



TOWARD A TAXONOMY OF HYPONYMS AND NARRATIVE FUNCTIONS OF FOCALIZATION

Dr. Husni Mansoor Nasser Saleh

Department of English, Radfan University College, University of Lahej, Yemen

Abstract

Focalization operates as both a corpuscular and hypernymous concept. It encompasses a spectrum of hyponyms and perceptual polysemies that render it one of the most contested terms in narrative theory. Its analytical utility lies in its capacity to produce a cohesive, reliable, and logically concatenated understanding of narrative structures. Beyond its embeddedness within existing theoretical frameworks, focalization demonstrates the potential to emerge as an autonomous and dynamically evolving discipline. This study systematically surveys the diverse modes, facets, forms, poles, categories, and functions of focalization, employing descriptive, interpretive, and integrative methodologies alongside reader-oriented response theory. By synthesizing these approaches, the researcher seeks to simplify and operationalize focalization for practical application in narrative analysis, offering a refined conceptual apparatus for future scholarship.

Keywords

Focalization, Hyponyms, Hypernymous, Discipline, Focalized and Focalizer, etc.

Full Article

Introduction:

This paper aims to explore focalization-related terms in a simplified way, focusing on its various modes, facets/planes, types, forms, components, poles/elements, typologies, functions, strategies and categories that may simplify such a briskly flourishing conception, which can contribute to ultimately enhancing the unity and reliability of whatsoever narrative. It seeks to contribute to simplifying the techniques associated to hyponym's impact and use, providing clarity on how these hyponyms can be effectively recognized and utilized in research and analysis. Focalization is a broad umbrella term, encompassing a range of hyponyms, which are intrinsically linked to it. It not only presents challenges for young scholars both on the theoretical and practical levels but also appears to remain an enigma for many researchers in analyzing any selected text or discourse. The researcher whittles down to make a studious preview of focalization into digestible morsels to allow future scholars to engage directly in practically analytical fields while saving effort and time rather than being inveigled. Those dedicated to this area of study, perhaps, have long engaged in esoteric debates concerning the very nature of focalization, its varieties, and its relation to the broader field of narratology. The researcher, accordingly, attuned to the hyponyms that associate with this term. These hyponyms have often been sporadically and niggardly cloche across various books and research papers. Actually, quarrels have been taking place among researchers that vary according to the specialization of each scholar and the specificity of the sampled texts. The researcher has sought to transcend such controversies in order to reach a certain perceptual ecumenism that allow scholars to practically apply this concept across a wide range of genres, rather than confining its use to a narrow selection of literary or media texts.

A Survey of the Hyponymic Focalization:



A full delving into these curated terminologies associated with focalization may pave the way towards realizing differences between focalization and narration. This realization would certainly clarify potential ambiguities. The former is concerned with “the angle of vision,” “who perceives?” or “where is the focus of perception?” while the latter refers to “who says?” or “who speaks?” Silke Horst Kotte and Nancy Pedri encourage “researchers to differentiate between the narrations of a story on the one hand and the mental processing of that story by a character- or by the narrator- on the other, thereby providing crucial insights into the representation of consciousness in fiction.” However, they acknowledge, “Yet focalization remains one of the most problematic and contentious narratological concepts.” (Horst Kotte, 330). Paul Ricoeur “accepts the distinction but considers point of view and voice as less separable: Point of view answers the question ‘From where do we perceive what is shown to us by the fact of being narrated?’ Hence, from where is one speaking? Voice answers the question ‘Who is speaking here?’ (Stuart 11). Monika Fludernik observes that “Genette privileges clarity of distinction (person and focalization as entirely separate domains), whereas Stanzel has been more interested in historical and prototypical combinations of voice and mood in actual texts” (Fludernik, 621). She argues “that Genette’s neat separation of voice and focalization does not explain the peculiarity of these texts either. In particular, I will argue that Genette’s classificatory model fails to take into account the mimetic illusion generated by the “voice” factor” (Fludernik, 623). And finally, she concludes her paper by stating that “the distinction of “who sees” and “who speaks” can be argued to be entirely spurious.” (Fludernik, *NWIOB*, 634). Manfred Jahn states that Genette “opens the door for focalization to become an independent module of the narratological system” (Jahn, *FOCA.*, 97) considers “narration and focalization come out as mutually reinforcing and mutually dependent factors of storytelling” (Jahn, *FOCA.*, 102). In contrast, Mary Jalea emphasizes that “It is important to note that there is a distinction between narration and focalization. While the former refers to the act of choosing words in a narrative, the latter refers to the act of experiencing or owning the perspectives which those words portray” (Jalea, 20). The significant question, which is out the scope of this paper, is whether the relationship between both terminologies is independent, dependent, interdependent or interrelated. Critics, like Mary Jalea, imply that “the category of focalization is an element that is undeniably present in all genres...It then existed as an independent discipline with different theories stemming out from it” (Jalea, 19), and Celestino Deleyto who states that “focalization is previous to narration and therefore, to a certain extent, independent from it” (Deleyto, 159) and Tatjana Jesch and Malte Stein conclude that “perspective and focalization are independent of one another” (Huhn, 61), and “implied in all narration” (Huhn, 93) as “Narration always entails focalization” (Jong DE and Irene J.F., 47); other critics like Keith Stuart indicated that “point of view and voice are interrelated and interdependent” (Stuart, 33). Seemingly, the relationship between these terms; a vocalization that refers to “mind’s ear” and focalizations that concern “mind’s eye”- remains an intricate question that requires further investigation. A further fundamental question arises regarding the identification and dissection of the various hyponyms associated with focalization. It is probably known what is meant by focalization of ‘perception’ and ‘knowledge,’ but how to effectively recognize its hyponyms and apply them to plausibly construct conceptualization remains a challenge.

