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**Volume 55**

# **Viewpoint and the Fabric of Meaning**

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Form and Use of Viewpoint Tools  
across Languages and Modalities

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Arie Verhagen

## Introduction: On tools for weaving meaning out of viewpoint threads

Human beings are unique in the animal kingdom for a variety of reasons. One of them is their extensive high levels of social cognition. The capacity to take the knowledge, feelings, and attitudes of other people, and the ways these relate to their own cognitive and emotional states, into account in coordinating their activities, definitely is a major “root” of human sociality (Enfield and Levinson 2006). Colloquially put: people are normally very good at assessing other people’s “point of view” on matters that are of interest to them. The study of viewpoint has a long history in the scholarly study of narrative discourse: (linguistic) narratology, stylistics, and (cognitive) poetics. An essential feature of stories (whether fact or fiction) is that they represent the speech, thoughts, attitudes, and emotions of characters. In processing narrative discourse, listeners/readers construct conceptualizations of the ways these different viewpoints are connected into a meaningful fabric, and moreover connect it to their own point of view, thus adding a further dimension of meaning. The study of the complexities of viewpoint in narrative discourse thus provides an especially interesting window on core characteristics of human cognition, while theories of social cognition and its evolution may shed light on the delight that humans universally take in storytelling and the role of viewpoint in it (cf. Zunshine 2006, Boyd 2009, Van Duijn, Sluiter and Verhagen 2015).

In the humanities, the study of viewpoint goes back until at least the middle of the 19th century, and its history has shown a development, reflected in the present volume, from interest in a specific type of narrative viewpoint mixing, to a much larger and varied set of viewpoint tools and techniques, some of them beyond traditionally recognized linguistic categories. The specific type of “mixed viewpoints” that has been studied intensively from early on (and still is in present day research), is that of the so-called Free Indirect Discourse, as it appears to constitute a prototype of mixing. Direct Discourse (‘quotation’ as in *She thought: I may be president tomorrow*) minimizes the responsibility of the narrator and the distance between the reader and the character; Indirect Discourse (complementation as in *She thought that she might be president the next day*) maximizes them; but Free Indirect Discourse (*She was lost in thought; she might be president tomorrow!*) constitutes a ‘mixed’ variety. It was characterized by Jakobson ([1957] 1971) as a special type of one of the four crucial “duplex” structures in language (reported speech being a message representing a message), and has been in the centre of attention in various linguistic, narratological and stylistic studies. In

these studies, tense, mood/modality and deixis have been identified as the major ‘parameters’ of Free Indirect Discourse as distinct from both Direct and Indirect Discourse; each type is in principle thought to be characterized by a specific, distinct combination of values of these parameters.

These distinctions refer to different ways of representing discourse (spoken or thought) of characters in a narrative (Speech and Thought Representation). However, early studies (including Jakobson [1957] 1971) already have pointed out that languages need not converge on the repertoire of linguistic resources they make available for construing the mixing of viewpoints. For instance, whereas Russian, as Jakobson points out, lacks a verbal grammatical category of evidentiality (marking of the relationship between the narrator and the source of evidence for the information involved), this is obligatory in many other languages; in the latter type of languages, this grammatical property implies a continuous computation of the relations between the source of the message and both the characters in the narrative and the narrator, which constitutes a kind of viewpoint mixing that is not only different from Free Indirect Discourse, but in fact not strictly a type of Speech and Thought Representation. So, with the inclusion of such obviously related phenomena into the overall study of viewpoint, first steps are taken to broadening the scope of this domain of investigation, mentioned above.

Furthermore, some languages, like Dutch and German, are known for their wide range of modal particles, which provide a variety of options for evoking a specific relationship between the viewpoint of the present Speaker and/or Addressee and some other one, of which the ‘anchor’ often is to be inferred from the context (see also Engberg-Pedersen and Boeg Thomsen on Danish particles in this volume). On the other hand, some (other) languages may lack a structural distinction between main and (supposedly) ‘subordinate’ clauses, and thus also a basis for distinguishing direct from indirect discourse; they definitely provide their speakers with tools for social cognition as well, but they simply are not of exactly the same type (cf. Evans 2010, ch. 4). Overall, partly as a result of its breadth, even the generally used category of Free Indirect Discourse has so far escaped a rigorous definition. Clearly, there is as much need for zooming out (broadening the range of languages and linguistic phenomena taken into account) as for zooming in (taking the details of specific forms of ‘mixing’ into account) in order to make further progress in understanding viewpoint mixing in general (cf. Dancygier 2012b for an overview of relevant conceptual and empirical dimensions).

