

A Critical Discourse Analysis of Robert Frost's Poem "The Dust of Snow"

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Abstract: *The Critical Discourse Analysis emergence from social science influenced other disciplines including literature two decades earlier. The Critical Discourse Analysis was born out of the womb of critical analysis. Fairclough propounded the Critical Discourse Analysis in which three-dimensional approach of descriptive, discursive and explanation are taken to examine a piece of literature. The present research paper aims at analysing Robert Frost's poem 'The Dust of Snow' under CDA approach. It explores the connection between the use of language and the social and political contexts dismantling the issues such as gender, ethnicity, cultural difference, ideology and identity and how they are both constructed and reflected in texts. The paper seeks to expose the ideology of Frost in the poem. The poem is a myth-breaker, a creator of positive attitude towards pre-assumed negativity about Nature, its objects and creatures, and treasury of literary and technical devices of irony, conflict, surprise, synecdoche, symbols, and metaphors. The qualitative methodology has been employed in which CDA method is adopted for the study.*

Keywords: Discourse Analysis, Discursive, Irony, Ideology, and Rued

1. Introduction

Critical Discourse Analysis as a field of study originated in 20th century, is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse that views language as a form of social practice combining critique of discourse and explanation of how it figures within and contributes to the existing social reality as a basis for action to change that existing reality in particular respects. It seeks to study the social perpetuation of dominance, power abuse by text and talk in a socio-political context. In other words, it explores the connection between the use of language and the social and political contexts dismantling the issues such as gender, ethnicity, cultural difference, ideology and identity and how they are both constructed and reflected in texts.

'Critical Linguistics' laid the foundation of Critical Discourse Analysis in Britain in 1970s and developed as a proper field of linguistic research (Holge, Kress, Trew, e Paul, 1979). Halliday's "Systematic Functional Linguistics" gave rise to the Critical Linguistics. Trew, the practitioner of Critical Linguistic, opined that 'ideology and ideological processes are represented as systems of process and features of linguistics system, by separating in discourse'. (Akram D, 2022) Laus Althusser argued that the ideology illustrates the relationship between social institutions and social practices. Afterwords, "Systematic Functional Linguistics" emerged under discourse analysis encoding different text of social and personal procedures. "Discourse Analysis" is widely used for the study of usage of language in texts and its contextual meaning. Halliday introduced Meta functions of language; field, tenor and mode. He claimed that a text is both a process and a product created, implanted and understood in a social context. Later Chauliaraki, Fairclough and Van. Dijk used the term 'Critical Discourse Analysis'. Fairclough found two drawbacks in critical Linguistics – first overlooking the interpretation of readers and the second 'intertextual text analysis' (ibid). He further argues that

previous Critical Linguistics focuses on clauses ignoring higher level of complete texts.

Van Dijk's Work on CDA

Van Dijk considers discourse more than just a textual or dialogic basis for it comprises of production and reception processes. It is added with a social context in which participants participate. Van Dijk's media discourse possesses coherence, themes, and news headlines. In addition to it, it contains structure, semantic analysis, the entire schematic and rhetorical aspects of texts (Akram, D. Sohail, B. & Qudesia, S., 2002).

Ruth Wodak's Work on CDA.

Ruth Wodak's approval is based on 'Sociolinguistics' and on the model of 'Frankfurt School', particularly of Jurgen Habermas. Wodak is of the view that 'Discourse Sociolinguistics' is a type of 'Sociolinguistics' that includes the contextual study of the text. Moreover, both variables are given weightage alike. It identifies and describes the problems in a dialogue embedded contextually (ibid). "Discourse Historical Method" is developed by her study on anti-semitism rhetoric. In the probing of a text, the historical context of conversation is a paramount feature distinguishing it from methodologies and ideas of "Critical Discourse Analysis" (ibid). According to Wodak and Ludwig (1999), "Discourse Historical Method Approach" has the affinity with Norman Fairclough's concept of intertextuality with respect to comparison believing that language displays and produces social process and interactions. They view that there is no existence of appropriate interpretation. Though they might be plausible yet they can be incorrect (p 13).

