

The Language and Power of The Characters in the Film “Free State of Jones”

Nova Syafitra Dafa R¹⁾, Yulia Mutmainnah²⁾

University of Muhammadiyah Semarang,
Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia
syafitrajaliteng@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study discusses the relationship between power and language in the Free State of Jones film which is analyzed using Fairclough's theory. Language is a tool used by humans to communicate with each other. Sometimes when humans communicate using language there are certain patterns that can be seen from the interaction. These patterns then become differences when one person communicates or talks to another person. These differences can occur due to factors such as who the speaker is and who he is speaking to. The more dominant the speaker's position, the more different the conversation is with the other party, plus the other party is in a submissive position. This can be interpreted that there is a relationship between language and power. Which is then divided by Fairclough into power of language and power behind language. A real example of this statement can be seen from the analysis of the Free State of Jones film. This study uses a qualitative design. The results of the study show that there is a relationship between power and language which is exemplified by the main character, Newt Knight. Newt uses language as a tool to gain power. He convinces others to agree with what he wants. Newt Knight also became a victim of the Power behind language, where he was forced to obey his superiors who had different goals than him.

Keywords: Language, Power, Dominant.

INTRODUCTION

Language can often be used to determine the status of someone who speaks. Not infrequently, language also determines how much power someone holds over other people or people in front of them (Galstyan, 2022,

p. 11). This can happen around us. Like when someone talks to other person who has a higher status than him. They definitely speak in a tone/language that has greater influence than those with lower status. So that people with lower status will consciously or unconsciously obey and comply.

Just like when an army commander orders his troops to attack the enemy. The soldiers, without thinking twice, immediately carry out the order. Even though their lives are at stake. This happens because they know that the army commander has the power to command them (Fairclough, 2002, p. 2). And they are aware that the troops have a lower status than the commander. So the commander has full power over his troops, and he uses language as one way to show his power over his troops.

Through the example above, it can be interpreted that the commander of the soldiers has political power. Which means he holds the power that has authority. That power is obtained from his position in the military, in other words he has the power over authority because he is a troop commander. He doesn't need to convince or persuade others to listen to what he says. But it is other people who have to listen to his words and obey his wishes. In this context, the soldiers must listen to and follow the commander's orders, because his position has higher authority than them in the military (Fairclough, 2002, p. 2).

Not only individual power can use language as a way to show their power over others. But the power of a group/a part of society can also do the same thing. It's just that they get that power because of social factors such as social class, ethnicity, gender, and even age (Neupane, 2022, p. 103). This can be seen in the past when slavery was still applied in any part of the world. Whether it's a developed country or a developing country.

It once happened in the United States. In the past, when this developed country was still in its independence, America experienced a period of slavery (Apriola et al., 2022, p. 1040). Slavery was taken from black people who came from the African continent. Only rich people could afford to buy these African slaves. These rich people used slaves for their own benefit. Just as these rich people placed slaves as workers to work on plantations, who received wages poorly and were treated more unfairly than free workers.

These African slaves had the lowest social status in society at that time. So they received discrimination and inappropriate treatment from higher social status (Neupane, 2022, p. 102). They often received verbal and inappropriate treatment from their "owners". The rich treated slaves inappropriately because they felt they had bought the life and death of the slaves. In addition, slaves subconsciously considered themselves to be objects that could be treated arbitrarily like inanimate objects.

This happens when their masters, order them to do something that they want. The masters used harsh language and showed no politeness when speaking to the slaves. Meanwhile, slaves had to speak in a polite tone and language when addressing people of higher social status. It can be said that the conversation is systematically structured, where social status can affect how the conversation goes (Fairclough, 2002, p. 12). In this case, it is their masters, because they have bought the lives and freedom of the slaves. The masters are on the dominant side compared to slaves who are on the submissive side. On the dominant side they have the advantage/power over the submissive side.

This can be seen when they are in conversation with each other, when social class differences become an obstacle in conversation (Fairclough, 2002, p. 12). The dominant party, which is the master, when talking they talk more than the submissive party. Sometimes the submissive party, namely the slaves, are only allowed to listen and nod, without talking much but only answering with "yes sir" or "yes ma'am". If the slaves talk too much, or even dare to fight or deny the words of the masters. Those slaves will be caned.

The above are some examples of the use of language to show power over others, whether that power is obtained from their individual position, they do have the authority to command others, or even because their social class is higher than others. This can be seen in the film *Free State of Jones*, which tells the story of a soldier's struggle in the American Civil War. Set in an era of independence where slavery still existed and the military had a very large influence. This film depicts the struggle of a white man who wants to free black slaves.

