

LINGUISTIC AND DISCURSIVE MEANS IN JAMES JOYCE’S SHORT STORIES

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Abstract

The degree of comprehensibility of Joyce as a short story writer and Joyce as a novelist varies to a great extent. This phenomenon is due to the fact that in novels, unlike in short stories, the author uses the stream of consciousness, the literary technique that enables him to illustrate the shift to the character’s perspective. The interest is generated by the new trends in the field and the newly introduced concepts. Thus, the term Deictic Center (CD), taken from actual discursive situation (I-here-now), what comes to the perspective from which the narrative is given, it is widely used in the research of Narratology. The notion of the deictic center permits 'access' to the world of the story, and allows shifts that affect not only the characters, but objects, places and times as well, as the deictic center is continuously moved and relocated.

Keywords: literary language, stylistic elements, author means.

This paper is concerned with the problem of Deictic Center (DC), its functions and contribution to narrative comprehension. It aims to explore the model of Deictic Shift Theory (DST) and draws upon the notion of “story world”. For the purpose of this research the analysis will investigate various linguistic devices that mark the Deictic Shift in J. Joyce’s short stories. Narrative has been thoroughly studied during the last 20 years. It is hardly surprising that narrative has received serious attention from the part of linguists, philosophers, psychologists, cognitive scientists and thus becoming the subject of a multidisciplinary study. This fascination with narrative is entirely appropriate since narratives consist of events that actually occurred or are similar to those from the real world. Consequently, narratives are easy to comprehend and remember, thus generating diverse inferences.

The story as the totality of events and experiences is embedded in a *story world* which surrounds the events of the story. Story worlds are mental representations of readers, inhabited by existents (participants and objects) and events [8, p.576]. Story worlds comprise *the actual story world* (explicit text, what is perceived as objective and implicit assumptions, linguistic, encyclopedic, etc. inferences) and *possible story worlds* (dreams, predictions, belief, etc.). The delineation of the discourse (level of linguistic units combined together as the text un-folds) from story (the text projecting a story world) is important in understanding how readers comprehend a certain narrative.

The separation of these two planes in narratives triggers the postulation of different *deictic fields*, which offer a clear-cut approach of how narratives are comprehended. Deictic fields include ‘come’ and ‘go’, ‘now’ and ‘then’, and ‘I’ and ‘you’. When these words are used in face-to-face dialogues, their meanings depend, as Lyons says, on “the spatio - temporal co-ordinates of the act of utterance.” These co-ordinates originate at a point we call the *deictic center* (DC), consisting of the “origin” of place (‘come’ and ‘go’) - the *Where*, time(‘now’ and ‘then’) - the *When*, and person (‘I’ and ‘you’) - the *Who* [2, p.23; 3, p.38]. Deictic terms occur in third-person narratives, even though, strictly speaking, there is no relevant “act of utterance”. They are not understood in terms of a speaker and an addressee. The “here” and “now” of the story do not derive from the spatio-temporal co-ordinates of the author at the time of writing, nor of the reader at the time of reading [1, p.154]. In fictional narrative, readers and authors shift their deictic center (the I-here-now paradigm) from the real-world situation to an image of themselves at a location within the story world.

This location is represented as a cognitive structure often containing the elements of a particular time and place within the fictional world, or even within the subjective space of a fictional character [4, p.15]. In this context, P.Stockwell introduces the idea of 'deictic projection' as a way of understanding a reader's feeling of being immersed in the world of a given text.

The notion of the *deictic center* permits 'access' to the world of the story, and allows shifts that affect not only the characters, but objects, places and times as well, as the *deictic center* is continuously moved and relocated. Thus, the *deictic center*, with its temporal, spatial and personal parameters forms a *focalizing perspective from which the reader views the unfolding of the story events*.

The reader “looks” at the narrative from the perspective of a particular character, temporal location and spatial location – the Who, When, and Where. The DC is an appropriate and useful structure for representing and integrating the information in the narrative and is thus a useful construct for studying how local sentence interpretation is integrated into more global comprehension of narrative text [9, p.6].

One task of the DC is to provide contextual cues allowing the comprehender to relate the information given in each successive sentence to the narrative as a whole. Other tasks of the DC include foregrounding, referencing, building narrative structure, inferring temporal relations, inferring spatial relations, and determining lexical usage.

In order for narrative comprehension to proceed smoothly, the reader must construct and modify successive DCs by making a number of critical inferences about the identity and position of characters and events in narrative time and space. During comprehension, the reader makes these critical inferences on the basis of a variety of linguistic cues in the text. These cues include grammatical information (e.g., verb tense and aspectual class), lexical information (e.g., the use of special deictic words), and syntactic information (such as the positioning of adverbial phrases within sentences) [9, p.12].

The words ‘come’ and ‘go’ are considered deictic in narrative text because they are understood only by reference to the objects and events currently unfolding in the constantly changing narrative world. For example, the motion verb ‘come’ only makes

sense by reference to the location of those characters and events currently in the reader's focus of attention; characters 'come' into the currently activated DC. Conversely, when the motion verb 'go' is used, it usually signals movement away from the DC.

