

DEFENSE MECHANISM IN RAMBO: THE FIRST BLOOD FILM IN REFERENCE TO SEMIOTIC

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ABSTRACT

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This study dealt with defense mechanisms in Rambo : The First Blood Film in reference to semiotic. It employed descriptive qualitative research method. This study was aimed to analyze: (1) The kinds of defense mechanisms experienced by Rambo and (2) why defense mechanism affected the utterance and action of Rambo in reference of semiotic. The data of this study were dialogues statement and figure that contained defense mechanisms. The theories were applied by the writer from Sigmund freud (1993) about defense mechanism and Chandler (2007) about semiotic. Based on the analysis, there were five kinds of defense mechanism used by Rambo, namely Denial (23,8%), Displacement (4,8%), Projection (42,9), Repression (14,3%), and Reaction Formation (14,3%) where Rambo used projection defense mechanisms the most. Fear that steam from trauma and to avoid conflict were the defense mechanism that happened and used by Rambo.

Keywords: *Defense mechanisms, semiotic, Rambo: The First Blood*

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

An essential thing in human life is language. Language is basically used by more than one person. It is caused by the reality that the main function of language is for communicating. Humans interact with other people requires a communication tool in order to understand each other about something, one of which is a sign, so the sign can be interpreted correctly and appropriately. But the sign was not always understood correctly and equally among the people. That discusses the signs called semiotics (the study of signs).

Film is a transformation of the depictions of human life, what can be defined as signs in a film?, the image, the character, the object and the color and the most prominent sign will always be the character. What happens when an audience begins to break down a film sequence or an actor's physicality to more fundamental parts?, semiotics as the study of signs plays an intricate role in the examination of symbols in films and the performing arts.

Literature shows the power of imagination and the product of fictional imagination stories about the real world. Literature is about life or human life as the writer sees or something they believe to be real. In brief, narrative story of film can be also analyzed by using literary theory.

The phenomenon of social or individual problem is reflected in daily conversation especially in face to face conversation where the actual feelings or attitudes can be observed and interpreted through *words* (the literal meaning)

account for 7% of the overall message. *tone* of voice accounts for 38% of the overall message and *body language* accounts for 55% of the overall message (Mehrabian , 1981).

In this era of globalization we see many psychological phenomena happen in society, take an example of obesity among the women, when the media has portrayed a *thin* body ideal for woman for several decades. The cultural ideal for thinness negatively impact woman's body image (Pase, 2014). When a woman wore a pair of jeans and then stated to her friend that the jeans are not feel comfortable, even though in reality the jeans doesn't fit her. The act of denying that fact is called defense mechanism.

language is not needed to be clear when we can't send a clear message, this also applies in defense mechanisms, where we use obscure language to avoid problem it all depend on *tenor* (relation between sender and receiver) and *mode* (mode of communication (Joseph,2016) In short, defense mechanism are inherently closely connected with language.

The example of defense mechanism can be seen in the soldiers who came back after the war, like an army of Indonesian soldier that were sent to Congo Republic in 2012 as their first mission order by PBB. The trauma of war give pain to the soldier in way to communicate with their family, friend, and society. In this case they cope with it by using defense mechanism.

According to Freud, human tends to decrease tension for the purpose of decreasing anxiety and uses defense mechanisms for this purpose. Therefore, defense mechanisms serve the function of protecting individuals from anxiety.

These mechanisms could be psychologically healthy or unhealthy, yet in either case, the basic purpose is to decrease the tension (Allen, 2000) but when get out of proportion, neuroses develop, such as anxiety states, phobias, obsessions, or hysteria.

By knowing that someone used defense mechanism and the reason they used it, we can try to avoid hurting them unconsciously. Defense mechanisms are unconscious means to cope with pain, pain comes from many factors like stress, pressure and trauma that come frequently in this era of globalization.

The experience of the soldier is manifested in *Rambo: the first blood* film. *First Blood* is a 1982 American action adventure film directed by Ted Kotcheff. It is co-written by and starring Sylvester Stallone as John Rambo, a troubled and misunderstood Vietnam veteran who must rely on his combat and survival senses against the abusive law enforcement of a small town. It is based on David Morrell's 1972 novel of the same name and is the first installment of the *Rambo* series.

