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Viewpoint and the Fabric of Meaning

Form and Use of Viewpoint Tools
across Languages and Modalities

Edited by
Barbara Dancygier
Wei-lun Lu
Arie Verhagen



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Barbara Dancygier and Lieven Vandelanotte

Discourse viewpoint as network

Abstract: This paper argues that multiplicity of viewpoint is the norm in discourse, and is best studied in terms of networks of local viewpoints contributing to and supervised by a higher-level Discourse Viewpoint: rather than a hierarchical ‘list’, then, viewpoint in discourse involves networked configurations. Depending on the viewpoint network required for interpretation, one and the same linguistic form (even a lowly grammatical form such as a pronoun or a determiner) may carry a different meaning, and viewpoint functions emerge in a wide range of contexts, which necessitates study of a broad range of data, not just narratives. The examples discussed in this paper thus include, alongside narrative excerpts, quotes from film discourse, examples of a popular internet meme, and a contemporary piece of video art, all of which evince multiple viewpoint configurations every bit as complex as in traditional narrative, requiring among other things compressions and zoom-outs to be established between discourse, belief and narrative spaces; defocusing and refocusing; and decompression of a discourse and its embodiment. In all cases, we propose that the different viewpoints are reconciled and understood at the level of the Discourse Viewpoint space, regulating and supervising the network.

1 Introduction

Multiplicity of viewpoints is a topic that has often been discussed in the context of narrative discourse (e.g. Mey 1999), where linguistic choices frequently signal the particular perspective of various subjectivities involved – fictional ones in the case of narrators and characters, or non-fictional ones in the context of journalistic prose and other genres (e.g. Sanders 2010). One prominent avenue of research has centered on the representation of speech or thought in various forms, such as direct and (free) indirect speech/thought, as recognizable clusterings of grammatical forms and lexical choices.

While we pay brief attention to this area below, the main aim of this paper is to broaden the scope of enquiry with the help of a range of examples collectively supporting the idea that multiplicity of viewpoint is the norm, not the exception. Part of this re-focusing requires looking not just at broad-ranging constructional clusters such as free indirect speech/thought but also at seemingly ‘innocent’ or ‘viewpoint-neutral’ lower-level constructions, down to the level of examples such as determiners or negation, which we will show can also function as view-

point markers. Correspondingly, the range of text types considered needs to be enlarged: much as full-scale narratives remain important sites for the management of multiple viewpoints, some of our examples show similar complexities at work in far more condensed form, for instance that of an internet meme. At both lower and higher levels of discourse complexity, we suggest that viewpoints are organized hierarchically and in terms of a network, with local viewpoint choices achieving overall coherence in what one might call a top-level or ‘Discourse Viewpoint’ space, from which lower-level viewpoint choices are overseen.

Starting from an understanding of viewpoint as a discourse participant’s alignment with an aspect of a frame or situation, we want to look at examples from different types of discourse forms – not just narrative – to study how viewpoint multiplicity and its particular configuration is dependent in equal measure on local and global viewpoint phenomena (for example, specific to a scene or organizing the text as a whole); these configurations change as the discourse unfolds. In addition, because the traditional focus on multiple viewpoints in individual sentences (for instance in sentences of direct or (free) indirect speech or thought) does not allow for a textured view of how viewpoints are expressed, shifted, manipulated, etc., we propose to move away from a sentence-based approach. In this respect, our guiding assumptions are as follows:

1. *Viewpoints are hierarchically ordered*; even if at any one point a given viewpoint is selected for ‘local’ purposes, it still participates in viewpoint construction at a higher level, as earlier work by Dancygier (2005, 2012a) on viewpoint compression has demonstrated for narrative fiction. Thus, for instance, in (1) below, a travel writer sees TV coverage of his own departure, and temporarily the narrative viewpoint is compressed with the viewpoint of the writer/traveller (*he*)-as-TV-viewer (*me*), rather than simply the writer/traveller-as-traveller (which would have yielded ‘my face had a cheesy pallor’ and ‘I looked like a clowning greenhorn’):

- (1) *The TV news went local. An Englishman had left Minneapolis that day in a small motor boat [...]. In the picture on the screen his face had a cheesy pallor. [...] He looked to me like a clowning greenhorn.* (Jonathan Raban, *Old Glory*; example quoted in Dancygier 2005: 109)

While what (1) presents is at one level a TV viewer’s perception of a TV news report, at the same time it contributes to the higher level Discourse Viewpoint, in this case that of the narrator of *Old Glory*; otherwise, the reader would not be able to see that the writer is in fact talking about his own image on TV.

2. *Specific viewpoint configurations available at any given point in the text are structured through language choices*; these choices often coincide with “global” categories established in existing literature (e.g. categories applied to constructions or even discourse fragments, such as direct vs. indirect vs. free indirect speech/thought), but are more effectively considered as constellations of “local” (word, phrase or sentence level) individual viewpoint parameters: tense, pronouns, proper names, adverbs, syntactic embedding, clause sequence, modality and polarity, conjunction, expressive lexemes, etc. In addition, temporal viewpoint may be separate from and independent of emotional viewpoint or epistemic viewpoint, as in those celebrated cases where a narrator’s past tense is used in speech or thought representation contexts where a character’s heightened emotion state is represented. In (2), for instance, the pastness of *was* is understood with respect to the narrator, whereas the despondent feelings and questioning attitudes expressed are clearly those of the character Ursula. Combining the narrator’s past perspective (*was*) and the character’s present perspective (*tomorrow*) has come to be known as free indirect discourse, loosely speaking a construction, but the nature of that construction centrally depends on the two independent viewpoints represented:

- (2) *Tomorrow was Monday. Monday, the beginning of another school-week! Another shameful, barren school-week, mere routine and mechanical activity. Was not the adventure of death infinitely preferable? Was not death infinitely more lovely and noble than such a life?* (D.H. Lawrence, *Women in Love*, Ch. XV)

Different linguistic choices regarding the representation of participants involved in the discourse thus yield different multiple viewpoint configurations.

3. *Viewpoints expressed in a text form a network, rather than just a hierarchical list.* While there needs to be a top-level, unifying viewpoint space, it can build on various configurations of lower-level spaces. Possible configurations may include embedded spaces, parallel spaces, alternative spaces, or even two independent networks of spaces, depending on the nature of the text; in fragmented narratives, for example, the text may develop rather elaborate networks before the unifying space becomes salient. To explain the final cohesion of such a network, we will rely on the concept of viewpoint compression (as described in Dancygier 2012a), as a phenomenon which allows viewpoint to be conceptualized coherently; importantly, in the reader’s mind, all lower-level or sub-network viewpoints are naturally considered with respect to their role and salience in the relevant part of the network, rather than as sentence-level interpretations. This assumption

allows one to understand viewpoint emergence in more complex texts, where a sentence-level viewpoint configuration (e.g., a stretch of direct speech) may participate in higher-level textual viewpoint (e.g., construction of a character).

4. *Multiplicity of viewpoint is not restricted to the commonly recognized categories; new constructions emerge in various contexts and genres.* The variety and flexibility of such examples require that we develop theoretical tools to deal with multiple viewpoints in a range of expressions, narrative and non-narrative alike. We hope to propose an approach which adequately deals with both well-described and new discourse forms.

