

## Variations and effects of Speech and Thought Presentation Categories on the basis of Short Stories by Contemporary Women Writers in English

**Nino Kvantaliani**

Faculty of Humanities

Tbilisi Ivane Javakhishvili State University

1, Chavchavdze Ave

0179 Tbilisi

Georgia

### Abstract

*The present study attempts to analyze the interaction between the categories of speech and thought presentation. Special emphasis is given to variations between the two modes as well as to the instances of ambiguity created by their interplay. The article endeavors to illustrate how authorial linguistic choices are used to manipulate the reader response and sympathy towards the events being narrated. The theoretical basis for the analysis is the classification of the speech and thought presentation modes by G. Leech and M. Short (2003) as it 'concentrates on the linguistic phenomena within texts that give rise to viewpoint effects' (McIntyre, 2006). Apart from this, since fictional texts display the tendency to move between categories of speech and thought presentation as well as between the modes within one category, the article attempts to offer the analysis of possible gradations and blends based on formal linguistic features. The practical part of research was done on the basis of short stories in English by contemporary women writers.*

**Keywords:** narrative point of view, speech presentation, thought presentation

### 1. Introduction

The study of the character speech and thought presentation is an important aspect of the narrative discourse. It has been extensively investigated within stylistics as well as narratology (D. Cohn, G. Leech, M. Short, S. M. Fludernik, E. Semino, S. Rimmon-Kennan). There have been various classifications. The tripartite schemata, which embraces direct discourse, indirect discourse and free indirect discourse, is considered as a core theory. Free indirect discourse is believed to be situated between indirect and direct discourse and be an alternative to either. However, according to many scholars (M. Fludernik, S. Chatman, G. Leech, M. Short) it disregards all formal patterns that can be found in individual texts (Fludernik, 2005, p. 276). An alternative theory in favor of a scale model is thought to hold formal variety more easily. According to Fludernik, this model provides positions for 'intermediary' phenomena, the formerly 'deviant' cases (2005, p. 276).

The modes of speech and thought presentation developed by Leech and Short are formally very much similar but are differently exploited by writers. Therefore, the effects they create vary from text to text and make a reader respond differently. The categorization being discussed distinguishes between five techniques on the speech as well as thought presentation cline. The following techniques are Direct Speech/Thought, Indirect Speech/Thought, Free Direct Speech/Thought and Narrative Report of Speech/Thought Act.

Speech presentation categories (Leech, Short, 2003):

- a. He said, 'I'll come back here to see you again tomorrow'. (Direct Speech: DS)
- b. He said that he would return there to see her the following day. (Indirect Speech: IS)
- c. He said I'll come back here to see you again tomorrow. (Free Direct Speech: FDS)
- d. He promised to return. (Narrative Report of Speech Act: NRSA)
- e. He would return there to see her again the following day. (Free Indirect Speech: FIS)

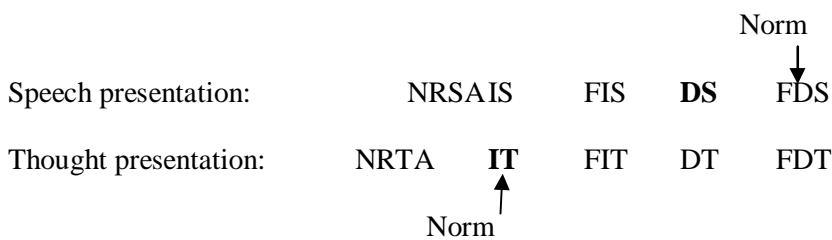
Thought presentation categories (Leech, Short, 2003, p. 337):

- a. Does she still love me? (Free Direct Thought: FDT)
- b. He wondered, 'Does she still love me?' (Direct Thought: DT)
- c. Did she still love him? (Free Indirect Thought: FIT)
- d. He wondered if she still loved him. (Indirect Thought: IT)
- e. He wondered about her love for him. (Narrative Report of Thought act: NRTA)

