

## Sara Mills Model Critical Discourse Analysis on the Peaky Blinders Serial

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### Abstract

*The research entitled Critical Discourse Analysis of Sara Mills Model in Peaky Blinders Serial (Case Study of Gender in Audio Visual Media) was conducted on the object of research in the form of audiovisual media as part of the communication media. This study seeks to examine gender issues in the form of discrimination against women which is shown in the Peaky Blinders series which is a text. Peaky Blinders is a drama series from England which is currently finished until season 6 breaths of air on the BBC and Netflix. The drama series was directed by Otto Brust with the main character Cillian Murphy. The researcher conducted this research based on the dominance of patriarchal culture and the series Peaky Blinders which is a crime drama genre featuring several scenes of resistance to patriarchal culture performed by several female characters. Researchers conducted research using a critical discourse analysis approach Sara Mills model. Sara Mills' discourse analysis model is often known as feminist stylistic in linguistic studies because it focuses on examining women's discourse from the perspective of feminism. Sara Mills' approach focuses on the position of the actor in a text which in this study is a film. Based on the critical discourse analysis of the Sara Mills model, the researcher conducted a study of the Peaky Blinders series by dividing it into discrimination against women in the position of the subject (who tells the story), discrimination against women in the position of the object (which is told), and discrimination against women in the position of the audience. In addition, researchers also provide identification of forms of discrimination against women shown in the Peaky Blinders series. The research was conducted by observing the Peaky Blinders series and then reducing the data in the form of a set of scenes to scenes to facilitate research, presenting data with tables, and conclusion drawings with narrative descriptions of the data displayed, then analyzed using triangulation of data sources.*

### Keywords

sara mills's critical discourse analysis; gender, audio visual media; peaky blinders; discrimination



### I. Introduction

Films are often considered entertainment because the stories shown in films can affect the emotions of the audience, whether they are happy, sad, afraid, or angry. The story in a film is a screenplay from a scriptwriter, director, actor, cameraman, and other production crew, which means that what is being shown in the film is not what is and is happening.

Audiences also often have certain expectations for a film so a less scary horror film, a comedy that is not funny, or a romance film that lacks romance and sadness will get criticism from viewers who judge the film does not live up to their expectations. A good filmmaker will be required to understand how to influence the emotions and perceptions of the audience by utilizing the elements in the film (Zacks 2015). In addition, the reach of the film to the general public makes it not only a communication medium but also a mass communication medium, which means that the messages contained in the film will be conveyed to the public. Effective communication is essential for all organizations. Organizational communication is satisfaction of organizational member toward several communication aspects occurs within organization (Syakur, 2020). Communication is the process of delivering accurate, clear, consistent, and comprehensive information as well as coordination between relevant agencies in the implementation process (Mahendra, 2021). Because the audience of the film is the public, in influencing the emotions and perceptions of the audience, filmmakers also need to understand the reality of the social life of the public who is the target of the film.

The filmmaker is a subject who can determine the meaning and purpose of the film he makes. Because the film is a medium of mass communication and can provide information that can move public emotions, it means that filmmakers have a discourse to convey something about the social reality that is happening. In this study, a crime drama series (continued) entitled "Peaky Blinders" became the discussion chosen by the researcher. Peaky Blinders is a British crime drama series directed by Steven Knight in 2013 and broadcast on the BBC. Currently, Peaky Blinders has arrived until season 6 and is still waiting for the sequel to season 7 which will reportedly be released soon. The Peaky Blinders series has experienced success after re-airing through the streaming service, Netflix. The main actor in the series is Thomas Shelby who is the leader of the Birmingham criminal gangster named Peaky Blinders. Thomas Shelby is played by a popular British actor, Cillian Murphy who is often also poor in Hollywood films. Telling the conditions in England after the first world war, Peaky Blinders is full of social, economic, and political images of England and the western world at that time. France, Birmingham, London, and New York from 1919 to the 1920s became the background story in the Peaky Blinders series.

