

# The Tragedy of The Holocaust as The Basis of The Fabula in The Novel Schindler's Ark by Thomas Keneally: A Study of Viktor Shklovsky's Russian Formalism

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**Abstract.** This study examines the use of the Holocaust in Germany as the basis for the fabula in Thomas Keneally's novel, "Schindler's Ark," through the lens of Russian Formalism, particularly Viktor Shklovsky's views. The novel centers on Oskar Schindler, a Czechoslovakian businessman, against the backdrop of Nazi Germany's rise. True events from the Nazi era guide the fabula, with the Holocaust serving as the historical foundation. The novel employs defamiliarization, blending historical fact with the author's imaginative *sjuzet*, making the story compelling. The study concludes that Keneally's control of the fabula, through defamiliarization, transforms historical facts into engaging fiction.

**Keywords:** *novel Schindler's Ark, Russian formalism, fabula, sjuzet*

## 1 Introduction

Known for the complicated honorific language, Japanese language differentiate its linguistic form by the degree of formality or politeness, called speech level in utterances according to [1]. The social factors and situational context determine the choice of use at the speech level., which is related to [2], [3], [4]. [5] states, the speaker must choose the appropriate speech level to be considered polite in society or group. This study adapted the scale of speech level theory by [6] by indicating the sentence-final form of *masu* form and plain form, namely the formal and informal forms here. (table 1).

The novel The Schindler's Ark consists of a series of stories about the origins of various people and are set in specific time periods. The author, Thomas Keneally, gives many life values to the main character. The novel briefly recounts the events of their past, their experiences in the ghetto or labor camp, and their reactions to the stories they experience. But the focus of this clip is main character Oskar Schindler and his mission to save his Jewish employees. Keneally interrupts the story from time to time to provide historical commentary or mention what happened to the characters after the war ended. The plot of the novel does not run chronologically, but moves back and forth in time. In the following plot synopsis, the main

events of saving Schindler's worker are presented in chronological order, ignoring all other storylines.

To appreciate literary works, formalist fans say it is important to understand the adaptation of the work. The success of a work can be measured from its form, namely in considering the overall structure and its relationship with the literary elements that support the work. Works that can be said to have met the minimum suitability level are works that are strong and have good supporting elements. In the formalist approach, the analysis of a literary work must be carried out regardless of the value or opinion of the author or reader, to find out its meaning. Viktor Shklovsky is one of the leaders of formalism, hailing from Russia and dividing it into three subjects. Namely algebra, habituation and defamiliarization. The third theme, namely defamiliarization, is the subject of this research.

To shape the flow of history, the life of human civilization can be used as raw material for the creative process of its builders. According to Jefferson, the reality of life which is the raw material for story creation and then processed by the author is called *fabula* (story), while *sjuzet* (plot) is the result of the author's composition. This attempt to turn *Fabula* into *Sjuzet* is called Defamiliarization. This topic is interesting to study because the famous Holocaust tragedy in Europe, which made Jews live a nomadic life to avoid Nazi persecution, was used as a *fabula* or the basis of the story in the novel *Schindler's Ark*. Readers can enjoy this novel and learn more about Nazi Germany's brutality against Jews.

Previous studies that are relevant to this study are Gia Lianni Putri's study, *Fabula and Parallel Plot Analysis in the Plot of Ankoku Joshi Novel by Akiyoshi Rikako*. The results of this study are based on the time period of Akiyoshi Rikako's *Ankoku Joshi Fabula and Sjuzet* novels which have no parallels. The *fabula*, or sequence according to the chronology of time and the logic of history, does not fit the novel's sequence of events after event, page by page, which is already difficult. From the explanation given, it can also be seen that the story presented by the author (*sjuzet*) in the novel is presented in a flashback or regression plot in such a way that readers who do not know the previous events can delay and survive. Maintain tension by telling a story that is not true in the story of a novel.

*Schindler's Ark* is one of the most popular novels of 1982. Written by Australian Thomas Keneally, this novel was adapted into a film called *Schindler's List* and won several prizes including the Man Booker Prize and the Los Angeles Times Award for Fiction. This novel also tells the original historical story of the Jewish and Communist Holocaust throughout Germany when the Nazis came to power. Russian formalism is used in this study as a knife that allows literary connoisseurs to see the integrity of the structure and explore the relationships and affections of the followers of literary works. In Russian formalism, literary texts are objects that are analyzed to find out their meaning. Researchers hope this research can improve the quality of literature in the future.

