INTERNATIONAL PREMIER JOURNAL OF LANGUAGES & LITERATURE (IPJLL)
VOLUME 3, ISSUE 4, 2025 p-ISSN: 3007-2336 e-ISSN: 3007-2344

THE DISCOURSE OF DOMESTIC CONTROL: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF POWER AND COERCION IN NETFLIX'S *MAID*

Maliha Shahid malihashahid24@gmail.com	MPhil Scholar, Department of English Linguistics and Literature, Riphah International University, Islamabad, Pakistan.
Dr Awais Bin Wasi Awais.wasi@riphah.edu.pk	Assistant Professor, Department of English Linguistics and Literature, Riphah Intinternational University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

Abstract

Maid is a limited series on *Netflix* which was released in 2021. This series is a depiction of poverty, domestic abuse, and motherhood. This research is a critical Discourse Analysis of a language of a character in this series whose name is Sean, focusing specifically on linguistic strategies of power, coercion and control within partner interactions. Through the analysis of selected dialogues between *Alex* and *Sean*, this research identifies how the choice of vocabulary, grammatical structures and pragmatics are used to dominate and manipulate relations. This research uses Fairclough's three dimensional CDA framework to reveal that *Sean*'s language represents dominance, power dynamics and construct ideological hierarchies in a relationship.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis, Linguistic Strategies, Power, Coercion, Control, Interaction, Vocabulary, Grammatical Structures, Pragmatics, Dominance, Power Dynamics, Ideological Hierarchies*

Corresponding Author: Dr Awais Bin Wasi (Assistant Professor, Department of English Linguistics and Literature, Riphah Intinternational University, Islamabad, Pakistan).
Email: Awais.wasi@riphah.edu.pk

1. Introduction

Media represents domestic abuse very frequently in an oversimplified way, by emphasizing only on physical violence, however, it overlooks the linguistic coercion. This *Netflix* series *Maid* is a limited series on *Netflix* which was released in 2021. It is based on Stephanie Land's memoir *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive.* This series challenged this standard by portraying gaslighting and emotional abuse as key elements of power control. This series is about a young mother named *Alex*; she leaves her abusive relationship with *Sean* and struggle to support her daughter while facing challenges of poverty and social vulnerability. *Sean*'s interactions with *Alex* are very rich linguistically and demonstrate power and coercion which

This research specifically focuses on *Sean*'s language that how his vocabulary, pragmatics, sentence structures and linguistic strategies impose control and declare authority. Through Critical Discourse Analysis, this research shows how linguistic practices in social and ideological context illustrate the power relation through everyday language. The main objective is to study the textual, turn taking, interruptions and social displays of power in *Sean*'s language.

1.1.Problem Statement

Language is not just a mode of communication; it is also a tool to enact power and ideology. In domestic abuse, coercive control is often showed linguistically through gaslighting, negation and modality, instead of through physical violence. Despite this, such linguistic abuse is underexplored in English Linguistics specially in media text. So, *Sean*'s language in *Maid* provides a sample to investigate how dominance and power are constructed through language. This research explored how *Sean*'s language portrays as a tool of coercive control and power, and what linguistic strategies are used to keep power and dominance over *Alex*.

1.2.Research Objectives

- To analyse the lexical choices, syntax and pragmatic elements, turn taking, interruptions used by *Sean* that shows power and coercive control
- To analyse *Sean*'s language in a broader sociolinguistic and ideological framework using CDA

1.3.Research Questions

- What Linguistic features i.e. vocabulary, grammatical, pragmatics are used by *Sean* to show power and control in his interactions with *Alex*?
- How turn taking and interruptions are used to enforce power dynamics?

- What social structures and ideologies are reflected in *Sean*'s language?

1.4. 1.4 Significance of the Research

This research helps to understand how the power, control, and dominance are shown through the language in media representations. By using Fairclough's Three Dimensional Model to analyse *Sean's* speech in the series *Maid,* this research highlights how everyday conversations shows dominance, manipulation and emotional abuse. The findings of this research will guide the future researches to identify how language is used in the situations of abuse and it will also help media studies to examine how the domestic abuse is represented and it will also make people more aware of the ways through which the coercive control is expressed.