Recent work in cognitive linguistics has identified important avenues in the investigation of the ways multiple viewpoints are managed and related to each other in discourse. The approach to intersubjectivity in grammar developed in Verhagen (2005) and its application to complementation constructions opened

the traditional issue of Indirect Discourse to a new set of questions. Also, constructional-functional approaches (cf. Vandelanotte 2009) have offered new views on the specificity of the Free Indirect Discourse category, including the hypothesis that it may only be one of several more ‘mixing’ categories. At the same time, other studies identified a broader range of viewpoint markers in language use (Sanders 2010, Dancygier and Sweetser 2012), or developed a comprehensive theoretical framework for the analysis of complex viewpoint structures in narrative texts and of their effects (Dancygier 2012a). This recent work suggests the existence and relevance of more general strategies of viewpoint allocation, maintenance or shift. Bound together by the common capability of viewpoint construction, they offer an additional set of tools which can be used to elucidate mixed viewpoint phenomena.

The linguistic diversity, and possibly inconsistency, of the span of linguistic means that define forms of Speech and Thought Representation have not been an explicit focus of research. As a result, the potential of linguistic and cultural-cognitive diversity for understanding both universal and culture specific features of the construal of represented speech and thought, and for the interaction between grammar and cognition in this domain, has, at a minimum, remained under-exploited (Evans 2010). The same holds, and even to a greater extent, for the contribution that gestures can make to viewpoint construction in oral narration (cf. Sweetser 2012, and chapters in Dancygier and Sweetser 2012), and the possible cultural diversity of these. It is all the more important for linguistics and cognitive science to redress this situation in view of the tight connection between social cognition – the highly developed human capacity to have a deep understanding of the inner life of others – and narrative discourse.

While we do not and cannot aim to achieve this goal in this volume, it constitutes a collection of studies that each aims to provide a step towards realizing it. They find their origin in the theme session “Linguistic manifestations of mixed points of view in narratives – Cognitive and typological perspectives” at the 12th International Cognitive Linguistics Conference, held in Edmonton, Canada in 2013. Papers from that session have been reworked to a greater or lesser extent, and were selected (after revision) by the editors on the basis of reports from two independent reviewers.

## Overview of the chapters

### Part I: The ubiquity of mixed viewpoints

The chapters in part I of this volume confront existing approaches and concepts in linguistics and cognitive science with wider ranges of data, from several languages. Dancygier and Vandelanotte show that multiplicity of viewpoints is not an exceptional feature of a special kind of discourse – like the mixture of narrator's and character's voices in literary narratives known as Free Indirect Speech – but rather the norm in texts of any size and any genre. Moreover, multiplicity of viewpoints may be introduced and managed in flexible and context dependent ways by linguistic elements of various kinds, not just by 'dedicated' (combinations of) linguistic signals such as those traditionally associated with Free Indirect Speech. Using examples from such different genres as literary narrative and political speeches, they demonstrate that also 'minor' signals (the demonstrative determiner *this*, a negative particle, etc.) may cue the construction of multiple viewpoints. And while a specific phrase in a specific type of context (*Said no one ever* on an "e-card") does have the character of a more or less fixed formula indicating the absurdity of the expression to which it is added, it quickly and in a dynamic way gives rise to extensions in other communicative environments and situations. While all local viewpoints in a text participate in a global understanding at the level of the Discourse Space, they do not become undistinguishable – viewpoint 'mixing' in a stretch of text does not lead to a 'merger' of the viewpoints into a single one. What provides coherence to the way a text is understood is the entire network resulting from the integration of local viewpoint signals.

Vanderbiesen takes his starting point in a general definition of viewpoint in language: viewpoint is present when an expression represents a person's judgement or when that person is responsible for the expression. Mixing of viewpoints then occurs when a single (complex) expression evokes more than one conceptualiser to whom judgements and/or responsibility may be ascribed. Given this conception, two types of viewpoint mixing may be distinguished: the first is called 'quotative': besides the Speaker producing the text (the 'Narrator' in narratives), at least one other person is present in the discourse as a conceptualiser in her own right. The other is 'reportive', and relates to evidentiality (see above): the other person evoked functions as a source of information for the Speaker/Narrator; the focus remains with the latter's viewpoint, the person associated with the second viewpoint is not an independent conceptualiser. With the help of these distinctions, Vanderbiesen undertakes a detailed analysis of a large number of viewpoint mixing constructions in German, ranging from several subtypes of reported

speech constructions to modal auxiliary constructions, from which he ultimately concludes that the two types just distinguished actually constitute the endpoints of a single quotative-reportive *cline*, not independently identifiable categories. In fact, many mixed viewpoint expressions turn out not to belong to either one type or the other, but they exhibit features of both of them in varying degrees, with different combinations of grammatical and lexical characteristics providing cues for the relevant interpretation of the mode of viewpoint mixing.