2 Viewpoint and constructional forms

Free Indirect Discourse provides a textbook example of a construction widely considered to involve mixing of viewpoints – often couched in terms of “dual voice” (e.g. Pascal 1977; see Vandelanotte 2009: 244–255 for discussion and references) – of the current speaker (or ‘narrator’) and the represented speaker (or character). In example (2), quoted above, the thoughts of the represented speaker (the character Ursula) are rendered without the syntactic incorporation into the current speaker’s discourse typical of Indirect Discourse, but, as we pointed out above, temporal expressions are not consistent – the word *tomorrow* signals the viewpoint of the represented speaker Ursula, while the choice of past tense takes into account the temporal distance between the ‘now’ of the current speaker and the temporal frame of the past story being told. This is, then, a true example of linguistic choices which signal multiple viewpoints. The construction as a whole is thus a good example of what has been called a ‘mixed-viewpoint construction’.

However, describing various kinds of multiple viewpoint forms as ‘mixing’ the viewpoints involved is, in our view, not a fully descriptive term. The term ‘mixed’ may be understood to imply that the viewpoints, once combined, ‘merge’ so as to become indistinguishable, or yield a constructional level at which they are fused, while in fact, each individual viewpoint expression in (2) is easily assigned to a specific participant. It seems possible to talk about fusion or mixing when multiple viewpoints of participants are built into one form (as is the case, for example, in expressions which Evans (2005) and others have referred to as ‘triangular’ kin terms, which reflect the relation of both speaker and addressee to the referent). But even in those cases, the intended multiplicity is recognizable at the meaning level. In more elaborate constructional forms, such as the “*Past + now*” construction (often signalling Free Indirect Discourse) described

in Nikiforidou (2012), or in some of the examples discussed below, viewpoints may be allocated to various independent expressions within a higher frame of the construction. In such cases, it is not quite accurate to talk about mixing. What can be argued, though, is that the independently expressed viewpoints become participants in a configuration which compresses them to a higher level viewpoint of the whole construction.

Constructions such as Direct, Indirect and Free Indirect Discourse are far from being the only constructions relying on viewpoint allocation. As Sweetser (2012) argues, viewpoint phenomena are pervasive, and individuals cannot escape viewpointed conceptualizations (even if only because of their temporal and spatial location), but, at the same time, a single mind can access multiple viewpoints on the same scene – if we see an object on our left, we are also aware that the same object is perceived as being on the right by the person facing us. These examples should not suggest that viewpoint is primarily spatial or temporal. In another context, we are fully capable of understanding that while we are ourselves satisfied with a tiny car, a person who has a large family may need to buy a van. While such dimensions of viewpoint may not yield themselves to straightforward grammatical analysis, there are in fact constructions which specialize in the expression of experiential viewpoint and profile it through grammatical means. An example of this is a range of constructions in English which use the genitive form as an experiential viewpoint marker (Dancygier 2009):

- (3) *One person's trash is another person's treasure.*
Benghazi may turn out to be Hillary's Waterloo.
My Vancouver includes the East Side.

Each of the genitive forms in (3) profiles a person's viewpoint – objects may be valuable or not in the view of a given person, an event may put a politician in a situation analogous to Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, and a resident's evaluation of the nature of the city may make them more or less understanding of differences in wealth and standard of living. Similarly, negation may be used to reject a viewpointed understanding of a situation, rather than negating the truth of a fact (Dancygier 2012b):

- (4) *Q: What do you hope to gain by behaving in this way? A: I don't hope to gain something. I'm just doing what I think is right.*

In (3) and (4), low-level grammatical forms such as genitive or negative markers provide a viewpointed construal of the situations described, rather than possession or negation. At the same time, this does not preclude the emergence of

full constructions which rely on such minimal viewpoint markers in important ways. For example, *One person's X is another person's Y* is a common construction which goes beyond marking one viewpoint. It contrasts two possible viewpoints on an object or a situation, and relies on rich frames associated with the X and Y expressions. The trash/treasure contrast is naturally imbued with viewpoint, but not all uses of the construction require that. For instance, in the example *One person's city street is another person's home*, used to comment on the issue of homelessness and lack of compassion on the part of some city inhabitants, *street* and *home* are not inherently viewpointed in the way that *trash* ('negative') and *treasure* ('positive') clearly are. It is the viewpoint-contrasting strength of the construction that yields the comparison, and the attendant evaluation, but while the contrast is a more broadly constructional matter, the viewpointed meaning relies on the genitive.

These examples suggest, then, that while constructions as wholes are meaningful structures, possibly engaged in viewpoint expression, their components may provide the lower-level viewpoints that the construction then organizes in more elaborate structures. We argue that this is true also of the standard speech and thought representation constructions. We cannot engage here in a full analysis of all potential viewpoint markers involved, but we will discuss examples where compositional analysis of viewpoint yields a more accurate analysis of the data at hand.

The next two sections start out from observations on pronouns, featuring first person pronouns relying heavily on the broader viewpoint network for their interpretation in section 3, and relating findings on pronoun choice and verbs of seeing to broader questions in section 4. In section 5 we show particular viewpointed deictic functions of determiners, to next consider broader discourse patterns in sections 6 (on the *said no one ever* meme) and 7 (on a piece of video art characterized by a disconnect between discourse and embodiment). A concluding section rounds off the paper.

3 Pronouns, viewpoint networks and viewpoint compression

In this section we consider examples where the use of the same grammatical form (in this case, the pronoun *I*) yields different meanings because of the different structure of the overall viewpoint set-up. First person pronoun *I* is typically considered in the context of one discourse space, with a single deictic centre (space, time, speaker, hearer). In this standard set-up, the pronoun *I* refers consistently

to the speaker of the discourse presented in the discourse space. However, in narrative examples such as (5), this is not the case:

- (5) *He started off on Aragon – had I read Le Paysan de Paris? Did I remember the Passage Jouffroy in Paris? What did I think of St. Jean Perse? Or Nadja of Breton? Had I been to Knossus yet? I ought to stay a few weeks at least – he would take me over the island from one end to another. He was a very hale and hearty fellow and when he understood that I liked to eat and drink he beamed most approvingly.* (Henry Miller, *The Colossus of Maroussi*; example quoted in Dancygier 2012a: 187)

The fragment represents a conversation between the first-person narrator and a Cretan man. They talk about literature, and about the attractions of Crete. The Cretan asks a number of questions, while the narrator is the addressee. The first question asked, then, was actually ‘Have you read *Le Paysan de Paris*?’. The tense is shifted into the past to represent the fact that the story is told from the present viewpoint of the writer, while describing the past visit to Crete. The form of the question is preserved, and the pronoun ‘you’ is shifted into the first person ‘I’, thus connecting the Cretan’s discourse to the flow of the first person narration. This (rather specific) form of discourse representation has been described by Vandelanotte (2004, 2012a) as DIST – Distancing Indirect Speech or Thought. It is characterized by a single, constant deictic centre (as contrasted with the two operative in example (2) above), such that all discourse of the narrative is subjected to one shared viewpoint of the first person narrative. The pronoun *I* is thus not cross-linked to the actual speaker (the Cretan man, Mr Tsoutsou), but to the addressee and narrator, which occasionally confuses readers, who expect *I* to consistently refer to the current speaker, not the represented addressee. In this case, the embedding of the conversation in the narrative discourse provides a higher level Discourse Viewpoint which subordinates all lower level deixis to the highest level deixis of the first person narrative. This is what we mean by saying that the viewpoint of a grammatical form results from the structure of the network, not an isolated sentence participating in that network.

