

# Recipient design in reported speech: How reporters manage the entry into and progress through reported interaction

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## Abstract

This paper examines two aspects of reported speech that reveal some of the complexity and structure that speakers use to design comprehensible reports. Firstly, the ways that reporters mark the entry into reported speech is investigated with an examination of the formulaic sequence 'I said to him I said', and variations thereof, which serve as both an orientation to the elements of the reported world, specifically the speaker listener roles, and as an alert of an imminent switch in mode from here-and-now speech to reported speech. The use of turn-initial discourse markers is another resource that may be used to clearly demarcate the boundary between the two modes. Secondly, when reporting a sequence of utterances that constituted a conversational exchange in the reported world, the reporter mainly reports short turns, often breaking up longer turns into separate shorter reports. The strategy seems to orient to the need to serve up reports in manageable chunks and constantly remind recipients of the report as to which of the participants in the reported interaction is actually producing the turn being reported and also to maintain the awareness that the report is ongoing and the reporter has not reverted to here-and-now speech.

Persons engaging in talk-in-interaction suffuse their speaking with references to other talk (Bakhtin, 1981). This practice is usually referred to as reported speech. However, what we refer to as reported speech is a catch-all term for a number of very different practices. Reporters of prior talk may perspectivize this talk in a variety of different ways, depending on the original context of the talk and their own decisions as to what is relevant in the here-and-now of the reporting world. This prior talk may be temporally or spatially proximate or distant to the current interaction, and the prior talk may have involved some, all or none of the persons co-present in the current interaction. The report of this prior talk can position itself on a cline from the general to the specific. That is, the reporter may minimally represent that fact that an utterance was made by a person, and elaborate no further as to content or hearers/recipient(s), as in the following:

- (1) *Somebody in the audience said something*

Alternately, the reporter can flesh out the full context of the reported utterance with explicit reference to the person making the utterance, the (intended or actual) recipient of the utterance, the topic of the utterance and the propositional content of the utterance, or some simulacrum thereof.

- (2) *I was talking to Bill about the summer vacation and told him that I am off to Spain for a fortnight.*

(See Yule (1993) for this general/ distant to specific/ proximate ordering in reports.)

The reporter of prior talk may report actual utterances, as far as memory serves, or report imaginary utterances, as in the case of jokes.

(3) *A Martian walks into a bar and says ...*

or other impossible utterances such as group utterances,

(4) *Everybody said that he would fail.*

The reporter may also leave it ambiguous as to whether the report concerns language that was actually uttered or was merely thought by the person represented in the report, as in the following excerpt from Romaine and Lange (1991, p.227) reporting the reaction of someone on the approach of a girl.

(5) *And I saw her coming and I'm LIKE "Nooooooooooooo."*

In this case it is not clear whether the person actually uttered the word upon the approach of the girl, or whether the word *Nooooooooooooo* was an example of inner speech, accessible only to the person thinking the word. It is interesting to note that the emergence of the 'be like' quotative as detailed by Romaine and Lange (1991), far from being slangy and imprecise, may tacitly recognize the impossibility of faithful rendering in a report and merely claim that the report is similar to (like) the original. Ironically, the 'be like' quotative, although often stigmatized, (See Buchstaller, 2013, pp.199-224) may be a more fitting system for reporting speech than the canonical reporting verbs.

Whatever stance the reporter takes towards the reported utterance, it is tacitly understood by both the reporter and the listener(s) of the report that it cannot have complete fidelity to the actual utterance as it was originally made. Tannen (1986, p. 311) is correct to state that the term reported speech is a "misnomer", citing the limits of human memory as a cause of this lack of fidelity. Whilst the lim-

its of memory do create a barrier, other factors also come into play in rendering reported utterances infidelious to their originals. Utterances, when made, are rooted in context. That is, they are generally made in sequence and in response to other utterances. Reporters have to decide how much of a report will make sense to the current listeners when removed from its original sequential context, with, for example, a minimally contextualized report of a first pair part of an adjacency pair possibly being more accessible than a report of the second pair part of an adjacency pair without inclusion of the prior utterance.

Utterances are made with a particular individual's voice, with its pronunciation idiosyncrasies, dialect features, its timing, pitch, and volume. These prosodic elements range from incidental to meaningful. How much of the prosody of the original utterance will find its way into the report is highly variable and prosody may be entirely disattended to by the reporter.

Utterances are also, in face-to-face communication, made with a wide range of paralinguistic elements, such as gaze shifts, gesture and body orientation, all of which are, or may be, relevant to the interlocutors at the time and place of the original utterance but may be completely absent from the report.

Most or all of these factors are usually not attended to (indeed possibly cannot be attended to) by the person making the report, the focus usually being the propositional content of the reported utterance inasmuch as it serves the purposes of the current reporter in their current context. It is therefore correct to assert that no report can ever be completely faithful in all points to the original utterance. Producers of reports and listeners to those reports tacitly accept this.

