

A Study of Attribution Theory in Antoine De Saint - Exupery's the Little Prince

OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 12

Special Issue: 1

Month: February

Year: 2024

P-ISSN: 2320-2645

E-ISSN: 2582-3531

Received: 04.01.2024

Accepted: 08.02.2024

Published: 12.02.2024

Citation:

Sri Revathi, SD, and S. Godwin Raj. "A Study of Attribution Theory in Antoine De Saint - Exupery's the Little Prince." *Shanlax International Journal of English*, vol. 12, no. S1, 2024, pp. 90–95.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/english.v12iS1-Feb.7453>

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Abstract

Antoine de Saint-Exupery is a nobleman, military aviator, the French author and illustrator of the novella The Little Prince (French Title: Le Petit Prince). Reynal & Hitchcock released it in both English and French for the first time in the United States in April 1943. After France was freed, it was published posthumously there. The narrative structure of the novella centres on a Little Prince who travels to several planets, including Earth, and tackles issues of grief, loneliness, friendship, and love. The Little Prince observes things about adulthood, human nature, and life. This work becomes Saint-Exupery's most successful work, selling an estimated of 140 million copies around the world which makes it one of the best-selling in history. This book has been translated into 505 different languages and being the second most translated work in the world. This paper tries to implicate the study of Attribution Theory in the renowned novella.

Keywords: Attribution Theory, Internal Factor, External Factor, Friendship, Loneliness, Adulthood.

Introduction

Prose, Poetry, fiction and theatre all comes under the categories of literature as an art form. It reflects social problems by representing literature and creates a connection to everyday life. Further, it helps people to understand various cultures, traditions and values. It deals with every part of society. The work of literature has its various ideas on economics, psychology, science, religion, politics, art and community. The idea of literature is to reflect the society through people's imagination.

Perfect form and perfect language have been traditionally prized in French Literature. To avoid mixing up our forward-thinking metaphors, French language has frequently been one step ahead of the literary curve. The Song of Roland, the first significant work in a collection of poems known as "chansons de Geste," is one of the first known examples of French literature. French is a Romance language descended from Latin that has been significantly affected, primarily by Celtic and Frankish. The works of French language produced by the authors from France is termed as French Literature. Literature written in the French language by citizens of other nations

such as Belgium, Switzerland, Canada, Senegal, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco etc. is referred to as Francophone literature. Antoine de Saint- Exupery, was born on Lyron, France in 1900, focused on his career as a pilot. Flying played a great role in his philosophical essays and works of fictions for twenty years from commercial aircraft flights to cartography missions. After losing his aircraft due to Germans invasion in France, he shifted to New York, Saint-Exupery started writing the novella ‘The Little Prince’ during the world war. In the book, Saint – Exupery felt having to leave his homeland and lose his ability to fly planes, in addition to the difficult thoughts of the war in Europe. In the book, Saint-Exupery conveys his feelings for his adulthood in France and wish to return a peaceful era. The stress of the war influenced Saint-Exupery’s message of love and compassion. He exposes his own experience by writing the novella ‘The Little Prince’, a fairy tale. He recalls a forced crash landing experience made in the Sahara desert because of heavy wind. He experienced a series of hallucinations while crossing the desert, one of which was meeting a fennec, a kind of desert sand that resembles the fox in the novella.

Adults prejudices people by their appearance. The novel satires the wierd and materialistic behaviour of adults. The characters in this novel didn’t accept the Turkish astronomer’s discovery because of his Turkish clothes, but they accepted it when he appeared in a European outfit.

The narrator describes his early experiences with drawing in the first chapter, as well as his negative perception of grown-ups. The second chapter begins in narrating a specific set of surroundings. The majority of the story takes place in the desert. The Little Prince’s came from another Asteriod (B612) and the planets he travelled are including asteroids are from different places. For The Little Prince the last planet is Earth, where he meets the narrator in the Sahara Desert. The little Prince quest, brings him to seven planets other than his own, and the friendship with a narrator built the rest of the story. It involves many steps of adventure and allows the reader to go to space imagination. These fantasies are so real that make us feel involved in the action. Literature is all about using our imagination and throughout the story we travelled through it and everything takes on a visual appearance. This novella opens the readers mind to virtually “travel to places they have never been” and can be as a reflection of life and reality.

