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral, and existential processes. Each process type identifies different ways in which actions are carried out, and who or what is affected just as follows:

1. **Material Processes**: These involve physical actions or events. The Actor performs an action that affects the Goal, which is the recipient of the action. For example, *"He carved him up"* illustrates Underwood's use of material processes to express decisive actions affecting others (Halliday, 2004)

2. **Mental Processes**: These processes involve internal states like thinking, feeling, or perceiving. The Senser is the participant who experiences the internal state, and the Phenomenon is what is sensed. For instance, *"I despise children"* reflects Underwood's personal emotions, conveying his mental processes (Halliday, 2004)

3. **Relational Processes**: These processes represent relationships between the participants, often identifying or attributing characteristics. The Carrier is linked to an Attribute, or the Identifier is linked to the Identified. Underwood's relational processes help define his identity and his evaluation of others, such as: *"He is the president"* (Halliday, 2004)

4. **Verbal Processes**: These represent communication or speech acts, where the Sayer expresses something, and the Receiver is the one who receives the message. In political discourse, such as Underwood's manipulation, verbal processes help communicate strategies or intentions, as seen in *"I told him the truth"* (McEnery & Hardie, 2012)

5. **Behavioral Processes**: These involve physiological or psychological actions, like breathing or laughing. The Behaver engages in a behavioral process that signifies physical or emotional responses, as in *"He laughed"* (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

6. **Existential Processes**: These describe the existence of something or an event. The Existent is the entity that exists or happens, like in *"There is a problem"* (Halliday, 2004,).

By analyzing Underwood's monologues through the lens of SFL, this research reveals how Underwood strategically uses these process types to assert control, manipulate others, and shape his environment. The dominance of material processes in his speech reflects his action-oriented nature and his preference for decisive, observable actions. Mental and relational processes, although less frequent, are crucial in demonstrating Underwood's internal reflections and how he evaluates others based on their utility to his goals.

The transitivity model allows for a deeper understanding of how language constructs power dynamics, manipulation, and control, particularly in political contexts. As McEnery and Hardie (2012) argued, language serves as a powerful tool for expressing not only personal emotions, but also political strategy, shaping both the perception of the speaker and the response from others. Similarly, Machin and Mayr (2012) emphasized how discourse analysis can uncover the subtle mechanisms of manipulation, especially in political communications, by examining the linguistic choices that construct power.

In the context of political discourse, SFG has been used to analyze how language reflects the dynamics of power and manipulation. Studies by Fairclough (2001) and van Dijk (2008) demonstrated that political language often employs material processes (e.g., "controlling," "manipulating") to construct a narrative of action and dominance. These processes align with the power relations that shape political discourse, where language is used to assert authority and direct social change (Thompson, 2009). By applying SFG, one can uncover how Underwood's monologues constructed his political agenda and how he manipulateed both people and events to maintain power.

Moreover, SFG has been widely used to analyze the rhetoric of persuasion in political speech. According to van Leeuwen (2008) political figures often use ideational resources (such as material processes) to promote specific actions or values to their audience. Underwood's use of action-oriented language in his monologues highlighted the importance of material processes in establishing his persona as a ruthless political operator.

3. Monologues and Political Power

The rhetorical nature of monologues in political drama allows characters like Underwood to articulate their personal philosophy of power and manipulation. Studies by Kress and van Leeuwen (2001)) suggested that monologues in political discourse often serve to present a character's moral standpoint and justify their actions to the audience. Underwood's monologues not only reveal his ambition, but also position the audience as his co-conspirators, making them complicit in his manipulative actions. In *House of Cards*, Underwood's monologues engage in a complex interplay of material processes and mental reflections, which allows the audience to understand how action and thought are inseparable in his pursuit of power. As Dyer (2017) argues, the function of Underwood k's monologues is not merely to provide exposition, but also to deepen the audience's understanding of political strategy and manipulation.

Briefly, the literature surrounding monologues, Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG), and transitivity provides a valuable framework for understanding how language is used in *House of Cards* to construct a political power. Underwood's monologues are an essential narrative device that reveals his internal world while simultaneously showcasing the action-oriented nature of his political ambitions. By applying SFG and the transitivity model, this research aims to analyze the material processes and mental reflections that underpin Underwood's manipulative language, shedding light on the strategies he employed to maintain control and power.

4 Research Objectives:

1. To explore the role of transitivity in reflecting power dynamics and conspiratorial relationships among characters in House of Cards.

2. To examine the evolution of conspiratorial language across different seasons of House of Cards and identify how it reflects the narrative and thematic developments.

5. Methodology

    a. Research Design

The study adopts a corpus stylistic approach combined with transitivity analysis. It is to investigate how the concept of conspiracy is constructed linguistically. Specifically, concentration will be on monologues delivered by main character, Frank Underwood, in *House of Cards* (Season 1 to explore how these monologues differ from regular dialogue in terms of function, emotional depth, and linguistic strategies.

    b. Model Used

The study is totally based on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework. It is particularly on its transitivity system. It is concerned with analyzing how processes, participants, and voice are represented in discourse.

    c. Data

The corpus includes all 13 episodes of *House of Cards* Season 1. More specifically, the data consists of Underwood's monologues to the camera, breaking the fourth wall. These episodes were annotated manually for transitivity features. Quantitative tools were used to analyze the frequency and co-occurrence of specific linguistic elements.

    d. Limitations

The study is limited in scope and time to only Season 1 of the series. The monologues within this season are rich in introspection and strategic meaning, The focus on only monologic speech excludes broader dialogue patterns or multi-character interactions.