Therefore, the previous finding became the reason why the writer chose *Rambo: First Blood* film by using semiotic approach (Chandler, 2007) and defense mechanisms based on Freud theory (1993), they were; denial, displacement, projection, denial, and reaction formation as the center of the study.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Theoretical Framework

Theory is the basic foundation in conducting an analysis of research. Theories are very important, because they are used to strengthen a research. In this chapter, various kinds of theory dealing with this research will be presented in order to give some clear explanations. Thus, the following theories are aimed toward a clear explanation in the research.

Film

Film is a transformation of the depictions of human life. Human life is full of symbols that have different meanings and through film that symbol gave a different meaning using visual language. The film is also a means of express something using actions and characteristics through the image shown in the film, which then produces a specific meaning in context.

language is not just a formal means of expressing ideas but is also a way to communicate emotions, wishes, and desires and, especially, as a way to get things done. For example, *Let's go* could mean *I've been at your parents' house long enough*, or *Hurry up?we'll miss the bus*, or *Let's find a more private place*. The meaning of this simple utterance is dependent on who says the words for what reasons under what circumstances (smith, 2011)

Semiotic

According to Chandler (2007:2), semiotics is the study of signs. Semiotics can be used to create a sign (encode) or to interpret it (decode). In film, semiotic can be used to interpret the message conveyed by verbal and

nonverbal sign. Danesi (2004:4) states a sign is anything a color, a gesture, a wink, an object, a mathematical equation, etc. that stands for something other than itself.

Semiotic views that sign consist of two interrelated parts, the form of the sign and the notion of the sign. In Chandler (2007:14) the form of the sign is called *signifier* and the notion is called *signified*. Based on how the signifier represents its signified, there are three modes of sign including icon, index, and symbol. Based on the signified concept conveyed by a sign, there are denotative signified and connotative signified. Their explanations are as follows

a. Modes of Sign

Chandler (2007: 36) proposes three modes of sign based on the relation between signifier and signified. The three kinds of sign are as follows:

1). Icon

Icon is a mode in which the signifier relates with its signified by virtue of some resemblance or similarity.

a). Example of iconic verbal sign

The example of iconic verbal sign is a dog sound. It consists of the signifier *bark* which is the imitation of the signified *the sound of a real dog*. The word *bark* is an icon because it is similarly sounding like the signified

b). Example of iconic non-verbal sign

the example of iconic non-verbal sign. The non-verbal sign is a picture resembling Eiffel tower. The picture is not a real Eiffel tower, however, the shape is similar. Therefore, the picture of Eiffel tower can signify the real Eiffel tower in Paris.

Index

Index is a mode in which a signifier becomes a recognizable signal or an indicator that is directly related to the signified.

a). Example of indexical verbal sign

examples of indexical verbal sign. The verbal signs are *here* and *there* which are the indicator of the distance of an object from the speaker. The two verbal signs are applied in sentences: *The apple is here* and *The apple is over there* It can be seen that the verbal sign *here* becomes an index that the position of the apple is near the speaker and the verbal sign *there* indicates that the position of the apple is far from the speaker.

b). Example of indexical non-verbal sign.

example of indexical non-verbal sign is the smoke from a cup of coffee. The smoke is an index indicating that the coffee is hot because smoke is directly related to something hot.

Symbol

Symbol is a mode in which a signifier has an arbitrary relation with its signified. This is to say that there is no necessary direct link (as with the index) or a link due to some resemblance or similarity (as with the icon) between the signifier and the signified. A symbol gets its meaning from a group of people who gives meaning to the symbol through convention.

a). Example of symbolic verbal sign

Words such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs are the example of this kind of sign because the relation between words (signifier) and the things it represents (signified) are established through convention among the speakers of the language. For example, the word *tree* in which consists of four letters t-r-e-e signifies a tall plant with bark and leaves only by the convention of English language.

b). Example of symbolic Non-verbal sign

example of symbolic non-verbal sign is a red and white flag. It signifies *Indonesia* by the convention among Indonesian people.

b. Denotative and Connotative Signified

People like to gives meaning to everything which makes a sign can has more than one meaning. Therefore, Chandler (2007:137) proposed two types of signifieds. He stated we all know that beyond its *literal*

meaning (its denotation), a particular word may have connotations: for instance, sexual connotations. In semiotics, denotation and connotation are terms describing the relationship between the signifier and its signified, and an analytic distinction is made between two types of signifieds: denotative signified and a connotative signified. Meaning includes both denotation and connotation (Chandler, 2007:137) .