2.Literature Review

2.1.Language, Power, and Domination

Language functions as a vehicle for power. Foucault's (1972) said that language is not only about communication but it also constitutes social reality through power. In abusive relationships, power is often hidden in language used rather than the physical acts. Stark's (2007) theory of coercive control highlights that the abusers often manipulate their partner through control of reality, psychological pressure and isolation through their language.

Recent linguists extend Stark's thoughts by focusing on how the language constructs coercion. For example, Vogels (2023) highlights that how the make committed violence has been framed across time by arguing that the frameworks shift, however, the strategies including minimizing the victim's experiences, they persist which serve to legitimize the abusive powers. Building on Stark's work Towns et al. (2016) stated in their study that coercive control is discursively enacted by noting that the abusers use a language to restate the reality, through their language they minimize the harm caused by them and maintain their authority. Their study shows that the discourse in the main site where the domination is normalized and sustained. Their analysis establishes a very strong theoretical foundation to examine how power and coercion are linguistically created in fictional and media stories. The focus of recent researches has shifted to demonstrate the coercive control through a "continuum of behaviour". Burdett (2023) highlights in his study that the current legal and social challenges in identifying the coercion is due to its undetectable nature because it is often embedded in the private language of the relationship therefore it becomes very difficult for the external system to find it.

2.2.Media Representation and Language of Violence

The social understandings of the violence are represented by the media. Critical Discourse Analysis is commonly used to analyse how media discourse frames the domestic abuse (Harjanti & Ardiansyah, 2024). Harjanti and Ardiansyah (2024) analyzed the Indonesian media reporting focusing on violence against children and women by showing how grammatical structures for example, passive voice and nominalization are used to minimize the culprit's responsibility. Similarly, Az-Zahra and Roselani (2024) conducted a Critical Discourse Analysis on corpus related to sexual violence narratives in The Jakarta Post, which revealed that the language of the victim is overshadowed by the negative sentiments, which weakens the accountability but highlights the vulnerability of the victim.

Ibitoye and Abolarin-Egbebiola (2025) pointed out that how media discourse plays an important role to continue patriarchal norms by blaming victims. Collectively, all of these studies show how the media language often sustain instead if challenging the power structures. Little (2023) analyses in her study the coercive control in popular young adult fantasy novels and explains that how the manipulative and controlling behaviours are usually romanticized or excused through the narrative discourse. In these stories a female character losing her independence is portrayed as if she has deliberately made this choice. When media shows these kind of situations, it trains the people to ignore the warning signs like commands, controlling questions and emotional manipulations and force them to see these signs as intense love. Such portrayal gives a real life abusers a model to justify their controlling behaviours as proof or their love and care. This study explains that the fictional texts can normalize coercive power relations by embedding them within emotionally charged narratives and due to this narration, the domination appears as care and is justified. These findings highlights that the critical analysis of media dialogues is necessary because fictional representations always contributes towards broader cultural understandings of power and abuse.

Boehm's (2023) qualitative textual analysis of *Netflix's series Maid* gives us a direct insight of how the power and domination are presented through male character's language and their behaviour. Using the idea of hegemonic masculinity as the foundation, Boehm states that instead of using obvious physical violence, *Sean's* working class masculinity is discursively framed through his control, entitlement, and emotional coercion. *Sean's* repeated assertions of financial authority, ownership over the space and superiority, all of these functions as linguistic strategies to sustain *Alex's* dependency and restrict her independence. Boehm (2023) argues that *Sean's* language shows the hegemonic masculinity norms in which the financial provisions are used to justify

dominance and silence the resistance. Coercive behaviour is usually normalized in the popular culture which makes it harder for the people to recognize when they are being controlled or dominated. Satiana (2024) studies the song *"Treat You Better"* and highlights that the behaviour which seems like caring is actually a form of benevolent coercion. In this song the make character is portrayed as a saviour which pressurize the woman to obey him as way of thanking him.

2.3. 2.3 Linguistic Violence and Gender Based Abuse

Linguistic violence is the language used to threaten, degrade, humiliate or control other and it is a very prominent area of interest in discourse studies (Ejiaso, 2024). Ejiaso used Fairclough's model to analyse to show how women are defamed and marginalized through language. Her findings highlighted that the language is functioned as an active culprit of violence and that it is not just a mere reflection of societal norms.