The foregoing will give some idea of the complexities surrounding the issue of reported speech. In addition to these points, there is also the issue of how reporters show the transition from one mode (here-and-now speech) to the other mode (reported speech) with a variety of resources, orienting their listeners to the polyphony of their utterance. The boundary between these two modes can be a

locus of some quite complex but orderly interactional work by the reporter.

### Preparing the transition: I was talking to him about ... and I said

In a seminal paper dealing with spoken narrative, Labov and Waletzky (1967) identified ways in which storytellers structure their narratives in orderly and predictable ways. Initially, narrators will provide an abstract of the story, briefly mentioning the subject matter of the upcoming narrative event. This phase serves to forewarn the listener(s) that the current speaker will take a longer than usual turn, and that topic shifts or launching of other interactional projects by other participants are inappropriate until the story has reached a recognizable end. After having established that a narrative sequence is upcoming the narrator then proceeds to the orientation. In this section, the narrator relates the setting of the narrative, the time, place and characters of the narrative. This will help the listeners to make sense of the story and the story world. The telling gradually tightens its focus from the general to the specific as the story teller homes in on the details of the narrative and its essentially tellable point.

In parallel with spoken narrative, reporters of prior speech also have work to do before the onset of the report proper to orient their listeners to the context of the reported utterance(s) and prepare them for the transition from here-and-now speaking to report delivery. Yule (1993, p.17) suggests a canonical ordering of elements that may appear in a pre-report.

- 1) Summarized report.
- 2) Indirect reported speech (IRS)
- 3) Direct reported speech (DRS).

Yule states that this “structural sequence will often be found, in that order, in spo-

ken reports of previous conversations.” To illustrate the sequence, he gives the following conversation excerpt.

- (6) *He told her about what happened- he said that he'd been tired- he was  
 << I'm sorry, I didn't mean to forget the meeting- I was so tired I just  
 didn't keep track of everything.>>*

This example illustrates the gradual focusing in of the report, its move from a coarse-grained account of the topic of the reported utterance, indicating the speaker of the original utterance and the recipient of that utterance, (He told her about ...) to a more fine-grained account of what was said, delivered as indirect reported speech (He said that., he was) to a final, fine-grained account of what was actually said, delivered as direct reported speech. (I'm sorry, I didn't mean ...) Notice the use of the 'he was' structure to introduce the DRS. This pattern illustrates some of the underlying structure of reports that reporters have at their disposal to make their reports comprehensible to their co-participants.

### Marking the transition into reported speech

Unlike the written form of English, which generally avoids proximal repetition of words and phrases, in spoken English (and other languages) repetition is a common occurrence. Speakers repeat words, phrases and sentences for a wide variety of reasons. (Tannen 1989.) Speakers may repeat either their own words or the words of other participants. Some repetitions are due to performance issues such as hesitations, re-starts after overlapped turn onset, floor-holding and a variety of repair practices. In these cases, the repetitions are usually at the level of individual words. They are uttered rapidly and are largely unconscious in nature, as shown by the fact that these kinds of phenomena are found to be systematically

omitted from transcriptions of naturally occurring speech. (See Lindsay and O'Connell, 1995). However, sometimes repetition occurs in an orderly and more directed manner, for example, to co-construct topic closing sequences, (See Drew and Holt 1998, p.504) or to dwell on a point of interest or humor, what Tannen (1989, p.51) refers to as *savoring*.

On the other hand, speakers may eschew repetition, as is often the case with agreements with assessments in English. McCarthy (1998, p.113) observes:

[i]t is important to note that exact repetition is not always pragmatically appropriate; the following concocted exchange would be considered by most people as odd:

S1: Hi! Freezing cold today.

S2: (with exact same intonation) Hi! Freezing cold today!

This practice may differ in other languages (See Campbell-Larsen 2016 for a discussion of repetition in assessments and agreements in Japanese and English and Couper-Kuhlen and Selting, 2018 chapter 4.5) There may also be an orientation to *horror aequi* in which speakers strive to avoid using the same construction in proximity and strive for elegant variation. In the case of reported speech, analysis of corpora reveals that proximal repetition of the reporting verb 'said' occurs in many instances of reported speech in the form of the construction:

**A said to B, A said.**

The following examples derived from the British National Corpus (Davies, 2004) are illustrative:

- (7) *I said to him I said she's got sixteen to tea I (unclear) invited thee and...*
- (8) *I, I, I went in today I said, this morning, I said to John I said (pause) I said thanks for erm (pause) now you see Steven*
- (9) *and I said (pause) I said to Bob I said well, you know (pause) said well hadn't you better...*