D. H. M. A. entails three main things; firstly, discourse analysis involves power relations and relevant ideologies. Secondly, Discourse is highly historical as it is connected with events that had happened before or happening at the production of the text. Thirdly, readers and listeners have

different interpretations of the same text just because of their different background, knowledge, information and positions (p. 12-13).

Relationship of Discourse and Ideology

Widdowson (2000) defines Critical Discourse Analysis as an effort to disclose the latent ideologies in texts. Several linguistics argues in Critical Discourse Analysis that ideology is the paramount part of discussion in it. Hodge and Kress (1979) hold the view that the ideology is a structured representation of reality. Van Dijk claims that the pivotal objective of text analysis is to exhibit diverse ideologies in texts. His ideology analysis contains three dimensions: Speech, Socio-conjunction, and Social analysis. Some other linguistics present their different views of CDA regarding ideology. Cameron (1992) claims that social hegemonies are controlled by stereotypes. Reicherbach opines that contents in the texts are tinged with ideologies. Texts are dependent on contexts and the contexts are associated with ideologies of social systems (Sabir, 2018). Since texts are not ideologically neutral, language and texts possesses a pivotal role in exhibiting, differentiating, altering, and even 'reproducing ideologies' (ibid). Fairclough willingly added the word 'Critical' to the 'Discourse Analysis' to pinpoint ideology or "basic hidden agenda" in the text and talk with an original context. Different ideologies about various things in the community and society are hold by people. Fairclough calls it "a hidden agenda" because People 'talk about different things in an opaque and invisible way' (ibid).

In a brief, ideology is reflected and constructed in a text and it is explored with CDA approach. The ideology becomes the most powerful at the time of its invincibility. The discourse is naturalised as the ideology becomes the part and parcel of the common sense. Speakers and writers use words and express themselves naturally and unconsciously by having the capability of expression. The ideology shapes the identities and construction of the world. As ideologies change, new discourses take place and emerge for people to produce and converse in the world. For the time being, the creation and reception of discourse is modified or altered. For example to replace the old existing ideology, the creation of new discursive hegemony is required. Consequently, CDA examination vis-a-vis DA Studies is of greater importance because it uncovers the speakers' or writer's latent ideology, whereas DA Studies the usage of language and its contextual meaning. CDA takes into account the cave of mind mentioning map based on speaker's or writer's words and discloses the abundant hidden intentions. The invisible ideologies are disclosed as the purposes are interpreted. CDA unmasks the words and states that how they are used to be 'racists', 'moralists', 'conservatives', 'liberals', 'terrorists', and 'anti-terrorists', among other things.

Objectives of the Research

Research objective is to examine the entailed ideology in Robert Frost's poem "The Dust of Snow" by using Fairclough's model as a framework for research.

Research Question

Which ideology is exhibited by Robert Frost in his Poem "The Dust of Snow".

2. Literature Review

There are scarcity of researches in the field of critical discourse analysis of Robert Frost's poetry because his poetry has been considered as insignificant and neglected. Critical Discourse Analysis has emerged as a new scholarly activity over last two decades providing new paths and road maps for innovation (R. Wodak and Chilton, 2005). Critical Discourse Analysis analyses discourse Keeping on mind social structures, practices and power relations in a dialectical manner. Various CDA studies concerning poetry field have been conducted recently, they are the following ones:

"The Critical Discourse Analysis of Marsiya-e-Hussain" (Rizwan Saeed, Fayyaz and Humanities, 2013), "Poetic Discourse Analysis of Syntactic Parallelism Biblical Hebrew Verse" Ayars, 2013), "Discourse Analysis of the Interpersonal Meaning in Wordsworth's poem 'An Evening Walk' through Tenor and Mood" (SARI 2014), and "Discourse Analysis of Lyric Poetry" (Harris and Humanities, 1989).

With CDA approach, a few studies have been conducted on Robert Frost's poetry during the last few years. (Sabir, Kanwal, and Humanities University of Wah, 2018) and (Akram, Sohail, Qudisia, webology, 2022).