Zanna and Suprayogi (2025) applied Critical Discourse Analysis to a TEDx talk on masculinity, and revealed that the choices of pronouns, adjectives and sentence structures shows a patriarchal ideology. All of these studies emphasizes that how linguistic features such as pronouns, imperatives, and evaluative expressions are not neutral but they are ideologically loaded, which serves to reproduce the gendered power hierarchies. These findings show that everyday language can function as a tool of coercion, specifically within the relationships.

2.4.Critical Discourse Analysis, Gender and Social Change

Critical Discourse analysis is used as a tool for social transformation (Rashid & Al-Zubaie, 2024). They highlighted that the English media repeats the patriarchal language but it also encourage stories that challenge these norms and promote equality. Similarly, Fakhria, Zahra and Orwela (2024) used critical discourse analysis to examine the Islamic legal discussion of domestic violence on social media. This showed that how the netizens challenge and negotiate the patriarchal legal norms.

3.Methodology

3.1.Research Design

This research is a qualitative discourse analysis by using Critical Discourse Analysis primarily focusing on *Sean*'s verbal interaction in selected scenes of *Maid* and it does not interpret any psychological states, but only the linguistic strategies. The focus is strictly on the *Sean*'s language to represent dominance, manipulation and coercive control.

3.2.Theoretical Framework

This research uses Norman Fairclough's three dimensional model of critical discourse analysis to critically analyse *Sean*'s language in the series *Maid*. This model has provided a well structured approach to link the linguistic details with social and ideological structures. The first dimension text focuses on the linguistic features of *Sean's* speech including his use of vocabulary, grammar, syntax, speech acts and pronoun usage. In this research the focus is on the linguistic strategies *Sean* uses to exercise coercive control for example, denial, negation, and imperatives and these highlights the mechanism through which he attempts to dominate and manipulate his interactions. The second dimension, discursive practice, examines the production and the consumption of the discourse analysing the speech act patters, turn taking and interruptions to help in analysing how *Sean* dominates in his interactions and how he controls the narrative. Finally, the social practice dimension situates *Sean's* language into the larger and broader societal and ideological context, specifically focusing on the gender hierarchies and power relations. By connecting his linguistic behaviours and the ideologies of patriarchy and male dominancy, this research highlights how *Sean's* language reflects the social structures by illustrating the interplay between an individual language use and broader societal customs. This integrated approach allows for an understanding of how the language both constructs and is constructed by the social power relations in the context of this series.

3.3.Data Collection

The data for this research is taken from the *Netflix Series Maid* specifically Episodes 1 and 3 to 9 are selected for the analysis as the coercion and power imbalance between *Sean* and *Alex* is most obvious in these episodes. Only the actual dialogues spoken between *Sean* and *Alex* are used for the analysis. The researcher carefully watched the selected episodes and transcribed the dialogues between these two characters. The dialogues are transcribed in detail to capture not only the spoken words but also the pauses, interruptions and the tone which is very crucial to understand the dynamics of the interactions. An initial coding approach is also applied to highlight the recurring linguistic features which shows dominance, manipulation, and coercive control. The codes include categories such as: denial of responsibility, negation, Dominance, Power, Evaluation, minimization, imperative, pronoun shift, modality, interruption and gaslighting. This structured approach allows to systematically analyze *Sean's* language and its function in maintaining the power and coercion within the selected scenes of his interactions with *Alex.*

3.4.Procedures of Data Analysis

The analysis in this research is conducted using the three dimensional framework of Norman Fairclough, beginning with the textual analysis, in which the researcher examines the lexical choices by describing the verbs and adjectives used by *Sean*, the grammatical structures by identifying the type sentence such as whether they are declarative, imperative, negative or interrogative and also their syntactic structures, pragmatic features are also analyzed which includes speech acts such as assertions, directions and expressions alongside the use of pronouns, all of this to understand how *Sean's* language functions to enforce control and influence within his interactions.

