

Discourse Analysis on the Poem Neem Tree

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ABSTRACT

Discourse analysis, more than five decades, is being used as a tool to analyse language in use in texts. Discourse means a discussion or a conversation and discourse analysis means analysing the discussion or a conversation whether it is in the form of written text or any other recorded form. Discourse analysis as a method in social sciences and its allied branches is employed to gather communication texts for analysis. It focuses on the construction of language in texts and takes into account the relationship between language and the socio-cultural contexts in which it is used. It also involves the ways in which language represents different world views and provides different understandings reflecting how multiple world views are produced through the discourse of spoken and written texts. This research paper is an attempt to make an analysis of the poem named 'Neem Tree' composed by Bhojraj Singh in an anthology: 'Pebbles into the Water: 2020' with the perspective of discourse analysis using textual method under it.

Keywords: *Discourse, Literary devices, Ideology, Covert, Overt.*

INTRODUCTION

Discourse analysis has grown out of the work in different disciplines in 1960's and 1970's including linguistics, psychology, anthropology, psychology, semiotics sociology and so on. Discourse analysts study language in use: written text of all kinds and spoken data highly institutionalised forms of talk. The term "discourse analysis" first entered general use as the title of a paper published by Zellig Harris in 1952. The paper offers a systematic analysis of linguistic structure beyond the sentence level. Harris proposed exclusion of grammatical examination which remained syntactic investigation. He pointed out two significant features of discourse analysis: analysis of language and the relationship between linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour. Harris examined the language to describe how the elements of language are distributed in texts and how these elements are combined across different patterns of text. According to him, the primary purpose of discourse analysis is to determine how language becomes meaningful for those who use it. It shows the analyst is devoted towards examining what language is used for. In the 1960's and 1970's other scholars and philosophers of languages such as Austen (1962), Searle (1969) and Grice (1975) influenced the development of this study as well.

In the analysis of discourse, the analyst looks at the language being used, the underlying ideas of the conversation, and the way ideas expressed through language. Discourse analysis is used to determine how ideas develop and change over a period of time in different contexts. Analysing discourse is, therefore, a form of collaborative 'social action' wherein the users of language jointly collaborate in the production of meanings and inferences during communication through spoken and written conversation.

Two forms of discourse analysis - transactional and interactional can be inferred from our discussion. Transactional discourse involves expression of content which has received particular attention from linguists, linguist philosophers and psycho-linguists. Who accept language as a means to communicate however they also assume that language is used for transmitting information.

Language use to communicate information based on facts or propositions is called primarily transactional language. Primarily transactional language is a form of communication where there is the transference of information which is in the mind of the speaker. The mode of communication in such a situation is message oriented. The researcher has to make sure that correct message is conveyed to the listener or the audience.

LEVELS OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

The analysis of discourse does not involve a single standard approach but diverse ways of how to analysis a text. Usually, there are six steps of presenting discourse analysis such as: surface elements, objects, actors in the text, expression through words, discursive strategy and ideological standpoints.

In the first step of analysing, the analyst focuses on the structural features of the text like date of publication, electronic media where it was published, author, and the length of the article. Theorist such as van Dijk explores the organization of the text providing a deeper insight into the text.

In the next step, the analyst identifies the discursive objects that are the themes constructed within the text. These are covert and overt. At this stage, the analyst focuses on how realities are constructed in relation to the role they play in bringing about a change. Identifying these discursive objects helps the researcher to understand the role of discourses since they are linked to the focus of the research.

The third step is the analysis of the actors in the text, which requires tracing key actors and how they appear within the text. Text plays a key role in defining the identities of the actors.

Another step is the analysis of expressions through words which involves language: (writing style- informal and conversational, vocabulary, etc) and rhetoric which involves tools such as symbols, citing trustworthy sources and other rhetorical figures employed in the text.

Discursive strategy guides the analyst about the ways of choosing and exploiting linguistic resources in order to achieve the objectives of discourse in an efficient way. Here the analyst requires devices to organize discourses according to a certain perspective. One is framing device which suggests how to use and interpret metaphors, catchphrases and depictions. The other is reasoning device which justifies the further course of action on the framing devices.