Izutsu and Izutsu also provide a study of viewpoint in two specific languages (in fact, in a specific genre), comparing the forms used in Ainu and Japanese with traditional categories of Speech and Thought Representation. They analyse viewpoint fusion in traditional folktales from Japan. As they are recited by performers in a first-person retelling, they involve a complex set of connected layers of viewpoints ‘from the very beginning’. The authors argue that in these folktales, some specific devices actually serve to let some of these layers ‘merge’, specifically those of Speaker and Narrator on the one hand, and Addressee and Audience on the other. Archaic Japanese evidentials normally mark a shift from Speaker to Narrator, but when their use and non-use alternate, as they do in the folktales, in the telling of the same narrative content, the result is that the distinction between Speaker and Narrator is blurred, which in turn gives the whole narrative a higher sense of “realism”. In Ainu, the distinction between inclusive and exclusive first person plural pronominal forms is exploited to distinguish the viewpoint of divine narrators (excluding the human audience and addressees) from that of human ones (inclusive). In both cases, the roles and viewpoints of addressee and audience are merged, again producing an enhanced sense of realism. The authors compare the viewpoint devices they analysed here with patterns of viewpoint mixing like Free Indirect Speech in terms of the Mental Spaces framework.

Given the omnipresence of mixed viewpoints in human communication, it is important to raise the question of the relationship between the ability to understand and process viewpoint mixing and social-cognitive problems. Engberg-Pedersen and Boeg Thomsen investigate the relationship between the development of social cognition (‘Theory of Mind’) and the use and acquisition of a set of three Danish particles by means of which participants in a conversation can signal their understanding of the interaction in relation to the propositional content of their talk. Based on previous semantic analyses, the authors hypothesize that these particles, labelled dialogue particles, indicate different specific configurations of shared knowledge or lack thereof, and they then develop an experimental way of testing these hypotheses. It turns out that adult speakers of Danish exhibit a high degree of consensus, corroborating the hypotheses and the feasibility of the test. Subsequently, the authors investigate the command of the use of these particles

in both normally developing children and children with autism. The capacity to use each of these elements appropriately requires a relatively sophisticated level of socio-cognitive development of children acquiring Danish, corresponding to second-order false belief tasks. A test such as the one developed here might thus provide (a contribution to) a tool for measuring (problems in) socio-cognitive development. Normally developing children aged between 11 and 14 show more variation than adults, and the children with autism, as a group, also perform significantly worse than the control group (while being matched for other aspects of cognitive development). But there is also considerable variation within the group of autistic children tested, and the authors discuss a number of factors potentially involved in this variation.

## Part II: Across languages

While the common denominator of the chapters in part I is to confront approaches and concepts with data, stemming from a variety of languages, the three chapters in this part explicitly aim to compare viewpoint mixing *across languages*. Van Krieken, Sanders and Hoeken look at a single genre – journalistic narratives of shocking events – in two languages, English and Dutch. In this genre, there is an important role for eye-witnesses in the narrated content, and a basic communicative goal of engaging the readership, turning them into *mediated* witnesses. The viewpoints of eye-witnesses are represented in similar ways in the two languages, especially by means of verbs of perception and cognition. Also, legitimization is achieved in the same way; by giving information in direct quotations, a narrative-*external* discourse space is accessed: the presentation as literal quotation evokes a witness-report *after* the event. However, dramatization is achieved differently in the narratives in the two languages; whereas the Dutch story uses present tense narration to this end, the American narrative employs free indirect discourse – maintaining the past tense of the story. The authors consider the possibility of different cross-linguistic conventions for blending viewpoints, and argue that their present study provides a good analytic framework to further explore this possibility in a larger corpus and, presumably, also across more languages.

In a somewhat similar vein to Vanderbiesen, Lu and Verhagen show that a specific combination of grammatical and typographical characteristics of English is employed systematically in Lewis Caroll's *Alice in Wonderland* to achieve the effect of a smooth gradual transition from a mixed, narrator-dominant viewpoint construal to a character-dominant one. Using four translations into Chinese as their material, they go on to argue that the lack of some of these characteristics in Mandarin – especially of the option to put a reporting clause in medial position –

apparently makes it difficult for translators to consistently achieve a similar effect. The same difficulty arises in the opposite direction where English lacks a straightforward conventional equivalent of the high frequency deictic movement verbs of Mandarin. Lu and Verhagen argue that translations, as parallel text corpora, provide an important addition to the methodological toolkit of cross-linguistic viewpoint research.