At the level of discursive practice. The analysis is focused on turn taking and interaction patterns to highlight how discourse is produced and managed in the interactions between *Sean* and *Alex*. Turn taking is closely examined to identify the instances where *Sean* interrupts *Alex* or cuts off her mid sentence to maintain the conversational control and also to limit her ability to express herself fully. Interaction patterns are analysed by the speech acts to reveal how *Sean* strategies of silencing, commanding or giving direction places *Alex* in a subordinate role. These patterns highlights that how coercion and dominance operated through everyday conversational exchange and how it reinforces unequal power relations.

Finally, the social practice interprets the coded data to understand that how *Sean's* language reflects the gendered power structures. In this research the researcher relates the Linguistic patterns to larger social ideologies such as patriarchy, authority and hierarchal relationships to demonstrate how *Sean's* language not only represents but also reinforces the societal power dynamics.

4.Data Analysis

The analysis of Sean's language in the *Netflix series Maid* reveals that how power and coercion operated through specific linguistic choices, grammatical structures, and discursive strategies. In order to understand how *Sean* maintains his dominance over *Alex*, the researcher examined the text not as a series of isolated exchanges but it is analyzed as a systematic implementation of Fairclough's three dimensional model, where micro level of vocabulary and grammar reflects the macro level of social power and patriarchal hierarchy.

The way *Sean's* uses first person pronouns shows his ownership that defines the domestic space. In Episode 1 where the tension arises when *Alex* tells him that she is leaving, *Sean* asserts his dominance by stating: "Where are you gonna go? I pay all the

bills. Let you hang out with my friends. I let you move into my trailer, you drink my beer, eat my food. I let you mooch off me. I do everything for you". The context of this dialogue is critical as it occurs when *Alex* attempted to voice her unhappiness but by using the pronoun "I" *Sean* shows himself as the source of all material and social resources. The specific choice of the verb "let" is a very powerful linguistic marker of coercion as in a healthy relationship living together and sharing a social circle are mutual rights but through *Sean's* language these are shown as a privilege that he has very graciously granted to *Alex.* This grammatical choice changes *Alex* position from a partner to a mere tenant whose presence is conditional and this justifies his power by the way he created a debt that *Alex* can never repay, and effectively silencing her complaints and independence by reminding her perceived "moocher" status.

This textual dominance is extended into the use of imperatives and directives which functions as speech acts that are designed to bypass negotiation and provoke immediate submission. In Episode 8 during the heated argument regarding *Alex's* scholarship and her potential move to Montana, *Sean* yells, "Get in the car!" and in Episode 9, during a dinner where *Alex* tries to leave the table in order to escape the suffocating conversation, he yells, "Sit… down!" These are not just mere requests but they are commands that are used to silence *Alex.* This scene particularly tells us the involvement of social practice as *Sean* issued this command in front of *Alex's* father *Hank* who remained silent and the silence from another male figure validates *Sean's* linguistic authority which reinforce a patriarchal hierarchy where the woman's physical movements are dictated by the men in the room. The absence of any polite words or modal verbs like "could" or "would" highlights that *Sean* does not view his conversation with *Alex* as an exchange between equals.

Beyond direct commands *Sean* language heavily used emotional manipulation and guilt tripping which serves as a psychological tool of coercion as in Episode 7 after he reveals his childhood's traumatic details, he tells *Alex,* "You are the only person that knows me. We're family" while this may appear as an expression of intimacy but the context of the scene reveals that it is a discursive trap. By positioning *Alex* as the "only person" who understands him, he places a heavy burden of emotional responsibility on her. The use of inclusive pronoun "we" does not suggest equality here however, it is used to bind *Alex* to his fate. This linguistic strategy is used by *Sean* to make *Alex* feel that if we leave him then it will be an act of extreme cruelty so, through his words he tries to use her empathy in his favor. In the same way his question in Episode 3, "Why don't you like me anymore?" is a very strategic choice of words by *Sean* which reframes the survival instincts of Alex as her own moral failing. Through this he shifter the focus from his abusive behavior to her "lack of affection" which forces her to defend her character rather that addressing his violence.

