

Minangkabau Women's Resistance: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Sara Mills

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Abstract. This research describe the forms of resistance by female characters in novel "Bako" by Darman Moenir through the lens of critical discourse analysis. The study is grounded Sara Mills' theory to analyze the injustices faced by women. The primary issue of this research is how women, either individually or as representatives of a group, articulate their rights, and how their struggle is portrayed through the selection of words, sentences, and narrative forms presented to audience. The analytical technique in this research is Sara Mills' discourse analysis. The research delves into portrayal of women in the novel, highlighting the resistance movements undertaken by the character Ummi, who serves as the protagonist challenging the norms of the matrilineal culture prevalent in Minangkabau society. As both the object and reader, audience is led by the author to become aware of the errors that often marginalize women in terms of tradition, social norms, and culture.

Keyword: minangkabau womens; resistance; critical discourse analysis

1. Introduction

Discourse analysis is commonly employed to analyze a text to comprehend the underlying messages. The purpose of discourse analysis is to provide an explanation of the intricate relationship between discourse elements and their functions in communication [1]. Critical discourse analysis, known for its emphasis on the power constellations in the production and reproduction of meaning, views discourse as a pragmatic language component. Utilizing and understanding discourse at the communication level requires various tools and devices [2].

Discourse analysis, as an academic discipline, explores the connection between form and function in verbal communication (both oral and written). Individuals are not seen as neutral subjects interpreting freely; they are heavily influenced by and connected to social forces within society. Discourse analysts view critical discourse analysis as the amalgamation of text analysis, production and distribution process analysis, and socio-cultural analysis of discursive practices [3].

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an approach used to understand or explain the meaning of a text. Through CDA, social phenomena, ideologies, political attitudes, gender, and power in a text can be unveiled [4]. In the context of using CDA, researchers apply it to uncover gender issues within literary works in the form of novels. CDA is defined as an effort to elucidate a text's social phenomena to understand the interests embedded in it. Discourse, as a form of social practice, can be analyzed with CDA to determine the relationship between discourse and socio-cultural development in novels and the evolving social phenomena in society [5].

The development of critical discourse analysis by scholars has given rise to various theories and approaches. In its evolution, discourse analysis aids in understanding language in its usage. Language is not merely a communication tool but also a tool for implementing power strategies. The ability to comprehend the functions of language can enhance communication effectiveness and discourse strategies. Various ways to describe reality or content in language, implying specific interests, purposes, and goals, require sharp interpretation [6]. Critical discourse analysis plays a crucial role in social life as an effort to explain social phenomena and interests within a Novel's text. Discourse analysis involves linguistic unit analysis in both oral and written language use, involving message senders and receivers in communication acts [7].

Critical Discourse Analysis for literary works represents a practical implication of linguistic theories. In its analytical exploration, the practical implications of linguistic theories intersect with literary theories because they share the same object of study: the actual use of language. In this connection, discourse analysis, in general, provides an approach that opens new insights for language and ideology studies and the accompanying social changes [8]. This concept is widely used and serves as a common characteristic for most discourse analysis frameworks, especially CDA, which, in some aspects, yields gratifying results. The strength of CDA in reviewing ideologies related to various social practices and its distinctive analytical positioning is its hallmark [9].

The focus point from the feminist discourse perspective is to reveal how texts exhibit bias in portraying women. Sara Mills' ideas differ slightly from critical linguistic models as previously outlined. Critical linguistics focuses solely on linguistic structure and its influence on audience interpretation. Sara Mills pays more attention to how roles of actors are presented in the text and the roles of readers and writers in the text. Ultimately, the style of presentation and the roles placed and presented in the text will shape legitimate and illegitimate parties, those in power, and minority parties controlled [10].

Furthermore, Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis approach focuses on how women are represented in discourse [11]. Women have often been marginalized and portrayed in unfavorable conditions, without the opportunity to defend themselves. This critical discourse approach is often referred to as feminist stylistics or feminist perspective discourse analysis. Sara Mills developed an analysis to examine how positions of actors are portrayed in the text – who becomes the subject and who becomes the object of narration [12]. Thus, the structure of the text and how meaning is treated in the text as a whole can be determined. Sara Mills also examines how readers and writers are treated in the text – how readers identify and position themselves in the text's narration. Such positioning places the reader in a certain position and influences how the text is presented. In the end, the narration style and positions placed and presented in the text legitimize one party and render another illegitimate [13].

