

DEFAMILIARIZATION OF CHARACTER IN ANTOINE DE SAINT EXUPERY'S *THE LITTLE PRINCE*

Nora Dita Zakiah Ridho'I

Program Studi Sastra Inggris
Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya

Tri Pramesti

Program Studi Sastra Inggris
Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya

Abstract. Defamiliarization is a device of art to make things unfamiliar by a process of making strange (estrangement) to increase the difficulty and length the perceptions. *The Little Prince*, a novella by Antoine De Saint Exupery presents the defamiliarized characters which appear strange and unfamiliar. To recognize them, the character's familiarity should be identified by the schemata study before came into defamiliarization. Experiencing the artfulness of object will give the reader chance to discover any kind of perceived meaning without inhibition for their judgments. This study uses qualitative method in terms of close reading technique in scrutinizing Antoine de Saint Exupery's *The Little Prince*. The discussion is conducted through its characters. Although those device are common objects, they appeared strange to open the reader's mind into any possible assumptions, meaning, and interpretation.

Key-words : automatism of perception, defamiliarization, schemata

INTRODUCTION

Defamiliarization is a device of art to make things unfamiliar by a process of making strange (estrangement) to increase the difficulty and length the perceptions. Antoine de Saint Exupery's novella entitled *The Little Prince* is seemingly a story for children or speak to the children. Actually it is addressed to be read by many different levels of readers with surprising meanings. The story is about children perception towards the action done by the adults. In *The Little Prince* some common objects and their habits seem strange but understandable. The characters are not only just objects to support another elements such as the talk able flower, making friend with a fox, snake,

possessing an asteroid and more, they also become unfamiliar objects.

To recognize de-familiarization, objects should be identified by the schemata study. Experiencing the artfulness of object will give the reader a chance to discover any kind of perceived meaning without inhibition for their judgments. Through character and characterization, the discussion will open the reader's mind into any possible assumptions, meaning, and interpretation.

DISCUSSION

A. Defamiliarization in *the Little Prince*

Defamiliarization in *The Little Prince* is illustrated through the

characters. Characters are based on their familiarity and the estrangement. The estrangement of the characters in this story is all of them have no name. In characterizing the characters, the author named them based on their physical appearance, so the familiarity emerges because of the automatism of perception and the image that had been organized in schemata. At the same time *The little prince* appears strange and wonderful since it challenges the reader's schema.

What seems to be familiar to the readers is actually beyond their familiarization.

In order to lead into defamiliarization approach, schemata as the structure of expectation are rendered by estrangement. Thus, the literariness and meaningful perception are achieved instead of just recognizing devices. The defamiliarization in *The Little Prince* will be shortly explained through the table that follows:

No	Person/Place	Familiarity/ Image/ automation of perception	Estrangements /defamiliarization
1	Little prince	Ruler, a king monarch A boy with odd prince's suit (fantasy) a small magical human creature Preeminent person in their field	Not a son of king Coming from another planet capable in having interaction with animal and plants Building relationship with flower and fox.
2	Airman	Pilot of an aircraft/ air force member Professional in reading map explored the whole world	desire of being painter
3	King	male, heading the monarchy seat on throne majestic Clad in purple and ermine absolute monarch	simple no castle, queen knight, councilman
4	Drunkard	A person who is habitually drunk Bottles of alcohol within Reason to drink	Ashamed Justifying twist logic
5	Businessman	Man in business, one who works at a commercial institution Well-suited (neckties) A lot of properties and money	Counting stars Owning stars
6	Lamplighter	A person employed to light streetlight(s) at dusk and snuff them at dawn. Required Lamp-post	Beautiful and useful occupation Unfortunate (setting case) 1440 sunsets a day
7	Geographer	A specialist in geography	Never become old fashioned Carving for explorer Just knowing geographies

