

# A typology of reported speech

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## Abstract

The centrality of reported speech in spoken interaction can hardly be over-estimated. Participants in spoken interaction regularly suffuse their talk with accounts of other talk. Canonically this other talk is talk that was uttered by some person at a time prior to the current reporting situation at a place removed from the current reporting place. Equally canonically, the reported speech episode is seen as falling within one of two categories: Direct reported speech (DRS) that purportedly reports the original utterance verbatim and indirect reported speech (IRS) that reports the original utterance embedded within a ‘that’ clause with concomitant shifts of deixis and backshifting of tenses. These aspects, however canonical, represent only a small section of the possibilities open to reporters of speech. This paper will outline some of the other factors that may come into play when speakers report talk during ongoing interactions. Categories such as granularity (high to low), possibility (actual to impossible), temporal (distant past, recent past and future), participants (self-reporting, reporting of current listener, reporting the talk of some other currently non-present person etc.), reports of speech or thought, will be referred to with examples drawn from corpus, from the literature and from the author’s own data. In addition, some of the interactional purposes that reports serve, such as narrative and (re) entry into an ongoing interaction will be examined. Reports are much more than exercises in relaying what was said in the past for the purposes of informing a current listener of what was

said. Reports can be carried out in a wide variety of different ways and for a variety of different interactional purposes beyond the updating/informing purpose of the canonical report schema.

In a discussion of human universals (Brown 1991) there are several items that are related to language. Spoken narrative is one such item and social status associated with proficient language use is another. Indeed, the centrality of speaking to the human animal has led to the suggestion that ‘Homo Sapiens is essentially ‘homo loquens’, the talking man’ (Wierzbicka 1987, p.1) and another suggestion for a binominal describing the human species is ‘Pan narrans’ or ‘the storytelling chimpanzee’. (Pratchet, Stewart and Cohen 2002). Speaking, more specifically spoken interaction (and especially spoken narrative), lie at the heart of our social lives.

Given the centrality of speaking to human existence and social interaction it seems inevitable that one central topic of our speech is reporting what we or others have said. Indeed, Bakhtin (1981, p.337) stated: ‘The transmission and assessment of the speech of others, the discourse of another, is one of the most widespread and fundamental topics of human speech’ Capone (2016, p.100) goes a step further and proposes that every instance of (indirect) reported speech ‘is a linguistic action very similar to a micro-narration (or mini-story)’. In this sense, reporting speech is narrative, a means by which speakers narrate social existence while engaging in the social activity of talk. Reported speech is, then, both the form and the function of sociality in humans.

### Canonical reported speech

On the face of it, reported speech would seem to be conceptually non-complex; at some point prior to the onset of the reporting event, some person made

an utterance. The reporter in the here-and-now of the reporting world reports this utterance with the general purpose of letting the current listener(s) know what it was that was said in the past, thus changing the current listener's epistemic status from minus to plus. The only complexity that is generally perceived is manifest in the direct/indirect binary distinction that features in most treatments of reported speech in materials for foreign language learners. In this schema, the original utterance can be repeated (allegedly) verbatim after a reporting verb, typically *said*, to create direct reported speech (DRS), or the original utterance can be embedded within a *that* clause after a reporting verb (again, typically *said*) and marked by a shift of pronouns, tense etc. This is termed indirect reported speech (IRS). This schema is exemplified as follows. (Note the use of punctuation, a resource that is clearly not available in spoken instances of reported speech.)

Original utterance by Mike: I am going to Hawaii.

Direct report: Mike said, "I am going to Hawaii."

Indirect report: Mike said that he was going to Hawaii.

However, this simple schema only skims the surface of what reported speech is and what it can (and can't) do. The first issue with reports that occur during normal interaction is based on the limits of human memory. Whilst it is feasible that a reporter may indeed remember an entire original utterance if that original utterance was of limited length, say a single word (e.g. *Yes.*) or a short phrase or sentence (e.g. *Not really*), as the original utterance lengthens it becomes increasingly unlikely that it will be remembered exactly. Mayes (1990, cited in Holt, 2000, p. 432) 'claimed that the authenticity of 50% of her collection of 230 naturally occurring examples is doubtful.'