Norrick (2016, p.102) notes that this construction is “rather formulaic in everyday spoken English.” The repetition of the verb ‘said’ in such close proximity as a purposeful construction must be differentiated from repetition due to performance issues. That is, the usage in excerpt 7 seems to proceed smoothly, with no apparent pausing or re-phrasing by the speaker. However, in excerpt 8 there are four instances of the word said. The first instance of said is followed not with any utterance content, but by an orienting expression ‘this morning’. It seems to be the case that the reporter is engaging in a self-initiated self-repair of the original temporal setting (‘today’) as they feel that a more exact time reference is important to an understanding of the original context. After clarifying this issue, the reporter then proceeds to frame the reported utterance with repetition of the reporting verb ‘said’ twice in quick succession, the first of these (I said to John) being used to establish speaker and listener roles. After this formulaic expression the speaker pauses before proceeding with the report, again uttering the word said. Thus, of the four instances of the reporting verb ‘said’ in this utterance, the second instance can be seen as a repeat of the first instance, this repeat taking place after a repair. The fourth instance can be seen as a repetition of the third instance, reporting the turn after a pause. Minus the repairs, the utterance could be represented as containing two instances of the report verb: *I went in this*



*morning and I said to John I said ...*

The third instance of said in the report as delivered is not, it seems, a performance related repetition of the second instance, but rather a separate phase of the report set-up. The second instance serves to establish who was the speaker and who the listener in the original reporting context (I and John respectively) and then the third instance, moving forward from the frame established by the second instance, proceeds to introduce the content of the reported utterance (thanks for erm).

A similar pattern occurs in excerpt 9. The first instance of said is followed by a pause as the reporter strives to construct the turn in real time. The reporter then proceeds to frame the speaker and listener (I said to Bob). Again the second instance of said can be seen as a repetition of the first instance occasioned by the demands of real time processing. Likewise, the fourth instance (said well hadn't you better) can be seen as a repetition of the third instance (said, well, you know), that is, a signal that the report proper is about to commence. The third instance is not merely a performance related repetition of the second, but again signals a shift from the framing of the participants in their speaker and listener roles before moving on to introduce the actual content of the reported utterance.

A variation on this practice is when the speaker/listener roles are established using a reporting verb and then a second instance of a different reporting verb is used to start the report proper, often using the verb tell followed by say as in the following examples from the BNC. (Punctuation is from the original transcripts.)

(10) *And I told him. I said your limit is, is five or ten miles an hour*

(11) *I, I told mother, I said if that's what they call (laughing) substantial in Northamptonshire they ...*

(12) *I told her I said as soon as you receive gifts like that ...*

In these cases, the speaker/ listener orientation is established using the reporting verb *tell*. This verb has a variety of different usages in reporting. It can be used to report the propositional content of the reported utterance (E.g., He told me that he was going to be late) or a more coarse-grained reporting of the topic of an utterance (E.g., He told us all about his job). *Tell* can also be used to report orders (He told them to be quiet) and to report the kind of discourse type that was taking place. (He told a joke/ a story/a lie/ the truth.) (See Campbell-Larsen, (2020) for a fuller description of the report verb *tell*.) The verb *tell* can be seen to encode a telic schema in that it either a) requires the inclusion of an addressee in the object slot, showing that not only was the message sent, but also that it was received or b) that the speech act (joke/story, etc.) was completed in full, i.e., the joke reached its punchline, or the story reached its ending. In the former case, the obligatory inclusion of an addressee in the object slot renders the verb well-suited to framing the speaker/listener roles before the report proper begins.

In parallel with the orientation phase of Labov and Waletzky's spoken narrative mentioned above, it seems that one of the resources that reporters of prior speech have to hand is a mini orientation, outlining who was the speaker and who the listener(s), or at least addressee(s), such orientation being set apart from the report proper. This practice may serve two specific purposes, firstly to describe the listener and speaker roles to make the report comprehensible. The second reason may be to prepare the current listener(s) for the onset of the report proper, that is, the switch from talk produced by the current speaker in the here-and-now, which is sequentially relevant to some prior utterance, to talk also produced by the reported speaker in the there-and-then which, whilst also being sequentially relevant in the here-and-now, was also sequentially relevant at the time and place of its original production.