Sean's use of denial and minimization is one of the most insidious way to use language in order to maintain his power as in Episode 1, the scene of alcohol fueled violence where he punches the wall and threw the glass just beside *Alex* and here his apologies are masterclass in linguistic avoidance. He says "I drank too much so I went too far" and in another scene of Episode where *Alex* loses her apartment because of *Sean* and when she confronted him, he very tactically replies "It was a slip, Okay? It happens." This lexical choice of word "slip" is a very significant minimization as it suggests his behavior as an accidental error rather than a deliberate act. By using the phrase "It happens," he employs a grammatical structure which generalizes his behavior and make it seem natural, unavoidable occurrence rather than a deliberate choice he made. This act of normalization is a form of gaslighting which forces *Alex* to question the validity of her own fear. In the context of Critical Discourse Analysis, these speech facts are justifications that are intended to erase the previous night's trauma and reset the power dynamic to a state where *Sean* is once again the "victim" of his own circumstances, rather than the culprit of *Alex's* suffering.

Interruptions and the turn takings provide further evidence of *Sean's* control over the conversational floor as in Episode 5 when *Alex* is desperately trying to find a childcare so that she may accommodate her cleaning shifts and she attempts to negotiate with *Sean* by saying "You take her until 3…." But *Sean* cuts her off mid sentence by replying "I am working a double" and when *Alex* tries again, he repeats the same phrase so, this use of interruption is a strategic discursive practice which is used to dominate the interactions. By making *Alex* to stop mid sentence, *Sean* ensures that her needs are not fully articulated thus making it impossible to get the support she needs for her independence. This strategy is used to keep her trapped in the state of financial dependency and his refusal of engaging in a functional turn taking shows his refusal to engage in an equal domestic partnership. Throughout the series his voice literally takes up all the floor and leave no room for *Alex* to state her needs. Additionally, *Sean's* use of modal verbs particularly those of prohibition reinforces his role as the one in authority in their relationship. When he says, "I don't like you giving this address out." By using the modal don't, *Sean* establish a set of rules that isolate *Alex* from external support systems. This is not a suggestion for safety it is a directive that limits her social options. In the social practice dimension, we can see how *Sean's* language aligns with the broader norms of the society that often excuse male dominance in working class settings. His language use reflects a "provider" ideology that is deeply flawed because he uses this label just to justify his control even through, he is failing to provide a safe and stable environment.

This series also highlights how *Sean's* language changes when he feels his power is being threatened by external influences for instance *Alex's* growing relationship with

the middle class *Nate* or her academic ambitions. Like when *Alex* mentions her desire to study in Montana, *Sean's* language becomes even more dismissive using derogatory terms in order to minimize her ambitions. This use of language serves to delegitimize her opinion and enforces a hierarchy where his current reality is the only valid one. Every linguistic choice by *Sean* whether it is a specific choice of nouns or the aggressive tone of his speech acts all of these are a brick wall of coercive control. This Critical Discourse Analysis highlights that *Sean's* power in not just about the physical threat by it is about a linguistic system which consistently denies *Alex's* independence. The way he uses pronouns, it establishes his ownership and the way he uses imperatives it demands obedience and his manipulation is used to induce guilt and when he minimizes *Alex*, in reality he is trying to deny his abuse and the interruptions are used to silence her voice. By analyzing these interactions in detail, we can see that *Sean's* language is a tool of structural oppression. This reflects the gendered power hierarchy where the male's voice is treated as the objective truth while the female's voice is treated as a nuisance which needs to be managed or silenced. *Alex's* eventual departure from his environment is not only about moving away physically but it is also about freeing herself through the language. She starts to speak for herself, write her own stories, and the use of word "I" with confidence and without needing *Sean's* approval, this change shows how powerful the language is as it not only control or oppress someone but it also helps them to resist the coercive control and reclaim their identity. In a broader paradigm, *Sean's* language is reinforced by the silence of those who are around them such as *Alex's* father or their shared social circle who treat *Sean's* behaviors and outbursts as "just how he is". This cultural normalization is what allows *Sean* to confidently use phrases like "it happens" because he knows that the social structure often favors the man's narrative of stress or struggle over the woman's narrative of fear and abuse. Due to this, his linguistic choices are perfectly used to exploit these social biases. The power and coercion in *Sean's* language is a micro reflection of macro societal inequalities that *Maid* so effectively critique. Through this detailed analysis we can see that every "Sit down" and every "I let you" is a deliberate act of power which is used to keep *Alex* in a position of subordination.

