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**EXAMINING THE *POWER* FRAME  
IN A. PUSHKIN'S "*BORIS GODUNOV*"**

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**Abstract**

This article examines the cognitive features of the *power* frame in A. Pushkin's historical tragedy "Boris Godunov". The study of linguistic frames has been of significant interest to many linguists; nonetheless, there is still a noticeable lack of academic research on the subject. The author of this study intends to clarify the definition of frame by considering numerous approaches defining this term in contemporary research. Pushkin's closet play is dedicated to the period of Boris Godunov's reign (1598-1605) and False Dmitry I's invasion. In this play, Pushkin depicts a realistic embodiment of the characters' images, with one of the main topics raised in the tragedy involving the question of *power and the person*. According to Pushkin, any power is violence, and therefore evil.

The theme of the legitimate monarch's overthrow and the usurpation of power is central to the work, with the motive for the usurpation of power presented from the usurper's point of view, thereby adding complexity and humanity to the villain's actions.

This study aims to identify the ways of implementing the cognitive framing of *power* within the work, especially by examining Boris' soliloquy, one of the play's most iconic scenes. The author integrates different research approaches in order to apply an integrative approach to the study of literary discourse, combining methods of both cognitive linguistics and discourse analysis throughout the work. This study distinguishes the features of the *power* frame (its use and implementation) and shows that this linguistic frame is indeed the leading one. It also presents the main character's dominant personality type based on Renaissance

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dualisms. Finally, this study analyzes conditionally-designated nominations of slots in Tsar Boris soliloquy from the standpoint of Machiavellian ideas.

### **Keywords**

Frame, power, semantic field, slot, historical tragedy, soliloquy, cognitive discourse.

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### **Introduction**

This article is devoted to the study of the *power* frame, namely its use and implementation in the historical tragedy "Boris Godunov", written by Alexander Pushkin. The relevance of this work is made clear by the close attention of contemporary linguistics to the notion of *frame*. The affirmation of this notion in research denotes a new degree in comprehending the ways and features of language, consciousness, cultural interaction, and, consequently, new aspects of linguistics, cognitive science, cultural studies, psychology, and philosophical relations. Marvin Minsky introduced the notion of *frame* in terms of artificial intelligence — a static informational structure of data that is necessary for a stereotypical representation of a given situation. Later, *frame* has found application in cognitive linguistics denoting a specific structure of human knowledge about stereotypical situations that are stored in the mind and represent the human experience.

Frame has been of interest to many linguists, such as N. Belozerova, T. van Dijk, E. Kubryakova, G. Lakoff, M. Proskuryakov, I. Tarasova, and C. Fillmore. However, the notion of *frame* is still not fully comprehended in contemporary research. This study aims to describe in detail the essence of the *power* frame and show its value and use in fiction, which determines the novelty of our work.

The main goal of this work is to identify ways of implementing the *power* frame through the example of A. Pushkin's "Boris Godunov". To achieve this goal, the following objectives were set:

1. To identify, review, and summarize the existing points of view on the definition of frame in linguistics.
2. To determine the notional component of the *power* frame.
3. To identify and examine the *power* frame implementation features in A. Pushkin's "Boris Godunov".

### **Literature Review**

*Frame* is one of the central categories of cognitive linguistics, a relatively new cognitive science that examines the nature and essence of knowledge and cognition.

This study focuses on the notion of frame essence as well as its development in linguistic research and also discusses various concepts that relate directly to this notion in cognitive linguistics. For a broader review, we studied various authoritative sources, which include "A Framework for Representing Knowledge" by M. Minsky, "Frames and the Semantics of Understanding" by C. Fillmore, "Language. Cognition. Communication" by T. A. van Dijk, "The Conceptual Structure of Text" by M. Proskuryakova, "The Discourse of Power and the Locus Category" by N. Belozerova, and others.

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According to N. Boldyrev, linguistic meanings can transmit only a part of knowledge about the world, and most of the knowledge is in our mind in the form of concepts (mental structures). They tend to change their characteristics constantly depending on their complexity and abstractness. As such, the characteristics changing requires new ways of verbalization [2].