## Discourse markers and reports

One of the central features of spontaneous spoken language is the prevalence of:

Small words and phrases, occurring with high frequency in the spoken language, that help keep our speech flowing, yet do not contribute essentially to the message itself. Hasselgreen (2004, p. 162)

These words and phrases belong to a fuzzy-edged category known variously as discourse markers, pragmatic markers, smallwords and fillers. The sheer frequency in spoken language of common discourse markers such as *Well*, *You know* and *I mean* is outlined by McCarthy (2010) and the central contribution that these words make to perceptions of fluency in second language speakers is described in detail by Hasselgreen (2004). The precise meanings and functions of the common discourse markers has been the subject of a vast body of literature. (See for example, Heritage, 2015; Schegloff and Lerner, 2009; Schiffrin, 1987.) Given the frequency, centrality and importance of discourse markers it is paradoxical that they remain somewhat off the radar in many areas of general language perception and teaching. For example, Hellerman and Vergun (2007) in the context of language teaching explicitly refer to discourse markers as 'language which is not taught'. Similarly, Hasselgreen (2004, p.213) refers to the negative stance that has often been taken towards discourse markers by language teachers in the past. Discourse markers have been referred to by various authors as '*throwaways*'; '*exasperating expressions*' and '*pollution*' (cited in Gilquin and De Cock (2013, p.8). The negative stance is also revealed by Watts (1989) in detailing critical stances taken by speakers towards discourse marker usage by other speak-

ers, such criticisms paradoxically being given in utterances that are replete with their own discourse markers.

The notion that speakers may ‘tune out’ discourse markers in reconstructions of daily conversation is borne out by research carried out by Lindsay and O’Connell (1995) in which volunteers who were asked to transcribe audiotaped interviews were highly likely to omit discourse markers (and hesitation phenomena) from their transcripts. The same pattern of discourse marker omission can be seen in subtitling of spontaneous talk in TV programs, (see Campbell-Larsen, 2017) foreign language teaching materials and so on. Although this may partially be a feature of the transition from the spoken to written medium, the underlying pattern seems to suggest that discourse markers can be dispensed with if the propositional content of the original talk is comprehensible. Rouchota (1998) touches on the differences between “ground floor statements which carry the truth-conditional content of an utterance and higher-order speech acts which *comment* on these statements” (p.106) and highlights the omission from IRS of these kinds of management/commentary components that were part of the original utterance (pp.107-108).

Given the negative impression that surrounds discourse marker usage in some contexts and the high likelihood of them being omitted in transcriptions and subtitles and other such representations of speech, it is perhaps surprising that discourse markers feature at all in reported speech, but only some of them, and only in some locations; primarily *Oh* and *Well* at turn initial position.

The following excerpts from the BNC show the use of *Oh* and *Well* occurring immediately after a reporting verb and prefacing the report proper, that is, representing the beginning of the reported utterance.

- (13) *Mum said how about renting one in Wisbech but I said well if she can't afford a mortgage you can't afford to rent one*

- (14) *and I said (pause) I said to Bob I said well, you know (pause) said well hadn't you better get (pause) cos Shirley*
- (15) *she's here telling me how they sent over and she said oh don't call for the next two week because we're going to Italy*
- (16) *Yeah (pause) and Ann was on about it you see and I said oh well (pause) some noisy bloody neighbours and I*

Excerpt 13 shows the speaker's response to a question by mum, the response seemingly being a blend of direct and indirect speech (Holt 2016) with its deictic shift from *she* to *you* apparently both referring to mum. The reported speech is prefaced by the marker *well*, but no further markers are included in the report. Excerpt 14 follows the orientation structure described above with the current speaker describing the speaker listener/addressee relationship in the report with the reporting verb *said* (I said to Bob) before moving on to flesh out the content of the report with a second iteration of the word *said* and then subsequently moving to the report proper with the marker *well*. This *well* is followed by the common discourse marker *you know*. The speaker immediately engages in a restart, again using the word *said* to introduce the report proper, again uttering the word *well* immediately adjacent to the reporting verb and then proceeding with what is recognizably meant to represent the words that were said to Bob in the prior context, but this time omitting the words 'you know'. Whether the utterance of *you know* was meant to be seen as part of the content of the reported utterance or whether it was to be seen as a here-and-now utterance by the reporter is open to debate, but its omission from the restart (*said, well, hadn't you better..*) tends to support the idea that the reporter is not intending that it be viewed as part of the

report proper.

Excerpt 15 again marks the speaker/listener relationship overtly (**she's** telling **me** how they sent over) before seeking to move to a more fine-grained report. The report is introduced with the reporting verb *said* and the report proper is prefaced with the change of state token 'oh' (Heritage, 1984). Excerpt 16 makes reference to the possible speaker/listener relationship, albeit in an indirect manner. The reporter uses a marker phrase *you see* which seems to be doing interactional work between the current speaker and listener in the here-and-now of the reporting world. The reporter then moves on to give the contents of the report, beginning with two markers *Oh* and *Well*. The combination of these two markers in this order is canonical, at turn opening (Heritage, 2018).

The high frequency of 'oh' and 'well' in reported utterances stands in contrast to the use in reporting of other common discourse markers. Instances of common markers such as 'you know' or 'I mean' which can occur mid-utterance are generally not a feature of reports. Norrick (2016, p.104) gives the following excerpt from a spoken narrative. (Line numbers and layout are as in the original.)