Sabir, M., L. Kanwal, D. (2018) examined the invisible ideology in the poem "Fire and Ice" that the poem is highly didactic. The study probes the internal connections and patterns of the poem while investigating its content. It has been analysed on the model of Fairclough clarifying to the readers that modest words affects the certain community and creates ideology.

Akram, M. D., Sohail, Bushra, and Qudesia, Samreen (2022) analysed Robert Frost's poem "Onset" under the Fairclough approach disclosing the latent ideology of didacticism – goodness and evil in life through natural cycle of life and death (Winter and Spring) giving the message of hope in darkness. The ideology in the poem affects a certain community. The study also focuses on the content and pattern pf the poem.

Farooqi, Farhana. (2023) 'Discourse Analysis on Neem Tree' analyses linguistic and technical devices of the poem including its hidden ideology. It focuses that the text takes a shape out of different component of language and social and cultural dimensions as well. The ideology of failure how to encounter, has been rendered to the community so that life can survive.

This very research paper seeks to analyse the covert ideology in the poem of Frost's "The Dust of Snow" on the Fairclough model: description, discursive and social pattern.

3. Research Method

The present study follows the qualitative research approach under which the research method – textual analysis, evaluative method and ideological tools are adopted to conduct the targeted objective of the poem.

Three-dimensional model of CDA by Fairclough

Norman Fairclough introduced three-dimensional model of research as a tool in the Critical Discourse Analysis to conduct the research in 1989; it was later improved in 1995. The rules for text interpretation has been propounded by him considering under Critical Discourse Analysis. He has rendered the three step- critical discourse analysis – text analysis (description), discursive analysis (interpretation), and social analysis (explanation) (Fairclough 1992, 1998). These are the following:

Text Analysis (Description)

The first step of CDA approach is text analysis also known micro-level in which linguistic properties are examined (Alhumeide, 2013). It encircles linguistic analysis, diction, pattern of sentence, sound system, grammar, coherence, and textual structure under examination. Text is a process of making meaning in context (Halliday and Hassan, 1976).

Discursive Analysis (Interpretation)

The Discursive Analysis is also known as the processing analysis. Its another name is miso level which includes text production, dissemination and consumption. The inconsistency is influenced by social context (Fairclough, 1992). It is a link between process and text. 'Reading is the result of a connection between the text qualities and the interpretative manner that the interpreter puts to comprehend the text' (Akram et al. 2022). The range of possible reading will be confined and limited in accordance with the nature of the text (Fairclough).

Social Analysis (Explanation)

The social analysis includes the relationship of speech with social and cultural realities. The initial context of emergence of text is very paramount for its true interpretation. The text which is made up of words and language is the stuff of the examination. Any dimension out of three can be selected for analysis but ultimately collaborates with all the three levels at the conclusion of discourse. The discourse is the part of social existence which is the root of the framework.

Data Analysis

Selected Text

The Way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of Snow
From a hemlock tree
Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.

Text Analysis

Textual Analysis at Lexical Level

Symbolism

The poem is filled with symbols. In the very first line of the poem 'crow' symbolises ill or evil. Moreover, 'hemlock tree' stands for poison and darkness in the poem. In addition to it, 'The dust of snow' is used as a symbol denoting emptiness

and death. Therefore, the poet exercises the literary devices of symbols rendering deeper meaning in the poem.

Imagery

The imagery is employed in the poem. Various types of imageries such as visual, thermal, and kinetic are visible in it. 'shook down the dust of snow' and 'the way crow' displays the kinetic energy in which kinetic imagery is beautifully and skilfully deployed by the poet. 'Snow' is everywhere that shows the thermal imagery in the poem. The visual imagery can be viewed in the 'hemlock tree'. A single word in the poem evokes the various types of imageries that reflects the skill of the poet using technical devices.

Metaphor

The poem contains the use of metaphor. The snow flakes are compared with dust of snow. The snow flake is a tenor, the dust of snow vehicle; the comparison between snow flakes and the dust of snow is the ground of the metaphor.