8	Railway signalman	Signaler is an employee of a railway transport network who operates the points and signals from a signal box in order to control movement of trains.	Sorting out thousand travelers Disapproval attitude towards travelers
9	Merchant	Owner or operator of a retail business, trading vessels in commodities for profit.	Selling sophisticated pills Demands of saving time
10	Boa constrictor	American snakes Carnivore Legless reptile with long, thicker than ordinary snake body, and a fork-shaped tongue	Eating elephant

B. Defamiliarization of Character

In literary creation, characters are created to produce lifelikeness in the work of fiction (Simon & Schuster : 30). They have their own lifelikeness, complexity, and their methods of character portrayal to lead them into reader’s awareness. Classifying the character in a story cannot be parted from the elements of the story. The appearance of the character brings the reader up into the plot. Most of the characters portrayed in this story is told individualized simple person and things.

The concept of familiarity is treating objects as familiar or our human-habitual-like or stereotype known in human being background knowledge. The lifelikeness of character is simply natural and tends to similar with the people (or any other creature portrayal) in real life. On the other hand, the concept of estrangement might appear artificial which lead the character not real. Nobody in this story has name, thus the following characters presented come with the common title to lead general automatism. They estrange their portrayal to make readers experience artfulness of the objects. Some motivations are made up for reasons by the author to imply the meaning which probably hard to achieve with the usual form of character

as person. Therefore, things are used as this disapproval in such objects forces the reader to prolong their perception and easily come into defamiliarization.

1. The Little Prince

Generally, a prince is a son of the ruler of a kingdom. He usually lives in a castle wearing an odd’s prince outfit. Little prince has the common look with golden lock and wears leather strap and golden muffler. Readers can associate his image as prince George of Cambridge with the same golden curls. In *The Little Prince*, little prince is his given name that has no relationship with aristocratic family. The little prince still appears unique as he come from another planet and wearing odd’s suit even he is not the son of any king.

The defamiliarization that illustrated from little prince lies in his character as the image of children in the whole story. His portrayal forces the adult readers to think as a child who is innocent, kind, and pure. The image of little prince will bring reader closer to his/her understanding. In addition, his character shows that little prince curious and love adventure to discover the world.

“Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves and it is

rather tedious for children to have to explain things to them time and again”(11)

Exupery shows his disapproval of adults' way of thinking. He believes that children's perception is valuable, because their innocence lead no difficulty towards life. "Children should always show great forbearance towards grown-ups”(22). Their imagination in facing life is more meaningful and brings satisfaction which would be hard to explain in words. That is why remembering our childhood playing around is more fanciful than our great achievement experiences. It said "only children know what they are looking for" (86), children do not ask explanation or proofs of what they are looking for to satisfy their need. They purely want it.

"The fact is that I did not know how to understand anything! I ought to have judged by deeds and not by words. She cast her fragrance and her radiance over me. I ought never to have run away from her.. I ought to have guessed all the affection that lay behind her poor little stratagems. Flowers are so inconsistent! But I was too young to know how to love her."(39)

The Little prince once ever acted like a grown-up when he began to fall in love with the rose in his planet. He begins to feel the attractions of the rose. He becomes aware with his opposite's attractions. Love drives him into complicated thought to understand other ones. Yet, he has learnt and appreciated the love he should embrace. The sanity of rose's lovely intention hiding behind her stratagems is like woman's heart that is so inconsistent.

"Men have forgotten this truth," said the fox. "But you must not forget it. You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed. You are responsible for your rose..."(82)

For the last conversation they have, little prince get some advices from the fox the meaning of responsibility. He should be responsible for what he has done. The friendship between the little prince and the fox is against the automatism of perception. Fox is a wild animal, he works instinctively. In *the little Prince* the cunning fox becomes a wise man teaching a child what an adult should be. The interaction between human and animal should be pure because they understand each other and always expect the unique of each other and happily perceived them as they are without any reason or explanation.