6. Data Analysis

Within this section, the research considered the monologues one by one to show the objectives given earlier:

> Episode 1, Monologue 1*There are two kinds of pain. The sort of pain that makes you strong or useless pain, the sort of pain that's only suffering. I have no patience for useless things. Moments like this require someone who will act. Who will do the unpleasant thing, the necessary thing? There. No more pain.(* Episode 1, Monologue 1)

Transitivity Analysis

1. **Participants:**
   o **Actor**: "I" (Frank Underwood)
   o **Goal**: "pain" (target of the action)
   o **Circumstance**: "Moments like this" (temporal or situational context)
2. **Processes:**
   o **Material Processes**: The action here is physical or practical—"do" and "act". Underwood asserted that someone must act to stop the suffering (e.g., the pain).
      ▪ "Moments like this require someone" → This indicates a process of demanding or requiring action.
      ▪ "Someone who will act" → Here, Underwood positioned himself as the Actor who could take the necessary action.
      ▪ "Who will do the unpleasant thing" → The process of doing the action, implying agency.
      ▪ "No more pain" → The goal is to eliminate the pain, shifting from suffering to strength.
3. **Agency and Control**

- o Underwood presented himself as the Agent capable of acting in a crisis. He spoke in the first person ("I"), and the Goal (pain) is something he would eliminate. His direct and decisive speech conveyed power and control over the situation and the people around him.

4. **Stylistic Devices**

- o **Contrast**: The juxtaposition of "strong" vs. "useless pain" emphasized Underwood 's decision-making power to reject weakness and act decisively. This also signaled his ruthlessness, as he only valued pain that has a constructive outcome, not suffering without purpose.
- o **Imperatives**: Underwood used direct commands ("Who will act," "No more pain") to assert control.

Episode 1, Monologue 2

"Oh. President-elect Garrett Walker. Do I like him? No. Do I believe in him? That's beside the point. Any politician that gets 70 million votes has tapped into something larger than himself... I've backed the right man."

Transitivity Analysis

1. **Participants:**
   - o **Actor**: "I" (Frank Underwood)
   - o **Goal**: Garrett Walker (the subject of Frank's opinion and belief)
2. **Processes:**
   - o **Mental Processes**: "Do I like him? No." (Here, Underwood reflected on his mental stance toward Walker).
     - ▪ "Do I believe in him?" (Mental process of belief or faith, which Underwood dismissed).
   - o **Relational Processes**: "That's beside the point" – Underwood made a relational statement that set aside the question of belief or liking, showing that the issue was more about a pragmatic political strategy.

3. **Agency and Control:**

- o The Actor (Frank) was positioning himself as the one who defined what matters in this relationship, suggesting he did not need to like or believe in someone for political advantage. This positioned Frank as the powerful manipulator who used relationships for his own ends, not based on personal feelings.

4. **Stylistic Devices:**

- o **Rhetorical Questions**: Frank used rhetorical questions to guide the audience's thinking, suggesting that what matters was not only the personal relationship, but also the political strategy.
- o **Contradiction**: "Do I like him? No. Do I believe in him? That's beside the point." This contradiction implies that Underwood 's actions will be dictated by power and political necessity, but rather by emotions.

Episode 1, Monologue 3

He didn't choose to be put on my platter. When I carve him up and toss him to the dogs, only then will he confront that brutal, inescapable truth. 'My God, all I ever amounted to was chitlins.

Transitivity Analysis

1. **Participants:**

- o **Actor**: "I" (Frank Underwood)
- o **Goal**: The person Frank plans to **dispose of** (implicitly, his political opponent)

2. **Processes:**

- o **Material Processes**: "I carve him up" (Frank plans a physical, figurative act of destruction, showing his dominance and agency in removing people who no longer serve his goals).

- ▪ "toss him to the dogs" (Another act of abandonment, a material process emphasizing Frank's power to cast people aside when they're no longer useful.)

  o **Mental Processes**: "only then will he confront that brutal, inescapable truth" (The opponent will face the consequences of their actions only when Frank allows it.)

  o **Relational Processes**: The phrase "all I ever amounted to was chitlins" reflects a **relational** process of identity, showing the worthlessness Frank assigned to the opponent once discarded.

3. **Agency and Control**

   o Underwood's control is clear: he carves and tosses others aside, which underscores his dominance in his manipulative world. His target (the opponent) was rendered powerless by Underwood k's decisive action.

4. **Stylistic Devices**

   o **Metaphor**: "Platter" and "chitlins" are metaphors for consumption and discarding people, representing how Frank disposed of others when they were no longer useful to his goals.

   o **Irony**: The person's fate was sealed by Frank's calculated manipulation, and they would only realize their fate after it's too late.

In each of these monologues, Underwood used material processes (the actions he performed), the mental processes (reflections and beliefs), and relational processes (defining others' value or identity) to assert his dominance, manipulate others, and control the narrative. Underwood consistently positioned himself as the Actor, initiating actions that affect others, with the Goal often being the victim of his manipulation. His agency was evident as he took decisive, controlling actions, shaping events to align with his will. Through mental processes, Underwood demonstrated his calculating nature, focusing on the pragmatic outcomes rather than on the personal feelings. Relational processes revealed how he redefined others based on their usefulness to his political goals, showing his ability to dismiss them once they served their purpose. Overall, Underwood 's

language reflected his manipulative, controlling nature, with his actions and strategic thinking reinforced his power and manipulation in the political landscape.

Episode 1, Monologue 4

"In post-war Berlin, salivating over free stockings and chocolate? What she's asking will cost far more than that."

Transitivity Analysis

1. **Participants**
   - o Actor: "she" (implicitly referred to someone Underwood was addressing, likely a political figure or counterpart)
   - o Goal: The benefit or object being salivated over (i.e., free stockings and chocolate)
   - o Circumstance: Post-war Berlin (providing the setting or context for the action)

2. **Processes:**
   - o Mental Processes: The phrase "salivating" is metaphorical and implies desire or longing, which is a mental process involving wish or yearning.
   - o Relational Processes: The monologue is also about value—what "she" desires was being evaluated in terms of its significance or cost. "What she's asking will cost far more than that" implied a relational judgment, defining the worth of something in terms of its consequences.

3. **Agency and Control**
   - o Frank is critical of others; he positioned them as desiring superficial or shallow things (i.e., stockings and chocolate), which contrasted with the higher stakes or more serious political games where Frank was involved in. He implied that real politics (or power) was much more costly, and this subtle judgment established his moral high ground.
   - o

4. **Stylistic Devices**

- o Metaphor: "Salivating" is a metaphor that suggests a basic, animalistic desire, implying that the person Frank is speaking about is focused on temporary pleasures rather than substantial power.

