

A DEFENSE MECHANISM BASED ANALYSIS OF SELECTED STORY

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Abstract

This research is aimed to discuss the kind of defense mechanisms that are performed by characters in Oscar Wilde's story *The Importance of Being Earnest* in their related positions and the implementation of characters' mechanisms in managing and solving the rising conflicts. The research used defense mechanism based analysis. In the analysis, two aspects of defense mechanisms were observed. Those aspects are characters' behaviors and how such behaviors are performed to settle the rising throughout the successive events in the in the play. The research results show the rest of the defense mechanism acts exist at every level of characters' unconsciousness's. In the three acts of the play, the characters mostly perform: denial, displacement, projection, reaction formation, regression and rationalization acts to defend themselves. Even though, there are three cores of conflicts, but every conflict does not totally become real conflicts because several characters in the play are finally able to overcome any related conflict.

Keywords: defense mechanism, behavior, character, conflicts and awareness.

Introduction

Men and society are related to each other until now and, of course, at the same time men are also trying to make their identities through their feelings, thoughts, and emotions in society. When one or more identities meet another identity, basic assumption will be constraining peace and happiness or triggering friction and tension; obviously, the consensus among identities is an answer. But when the basic Instinct of an identity comes up as psychological determinism, it naturally forms conflict as a response and, on the next stage, specific acts happen as further responses.

Connecting to ideas, Play as a part of literature may also explain the kinds of human conditions and it is considering as a small mode of the real world, Culler (1997: 45) emphasizes that a literary work—*Hamlet*, for instance—is characteristically the story of a fictional character: it presents itself as in some way exemplary (why else would you read it?), but it simultaneously declines to define the range or scope of that exemplarit – hence the ease with which readers and critics come to speak about the ‘*universality*’ of literature. From the statement, literature deals with the true-life events in the society which are transmitted into fiction and presented it to the society as mirror or reflection so that the

reader can see him/herself within.

Literary work is presented to the readers as a description of social condition, In a story there will be some defense mechanisms acts that can be revealed. The selected play in the research also has some defense mechanisms acts that need to be investigated further, the selected play represents conventional Victorian values such as nations, honor and moral values. In fact, Oscar Wilde sends up criticism through the characters of play against the hypocrisy in conventional Victorian morality, it is also argued by Oscar Wilde in Danson (1997:80) that the highest criticism is that which reveals in the work of art what the artist had not put there. The characters used their egos to keep their honorable images unharmed, one of the egos, like the use of Ernest which enabled characters (Earnest Worthing and Algernon Moncrieff) to escape from the boundaries of their real lives and acts. The characters wanted to be seen as upright and have solid moral, but, what they actually did was a mask to escape from real life.

Literature Review

In Freud's personality theory, there are conscious pre conscious and unconscious minds as the parts of mental processing hence humans can think and act normally. There are three components of personality: *the id, the ego, and the superego*. The Id is personality energy that creates satisfaction for basic needs and desires. The ego is a part of personality that fulfills the id, the superego and reality inquiries.

One of personality theories is defense mechanisms theory, it is formed by the ego to defend against anxiety and tension. Defense mechanisms are developed in early childhood, they operate automatically in the habitual events of humans' life. The difficulties to cope with actual anxieties are the main reason of defense mechanisms, it is supported by Hentschel, Smith, Draguns, Elhers (2004:9) that defense mechanisms are automatic psychological processes that protect the individual against anxiety and from the awareness of internal or external.

The idea of defense mechanisms is broadly accepted by general schools of thought until now. As practitioners, Anna and Sigmund Freud have influenced many uncovered ideas about defense mechanisms and these ideas appear as avant-garde in the century. In Freudian theory, there are eight types of defense mechanisms and each mechanism emphasizes the roots of mind that deal with humans' present conditions and these can be particularly recognized within humans' life conditions and strengths. In short, Krapp (2005: 157-158) mentions the types of defense mechanisms, namely repression, denial,

displacement, projection, reaction formation, regression, rationalization and sublimation

Defense Mechanisms and Human Behavior deal with the capability of humans to react and interact to their environments. Humans have receptive tools that link to mechanisms and will react against threat senses, the receptive tools are form nose mouth, eyes, ears, and skin, and they obtain the stimuli from their environments around them. Sigmund Freud in Kurzweil.E and Phillips.W (1983:130) states human behavior is determined, not consciously, but by instinctive needs, hunger and love. Human behaviour are integrated in complicated structures, they perceive their capacities from the environment, and of course, they are derived from cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and other factors.

Humans' behaviour changes day to day and makes actions, in relation to literature, humans' behaviour is coped in so many kinds of problematic issues that deals with the true-life events in the society and through fiction, the characters present particular behaviour or mechanisms as mirror or reflection for him/herself within. Abrams (1999:32) also states characters as the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities. In short, the development and resolution of conflicts turns around typical defense mechanisms

Methodology

The research was written based on primary data and secondary data. The primary data was the play *The Importance of Being Earnest* published by The New American Library (1958, 54 Pages). The researcher read the story carefully, and later on, analyze the part of the story. The secondary data was videos, books, journals, articles, dictionaries, and encyclopedias, both printed and electronics that possibly relevant to the topic the research. In the research, the researcher used descriptive qualitative method. Descriptive qualitative method presented the data in descriptive form, as Hasan (1990:16) states that qualitative research is always descriptive. It means the data are analyzed and the results outline the description of phenomena, the data are not numbers or coefficients among variables. Qualitative research method reveals the description of authentic realities on natural situation in terms of real phenomena. Furthermore, the data were described on the analysis of corpora such as facts, distinctiveness, and correlation of elements.