5. Discussion

This research of Critical Discourse Analysis highlights that how *Sean*'s language in the series "*Maid*" portrays a sophisticated instrument of controlling *Alex*. The data reveals that the power and coercion are not just incidental to *Sean* and *Alex's* interactions but they are structurally embedded within *Sean's* linguistic habits. Through the detailed analysis of these patterns through Fairclough's three dimensional model, we can see that how micro level linguistic choices such as the use of specific pronouns, modal verbs and

interruptions demonstrate the macro level social structures. The patterns of *Sean's* language shows that power is not just a background element but it is actively constructed through everyday speech acts. The frequent use of the first person pronoun "I" in phrases like "I pay the bills" or "I let you move in" functions as a linguistic support for his authority. By portraying himself as the source of provisions, *Sean* uses language to create a reality where *Alex* is continuously indebted. This linguistic choice is a form of coercion because it makes the basic domestic necessities as privileges. As these statements usually occurs when *Alex* attempts to assert her own will, this shows that *Sean* uses his status as a provider is a conversational weapon which is used to silence *Alex's* complaints. This aligns with the idea that the language is used to construct a power hierarchy where the contributions of one person are used to delegitimize the needs of other.

The transition from dominance to overt coercion is very much visible in the use of imperatives and directives such as "Get in the car!" and "Sit down!" because they take away the possibility of negotiation. These speech acts basically impose *Sean's* will directly onto *Alex,* for instance the yelling of "Sit...down!" in Episode 9, particularly when *Alex* attempts to leave the suffocating social situation it represents a height of linguistic coercion. This shows that *Sean's* authority is not just about financial control but also about the total regulation of *Alex's* behaviour and movements. By not using the polite words, *Sean's* language reflects a social practice where conversation is replaced by commands to ensure that the power dynamic must remain strictly top down and non reciprocal. Additionally, the turn taking and the frequent use of interruptions highlights the discursive strategy in order to maintain the control over the conversational floor. Like in Episode 5 when *Alex* tries to plan her independence by asking for childcare help, *Sean's* repetitive interruptions act as a linguistic barrier. These interruptions are not just an accidental break in conversation, however, they are strategies used to limit *Alex* from stating her plans or securing the resources she needs to leave. Through controlling who gets to speak and what topics are valid *Sean* ensures that the narrative of relationship is always dictated by him only. This practice by *Sean* shows a coercive environment where *Alex* who is the subordinate, her voice is systematically excluded from the decision making process.

The use of emotional manipulation and minimization further strengthens this power structure where *Sean* uses phrases like "You are the only person that knows me" and "You are hurting my feelings," he through his choice of words weaponizes intimacy to induce guilt. This is also a form of coercion because it traps *Alex* in a cycle of emotional liability. His use of minimization with words like "slip" or phrase like "it happens", *Sean's* language functions to redefine reality in a way that it protects his power. By using these minimizers, he tries to linguistically erase the trauma he has caused in order to force *Alex* to doubt her own perceptions of danger. So, these findings show that *Sean's* language is a

comprehensive system of power which uses grammatical and discursive tools to ensure that *Alex* remains in a state of subordination and compliance.

6. Conclusion

This research is a linguistic Critical Discourse Analysis specifically of the language used by *Sean* in a *Netflix* series "*Maid*". This research highlights that how power, control and coercion cannot only be enacted through physical violence but they are also present in the discourse. By shifting the focus from physical acts to linguistic structures, this research reveals how *Sean* constructs a dominant position in a very systematic way. The findings suggest that the coercion is built through a very sophisticated interplay of lexical choices, grammatical structures and discursive management and how all of these serve to sustain the unequal power dynamic throughout the series. This analysis identifies how the deliberate choice of vocabulary is used to minimize or even deny the responsibility of abuse. By calling the violent outbursts as "slips" or accidents, *Sean's* language functions to protect him from the responsibility while gaslighting *Alex* into doubting her fears. This linguistic manipulation is reinforced by the frequent use of imperatives and directives with commands like "Get in the car!" and "Sit down" are the speech acts that eliminate any type of negotiation and instead they impose *Sean's* will directly onto *Alex's* physical social presence.