- o Contrast: The contrast between material goods (e.g., stockings and chocolate) and higher stakes (e.g., what's really at play in politics) reflected Frank's belief that superficial desires have no place in the serious world of political manipulation.

Episode 2, Monologue 1

In a town where everyone's so carefully reinventing themselves, what I like about Freddy is that he doesn't even pretend to change. Ooh. I'm late. Every Tuesday I sit down with the speaker and the majority leader to discuss the week's agenda. Well, discuss is probably the wrong word. They talk while I sit quietly and imaging their lightly salted faces frying in a skillet. (Episode 2, Monologue 1)

Transitivity Analysis

1. **Participants**

- o Actor: "I" (Frank Underwood)
- o Goal: Freddy (the person Frank is addressing or reflecting on)
- o Circumstance: "In a town where everyone's so carefully reinventing themselves" (providing the context of Washington D.C. or political world, where people constantly alter their public persona)

2. **Processes**

- o Mental Processes: "What I like about Freddy" suggests a mental process of evaluation, where Frank expresses his appreciation for Freddy's authenticity in a world filled with pretension.

o Relational Processes: "He doesn't even pretend to change" is a relational process evaluating Freddy's identity, suggesting that he is authentic compared to the superficial nature of others in the political world.

3. **Agency and Control**

o Frank positioned himself as the judge of others, noting that in a world of constant reinvention, Freddy stood out as a rare individual who did notconform to the typical political strategy of changing personas for gain.

o This revealed Frank's control over his environment—he could evaluate and categorize people according to their authenticity or manipulation, revealing his deep understanding of political personas.

4. **Stylistic Devices**

o Contrast: Frank set up a contrast between people who were constantly changing and Freddy, who remained authentic, reflecting Frank's belief in the value of authenticity when maneuvering through political circles.

o Hyperbole: The phrase "carefully reinventing themselves" emphasized the extreme lengths to which people go to reshape their public identity in the political world.

Episode 2, Monologue 2

> *Glendon Hill fronts San Corp Industries. San Corp is deep into natural gas. I don't give a hoot about natural gas, but I have 67 deputy whips, and they all need cash to win races. San Corp helps me purchase loyalty, and in return they expect mine. It's degrading, I know, but when the tit's that big*.(Episode 2, Monologue 2)

Transitivity Analysis

1. **Participants:**

o Actor: "I" (Frank Underwood)

    o Goal: Glendon Hill (who is being described by Frank as the front for San Corp Industries)

    o Circumstance: San Corp Industries (the company Frank discusses)

2. **Processes**

    o Material Processes: "Glendon Hill fronts San Corp Industries" indicates a material process where Glendon Hill is acting on behalf of the company, positioning himself as the front of the operation. This reflects how Frank sees Hill as a representative of a larger, more powerful institution.

    o Mental Processes: "I don't give a hoot about natural gas" represents indifference—Frank expresses his mental attitude toward natural gas, showing it's not about the content, but what the relationship can provide.

    o Material Processes: "San Corp helps me purchase loyalty" reflects Frank's action of leveraging resources (money) to acquire loyalty, a key political currency in his manipulative world.

3. **Agency and Control**

    o Frank used San Corp to purchase loyalty from others (such as his 67 deputy whips). Here, Frank is the Agent, manipulating the system for political gain. He is aware that loyalty is transactional and uses this relationship for his own advantage.

    o Frank's indifference to the industry (natural gas) demonstrated his pragmatic approach—he was not interested in the industry itself, but in what it provided him in terms of power.

4. **Stylistic Devices**

    o Colloquial Expression: "I don't give a hoot" is a colloquial expression that adds a layer of informality, signaling Frank's disdain for the industry, which contrasts with his more formal political actions.

    o Metaphor: The phrase "the tit's that big" used metaphor to describe the scale of San Corp's influence, implying power and resources.

    o Hyperbole: "The tit's that big" exaggerated the significance of San Corp's influence and their ability to buy loyalty.

These monologues, like the previous ones, reveal Underwood's strategic thinking and manipulation. He was positioned as the Agent in each, directing actions (material and mental) and shaping political landscapes by making evaluations and decisions about people and situations. Whether it evaluates loyalty through metaphorical real estate or asserts power over others by emphasizing authenticity or cynicism, Frank controlled the narrative around him, using relational, mental, and material processes to craft his vision of the world.

Episode 2, Monologue 3

> *Such a waste of talent. He chose money over power-- In this town, a mistake nearly everyone makes. Money is the McMansion in Sarasota that starts falling apart after ten years. Power is the old stone building that stands for centuries. I cannot respect someone who doesn't see the difference (Episode 2, Monologue 3).*

Transitivity Analysis

1. **Participants:**
   o Actor: "He" (the individual Frank is referring to, likely someone who has chosen money over power)
   o Goal: Talent (which Frank considers wasted)

2. **Processes:**
   o Mental Processes: "Such a waste of talent" reflects Frank's judgment and evaluation of the individual's decision-making, implying that the choice was foolish. This is a mental process where Frank assessed the other person's decisions.
   o Relational Processes: "Money is the McMansion in Sarasota that starts falling apart after ten years" and "Power is the old stone building that stands for centuries" are relational processes, where Frank defined the

value of money and power, establishing a contrast between the fleeting and the enduring.

3. **Agency and Control**
   o Frank is the Agent who critiques the choice of someone who values money over power, which Frank sees as a fundamental mistake. His evaluation places him in a position of authority, as he is the one who can judge what is valuable in the political world.

4. **Stylistic Devices**
   o Metaphor: "Money is the McMansion" and "Power is the old stone building" are metaphors that frame money and power in terms of longevity and value, showing Frank's belief in long-term power over short-term wealth.
   o Contrast: Frank's comparison between money and power highlights a value judgment that aligns with his belief in the enduring nature of power over the fleeting nature of wealth.