The crime drama series Peaky Blinders shows a sadistic and cruel side but is interesting because it brings up several moments of women's struggles and scenes that use women's perspectives amid the dominant patriarchal and criminal culture. The story of the Peaky Blinders gangster is inspired by the gangster of the same name, it is estimated that the gangster was active from the 1890s until the early 20th century. Meanwhile, the story in the Peaky Blinders series is set in Birmingham, England, in 1919 after the end of World War I. The researcher sees a social situation in the form of gender inequality in the Peaky Blinders series which describes the dominance of patriarchal culture in the post-World War I period. Set in 1919, Peaky Blinders was in the era of the industrial revolution 2.0 which was a revolution in which mass production machines were invented so that there was a slight shift in conditions from factory workers who were dominated by men because they needed energy, starting to be done by women because of production machines. the bulk which reduces the workload (Kinasih 2022).

Researchers will try to understand the discourse of the Peaky Blinders series, especially in looking at gender issues. This will be discussed by the researcher using observations of the scenes in the series. The scenes will be categorized by the researcher as showing female characters in the series as subjects or objects. By knowing how many women are presented as subjects and presented as objects, the discourse of the Peaky Blinders series on gender issues will be defined by researchers.

## **II. Review of Literature**

### **2.1 Mass Communication Media**

Mass communication media is a very powerful socialization tool because it can determine things and how many people understand themselves and their world, so communication studies need to study mass communication media critically. The assumption that the existence of the media is not to be considered neutral, and that it is appropriate to understand the discourses that exist in the media critically is the basis for writing critical discourse analysis. Mass communication media has a role as an agent of socialization which means it has the use of conveying a message to be understood by the public/group of people. A media can be categorized as a mass communication medium if it has the nature of publicity which means that it can be consumed by the public, widely and continuously distributed, produced by an institution or group of people, not individuals, and requires a certain technology in the production and distribution process. (Ardianto 2007)

### **2.2 Film**

The film is one of the mass communication media that is audio-visual to convey a message to a group of people gathered in a certain place (Effendy 1986). The message of the film in mass communication can take any form depending on the purpose of the film. Generally, a film can include a variety of messages, which can be educational, information, or entertainment. The message in the film is conveyed using semiotic mechanisms that exist in the human mind in the form of sound, speech, movement, or the selection of a setting, both a place and an atmosphere that is built through the composition of color, light, and so on. The film is also considered a medium of communication that is audio-visual, in the form of a blend of vivid images and sounds. With a mix of pictures and sound, films can tell a lot in a short time. Audio-visual media is a medium that utilizes the stimulation of the senses of sight and hearing. The nature of films that utilize these two senses is considered more attractive and easy to remember than other forms of communication

### **2.3 Discourse Analysis**

Discourse is often a substitute for the word discourse. In English, there is only the word " discourse " to define the concept developed by Michel Foucault as a linguistic concept which according to the Collins Dictionary means a serious discussion carried out to explain something (Collins Dictionaries 2022). In a more general sense, discourse is defined as a unit of language in communication either orally or in writing that carries a complete message (Oka 1994). Another opinion about discourse was put forward by Sumarlam, et al who concluded from several expert opinions and stated that discourse is the most complete language unit, both spoken and written, which is cohesive from its outward structure, coherent from its inner structure, and integrated. (Sumarlam 2009).

### **2.4 Sara Mills Critical Discourse Analysis Model**

As the definition of discourse analysis previously described by the researcher, Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis is an approach to communication studies that focuses on linguistic studies to examine linguistic units. There are several forms of critical discourse analysis according to experts, such as the critical discourse analysis of the Teun A. Van Dijk model which dissects language into several structures, namely macro, superstructure, and microstructure so that it can describe a linguistic unit into words, propositional sentences, and clauses. In addition to Teun A. Van Dijk's model which focuses more on linguistic structure, there is a critical discourse analysis of Norman Fairclough's model which focuses more on dissecting the linkage of discourse or linguistic unit with reality and social practices that

occur. Norman Fairclough tries to analyze how language is interpreted and cannot be separated from the reality and social practices that occur where people as consumers of texts that become concrete forms of language have contextual meanings that can influence the understanding of the text itself. Fairclough offers an analytical model by dividing language into three dimensions, namely text, text production and consumption, and social practice (Phillips 2002).