Personification

The poem employs the figurative language using personification as crow is personified shaking down the snow like human being from the hemlock tree.

Synecdoche

The synecdoche figure of speech is exercised in the poem referring change of 'heart' of poet standing for his entire personality and 'day' for life.

Enjambment

The sentence of the first stanza continues to the next second stanza giving no pause or use of punctuation. The meaning of the first stanza extends and complete with the end of the full stop in the second stanza. The enjambment is created in the poem artistically.

Inversion

In the first stanza, sentence structure is changed for comparison.

Irony

The technical device of irony is employed in the poem 'The Dust of Snow'. The phrase 'change of mood' and the clause 'saved some part of day' entail several types of ironies like structural irony, situational irony, dramatic irony and irony of character. The structural irony is noted as the poet initially holds his concept concerning the Nature and its objects and creatures that they send gloom, darkness, mystery, and evil, however, at the end of the poem his conviction and perception finds opposite what he expected. As the poem is considered as an entity of a work not a single unit of situation, it is assumed to be structural irony because the poet satirises the negative attitude of world towards 'crow', 'snow', and 'hemlock tree' and instils to be positive attitude to them. As the poem is perceived in a single unit of situation in which poet's expectation turns opposite, there happens to be a situational irony. Moreover the dramatic irony is worthy to be marked as the poet as a character does not know that the crow (another character) and snow can impart joy and happiness and at last they do impart. The dramatic irony naturally takes place. Apart from it, the irony of character is observable in the poem when the poet holds

negative views about Nature and its beings but the reality turns poet's character to spring a positive being in him towards the Nature and its creatures and objects.

Overlexicalization

The poet has used overlexicalization in the poem. The concept of gloom is described through words such as 'crow', 'dust of snow', and 'hemlock tree'.

Dramatic elements: Conflict, Anagnorisis, Peripeteia, Surprise, and Resolution

The poem embeds the dramatic elements such as conflict, anagnorisis, peripeteia, surprise, and resolution. The poet as a character had been in worries and tensions of life while he was watching the beauty of Nature as elucidated 'of a day I had rued'. The poet's staying in the lap of nature before shaking down the snow flakes on him by the crow shows his pulling towards Nature's enticement having the fever and frets of life in his mind. This display covertly a conflict in his mind between his attraction towards Nature and worries and tensions of life as more than his half day wasted in them. The anagnorisis and peripeteia are also noticeable in the poem. The protagonist recognises his mistake of spending his time in vain and his intentions are reversed as he seeks to pursue pleasure in worldliness where it doesn't exist. Moreover, the poem is made dramatic as the surprise is entailed in it by changing the attitude that even a crow can be a harbinger of happiness and joy to the poet's life. This also creates the resolution to poet's conflict. The poem is dramatic because it possesses characters, conflict, anagnorisis, peripeteia, surprise, and resolution.

Textual Analysis at Phonological Level

Alliteration

The poem has beautifully used the alliteration. The consonant 'h' and 's' in the words 'has' and 'heart' and 'saved'; 'some'.

Actor	Process material	Goal	Attribute
A crow	shook down	on me the dust of snow	from a hemlock tree

In this line 'A Crow' through a material process 'shook down' the dust of snow on the poet in such a way from the hemlock tree. The doing of crow gives ab strangeness to the poet.

Consonance

The consonance is noticeable in the ending part of the words. The consonant 't' is seen in 'heart' and 'part', whereas the letter 'd' is observed in words 'mood' and 'rued'.

Assonance

The vowel sound is noted in the words like 'shook' and 'down' and therefore the assonance is skilfully deployed in the poem.

Rhyme

The rhyme scheme is followed in the words such as 'crow', 'snow', 'mood' and 'rued' in the poem.

Textual Analysis at Graphological Level

The poem is divided into two quatrains. The second stanza is continued without punctuation having the usage of enjambment. The tone of the poem is lyrical.