For comparison, the ostensibly Direct Discourse fragment in (6) represents a different pattern:

- (6) *I am a politician, which means that I'm a cheat and a liar, and when I'm not kissing babies I'm stealing their lollipops, but it also means that I have options.* (*The Hunt for Red October*)

Although the politician speaking refers to himself as ‘I’ (predictably), he is not really describing himself from his own perspective. On the contrary, when he calls himself a cheat and a liar, he is sarcastically echoing descriptions which might have been offered by people who do not think highly of politicians. This makes (6) a good example of what Clark has discussed under the rubric of “staged communicative acts” (1996: 368–378), in which interlocutors knowingly engage in joint pretence within a single communicative act, in order to “mutually appreciate the salient contrasts between the demonstrated and actual situations” (Clark 1996: 368). Staged communicative acts include not just irony and sarcasm, but also, for instance, teasing, rhetorical questions, under- and overstatement, and hyper- and misunderstanding (on the latter two notions, see e.g. Brône 2008; Brône and Oben 2013).

One reading of Clark’s argument seems to suggest, however, that there is a hierarchy of viewpoints, where the “serious” attitude is in a sense in the scope of the “nonserious” one. While the final interpretation indeed suggests shared pretence, the details of how such meanings are construed require clarification. We argue that the configuration and the process are in fact more complex, with the “serious” and “nonserious” takes co-existing, and the clash between them being resolved at a higher level, which we label “Discourse Viewpoint space”. This brings our interpretation in line with the recent interpretation of irony, offered in Tobin and Israel (2012), wherein the clash of viewpoints can only be resolved from a higher, zoom-out perspective.

In (6), the belief that politicians are cheats and liars and the discourse representing that belief are incorporated into the discourse of the speaker. As a result, the viewpoint has to be incorporated into the viewpoint structure in which *I* does in fact refer to the actual speaker (the politician). What needs to be resolved in the previous example (5) is, one might say, “who’s who” within a single speech event (such that it becomes understood the Cretan Mr. Tsoutsou did not actually say “Had I read *Le Paysan de Paris*” but rather “Have you read *Le Paysan de Paris*”). The present example (6), on the other hand, can only be resolved once it is understood to relate to a second speech event or discourse space, in which people voice their strong mistrust of politicians.

Figures 1 and 2 attempt to capture this difference from the point of view of the reader’s or viewer’s interpretive processing (cf. Rohrer 2005). In these diagrams, we distinguish ‘discourse/belief spaces’, containing some discourse participant’s discourse or belief, from ‘narrative spaces’, which may contain spatial and temporal settings, events, characters and narrators, and which participate in the story which emerges when readers read narrative texts (cf. Dancygier 2012a: 36). Dotted lines show correspondences between discourse participants. The overarching, “global” viewpoint that is construed by the network of lower-level viewpoints is ultimately located in what we call the Discourse Viewpoint Space.

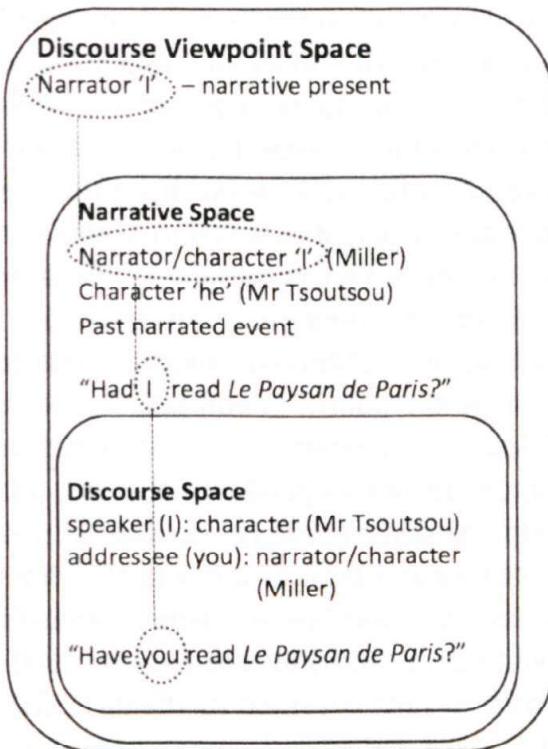


Figure 1: Resolving the Miller example (5): one discourse space embedded in a narrative space

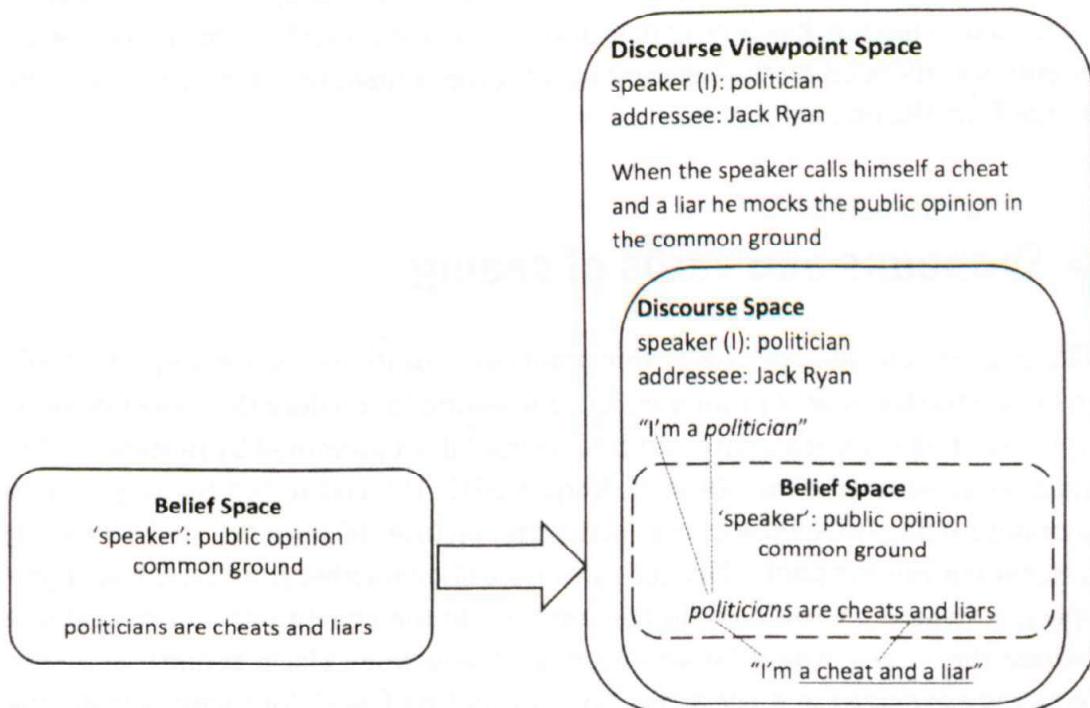


Figure 2: Resolving the *Red October* example (6): a discourse space and a belief space

In Figure 1, the Discourse Viewpoint Space of the narration is deictically linked to the narrator's present time and first person identity. The story includes many narrative spaces, including one represented in (5); this narrative space, in turn, contains a discourse space – a conversation. Each of these spaces has its own topology (time, place, participants, etc.). However, in this case, even though in the bottom level of the Discourse Space the narrator is an addressee (*you*), viewpoint compression aligns the network with the Discourse Viewpoint Space, where he is represented as *I*. The network structure determines the form and its meaning.

