

Stylistic Analysis of Leo Tolstoy's Short Story: *God Sees the Truth, but Waits*

Jyoti Jayal

(Research Scholar)

The English and Foreign Language University
Lucknow campus.

Work in stylistics pertains the in-depth analysis of individual literary texts or extracts, usually in order to relate specific linguistic choices and patterns to potential meanings and effects. Such kind of work represents one of the main strengths of the stylistics tradition: for all the controversy that sometimes surrounds the linguistic study of literature, exact, explicit, and sensitive linguistic analyses provide invaluable insights into the workings of texts and language generally, as well as useful hypotheses and explanations with respect to readers' interpretations.

The analysis of particular texts involves implicit or explicit comparisons with other texts. Claiming that specific linguistic choices and patterns are significant because they are deviant, or conventional, or exemplary of an author or genre inevitably involves claiming that similar choices and patterns will, or will not, normally be found in other (comparable) texts, or in general language use. This is where analysts often have to believe on their own intuitions as language users and literature readers, and on the assumption that these intuitions will be shared by their audience.

The increased availability of corpora provides new resources that can usefully complement analysts' intuitions, and therefore strengthen and refine the results drawn from the intensive linguistic analysis of individual texts. My aim in this paper is to demonstrate this by carrying out an in-depth analysis of an extract from Leo Tolstoy's short story *God Sees the Truth, But Waits*. I will focus particularly on the way in which characters' speech and thought is presented, and on how this affects the projection of point of view and the potential for readers' sympathy towards the characters.

God Sees the Truth, But Waits is a short story by Russian author Leo Tolstoy. The Russian novelist and moral philosopher Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910) ranks as one of the world's great writers and his "War and Peace" has been called the greatest novel ever written. The purpose of all true creative art, he believed, is to teach. But the message in all his stories are presented with such humour that the reader hardly realizes that it is strongly didactic. The seven parts into which this book is divided include the best known Tolstoy stories *God Sees the Truth, but Waits* and *A Prisoner in the Caucasus* which Tolstoy himself considered as his best.

God Sees the Truth, but Waits, which was first published in 1872, is a story about a man sent to prison for a murder he didn't commit that takes the form of a parable of forgiveness. English translations were also published under titles *The Confessed Crime* and *Exiled to Siberia*. The concept of the story of a man wrongfully accused of murder and banished to Siberia also appears in one of Tolstoy's previous works, "War and Peace", during a philosophical discussion among two characters who relate the story and argue how the protagonist of their story deals with injustice and fate.

NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN *GOD SEES THE TRUTH, BUT WAITS*:

The meaning of the story can be best understood by considering the narrative in the light of the implications suggested by the structure of the plot. *God Sees the Truth,*

But Waits serves an excellent example in defense of the supposition that Tolstoy's renunciation of the "literary" and "artistic" should be understood. Considering the brevity of the story, the scope of the narrative seems extraordinarily ambitious. It subsumes the whole of the life of the protagonist, Ivan Dmitrich Aksenov, from his young manhood to his death, a period of no less than twenty-six years. While the basis of the narrative is biographical, however, the number of incidents recounted is very small.

Aksenov, a happy and successful merchant, leaves home on a business trip. On the night of his first day on the road he shares a hotel room with a stranger, a fellow merchant. During the night a thief enters the room and robs and murders Aksenov's companion. Unaware of this, Aksenov departs early in the morning, and, on the second day of his journey, he is overtaken by the police and charged with murder. Although innocent, he is tried and convicted.

He spends twenty-six years at hard labor in Siberia. A new convict, Makar Semenov, then arrives at the prison, and Aksenov learns that it was this hardened criminal who had committed the crime for which he himself had been imprisoned. One night Aksenov observes Makar digging a tunnel. The prison authorities discover the tunnel before it is completed. The prisoners are assembled for interrogation, and the warden questions Aksenov in particular. Though he has good reason to hate Makar, Aksenov refuses to report him. Makar is so moved by Aksenov's protection of him that he comes to him at night to seek his forgiveness. On the next day Makar confesses to the authorities that he was the real murderer. Aksenov is granted a full pardon, but by the time it arrives he has died.