The last step is ideological standpoint. An ideology is typically an arrangement of ideas based on norms and facts shared by people to shape their understanding about some issue. Ideas are obtained through interaction-verbal or written. Ideology is intrinsically a part of discourse which affects the way meanings are constructed out of the discourses. By this step, the analyst to select and represent objects, actors, language and strategies that are used in the discourse analysis.

This research paper would make an attempt to probe the discourse analysis into the selected poem, *Neem Tree* composed by Bhojraj Singh and published in an anthology- *Pebbles into the Water* 2020. It would also delve into the themes, rhetoric, ideologies and implied meaning of the language in the poem. The content of the work is basically the themes and stuff around which story is interwoven with the assistance of technical devices: use of figurative language, view point, tone, mood and the words that work together to produce the meaning of text.

The Indian English literature is rich in abundance in various genres such as novel, poetry, drama, prose and autobiography. The poets who had composed their works of great merit such as Ravindrath Tagore, Nissim Ezekiel, Sarojni Naidu, Mamta Kalia, etc have been renowned in Indian literature. The discourse analytical approach has been adopted to examine the above-mentioned poem.

Data used in discourse analysis can be categorized into various forms such as found data (data that is naturally occurring and already existing data), data obtained through interviews, data obtained through participant observation. Collecting existing data is easier for the analyst than to collect other forms of data. However, this form of data requires the researcher to follow certain steps prior to collecting it. Existing data may include newspaper articles, official documents and audio-visual contents.

Analysis of the Poem

The present poem is under examination from the perspective of discourse analysis in which attempt is focused to understand the deeper insight of the meaning of the text and effort is made to perceive the way how the language works to produce meaning. The language is a combination of words, phrases, sentence and paragraphs. Moreover, it entails imagery, symbols, rhyme, rhythm, figures of speech, tone, mood and the message. Analysis of discourse of the targeted poem is to be examined on the following levels:

- (i) Surface element
- (ii) Actors in the text
- (iii) Expression through the words
- (iv) Discursive strategies
- (v) Ideological standpoints

Surface Element

The Peepal tree is growing in the Neem tree's lap,

Three years baby it is, having fresh leaves and smooth skin

The poem uses literary devices like imagery and symbol in the phrases: 'fresh leaves and smooth skin', metaphor and the personification in the phrase: 'three years baby'. These different units combine a unified congruence with the meaning of language. The poem inculcates various themes such as life nourishment, rustic life, past memories, childhood days, theme of death, and philosophical attitude to failure and defeat. The central prevalent theme of the poem is the attachment of the poet to the neem tree because of spending the sweet childhood days under its shadow with his pals who are no more now. The composition embeds not only the covert themes but also the overt themes. The former denotes the latent themes such as impermanence of life, emotional attachment among children, and philosophy of the Gita of doing action; the latter implies the direct themes being described in the poem like the theme of past memories of childhood, the theme of life and death, and game of marbles as a recreation.

Actors in the Text

The actors in the text stand for characters in literary piece of work how they develop or overpower the other characters. The poem 'Neem Tree' keeps shaping identities of characters – powerful and weak. The actors include - neem tree, the poet, friends, rustics, and marbles. The dominant actors in the text are the neem tree and the poet's childhood activity. Neem tree holds an identity of giving shelter to the sapling peepal tree and keeps the disease away from the village because of sufficing them antibiotics and herbal toothbrushes and provides shadow to the shelter seeker from loo burning summer. Next actor is the poet himself whom the tree is dear for his long summer used to spend under it along with his friends. The third actors are the childhood friends who were the part of poet's game of marbles and the cause of defeat and victory in it. The fourth characters are the marbles which often change hands. Sometimes, they enthrone the victory to the winner; other times give the title of defeat to the loser. Other actors are subordinates to be delineated. However, they are interwoven together to produce the meaning and conveying the identities to be deemed wholly.

