Taking a Stance: a Corpus Study of Reported Speech

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Abstract

People tend to avoid exposed disagreement in conversation. This is normally attributed to politeness strategies that mitigate the potential face-threat created by direct disagreement with a conversational partner. In reported speech the pressure for mitigation of negative responses is removed, leading to the prediction that reported speech should contain more exposed disagreement. However, concerns about self-presentation may lead people to present their prior behaviour in such a way that demonstrates their understanding that disagreement is a sensitive matter; thus, differences in self-reported and other-reported disagreement would be anticipated. Finally, we predict that reported speech is used to highlight substantive differences in stance, and contains more explicit markers of stance to highlight newsworthiness. To test these ideas we compare the distribution of markers of agreement, disagreement and stance in four samples of conversation from the BNC: direct speech, self-reported speech (I said), other-reported speech (he / she said) and local dialogue context. Contrary to the prediction the results show that both direct and indirect markers of agreement and disagreement are more common in direct than reported speech. However, markers of contrast and emphasis including negations, swearwords and contrastive conjuncts are both more common in reported speech than direct speech and in self-reported speech than other-reported speech.

1   Introduction

In spoken dialogue people sometimes talk about things that were said in other conversations. These instances of reported speech are typically marked by a pronoun (e.g., 'he', 'she', 'I') and an embedding verb (e.g., 'said', 'went', 'goes') followed by a rendition of the previous utterance, as demonstrated by the following examples, taken from the British National Corpus:[1]

> *I said, I'm not assassinating your character now but you're being very intimidating in the way that your talking to people.*[2]

> *So she said, well you can't do that.*[3]

Example 1

Detailed studies of the form and function of reported speech show that they are not simple verbatim reproductions of something said previously (Clark and Gerrig, 1990; Clift, 2006; Clift, 2007; Holt, 2000; Holt, 2007). Rather, they involve the selective representation of people's own and others' conversational conduct. This allows conversational participants to use them, amongst other things, as evidence or justification for particular accounts of events, to relay complaints and disputes and to claim *epistemic priority* or privileged rights, knowledge or expertise about a topic under discussion (Holt, 2000; Clift, 2006; Haakana, 2007; Vincent and Perrin, 1999). The non-narrative functions of reported speech have been closely associated with the expression of a *point of view* and argumentation, providing justification,

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[1] Data cited herein have been extracted from the British National Corpus, distributed by Oxford University Computing Services on behalf of the BNC Consortium. All rights in the texts cited are reserved.
[2] Theatre public meeting, September 1991, BNC-D91
[3] At home, March 1992, BNC-KCN1

support or authority for a particular stance (Vincent and Perrin, 1999; Couper-Kuhlen, 2007). It has been noted that reported speech is often more blunt or forthright in character, and constructed in such a way that the reported speech, and the action performed by it, is easily recognisable (Clift, 2007).

The difference between what is said and what is reported as said thus provides a potentially useful analytic window on the specific ways people use language to produce these different pragmatic effects. Here we focus in particular on what this contrast can tell us about the way people formulate and report on their agreements and disagreements with others.

Direct challenges and disagreement in conversation are socially problematic. As we discuss below, exposed disagreement is generally avoided (Pomerantz, 1977) because it is potentially face threatening (Brown and Levinson, 1987). If people are reluctant to expose disagreements directly then reported speech provides a potentially useful context in which prior disagreements could be presented more explicitly; the original addressee is absent which reduces concerns about politeness and the likelihood of a challenge to the speaker's version of events.

What can reported speech tell us about the differences between how people enact disagreement and how they represent their disagreements in conversation? Which elements are preserved in the representation of (dis)agreement and which are not? To address these questions we test whether there are systematic differences in the manifestation of agreement and disagreement in direct speech and reported speech in a large corpus of everyday conversations (Burnard, 1995). In particular, we look at the distribution of markers of (dis)agreement, updates, contrast and emphasis. We compare how people use these in direct speech, in reports of their own speech and the speech of others.