The example from James Joyce's short story "A Little Cloud":

*The child stopped for an instant, had a spasm of fright and began to scream... The thin walls of the room echoed the sound. He (Little Chandler) tried to soothe it but it sobbed more convulsively. He looked at the contracted and quivering face of the child and began to be alarmed. He counted seven sobs without a break between them and caught the child to his breast in fright. If it died!... The door was burst open and a young woman **ran in**, panting. (J. Joyce "A Little Cloud")*

The status of Who-point that belong to Chandler, the focalizer by whom things are directly perceived, is reinforced further by the use of the deictic "ran in". Joyce contextualized the scene from inside the room.

The focalizer, together with the reader, is first aware of the door opening with violence, not of the person opening it. He only then sees the woman, Chandler's wife, Annie, "running" in the room. She is not directly named, but vaguely described as a "young woman". This might betray the narrator's voice, but at the same time it can be interpreted as Chandler's viewpoint who is so frightened by the child's sobs, that he does not realize who is running in. The deictic term "ran in" can only be used from inside the lunchroom [3, p.38).

The author represents the event from Chandler's perspective who is inside the room at that time, consoling the crying child. In order to understand the sentence appropriately, the reader has, in some way, to interpret the scene from the same perspective.

The Deictic Shift Theory (DST) assumes that the reader becomes absorbed in the fictive story world, which contains characters, sequences of events, intentional actions, knowledge states of characters, properties of the setting, and other content associated with the story. *The DC window* systematically focuses on the various characters, events, and other referential content as the narrative unfolds from beginning to end. It is important to acknowledge that the moment-by-moment development of the DC is a separate track from the chronological development of the story world. Thus, the DC window might start out at the middle of the story world, then refer to an episode at the end (a flash forward), and then refer to an episode at the beginning (a flashback). However, there normally is a close correspondence between the chronology of the story world and the DC structure, at least in most traditional narratives [9, p.10].

According to P. Stockwell, a deictic shift occurs when, through the use of deixis, the author shifts focus from, for example, the narrator to a location, then to a character or the extra-fictional world of author. He introduces two terms: *pushes* –deictic shifts towards the inside world of the text (characters, time, place) and *pops* - deictic shifts towards the outside word of the text (narrators, authors, readers) [10, p.148].

W. Rapaport uses the terms of *discontinuities* for the deictic shifts. He distinguishes four types of discontinuities: *discontinuities of topic*, *discontinuities of space and time*, *discontinuities of figure and ground*, and *discontinuities of the narrative*

perspective. In this paper we are mostly concerned with the last free types of discontinuities.

The most important temporal discontinuities are:

a. A shift from perfective to imperfective sentence perspective accompanied by a shift to a much greater time scale. The corresponding rhetorical move is frequently characterized as "introducing background or descriptive material". The move is frequently accompanied by a topic re-introduction.

b. The reverse shift from descriptive material to the main line of the narrative. This move is signaled by the temporal focus (or When - point) and the entire DC, returning to an established node in the narrative, with an appropriate contraction of the time scale.

c. A backwards move of the temporal focus to an earlier point in time, with or without a change in time scale. Rhetorically, this is known as flashback. This move is frequently signaled by a verb in past perfect or by the *used to + Infinitive construction*, although a shift may occur without such a verb form, and the presence of such a verb form does not necessarily signal a shift: the reference time of the sentence may remain the same as, rather than precede, the current temporal focus [7, p.30].

(1) *SHE sat at the window watching the evening invade the avenue.* (2) *Her head was leaned against the window curtains and in her nostrils was the odour of dusty cretonne.* (3) *She was tired.* (4) *Few people passed.* (5) *The man out of the last house passed on his way home; she heard his footsteps clacking along the concrete pavement and afterwards crunching on the cinder path before the new red houses.* (6) *One time there used to be a field there in which they used to play every evening with other people's children.* (J.Joyce "Eveline")

The whole abstract is conceptualized from the constant perspective of a single entity – the main character, Eveline. The first three sentences introduce the DC that is situated in the room, the location from which the focalizer captures the scene. In the fourth and the fifth sentences the DC window focuses on the topic or the object of focalization: the people who pass, the street, the houses. The sixth - twelfth sentences contain a backwards move of the temporal focus or When – point of the DC, known as *flashback*. In the part of the short story under analysis this shift is marked by well-known clue phrase "one time" and the construction "*used to + infinitive*" : "... *there used to be a field there...; children of the avenue used to play...; her father used often to hunt them...; little Keogh used to keep nix...;*".

The shift of the temporal focus is accompanied by the *topic shift* perceived by the same Who – Eveline: the man from Belfast, children of the avenue, her family. The thirteenth and fourteenth sentences, although continue the stretch of descriptive material of the last two previous sentences, are related to the current temporal focus. The last sentence is a return to the event sequence of the first sentence, thus the *When – point* is restored to the initial reference time of the main line of the narrative through the use of adverb "now" and present tense "*everything changes*".

Analyzing Joyce's works one might not fail to notice the difference in understanding his novels and short stories.

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in short stories, the author uses the stream of consciousness, the literary technique that enables him to illustrate the shift to the character’s perspective.

Further analysis might uncover other linguistic and discourse means that would explain this difference in understanding his works.

The concepts of DC and DS and discontinuities along the DC coordinates seem to be quite productive in understanding the mechanisms of narrative comprehension. The way the author deals with these shifts affects the reader’s coping with the text.

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