The scholarly contention surrounding focalization extends far beyond its categories, striking at the very core of the hypernym itself. Monika Fludernik identifies it as the “most controversial and hotly disputed category in Genette’s typology” (Fludernik, *AI*, 102), a claim that underscores its precarious position in narrative theory. Manfred Jahn’s definition—framing focalization as “the submission of (potentially limitless) narrative information to a perspectival filter” (Jahn, *FOCA.*, 94) - offers a functionalist counterpoint to Seymour Chatman’s radical dismissal, which insists the term “should be abandoned entirely” (Nelles, 369). However,

Horstkotte and Nancy, aligning with Jahn, defend its centrality, arguing that “Distinguishing between character-bound and narratorial focalization offers strong arguments for preserving focalization as a central category of narratological analysis” (Horstkotte, 335). Even Genette, reflecting on the discourse his work ignited, wryly observes that “my study of focalizations has caused much ink to flow—no doubt, a little too much” (Nelles, 365). Such tensions reveal a concept unmoored from theoretical consensus, its foundations perpetually unsettled—a field where, as Keith Stuart asserts, “Much of the power of the text depends on its point of view” (Stuart, 325), yet where even the basic question of its relationship to voice remains contested. Stuart reiterates Genette’s insistence that “voice and point of view should be clearly separated” (Stuart, 315), a demarcation that Currie’s broader appraisal complicates: “The analysis of point of view is one of the great triumphs of twentieth-century criticism” (Postmodern Narrative Theory 1998:18). Mieke Bal, further, elevates the concept’s significance, declaring focalization “the most important, most penetrating, and most subtle means of manipulation” (Bal, 191-192). Despite these disputes, the term’s analytical vitality endures. The researcher concurs with Uri Margolin that focalization warrants autonomous study—a discipline requiring “at least the translation of [its] terms into those of the higher, more powerful theory” (Huhner, 47). Therefore, the relationality of its hyponyms, far from undermining its value, demonstrates the concept’s proliferation and remarkable adaptability across all narrative forms. Whether visual or non-visual, literal or metaphorical, focalization’s perceptual frameworks now permeate written, verbal, cinematic, and media narratives. Its theoretical instability, far from diminishing its utility, signals its generative force.

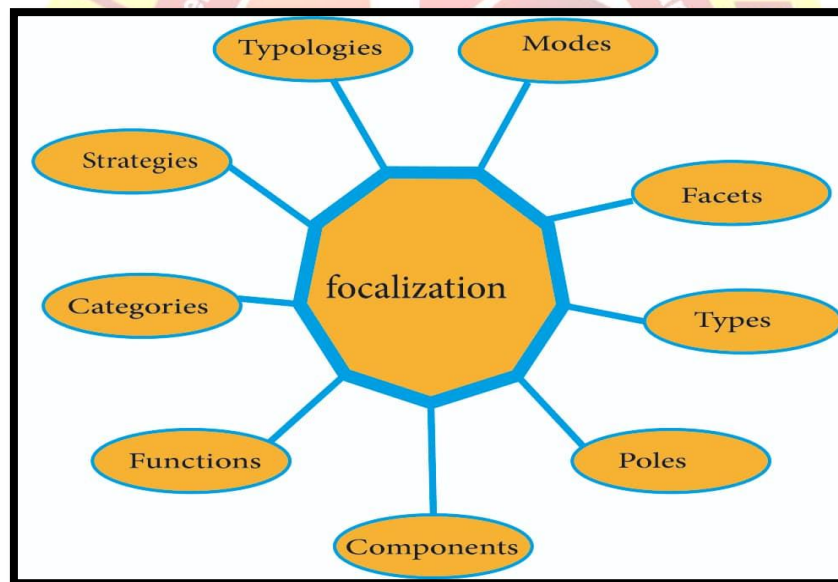
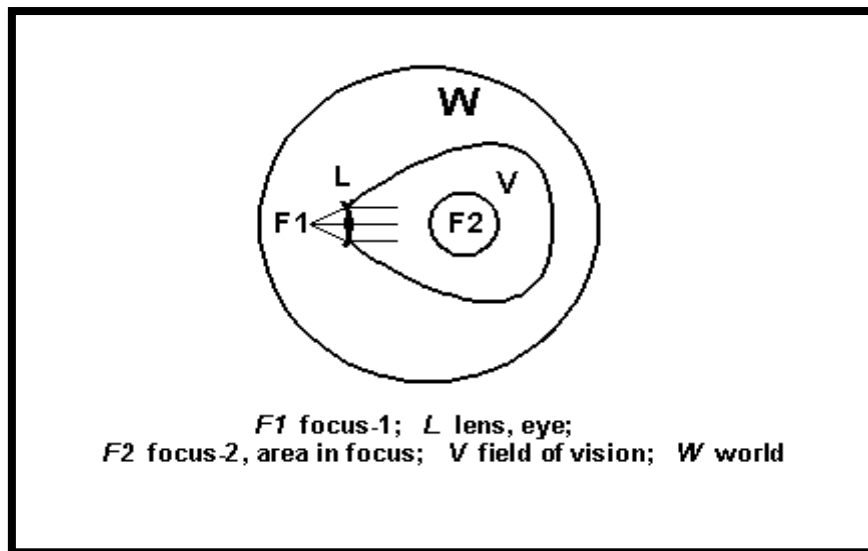