Through this research, we want to know how novelists use the facts of life as the basis for Thomas Keneally's *Schindler's Ark Fabula* and how this *fabula* can be made from *Sjuzet* in Thomas Keneally's *Schindler's Ark*.

In this study, the authors used a type of qualitative research. Qualitative methods can be used to capture and understand something behind completely unknown phenomena. This method can also be used to gain insight into something that is little known. Qualitative research is a method

for investigating and understanding the importance of the attributes of different individuals or groups of people to social or humanitarian problems [1].

The aim of qualitative research is to gain a general understanding of social reality from the participant's point of view. This understanding is not predetermined, but obtained through an analysis of social reality which is the subject of research. This study uses an objective approach. This objective approach serves as an approach to finding facts that are used as fictional instructions in the novel *Schindler's Ark* by Thomas Keneally. When analyzing this objective approach, the theory of Russian formalism with the concepts of *Fabula* and *Sjuzet* is used as a theory. The reason for using the theory of Russian formalism, especially Viktor Shklovsky's views and an objective approach to fact-finding, which serves as a *fabula* guide in the course of the story presented in the novel.

## **2 Theoretical review**

The theory of formalism is one of the contemporary literary theories. This theory was born in Russia based on the thoughts of experts on Russian language and literature. All of this stems from the belief of the formalist community that learning it can improve one's ability to read literary texts correctly. Formalists prefer to study literary texts formally, namely according to the structure of the language. In the early stages of formalism, the main author of this theory was Victor Shklovsky. Shklovsky presented one of the concepts of defamiliarization, with the meaning of doing something strange or special [2]. Shklovsky also points out that one of the arts is to make objects unusual by presenting difficult shapes to increase difficulty and widen perception, because the process of perception is an aesthetic goal and must be expanded [3].

Formalists focus more on the "specificity" of literary texts to emphasize the uniqueness of a literary work. Formalist supporters use two concepts to argue a literary work with everyday life or reality, namely the concepts of defamiliarization and de-automatization. So normal activities still look normal, but there are things that feel strange or foreign. The goal is for readers to be more interested in the structure of literary works and appreciate the things around them. When composing a literary work, reality is secondary here. Reality is included in a literary work after the author includes it in the creation of the literary work. Seeing literature from a certain point of view is only a side effect from an aesthetic point of view.

According to Jefferson The study of formalist accompaniment literature is only based on the differences in the original events and the appearance of the second party, namely between *Fabula* and *Sjuzet* [4]. This concept was invented by Shklovsky. Distinguish the concept of *fabula* (or story), ie. *Fabula* is the basis of the story according to the chronology of events, while *Sjuzet* is something that makes the story strange [5]. In short, *Fabula* is a story whereas *Sjuzet* is a plot. Russian formalists strongly emphasized the difference between "story" and "plot". They argue that the plot (*sjuzet*) must be truly literary, while the story (*fabula*) is only the initial standard for the author to work on and develop further. Plot is not only the structure of a story, but writers can also use it as a tool to break up storylines. *Sjuzet*'s compositions are based on the idea of alienation, which prevents the reader from perceiving events as mundane and familiar [2].

According to Abrams, the plot of fiction is the arrangement of events observed in the sequence and presentation of these events to produce certain emotional and creative effects [6]. Evidence supports this. It is common for writers to achieve artistic effect in their works by rearranging

certain sequences of events. This change in the sequence of events can arouse the reader's interest. The event phases serve to build the basic story that tells the story of the characters in the story [7], [8], [9]. A story is important because it contains all the parts that make up a literary work at all levels. A story is made up of discrete events, each of which conveys a specific atmosphere, setting, and mood. This allows the reader to understand characteristics, characters and places all at once [10], [11].

### **3 Results and Discussion**

The main character of this novel is a businessman named Oskar Schindler, who comes from Czechoslovakia. Oskar Schindler is depicted at the beginning of the story as a good character. Schindler is greedy, misogynistic, and manipulative. The main task when arriving in Poland was to build an iron factory that would process kitchen equipment and armor. Previously, Germany occupied Poland and used many Jews as forced laborers. Schindler hoped he could allow Jews to work in his factory to cut costs and make more money. The beginning of the story shows how the Jews in Poland panicked when they learned that the Nazis had succeeded in attacking their country. All they could do was pray for safety and escape from the Nazi soldiers. However, concentration camps were set up in Poland. Jews were arrested and forcibly taken to camps. Jews never know what bad thing is going to happen to them.

