

HEGEMONY OF LANGUAGE AS REFLECTED IN BURNETT'S *A LITTLE PRINCESS*

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Abstract

This research is intended to find out the form of the hegemony of language that is conducted by the ruling class over the subaltern people in the Novel *A Little Princess*. This research also explains the causal factor and its effects on the characters of Burnett's novel in the Victorian Era. The researcher uses Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Hegemony is the predominance obtained by consent rather than the force of one class over other classes. This research applies to library research because the corpus is a novel entitled *A Little Princess*. Besides that, this research is a concept analysis. The researcher explains the object and relates it to concepts, theories, or other relevant sources. It can be concluded that the ruling class conducts the hegemony of language because there is a diamond mine. The hegemony of language in this novel brings many impacts. They are: French becomes a nobility language in the *Select Seminary* environment, the classification of society as two classes (aristocratic and *pariah* class), a snobbish attitude, unfair and arbitrary attitude towards *pariahs*, and the emergence of resistance.

Keywords: the *hegemony of language*, *ruling class*, *subaltern*, *diamond mine*, and *class dynamics*.

INTRODUCTION

A Little Princess is one of Frances Hodgson Burnett's novels. It has garnered a reputation as one of the best chapter books for children since its initial publication in 1905. The central character is a young girl, Sara, who is left at boarding school while her father seeks his fortune abroad. Unfortunately, her father dies and the girl is unable to pay her fees. She is entered into service at school. As a result, she has to deal with poor treatment and squalid conditions, yet, she still manages to keep a smile on her face and show kindness to others. Eventually, a friend of her father's come to her rescue, and her fortune changes one more for the better (Burnett, 2014, p.viii).

Many critics argued that Burnett's novel falls into the category of literature for children. For example, Collin's Burb. He argued that *A Little Princess* is a heartwarming tale of hope, hardship, and love set against the backdrop of Victorian England (Burnett, 2014). This is also in line with the opinion of Ana S. who states that *A Little Princess* is short of *Cinderella* without the twists, and turns of life and was not married to a prince (Ana S., 2010). In this case, the researcher has a different opinion from the critics above. After reading and conducting an analysis, the researcher believed that *A Little Princess* was not only included in the category of children's literature. However, it can also be categorized as an adult literary work. It can be proven by the existence of capitalism, class dynamics, the ruling class, and the subaltern.

A Little Princess was written in the twentieth century. And at the time, writers and critics are interested in class conflict, and the ups and downs in society (Ullah, 2012, p.2). From this statement, it can be seen that the 20th century was a century in which writers and critics were interested in the class conflict in society. Burnett wrote this novel right at the start of the century. She seemed to reflect society's problem at that time.

Burnett focuses on Sara's living conditions in *Select Seminary*. Sara is described as a character that experiences the class dynamics *princess-pariah-princess*. The cause of this class dynamics is economic problems. When Sara was the daughter of Captain Crewe the owner of a diamond mine, she is considered and treated as a princess. However, when her father died and his business went bankrupt, Sara is considered and treated as a *pariah*. The phenomenon of the patrician versus the *murba* seems to be inserted by Burnett as a fact about class conflict in society at the time the literary work was created. As Marx and Engels stated that freemen and slaves, aristocrats and plebeians, oppressors and oppressed against each other continuously, clandestine or open wars that end in revolutionary or class conflict (Marx and Engels, 2003, p.7).

The issue of class conflict ultimately leads to the form of hegemony from the ruling class over the class that is controlled (subaltern). Hegemony is conducted by the owner of *Select Seminary* over the residents of *Select Seminary*. Hegemony is a chain of victories obtained through the approval mechanism carried out by one class against another class. Hegemony is achieved in various ways, in which civil society institutions play a role either directly or indirectly (Femia, 1981, p.24). The managers of *Select Seminary* as the ruling class try to instill their ideas in the class they control. They tried to create obedience from school residents and then lead them to assess and view social problems within the framework they have determined.

In this novel, the ruling class legitimizes French as the language of patricians. The ruling class also promotes that materially poor people, who have no parents, and no inheritance is *pariahs*. The ruling class makes its beliefs and values match its power. Then promote it so it becomes universal. From this, the researcher is motivated to carry out an analysis of *A Little Princess*. The researcher tries to dismantle the ideology of the ruling class over the subaltern through an institution. The writer also wants to prove whether this novel is only intended for children or if is there any certain message from the author packaged through the world of children.

METHODOLOGY

This research applies to library research because the corpus is a novel entitled *A Little Princess* (1905) by Frances Hodgson Burnett. This research is a concept analysis. Concept analysis can be defined as an activity in which concepts, characteristics, and relationships to other concepts are explained. Conceptual creation or clarity is the most important thing in various types of research. General research guidelines like philosophical literature often refer to it as concept analysis or concept research (Nuopponen, 2010, p. 4). Here, the researcher describes an object. Next, the researcher associates it with concepts, theories, or other sources that are relevant to the research object.