Figure 1: Hyponyms of Focalization

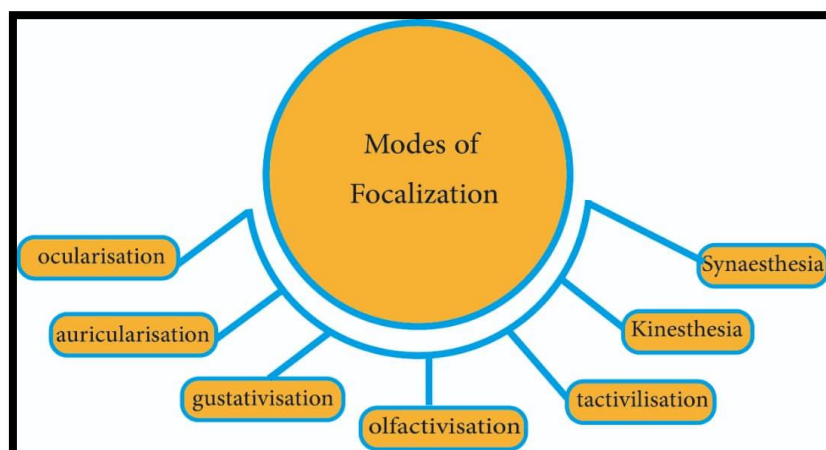
The researcher has opted to use the term focalization in this paper. Before proceeding further with a detailed examination, it’s pertinent to consider Manfred Jahn’s model of vision, which provides a useful framework for understanding how vision and focalization function from within. Focalization, as a hypernymous and polysemic concept, seems to be traced back to Gerard Genette (1972), who has clarified that he has taken it from the French word that denotes ‘vision’ to abstractly avoid specified visuality of the term. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan quotes that it “avoids the specifically visual connotations of ‘point of view’ as well as of the equivalent French terms, ‘Vision’ (Pouillon, 1946) (Narrative Fiction 73). This term has been referred to by various scholars using different terms like POV (point of view), view point, center of consciousness, filter,

prism, perspective, angle of vision, orientation,...etc. Jahn highlights that “narratologists have added a number of variants such as “figural media” (Stanzel), “focal characters” (Genette), “filters” (Chatman), and “internal focalizers” (Bal) the proliferation of terms clearly indicating the importance of the concept.” (Jahn, *FOCA.*, 95). The choice of terminology often reflects the preferences and theoretical orientations of individual scholars. For example, Mieke Bal prefers the term ‘focalization’ rather than ‘perspective’ and offers two primary reasons: ‘the first reason concerns tradition’ since no noun subject can be derived out of perspective nor is the verb ‘perspectivize’ is customary’ and the second reason is because the term, focalization is ‘technical’(143). While it is not necessary to deeply delve into this debate in the present context, it is worth noting that ‘focalization’ is widely accepted by many scholars, like Wolf Schmid, who states that “focalization has found wide-spread acceptance in international narratology” (Schmid, 89).



(Jahn, *Windows of focalization*, 242)

Importantly, focalization encompasses various modes, which seem to be typically demonstrated through sensual perceptions. These modes establish a distance that defines the relation between focalizer, focalized or focalizee. The focalizational modes include all the five senses: “ocularisation’ (sight), ‘auricularisation’ (sound), ‘gustativisation’ (taste), ‘olfactivisation’ (smell), and ‘tactivilisation’ (touch)” (qtd. in Herman et al. *Routledge Encyclopedian*). Additionally there are kinesthetic and synaesthetic modes, which further expand sensory engagement in focalization. Such modes seem not only to simplify focalization but may enhance poetic and reliable perceptions due to their direct connectedness with senses. Alicia Rasley, in her work *The Power of Point of View* (2008) simply defines point of view or view point as “the perspective from which the reader experiences the action of story...determines whose perceptions (sight, hearing, and the rest of the senses), whose thoughts, whose emotions you get as you read” (Rasley, 9). While Rasley uses the term POV, it is important to note using ‘focalization’ as discussed previously. The distinction is made to avoid conflating POV as a technique for analysing narratives, discourses and texts with the more common sense notion of perception. Focalization, in its broader sense, extends beyond just the visual, non-visual or extra-fictional narrators. It can encompass a range of entities including readers, story entities, narrators and trans-narrators, ‘potential readers’ and recipients, each of whom may possess distinct modes of perception. The researcher organizes these modes as follows:



Focalization is associated with a number of facets, often referred to as ‘semantic functions.’ Wolf Schmid, in her book *Narratology: An Introduction*, summarizes five key parameters of focalization: spatial, temporal, ideological, linguistic and perceptual planes. While “Spensky (1973) develops a theory of point of view based on a fourfold typology: ideological, phraseological, spatio-temporal and psychological point of view” (Stuart, 33), Fowler considers “phraseological” as part of voice rather than focalization. While these debates provide different approaches, they highlight the nuanced ways of focalization. By looking over such an argument, these facets have some snippet perception. For instance, the first plane is *spatial point of view* in which the ‘happenings are being perceived differently and according to the spatial position or angle of vision.’ The second is the *ideological point of view* in which, happenings are diversely being perceived according to knowledge, way of thinking, evaluative position, and intellectual horizons. The third is the *temporal point of view* that ‘denotes the interval between the original comprehension and the latter acts of comprehension and representation. The fourth one is the ‘linguistic point of view, ‘in which different linguistic registers are used. The fifth parameter is ‘perceptual point of view’ it is the most important of these parameters. It is the prism through which the occurrence is perceived. It aims at questions like “Through whose eyes does the narrator look at the world?” or “Who is responsible for the selection of these, and not other, elements of the happenings for use in the story?” (Schmid, 100-5). Likewise, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan (1983), for example, suggests that there are various facets to focalization; these are the perceptual component, the psychological component and the ideological component within these divisions she discusses such aspects as space, time, cognition and emotion (McIntyre, 37).