In addition to the limits of memory, there are other constraints on the ability of the reporter to claim complete fidelity to the original utterance.

Conversation Analysis methodology relies on careful microanalysis of data, with transcripts of data attempting to detail everything that is uttered by a speaker, no matter how incidental or accidental it seems. Heritage (1984, p.421) stated that 'no order of detail can be dismissed, *a priori*, as disorderly, accidental or irrelevant.' This means that any phenomenon that occurs in talk-in-interaction may be meaningful to the participants as they co-construct the interaction. Items such as pauses, filled or unfilled, within a turn or between turns, overlaps, laugh tokens, hesitations, restarts, repetitions and other repair phenomena, gaze direction, gesture, body orientation and so on may well have had import for the speaker or listener(s), or both, when the original utterance was made. Such phenomena are extremely unlikely to find expression in the report that is made subsequent to the original utterance.

The prosody of the original utterance is also an area where complete fidelity to the original may not actually be possible. Individuals have accents and may speak in a dialect or dialects. Each individual has a personal style of speech, an idiolect. These aspects of speech may, but probably won't, be represented in the report. The pitch, stress, speaking speed and volume of any utterance all contribute to the list of elements that characterize that individual utterance. Gifted mimics and impersonators may be able to precisely capture these aspects in their reports, but generally the reporter does not attempt to re-create these features. There may be marked prosody features to signal that reported speech is being represented (see Klewitz and Couper-Kuhlen 1999) but these may belong to the reporter rather than reflect any phenomenon in the original utterance. For all of these reasons, 'the term *reported speech* is a misnomer... What is commonly referred to as reported speech or direct quotation in conversation is constructed dialogue, just as surely as is the dialogue created by fiction writers and playwrights.' (Tannen, 1986, p.311.)

In addition to the (near) impossibility of faithfulness to the original utterance,

there are other ways in which the simplistic view of reported speech is not accurate. The canonical view is that reports refer to an actual utterance that was made by someone in the past. However, there are many other reporting genres that can exist. Buttny (1997, p. 479) gives a list of reported speech typologies.

1. The reporting speaker may quote another person or quote him- or herself.
2. The quote may be of what was verbally said or of what was thought, what may be called *reported thought*.
3. The quote may be verbal or nonverbal, where the latter includes bodily movements and vocal qualities such as intonation or regional/ethnic accent or dialect.
4. The quote can report the words of a single person or of a dialogue between two or more persons.
5. The quote can be of what was actually said or be fictional, that is, contrary to fact- what *should* or *could* have been said or what *will* be said.
6. The quote can be overtly marked by a reporting clause, a shift in intonation or in writing by quotation marks; or it can be unmarked.
7. The quote can be continuous or interspersed with the reporting speaker's commentary.

To further refine these points, it is possible that the reporting speaker may quote the current listener back to him or herself, i.e. report speech that the listener to the report already knows (*When I asked you last week, you said you weren't interested*). It is also possible that the report is ambiguous as to whether the content was spoken or merely thought using the reporting verb *like*. (See Roumaine and Lange, 1991). The report can refer to an utterance that typifies various things said by a group of people rather than an individual (*They all said that it's not fair!*). The report can refer to speech that never actually happened, in fact the report may be not just fictional but actually impossible (*A Martian walks into a*

bar and says, “Give me a beer earthman.”). A report can also report a report. (*He said that she said she wasn't interested.*) It is clear from these observations that reported speech fulfills, or can fulfill, a myriad of roles apart from letting the current listener know what was said in the past by the current reporter or a third person with the goal of changing the epistemic status of the current listener from not knowing to knowing what was said. It is also clear that the structures ‘he said’ or ‘he said that’, which frame the report using a pronoun and a reporting verb (*typically say*) in its simple past tense form to introduce the report represents only one way in which reports can be performed. Other tenses are possible and other verbs are possible, including omission of a reporting verb, the so called ‘zero quotatives (see Mathis and Yule, 1994). Some of these other possibilities will be examined in the next section.

