



MAXIMIZING THE COMPETENCE IN THE NOVEL *OUT OF MY MIND* (2010) BY SHARON M. DRAPER

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Abstract

The purpose of the analysis is to expose the issue of maximizing the competence done by the main character with cerebral palsy to use all of her efforts in order to reach the equality with normal people. This analysis is using text based and context based method. The text based is using character, plot and setting. The context based is related to the concept of life instincts by Freud, the concept of self-awareness by Crisp-Turner. The result of this analysis shows the protagonist succeeds to maximize her competence through participating in competition and social life.

Key words: maximizing, competence, self-awareness

A. INTRODUCTION

People naturally have the eagerness to show themselves in public, either they were born with physical defect or not. People who are born with no physical defect will have easier ways to obtain the trust of the people; show themselves in public; perform their ability, and expose their identity. However, people who are born with physical defect will face the harder ways to make people believe that they have the ability. They need to do extra struggles and have more challenges to maximize their competence, such as in studying and socializing. Maximizing the competence is the way to get the self-actualization, in order to get the education and chance like other people. The competence can be done by gaining the knowledge so that they have the ability to participate in competition and the social life.

Maximizing the competence is the manifestation of the self-awareness. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary (2018), *maximizing* means to increase (something) as much as possible. Someone can maximize their competence when they are aware of the potency in themselves. Indeed, the support of the society is needed to grow the self-confidence of the people with physical defect. The smallest and the most essential society is family. The role of the family is very important to make these people realize of their own ability which then make them to become great people.

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B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The analysis of the novel *Out of My Mind* (2010) by Sharon M. Draper is done through text and context-based interpretation. It is done by analyzing some parts of fictional devices, such as characters, plot (conflict), and setting. Character and setting are used to show the way to maximize the competence by analyzing character's reaction towards the conflict. Then, the setting deals with the circumstances and atmosphere. It gives contribution in process of analysis by giving help in revealing the meaning. This analysis dealing with the psychological theory by Sigmund Freud. It gives contribution in process of analysis by giving help in revealing the meaning.

C. DISCUSSION

This chapter analyzes fictional devices in order to reveal the issue *maximizing the competence* in the novel *Out of My Mind* (2010). This issue is emerged through the character's thought, activity and situation which is faced by the protagonist. There are two ways that the main character does to maximize her competence. They are: by participating in competition and in social life.

1. Participating in Competition

Participating in competition is one of the main character's strategies to show her ability. She does all of her efforts to convince the teacher and her friends to give her the chance to participate in the competition. She fills her mind with the commitment that she can do it although she is dragged down and underestimated. She studies every night with her neighbor. She is trying hard to win the competition.

The first one is to convince her teacher to involve her in the Wiz Kid Competition then register her to that class competition which shown in TV. This is one of the most difficult problems that she faces. It can be seen in the following quotation:

“Melody participated?” Mr. Dimming asked as he took the print out. He glanced from me to the paper in his hand. “how nice.”

I don't like the sound of his voice. He scored the papers while we watched a movie about the pyramids in Egypt. I couldn't help stealing glances at him. (page 66)

The setting in this text refers to the tense situation which is faced by the main character during the class selection for the competition. This tense situation is triggered by the underestimation by her teacher. The setting leads to the external conflict that she is being looked down due to her physical limitation. This external conflict then impacts to the internal conflict toward the character. It makes her disappointed and then she challenges herself to maximize her competence as a result of being underestimated. The quotation above shows that Melody is

disparaged by her teacher. The main character is not given the chance to involve in the test for joining the competition. It is also emphasized by Mr. Dimming's utterance *how nice*. That utterance is a reaction of disbelief. This proves that the disabled people tend to be humiliated by people who are normal physically. The sentence *I don't like his voice* shows that the main character does not want to be insulted because she has self regard. That utterance also reflects a promise to prove that she has the competence to involve the competition. This is her way to release the conflict in herself. She wants to show that she is not weak, she is unbreakable and invulnerable. The underestimation cannot dim her spirit that lies in herself.

