

Discourse Analysis of *Saying Goodbye to Cambridge Again*

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Abstract

The linguistic theory of discourse is an important theory of discourse analysis. This paper analyzes Hsu Chih-mo's classic poem *Saying Goodbye to Cambridge Again* from the perspective of the three basic functions of discourse: ideational function, interpersonal function, and textual function to, on one hand, further explore the narrative mode, expressive features and linguistic style of the poem, and on the other hand, explore new ways of analyzing poetry from the perspective of discourse in pragmatics.

Key words: Discourse; *Saying Goodbye to Cambridge Again*; Ideational Function; Interpersonal Function; Textual Function

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1. INTRODUCTION

The artistic achievements of Hsu Chih-mo's poems lie in the three aspects of natural disposition, imagery and rhythm, and it can be said that his poems are artistically characterized by these three major features. Moreover, these three features of his poems, actually inseparably united and forming the whole of Hsu Chih-mo's poetic art, have brought certain universal artistic experience to the development of new Chinese poetry. This paper attempts to use the linguistic theory of discourse as a basis to analyze his master piece *Saying Goodbye to Cambridge*

Again from the perspective of the function of discourse.

Saying Good-bye to Cambridge Again

by Hsu Chih-mo

Very quietly I take my leave, as quietly as I came here; Quietly I wave good-bye, to the rosy clouds in the western sky.

The golden willows by the riverside, are young brides in the setting sun; Their reflections on the shimmering waves, always linger in the depth of my heart.

The floating heart growing in the sludge, sways leisurely under the water;

In the gentle waves of Cambridge, I would be a water plant!

That pool under the shade of elm trees, holds not water but the rainbow from the sky; Shattered to pieces among the duckweeds, is the sediment of a rainbow-like dream?

To seek a dream? Just to pole a boat upstream, to where the green grass is more verdant; Or to have the boat fully loaded with starlight, and sing aloud in the splendor of starlight.

But I cannot sing aloud, quietness is my farewell music; Even summer insects keep silence for me, silent is Cambridge tonight!

Very quietly I take my leave, as quietly as I came here; Gently I flick my sleeves, not even a wisp of cloud will I bring away.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Literature method is adopted by this research, it consulted, analyzed and summarized the relevant theory, ie. discourse analysis theory. Discourse analysis is inseparable from discourse and discourse knowledge, which are interrelated. Discourse is a unit of language that expresses meaning, including spoken and written discourse. In terms of its length, it can be a word, a sentence, a book or even several books. In the process of writing, the author needs to use some means to organize the language into a coherent discourse, and this means is discourse knowledge. Discourse knowledge is the

knowledge of how discourse is formed, how discourse expresses its meaning, and how people use discourse in communication. There are complex relationships among the elements of a discourse, for example, the relationships within and between sentences constitute the micro-structure of a discourse, including the grammatical structure inside a sentence, word collocations, referential relations and the way of information development of a sentence. The macro structure of discourse is composed of text type, text format, the relationships among paragraphs, and the relationship between each part and the topic. In the process of reading, in order to achieve the reading effect, readers need to carefully analyze these complex relationships in the text and study how these components are combined to convey feelings and meanings, so as to grasp the context of the article and understand the meaning the author wants to express. This activity of analyzing the complex relations among the elements of a text is called discourse analysis.

Halliday's systemic functional grammar lays great emphasis on the applied study of discourse, this study mainly serves two purposes: one is to understand discourse, and the other is to evaluate discourse properly on this basis. According to systemic functional grammar, discourse analysis including 10 steps, such as, the analysis of theme and rheme structure, information structure of discourse, the analysis of the interpersonal function in discourse through the mood and modality of the clauses, the analysis of the experiential meaning of the discourse through the transitivity, the textual cohesion, grammatical metaphor analysis and register analysis and so on. This paper will mainly analyze Hsu Chih-mo's poem from transitivity, mood and modality, theme and rheme, so as to dig deeper into the connotation of poems.

3. DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SAYING GOODBYE TO CAMBRIDGE AGAIN

Halliday argues that situational contexts govern the choice of meaning systems. It is within the contextual constraints that discourse is generated through the selection of meaning, which is reflected in the lexical structure. At the lexico-grammatical level, the basic unit to manifest meaning is a clause. It is a multifunctional structure that embodies a variety of semantic structures at the same time. In contrast to the three contextual dimensions, the semantic layer also has three basic functions: ideational function, interpersonal function and textual function. The ideational function is the function of the speaker as an observer, expressing people's social experience and inner psychological experience, as well as various logical relations between things, such as juxtaposition, subordination, etc. The interpersonal function is the speaker's function as an intruder, expressing his opinions, attitudes, and evaluating his relative role to the listener,

including social and communicative role relationships. The textual function is the function of the speaker as an organizer, which organizes the ideational and interpersonal functions, according to the situational context, into a whole in the discourse, so that they work together in the context. The ideational function is expressed in the form of transitivity in a clause, the interpersonal function is expressed in mood and modality, and the textual function is expressed in the form of theme-rheme. The following is an analysis of Saying Good-bye to Cambridge Again from three perspectives, including transitivity.

3.1 Transitivity Analysis

The transitivity structure of a discourse is the representation of people's actions, experiences and perceptions through different types of processes. The transitivity system consists of six different kinds of processes: material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioral and existential processes.

The material process represents the process of doing something. In this poem, this process is mainly reflected by the narrator's actions. The first stanza is about the long-lost student's sadness when he leaves his alma mater. The use of the word "quietly" three times in a row makes us feel as if the poet is on his toes, coming like a breeze, and swinging away silently. The poem begins with the words "quietly", "take my leave", "came" and "weave good-bye to the clouds", in which the author uses the material process to express his longing for the life of the past and his inescapable sorrow for the present. In the fifth and sixth stanzas, the poet's illusory material process takes on a new meaning, and the four lines, namely "seek a dream" "to have the boat fully loaded with starlight, and sing aloud in the splendor of starlight." "But I cannot sing aloud" "Even summer insects keep silence for me", bring the poem to a climax, just like the water of the River Cam, full of twists and turns. The poet is right in the depth of the green grass, unfortunately he cannot sing aloud in the glow of the stars barefooted, but the silence and tranquility at this point is even more touching than many words of love. The last stanza has three 'quietly' to echo the first stanza. The last stanza, with its three "quietly", corresponds to the first stanza. The poet comes and goes free and easy, creating a special feeling in rhythm. What is shaken off with a wave of the sleeve? There is no need to answer. Since he has been reborn at Cambridge, why take away a wisp of cloud? The material process of reality and fiction makes the whole poem coherent and soul-stirring.

The existential process is the process of expressing the existence of something; the verb "be" is commonly used among other verbs. There is a great deal of expression of existential process in the poem, which is mainly reflected in the author's painstaking manipulation of poetic imagery. "The golden willows by the riverside, are young brides in the setting sun." The poet boldly imagines the "golden willows by the riverside" as "young brides in the

setting sun”, transforming inanimate scenery into living beings, warm and lovely; “floating heart” “water plant” “pool”, “elm trees” and “rainbow” are all emotions that the poet holds deep in his heart. The virtual imagery and the tangible emotions in the poet’s mind are in perfect harmony and complementing each other, highlighting the tension of imagery. By giving the objective things emotional connotation, the imagery is colored by emotion and made beautiful by emotion, thus making the whole poem more ethereal and spiritual.

The mental process represents the activity of the inner world. The author suspects that the clear water of the pool is “the rainbow from the sky”, after it is crushed by the floating duckweeds, it turns into “a rainbow-like dream”. It is in the midst of the confusion that the poet, like Chuang Tzu dreaming of a butterfly, feels that “their reflections on the shimmering waves, always linger in the depth of my heart” and is willing to be a swaying water plant in the soft waves of River Cam.

The behavioral process denotes a number of behavioral activities. Some behavioral processes are external manifestations of mental activity, and some reflect mental states. The fifth stanza of dream seeking is an unreal behavioral activity of the author. Through the description of those imaginary and real images of River Cam, the author cleverly blends his emotions with them and poles a boat to seek a dream. Such a fresh and beautiful image, with a soft and gentle rhythm, harmonious and natural, accompanied by the ups and downs of emotion, is like a pleasant and slow andante, light and gentle, tugging at readers’ heartstrings.

