Unmasking Hierarchies: Analyzing Power Dynamics in Supervisory Discourse with Staff

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Abstract

This study aims to understand, reveal, and challenge social inequalities through the analysis of language and power dynamics in the workplace. Using qualitative approach, this study focuses on the interactions between supervisors and staffs. The data were collected by voice recording the interaction process, and were then transcribed into text. The data analysis process involved three main steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The transcribed text was analyzed using Dell Hymes' Speaking Theory, which helped categorize the various components of the interaction. This study reveals a formal and professional setting characterized by respectful language and hierarchical relationships. The conversation revolves around professional tasks and responsibilities such as attending meetings, delivering letters, and organizing participants for a futsal event. This study also highlights the structured hierarchy in the communication and the respect given to those in authority. The conversation's content is classified as a combination of task-oriented and problem-solving discourse. It underscores the importance of recognizing and comprehending power dynamics to encourage more equitable and effective communication and collaboration in the workplace

Keywords: *Unmasking Hierarchies; Analyzing; Power Dynamics; Supervisory Discourse; Staff*

Introduction

Critical Discourse analysis in the workplace which particularly happened between supervisor and a staff member is a complicated area of study. It encompasses not only base of language but is also concerned with exposing patterns of power unequal powers. Furthermore, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a form of discourse analysis method that primarily investigates how text and speech in the social and political context are used to abuse power and create inequality in society which helps to see how these unfair situations are created, maintained, justified, and sometimes resisted through the words people use in social and political settings (Dijk, 1994). Rogers (2004) noted that this method has been very helpful in showing the connection between language, power, and society. Through such unconventional research approach, the analysts of critical discourse adopt a clear stance, aiming to understand, reveal, and ultimately challenge social inequalities (Van Dijk, 1994).

Additionally, an important idea explored in much critical discourse research is the concept of power, particularly the social power held by groups or institutions (Lukes, 1986). In essence, social power is defined as the ability to control (van Dijk, 1994). In simpler terms, groups possess varying degrees of power depending on their ability to influence the actions and thoughts of members of other groups. This capability depends on having a strong foundation of privileged access to limited social resources, such as force, money, status, fame, knowledge, information, culture, or even different ways of communicating publicly (Mayr, 2008). Moreover, the influence of dominant groups can become embedded in laws, regulations, social norms, habits, and even widely accepted beliefs, forming what Gramsci referred to as hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). It is important to note that power is not always exercised through overtly abusive actions by members of dominant groups; it can also manifest in the many unnoticed everyday actions, as described by Foucault in 1980, especially in cases of everyday sexism or racism (Essed, 1991). Importantly, not all members from a powerful group are necessarily more powerful than every member of the dominated one which here is about power at the group level. Therefore, the importance of conducting a critical discourse analysis on interactions between supervisors and staff members lies in its potential to uncover and address imbalances in power. By recognizing and comprehending these power dynamics, the more equitable and effective communication and collaboration in the workplace we can be encouraged. This, in turn, can result in improved practices for research supervision and ultimately enhancing the quality of research outcomes and the overall productivity of the team (Sikandar & Hussein, 2018).

Furthermore, Dell Hymes' theory on speaking is part of a broader concept known as the ethnography of speaking. He developed a helpful memory assisstance called S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G which stands for Setting and Scene, Participants, Ends, Act Sequence, Key, Instrumentalities, Norms, and Genre. This breaks down communication into essential parts such as setting which refers to the time when the conversation happens, and 'Place' which is about where and when it occurs. The scene deals with the psychological or cultural context such as whether the interaction is formal or informal and the emotional tone such as playful or serious (Hymes, 1974). This can help the readers to understanding the nature and feel of the dialogue. Participant refers to anyone involved in a conversation, whether they are talking, listening, addressing someone, or just receiving information. Their role might change as the conversation goes on. End is about the goals of the conversation including what each participant wants to achieve. If someone uses language inappropriately, it might stop them from reaching their goals (Qalyubi, 2017). Act sequence is the steps of giving a speech which includes what is said and how it is said. The key tone describes how the speech sounds such as whether it is slow, fast, or rushed. Instrumentalities are the methods or channels used for communication especially in direct conversations like talking face-to-face. Norms are the guidelines that control how people talk and understand conversations. These communication norms vary depending on the situation. Genre refers to the type or category of what is being talked about such as proverbs, apologies, prayers, casual chat, discussions about problems, or sharing information. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to examine and clarify how supervisors and staffs interact in their workplace. The goal is to help create a workplace where everyone feels appreciated and respected contributing to a healthier and more inclusive environment.

Method

This paper uses a qualitative approach to analyze and explain the discourse between supervisors and staffs by examining their interactions. The participants involved in this study were two supervisors and two staff members. The data were gathered by voice recording the interaction process. The data analysis process involved three main steps such as data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. First, the audio is transcribed into text, providing a written record of the conversation. The transcribed text was then analyzed using Dell Hymes' Speaking Theory which helped categorize the various components of the interaction such as setting and scene, participants, ends, acts sequence, key, instrumentalities, norms, and genre. After analyzing and categorizing the data, it was then descriptively explained, and drawn into a conclusion.