The unity of the narrative is based upon the fact that it relates the life story of a single individual. It is highly selective in the events presented, and the structure of their arrangement is tightly controlled. There are substantial accounts of only two brief periods in Aksenov's life. The first half of the story is devoted to the events surrounding the murder of the merchant. The second half of the story recounts the events consequent upon the coincidental meeting of Aksenov and the real murderer. The isolation and juxtaposition of two significant events in the life of the protagonist is basic to the symmetry that is the dominant factor of the story. The symmetry is evident in many ways.

The protagonist's emotional response to his confrontation with the authorities is quite dissimilar in either half of the story. In the first half Aksenov is highly agitated, stunned, stammering, and confused. In the second half he is again highly agitated, but he retains his self-control, and the response that he makes is firm, lucid, and the result of a conscious decision.

The implication in the narrative conclusion to each half of the story is that the protagonist's emotional state remains the same as in the preceding scene, so that Aksenov's emotional states at the end of the two halves of the story are opposite to one another. At the end of the first half he is suffering and in despair, while at the end of the second half he is joyful, calm, and contented.

THE EXTRACT FOR ANALYSIS:

(1) One night as he was walking about the prison he noticed some earth that came rolling out from under one of the shelves on which the prisoners slept. (2) He stopped to see what it was. (3) Suddenly Makar Semyonich crept out from under the shelf, and looked up at Aksionov with frightened face. (4) Aksionov tried to pass without looking at him.

(5) But Makar seized his hand and told him that he had dug a hole under the wall, getting rid of the earth by putting it into his high-boots, and emptying it out every day on the road when the prisoners were driven to their work. (6) "Just you keep quiet, old man, and you shall get out too. (7) If you blab, they'll flog the life out of me, but I will kill you first." (8) Aksionov trembled with anger as he looked at his enemy. (9) He drew his hand away, saying, "I have no wish to escape, and you have no need to kill me; you killed me long ago! (10) As to telling of you--I may do so or not, as God shall direct." (11) Next day, when the convicts were led out to work, the convoy soldiers noticed that one or other of the prisoners emptied some earth out of his boots. (12) The prison was searched and the tunnel found. (13) The Governor came and questioned all the prisoners to find out who had dug the hole. (14) They all denied any knowledge of it. (15) Those who knew would not betray Makar Semyonich, knowing he would be flogged almost to death. (16) At last the Governor turned to Aksionov whom he knew to be a just man. (17) He said: "You are a truthful old man; tell me, before God, who dug the hole?" (18) Makar Semyonich stood as if he were quite unconcerned, looking at the Governor and not so much as glancing at Aksionov. (19) Aksionov's lips and hands trembled, and for a long time he could not utter a word. (20) He thought, "Why should I screen him who ruined my life? (21) Let him pay for what I have suffered. (22) But if I tell, they will probably flog the life out of him, and maybe I suspect him wrongly. (23) And, after all, what good would it be to me?" (24) "Well, old man," repeated the Governor, "tell me the truth: who has been digging under the wall?" (25) Aksionov glanced at Makar Semyonich, and said, "I cannot say, your honour. (26) It is not God's will that I should tell! (27) Do what you like with me; (28) I am your hands." (26) It is not God's will that I should tell! (27) Do what you like with me; (28) I am your hands." (29) However much the Governor tried, Aksionov would say no more, and so the matter had to be left. (30) That night, when Aksionov was lying on his bed and just beginning to doze, some one came quietly and sat down on his bed. (31) He peered through the darkness and recognised Makar. (32) "What more do you want of me?" asked Aksionov. (33) "Why have you come here?" (34) Makar Semyonich was silent. (35) So Aksionov sat up and said, "What do you want? (36) Go away, or I will call the guard!" (37) Makar Semyonich bent close over Aksionov, and whispered, "Ivan Dmitrich, forgive me!" (38) "What for?" asked Aksionov. (39) "It was I who killed the merchant and hid the knife among your things. (40) I meant to kill you too, but I heard a noise outside, so I hid the knife in your bag and escaped out of the window." (41) Aksionov was silent, and did not know what to say. (42) Makar Semyonich slid off the bed-shelf and knelt upon the ground. (43) "Ivan Dmitrich," said he, "forgive me! (44) For the love of God, forgive me! (45) I will confess that it was I who killed the merchant, and you will be released and can go to your home." (46) "It is easy for you to talk," said Aksionov, "but I have suffered for you these twenty-six years. (47) Where could I go to now? (48)...My wife is dead, and my children have forgotten me. (49) I have nowhere to go..." (50) Makar Semyonich did not rise, but beat his head on the floor. (51) "Ivan Dmitrich, forgive me!" he cried. (52) "When they flogged me with the knot it was not so hard to bear as it is to see you now ... yet you had pity on me, and did not tell. (53) For Christ's sake forgive me, wretch that I am!" (54) And he began to sob. (55) When Aksionov heard him sobbing he, too, began to weep. (56) "God will forgive you!" said he. (57) "Maybe I am a hundred times worse than you." (58) And at these words his heart grew light, and the longing for home left him. (59) He no longer