The network in (6) is different from the one in (5). While the listener initially has access only to the Discourse Space, where the politician and Jack Ryan are participants, what is said evokes a Belief Space, which represents public opinion in the common ground. The two spaces are parts of independent networks, but interpreting (6) requires that they are incorporated into one network (the outlined arrow indicates the projection of one space into another). As a result, the viewpoint of the Belief Space is projected into the Discourse Space, where it expands the discourse understanding of who a politician is and yields the ensuing self-mocking description. The discourse fragment is now governed by the discourse viewpoint which is informed by the Belief Space and gives meaning to the Discourse Space. The *I* in the expressions *I'm a politician* and *I have options* is directly aligned with the deictic set-up of the Discourse Space, but, because there is no speaking participant or temporal alignment in the Belief Space, the *I* is further projected to the mock-echoic expression *I'm a cheat and a liar*. The choice of the pronoun is dictated by the network again, even though this network is very different from the one in (5).

4 Pronouns and verbs of seeing

The analyses above suggest that viewpoint configurations have an important role in our understanding of pronouns. It is interesting to consider these observations in the context of experimental studies of simulation prompted by pronouns. One such study (Brunyé et al. 2009; cf. Bergen 2012: 113–114) tested the response to pronouns using (matching or non-matching) pictures of activities such as slicing a tomato or ironing pants. The activities were shown either from an internal perspective (where a viewer would feel engaged in the activity) or an external one (where the viewer would be an observer of somebody else's action), and subjects were expected to press a “yes” or “no” button (“yes” for pictures matching the event description, “no” for a mismatch, i.e. when the relevant objects were depicted but were not being used in the action described). The study showed how

grammar influences the viewpoint from which to simulate a scene: it found that the subjects were responding faster to participant perspective pictures ('internal') following *you* sentences and to observer perspective pictures ('external') following *he* sentences. However, the results for the use of first person pronouns were less straightforward. There the responses were faster if the pronoun *I* was used with participant perspective pictures ('internal') accompanying short sentences (*I am slicing a tomato*), but when a more elaborate context was added (*I am a 30-year-old deli employee. I'm making a vegetable wrap. Right now, I'm slicing a tomato.*) subjects responded faster to observer perspective pictures ('external', i.e. simulating *someone else* slicing a tomato). Brunyé et al. and Bergen suggest that the effect may be due to the fact that a more elaborate context makes it clear who the referent is.

In their discussion of this experiment, Sanford and Emmott (2013: 162–169) agree that the experiment shows the importance of linguistically driven cues to viewpoint, but they do rightly point out that, even in the condition in which some context was added, the materials used in the experiment remain much simpler than real narratives. Other factors, including lexical choices, style, and text types should be taken into account; in particular, they (2013: 166–167) argue, presence vs. absence of internal perspective cues in the text, including verbs of seeing (e.g. *I noticed*), certain deictic expressions (e.g. *right in front of me*) or markers of vagueness or lack of knowledge (e.g. *something*), constitutes a more decisive factor than length of context provided.

We agree with Sanford and Emmott that the nature of textual viewpoint clues matters significantly for viewpoint interpretation, but we also argue that it is very difficult to establish the effectiveness of such means without also considering the network involved. We consider two textual examples of narrative reliance on vision, (7) and (8) below, which, in Sanford and Emmott's interpretation, should prompt for internal perspective. The examples illustrate different ways in which presence vs. absence of seeing verbs need not correlate directly with presence vs. absence of internal perspective. In the first, the explicit marking of 'seeing' arguably makes the perspective less rather than more internal:

- (7) *I see us turn and walk away toward the gap in the dunes that led to Station Road. A corner of Chloe's towel trails in the sand. I go along with my towel draped over one shoulder and my wet hair slicked down, a Roman senator in miniature. Myles runs ahead. But who is it that lingers there on the strand in the half-light, by the darkening sea that seems to arch its back like a beast as the night fast advances from the fogged horizon? What phantom version of me is it that watches us – them – those three children – as they grow indistinct in that cinereal air and then are gone through the gap that will bring them out at the foot of Station Road?* (John Banville, *The Sea*; example quoted in Vandelanotte 2010: 220)

If we compare *I see us turn and walk* to *We turn and walk* we find that the expression *I see us* is in fact a case of ‘distanced’ narration yielding a ‘floating eye’ style ‘view of a viewpoint’. In this case, a conceptualizing subject takes himself (along with two others) as the object of conceptualization (*I see us*). Furthermore, there is a zooming out effect (cf. Tobin and Israel 2012) prompted by going from the use of *us* (inclusive ‘we’, including the I-narrator) over *them* (personal pronoun marking high accessibility in the sense of Ariel 1990) to *those three children* (distal demonstrative pronoun). In this case, the narrative network dampens the embodied effect of *see*.

Our next example suggests that while ‘see’ may be important as a means of evoking the ‘internal perspective’, it may in fact be implied rather than explicitly used. In example (8), a photographer is describing her first experience with a traditional camera:

- (8) *It was a summer afternoon in 1917. My father hung upside down in the little lozenge of glass; my mother's chair was stuck in a canopy of flowers where my beautiful brother Orlando's toes were planted...* (Paul Theroux, *The Picture Palace*; example quoted in Dancygier 2012a: 94)

It used to be the case that looking through a camera lens yielded an upside down image (which then appeared the right side up in the photograph). This is the experience the fragment describes, without ever referring to it as seeing. The description of a striking image makes sense not as an act of visual perception, but as an element in the complex network of narrative spaces and frames, where what the photographer sees is the image on the lens, not the actual situation. This is, quite naturally, an internal perspective, but it has to be first appreciated as such, to be then understood as an act of seeing. To conclude, seeing, whether mentioned or implied, may involve an internal perspective, but not automatically. In the context of a narrative, the nature of the network and its specific profiling of

subjectivity capable of taking an internal perspective plays an equally important role. We assume that the same may appear to be the case if other ‘internalizing’ means mentioned by Sanford and Emmott are involved.

5 Deictics as viewpoint markers

In this section we turn to examples of deictic *this* functioning as viewpoint marker, where it serves to navigate the multiple viewpoints present in a network rather than to yield a properly ‘mixed’ perspective. Here again, then, as discussed in section 2, there is multiplicity but not mixing. The first example comes from a novel:

- (9) *I will come home and the door will be open, wide. The babysitter will be gone and there will be silence. (...) At the steps up to Toph's room there will be blood. Blood on the walls, handprints soaked in blood. (...) I will be to blame. (...) There will be a hearing, a trial, a short trial –*

How did you come to meet this man, this baby-sitter?

We found a posting, on a bulletin board.

And how long did your interview of him take?