Results and Discussion

The data was taken in Social Service, East Lombok. The data were analyzed using Speaking Theory developed by Dell Hymes. Speaking itself is the accronym for setting or scene, participant, ends, act sequence, key, instruments, norms, and genre. The detailed result is described below.

Setting or Scene

The setting refers to the time and place of a speech act, while the scene describes the abstract psychological setting or the cultural and social atmosphere of the situation (Ray & Biswas, 2011). Based on the conversation, the setting is a workplace particularly an administrative office. The conversation spans two days with the first part taking place on the day before a technical meeting for a futsal event and the second part taking place the day after the meeting. The conversation involves planning for the meeting, discussing the results of the meeting, and strategizing for a future futsal match. The Scene or the psychological and cultural context on the other hand, is a formal and professional one. This is proven from the use of respectful language and titles such as "Nggih pak", and the hierarchical relationship between the speakers. Also, the conversation revolves around professional tasks and responsibilities such as attending meetings, delivering letters, and organizing participants for a futsal event. The Scene is as well characterized by a sense of competitiveness and strategy as the speakers discuss how to ensure their team's success in the upcoming futsal match. As seen in,

> Pak KTU: Besok Raka temenin teguh ya untuk tehnikal meeting acara futsal di aula dinsos (Raka, please accompany Teguh tomorrow for the technical meeting of the futsal event in the Social Services Hall)

> Raka: Nggih Pak, jam brp tehnikal meetingnya pak? (Yes, sir. What time is the technical meeting?)

> Pak Solihin: Besok jam 3 tehnikal meetingnya (The technical meeting is at 3 PM tomorrow)

> Raka: Nggih siap Pak. (Understood, sir)

Therefore, the setting is clearly a workplace where people are organizing a technical meeting for a futsal event. The Scene is set as a formal, professional environment, as indicated by the use of respectful language ("Yes, sir") and the discussion of professional responsibilities (attending a technical meeting).

Participant

The participants component refers to the individuals involved in the conversation, their roles, and their relationships. The main participants in this conversation are Mr. KTU (Head of Administration), Raka, Mr. Solihin, and Teguh. Mr. KTU is the Head of Administration and appears to be in a position of authority as he gives instructions and asks for updates on the technical meeting. He plays the role of a leader and decision-maker. While, Raka is an employee who is tasked with attending the technical meeting and reporting back to Mr. KTU. Raka's role itself is an employee and executor of tasks. On the other hand, Mr. Solihin is another authoritative figure who provides instructions to Raka and engages in discussions about the futsal event. His role is similar to Mr. KTU's in which he is also in a leadership position. And the last is Teguh mentioned as someone who will accompany Raka to the technical meeting. However, his role in the conversation is minimal and he mainly acts as a listener and acknowledges the instructions given by Mr. KTU. It can be infered that the relationships between the participants are hierarchical, with Mr. KTU and Mr. Solihin in supervisor positions and Raka and Teguh in employee roles. The conversation below shows how many participants involved.

> Mr. KTU: Teguh, coba panggil Raka gmna hasil tehnikal meeting itu. (Teguh, call Raka and ask about the results of the technical meeting.)

Teguh: Nggih pak. (Alright, sir.)

Mr. Solihin: itu kayanya salah, soalnya saya udh protes panitianya, kemarin aja bisa kok banyak anak pegawai ikut tpi yang main itu Cuma dua di dalam lapangan. (I think that's a misunderstanding. I already protested to the committee. Last time, many employees participated, but only two played on the field.)

It is summarized that Mr. KTU, as the Head of Administration, gives an instruction to Raka, who acknowledges and asks for further information. Whilst Mr. Solihin which ais another authoritative figure provides the requested information. This interaction clearly shows the roles and relationships of the participants in the conversation.

Ends

Ends is the purpose, goals, and outcomes of the speech or conversation (Ray & Biswas, 2011). In this case, the main goal is to plan and organize a futsal event. The conversation starts with Mr. KTU telling Raka to go with Teguh to a technical meeting for the event. The goal here is to gather information about the event which Raka later reports back to Mr. KTU and Mr. Solihin. The conversation also involves giving out tasks for the event. For instance, Raka has to deliver a leave request letter and later where he is asked to have Andy prepare a list of players for the match. The outcomes of the conversation include the clarification of the event's rules and the decision to invite the employees who usually play to participate in the event. The conversation also reveals a potential misunderstanding about the number of employees who can participate, which Mr. Solihin plans to protest if it leads to unfair play.