### Forms of reported speech: Granularity

For language teachers in a second or foreign language-teaching context, reported speech often features in syllabi as a largely grammatical target. Reports are seen as coming in two types, direct and indirect, and whilst direct reports are seen to provide a verbatim reproduction of the original utterance, indirect reports are seen as giving an account of the previous utterance from the standpoint of the current reporting situation with changes of tense, deixis and so on. However, this distinction is not as absolute as the EFL/ESL syllabus often implies. As Mathis and Yule (1994) state, ‘The traditional grammatical dichotomy between direct and indirect speech, with its associated formal markers and prescriptions for appropriate usage, is increasingly being demonstrated to have little empirical foundation in the everyday social business of reporting what was said.’ (p.63)

This dichotomy is, at heart, about the level of granularity that the reporter

brings to the report (see Schegloff, 2000.) In some instances, a claim is made for extremely high levels of granularity, as in the following case, where an eyewitness to a terror attack in London reports to the media what the attacker said.

### Excerpt 1 BBC News

Finsbury Park Mosque: "This is a terrorist attack" (0: 55- 1:03)

01.A: And then he kya. he was shouting wll all Muslims

02. I wanna kill all muslims (.) literally he said

03. that wur. word by word (.) he said it like this

The speaker, perhaps aware that he is on record and that his words will be broadcast to a large audience, is at some pains to increase the granularity of the report to the maximum, using the word 'literally' and also using the fixed expression 'word by word' and then going to a further increment claiming fidelity not only to the content of the utterance but also its manner ('he said it like this'). This is reporting of the most fine-grained type, but such claims for fidelity to the original are not the norm.

Analysis of other data shows that there are many cases where what is reported cannot be clearly identified as direct or indirect speech. This phenomenon is examined by Holt (2016) who stated that;

[T]he boundaries between between IRS and DRS and IRS and loose glosses or summaries of prior speech are so fuzzy as to be indistinguishable. Thus it may be productive to view these devices as positioned on a continuum that stretches from DRS on one side to glosses and summaries on the other.

The difficulty in identifying what is part of the report, what is a gloss or summa-

ry and what is outside the report completely is exemplified in the following excerpt taken from a YouTube video featuring entertainer John Cleese.

**Excerpt 2 (Democracy in Name Only, 2017).**

01.J: a renowned psychiatrist in London called Robin  
 02. Skinner sed something very interesting to me  
 03. he sed if people can't control their own emotions  
 04. then they have to start trying to control other  
 05. people's behavior and when yuround supersensitive  
 06. people you cannot relax and be spontaneous  
 07. because you NO IDEA what's gonna upset them next  
 08. and tht's why I bin warned recently don't go to  
 09. most university campuses

In lines 01 and 02, the speaker is clearly setting up the relevant orientation for the report, i.e. who was the original speaker and original addressee (Skinner and Cleese respectively). The content of the report is glossed as 'something very interesting' and then Cleese repeats the reporting verb said (sed) in line 03 and moves into the report proper. It is unclear whether this report is DRS or IDRS. The words following 'if' in line 03 are clearly intended to be heard as a report, but no indication is given as to whether it is a verbatim report or an indirect report as there are no deictic expressions to indicate one way or another. The report can be seen to continue to the end of the conditional construction, that is, to the word 'behaviour' in line 05. Any cessation before this word would leave the reported utterance as hearably incomplete. The next increment starting at 'and when yuround supersensitive people' could be a continuation of Skinner's original utterance or it could be Cleese's own voice proceeding to explain the logical upshot of

Skinner's utterance. So, in this sequence, we have a gloss of the upcoming report (*said something interesting*) followed by something which is clearly intended to be heard as a report (*he said if people ...*) with no signaling as to whether it is DRS or IRS, followed by a further stretch of talk which could be either DRS or IRS or not even reported speech. This sequence returns in lines 08 and 09 to a further report, in this case using the speech act verb 'warned' and an account of the content of the warning with no claim to represent what was actually said at any level of granularity, or even report who the warning emanated from.

Finally, at the extreme opposite end of the scale from the kind of report exemplified in excerpt 1 above there are reports of speech having taken place but the reporter is unclear about who the original speaker was and giving designedly minimal information as to the content. This is shown in the following excerpt taken from the British National Corpus at BYU. (Transcript format follows the transcript of the corpus, with line numbers added.)

