

FREE INDIRECT DISCOURSE IN JANE AUSTEN'S "PRIDE AND PREJUDICE"

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Abstract

Addressing one of the most controversial topics in stylistics both linguistically and theoretically, the present paper aims at shedding light over Jane Austen's central and potentially most influential writing technique in *Pride and Prejudice: The Free Indirect Discourse*. Through a mentally complex and authentic depiction of her characters and their surroundings, Austen created a marry-go-round of everyday speeches not only amongst her characters, but also in the happy melange between the third person omniscient narrator and the cast's points of view. In the story world, additionally to being the main factor in author's linguistic choice, this technique is also central to the building of a more salient perception of some characters over others. Austen's structural representations of speech lead us to give careful consideration to the permeability of conceptual boundaries between author and reader, reader and character, and narrator and narratee in the novel.

Keywords: *Narrative, free indirect speech, free indirect thought, deixis, dual voice, Austen, omniscient narrator.*

Introduction

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is one of the most intense scholarly studied novel in the English Language and has been the central focus of interest for various literary research categories. This paper aims at emphasising particularly on Austen's approach to portraying her characters' speech and thought.

Owing to the circumstances in which Austen endeavoured to blend a realistic image of her characters and the climate they grew in, she categorises the language of the text based on characters' social classes. Thus, some utterances are considered vital while the rest are perceived as of petty importance, meanwhile some characters appear to be stronger than others in the story world.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen demonstrates her characters' direct and indirect forms of speech along with the portrayal of their thoughts, which covers a dominant part of the story. Therefore, this essay is an attempt to analyse the use of free indirect discourse (FID) in selected excerpts of *Pride and Prejudice*. It begins by defining the term 'free indirect discourse', and then investigates the narrative techniques of the novel. Afterwards, the analysis of selected passages and the issues in applying FID in Austen's novels will be provided respectively.

Free Indirect Discourse (FID)

The term *Free Indirect Discourse*, henceforth addressed as FID, is also referenced in literature as free indirect speech, free indirect style, narrated monologue, represented speech and thought or *discours indirect libre* in French, and its specific definition permits a thorough discussion. Fludernik (1996) examines FID from a linguistic perspective. She argues that FID is a type of speech and thought depiction, which revolves around syntactic, lexical and pragmatic features, where at a syntactic level, extracts of FID are established by non-subordination and temporal shifting consistent with the basic tense of the reporting frame. Mezei (1996) on the other hand scrutinises FID from a literary stance and delineates it in segments, establishing at the same time that its contentious usage originates from its docile nature, pointing out how FID produces the “appropriate space for interchange between author, narrator, character-focalizer, and reader” (67).

The general perception is that FID simply stands for an indirect speech of a character's unexpressed thoughts through the third-person narrator, or if we are to look at it the other way round: the direct way in which the author/narrator can express his/her thoughts on a character's speech, and therefore, it is often viewed as a facet of focalisation (the lens through which readers see characters). The character's feelings are reconstructed directly and in a way that a reader might possibly conceive as the character's contemplative thoughts; however, the narrator keeps on talking about the character in the third person - beautiful alternation in which the third person narrator picks up on character's own speech and vice-versa. And since all this is formed without any inverted commas or similar indicators, it is named free indirect discourse (Abbott, 2008).

Partaking Fludernik's (1996) belief that only the content and the context of a literary passage permit the construction of speaker and self, Bray (2007) identifies with an increasing group of researchers who study the cognitive devices at work when introducing the point of view in language (Dancygier and Sweetser, 2012; Fludernik, 1996; Vandelanotte, 2004, 2009), his interest being mostly directed towards the occurrence of the third-person narrator in descriptions of FID.

Furthermore, the first-person narrative seems to be mismatched with ‘classic fiction’, a shared quality in several narratives where first-person subjectivity converts to third-person narration, which is common in FID. First-person narratives - representative for the epistolary novels - practise a natural statement-subject, not a classic one, and hence they are inharmonious with FID (Hamburger, 1957, 1973).

A parallel perception might be seen in Ann Banfield's (1982) *Unspeakable Sentences*, whose position (abridged by Fludernik, 1993) is that “Narrative itself [in contrast with actual or fictional speech acts] ... has no expressivity at all” (361), namely, they are “texts with a deictic centre but not self aligned with it” (360). Hence, first-person narratives, which have a perceptible deictic (contextual) orientation, cannot be categorised under this description of narrative language either.