Result

The details of each character's defense mechanisms are elaborated as follows:

a. Jack Worthing

The researcher found: Projection is as the first defense mechanism (35), Displacement is as the second defense mechanism (23), Rationalization is as the third defense mechanism (22), Reaction Formation is as the fourth defense mechanism (16), Denial is as the fifth defense mechanism (14), Regression is as the sixth defense mechanism (3), at last, Repression and Sublimation is the minor ones (2).

b. Algernon Moncrieff

The researcher found: Rationalization is as the first defense mechanism (38), Displacement is as the second defense mechanism (16), Projection is as the third defense mechanism (9), Regression is as the fourth defense mechanism (6), Denial is as the fifth defense mechanism (4), Reaction Formation is as the sixth defense mechanism (2), at last, Repression is the minor one (1).

c. The Rev. Canon Chasuble, D.D

The researcher found: Projection is the first defense mechanism (5), Displacement is as the second defense mechanism (4), at last, Repression is the minor one (1).

d. Merriman

He performs (1) Repression mechanism is his dominant defense mechanism.

e. Lane

He performs (3) Repression mechanisms and (2) Rationalization mechanisms. Repression mechanism is his dominant defense mechanism and Rationalization is minor one.

f. Lady Bracknell

The researcher found: Projection is as the first defense mechanism (15), Reaction Formation is as the second defense mechanism (12), Displacement is as the third defense mechanism (9), Repression is as the fourth defense mechanism (2), and at last, Denial and Rationalization are the minor one (1).

g.Hon. Gwendolen Fairfax

The researcher found: Projection is as the first defense mechanism (13), Reaction Formation is as the second defense mechanism (10), Displacement is as the third defense mechanism (5), Denial is as the fourth defense mechanism (4), Repression is as the fifth defense mechanism (2) and at last, Regression is the minor one (1).

h.Cecily Cardew

The researcher found: Projection is as the first defense mechanism (28), Displacement is as the second defense mechanism (21), Rationalization is as the third defense mechanism (4), Reaction Formation is as the fourth defense mechanism (3), Repression and Regression are as the fifth defense mechanism (2) and at last, Denial is the minor one (1).

i.Miss Prism

The researcher found: Displacement is as the first defense mechanism (6), Projection is as the second defense mechanism (4), and at last, Reaction Formation is the minor ones(2).

Discussion

The rest of the defense mechanism acts remains at every level of characters' unconsciousnesses, which is: repression, denial, displacement, projection, reaction formation, regression, rationalization and sublimation. In the three acts of play *The Importance of Being Earnest* published by The New American Library (1958, 54 Pages), there are (358) defense mechanisms acts that had been performed by characters related to their positions. Based on the finding above, it is indicated that there are defense mechanisms acts performed by characters. In the three acts of play *The Importance of Being Earnest* published by The New American Library (1958, 54 Pages), the characters mostly performed denial, displacement, projection, reaction formation, regression and rationalization acts to defend themselves against any anxiety and tension because those are in the outer part of

awareness and it can be easily seen, so that, the researcher can order and analyze the selected data (defense mechanisms acts) that exists in the Act 1, Act 2, and Act 3 of the story “The Importance of Being Earnest”.

In other hand, the characters rarely performed repression and sublimation because those are in the inner part of awareness and it took more investigation to digest it. The researcher had also identified that there were three sources of conflicts, among others: **Jack Worthing**: Conflict between Jack Worthing vs Lady Bracknell, Conflict between Jack Worthing vs Gwendolen and Conflict between Jack Worthing vs Algernon Moncrieff. **Algernon Moncrieff**: Conflict between Algernon Moncrieff vs Jack Worthing and Conflict between Algernon Moncrieff vs Cecily Cardew. **Lady Bracknell**: Conflict between Lady Bracknell vs Jack Worthing, Conflict between Lady Bracknell vs Gwendolen Fairfax and Conflict between Lady Bracknell vs Miss Prism.

Conclusion

The rest of the defense mechanism acts exist at every level of characters' unconsciousnesses, namely: repression, denial, displacement, projection, reaction formation, regression, rationalization and sublimation. In the three acts of play, the characters mostly perform denial, displacement, projection, reaction formation, regression and rationalization acts to defend themselves. As the reflection of characters' mechanisms in managing and solving the rising conflicts, the researcher also found that every character's mechanism in the play *The Importance of Being Earnest* did not totally become conflicts because of some characters in the story *The Importance of Being Earnest* are able to put their awareness against every conflict. In the story *The Importance of Being Earnest*, the researcher has identified the three cores of conflicts, namely Jack Worthing, Algernon Moncrieff and Lady Bracknell. The story ends happily when the characters know the importance of having name "*Earnest*".

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