Manfred Jahn has argued, “that focalization is a means of opening an imaginary ‘window’ onto the narrative world” (Herman et al., *Routledge Encyclopedia*). Moreover, Luc Herman and Bart Vervaeck have emphasized the role of mental activities and imagination, stating that “Imagination forms part of the focalizer’s perception” (Herman, 76). Uri Margolin defines focalization as “the general term (Ober- or Sammelbegriff) used to designate at least some of the mental activities ... indexed to a particular individual, time and place” (Herman, 42). It is worth noticing that this term is “broadened to include cognitive, emotive and ideological orientation (see pp. 79–82)” (Rimmon-Kenan, 73). Joaquin Martinez Lorente, in her thesis *Blurring Focalization: Psychological Expansions of Point of View and Modality* sums up some different views like Uspensky, Fowler, Simpson, Rimmon-Kenan Chatman, Fowler, and Bal, in a table as follows:

Uspensky Fowler 1986 Simpson	Spatiotemporal	Psychological	Ideological	
Rimmon- Kenan	Perceptual	Emotive Cognitive	Ideological	
Chatman 1978	Emotive	Conceptual		Interest
Fowler 1977	Perspective	Attitude		
Bal	Perspective / Focalization / Perception			
	Physical	Psychological		

Table 1. Scholars' Views of Focalizational Facets (Lorente66).

Types of focalization follow a consistent pattern of trilogies proposed by various scholars. Pouillon (in 1946) divides it into 'vision from behind', 'vision with' and 'vision from without'. From his side, Todorov (in 1967) symbolizes as: narrator > character, narrator=character and narrator < character. Similarly, Gerard Genette (in 1972) introduced three well-known types of focalization. These types are zero-, internal and external-focalizers, based on the focalizer and its relation with the focalized; (1): non-focalization or zero focalization (some call free focalization) [in which] the narrator knows and says more than any of the characters knows; vision from behind; (2) internal focalization: the narrator says only what a given character knows; vision from within. The third type is (3) external focalization: the narrator says less than the character knows; vision from without (Huhn, 235). As per Genette, "It would be rare to find a novel that was consistently of one narratorial type" (Stuart, 15). The table below clarifies the three focalizational types:

Genette	Pouillon	Todorov
Zero focalization	Vision from behind	The narrator knows and says more than any of the characters knows
Internal focalization	Vision with	The narrator says only what a given character knows
External focalization	Vision from without	The narrator says less than the character knows

Table 2.

Focalization, as a concept, is further polyfurcated. Jahn Manfred deals with four forms or-what he calls patterns- of focalization that include fixed, variable, multiple, and collective focalizers. He has summarized in N3.2.4 that the first form has been perceived as 'fixed focalization', which is 'the presentation of narrative facts and events from the constant point of view of a single focalizer.' The second form is 'variable focalization' which is considered 'the presentation of different episodes of the story as seen through the eyes of several focalizers.' The third form is 'multiple focalization' which he states as "A technique of presenting an episode repeatedly, each time seen through the eyes of a different (internal) focalizer' in which 'different people tend to perceive or interpret the same event in a radically different fashion'. The last fourth form is a



‘collective focalization’ which is a focalization ‘through either plural narrators (‘we narrative’) or a group of characters (‘collective reflectors’). See Stanzel (1984: 172); Banfield (1982: 96)” (Jahn, N3.2.4). Brian Richardson in “Plural Focalization, Singular Voices” adds “wandering focalization” which partakes the peculiar features of we-narratives’ (Huhn Peter, 156). Similarly, Alan Palmer deals with *Single focalization* which occurs when there is one focalizer and *multiple focalization*, which refers to the presence of two or more focalizers of the same object. He perceives these multiple focalizers of intramental individuals or intermental groups or a combination of the two.” Palmer differentiates “between *intramental* and *intermental* focalization” as the former “refers to the distinction between mental activity by one (intramental)” while the latter “by more than one (intermental) consciousness.” (84). It may recall that all these forms may be contained within a single text and can be called poly-internal focalization. Genette’s types and forms of focalization can be clearly figured out hereunder based on Keith Stuart’s diagram with the addition of the fourth ‘collective’ form:

zero-->-----internal--->----->----->----->----->-----external

focalizationsingle multiple variable collective focalization

Remarkably, Genette’s trilogy was criticized initially by Mieke Bal (in 1977), and her criticism “was developed by Pierre Vitoux (in 1982). Vitoux shows that Genette’s typology is heterogeneous, for it does not distinguish the subject from the object of focalization. He proposes that ‘zero-focalization’ concerns the subject (it is a way of perceiving things), whereas ‘external focalization’ concerns the object (away of being perceived) (85). It is suggested a binaried-position: “zero vs. internal as regards subject-focalization and internal vs. external focalization as regards object-focalization” (Pier ‘The Dynamics of Narrative Form’ 85). The below table may indicate their criticism:

Subject	Internal/	Zero-focalization
Object	Internal focalization	External focalization

Table 3.

