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THE LITERARY PHENOMENON OF FREE INDIRECT SPEECH

The theory of narrative style is interesting from both the standpoint of literary stylistics as well as from that of the theory of communication. In this framework, the relation of a narrator to a reader is the basic relationship underlying all narrative structures. As Crystal and Davy (1966) note, the “communication theory” model of language has the speaker-addressee relationship at its core. According to this basic relationship a number of ways of narration are differentiated or, as Mc Hale (1978) calls them *represented/reported discourse*.

According to McArthur (1998), there are four types of represented discourse: direct speech, indirect speech, free direct speech and free indirect speech. The researcher indicates that the major markers of **direct speech** (DS) are the exact words in the report and the quotation marks in writing and print; **indirect speech** (IS) conveys the report in the words of the reporter, with verbs generally ‘backshifted’ in tense and changes in pronouns and adverbials of time and place are made to align with the time of reporting; **free direct speech** (FDS) lacks a reporting clause to show the shift from narration to reporting, it is often used in fiction to represent the mental reactions of characters to what they see or experience; **free indirect speech** (FIS) resembles indirect speech in shifting tenses and other references, but there is generally no reporting clause and it retains some features of direct speech (such as direct questions and vocatives).

This article deals with the latter type, that is free indirect speech. Throughout, illustrations will be drawn from Somerset Maugham’s (1974) short stories “Red” and “Outstation”. Maugham's short stories are distinguished by features which are peculiar only to them. That is, he introduced the so called “framing narration” to the classic short story. It is typical of him to give a detailed description of the narrator himself and the circumstances of the narration. Consequently, it brings about two equivalent climaxes of a story, one is contextual, connected with a certain episode, another – narrative, distinguished by

an intonation peculiar to Maugham. “Outstation” and “Red” are the brightest examples of Maugham's creative manner, and are rich with ‘free indirect speech’.

Taking into account the terminological controversy about the construction of ‘free indirect speech’ the list of some of the proposals is relevant: *represented speech* (Jespersen 1924), *free indirect discourse* (Mc Hale 1978), *represented speech and represented thought* (Banfield 1973), *free indirect thought* (Ikeo 2007), *uttered and unuttered speech* (Galperin 1981), *represented uttered and inner speech* (Kuznetsova, Smykalova 1972).

Further on in this work the term ‘**free indirect speech**’ is used following Pascal, who defines this term on the grounds that “speech” refers not to “actual spoken language” but to a “mode of discourse” (Pascal 1977:31–32).

The amelioration of the ways of conveying the character’s speech and methods of the introduction the author's narration has resulted in the manifestation of FIS in modern fiction. In comparison with DS or IS, FIS is a more astute means of discourse. It is claimed that FIS is the displacement of the objective author's plane and subjective character's plane which are both relatively balanced (Kusko 1980:98).

Normally, the stream of spoken language can be conveyed in literary texts in two ways: “directly” or “indirectly”. Thus DS and IS are distinguished. Nevertheless, in modern fiction it is more often found that the distinction between direct and indirect speech appears violated. The fact that certain discourse is neither direct nor indirect speech is evident in the following passage from Maugham's “Red”: *He wanted Sally. He loved not only her beauty but that dim soul which he divined behind her suffering eyes. He would intoxicate her with his passion. In the end he would make her forget* (“Red”:267). No sentence in the example above is embedded after an introductory clause, yet, the past form **would**, characteristic of IS, occurs in the independent sentence. In neither case can **would** be construed as conditional or habitual as is the usual case for **would** in independent clauses.

A *Then he sank heavily in his chair. Was that the man who had prevented him from being happy? Was that the man whom Sally had loved all these years and for whom she had waited so desperately? It was grotesque. He had been cheated.* (“Red”:295)

B *He wondered why he had ever loved her so madly. He had laid at her feet all the treasures of his soul, and she had cared nothing for them. Waste, what waste!* (“Red”:297)

Passages A and B have markers of DS, specifically, general questions (A), expressive exclamations (B). However, it is not DS. Firstly, because the quotation marks are missing, and secondly, in passage A general questions are posed by the referent of ‘he’, so far as it is known from the context there was nobody to direct questions to. The exclamation *Waste, what waste!* is attributed to the same person.

FIS captures something between speech and thought which can neither be paraphrased in a propositional form nor cast into an expression with a new first-person referent. It may be stated that FIS articulates the stream-of-consciousness. FIS avoids suggesting that the actual process of reflection and sensation occurs as internal speech, by distancing the language, which reproduces it, from verbal communication in suppressing both first- and second-person pronouns.

Because FIS occurs in an independent expression, it can contain expressive elements and constructions, even incomplete sentences. It makes FIS the vehicle for the expression of consciousness responsive to the emotional dimension. It allows inner states to be expressed in expressions where they are ordinarily constrained to be reported in sentences.

Leech, a semanticist, has advanced *the incontrovertible principle of semantics that the human mind abhors a vacuum of sense* (1974:8). In accordance with this principle the reader, induced by one or more signals to distinguish instances of FIS, is compelled to make sense of their presence in the literary text, to ascribe meaning or purpose to them.