Researchers in the field of cognitive linguistics argue that there are certain cognitive structures or blocks of knowledge behind word meanings that actually provide words understanding. Scholars have called these a number of names: *cognitive contexts*; Gilles Fauconnier and George Lakoff refer to these as *mental spaces*; Charles Fillmore called them *frames*. Nevertheless, it is well agreed that knowledge is organized through structural cognitive models [4, 5, 9].

The term *frame* came to linguistics from the field of IT and spread widely in the 1970s. In a broad sense, a *frame* is a framework, a cell, a stable cognitive structure, an image containing information. At about the same time, Marvin Minsky introduced the term *frame* into linguistics. It denoted the structure of knowledge in perceiving spatial scenes and representing stereotypical situations [10, p. 19].

*The Concise Dictionary of Cognitive Terms* defines *frame* as a unit of knowledge organized around a certain notion, but unlike associations, containing data on the essential, the typical, and the possible for this notion. Frame, as a rule, has a more or less conventional nature and therefore helps to specify what is distinctive and typical in a certain culture [8, p. 90].

In cognitive linguistics, a frame is a way of reflecting the structure and content of a concept. Slots clarify the content of the frame, including some aspect of its concretization. The use of this term in cognitive linguistics is due to the fact that rapidly increasing streams of language information in the form of electronic sources require the creation of automated word processing systems in order to retrieve semantic information from texts according to predetermined parameters.

Fillmore described *frame* as a group of words, which is studied as a whole. Furthermore, in order to determine the meaning of a word of the group, it is important to know the meanings of all the words of this group. That is, the frame forms a special organization of knowledge, a prerequisite for our ability to comprehend closely-related words [5, p. 58]. Slots are the frame components in the representation of knowledge. They characterize some property or connection of the concepts or objects described by the frame, in turn being the elements of the situation that include some part of the frame.

Teun A. van Dijk defines frame as a unit of knowledge organized around a certain concept, containing basic, typical, and potentially possible information that is associated with a particular concept [3, p. 71].

Some scientists consider frame not just a type of concept but a form of its mental representation, that is, a conceptual structure, a unit of mental space [12]. Thus, frame is one of the concept's mental representation ways — by referring to the conceptual area in which this concept is interpreted. Other linguists interpret frame not as a concept, but as a higher-level cognitive structure, a type of interaction between concepts,

as a way of organizing the mental space [14]. Thus, the use of a frame structure facilitates the analyzing language material task. In addition, it makes it possible to systematize and examine with more detail the individual units that make up a slot included in the structure of this model. Frames are directly involved in the process of speech communication attracting the extralinguistic knowledge about the world, contained in them.

It is worth noting that not much attention is paid to the question of the frame and field ratio (lexical, semantic, conceptual). The semantics of frames considers the set of interpretation frames as alternative *ways of seeing things*. The differences are determined by where the search for a structure is concentrated — in the language system or outside it [5, p. 61].

Irina Tarasova also points out the main differences between a semantic field and a frame. Frame is a more rigid structure that reflects typical connections in typical situations, while field is an associative-specific structure but also individual-specific. Frame's integrative principle is situational proximity; associative-semantic proximity is the integrative principle in the field. The structural organization of a frame assumes the presence of nodes (slots); and in a field — the core, the center, and the periphery, the boundaries between which are very vague and mobile.

As Tarasova notes, when comparing frame and conceptual field as different types of cognitive structures, it is the degree of typicality (or individuality) of associations, their rational (or emotional) character that can become the boundary that marks the frame and field formations [14].

Thus, the frame structure plays an important role in the analysis of linguistic material, since its use makes it possible to systematize and consider in more detail the individual units that make up one or another slot included in the structure of this model. Frames attract the extra-linguistic knowledge about the world contained in them, directly participating in the process of speech communication.

### **Methods**

The study of the multidimensional nature of discourse is still under development. This is made evident by the variety of research methods employed within discourse study as well as relative uncertainty concerning its criteria and characteristics. Thus, it is necessary to integrate different research approaches — to apply an integrative approach to the study of discourse that combines methods of both cognitive linguistics and discourse analysis.

