



The Representation of Polemical Language in the Novel *Perahu Kertas* by Dee Lestari: Critical Discourse Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the forms, functions, and meanings of polemical language in the novel *Perahu Kertas* by Dee Lestari. It employs a descriptive qualitative approach through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The data source is the novel *Perahu Kertas*, while the data itself consists of dialogues, monologues, and narrative passages containing polemical language. Data collection was carried out using the "read-and-note" method, and data analysis involved data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results indicate that the forms of polemical language in the novel include rejection, criticism, defense of opinions, and protest. The functions of polemical language encompass rejection, self-defense, criticism, and ideological conflict. The meanings identified within the polemical language include clashes of idealism, social conflict, psychological conflict, and the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, the polemical language in this novel serves not merely as a tool for communication but also represents power relations, ideological clashes, and the individual struggle to maintain self-identity amidst social pressure.

Keywords: polemical language, novel, Perahu Kertas, critical discourse analysis

INTRODUCTION

Language is a primary element in literary works, serving as a medium to convey the ideas, attitudes, and conflicts experienced by characters. In novels, language functions not merely as a tool for communication but also as a means of shaping character, plot, and the overall meaning of the story. Nurgiyantoro (2018) states that language in literature plays a strategic role in constructing conflict and conveying the author's message to the reader. Therefore, examining the language used in literary works is essential for understanding the meanings embedded within them.

Language in literature is frequently employed to represent the clashing ideas and conflicting val-

ues experienced by characters. Keraf (2010) explains that the use of specific stylistic devices can reflect attitudes of assertion, resistance, or rejection regarding a particular viewpoint. Linguistic forms embodying such contradictions can be understood as "polemical language," as they encapsulate ideological conflicts conveyed either explicitly or implicitly.

Polemical language in literature manifests not only through direct debate but also through dialogue, narration, and a character's internal monologue. Sobur (2015) notes that language serves as a representational tool used to shape and present reality to the reader. Thus, polemical language

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functions as a vehicle for representing the clashes of ideas, values, and attitudes characters hold regarding the social and psychological realities they face.

Conflict is a crucial element in literature, acting as a driving force for the plot. Nurgiyantoro (2018) explains that conflict can be internal or external, arising from a clash between a character's desires and the demands of their environment or social values. Since such conflicts are expressed through language, analyzing polemical language becomes relevant to understanding the dynamics of conflict within a novel.

Based on this perspective, polemical language is viewed as a means of representing the clash of ideas and values within literary works. The novel *Perahu Kertas* by Dewi Lestari was selected as the object of this study because it presents strong ideological and psychological conflicts among the characters, particularly the tension between idealism and the realities of life. Consequently, this research focuses on the representation of polemical language in *Perahu Kertas* to uncover the forms, functions, and meanings of the conflicts experienced by the characters.

Based on this background, the research questions are: (1) What are the forms of polemical language used in the novel *Perahu Kertas* by Dewi Lestari? (2) What is the function of polemical language in constructing the characters' ideological and psychological conflicts within the plot? and (3) What is the meaning of the clash of ideas and values represented through polemical language in the novel *Perahu Kertas* by Dewi Lestari?

In line with these research questions, this study aims to describe the forms of polemical language in *Perahu Kertas* by Dewi Lestari, explain the function of polemical language in constructing the characters' ideological and psychological conflicts, and reveal the meaning of the clash of ideas and values represented through polemical language in the novel.

Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the study of literary language, particularly in un-

derstanding polemical language as a form of representing conflicting ideas and values within literary works. It is also expected to contribute to the development of critical discourse analysis in literature, specifically by examining the forms, functions, and meanings of polemical language in novels. Practically, this study can serve as a resource for students conducting linguistic and literary research, especially regarding the analysis of polemical language in novels. For educators, the findings can serve as a reference in teaching Indonesian literature, particularly for understanding how language is used to construct narrative conflict. Furthermore, this study can act as a reference and basis for comparison for other researchers examining similar subjects or employing similar approaches.

Representation is a concept concerning how language is used to present and shape the meaning of a given reality. According to Hanuswantari & Wahyuti (2023), representation is the process of producing meaning through language, enabling ideas, concepts, or realities to be understood by society. In literary works, representation manifests through language that constructs images of the characters, events, and conflicts presented by the author. Polemical language refers to language use that embodies contradiction, rejection, or opposition toward a specific idea; Handoyo, Asropah, & Septiana (2026) explain that it serves to assert a stance and construct a confrontational argument. Meanwhile, character conflict refers to the opposition experienced by a character, whether internally or externally. Indrawan and Putri (2022) state that conflict is a crucial element that drives the plot and shapes character development in literary works.