The discursive management of the conversational floor is another example of coercive control as through frequent interruptions and the act of cutting *Alex* off mid sentence, *Sean* very effectively silences her attempts of self advocacy and independence. This control by *Sean* over turn taking ensures that the narrative of the relationship remains entirely with *Sean* and that it leaves no space for *Alex's* needs or plans to be validated. The purposeful use of pronoun "I" to emphasize his role as the sole provider and contrasted the pronoun "you" that positions *Alex* as a dependant subordinate, shows the ideology of dominance and this normalizes a form of coercive control that is subtle in delivery but very devastating in its impact.

For English Linguistics, this research highlights that the abuse can also be examined through language and discourse instead of just relying on psychological features. The findings shows that more research is required to understand how media with the use of language shows violence and how this affects the ideas about control, power, and gender in a society.

References

Az-Zahra, R., & Roselani, N. G. A. (2024). A Critical Discourse Analysis of Sexual Violence Narratives in The Jakarta Post *Lexicon*, *11*(1), 34. https://doi.org/10.22146/lexicon.v11i1.93145

Boehm, M. (2023). Netflix's Maid and representations of masculinities through social class: a textual analysis. *Ámbitos Revista Internacional De Comunicación*, 68–80. https://doi.org/10.12795/ambitos.2023.i59.05

Burdett, J. (2023). *Understanding coercive control within and beyond the domestic environment* (By University of York) [Thesis].

Ejiaso, V. (2024). Linguistic Violence on Women: Representation of women in ritual killing discourse on Nigerian social media spaces. *Studies in Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis*, *5*(1), 32–45. https://doi.org/10.48185/spda.v5i1.985

Fakhria, N. S., Zahra, N. F., & Orwela, C. (2025). Mapping Islamic legal discourses on domestic violence: media representation and the dynamics of contemporary Muslim family law. *Legitima Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Islam*, *7*(2), 159–189. https://doi.org/10.33367/nhff4v64

Foucault, M. (1972) The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language. Translated from the French by A. M. Sheridan Smith. Pantheon Books, New York.

Harjanti, F. D., Ardiansyah, R., & Universitas Wijaya Kusuma Surabaya. (2025). Media narratives and linguistic agency: The role of language in framing perpetrators of violence against women and children in Indonesia. In *BAHASTRA* (Vol. 45, Issue 2, pp. 423–436). http://journal1.uad.ac.id/index.php/BAHASTRA/index

Little, E. (2023). Excusing coercive control in popular young adult fantasy texts. In *Papers: Vol. 27.1* (pp. 1–4).

Rashid, B. N., & Zubaie, B. M. S. A. (2024). Critical Discourse Analysis of Gender-Based violence in English Media and Conversations. *Journal of Ecohumanism*, *3*(8), 7733–7742. https://doi.org/10.62754/joe.v3i8.5395

Sabtiana, R. & English Literature/Communication and Language Faculty, Universitas Bina Sarana Informatika, Jakarta. (2025). Emotional Manipulation in the Name of Love: A feminist and hyperrealist analysis of "Treat You Better." In *International Journal of Humanities Education and Social Sciences (IJHESS)* (Vol. 4, Issue 6, pp. 2787–2797). https://ijhess.com/index.php/ijhess/

Stark, E. (2007). *Coercive control: How men entrap women in personal life.* Oxford University Press.

Towns, A. J. (n.d.). Discursive and Coercive Control: Theorizing men's domestic violence against women using the Language Control Wheel as a training tool. *ResearchGate*.