**Excerpt 3 BNC (KCE) s\_conv Helena (Davies, 2004)**

- 01. H: who was it, someone said something about (pause)
- 02. people being fat or whatever and someone's gone,
- 03. oh yeah, like Helena, you know jokingly
- 04. (pause) and erm (pause) and me and Joe both
- 05. turned round and said
- 06. yeah but she's not fat though is she

In this case the initial report is extremely coarse grained. In line 01 it is reported that 'someone said something about people being fat. Who this person was is not made clear and the topic of 'people being fat' is not elaborated in any way. Also, the intended listener of the original utterance is not explicitly mentioned. The

reporter of this utterance (Helena) could have been addressed directly by the ‘someone’ or could have been eavesdropping. In fact, the report is kept vague by the addition of the expression ‘or whatever’ in lines 01-02. A further report is introduced in line 02, again not making clear who made the original utterance beyond ‘someone’. This ‘someone’ is likely not the same someone as the first ‘someone’, otherwise the reported could have used a pronoun, probably ‘they’. The identity of this possible second someone is also unspecified. The third report identifies the speakers as ‘me’ and ‘Joe’, and makes some kind of claim that both speakers said the same thing ‘Yeah, but she’s not fat though, is she’. Whether the speakers said exactly the same words at the same time or spoke the words individually in sequence is left unclear. It seems more likely that this is a gloss of the combined statements of both speakers. In whatever case, the whole sequence is characterized by very low granularity and specificity.

Low granularity is often carried out with reporting verbs such as *say*, *talk* and *tell* combined with the word *about* to indicate the general topic, the *aboutness* of the original utterance. The lowest possible granularity would be in a case where an utterance was made but the topic, content, the original speaker and intended audience were unspecified for some reason either practical or pragmatic. A report that ‘Someone in the audience said something, but I couldn’t hear what it was’ would represent this lowest granularity type of report.

The granularity of reports can therefore be seen as more than a simple binary distinction between supposed verbatim reports of DRS and IRS reports that undergo predictable and mandatory grammatical transformations. Rather, the spectrum extends across a number of different means of reporting speech, with a fuzzy boundary between different levels of granularity.

### Temporal aspects of reports: Distal and proximal past and future

Reported speech is generally understood to mean that the original utterance was made at a time prior to the time when the report is made. This is reflected in general tendency in ESL/EFL materials to present reported speech using the simple past tense form of the reporting verb, prototypically 'said'. However, reports can reference other time frames apart from past. Reports can reference a past that is seen as psychologically distant from the present context (see Lewis, 1986 for an account of the 'distance' meaning of so-called simple past tense forms in English verbs). Reports can also reference a past that is proximate to the reporting context. In this case the inclusion of the word 'just' along with the present perfect tense indicates that the report is temporally proximal to the reporting context and therefore presumably accessible to the current listeners in a way that simple past reports are generally presumed not to be accessible to addressees. This is shown in the following excerpt from the British National Corpus.

#### Excerpt 4 BNC Parish meeting (Davies, 2004)

- 01. A: So we've got four definites at the moment.
- 02. B: Mm. So in that case we've got to do a bit of research haven't we?
- 03. C: Well I've got the (unclear)
- 04. B: Ah.
- 05. D: (unclear)
- 06. E: Let's let's have the (unclear)
- 07. F: Well well you've just said we've got four definites.

In line 01 speaker A states that they have 'four definites', referring to some kind of list (seemingly of people who were involved in the war). The talk contin-

ues among various members of the group until line 07 where speaker F references speaker A's utterance 'you have just said we've got four definites'. This reports an utterance that was made very recently and is presumably still accessible to the working memory of the other participants, thus the report cannot be doing the job of informing in the way that reports of distal prior utterances canonically perform. Many of the instances of 'just said' in corpus data suggest a function of topic management, resolution of ambiguity or misunderstanding and questions of truthfulness and honesty. This last is exemplified in the following excerpt from a documentary program concerning policing in London. In this section officers have stopped and searched two individuals suspected of being involved in an illegal drugs transaction.