had any desire to leave the prison, but only hoped for his last hour to come. (60) In spite of what Aksionov had said, Makar Semyonich confessed, his guilt. (61) But when the order for his release came, Aksionov was already dead.

I have selected this passage for analysis because it concludes the second half of the story, and relates to a single, crucial episode in Aksionov's life. This particular experience is central to the plot, and it adds depth and humanity to Aksionov's character, who, at the end of the second half of the story is joyful, calm, and contented. The theme of the story, the eventual triumph of truth over falsehood, was achieved in this second half. Additionally, the narration of the prison conversation between Aksionov and Makar Semyonich foregrounds the central theme of memory. Although Aksionov had earlier acknowledged that Makar Semyonich was the person who killed the merchant and hid the knife among his things and he has good reason to hate Makar, yet Aksionov refused to report him. Makar was so moved by Aksionov's protection of him that he came to him at night to seek his forgiveness.

Even on a first reading, it should be evident that, as in the rest of the story, this part of the second half is narrated from Aksionov's point of view. This applies in spatial terms (we share his positions and follow his movements in the story), in evaluative terms, and in psychological terms (his thoughts and internal states are repeatedly presented throughout the extract). Makar, in contrast, is portrayed entirely from the outside: although his speech is repeatedly presented, the narrator does not give us any direct access to his thoughts. Given that Aksionov is also the "wronged" and most vulnerable party in the relationship, this imbalance between the two characters makes it even more likely that readers will sympathize with him rather than Makar. In my analysis of the extract, I will show in detail how Leo Tolstoy manipulates the presentation of speech and thought to project Aksionov's own experience of this particular event.

Speech and Thought Presentation is one of the features of stylistic which shows what sort of speech and thought presentation the writer has used within the text.

SPEECH AND THOUGHT PRESENTATION

While narrating an incident, we usually report the events from our own point of view. The main events are in the third or first person and in the simple past or present tense. But in order to save the narrative from being monotonous, we often report what the characters said or thought and try to reproduce their speeches as faithfully as possible. An author has a number of choices in the manner the thought and speech of the characters is displayed. S/he can use the actual words uttered by the characters without any modification and can create an impression that the characters are speaking in our presence. S/he can just refer to the nature of the speech made by the characters without quoting the actual words. The nature of the speech and thought presentation depends on the degree of the involvement of the narrator. Is the narrator totally neutral? Whose voice do we listen to when we go thought the words uttered by a character? Can we listen to both the voices- the author's as well as that of the character?

Leech and Short (1981) have classified speech and thought presentation in fiction into five categories. They are:

1. Narrative Report of speech Act/Narrative Report Of Thought Act	NRSA/NRTA
2. Indirect Speech/Indirect thought	IS/IT
3. Free Indirect Speech/Free Indirect Thought	FIS/FIT

4. Direct Speech/Direct Thought	DS/DT
5. Free Direct Speech/Free Direct Thought	FDS/FDT

The Presentation of Speech:

- *The Narrative Report of Speech Act (NRSA)*: It is more indirect than indirect speech. Here the narrator does not reproduce the actual words uttered by the person, whose speech is being reported. When a writer reports the speech made by a person without actually quoting the words uttered by him, we see the event entirely from the writer's perspective.
E.g.: She asked her friends for advice.
- *Direct Speech (DS)*: The words uttered by the speaker are quoted within inverted commas. A narrator uses the direct speech to report verbatim what a character said in a particular context.
E.g.: "Didn't you recognize me?" He said.
- *Free Direct Speech (FDS)*: In DS, the narrator reports what the character uttered in a particular context. But in Free Direct Speech (FDS) the character speak directly without the intermediacy of the narrator, and, consequently the reporting clause is omitted in the presentation of such a speech.
E.g.: "Just you keep quiet, old man, and you shall get out too".
- *Indirect Speech (IS)*: The words of the speaker are reproduced in the third person with a reporting verb and the speech is presented from the point of view of the narrator.
E.g.: Makar told him that he had dug a hole under the wall.
- *Free Indirect Speech (FIS)*: It occupies a place between DS and IS. In FIS, the reporting verb is omitted but the function of the 'tense' is similar to that of its function in IS. FIS is neither a verbatim reproduction of the original speech nor is it a mere indirect rendering of the original. Leech and Short (1981) remark that FIS involves some kind of a distancing effect in the sense that due to the intervention of the authorial voice between the reader and the words of the character the reader is distanced from the character's words.

The Presentation of Thought

Just as the speech can be presented as NRSA, IS, FIS, DS, FDS the thoughts of the characters can also be presented as NRTA, IT, FIT, DT, FDT

- *Narrative Report of Thought Act (NRTA)*: Here the writer does not reproduce the thought of the character: he simply records the character's thought process.
E.g.: He longed for a change.
- *Direct Thought (DT)*: Here the thought of the character is reproduced verbatim by the narrator.
E.g.: "I need a change, "he thought.
- *Free Direct Thought (FDT)*: Here the thought of the character is presented directly without the intermediacy of the narrator, and consequently, the reporting clause is omitted in presenting the thought.
E.g.: "I need a change".
- *Indirect Thought (IT)*: Here the thought of the character is reported in the third person with a reporting verb.
E.g.: He turned to look his parents.

- *Free Indirect Thought (FIT)*: Free Indirect Thought occupies a place between Direct Thought and Indirect Thought, As Leech and Short point out, “The FIT version differs from that of DT by virtue of the backshift of the tense and the conversion of the first person pronoun to the third person (indirect features) and also by the absence of a reporting clause and the retention of the interrogative form and question mark (direct features),”

E.g.: The man took him near the balloons, thinking the bright color.

The relative position of the different modes of thought presentation as shown by Leech and Short (1981) is given below:

- 1- By using IS and NRSA, the narrator indicates that the actual words uttered by the characters are not of great importance.
- 2- By using DS, the narrator indicates that the actual words uttered by a character are important.
- 3- When a narrator uses DT, he assumes the role of an omniscient narrator who can render the thoughts of his characters in the first person.
- 4- When a narrator uses IT. He is just a reporter of the inner world of his characters. He seems to be a detached onlooker.
- 5- When a narrator uses FIT, he intrudes into the inner world of his character; there is a fusion between the thought of the characters and that of the narrator.

ANALYSIS OF THE EXTRACT:

Table 1: Categories of Speech Presentation

Category	Brief Description	Example from the extract	Sentences in the extract	(%) in the extract
Narrator’s representation of speech act (NRSA)	Reference to an illocutionary force of utterance or utterances (possibly with an indication of the topic)	The prison was searched and the tunnel found. (Sentence 12).	Sentence(s): 12; 29; 60; 61 (Total: 04)	10%
Indirect speech (IS)	Representation of an utterance or utterances via a reporting clause (e.g., he said) followed by a grammatically subordinated reported clause. The language used in the reported clause is appropriate to the narrator (in terms of pronoun, tense, lexis, etc.).	He told him that he had dug a hole under the wall, getting rid of the earth by putting it into his high-	Sentence: 5; 13 (Total: 02)	06%

		boots, and emptying it out every day on the road when the prisoners were driven to their work. (Sentence 5).		
Free indirect speech (FIS)	Representation of an utterance or utterances without a reporting clause (e.g., he said) and using language that is partly appropriate to the narrator (in terms of pronoun, tense, lexis, etc.) and partly appropriate to the speaker.	They all denied any knowledge of it. (Sentence 14).	Sentence(s): 14 (Total:01)	03%
Direct speech (DS)	Representation of an utterance or utterances via a reporting clause (e.g., he said) followed by a grammatically independent reported clause, which is typically enclosed in quotation marks. The language used in the reported clause is appropriate to the speaking character (in terms of pronoun, tense, lexis, etc.).	"What more do you want of me?" asked Aksionov. (Sentence 32)	Sentence(s): 9; 17; 24; 25; 32; 35; 37; 38; 43; 46; 56 (Total: 11)	31%
Free direct speech (FDS)	Representation of an utterance or utterances without a reporting clause (e.g., he said) and using language that is appropriate to the speaker (in terms of pronoun, tense, lexis, etc.). The speaker speaks directly without the intimacy of the narrator.	"I will confess that it was I who killed the merchant, and you will be released and can go to your home." (Sentence 45).	Sentence(s): 6; 7; 10; 26-28; 33; 36; 39; 40; 44; 45; 47-49; 52; 53; 57 (Total: 18)	50%
TOTAL			36	100%