The second one is to convince her friends to involve her to the competition. It can be seen in the following quotation:

I look over at Rose. She smiled at me—a look of anticipation on her face. Mr. Dimming was silent for a moment. He scratched his head. Finally, he cleared his throat and said, “The winner of today’s competition, and the winner of the Butterfinger candy bar, with *perfect* score is...” He paused again, gave his head a shake, and started again. “The only person in the class who got every single question correct is... Melody Brooks” Dead silence. No cheers. Just looks of disbelief. “No fair!” Molly blurted out angrily. “Melody’s got a helper who whispers the answer to her”. “She *musta* cheated!” Claire added loudly. (page 67)

The quotation above shows that the main character is not given the same right with the other students. The setting refers to the hurt feeling condition of the main character. The main character is insulted by her friends. Her friends do not believe on her competence. This conflict is triggered by the situation of being not entrusted by her surrounding. The sentence of not being entrusted is emphasized in “*Dead silence. No cheers. Just looks of disbelief*”. and ‘*gave his head a shake*’. Those are the expressions of distrust. She is not appreciated for her achievements. The conflict is the refusal of her friends to join the competition. The sentence *She musta cheated* is the disgrace to her self-regard. This is the challenge of the main character, how to be entrusted and not being treated disgracefully by the surroundings. She changes the humiliation of her friends to become a promise to prove that she can be someone respected.

Main character has the strong commitment to empower herself. It appears in the following quotation:

I turn up the volume on my machine—very loud.
“I am here to take the test.” Mr. Dimming

blinks. “Melody, I don’t want your feelings to get injured. The test is very hard” **“I am very smart”** “I just don’t want you to be hurt, Melody.” He sounds sincere. Sort of. **“I’m tough,”** I typed. (page 79)

The bold sentences are her utterance by using Medi-Talker machine which helps her to communicate. The setting refers to the positive atmosphere and full of self confidence that she has value to be respected and counted on. The conflict in the passage above is the repetitive refusal of her teacher to stop her joining the test. However, she releases her conflict by empowering herself with the self awareness that makes her not losing her hopes. The words *—very loud* is emphasizing her self confidence. She builds the self confidence by herself because she has the self awareness which is the realization of herself as the individual entity. She consciously knows her human value and identity. Her self confidence is proven by the sentence **“I am very smart”**. She also proves that she has the strong desire by saying **“I’m tough.”** Those sentences indicate that she indeed has the life instinct. She does not say that she is smart, but she says that she is *very smart* to emphasizes that she is fabulous. She is beyond other people’s expectation. The word *tough* is showing that she is unbreakable. She is not someone who is weak or easy to be broken. She is not someone who gives up on her condition.

Another quotation that supports about the strong commitment that the main character has, appears on the following passage:

“Are you sure?” Dad asked, glancing at me.
“Maybe we’re setting her up for failure, and she’ll be hurt even worse.”

“I am absolutely positive!” Mrs. V insisted.
“Can Melody stay a little longer to study? I’ll give her dinner and bring her home in a couple of hours. That will give you some one-on-one time with Penny.”

“You cool with that?” Dad asked me.

“Yes! Yes! Yes!” I typed. **“I want to do this.”**

“Go for it, my Melody,” Dad said. He gave Mrs. V a thumbs-up sign and left with Penny.

The quotation above shows that the main character keeps her commitment to study. The setting refers to the energetic situation that is shown by the main character though her father has hesitancy on her. This triggers the internal conflict to the main character that should prove that she is able to turn the hesitation of her father into a pride. It is emphasized by the bold sentence **“Yes! Yes! Yes!”** I typed.

“I want to do this.” This indicates that the main character keep holding her promise to be a smart girl.

To join the competition, the main character studies every night with her neighbour (Mrs. Violets). It can be seen in the quotation below:

Every time Mrs. V would add new words, I learned them quickly, used them in sentences and was hungry for more. I wanted to READ! So she made flash cards. Pink for nouns. Blue for verbs. Green for adjectives. (Page 21)

That quotation shows that the setting refers to the enthusiastic atmosphere during the main character studies with Mrs. Violets (Mrs. V). This enthusiastic atmosphere describes that she is hungry of knowledge. This setting leads to the internal conflict that she wants to prove that she has the ability. The main character has the strong desire to fulfill her knowledge that can be seen when she is learning every night. The word *quickly* indicates that the main character is smart. The quotation above shows that the main character has the curiosity and wants to live like normal. She learns many things and discover new words. It proves that she has the strong commitment to be a better person, to walk further, and to know more. It is also emphasized by the sentence *I wanted to READ*. Reading is something crucial to gain the knowledge. The main character knows well that she needs to read a lot to makes her knowledgeable. That utterance also describes that the main character does not want to be seen as a disabled. She wants to be seen as normal. She is accepting her limitation, yet she is battling with her hesitation in herself.

