



A Discourse Analysis of Crossing the Bar by Alfred Lord Tennyson

*¹Radhika Sharma

*¹Assistant Professor, KIET Group of Institutions, Delhi, India.

Abstract

Discourse analysis enables us to comprehend the social context in which the author's language was employed or the setting in which the author envisaged writing a particular poem. It aids in our comprehension of how the language employed in that poetry was influenced by its intent, culture, convention, values, beliefs, and assumptions, as well as by the social, political, and historical settings of the society at the time. It aids in mapping how language operated at that time and in that society by focusing on the context of language, where vocabulary, grammar, structure, genre, and conventional norms are highlighted. Text analysis techniques that are qualitative and interpretive have been employed. The objective of this study is to present discourse analysis in 'Crossing the Bar' by Alfred Lord Tennyson. It focuses on understanding the functions of language during that time when Tennyson lived, imagined, or created, and tried to present in his poem to achieve a specific purpose if any while composing this.

Keywords: Discourse analysis, language-functions, context, meaning, social usage of language

Introduction

The time period in which Alfred, Lord Tennyson was born saw the transformation of society from one that was predominately rural and agricultural to one that was urban and industrial. The Victorian era, which covered Queen Victoria's reign from 1837 to 1901, was a time of peace, prosperity, cultured emotions, and self-possession for Britain. Tennyson wrote the poem "Crossing the Bar" in 1898. Discourse analysis of Alfred Lord Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar" is the study's main goal. It focuses on comprehending how language operated at the time Tennyson lived, imagined, or created, and strove to present in his poem to achieve, if any, a certain objective. Discourse analysis enables us to comprehend the social context in which the author's language was employed or the setting in which the author envisaged writing a particular poem. It aids in our comprehension of how the language employed in that poetry was influenced by its intent, culture, convention, values, beliefs, and assumptions, as well as by the social, political, and historical settings of the society at the time. Discourse analysis of the poem "Crossing the Bar" has been presented using qualitative and interpretive text analysis techniques. It aids in mapping how language operated at that time and in that society by focusing on the context of language, where vocabulary, grammar, structure, genre, and conventional norms are highlighted.

Literature Review

Discourse analysis is a technique for examining the organisation of writings or speeches longer than one sentence while taking into account both their linguistic content and

*Corresponding Author: Radhika Sharma

sociolinguistic context, according to the Oxford English Dictionary. The term "discourse" is widely used and abstract, referring to a wide range of issues in various disciplines. Discourse analysis is employed in this case to examine written language usage rather than linguistic details like vocabulary and sentences. Discourse analysis also emphasises how language is used in a social setting. [1] Examining how language works and how meaning is formed from language used in various social circumstances is a key component of discourse analysis [2]. Discourse analysis, or the biographical approach, is more applicable when hearing people describe their own experiences with a scenario, according to Jankowicz (2005, p. 229). [3] Tennyson is telling his own story in this passage when he was dying of disease. The words "I" and "me" are used frequently.

There is a problem with the notion of discourse analysis that suggests that words in a language can have specific meaning, but language is arbitrary, as the very feature of discourse analysis is that language and discourse (where speech communication is involved) are not assigned, absolute facts, but one that is moulded by a social context, and can in turn create a picture of the world that is specific to the author of the discourse. Discourse analysis is a research method that examines language and has grown in acceptance in the social and management sciences in recent years [3].

Discussion

As poet laureate, Tennyson is recognised as a representative poet of the Victorian era, which is remembered for Charles Lyell's contribution, Queen Victoria, Darwin, the impact of

earthquakes, and the growth of scientific discourse. [5] Still a religious era when frequent church attendance was the norm. It was an era of rapid technological development, and Britain's goal was to colonise the entire world. This poem exemplifies the beliefs and worldview of the Victorian era. The metaphorical phrase "Crossing the Bar" refers to passing peacefully from life into death. The setting of coast and ocean can be found throughout this poem, and terms like sunset, evening star, sea, sound, foam, twilight, dark, and evening bell make it quite thorough. "Evening star" and "sunset" stand in for "old age."