- (17) 12 *Kyle and he said,*  
 13 *I suddenly felt so ill, y'know*  
 14 *and I was shaking,*  
 15 *and, and, and, and, and obviously started running a temperature and,*

Norrick comments on the unlikelihood of the Kyle remembering that the original speaker uttered the word *and* precisely five times in the original utterance, and it is more likely that the repetition in line 15 is a feature of the Kyle's attempts to formulate this utterance in the here-and-now. The same unlikelihood is also seen to apply to the insertion of the marker *y'know* in line 13, with Norrick stating that

“Someone listening to Kyle’s performance would hence assign the ‘y’know’ to the teller rather than the original speaker.” (2016, p.105).

Turn-internal or turn-final discourse markers seem to be under-represented in reported speech episodes, whereas turn-initial discourse markers are prominent. In a narrative reported by Woolfson (1982, pp.25-17) there are a large number of reported speech episodes as the narrator details how he and his wife negotiated to lower a house price over a series of encounters with a realtor. Many of the reports have some form of marker at report-initial position.

(18) *My wife says, ‘Look, we’re not talking land, we’re talking house ...’*

(19) *So, he says to my wife, he says, ‘Well what would you bid?’*

(20) *So he says to her, he says, ‘Well,’ he says, ‘the person at thirty four backed out.’*

(21) *So I says, ‘Aah, don’t be silly’, I says, ‘Look you just take it.’*

(22) *He says, ‘Well’, he says, ‘This uh date was changed.’*

However, common discourse markers that generally occur in turn-internal or turn-Final position such as *you know* or *I mean* are absent from the reported utterances, with the exception of one marginal instance of *you know*.

(23) *So he gets on the phone and so my wife says. ‘Look, we’re not talking land, we’re talking house. The house isn’t worth it and needs a lot of work.’ You know, and we made up a lot of things ...*

In this case, it is unclear whether the ‘You know’ is intended to be seen as part of the wife’s original utterance, occurring in turn-final position, or part of the current narrator’s here-and-now production of a turn at talk. As transcribed, the discourse marker is separated from the reported utterance, but would certainly make sense if it were seen as part of the wife’s appeal for some kind of epistemic convergence with the realtor. Whatever the case, this is the only instance of a common discourse marker appearing at a position other than turn-initial. The *Aah* in (21) is unlikely to be based on the narrator’s memory of producing this hesitation marker in his original utterance. It is also interesting to note that in (20) and (22) the narrator separates the marker well from the rest of the reported utterance with a further repetition of the pronoun plus reporting verb that has already been given.

(20) (Detail)

*So he says to her, he says, ‘Well’, he says, ‘the person at 34 backed out.’*

(22) (Detail)

*He says ‘Well’, he says, ‘This uh date ...’*

In addition to general problem of accurate recall of prior utterances to create a faithful reported utterance, we must also consider the phenomena of reporters seemingly having differential recall when it comes to turn-initial discourse markers and discourse markers that occurred in other positions within the reported turn when reporting an utterance. To account for this issue of differential recall, it is suggested here that the inclusion of turn-initial discourse markers in reports may not be focused primarily on the discourse markers fulfilling their usual discourse functions (i.e. change of state token for *oh* (Heritage, 1984) and general alert for upcoming non-straightforwardness for *well* (Schegloff and Lerner, 2009). Schourup (2016) suggests that these quote initial words are used for the pur-



pose of “invoking or ‘creating’ the moment at which the utterance occurred and so providing a ‘living’ context for the quote.” (p.20). This may be true, but a more quotidian explanation may be that the reporter is utilizing them for their high recognizability as words that appear at turn starts. That is to say, the usual pragmatic functions are bleached out and the reporter is using the DM’s to prominently mark the onset of the reported turn, to differentiate what was said before from what will be said afterwards, to mark the transition between the *here-and-now* utterance of the current speaker and the words that are intended to be heard as having been uttered on some prior occasion.

To sum up, reporters of prior speech have at their disposal several resources to mark the transition from current speech to prior (or other) speech. In terms of prosody, Norrick (2017, p. 133) notes, “The flexibility of the human voice allows conversational storytellers to clearly mark speech by different characters with voice shifts alone.” And indeed, some people are skillful and entertaining mimics who can animate their narratives with evocative and very accurate imitations of dialects, idiolects and other auditory aspects of talk. However, not all character voicing is done this way, and reporters may rely on means other than the purely prosodic to design their reports. They can engage in a step-by-step ‘zoom in’ moving from summary and topic explication to indirect report to direct report. They can also deploy a cluster of reporting verbs in close proximity (*I said to him I said, I told him I said*) to orient the current audience to the speaker listener relationship of the reporting context and give a forewarning of an upcoming switch to reported talk. And finally, reporters can mark the onset of the report proper by including the discourse markers *Oh and Well* (and others, see Schourup, 2016, p.17) immediately after the reporting verb, these discourse makers occurring in turn-medial position in the reporting turn, but signifying turn onset of the reported utterance.

