



Multicultural Society Reflected in Freedom Writers Movie: Sociolinguistics Approach

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Abstrak

Analisis sosiolinguistik film “Freedom Writer” merupakan analisis terhadap variasi bahasa yang digunakan dalam masyarakat dan budaya. Tujuan penelitian adalah untuk menganalisis perbedaan gaya bahasa yang digunakan oleh masyarakat multikultural serta untuk mengetahui hubungannya dengan tingkat pendidikan dan latar belakang budaya. Sumber data dalam penelitian ini adalah film *The Freedom Writers* karya Richard La Gravenese, sedangkan data dalam penelitian ini adalah dialog lisan yang meliputi tingkat pengucapan kata, pemilihan kosakata, dan kesalahan berbahasa. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Analisis data berupa pengamatan terhadap setiap ujaran yang dipilih, dilanjutkan dengan penyajian data dan penarikan kesimpulan. Temuan mengungkapkan bahwa berbagai kelompok individu menggunakan bahasa yang berbeda tergantung pada status sosial mereka. Beberapa alasan berkontribusi pada perbedaan ini. Selain dari ras, tingkat pendidikan dan latar belakang sosial merupakan unsur penting dalam perkembangan pola bahasa seseorang.

Kata Kunci: Sosial Budaya, Multikultural, Kemerdekaan Penulis, Sosiolinguistik

Abstract

Sociolinguistics analysis of “Freedom Writer” movie is an analysis of the variation of language that used in society and cultural. The research objective is to analyze the differences in language styles used by multicultural society as well as to determine their relationship with the level of education and cultural backgrounds. The data source in this research is *The Freedom Writers* movie by Richard La Gravenese, while the data in this research are spoken dialogue that contains in the level of word pronunciation, vocabulary selection, and language errors. This research used a descriptive qualitative method. The data analysis will be in the form of observations on each selected utterance, followed by presenting the data and drawing a conclusion. The findings reveal that various groups of individuals employ different languages depending on their social standing. Some reasons contribute to these disparities. Besides from race, education level and social background are important elements in the development of a person's language patterns.

Keywords: Sociocultural, Multicultural, Freedom Writers, Sociolinguistics

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a communication tool used by humans to interact with their social environment. Society can be defined as a group of people who are bound to one another and have a common goal to be achieved. Meanwhile, language is a tool used by these communities to communicate in order to achieve goals (Asrial et al., 2019; Fen & Poh, 2015; Khromchenko & Shutilo, 2021). By using human language, we can work together, do politics, run the economy, and connect with other people around the world. Language in relation to social contexts is known as sociolinguistics. In simple terms, sociolinguistics can be understood as a science that studies the relationship between language and social life (Bayyurt, 2016; Saputra et al., 2019; Syahidawati & Parmawati, 2020). This science explains how someone speaks differently in different contexts of conversation, how the social function of a language and how language can reflect social meanings (Faizin, 2019; Harya, 2018).

The way a person speaks will be greatly influenced by the context that accompanies the conversation, so that different language variations are created depending on the context

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(Caterine et al., 2021; George & Mamidi, 2020; Zavitri et al., 2018). Sociolinguistics occurs in multicultural societies where language is used in accordance with racial and cultural provisions (Bayyurt, 2016; Fitriani, 2017; Paradis & Nicoladis, 2007). Multiculturalism is an ideology that promotes the institutionalization of multi-cultural societies. This often applies to a location's demographic mix. In a political context, the phrase can refer to anything from fighting for equal respect for diverse cultures in society to measures that support the preservation of cultural diversity. In the United States, multiculturalism is not clearly defined in federal policy (Abacioglu et al., 2022; Ong, 2022; Setiawan & Wardhani, 2022). Rather, this has been tackled primarily through the school system with the emergence of ethnic study programs in higher education and efforts to make primary school curricula more inclusive of history and the contributions of non-white societies.

The existence of a theory about sociolinguistics encourages researchers to identify the variations in language styles that exist in multicultural societies. The object of study chosen in this study is "Freedom Writers" movie directed by Richard La Gravenese. This film is inspired by the experience of a teacher at Woodrow Wilson Classical High School in Eastside, Long Beach, California with students who come from various ethnicities and different backgrounds. The film was released on January 5, 2007 in Los Angeles, United States (Hidayati, 2017; Sancoyo, 2018). The film stars by Hilary Swank as Erin Gruwell, Scott Glenn as of the problematic family are also important points raised in this work. Based on the above social Steve Gruwell, Imelda Staunton as Margaret Campbell, Patrick Dempsey as Scott Casey and the other figures are students of class 203 at Woodrow Wilson Classical High School in Eastside, Long Beach, who are a mixture of Asian, African and Mexican immigrants. As a film that tells the story of strife between races and ethnic groups, *Freedom Writers* emphasizes the relationship between people who come from lower-class circles in society (Fitriani, 2017; Hidayati, 2017). Apart from that, the level of education and background aspects, the researcher tries to see the language style shown in the film *Freedom Writers* and how the use of this language explores the background and position of the characters in society.