This film shows the relationship between language and power which occurs in the military, and also the social. Between ordinary soldiers with their superiors and black slaves with their masters. The main character in this film shows that language can be used to gain power by persuading and convincing others about what they want. This can also be called influential power, when someone does not have any power but tries to convince others or persuade them to follow or support someone's ideas.

METHOD

Qualitative research is a way to explore and understand the meaning of a social or humanitarian problem presented by an individual or group (Dina & Suhendi, 2020, p. 92). By tracing the analysis data, it is hoped that the author can produce findings that can provide clarity regarding the data sources being analyzed. Phenomena, events, social dynamics, attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of a person or group towards something are things that are explained and analyzed when conducting qualitative research

(Siahaan & Satria, 2022, p. 207). Through this method the author aims to obtain implied meaning and in-depth and detailed clarity regarding the analytical data taken.

Data is the most important component that must be present in research. Research data is classified as qualitative data based on its form, whether in the form of words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs. Qualitative data analysis is related to the transformation of original data by searching, evaluating, recognizing, coding, mapping, exploring and describing patterns, trends, themes and categories to interpret them and give them meaning ("Qualitative Data Analysis: An Overview of Data Reduction, Data Display and Interpretation," 2020, p. 15). Primary data and secondary data are the results of classification from data sources (Nasution et al., 2021, p. 75)

Primary data is the main data that is first obtained by the author and provides a general overview of the analysis topic. The author here uses a film directed by Garry Ross entitled "Free State of Jones" as primary data. Where in this primary data the author uses dialogue between characters as a data source. Secondary data is additional data and functions to support or assist in analyzing primary data (Firdaus & Hkikmat, 2021, p. 83)

The author here uses Norman Fairclough's theory book entitled "Language and Power". Fairclough explains the relationship between language, power, and society. He classified the relationship between language, power and society into power behind language and power of language. Power behind language is about how language can express the power it has. Then the power of language itself (power of language) is about language that can maintain dominant status, and language that is able to unite and influence others.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Power Behind Language

Power behind language in this case views that language itself does not actually have its own power, but can be a tool to influence or even control an object. This can be known by looking at who is expressing/speaking. This can be seen in one of the dialogues in the film Free State of Jones,;

Newt Knight

*"You don't listen to no sergeant,
you don't listen to no officers,
only me. You understand now?"*

(Newt Knight 8:36)

The conversation took place when Newt was talking to his nephew. His nephew, who had just been forcibly drafted into the army by officers, searches for the main character's whereabouts. He met Newt and told him everything. Newt then calms him down and tells his nephew to follow him when the battle begins tomorrow. His nephew, who had no one else but his uncle, did what his uncle wanted. He felt that following Newt was the only thing that could make him safe. When on the battlefield they both separated themselves from the ranks of the soldiers and went to follow Newt's destination.

The content of the dialogue in italics is an oddity in itself, why is Newt Knight, who is just an ordinary medical soldier, able to make his nephew obey Newt. Even though in terms of rank they are almost the same. It can be seen from the person who is speaking, namely Newt, he has an emotional closeness/relationship to the person he is talking to in this case he is the uncle of the boy. That background makes him able to influence or even control his nephew even though they have almost the same rank.

The power behind language is also found in other dialogues, when Newt meets one of the soldiers who is more senior than himself:

Officer

*"All right, you're with us now.
We're making for that Ridge over to the right."*

Newt Knight

"Uh-huh."

(Officer 10:33)

When Newt Knight and his nephew wanted to carry out their own plan, they accidentally met one of the officers on the battlefield. The officer asked them where the group came from and also how many people were left. When he knew the answer, the officer told the two of them to follow his own plan, which was to head to the ridge on the right side of the battlefield.

Although Newt has his own plans for him and his nephew. In this situation he has no other choice but to obey the Officer, because structurally the Officer has a higher rank. And if Newt disobeys his orders then it is considered a rebellion and can be executed immediately at that time. So he is torn between wanting to continue his own plan or follow the Officer's

plan. This is part of the power behind language, where the speaker has the power to support what is said. It would be different if another soldier with the same rank as Newt gave that order. So Newt could have refused without any consequences for his actions.

The power behind language can also be seen in the following dialogue:

Newt Knight

"All right, look here, I was a blacksmith. I was. I shoed horses. Forged all kinda stuff, yokes, bits, ax blades. I pounded a lot of metal in my life. If you want, I can get that thing off you."