## Recipient design in reported interaction

Having made the initial transition from the reporting world to the reported world the reporter can represent the reported utterance in varying degrees of granularity. The reporter may report a single utterance, but there also exist the possibility that the reporter wishes to report a sequence of utterances, that is, to report an interaction. Many of the facets of sequential interaction will of necessity be lost in any report of that interaction. The precise timing of any following utterance, either overlapped, latched or paused, which may or may not have been relevant in the original interaction, will be unlikely to find its way into the report, not only due to the problems of recall of such details, but also because the reporter will have to use the space between one reported utterance and the next reported utterance to indicate that speaker change has occurred. That speaker transition occurred was grossly apparent to participants in the original interaction but will not be apparent to listeners to the report unless marked by some means.

In order to report an interaction, rather than just a stand alone utterance, the reporter seems not to be able to simply engage in a list-like series of report statements of the kind *'A said ... then B said ... then A said ... then B said*. Rather, it seems that reporters deploy a variety of practices to proceed through their report of a sequence of utterances in order to render the reported interaction comprehensible to their listeners.

In normal talk-in-interaction, turns can range in length. A completed turn completion unit (TCU) may be lexical, clausal, phrasal, sentential or multi-sentential. Although there is a tendency for short turns to predominate (Cook 1989), it is possible for one speaker to produce an extended turn and hold the floor for a prolonged period. Even if an extended turn is taken, backchannels from listeners can break up turns into shorter chunks. Reports of interactions tend to keep turn

length within manageable limits and not report extended turns, or if the original turn was lengthy, the reporter can either gloss the report with reference to its over-all topic ('and he was talking about his job') or break up the utterance into shorter units and report them using repeated report structures such as *he said*, etc. Consider the following transcript from the British national corpus. The reports are subdivided into minimized units marked with superscript numbering and underlining. (Punctuation matches the original transcript.)

(24)

Mum: No I done it bloody last week. He was late in. And I left it on the side instead of leaving it in the grill. And it got dry. And he come in, he said 'what's this? I was just going to bingo. <sup>2</sup>What's this up here? I said <sup>3</sup>well that's your tea.

He said <sup>4</sup>I don't bloody want that. I said <sup>4</sup>all you've got to do is put in the microwave

<sup>(5a)</sup>two minutes <sup>(5b)</sup>that'll do it I thought <sup>(5c)</sup>oh my goodness. Fucking microwave.

Friend: He never!

Mum: So I thought <sup>6</sup>oh shut up. When I come back from bingo he said I went up the shop up the (pause) chip shop he said <sup>8</sup>and got some fish and chips for my tea. I said <sup>9</sup>well tough you'll pay for it now (unclear). Bloody hell. He said <sup>10</sup>I'd rather have had two tins of vegetable soup, he said <sup>11</sup>with a nice pot of potatoes. That would have suited me that and a loaf of bread. (pause)

Friend: (unclear)

Mum: He said <sup>12</sup>I had chips for my dinner. I don't want chips for my dinner. I said <sup>13</sup>I don't never co-- I haven't cooked a chip since bleeding, all year.

Friend: No.

Mum: I said <sup>14</sup>I told you if you want chips you go down the chip shop.

Friend: Chip shop.

Mum: He said <sup>15</sup>well he said <sup>16</sup>I had Kentucky dinner time he said. So I said <sup>17</sup>well I said <sup>18</sup>a pity (unclear) (coughing) in n it? I said <sup>19</sup>your fucking fault. I said <sup>20</sup>if you don't want, I said <sup>21</sup>what I got here. That's fucking tough. And he said. <sup>22</sup>Don't get your pissy head on with me. I said <sup>23</sup>you've go your pissy head

Friend: Your pissy head

Mum: on with me. I'm your mother. This is my home now please fuck off. He went <sup>24</sup>tut. Anyway, in the next breath he said erm <sup>25</sup>about some supper then? I said <sup>26</sup>want some supper?

Friend: (unclear)

Mum: He was laughing. I told him (unclear) <sup>27</sup>put the bleeding crumpets in the bloody toaster again.

Friend: And put the alarm on?

Mum: Oh my god it was like a, well it was like a fog out here. Thick black evil fog.

