



## RESEARCH PAPER

### Blurring Boundaries: The Use of Free Indirect Discourse in Contemporary Pakistani Novels

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to investigate free indirect discourse (FID) in contemporary Pakistani novels written in English, analyzing how these blends the narrator with each character's thoughts. The selected novels are *Home Fire* by Kamila Shamsie, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid and *Cracking India* by Bapsi Sidhwa. The research is supported by using Dorrit Cohn's (1978) elaboration of different narrative modes and Banfield's (1982) interpretation of FID within a narratology and stylistics model. The analysis reveals how personal and political tensions are expressed with the help of FID. This narrative mode not only deepens psychological realism but also constructs an ambivalent space where personal and collective histories intersect. Through close readings and comparative analysis, the research reveals how FID contributes to the evolution of the Pakistani English novel as a site of aesthetic innovation and socio-political engagement.

**KEYWORDS** Free Indirect Discourse, Narrative Techniques, Pakistani English Novels, Narrative Voice, Literary Pragmatics, Narrative Boundaries

## Introduction

Since the early 2000s, writing in English within Pakistan has become powerful for looking at themes such as identity, nationalism, gender, migration and postcolonial matters. Recent novels from Pakistan interact with both local and international issues, sharing detailed views of what life is like there during political changes, cultural disputes and changes in society. The collection of this literary work gives academics useful materials, mainly because of the global acclaim given to Mohsin Hamid, Kamila Shamsie and Mohammed Hanif for works that question the traditional representations of Pakistan (Shamsie, 2010, Hanif, 2008; Hamid, 2017).

Since the present period, Pakistani authors have made it a point to study and counter popular ideas about terrorism, fundamentalism and exile and at the same time, present their unique imaginations of the nation. Because these novels cross different genres, languages and regions, they depict the ways diaspora and being international can be challenging (Hashmi, 2012). Today's writers also discuss issues like sectarianism, inequality between genders and class differences in society which results in texts that appeal to readers from various backgrounds (Rahman, 2011).

The main goal of this study is to scrutinize how theme, style and issues related to society influence recent novels written in English from Pakistan. The approach takes into

account how these literary works influence global discussions, after recognizing that they are tied to their own cultural and historical times. The analysis of chosen books by important Pakistani writers strives to reveal how they handle concerns such as identity, authority and representation after colonialism and the events of 9/11.

Merging third-person narration with characters' internal thoughts is what is known as free indirect discourse. It is important for creating both believable feelings and a sense of closeness with readers. FID arose from 18th-century European writing and progressed in 19th and 20th-century novels, mainly by Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, enabling readers into a character's inner thoughts (Banfield, 1982; Cohn, 1978). FID is notable for its skill in mixing the narrator and characters which allows the story to be both precise and open to multiple versions (Toolan, 2012). In Pakistani English fiction included in postcolonial literature, FID is being used to explore themes of identity, displacement, gender and psychological conflict. Authors such as Mohsin Hamid, Kamila Shamsie and Bapsi Sidhwa from Pakistan now use FID in their English works to describe how their characters deal with issues related to postcolonial identity, leaving their homeland and difficult times politically. When South Asian writers use English, a language introduced by colonialism, for their own artistic purposes, narrative strategies help them deal with the way language carries meaning (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2002). In *Home Fire* (2017), Kamila Shamsie shows through FID that Western Muslims can struggle with their shifting identities, keeping readers accurately distant and emotionally close. Likewise, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), by Mohsin Hamid, is mostly about a dramatic monologue, but it introduces both consciousness and ambiguity, showing the narrator's viewpoint change. Noting how Bapsi Sidhwa deployed FID in *Cracking India* (1988), the book explores a child's awakening during the time of Partition and so challenges simplistic versions of history. FID has become a common feature in modernist and postmodernist Western fiction, but close analysis in Pakistani Anglophone literature is not widely seen. We should explore how stories using such narratives work in postcolonial situations where issues of voice, authority and identity are often in dispute. The purpose of this research is to determine how contemporary Pakistani novels implement FID to shape the story, create richer characters and deal with cultural blending.

