VERBAL ABUSES IN KIDNEY DONOR REFLECTED
IN JODY PICOULT’S NOVEL MY SISTER’S KEEPER (2008):
A SEMIOTIC APPROACH

PUBLICATION ARTICLES

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ABSTRACT

This research proposed elaborates verbal abuses in kidney donor that is reflected in My Sister’s Keeper novel, which is analyzed through semiotic approach. The aim of this study is to analyze My Sister’s Keeper novel based on the structural elements and the semiotic analysis of the novel. This study focuses on verbal abuse of the major character named Anna Fitzgerald and to analyze each element based on the signifiers and the signifieds. This research is qualitative research. Type of data of the study is text taken from two data source, primary and secondary. The primary data source of this study is My Sister’s Keeper novel written by Jody Picoult, this novel was published by Hodder & Stroughton. And the secondary data source is taken from other sources which are related to primary data such as biography of the writer, criticism in relation to the problem and material related to the study taken from books or internet. The outcome of this study shows the following conclusions. Firstly, based on structural analysis, it shows the character and characterization, setting, plot, point of view, style and theme are interrelated each other and forming a unity. Secondly, based on semiotic analysis, it is shows the denotative level and connotative level of the novel. The semiotic analysis uses to describe the meaning of the structural elements of the novel based on the signifiers and signifieds. By using the semiotic analysis, the writer finds some verbal abuses occurring to the major character Anna Fitzgerald. That condition makes Anna concluding to sue her mother of her medical emancipation.

Keywords: Verbal Abuse, My Sister’s Keeper, Semiotic Approach

1. Introduction

God creates humans complete with their senses, feeling and perfect body being. As a human, we are grateful having that god sends particularly a feeling of something. Children also have the same feeling like adult people. They have sensitively felt to everything. Oftentimes, they felt abusive from their parent like verbal abuse to their children. Verbal abuse on children is yelling on them with demeaning language. Children who suffer from verbal abuse can know the pain of those words. If their parents are stressed, they might be showing that irritation on their children, but remember that this makes
their children lose the confidence on themselves. They may even unable to recognize their own talents and unable to adapt the challenges of life.

Verbal abuse is best described as an ongoing emotional environment organized by the abuser for the purpose control. Verbal abuse may occur to a person of any gender, race, culture, sexual orientation, age, or size. Typically, verbal abuse increases in intensity over time and often escalates into physical abuse as well. After exposure to verbal abuse, victims may fall into clinical depression and/or post traumatic stress disorder. Verbal abuse also reflected in Jody Picoult’s novel **MY SISTER’S KEEPER**.

As one of Jodi Picoult’s novel, **My Sister’s Keeper** is very interesting to read. With a diversity of main character on this novel make reader attracted to read more and more. **My Sister’s Keeper** was published in America in 2004 by Atria books a division of Simon and Schuster Inc. It was written by Jodi Picoult who was born on May 10, 1966, in Long Island New York. Picoult's novels usually deal with ethical issues and are told from a variety of viewpoints, with each chapter written in a different character's voice. Picoult uses this technique to show multiple sides of a situation and underscore areas of moral ambiguity. She wrote this novel based on her views about a couple in America that successfully conceived a sibling that was a bone marrow match for his older sister, a girl suffering from a rare form of leukemia. His cord blood cells were given to the sister, who still in remission. When she started to look more deeply at the family dynamics and how stem cell research might cause an impact, she came up the story of the Fitzgerald. She personally is pro stem-cell research. All character to this novel are fictitious and resemblance to real person, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

**My Sister's Keeper** is written by Jody Picoult, while the story of this novel tells about an anxiety and despair of major character of this novel. Sara Fitzgerald’s daughter Kate is just two years old when she is diagnosed with a rare form of leukemia. Reeling with the helpless shock of it, Sara knows she will do anything whatever it takes to save her child. Then the test results come back time and again to show that no one in their family is a match for Kate. If they do not find a donor for the crucial bone marrow transplant she needs, there is only one option: creating another baby, specially designed to save her sister. For Sara, it seems the ideal solution. Not only does Kate live, but she gets a beautiful new daughter, Anna. Until the moment Anna hands Sara the papers that will rock her whole world. Because, aged thirteen, Anna decided that she doesn’t want to help Kate live anymore. She is suing her parents for rights to her own body.