Episode 2, Monologue 4

"What a martyr craves more than anything is a sword to fall on, so you sharpen the blade, hold it at just the right angle, and then 3, 2, 1—"

Transitivity Analysis

1. **Participants:**
   o Actor: "What a martyr" (referring to the martyr figure in this analogy)
   o Goal: "A sword to fall on" (the object the martyr craves)
   o Circumstance: "3, 2, 1" (indicating the timing of the event)

2. **Processes**
   o Material Processes: "You sharpen the blade" and "hold it at just the right angle" represent action, where Frank metaphorically explained the physical preparation needed for a martyr to meet their fate.

    o   Relational Processes: The idea of a martyr craving a sword and Frank's process of sharpening it are relational actions about what the martyr desires in terms of sacrifice or consequence.

3. **Agency and Control**

    o   Frank described himself as acting in the context of creating the circumstances for someone to fulfill their martyrdom. He controlled the situation, giving the martyr what they want to meet their fate.

4. **Stylistic Devices**

    o   Metaphor: "Sword to fall on" is a metaphor for a decisive end or a sacrifice that someone is led to face. Frank implied that people often seek their own destruction or sacrifice in their political battles.

    o   Imperative Tone: "Sharpen the blade" and "hold it at just the right angle" give a commanding tone, showing Frank's power in orchestrating situations where others fulfill their roles in his grand political scheme.

Episode 2, Monologue 5

> *He has no idea we've got six kids in the next room already working on a new draft. Stamper! But why dampen his mood by telling him? We just gave him a great gift-- a chance to fulfill his destiny. Write up a statement for Blythe-- stepping aside, fresh ideas, et cetera, et cetera, and make it dignified. He's a good man. Oh. And bring me that Williams editorial* (Episode 2, Monologue 5).

Transitivity Analysis

1. **Participants**

    o   Actor: "I" (Frank Underwood)

    o   Goal: Six kids (who are working on a new draft in the next room)

    o   Circumstance: "Next room" (providing spatial context)

    o

2. **Processes**
   - o Material Processes: "We've got six kids in the next room already working on a new draft" involves a material process of action, where Frank orchestrates a scenario where his plans are being executed in the background by others.
   - o Mental Processes: "He has no idea" is a mental process where Frank reflects on the ignorance of someone, indicating that secrecy and control are at play.

3. **Agency and Control**
   - o Frank positions himself as the Agent who is secretly manipulating events behind the scenes. The kids are the secondary actors, fulfilling the task Frank set up without the primary target's knowledge.

4. **Stylistic Devices**
   - o Irony: "He has no idea" is ironic, as Frank is orchestrating events out of the other person's view, giving Frank the upper hand.
   - o Metaphor: "A chance to fulfill his destiny" is a metaphor for Frank manipulating someone into accepting their fate or role in his plans.

In these monologues, Underwood's agency and control over others were emphasized through his use of material, mental, and relational processes. He positioned himself as the manipulator, shaping others' actions and decisions through power, money, and strategic sacrifices. His strategic thinking was further enhanced by his use of stylistic devices, such as metaphor, contrast, and irony. These techniques allowed Underwood not only to reflect on the power dynamics at play, but also to actively manipulate and reshape them. His language revealed his complex view of relationships and identity, where secrets and manipulations served as tools for controlling his environment, as seen in his remarks about Peter Russo's entrapment by secrets and his own relationships with Claire and Zoe. Through these monologues, Underwood illustrated how he used language to create and redefine power and control.

Episode 7,Monologue 1

"Same voice she had when she was 16. Telling him all about her new job, how much she misses him, and sorry she didn't send a card. Telling him everything but the truth."

Transitivity Analysis

1. **Participants:**
   - o Actor: "She" (the woman Frank is referring to is Zoe, the reporter.
   - o Goal: Him (the man she's speaking to)
   - o Circumstance: Voice she had when she was 16 (indicating time, age, or context)

2. **Processes**
   - o Mental Processes: "Telling him all about her new job" and "how much she misses him" indicate mental processes of communication and affection, though the monologue subtly hints that these expressions may be deceptive.
   - o Material Processes: "I'm calling now" is a material process where Frank takes physical action—he's making a call.
   - o Relational Processes: "Same voice she had when she was 16" establishes a relational process, emphasizing identity or continuity of the woman's voice, which serves as a metaphor for her deceptive nature or continuing role in this drama.

3. **Agency and Control**
   - o Frank is the Actor who controls the narrative, observing and commenting on the behavior of the woman (Zoe, the reporter), while being reflective about the situation. He judges her actions but does not directly intervene—his control lies in his perception and commentary.

4. **Stylistic Devices**

- o Irony: The phrase "Telling him everything but the truth" introduces irony—the woman communicates everything except the truth, emphasizing deception.
- o Repetition: "Telling him" is repeated to emphasize manipulative communication.
- o Metaphor: "Same voice she had when she was 16" is metaphorical, possibly indicating immaturity or dishonesty that has persisted over time.

Episode7, Monologue 2

 "Just like she wouldn't tell me about that young man downstairs. There's a value in having secrets."

Transitivity Analysis

1. **Participants**
   - o Actor: "She" (the woman Frank refers to, still likely Claire or another woman in his life)
   - o Goal: Me (Frank, in this case, the one being deceived or excluded)
   - o Circumstance: Young man downstairs (the situation or event that is being withheld)

2. **Processes**
   - o Mental Processes: "She wouldn't tell me about that young man downstairs" refers to withholding information, which is a mental process of avoidance.
   - o Material Processes: "I'm calling now" is another material process, where Frank takes physical action to confront or engage in the situation.

3. **Agency and Control**
   - o Frank positions himself as reacting to her actions, indicating that he is aware of her manipulations. The goal is his knowledge or lack thereof, showing how he gains or is deprived of control over the situation.

4. **Stylistic Devices**

  - o Direct Speech: "I'm calling now" adds urgency, as Frank is attempting to take control by engaging with the situation head-on.

  - o Contrast: The contrast between telling the truth and withholding information emphasizes the deceit in Frank's world.

Episode 7, Monologue 3

"Creatures like myself, like Claire, like Zoe, we wouldn't be ourselves without them."

Transitivity Analysis

1. **Participants**

  - o Actor: "Creatures like myself, like Claire, like Zoe" (Frank, Claire, and Zoe are the subjects of this reflection)

  - o Goal: Secrets (the hidden, concealed truths)

2. **Processes**

  - o Mental Processes: "We wouldn't be ourselves without them" involves reflection and evaluation, where Frank expresses how secrets are integral to their identities. It implies that their manipulation and control are partly sustained by keeping things hidden.