Also using translations as their data, Foolen and Yamaguchi undertake a comparative study of the way viewpoints are managed in different languages by looking at the translations of a Japanese novel (*Beauty and Sadness* by Yasunari Kawabata) into English, German, and Dutch. They start from the assumption that such differences need not be limited to differences in forms and structures, but that they may actually involve different conventional conceptualizations of viewpoint. Relating their discussion to the narratological tradition of perspective analysis, their linguistic approach demonstrates that several other viewpoint phenomena also have to be taken into account – for example granularity (high granularity suggesting closeness). Within this broader framework, they formulate some expectations about differences between the Japanese original and the translations into three West-Germanic languages. Eventually, they find some support for the expected preferences in Japanese, but the three European translations do not exhibit a consistent pattern that contrasts with Japanese. The authors attribute this (at least partly) to the challenging nature of representing the complexities of viewpoint, given the variety of different elements in each language that play a role in guiding the interpretation of viewpoint.

### Part III: Across modalities

The last part of this volume extends the scope of viewpoint mixing research beyond the traditional boundaries of linguistic analysis, usually set by a limitation to spoken and/or written texts. The chapter by Fukada considers how viewpoint is effected by the combination of visual and verbal information, in the Japanese picture storybook *Usagi*, and how potential discrepancies between visually and verbally represented viewpoints are dealt with. The visual features investigated include colour, size of characters (cf. the granularity also discussed by Foolen and Yamaguchi), facial expression and gaze direction. The verbally represented viewpoint characteristics comprise direct speech, repetition, deictic expressions, and onomatopeia. The verbal representation turns out to provide a relatively stable view of the world of the two rabbit-characters in the story, but the viewpoints suggested by the pictures vary considerably throughout the book, and include subjective ones that invite a high degree of involvement from the reader

with one or both characters. Fukada reports results of an experiment testing how readers deal with apparently conflicting cues, showing that the text actually plays an important role in the construction of readers' perspective on the events being represented.

The chapter by Sweetser and Stec is concerned with the role of one specific feature of co-speech gesturing in viewpoint management in oral narration, viz. gaze. First of all, they show that gaze does not (just) support the spoken channel, but plays an independent role in the on-line construction of meaning: It may mark one viewpoint while the spoken channel represents another. Second, the precise role that gaze plays is in turn heavily dependent on the configuration of Mental Spaces available at a particular moment in the narrative, for example, what portion of the Real Space has been assigned to a particular character in a previous stretch of discourse. Or, again dependent on both properties of the discourse situation and the content of the story being told, gaze is sometimes used to check mutual understanding between the actual Speaker and Addressee, or to enact an aspect of a conversation between characters in the story. Sweetser and Stec's analysis thus underscores both the crucial role of Mental Spaces in discourse understanding and the flexibility of gaze to be used as a meaningful, in fact indispensable, type of co-speech gesture.

Whereas language-specific characteristics investigated in previous chapters involve differences between conventions, the chapter by Jarque and Pascual addresses a type of difference that may be immediately related to the actual physical and perceptual properties of modality in which the language is realized, viz. signed, spoken, and/or written. They examine the construction and function of markers of viewpoint shifting – standardly associated with direct speech – in narratives conducted in sign language, using Catalan Sign Language (LSC) as their material. Researchers of spoken language agree that direct discourse in a conversation serves as an enactment or 'demonstration', rather than as an attempt or claim to reproduce someone else's words as they supposedly have been produced before (cf. the use of exactly the same devices of viewpoint shifting for 'fictive interaction', or in the internet memes discussed by Dancygier and Vandelanotte). Building on this view of spoken interaction, the authors first establish how factual discourse, i.e. quotation, is marked in signed interaction in LSC (among other things: interrupting eye contact with the actual interlocutor and shift of gaze to the position in sign space representing the addressee of the reported utterance); they then go on to show that exactly the same set of devices is employed to convey hypothetical and conditional statements, intentional and attitudinal states of characters, as well as evidentiality (marking that sources differ in their account of the same event). They relate the general, grammaticalized use of the same viewpoint shifting tools for representing both factual discourse and imagined

thoughts and attitudes in LSC to a general tendency found in languages without a strong tradition of literacy.

## In conclusion

As a whole, this volume testifies to the present state and direction of viewpoint research. On the one hand, the awareness of the variety of viewpoint tools and strategies within and across cultural communities is growing, and so is the insight into their specific character. But by the same token, it is also increasingly clear that there are general cognitive mechanisms and processes underlying the management of multiple viewpoints. Areas that appear to be relatively well charted – like that of Speech and Thought Representation – still see important innovations, both because of increasing cross-linguistic coverage and through integration with insights produced by the study of newly discovered (or recognized) viewpoint phenomena. New areas – like that of gesture – simultaneously benefit from the theoretical and analytical insights and tools developed in the long tradition of Speech and Thought Representation research, and create new directions of investigation and opportunities for deeper, generalized insights. The editors hope that the collection of studies in the present volume will inspire investigators to move this exciting cross-disciplinary field, that is so central to our understanding of what it is to be human, further forward.

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