This research is designed based on some researches done by previous researchers. Previous research mentions that the sociolinguistic explain and identify applied to the *Freedom Writers* movie provides a discussion of the language process that exists between groups living in a multicultural setting (Pimentel, 2010). Then, other study used the descriptive qualitative method, describing one word or phrase of slang language from the film one at a time (Septiyanti et al., 2020). The writer chooses two types of slang based on the analysis: society slang and public house slang. The writer cites slang dictionaries and other related materials to back up his analysis.

Some English characters spoken by persons in multicultural environments, or, in this case, in the United States, diverge from Standard English. Furthermore, there is always a reason when people in multicultural environments violate some cooperative principle maxims so that they might comprehend that the speaker's objective is sometimes different from what is literally expressed. This film is about racial discrimination, which affects the protagonists' capacity to communicate with one another. Therefore the aim of this study is to analyze the differences in language styles *used by multicultural society* as well as to determine their relationship with the level of education and cultural backgrounds.

2. METHOD

The type of this research is descriptive qualitative method according to the data taken from the phenomenon that exist in society. Qualitative method is appropriate when comprehensive explanations of occurrences and an emphasis on the portrayal of participants'

communication with the researcher are required (Stewart, 2022). The researcher use word to describe as the form of object descriptive to analyze and show the findings. The primary data source was taken from the movie *Freedom Writers*. While the secondary data sources were taken from related theory from journals, book, articles, and other publications.

To collected the data, the researcher uses several steps. The first is watching movie *Freedom Writers*, then take a note the data that related to divorce, classify the data based on the theory used, make an interpretation, and the last is drawing a conclusion. In analyzing the data, the researcher used the steps based on descriptive research approach. Those are focus on analyzing data and analyzing the data based on sociological perspective.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Freedom Writer is a perfect picture of sociolinguistic phenomena that occur in multicultural societies. Here, it is clear that the different styles of language used by people from different groups and ethnicities and from various backgrounds are clear. The differences in language use that stand out in this film are based on differences in race, skin color, social and family background, and the level of education of the speakers of the language.

The film, which is set in Los Angeles, underscores the differences between white people with high levels of education and good social life and immigrant communities of color such as Asian-American, Latino, and African-American, rural communities with low levels of education and life. Social inseparable from warfare between gangs. This study can be characterized as descriptive qualitative study since it clearly depicts, interprets, and overcomes difficulties based on correct facts. The utterances that fit language variation expressed by both white and colored people in the film are the subject of this study. Language variation can occur in the level of word pronunciation, vocabulary selection, and language errors.

Word Pronunciation

Table 1. Word Pronunciation Dialogue

Characters	Dialogue
Marcus	“..... because we ain’t afraid to die [da] protecting our own. At least when you die [da] for your own, you die [da] with respect, you die [da] a warrior.”
Erin	“So, when you're dead, you'll get respect? Is that what you think? You know what's going to happen when you die [da]?”

Base on Table 1, the conversation above takes place in the classroom. Marcus, a black student of African - American descent, argues about his life as a gangster with Erin Gruwell (the teacher). In example 1, it can be seen that two people with different social backgrounds are pronounced the same word (die). An African - American with a low level of education pronounces the word die with [da] which is nonstandard and slang pronunciation, while a white person from a high social class uses the standard sound form of die [daI].

Vocabulary Selection

Furthermore, differences in language style can also be found in the selection of vocabulary that tends to be produced. Erin Gruwell as a teacher and student tends to used standard vocabulary, and frequently introduces political and scientific terms, such as choosing to use the word retaliation with the meaning of revenge instead of using the general term revenge. In contrast, students tend to use vocabulary that is not standard, slang and

seems uneducated, such as bitch, damn, ass, dumb, dumbass, goddamn, bullshit, and shit. This is of course very much influenced by the social life of those who come from the suburbs of Los Angeles with most of the population of the same race and education level and the economy is below average. It can be seen in [Table 2](#).