3. **Agency and Control**

  - o Frank implies that secrecy is a defining feature of their identities, showing how powerful secrets are in maintaining control and influence. He places himself and the others (Claire, Zoe) as agents who depend on secrets for their survival in the political game.

4. **Stylistic Devices**

  - o Metaphor: "Creatures like myself" and "we wouldn't be ourselves without them" are metaphorical in that Frank likens himself, Claire, and Zoe to survivors or products of secrecy, reinforcing the idea that power is maintained by what is hidden.

    o Paradox: The paradox lies in the idea that secrecy and hidden truths are essential for their selfhood, which emphasizes the moral ambiguity of Frank and others.

Episode7, Monologue 4

"But Peter Russo, on the other hand, he's trapped by his secrets. What I'm trying to do is give him the opportunity to set himself free. After all, we are nothing more or less than what we choose to reveal."

Transitivity Analysis

1. **Participants:**
    - o Actor: "He" (Peter Russo)
    - o Goal: Secrets (the thing Peter is "trapped" by)
2. **Processes**
    - o Mental Processes: "He's trapped by his secrets" indicates mental imprisonment or psychological constraint, which makes Peter's secrets a form of control over him.
3. **Agency and Control**
    - o Frank positions Peter Russo as controlled by his own secrets, implying that Peter is not in full control of his own fate, unlike Frank, who can manipulate his secrets for his advantage.
4. **Stylistic Devices**
    - o Contrast: The contrast between Frank's control over secrets and Peter Russo's trapped state highlights Frank's mastery over his life and others, reinforcing his manipulative power.

Episode 7,Monologue 5

"What I am to Claire is not what I am to Zoe, just as Zoe is not to me what she is to her father."

Transitivity Analysis

1. **Participants**
   - o Actor: "I" (Frank Underwood)
   - o Goal: Claire and Zoe (the two women Frank refers to, highlighting their different relationships with him)

2. **Processes**
   - o Relational Processes: "What I am to Claire is not what I am to Zoe" is a relational process where Frank defines his identity in relation to both women, showing that his roles and relationships are manipulated and calculated for different outcomes.

3. **Agency and Control**
   - o Frank is the Agent who defines his roles within these relationships. His identity is context-dependent, suggesting that Frank is fully in control of how others perceive him based on the secrets and roles he assumes.

4. **Stylistic Devices**
   - o Paradox: The idea that Frank is not the same person to both women implies that identity itself is fluid and manipulable, reinforcing Frank's power over how others see him.

Underwood's monologues revealed his strategic manipulation of others and his control over how he was perceived. Through the transitivity model, one can see how Underwood was the central agent in these monologues, asserting agency and defining power through his relationships, secrets, and manipulations. He was both a master of his own fate and a manipulator of others' identities, using mental, material, and relational processes to control those around him.

Episode 9,Monologue 1

'I'm not going to lie. I despise children. There. I've said it.''

Transitivity Analysis

1. **Participants**

   o   Actor: "I" (Frank Underwood)

   o   Goal: Children (the object of Frank's disdain)

   o   Circumstance: None explicitly mentioned, but the context is implied through Frank's admission of hatred.

2. **Processes**

   o   Mental Processes: "I despise children" is a mental process where Frank is expressing his attitude or feeling toward children. "Despise" reflects a strong negative sentiment, demonstrating Frank's judgment and evaluation of a certain group (children).

   o   Material Processes: "I've said it" is a material process, where Frank articulates or makes a statement. It's a physical action of speaking or announcing his feelings.

3. **Agency and Control**

   o   Frank is the Actor in this monologue, and his control is exerted through honesty—he's deciding to publicly admit his feelings, which implies that he is in control of the narrative he's presenting. By making this statement, he controls how his personal opinion on children is portrayed to the audience.

   o   The Goal (children) is something Frank dislikes, but it's noteworthy that he chooses to express his disdain openly, indicating power over how he is perceived.

4. **Stylistic Devices**

   o   Directness: Frank's straightforwardness, "I'm not going to lie," is a rhetorical device meant to highlight his sincerity and blunt nature.

   o   Hyperbole: "I despise children" uses hyperbole (exaggerated language) to emphasize Frank's strong aversion. This adds to his ruthlessness and lack of empathy, which is central to his character.

Episode 9,Monologue 2

can't compete with Sancorp's war chest. My only option is asymmetrical...
To pick off the opposition one by one like a sniper in the woods. There will
come a time to put Remy in my crosshairs, but not right now. As we used
to say in Gaffney, never slap a man while he's chewing tobacco.(Episode
9, Monologue 2).

Transitivity Analysis

1. **Participants**
   o Actor: "I" (Frank Underwood)
   o Goal: Sancorp's war chest (the large financial resources of Sancorp that Frank is referring to)
   o Circumstance: None explicitly mentioned in this segment, though the context of competition and political strategy is implied.

2. **Processes**
   o Material Processes: "I can't compete with Sancorp's war chest" involves a material process of competition, where Frank is discussing the financial power (the war chest) of an opponent (Sancorp).
   o Mental Processes: "My only option is asymmetrical…" involves a mental process of decision-making, where Frank is weighing his options. The statement shows that Frank recognizes his limitations in terms of resources but formulates a strategy to overcome them.

3. **Agency and Control**
   o Frank acknowledges that he can't directly compete with the material resources of Sancorp. However, he quickly turns this into a strategic opportunity: "My only option is asymmetrical..." This is a powerful moment of agency, where Frank is actively deciding to use asymmetrical tactics (unconventional, guerrilla-like strategies) to compensate for a lack of resources.

    o   Frank chooses how he will approach this situation, even when he faces financial disadvantage. His strategic thinking demonstrates how he controls the narrative of his political maneuvers despite the odds.

4. **Stylistic Devices**

    o   Metaphor: "Like a sniper in the woods" is a metaphor for strategic, precise action, implying that Frank intends to eliminate his opponents in a targeted manner rather than confronting them head-on.

    o   Colloquial Expression: "As we used to say in Gaffney, never slap a man while he's chewing tobacco" is a colloquial expression that adds a layer of familiarity and rural wisdom, reinforcing Frank's pragmatism in dealing with opponents.