The definition of denotative signified and connotative signified based on Chandler (2007:137-138) is as follows:

- 1). Denotative signified is the factual and objective notion of a sign which is the natural attributes possessed by a sign.
- 2). Connotative signified is the value of a sign beyond its denotative meaning which reveal the socio-cultural or personal association toward a sign including attitude, emotions, feelings. .

As stated by Chandler (2007:137), the meaning of a sign includes both denotation and connotation. For example, a rose flower given by a man to a woman sends a notion about a beautiful flower with a beautiful colour and pleasant scent (the denotation) as well as a love feeling from the sender to the receiver (the connotation).

Defense Mechanism

Freud in Mcleod (2009) once said, *Life is not easy!* The ego -- the I -- sits at the center of some pretty powerful forces: reality; society, as represented by the superego; biology, as represented by the Id.

If the ego is obliged to admit its weakness, it breaks out in anxiety regarding the outside world, moral anxiety regarding the superego, and neurotic anxiety regarding the strength of the passions in the id. (Freud, 1933)

a. Examples of Defenses Mechanism

Freud (1933) categorizes defense mechanism into 5 type, they are denial, displacement, projection, repression, and reaction formation.

1). Denial

Denial involves blocking external events from awareness.

If some situation is just too much to handle, the person just refuses to experience it. For example is the statement *I didn't do it* and *It can't be true.*

2). Displacement

Displacement is the redirection of an impulse (usually aggression) onto a powerless substitute target. For example is when a man get yelled by his boss and then he yelled at his son by saying *you are not getting dinner next time* to relieve himself from his angry to his boss.

3). Projection

This involves individuals attributing their own thoughts, feeling and motives to another person. Thoughts most commonly projected onto another are the ones that would cause guilt such as aggressive and sexual fantasies or thoughts. For instance, *He/she hates me* and *Oh my god, she's so fat/ugly/slutty.*

4). Repression

Repression is an unconscious mechanism employed by the ego to keep disturbing or threatening thoughts from becoming conscious. Thoughts that are often repressed are those that would result in feelings of guilt from the superego. For example, in the Oedipus complex, aggressive thoughts about the same sex parents, are repressed.

5). Reaction Formation

This is where a person goes beyond denial and behaves in the opposite way to which he or she thinks or feels. For example a man violently dislikes an employee; without being aware of doing so, he *bends over backwards* to not criticize the employee and gives him special privileges and advances.

Summary of Rambo: The First Blood film

First Blood (also known as Rambo or Rambo: First Blood outside the United States), is a 1982 action/thriller film directed by Ted Kotcheff. The film stars Sylvester Stallone as John Rambo, a troubled and misunderstood Vietnam War veteran, with Sheriff Will Teasle (Brian Dennehy) as his nemesis, and Colonel Samuel Trautman (Richard Crenna) as his former commander and only ally. It was released on October 22, 1982.

Based loosely on David Morrell's 1972 novel of the same name, it was the first of the four-film and ongoing Rambo series. Unlike the following sequels which were war adventure films set in foreign countries, First Blood

was a post-Vietnam War psychological thriller set in the United States. First Blood particularly lacks the gore and violence that would later become a trademark of the series.

The last twenty or thirty minutes is a very good part, well-paced, and well-acted, not only by Stallone but also by Crenna and Brian Dennehy, as the police chief. The best scenes come as Stallone's on the run in the forest, using a hunting knife with a compass in the handle, and living off the land. At one point he's trapped on a cliffside by a police helicopter, and we really feel for this character who has been hunted down through no real fault of his own. We feel more deeply for him then, in fact, than we do later when he puts his grievances into words.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted by using descriptive qualitative design. Centralized to Ary et al (2002:423) qualitative research is concern with developing explanations of social phenomena that was lived by participants in a particular social setting (for example: a culture, school, community, group or institution). The purposes of this descriptive qualitative data were to create a description, illustration, facts, characteristics, and the relationship between investigated phenomenon related to the study. The source of the data was Rambo: First Blood film and the data were verbal and non verbal that represent by picture, statements (broadly speech by one person), dialogues (conversation among the characters), and the actions of Rambo which were taken from the script and scenes of Rambo: First Blood film.