**Excerpt 5 (LondonBoys 2017.) Drug stop (42:41)**

- 01.A: So where 'suh drugs you bought off im uh? Where's  
 02. the drugs you bought off him?  
 03.B: Soon as my mate said it I slung it  
       ((Edit to other suspect and police))  
       ((Edit back to A and B interaction))  
 05.B: Adhn I didn't no nothing wrong  
 06.A: Fuhr Ahhhh hh. You've just said you threw the  
 07. drugs away=  
 08.B: =uep  
 09. (.)  
 10.A: W'll where diju throw them?  
 11.B: whm ll s gonna tell yuh where I'm gonna frow  
 12. 'em?

In this excerpt the report in line 06 is reported using the present perfect tense, and the word *just* to indicate its recency as was the case in excerpt 4. In this case the talk is clearly disaffiliative. The police officer (speaker A) has an institutionally mandated duty to seize on any contradictions in suspects' statements and probe them further. Speaker B does not attempt to resolve the contradiction between admitting throwing the drugs away and his assertion that he has done nothing wrong. The original utterance in line 03 is reported back to the original speaker in line 06 in pursuance of A's agenda rather than to inform B of any unknown material. Proximal reports as illustrated in these cases seem to serve different interactional agendas to distal reports covering both affiliative and disaffiliative interactional trajectories. The range of interactional purposes that proximal reports perform is a topic for future research.

In addition to reports of prior utterances, reports can also reference future speech, that is, speech that the reporter(s) project as being likely to be uttered by some person(s) at a time following the report. The following excerpts from BNC illustrate instances of future reports.

**Excerpt 6 BNC PS1BY mum and dad (Davies, 2004)**

- 01. A: Exactly! See what she thinks. If she thinks it's a good idea, we
- 02. will then have erm a word with I'll make sure
- 03. it's okay with dad and mum first (pause) basically.
- 04. B: (laughing) We've (pause) you've planned all this well they
- 05. better let
- 06. A: And check to make sure cos they're gonna have an
- 07. argument about it, I can see it! Dad will say yes and mum will
- 08. say no!

**Excerpt 7 BNC PS1BY Drinks (Davies, 2004)**

01. A: Oh dad won't, mum will. Dad will have no problem, but he'll say  
 02. you can get lager and stuff no problem. He, there won't  
 03. be any spirits, they'll say no spirits. They'll say, right you can  
 04. have lager and you can have wine. But mu-- mum will say no to  
 05. everything! So, basically they'll be an argument between he--,  
 06. him and mum.
07. B: Who's gonna win. (sigh)
08. A: Er hopefully dad. So

**Excerpt 8 BNC PS0V4 Returned book (Davies, 2004)**

01. A: And that book upstairs. I don't want to read it I'm  
 02. not interested.
03. B: No.
04. A: But what can you say to her?
05. B: Say, mm yeah.
06. A: Yeah but then she'll start asking me things about it and I won't  
 07. know.
08. B: Ah.
09. A: I'll just say, look Julie I haven't had time to read it
10. B: No.
11. A: so you might as well have it all back. (laughing) And don't give it  
 12. to me again.
13. B: Only she will say well hang on to it till you've listened to it. I'm  
 14. in no hurry. That's the problem.
15. A: Yeah.

16. B: And
17. A: Well fine. In that case I'll hang on to it but I really think she
18. ought to, actually I'll I'll take round there when I'm home.
19. B: Either that or
20. A: Wrap it up and drop it through the letterbox.

These three excerpts all illustrate that interactants can project what they think will or may be said in the future and report this. The reports in these examples are mainly presented as direct reports, although future glosses are also presented as in excerpt 6 lines 06 and 07 where the upcoming interaction is first glossed as an argument and then the speaker warms to the theme with 'I can see it' before characterizing the nature of the argument in DRS. (*Dad will say yes and mum will say no.*) This granularity schema (coarse-grained to fine-grained) is reversed in excerpt 7 where the speaker gives a details of the proposed future interaction first, contrasting the utterances that will be made by dad and then mum and then characterizing this as an argument in lines 05 and 06.

Excerpt 8 reveals the kind of co-construction referred by Sams (2010) where interactants jointly create projected future dialogues as a way of showing convergent stance towards the matter in hand. In the case of excerpt 8 there is a coarse-grained account of a future utterance presented in line 06 (*but then she'll start asking me things about it*). This is followed by a more fine-grained report by speaker A in lines 09, 11 and 12 who projects her utterance to the antagonist Julie as an account of why she has not read the book that appears to have been lent to her. B aligns with this and offers her own version of Julie's projected response to A's projected account in lines 13 and 14. This projected utterance aligns with A's implicit criticism of Julie as a troublesome person who cannot be relied on to read social cues and who pursues her own agenda in a somewhat persistent manner.