*Ten, twenty minutes. (...) (Dave Eggers, *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*; example quoted in Dancygier 2012a: 38)*

Dancygier (2012a: 38–40) discusses this example at length to point out various viewpoint phenomena. The story presents the main character, who left a child (his brother Toph) with a babysitter, worrying about the situation and spinning very unlikely scenarios to flesh out the worries. The man, Dave, imagines the babysitter as a murderer and goes on to imagine himself being put on trial for trusting the wrong person. There are many important viewpoint phenomena here. The imagined future situation (finding the child murdered) and the imagined future trial in which Dave is asked questions are all contained in a higher space of the narrative, that of the time spent driving when Dave lets his imagination flow. The represented thoughts of Dave take the form of direct discourse in the trial, so that in effect direct speech has the function of free indirect thought. Temporal viewpoint is also tricky, as in the context of the trial the past event of the murder is in fact an imagined future event in the main story.

However, for the purposes of our discussion here, we want to focus on the use of the proximal demonstrative *this*. When the imagined prosecutor asks *How did you come to meet this man, this baby-sitter?* he is referring to a person who is

absent: strangely, the fantasy does not even assume Stephen, the baby-sitter, to also be on trial for the murder, and the nameless reference to him as a *man* and *baby-sitter* further suggests that he is considered perhaps with contempt, but in any case as an unimportant nonentity not relevant to the case in hand; in Dave's fantasy, he alone is to blame, hence the choice of expressions. Given Stephen's absence from the scene, spatial proximity is not the issue in using the proximal *this*. Also temporal proximity seems unlikely, given that the prosecutor is using a distal past tense to talk about the event of Stephen and Dave meeting for the first time. Our explanation is that the prosecutor's repeated use of *this* here resets the viewpoint of the exchange from the events of the murder, to the point of Dave having made the wrong decision in hiring Stephen as baby-sitter; the specific point may seem irrelevant to the murder, but is uniquely relevant to the fantasy concocted so that Dave can indulge in blaming himself for all the potentially bad decisions he makes as a guardian of his brother. The proximal demonstrative here maintains its indexical function, but it organizes viewpointed narrative spaces, rather than objects or people: from the reader's perspective, it creates a connection between the imagined space of the trial, with its embedded discourse between prosecutor and defendant, and the past (hence real, but actually 'distal') space of Dave interviewing and hiring Stephen. *This* is thus in effect a viewpoint marker, pointing to the narrative space currently in focus in the exchange – the trial, in which *this man* is currently being discussed and so 'proximal' in terms of discourse activation – and contributing to the overall Discourse Viewpoint, which portrays Dave as getting lost in exaggerated fears and self-doubt.

Our second example comes from Barack Obama's victory speech in 2008 – a different genre altogether. In the fragment, Obama talks about Ann Nixon Cooper, first introduced in his speech as "a woman who cast her ballot in Atlanta", more specifically a (then) 106-year-old African American woman who voted in the election, using a computer screen. The point is to highlight all the ways in which the 2008 election changed all the expected standards – it allowed an older person to use the benefits of the internet, and it allowed an African American woman to vote for an African American candidate for President:

- (10) *A man touched down on the moon, a wall came down in Berlin, a world was connected by our own science and imagination. And this year, in this election, she touched her finger to a screen, and cast her vote, because after 106 years in America, through the best of times and the darkest of hours, she knows how America can change. Yes we can.*

In the fragment, Obama lists some crucial events and developments which resulted in freedom and access to technology¹ – the prerequisites of Cooper's ability to vote for him. Importantly, these events are described with indefinite articles, in spite of their uniqueness and clear referential status (Neil Armstrong, the Berlin Wall)²: they are such central referents within the common ground (cf. Clark 1996: Ch. 4) that the seemingly general description given is in fact sufficiently informative for listeners to identify the specific instances for Obama and the audience to jointly focus attention on. (For comparison, the unique identity of *a woman who cast her ballot in Atlanta* is not part of the common ground, so Obama in his speech quickly follows this NP up with the woman's proper name and further particulars.).

When, having discussed the frames of freedom and technology, whose advances come together in the life-story of Cooper, Obama returns to the issue of the election, he uses *this* (*this year, in this election*). As was the case with his choice for *a* (*in a man, a wall, a world*), with this determiner choice too he is manipulating the viewpoints in his speech. The events and people mentioned (such as the landing on the moon or, in an earlier part, various important moments in the Civil Rights movement) are not specific events he focuses his viewpoint on – they are just 'illustrative' material from the past he uses to highlight freedom and technology (Figure 3). But when he returns to the space which is in focus – the current election and its results – he uses the demonstrative proximal *this*, in ways similar to how it was used in example (9).

We argue, then, that in the context of complex discourse, basic grammatical forms (pronouns, determiners, tense, etc.) may be used not in their basic deictic function, but to manipulate the deixis of the event spaces involved. The indefinite article may then defocus a salient space, while *this* can designate a space as the one currently in focus. Both forms work as viewpoint markers, just like the pronouns discussed in Sections 3 and 4. It is interesting to note that the recent innovation in the quotative system in inner-city London, discussed as "*this is + speaker*" by Fox (2012), combines precisely the viewpoint focusing element of demonstrative *this*, referring cataphorically to the ensuing quote (cf. Vandelaarotte 2012b: 187), with personal pronouns:

- (11) [Airport security staff checks a potentially suspicious spray]
they sprayed the spray yeh (...)
like just to check that it weren't anything.

¹ The discourse fragment relying on indefinite articles is in fact much longer, detailing major events in the struggle for civil rights in America.

² We want to thank Adrian Lou for drawing our attention to this usage.

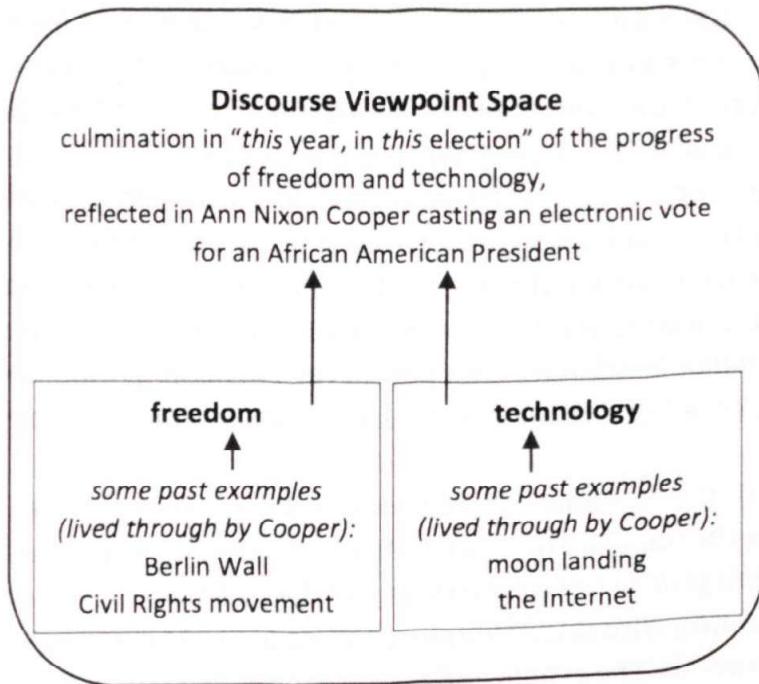


Figure 3: Defocused events contributing to the Discourse Viewpoint in focus

bruv when I say they were smelling weed
this is him. **this is them** “what’s that smell that’s coming out?”
this is him “oh i dunno like it must be d.d. thing”
(Fox 2012: 251; emphasis original)

The use of *this is + pronoun* seems a very explicit means of opening up and focusing on different speakers’ discourse spaces. In the next section we turn to a much more subtle device opening up a discourse space which effectively turns out to have no appropriate accompanying speakers, but which nevertheless contributes significantly to the Discourse Viewpoint intended.

