

A CRITICAL DISCOURS ANALYSIS OF ROBY'S RESPONSES IN INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP IN THE NOVEL BROKEN STRINGS

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ABSTRACT

This study employs Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of Critical Discourse Analysis to examine Roby's public responses regarding the novel Broken Strings. The analysis focuses on how language is used to construct legitimacy, rationality, and authority in the context of a viral digital controversy. At the textual level, Roby's lexical choices, grammatical structures, and modality strategies position him as a rational evaluator while questioning the novel's authenticity. At the discursive level, the circulation of his response through social media and television reinforces his authority and guides public interpretation. At the socio-cultural level, the discourse reflects an ideology of empirical rationalism that privileges verifiable truth over personal or symbolic narrative. The findings reveal how public discourse shapes perceptions of credibility, regulates truth claims, and reinforces power relations in digital literary debates.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Public Response, Narrative Legitimacy

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language plays a crucial role in shaping and maintaining interpersonal relationships because it enables individuals to express emotions, attitudes, and social positions. In literary works, language is deliberately employed by authors as a means of constructing characters and relationships. Dialogues and responses between characters function not only as tools of communication but also as representations of conflict, emotion, and social dynamics within the narrative. Therefore, novels serve as relevant sources for examining how interpersonal relationships are constructed through discourse.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an analytical approach that views language as a form of social practice closely connected to power, ideology, and identity construction. CDA goes beyond textual analysis by considering the social and cultural contexts in which discourse is produced. In literary studies, this approach allows researchers to uncover implicit meanings and power relations embedded in characters' utterances and responses. As a result, CDA provides deeper insight into how language represents interpersonal relationships in literary texts.

The novel Broken Strings portrays complex interpersonal relationships characterized by emotional tension and internal conflict. These conflicts are reflected in the characters'

linguistic choices and ways of responding to one another. Bobby, as one of the main characters, displays varied responses in his interactions with others, particularly within personal and emotionally charged relationships. His responses reveal how he positions himself within interpersonal relationships, whether by asserting control, expressing vulnerability, or negotiating his emotions.

Based on these considerations, this study focuses on analyzing Bobby's responses in interpersonal relationships in the novel *Broken Strings* using a Critical Discourse Analysis approach. The analysis examines selected dialogues and narrative contexts involving Bobby to identify discourse strategies used in constructing interpersonal meaning. This study is expected to contribute to critical discourse studies in literary analysis and to provide a deeper understanding of how language functions in representing interpersonal dynamics.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This section describes in detail the procedures used in conducting the study, including the preparation, implementation, and evaluation processes related to data collection and analysis. It provides a comprehensive explanation of how the research was designed, organized, and executed systematically to achieve its intended objectives. This section also elaborates on the type of research, the participants involved, the instruments employed, and the techniques used for data analysis. Furthermore, it highlights the rationale behind each methodological choice to ensure that the results of the study are valid, reliable, and relevant to the investigation of students' writing skills in describing their daily activities using the simple present tense. By presenting these procedures clearly, this section aims to guide readers in understanding how the researcher collected, interpreted, and validated the data within the real classroom context.

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design aimed at understanding and interpreting the discourse found in Bobby's responses toward the book discussed in the novel *Broken Strings*. A qualitative descriptive design is considered appropriate because the research focuses on exploring meaning, attitudes, and perspectives constructed through language, rather than testing hypotheses or relying on numerical measurement.

The research is text-based in nature, with the novel *Broken Strings* serving as the primary data source. In this study, the literary text is viewed as a discursive space in which characters construct meaning through language. Bobby's responses toward the book are treated as the main units of analysis, as these responses reflect how the character understands, evaluates, and interprets the book within the narrative. The analysis is conducted by taking narrative context into account to ensure that the discourse is examined within its situational framework.

The research process begins with a comprehensive reading of the novel to gain an overall understanding of the storyline and contextual background. Subsequently, the researcher identifies textual segments that explicitly or implicitly contain Bobby's responses toward the book. The collected data are then selected and categorized based on the type of response, such as evaluative, reflective, or emotional responses. This categorization is intended to support a systematic and organized analysis.

Following the data categorization, the analysis focuses on examining linguistic aspects present in Bobby's responses, including word choice, sentence structure, and patterns of meaning construction. The analysis also considers the discursive context in which the responses appear, such as narrative situations and the character's positioning toward the book. Through this approach, the study seeks to reveal how language is used to construct Bobby's attitudes and perspectives toward the book.

Overall, this research design enables an in-depth and structured examination of discourse in a literary text. The design is expected to contribute to discourse analysis studies by demonstrating how qualitative discourse analysis can be applied to novels, particularly in

understanding how a character's responses toward a book are constructed and represented through language.