There is a perceptible difference between the effects created by speech and thought presentation categories. G. Leech and M. Short state that the reason for this is the difference between what is considered a norm for speech presentation categories on the one hand, and thought presentation categories, on the other. The baseline for the thought presentation is considered to be the indirect thought whereas the direct speech serves as the baseline for the speech presentation (Leech, Short, 2003, p. 344). The scholars hold semantics of the reporting accountable in this case. The direct speech claims to reproduce the speech verbatim whereas through the indirect speech the narrator presents somebody else's words by maintaining the general idea of the utterance but without copying exact words uttered.

The direct speech is the most common technique since it represents the speech the way it was communicated to the listener (Leech, Short, 2003). Owing to the fact that other peoples' thoughts are not as accessible to direct perception as the speech, the conception of the norm changes. The indirect thought is considered to be the baseline since it guarantees the closest possible representation of what was thought. However, Leech and Short state that thought is not 'verbally formulated and so cannot be reported verbatim' (2003).

The figure that follows (Leech, Short, 2003, p. 344) clearly represents that the norms of speech and thought presentation are situated at the opposing sides of the continuum. For this reason they acquire different values.



The authors define FIS as the movement left off the norm – towards authorial intervention while FIT is considered to be moving to the right, distancing itself from the 'author's most directly interpretative control and into the active mind of the character' (2003). Many scholars argue that DT is more artificial in nature than indirect forms since it is impossible to perceive other people's thoughts directly. As Leech and Short have it, by using instances of DT the narrator presupposes what it would be like if the character's thoughts had been overt. It is this explicitness that ascribes the quality of consciousness to DT and FDT according to the scholars (Leech, Short, 2003). Despite its artificial nature FT categories are widely employed, especially in traditional novels. Leech and Short attribute this quality to the likeness between FT and the dramatic monologue or an attempt to make the thoughts of the character more realistic (2003).

Due to the fact that among speech and thought presentation categories some are considered more foregrounded and deviant (free direct and free indirect) than the rest (direct, indirect), the bulk of the article is devoted to the analysis of the former modes.

## 2. Free Direct Speech and Free Direct Thought

### 2.1. Free Direct Speech

Free Direct Speech is produced if the formal features such as the quotation marks or the introductory reporting clause are removed. Either or both of the markers can be removed (Leech, Short, 2003). In the following extract reporting clauses are retained but the inverted commas are removed:

Later they lay on their backs and murmured into the dark, the way they used to do when they were little. Morna said, he would claim he found it by accident. That could be the truth, Lola said, but Morna was quiet. Lola wondered if their mother knew. She said, you can get the police coming round. What if they come and arrest him? If he has to go to prison we won't have any money.

(‘The Heart Fails without Warning’, H. Mantel)

The passage below is the case when the combination of both possibilities is at work – in some instances of FDS the reporting clause is used but the inverted commas are eliminated while in the middle of the passage ‘bare’ forms of FDS are exploited:

November: Dr Bhattacharya from the unit came to discuss the hairiness. It happens, she said. The name of the substance is lanugo. Oh, it happens, I am afraid to say. She sat on the sofa and said, "With your daughter I am at my wits' end."

(‘The Heart Fails without Warning’, H. Mantel)

FDS is believed to manifest the effects of dramatization and immediacy (Semino, Short, 2004, p. 89). This mode of speech presentation is especially significant in the dramatization of characters’ voices since it allows the author to remove a clear distinction between speech and narrative report (Leech, Short, 2003). FIS provides the effects of vividness and immediacy, which promotes the reader involvement in the narrative. In the excerpt that follows these features are enhanced by the character idiolect and elliptical sentences:

He didn't know who she was, who Tick was, until she said, Tick Corn, your brother Rollo's son, and that Rollo had passed on, killed by a waspy emu, though prostate cancer was waiting its chance. Yes, she said, you bet Rollo still owned the ranch. Half of it anyway. Me and Tick, she said, we been pretty much running it the past ten years.

