

Speech Presentation in Kipling's “ ‘They’ ”

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If narrative fictions purport to mirror human life, and given our habit of inevitable talk when we meet someone we know, abundance of inverted commas in almost any novels is an unsurprising fact. It would be no exaggeration to say that each and every novelist makes his fictional characters speak in his fictional works. Our novelist concerned is no exception ; rather, Kipling is an expert in creating fictional talks, and that goes for “ ‘They’ ”, too.

The following extract is a portion of lines between the initial and the next narrative sentences in “ ‘They’ ” :

‘I saw a couple up at the window just now, and I think I heard a little chap in the grounds.’

‘Oh, lucky you !’ she cried, and her face brightened. ‘I hear them,

of course, but that's all. You've seen them and heard them?'

'Yes,' I answered. 'And if I know anything of children, one of them's having a beautiful time by the fountain yonder. Escaped, I should imagine.'

'You're fond of children?'

I gave her one or two reasons why I did not altogether hate them.

'Of course, of course,' she said. 'Then you understand. Then you won't think it foolish if I ask you to take your car through the gardens, once or twice—quite slowly. I'm sure they'd like to see it. They see so little, poor things. One tries to make their life pleasant, but-' she threw out her hands towards the woods. 'We're so out of the world here.'

(pp. 388-389) (italics mine)

One thing to notice is that in the middle of this dialogue indirect speech mode is used:

(1) I gave her one or two reasons why I did not altogether hate them. The author could have used direct quotation when he decided to render this act of utterance. He had other linguistic forms for reporting this speech event at his disposal and, furthermore, both the previous and the following utterances are given in direct reporting style. Why doesn't the author introduce this speech act here in direct quotation? What moved him to choose one mode rather than another?

A Variety of Speech Presentation Types

There are various possibilities for a novelist to present a fictional speech act. Leech and Short (1981) categorize these possibilities of speech presentation into five; Direct Speech (DS), Indirect Speech (IS), Free Direct Speech (FDS), Free Indirect Speech (FIS), Narrative Report of Speech Act (NRSA). My discussion will be developed based on these five variations¹. First, for the sake of clarity, I will outline some general features of these modes:

(2) **DS** presents the exact words which the reported speaker actually used. The reported parts are marked off by quotation marks with adjacent verbs of saying.

IS presents only contents of what was stated.

FDS is a direct quoting style without reporting clauses.

FIS combines both features of IS and DS. While it has the back-shifted verbs and shifted personal pronouns as in IS, some characteristics of DS such as word order and exclamations are retained.

NRSA is a style which merely reports the occurrence of a speech act or number of speech acts.

A novelist can describe some particular speech event in any of these five modes. Suppose there occurs the following speech event in his fictional world;

(3) Mary: I won't tell anyone.

He can choose any of these five modes ;

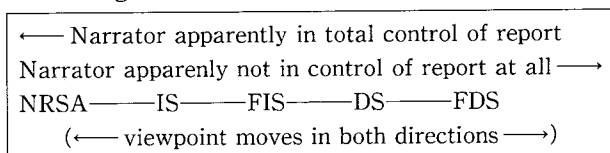
- (4) a. 'I won't tell anyone.' (FDS)
- b. Mary said, 'I won't tell anyone.' (DS)
- c. She would't tell anyone. (FIS)
- She would't tell anyone, Mary said. (FIS)
- d. Mary said that she would not tell anyone. (IS)
- e. Mary promised not to tell anyone. (NRSA)

As the author has alternative ways for rendering the same speech event, these modes of speech presentation can be regarded as stylistic variants. And yet in terms of fictional point of view, what is reported in one mode is not necessarily the same in another.

Providing a diagram as in Fig. 1, Leech and Short (1981) point out the stylistic relevance to fictional points of view as thus ;

- (5) When a novelist reports the occurrence of some act or speech act we are apparently seeing the event entirely from his perspective. But as we move along the cline of speech presentation from the more bound to the more free end, his interference seems to become less and less noticeable, until, in the most extreme version of FDS, he apparently leaves the characters to talk entirely on their own. (Leech and Short 1981 : 324)

Fig. 1 Cline of 'interference' in report



Narrative Report of Speech Act (NRSA)

NRSA is defined by Leech and Short as thus ;

- (6) The possibility of a form which is more indirect than indirect speech is realized in sentences which merely report that a speech act (or number of speech acts) has occurred, but where the narrator does not have to commit himself entirely to giving the sense of what was said, let alone the form of words in which they were uttered.

(Leech and Short 1981 : 323)

For example, a statement 'I am innocent.' can be reported by either of (7a), (7b) and (7c) :

- (7) a. He said, 'I am innocent.' (DS)
b. He declared that he was innocent. (IS)
c. He declared his innocence. (NRSA)

(7c) which gives the minimal account of the details is an instance of NRSA. It is more intervened and more controlled than IS by the reporting person. IS is the reporter's version of statement : only the propositional content of the original utterance is encoded in its subordinate clause. In NRSA, the content of the original utterance, which could have been reported as a proposition, may be nominalized or reduced to *to*-infinitive. The form only conveys the gist of the original utterance. Therefore it is extremely hard to reproduce the original words (what was actually said) from NRSA. Even in IS, some of the original

expressions are lost by reason of the grammatical regulations and the restricted expressibility. In NRSA, since the original word-formation is revised or distilled into concise lexes by the reporting person, no trace of the original structure is left. All we can get is what kind of speech act was performed.