Table 2. Vocabulary Selection Dialogue

Characters	Dialogue
Jamal	“I give this bitch a week.”
Jamal	“Yeah, and that's some bullshit. It's the dumb class, coz.”
Jamal	“Sit your punk ass down, homeboy!”
Gloria	“Ms. G, he just took my damn bag”

Base on [Table 2](#), Gloria, a student from Latin America, addresses Erin Gruwell as Ms. G. This is a common informal occupation among American minority communities. The case for selecting certain vocabulary can also be seen in the kinship greeting used by this American immigrant community. Even though they use English in their daily conversations, for kinship calls, they prefer to keep using greeting words from their native language, such as mi papa (my father), mi amigos (my friend), and moms and pops (father and mother).

Language Error

The last difference in language style can be seen from the dramatic errors commonly used by minority communities. They tend to ignore grammatical concepts and create their own language styles, such as the use of the lexicon ain't (to express negative sentences), gonna (going to), gotta (got to), wanna (want to), y'all (you all), yo (you), kinda (kind of) and coz (because). They also sometimes ignore the standard grammar that applies in English, such as the omission of "to be" in sentences. The example is show in [Table 3](#).

Table 3. Language Error Dialogue

Characters	Dialogue
Andre	“I gotta get out of here.” (I am going to get out of here)
Jamal	“Man, I know you ain't talking to me!” (Man, I know you are not talking to me!)
Jamal	“I talking to ya.” (I am talking to you)
Sindy	“Whadap?” (What's up?)

Base on [Table 3](#) show some of the examples that this minority population has a proclivity to ignore regular English grammar and develop their own linguistic style. This linguistic style, however, is intelligible and does not produce misunderstanding because it is so widely used.

Discussion

The sociolinguistic description and analysis of language used in the film *Freedom Writers* provides an overview of the language processes that occur between groups of people living in a multicultural setting. Language is utilized differently by various groups of people depending on their social standing ([Mahadi & Jafari, 2012](#); [Rina Devianty, 2017](#); [Wahyuningsih, 2018](#)). Some reasons contribute to these disparities. Beside race, higher

education level and social background are factors that affect the formation of a person's language styles. Language variations seen in the film include word pronunciation, vocabulary choices, and language error (Fillmore, 1989; Shilfani et al., 2022; Yang, 2010).

The findings of previous study on sociolinguistic study, which aims to identify and analyze stereotypes in the *Freedom Writers* movie, align with the current research (Fitriani, 2017). The study involved qualitative and quantitative investigations, leading to the identification of five categories of stereotypes present in the characters' utterances: gender, race, age, physical features, and occupations/socioeconomic status (Koedel et al., 2017; Oktaviani & Arimbi, 2015). Among these categories, race was found to have the highest number of occurrences, while gender and physical features had the lowest. Additionally, the study identified three functions of stereotypes in the movie: cognitive economy, ego protection, and social function (Nur'aini et al., 2021; Rifai & Prasetyaningrum, 2016; Silaban & Afriana, 2020). The most frequently used function was cognitive economy, whereas social function was the least frequent.

Another study conducted which focused on analyzing the appraisal analysis in the *Freedom Writers* movie (Hidayati, 2017). The study aimed to explore the use of appraisal systems in expressing the writer LaGravenese's attitudes, engagement, and graduation towards the main characters in the movie screenplay. The analysis revealed that LaGravenese tended to explicitly express characters' negative emotions rather than implicitly (Hasbi, 2013; Salifu, 2010), indicating the realization of attitudes. The engagement aspect emphasized the characters' denial towards each other's opinions and existence, employing more Disclaim Heterogloss in the screenplay. In terms of graduation, the use of more Sharpening Focus indicated a greater emphasis on the characters' category boundaries rather than the scaling of intensity.

This research gives an educational implications to other researcher who conducted related with multicultural society from sociolinguistics approach; to the students of any affiliate for knowledge and reference; to the researcher itself for improving the skills of writing, reading, and understanding about multicultural society; and to the readers for educational purpose in understanding. This research also has limitation, this research depends on the cultural and linguistic representations found in the film *Freedom Writers*. However, keep in mind that film is a work of art that can misrepresent reality or sometimes depict stereotypes. Therefore, the findings in this study may be influenced by the representations made by filmmakers.

4. CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data based on the movie *Freedom Writers*, the researcher will reveal a conclusion of this research. It referring to answer the research objectives. It is reasonable to deduce that someone with a higher degree and coming from a reputable social background prefers to utilize conventional language and terminology. In contrast, someone from a minority or marginalized group prefers to highlight and stress their distinctions by employing non-standard linguistic approaches. Language variations seen in the film include word pronunciation, vocabulary choices, and language blunders.

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