Presumably, the number of possible function of FIS in the total structures of a particular text is unlimited. FIS can be a vehicle of irony, empathy, stream-of-consciousness or polyvocality.¹ In addition to this it functions as an index of literariness that means it serves as a register-marker for the register of literature.

Ullman (1957:101–102, 110–113) suggests that FIS be viewed as the vehicle for dreams, hallucinations and other such mental states, moving in the direction of stream-of-consciousness but not identical with it.

Banfield (1973:31–32) argues that whenever speech happens to appear in FIS, it appears as the “echo” of words in a character's consciousness, words as they are heard or perceived by a character. There is, she notes, a visual counterpart to free indirect stream-of-consciousness, in the form of descriptive details or impressions which are attributable to the limited visual perspective of a particular character. Thus, FIS is able to capture impressions in the mind, not just words in the mind.

The naturalisations considered so far can all be related to a more general and problematical function, that of systematic equivocation of the issue of who is speaking. When FIS functions as stream-of-consciousness the speaker or “thinker” is identifiable, while FIS functions as the vehicle of irony or empathy there are at least two sources, often difficult to distinguish: the character whose utterance is being reported and also an author/narrator who intervenes somehow, to some degree, in the report and is responsible for the irony or sympathy itself.

Beyond the naturalisations of which FIS is susceptible according to literary conventions (irony, empathy, stream-of-consciousness, polyvocality) one can also ascribe to it a differentiating meta-function within the system of situationally

¹ See C.T. Onions (1905)

related varieties of language. Just as, for instance, the register of unscripted spoken commentary is signaled by certain prosodic features and by distinctive forms of incomplete syntax or the register of legal documents by a particular set of archaisms and by a high density of adverbial clauses, so is literary prose signaled by FIS, among other indices.

Regarding FIS from the semantic standpoint two kinds of FIS can be differentiated. The first kind presents internal discourse, the second external discourse. In other words, we distinguish **inner FIS** – an unpronounced speech, the flow of thought unrealised in words and **uttered FIS** – outward speech, audible for the listeners.

On the structural-semantic level it is possible to mark out a number of types of FIS according to the nature of speech produced by a speaker. Thus, in uttered FIS the following types can be defined: *topical speech (TS)*, *hidden speech (HS)*, *quoted speech (QS)*, *speech in speech (S in S)*; in inner FIS – *internal reflections (IR)*, *internal monologue (IM)*, *internal dialogue (ID)*, *stream-of-consciousness (S-of-C)*.

Structural semantic types of uttered FIS

Topical Speech is the expression of a speaker, altered in a peculiar way and included into the speech of a narrator. Through TS only the general content of what has to be said can be conveyed. The character's words are not realised in open speech. The following passages provide instances of TS:

The impression which Allen Cooper had given him was not very favourable, but he was a fair man, and he knew it was unjust to form an opinion at so brief a glimpse. Cooper seemed to be about thirty. He was a tall, thin fellow, with a sallow face in which there was not a spot of colour. It was a face all in one tone. (“Outstation”:87)

It was easy to read between the lines. Dick Temple, whom he had known for twenty years, Dick Temple, who came from quite a good country family, thought him a snob and for that reason had no patience with his request. (“Outstation”:112)

In these examples the personage's flow of speech is inserted into the narrator's discourse and FIS almost blends with the narration.

Hidden Speech explicates a certain language impulse that makes out the interference of a personage into the narrator's speech, although the absorption of personage's discourse is not as full as it is in TS. Only some cases of absorption are retraced. HS conveys the general content of the expression as well as TS, whereas the concealing of real speech is obligatory only in HS.

Cooper was watching him. His blue eyes, deep in their sockets, were hard and supercilious, and on his lips was a mocking smile. He had heard a good deal about Mr. Warburton in Kuaba Solor. Not a bad sort, and he ran his district like clockwork they said, but by heaven, what a snob! (“Outstation”:103)

In the passage above the author’s discourse contains such components of the personage's speech as *not a bad sort; but by heaven, what a snob!*

Quoted Speech can be presented in two modifications: as a literal speech of personages included into the narrator’s discourse or as a literal speech of famous people. This device consists of the interference of character's words into the narrator's discourse. It can be one single word, or alternatively whole sentences scattered through the narration in the form of sentences surrounded by words of a narrator: *Cooper! An envious, ill bred fellow, bumptious, self-assertive and vain. But Mr. Warburton’s irritation could not withstand the silent beauty of the night.* (“Outstation”:93)

Speech in Speech represents the speech of one character included into the speech of another one. In this case one can retrace the combination of inner and uttered FIS, as long as the real speech appears together with the interior flow of thought.

Structural semantic types of inner FIS

Internal Reflections. This is the most wide-spread type of inner FIS. It contains the majority of determinative indices of FIS. IR may appear in various forms – words, word combinations, sentences, the whole paragraphs which convey interior thoughts or interior reflections that converge with the narrator's discourse. IR turns out to be the most progressive form of FIS presented in “Outstation”.