Schindler's Ark tells the story of Oskar Schindler, a German Catholic businessman who helps rescue Jews from concentration camps. It has a military backed factory in Germany. However, he used the factory to employ Jews to prevent the Germans from capturing them. He did this so that the Jews would not end up in concentration camps. Schindler's Ark novel also tells about the moral struggle of the character Oskar as a German who should hate Jews. This novel is characterized by a large number of stories. One of them is about a little boy who is being chased by German soldiers.

As World War II continued and the fate of the Jewish people became increasingly clear, Schindler's motivations shifted from profit to compassion for humanity, and he managed to save over 1,100 Jews from death in the gas chambers. This story is very interesting and famous in Europe. Thomas Keneally wrote a novel out of it called Schindler's Ark.

The fact that these events took place while Nazi Germany was in power forms the basis of the tale of Schindler's Ark. This is explained using the events set out in the novel Schindler's ark. There are many stories in

Schindler's Arche that serve as examples of true events from the Nazi era and serve as guides for the Fabula.

#### **Holocaust**

Krakow, a city in Poland, was occupied by Nazi Germany during World War II. The Nazi mission was to destroy the Jewish nation which had a large population in Poland. Oskar Schindler, a German businessman from Czechoslovakia, tried to approach the Nazi soldiers who are commonly known as the SS. Through various flamboyant parties, Oskar joined the ranks of SS officials and was called "Herr Führer". Thanks to their connections, Oskar managed to set up a company that used Jewish workers to make pans and various silverware, because of their low wages [12].

Oskar entrusts Itzhak Stern, an accountant of Jewish origin, with the management of his company. Itzhak recommended several Jewish prisoners in the Nazi camps to work for the company, from young children to the elderly, from the able-bodied to the disabled. Itzhak did everything to save his people from concentration camps. At first Oskar did not agree with Itzhak's concept, but after seeing the sadism of torture in concentration camps, Oskar gradually began to sympathize with the Jews and recruited as many of them as he could into his ranks. Everything was going as it should until a new commander named Amon Goth arrived. Ammon set up a new camp at Plaszow and began the mass extermination of the Jews. He even liked to shoot camp residents from the balcony of his official residence.

Talking about genocide, the term holocaust is certainly no stranger. The Holocaust was the German Nazi massacre of nearly all European Jews. Within four years, Nazi soldiers, under the iron fist of Adolf Hitler, tortured and killed millions of Jews. The Holocaust is without a doubt one of the most terrible tragedies in world history. But like other historical stories, many people are starting to forget the Holocaust tragedy. Schindler's Ark tells the true story of Oskar Schindler, a German industrialist who saved more than 1,300 Jews from the Nazis. Like many of the main characters, Schindler is an ordinary man who acts according to his conscience, despite the evil around him. Keneally used the Holocaust as the basis for his fable to support his novel. The legendary story of the Holocaust during the time when the Nazis were in power in Germany inspired the writer to write this novel. Keneally also added that Sjuzet said that Schindler's character was attracted to women and the feminine. Here a process of alienation takes place, combining the fable of the Holocaust tragedy with the whimsical imagination of the author Sjuzet, which makes the course of the novel even more interesting for the readers.

#### **4 Conclusion**

This study concludes that the predetermined fabula guidelines can be used as a basis for producing sjuzet in Schindler's Ark. The author controls the existing fabula in such a way that the sjuzet emerges through a process of defamiliarization according to Viktor Shklovsky's theory of Russian Formalism. In the novel Schindler's Ark by Thomas Keneally, the story of the atrocities of the Nazis and Hitler is the basis of the fabula, and after a process of Defamiliarization, sjuzet appears. From this it can be seen that the fabula, which is undergoing a process of defamiliarization, becomes fiction, even though the novel contains many real historical facts. For example, the author defamiliarizes the sjuzet from the original story about the incident when the Nazis ruled Germany, it makes this novel very interesting for the readers.

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