Fludernik (1993) repudiates the empty-centre hypothesis (which stands as the essence of Banfield's ‘unspeakable sentences’) claiming that it evades “narratological communicational structure” (p.361), neglects oral stories (p.362), circumvents Derrida's (1988) theorisation of *écriture* (p.379), dismisses second-person free indirect discourse

(p.380), hinges excessively on the Modernist norm (p.381), and overly accentuates the production of consciousness, not utterances (pp.381–382).

Additionally, Prince (2003) contends that FID, which does not often linguistically result from direct discourse, embraces indicators of two discourse incidents (a storyteller's and a character's), two languages and two voices. This seems to be connected to the dual-voice hypothesis or Bakhtin's dialogic theory, in which FID is considered to be the effect of fusing two voices (the narrator's and the character's) (Pascal, 1977). Accordingly, Polukis (2009) refers to FID as a mode of third-person omniscient point of view, wherein the narrator's and a character's thoughts and feelings are akin to one another.

Despite the fact that the storyteller frequently uses a conventional, formal voice and writes the episodes in the past tense, s/he sporadically adopts the mind of the character, and consequently retains the character's thoughts, choice of words, syntax and language peculiarities. Besides, in practising FID, sometimes the writer's language changes into the present tense (when the character's thoughts are demonstrated), replying to actions in the story as if they were happening now.

***Pride and Prejudice* and The Narrative Technique**

Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* exploits the merger of narrative voice and discourse (telling and showing), to successfully construct the perception of a social world occupied by a range of characters (Wright 2010).

The novel is written in the third-person narration, where the narrator is not a real character in the story world (such as in first-person narration), but a separate individual. In *Pride and Prejudice* the narrator is also an omniscient, who allows readers to penetrate a particular character's psyche and informs them of the latter's actions from the narrator's own perspective.

A typical elucidation of Austen's skilful conduct of narrative voice in *Pride and Prejudice* is that the basic features of her narrative technique exist in the tradition of epistolary narrative (Keymer, 2010). For example, almost a century before Austen first drafted her novel in the 1790s, Aphra Behn, in her *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1684–7), used fictional letters to offer direct entrée to the consciousness of her characters. Moreover, we have other classic eighteenth-century examples of this style in the works of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778), and Laclos's *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1782) (Wright, 2010).

At the beginning of *Pride and Prejudice*, the omniscient narrator is temporarily silent, while the two major characters (Elizabeth Bennet and Mr Darcy) move forward to express the story in their own words. This can be interpreted as a key procedure of representing, known as direct speech or dialogue, and is defined by Short (2005) as “the actual words and grammatical structures which the character used in the original utterance, not those of the narrator” (1). Hence, it is believed that this style of writing is adequate for producing a sense of closeness between the characters and the reader, the dialogue being employed to effectively present conflicting opinions. A case in point is the situation where the reader can differentiate the dissimilar views between Elizabeth and Darcy on poetry. Such dissimilarities between characters resemble the dialogic theory of Mikhail Bakhtin, who claims that language is

primarily a dialogue of clashing voices, and the practice of direct speech in fiction is a process of artistically composing these voices (Wajsberg, 2009).

The regular use of dialogue in *Pride and Prejudice* would probably bring forth the topic of veracity. The reliability of Elizabeth's discourse is reinforced when the narrator does not use a separate narrative voice to delineate the character's thoughts, but focuses on the events through her. Consequently, we can observe that Elizabeth's thoughts and feelings are expressed through the narrator's voice, or, in other words, that Elizabeth is the character that the narrator takes the view of most often, stepping out of her traditional role as narrator and assuming Elizabeth's "personality", putting herself under Elizabeth's skin. This style functions as a means of evoking the reader's sympathy for Elizabeth (as against presuming a situation of ironic objectivity) a feature which is typically found in Austen's writing (Wright, 2010).

On the other hand, the narrative viewpoint possibly moves away from Elizabeth when readers encounter the use of indirect speech; "The words of indirect speech usually belong to the narrator" (Short, 1996, p.289). The difference between direct speech (DS) and indirect speech (IS) is that DS shows the exact words a character utters, enclosed in inverted commas, while in IS the narrator reports the topic of what was said, using his/her own words (Ibid).