Table 2: Categories of Thought Presentation

Category	Brief Description	Example from the extract	Sentences in the extract	(%) in the extract
Narrative report of thought act (NRTA)	Simply, the thought process of the character is recorded.	Aksionov trembled with anger as he looked at his enemy. (Sentence 8).	Sentence(s): 8; 34; 55; 42; 50; 54 (Total:06)	25%
Indirect Thought (IT)	The thought of the character is reported in the third person with a reporting verb.	He stopped to see what it was. (Sentence 2)	Sentence(s): 1; 2; 4; 19; 31; 41; 58; 59; (Total: 08)	33%
Free indirect thought (FIT)	It differs from DT by virtue of the backshift of the tense and the conversion of the first person pronoun to the third person (indirect features) and also by the absence of a reporting clause and the retention of the interrogative form and question mark.	Suddenly Makar Semyonich crept out from under the shelf, and looked up at Aksionov with frightened face. (Sentence 3)	Sentence(s): 3; 11; 15; 16; 18; 30; (Total: 06)	25%
Direct thought (DT)	The thought of the character is reproduced verbatim by the narrator.	He thought, "Why should I screen him who ruined my life? (Sentence 20).	Sentence(s): 20 (Total: 01)	04%
Free direct thought (FDT)	The thought of the character is presented directly without the intermediacy of the narrator, and consequently, the reporting clause is omitted in presenting the thought.	Let him pay for what I have suffered. (Sentence 21).	Sentence(s): 21-23 (Total: 03)	13%
TOTAL			24	100%

THE SPEECH AND THOUGHT PRESENTATION OF THE EXTRACT:

From the above analysis of the extract, we found that there is more use of Speech presentation (60%) than the thought presentation (40%).

In case of speech presentation, the author has given more importance to the character's words. There is maximum use of FDS (50%) and DS (33%). With the help of FDS and DS, the author has tried to present the whole story from the point of view of the protagonist. It helped the author to gain sympathy and concern for the protagonist and to bring the theme properly before the audiences. The third most used speech presentation was NRSA (10%). It was mostly used by the author to describe an event. It is used in the beginning of the extract and at the end. There is minimal use of IS (06%) and FIS (03%). It is used in the extract wherever the author felt that the speeches of the characters were not important.

Forty percent use of thought presentation shows that author has given importance to the inner thought process of the characters. To bring out the theme of the story, it was crucial for the author to make proper use of the thought presentation. There is maximum use of IT (33%) which shows that the narrator is just a reporter of the inner world of his characters. He seems to be a detached onlooker. By the use of NRTA (25%) and FIT (25%), the narrator intrudes into the inner world of his character. There is a fusion between the thought of the characters and that of the narrator. There is minimal use of FDT (13%) and DT (04%).

With the proper use of speech and thought presentation, Leo Tolstoy was able to present the theme of the story successfully in front of the audiences and was able to gain sympathy and concern for his character Aksionov.

Works Cited:

- Cook, G. 1994. *Discourse and Literature: the Interplay of Form and Mind*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Halliday, M. A. K. 1978. *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Halliday, M. A. K. 1994. *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. 2nd ed. London: Edward Arnold.
- Kumar, S. 1987. *Stylistics & text analysis*. Bharti publications pvt ltd.
- Leech, G., and M. Short. 1981. *Style in Fiction*. London: Longman.
- Tolstoy, L. N. 2008. "God Sees the Truth, But Waits". *Twenty-three Tales*. Vol: 1 of 2: Accessible Publishing System PTY, Ltd.
- Widdowson, H. G. 1992. *Practical Stylistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.