In these two monologues, Underwood demonstrated his control and strategic thinking through decisive language. In the first monologue, he unapologetically expressed his disdain for children, showcasing his self-assurance and lack of pretense. In the second, despite acknowledging his financial disadvantage, he pivoted to discuss his alternative approach—using asymmetrical tactics. His use of metaphors and colloquial expressions, like "sniper in the woods" and "never slap a man while he's chewing tobacco," highlighted his ability to communicate complex strategies in relatable terms, illustrating his mastery of manipulation. Frank established himself as the Agent who manipulates situations to his advantage, even when faced with challenges. The material processes in his speech reflected his pragmatic decision-making, while the mental processes revealed his strategic thinking. Through strategic communication, using colloquialisms and metaphors, Underwood made his tactics clear and efficient. Overall, Underwood's language reinforced his image as a strategic manipulator, always controlling and shaping his circumstances to maintain power.

Episode 12, Monologue 1

> *If the President takes this much convincing, it doesn't bode well. I can feel it... his hesitation on the other side of that door. I know it's pointless to*

worry until I know what cards I'm holding. Perhaps he just got interrupted by some.(Episode 12, Monologue 1)

Transitivity Analysis

1. **Participants**
   - o Actor: "I" (Frank Underwood)
   - o Goal: The President (though not directly mentioned in the second part of the monologue, Frank is still focused on his interaction with the President)
   - o Circumstance: "On the other side of that door" (indicating spatial context)

2. **Processes**
   - o Mental Processes: "I can feel it... his hesitation" involves perception—Frank senses hesitation from the President, indicating Frank's awareness of the situation.
   - o Material Processes: "It doesn't bode well" implies a material process of outcome or forecasting. Frank is making a prediction based on the situation, essentially calculating the consequences of the President's hesitation.
   - o Mental Processes: "I know it's pointless to worry until I know what cards I'm holding" shows Frank's awareness of the futility of worrying without full information. This reflects strategic thinking.

3. **Agency and Control**
   - o Frank positions himself as the Actor who is actively assessing the situation, predicting the potential outcome based on his understanding of the President's actions. He is in control of his own thoughts, even if he doesn't have full control over the President's actions.
   - o The Goal (the President) is not an active participant in the process but rather the subject of Frank's observation and calculation. Frank assesses the situation and anticipates what will happen next, showcasing his strategic thinking.

4. **Stylistic Devices**

- o Hesitation and Uncertainty: The phrase "I can feel it..." communicates a sense of uncertainty but also confidence in his ability to perceive the President's hesitation.

- o Foreshadowing: The idea that "it doesn't bode well" introduces a sense of foreboding, indicating Frank's ability to read the situation and predict negative outcomes based on hesitation.

- o Casual yet Decisive: "Until I know what cards I'm holding" uses the metaphor of cards to express strategy and control. Frank acknowledges that his actions will depend on information, showcasing his pragmatic decision-making.

Episode 12, Monologue 2

> *I said to my professor, "why mourn the death of Presidents, or anyone for that matter? The dead can't hear us." And he asked me if I believed in heaven. I said no. And then he asked if I had no faith in God. I said, "you have it wrong. It's God who has no faith in us." Deeper into the woods.(* Episode 12, Monologue 2)

Transitivity Analysis

1. **Participants**
   - o Actor: "I" (Frank Underwood)
   - o Goal: The Professor (to whom Frank is speaking)
   - o Circumstance: Context of mourning death (implied as part of the conversation)

2. **Processes**
   - o Mental Processes: "I said to my Professor" involves a speech process, where Frank is reporting his own speech.

- o Mental Processes: "Why mourn the death of Presidents, or anyone for that matter?" This reflects Frank's questioning and challenging beliefs about death, reflecting his philosophical mindset on life and power.

- o Relational Processes: "The dead can't hear us" represents a relational process, where Frank defines death as the absence of engagement or response, setting up a value judgment on mourning and the significance of death.

3. **Agency and Control**

   - o Frank controls the conversation with the Professor, using his intellectual insights to challenge conventional views on death and mourning. He defines what is valuable and worth grieving and provides his own perspective on the matter.

   - o The Goal (the Professor) is largely passive in this exchange. The Professor serves as a sounding board for Frank's thoughts, illustrating Frank's control over the conversation.

4. **Stylistic Devices**

   - o Rhetorical Question: "Why mourn the death of Presidents, or anyone for that matter?" This rhetorical question positions Frank as the master of the conversation, suggesting that he is making a point rather than seeking an answer. This challenges traditional values of mourning and grief.

   - o Metaphor: The phrase "the dead can't hear us" uses metaphor to emphasize that death renders a person irrelevant to the living. Frank's view minimizes the importance of posthumous respect or mourning.

   - o Contrast: The question of why mourn contrasts with conventional norms of mourning death, positioning Frank as a cynic who views political deaths as strategic opportunities rather than emotional events.

In these two monologues, Underwood demonstrated his ability to control and strategize. In Monologue 1, he assessed the President's hesitation and planned his next steps, showcasing a strategic mindset and control over both his reactions and the political

situation. In Monologue 2, Underwood challenged societal norms around mourning, particularly the death of Presidents, asserting his intellectual dominance and framing his beliefs in pragmatic terms to reinforce his stance on life and power.

In both monologues, Underwood displayed agency and control. In Monologue 1, he was reactive to the President's hesitation, but actively strategized, positioning himself as the key decision-maker. In Monologue 2, Underwood took full control of the conversation, using intellectual arguments to challenge conventional views, reducing emotional matters to strategic decisions.

Episode 13, Monologue 1

"Of all the things I hold in high regard, rules are not one of them. I will not place my fate solely in the hands of the middleman if I can go directly to the supplier."