Textual Analysis at Grammatical Level

Transitivity-analysis

Transitivity-analysis is a strong tool for examining the meaning in clauses. It takes into notice how events and processes are associated with subjects and objects. There are six principal processes types in transitivity system – Material, Mental, Relational, Behavioural, Verbal and Existential.

Example:

"The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree"

First of all there is a material process of doing described in "the way a crow shook down"

Example:

"Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued".

In the second stanza, there is also a material / mental process in 'Has given my heart a change of mood' and Relational Process in 'saved some part of a day'.

Actor/ Sensor	Process Material/ Mental	Attribute
Crow	has given	my heart a change of mood
Actor	Process Relational	Attribute
I	saved rued	some part of the day

The poem has blended beautifully the double processes – material and mental in the poem has given my heart a change of mood because the crow as an actor renders a

change of mood to poet's heart attributing process material, whereas indirectly the poet feels a change of mood assigning process mental. Besides it, Process Relational is used in 'I

Saved some part of the day'. By being blessed from doing of crow, the part of day which the poet had rued, gives new perspective of hope and change to pass it with happy mood.

Discursive Analysis

In the first line of the first stanza of the poem "The Dust of snow" by Robert Frost presents the natural phenomenon of the snow fall that has been occurred before the beginning of the poem. All the nature is covered snow including the hemlock tree on which the crow is sitting. The poet examines with the way of crow shaking down the dust of snow on the poet (him). As the nature is bathed in snow and looks beautiful and attractive, how can the poet be untouched with the enticing (joy giving) Nature. The second stanza represents the change in poet's mind and removes the tensions and worries of wordly life from his mind. The Nature in the form of 'dust of snow' and 'Crow' fills his mind with delight and saves his rest of day imparting positivity and hope in his life. The ideology of hope and delight taking out of insignificant parts of the nature is imposed naturally in a certain community with soft and simple words in the poem. The poem ends with a hope and positivity taking into account the small things in nature rendering a positive change and optimistic perception which can render happiness and joy in the rest of the life.

Social Analysis

The present poem 'The Dust of Snow' mentions natural phenomenon of falling of snow like many other poems of Robert Frost. His poems describes the winter season and exhibits the presence of awe, mystery, darkness, and evil in Nature. At the same time, Nature also possesses the goodness, hope and optimism. The presence of goodness and evil in Nature represents the human nature which occupies both of them simultaneously. Furthermore, the Nature is so powerful that it can change the mood of human beings in no time. As there is a constant conflict between worries, tensions and hopes; joys in human mind, and likely monotony of life may reach to be won. But it is the Nature in form of insignificant things and creature like 'dust of snow' and 'crow' change the attitude of humans into positivity and motivates them to live the life with hope and delight. After half past day spent in gloom by the poet, he is instilled to pass the rest of the day in joy and hope. In the end the poem is filled with deep meaning incorporating linguistic technical devices. The poem breaks the old myths of 'crow', 'snow', and 'hemlock tree' symbolising evil and darkness earlier, can even impart goodness, hope, and weal to the poet and human beings.

4. Results

The poem is divided into two stanzas – consisting two quatrains. The first stanza exhibits mystery, darkness, and evil in shape of crow, dust of snow, and hemlock tree creating an atmosphere of awe in the Winter in which Nature is surrounded with snow. The second stanza represents a shift in surprise to the poet changing his mood from dullness and tensions of worldliness imparting him an optimistic note to spend life in joy and happiness. The poem is analysed under Norman Fairclough model presenting ideology in it that evil and goodness are always in conflict but Nature feeds life by giving hope and joy through small objects and

creatures. The figurative language and technical devices are employed to give deeper insight in the poem to affect readers. The transitivity analysis describes the usage of material, mental, and relational processes as the poet himself experiences everything and believes that life lies in arrival of joy and hope. Thus, the poem has been examined on the model of Norman Fairclough to probe into the deeper insight and the latent ideology.

5. Limitations of Study

The study is limited only to 'The Dust of Snow'. The other genre of literature can be analysed under Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model.

6. Suggestions

To understand better to Frost's poetry, the three of model of Norman Fairclough can be applied to his other poems.

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