# Fictive indirect speech: Demonstration of conversation as a scalar phenomenon

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Cognitive Linguistics has shown time and again that categories are not clear-cut and fixed. One factor of conceptual extension is that of *fictivity* (Talmy, [1996] 2000), conceptualizations in-between fact and fiction. In this talk we explore the conceptual basis of the direct-indirect speech distinction through an understudied phenomenon: fictive indirect speech.

The traditional opposition between direct and indirect speech is illustrated in (1)-(2):

(1)    John said: "Huh? Butter!"

(2)    John said that he couldn't believe it wasn't butter

Following the influential proposal by Clark & Gerrig (1990), the quotation in (1) is 'demonstrated', whereas the embedded clause in (2) is a description. But presenting direct and indirect speech as a binary opposition has long been regarded as a simplification (see Coulmas, 1986 for an overview). Indeed, description and demonstration (or 'depiction', Clark, 2016) can be mixed, as in (3), where the depictive interjection appears in an otherwise descriptive indirect speech construction.

(3)    John said that he –huh!– couldn't believe it wasn't butter

Yet, if indirect speech can include depictive elements, the traditionally assumed tight relation between direct ('demonstrated') and indirect ('described') speech is no longer stable, semantically and grammatically. Scholars have suggested that depictive elements in descriptive sentences are extra-syntactic intrusions (Kaltenböck et al., 2011), pragmatically added units (Maier, 2007), or even a prototypical third type of reported speech (Evans, 2013).

A more radical interpretation is that a stable grammatical distinction never existed, depiction and description being modes of communication only loosely correlating with specific structures (Clark, 2016; D'Arcy, 2015). Building on these ideas, we propose an alternative, based on an analysis of certain 'mixed' instances as sentential fictive interaction. Fictive interaction (FI) is the adoption of the conceptual frame of communication as a model for various functions not involving actual interaction, manifested, i.a., in non-speech meanings of communication constructions (Pascual, 2014). FI being construction-agnostic, it may occur at any level of grammar ('This painting speaks to me'). Since direct speech is the most unambiguous strategy for demonstrating speech, it is the most likely candidate for expressing FI, presenting a conceptualization as if it were spoken. Thus, (4) is a more straightforward and more common FI strategy than (5).

(4)    Her eyes said: "Leave!"

(5)    Her eyes told me that I had to leave

But a speaker may, under the influence of several factors, also choose a less than maximally 'demonstrating' structure: indirect speech or 'mixed' speech may also be used for FI, with a weaker sense of demonstration and a stronger sense of description. Indirect speech is not characterized by the absence of demonstration, it signals a relatively *weak* demonstration and thus a larger *degree* of responsibility for the actual speaker. We suggest that the distinctions between demonstrating/depicting and description and between direct and indirect speech, are not binary but scalar. This proposal both maintains the conceptual basis of direct and indirect speech, while correctly predicting that they may contain intermediate types and do not express fully opposite meanings.

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