The paper proceeds by briefly setting out qualitative, conversation analytic (CA), research on how disagreements are typically managed in direct conversation. We then consider the different markers of (dis)agreement, contrast and stance that can be used to inform a quantitative analysis. This enables a comparison of the ways people both enact and report on their agreements and disagreements. We compare, in particular, a) direct speech with reported speech b) self-reported speech ('I said') with other-reported speech ('He said', 'She said') and, in order to check effects of conversational context, c) self-reported speech with direct speech by the same speaker in their talk immediately preceding the reported speech.

The results show, contrary to our predictions, that explicit agreement and disagreement are more common in direct speech than reported speech. Nonetheless, markers of contrast and emphasis including negations, swearwords and contrastive conjuncts are both more common in reported speech than direct speech and more common in self-reported speech than other-reported speech. We propose that people use reported speech primarily to present the substance of their differences with a prior addressee rather than to re-present how those differences were played out.

1.1 Avoiding Disagreements

Making and responding to assessments and other assertions is a common feature of conversation. Conversation analysts have shown that when people produce initial assessments of situations or events, positive responses are made more quickly and clearly than negative or unaligned responses (Sacks, 1987; Pomerantz, 1977). Negative or *dispreferred* responses are normally produced more slowly, are often prefaced with some form of agreement ('Oh yes... but') and the negative assessment itself is often delayed by several turns and produced with some sort of mitigating account (Pomerantz, 1977).

When responding to an initial assessment, an agreement may be signalled by repeating back the original assessment, but whether this is an exact repeat or a modified repeat can signal whether it is a strong agreement or weaker variation, acting to modify or downgrade an assessment or perhaps even disagree. In the following example, taken from Pomerantz (1977), pauses and delays, such as the '(hhhhh)', may suggest the speaker is taking some time to formulate their disagreement, or decide upon the most tactful way to deliver it:

A: cause those things take working at,
   (2.0)
B: (hhhhh) well, they do, but
A: They aren't accidents,
B: No, they take working at, But on the other hand, some people are born with uhm (1.0)

B: well a sense of humor, I think it's something you are born with Bea.

A: Yes. Or it's c- I have the- eh yes, I think a lotta people are, but then I think it can be developed too.

Example 2

In addition to the hesitation, speaker B also uses the discourse marker *well*, often used to highlight that a disagreement is forthcoming. Furthermore, speaker A performs an initial agreement by repeating back *they take working at*, before delivering a contrasting point of view, namely that certain traits are innate. In response speaker A also offers an appeasing agreement, before reverting back to their previous, contrary stance, *I think it can be developed too*. This small extract highlights many of the devices, such as hesitation, negation, and discourse markers, that are employed when managing disagreement in dialogue.

The CA observations highlight the ways that people normally avoid exposing disagreements directly (unless of course they intend to be abrupt or confrontational). Consequently explicit markers of disagreement should tend to be rare in conversation and much less common than explicit markers of agreement. How would we expect these phenomena to play out in reported speech?

1.2   Hypotheses

We distinguish three general hypotheses for reported speech:

1. Politeness: The general politeness hypothesis is that people avoid the face-threat involved in direct disagreement with an addressee. Unless a current addressee is aligned in some way with the person(s) whose speech is being reported then the pressure for mitigation of negative responses is removed.[4] The general *politeness hypothesis* thus predicts that reported speech should tend to contain more exposed disagreement than direct speech.

2. Self-Presentation: Even where people are not disagreeing directly with their current addressee they might still wish to demonstrate that they understand that disagreement is a sensitive matter e.g., to avoid the inference that they are rude or combative. If people are sensitive to this

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[4]Of course, it is possible that the current addressee might also take issue with the opinion or stance identified in the reported speech but this would become an issue for their *subsequent* response to the report not the format of the report itself.

then, all things being equal, they should not produce any more explicit disagreements in reported speech than they do in direct speech. Moreover, concerns about self-presentation should by definition affect 'self 'more strongly than 'other' therefore we would expect fewer explicit markers of disagreement in self-reported than other-reported speech.