The data on this study was analyzed by applying content analysis. Proposed by Ary et all (2002:442), content analysis is a research method applied to written or visual materials for purpose of identifying specified characteristics of the material. The material analyzed can be textbooks, newspaper or any other type of documents. In this study, after the data collected, they were analyzed by using some procedure as follows:

1. Identifying the sentences and picture in each sign which contained defense mechanisms.
2. Classifying the type of defense mechasnisms used in the Rambo : The First Blood Movie.
3. Tabulating the data analysis of defense mechanisms in the film.
4. Interpreting the data analysis of defense mechanisms in Rambo : The First Blood movie and explaining the reason of defense mechanisms happened.
5. Describing the conclusion based on the result of analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

In analyzing the data, the data analysis that already collected was being display as following:

Table 4.1 Types of Sign used in Rambo Movie

| No. | Types of sign | Amount of sign (of 25) |
|------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. | Verbal Sign | 10 |
| 2. | Non Verbal Sign | 16 |

Table 4.1 shows that there were 2 type of sign in the movie. Based on the table above, Non verbal sign was the most sign used in the movie where 16 of 26 sign was the most often appeared in the movie. Then it is followed by verbal sign (10 of 26 sign)

**Table 4.2 Types of Defense mechanisms used in Rambo : the First Blood
Movie**

| No. | Types of Defense Mechanism | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. | Denial | 5 | 23,8% |
| 2. | Displacement | 1 | 4,8% |
| 3. | Projection | 9 | 42,9% |
| 4. | Repression | 3 | 14,3% |
| 5 | Reaction Formation | 3 | 14,3% |
| Total | | 21 | 100% |

Table 4.2 shows that there were 5 types of defense mechanism used in the movie, they were Denial, Displacement, Projection, Repression and Reaction

Formation. Based on the table above, projection was the most dominant defense mechanism which was used in the movie. There were 9 frequency indicates into projection with the percentage 42.9%. Then, 5 frequency indicates into denial with the percentage 23,8%. It was followed by 3 frequency of repression with percentage 14,3%. And 3 frequency of reaction formation with percentage 14.3 %, and lastly, 1 frequency of displacement with percentage 4.8%. From the table above, it can be said that projection was used the most and displacement the least.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to find the what kind of defense mechanism that Rambo used and the reason why he do it. Freud (1993) stated that there are 5 categories of defense mechanism. Those five categories can appear in our everyday life to help defense our mind. It used as mechanism to cope with negative feeling or pressure. This study has shown that based on the problem of this research, the five categories of defense mechanism were found in Rambo: The First Blood movie.

Of the five categories of defense mechanism, the most used defense mechanism are projection, where it was shown through the actions of violence. The result are broadly consistent with the study of Gokdag (2015) defense mechanism used by university student to cope with stress where it shown that male is using projection the most in dealing with stress while in this study Rambo use it when dealing with trauma.

from the research finding, negative feeling and pressure can be a trigger to defense mechanism and there are reason why it happen. In this study Rambo

use defense mechanism in order to cope with his trauma and as a way to avoid trouble. These finding concur with the other studies that show author the difference of standing of individuality could be a factor that made someone to avoid trouble (Hede,2001).

Through semiotic approach, the research finding found that Rambo action and word was an indication of him using defense mechanism to suppressed his trauma and to avoid problem. His silent and few word is a language that need deeper interpretation in order to get the truth meaning of what Rambo saying. These finding concur with the order studies where in using semiotic approach we need to analyzed the clear and obscure language of the target where it said one of them is *Mode* or mode of communication. (Joseph. H. 2016).

It also shown that through the scenes, the research finding found that Rambo was someone who under heavy stress and anger that could be found through his expression and action in the movie. Just like when he silent when tease interrogated Rambo, it can be interpreted as symbol of obedience. These studies is consistent with the study of Suchita. B (2017) where visual communication can be a source of social commentary to determine social phenomena like obedience or the power of authority.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

After analyzing the data, the conclusions presented as following :

1. There were 5 types of defense mechanisms which were applied in the movie. They were denial, displacement, projection, repression, and reaction formation. In determined the defense mechanism, one or more sign might be used in identify the phenomena.
2. The defense mechanism was used by individual as way to cope with or run away from something negative that can affect their sanity or not acceptable for them. It can be trigger in form of trauma, fear, and bad impression of individual or group. It also served as a ways for someone to directed their negative feeling when target of their emotion is someone who have higher status.

Suggestion

There were two suggestions that can be offered based on the analysis of the study, they were;

1. For English department, they may use this study as a reference to understand the study of pyscholingustic realted to defense mechanisms through semiotic and apply it in the daily life especially in observing defense mechanism to family or someone close.
2. Practically, the students of English and Literature Department are suggested to use the other object or media for futher study such as novel or drama.

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