Attribution theory explains how people understand the feelings and intentions of others or oneself to understand their behaviour, and analysis the cause for their behaviour. People judge other character by their situation or analysing the character by the behaviour of others. Fritz Heider is called as the father of attribution theory. Attribution theory is one of the first theories in social psychology. This project explores how the characters attribute behavioural outcomes to dispositional (internal) causes or situational (external) causes.

Dispositional attribution theory, analyse the cause of someone’s behaviour by seeing the internal quality of a person for example if one helps the poor people there kind of personality is analysed. This is also called as internal factor for cause of the behaviour. Situational attribution theory is analysing the situation of person and event that occurred to a person to analyse the character of a person. This looks out of personal qualities while analysing the characters of people. These factors are also known as external factor in analysing the psychological character of a person. For example: if the person gets low salary but blaming the higher officials.

The Little Prince is a novella in which a pilot who has become trapped in the desert meets a young prince who has been dropped to Earth from a tiny asteroid. The author also provided the water colour pictures for the story. The Little Prince, although being marketed as a children’s book, contains some profound and idealistic observations about adult life and human nature. The Little Prince, the Pilot, the Fox, the Rose, and the Snake are the five primary characters. The route is composed of asteroids and seven planets. In the tale, “The Little Prince,” a young child from a tiny asteroid, journeys from planet to planet in search of enlightenment. He learns about

adult's unpredictable behaviour throughout his voyage. Despite being created in 1943, the book's philosophical messages are still relevant today. This may be a reference to current social movements that oppose social injustice and unequal wealth distributions, such as the Yellow Vests in France.

A Study of Attribution theory in "The Little Prince"

The psychological study plays the significant role and helps readers to view the literary work in various aspects. This helps readers to understand the situation of the writer. Thus it helps the readers to connect with the story. By being familiar with the authors' psychic nature readers can connect with the authors behind the writing in literary work. Psychological theories explain the psychic nature of humans such as behavioral thought and emotions. There are major and minor theories in psychology which help to analyse the work. It includes clinical psychology, cognitive psychology, behavioural psychology and bio psychology, attribution theory, attachment theory, psychoanalysis theory. Attribution theory explains how people understand the feelings and intentions of others or oneself to understand their behaviour.

In *The Little Prince*, the narrator explains his childhood experience when he was a child he admired the act of a Boa constrictor swallowing an Elephant. "The grown-ups' response, this time, was to advise me to lay aside my drawings of boa constrictors, whether from the inside or the outside, and devote myself instead to geography, history, arithmetic, and grammar. That is why, at the age of six, I gave up what might have been a magnificent career as a painter" (Saint-Exupery, 10). He drew the boa constrictor swallowing an elephant and showed this drawing to adults but adults couldn't understand his drawing so he drew an inside view of the boa constrictor. But this time the adults didn't understand the drawing and they asked him to study subjects instead of drawing. So the narrator became a pilot. He said studying of geography helped him. He meets many people and shows his drawing to adults but no one can understand eventually he did not show his drawing to anyone. This behaviour of adults is caused by the belief that children can achieve only by studying which is due to an internal factor.

Then the narrator spends his life alone and his plane crashed in the Sahara desert and he did not have anyone with him. So he struck in the middle of the desert. Then he slept in the sand and awakened by an odd voice because he was away from human habitation. The little prince asked the narrator to draw him a sheep. For the narrator, the Little Prince did not look like a lost child in the desert. Then the little prince again told him to draw a sheep. So, the narrator draws him a sheep. The little prince rejected all the drawings by commenting it as a sick sheep, ram, old sheep etc. The narrator gets annoyed and drew a box and threw it. He said the sheep was inside the box. But this time the Little Prince accepted the drawing. This behaviour of the narrator was due to his urgency to repair his plane.