(‘The Half-skinned Steer’, Anne Proulx)

## **2.2. Free Direct Thought**

FDT exhibits features as different from its speech counterpart. Since any instance of representing character thought implies the presence of an omniscient narrator, the use of more direct categories of thought presentation, i.e. direct thought and free direct thought, acquires a different value from those of the corresponding speech presentation categories. In speech presentation the use of the direct speech and the free direct speech makes the impression of the character talking in the reader’ s presence. In instances like this, authorial intervention decreases:

‘This roast beef is marvelous, Cindy. And the green rice. How did you do that?’ By frying it lightly first and using plenty of parsley, Cindy disclosed. She’d be glad to share the recipe. It was the least she could do, thought Violet, and leaned down to stroke the dog, who’d parked himself beside the chair.

(‘Taste of Dust’, L. Sh. Schwartz)

Similarly, when dealing with the direct thought and the free direct thought, the authorial intervention could be defined as minimal; however, the actual result is a monologue, a character ‘talking’ to himself or herself and the thoughts acquire conscious value (Leech, Short, 2003):

Seth circled the table pouring wine (a less than steady hand, Violet noted – anxiety or Parkinson’s?) while Cindy carried platters out from the kitchen. Be sure to say something, Violet reminded herself. Give credit where it’s due. She probably couldn’t have managed a dinner on such a grand scale.

(‘Taste of Dust’, L. Sh. Schwartz)

In many cases of FDT quotation marks are omitted; however, reporting verbs are retained:

This kingdom's not made much progress with housework, she thought, despite my personal interest. They can find water on the moon, but they can't invent the self-filling bucket, never mind the self-scrubbing floor. "Women into Engineering!" That would be my manifesto. If I had a manifesto.

(‘Cinderella in Autumn’, H. Mantel)

Due to the fact that FDT is relatively easier to identify, it may be employed to present the instances of sudden apprehension of reality:

Even as I hesitate, I see Maurice drifting over to Bernard’s side. Mother love? What’s that? What’s required? I want Maurice to grow up to be the best of his father, not the worst. We aren’t meant to be on sides: we are meant to try to be civilized.

(‘Red on Black’, F. Weldon)

The use of FDT serves the same purpose in the following example:

Perhaps I can't forgive my mother, thought Maria, not because she abandoned me, but because in leaving us she let me think my father could be mine, gave credence to my illicit fantasies. Didn't I once hate Eleanor?

('Red on Black', F. Weldon)

In the extreme manifestation of FDT, reporting verbs and quotation marks characteristic of the indirect speech are not used. Shortened sentences and associative shifts of the subject matter result in creating an impression that the character, like the reader, follows the flow of his/her own thoughts. The thoughts presented are perceived as emergent, partially formed and amorphous:

Martin brings back flowers and chocolates: whisks Martha off for holiday weekends. Wonderful! The best husband in the world: look into his crinkly, merry, gentle eyes; see it there. So the mouth slopes away into something of a pout. Never mind. Gaze into the eyes. Love. It must be love. You married him. You. Surely you deserve true love?

('Weekend', F. Weldon)

Needless to say there is an element of artifice in representing thoughts in the verbal form. As the result, the reader gets an impression that what is communicated is deliberate thought. Finally, we have seen that FDT is used to present thoughts which give the impression of having been mentally verbalized at particularly intense and dramatic moments (Semino, Short, 2004).