It is interesting to note that the excerpts presented here from corpus data, and the future reports presented by Sams (2010) all refer to problematical interactions in the future. In excerpts 6, 7 and 8 the future reports deal with predicted parental arguments or potentially awkward dealings over returning an unread book and having to account for not reading it. In Sams (2010), the future reports deal with having to account for non-achievement at a future school reunion and being sarcastic towards those who will have had children by the time of the reunion, accounting for severe weight gain at a future school reunion and the problems that will arise when the speaker has lied about attending a party and is imagining being put on the spot when asked to provide the details of the party. Anticipating arguments or other problematical interactions seems to be well represented among future reports. Further research is needed to investigate the kind of things future reports accomplish.

### Possible and impossible reports

As was mentioned above, the canonical report schema entails a current speaker reporting what was said at some point in the past. The example in excerpt 1 is intended to be seen as not only truthful and also officially on record. Reports such as these or other such reports, such as court testimony have a strong and often marked orientation towards truthfulness. The following excerpt from BNC illustrates the point:

#### **Excerpt 9 BNC PS52C Exact words (Davies, 2004)**

01. A: They're out for a laugh, I mean Charlie
02.     won't even tell me who he
03.     fancies because erm he says, you know,

04. he said to me, you know, and in, in, in,
05. and in his exact words he said
06. you've got to be really stupid
07. to tell anyone anything in this place and I said yeah ...

In this case, the report is given an extra claim of accuracy and thus truthfulness by the expression 'in his exact words'.

In other, non-marked cases, the assumption is generally made that the reported utterance did indeed take place. However, not all reports deal with utterances that actually occurred. As Tannen (1986) notes, reports can reference things that were almost or nearly said, as in the following extract from BNC.

**Excerpt 10 BNC PS0FP Nearly said (Davies, 2004)**

01. A: Well, if he was tidy you wouldn't have a job would you?
02. B: What?
03. A: If he kept the place tidy, you wouldn't have a job.
04. B: Well I nearly said that to him, but I thought ooh no! (pause) But,
05. I thought to myself well (pause) that's up to him how he li-, he,
06. he lives his life.

In this extract two women are discussing the untidiness of a man for whom one of the speakers (B) is employed as a housekeeper. Although the man provides employment for speaker B because of his untidy house, she is disapproving of his standards of tidiness. However, she feels that she cannot voice this directly to her employer, as it would be an on-record criticism and constitute a face-threatening act (See Brown and Levinson, 1987). Thus the statement remains precipitously unvoiced in line 04 and the speaker then moves into the mode of reported thought

to account for her attitude to the whole situation.

Clearly, future reports cannot refer to actual utterances, but there are different levels of modality and granularity that can be communicated in a future report. Reports of future utterances can refer to things that may, might, probably or definitely will be said and the reporter can predict either the exact words that will be uttered or provide a gloss of the kind of things that will be said. The counterfactuality of future reports does not preclude a reference to their granularity; the same gradients that apply to reports of past speaking are also available to reporters of future talk.

### Narrative and reports

The use of reports in narrative has long been the subject of research (See for example, Wolfson, 1982, Norrick, 2000, Norrick, 2016, Holt, 2016). The role of reports in narratives can encompass a wide spectrum of occurrences. At one end of this spectrum there are narratives that describe only events and actions and make no reference to any utterances made by participants in the events described. This is illustrated in excerpt 10 in which a student is relating an incident of a delayed train that was caused by an elderly driver driving into a level crossing.