Transitivity Analysis

1. **Participants**
   o Actor: "I" (Frank Underwood)
   o Goal: Rules (the concept Frank is dismissing)
   o Circumstance: None explicitly mentioned, but the context of political manipulation is implied.
2. **Processes**
   o Mental Processes: "Of all the things I hold in high regard" involves a mental process of evaluation. Frank is assessing his values, determining what is worth holding in high regard.
   o Relational Processes: "Rules are not one of them" is a relational process, where Frank is defining the value of rules in his world. By rejecting rules, Frank reveals his strategic mindset, where he prioritizes power and action over formalities.
3. **Agency and Control**

- o Frank actively rejects the concept of rules as something that limits his agency. He is positioning himself as above rules, implying that rules are only for those who don't have the power or the will to act freely. This is an assertion of his dominance and autonomy.

4. **Stylistic Devices**

   - o Contrast: "Rules are not one of them" contrasts with what Frank values, establishing that his world operates on a different set of principles than conventional morality.
   - o Clarity: Frank's directness here shows his assertive communication style, where his disdain for rules is unequivocal.

Episode 13, Monologue 2

> *Every time I've spoken to you, you've never spoken back. Although given our mutual disdain, I can't blame you for the silent treatment. Perhaps I'm speaking to the wrong audience. Can you hear me? Are you even capable of language, or do you only understand depravity? Peter, is that you? Stop hiding in my thoughts and come out. Have the courage in death that you never had in life. Come out, look me in the eye and say what you need to say. There is no solace above or below. Only us... Small, solitary, striving, battling one another. I pray to myself, for myself.*(Episode 13, Monologue 2)

Transitivity Analysis

1. **Participants**

   - o Actor: "I" (Frank Underwood)
   - o Goal: You (who Frank is speaking to, likely a political opponent or an imagined figure like Peter Russo)
   - o Circumstance: Our mutual disdain (implying the context of conflict or animosity)

2. **Processes**

- o Material Processes: "Every time I've spoken to you" involves Frank's speech acts, which are material actions where he attempts communication.

- o Mental Processes: "You've never spoken back" is a mental process where Frank evaluates the lack of response he receives. It suggests a psychological disconnect or silence as a form of rejection.

- o Relational Processes: "Perhaps I'm speaking to the wrong audience" is a relational process, where Frank defines the audience (the person he's speaking to) and questions the fit of the communication.

3. **Agency and Control**

- o Frank is actively confronting the silence of his audience, positioning himself as the agent of action. He controls the conversation by stating his discontent and evaluating the effectiveness of his communication.

- o The Goal (the other person) is not engaging, which implies that Frank's control over the situation is challenged by the lack of response from the other party.

4. **Stylistic Devices**

- o Irony: "You've never spoken back" uses irony to highlight the powerlessness of the other person in the conversation. Frank implies that silence in this context is not innocent but a sign of weakness or defeat.

- o Rhetorical Question: "Can you hear me?" and "Are you even capable of language?" serve as rhetorical devices, emphasizing Frank's frustration and mocking the silence.

- o Contrast: Frank contrasts the act of speaking (his agency) with the inability of the other person to respond, creating an asymmetry in their power dynamic.

5. **Episode 13, Monologue 3**

   Thirteen minutes from now, Tusk will meet with the President, if he isn't there already. You've never been an ally, have you? Pressing on with your slow, incessant march. Time would've killed Russo if I hadn't, just as it

will kill me someday. Kill us all. Sir, I just got Doug's voicemail. I wonder

where he's at. Well, maybe this is him. (**Episode 13, Monologue 3)**

Transitivity Analysis

1. **Participants**

   o Actor: "I" (Frank Underwood)

   o Goal: Tusk and the President (the people involved in the meeting)

   o Circumstance: Thirteen minutes from now (time context for the upcoming event)

2. **Processes**

   o Material Processes: "Tusk will meet with the President" involves material processes of meeting, where Frank is narrating an event that is about to occur.

   o Mental Processes: "You've never been an ally, have you?" is a mental process where Frank reflects on the relationship with Tusk, evaluating him as not being an ally.

   o Material Processes: "Time would've killed Russo if I hadn't" is another material process, where Frank claims responsibility for changing the fate of Peter Russo through his own actions. The use of past tense here also implies that Frank actively shaped events to his advantage.

3. **Agency and Control**

   o Frank is the central Agent throughout this monologue, whether it's orchestrating Tusk's meeting or reflecting on the fate of Russo. He demonstrates control over events and others, positioning himself as the decider of what happens next.

   o The Goal (Tusk and the President) is merely an object in Frank's calculation, emphasizing his power to influence them from the outside.

4. **Stylistic Devices**

- o Foreshadowing: "Thirteen minutes from now" creates a sense of immediacy and anticipation, preparing the audience for the upcoming political maneuver.
- o Causal Relationship: "Time would've killed Russo if I hadn't" uses a causal connection to show Frank's influence over Russo's fate, reinforcing the idea that events unfold according to Frank's will.
- o Colloquialism: "Never slap a man while he's chewing tobacco" is a colloquial saying that adds familiarity and pragmatism to Frank's otherwise strategic tone, giving the speech a sense of down-to-earth wisdom that connects with his rural roots.

In these monologues, Underwood consistently demonstrated his ability to assert control and strategically manipulated situations. In Monologue 1, he rejected conventional rules, positioning himself as unconstrained in his pursuit of power. His use of mental and relational processes revealed his strategic thinking, emphasizing that rules are irrelevant to his ambitions. In Monologue 2, Frank showed his control through frustration with the lack of engagement from the other person, using silence as a tool to make them feel powerless, reinforcing his dominance in the conversation. In Monologue 3, Underwood took full control of the situation by anticipating and narrating events, using foreshadowing to illustrate his active role in shaping outcomes, such as Tusk's meeting with the President and his manipulation of Russo's fate. Through all three monologues, Frank used mental, material, and relational processes to manipulate those around him while maintaining a strong sense of agency. His ability to evaluate, shape, and predict outcomes reflected his strategic dominance. Additionally, stylistic devices like irony, colloquialism, and foreshadowing enhanced his persona as a decisive, pragmatic, and ruthless character, traits that define his role throughout House of Cards
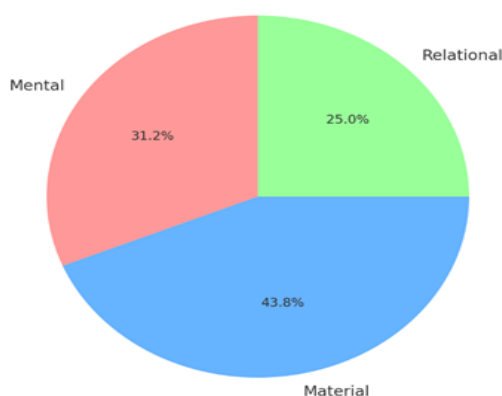
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Figure 1. Distribution of process types across Frank's Monologues