Several relevant studies indicate that language plays a significant role in representing conflict and the clash of ideas within literary works. Research conducted by Simatupang, Bangun, and Panggabean (2022) on character conflict in Indonesian novels indicates that dialogue and internal monologue serve as primary vehicles for present-



ing characters' psychological struggles. A study by Ramadhani and Suryanto (2022) found that argumentative language forms within novels reinforce the ideological conflicts experienced by the protagonist. Furthermore, research by Iqbal et al. (2025)—focusing on conflict representation through literary discourse analysis—demonstrates that the use of polemical language can reveal the clashes of social and cultural values emerging within society. These studies share a common focus on language as a means of representing conflict, whereas the present study differs by specifically examining the representation of polemical language in the novel *Perahu Kertas* by Dewi Lestari.

The operational definitions in this study encompass several key concepts. Representation refers to the way the author employs language to present and shape meaning regarding the clashing ideas and values of the characters in the novel, achieved through the choice of diction, stylistic devices, and character speech. Polemical language refers to the use of language in Dewi Lestari's novel *Perahu Kertas* that embodies conflicting ideas, rejection, resistance, or value-based conflict—whether conveyed explicitly or implicitly through dialogue, narration, or the characters' internal monologues. The novel *Perahu Kertas*—a work of prose fiction by Dewi Lestari—serves as the object of this study, specifically focusing on textual segments that utilize polemical language to construct the story's conflict. Character conflict refers to the internal and external clashes experienced by the characters in *Perahu Kertas*, as represented through the use of polemical language.

METHOD

This study employs a critical discourse analysis approach as its methodological framework. This approach was selected for its ability to examine language not merely as a tool for communication, but as a social practice that represents ideas, values, and power relations within a text. According to Norman Fairclough, critical discourse analysis views language as a form of social practice inex-

tricably linked to ideological and sociocultural contexts. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an approach used to examine language as a non-neutral social practice—one that embodies specific ideologies, power dynamics, and interests. This approach seeks to uncover hidden meanings within the text related to social relations and the underlying context.

According to Eriyanto (2001), discourse analysis is a method for understanding how and why a message is conveyed in a particular form, as well as how meaning is constructed through language. From a critical perspective, discourse analysis aims to unmask the ideologies, interests, and power relations concealed behind the text. A critical discourse analysis approach enables researchers to uncover how polemical language is used to represent conflicting ideas and values within literary works. In novels, polemical language is understood as a form of language use characterized by resistance, rejection, and the clash of ideas—manifested through dialogue, narration, and characters' internal monologues. In this context, language serves not merely to convey a story but also as a means of constructing meaning and shaping the characters' ideological stances.

Furthermore, Eriyanto emphasizes that language functions not only as a tool for communication but also as a vehicle for shaping reality and influencing societal perspectives. Consequently, critical discourse analysis focuses not merely on linguistic structures but also on social and ideological contexts. Aligning with this view, Sobur (2015) states that discourse is a social practice that both shapes and is shaped by social reality. Language within discourse often carries meanings that are not immediately apparent; thus, critical analysis is required to reveal the underlying ideologies. Critical discourse analysis emphasizes the interrelationship between text, discursive practices, and social practices. Consequently, this study not only identifies forms of polemical language but also analyzes their functions and underlying meanings within the context of the characters' ideological and psychological conflicts in Dewi

Lestari's novel *Perahu Kertas*. Through this approach, the researcher aims to reveal how polemical language is employed to construct conflict, highlight clashing values, and represent the characters' social and psychological dynamics. Thus, the critical discourse analysis approach is deemed relevant to the research objectives: describing forms of polemical language, explaining their function in building conflict, and uncovering the significance of conflicting ideas and values within the novel.

A descriptive qualitative approach was selected as the methodological basis for this study. This choice was made because the research data consists of verbal expressions—including diction, phrases, sentence structures, and implied meanings—found in Dewi Lestari's novel *Perahu Kertas*. According to Sugiyono (2019), Razak (2017), qualitative research aims to build a comprehensive understanding of phenomena experienced by research subjects through the medium of language and descriptive exposition. Therefore, this approach is considered appropriate for examining polemical language and conflict within the novel through its linguistic representations.