The last narrative technique which is used pervasively in *Pride and Prejudice* is free indirect discourse. It combines two types of representation of a character's utterances and thoughts, free indirect speech and free indirect thought, which is a conspicuous way of catching the idiosyncratic qualities of a character's speech and thought in narrative fiction (Keymer, 2010).

Analysis

Austen's narrative is often invigorated even more by her practice of free indirect discourse, and she is credited for inventing it (Michaelson, 1990). By using FID, she enriches the readers' experience by sprinkling other voices with her own. Thus, she depicts her characters in a way that their peculiar speech reveals aspects of their personality and class position. For example, in *Pride and Prejudice*, Mary Bennet's style of speaking demonstrates a character whose attitude towards life is artificial and bookish. Lydia Bennet's mode of expression illustrates a complete lack of self-restraint. And Mr Collins' language is full of metaphors, expounded sentences, illogical reasoning and didactic expressions (Hough, 1970).

Furthermore, Keymer (2010) states that Austen elucidates the characteristic markers of FID in both its simple *speech* and complicated *thought* styles. These encompass, basically, an absence of reporting clauses (he said that / she thought that), and the irregular occurrence of linguistic characteristics within third-person-past-tense-discourse to signify a character's viewpoint and voice.

Austen employs features like proximal deixis (*now / here / tomorrow* instead of *then / there / the next day*); temporally back-shifted exclamations, e.g., "**How differently did everything now appear in which he was concerned!**" (Austen, 2003, p.229).

She also makes use of exclamatory questions, e.g., "**What could be the meaning of it? – It was impossible to imagine**" (p.81); unshifted modals e.g., "**She must own that she was tired of great houses**" (p.267).

Other linguistic characteristics are syntactical informalities and fragments, e.g., “*A few weeks, he believed*” (p.373); character-explicit locutions or modulations, especially idioms and profanities, e.g., “*how shocking it was to have a bad cold, and how excessively they disliked being ill*” (p.38); and “*it was much better worth looking at in the summer*” (p.184).

The characters’ mental processes, mainly that of the protagonist, Elizabeth Bennet, are essential element for my analysis because “the same free access to hidden mental processes is not available in the case of the other characters. [...] It is as if the beam of the narrator’s attention is focused sharply on [Elizabeth], less brightly on [Darcy], while the other characters are placed in the penumbra at varying distances from the centre, the distance being inversely proportionate to their role in the story and the sympathy they are allowed to claim” (Pascal, 1977,p.57).

As mentioned earlier, the FID does not depict external actions; rather, it is a device to portray states of mind, disposition and attitudes; which makes *Pride and Prejudice* the ideal candidate to offer the preconditions that are essential for the ostensibly regular usage of FID. Hence, the following passage from *Pride and Prejudice* could illustrate Elizabeth’s thoughts in the free indirect mode.

As for Elizabeth, *her thoughts* were at Pemberley this evening more than the last, and the evening, though as it passed it seemed long, was not long enough to *determine her feelings* towards one in that mansion; and *she lay awake two whole hours, endeavouring to make them out. She certainly did not hate him.* No; hatred had vanished long ago, and she had almost as long been ashamed of ever feeling a dislike against him, that could be so called. The respect created by the conviction of his valuable qualities, though at first unwillingly admitted, had for some time ceased to be repugnant to her feeling; and it was now heightened into somewhat of a friendlier nature, by the testimony so highly in his favour, and bringing forward his disposition in so amiable a light, which yesterday had produced. But above all, above respect and esteem, there was a motive within her of good will which could not be overlooked. It was gratitude. Gratitude, not merely for having once loved her, but for loving her still well enough, to forgive all the petulance and acrimony of her manner in rejecting him, and all the unjust accusations accompanying her rejection (Austen, 2003,pp.252-253).