Cognitive discourse analysis is a form of analysis that can affect any statement (verbal or non-verbal) aimed at communication with another person. The statement itself refers the speaker to a particular social group, as its specific expression of thought implies a focus on using language in a particular social context. In "Boris Godunov", the role of such *social* utterance is played by political utterance or political discourse as a whole [13, p. 63].

Steps of the research process:  
— Identification of a problem.

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- Review of relevant literature, definitions of terms and concepts, and clarification of the problem.
  - Extraction of textual and extra-textual information about the discursive situation, such as historical and idiosyncratic text creation conditions.
  - Identification and discursive interpretation of the *power* frame that serves to convey the semantic content of the text.
  - Semantization of language units objectified in the text.
  - Establishment of a semantic variation of a statement in which lexemes and phraseological combinations entering into lexical and phraseological configurations participate in a variety of semantic increments that reflect the opinions and values of the character.
  - Creation of a holistic understanding of the analyzed discourse fragment.

### Results

The communicative function of Alexander Pushkin's historical tragedy "Boris Godunov" is determined by the content of two interrelated parameters of Roman Jakobson's functional model: context category content and author category content [6]. The semantic core of the sum of these parameters includes:

- 1) historical context: the historical period of the tragedy creation associated with the events related to the emotional arousal of some social communities and individuals influencing the political situation and the active formation of new political views in society, such as the Decembrist revolt;
- 2) A. Pushkin's belonging to the synthetic (more metonymic) type of authors;
- 3) a dual intertextual basis of the tragedy that includes Shakespeare's historical tragedies, on the one hand, and the relevant parts of N. Karamzin's work "History of the Russian State", on the other.

Alexander Pushkin's closet play (not intended to be performed onstage) "Boris Godunov", written in 1825, was influenced by Nikolay Karamzin's "History of the Russian State" (1816-1826), a multivolume national history that chronicled Russia from ancient times to the reign of Ivan the Terrible and the Time of Troubles [7].

Although, Karamzin's work was not the first fictional interpretation of Russian history, it was a work that made history more broadly accessible for the public. Furthermore, it contributed greatly to the formation of national self-consciousness due to its high literary merits and the author's scholarly scrupulousness [11].

Pushkin's full-length (twenty-three scenes) play in verse is dedicated to the period of Boris Godunov's reign from 1598 to 1605 and False Dmitry I's invasion. The author used for the story a popular rumor that Ivan the Terrible's 8 year-old son and heir to the throne Cesarevich Dmitry was murdered, allegedly on Boris Godunov's order. That, however, has not been historically confirmed. It is also important to note that the tragedy was written in imitation of Shakespeare's historical chronicles mainly in a blank verse and with a few prosaic scenes. Pushkin's wide interest in foreign literature and his appreciation of Shakespeare influenced his work, though, without changing his own style.

In this play, Pushkin depicted a realistic embodiment of the characters' images, with one of the main topics raised in the tragedy being the question of *power and the person*. According to Pushkin, any power is violence, and therefore evil.

In the political tragedy "Boris Godunov", the theme of the legitimate monarch's overthrow and the usurpation of power is central to the work, with the motive for the usurpation of power presented from the usurper's point of view. One of the play's most iconic scenes begins with Boris's soliloquy, a monologue that denotes the solo utterance and reveals the character's inner thoughts and feelings to the audience. In this scene, Boris Godunov is able to reflect frankly on his position, intensifying the dramatic effect of the character's private thoughts, reflections, and transmission of motives.

Boris Godunov's dominant type is based on Renaissance dualism, and the character is showed from two sides — a Renaissance humanist and the ruler with an unrelenting thirst for power. The following opposition appears in Fig. 1.



Fig. 1. Godunov's Dominant Type

Рис. 1. Типологическая доминанта Б. Годунова

Turning to the political metaphor in the tragedy where the usurper is dualistic, we can see that it goes to the following slots: *life, mental illness, bodily disease, economic activity, love, people, family, nature, immature peace, death, poison*. It is worth noting that such fields as *economic activity, nature, and poison* are the concepts of the Renaissance episteme.