#### Excerpt 11 Train Delay AEIII YA

- 01.Y: =Cloudy and wind and °you° (1.0)you know Airi eh I  
 02. had a pro. program(.) yesterday  
 03.A: Yes  
 04.Y: Well I mean (.) °d° eh train was delay by  
 05. accident ah:

- 06.A: >That's too bad<  
07.Y: A car old °uh° (2.3) oldo (.) old man crashed into  
08. express trai. train  
09.Y: byahh ((Makes crashing sound and gesture))and I  
10. have to wait for  
11.A: u[hh]  
12.Y: [oh] (0.9) ninety fifty minutes  
13.A: Really?  
14.Y: Yeah it's a very big accident actually (2.1) the  
15. accidento  
16.Y: was on headline (.) of newspaper  
17.A: Uh huh  
18.Y: Yeah (.) I'm bored so (.) I'm tired, >you know  
19. wharI mean<?=  
20.A: =I think so (.) so:::  
21.Y: What 'bout you?=-

In this case, the narrative is related without any reports of speaking, with the action of the incident and it's aftermath constituting the whole of the narrative.

At the next level up, a narrative can deal with a series of events that are tellable in their own right and the utterances made by the characters are included only to support the narrative, to give color or texture to the narrative which would still be understandable and pass the test of tellability without the reported utterances. Excerpt 10 above could have included reports of station or train announcements, which were surely made, or reports of phone calls or text messages by the stranded passenger. The narrative is comprehensible without any such reports.

However, reporting an utterance may be vital to understanding a narrative,

as in the narrative reported by Holt (2000, p.435) in which a visit to a local church sale proceeds without incident until an acquaintance (Mr R) makes the statement 'Oh, hello Lesley. Still trying to buy something for nothing?' The climax of the story, its entire point is centered around this impolite utterance; the story is the report. A further enhancement of the role of reported speech is achieved when the narrative is based around a series of utterances. This is exemplified in the narrative quoted in Wolfson (1982, pp.25-27). The narrative centers around a man telling the story of how he managed, over a series of phone calls to a realtor, to negotiate down the price of a property that he was intent on buying, supposedly demonstrating his business acumen. The narrative reports approximately 30 separate utterances made over the course of several phone calls over several months. The reporter reports his own utterances and also the utterances of his wife and the realtor and other participants. The narrative is dialogic in nature and the outcome of this dialogue (or series of dialogues), negotiating down the price of the property, is achieved through talk and it is this talk that comprises both the tellability of the narrative and the actual substance of the narrative. The outcome of the story, the successful purchase of the house at a low price, is achieved by and only by the talk of the characters in the narrative.

In narrative, reports can be entirely absent, marginal or central to the tellability and they can be minimal as in the case of Holt's Mr R and his single rude utterance or maximal as in the case of Wolfson's Speaker B and his long series of phone interactions.

### Reported speech and conversation (re-)entry

As already mentioned, the canonical report schema takes place when a reporter reports some piece of prior talk to the current interactant(s) as part of the ongoing interaction as a feature of general progressivity. References to prior

talk can also take a more direct interactional function. This could be upon the entry of a new participant into an interaction or the re-entry of a temporarily absent interactant into an ongoing interaction. The (re) entry of persons into an ongoing interaction has the possibility of being a locus for a face-threatening act, as detailed by Campbell-Larsen (2015, p. 335):

[T]he sudden discontinuance of talk or a clear switch to a new topic upon the entrance of a newcomer could be perceived of as a face-threatening act, as could the unmarked continuance of discourse without any attempt to include a new participant. The use of reporting to talk about ongoing talk serves the dual functions of continuing the ongoing interaction whilst simultaneously orienting all participants to the changed circumstances of that interaction, namely the entry of a new participant who has equal rights to participate.

In practice this means that when interactants orient to (a) new or returning participant(s), reported speech is a resource for the reconfiguration of the new participant framework. This can be seen in the following excerpt which takes place in an EFL classroom. The teacher J is chatting casually with several students. Other groups of students have left the classroom to perform a recording task and they return gradually as they complete their tasks.