Vogels, C. (2023). Mapping the Language of Male Partner Violence: An Historical examination of power, meaning, and ambivalence. *Violence Against Women*, *29*(14), 2787–2811. https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012231192571

7.Appendix A Transcription and Coding

Episode	Speaker	Dialogue	Notes	Code
1	*Sean*	"You need to eat. Come on"	Dominance, directive to Alex	DOMINANCE
1	*Sean*	"I thought we had an agreement"	Assertion of authority and usage of pronoun "I"	PRONOUNS & DOMINANCE
1	*Sean*	"You are hurting my feelings"	Emotional manipulation and induction of guilt	GASLIGHTING
1	*Sean*	"I drank too much so I went too far"	Denial and responsibility shift	DENIAL
1	*Sean*	"Hey, I would never hurt her, you Know that"	Defensive Denial	DENIAL
1	*Sean*	"I pay all the bills"	Assertion of control via resources	DOMINANCE & PRONOUN
1	*Sean*	"I let you hang out with my friends"	Control over social freedom	DOMINANCE & POWER
1	*Sean*	"I let you move in to my trailer"	Authority and control over living arrangements	DOMINANCE
1	*Sean*	"I do everything for you"	Dominance and hierarchal superiority	DOMINANCE
1	*Sean*	"If you walk out of here, you'll have no one"	Power and threat	POWER
3	*Alex*	"Where is Maddy?"	Concern and questioning	
3	*Sean*	"Relax, she is with my mom!"	Minimization of Alex concern	MINIMIZATION
3	*Sean*	"Will you chill?"	Interruption and diminishing Alex's concern	INTERRUPTION & MINIMIZATION
3	*Sean*	"You are an emergency"	Evaluative adjective and showing dominance	EVALUATION & DOMINANCE

3	*Sean*	"Why don't you like me anymore?"	Emotional manipulation and guilt induction	GASLIGHTING
4	*Alex*	"She can just nap in your car"	Attempt to negotiate	
4	*Sean*	"Yeah, it's not a real nap"	Interruption and conversational control	INTERRUPTION
4	*Sean*	"I am tired. I worked late. Had to get up early to get a ferry to accommodate your schedule"	Pronoun shift and asserting authority	PRONOUN & DOMINANCE
5	*Alex*	"You take her until 3..."	Negotiation and request	
5	*Sean*	"I am working a double"	Interrupts and stops Alex mid sentence	INTERRUPTION
5	*Alex*	"Could you come in late until I...."	Attempts to negotiate	
5	*Sean*	"I am working a double"	Interrupts to maintain conversational control	INTERRUPTION
6	*Alex*	"What was my dad saying to you?"	To get information	
6	*Sean*	"Nice to see you too"	Sarcastic interruption	INTERRUPTION
6	*Sean*	"Not everything in my life is about you"	Minimization of Alex's perception	MINIMIZATION
7	*Alex*	"I lost my apartment because of you"	Blaming	
7	*Sean*	"I know. It was a slip. Okay? It happens"	Minimization and downplaying responsibility	MINIMIZATION
7	*Sean*	"I am doing this for you and Maddy"	Dominance	DOMINANCE
7	*Sean*	"You are the only person that knows me. We're family"	Emotional manipulation	GASLIGHTING
8	*Alex*	"I got a scholarship"	Attempt at independence	
8	*Sean*	"When did you apply? Why didn't you tell me?"	Dominance, minimization and control over Alex's independence	DOMINANCE & MINIMIZATION
8	*Alex*	"I really don't have any...."	Attempt to clarify	
8	*Sean*	"Do you have any idea how hard it is to not drink?"	Interruption and manipulation	INTERRUPTION
8	*Sean*	"Get in the car!"	Directive, command and asserting authority	DOMINANCE
8	*Alex*	"This is the only thing for me to do anything...."	Attempt for independence	

8	*Sean*	"I am late for work"	Interruption and conversational control	INTERRUPTION
9	*Sean*	"I don't like you giving this address out"	Dominance and authority	DOMINANCE
9	*Sean*	"She should be dressed at dinner time"	Authority and directive	DOMINANCE
9	*Sean*	"You are being rude"	Evaluation	EVALUATION
9	*Alex*	"I don't wanna eat Sean"	Refusal	
9	*Sean*	"Sit down"	Directive and dominance	DOMINANCE
9	*Alex*	"I don't wanna..."	Refusal	
9	*Sean*	"Sit...Down..."	Repeated interruption and power	INTERRUPTION & DOMINANCE
9	*Alex*	"This isn't negotiable...."	Asserting boundary	
9	*Sean*	"I wanna know where my daughter is!"	Interruption and assertion of power	INTERRUPTION & DOMINANCE