2. An Airman

The thought of an airman's discovery in the desert is described in detail. The job of an airman is a dream job even for adults as it is one of top most occupation with high salary. His/her work is flying plane, exploring the earth, discovering maps and traveling to all around universe. "I flew more or less all over the world. And indeed geography has been extremely useful to me. I am able to distinguish between China and Arizona at a glance”(11). Adult's dream of going all around the world, the airman even could recognize any space of world in ease. In reader's perception, it is a great job done by a great man. In reader's image, an airman is a person who knows geography well, he even has knowledge between country and a state part of the USA. Even though he then said, "I gave up magnificent career as painter at the age of six”(11) . It can be

said that the story does not tell about his great experience as an airman.

Despite his occupation, he still thinks that he should be an artist. He argued adults do not understand his drawing, his masterpiece. They did not see objects are should be appreciated, but they need explanations or proof to value them. A child does not understand why adults need explanation and what made them do not understand his intentions. He had already drawn the second drawing to give explanations for the first one. His drawing is only understood by children. He gave up his dream as a painter because the grown-ups do not appreciate his picture. The airman loses his confidence in his big dream at that age which made him lose his trust to adults.

As a child, an airman shows the complexity of an adult's topic such as "bridge, golf, politics, and neckties" (11). He chooses golf rather than soccer or swimming because those activities are associated with the success of a man. He is aware that people love to show their success in term of money and wealth. Golf simply represents sport interest for high-class, rather than just a hobby for spending leisure time, but it is more on how people luxuriously spend their time. Politics is the attribute of adult, he shows that he is not a kid anymore. Kid will never consider about government, corruptions, or nations which this kind of stuff will never come out from the children's conversation. Neckties, he needs to talk about success. Great figure in white scholar such as the executives will be conscious about their suit and necktie. He argues that they are obsessed with money, ambitions, evidence and figures.

"I shall also make mistakes about some more important details. But I must be forgiven

for that. perhaps I am a little like grown-ups. I am getting old." (23)

Making mistakes and be forgiven are the characteristics of the grown-ups. Become an airman is a mistake for him because he forgets some important detail.

3. A King

"Clad in purple and ermine, he was seated on a thorn, both simple and majestic"(42)

The king represents the power and the human leader. The embodiment of this character is simple with the crown attributes. The automatism of perception of a king should be with his knights, councilman and lady courts. The king is portrayed is not the stereotype of king like in other fiction. The king in *the Little Prince* is described as a person who "tolerated no obedience. He was an absolute monarch". There are two conflicting explanations about the king. The first one is "for king attached considerable importance to his authority being respected. He "for he was not only an absolute monarch but a universal one"(44), but "as he was very kind, he gave reasonable orders"(44).

The image of a king authority is no obedience to everyone in his domination. The schema knowledge of a king who has absolute monarch is totalitarian government in which the government control every aspect of life. In *the Little Prince* Exupery portrayed a king as a very friendly person who understands his people need. Defamiliarization also means intensifying the sensation of things.

4. Conceited man

“a conceited individual’ Aha! Here comes an admirer!’.. for conceited man see all other men as admirer”(48)

“Conceited man only hear praise..”(49)

“To admire means that you consider me as the handsomest, the best dressed, the richest and the most intelligent man on this planet... do me this kindness. Admire me all the same!”(49)

In the introduction of the conceited man, he already treats little prince as his admirer. In automatism of perception, conceited man is no more than an arrogant man. It is familiar for the readers that an arrogant man in fiction is usually antagonist who is at least against little prince. In this story, defamiliarization leads us to have knowledge of a thing through the organ of sight instead of recognition. The conceited man argues that everyone is his admirer. It shows one of the grown-ups’ behavior, arrogance. They arrogantly want to be admired or being the center of attention. He only sees his own perception without considering other’s whether they like to praise them or just do it in necessity. He probably sees himself as a figure that will always impress everyone. There is no reason for little prince to hate his attitude though. Therefore, understanding people’s attitude by paying attention of this character is impressive. The higher sight of understanding other’s perception will bring us to be a better person and feel the value of true respect.