FID has been widely studied in Western literature, yet its position and use in South Asian, especially in Pakistani English fiction, are not well studied. Mohsin Hamid, Kamila Shamsie and Bapsi Sidhwa from Pakistan use FID in their novels to portray split identities, interior conflicts and the complicated lives of people going through post-colonial and diasporic experiences. Nevertheless, how FID impacts character development, narration and the main themes in Pakistani Anglophone literature is an area that has not been explored closely. It looks at how Pakistani novelists now use FID to merge the roles of narrator and character, voice and identity and personal and political aspects of their writings.

## **Literature Review**

There has been a lot of scholarly interest in Free Indirect Discourse (FID), a way of writing that blends a narrator's voice with a character's thoughts, especially in modernist writers like Jane Austen, Gustave Flaubert, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce (Cohn, 1978; Banfield, 1982). It is placed midway between speaking and thinking in narrative forms and lets the narrator share a character's feelings and thoughts from the outside (Toolan, 2012). Both Pascal (1977) and McHale (1978) have stressed that the use of FID improves both narrative puzzles and the feeling of realism.

## **Views on FID**

Cohn's 1978 book *Transparent Minds* introduced a key grouping of narrative techniques for revealing consciousness and highlighted the use of FID which lets the narrator convey a character's inner state by showing it, rather than explaining it. Banfield (1982) points out that FID stands for more than how a writer presents his or her ideas or uses specific grammar patterns, but represents real issues in philosophy. The authors Leech and Short (2007) additionally focus on stylistics, describing FID as a mixing of the narrator's focus on time and place with the character's judgments.

### **Factors of Identity in Postcolonial and Global Anglophone Literature**

Up until recently, studies on FID were mainly about European works, but current efforts are trying to make sense of it in postcolonial narratives. An important change is applying literary theory to titles from places previously under colonial rule. FID techniques in narrative, according to scholars, are useful in dealing with split identities, trauma from postcolonialism and the experience of being hybrid (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2002). Many South Asian authors have used FID to describe characters' battles with their history, new environments and mixed language systems (Boehmer, 2005; Quayson, 2000).

### **The use of FID in Pakistani English Novels**

Although Pakistani English fiction includes many new narrative ideas, not much research has been done on its formal elements like FID. Authors such as Mohsin Hamid, Kamila Shamsie and Bapsi Sidhwa effectively explain complicated psychological issues and social and political tensions with FID. Shamsie uses FID in *Home Fire* (2017) so that various viewpoints can be portrayed without changing the main voice, enhancing the relationship between people's feelings and political beliefs. Though most of the novel is told from one view, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) uses interior monologue that mimics FID which gives readers a complex insight into the character's thought process. Sidhwa's *Cracking India* (1988) makes use of FID, telling the story mostly through the childlike voice of a young narrator.

Though these cases exist, not much attention is given by scholars to the actual use of FID in Pakistani fiction. Literary critics usually look at themes of Partition, migration and gender, but they do not always discuss the language and style in these writings. The existing gap shows that stylistic and narratological analysis of FID is needed in Pakistani English literature.

According to Semino and Short (2004), linguistic features that signal FID are when tense is consistent, the speaker uses different pronouns or addresses and there are expressions of emotions. In cases where languages mix and cultures are a blend, the appearance of FID is more difficult to spot but can teach us a lot. Due to its mix of different languages and social ideas, Pakistani English fiction is a perfect setting to study FID's role both in the plot and in matters of ideology and identity.

Free Indirect Discourse is frequently studied in relation to modernist and Western literature, but its part in postcolonial Pakistani English novels is still being explored. This review introduces the main theories of FID and reveals that not enough studies have applied them to Pakistani fiction. In trying to solve this gap, this study hopes to benefit both stylistics and postcolonial narratology by revealing novel aspects of contemporary South Asian literature.

