

IN THE NAME OF GOD

1-8814



Razi University

Faculty of Letters and Humanity
Department of English Language

M.A. Thesis

Title of the Thesis

Power Relations in Discourse of Home and School
(Based on Norman Fairclough's Theory of Power)

Supervisor:

Dr. Mostafa Hasrati

Advisor:

Dr. Amer Gheytoori

By:

Morteza Pahlevani

June 2008

Handwritten signature and stamp in Persian script.

1925 19/ 22

Handwritten signature in Persian script.



Razi University

دانشگاه رازی

دانشکده ادبیات و علوم انسانی

گروه زبان انگلیسی



پایان نامه جهت اخذ درجه کارشناسی ارشد رشته ی زبان شناسی همگانی

۱۳۸۷ / ۹ / ۲۳

عنوان پایان نامه

روابط قدرت در گفتمان خانه و مدرسه بر پایه نظریه قدرت نرم فرکلاف

استاد راهنما:

دکتر مصطفی حسرتی

استاد مشاور:

دکتر عامر قیطوری

نگارش:

مرتضی پهلوانی

تیر ماه ۱۳۸۷

۱۰۵۵۳۶



Razi University

**Faculty of Letters and Humanity
Department of English Language**

M.A. Thesis

Title of the Thesis

**Power Relations in Discourse of Home and School
(Based on Norman Fairclough's Theory of Power)**

Approved and Evaluated by Thesis Committee as:

1. Supervisor: Assistant Professor Dr. Mostafa Hasrati
2. Advisor: Assistant Professor Dr. Amer Gheythouri
3. External Examiner: Assistant Professor Dr. Khormaie
4. Internal Examiner: Assistant Professor Dr. Khosro Gholamali Zadeh

M. Hasrati
A. Gheythouri
A. Khormaie
Khosro

June 2008

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Mostafa Hasrati who first made me most enthusiastic in sociolinguistics and then didn't leave me alone in doing the present research. I also express my thanks to Dr. Gheyhuri and other staff at Razi University. Thanks to my wife and child who were patient enough during my studies. My gratitude also to my colleagues in Sokhan Language Institute in Sanandaj for their cooperation.

Special thanks to the inspiration of all my life, my mother, Sadat Yousefi, for EVERYTHING.

TO

KAJAL

AND

MOJAN

Abstract.....	a
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
1.1: Statement of the Problem.....	2
1.2: Research Questions.....	2
1.3: General View.....	3
1.4: Power Holders in the Curriculum.....	6
1.5: Power in the Society and in the Curriculum.....	9
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature.....	12
2.1: Introduction.....	13
2.2: Theoretical Considerations.....	14
2.3: Definitions of Power.....	21
2.4: Power Relations in Classes.....	23
Chapter 3: Methodology:	28
Chapter 4: Data Analysis:	35
4.1: Classroom Discourse and Power Relations	36
4.2: Trace of Power through Using Plural Forms in Persian Language.....	49
Chapter 5: Discussion:	53
5.1: Introduction.....	54
5.2: Norman Fairclough's Arguments on Power and discourse.....	54
5.3: Class setting.....	57
5.3.1: Verbal techniques in manifestation of patterns in unequal power relations:.....	58
5.3.2: Nonverbal techniques in manifestation of patterns in unequal power relations:.....	61
5.4: Power or Politeness?.....	63
Chapter 6: Conclusion:	67
References.....	70

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Work on social power relations has a young history of not more than two decades (for instance Manke, 1997 and Murray 2003), but this is no reason for inaction by Iranian sociolinguists. Unfortunately, studies on social power on the whole, and social power in curriculum in particular are very colorless and marginal, so the need for highlighting social power specially that of teacher-student is felt strongly. The Western Emiritus Professor Norman Fairclough has done splendid research on power relations which is needed to be expanded and continued in other cultures and contexts. This research is an attempt to find or reject social power techniques of Fairclough (2001) in teacher-student and family discourse in an Iranian context.

1.2 Research Questions

In this research there are two main questions which I will try to answer during the research:

1. Do Fairclough's techniques of social power (Fairclough 1989, 2001) exist in an Iranian discourse?
2. Are there any more techniques (patterns) of social power in addition to those of Fairclough in an Iranian discourse?