Moses Washington

"No, you can't do that. All that bangin' will bring the bounds for sure."

Newt Knight

"How many bounds?"

Moses Washington

"And the men that go along with them."

Newt Knight

"How many men?"

(Moses and Newt 45:55)

In this conversation, Newt Knight offers Moses to remove the iron chain around Moses' neck. Moses is a slave who ran away from his master. Here Newt explains to Moses that he used to be a blacksmith who dealt with iron every day, so he was able to remove the iron around Moses' neck. Moses was initially reluctant to remove the chains because he feared the noise of the process would alert hunters looking for deserters. But seeing Newt's seriousness, he finally agreed to Newt's offer.

It can be seen that Moses, who was initially reluctant, finally agreed to Newt's offer. Actually, it wasn't due to Newt's profession, which was a blacksmith, or the way Newt spoke to Moses. But rather Moses' assessment of Newt as a deserter; Newt was basically a deserter like Moses. It's just that Newt ran away from the battlefield and Newt didn't hesitate to fight back, this was seen from his seriousness in wanting to remove Moses' iron

necklace. This proves that Newt's background as a speaker increasingly convinced Moses to believe in him, the power behind language was shown at that time where Newt's background made his speech more trusted by others in this case Moses.

2. Power of Language

The power of language itself, in this case language has its own power. It can be used to maintain the dominance of the speaker, gain influence and influence others. On the other hand, language can be used to convince others to believe or obey the speaker.

This can be seen from the dialogue in the film Free State of Jones:

Newt Knight

"Everybody know how to blow one of these?"

The Ladies

"Yes, sir."

Newt Knight

*"All right, look here. If they come back,
I want you to blow that as loud as you can as soon as you hear them riding up"*

(Newt Knight 18:39)

The context of the dialogue is when Newt Knight is the only man in the small settlement/village. The rest are women who were left by their husbands or male relatives because of the war. The women became victims of looting by the Confederate soldiers, the soldiers who should have protected them instead harmed their own citizens. Here Newt tries to help the women with everything he can do.

.At that time, Newt tried to convince the women to blow the trumpet, if there were soldiers who wanted to take their property for war purposes. It can be said that Newt showed the power of language that he intended to control others to agree or follow his orders. He felt that as the only man capable of carrying a weapon, he could further convince the women that following Newt's wishes was the only way to survive the plundering Confederate army.

The next Power Of language occurs when Newt tries to convince the farmers to follow what he orders,:

Newt Knight 56:56

"What you sow, you should reap.

What you put in the ground, you should take outta the ground."

Newt Knight 57:17

"What you say we go out there and we pick it clean?

There's 100 of us here. We could pick it clean all in one day. Can we do that?"

Crowds

"Yeah!!!"

Newt Knight 57:22

"Now, we pick it clean. We hide it away, we divide it amongst ourselves later on. Meanwhile, by the time they get down here, we done scattered."

The context of the conversation above is when Newt gathers the farmers to listen to his speech. Usually, these farmers work the fields and then collect their harvest in a barn, then an envoy from the local government will come to take their harvest on the grounds that it is used as food for war. When Newt gathered the farmers, Newt knew of their suffering and the reasons for that suffering. So he will give a speech that will eventually lead to a rebellion against the local government so that there will be no more taking of the crops.

It can be seen from the conversation above that Newt told the farmers what you plant should be entirely yours. This of course directly leads to their main problem regarding their harvest being taken by the government. Then Newt said again that there were a lot of you, you should be able to take your harvest in 1 day without the government knowing. Here Newt tries to emphasize again that the number of farmers is much greater than the government's men who will come, so they should be much more able to do anything than those men. Then his speech ended with Newt's invitation to the farmers to take their crops. Newt's series of speeches from beginning to end show how Newt's efforts to use language as a tool to gain influence over what he will do and influence others to agree with what he wants. From the way Newt finds out what the farmers want, then explains to the farmers about their superiority in terms of numbers, to the next actions that the farmers must take to solve their own problems. He did this through his speech in front of the farmers.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that in the film *Free State of Jones* Directed by Gary Ross shows the use of language and power from the characters, whether it is the power of Language and the power behind language which differs only in the purpose and how they use it. This is supported by the finding that Newt uses the power of language to influence others to follow his wishes. The power behind language is also used by the Officer to Newt when the Officer wants Newt to follow his wishes. At that time the Officer used his rank to show his superior authority to Newt. The above is an example of how power and language are interrelated and also shown in the film *Free State of Jones*.

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