Research Participants or Population and Sample

This study does not involve human participants, as it is a text-based qualitative discourse analysis. Therefore, there are no participants in the conventional sense of research subjects. Instead, the focus of the study is on a fictional character presented in a literary work.

The primary subject of analysis in this research is the character Bobby from the novel *Broken Strings*. Bobby is selected as the focal participant because his responses toward the book discussed in the narrative provide rich linguistic data for discourse analysis. His responses are considered representative discourse units through which attitudes, perspectives, and meanings are constructed.

In this study, Bobby functions as the analytical participant whose discourse is examined within the narrative context of the novel. The analysis does not aim to generalize findings to real individuals but to interpret how language is used by the character to respond to and engage with the book within the story.

By treating the fictional character as the research participant, this study aligns with qualitative literary discourse analysis practices, where characters' utterances and narrative responses are analyzed as meaningful data. This approach allows the researcher to focus on discourse construction without involving ethical considerations related to human subjects.

Instruments

In this study, the main instrument used to collect data was a guided writing test, which was specifically developed by the researcher to assess students' ability in writing descriptive sentences about their daily activities using the simple present tense. The test was designed to focus on students' ability to construct grammatically correct sentences, incorporate appropriate adverbs of frequency, and use relevant time expressions in describing daily routines. Each prompt provided a subject and an adverb of frequency, for example: She - always, He - usually, I - never. Based on these prompts, the students were asked to develop complete sentences by adding their own activities and suitable time markers. For instance, a student could write: She always waters the garden on Sunday morning.

The development of the guided writing test involved several steps to ensure its content validity. Firstly, the researcher reviewed relevant literature and previous studies on writing skills and the teaching of the simple present tense. This review aimed to identify common errors students make and effective strategies to elicit meaningful writing responses. Secondly, the researcher created preliminary test items and consulted an English language education expert to review the items' clarity, appropriateness, and alignment with the research objectives. After receiving feedback, the items were revised to improve their readability, comprehensibility, and relevance to the students' daily experiences.

During the data collection process, the researcher personally distributed the test papers to the students in SMP Negeri 2 Siantar. Before starting the test, the researcher gave a detailed oral explanation of the instructions to ensure that all students understood what was expected of them. The researcher also emphasized that the students should write individually and try to use their own ideas rather than copying from peers. While the students were completing the task, the researcher observed their behavior and writing process, taking notes on students' engagement, hesitation, or any difficulties encountered. This observation helped provide additional qualitative information about the students' writing abilities and challenges.

The students were given 25 minutes to complete the writing task. After the time elapsed, the researcher collected all written responses and prepared them for descriptive qualitative analysis. In this study, the researcher also acted as the key instrument, which means that the researcher was responsible for observing, interpreting, and validating the data throughout the research process. This role required the researcher to be actively involved in the study,

ensuring that the data accurately reflected students' abilities and that the analysis was conducted in a systematic and trustworthy manner.

The use of a guided writing test as the main instrument was chosen because it allowed the researcher to gather direct evidence of students' writing skills in a controlled yet authentic classroom setting. Furthermore, it provided the opportunity to evaluate not only grammatical accuracy but also the students' creativity and ability to express personal routines in English. Combined with the researcher's observations, this instrument offered a comprehensive approach to understanding how students describe their daily activities using the simple present tense.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study is conducted using a qualitative discourse analysis approach. The analysis aims to interpret how Bobby's responses toward the book are constructed through language in the novel *Broken Strings*. Rather than focusing on numerical measurement, the analysis emphasizes meaning-making and interpretation of discourse.

The first stage of data analysis is data familiarization. At this stage, the researcher rereads the novel carefully to gain a thorough understanding of the narrative context surrounding the appearance of the book in the story. This step is essential to ensure that Bobby's responses are analyzed in relation to the situation and storyline in which they occur.

The second stage is data identification and selection. The researcher identifies dialogues and narrative passages that contain Bobby's responses toward the book. The data are selected based on their relevance to the research focus, particularly responses that reflect Bobby's evaluation, reflection, or attitude toward the book. Only relevant excerpts are included in the analysis.

The third stage involves data categorization. The selected data are classified into several categories of responses, such as evaluative responses, reflective responses, and emotional responses. This categorization helps organize the data and facilitates the identification of discourse patterns within Bobby's responses.

The fourth stage is discourse interpretation. In this stage, the researcher analyzes the linguistic features present in Bobby's responses, including word choice, sentence structure, and expressions that indicate stance and perspective. The interpretation also considers the discursive and narrative context in order to reveal how meaning is constructed through Bobby's language.