### **3. Free Indirect Speech and Free Indirect Thought**

#### **3.1. Free Indirect Speech**

FIS is considered to be the least frequent category of speech presentation (Semino, Short, 2004). Despite this, FIS is believed to be linguistically more complex than other forms since it is a mixture of direct and indirect features it be lexical, grammatical or deictic markers of subjectivity (Semino, Short, 2004). FIS differs from other speech presentation categories due to the author's increased control of conversations: 'the authorial voice is interposed between the reader and what the character says, so that the reader is distanced from the character's words (Leech, Short, 2003). This way FIS allows the author to guide the reader's sympathy towards certain characters. It does so through maintaining the features from both sources, the authorial commentary and the idiolect, value language and sentence structure characteristic of the protagonist:

Once, a year or two into their marriage, he had confessed to her that he found the presence of small children unbearably agitating: the unmodulated noise, the strewn plastic toys, the inarticulate demands that you provide something, fix something, though you didn't know what it was.

('Winter Break', H. Mantel)

One more essential quality of FIS lies in its ability to communicate various shades of conversations and to produce layers of the character speech. It could be perceived as presenting a kind of hierarchy of characters based on what amount of information is communicated to the reader and how:

'This roast beef is marvelous, Cindy. And the green rice. How did you do that?' By frying it lightly first and using plenty of parsley, Cindy disclosed. She'd be glad to share the recipe. It was the least she could do, thought Violet, and leaned down to stroke the dog, who'd parked himself beside the chair.

('Taste of Dust', L. Sh. Schwartz)

In the example above the protagonist's utterances are presented through FDS, which helps the reader to gain direct access to the character and subconsciously attach more importance to her presence in the scene. However, a minor character is represented via FIS thus the shade of inferiority is attached to her. Furthermore, it could be argued that in the case above the combination of FIS followed by IT creates an effect of irony: the authorial voice is inserted between the reader and the character's words/thoughts. The result of irony is distancing the reader from the character.

As the discussed passages illustrate, FIS communicates a sense of distance with relation to either the character who uttered the statement or the narrator who reported it.

### 3.2. Free Indirect Thought

According to G. Leech and M. Short (2003), while FIS distances the reader from the character, FIT manifests the opposite effect - it locates the reader directly in the consciousness of the character. FIT is a widely used mode in narrative fiction. Many novelists as well as short story writers exploit it successfully to manipulate the reader's sympathy towards the story world, events and characters being presented. The most significant use of thought presentation categories and especially, FIT lies in manipulating the narrative point of view. This is accomplished by various linguistic features. In the following example the reader's sympathy is generally manipulated by the use of deictic words (today's, now), value laden (Leech, Short, 2003) vocabulary (outgrown cuteness, purely clinical, notably, a bit too much, too bright, too much wattage) and the character's idiolect (outgrown cuteness, purely clinical, notably, a bit too much, too bright, too much wattage). All these linguistic markers enable the reader to perceive the events from the protagonist's point of view and share her emotional reaction to the events going on:

Today's Cindy had outgrown cuteness. Violet's interest was purely clinical by now, yet maybe in the course of afternoon she'd spot something that would make it clear, some feature in Cindy notably lacking in herself. Youth and cuteness didn't seem enough to account for so much devastation. Cindy's hair was the color fortyish women often chose, somewhere between chestnut and gold, and there was a bit too much of it, Violet thought. She could also go easier on the makeup; the impression was altogether too bright, too much wattage.

(L. Sh. Schwartz 'Taste of Dust')

In summary, FIT provides extended access to the minds of characters without obvious traces of artificiality. By doing so, it allows the reader to get more dramatic and immediate access to characters' consciousness. In this respect FIT is a great tool for manipulating the point of view effects and channeling the reader's empathy towards story existents.

### 4. Cases of Blending between Speech and Thought Presentation Categories

It is worth noting that there are a number of instances of speech and thought categories interacting in many interesting ways. The case below illustrates an interchange between FIS and FIT. The sentences are emotionally colored and the effect that is created could be attributed to elliptical sentences and the characters' idiolect:

Joyce set about convincing him that he was mistaken. He had so little experience of women. None, except for her. They had always thought that experimenting with various partners was childish, adultery was messy and destructive. Now she wondered, Should he have played around more?

