

An Analysis Of The Discourse Types In James Joyce's *Ulysses*

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Abstract

Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin was a Russian literary theorist and philosopher. Bakhtin introduced the concepts of dialogism, heteroglossia, discourse and the carnivalesque in prose narratives. According to Bakhtin, the characteristic feature of prose that distinguishes it from poetry is its “possibility of employing on the plane of a single work discourses of various types, with all their expressive capacities intact, without reducing them to a common denominator” (*PDP* 200). Hence the author of prose narratives is confronted with voices of several people “among which he must orient himself” (*PDP* 201). He argues that language is shaped by its social context and by the “voices” of diverse social groups and individuals (heteroglossia), and that it always anticipates future utterances making language inherently “dialogic.” Bakhtin countered the prevailing “monologic” approaches to literary study by introducing a “dialogic” approach to literature. By “discourse,” Bakhtin means the language in use which is shaped through interaction with other social voices.

Key words: Dialogism, monologic, discourse, single voiced discourse, double voiced discourse

This paper attempts to analyse the different discourse patterns in James Joyce's *Ulysses*. The novelistic genre incorporates several utterances (the speech in real situation) and discourses on its plane to communicate meaning. The different individual utterances and social discourses interact and clash on the surface of the novel making it highly dialogic or polyphonic (multi voiced). Bakhtin makes a detailed study of the different types of discourses and makes a classification of the various types of discourses generally used in novels. Bakhtin classifies the novelistic discourse into three main types:

The first type of novelistic discourse is the “direct, unmediated and referentially oriented” discourse of the author. This is exclusively oriented to the object or topic of reference. In novelistic prose, this discourse is the direct speech of the author or of the implied author. Naming and informing come under this category.

The second variety of novelistic discourse is called the “objectified discourse,” i.e. speech, which is the object of authorial understanding and treated by the author as someone else's discourse. This is the “discourse of a represented person”, i.e. the speech of the character (*PDP* 199). This speech is also referentially oriented. But it is subordinated to the authorial discourse.

Both the above categories of discourse are called “monologic discourse” or “single voiced discourse” as they represent a single consciousness and a single intention.

The third variety of discourse is called “double-voiced discourse.” This is a discourse in which we find the simultaneous occurrence of two semantic intentions or two voices. Among the two voices, one voice will reflect the speaker's own position, while the other will present an opposing viewpoint. The interaction of the two coexisting voices in the same discourse creates a dynamic tension between them. The two contradicting voices in this single discourse will not merge completely as they do in a single voiced discourse. Such a “double voiced discourse” is called “dialogic” discourse. Bakhtin sees this “double voiced discourse” to be the “quintessential expression of dialogicality” in prose narration (Lynne Pearce 52).

This is how the double voiced discourse is used by writers: The author of a double voiced discourse will take an “objectified” discourse and infuse it with his own private intentions and consciousness. He will at the same time retain the original speaker’s intentions. That is, the peculiarity of a double-voiced discourse is that discourse in it “has a two-fold direction- it is directed both toward the referential object of speech as in any ordinary discourse and also towards *another’s discourse*, i.e. toward someone else’s speech” (PDP185). We can simultaneously hear the point of view of the original speaker and the second speaker in the double -voiced discourse.

Bakhtin divides double voiced discourse into “passive” and “active” varieties. In the “passive” variety, the other’s speech remains passive in the hands of the author and the author makes use of the other’s words for his own special purposes. The passive double voiced discourse is further subdivided into “unidirectional” and “vari-directional” types. The “unidirectional” variety of double voiced discourse is best represented by “stylisation” and “skaz.” The “vari-directional” variety of passive double voiced discourse is represented by “parody” and “irony.”

In the “active” variety of double voiced discourse, the author does not directly take into account another’s discourse and use it for his own purposes. But the discourse of the “other” will influence the narrator’s discourse from outside in some way and as a result the narrator’s words and behaviour will change accordingly. Here, the other’s discourse will influence the narrator’s speech and we find an “active” relationship of the narrator’s discourse with the other’s speech.

“Active double-voiced discourse” is seen in daily speech when we talk with reservation taking into account all the hostile views of other’s words. The other’s speech influences the narrator’s speech profoundly and the narrator always makes a reference to it. “Hidden polemic”, “hidden dialogue” and “overt polemic” are the main types of discourse that come under this category. The peculiarity of these discourses is that they are all “reflected” words or words with an intense “sideward glance” at other’s discourse (PDP 205).

James Joyce’s *Ulysses* contains many of the discursive patterns mentioned by Bakhtin. In the “single voiced discourse,” the narrator is the author himself. The representation of the hero and other characters in the novel takes place in the words of either the implied author or perhaps of the real author himself. An example of authorial narration can be seen in the introduction of Buck Mulligan at the beginning of the novel: “Stately, plump Buck Mulligan came from the stairhead, bearing a bowl of lather on which a mirror and razor lay crossed” (*Ulysses* 1). What we see here is the direct speech of the author/narrator.

The next type of discourse i.e., the represented speech of the character starts with an introductory dash in *Ulysses*. An example of this type of discourse can be seen in the conversation between Mulligan and Stephen.

-- The aunt thinks you killed your mother, he said. That’s why she won’t let me have anything to do with you.

-- Someone killed her, Stephen said gloomily (*Ulysses* 5).