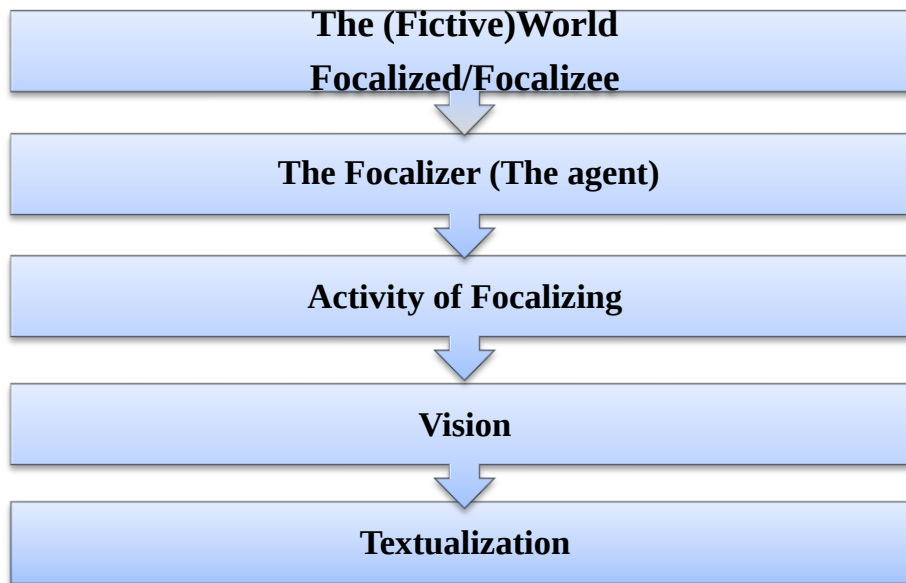
Underpinning, to Goran Nieragden “External focalization is always heterodiegetic...the focalizer in this case is solely the narrator, and, accordingly, this variant can be renamed heterodiegetic narratorial focalization. If the focalizer in a heterodiegetic narrative is not the narrator, but a character, this should be called heterodiegetic figural focalization” (Nieragden, 691). Heterogeneous and homogeneous terms seem not only concerned with narrators but also extended to be a characteristic of the focalization theory. Alan Palmer assumes that “In the case of *homogeneous focalization*, the two focalizers have the same perspective, views, and beliefs and so on, relating to the object. By contrast, *heterogeneous focalization* reflects the fact that the focalizers’ views differ, and their perspectives conflict one with another” (Palmer, 84). In addition to that, focalization appears to have started to move towards cognitivity or a cognitive approach. Herman and Vervaeck disagree with ‘Rimmon-Kenan [who] holds that the panoramic and simultaneous views are only possible for external focalizers’ (Palmer, 76). They opine that “A character can perfectly imagine what happens elsewhere (Palmer, 76). They clarify that “There is simultaneous focalization when the reader perceives what happens in different locations at the same time (Palmer, 75). Furthermore, Mieke Bal adds ‘embedded focalization,’ which ‘works on the analogy of embedded texts’ (Jahn, *WIND*, 260). To Kathryn Stoddard, “embedded focalization occurs when a primary narrator-focalizer adopts a character’s focalization of a particular event as



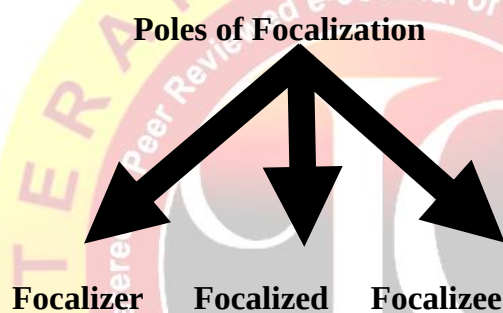
if it were his own reaction and assessment of a situation...This technique is useful to reveal character's emotions with no need to actual character's text" (Stoddard, 117). This embedded focalization contains various types of focalizations. It shifts in the same text to different focalizers from external focalizer (EF) to Character focalizer (CF) (See *Narratology: An Introduction*, edited by Susana Onega, Jose Angel Garcia Land N.P). Generally, a variation keeps occurring between Bal and Genette not in narrative but in focalization, too. For instance, Uspensky points out that "Every text fragment, for Bal, is the object of focalization on the parts of some subject, whereas for Genette some passages are non focalized" (Edmiston, 156). According to Michael Toolan, Genette's perception of focalization refers to "a view-point from which things are implicitly seen, felt, understood and assessed, reflecting the cognitive, emotive, ideological, and spatiotemporal perspective of the narration" (Toolan, 132). On the face of that, Wilhelmus Bronzwaer praises the advantage of Mieke Bal's analysis of FID (Free Indirect discourse) and remarks that "the dividing line between what is attributable to the narrator's discourse and what to the character's discourse is generally recognized to be vague.." (Bronzwaer, 199) and he concludes that "the theory of focalization implies certain contradictions which sometimes make the focalizer into an instance invested with linguistic powers" (Bronzwaer, 200). It is worth to note that Manfred Jahn has proposed another scheme of focalization in which he:

Distinguishes between 'strict focalization' (views originating from a determinate spatio-temporal position), 'ambient focalization' (story events and existents seen from more than one angle as in mobile, summary, or communal views), 'weak focalization' (an object seen from an unspecific spatio-temporal position), and 'zero focalization' (a wholly a perspectival view). (qtd. in *Routledge Encyclopedia Web*:175).