## Material and Methods

This research is qualitative in nature and utilizes textual analysis of Free Indirect Discourse (FID) of selected novels by Pakistani novelists. The selected texts are *Home Fire* by Kamila Shamsie, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid and *Cracking India* by Bapsi Sidhwa. By closely examining the novel, the study notes that changes in words such as 'here' and 'now' plus shifts in verb tenses, changes in speakers' evaluation and choice of modality help characterize the characters' mental activity and affect storytelling. The examination includes various social, political and language-related elements to understand how FID appears within a postcolonial context. Clues about the storytelling, people and psychological settings are found by examining the themes and style of the pieces.

## Theoretical Framework

The research is supported by using Dorrit Cohn's (1978) elaboration of different narrative modes and Banfield's (1982) interpretation of FID within a narratology and post-colonial stylistics model. According to Cohn, the typology systematically marks out FID as a special form of thought representation, but Banfield zeroes in on the syntax and philosophy of the role that descriptions play in stories and movies. Furthermore, by relying on the theories of Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2002), the study examines how issues related to linguistic mixes, identity and the displacement of culture appear in Pakistani English literature. With this approach, it is easier to understand how form and meaning merge in postcolonial novels.

## Results and Discussion

### Kamila Shamsie's *Home Fire*

In the novel, Shamsie employs Free Indirect Discourse (FID) to express the inner struggles that both Aneeka and Isma go through. A key moment appears when Isma looks back at her brother Parvaiz's life and decisions.

"She hated herself for thinking it, hated herself for the knowledge that she would say yes to this invitation if it were extended by another voice, one not her own."

This sentence blurs the boundaries between the narrator's voice and Isma's internal monologue. Although the narrative continues in third-person, the reader notices Isma's personal feelings and doubt. In this way, Shamsie demonstrates through the thoughts and words of main characters how their lives change. The story demonstrates how FID shows little distance with the characters' minds, a feature typical of psychological realism in postcolonial writing.

Also, Aneeka's devastation following Parvaiz's death is described by comparing her feelings to unusual signs:

"They said she was not thinking straight, but of course she wasn't. How could she be?"

Here, the narrative presents communal judgment ("They said...") while simultaneously conveying Aneeka's defiance. As the phrase "of course she wasn't" is used instead of formal narrative, it shows the character's consciousness as described by Dorrit Cohn (1978) KS: in a narrated monologue. In the story, I see how a person's grief can be so

private, while their image in public is very different which I find is a typical aspect of diasporic identity narratives.

### **Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist***

While the story is mainly written as an account by one speaker, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* naturally introduces examples of FID in Changez's memories. When he reflects on his growing discomfort in America post-9/11, the narration takes on a tone that blends the character's voice with the narrator's:

"He didn't know if they looked at him differently now, or if he was imagining it, but the feeling had settled, unwanted and unwelcome."

In this part, the author displays how post-9/11 Muslims doubt themselves through monologues that slip into Changez's feelings and thoughts. The narrator does not speak his words, but by telling us he was unsure whether the stationery was really from Malcolm, we see how alone Malcolm feels. Moving back and forth between description and reflection demonstrates Banfield's (1982) "unspeakable sentences," to deliver the main character's internal life, even without clear, pointing sentences.

Changez's attraction to Erica forms another example in the novel.

"She was there, but not really there. He should say something, do something, but what?"

The abrupt questions embedded in third-person narrative structure evoke Changez's confusion and emotional paralysis. The narrator steps back, allowing the character's interior state to surface. Thus, FID provides a way to express scattered mental states while still holding together a coherent narrative which is very helpful for authors who depict people from the diaspora.

### **Bapsi Sidhwa's *Cracking India***

He often illustrates Lenny's changing life through the use of FID. Since the story is told by an adult, the innocence and confusion of Lenny's childhood perspective are explained in a more mature manner. FID becomes evident as she deals with adult topics.

"Godmother always knew what to say. Lenny wished she could talk like that—wise, composed. But she couldn't. She never could."

Showing us Lenny's wishes and fears, even though they were the result of his mother's thoughts, helps us see Sidhwa use FID to represent a child's insecurities. Even without direct words or inside thoughts, the characters' feelings and minds are clearly expressed.

Dirty images and quick scene changes are used to reveal Lenny's disenchantment in between partition scenes.