On this novel the writer found verbal abuses from Sara Fitzgerald to her daughter Anna Fitzgerald. Considering the explanation above, the writer is interested in analyzing My Sister’s Keeper novel by semiotic approach, because entitled **VERBAL ABUSES REFLECTED IN JODY PICOULT’S NOVEL MY SISTER’S KEEPER (2008): A SEMIOTIC APPROACH**
Problem Statement in this research is “How is verbal abuse occurs to Anna Fitzgerald reflected in Jody Picoult’s *My Sister’s Keeper*?”. Limitation of the Study is analyzing verbal abuse of main character Anna Fitzgerald which appears using semiotic approach. Objective of the Study is to analyze *My Sister’s Keeper* novel based on the structural elements of the novel and to describe the novel based on the semiotic approach. After looking for Literature Reviews in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, the writer found the research concerning with My Sister’s Keeper novel done by other writers. There are two researchers who have conducted the study of *My Sister’s Keeper* novel. The first research paper was done by Ratnasari (UMS, 2010) entitled STRUGGLE FOR RIGHT IN JODY PICOULT MY SISTER’S KEEPER: AN INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH. It research done in order to shows that Anna personality changes from weak girl into strong girl to struggle to get her right. The second previous research was done by Alwafa (UMS, 2011) entitled PERSONALITY OF ANNA IN JODY PICOULTS MY SISTER’S KEEPER: A PSYCHOANALITIC APPROACH. This research was done in order to find out personality of Anna of the novel being researched. The different of this study and two previous studies are in the theme. The researcher uses the different perspectives. Here, the researcher presents the study of verbal abuse in *Jody Picoult’s* novel using a semiotic approach. The writer uses *My Sister’s Keeper* novel by Jody Picoult as the data source to be analyzed.

2. Research Method
In this research, the writer uses a descriptive qualitative research. It is library research while data sources are using literary data. It purposes to analyze the novel using semiotic perspective. There are two data sources that are needed to do this research (1) Primary Data Source, the primary data source is *MY Sister’s Keeper* novel written by Jody Picoult, this novel published by Hodder & Stroughton.. (2) Secondary Data Source, the secondary data sources are books and other sources that support the analysis.

The technique of data collection is library research, the data are taken by reading the novel of My Sister’s Keeper in order to understand about the novel and secondary data, classifying and determining the relevant data, taking notes from the material and some other resources related to the novel. The technique used in analyzing the data is descriptive analysis. It concerns with the structural elements of the novel and a semiotic approach.

3. Underlying Theory
The definition of verbal abuse was used by Garbarino (1986) and amended by Pearl, “Constant name calling, harsh threats and sarcastic comments that continually “beat down” the child’s self esteem with humiliation. Verbally assaulting behaviors include openly telling the child that he/she is worthless and calling the child derogatory / demeaning names”.

Based on epistemology, semiotic is from Greece word “semeion” that it means “sign”. The definition of sign itself is as a thing that is created based on a social convention, and can be the representation from the other thing (Sobur, 2004:95). There are many definitions about semiotics. From Hornby (1995: 1068), semiotic is the study of signs and symbols and of their meaning and use. According to Daniel Chandler (2005), semiotics could be anywhere. The sorters definition is that is the study of signs.

According to Barthes (1968), the definition of semiology is:

Any systems of signs, whatever their substance and limits: images, gestures, musical sounds, objects, and the complex associations of all of these, which form the content of ritual, convention or public entertainment: these constitute, if not languages, at least systems of signification. It involves the study not only of what we refer to as “sign” in everyday speech, but of anything which “stand for” something else.