The research data is organized based on text excerpts taken from Dewi Lestari's novel *Perahu Kertas* that contain polemical linguistic expressions. These excerpts may take the form of dialogue between characters, authorial narration, or characters' internal monologues that represent conflicting ideas, values, and conflicts within the story. The data for this study was obtained from a primary source: the novel *Perahu Kertas* by Dewi Lestari, published by Bentang Pustaka. Supplementary data sources—serving as secondary data—include literary theory books, scholarly journals, articles, and prior research concerning polemical language, representation, conflict, and the linguistic analysis of literary works.

Data collection for this study employed reading and note-taking techniques. The novel *Perahu Kertas* by Dewi Lestari was read

intensively, critically, and repeatedly to grasp the story's context and identify textual segments containing polemical language—whether in dialogue, narration, or the characters' internal monologues. Subsequently, the data—consisting of textual excerpts featuring polemical language—were systematically recorded and compiled. The recorded data were then classified according to the research focus: the forms and functions of polemical language, and the representation of conflicting ideas and values among the characters in the novel.

A descriptive-qualitative approach was used for data analysis. The first stage involved data identification, specifically identifying textual excerpts that demonstrate the use of polemical language—in the form of dialogue, narration, or characters' internal monologues—within Dewi Lestari's *Perahu Kertas*. The second stage involved data classification, organizing and categorizing the data based on the established research focus: the forms of polemical language, the function of polemical language in constructing conflict, and the representation of the clashes of ideas and values experienced by the characters.

The next stage is data analysis. The classified data are analyzed comprehensively with reference to the relevant theoretical framework. The analysis aims to explain how polemical language is employed and its function in constructing conflict as well as representing ideas and values within the novel. Subsequently, data interpretation is conducted to reveal the meaning embedded in the use of polemical language and its connection to the conflict and character dynamics in the story.

The final stage is drawing conclusions. Conclusions are formulated based on the results of the data analysis and aligned with the problem statement and research objectives. This concluding phase utilizes the analysis results as a basis to explain the forms of polemical language, its function in constructing conflict, and the significance of the clash of ideas and values represented in the novel *Perahu Kertas* by Dewi Lestari.



RESULTS

1. Research Findings on Polemical Language Forms in the Novel *Perahu Kertas*

1.1 Conflicting opinions

Forms of polemical language manifesting as conflicting opinions were identified, characterized by differences in viewpoints, assessments, and interpretations among the characters regarding a particular issue. The data obtained are presented below.

Data 1

"Maaf, sebetulnya gua kurang setuju, karena bagi Kugy semua hal nggak ada yang aneh..."
("Sorry, actually, I don't really agree, because for Kugy, nothing is strange..." Lestari, 2009: 31)

The excerpt illustrates a form of polemical language characterized by a clash of opinions. This is marked by the phrase "gua kurang setuju" (I don't quite agree), which directly indicates a difference in perspective between Noni and Kugy. The statement signals that Noni does not fully accept the viewpoint Kugy adopts regarding the game she has proposed.

Data 2

"Menurut saya, tiga-tiganya standar."
("In my opinion, all three are standard." Lestari, 2009:256)

The excerpt illustrates a form of polemical language characterized by a clash of opinions. The phrase "all three are mediocre" constitutes an evaluative statement indicating that Kugy holds a different assessment of the concepts under discussion.

Data 3

"Tiga konsep tadi memang padat info, tapi cerewet."
("The three concepts were indeed packed with information, but they were too wordy." Lestari, 2009:256)

The excerpt illustrates a form of polemical discourse—specifically a clash of opinions—manifested through argumentative criticism. Kugy acknowledges the merits of the concept under discussion, noting its comprehensive information,

yet simultaneously critiques it as overly complex and lacking the visual impact needed to capture the audience's attention.

2. Rejection

Polemical language forms involving rejection were identified, manifested through expressions of disagreement, negative assessments, skepticism, and direct rejection of an idea or action. The data found are presented below.

Data 1

"Mmm... saya nggak suka tiga-tiganya."
("Mmm... I don't like any of the three." Lestari, 2009: 256)

The excerpt demonstrates a form of polemical language characterized by rejection. This rejection is marked by the phrase "don't like any of the three," which directly indicates that the speaker does not accept a single one of the proposed concepts.

Data 2

"Memangnya Keenan mau dicomblangin gitu? Kok, gua nggak yakin."
("Does Keenan really want to be set up like that? I'm not convinced." Lestari, 2009: 77)

The statement demonstrates a form of polemical language characterized by indirect rejection; although the word "reject" is not used, the speaker questions the likelihood of success for the work plan under discussion.