Expression through the Words

Word is the basic unit of language. It expresses the meaning because it is loaded with the meaning itself. The poem encompasses a lot of symbols like neem tree, peepal tree, marbles, butterfly, eve-birds, twig, nightingales and village. Neem tree imparts the spirit of motherly love to the peepal tree and renders good health to the patients; it's a 'live doctor'. Peepal tree stands for a baby or son in the lap of mother tree. The neem tree is a witness of both life and death of the departed friends of the poet. Marbles are represented as friends and enemies, village as garden of flowers, newly cropped leaves as antibiotics, and twigs as toothbrush. These symbols exercised in the text to enhance and impart the deeper meaning to the readers.

Discursive Strategies

Discursive strategy refers to the ways of selection and exploiting linguistic resources through framing (metaphors, catchphrases and depiction) and reasoning devices (work upon the framing devices to develop the ideas). The poem flooded upon these devices. For instance- 'As hills grow...', 'As clouds conceal sunlight', 'butterfly like memories' (Metaphors), 'sleepy noon', 'thirsty lips' (epithet), 'live Doctor', and 'tree's lap' (personification). The text is replete with the catchy phrases like 'three years baby', 'tearful sorrow', 'magnet of mild rebuke', etc. The poem depicts several things with the groups of words such as 'hub of human relationship', 'abode of love', 'nest of parents' affection', 'twig became the toothbrush', and 'wasps quenched thirst on the dropping drops of nectar'. Reasoning devices justifies the further course of action working upon the framing devices. In the poem, reasoning devices function to develop the course of the idea. Let us extract the example form the poem:

Thou are a live doctor.
Thy bark is an ointment to the tiny pimples,
Thy newly cropped leaves are the
Antibiotics to morn-walkers,
Thy twigs become the toothbrushes to the old men.

The above stanza proves the idea of doctor assigned to the neem tree. The phrase- a live doctor is utilized by the poet as a metaphor and catchy phrase enhancing ideas by giving them logical reasoning. The bark of neem tree is a medicine to tiny pimples. The newly cropped leaves are taken orally by the morning walkers as antibiotic medicine. Moreover, the twigs of neem tree are used as toothbrushes by the old men. Metaphor is given the ground reasons to develop into the further course of idea development and understanding the meaning of language.

Ideological Standpoint

Ideological standpoint in discourse analysis deals with the arrangement of ideas based on norms and facts shared by a community to shape its understanding about some issues. Ideas are obtained and communicated through interaction – verbal and written as well. The ideology, an intrinsic part of discourse, allows the analyst to select and represent objects, actors, language and technical devices exercised in the poem to convey the meaning. There are some instances of ideological expression prevalent in the poem. The example is the following one:

A defeat is better than a victory that
Makes a man arrogant;

A failure seeker seeks to triumph.
A work keeps blunders as birds' face
Death if fly wrong over the ocean.
I was a bundle of defeats. All used to
Play fake games:
We were the happiest souls of the world
For
No joy to win and no sorrow to be defeated..."

In the above stanza, the ideological standpoint is clearly expressed that the marble game brings both a win and a defeat. The winning renders joy to the winner and the defeat sadness to the person who gets defeat. The victory makes a winner arrogant and the defeat effort-seeker. Failures meet a person in a great deal but take them light as fake games. The real happiness of life lies in being indifferent to the result even though being the part of the engagement of the work. All the elements of discourse analysis work together to cater the meaning of language. A deep insight, objects, actors, metaphors, imageries and ideology all are interwoven in one string to work upon the meaning of language.

CONCLUSION

discourse analysis of the poem 'Neem tree' has been conducted in order to understand how the language as a whole assimilating different units such as deep insight of language, objects, imageries and ideologies produces meaning to the readers. The poem is analysed having both covert and overt objects which provide deeper insight to the meaning of the poem. The figure of speech like metaphors, personification, and transfer epithets have been judiciously employed to embellish the language. The ideological standpoint has been made inseparable part of the poem. Overall, the poem consists of these discourse analysis steps interwoven very intelligently to give deeper meaning to the words and language as well.

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