According to Peirce (Chandler, 2005) the definitions of semiotic is “the formal doctrine of sign which was closely related to logic.” While according to Saussure (Chandler, 2005) the definition of semiology is “a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life.”. According to Peirce (Chandler, 2005) signs are divided into three modes, they are:

1) Icon/ Iconic

The first part of sign is icon. Icon is a sign which represents its object mainly by its similarity. According to Pierce (Chandler, 2005) the means of icons is

A mode in which the signifier is perceived as resembling or imitating the signified (recognizably looking, sounding, feeling, tasting or smelling like it) being similar in possessing some its qualities: e.g. a portrait, a cartoon, a scale-model, onomatopoeia, metaphors, realistic sounds in music program, sound effects in radio drama, a dubbed film soundtrack, imitative gestures.

2) Index/ Indexical

The second part of sign is index. Index indicates something which is connected to its object as a matter of fact. There is a real connection. There may be a direct physical connection. According to Pierce (Chandler, 2005), the means of index is:

A mode in which the signifier is not arbitrary but is directly connected in some way (physically or causally) to the signified, this link can be observed or inferred: e.g. ‘natural sign’ (smoke, thunders, footprints, echoes, non synthetic odors and flavors), medical symptoms (pain, a rash, pulse-rate), measuring instruments (weathercock, thermometer, clock, spirit-level), ‘signals’ (a knock on a door, a phone ringing ), pointers (a pointing ‘index’ finger, a directional signpost), recordings (a photograph, a film, video or television shot, an audio-recorded voice), a personal ‘trademarks’ (handwriting, catchphrase) and indexical words (‘that’, ‘this’, ‘here’, ‘there’).
3) Symbol/Symbolic

The third part of sign is symbol. Symbol is a conventional sign which refers to the object that is interpreted as referring to that object. According to Pierce (Chandler, 2005) the means of symbol is:

A mode in which the signifier does not resemble the signified but which is fundamentally arbitrary or purely conventional, so that the relationship must be learnt: e.g. language in general (plus specific languages, alphabetical letters, punctuation marks, words, phrases and sentences), numbers, more code, traffic lights, national flags.

There are several principles as the basic of semiotic study. The principles here presented as aims the extraction from linguistic to start semiotic. This principles of semiotics will be grouped into five main headings, they are: sign, signifier and signified, modality and representation, syntagmatic, and paradigmatic, denotation and connotation.

1) Sign
2) Signifier and Signified
3) Modality and Representation
4) Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic
5) Denotation and Connotation

4. Discussion

Jody Picoult creates the major characters of this novel, Sara Fitzgerald and Anna Fitzgerald. She also creates minor characters to strengthen this story. There are several names of minor characters, namely, Brian Fitzgerald, Jesse Fitzgerald, Kate Fitzgerald, Campbell Alexander, Judge DeSalvo, Zanne, Taylor Ambrose and Julia Romano. From the interaction between characters, she creates conflicts and builds the plot. In *My Sister’s Keeper* there is an ironic condition that a mother makes effort to save Kate alive. In other hand, she sacrifices another child, Anna, as body reserve for Kate.

The time and place of this novel are clearly written. Picoult mentions the time of this story in several chapters of novel, it is on 1990-2003, or around twenty century. While the setting taken in four places. First is in Fitzgerald house. Some events of this story happen on this place.

She matches upstairs and opens up our bedroom door to find my sister hysterical on her bed, and just like that the world collapses again.—(MSK: 11)

The second is Alexander’s office; in this place Anna proposed her medical emancipation case to her attorney Campbell Alexander.

Campbell Alexander, esquire’s office is on the third floor. The walls are paneled with the wood the color of a chestnut mare’s coat, and when I step onto the thick Oriental rug on the floor, my sneakers sink an inch.—(MSK: 15)
Third is Providence Hospital; it is a hospital where Kate was diagnosed as APL patient and she got medical treatment.

We have been at Providence Hospital for three hours, and with every passing minute it gets more difficult to deceive myself into believing that Dr. Wayne made a mistake. –(MSK:29)

Last place is the court, Anna encounter her mother of medical emancipation of her body in the court.