In his theory, Sara Mills does not focus on the critique of linguistic structure but rather pays attention to the position of actors in the text. The position of the actor is divided into two concepts, namely the position of the subject-object and the position of the reader, these concepts will be used as a framework for critical discourse analysis of Sara Mills' model. The critical discourse analysis framework of Sara Mills model can be described as follows:

**Table 2. Sara Mills Analysis Framework**

<b>Sara Mills Analisis Framework</b>	
<b>Position</b>	How was the event viewed and from whose perspective was it viewed?
<b>Subject-Object</b>	Who is positioned as the narrator (subject) and who is positioned as the narrator (object)?
<b>Reader Position</b>	How is the position of the reader displayed in the text? How does the reader position himself in the displayed text?

The table above serves as a framework for critical discourse analysis of Sara Mills' model in reviewing a text. Knowing the perspective of a text and how the position of women is placed in the text (subject/object) and how the reader is positioned in seeing women in the text is how Sara Mills examines women's discourse linguistically.

The thesis written by Angela Eka Harlinda in 2021 has the same discussion as the researcher's thesis. Both of them discussed discourse about women, especially on the issue of discrimination in a text. In addition, the discourse analysis model used also used the critical discourse analysis model of Sara Mills' perspective. Slightly different, Angela's thesis discusses a text in the form of a novel which focuses on the writing in the novel, while the research object is a film which has other elements besides text that can be read from the displayed dialogue but also facial movements and emotions that are shown visually. . Another difference between the researcher's thesis and Angela's thesis lies in Angela's conceptual framework, which not only examines the position of subject-object and writer-reader but also looks at the contextual and ideological context of the society in social reality in Central Java.

Aditya's thesis, which was written in 2020, has similarities both in terms of the theoretical framework used and the form of the object of research. Both of them studied audio-visual media using Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis model. However, Aditya's research and the researcher's also have differences regarding the title of the film and how to perform data analysis exposure. Aditya analyzes the data for each scene while the researcher explains it from the phenomena that are seen and only refers to which scene.

### **III. Research Methods**

Researchers used descriptive qualitative research methods based on data in the form of words in describing the object under study. The object of this research is a film series entitled *Peak Blinders*. The qualitative descriptive method was chosen by the researcher because it

was able to be used by researchers to find out how the position of the female characters in the Peaky Blinders series experienced discrimination or resisted the patriarchal culture after World War II. The purpose of the researcher using qualitative methods is to find out an in-depth understanding of a symptom, fact, or reality that occurs in the Peaky Blinders series. This method is carried out in a structured manner starting from a predetermined topic, data collection to data analysis, and finally, a conclusion will be obtained in the form of an understanding of a topic in which there are certain issues (Semiawan, 2010).

In facilitating the research, the researcher uses a theoretical framework in the form of critical discourse analysis with a feminine paradigm that can examine how women are positioned in the Peaky Blinders series. The researchers did this by referring to the theoretical framework of Sara Mills' discourse analysis model which examines the text by dividing it into two concepts, namely the position of the subject-object and the position of the reader. In this study, researchers will examine discrimination against women as subjects, discrimination against women as subjects, and discrimination against women from the position of the reader or in this case the audience.

### III. Discussion

#### 3.1 Discrimination against Subject Position

Based on the data analysis unit that the researcher has described in Table 2, we can see that there are scenes that position women as subjects, namely Grace who is the head of a spy in uncovering the criminal case of the Peaky Blinders gang. Grace is the storyteller in those moments when she tries not to be caught by the Peaky Blinders that she is a spy. However, even though at that moment Grace as a woman becomes the subject of her story, she gets a form of discrimination such as the demeaning behavior of women by Sergeant Mos who was surprised by the decision of the Capbwell Police to hire Grace as a spy. This can be seen in season 1 episode 4 at the 14th minute.