1.3 General view

The subject of my thesis has always been there in my life. As a child, I found "power" as an inseparable element in my social relations; relations with my friends, relations with my family members, relations with my neighbors, relations with the elders and the youngers. I wonder whether because I was the youngest member of the family, or because I had lost my father when I was just two years old that my mother always wanted to raise me well and it was her wish for me to behave myself – and this is what parents expect and dream about their kids. I was the focus of attention and everybody wanted me to be polite, gentle and wise. In such an atmosphere, one has to be very cautious and sensitive to his relations. Now when I review my memories about that period, I find I was exposed to various "power relations".

Inevitably, I felt fragile and powerless to many people around me, to my elder brother, for instance, who was most of the time on the hunt for a minute chance to satisfy his feelings of jealousy toward me and frighten or annoy me. I also felt powerless and defenseless toward the big boys in the bakery who tried to capture my turn in the queue. I even felt powerless to the tattered mad man who once seized me in my throat and I was nearly suffocated and whose bulking red eyes were my childish nightmares. Although my mother always did her best to fill the vacant place of my father, I felt the heavy look of pity on me deeply, and this even enhanced my feeling of powerlessness. Fathers are mostly their kid's knight, and my eldest brother was my legendary knight. I could bet there was nothing in the world he couldn't handle well – that is what my 6-year-old daughter thinks about me now. Gradually I grew up and felt the joy of power and superiority. I doubt whether or not it was the first time experiencing such a feeling when the sweet girl of my first grade at primary school chose me among others to buy her some biscuits and I didn't

hesitate to jump on the gate and perform the mission. I felt pleased enough not to care about the blames and threats of the school principal later on. I felt powerful!

I am grown up now and take the role of a powerful participant and as the supporter of a family, father of my child, teacher of my students at school and university and as the manager of an institute. I have some in-between power relations as well, with my equals. My classmates and I in my MA class are powerless to our professors. My fellow teachers at school are powerless to our school principal as we are powerful to our students.

As I tried to illustrate above, this topic (power) is strongly and inevitably entangled with our life. Now I dare say the first thing we try to clarify and ascertain in any new acquaintance is this very topic (power). Let's try to illustrate it. Just think sharply and remember what information you are curious about when you meet a new person. In nearly every such situation, you try to illicit the social status of the opposite side. You might ask questions about such issues as: 1. their job, which usually leads you to estimate how much money they have, 2. the region they come from which shows their national rank, and even 3. their marital status, which helps you decide their burden of responsibility. Like it or not, I have to say, you abruptly compare these data with your own status and decide your lower or higher place in a conventional hierarchy. Honestly, would you behave identically to a person from a town like Yorkshire (in England) or Jahrom (in Iran) and one from the capital, London or Tehran? How about your reaction toward someone in an elegant suit in comparison with another body wearing traditional clothes? Doesn't really beauty of the opposite face influence your viewpoint about their inside and your manner of behaving?

You may have heard the story of "Eat, clothes, eat ", in which the man's social status is estimated by his clothes: A man was invited to a dinner party. The man was rich enough to wear fine clothes, but very simply did not have time to put on his fine clothes because he was busy working in his garden, so he went in his work clothes. When he arrived all other

guests were there, but nobody paid attention to him. He immediately got the picture, returned home, washed and dressed his fine clothes. He returned to the party. This time, every body greeted and welcomed him warmly. The host seated our hero beside him and passed him the food. The man took the food and put it in his pockets. "Eat, clothes, eat.", he said, and explained to the dazzled audience: "I am the same man that you ignored an hour ago; I am the same, so my clothes must be important to you. I am just giving their share of the food. This might seem just an amusing story, but occasions like this absolutely occur day in and day out around us. We can barely help judging people on their appearance and deciding abruptly our distance with them. By "distance" I mean "social distance". Sometimes when our interpretation (of the appearance) is vague, we step forward a bit more and ask some easy questions to find out their occupation, if any, their education, if any, and even how much money they have, if any. Then we skillfully ascertain our and their status on our social hierarchy diagram. How many times has your tone of speech or even your posture changed hearing the guy is a merchant, or a lawyer or happens to be your new boss? All these happen because of "power relations".

Whom do we consider more powerful? A man or a woman? The older or the younger of either sex? Does "age" dominate "sex" or the other way around? What function do social roles play? In an Eastern context, elders are respected more (Deborah E. Bowen, 2005 and Kyu-taik Sung, 2004). Linguistically speaking, they are considered more powerful. And let's measure the degree of power by which we choose to greet first or last. A young manager is not expected to greet his or her employee first, for instance a genitor (even elderly). Now let's just suppose this elderly genitor were the manager's father! A son or daughter is expected to greet his/ her parent first. Most of the time it happens for my old genitor in my institute to be too busy working to notice my presence. I say hello first, he suddenly apologizes for his so-he-calls-it ignorance and greets me in an embarrassing way.