Act Sequence

The act sequence involves 4 key participants such as Mr. KTU, Raka, Mr. Solihin, and Teguh. The conversation is broken down into distinct acts. Act Sequence refers to the order of events or utterances that occur during the conversation (Jones, 2012). The Act Sequence of the conversation can be broken down as follows:

1. Mr. KTU instructs Raka to accompany Teguh to a technical meeting for a futsal event.
2. Raka acknowledges the instruction and asks for the time of the meeting.
3. Mr. Solihin provides the time of the meeting.
4. Raka confirms understanding and informs Mr. Solihin of his plan to accompany Teguh.
5. Mr. Solihin asks about their departure time and gives further instructions to Raka including praying before leaving and delivering a leave request letter.
6. The next day, Mr. KTU asks Teguh to call Raka for an update on the technical meeting.
7. Raka arrives and provides a report on the meeting including the number of clubs participating and the rules about employees' participation.
8. Mr. KTU and Mr. Solihin discuss the rules and decide to invite the employees who usually play to participate in the event.
9. Mr. KTU instructs Raka to ask Andy to make a list of the players.
10. Mr. Solihin expresses his intention to protest if the other team plays unfairly.
11. Teguh shares information about the other team's previous behavior.
12. Mr. Solihin expresses confidence in their team's ability to win.

In this exchange, the Act Sequence involves Mr. KTU asking for a report (act 1), Raka providing the report (act 2), and Mr. KTU responding to the report with a decision (act 3).

Key

In the discourse, the key, or the overall tone or manner of the speech, is formal and authoritative reflecting a professional setting (Saville-Troike, 2003). The discussion involves supervisors (Mr. KTU

and Mr. Solihin) and an employee (Raka), and the language used is polite and respectful, indicating a hierarchical relationship. The supervisors give instructions and ask questions while the employee responds affirmatively and provides information as requested. For instance, Mr. KTU starts the conversation with an instruction: " Besok Raka temenin teguh ya untuk tehnikal meeting acara futsal di aula dinsos" and Raka responds with "Nggih siap Pak," showing respect and compliance. This pattern continues throughout the conversation with the supervisors giving instructions or asking questions and Raka responding accordingly. Moreover, the tone of the conversation is serious and focused since it revolves around the planning and execution of a technical meeting for a futsal event. Additionally, the supervisors express their concerns and expectations about the event while Raka provides updates and clarifications. For example, when Mr. KTU asks about the results of the technical meeting, Raka provides a detailed report which indicates the seriousness of the conversation. Thus, the key of this discourse is characterized by formality, authority, respect, and seriousness reflecting the professional and hierarchical nature of the setting in which the conversation takes place.

Instrument

The form of the speech is primarily dialogic with multiple exchanges between the participants. The style is characterized by politeness and respect with Raka and Teguh addressing their supervisors as 'Pak' and acknowledging their instructions with 'Nggih Pak'. The conversation also includes elements of planning and strategizing specipically when Mr. KTU and Mr. Solihin discuss inviting the employees to participate in the event and Mr. Solihin expresses his intention to protest if the other team plays unfairly. Overall, the instruments of the discourse reflect its professional context and the roles and relationships of the participants with a focus on conveying information, giving instructions, and planning for a future event

Norms

The norms or the rules that control how the conversation is conducted and understood are marked by the structured hierarchy in the communication and the respect given to those in authority. The conversation takes place in a professional setting with Raka and Teguh as the employees showing respect to their supervisors (Mr. KTU and Mr. Solihin) by addressing them as "Pak" and complying with their instructions without question. The norms dictate that instructions should be followed and information should be reported back to supervisors. Furthermore, the norms highlight the need for clear explanations when problems or confusions occur such as when Mr. KTU and Mr. Solihin ask for more details about the rules of the futsal event.

Genre

The genre or the style and classification of the conversation's contents can be described as a combination of task-oriented and problem-solving discourse. The conversation takes place in a professional setting with the primary focus on organizing and strategizing for a futsal event. The participants discuss the technical meeting, the rules of the event, and the participation of employees which are all task-oriented topics. Additionally, the conversation involves problem-solving elements as the participants address a potential misunderstanding regarding the rules of the futsal event. In addition, Mr. KTU and Mr. Solihin seek clarification and discuss possible actions to ensure fair plays which demonstrate the problem-solving aspect of the discourse. It can be seen in the ilustration below.

> Mr. KTU: Itu apa maksudnya dua anak pegawai, dua orang aja maksimalnya atau bisa bawa banyak tpi yang main dilapangan maksimal dua. (What do they mean by two employees? Only two people can participate, or they can bring more but only two can play on the field?)

> *Mr. Solihin: Itu kayanya salah, soalnya saya udh protes panitianya, kemarin aja bisa kok banyak anak pegawai ikut tpi yang main itu Cuma dua di dalam lapanganI think that is a misunderstanding. (I already protested to the committee. Last time, many employees participated, but only two played on the field.)*

Thus, the genre of the conversation is clear from the way they focus on solving a problem. Mr. KTU and Mr. Solihin talk about a possible confusion regarding the rules of the futsal event and think about ways to resolve the issue.

Conclusion

The analysis of the conversation using Dell Hymes' Speaking Theory highlights key aspects: the formal workplace setting of an administrative office for a two-day futsal event; participants including Mr. KTU in authority, Raka, Mr. Solihin, and Teguh in employee roles; the primary goal of organizing the event; a structured act sequence; a formal and respectful tone; dialogic communication; adherence to hierarchical norms, and a genre focusing on task-oriented and problem-solving discourse. This analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of communication dynamics in the professional setting of the administrative office in Social Service, East Lombok.

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