Data 3

"Kalian berdua aja, deh. Gua nggak bakat nyomblangin orang."
("You two go ahead. I'm just not good at setting people up." Lestari, 2009: 77)

The excerpt illustrates a form of polemical language characterized by the rejection of a course of action. This rejection is conveyed through the expression: "Just the two of you clarify that Kugy does not want to be involved in the plan being discussed."

3. Sarcasm

Forms of polemical language involving sarcasm were identified, manifested through

mockery, irony, metaphors, and indirect criticism directed at the behavior, thoughts, or appearance of other figures. These forms are outlined below.

Data 1

"Orang gila lu layanin, ya makin senanglah dia."

("If you entertain a crazy person, they'll only become happier." Lestari, 2009: 23)

The excerpt demonstrates a form of polemical language characterized by sarcasm. The expression is not intended to suggest that Kugy is actually suffering from a mental disorder; rather, it serves as a form of criticism and mockery directed at her behavior, which those around her deem unconventional.

Data 2

"Kok, gua serasa ada di tengah alien nation gini, ya?"

"Why do I feel like I'm in the middle of an alien nation?" Lestari, 2009: 33)

The quote is not intended to be taken literally—labeling the two as aliens—but rather serves as a form of sarcasm directed at their way of thinking and behavior, which are perceived as different from those of most people.

Data 3

"Untung kamu udah keburu pindah, Sayang. Jadi nggak perlu ikut menyaksikan aib ini."

("Luckily, you had already moved, dear. So you didn't have to witness this embarrassment." Lestari, 2009: 33)

This expression is not intended as an expression of gratitude per se but rather as an indirect way to convey shame and criticism of the situation being experienced. The speaker satirizes himself as well as a situation that is considered embarrassing through the choice of words that tinge with irony.

Data 4

"Ya, kata Ami, metode dongeng lu sukses berat, tapi jangan dipaksain pakai gambar, deh."

("Well, according to Ami, your storytelling method was a huge success, but don't force yourself to use illustrations." Lestari, 2009: 105)

The quote is used to indirectly criticize Kugy's drawing ability. The speaker first acknowledges the success of the storytelling method Kugy employed, then introduces a criticism using the conjunction "but."

Data 5

"Tumben lu agak cakepan."

("You look unusually handsome today." Lestari, 2009: 85)

The excerpt demonstrates a form of "planetary language" characterized by innuendo. This innuendo is evident in the use of the word *tumben* (an expression denoting something unusual or unexpected), implying that the situation being praised is a rare occurrence.

4. Conflict of Thought

A form of polemical language involving a conflict of thought is observed, manifested through the tension between idealism and reality, logic and emotion, hope and actuality, as well as personal identity and social demands. This form is described as follows.

Data 1

"Buat orang yang nggak tahu kamu, cerpen itu mungkin bagus..."

("For someone who doesn't know you, the short story might seem good..." Lestari, 2009: 54)

The excerpt illustrates a form of political language manifested as a conflict of ideas. This conflict arises from the clash between Kugy's desire to produce work considered generally good and Keenan's view that such work actually causes the author to lose their authenticity.

Data 2

"Dalam cerpen itu, saya tidak menemukan diri kamu. Yang saya temukan adalah penulis yang pintar merangkai kata-kata, tapi nggak ada nyawa."

("In that short story, I don't find you. What I find is a writer who is skilled at putting words together, but whose writing lacks soul." Lestari, 2009: 54)

The excerpt illustrates a form of "polymeric" language—manifested as a conflict of thought—by embodying the tension between technical writing proficiency and the presence of personal identity within a work.

Data 3

"Saya Cuma mau melukis. Mungkin sudah saatnya saya mempertimbangkan untuk benar-benar mandiri."

("I just want to paint. Maybe it's time for me to consider becoming truly independent." Lestari, 2009: 140)

The excerpt illustrates a form of political language—specifically a conflict of ideas—as Keenan faces two opposing choices: continuing his education in accordance with his family's expectations or pursuing his dream of becoming a painter.

Data 4

"Kamu tahu apa artinya itu, kan, Nan? Kamu akan menggantungkan diri sepenuhnya ke penjualan lukisan kamu."

("You know what that means, right, Nan? You'll be relying entirely on the sales of your paintings." Lestari, 2009: 140)

A conflict of perspectives arises from the clash between Keenan's idealism—his desire to become a full-time painter—and Wanda's realistic view, which highlights the risks associated with that choice.