6 Unattributable discourse in an internet meme

Among the more interesting complex viewpoint constructions to have emerged in recent years is the use of *said no one ever*, particularly in internet memes³ typically going round in the form of “e-cards”. In their most formulaic form, e-cards

³ While “said no one ever” may have become a set expression, it is primarily interesting to us as appearing ubiquitously in so-called “internet memes”. A pervasive form of on-line communication, memes also rely crucially on easily recognizable linguistic forms and varying visual images.

such as those featuring *said no one ever* combine text in a plain style with a stylized drawing of a man or woman, often in the style of 1950s or 1960s advertising, against a bright monochrome background, but other forms featuring full-colour photos of people and block lettering can also be widely found. We do not propose to consider the visual aspects in detail, but want to focus on the family of *said no one ever* and related forms in terms of the kind of viewpoint they present. Consider two typical examples below (Figures 4 and 5), taken (like all examples in this section) from the Internet, the first in the typical stylized format, the second in the freer picture-cum-lettering format:

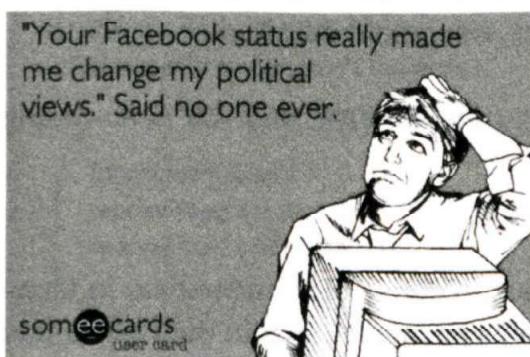


Figure 4: From someecards.com



Figure 5: From cheezburger.com

The use of quotation marks as in Figure 4 is typically taken as a signal that Direct Discourse is involved, and thus as an instruction to locate the speaker in the discourse context, who is naturally assumed at first glance to be embodied by the person depicted in the card, presumably addressing the card's reader. In examples without quotation marks, such as Figure 5, the default assumption in online processing initially must be that *I* and *you* simply refer to a speaker depicted in the picture (one of the bored looking hipster girls in the case of Figure 5) and the card's recipient respectively. In both types of cases, when one gets to *said no one ever* it turns out that the expectation is not met, since apparently the preceding speech act (typically a statement as in Figure 4 but a request in Figure 5) cannot be attributed to anyone.

The “*said no one ever*” meme is different from occasional conversational uses of “non-quoting” Direct Discourse, as in (12) below, which fit into a family of conditional, counterfactual or negated uses, illustrating the point that direct speech

We argue that they provide very relevant data in the study of viewpoint (which distinguishes our approach from that represented by Shifman 2013a, b).

does not always “report” a pre-given “original” (see e.g. von Roncador 1988, Vandelanotte 2009: Ch. 4). In (12), the negated quote is used to underscore a point within a discourse context in which a lot of details are coloured in, relating to a parent whose talents do not lie in baking; note also that the negated *say* clause precedes the unattributable quote. In “said no one ever” memes as in (13), on the other hand, the negation indicating the quote’s non-attributability necessarily follows the quote, and the construction is used unprompted, to make a clever sarcastic or amusing comment on people’s typical behaviour.

- (12) *No one has ever said: Nance, these are the best brownies I've tasted. And for my son's 11th birthday he begged me to buy, not bake, his cake. The child was right; I shouldn't bake.* (Cobuild corpus, National Public Radio)
- (13) *"I love listening to all the crap you're going through, and you never asking about my crap. It's awesome."*
Said no one ever.⁴

In terms of viewpoint, we believe this construction is best understood in terms of the kind of “zoom out” proposed by Tobin and Israel (2012) in their account of irony: because of some perceived incongruity which prompts for a re-evaluation, attention shifts from a ‘lower’ mental space where viewpoint initially is located to a ‘higher’ one, the Discourse Viewpoint space. Thus, in Figure 4, the initial viewpoint *Your Facebook status really made me change my political views* has to be re-evaluated as a result of the *said no one ever* part, as not being said by the card’s speaker to its reader, but rather being said by no-one to no-one. These two incompatible viewpoints are resolved in the final Discourse Viewpoint, according to which what people say on Facebook has no influence on people’s political views (Figure 6): the idea that anyone would ever say their views were influenced by Facebook posts is effectively presented as being too ridiculous to contemplate. The initial viewpoint thus ends up being re-construed as its opposite very effectively and economically, in ways similar to the conversational use of *not* as a sarcastic, zooming-out follow-up (as in *That dress looks so cute on you. NOT*).

This type of example cleverly exploits an important aspect of Clark’s notion of common ground, namely his observation that when we act on the basis of our common ground, “we are in fact acting on our individual beliefs or assumptions about what is in our common ground” (1996: 96), since we cannot take it as given

⁴ Examples (13) and following in this section are quoted from the Internet with punctuation, capitalization and (deliberate) line breaks between the initial part and *said no one ever* given as found in the e-card.

that we truly have corresponding mutual beliefs about something. The zoom-out operation described above serves to explicitly construe part of the common ground: the viewer's likely suspicion that *Your Facebook status really made me change my political views* cannot be a serious claim is confirmed by *said no one ever*, and allows the 'card writer' and 'card viewer' to jointly add the belief that Facebook posts never influence people's political views to the intersubjectively construed common ground.

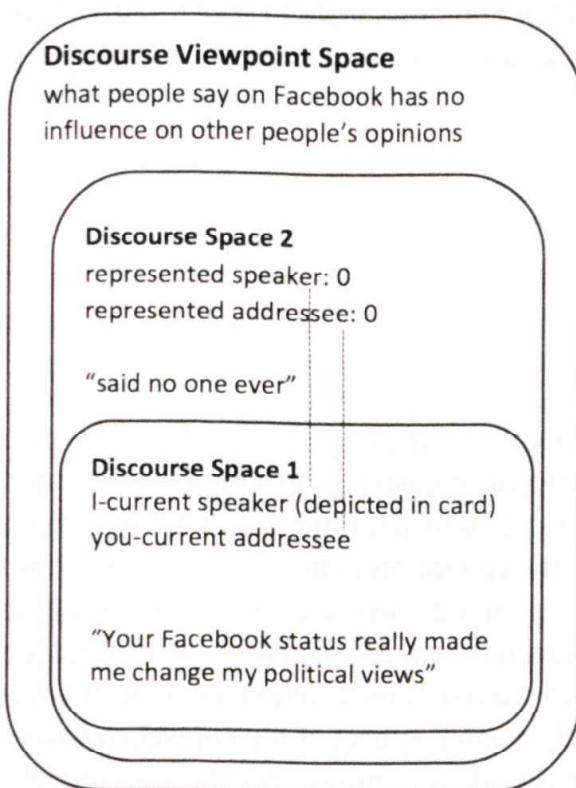


Figure 6: *Said no one ever*: Zoom-out to Discourse Viewpoint space.