The above pie chart reflects the distribution of the material (43%), mental (31.2%), and relational processes (25%) across the monologues that have been analyzed. The chart shows the approximate proportion of each type of process based on the breakdown of Underwood's speeches:

- **Mental** processes reflect Underwood 's internal thoughts, reflections, and evaluations.
- **Material** processes involve actions and physical events he either causes or experiences.
- **Relational** processes define relationships and establish value or identity (how Underwood defines or evaluates others).

In analyzing the language of Underwood from *House of Cards*, a critical examination of his monologues has revealed a complex narrative where the themes of power, control, and manipulation dominate. By examining the transitivity model of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the processes within Underwood's speech can be categorized into the following processes: material, mental, and relational processes. As illustrated in Figure 1, the dominance of material processes in Underwood's Monologues have been the dominant ones in his language, outnumbering both the mental and relational processes.

This dominance is significant in understanding Underwood 's character and his approach to navigating the complex political landscape. Thus, the material processes have been the highest in Underwood's monologues; a matter which reflects his manipulative, action-oriented, and power-driven personality.

Underwood's frequent use of material processes—expressed through verbs, such as "act," "manipulate," "control," and "destroy"—has highlighted his focus on tangible actions rather than on the abstract thoughts or relationships. This has further reflected Underwood the strategic approach to power and manipulation. He is not a passive character, who waits for things to happen. Instead, he takes deliberate, often ruthless, action to shape his political reality. His actions and decisions are the foundation of his power, and the material processes in his language reflect this. For example, when he stated, *"I'm not going to lie. I despise children,"* the use of material processes here highlighted Underwood's directness and assertiveness, revealing a man who actively shapes how he is perceived rather than passively accepting social norms or expectations. In other words, Underwood 's actions speak louder than his reflections or relationships.

Moreover, while mental processes have shown to be important in understanding Underwood's internal thoughts, reflections, and strategies, they often served as the cognitive groundwork for his material actions. In other words, Underwood 's thoughts about power, betrayal, and loyalty have led to the material processes that demonstrate his manipulation of those around him. Mental processes in his speech—like "I know it's pointless to worry"—have merely informed the action he will take next. His strategic thinking is not passive, but is immediately translated into material action that shapes the outcome.

Similarly, relational processes—which define relationships and assign roles or identities to others—are important, but they are often secondary to the actions Underwood undertook. In one monologue, Underwood stated, *"What I am to Claire is not what I am to Zoe."* This relational process has highlighted Underwood's flexible identity in different contexts. However, it remained subordinate to his ability to manipulate those identities

to serve his goals. Underwood has constantly adjusted his relationships based on his actions, consolidating power, forming alliances, or dealing with adversaries. Therefore, relational processes are tools that help Underwood execute his material plans.

In Underwood's monologues, the dominance of material processes has reflected his character's core traits of agency, manipulation, and power. Underwood 's world is not one of passive reflection, but is one of action, where the most significant changes come through deeds rather than through words. The material processes in his language have conveyed a man who shapes his destiny through active manipulation of people, events, and relationships. His reliance on material actions has underscored his strategic mindset, where every decision and interaction are carefully crafted to serve his overarching goal: to hold and expand his power. Thus, the predominance of material processes in his monologues is a reflection of Underwood's active, ruthless pursuit of control in the world of *House of Cards*.

7. Conclusions

The material processes dominate Underwood's monologues, emphasizing his action-oriented nature and his ability to manipulate and shape political events to his advantage. Mental and relational processes, though secondary, are instrumental in revealing Underwood 's strategic thinking and his calculated evaluations of others based on their utility to his goals.

The transitivity model has allowed for a detailed understanding of Underwood 's linguistic strategies and of how they contribute to the construction of conspiracy within the narrative. His speech not only reflects his internal thought processes, but also serves as a vehicle for an external manipulation and the execution of his political ambitions. Through his strategic use of language, Underwood has constructed a web of conspiracy that influences both his allies and adversaries, furthering his control over the political landscape.

This research has contributed to the broader field of political discourse analysis by demonstrating how language, particularly in political contexts, functions both as a reflection of power and as a means of exercising control. The study has also emphasized the importance of corpus-stylistic methods in understanding how discourse shapes character development and narrative structure in television series. As *House of Cards* has continued to captivate audiences, the language of conspiracy portrayed through Underwood's monologues remains a central aspect of the show's exploration of power, manipulation, and of the political strategy. The linguistic construction of conspiracy has become an integral part of Underwood 's character, illustrating the complex relationships between language, power, and manipulation in political discourse.

8. Recommendations for Further Studies

Based on the analysis of Underwood's monologues in *House of Cards* through the transitivity model of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), several avenues for further research might emerge. These recommendations aim to extend the current study and explore related linguistic, thematic, and narrative aspects of the show, as well as other political discourse in media:

1. **Expansion to Other Characters**: Analyzing language use in other characters like Claire and Doug Stamper to compare power dynamics and manipulation strategies.
2. **Comparative Analysis Across Seasons**: Studying how Underwood's linguistic strategies evolve across seasons, reflecting shifts in power and influence.
3. **Cross-Cultural Political Discourse**: Comparing House *of Cards*' political discourse with other cultural contexts, such as *Borgen* or *The West Wing*.
4. **Non-Verbal Communication**: Including the analysis of body language and facial expressions to understand how non-verbal cues contribute to power and manipulation.
5. **Impact on Audiences**: Investigating how the language of power and manipulation in *House of Cards* affects viewers' perceptions of political issues.

6. **Linguistic Manipulation in Other Genres**: Exploring the linguistic strategies in other genres (legal dramas, corporate thrillers) to understand broader applications of power and manipulation.

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