He knew, he could not help knowing, that there were odious people who called him a snob. How unfair it was! Why, there was no vice he found so detestable as snobbishness. After all, he liked to mix with people of his own class, he was only at home in their company, and how in heaven's name could anyone say that was snobbish? Birds of a feather. (“Outstation”:104)

The idiot! Hesitation was in Mr Warburton’s mind. Did the man know in what peril he was? He supposed he ought to send for him. (“Outstation”:125)

The given examples of IR are full of lexical time fillers (*perhaps, after all*), rhetorical questions (... *how in heaven’s name could anyone say...? Did the man know...?*) and colloquialisms (*birds of a feather, idiot, and man*) are the most powerful indices of FIS.

Internal Monologue is the characteristic feature of the literature of the 20th century, when the writers give their evaluation of the contemporary society through the character's perception. A typical feature of IM is the use of second-person pronoun *you* that highlights that it is actually the dialogue of the character with himself /herself. Through IM a reader can observe how the character's point of view is formed:

Poor Warburton was a dreadful snob, of course, but after all he was a good fellow. He was always ready to back a bill for an impecunious nobleman, and if you were in a light corner you could safely count on him for a hundred pounds. (“Outstation”:94)

Internal Dialogue is defined as a subtype of IM. It has the form of reminiscences which are sounded in the character’s mind, the conversation which he/she had or will have with other characters, reproduced in the consciousness.

Stream-of-Consciousness is distinguished by demonstration of a thought which, has not yet been formed. S-of-C as a structural semantic type of FIS displays the process of reflecting, of forming opinion. The picture of the whole procedure of the thought origin – beginning with the subconscious assumption, then the realising and finally, definitely-formed thought is depicted.

Numerousness of structural semantic types of inner and uttered FIS implies the frequent usage of some and rare use of others. Such a difference in productivity is caused by the specific nature of such types as QS, HS and IM that restricts their appearance in literary texts. Though this consideration is relative to some extent, for the usage of this or that type of FIS is predetermined by the piece of fiction itself. Specifically, the statistical analysis of the short story “Outstation” reveals the productiveness of each type of FIS in it. The table below presents the according results.

Structural Types of FIS (in W. S. Maugham's “Outstation”)

pages	TS	HS	QS	IR	IM	Representing
86	1					Reflected
93			1			0
94					1	0
97–98				1		0
100				1		began to think
103		1				said
104				1		0
109						0
111	1					knew
112				1		0

113–114			1			0
117			1	1		0
119	1		1			0
120				1		0
124				1		0
125			1	1		0
126				1		0
128				1		0
total	3	1	5	10	1	4
%	14.3	4.8	23.8	52.4	4.8	0-representation 80.9%

This table confirms the mentioned peculiarity of IR, that is, its productivity in modern fiction, which is characterised by the psychologism of presentation. So far as IR conveys the character's thought and reflections, it adds to the psychological nature of the narration. By means of IR, the author penetrates into the inner world of the characters, displays their attitude towards the outside world.

The last column of the table displays various possible methods of the representation of FIS into the general context of the narration. Statistical evidence attests that in majority of cases FIS is represented by zero-representation – 80.9%. This fact implies the availability of the contextual representation. One might suggest that local contextual features need not be directly related to process of speech or thought for them to determine a sentence as FIS. General context has a considerable influence on the recognition of FIS.

In rare cases, representing verbs of speaking/thinking such as *to reflect*, *to say*, *to know*, *to think* are found. 75% of them belong to the verbs of thinking, a fact which backs the mental nature of FIS. Though the productivity of the representing verbs is not high, their emergence in the author's narration creates the effect of the unexpectedness, urgency.

The investigation of the structural-semantic peculiarities of FIS in W.S. Maugham's "Outstation" leads to the conclusions that the inner FIS, unlike uttered, excels in number of types of FIS, ranging in subject matter from Topical Speech, Hidden Speech to Interior Reflections. Each type carries out a specific function and is peculiar by its length.

Thus, such types as Internal Reflections, Internal Monologue or Dialogue, Topical Speech, Hidden Speech, Speech in Speech are, usually, not longer than a paragraph. The form of FIS shorter than a paragraph is typical of Quoted Speech, Topical Speech, Hidden Speech, and Internal Reflections. Stream-of-Consciousness, Internal Reflections may take more than a paragraph. As the

statistical analysis testifies, the most numerous type of FIS is Internal Reflections, for its function as a specific type coincides with the general function of FIS as a style. That is, to convey the personage's opinion that is not “audible”.

Summing up, it is necessary to point out that FIS is distinctively literary not because it is exclusive to literary text, for that is demonstrably not so, but rather because the essential character of literature itself is inscribed in miniature within it. From the standpoint of the theory of literature and literary stylistics, FIS is *an* authentic style that serves to convey the message in its special way. This style presents a reader with a difficult challenge. In order to make sense of the complex text with FIS the reader has to transcribe the written sentences into oral forms, but as he/she does so, he/she becomes more and more entangled in the verbal net.

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