In some respects, the network in Figure 6 is similar to Figure 2, which is not too surprising given that both require a reinterpretation of an ostensibly straightforward statement by the speaker. In both cases common ground changes the viewpoint of what is being said. There are important differences, though. In Figure 2 we saw a common ground belief incorporated into the discourse, yielding an actual utterance where the speaker presents himself and his political role in the worst possible way. Here we see the emergence of a proposed common ground, on the basis of embedding the ostensible (not actual) utterance, which is not in itself conspicuously odd, in a clause rejecting its utterance status and commu-

nicative validity. We are not suggesting that these differences distinguish some well-defined types of viewpoint configurations; rather, we are pointing out that the nature of these configurations is directly relevant to the emergent meaning. The need for incorporation of multiple viewpoints into coherent discourse structure is what is shared across all these examples; the specific patterns of incorporation vary.

A number of extensions from the constructional template illustrated in Figures 4–5 and (13) are worth noting. One is exemplified in (14–15), and concerns condensed forms in which the full clause *said no one ever* is shortened to *no one ever* or even just *nobody*, adopting the quotation style in which rather than quoting clauses and/or quotation marks, a long dash is used to introduce the source of the quote:

- (14) *I love final exams.*

– *No One Ever*

- (15) *I love your crocs*

– *Nobody*

As one reviewer pointed out, these condensed phrases (– *No One Ever*, or – *Nobody*) seem to function almost like emoticons or hash tags in computer-mediated communication: in the absence of prosodic and paralinguistic markers which can help signal the need for a sarcastic interpretation in face-to-face interaction, modern online communication has developed its own set phrases and graphic conventions to help activate layered meanings. Such examples also illustrate what Dancygier and Sweetser (2005) have termed “constructional compositionality”, by which the presence of even only a small subset of lower-level constructional forms can be sufficient to metonymically prompt the whole construction, such that here, for instance, *no one ever* without the *said*, or even just the subject *nobody*, propped up by the long dash which we know from other contexts of use can introduce sources, suffice to evoke *said no one ever*.

Another extension involves examples which restrict the class of improbable or impossible speakers, to whom the initiating utterance cannot believably be attributed, to a specific subset of people relevant to the utterance’s content, for instance Latino people where tacos are concerned or gamers where endless online gaming is concerned. Because they play on stereotypes that target certain groups of people specifically, *no one* is replaced in these examples by *no + noun*, with the noun typically being a common noun (e.g. girlfriend, man, gamer, student in 17–20 below), but possibly a proper name as in (16), in which Juan as

a very typical Latino name is sufficient to frame-metonymically evoke Latinos in general:

- (16) *I hate tacos! ... said no Juan ever.*
- (17) *I'm mad at you and I'm gonna be very specific in telling you why said no girlfriend ever.*
- (18) *"Date? Nah, you're like a sister to me." said no man ever.*
- (19) *"I wanna play online, but no one's gonna be on the server early in the morning" said no gamer ever*
- (20) *"I can't wait for class to start" said no student ever*

The initial viewpoint which ends up being re-evaluated in these cases is not one judged to be unattributable to anyone at all: there may well be people who hate tacos, don't want to date girls they are friends with, or think no one will be online to game early in the morning – only these are not viewpoints found among the most typical people likely to be involved with tacos, dating girls or online gaming (viz. Latinos, men and gamers respectively). Those people are the butt of the joke, whose overall effect is to reinforce stereotypes.

A final extension worth noting concerns examples turning the joke on the use of the “said no one ever” construction itself, as in (21), which cleverly draws attention to the meme’s success in writing but apparent non-existence in ordinary conversation, or (22), in which the initial part which is subsequently re-evaluated consists only of the phrase *said no one ever*, whose well-formedness (or otherwise) is commented on from a normative English usage viewpoint:

- (21) *"Remember when I said 'said no one ever' out loud in conversation?" said no one ever.*
- (22) *"Said no one ever," said no one ever with a basic understanding of the English language.*

Further examples with different twists include (23), a one-off joke printed over a picture of a big number “1” which is unexpectedly pushed into the role of the (absent) represented speaker in ways similar to examples (16–20) above, and (24), which moves from one extreme (no speaker ever says X) to another (every single speaker says X constantly) to make a point about how annoying the *said no one*

ever construction has become. (24), then, does not involve the kind of zooming out from an assumption of a current speaker addressing an addressee to there being no available speaker, but conversely zooms out from some individual speaker to a huge collective comprising all possible speakers universally finding the over-use of *said no one ever* incredibly annoying.

(23) “*I’m greater than two!*” *said no one ever*.

(24) *Your overuse of the phrase, “said no one ever”, is “incredibly annoying”, says everyone, all of the time.*

While *this is + pronoun* very explicitly draws a discourse space into focus, and *said no one ever* typically constructs discourse spaces not attributable to suitable speakers, our final example involves yet another type of discourse space – one embodied not by its speaker but by its topic.

7 Discourse vs. embodiment: *2 into 1*

In the striking short film *2 into 1*,⁵ British artist Gillian Wearing quite literally “represents” interview material from two sides of a parent-child relationship. The opening view is of a middle-aged woman sat on a bench; when the sound comes on, however, we hear a young boy’s voice to which the woman lip-synchs:

(25) *Um... I’m... intelligent... and sophisticated... I mean sophisticated means you know you know about, you know about the world so when you get... I mean obviously everyone does, but you know I’m only eleven (...)*

It is clear the speaker (or ‘lip syncher’) we see is not an eleven year old boy; when the image cuts to two teenage boys in school uniforms sat in chairs and we start to hear a woman’s voice describing her sons, the initial confusion is resolved, as we understand the discourse and its embodiment have been switched:

⁵ At the time of writing, the full piece is viewable on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=36WUgFMDY-M>.

- (26) *My sons are unusual and they are absolutely adorable and they're very bright and very alive and full of life and they, um, they've got very very strong personalities and... and sometimes they, God obviously they drive me mad, but they... um... Well they love me I suppose. And they can be quite cruel, too. They do actually say to me "Now get in and make our dinner". I have had that a few times.*

The incongruity between the discourse and its embodiment is more than an amusing gimmick, as becomes clearer as the piece progresses and themes of cruelty and control in relationships emerge. The boys voiced by the mother criticize her among other things for being a slow driver, for her dress sense (or lack thereof), and for being forgetful and overly dramatic ("like a Laurence Olivier play"); the mother voiced by the boys professes her love for her boys while at the same time admitting they sometimes drive her mad and can be abusive to her. Of one for instance she says,

- (27) *I think he's brilliant but he's er... got a terrible temper and he can be a real bugger at times. Oh, he said my teeth are yellow, I'm old and ugly, and I never finish anything. I say I'm going to do it and I don't. He has a way of putting his finger on the truth. Oh yes he says I'm a failure. He said I'm a failure, which has hurt because I think of myself as a failure.*

Apart from the pragmatic mismatch which as a viewer you pick up on relatively quickly, there is also a sense in which the 'incomplete' embodiment provides a clue to what is going on, in that the speakers/lip syncers in the video piece do not use any co-speech gesture, which in spontaneous speech would be highly unusual. Collectively the cues provided by the discourse mismatch, lip-synching and lack of gesture prompt the viewer (who is not guided in this by any narrating voice or screen titles) to construct their own understanding of 'who is who', and their own interpretation of the relationships between the different discourse participants involved.