The other quotation that supports about studying every night with her neighbour can be seen in the following quotation:

The week zipped by. I studied at school every day with Catherine, after school everyday with Mrs. V, and every evening at home as well. I reviewed words from all the levels of my board. I practiced spelling long words and matching facts and dates. I made up my own games. Mom quizzed me about flowers and medical terms. Dad asked me questions about economics and retail management and sports. I swallowed it all. (page 74)

The text above reflects that the protagonist studies many kinds of field and level of knowledge. This is her strategy to make people respect her. The setting in that text refers to the spirit atmosphere that is felt by protagonist. This is caused by the repetitive refusal of her teacher. She learns further than her friends and the other students do. The sentence *I swallowed it all* proves that the main character is a brilliant girl. She is not only getting the knowledge from school, but also from

outside the school. From the passage above it can be seen that the support of the family and surrounding are also a crucial thing to build the confidence of the main character. It shows that the family and her neighbour (Mrs. V) do not treat the main character as disabled in giving the knowledge.

Another quotation that supports about studying every night with her neighbour appears below:

I looked at her, a little confused. **“Started on what?”** I asked. “On your study plan. You and I are going to practice, prepare, and push. I am going to quiz you, and you are going to answer. We’re going to learn geography, science, math — thousands of glorious tidbits of information!” (page 70)

The quotation above describes that the main character has the strong desire in maximizing her competence. The setting refers to the motivational situation that makes her energetic. This setting triggers the hopes of the protagonist. The phrase *practice, prepare, and push* shows that the main character does continual commitment. The protagonist continuously studies to get the better and brighter future, in order to prove that she has the incredible ability that most of the people do not realize.

In summary, participating in competition is one of the main character’s strategies to maximize her competence. The variation of settings cause different conflicts to the character. It refers to the condition and situation that cause different triggers toward the main character. She faces many struggles in convincing her teacher and her friends to involve her in competition. She keeps holding her commitment though she is underestimated and dragged down. Besides, she keeps studying and gaining her knowledge since she consciously knows that it is something crucial to become someone respected.

2. Participating in social life

Another strategy that is done the main character to maximize her competence is by participating in social life. She has self-confidence. She participates in class actively. She makes friends. She behaves friendly to her friends and does not even hate the people who underestimate her.

The protagonist participates in class actively. It appears in the following quotation:

As I’ve been getting used to using Elvira over the last month, life at school has been almost pleasant. Almost. I can ask Connor about a TV show that came on the night before or tell Jessica that I like her new shoes. It’s been

snowing — just flurries — almost every day. Late on January afternoon I typed, “I hope we have a snow day — no school.” Everybody agreed. For once, I got speak for the class. I can answer questions in class lots better with Elvira to help me. For the first time, instead of “pretend” grades that teachers would give me because they weren’t quite sure if I knew the answer or not, I get real grads recorded in the teachers’ grade book that are based on actual answers I’ve given. Printed out and everything!
(page 64)

The text above shows that the protagonist has the strong desire to be active in class like the other students in the *regular* class. The setting refers to the passionate situation that turns on the enthusiasm of the protagonist. The difficulty in that quotation is that the main character cannot be separated with her Medi-Talker which helps her to communicate. It limits her to utter her ideas and minds that make people still cannot fully believe that she is incredible. It can be seen through the utterance *For the first time, instead of “pretend” grades that teachers would give me because they weren’t quite sure if I knew the answer or not, I get real grads recorded in the teachers’ grade book that are based on actual answers I’ve given. Printed out and everything!* It describes that it is uneasy thing to make people realize on her ability. The phrase *pretend grades* indicates that she is degraded. However, the protagonist participates in regular class with no hesitation. It can be seen in the sentence *For once, I got speak for the class*. It means that she has idea in her mind that drives her to utter it. She has the confidence to involve in class actively. She does not feel that she is inferior due to her physical differences.

Another quotation that supports about participating in class actively can be seen below:

I liked her. She brought in stacks of new books to read to us, as well as games and music and videos. Unlike Mrs. Billups, Mrs. Shannon must have read all our records because she dusted off the headphones and even brought in more books on tape for me. “Ya’ll ready for music class?” she asked us one morning. “Let’s get this inclusion stuff goin’!” I jerked with excitement. As the aides helped us down the hall to the music room, I wondered if I’d get to sit next to a regular kid. What if I did something stupid? What if Willy yodeled, or Carl farted? Maria was likely to blurt out something crazy. Would this be our only chance? What if we messed up this

up? I could barely contain myself. We were going to be in a *regular* classroom. (page 40-41)

The text above shows that the protagonist is given the chance for the first time to join the *regular* class to study music. The setting refers to the passionate situation that turns on the enthusiasm of the protagonist. The sentence *I jerked with the excitement* points out that the protagonist is interested in something new that challenges her. There are few challenges that she faces which will trigger the internal conflict to the main character. First, the protagonist is physically different with the regular students. It will give the tense to the main character and make her difficult to adapt with the other students. She uses medium to communicate which will need the adaptation with the class members in regular class. Another challenge is that the protagonist is vulnerable to be bullied by the other students. The hesitation is shown by the main character can be seen in sentences *What if I did something stupid? What if Willy yodeled, or Carl farted? Maria was likely to blurt out something crazy. Would this be our only chance? What if we messed up this up?* However, the main character shows that she releases the conflict by saying *I could barely contain myself. We were going to be in a regular classroom.* It shows that the main character gives the suggestion to herself that she can be able to participates in the class and show that she is normal and potential.