Besides Grace, Jessie Eden is also often the subject of stories about her efforts as an activist for the feminist movement. In this case, Jessie tried to fight patriarchal culture and even dared to threaten Thomas Shelby as the head of the gangster Peaky Blinders that women would move to the streets and take over production together if Thomas did not help him care for the welfare of women in Birmingham. This can be seen in the scene in season 1 episode 4 minutes 16. Although described as a subject of her feminist movement the movement of Jessie Eden at that time was still underestimated by Peaky Blinders who focused more on her conflict with the police.

The Peaky Blinders series also features Thomas' younger sister Ada Shelby as a subject in season 1 episode 6 which shows Ada's efforts to stop the feud between the Peaky Blinders and the Sabini mafia. Ada had repeatedly persuaded her brethren to not pay attention to each other's safety. Although as a subject Ada finds discrimination in the form of her efforts considered a nuisance and her voice is not important. In the end, he did the reckless thing, namely being in the middle of the place of conflict while holding the baby he had just given birth to. Suddenly it was this that stopped the dispute between the Peaky Blinders and the Sabini gang. This is shown in the 41st minute.

Discrimination against the subject also occurs in Esme Shelby who tells herself in season 3 episode 4 who is angry because she feels that the male members of the Peaky Blinders do not respect her and other women in the Shelby family. Esme felt that she was only considered a family servant despite her status as the wife of John Shelby. The scene about Esme's anger and the humiliation of her heart was found in the 8th minute.



The last scene that makes women the subject is in season 4 episode 2 where Jessie Eden invites women in Birmingham who are working to stop their activities and take to the streets as a form of protest against no one cares about women who continue to work on holy days.

### 3.2 Object Position Analysis

Women as objects are shown in a scene when Thomas is talking about the interests of the Shelby Company. Ltd and Ada provided a suggestion, but Jhon immediately denied Ada's input and said it was Shelby Company's business. Ltd has nothing to do with women. This is a sign that women are not considered voices and are often ignored without any thought considering their voices. Ada's humiliation scene is in the 17th minute of season 1 episode 1.

Unfavorable social conditions for women and the roles of Ada, Polly, and Lizzie in the Shelby Company. Ltd seems to have made Thomas Shelby finally open-minded. Lizzie who tried to express her opinion and was denied by the other Shelby members was then given support by Thomas who stated that the Shelby Company. Ltd is a modern company and modern companies need to respect women's voices. This indicates that there is resistance to patriarchal culture, but here it shows that the success of resistance to patriarchal culture is also due to the help of the man himself (Thomas) which means that here women are only the object of the story.

In the Peaky Blinders series, the researcher finds that female characters are shown both as subjects and as objects. The female characters are depicted in various forms of discrimination. There are at least five forms of discrimination, namely marginalization, stereotypes, subordination, double workload, and violence.

Marginalization of women is a process of neglect that makes women not get socio-cultural attention which results in poverty and inability to develop themselves (Fakih 2012). In the Peaky Blinders series season 1-4, there are many images of marginalization that researchers can find, as depicted by Lizzie who is economically down until she is willing to sell her body. Another neglect of women can be seen in every scene of denial of opinions expressed by female characters such as what happened to Ada or Lizzie when they were part of the Shelby Company. Ltd.

The stereotype of women is the existence of a negative stigma/name against women (Fakih 2012). One of the negative stereotypes against women can be seen in the opinion that women are servants, it even makes Esme furious because the labeling of women as servants makes women more isolated and does not find space to be heard or develop themselves.

Women's subordination is the subordination of women to something, meaning that there is distrust of women's ability to lead or otherwise (Fakih 2012). One of the subordination phenomena in the Peaky Blinders series is depicted in Sergeant Mos who does not accept that Grace was assigned by the Capbwell Police to be a spy. Sergeant Mos doubts Grace because she is a woman. In addition, the Capbwell Police themselves also showed their disapproval of Grace's choice to continue working in the police force. Campbell Police want Grace to resign from the police because they think that serving as a spy is unsafe for women and asks Grace to marry, even Capbwell Police persuade Grace that he will take care of Grace as he promised Grace's father. This clearly illustrates the distrust of women in choosing a profession. Police Capbwell's statement that he will take care of Grace is also a form of subordination to the distrust that women can take care of themselves.