(A. Munroe 'Too Much Happiness')

The short story by F. Weldon "Weekend" is particularly rich in interesting cases and combinations of speech and thought presentation techniques. The following paragraph from the story contains the blend of the two techniques – FIS and FIT. The FIT of the protagonist could be perceived as the echo of her husband's FIS:

Shop in the lunch-hour. Lug it home. Cook for the freezer on Wednesday evenings while Martin is at his car-maintenance evening class, and isn't there to notice you being unrestful. Martin likes you to sit down in the evenings. Fruit, meat, vegetables, flour for homemade bread. Well, shop bread is full of pollutants. Frozen food, even your own, loses flavour. Martin often remarks on it.

Or:

Clothes. Oh, clothes! Can't wear this: must wear that. Dress shops. Piles of clothes in corners: duly washed, but waiting to be ironed, waiting to be put away. Get the piles off the floor, into the laundry baskets. Martin doesn't like a mess.

(F. Weldon "Weekend")

In the extract that follows various techniques interrelate in order to reflect the chaos going on in the protagonist's consciousness:

She is running around in her nightie. Now if that had been Katie - but there's something so practical about Martha. Reassuring, mind; but the skimpy nightie and the broad rump and the thirty-eight years are all rather embarrassing. Martha can see it in Colin and Katie's eyes. Martin's too. Martha wishes she did not see so much in other people's eyes. Her mother did, too. Dear, dead mother. Did I misjudge you?

(F. Weldon “Weekend”)

The following techniques are at work: authorial commentary (She is running around in her nightie. Now if that had been Katie - but there's something so practical about Martha.), IT (Martha wishes she did not see so much in other people's eyes.), FIT (Her mother did, too.) and FDT (Dear, dead mother. Did I misjudge you?).

The next extract from the same short story exploits the techniques that could be interpreted differently by different readers since it gives the ground for various readings:

Mrs Hodder came in twice a week to clean. She was over seventy. She charged two pounds an hour. Martha paid her out of her own wages: well, the running of the house was Martha's concern. If Martha chose to go out to work - as was her perfect right, Martin allowed, even though it wasn't the best thing for the children, but that must, be Martha's moral responsibility - Martha must surely pay her domestic stand-in. An evident truth, heard loud and clear and frequent in Martin's mouth and Martha's heart.

Part of the sentences could be attributed to either speech or thought depending on the interpretation of the reader. E.g. the sentence – ‘Well, the running of the house was Martha's concern’ - may be Martin’s (the husband’s) FIS or FIT that flashed in Martha’s (the protagonist’s) mind. Furthermore, it should be noted that the sentence going through Martha’s mind could be the reminiscence of Martin’s utterance or its reiteration. There are a lot of instances of such ‘mental reiterations’ in the story:

Creativity arises out of order, not chaos. Five years off work while the children were small: back to work with seniority lost. What, did you think something was for nothing? If you have children, mother, that is your reward. It lies not in the world.

Here again the reader ‘hears’ Martin’s views about matrimony and household routines through Martha’s consciousness.

In the passage below there is only one sentence which was actually uttered. The reader can construe it by the help of the brackets and the indication of the person uttering it. FDS is communicated through the sentence inserted in the protagonist’s direct (or indirect!) thought:

Midnight. Good night. Weekend guests arriving in the morning. Seven for lunch and dinner on Saturday. Seven for Sunday breakfast, nine for Sunday lunch. (‘Don't fuss, darling. You always make such a fuss’: Martin) Oh, God, forgotten the garlic squeezer. That means ten minutes with the back of a spoon and salt. Well, who wants lumps of garlic? No one. Not Martin's guests. Martin said so. Sleep.

(F. Weldon “Weekend”)

There are some interesting instances in which the protagonists’ FIT is the result of the paraphrases of the sentence originally uttered by another character. More interestingly, the original sentence is usually provided in the form of the detachment as the following example illustrates:

Very little could be left in the cottage during the week (‘An open invitation to burglars’: Martin).