5. A Drunkard

“to forget that I am ashamed.... ashamed of drinking!” (51)

In reader’s automatism of perception, a drunkard is a person keeping drinking. Exupery wrote this

character very short. Most people become drunkard for reasons. It is considered as one of author’s attempt to describe adults’ habit of drinking, so short, but it causes deep sadness and feel less useful. He justifies the twist logic for drunkard in three words that relatively influence one another : ‘forget’, ‘ashamed’, and ‘drinking’. It can be prolonged as;

- Drunkard forget things > things made him ashamed
- Drunkard is ashamed > he drinks to forget
- Drunkard drinks and he is ashamed of it > he admit his attitude is shameful
- He is ashamed for some reasons > fact of he is drinking also shameful
- He keep doing the useful things that worse his own good.

6. A businessman

“..revealed its number to you, it is on account of grown-ups. Grown-ups love figures... they never ask questions about essential matters” (21)

The most discursive portrayal character is a businessman. A businessman tells readers the character that contributes to the virtue of appropriate neckties and numbers which is also ease the automatism of reader’s perception. Businessman should appear as a man in business, one who works at a commercial institution, having a lot of money, wearing suits. Defamiliarization removes those automatism by describing all the businessman attitudes towards little prince. There the reader is forced to feel the essential of businessman than just recognizing or imagining their obvious attitude. Businessman is portrayed as a person whom only worrying about his

account. In the previous chapters, the author narrated;

“eh, are you still there? Five hundred and one million of.. I don’t remember.. I have so much work! I am serious man, I don’t amuse myself with balderdash! Two and five make seven..”(52)

Exupery describes the businessman as his disapproval expression of grown-ups. The image of businessman is better known as a figure who less care about new comer for their life, focusing on his own business numbering his accounts, showing himself as mature enough or a serious people and he does not have any time to look after other’s perception. The balderdash he mentioned also can be prolonged into unlimited explanation. The author made the object of businessman as grown-ups is unimportant. Further illustration of the author’s disapproval of grown-ups’ attitude also appear in conversation between little prince and business man that discussed about the job as businessman as follows;

‘A : what do you do with five hundred million stars?’

‘B :..nothing, I owe them.’

‘A : and what use is it to you to own the stars?’

‘B : it makes me rich’...’in case which they are mine, because I was the first person to think of it’

‘A : And what is the point of being rich?’

‘B : it enables me to buy the other stars, if anybody can find any’”(54-55)

The conversation between businessman and little prince is normal. The turn taking of each

conversation is also well formed. The addresser (little prince) and the addressee (businessman) performs the question-answer speech act well. Exupery has used simple vocabularies and colloquial words in this line. However, he defamiliarizes them by juxtaposing words which are not semantically accompanied with each other. Exupery forces readers to overcome the imagination of what they are arguing. The concept of being rich here, rather than showing the role of money as standard of rich, Exupery estranges having money as owning stars. Commonly, it is accompanied with moon, or sun. However, all of the subject that businessman do, count, owe are just stars.

7. A Lamplighter

“The little prince wondered what could be the use of a lamp-post and a lamplighter somewhere in the sky, on the planet without houses or people.”(57)

This sentence estranges the reader’s Automatism of perception. The author defamiliarizes a lamp-post and a lamplighter. Lamplighter is a person employed to light streetlight(s) at dusk and snuff them at dawn. He required Lamp-post. But in the story, the lamplighter is not associated with people nor houses and light. Exupery describes him as one of the figure of grown-ups who is not absurd, as:

“for at least his work has some meaning. When he lights his streetlamp, it is as he brought one star to life. ...when he extinguishes his lamp, he puts ... the star to sleep. It is beautiful occupation. And since it is beautiful, it is truly useful.”(57)

The automatism of reader's perception of lamplighter is a person who has important job because he/she light the street in which the people pass by. It is important to make the street clear and bright because it can avoid the dangerous action. In *the Little Prince*, the lamplighter brought one star to life, so it is not about the street it is about hope and clear and bright life. by characterizing the lamplighter, the author shows the readers that the lamplighter's work seems not important, but it is actually very important because without him there will be no light of life.