I stand up, my hands in my pockets. ‘Can you tell the Court how the Fitzgeralds came to consults Providence Hospital’s preimplantation genetic diagnosis team to conceive Anna?’ –(MSK: 324)

In organizing My Sister’s Keeper novel, Jody Picoult uses flashback plot. It is unusual plot in present time, but from that plot can make the novel more interesting. It shows every past event of the novel. The conflicts and the resolution which are created by Jody Picoult are very complicated in conveying her idea to send her message to the readers. She also uses standard grammatical structure. The variation between long and short sentences makes the novel so attractive.

There is a comfort to having Brian beside me, as if we are now a pair of sentries, a double line of defense. We have been at Providence Hospital, and with every passing minute it gets more difficult to deceive myself into believing Dr. Wayne made a mistake. Jesse is asleep in a plastic chair. Kate has undergone another traumatic blood raw, and a chest X-ray, because I mentioned that she has a cold. –(MSK:29)

Meanwhile the standard grammars are used in the dialogue, for example:

‘Providence Hospital doesn’t know anything,’ he says fiercely.
‘Do you remember when the chief’s son broke his left arm, and they put a cast on the right one?’—(MSK:34)

The diction based on medical terminology because the novel tells about Acute Promyelocytic Leukemia, it uses to support the story of the novel.

Kate has acute promyelocytic leukemia.—(MSK:9)

Molecular relapse and granulocyte and portacath- these words are part of my vocabulary, eventhough I’ll never find them on any SAT. –(MSK:10)

‘Anemia, right?’ I ask the pediatrician. ‘Kids her age don’t get mono, do they?’ –(MSK:27)

This novel has two themes, there are family and individuality. Family means how a family especially parent do everything for their child. And
individuality in this novel means that there is a mother, Sara that gives more attention to Kate who has Acute Promyelocytic Leukemia, yet wanting to panting attention to the other children. This novel shows the individuality of Anna when she refused to donate her kidney for her sister. It happened because she does not want to live like a shadow of her sister. The discussion above shows that the structural elements of *My Sister’s Keeper* novel. In addition, the discussion of the verbal abuse in kidney donor in *My Sister’s Keeper* novel has a close relation with paradigmatic and syntagmatic analysis.

From the paradigmatic perspectives it can be analyzed from many aspect, from title the writer get the phrase *My Sister’s* that can be separated into /My/ /Sister’s/. The word /My/ can be changed with the other word like her, his, or its. But the reason of the Author of the novel uses *My* to the other because she wants to give explanation if the subject of the novel focuses on a person. In other one, the word /Sister’s/ also can be changed with other word like aunt or auntie. The substitution of the words of phrase will not change the meaning of phrase. A reason why the Author of that novel uses *Sister’s* to the other because the author wants to clarify if there is a relation between determiner and modifier. The phrase *My Sister’s* has deepest meaning of the title.

On the syntagmatic analysis, it concerns with relation among the signifieds in the connotative level, it has shown how deep the signified give the representation of verbal abuse in *My Sister’s Keeper* novel. For the representation of verbal abuse in the title *My Sister’s Keeper* novel is in the phrase *My Sister’s Keeper* that contains contradictive meaning. It means a people who or child who become a keeper for another people and people who was keeping their sibling in particularly their sister.

The representation of verbal abuse in *My Sister’s Keeper* novel is shown how the author creates some characters in there. First, Sara is a symbol of strongest woman who struggle for her child. Sara’s icon represents the bad quality of character or the protagonist character of the novel that takes bad aspects of characterization.

> My mother could be beautiful, if she were parachuted into someone else’s life. She has long dark hair and the fine collarbones of a princess, but the corners of her mouth turn down, like she’s swallowed bitter news.—(MSK: 10)

The denotative meaning of Sara Fitzgerald is a beautiful woman about 30 years old with long dark hair. She was married with Brian Fitzgerald and they have three children, there are Kate Fitzgerald, Jesse Fitzgerald and Anna Fitzgerald. She is an ex-lawyer and still takes care of her daughter Kate who has *Acute Promyelocytic Leukemia*. The connotative meanings are the character Sara Fitzgerald represents a struggle of a mother. She was stubborn to make a baby design as perfect match donor to save Kate. Some considerations that it was hurting Anna as perfect match donor of Kate. Sara is a symbol of strongest woman who struggles for her child.
And the second major character is Anna; she is a symbol of sacrifice of her sister and need a medical emancipation of her body. That icon represents the weaknesses of a child that underage to do donating her kidney and need to be protected.