"Why were they all shouting? They were supposed to be friends. Why was everything falling apart?"

Thoughts like these are Lenny's way of expressing his inner indecision. Using question words in the present tense while writing about the past shows the author slip into

Monica's mind. It portrays the strong emotional division from communal violence such as when personal and national identities are shattered.

The author blends the narrator's words and the feelings of the characters by using Free Indirect Discourse in each of the novels. Using this form, authors can show personal conflicts, different cultures and real emotions while keeping strong storytelling. Family loss and moral problems are lit up in *Home Fire*, FID; the division of ideas is revealed in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Cracking India* explores how innocent people are scarred in times of political upheaval.

This type of writing points to global literary modernism and also matches the experiences of people in postcolonial situations who face issues of identity, being exiled and moving between cultures. Using FID, the writer is able to express subjectivities that are sometimes not easy for people to put into words.

## Discussion

This study shows that many contemporary Pakistani English novels use FID to make the narrator's thoughts similar to those of the characters. This is supported by earlier research which states that FID makes it possible to show different psychological views and line them up in a single coherent story (Cohn, 1978; Banfield, 1982). By examining *Home Fire*, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Cracking India*, we find that Pakistanis employ FID to deal with the issues of postcolonial identity, the challenges of being apart from one's origins and important changes in society and politics.

Kamila Shamsie employs FID which helps to describe internal conflicts and ambiguous emotions that Cohn (1978) thinks FID mediates between the direct and indirect ways characters' subjective realities are presented in fiction. Toolan (2012) reported findings that FID enables readers to feel involved in a story and sympathize with characters by revealing their personal ideas during the third-person narrative. Shamsie uses FID in a way that matches its two functions, pointing out how diasporic subjects deal with the competition between their own agency and the influence of their surroundings.

Mohsin Hamid shows that FID underlines the main character's unclear and shifting thoughts, as observed by Bousfield (2008) in his study of the way words and language can portray difficulties in fitting in and defining one's identity. Hamid adds FID to the monologue, causing unclear borders in the narrative and resembling the theory by Searle in 1969 which includes the reader in the process of deciphering hints at emotions not clearly stated. It captures well the character's location between two cultures, between believing and doubting and between himself and everyone else.

*Cracking India* by Bapsi Sidhwa introduces an example of FID presenting the voice of a child who is both honest about her thoughts as a child and aware of things as an adult. The narrator shares characteristics with both the adult narrator and Lenny's childish voice, showing that style in fiction can show a character's mental state through language, as Leech and Short (2007) suggest. Because of these voices, trauma and the role that memory plays after colonial times are explored in a touching way.

FID style fits into the discussion from Watts (2003) and Culpeper (2011), since it commonly hides the social challenges, emotional repression or refusal by using only hints. Indeed, this approach reflects the cultural and political issues that exist in Pakistani life, where speaking and being silent are both carefully managed.

The findings support and add to what current theories say about FID by proving its significance for Pakistani English novels, whose plots and characters involve flexible storytelling. Mixture of the narrator and characters' perspectives using FID improves the stories' exploration of themes such as identity, memory and political disputes, giving readers a more involved reading experience. In addition, Attridge (2004) noted that storytelling in contemporary South Asian literature changes to enhance and make visible the lives of those who are often left out.

## **Conclusion**

It investigated how the technique of Free Indirect Discourse (FID) is applied in three popular contemporary novels from Pakistan: *Home Fire* by Kamila Shamsie, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid and *Cracking India* by Bapsi Sidhwa. It was evident from the analysis that FID helps these authors mix the narrator's voice with that of the characters, resulting in a rich description of challenging emotions and political topics. The way FID lets readers experience characters' innermost feelings allows it to address significant themes related to postcolonial and diasporic literature such as identity, feelings of being apart from society, difficult past experiences and recollection. Use of this method adds depth to the story and captures the readers' attention by subtly including subjective feelings. The findings prove that FID is a valuable tool in Pakistani fiction today and stressed that it can demonstrate the split mindset and mix of cultures present in many postcolonial societies.

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