In carrying out the work steps, the researcher carries out a close reading (reading carefully) of the material objects and references that are relevant to the object of research.

The researcher also reviews whether there is research (topic) that is the same as the research conducted by the researcher or not. If there are, the researcher looking for a room that is different from previous studies. Next, the researcher records the necessary information (e.g. sentences, paragraphs, and the attitude of the characters in the novel). Then, the researcher analyzed the research material object. The analysis was carried out using the sociology of literature approach, precisely from the perspective of Gramsci's hegemony.

RESULT

From this research, it can be seen that *A Little Princess* is a novel intended for adults but packaged through the world of children. It can be proven by the presence of language hegemony. The language hegemony carried out by the ruling class brings many impacts. They are: French becomes a nobility language in the *Select Seminary* environment, classification of society as two classes (aristocratic and *pariah* class), there is a snobbish attitude (showing off, exalting oneself) from the hegemonic class so that people believe that education in the western world has higher quality than in the eastern world, unfair and arbitrary attitude towards *pariahs*, and the emergence of resistance.

DISCUSSION

The Impact of the Norman conquest of England has brought many consequences. One of them is language. French became the language of higher civilization which created a social gap between the conquered and the conqueror. It had become the only language employed in England either in the castles or at court and had been used by almost all classes at that time. For 300 years England used three languages but was without one tongue for everyone. It was French for the classes, Latin for Churchmen, and English for the obscure (Osgood, 1935, p.52).

In *A Little Princess*, Miss Minchin as the representative of the ruling class used French as a medium to dominate Sara. She thought that French was the language of the nobility. And this is in line with Sara's dream, which is to become a noble. The planting of ideas by Miss Minchin as the ruling class requires a process. This process begins with the arrival of Mr. Barrow. He is Captain Crewe's lawyer. Mr. Barrow's arrival at Miss Minchin's *Select Seminary* makes the condition chaos. Sara who was originally hailed as the smartest student and treated like a princess turned into a maid and was considered a *pariah*. This was because Mr. Barrow informed Miss Minchin that Captain Crewe had died, and all his wealth had been taken over by his business partner.

"Diamond mines spell ruin oftener than they spell wealth," said Mr. Barrow. "When a man is in the hands of a very dear friend and is not a businessman himself, he had better steer clear of the dear friend's diamond mines, or gold mines, or any other kind of mines dear friends want his money to put into. The late Captain Crewe"(Burnett, 2014, p.64).

The quotation above illustrates that the diamond mine business owned by Captain Crewe so far has not been run by himself. However, run by his business partner named Mr. Tom Carrisford. Ironically, when Captain Crewe died, his business partner took over all of

his wealth including the diamond mines he owned. It automatically causes Sara to lose her inheritance right over the diamond mines.

The loss of this inheritance right, makes Sara thrown out from the *Select Seminary*. She has no place to live, no one covers her living expenses and school fees anymore. “Do you mean to tell me,” She cried out, “That he left nothing! That Sara will have no fortune! That the child is a beggar! That she is left on my hands a little pauper instead of heiress? (Burnett, 2014, p.65). This quote is what Miss Minchin said to Mr. Barrow. Miss Minchin was angry and disappointed to know the fact that Captain Crewe had passed away without leaving any treasure. Thus, Miss Minchin refers to Sara as a child who has no luck, a beggar, and an orphan without an inheritance.

Next, Miss Minchin tries to negotiate her ideology to get a consensus that can be accepted by Sara and all parties. To become a hegemonic class, certain groups must represent the general interest by coordinating, expanding, and developing their interests with subaltern interests. In this case, Miss Minchin did not let Sara live in her *Select Seminary* for free. She tries to make the most of Sara. One was to get Sara to study and then teach French. She tried to form Sara’s awareness that French was the language most suitable for use by the nobility as she aspired to be.

It appears that Miss Minchin can be said to be an ideological functionary whose function is to elaborate on the dominant ideology and to provide awareness of that ideology, which must later be disseminated to all members of the school. Ideology is ideas that are useful for legitimizing dominant political forces, serving the decisions of the ruling class in a situation that has no legitimacy (Magnis Suseno, 2005, p.121-122).

In building language hegemony, Miss Minchin is still willing to use English in the school environment. However, he wants to make French her flagship program. Thus, the *Select Seminary* that she manages will be famous as a school in demand by people all over the world. In this case, language becomes an important tool of hegemony because language has the power to change circumstances and situations in dormitory life. The people in this novel believe in the power of language, they always use language for survival. They also know that language can change the quality of their life. Burnett describes Miss Minchin’s planting of the French language as a means of gaining and maintaining her power.