(F. Weldon “Weekend”)

One more technique that is worth noting in presenting the narrative point of view is accomplished by the multiple character narrative voice. Several different modes are exploited to communicate multiple narrative voices:

Martha worried about her age, her tendency to complain, and the width of her hips. She took the remarks personally. Was she right to do so? The children noticed nothing: it was just funny lively laughing Daddy being witty about Mummy's car. Mummy, done for drunken driving. Mummy, with the roots of melancholy somewhere deep beneath the bustling, busy, everyday self. Busy: ah so busy!

(F. Weldon “Weekend”)

In the passage cited there are instances of the narrator’s commentary, the protagonist’s TIS (or FIT) in the form of the question followed by the children’s FIT. Due to the fact that the verb ‘noticed’ is used to represent the children’s mental activity, the sentences that follow could be classified as consciousness and not speech. However, it should be noted that in the given sentences the narrative point of view is of the protagonist’s children; as for the narrative voice, it could be ascribed to the narrator since the discourse is not characteristic to children’s way of thinking (Mummy, with the roots of melancholy somewhere deep beneath the bustling, busy, everyday self).

One more example where a similar polyphony of narrative voices is at work is presented through FDS:

Salisbury Plain. Stonehenge. Look, children, look! Mother, we've seen Stonehenge a hundred times. Go back to sleep.

Or:

London Airport to the left. Look, look, children! Concorde? No, idiot, of course it isn't Concorde.

(F. Weldon "Weekend")

In conclusion, Speech and Thought Presentation categories present a fertile ground of possibilities for writers as well as for scholars. These modes exhibit various features that can be exploited by fiction writers in a number of ways. As seen above, speech and thought presentation modes account for interesting and effective variations in manipulating the narrative point of view. As well as this, writers employ almost inexhaustible potential of Speech and Thought categories to control the reader's empathy towards characters and the story world. This trait attaches significant interpretative value to the discussed categories.

### References

- Fludernik M.(2005). The Fictions of Language and the Languages of Fiction: The Linguistic Representation of Speech and Consciousness. *Taylor & Francis e-Library*. ISBN 0-203-45657-2 (Adobe eReader Format). Retrieved from <http://bookos-z1.org/>
- Geoffrey N. Leech and Michael H. Short (2003), *Style in Fiction – A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*. Longman, London and New York
- McIntyre D. (2006). Point of View in Plays: A cognitive stylistic approach to viewpoint in drama and other text-types. *John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam/Philadelphia*. Retrieved from <http://bookos-z1.org/>
- Semino E., Short Mick (2004). Corpus Stylistics: Speech, writing and thought presentation in a corpus of English writing. *Taylor & Francis e-Library*. Retrieved from <http://bookos-z1.org/>

### Short Story List

- Mantel H. The Heart Fails without Warning. *The Guardian, Saturday 10 October 2009*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/dec/19/hilary-mantel-short-story-cinderella?INTCMP=ILCNETTXT3487>
- Mantel H. Winter Break. Retrieved from <http://www.welovethisbook.com/features/winter-break-short-story-hilary-mantel>
- Mantel H. Cinderella in Autumn. *The Guardian, Saturday 19 December 2009*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/dec/19/hilary-mantel-short-story-cinderella?INTCMP=ILCNETTXT3487>
- Proloux A. The Half-skinned Steer. Retrieved from [NOVEMBER 1997 ATLANTIC MAGAZINE](#)
- The Best American Short Stories 2005 by Chabon M. and Kenison K. *Houghton Mufflin Copany, New York*.
- F. Weldon (1996). Wicked Women: A collection of short stories. pp. 227-248. *Flamingo*. Munroe A. Too Much Happiness. Retrieved at <http://www.litmir.net>
- F. Weldon. Weekend. Retrieved from <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/weekend>