Examples of “stylisation” in *Ulysses* can be seen in the “Nausikaa” chapter. In stylisation, the authorial purpose coexists with the author’s discourse and the two move in the same direction. Stylisation is also seen in our daily speech when we quote other’s words or speech forgetting that it is someone else’s words or speech making it our own. The two intentions then become unidirectional and this gives rise to stylisation. When the objectification is reduced, the two voices merge and they become the discourse of the first type mentioned by Bakhtin. The “Nausikaa” episode is written in the borrowed language of some cheap women’s fashion magazine or a novelette and not definitely in the language of the author. Not only is the language of women’s magazines and romance fiction is stylised in this chapter, but we can also hear the language of advertisements, superstition, folk wisdom, Mariolatry, religious oaths, euphemisms, proverbs, fairy tales and many others. Joyce himself writes that “Nausikaa” is written in the “namby pamby jammy marmalady drawersy style” (Budgen 210).

“Skaz” originating from the Russian word “skazat” meaning “to tell” is another narratorial method by which a novel can become polyphonic or dialogic. According to Bakhtin, this refers “to a technique or mode of narration that imitates the oral speech of an individualised narrator” (*PDP* 8). This type of narration allows the author the freedom to incorporate speech forms like dialects, slang, neologisms and mispronunciations that might give naturalness and vigour to the narrative unattainable in any other types of narration. The “Cyclops” episode in *Ulysses* provides good examples of this type of narration.

“Parody”, as in stylisation borrows the discourse of another person but with a different intention. Here, the author’s discourse acts in a hostile way upon the other’s discourse and the authorial intention and the other’s intention oppose each other and move in opposite directions. The author introduces an opposite semantic intention into a discourse that is already in possession of an intention of its own. *Parody* imitates another’s voice with the intention to distort, critique, or subvert the original discourse. Parody occurs in daily speech when we quote other’s words imposing a certain amount of authority on it. But in both parody and in stylisation, the “original discourse is lexically or grammatically invoked in the text” (*After Bakhtin* 60). However, the reader may miss the point if he/ she is not sufficiently informed of the author’s new intention and the real object/discourse that is parodied. *Ulysses* is replete with religious and political parody. Joyce was parodically reinterpreting the Homeric epic in the modern context by modelling the text on the Homeric epic, *Odyssey*.

“Irony” is another form of double-voiced discourse that shows a discrepancy between what is said and what is meant. In irony, the literal voice will say one thing and the implied meaning will mean something else. Irony exposes the contradictions within the characters’ beliefs and actions and hence is internally dialogised.

The “active double voiced discourse” is most clearly represented in *Ulysses* in almost all conversations taking place between Leopold Bloom and Molly Bloom as well as in the interior monologues of Bloom.

An apparently ordinary conversation between Leopold Bloom and his wife Molly (*Ulysses* 59-60) is saturated with various forms of dialogue, particularly the “double voiced discourse”. Bloom enters the hall after buying pork kidney. He sees two cards and a letter lying on the hall floor. The ensuing conversation between Bloom and his wife try to conceal their fears for each other on the same topic- Bloom’s fear of being cheated by his wife; Molly’s awkwardness in being ‘caught’ by her husband. The subsequent dialogues become good example of “hidden polemic”. In “hidden polemic,” the other’s speech is not at all reproduced but the implication of it is seen in the narrator’s antagonistic attitude towards the other’s speech. This attitude changes the intonation and syntax of the speeches of both Bloom and Molly. Bloom’s agitation on seeing the letter addressed “Mrs Marion” in bold hand and the quivering quality of Molly’s voice in calling her husband “Poldy” reflect the tension of the situation through a simple dialogue. It is quite obvious that the dual intentions in the same dialogue are contradictory and hence disturbing to each other. Bloom’s gestures already betray his emotions on seeing the letter.

Bakhtin explains “hidden dialogue” by means of the analogy of an overheard telephone conversation. In a telephone conversation, a listener can surmise what the other person is trying to say from the other side by simply listening to the conversation of the person on the listener’s side. The “hidden dialogue” can be split up and viewed as two bits of conversation taking place in the form of two rejoinders, i.e., in the form of a discourse and counter discourse between two persons but the listener’s conversation “wedges” into the speech or interior monologue of the narrator and will be fused or embedded in the discourse of the narrator. The inaudible words of the listener and the audible words of the narrator move in different directions and clash with one another causing a dialogic collision inside the resulting utterance of the narrator.

An example of “hidden dialogue” in *Ulysses* can be seen in the interior monologue of Bloom discussed here. The acute anticipation of the other’s presence gives Bloom’s interior monologue a “halting” quality:

O well: she knows how to mind herself. But if not? No, nothing has happened. Of course it might. Wait in any case till it does. A wild piece of goods. Her slim legs running up to staircase. Destiny. Ripening now. Vain: very (*Ulysses* 64).

The above piece of interior monologue can be rewritten in the manner of a telephone conversation:

Listener: Does your daughter take care of herself?

Bloom: O well, she knows how to mind herself.

Listener: But what if she doesn't know Boylan's true nature?

Bloom: But, if no?

Listener: Are you sure nothing has happened so far?

Bloom: No, nothing has happened.

Listener: Do you think nothing will happen?

Bloom: Of course, it might. Wait in any case till it does.

Conclusion

Bakhtin considers "double-voiced" discourse to be the "chief hero" among novelistic discourses. According to him this is a peculiar feature of the novel that arises from the dialogic interaction of language. We have seen that the narrative of *Ulysses* employs almost all types of discourse mentioned by Bakhtin. It is the pervasive use of "double voiced" discourse in the text that makes it highly dialogic or polyphonic.

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