For Miss Minchin, language is one of the most basic and most effective means of communication in conveying ideas, concepts, or thoughts to other people. Language practices carried out in *Select Seminary* to support her hegemonic practices certainly run more smoothly without any physical violence. So that what is conveyed by her as the ruling class becomes truth and must be implemented.

Below, the researcher finds some evidence of language hegemony in *A Little Princess*.

Table 1. some evidence of language hegemony in *A Little Princess*

Data Number	Page	Data
1	15	“I’m afraid,” said Miss Minchin, with a slightly sour smile, “that you have been a very spoiled little girl and always imagine that things are done because you like them. My impression is that your papa wished you to learn French.”

Data Number	Page	Data
2	15	“That is enough,” she said with polite tartness. “If you have not learned, you must begin at once. The French master, Monsieur Dufarge, will be here in a few minutes. Take this book and look at it until he arrives.” Sara’s cheeks felt warm. She went back to her seat and opened the book. She looked at the first page with a grave face.
3	17	“Ah, Madame,” he said, “there is not much I can teach her. She has not learned French; she is French. Her accent is exquisite.”
7	60	My reply was, ‘Her education at my seminary, Captain Crewe, shall be such as will adorn the largest fortune.’ Her French and her dancing are a credit to the seminary. Her manners—which have caused you to call her Princess Sara—are perfect.
9	74	“You are a sharp child and pick up things readily. If you make yourself useful I may let you stay here. You speak French well, and you can help with the younger children.”
10	78	That was the beginning, and from day to day the duties given to her were added to. She taught the younger children French and heard their other lessons, and these were the least of her labors. It was found that she could be made use of in numberless directions. She could be sent on errands at any time and in all weathers. She could be told to do things other people neglected.
11	173	Miss Minchin saw her for the first time when she entered the schoolroom to hear the little French class recite its lessons and superintend its exercises.

From the quotations above, it appears that Miss Minchin tried to make Sara as perfect as possible. At First, Miss Minchin influenced Sara. She said that her father, Captain Crewe hoped that Sara could master French (data 1). Miss Minchin used Captain Crewe’s wish as a logical reason. She also used words that are flattering to Sara (data 9) to launch her hegemonic practice.

Furthermore, Miss Minchin asked Sara to learn French even though Sara herself did not want it (data 2). When Monsieur Dufarge said that he didn’t need to teach Sara anymore because Sara was French. The accent is very good (data 3). So Miss Minchin wanted to control Sara even more. The teaching and learning process in Miss Minchin’s school is a real hegemonic tool. Students as objects and teachers as subjects.

Burnett represents Miss Minchin as a leader who often rationalizes policies deemed important for the prosperity of her school. In data 7, Miss Minchin clearly states that Sara’s ability to master French and her skills in dancing is a valuable assets for her institution. Miss Minchin made Sara a tool to cultivate French in her school environment. Empowering the French language means that it will improve the image of the institutions. Miss Minchin as the ruler of the school often uses her position and authority to deceive the residents of *select Seminary*, especially the children. She makes rules and policies that are often unfavorable to Sara or the other students. However, it is profitable for her and the groups that support her power.

Because she is worried that the school she manages will lose competitiveness with other schools, she highlights French as her flagship program. To increase the productivity

of French, she must hire a qualified language teacher. Meanwhile, to keep costs down, she doesn't want to hire a French teacher other than Monsieur Dufarge. She made a bargain with Sara. Sara should have refused. Because from the beginning of the story, she only wanted to be a princess, not a language teacher. However, because her father had died, Sara accepted Miss Minchin's offer.

In *A Little Princess*, there is a conflict between the old and the young. The elderly were represented by Miss Minchin and the young people were represented by Sara. This is very closely related to intellect. Gramsci's hegemony prioritizes human intellect so that older people who are considered more experienced also consider themselves more intellectual. In this novel, intellectuality is not related to age. The proof is Sara. She is described as very intelligent, she has devoured many books in foreign languages, he has mastered French and his behavior is liked by many people. However, luck is not on her side. Thus, Miss Minchin hegemonizes her to gain wealth and perpetuate her power.

Furthermore, in data 9 it can be seen that there is evidence of negotiations between Miss Minchin and Sara. Miss Minchin said that if Sara wanted to stay at the *Select Seminary*, she had to be willing to teach French. Negotiations are needed so that there is consensus between groups of different ideologies. Here, it appears that Miss Minchin is trying to get approval from Sara by praising her. She knew that Sara has royal blood, behaves, dressed, and is proficient in speaking the language of the nobility. Even Sara aspires to become a noble. It was for this reason that Miss Minchin entered into negotiations to strengthen her position as a ruler and improve the public image of the *Select Seminary* she managed.