Similarly, focalization can be understood in terms of different components or poles. From one hand, Mieke Bal's classifies these poles into 'the subject and the object of focalization'; focalizer and focalized in which she insists [that it] should be studied separately (146); 'The subject of focalization, the focalizer, is 'the point from which the elements are viewed' and its 'lie with a character' while 'Objects, landscapes, events, in short all the elements are focalized, either by an EF or by a CF.' (150). The 'combination of a focalizer and a focalized object can be constant to a large degree' (149). Moreover, the former term the "focalized can only be applied to the narrative itself," while the latter- the focalizer can be "applied to anyone, it could only be the person who focalizes the narrative-that is, the narrator" (1988: 73; 1983: 48)" (Nelles, 368). Besides, one more term may be proposed; the focalizee that can refer to fictive entities in any narrative. On the other hand, Uri Margolin classifies these components into five constituents: (1) the story-world state or event focalized; (2) the focalizing agent and its make-up; (3) the activity of perceiving and processing this object-focalization (4) the product of this activity, that is, the resultant take or vision and (5) the textualization of all the above (Huhn, 48). These components and/or poles are essential to focalization-related process and can be indicated in the following segmented diagram:



Mieke Bal's poles of focalization can be indicated in the following diagram with adding the third pole to refer to fictive entities:



Other focalizational-related hyponyms pertain to its typology of focalization, oscillates between a non-restricted and a restricted regulation of information vis-à-vis the reader. Genette terms these alterations, and sub-divides them into the categories of paralipsis and paralepsis (Genette, 195). It refers respectively to 'giving less information than is necessary in principle, or giving more than is authorized in principle in the code of focalization governing the whole' (Genette, 195)" (McIntyre, 37). According to Keith Stuart, "ellipsis invites the reader to fill in the missing information which functions to establish a form of conspiracy between writer and reader which is aimed at criticizing a major social institution" (Stuart, 324) to the researcher it is not only this but "possibly meant to imitate nature, project a fragmented life in tyrannical and oppressed societies, express narrator's psychological and cognitive states of mind and to enhance narrativity" (Saleh, 292). This typology of focalization includes 1. Narrator's focalization and voice 2. Character's focalization and narrator's voice 3. Character's focalization and voice, as in stream-of-consciousness 4. Blends of the narrator's focalization and voice with characters' focalization and voice, as in free indirect discourse 5. Narrator's focalization and character's voice, as when a naive character narrator unwittingly takes on the voice of another character" (Phelan Blogs). Such typologies need to exert great efforts to be ascertained and analyzed in the fictive world. As aforementioned, Tatjana Jesch and Malte Stein consider Genette's typology of focalizations, at least in *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, is the differentiation between a non-restricted and a restricted regulation of information vis-à-vis the reader. The researcher can put in the following diagram:

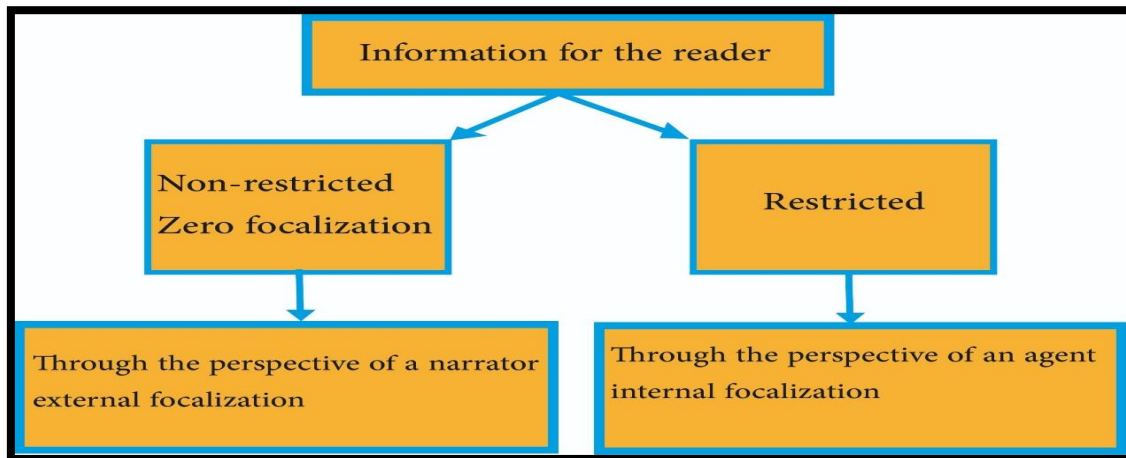


Figure 3: Types of Focalization According to Genette (1988) (qtd. in Huhn, Schmid and Schönert *Point of View, Perspective and Focalization* 62).

In addition to the aforementioned types of focalization, there are several categories that further refine the complexity of this concept, which may include trans-, self-, ambiguous, hypothetical and pseudo focalizations, each of which refers to a unique perspective on how focalization operates. Regarding pseudo-focalization and trans-focalization; the former, according to James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz in *Theory and Interpretation of Narrative*, is the category “in which the thoughts of several individuals are presented as if by an omniscient third person narrator, but it is one who turns out to be merely a character who uses her imagination to attempt to intuit the probable or possible thoughts of the others” (Phelan, 11). The latter can be proposed as a depiction of the authors’ principles, views and perceptions to story entities and preferred environment whether it’s imaginative or realistic. Characters to some extent might be seen as puppets to the world in which the author is one who holds certain strings interrelated or correlated with entities, according to Heebon Park-Finch is more complex in its interweaving of texts, ideas and schemes, and it “provides the playwright with added opportunity for creative reworking of the crucial themes” (Park-Finch). David Herman’s ‘hypothetical focalization’ (Huhn Peter, 156) “this is what would be seen by whoever, any human observer, including the reader,” (Huhn Peter, 51), and also called ‘virtual’, ‘nonexistent’, ‘ambiguous’, ‘outside’, and ‘ambient focalizer’ of ‘who sees, what is seen, and how it is seen’, which to Uri Margolin takes place “where two focalizers observe simultaneously the same object from different points” (Huhn Peter, 54) so “the vision is mobile” (Huhn Peter, 55), and as per Jakob Lothe and Jeremy Hawthorn in *Narrative Ethics*, “This entails the use of hypotheses [...] about what might be or might have been seen or perceived-if only there were someone who could have adopted the right point of view on the situation and events at issue” (Lothe, 203). Self-focalization appears to take place when the focalizer re-perceives a portion of his/her own life in the fictional/poetic work. In addition to categories of objective, behaviorist, and selective ones together with double-focalization of narrating and showing. All these terms are probably contributing to enrich and enhance the reliability of focalization. Noteworthy neo-derivative-and hyphenate terms have been created and amended over time.