8. A Geographer

"a geographer is a scholar who knows the location of all the seas, the river, the cities, the mountains, and the deserts."(62)

A geographer is obviously a specialist in geography. The existence of geographer becomes more powerful that giving suggestion to little prince to come to the earth. The geographer knows that he needs an explorer like the little prince to give proof of the geologic events. So he suggests little prince to come to earth. The geographer has a job like an airman who is excellent in reading and drawing a map.

9. The railway signalman

"I sort out the travelers, in a bundles of a thousand. I shunt the trains carrying them"(85)

The railway signalman is a signaler who is employee of a railway transport network who operates the points and signals from a signal box in order to control movement of trains. It is conventionally described familiar

occupation. Readers are familiar that railway signalman who usually works in a train station. However, it is quiet impossible for a man can count or classify thousand travelers into train. Exupery removes the automatization of perception of the machine that they operate on. The system will never run well without the human who had idea to create and manage them.

The railway signalman absolutely has met billions people in his life. "No one is ever satisfied where they were"(85), he teaches little prince that people (the traveler) are never satisfied. They keep looking for another one and not enjoying the present.

10. Merchant

"He was a merchant selling sophisticated pills intended to quench one's thirst. If a single pill was swallowed once a week, the need to drink disappeared"(87)

The conventional aspects of merchant is so different from the merchant in our everyday life as the setting is in Sahara desert. In reader's schemata, a merchant is the owner or operator of a retail business, trading vessels in commodities for profit. He looks for profit by innovating products and sell them in retail. The product he sells is sophisticated pills that make people do not feel thirsty. It is very unusual even do not exist nowadays. Every one should drink water in order to avoid dehydration that causes death. What appears strange yet wonderful here is the invention of sophisticated pills. The sophisticated pills can be illustrated as the advertisement in TV program which competing each other with their unique functions nowadays. Other product that the merchant sells is the bread maker machine. This machine

removes the need of other requirement like mixer, roller or even the oven. The bread maker is now like sophisticated pills," It saves a lot of time"(87) the machine and the pill save the time, money, energy, removes the complicated default elements. The merchant is an agent to spread over this improvement.

Though the products that the merchant sells seem unfamiliar but, it can be understood cause the merchant sells his goods in Sahara desert. In this desert water is rare and must be expensive so people need sophisticated pills to avoid thirst. De -familiarization of the products sold by the merchant has function to intensify the impression of senses and things.

11. Boa Constrictor

A boa constrictor is an American snake, legless reptile with long, thicker than ordinary snake body, and a fork-shaped tongue. It lives in swamp and categorizes as carnivore. The estrangement that appears from Boa constrictor in *Little Prince* is it lives in Primeval forest and in the airman's childhood drawing. He said the image of boa is a beautiful picture. It swallowed their prey to digests it for months is wonderful. "a boa constrictor digesting elephant" (10). The snake is de-familiarized by describing it eating an elephant. The description of boa eating elephant challenges the reader's familiarization of a snake.

CONCLUSION

Defamiliarization is a device of art to make things unfamiliar by a process of making strange (estrangement) to increase the length of the perceptions. *The Little Prince* by Antoine De Saint Exupery presents the familiar objects into de familiarized one. The object's familiarity is identified by

the schemata study before came into defamiliarization. Through the characters, they appeared strange to open the reader's mind into any possible assumptions, meaning, and interpretation.

Defamiliarization of characters in *The Little Prince* opens the importance of children perception of life as everyone is once a child. At the same time it also questions the automatism of perception of grown-ups. An airman, a king, a conceited man, a merchant, a geographer, a lamplighter, a boa constrictor, the railway signalman, a business man and a drunkard are characters without a name. They are called based on their profession or their personality. The familiarization of those characters are based on the adult's background knowledge, while little prince is portrayed as a child encountering adulthood sees differently.