First of all, the text of the monologue presents Boris Godunov's standpoint and, directly, Pushkin's attitude as well as the intertextual point of view of N. Karamzin. Boris Godunov speaks here as a ruler entrusted with the essential duties of governing the state, the entity denoted as *caring* within Shakespeare's plays. Concerns of the state (its *cares*) under the management of the crown are elements of the power discourse determining the burdens of the crown or, in this case, of Monomakh's Cap [1]. However, it should be pointed out that Godunov is represented in this scene as more than a politician — he is also a statesman with distinctly human characteristics.

This monologue consists of parts that can be conditionally designated by the following slot nominations; their relationship with the *power* frame can be represented in the form of a triangle (Fig. 2):

- 1) Godunov — a human,
- 2) Godunov — a statesman,
- 3) Godunov — a power-hungry ruler.

Going back to Shakespeare, a similar schema can be applied to the monologue of one of his power-seeking characters, Richard Gloucester ("Richard III").

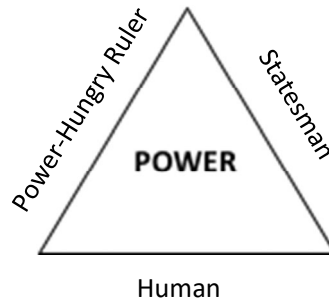


Fig. 2. The Relation of the Slot  
Nominations with the *Power* Frame

Рис. 2. Взаимосвязь номинаций  
слов с фреймом «власть»

However, there are significant differences between the main motives of these two historical tragedies and the typological dominants of their main characters. First and foremost, this is due to the fact that the main idea of Machiavelli's philosophy — the idea that “the end justifies the means” according to which morality may be disregarded in support of brute force for the sake of strengthening the state — becomes a clear, if under-emphasized aspect of “Boris Godunov”. Unlike Gloucester, who plans villainy outright, Godunov is tortured by his conscience.

So, we turn directly to the text. As already mentioned, the monologue can be conditionally divided into three parts, in the first of which Boris Godunov appears as a simple person, a man who is not free from ordinary feelings.

“Достиг я высшей власти;  
Шестой уж год я царствую спокойно.  
Но счастья нет моей душе. Не так ли  
Мы смолоду влюбляемся и алчем  
Утех любви, но только утолим  
Сердечный глад мгновенным обладаньем,  
Уж, охладев, скучаем и томимся?” [15]

Pushkin suggests that *power* and *reign* are equivalent to such concepts as *love*, *soul*, and *life* for Godunov: the first two lines emphasize that life and reign are indivisible for him. Then again, though, we see him as a human being who feels and suffers. He speaks about his dear people whose troubles he is implacably blamed for by others.

“В семье моей я мнил найти отраду,  
Я дочь мою мнил осчастливить браком —  
Как буря, смерть уносит жениха...  
И тут молва лукаво нарекает  
Виновником дочернего вдовства  
Меня, меня, несчастного отца!..  
Кто ни умрет, я всех убийца тайный:



Я ускорил Феодора кончину,  
Я отравил свою сестру царицу,  
Монахиню смиренную... все я!  
Ах! чувствую: ничто не может нас  
Среди мирских печалей успокоить;  
Ничто, ничто... едина разве совесть.  
Так, здравая, она восторжествует  
Над злобою, над темной клеветою" [15].

In this part of the monologue, the following opposition can be clearly discernible (Fig. 3):

RULER  PEOPLE

*Fig. 3. The Ruler and the People Opposition*

*Рис. 3. Оппозиция правитель/народ*

However, it is better disclosed in the second part of the monologue:

“Напрасно мне кудесники сулят  
Дни долгие, дни власти безмятежной —  
Ни власть, ни жизнь меня не веселят;  
Предчувствую небесный гром и горе.  
Мне счастья нет. Я думал свой народ  
В довольствии, во славе успокоить,  
Щедротами любовь его снискать —  
Но отложил пустое попеченье:  
Живая власть для черни ненавистна,  
Они любить умеют только мертвых.  
Безумны мы, когда народный плеск  
Иль ярый вопль тревожит сердце наше!  
Бог насылал на землю нашу глад,  
Народ завыл, в мученьях погибая;  
Я отворил им житницы, я злато  
Рассыпал им, я им сыскал работы —  
Они ж меня, беснуясь, проклинали!  
Пожарный огонь их дома истребил,  
Я выстроил им новые жилища.  
Они ж меня пожаром упрекали!  
Вот черни суд: ищи ж ее любви” [15].