So, as we can see discourse relations are very various and broad, and may be focused on in many distinguished situations. I have limited my research to power relations in the discourse of classrooms, and I have chosen English classes in my own institute, to which I have easy access, and I have focused my attention on the discourse of communication between teachers and students. Family discourse was also another crucial context. Routledge Falmer (2002) believes, "The arenas of the family and the school are important for the development of young people in different ways, in a period of their lives that is crucial for learning about cultural expectations in a wide sense." (Falmer,2002; children, home and school; p.172). As Falmer(the same source) reports from Valsiner(2002): "... the emotional closeness and nurturing that is associated with family relationships, the family is the arena of informal education, using everyday life contexts and episodes to guide children towards fulfilling adult lives". (p. 172) However, Falmer considers the type of knowledge transmitted at school outsiders' knowledge oriented towards the establishment of values, loyalties, and ways of thinking and feeling that are in accordance with social units that are larger than the family or local community. In my research, I also observed both contexts of home and school, but focused on school power relations, to have narrowed down the issue more and more.

1.4 Power-holders in the Curriculum

In discourse between teachers and students, normally and generally, it is teachers who exercise control over their students. In this educational discourse, knowledge is negotiated between the powerful participant, the teacher, and the less powerful, or powerless participants, who are the students. Waller (Waller 1932) believes, "Children are certainly defenseless against the machinery with which the adult world is able to enforce its

decisions; the result of the battle is foreordained"(p. 196). This saying gives the importance to teachers, school staff and parents as a powerful side and deprives students of such power. The relations and interactions in between is also called a battle which is taken from a very harsh idea.

As John Murray reports (Murray 2001): "When teachers are criticized for accepting low student effort in exchange for compliance (Sizer, 1984; Sedlak, Wheeler, Pullin, & Cusich 1986), it is assumed that they have relinquished their power over students. It is taken for granted that some conventional ways in a pedagogical atmosphere like a class lead to *power*."(p.12) These conventions confer authority and power on the teacher and put students in a lower hierarchy. There is a kind of acceptance fromward both sides (teachers vs. students) and teachers are taken for granted as the leaders, subject holders having the right to take the floor, ask questions, correct and blame the other side, praise, punish, interrupt and evoke him/her, or discipline and make him/her silent, whereas students are pre-assumed as controlled, all-ears servants, who are in need of teachers' knowledge and experience. There are even arms-facilities used by teachers: marks, scornful looks, threatening gestures and remarks, office, the manager, and suspension, while the only simple arm of students are giggles and day-dreams but pretending to be involved.

In a dialogue between a teacher and his students, we shall see that even to start a question, students have to take permission (extract 4-1-4): (*ed3aze aqa... eib nædare benvisim, bæd hæmuno bexunim...*?(Persian, meaning: Excuse me, sir Might we write it, and then read that?)

In "Classroom power Relation", Manke (1997) mentions: "In *almost* any classroom, an observer can watch teachers engaged in direct interaction with students that is intended to control student behavior and promote student learning. They also believe in some kind of "in visible (referring to Hustler & Payne, 1982) arrangements and it includes other actions

teachers plan and carry out before students come into the classroom. Manke calls this kind of management "Proactive Management", management that prevents trouble from happening, rather than dealing with it after it happens. To exemplify this management, Manke mentions instances of teachers' arranging desks in a way teachers can see and control students well, providing an activity for students to start on as soon as for students to stand in an uncrowded line, also having more than enough for students to do, avoiding "dead time" in which trouble can occur.

Manke is right in using the term "*almost any classroom*" (first line, paragraph above) for, there are some modern classes which lack direct control of teachers. In these classes, students see and hear their teacher via a monitor and one teacher teaches more than one class at the same time, so there isn't some sort of direct interaction between teachers and students which is an exception and hardly a setting for power relations to arise.

The classes I observed were good arena of power emergence. In my reports I will show that powerless participants practice their powerlessness through different techniques which might be categorized in two groups: verbal and nonverbal. Verbal techniques include *addressing* (using titles like Sir, and Mr.), *using special structures* (imperatives and commands), *tu/vous pronouns* (using first person singular form of pronouns), *tone of speaking*, (the powerful speaking ridiculously, while the powerless speaking formally), *justification* (the powerless using swears to justify his / her saying), *greeting first or second* (the powerful expect the less powerful to greet first), whereas the powerless stand up before the powerful, *programming* (teacher's deciding what to do and whom to do it), *controlling* (monitoring verbally and nonverbally), *formality and politeness* (using formal expressions)

Nonverbal techniques include *body language* (e.g: moving freely in the classroom), *interruption* (up-down relation interruption: the powerful interrupting the powerless),

length of utterances (a powerful participant has got the right to use short answers in response to a long question.)