2. Method

This research falls under the category of content analysis, employing the critical discourse analysis model proposed by Sara Mills. The primary focus is on discourse related to feminism. Sara Mills' feminist perspective centers on discourse about women, examining how women are portrayed in texts, novels, images, photos, or news [12]. This discourse approach is often referred to as Sara Mills' perspective. The focal point of the feminist

discourse perspective is to illustrate how texts portray women [11]. Women tend to be depicted in texts as the wronged or marginalized party compared to men. According to Mills, traditional linguistic studies focus on sentence structure selection, neglecting language analysis in its usage. In discourse analysis, however, aspects related to sentence structure and grammar are given greater attention [10].

The object of this study encompasses all events experienced by story characters discussing the roles and positions of women in Darman Moenir's Bako novels. The research data consist of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences containing the roles and positions of women. Additionally, intuitive data generated by the researcher are triangulated with experts in the field of literature. The data source for this research is the novel Bako, authored by Darman Moenir. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method.

3. Result and Discussions

Sara Mills utilizing Althusserian analysis, prioritizes the role of actors in the text. This role is considered a form of positioning, signifying someone as an interpreter, and the position interpreted emphasizes how the actors are positioned in the text [12]. Therefore, two aspects need to be prioritized: how the actors in the text are positioned and how the actors function as interpreters or the interpreted in the reporting. The role of actors in the text, whether as interpreters or the interpreted, is to interpret the occurrences and their nature. This even impacts how the reader's role in the text, which results from the negotiation between the reader and the writer [14]. This illustrates that the reader is depicted by the writer according to the writer's imagination. For a clearer understanding, let's examine the position of women in Darman Moenir's novel "Bako" within both character perspectives as described below.

When viewed from the perspective of this research object, Sara Mills' Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) aims to determine who serves as the subject and object within Darman Moenir's novel "Bako." In this context, the author's role as the narrator represents the narrative standpoint, where they control the flow of the story. Therefore, the representation of women shaped in this novel will be significantly influenced by the author in narrating a series of events within the ideological framework they endorse. Regarding the object position, the female character named Ummi becomes the focal point narrated by the author through the character Man in the novel. It explicates her endeavors to resist the injustices she faces in life.

The character Ummi, as portrayed by the author through the character Man, strives to resist the societal norms in Minangkabau by employing ideological justifications. The author conveys a rejection of customs within Minangkabau culture that discriminate against women [15]. Women are considered unnecessary to attend school, subjected to arranged marriages without their consent, relegated to domestic work, and denied the right to voice their opinions in decision-making processes. The depiction of women's positions in the literary discourse aligns with Sara Mills' theory, situating them in both subject and object positions. For a more detailed explanation, refer to the following discourse.

This analysis employs Sara Mills' Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis to scrutinize the power dynamics and representations of women within Darman Moenir's novel "Bako." The author's role as the narrator is pivotal, as it shapes the portrayal of female characters and events in the novel, influenced by the author's ideological framework. Ummi, the central female character, is presented as challenging societal norms in Minangkabau, particularly

those discriminating against women. The narrative unfolds through the eyes of the character Man, describing Ummi's resistance against injustices prevalent in her life.

Ummi, under the narrative lens of the author, symbolizes a figure of resistance against entrenched cultural practices in Minangkabau. These practices include the marginalization of women's rights, such as the denial of educational opportunities, forced arranged marriages without female consent, confinement to domestic roles, and exclusion from decision-making processes [16]. According to Sara Mills' theoretical framework, the portrayal of women in this literary discourse positions them as both subjects and objects. This dual positioning emphasizes the complexity of their roles and struggles within the narrative. In essence, Sara Mills' Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis sheds light on the intricate interplay between the author's narrative control, the representation of female characters, and the ideological underpinnings that shape the novel "Bako." Ummi's character exemplifies a feminist resistance against cultural norms, showcasing the broader societal implications of gender discrimination in Minangkabau [17].

3.1 Subject Position

As previously explained, the subject position here refers to the author as the narrator's perspective on the unfolding events. This is evident in the following quotation: *"Having the opportunity to attend Thawalib madrasah was a rare occurrence at that time. Especially for a woman"* [18]. In addition to managing household affairs and family needs, women in the novel "Bako" have experienced formal education and engagement in political and humanitarian activities. The thought pattern depicted through the character Ummi is portrayed as more advanced compared to other female roles, who prioritize household chores without emphasizing education and knowledge.

Furthermore, the author portrays women as caring for the well-being and education of family members, as evident in the following quote: *"In the morning, Ummi served breakfast for me. She paid attention to whether my shirt collar was neatly and properly fastened"* [18]. Ummi's concern for the education of both herself and her family is not merely verbal but is demonstrated through actions by contributing financially to her brother's education. She acquires these funds by selling harvests and family assets.

