An Analysis of the Cohesion Devices in the Road Not Taken

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ABSTRACT. *This paper analyses the poem The Road Not Takenfrom the view of textual cohesion. From an analysis of the poem's cohesion devices: anaphora, substitution and reappearance, we find that cohesive effects can be achieved by those different grammatical and lexical devices. Textual analysis and cohesion analysis can be effectively used to analysis poems for the characters of poems.*

KEYWORDS: *The Road Not Taken; Textual cohesion; Cohesion devices*

1. Introduction

The Road Not Taken is the first narrative poem of the poetry anthology Mountain Intervals written by American poet, Robert Frost. This poem reads naturally and conversationally. It depicts a quiet moment in woods and what the poet himself has thought about when he was staring at the two roads. Robert Frost is very good at telling people some philosophy and profound ideas through his description of daily life.The Road Not Takenconsists of four stanzas of 5 lines each. The first line rhymes with the third and fourth, and the second line rhymes with the fifth (ABAAB). The meter is basically iambic tetrameter, with each line having four two-syllable feet. Though in almost every line, in different positions, an iamb is replaced with an anapest. The variation of the rhythm gives naturalness, a feeling of thought occurring spontaneously, and it also affects the reader's sense of expectation. The poem is so classical that readers in different times and with different experiences can comprehend and paraphrase it according to themselves. And what we have to focus on in this paper is the textual cohesion in this poem.

2. Cohesion

As the founder of systemic functional linguistics, Halliday was the first person to change the word cohesion from an ordinary word to a linguistic term. The publication of the book Cohesion In English, which is co-authored by Halliday and Hassan, marks the foundation of cohesion theory. In the book, Halliday and Hasan believe that cohesion refers to the relationship of the meanings that exist in the text, so it is a semantic relationship. It is the existence of this relationship that makes a text a text. According to them, cohesion is an abstract concept, and its concrete

manifestation is cohesion relation. Cohesion relation is a kind of semantic relationship which exists between two or more constituents, and it is independent from the grammar construct. In other words, if the understanding of a constituent depends on the understanding of another constituent in the same text, then the relationship between the two constituent is the so-called cohesion relationship. The "another constituent" referred just now actually is the constituents that play a key role in the understanding of the whole text. They can be found out in the text, but their location has no relationship with grammar construct[1].

The cohesion that we have discussed is discussed from a narrow sense. The cohesion in a text is realized by different grammar means, including anaphora, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and vocabulary devices, etc. And it should be noted that though we are talking about grammar or lexical devices, we are not mean that the cohesion has no relationship with meaning. In fact, cohesion is a semantic relationship, but is expressed by grammar devices. Anaphora can be classified into endophora and exophora[2]. Substitution means to substitute a linguistic unit which has appeared before with a pro-form. Substitution can avoid repeating, can highlight key information and can link up the texts together. Ellipsis can be regarded as substitution by zero. Conjunction is a way to link different logical meanings together by conjunction devices. It can clearly show the logical relationships between two sentences. Lexical cohesion can be divided into reappearance relation and co-occurrence relation. Reappearance means that a word appears in different forms, its original form, synonym, superordinate, hyponym, or a generative word. By this way, sentences can connect with each other. Co-occurrence relation is a kind of tendency when words tend to occur together. In a very context, under a very topic, a word must occur with another word at the same time, and other words will never show up[3].

3. An analysis

Now we turn to the next step. First, have a look at the whole poem. The poem is a depiction of the poet's thoughts when he stand at the junction of three roads, and he relates the choices of different roads to the choices in his life. We can have a analysis of the cohesion devices of this poem. There are all together 20 sentences in this poem, and every 5 sentences is a stanza. Following is the chart of cohesion chains in this poem:

Number				
1	two roads		a yellow wood	
2				I
3				one traveler, I
4	one			I
5	it			
6		the other		
7				
8		it		

9				
10	them			
11	both			
12				
13	the first (referred road)			I
14				
15				I, I
16				I
17				
18	two roads		a wood	I
19		the one less traveled by		
20				

Chart. 3.1

This is the main pronouns in this poem, two roads, I, and the wood. So we can briefly find out that the poem mainly depicts the incident happened between the three pronouns.

In the beginning of this poem, "two roads", "a yellow wood" and "I" appears for the first time. Afterwards, the poet refers to one road for two times, using "one" and "it", which all refer to one of the two roads. Then the poet refers to the second road, with "the other" and "it". Next, he refers to the two roads by "them" and "both". And he mentions the first road by "the first (referred road)" . "One", "the other", "the first (referred road)" are all substitution devices. Actually, they refer to the same thing but with different forms. "It", "it", "them" and "both" denote the thing that have been referred before, so they belong to anaphora. And in sentence 18, "two roads" and "a wood" appear for the second time, which looks like a perfect circle. They can be defined as reappearance, which highlight their importance and the key topic of this poem. In sentence 19, the second road is described as "the one less traveled by". The poet gives the second road a new definition, because after he made his decision, the road, which means nothing to him before, turns to be a meaningful and special road to him. So the poet use a new post-attributive to redefine the road he has chosen. The word "I" appears for 8 times in this poem, which indicts that, there is nobody being accompany with the poet, and he is doing this alone. The cohesion devices--anaphora, substitution and reappearance all together make the poem a cohesive poem.

Conjunction is a way to link different logical meanings together by conjunction devices. It clearly shows the logical relationships between two sentences. In this poem, we find that in the first stanza there are three "and". "And" means things are going on step by step, so the first stanza is mainly introducing the circumstance of that time. In the second and third stanza, the story becomes complex, for there are different conjunctives: "then", "and", "because", "though", "and", "yet". The using of different kinds of conjunctives indicates that the decision-making process is very serious. But finally, the poet gives his reason and his thinking and thoughts about the two different roads. There are only two "and" in the last stanza, which means that the whole story comes to its end, all thing are settled down ,and the poet gives his

own opinion about his decision.

4. Conclusion

This paper analyses the poem The Road Not Takenfrom the view of textual cohesion. From an analysis of the poem, we find that all the cohesion devices: anaphora, substitution and reappearance together make the poem a cohesive poem. The understanding of the whole poem depends on the understanding of the linguistic unites and the relationships between those linguistic unites. No word is an isolated island. Every word in a poem must have its significance of being. And cohesion is exactly achieved by those co-related units. So an analysis of the relationships of the linguistics units becomes necessary, and it provides a useful method to analysis poems.

References

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