The effect of this is not only the viewer's construction of a shared Discourse Viewpoint which allows them to attribute claims appropriately and also appreciate the complexity of the family dynamic represented. The re-construed embodiment also creates a disturbing effect. The way viewers naturally respond is to see the speakers as not simply mouthing other people's words, but in fact talking about themselves from a perspective that they are possibly aware of (the mother's words suggest that), but would express differently. There is an almost abrasive straightforwardness in the discourse with which people typically do not see themselves, suggesting that we generally view our own faults more generously than

others view them. This idea of using discourse to put a crooked mirror in front of a person is here exploited purely through embodiment – presumably without the speaker's awareness of what is being done. But as viewers, we naturally assume that a speaker's words are a signal of their conceptualization, hence our complex emotional response to the video.

All along, the contents of what is being communicated are entirely serious, unlike in most cases of irony or in the case of *said no one* ever discussed above. The mother embodies the sons' discourse about herself without sarcastic comment, not even non-verbal, and likewise the sons and the mother's discourse about them. It is in fact interesting to compare example (6), which is a self-mocking rendering of the viewpoint clearly espoused by other people, critical of politicians, and the Wearing video, where critical views of others are also incorporated into the discourse of the person being described. The absence of sarcasm in the video seems to be due to the use of pronouns and discourse representation constructions. While the speaker in (6) is not allowing his critics to have a true voice, the mother quotes her son's words through Indirect Speech (*Oh, he said my teeth are yellow, I'm old and ugly, and I never finish anything*). But in the video, it is the son actually saying these words, so his hurtful criticism is put back in his mouth, but through the mother's actual voice. Still, he is referred to as *he* not *I*, and that precludes the viewer from reading it as the self-mocking sarcasm of (6), as the third person pronoun increases the distance between his own thoughts and the mother's response to them. Similarly, the good things the mother says

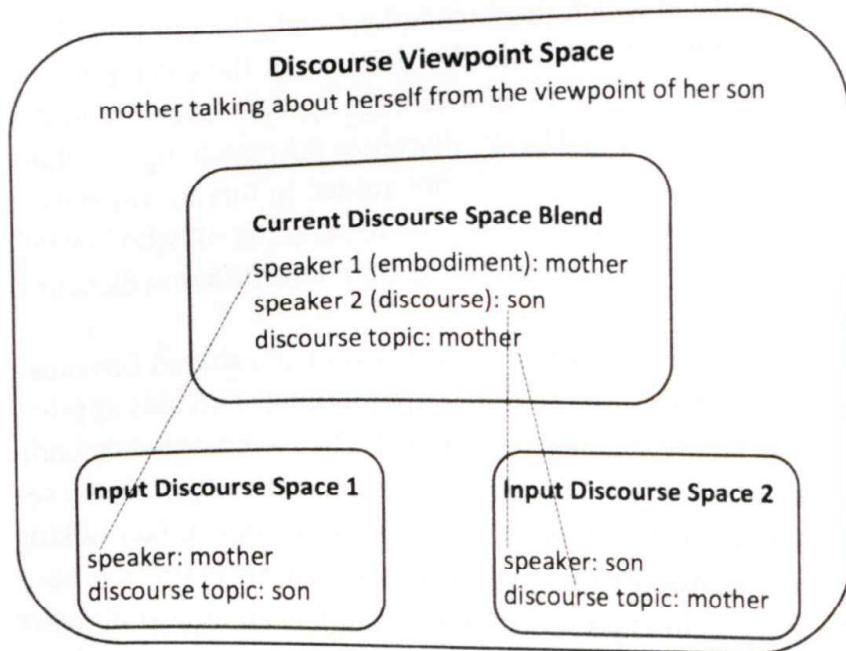


Figure 7: Discourse-embodiment blend in Gillian Wearing's *2 into 1*

about the sons are now said by them, again quite seriously. There is no appropriation of discourse, just the uncomfortable clash resulting from the fact that what people think and say privately becomes the discourse of the person talked about. Thus we need to understand what we are presented with as a blend of discourse spaces in which the discourse of one input is combined with the embodiment of the other (thereby indeed putting “2 into 1”, as the piece’s title has it). One side of this interpretive process is represented in Figure 7.

This example represents another viewpoint pattern, wherein two discourses are blended into one – rather than one being incorporated into another. This is perhaps the only case where the viewpoints are close to being mixed, and this happens not only because of the blend prompted, but also because of how we end up interpreting the discourse, which results from its embodied aspects, not just from a combination of discourses.

8 Conclusions

Just as studies increasingly show that multimodality in viewpoint is the norm rather than the exception (e.g. Parrill 2012, Green 2014), so do our examples suggest multiplicity of viewpoint in discourse is natural and ubiquitous, and not restricted to special constructions such as Free Indirect Discourse. At the same time, we have suggested this multiplicity is best studied in terms of complex networks of local viewpoints which contribute to and are ‘supervised’ from a higher level viewpoint, the Discourse Viewpoint, which guides comprehension in communication. These local viewpoints may be marked even by such small grammatical forms as genitives, negative particles or determiners, and one and the same form may carry a different meaning depending on the viewpoint network, as we illustrated with first person pronoun examples.

We have shown that various networks are required for actual expressions to be understood. In Figure 1, the lowest space is the discourse of the scene, while the actual text representing it is in a higher narrative space, in the centre of the network. In Figure 2, a belief in the common ground is incorporated into the discourse. In Figure 6, the actual discourse of the meme is at the lowest level, to be then embedded in the negative *said no one ever* and properly re-construed in the Discourse Viewpoint Space. Finally, Figure 7 shows the actual discourse of the video as a blend of discourse spaces that need to be recovered. In each case, the network is different, and the actual discourse of the text may be located at a different level. But in each case, the Discourse Viewpoint Space is the level which is necessary for comprehension to take place.

The analysis presented here also poses interesting questions regarding the approach to meaning, and especially constructional meaning. We have shown that grammatical forms may develop viewpoint functions on the basis of their widely recognized syntactic or discourse functions, working as the lowest-level elements in the construction of higher-level viewpoint. But the specific role an item plays in an expression or the discourse is determined by the emergent viewpoint network. Lower-level items provide the building blocks, but the meaning is as much a function of the network as it is a function of the lower-level meanings. We are not arguing for crude compositionality, but for a recognition that grammar operates at various levels of generalization, and that the interaction across levels is as much a component of the emergent meanings. The building blocks do their jobs, and complex syntactic expressions (like FIST) have recognizable functions. But there is a host of linguistic phenomena organizing the emergent structures, and they are in many cases driven by viewpoint.

The resulting picture is one of local multiplicity and complexity within global coherence. A visual analog for this discourse phenomenon is formed by the kinds of picture collages David Hockney is renowned for, where each individual picture has its own perspective, giving the viewer much more to look at and be involved in, while at the same time the complete work is perfectly coherent thanks to the viewer's effortless linking together of the different bits.⁶ Further research into viewpoint phenomena in language and image can only be mutually enriching and point the way towards a fuller understanding of how viewpoint networks work.

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⁶ One example is “Pearblossom Highway, 11th-18th April 1986”, which is viewable online at http://www.hockneypictures.com/works_photos.php.

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