#### Excerpt 12 Traveling Zemi 4

01. J: If I go to Africa South East Asia India

02. something like that=

((Several students enter the room))

03. M: =We're back=

04. J: =Same prob[lem]  
 04: A: [Hi ]  
 05. Y: Finish=  
 06. J: =it's gonna be like really really poor salary  
 07: uh [good experience]  
 08: ?: [Yeah]  
 09: ?: [Hmmm] Yeah  
 10: ?: Huh?  
 11: M: It's too hot  
 12: J: Huhh. Hh  
 13: Y: >huho.<  
 14. J: >Uh? Uh?<  
 15. Y: Uhh wha. you guys finished talking about?  
 16: J: We're talking about traveling when you're young  
 17: an stuff like this  
 18: ?: Uhhnm  
 18: N: Uhn why did you choose come to Japan((continues))

In lines 01 and 02 the teacher J is explaining to N and A why he chose to come to Japan to teach English, rather than any other country. In line 03 speaker M enters the classroom with other members of her group and announces her return. (*We're back*) From line 04 to line 13 there is a series of semi-aligned utterances, with J continuing his prior talk, speaker A greeting the newcomers, speaker M giving an assessment of the weather outside and other utterances made by unidentifiable participants. At this point it is not clear whether the talk will continue on the theme that was underway before the arrival of M and her group or whether the new arrivals will trigger a new topic for talk, possibly initiated by M's assessment of the weather. In line 13 speaker Y, one of the newcomers, begins to take

a turn which may be hearable as an abortive attempt to ask 'what'. After a signal to go ahead by J in line 14, in line 15 speaker Y orients to the previous talk and asks what 'you guys' (J, N and A) were talking about, inserting the word 'finished', possibly as a blend of 'what were you talking about?' and 'are you finished?' The question is understood by J as a request to bring the newcomers up to date on the previous talk and this understanding is ratified by speaker N who takes J's rather general account (appended with a general extender 'and stuff like that') and focuses more narrowly on the topic in hand, namely that J has been asked why he came to Japan, and is answering this question. The scene is now set for the newcomers to join the ongoing interaction.

Referring to the topic or content of prior talk in the context of welcoming (re)entrants into an interaction is a resource that is available to both the established participants and to the (re)entrants. The established participants can inform the newcomers of the topic and content of the ongoing talk (usually after short greeting sequences and dealing with other here-and-now considerations such as seating arrangements and so on) by such formulations as 'We were talking about...' or 'I was just saying that...' The newcomers can also gain entrance to the ongoing interaction by asking such questions as 'what were/are you talking about?' or 'what's this?' The preference for established participant(s) informing newcomer(s) or newcomer(s) requesting to be informed of the topic/content of the ongoing interaction is a subject for further research. It would also be relevant to investigate the amount of time spent dealing with here-and-now issues such as seating arrangements, drink ordering, removal of outside clothing and so on that can elapse before a previously ongoing topic can be re-started or whether there comes a point when sufficient amount of such other business has rendered the previous topic closed.

## Conclusion

Just as talk is the central social action for all human societies, it follows that talking about talk is a central theme or topic of interaction. The canonical schema of reported speech is of a current speaker informing a current listener of something that was uttered by someone at some point in the past, that someone being a currently non-present person or the current speaker, reporting something that was said in a context in which the current listener was absent. Embedded within this schema is the notion that the recipient of the report, that is to say, the current listener, was in a state of ignorance of the contents of the prior utterance until she heard the current speaker's report of that utterance. The only access that the recipient of the report has to the original utterance is through the report of the reporting person, who is supposed to have a binary choice in making the report: direct speech (DRS), purportedly verbatim in nature, or indirect speech (IRS) with concomitant shifts in tense and deixis. The presentation of reported speech in textbooks for foreign language learners bears out the centrality of this schema.

However, in practice, reported speech, (or talk about talk) goes far beyond these parameters. The DRS-IRS distinction is more properly conceived of as a gradient than a binary. The recipient of the report is not necessarily unknowing of the contents of the report. Indeed, the report can refer to an utterance that the current recipient made herself. The report can refer to an utterance that was made in a psychologically distant past or just prior to the report. The report can follow the Gricean maxim of truthfulness and report an utterance that was actually made, or it can report possible, likely, unlikely or impossible utterances. Reports can be stand-alone references to single utterances or reports of extended dialogues, with different import and sequential unfolding in each case. Reports can fulfill the task of informing the listener of what was said in a general sense of maintaining pro-

gressivity, or reports can fulfill here-and-now functions such as orienting (re)entrants to ongoing interactions, proffering topics and other such fine-grained social actions. These are some of the contexts and usages of reported speech. Further research will more fully delineate the categories, contours and practices of talk about talk.

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