The double workload of women is a form of discrimination by giving too many tasks to a woman as an employee, domestic worker, mother, and wife (Fakih 2012). Although there are many forms of discrimination against women that undermine a woman's ability, women also experience discrimination in the form of a double workload. The patriarchal culture views children as the responsibility of a mother. It is described how the men of the Shelby family lost a mother and father who did not care and got drunk. It also illustrates how no one

cares about Ada's status as a single mother who takes care of her child and still has to work. Another example is also described by the figure of Polly Gray who knows where her husband is but she meets her son, Michael, and Polly plays the role of mother, the chief financial officer of the Shelby Company. Ltd, as well as a mother figure to the men of the Shelby family. The men in the Peaky Blinders series always leave their children with their wives at home regardless of the other busyness of a mother.

Violence against women is an attempt to carry out physical or psychological attacks against women to hurt, threaten, or annoy them (Fakih 2012). Violent forms of discrimination are also featured in the Peaky Blinders series. This happened when the Capbwell Police threatened Polly and made Polly sexually assaulted by the Capbwell Police.

Five forms of discrimination against women are shown in the Peaky Blinders series either when they are the subject or object of the story. With the main character being a male leader of a criminal gangster, the audience is suggested to think that the movement of women who seek defense against themselves interferes with the movement of the main character and his group. This makes the audience less concerned about the struggles of women and feminists. But filmmakers also often include scenes of resistance to patriarchal culture, which means it also shows that the Peaky Blinders series wants to illustrate how terrible the excessive patriarchal culture was in the past. How bad is the patriarchal culture where almost everything is resolved by fighting and killing? These things ignore human rights.

Based on the theoretical framework of Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis model, structurally, women's texts get so many places in the narrative of the Peaky Blinders series. However, the position of women in the Peaky Blinders series faces many issues of gender discrimination. This illustrates how bad the social reality will be if the brutal patriarchal culture of the past is still firmly held by today's society.

#### IV. Conclusion

Based on the research and discussion that the researcher has described in the previous chapter, the researcher will conclude the study based on the identification of the problem that the researcher has made previously. Based on the critical discourse analysis approach of Sara Mills model, women's discourse related to the issue of gender inequality shown in the Peaky Blinders series makes researchers identify three problems, namely how women discriminate against subject positions, women discriminate against object positions, and women discriminate against audience positions. The identification of the problem is then described by the researcher in chapter IV which is based on the unit of data analysis.

The researcher found that women's discrimination against the position of the subject is shown in 5 scenes that occur in different characters, including Ada Shelby, Grace Burgess, Polly Gray, Jessie Eden, and Esme Shelby. Meanwhile, women's discrimination against the position of objects is shown in 2 scenes that occur in Ada Shelby and Lizzie Shelby. Then viewed from the position of the audience, discrimination occurs when women are shown as interfering with the performance of the main character and his group, but the audience is also presented with scenes that show resistance to a patriarchal culture that has a dark side in the form of the absence of human rights such as high crime and murder.

The researcher was also able to identify the forms of discrimination shown in the Peaky Blinders series. These forms of discrimination include marginalization in the form of many scenes about ignoring women's voices, stereotypes depicted that women are identical as servants, subordination depicted by men's distrust of a woman's skills such as being a spy and leading a company, double workload. This is shown in women who live amid a patriarchal culture and a post-war atmosphere full of crime still having to work and also take care of household needs and the lack of a sense of family responsibility from the men.

The researcher sees that the Peaky Blinders series which has a crime genre with the main character being a male gangster leader also raises the issue of feminism as a concern. The efforts of women in the past who struggled to fight against patriarchal culture are still enthusiastic today, this indicates that the Peaky Blinders series which is set in 1919 is also a reflection of today's social reality, considering the issue of human rights and gender inequality has become a concern the world after the end of the cold war.

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