Data 5

"Saya salah selama ini, saya pikir melukis adalah jalan hidup saya, tapi ternyata bukan."

("I was wrong all this time. I thought painting was my calling, but it turns out it wasn't." Lestari, 2009: 186)

The quote illustrates the internal conflict Keenan experiences when the beliefs that have long formed the foundation of his life clash with the reality he has just discovered.

Data 6

"Luhde... Saya benar-benar nggak tahu harus mulai dari mana... saya... bahkan nggak yakin saya bisa melukis lagi."

("Luhde... I really don't know where to begin... I... I'm not even sure I can paint again." Lestari, 2009: 206)

A conflict of thoughts arises when Keenan experiences a conflict between his identity as a painter and the doubts that now dominate his mind.

Data 7

"Kenangan itu Cuma hantu di sudut pikir. Selama kita Cuma diam dan nggak berbuat apa-apa, selamanya dia tetap jadi hantu. Nggak akan pernah jadi kenyataan."

"Memories are just ghosts in the corners of our minds. As long as we remain silent and do nothing, they will forever remain ghosts. They will never become reality." Lestari, 2009: 221)

The excerpt illustrates a form of polemical language—specifically a conflict of thought—arising from the clash between living in the past and the courage to act.

Data 8

"Kalau nggak begini, saya akan selalu meminta kamu untuk mencintai saya, Gy..."

("If it weren't for this, I would always ask you to love me, Gy..." Lestari, 2009: 297)

The excerpt illustrates a form of polemical language—manifested as a conflict of thought—when Remi is faced with a choice: either hold onto the relationship he desires or accept the reality that Kugy's feelings cannot be forced.

2. Research Findings on the Functions of Polemical Language in the Novel *Perahu Kertas*

2.1 Expressing disagreement

Polemical language serves to express disagreement with specific ideas, opinions, or situations. This function is observed in the data categorized as Forms of Opposing Opinions 1, 2, and 3.

2.2. Rejecting ideas or actions

Polemical language serves to reject proposals, plans, decisions, or actions deemed inconsistent with a character's perspective. This function is

observed in the data categorized as Forms of Rejection 1, 2, and 3.

2.3 Conveying criticism and sarcasm

Polemical language serves to offer assessments, criticisms, or sarcastic remarks regarding the behavior, abilities, thoughts, and circumstances of other characters. This function is observed in the data categorized as Forms of Sarcasm 1, 2, and 3.

2.4 Expressing conflicts of thought

Polemical language serves to articulate the inner struggles, doubts, quests for self-identity, and clashes between idealism and reality experienced by the characters. This function is observed in the data categorized as Forms of Conflict of Thought (Data 1 through 8).

3. Research Findings on the Meanings of Polemical Language in the Novel **Perahu Kertas**

3.1 The search for self-identity

The polemical meaning associated with the search for self-identity is found in the data categorized as Forms of Conflict of Thought (Data 1 through 7). These data illustrate the characters' processes of understanding their own identities, abilities, goals, and life choices.

3.2 Freedom in determining life choices

The polemical meaning associated with the freedom to determine life choices is found in the data categorized as Forms of Rejection (1–3) and Forms of Conflict of Thought (Data 3 and 4). This meaning is evident in the characters' courage to make choices based on their personal desires and convictions.

3.3 The struggle to realize aspirations

The significance of the conflict as a struggle to realize aspirations is found in data items 3, 4, 5, and 6, which are categorized under "Forms of Intellectual Conflict." These data primarily relate to Keenan's struggle to uphold his desire to become a painter.

3.4 Acceptance of life's realities

The significance of the conflict as an acceptance of life's realities is found in data items 7 and 8, also categorized under "Forms of Intellectual Conflict." These two data points illustrate a shift in the character's perspective following experiences of conflict and inner turmoil.

DISCUSSION

Polemical Language Forms from a Critical Discourse Analysis Perspective

These research findings align with Fairclough's view that language is a social practice used to construct identities, social relations, and knowledge systems within society. From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis, the emergence of conflicting opinions, rejections, sarcasm, and clashes of ideas in the novel *Perahu Kertas* demonstrates that language functions not merely to convey messages but also serves as a means to negotiate meaning and the characters' social positions. The characters in the novel employ polemical language to uphold their beliefs, assert their identities, and respond to the social pressures they face.

Conversely, viewed from a humanistic literary perspective, polemical language not only reflects power relations and ideology—as posited by Fairclough—but also acts as a medium for expressing the characters' inner experiences. The prevalence of ideological conflict within the novel indicates that polemics occur more frequently within the individuals' psychological realms than as overt social confrontations. Thus, the polemics in this novel represent not only social conflict but also the characters' processes of seeking meaning in life.