'Pilot' is a metaphor used for 'God' he hopes to meet after his death. Word 'pilot' presents the scientific advancement during Victorian age and its meaning in term of understanding 'Christian God' is reflecting religious beliefs of people during that time. Tennyson has used the words like 'moaning, embark, bourne, put out, bar, and crost' etc. and expression like 'moaning of the bar' means 'noise of the disturbance by sandbar while crossing it'. The expression of the poet in the poem is serene, calm, satisfied, aware, accepting death rather than fearing of it. He presents sandbar as a barrier between life and death, and he wants to pass it quietly as he believes that this is not the real end, and he will meet his pilot after he would have crossed the bar. Tennyson has handled the topic of death in many poems like 'In Memoriam' for his fellow poet Arthur Henry Hallam. Here we get the glimpse of his faith when he says that death is natural thing which happens to humans and in afterlife, he hopes to meet his God face to face. This poem 'Crossing the Bar' has been considered the reflection for his own death when he was battling from his ill health. We find the use of first person like 'I' and 'me', and no other person and voice but 'Christian God' in words of 'Pilot' There are four quatrains, and the poem has a regular rhyme scheme of ABAB in all four paragraphs. We find that first and third paragraphs are linked so are second and fourth. The poem "Traversing the Bar" is a metaphor for contemplating death; it begins with the poet saying that he can hear a voice telling him that the time has come to pass away. The poet then compares the process of dying to peacefully crossing a sandbar separating a coastal region from a larger ocean. He used phrases like "sunset" and "evening star" to symbolise how close he feels to passing away. He has expressed his belief that his time has come to leave this earth using phrases like "one unambiguous call for me."

A sunset and a star at night and one loud request for me!

Similar to this, the poet wishes to pass away peacefully and fearlessly, comforted by his religious conviction that he will one day see God. Additionally, he hopes that the bar won't lament when he passes away. Others ought to acknowledge that everyone experiences death as a fact of life.

Moreover, I hope the bar doesn't groan. I sailed out to sea,

The poet's belief in the hereafter is reflected in the poem's argument that dying is a comfort. When he says: Tennyson both accepts and rejects the prevalent realities of life.

And when I leave, may there be no grief of farewell;

Tennyson wrote "Crossing the Bar" just before he passed away, and in it, he expresses his hope that he will see God after death. As a result, he is not upset by his own death but

accepts it with grace since he believes that he will see God there:

When I cross the bar, I want to see my pilot face to face.

Conclusion

In order to understand Tennyson's beliefs, the social conditions of his day, his religious views, and the impact of technological advancement, this study analyses the language from "Crossing the Bar." He held this poem in such high regard that he insisted it be included at the end of all subsequent collections and editions of his poems. One technique that aids in a deeper comprehension of a poem is discourse analysis. Even though this study must be selective, it is hoped that it will give readers an understanding of how Tennyson's poem "Crossing the Bar" uses language. It is also hoped that it would encourage students and researchers to apply this approach to other literary works.

References

1. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg (Ed), *The rhetorical tradition: readings from classical times to the present*, 2 (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001) 296.
2. Paul Butler, *Out of style: Reanimating stylistic study in composition and rhetoric* (Utah University Press, Logan. Utah, 2008) 43.
3. Edward P.J. Corbett, *The usefulness of classical rhetoric*, *College Composition and Communication*, 14 1963, 163.
4. Carol Mohrbacher, *Style: definition, separation, and the teachable*, *Minnesota English Journal* 8, 9.
5. Salkind N.J. *Encyclopedia of research design*, 2010, 1-0. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781412961288
6. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/discourse-analysis/> Accessed on Aug, 2022
7. Jankowicz, A.D. (2005). *Business Research Projects*, 4th ed., Thomson Learning, London.
8. <https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/how-to/research/data-analysis/use-discourse-analysis> Accessed on Aug, 2022.