1.5 Power in the Society and in the Curriculum

Adler (1927) believed that human beings need mastery and superiority and this superiority influence people's environment and relationships. One thing is for sure and that is existence of any thing comes true with the existence of other things. One may not understand what health means if never gotten sick. Terms such as goodness, richness, happiness and comfort would have totally been meaningless whether there were no badness, poverty, sorrow and misery. Even the most powerful tyrannies such as Atila, Changiz and Hitler would mean nonsense, let alone powerful, if there were no people whom they could be cruel towards. Foucault (1980) believes: "Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization; and not only do individuals circulate between its threads, they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power"(p. 98). This idea emerges from the viewpoint that power is bilateral, it relies on the existence of a colony. Even a ruler or a leader would mean nonsense if there were no relations, no soldiers and no common people.

In one viewpoint, powerful people have restrictions; they are under the power of regulations which they themselves might have made. I have many times envied my students.

I have envied them when I have been under their sharp investigations. Just imagine how terrible it would be when about thirty faces, sixty eyes and sixty ears focus on your behavior, and your actions and are looking forward to seeing or hearing what plans you arrange for them to follow. To this you might add the restrictions of time and anxiety of the

efficiency of the procedure and also the school administrators' and parents' logical and illogical expectations. Who can claim s/he is the absolute power. To see the matter from another angle, I might add, every power has another superior and this reminds me of the story of the mouse as the start and end of a power cycle: There was a hunter that hunted lions that frightened dogs that chased cats that worried mice that frightened the hunter's wife of whom incidentally the hunter was afraid a lot...! Consequently, hunters are hunted, like it or not. Thus, who may claim s/he is the absolute power?

Janeway (1908) believes, "Power's being is becoming. Its steady existence is derived from ceaseless shifts and tensions; its balance is maintained by thrust and response, hope and frustration, and by the practical actions that grow out of compromises and confrontations among its myriad human components (p.3)". This metaphor Janeway used also emerges from a mutual relation the balance of which, like a see-saw, depends on the same amount of weight reflected.

Foucault (1980) also observes power as a dynamic, interactive process, and he believes that it is not held by one individual or group, but circulates in group networks, then students as well as teachers have powers. Mc Neil (1986), Delpit(1995), Oylar(1996), Manke(1997), and Tai (1999) all assert that students exercise power through their reactions to teacher behaviors and classroom course structures.

In the previous chapter, I tried to clarify and point to the closeness of the present study to our daily life and to help gain a broad view on the topic, power. I also listed the patterns of social power patterns which I will go through more elaborately in next chapters.

Going through different aspects of relations between teachers and students, and on the other hand, elders and students and highlighting patterns of discourse in teacher-student relations might help improve manners of relations and lessen anxiety which usually emerges in an unequal power pattern. In the following chapter, I will put finger on the

literature of the emergence and development of our present topic, power and will put together definitions, categorizations and also various viewpoints in regard to first power on the whole and second power in the specific setting of curriculum.

Chapter 2:
Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I try to give a broad picture of the literature of power, first in general, then in particular-the power in the curriculum. I want to ascertain the previous works and theories in regard with the topic.

Power and studies on the notion of power refer back to long ago. For example Adler (1927) worked on power and impacts of power on the environment and relationship. Adler believed humans have thirst for mastery and superiority and this feeling influences social environment and social relations and that people of a society gain power to the degree it makes them influence others. Ferguson worked on diglossia in 1959, which was later the basis for more studies of this kind. In Ferguson's article "Diglossia" in the journal "*Word*" (1959), diglossia was described as a kind of bilingualism in a given society in which one of the languages has higher prestige than the other. Weinreich (1953) worked on linguistics and sociolinguistics (*Languages in Contact*). While linguistic and sociolinguistic researches on discourse and thereafter power relations have a rather long history, consequences on power relation in a curriculum are not older than two or three decades.

Simmel (1896) who is known as the father of American sociology suggested the subject of power as deserving of study and more understanding. We should of course remember that from the very beginning of human life, there has been power, as it has existed among other creatures as well. I say *creatures* because I do believe that even a plant which draws