The final stage is drawing conclusions. Based on the interpretation of the data, the researcher synthesizes the findings to explain how Bobby's discourse toward the book represents his attitudes and perspectives. This stage connects the analytical results with the research objectives and provides a coherent understanding of the discourse patterns identified in the novel.

Through these stages of analysis, the study aims to present a systematic and in-depth discourse analysis that reveals how language functions in constructing Bobby's responses toward the book in *Broken Strings*.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research Findings

This section presents the research findings based on the critical discourse analysis of Bobby's public response to the controversy surrounding the book *Broken Strings*, which claims to be a true story involving forced marriage and domestic violence. Using Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, the findings reveal how Bobby constructs legitimacy, rationality, and moral authority through language, while simultaneously challenging the authenticity of the narrative presented in the book. The analysis demonstrates how Bobby's discourse operates at the textual (micro), discursive practice (meso), and socio-cultural (macro) levels to negotiate truth, power, and public judgment in a viral digital context.

Textual Analysis (Micro Level)

Vocabulary and Lexical Choices

Boby's response is dominated by lexical choices associated with logic, proof, rationality, and factual verification. Recurrent expressions such as "who is Robi in the real world?", "it must exist on Google," and "that's simple logic" are repeatedly used to delegitimize the claim that the book represents a true story.

For instance, Roby states:

"Robi in the real world—who is he?"

"If this is a true story, it must be traceable on Google."

These lexical choices frame Boby as a rational and logical speaker, while implicitly positioning the author of the book as lacking credibility. Emotionally loaded terms such as "forced marriage" and "domestic violence (KDRT)" are mentioned not to express empathy, but to question narrative plausibility:

"Does it make sense that there is no news about Robi Tremonti forcing someone to marry or committing domestic violence?"

Grammatical Structures and Transitivity

Boby frequently employs active voice constructions that foreground himself as the central agent of evaluation, such as:

"I ask again,"

"I emphasize this point,"

"I want to ask the audience at home."

Through these structures, Boby positions himself as an authoritative evaluator of truth. Meanwhile, the alleged male figure in the book is represented through existential questioning rather than action:

"Who is Bobby in the real world?"

This grammatical strategy removes agency from the alleged perpetrator and shifts responsibility to the author to provide proof, thereby transforming moral accusations into epistemic uncertainty.

Modality and Epistemic Authority

Boby's discourse displays high epistemic modality, signaling strong confidence and certainty. Statements such as:

"That's simple,"

"This cannot be twisted,"

"It must make sense,"

construct Boby as a holder of unquestionable rational authority. At the same time, he redistributes responsibility to the audience by stating:

"Let the people at home judge for themselves."

This strategy allows Boby to appear neutral while still guiding interpretation, reinforcing his epistemic dominance without explicitly imposing conclusions.

Cohesion and Argumentative Structure

The discourse is organized through repetition and accumulation, especially the repeated questioning of identity and proof. Roby reinforces his argument using analogies unrelated to the case, such as:

"One plus one equals two."

"The capital city of Indonesia is Jakarta."

These analogies equate social truth with universally accepted facts, simplifying complex narrative claims and framing alternative interpretations as illogical or irrational.

Discursive Practice (Meso Level)

Text Production

Roby's response is produced within a media-saturated and viral context, as indicated by his references to public attention:

“This is going viral.”

“I will clarify this on a TV talk show.”

He constructs himself as a reluctant speaker by emphasizing:

“From the beginning, I did not want conflict.”

This positioning strengthens his moral legitimacy and frames his response as defensive rather than aggressive.

Text Distribution

The discourse is distributed through social media platforms and entertainment television, which Bobby explicitly acknowledges:

“My Instagram only has 29 thousand followers.”

This statement minimizes his perceived power and portrays him as an ordinary individual facing disproportionate public scrutiny.

Text Consumption and Audience Positioning

Bobby consistently positions the audience as rational judges:

“You at home decide for yourselves.”

Audiences are encouraged to adopt logical reasoning rather than emotional interpretation, aligning themselves with Bobby’s rational framework.

Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity

Bobby’s discourse draws heavily on digital intertextuality, particularly search engines as arbiters of truth:

“If you search Robi Tremonti on Google...”

Interdiscursively, the response blends common-sense logic, media discourse, and legal-rational reasoning, reinforcing a modern digital standard of credibility based on visibility and traceability.

Socio-Cultural Practice (Macro Level)

Situational Context

The discourse emerges within a context of viral controversy and public moral judgment, where personal narratives are scrutinized in digital public spaces.