Now that I am thirteen, these distinctions are only more complicated……

—(MSK: 7)

I was born for a many specific purposes. I wasn’t the result of a cheap bottle of wine or a full moon or the heat of the moment. I was born because a scientist managed to hook up my mother’s eggs and my father’s sperm to create a specific combination of precious genetic material. —(MSK: 7)

The denotative meaning is Anna Fitzgerald is a child about 13 years old who is beautiful nice and kindly person. The author creates Anna as a major character as a perfect match donor for her sister. The connotative meaning is Anna Fitzgerald is a symbol of sacrifice for her sister and need a medical emancipation for her body. It is proposed to stop employing her body as a perfect match donor kidney.

In setting of place, verbal abuse in *My Sister’s Keeper* is shown by Providence London. There are some places that mostly take in the novel. Fitzgerald house is one of the setting place, several plot built in that place. And several place that contributes in the story.

In the plot sequence shows many conflicts, the flashback plot is more interesting in explaining a story of someone’s life journey. Anna’s decision to bring the case to the court without considering the impact from the case makes Sara has possessive felling and a role to scold someone to be responsible with the effect of the act. Finally, Sara understands the reason why her daughter was ready to die.

As the syntagmatic analysis, verbal abuse in *My Sister’s Keeper* novel will be meaningful by supporting signifiers and signifieds. There are verbal abuses that occur to Anna:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal Abuse</th>
<th>Signifiers &amp; Signifieds</th>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Denotative &amp; Connotative Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Making Others Feels Unwanted and Unloved | The signifier is a condition that makes others feeling unwanted and unloved and the signified is the major character, Anna, fell on deaf ears of her mother, except she needs her blood or something to save Kate. | *She looks down, so that her hair covers her face. “They don’t really pay attention to me, except when they need my blood or something. I wouldn’t even be alive, if it wasn’t for Kate being sick.”*—(MSK: 18) | The denotative meaning of unwanted is not having a good reason and therefore annoying or unfair. The denotative meaning of unloved is not loved; dislike each other. Therefore the denotative meaning of making others feeling unwanted and unloved is the activity that subject is under protest with the object. That makes object feeling unwanted and unloved. The connotative meaning of
| Isolating a Person from Some Type of Support System, Consisting of Friends or Family | The signifier is a condition that isolating a person from some type of support system, consisting of friends or family and the signified is Anna should in the house to keep her sister. If she playing with her friend, her sister felt uncomfortable with this condition, she needs to be resting. | “Do your friends still play hockey?” “Friends?” she shakes her head. “You can’t really have anyone over to your house when your sister needs to be resting. You don’t get invited back for sleepovers when your mom comes to pick up at two in the morning to go to the hospital. It’s probably been a while since you’ve been middle school, but most people think freak hood is contagious” – (MSK: 99-100) | making others feeling unwanted and unloved represents a person who has negative attitude that makes another person feeling unloved and unwanted strength of their attitude. In generally, the object will get different treatment by their family or their friends. It is evidenced definitely representing the object which is outcast in their society. |
| Manipulating People to Submit to Undesirable Behavior | The signifier is a condition that manipulates people to submit to undesirable behavior and the signified when Sara persuades her daughter to do something, and she threatens slowly. | Anna sits with her back to the wall. She is angry, too. “I’m not doing this.” I crouch down next to her. “There is nothing, believe me, It’s rather make you do less. But if you don’t, Anna, the one day, you’re going to wish you had.” – (MSK: 246) | The denotative meaning of ‘isolating’ is a border or a rule that shoes the limits of something or how things are divided. The phrase ‘isolating person’ means a person who separates someone from other things or people with which they are joined or mixed, or to keep them separate. The connotative meaning of isolating person represents an act that bounded a person from someone or something to protect the person as specific purposes. The act of isolating person does not cogitating the effect to the object. |

| The denotative meaning of manipulating people is ‘control someone to your advantage, often unfair of dishonestly’. The denotative meaning of undesirable is people whose behavior or appearance makes them unacceptable in society or at a particular occasion. Therefore the denotative meaning of manipulating people to submit to undesirable behavior is control someone whose behavior or appearance makes them unacceptable |
The denotative meaning of ‘manipulating words’ is controlling someone or something to your own advantage, often unfairly or dishonestly. 