In *the little Prince*, Exupery does not only tell the readers the story of a child he also quests the adult's automatism of perception. We should not see what we want to see, we should see what we have to see. His message to readers is do not easily judge people from their physical appearance. The little prince is about satisfaction and appreciation of life because of self-evident, love, and friendship. As the time goes by and people always grow up, kid learn about humankind's vice that they obsessed with money, ambitions, evidence and figures.

This study hopefully contributes some insights of Formalism, de -familiarization in daily and written text. The writers hope that this study can contribute useful insights for further literature research. Especially, on applying de-familiarization in some literary works as the work of arts.

REFERENCES

- Abbey, E. 1971. *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness*. New York: Random House
- Brizee, A., Tompkins, J. C., Chernouski, L., Boyle, E. 2011. *Literary Theory and School of Criticism : Formalism (1930s-present)*. <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resouce/722/03/>. Cited on April, 10th 2017
- Blankenhorn, R. 2013. *Habitualization*. www.danablankenhorn.com. Access on 02/01/2017
- Brown, G. & Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse analysis*. Cambridge university press.
- Eagleton, T. (1996). *Literary Theory An Introduction*, Second edition. Great Britain : Blackwell Publishers. Ltd
- Esmaeli, Z. (2013). *The Assesement of Defamiliarization in Forough Farrokhzad's Poetry*. International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature.
- Exupery, A. DE S. (1943). *The Little Prince*. (Ferry, Irene T. Trans). Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited published in 1995
- Gabriel. Richard P. (2012). *Defamiliarization: Flarf, Conceptual Writing, and Using Flawed Software Tools as Creative Partners*. Knowledge Management & E-Learning: An International Journal.
- Groden, M., Kreiswirth, M., & Szeman, I., Review by: Kramp, M. (2005). *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory & Criticism. Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association*
- Hamilton, G. (2014). *Defamiliarization and The Act of Reading World Literature*. Department of English, Chinese University of Hong Kong
- Hunt, P. (1999) *Understanding Children's Literature*. London : Routledge
- Jameson, A.D., (2012). Viktor Shklovsky wants to make you a better writer, device & defamiliarization. [Htmlgiant.com/craft-notes/viktor-shklovsky-wants-to-make-you-a-better-writer-part-1-device-defamiliarization/](http://htmlgiant.com/craft-notes/viktor-shklovsky-wants-to-make-you-a-better-writer-part-1-device-defamiliarization/). Access on April 6th, 2017
- Merriam Webster Dictionary. www.merriam-webster.com
- Miall, David S. & Kuiken, D. (1994). *Foregrounding, Defamiliarization, and affects : Response to Literary Stories*. Elsevier Science B.V
- Notari, Debbie. (2011). *Identifying Themes and Literary Analysis*. BCCC Tutoring Centre.
- Pourjafari, F. (2012). *Defamiliarization in Sohrab Sepehri's Poetry*. Canadian Academy of Oriental and Occidental Culture
- Pratchett, T. (1983). *The Colour of Magic, the first series of Discworld*. Colin Smythe
- Selden, R., Widdowson, P., & Brooker, P. (2005). *A Reader's Guide to*

Contemporary Literary Theory, Fifth Edition. Pearson Education Limited.

Sher. Benjamin. (2009:fourth printing).
Theory of Prose Viktor Shklovsky.
London: Dalkey Archive Press
Champaign.

Shklovsky, V. (1965). *Art as Technique.*
Russian Formalist Criticism: Four

essays. (Lemon, Lee T., & Reis, Marian J. Trans.). Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Wilcox, D. (1997). *The Defamiliarization of Significant Phenomenon.*
Theatre Research International
Vol. 25 no. 1 pp. 74-85