In this novella, the narrator explains that a Turkish astronomer saw the asteroid of *The Little Prince* through a telescope then he presented it to the International Astronomical Congress. But nobody believed his discovery only because of his costume. "On making his discovery, the astronomer had presented it to the International Astronomical Congress, in a great demonstration. But he was in Turkish costume, and so nobody would believe what he said. Grown-ups are like that . . . Fortunately, however, for the reputation of Asteroid B-612, a Turkish dictator made a law that his subjects, under pain of death, should change to European costume. So in 1920 the astronomer gave his demonstration all over again, dressed with impressive style and elegance. And this time everybody accepted his report" (Saint-Exupery, 21). People developed this behavior because of the misconception from the costume revealed by the character. It reflects the external factor of attribution theory.

He says if children make a friend they won't ask the essential information like voice and hobbies but they would ask about his siblings, their age and their father's salary. He says grown-ups only care for figures (numbers). this behaviour of adults is due to the materialistic nature of humans (internal factor). The narrator says children should ignore the ideas of adults and they understands the life more than adults. The narrator worries that if he forgets his friend he will also become like a grown-up those who cares only about figures This behaviour is due to the quest for money and other materialistic things people spend their lives only focusing on those things which are not permanent. Those who understand life will pay interest in small happiness and care for their relationships more than materialistic things.

He regrets that he also became like a grown- up because he cannot see the sheep behind the box. Then Little Prince asked the narrator do sheep eat baobabs? The narrator replied that baobabs are not small plants they are large trees even a herd of large animals like elephants cannot eat one baobab tree. Then Little Prince laughed and said even the big tree like baobab would be small before they grow up. The narrator taught this is real fact. The narrator learns that Little Prince needs the sheep to eat the baobabs when they are small. The Little Prince said these trees must be plucked when they are small or else would break the Little Prince's planet and he asked little prince to draw a picture of baobabs. The little prince said the baobabs means disaster. No one should be careless with these. The baobabs are the symbolic representation of problems.

The next day, when the Prince is watching the sunset and he asked the narrator to come along with him to see the sunset .The narrator replied they must wait to watch sunset. The Little Prince was confused and said that in his planet he sees sunset forty-four times because his planet was very small. If he moves his chair to a small distance he can see the sunset again. One day," you said to me, "I saw the sunset forty-four times! "And a little later you added: "You know--one loves the sunset, when one is so sad" (Saint-Exupery, 31). He said watching the sunset would cheer him when was sad. This shows the innocent nature of Little Prince which reflects the internal factor. The narrator is busy with the matter of consequences. Little prince becomes very upset and says you are talking like grown-ups.

The Little Prince worries if sheep eats his flower then his world would become dark. He says this because he loves his flower very much and he cares for his flower. "The flower that you love is not in danger. I will draw you a muzzle for your sheep. I will draw you a railing put around your flower (Saint-Exupery, 35). The Little Prince cleaned his volcanoes and plucked a last shoot of baobabs. He says he wish never to return to his planet. He says in that day the regular works seems to precious to him. He said goodbye to his flowers. The flower asked him for forgiveness which shocked the Little Prince. He was confused by her kindness. For she did not want him to see her crying. She was such a proud flower.

The little prince travels to Earth at the geographer's recommendation, but he finds himself in the middle of a desert and is unable to locate any people. "Because intoxicated men see double. Then the geographer would note down two mountains in a place where there was only one." (Saint-Exupery, 61) Instead, he encounters a snake that speaks in riddles "Whomever I touch, I send back to the earth from whence he came," the snake spoke again. "But you are innocent and true, and you come from a star..... (Saint-Exupery, 68) and subtly suggests that, should he so choose, its deadly poison may return the young prince to the skies. The little prince is eventually surprised and depressed to find a rose garden because his rose had informed him that she was the only one of her kind.

