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## Consciousness presentation and reference

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## Consciousness Presentation and Reference

Compared to the amount of theoretical research, to date, not many studies can be found employing controlled experimental methods to test the linguistic make-up of literary techniques for presenting human consciousness. Therefore, we have designed a controlled experiment to investigate whether and how such techniques affect the ways the reader perceives the narrative, combining findings from psycholinguistics and literary studies. This experiment uses one formal cue from Free Indirect Style (shifted referential form) to examine the effect of narrative voice on the preferred linguistic realisation of referents in narrative processing. This experiment contained two conditions: passages were constructed either in one character's own voice using typical FIS devices or in an ambiguous way without specific cues to indicate the possibility that the narrative was filtered solely through the character's consciousness. Participants were exposed to only one condition for each passage (52 passages). Their preferences were recorded regarding the form of reference to the character in the final sentence (e.g., 1<sup>st</sup> condition: *Dorothy stared wide-eyed at Frederick. Why such a temper? . . . . .* *By Jove, was **she/Dorothy** to understand that ...?*; participants had to choose "she" or "Dorothy"; underlining indicating FIS devices). This study hypothesised that shifting the dominant voice would affect readers' preferences concerning referential form: if the narrative is anchored to a fictional consciousness represented solely in its own voice, readers would prefer a pronominal reference to that operative consciousness over a proper name, while this difference should be reduced when no such anchoring is present. Statistical analyses confirmed our hypothesis. We suggest that the observed difference was driven by the reduced psychic distance between character and reader (induced by FIS through obscuring the presence of a narrator). This study provided supporting evidence for the effect of literary techniques for consciousness presentation on readers' narrative processing.