To participate in social life, the protagonist makes friends. It can be seen in the following quotation:

Finally, a girl got up out of her seat and walked over to my chair. She squatted down and looked me directly in the face. Then she smiled. It was the girl with the long hair who had frowned at her friends for laughing. "I'm Rose," she said, her voice soft. I smiled back, and tried really hard not to kick or grunt or make a noise that would scare her away. I held my breath and thought about calm, quiet things, like ocean waves.. it worked. I inhaled deeply and slowly, then pointed on my board to **Thank you.** Rose seemed to understand.

The text above describes that the protagonist has the strong desire to socialize with the other student in regular class. In that quotation the setting refers to the pressure and tensed situation that is felt by the protagonist. This situation is triggered by the protagonist unconscious reaction such as voice and moves. These unconscious reactions lead to the internal conflict. The protagonist needs to control herself so that she can calm and not scare her friends. This is the extra struggle that she faces in socializing or making friends. However, the protagonist has her own way to release this conflict. It can be seen in the sentence *I held my breath and thought about calm, quiet things, like ocean waves.. it worked.* That sentence shows that she knows herself well and comprehends how to control herself.

Another quotation that supports about making friends can be seen below:

I think about Rose all the time. I worry that she will change her mind and not like me. But Rose talks to me like I understand, and she tries to figure out what I'm saying as well. One day I pointed to **new** and **shoes** and **nice** on my communication board, then down to her feet, to let her know that I had noticed she got new sneakers that I like them. At first she seemed surprised that I could do this. Especially since it sometimes takes me a long time to make my thoughts make since using my board. (page 44)

The text above describes that the protagonist has the strong desire to socialize with the other students in regular class. The setting refers to the sympathy feeling that is felt by the main character. This sympathy feeling is shown by the main character towards her friend. It proves that she is an attentive person. She has the confidence to communicate with her friend though she is using communication board.

The main character behaves friendly to her friends, neighbour, and new people. It appears on the following quotation:

I nod. "**Way cold,**" the machine says loudly. Oops! I meant to say *Way cool*. I felt my face getting warm as I hear Claire and Molly snicker. But Rose pulls close to my chair. "This is awesome, Melody," she says softly, and I let her touch the shimmery keys.

"**Oh, yes,**" I reply. Then I look at her. "**Friends?**" I type.

"Friends!" she answers without hesitation.

"**Happy,**" I type, then I tense. I hope I won't do anything stupid like knock something over excitement.

The quotation above shows that the main character has a good attitude towards her friends. The setting refers to the warm feeling that is felt by the main character. This warm feeling is caused by the communication that she built with her classmates in regular class. However, in that quotation, the main character still faces the internal conflict. This conflict is related to her unconscious moves which can come suddenly that will may scare her classmates. It is implicitly shown in the sentence *I hope I won't do anything stupid like knock something over excitement*. It also appears in the sentence *then I tense* which indicates that she still has worry about her unconsciously habitual moves that needs to be controlled.

It describes that the main character does her best to be accepted in regular class. The passage above is also shown that the main character is not differentiate her good friends and the others who used to bully her. This indicates that the main character has a good mentality. She is not a hater. The sentence *I felt my face getting warm as I hear Claire and Molly snicker* proves that the main character is as good as her name, Melody. The thing that entertains people and brings warm to the people around her. The main character feels satisfy when people around her get the happiness either they treat her good or bad. The phrase *getting warm* points out that she is happy to be accepted in the class just like the other students.

Briefly, participating in social life is the next strategy of the main character to maximize her competence. Through the setting, it reveals that the main character has her own way to join the social life. The main character builds the confidence to participate in class actively and do her best to be like normal students. The main character also makes friends by using her communication board. The last one, she behaves friendly to all people. Those are her ways to be accepted in the society, so that she can maximize her competence.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Out of My Mind (2010) novel written by Sharon M. Draper reveals the maximizing the competence. Maximizing the competence in this analysis refers to the actions done by the main character, an eleven years old girl with physical defect to reach the equality with normal people. It is revealed through text-based and context-based by focusing on fictional devices such as character, plot, and setting. This analysis also deals with the psychological theory about life instinct by Sigmund Freud. The main character is maximizing her competence in two ways: by participating in competition and in social life.

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