The extract continues in FID and sums up together with the part cited here, from the sentence, ‘*She certainly did not hate him.*’ onwards. I assume that the thoughts explained are possibly Elizabeth’s. Moreover, with an omniscient narrator’s report, this excerpt presents the conditions in which Elizabeth finds herself, and includes several markers that her thoughts and feelings are to follow, like ‘*her thoughts*’, ‘*determine her feelings*’ and ‘*she lay awake two whole hours endeavouring to make them out*’. It can be seen that her views are represented in FID, mostly using her own ‘words’, whereas if they were presented in direct style, thinking for two hours would fill several pages, and

establishing whether the words belong to the narrator or to the character would be a tricky process.

Mr. Collins's return into Hertfordshire was no longer a matter of pleasure to Mrs. Bennet. On the contrary, she was as much disposed to complain of it as her husband.—It was very strange that he should come to Longbourn instead of to Lucas Lodge; it was also very inconvenient and exceedingly troublesome.—She hated having visitors in the house while her health was so indifferent, and lovers were of all people the most disagreeable. *Such were the gentle murmurs of Mrs. Bennet* (Austen, 2003, p.126).

In this extract, the sentence '*Such were the gentle murmurs of Mrs. Bennet*' suffices to advise the readers of the free indirect mode of the preceding sentences. Although Ernst (2008) argues that the use of long dashes may suggest that these are Mrs. Bennet's words, it still remains vague why the final sentence is not directly placed after the second dash. Moreover, a type of questioning will convert the answer into FID.

Elizabeth, who knew this to be levelled at Mr. Darcy, was in such misery of shame, that she could hardly keep her seat. It drew from her, however, the exertion of speaking, which nothing else had so effectually done before; and *she asked Bingley, whether he meant to make any stay in the country at present. A few weeks*, he believed (Austen, 2003, p.318).

The response to the question appears to be set in IS, whereas in fact it is presented in FID. It would seem peculiar to render the phrase into IS because readers would possibly think that it is Elizabeth who repeats the words '*a few weeks*' in her mind. For this reason, the free indirect style shown from Elizabeth's perception does more justice to the excerpt than IS would do.

The effects of FID are frequently intuitively noticed by readers, although in some situations, readers will face difficulty in comprehending its meaning. It is often hard to establish whether FID is present or not, particularly when dissimilar modes of speech presentation are used together and FID occurs only in small fractions (Ernst, 2008). Besides, "the context is always of decisive importance in determining what function a piece of FID fulfils" (Pascal, 1977).

As speech reports seem to be close to the respective styles of characters, there is a disguised difference between the narrator's and the character's utterances; this intimacy permits the narrator to shift easily from one form of speech to another, which creates a shift of viewpoints and a colourful narration.

The Problem of Applying FID in Austen's Novels

The free indirect discourse is mainly seen in stories with an omniscient, third-person narrator. Novels that contain FID concentrate on the interiority of characters, since this mode of narration scrutinises the consciousness of each character. Thus, FID provides readers with a profound insight into a character's feelings and thoughts. Likewise, readers are able to observe the characters' ecstasy and misery intensely because these emotions are expressed in their own words (Daniel, 2004).

On a general note, Jane Austen is accepted to be the first English author who continuously used FID in the depiction of figurative language and thought. However, sometimes the FID model has not been well-matched to Austen's work, complicating the way the theory functions in her novels.

According to Daniel, two hypothetical trends in particular have contributed to this confusion. Firstly, the most prominent theories on FID in English have been inclined to highlight the independence of FID representations of speech and thought, and to compare them with authoritative narrative observation. From this perspective, FID is considered as the outstanding mode of objective narration, in which the narrator apparently withdraws or vanishes for the sake of impersonal figural representation.

Secondly, FID has been frequently categorised as naturally distracting and disrupting—a method that permits other voices to participate in and destabilise the monologic authority of the storyteller or the implied author.

Polukis (2009) claims that much of the artistic pleasure in Austen's FID passages derives from delicate variations among narrative voices, as the text moves in and out of a multifarious range of voices, encompassing that of the narrator herself. Nevertheless the present paper observes that when these characterisations of FID are applied to Austen's novels, they occasionally appear to be inadequate or to cause confusion. This is especially true when FID happens to be in conjunction with the authoritative narrative voice, or when it is repetitively blended with narratorial commentary (sometimes in one single sentence).

Conclusion

This essay, through the several passages provided, has tried to show that Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is a proper example of the study of free indirect discourse, aspects such as the presentation of speech and thought have been scrutinised thoroughly by analysts like Geoffrey N. Leech and Michael H. Short.