Boris Godunov enumerates a string of tragic events for which the people blame him. Here, his real attitude and intentions towards the people and his true aspirations become clear: “Я думал свой народ / В довольствии, во славе успокоить...”. This part of Boris’s soliloquy reveals an important isotopy — the recurrent sequence of



semantic features in the text, the sources of which we find in the IX-X volumes of Nikolay Karamzin's work, "The History of the Russian State", expressed by the words: "The people scream, then do not speak" ("Народ то кричит, то безмолвствует").

The phrase "народ безмолвствует" ends Pushkin's tragedy "Boris Godunov". We can also find it repeated in Karamzin's descriptions of the most important turning points in Russian history. With the consistency of a formula, the famous phrase goes from a volume to another. It appears in different contexts and gradually becomes the bearer of the essential meaning, the quintessence of the Russian Middle Ages history.

However, the historian does not interpret silence as a sign of the people's obedience, humility, and non-resistance. We can see that the meaning of the idea is completely different. People's silence is a sign of secret and always dangerous hatred to obdurate rulers.

An irrefutable proof of the strong connection between the historical works of Pushkin and Karamzin can also be the fact that the first edition of "Boris Godunov" comes out with a dedication: "To the Memory, Precious to Russians, of Nikolay Mikhailovich Karamzin, this work, inspired by his Genius, is dedicated with reverence and gratitude by A. Pushkin" ("Драгоценной для россиян памяти Николая Михайловича Карамзина сей труд гением его вдохновленный с благоговением и благодарностью посвящает А. Пушкин").

As for the first part of this isotopy — a repetition of a basic meaning seme — namely "народ кричит", it is perfectly expressed in the monologue through the following metaphors: "народный плеск", "ярый вопль", "народ завыл", "они ж меня <...> упрекали", "они ж меня, беснуясь, проклинали", "черни суд", "живая власть".

However, the opposition of *the ruler/the people* exists in the tragedy not separately, but in a system that can be represented in the form of the following schema (Fig. 4).

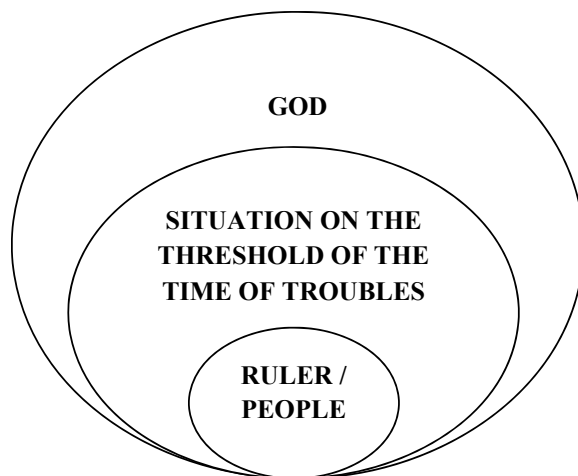


Fig. 4. The System of Powerful Forces in Godunov's Monologue

Рис. 4. Система векторов власти в монологе Годунова

Both the ruler and the people cannot overcome the confines of the Time of Troubles, which undoubtedly impacted both sides. However, these two seemingly powerful forces end up under the exorable power of God's divine justice.

The tsar accepts that God is the supreme power and judge, and that all is ultimately in his mighty hands. Realizing retribution, Godunov, more and more often, turns to the theme of remorse that Pushkin presents in the third and final part of the soliloquy:

“Но если в ней единое пятно,  
Единое, случайно завелось,  
Тогда — беда! как язвой моровой  
Душа сгорит, нальется сердце ядом,  
Как молотком стучит в ушах упрек,  
И все тошнит, и голова кружится,  
И мальчики кровавые в глазах...  
И рад бежать, да некуда... ужасно!  
Да, жалок тот, в ком совесть нечиста” [15].

Having sacrificed everything for power and crossed the line by committing crime, Boris Godunov comes to the understanding that the supreme power remained for him as before unattainable. God's wrath, people's revolt, and extreme gravity of the crime prevail over him.