This can be said a form of hegemony. Hegemony represents a set of values and beliefs in a place where the ruling class exercises its power over society, including religion, education, and media (Peter Ives, 2017). The hegemony exercised by Miss Minchin over her students here is persuasive and not coercive. Persuasive here means an inducement that then proceeds to an agreement. An agreement was received by Sara. It can be seen from the quotation below:

"You look rather cross, Sara," she said. "I am sorry you do not like the idea of learning French."

"I am very fond of it," answered Sara, thinking she would try again; "but-"

"You must not say 'but' when you are told to do things," said Miss Minchin. "Look at your book again."

And Sara did so, and did not smile, even when she found that "le fils" meant "the son" and "le frère" meant the "brother" (Burnett, 2014, p.16).

From data 10 and 11, it appears that Sara's duties are increasing day by day. One of them is teaching French. Miss Minchin was pleased to see that. Because being taught French in the *Select Seminary*, it means that her wish has been fulfilled. The wish to change the condition of the school which previously could not speak French to become proficient in French. This is the function of the intellectuals. Namely agent of change. In other words, Miss Minchin as the ruling class is the main key to social dynamics in the school.

Furthermore, language hegemony has also spread to a four-year-old child named Lottie. Sara spoke to her in French. And Lottie understood it too: “No, he is not Chinese,” Sara whispered back; “he is very ill. Go on with your exercise, Lottie. Non, monsieur. Je n’ai pas le canif de mon oncle” (Burnett, 2014, p.110). Lottie thought the visitors to Miss Minchin’s school were Chinese. Because, as far as Lottie knew, he was Chinese with yellow skin. But Sara said that the guest was not Chinese, but someone who was sick. It is a guest who at the end of the story brings Sara back to her country, India.

Hegemony is said to be successful if the way of life, way of thinking, and views of the subaltern have imitated and accepted the way of thinking and lifestyle of the ruling class that dominates and exploits them (Patria and Arief, 2015, p.126-127). In other words, the ideology of hegemony has been taken over voluntarily by the subaltern. So, this will affect their morality and intellect. In *A Little Princess*, the hegemonies/subalterns/subordinate are the students of the *Select Seminary*. They are Sara, Jessie, Lavinia, Lottie, Ermengarde, James, Emma, Rebecca, Mariette, Isobel, and so on. They took for granted and supported the ruling class’ idea that French was the language of the nobility. They also voluntarily accept the class classification made by the ruling class. Namely the aristocratic and *pariah* class. The student of *Select Seminary* happily tried to learn and use French. And eventually, they mastered it. They also practiced those two-class customs declared by the ruling class. If they are classified as aristocrats, then their life must be in luxurious style. For example, the implementation of birthday celebrations (Burnett, 2014, p.162), the use of nice clothes, and everything being served. However, if these students are classified by the ruling class as part of the *pariah class*, then they must be willing to become servants. The clothes they wore were simple, one might even say shabby.

From a sociological point of view, the problem of the existence of a language system initially tends to natural communication to build collective social understanding. However, the case that occurs in *A Little Princess* shows how language is unlimited to its meaning as a reflection or mirror of a relatively natural reality. But, the use of language displays the opposite side, influencing and even constructing the consciousness of children. In this potential power or language power is hidden what is called ideology. This is presumably with Wodak’s view that ideologies are themselves closely related to cognitive and psychological processes and are expressed through language or originate in or are reinforced by it (Wodak, 1989, p.58-64).

CONCLUSION

The language hegemony process carried out by Miss Minchin had a positive impact on the institutions she manages. The characters in the novel believe that French is the language of the nobility. Thus, this raises the enthusiasm of foreigners to send their children to these institutions. However, the concept of aristocrat-*pariah* turned out to have a negative impact. When Miss Minchin pinned the word nobility on a class, she was exalting it too much. on the other hand, when she puts a *pariah* in a class, she doesn’t hesitate to insult and even treat her arbitrarily. This is seen as an injustice.

The injustice that was committed by Miss Minchin as the ruling class caused quarrels within the ruling class itself. Miss Amelia, who is Miss Minchin’s younger sister

and at the same time becomes her right-hand woman, got up and turned against Miss Minchin (Burnett, 2014, p.202-203). Miss Minchin never thought that her sister would be so direct with her. Burnett drew that the quarrel which occurred within the ruling class was the end of the story of Miss Minchin's power in the *Select Seminary*. All the occupants of the institution discussed the quarrel between the rulers. Miss Minchin could do nothing. The *Select Seminary* which has been famous overseas all this time will wither and die. The rules made by the ruling class apparently cannot provide balance in the school. So that, unexpectedly by Miss Minchin, it was her sister who finally uncovered all her cover. And in the end, she would only be able to witness Sara's departure and wait for the destruction of the institution she had been so proud of.

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