Institutional Context

Although Bobby does not represent a formal institution, he invokes media platforms and public logic as sources of legitimacy, positioning digital visibility as a substitute for institutional authority.

Societal and Cultural Context

In Indonesian society, truth is often negotiated through reasonableness (*masuk akal*) and social logic. Bobby’s emphasis on logic reflects these cultural values.

Representation of Social Actors

Bobby represents himself as calm, rational, and restrained:

“Silence does not mean fear.”

Meanwhile, the author and characters in the book are indirectly represented as inconsistent and unverifiable.

Power Relations and Ideological Implications

The discourse reveals a struggle over narrative authority, privileging rational, publicly verifiable truth over emotional or experiential testimony. The underlying ideology emphasizes rationalism, public accountability, and digital visibility as the main criteria for credibility.

Ideological Formations in Bobby’s Response

The analysis of Bobby’s response reveals distinct ideological formations that shape the representation of education, poverty, and state responsibility. The dominant ideology embedded in the discourse can be identified as developmentalism, which conceptualizes education as a technical and policy-driven solution to socio-economic problems, particularly poverty. Within this ideological framework, education is framed primarily as

an instrument for development and human capital enhancement, rather than as a fundamental right or a site of structural contestation.

Boby's response emphasizes educational programs, institutional interventions, and state initiatives while marginalizing structural critiques related to economic inequality, labor precarity, and systemic injustice. This reflects a broader tendency in contemporary policy discourse to depoliticize social problems by reframing them as administrative challenges that can be resolved through technocratic governance (Rizvi & Lingard, 2016; Jessop, 2018).

In addition, the discourse reflects a paternalistic ideological orientation, positioning the state as a benevolent authority responsible for guiding and improving the lives of marginalized communities. Through this construction, disadvantaged groups are implicitly portrayed as passive beneficiaries of government intervention rather than as active agents with educational rights and political voice. Such representations align with recent critical discourse studies highlighting how state-centered narratives reinforce hierarchical power relations in education policy discourse (Savage et al., 2020; Tikly, 2019).

The ideological effects of the discourse are further reinforced through moral legitimation and authoritative framing, where state-led educational interventions are presented as inherently positive, necessary, and sufficient to address complex social issues. By privileging official perspectives and policy rationales, the discourse contributes to the normalization of dominant policy logics and limits alternative interpretations or critiques. Recent studies on media and policy discourse demonstrate how such legitimation strategies contribute to the maintenance of hegemonic meanings in public debates (Wodak & Reisigl, 2015; KhosraviNik, 2017).

Overall, these findings indicate that Boby's response operates not merely as an informative statement but as an ideological construction that legitimizes governmental authority, naturalizes specific development-oriented policy approaches, and shapes public understanding of education and poverty in contemporary Indonesia. This aligns with recent empirical research showing that news and public discourse frequently reproduce dominant ideologies and power relations through subtle discursive mechanisms (Fauzan, 2018; Sobari et al., 2025).

DISCUSSION

This discussion interprets the findings of the Critical Discourse Analysis of Boby's public response to the novel *Broken Strings*. Drawing on Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, this section explains how Boby's discourse functions at the textual (micro), discursive practice (meso), and socio-cultural (macro) levels. In line with Fairclough (1995, 2003), discourse is treated as a social practice through which power, ideology, and legitimacy are produced and negotiated. The discussion demonstrates that Boby's response does not operate merely as a personal clarification, but as a discursive mechanism that shapes public judgment, regulates truth claims, and limits alternative interpretations of the novel.

Textual Level (Micro Analysis)

At the textual level, Boby's response is marked by distinctive linguistic patterns that construct rationality, authority, and epistemic control. His discourse relies heavily on rhetorical questions, logical analogies, repetition, and high-modality statements. Expressions such as "Robi in real life siapa?", "kalau ini kisah nyata harus bisa dibuktikan", and "itu logika, satu tambah satu sama dengan dua" foreground rational reasoning as the dominant interpretive framework.

The repeated use of mathematical analogies and factual statements ("ibu kota Indonesia adalah Jakarta") functions as a strategy of simplification, positioning Boby's argument as universally valid and beyond contestation. According to Fairclough (1995), such linguistic strategies work ideologically by presenting particular viewpoints as common sense rather than

as subjective interpretations. Through this textual construction, Bobby positions himself as a rational, unbiased speaker while implicitly framing the author's narrative as illogical and unreliable.