The conciseness of NRSA often contributes to the development of the story; when a speech event in the fictional world is of little value for full presentation, the author can give us only the minimal account of that event by the use of NRSA. For example, when a certain character said something which is rather trivial and not worthy of rendering in full form, and yet the occurrence of that speech event is important for the story, the choice of NRSA is a happy one. This mode answers the author's purpose and at the same time facilitate the flow of the tale without a hitch. As a general rule, a speech event given by NRSA is the one which the author regards as not so important for his literary world. Then, we come back to the pending question. As for “‘They’”, things are not so simple as this generalization can explain. The speech event in question, which is rendered by NRSA, is far from trifling. On the contrary, what ‘T’ refers to here is quite meaningful for the interpretation of the story.

NRSA in “‘They’”

“‘They’” is a story of a father whose long-cherished wish to see his deceased child is realized in the mysterious house (House Beautiful),

where the little souls ('they') hound. Some readers know as a background knowledge that Kipling lost his beloved child five years before the publication of the work. Because of this biographical evidence, it is generally believed that the narrator in "They" is another Kipling. For example, some critics point out the significance of relation between the author's personal experience and "They";

- (8) Behind the delicate pathos of this story lies Kipling's grief at the death of his little daughter Josephine, aged six, in 1899².

Given the author's tragic incident, the narrator's love for children is understandable. And the reason why he does 'not altogether hate them' is of great relevance to the whole story.

Why, then, does the author give this meaningful utterance in such an elliptic way instead of full presentation? As I previously mentioned, it is almost impossible to reproduce what was actually said from NRSA. Therefore the exact words of 'I' are hardly accessible to us. Then, what is the point of this rather intentional concealment of this key information?

The Effect of Stylistic Deviation

While giving us less information than we need or intentionally suppressing the important messages, Kipling provides us with stylistic hints which contribute to our interpretative process. The author usually devises some schemes for calling our attention to a particular message. One of his favourite devices is a stylistic deviation generally called

'foregrounding', which is an English equivalent for the Prague School notion of *aktualisace*³:

- (9) The artistic deviation 'sticks out' from its background, the automatic system, like a figure in the foreground of a visual field.

In visual arts, a foregrounded image is conspicuous against the background. Likewise, in literary art, a linguistic deviation stands out against the background of repeated patterns. It might well be that part of the author's artistry lies in his stylistic techniques of how to depict a foreground, and how to balance it with its background. If a message in a text stylistically deviates from the rest, the 'foregrounded' part is most likely to be a sign of significance.

In the case of "They", persistent use of the same speech mode forms a background: when the author introduces speech events by repeated use of direct quotation or (F) DS, no one of them is salient. In the midst of them, however, unexpected choice of NRSA naturally draws the reader's attention. Although the actual utterance is left unknown to us, the speech act by NRSA is foregrounded against the background of successive (F) DSs. That is, the reason why the narrator does 'not altogether hate them' is ingeniously designed to call our attention. Generally, NRSA is a stylistic option for insignificant speeches, but it can give us most important message when the author artfully manipulate his style throughout the work.

This intentionally focused message is nevertheless deliberately concealed, so that we have to read forward with a feeling of being mystified. Keeping readers in suspense in this way is one of his old

tricks, which is of course part of his artistry. And yet, the author purposely scatters the key words over the story. If we try to read in his 'one or two reasons', or to guess at the original utterance of the elliptical NRSA, we have no choice but to infer from some other clues. Some may have a knowledge of the author's biographical facts, then they can draw some reasonable inferences without so much difficulty. And even others who have little knowledge of his deceased daughter will safely arrive at the author's intended destination: as we go along, we are to see the suggestive words such as 'shadow', 'yew', 'Pit', 'lost souls', and 'out of the world', all of which are the symbol of death. Like a jigsaw puzzle, the story is elaborated to complete the whole picture. Here we find another view of Kipling's art.

Notes :

1. Although I will develop my argument based on these five categories, speech types cannot always be pigeonholed into the five. Speech forms have mixed features of more than one speech categories. Hence the diagram in Fig. 1 should be understood as forming a spectrum rather than discrete categories.
2. *Rudyard Kipling Selected Stories*, p. 523.
3. G. N. Leech, *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* (London: Longman, 1969), p. 57.

Text

Kipling, R. " 'They' ", in *Selected Stories*, London : Penguin, 1987.

要 旨

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文学作品における発話行為 (speech act) の提示法は様々であるが、文体的にみて話法は Direct Speech, Indirect Speech, Free Direct Speech, Free Indirect Speech, Narrative Report of Speech Act の5種である (Leech & Short 1981)。R. キプリングの傑作の一つとされる作品 " 'They' " には直接的話法が連なる中、一文だけ間接的話法が紛れ込んでいる箇所がある。この明らかに作意的な文体操作は何故か。

直接的話法の中の一文だけが間接的話法であるということは、この間接的話法の文が 'foreground' されていることを意味する。また、間接的話法は台詞を明示しないため、読者にはここで話された言葉が実際何であるかわからない。このように不透明化された発話は、実は作品全体のミステリーを解決する糸口となっている。作者の目的は Key となる情報を焦点化しながらも suspense にすることにあつたと考えられる。

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