These results are consistent with previous studies showing that linguistic conflict in literary works is often used to develop characters and illustrate value clashes within society. However, this study offers a distinct advantage by not only identifying forms of polemical language but also linking them to the characters' psychological dynamics, thereby providing a more



comprehensive picture of the function of polemics in the novel.

A limitation of this study lies in its scope, which focuses on a single novel; consequently, the findings cannot yet be generalized to Indonesian popular literature as a whole. Therefore, future research could expand the scope of study by comparing several novels by Dee Lestari or other authors to gain a broader understanding of the use of polemical language in contemporary Indonesian literature. Findings on the Functions of Polemical Language from a Linguistic Perspective

From a linguistic perspective, the study's findings indicate that polemical language serves functions extending beyond the mere expression of conflict. It acts as an expressive medium, allowing characters to articulate their attitudes, feelings, and views on various issues. Functions such as expressing disagreement and rejecting ideas highlight the role of language as a tool for negotiation within social interactions. Meanwhile, functions involving criticism and sarcasm demonstrate language's capacity to convey evaluations indirectly through specific linguistic strategies.

Viewed from a pragmatic perspective, the use of polemical language in the novel reveals the application of politeness strategies. Criticisms and rejections voiced by characters are often framed through sarcasm, humor, or indirect expressions, thereby preserving social relationships between them. Conversely, from a functional perspective, the use of polemical language plays a crucial role in shaping the plot and driving character development. In other words, polemical language serves not only a communicative function but also an aesthetic one within the literary work.

These findings support previous research indicating that language in literary works simultaneously serves interpersonal and ideational functions. However, this study offers a distinct advantage by demonstrating the link between the function of polemical language and the development of the characters' psychological conflicts—specifically those of Keenan and Kugy. A limitation of this study is that the analysis focuses

primarily on the function of polemical language without delving deeply into pragmatic aspects such as speech acts, implicatures, or the politeness strategies employed by the characters. Consequently, future research could expand upon these pragmatic dimensions to gain a deeper understanding of how polemical language is utilized in literature.

The Meaning of Polemics and Its Relevance to Social Life

The nature of the polemics identified in this study reveals that the conflicts within the novel *Perahu Kertas* serve not merely as narrative elements but also as representations of the various issues individuals face in real life. From a sociological perspective, the clashes of idealism and the social conflicts experienced by the characters mirror a societal reality characterized by a diversity of values, interests, and expectations. Such differences frequently give rise to polemics that must be resolved through communication and mutual understanding.

Meanwhile, from a psychological perspective, the internal conflicts experienced by Keenan and Kugy demonstrate that polemics do not always occur between individuals; they can also take place within a single person. The struggle between expectation and reality, logic and emotion, and idealism and pragmatism represents a form of psychological conflict commonly experienced by humans during the process of self-discovery. Thus, the novel portrays not only social relationships but also the profound development of the characters' personalities.

These findings align with literary studies that view literature as a reflection of societal life. The study's strength lies in its ability to simultaneously link the meaning of polemics with social and psychological aspects, thereby yielding a more comprehensive understanding of the messages embedded within the novel. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that controversy does not necessarily carry a negative connotation; rather, it can serve as a vehicle for learning, self-reflection, and character maturation. However, the study has

limitations, as the analysis of the meaning of controversy focused on the narrative context without incorporating reader responses into the meaning-making process. Consequently, the interpretation of meaning relies primarily on the researcher's perspective. Therefore, future research could employ a literary reception approach to explore how readers interpret the controversies within the novel *Perahu Kertas* and their relevance to contemporary social life.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings regarding polemical language in the novel *Perahu Kertas* by Dee Lestari, it can be concluded that such language manifests as conflicting opinions, rejections, sarcasm, and clashes of thought. These elements reveal differing viewpoints, critical attitudes, and the characters' internal struggles when confronting various life issues. The functions of polemical language include expressing disagreement, rejecting ideas or actions, conveying criticism and sarcasm, and articulating conflicting thoughts; characters employ this language to express their stances and defend their opinions in both social and personal interactions. Furthermore, the significance of this polemical language reflects clashes of idealism, social and psychological conflicts, and interpersonal dynamics. This demonstrates that polemics serve not only to build narrative conflict but also to represent the dynamics of human life—specifically regarding the search for identity, social relationships, and decision-making.

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