The various hyponyms and polysemies of focalization seem to serve multifaceted functions and metafunctions, many of which extend beyond the scope of this paper. As Jahn highlights, “many contemporary commentators jumped to one of two conclusions, both equally problematic: either that the narrator was dead and the reflector had somehow absorbed his or her functions (Percy Lubbock); or else that the reflector had become a narrator (Wayne C. Booth).” (96-7) while “Genette defuses both the error of declaring the narrator dead and the error of



equating focal characters with narrators” (Jahn, *FOCA.*, 97). Suggestively, focalization appears to serve several functions like oversimplifying texts, interpreting narratives, constructing meanings, encoding/decoding judgments, and conveying attitudes, as well as to confirm coherence of “narratorial strategies” (Jahn *Windows of Focalization*). Moreover, Horstkotte and Nancy point out that “focalization is a pivotal concept for a visual or multimodal narratology in so far as it directs meaning and opens up the possibility for variance in meaning and mood” (Horstkotte, 351). Similarly, Monika Fludernik supposes that “It does not matter who sees or who speaks because the entire point of the narrative is to give us a portrait of each character's motivations and thoughts.” (Fludernik, *NWIOB*, 636). Furthermore, focalization has evolved to encompass various strategies that involve shifting focalizers, withholding or releasing information, and engaging with story entities, narrators, authors, and recipients. It can be said that “The strategies to focalize the subject do not correspond exactly to the strategies used to focalize the object” (Quarezemin Web). Mieke Bal reinforces the interpretative function of focalization, claiming that “focalization is already an interpretation, a subjectivized content” (Bal, 163), in this sense, focalization functions across various dimensions. It is not merely concerned with viewpoints but also with how information is structured, manipulated and interpreted within a narrative as per perception and knowledge; Tomas Kubicek reached the conclusion that “The comprehensive perspective is not inherent in the text alone nor determined by it, but ultimately depends on reception by the reader” (Huhn Peter, 5) or what can be called in Jan Christoph Meister and Jorg Schonert the “personal engagement with the ongoing” (Huhn Peter, 33). Consequently, as proposed by De Jong and J.F. Irene “The analysis of the focalization in a given passage is usually complex, not least because of its inherent ambiguity.., but leads to the heart of the emotional or ideological force of that passage” (Irene JF and De Jong, 69) which make it “the most important new analytical tool” (Irene JF and De Jong, 69). As such, it plays a vital role in shaping the reader’s understanding, enhancing the process of recontextualization, legitimizing its reliability, and reinforcing the overall coherence of ‘what counts as a world’.

Conclusion:

Focalization operates as a hypernymous and polysemic concept, one that has evolved into a dynamic and contested sub-discipline marked by persistent scholarly debate over its hyponyms. These disputes extend beyond the term itself to its manifold subordinate categories, cementing focalization as one of the most fundamental concepts in narrative theory. This study has sought to delineate the essence of focalization while systematically mapping its diverse hyponyms, for which no singular, simplified framework exists. To that end, it has examined ocular, auricular, olfactory, tactual, gustatory, kinesthetic, and synesthetic modes, alongside spatial, temporal, ideological, linguistic, and perceptual facets. The analysis further delineates focalization’s typological constraints—such as the classic triad of zero, internal, and external focalization—while expanding internal focalization into its polyfurcated forms: fixed, variable, multiple, and collective focalizers. Structurally, focalization’s constitutive elements—focalizer, focalized, and focalizee—can be diagrammed as interdependent poles. Additionally, embedded, trans-, pseudo-, self-, double-, poly-, hypothetical, and ambiguous categories, enriched by imagery, metaphor, memory, emotion, and cognition, facilitate the reconstruction of narrative perception. Despite its interpretive variability, focalization’s analytical power remains undeniable. It functions as a critical tool for textual simplification, narrative interpretation, meaning deconstruction and reconstruction, judgment encoding/decoding, and attitude conveyance, all while ensuring narrative coherence and unity. Given its interdisciplinary resonance across the social and human sciences, focalization holds the potential to crystallize into an autonomous discipline in its own right. Ultimately, focalization exerts a transformative influence over all narratives—texts, co-texts, and



contexts—whether verbal, visual, or written, operating across literal, metaphorical, and cognitive dimensions.