The connotative meaning of manipulating words represents a falsehood that gives an advantage other people. It will be continuous falsehood before someone or something stops it with some evidence.

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**Manipulating Words**

The signifier is the condition that there are manipulating words and the signified is the major character, Sara, lying about Kate if she does not accept donating marrow from Anna. It does to convince Anna donating her bone marrow.

I duck my head. “I don’t want to do it anymore.” That ignites my mother. “Well, you know Anna, neither do in fact, neither does Kate. But it’s not something we have a choice about—”—(MSK: 48)

“I was told that donating marrow isn’t considered a particularly invasive procedure for a donor. Maybe I was just waiting to hear those words: maybe I needed to hear them at the time. And maybe I was not thinking as much of Anna as I should have been, because I was so focused on Kate. But I know beyond a doubt that—like everyone else in our family- Anna wanted nothing more than for her sister to be cured.”— (MSK: 269)

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**Accusing Others Falsely for The Purpose of Manipulating a Person’s Decisions**

The signifier is the condition that accusing others falsely for the purpose of

“Mrs. Fitzgerald’s youngest daughter is seeking medical emancipation from her parents.”

The denotative meaning of accusing others is suggesting that you think that someone has done something bad or a
As in *My Sister’s Keeper* novel, the combination and relation and association the many signifieds shows verbal abuse that was happened to Anna Fitzgerald that can raise the representation of verbal abuse inside.

5. Conclusions

Based on the discussion above, the researcher comes to conclude as follows: In this novel, Picoult wants to illustrate how a mother endeavors to keep her daughter alive. Everything is going to do though she has sacrificed other daughters. The author of the novel also builds complex character inside. It makes the novel more interesting to read.

As result of this research, the writer concludes the result of structural element analysis and the semiotic analysis. First, *My Sister’s Keeper* novel is written by Jody Picoult. In *My Sister’s Keeper* novel, Jody Picoult creates the major characters of this novel, Sara Fitzgerald and Anna Fitzgerald. She also creates minor characters to strengthen this story. There are several names of minor characters, namely, Brian Fitzgerald, Jesse Fitzgerald, Kate Fitzgerald, Campbell Alexander, Judge DeSalvo, Zanne, Taylor Ambrose and Julia Romano. The setting of place takes in four places and the setting of time begin at 1990. The author of the novel uses flashback plot. She also uses standard grammatical structure. The novel shows the individuality of major character, Anna, when she refused to donate her kidney for her sister. From structural element analysis, it shows that each of the elements of the novel are interrelated to each other and forming a unity. Picoult makes this novel very interesting to read.

Second, the researcher concludes the My Sister’s Keeper novel has a close relation with paradigmatic and syntagmatic analysis. The researcher finds many verbal abuses in that novel. There are making others feeling unwanted and unloved; isolating a person from some types of support system,
consisting of friends or family; manipulating people to submit the undesirable behavior; manipulating words; and accusing others falsely for the purpose of manipulating a person’s decisions making. People who have abused by other people feeling if they are unloved, unwanted and some others. In this novel, verbal abuse does by a mother to her child. This condition making child or someone who gets verbal abuse rebelled against their parent’s act of them. Though a major character, Sara Fitzgerald, want to keep her daughter alive, she should not sacrifice another child. There is a better way to solving her problem without harm the others. And as the syntagmatic analysis, verbal abuse in *My Sister’s Keeper* novel will be meaningful by supporting signifiers and signifieds. As in *My Sister’s Keeper* novel, the combination and relation and association the many signifieds shows verbal abuse that was happened.
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