The flowing points are all based on analysis of this single example and must therefore be seen as preliminary and tentative in nature. Further analysis of other data will be needed. In this reported interaction, the two participants engage in two separate interactions, pre and post bingo, which are represented as being pragmatically contiguous in that they deal with the son's dissatisfaction with the 'tea' (evening meal) prepared for him by his mother (the reporter) and her strongly negative response to these expressions of dissatisfaction. The story is related in the here-and-now world in a series of long turns by 'Mum' and the recipient of the storytelling (Friend) mostly contributes short backchannel utterances. The

reported interaction contains approximately 14 separate turns, broken up into 27 separate reports, including reported thoughts. A reconstruction of pre-bingo sequence would look something like this.

*Turn 1. Son:* What's this? What's this up here?

*Turn 2. Mum:* Well, that's your tea.

*Turn 3. Son:* I don't bloody want that.

*Turn 4. Mum:* All you've got to do is put in the microwave (two minutes).

(That'll do it).

In reporting the pre-bingo conversation Mum carries out two separate reports of what looks like the son's first turn. It is not clear if she intends to convey that the son asked two questions in quick succession, or whether the rewording is the mother's own device, with the second iteration 'What's this up here' being an elaboration of the son's question by mum following her orientation utterance 'I was just going to bingo'. In response to this question, or question plus its reformulation, mum answers 'well, that's your tea' (Report 3). The discourse marker 'well' appears in canonical turn opening position and the rest of the report is comprised of a single TCU. The son's response to this utterance is likewise a single TCU, and mum's response to this is reported with some ambiguity. The report is introduced with the reporting phrase 'I said', and the immediately following content ('all you've got to do is put in microwave') is designed to be heard as a report, the next increment along ('two minutes') is not so clearly reported speech or reported thought. The reported thought expression, 'I thought' could possibly refer to the prior content (Two minutes, that'll do it, I thought), or to the subsequent increment ('I thought, 'Oh, my goodness'). Prosodic features probably indicate which option is meant, but even if the reports labelled 5a, 5b and 5c are part of the spoken report, the report is still very brief. Mum rounds off her account

of this interaction with the reported thought 'Oh, shut up'. This brings the sequence to a close.

Mum then orients to a second round of interaction that takes place after her return from bingo. The talk of the son is represented as a series of complaints about food. The son's complaints continue, and his utterances are often broken up into more manageable chunks. For example, the reports labelled as 10 and 11 consist of a total of four TCUs, but the turn is separated with an utterance of 'he said' after the declaration of preference for soup, giving a breakdown of one TCU followed by a repetition of the report phrase followed by three more TCUs with the final utterance 'that and a loaf of bread' being represented as a turn expansion by the original speaker.

The climax of the story occurs with the mother's direct and unmitigated rejection of the son's complaints. The turns could be reconstructed as:

Son: Well, I had Kentucky dinner time

Mum: Well, it's a pity, isn't it? It's your fucking fault. If you don't want what I got here, that's fucking tough.

In the report of this sequence the son's complaint is broken into two parts, with the report phrase 'he said' occurring initially, then again between the discourse marker 'well' and the main content and finally as a tail (Carter, Hughes & McCarthy, 1998) to this reported utterance, in effect serving as an unquote to mark the end of the son's turn and the switch to the other speaker.

*He said* well *he said* I had Kentucky dinner time *he said*.

The initial 'he said' would have sufficed to introduce the whole reported turn,

but mum in her role as reporter, seems to be at pains to place emphasis on this particular turn using multiple, seemingly redundant iterations of the reporting phrase, highlighting its climactic nature. Mum introduces her angry and dismissive response to this complaint in a marked manner. The reporting phrase is introduced with the word ‘so’, rather than just ‘I said’ and then moving to a stand-alone report of a discourse marker. (Note that the pre -bingo interaction also concluded with a report introduced with the word ‘so’ and initiated with a discourse marker, oh. (**So** I thought **oh** shut up.)

The son’s response to this climactic utterance is likewise given with an additional increment to the report phrase ? (**And** he said don’t get your ...). After this climactic exchange signaling Mum’s impatience and anger towards the son and the son’s responsive criticism of the mother’s anger, the reported interaction rounds off with a final dismissive utterance by the mother, claiming her rights as mother and as homeowner to dictate the terms of what is served for meals. The final response of the son to this upshot conclusion is reported not with ‘he said’ but with ‘he went’ and the contents of this final utterance is a non-lexical ‘tut.’