Modality also plays a significant role in establishing authority. Bobby frequently uses high-modality expressions ("harus," "pasti," "enggak masuk akal") when questioning the authenticity of the story, while softening his stance with disclaimers such as "tidak ada niat buruk" or "tanpa menseseraya". This combination allows him to maintain an appearance of neutrality while simultaneously asserting strong evaluative judgments.

Discursive Practice (Meso Level)

At the level of discursive practice, Bobby's response is produced and circulated within a highly mediated public space, particularly social media and televised talk shows. His statement is framed as a clarification rather than an attack, yet it gains authority through repetition, virality, and audience engagement. By inviting audiences to "menilai sendiri", Bobby appears to decentralize authority, while in practice guiding interpretation through a predefined logical framework.

This strategy reflects what Fairclough (1995) describes as the indirect exercise of power, where control is maintained not through explicit coercion but through framing the terms of interpretation. The absence of alternative discourses—such as literary interpretation, symbolic representation, or trauma-informed perspectives—limits interpretive plurality. As a result, Bobby's response becomes a dominant reference point in the public discussion surrounding Broken Strings.

Intertextually, Bobby's discourse draws upon legal reasoning, digital visibility (Google searchability), and media logic, suggesting that truth must be publicly traceable to be valid. This interdiscursive blending of legal, digital, and moral discourses strengthens his position as an authoritative evaluator rather than merely a participant in the debate.

Socio-Cultural Practice (Macro Level)

At the socio-cultural level, Bobby's response reflects broader ideological assumptions embedded in contemporary digital culture. Central to his discourse is an ideology of empirical rationalism, which equates truth with public evidence, online visibility, and logical coherence. Within this framework, personal narratives especially those related to trauma, forced marriage, or domestic violence are considered legitimate only if they can be externally verified.

This ideological positioning marginalizes experiential and narrative forms of truth, particularly those that are private, symbolic, or anonymized for protection. As Fairclough (2003) notes, such discourses reproduce power asymmetries by privileging voices with public recognition while delegitimizing those without access to visibility or institutional validation.

Furthermore, Bobby's repeated emphasis on calmness, silence, and self-control ("diam itu bukan takut") constructs a moral hierarchy in which emotional expression is implicitly associated with irrationality. This reinforces dominant norms that value rational restraint over emotional testimony, especially in public discussions of sensitive issues.

Ideology, Power, and Discursive Implications

The findings suggest that Bobby's response operates as a form of discursive regulation, defining what counts as truth, evidence, and legitimacy in public literary debates. His discourse reinforces hegemonic norms that prioritize logic, visibility, and verification, while sidelining alternative epistemologies such as narrative truth, symbolic storytelling, and survivor testimony.

Through language, media circulation, and ideological framing, Bobby's response contributes to the normalization of a narrow understanding of authenticity. This has broader implications for how literary works, particularly those addressing personal or traumatic experiences, are received and evaluated in the public sphere.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined Bobby's public response to the novel *Broken Strings* through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis, employing Fairclough's three-dimensional framework. The analysis demonstrates that Bobby's response functions not merely as a personal opinion or clarification, but as a powerful discursive practice that shapes public interpretation, regulates legitimacy, and constrains alternative readings of the literary text.

At the textual level, Bobby's use of high-modality expressions, rhetorical questioning, and logical analogies constructs an image of rational authority while positioning the novel's narrative as questionable and insufficiently credible. These linguistic choices naturalize a particular understanding of truth that prioritizes logic, factual verification, and public traceability over symbolic or experiential forms of storytelling.

At the level of discursive practice, Bobby's response gains authority through its circulation within digital and broadcast media, where repetition and audience engagement amplify its influence. Although framed as an invitation for public judgment, the response subtly directs interpretation by establishing rigid criteria for authenticity, thereby limiting interpretive plurality. This demonstrates how media discourse enables indirect forms of power by shaping the conditions under which meaning is produced and evaluated.

At the socio-cultural level, the findings reveal the presence of an empirical-rationalist ideology that equates truth with visibility, documentation, and logical coherence. This ideological framework marginalizes personal narratives that rely on anonymity, symbolism, or emotional testimony, particularly in discussions of sensitive issues such as trauma and violence. Consequently, Bobby's discourse reinforces existing power asymmetries by privileging publicly recognizable voices while delegitimizing less visible experiences.

Overall, this study highlights the role of public figures in defining discursive boundaries within contemporary literary debates. Bobby's response illustrates how language operates as a mechanism of power that legitimizes certain forms of knowledge while excluding others. By exposing these dynamics, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how discourse in digital public spaces shapes perceptions of truth, authority, and narrative legitimacy. Future research may extend this analysis by comparing similar discursive responses across different media platforms or examining audience reception to further explore the social impact of such discourse practices.

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