My study has primarily focused on the term FID and has examined it in detail. At the same time, it has referred to the problems that occur when this mode of speech and thought presentation is applied to Austen's work. It has also studied the narrative techniques of the novel. The exploration of the manifold narrative technique forms has revealed that each type has its own function in the shaping of the story. Finally, the shift between speech and thought presentation could be considered as one way of creating the narration in a colourful manner.

Sometimes, it seems unclear whether to categorise a phrase as *free indirect speech* or *thought*; hence the researcher has adopted the term *free indirect discourse*, which embodies both speech and thought presentation. Nonetheless, readers are not likely test the story for explicit forms of speech or thought, and therefore they will not get exasperated when such a contradictory state appears.

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گفتوگۆی سەربەستى ناراستەوخۆ لە رۆمانى 'شانازى و قينە' جەين ئۆستىن

پوختە

باسکردنى يەككەك لە گرنگترین بابەتە گەرمەكانى شىوازاسى لە روانگەى زمانەوانى و تىۆرىيەو، ئەم لىكۆلینەوئەپە ئامانجى روونکردنەوئە كاریگەرتەين تەكنىكى نوسىنى (جەين ئۆستىن) لە رۆمانى 'شانازى و قينە': گفتوگۆى سەربەستى ناراستەوخۆ. لەرىگەى ویناکردنى ھزرى ئالۆزى كاریگەرتە و ژینگەى دەوروبەرى، ئۆستىن نە تەنھا ئەم گفتوگۆیانەى لەنپوان بابەتە رۆتینىەكانى رۆژانەى كاریگەرتەكانى دروستکردوو، بەلكو تىكەلاویەكى جوانى نیشانداوئە لەنپوان چىرۆكخوانى لىزان و تىپروانىنى ئەكتەرەكان. لە جیھانى چىرۆكەكەدا، ئەم تەكنىكە ھەلبژاردەپەكى سەركى نوسەرە كە بەھۆیەوئە بىننى كاریگەرتە سەركىيەكان بۆ رووداوەكان زالدەكات بەسەر ئەمانى تر. روونکردنەوئە پىكھاتەپى قسەکردنى ئۆستىن یارمەتیدەرە بۆ ئەوئە بە ووریاپىەكى زۆرەوئە مامەئە لەگەئە سنوورە ھزرىيەكان بكەين لەنپوان نوسەر و خوینەر، خوینەر و كاریگەرتە، و چىرۆكخوان و چىرۆك-بۆ-گىرەوئە لە رۆمانەكەدا.

ووشە گرنگەكان: ھونەرى چىرۆك گىرەوئە، گفتوگۆى سەربەستى ناراستەوخۆ، بىرى سەربەستى ناراستەوخۆ، دەستەواژەى ئاماژەدان، دەنگى دووانەپى، ئۆستىن، چىرۆكخوانى لىزان.

خلاصة

الخطاب الغير المباشر الحر في "برايد و بريجوديس" لجين أوستين نبذة مختصرة

دراسة لواحده من أكثر الموضوعات إثارة للجدل في علم الاسلوب على المستوى اللغوي و النظري، فالدراسة الحالية تحاول القاء الضوء على التقنية المركزية لجين أوستين في "برايد و بريجوديس". من خلال تصوير معقد و أصيل لشخصياتها و البيئة المحيطة بهم، ما أجاد أوستين محادثات يومية عادية من بين الشخصيات فقط، و لكن خلق مزجا مذهلا بين الراوي المطلع و وجهات نظرهم. ففي عالم القصة، على الرغم من كونها السبب الرئيسي في الاختيار اللغوي للكاتب، فهذه التقنية تحتسب محورية في بناء فهم اكثر وضوحا لبعض الشخصيات على الاخرين. فإن التمثيل البنائي في الخطاب يؤدينا الى ان نعطي اهتماما اكثر الى الحدود الذهنية من بين الكاتب و القارئ، القارئ و الشخصية، و الراوي و المروي له في الرواية .

كلمات البحث: السرد، التعبير الغير المباشر الحر، الفكر الحر الغير مباشر، صوت مزدوج، أوستن، الراوي مطلع.