In sum, the reporter here is being judicious with her report structure. In addition to clearly signaling speaker transition at each point, mum limits the lengths of the reports, sometimes breaking up what could have originally been a single long turn into smaller increments separated by reporting phrases. The purpose of these phrase insertions may be based on the need to maintain recognition of who the current speaker is. The proximal repetition of the reporting phrase may also serve another purpose. It was outlined above that reporters have at their disposal a variety of resources to mark the entrance into reported speech. At the opposite end of the report, i.e., the exit from report and return to here-and-now talk the boundary is also of importance. However, the exit from reported speech, back to current speech is not, it seems, a similar locus for extensive marking. Holt (2009) remarks that “Whilst analytic attention has been paid to the various means by

which the start of a reported utterance is signalled, there has been less concern with indications that the speaker has reached the end of a report” (p.195). This lack of marking at the end of reported content is described by Bolden (2004) who describes reported speech in Russian and outlines the phenomenon called ‘fade out’ where the boundary between reported content and here-and-now content is often ambiguous. Bolden describes the often gradual return to the here-and-now. “Eventually, after several ambiguous turn constructional units, it becomes clear that the speaker is now talking in his/her own voice.” (2004, p. 1106). Given the seeming tendency for reports to fade, especially if they are prolonged, it may be that the insertion of reporting phrases throughout the report, as seen above, may be a piece of subtle recipient design. The repeated deployment of these report phrases may be an ‘anti-fade-out’ device, reassuring the listener that they are still in the reporting world and that the status of the uttered words is clearly delineated as report and that the report still refers to the talk of an understood individual.

Another aspect of recipient design is when weight and importance seem to be given to some reported turns by adding increments to the reporting phrases (**So** I said, **and** he said) to signal things like climactic exchanges in a multi-turn report.

In addition to these practical considerations for helping the listener make sense of what is being reported, there may also be a facet of recipient design that seeks to keep the listener engaged and entertained. A simple list of back-to-back ‘he said, I said, he said, I said’ reporting phrases would probably quickly run out of steam and tax the patience of the listener. Instead, reporters of extended interactional sequences deploy a variety of resources to break up the monotony and sustain progressivity. As noted by Norrick, (2016, p. 102), “The overall effect of all the reports of saying is one of listening to a lively dialogue rather than a straightforward narrative.”

So, in summary, it seems to be the case that when the reporter is embarked



upon the reporting of a sequence of utterances, in addition to reporting the propositional content of the various speakers in the reported world, they (the reporter) must also attend to other issues. The transition into DRS is often elaborately marked. Speaker transition in the reported interaction must be clearly marked. Reported utterances of more than minimal length may be broken up with repetitions of the report phrase (e.g., he said) to orient the current listener to the continued speakership of the reported person and head off the tendency for fade out and a gradual, unmarked return to here-and-now speech to occur. Different weight and importance can be given to various parts of the reported interaction with prosodic elements being used in combination with report phrase increments such as 'so' and 'and' used to add variation and focus to the sequence of reported utterances. Reporters of multi-turn interactions have a series of complex tasks to perform; differentiating here-and-now speaking from reported content, orienting the current audience to the participant framework of the original interaction, reporting propositional content, showing speaker transition, heading off fade out, and giving texture and direction to both the reported interaction and the currently underway interaction. The fact that reporters routinely carry out these tasks successfully suggests that participants in interactions can bring to bear their tacit knowledge of how interactions proceed to make their reports not only comprehensible but also engaging.

### Future directions

The foregoing has focussed primarily on the ways in which speakers of English deploy a variety of resources to transition from here-and-now utterances in which the speaker is principal, author and animator (Goffman, 1981) of the words spoken to some other situation of utterance. It seems that a simple pronoun + report verb structure such as "I said X" and so-called 'zero reports' (Mathis

& Yule, 1994) lie at one end of a spectrum of options with multi-component utterances such as “I said to him, I said, ‘well’ I said,...”, lying at the other end. In light of these observations a number of further topics for research present themselves. Do other languages have similarly complex means of moving from non-report to report, and if so, are they similar in nature to the means outlined in this paper? In languages such as Japanese where the report phrase is typically placed after the reported content, how is the transition from here-and-now speaking to reported content signalled and how is content managed? Are there maximum limits as to the length of what can be included between the notional quotation marks that bookend a reported utterance, and in what ways are long utterances broken into digestible chunks during their reporting? Are there limits to the number of reported utterances that can be placed back-to-back when reporting a multi-turn interaction before some commentary or narrative detailing is deployed by the reporter? Are there also limits to the number of participants who can be voiced in a reported interaction, or does reported interaction only report dyadic exchanges? A further question is what level of recursion can be represented by a report before it becomes too opaque. The recursion typified by “A said that B said that C said...” cannot be pursued too far before who said what to whom becomes hopelessly entangled. These are all questions for further research. In this paper I have made a preliminary attempt at investigating some of the aspects of reported speech that pertain to reports as they are deployed in mundane conversation. Although verbatim reporting can be said to underrepresent or even misrepresent what was originally spoken and fall under the heading of ‘reconstructed dialogue’(Tannen, 1986) it is also clear that reporters are at some pains to create a simulacrum of interaction in their reports that in some ways captures the sophistication and subtlety of actual interactions unfolding in real time.

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