The examined material allows us to conclude that the *power* frame is dominant within Boris Godunov's monologue, thereby setting one of the main themes of the play: the thirst for power for the benefit of the state.

### **Conclusion**

In cognitive linguistics, frame is a model of an abstract image, the minimum possible description of an object, phenomenon, event, situation, or process essence. Frame is a way of reflecting the structure and content of concept. Slots clarify the content of the frame including some aspect of its concretization.

When considering frame and semantic field as different types of cognitive structures, it becomes obvious that the boundary separating frame and field formations is the degree of representativeness/individuality of associations and their rational/emotional nature.

Frame is determined by the individual characteristics of the language personality and the specificity of the encoded representation.

Frame structure plays an important role in the analysis of language material. It makes it possible to systematize and consider in more detail the individual units that make up a slot that is a part of this model's structure.

Traditionally, power is considered among the most attractive and important of social values to a person. That want explains why all human abilities are involved in the struggle for power.

This article examined the *power* frame in Alexander Pushkin's work "Boris Godunov", using the main character's monologue as an example of its implementation.

In this closet play, the central, metaphorically fixed theme of political tragedies — the overthrow of the legitimate monarch and the usurpation of power — is displayed clearly. The idea of usurpation forms the thematic core and is presented from the usurper's point of view revealing his real motives.

Tsar Boris's dominant type is based on Renaissance dualism. Pushkin represents this character as a humanist, a wise ruler who is not completely devoid of nobility and mercy. At the same time, according to Pushkin, Godunov is a regicide with a lust for power who stops at nothing, not even at the murder of the innocent child.

The work clearly traces the main idea of Machiavellianism: the end justifies the means. However, neglecting the moral standards for the sake of strengthening the state proves a fatal mistake for Godunov. Pushkin gives a clear definition: any power is violence and therefore evil.

Thus, this study allows us to conclude that the *power* frame is the leading one in Alexander Pushkin's historical tragedy "Boris Godunov", demonstrating that this reoccurring frame has a significant presence in the writings of one of Russia's most prominent writers.

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**ФРЕЙМ «ВЛАСТЬ» В ПРОИЗВЕДЕНИИ  
А. С. ПУШКИНА «БОРИС ГОДУНОВ»**

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**Аннотация**

Статья посвящена исследованию когнитивных особенностей фрейма «власть» на материале исторической трагедии А. С. Пушкина «Борис Годунов». Автор уточняет определение фрейма, изучая многочисленные подходы к дефиниции данного термина. Актуальность работы определяется пристальным вниманием к данному понятию современной лингвистики; утверждение понятия «фрейм» в науке обозначает новую степень в постижении способов и особенностей взаимодействия языка, сознания и культуры, а следовательно, и новые аспекты взаимосвязи лингвистики с другими науками. Тем не менее проблемы фрейма остаются еще не до конца изученными. Данное исследование позволяет подробно описать сущность фрейма «власть» и показать его значение и использование в художественной литературе, чем и обусловлена новизна работы. При выполнении работы были использованы общие методы исследования наряду с частными лингвистическими методами. Применение когнитивно-дискурсивного анализа позволило существенно расширить глубину понимания фрейма «власть», доминирующего в исторической трагедии Пушкина. В рассматриваемом историческом произведении представлена центральная тема политической трагедии: свержение законного монарха и узурпация власти. Мотив узурпации власти образует тематическое

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ядро и представлен с точки зрения узурпатора. Типологическая доминанта царя Бориса базируется на возрожденческом дуализме. Герой представляется с двух сторон: возрожденческого человека, гуманиста и правителя, жаждущего власти. В произведении четко прослеживается главная идея макиавеллизма: цель оправдывает средства. Однако для Годунова пренебрежение нормами морали ради упрочения государства — это роковая ошибка. Пушкин дает абсолютно четкое определение: любая власть есть насилие, а значит — зло. Рассмотренный материал позволяет сделать вывод, что фрейм «власть» является ведущим в рассматриваемом монологе Бориса Годунова, задавая тем самым одну из главных тем произведения. Все три части монолога объединены общей темой жажды власти ради блага государству.

**Ключевые слова**

Фрейм, власть, семантическое поле, слот, историческая трагедия, солилокви, когнитивный дискурс.

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