The relational process indicates the relationship between things. “The golden willows by the riverside” “Are young brides in the setting sun” “Their reflections on the shimmering waves” “The floating heart growing in the sludge” “In the gentle waves of Cambridge” “That pool under the shade of elm trees” all indicate an orientation relationship.

3.2 Mood and Modality Analysis

The poem uses mainly declarative sentences to state facts, exclamatory sentences to express emotions, and questioning sentences to deliberately conceive questions. The declarative mood states the author’s material process, the orientation and modality of all the imagery, and the author’s painstaking and somewhat deliberate pursuit of imagery. He is good at capturing images in life, finding poetic interest in life and making the images of life and poetic interest blend into his works, thus constituting a lofty aesthetic realm. In the exclamation “In the gentle waves of Cambridge I would be a water plant!” The author expresses his feelings and melts his wisps of emotion into the beautiful scenery of Cambridge that he writes about. The formal question “seek a dream?” is not a real question, in this stanza the author uses illusion to paint a dynamic picture, forming a wonderful mood,

meticulously expressing his love for Cambridge and his longing for his past life in a sincere, rich and meaningful way.

Modality is achieved mainly by modal verbs and other modal components in clauses, and it is used to express the speaker’s judgement and attitude towards things. In this poem, the modal verbs are “would be” and “cannot”. “Would be” expresses a wish of the author to be a water plant in the river and to be integrated into Cambridge because of his love for it. The author is so happy to be back in the old place, and with the beautiful scenery in front of him, he really wants to sing, but he “can’t” because of the inescapable sorrow of leaving.

3.3 Analysis of Theme and Rheme

Halliday believes that the theme is the starting point of the discourse, and the rheme is the narration, description and explanation of theme, and the core content of narration. In the process of discourse generation, the analysis of the theme-rheme structure of clauses can help to clarify the author’s thinking and grasp the stylistic characteristics of the discourse.

A simple theme-rheme structure is predominantly used in this poem. The theme, the starting point of the discourse, is the known information. The rheme is the end of the discourse, the new information. The poem is structured around “I” “golden willows” “floating heart” “pool” and “summer insect”. “I” is a person who is in love with Cambridge, who is longing for the old life, and who is sad about the inevitable departure. When I return to England and visit Cambridge, the specific beauty and atmosphere there give me solace and inspiration, so I am inspired to write a poem, combine the specific scenery with my imagination to form a vivid and distinctive artistic image, cleverly blend atmosphere, emotion and scenery into an artistic conception, and achieve a fusion of feelings with the natural setting. “Golden willows” “floating hearts” and “pools” are some of the concrete and tangible features of Cambridge that come into view. Two metaphors here are set a high value on. The first is a bold imagining of the “golden willows by the riverside” as “young brides in the setting sun”. The shift from “golden willows to “young brides” is a result of the displacement of the poet’s senses; the second is the suspicion that the clear water of the pool is “the rainbow from the sky”, which, after being crushed by the floating duckseeds, turns into a “rainbow-like dream”. It is in this enchanting scene that the author feels that “their reflections on the shimmering waves, always linger in the depth of my heart”. This unity of subject and object is the result of both inspiration and refinement. In this enchanting situation, it seems that the summer insects also have intelligence, “even summer insects keep silence for me”. This brings the reader into a world of ideals and illusions, where he or she can unconsciously empathize with the author: Cambridge was once a testament to the good old days,

but now things have changed and people have gone, and there are many regrets hidden here that people cannot bear to live with. Every piece of the landscape here is imbued with emotion, and the fusion of emotion and scenery makes it possible to express the “Hsu Chih-mo style” of easiness and helplessness.

4. CONCLUSIONS

A linguistic interpretation of the poem from the perspective of discourse allows one to understand the entire macro framework of the poem and to grasp its narrative style at a micro level, so as to explore the connotations of the poem more profoundly. Hsu’s poems are fresh, rhyming, metaphorical, rich in imagery, beautiful in conception, and full of variety, and they pursue a neat and flamboyant artistic form with a distinct artistic personality. In the framework of discourse analysis, the characteristics of Hsu’s poems are even more clearly shown.

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