References

- Akimoto, Taisuke, and Takashi Ogata. "Experimental development of a focalization mechanism in an integrated narrative generation system." *Journal of Artificial Intelligence and Soft Computing Research*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2015, pp. 177-188.
- Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. 2nd ed., University of Toronto Press, 1997.
- ---. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. University of Toronto Press, 2009.
- Bronzwaer, Wilhelmus. "Mieke Bal's concept of focalization: A critical note." *Poetics Today*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1981, pp. 193-201.
- Cohn, Dorrit. "Narratology and the Reading of Fiction." *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative Theory*, edited by David Herman, Cambridge UP, 2007, pp. 31-48.
- De Jong, Irene J. F. *Narratology and Classics: A Practical Guide*. Oxford UP, 2014.
- Deleyto, Celestino. "Focalisation in film narrative." *Atlantis*, vol. 13, no. 1/2, 1991, pp. 159-177.
- Edmiston, William F. *Hindsight and Insight: Focalization in Four Eighteenth-Century French Novels*. Penn State Press, 1991. *Google Books*, books.google.co.in/books?id=fdxNwlQmF8AC.
- Fesi, Joshua Israel. "Enlightenment Phenomenology: The Focalization of Perceptual Experience in Eighteenth-Century Urban Narrative." 2016. Rutgers University, PhD dissertation.
- Fludernik, Monika. *An Introduction to Narratology*. Taylor and Francis e-Library, 2009.
- ---. "New wine in old bottles? Voice, focalization, and new writing." *New Literary History*, vol. 32, no. 3, 2001, pp. 619-638.
- Herman, David, et al., editors. *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2010.
- Herman, Luc, and Bart Vervaeck. *Handbook of Narrative Analysis*. U of Nebraska P, 2005.
- Horstkotte, Silke, and Nancy Pedri. "Focalization in graphic narrative." *Narrative*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2011, pp. 330-357.
- Hühn, Peter, et al. *Point of View, Perspective, and Focalization*. De Gruyter, 2009.
- Jahn, Manfred. "Focalization." *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative Theory*, edited by David Herman, Cambridge UP, 2007, pp. 94-108.
- ---. "Windows of focalization: Deconstructing and reconstructing a narratological concept." *Style*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1996, pp. 241-267.
- Jalea, Mary Gleefer Fabellon. "NARRATOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE FOCALIZATION TECHNIQUES IN QUIJANO DE MANILA'S REPORTAGE ON CRIME: THIRTEEN HORROR HAPPENINGS THAT HIT THE HEADLINES." 2017. U of Asia and the Pacific, MA thesis.
- Lorente, Joaquin Martinez. "Blurring Focalization: Psychological Expansions of Point of View and Modality." *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses*, no. 9, 1996, pp. 63-89.
- Lothe, Jakob, and Jermy Hawthorn. *Narrative Ethics*. Rodopi, 2013.
- McIntyre, Dan. *Point of View in Plays: A Cognitive Stylistic Approach to Viewpoint in Drama and Other Text-Types*. John Benjamins, 2006.
- Nelles, William. "Getting Focalization into Focus." *Poetics Today*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1990, pp. 365-382.



- Nieragden, Goran. "Focalization and Narration: Theoretical and Terminological Refinements." *Poetics Today*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2002, pp. 685-697.
- Onega, Susana, and Jose Angel Garcia Landa. *Narratology: An Introduction*. Routledge, 2014.
- Palmer, Alan. "Large Intermental Units in *Middlemarch*." *Theory and Interpretation of Narrative*, edited by James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz, Ohio State UP, 2010.
- Park-Finch, Heebon. "Hypertextual adaptation: Humanistic enquiry through transfocalization in Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*." *Journal of Adaptation in Film & Performance*, vol. 5, no. 2, Oct. 2012.
- Phelan, James. "Notes on 'Dual Focalization, Discourse as Story, and Ethics.'" *Josie Torres Barth*, 29 Mar. 2011, blogs.commonsgorgetown.edu/jtb63/2011/03/29/narration-and-focalization. Accessed 21 June 2019.
- Phelan, James, and Peter J. Rabinowitz. *Theory and Interpretation of Narrative*. Ohio State UP, 2006.
- Pier, John, editor. *The Dynamics of Narrative Form: Studies in Anglo-American Narratology*. Vol. 4, Walter de Gruyter, 2011. *Google Books*, books.google.co.in/books?id=l3aTiNOZPygC.
- Quarezemin, Sandra. "Sujeito e objetofocalizados nas sentenças SVO do português brasileiro." 2012. Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. Accessed 12 Sept. 2025.
- Rasley, Alicia. *The Power of Point of View*. 1st ed., Writer's Digest Books, 2008.
- Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith. *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*. 2nd ed., Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005.
- Saleh, Husni Mansoor Nasser. "Narration and Focalization in The Selected Poems of Percy Bysshe Shelley: A Narratological Analysis." 2020. India, MA thesis.
- Schmid, Wolf. *Narratology: An Introduction*. Translated by Alexander Starritt, Walter de Gruyter, 2010.
- Stoddard, Kathryn. *The Narrative Voice in The Theogony of Hesoid*. Koninklijke Brill NV, 2004. *Google Books*, books.google.co.in/books?id=ZnzoT58sPpMC.
- Stuart, Keith Douglas. "A Systemic Linguistic Analysis of Point of View in Narrative Fiction." 1996. Universitat Politècnica de València, PhD dissertation.
- Toolan, Michael. *Narrative: A Critical Linguistic Introduction*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2001.



This is an Open Access e-Journal Published Under A Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

Article Received: 25/07/2025

Article Accepted: 04/08/2025

Published Online: 30/09/2025

To Cite the Article: Saleh, Husni. "Toward a Taxonomy of Hyponyms and Narrative Functions of Focalization." *Literary Cognizance: An International Refereed/Peer Reviewed e-Journal of English Language, Literature and Criticism*, Vol.-VI, Issue-2, September, 2025, 26-38. www.literarycognizance.com