This constitutes a form of resistance by Ummi, considering such actions are considered taboo in Minangkabau society, as illustrated in the following quote: *"She took responsibility for her words. Sending me to school means she has to provide a considerable amount of money"* [19]. The novel vividly portrays familial relationships and actions through Ummi's behavior towards "I" (the narrator) and other siblings who are not her biological children. Despite not being her own offspring, she nurtures them as if they were her own. In this context, women are seen attempting to defy cultural norms in Minang, where male relatives are typically the responsibility of their mother's family. These children would usually be cared for, raised, and educated by the mother's family. However, in this case, Ummi takes on this responsibility. Through this quote, it becomes apparent that women are starting to reject these customs, deeming them incompatible with their beliefs.

In doing so, female characters in the story begin to take action, refusing practices considered outdated and doing what they believe is right without intimidation or discrimination by authorities or men within the social group of the narrative, as illustrated in the following quote: *Umi and Bak Tuo insisted on instructing me. Their reasons were to mark charcoal on my forehead; In the morning, Ummi immediately fetched uduk water, sometimes from the well but more often from the side of the house; She is known as a devout*

follower of Muhammadiyah; She remains faithful to her religion, and in the evening, before bedtime, reads the book of God [18].

Furthermore, regarding decision-making, the author demonstrates the role of women as a form of resistance, indicating that in this scenario, women have attempted to reject marginalization as a group. Through this quote, it is evident that Umami boldly instructs her brother, an action not typically performed by a woman to a man. Subsequently, in the following quote, there is also a display of the freedom possessed by Umami to actively participate in organizational affairs and pursue her desires without intimidation.

3.2 Object Position

Based on the theory presented by Sara Mills, where typically the female character who becomes the main character in the novel explains her existence, receiving unfair treatment in society, and becoming the object of narration. In the novel "Bako," the author depicts the position of women as individuals striving to reject all forms of discrimination and injustice against them. As seen in the following quotation: *"Women in my village, to mention a few old but still relevant stories, after reaching menstruation, are immediately sought after by their husbands... and they wouldn't mind becoming second, third, and so on wives; they would only stay at home cooking and giving birth. At the very least, my mother is not willing to adopt such ways. She dares to take on a role in the community typically performed by men" [18].*

Progress in thinking is also evident when Umami is willing to contribute her inherited wealth for the benefit of schooling, even for children not from her own lineage but from her brother's. In this regard, the female figure as a mother can nurture her family members. Umami has fulfilled her role as a woman within her community, relatives, and the surrounding society.

3.3 Reader's Position

Sara Mills' analytical model also discusses the reader's position. This position aims to observe how the reader situates themselves within the presented text. According to Sara Mills, the reader's position should be a crucial consideration in a text. Often, this position is overlooked, portraying the text's creator solely from the author's perspective, rendering the reader a passive audience that does not influence the text created. The placement of the reader's position is related to the addressing or mention of the reader written in the novel, as the positioning of the reader in the text is generally associated with the use of pronouns such as "you," "your," and so on, where the reader is directly addressed by the text [19]. Sara Mills also explains that the intended audience influences how the reader positions themselves.

In addition, the placement of the reader's position can also be identified through dominant reading, as seen in the following quote: *"If there were no Umami, once again, it's not impossible for all the children to be left behind. Umami plays a crucial role. She is the one who manages all their needs. From food to school preparations. From wiping their noses to putting them to bed at night" [18].* The use of the clause "once again, it's not impossible for all the children" as a form of statement or address to the reader, the author attempts to communicate directly with the reader as the target audience. The reader's position in this case includes the researcher. By understanding the quotations in the novel "Bako," it is evident that the narrative character is not just an ordinary woman accepting discrimination against her rights. Through the character Umami, she not only serves as a mother to her relatives but also cares about education for herself and her family. Additionally, she actively participates in society to advocate for women's rights, both directly and indirectly marginalized [20].

4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of literary discourse through the Critical Discourse Analysis approach grounded in Sara Mills' theory in the novel "Bako" by Darman Moenir, observations can be made regarding the subject-object positions and the reader's stance. Findings from the research on subject-object positions and readership suggest that women have gained more freedom in forming opinions and making decisions to independently shape their lives. They are no longer as bound by the customary rules of Minangkabau culture. In fact, they are daring enough to reject regulations they perceive as detrimental to women without relying on the men in their community or their husbands.

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