The prince makes friends with a fox, who teaches him valuable lessons such as the fact that the things that matter in life are only visible to the heart, that spending time apart from a rose increases its significance to him, and that being in love holds one accountable for the creatures they love. "I thought that I was rich, with a flower that was unique in the entire world, and all I had was a

common rose. A common rose and three volcanoes that come up to my knees...forever... (Saint-Exupery, 73). The young prince understands that although there are many roses in the world, his rose is special because of his love for her, and as such, he bears responsibility for her. He still feels incredibly alone because he is so far away from his rose even after realising this. The prince describes his interactions with a sales clerk and a railway switchman as he wraps up his tale.

On the eighth day of the narrator's stay in the desert, they decided to look for a well at the prince's recommendation. Both of them experience physical and emotional nourishment from the water, and they agree that too many people fail to recognise the true meaning of life. But the little prince's thoughts are only on going back to his rose, and he starts arranging with the snake to return to his planet. On the day before the prince's one-year anniversary of arriving on Earth, the narrator fixes his plane and walks melancholy to the spot where the prince landed with his comrade. The little prince is bitten by the snake and silently falls in the sand.

The following day, the narrator finds solace in the knowledge that the prince has made his way back to his asteroid after failing to locate his body. The narrator finds solace in the skies as well, where he can now hear his friend laughing. But frequently, he gets depressed and questions whether the sheep he sketched had eaten the prince's rose. In closing, the narrator shows his readers a depiction of the desert and requests that they, should they ever find themselves there, take a moment to rest under the stars. They should also notify the narrator right away if they see the little prince again.

Conclusion

This novella deals with the perspective of a pilot who crashes his plane in the desert of 'Sahara'. There he meets the little prince. The pilot is both the narrator and character of the novella. He conveys his experiences with the Little Prince. His point of view allows readers to see world through his eyes. This makes the narrator as an important observer which makes the readers interesting and engaging. Saint-Exupery shows the conflict between adult thinking, creativity and in view of children's point of view. This exhibit the innocence, curiosity and imagination of the little prince. The story also contains allegorical elements, which symbolizing deeper ideas of the characters and events. The other different planets and their tenants shows various outlook of humans nature and society which is providing a wide commentary in adult world.

In the whole novella, the Little prince immerse in philosophical reflections on love, friendship, loneliness and nature. Aviator's practical thoughts summons and inspires the readers to think deeper. The Little Prince sees the world with wonder and questions about each little things of logic of adults. This shows that the little prince was alone in his small asteroid, travelling from one planet to another planet and experiencing variety of isolated characters. This novel highlights loneliness as a universal human experience. Every character expresses a different flaw and provides satirical commentary on human nature. The bond between the little prince and the fox highlights the importance of love and friendship. The phrase "people only see clearly with their minds. The most important things are invisible to their eyes" expresses the true understanding depends on an emotional connection beyond the appearances. The little prince sacrificed himself to save his beloved rose which shows altruism and dedicated nature of him. He always puts the needs of others before his own. This novella reflects the existentialist notion that life lack essential purpose. In simple he interacts with nature and speaking with snake and rose and asking many questions Why is this?, What is that? Which provides insight? etc. We see a king who rules over no one but by himself, a vain man who is endlessly thirsty to forget his shame, a lamplighter who turns on and off the one street lamp and a geographer who never explored. Finally, the narrative perspective focuses on the pilot, narrates his own experience and the novella takes on a poignant and reflective

tone. The pilot describes the prince's decision to leave Earth and decided to return to his asteroid to care his loved rose. The snake disappearance incident tells complex emotions to understand sorrow of his departure and his desire for rose and asteroid. This aspect of novella highlights the social dynamics of attribution, because he must navigate the snake's behaviour to achieve his goal. This novella "Little Prince" is a timeless and fascinating story that gives readers a very great exploration of human condition, also gives both stirring and provoking experiences. The true connection and understanding of the special qualities makes each person special with unique and distinct. This shows that whatever we go through in our life we have to enfold our inner child and nourish our imagination and precede life with wonder.

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