3. Contrastive Stance: A third general hypothesis is that people's primary concern when reporting on a prior conversation is to highlight the substantive differences between their own stance and that of others. The intuition here is that like ordinary utterances reported speech should ideally be newsworthy in some way (Goodwin, 1979); either to the current addressee as a means of highlighting a significant stance previously taken by the speaker, or to convey the newsworthiness of the reported speech to the people actually in the prior conversation. This leads to the prediction that reported speech should contain more explicit markers of stance or emphasis than direct speech; for example, by using turn-initial discourse markers such as 'well' or negations (Scott, 2002) as illustrated above in Example 1.

In order to make quantitative tests of these predictions we now consider in more detail some potential indices of the different ways people can position direct and reported speech. In particular, discourse markers of (dis)agreement, stance, emphasis and contrast.

1.3   Markers of Agreement and Disagreement

The simplest case for analysis is where people explicitly position their turns as agreement or disagreement. This can be done with phrases such as 'You're wrong', 'I disagree', 'I don't agree' and 'You're right' or 'I agree'. Unfortunately, for the reasons outlined above these exposed forms, especially those associated with disagreement, are likely to be rare.

A second set of more indirect indicators are provided by cue words or discourse markers that are associated with agreement and disagreement but don't explicitly formulate a turn as such. Walker et al. (2012) analysed large datasets of forum posts to identify cue words marking features such as agreement, disagreement and sarcasm. Samples were manually annotated for levels of disagreement and agreement. In order of decreasing consensus amongst annotators the markers of dis-

agreement were: 'really' (67% read a response beginning with this marker as prefacing a disagreement with a prior post), 'no' (66%), 'actually' (60%), 'but' (58%), 'so' (58%), and 'you mean' (57%).

These markers do not, of course, encompass all ways of doing disagreement. About 50% of respondents interpreted unmarked posts as disagreeing, highlighting the way disagreement is often enacted by more indirect means. Walker et al. (2012) also identified markers of agreement: 'yes' (73% read a response beginning with this marker as prefacing an agreement), 'I know' (64%), 'I believe' (62%), 'I think' (61%), and 'just' (57%).

One limitation of these indirect markers is that they are drawn from analysis of online discussion forums which are less dialogical than face-to-face interaction and where people may also tend to actively seek out disputes. It is also worth noting that, for example, the frequency of turn-initial 'yes' is not an unambiguous indicator of agreement; disagreement is often preceded by techniques including agrees (e.g. 'yes, but...'), delays and prefaces, such as, 'well' and 'hmm' (Sacks and Jefferson, 1995; Pomerantz, 1977; Kotthoff, 1993). Clift (2006) observes that 'well' can act as a buffer. Nonetheless, we assume that the relative distribution of these markers across different samples is indicative of the overall patterns of agreement and disagreement within them.

1.4 Update Markers

In addition to marking the fact of agreement and disagreement there are more subtle pragmatic markers that can signal an individual's knowledge state or stance with respect to the current conversational context. Here we use 'well' and 'oh' , which we gloss as *update markers* both of which are associated with signalling some form of contrast or sequential discontinuity in dialogue.

A turn-initial 'well' typically (but not exclusively) indicates that what follows will be in some way unexpected, unwelcome, discontinuous or contrary to a prior statement (Pomerantz, 1984; Schegloff and Lerner, 2009; Schiffrin, 1988; Heritage and Clayman, 2010). As such it can signal a forthcoming utterance, that is contrasting, unexpected or perhaps unwanted in substance, and which will lead to an update of the knowledge status.

A turn-initial *oh*, by contrast, typically (but not exclusively) acts as a reactive *change-of- state* token that indexes a responsive shift to a prior utterance through an update in the speaker's knowledge or awareness (Heritage, 1984; Heritage, 1998). Schiffrin (1988) observes that *oh* often marks a shift in speaker orientation or stance, indicating a speaker's realisation that the hearer is not similarly aligned or oriented towards a proposition and may signal a potentially argumentative stance.

1.5 Contrast, Emphasis and Expletives

Finally, in order to index the way in which the content of a turn is formulated or positioned with respect to another turn, we track negations ('not' and 'n't') and mid-turn contrastive conjuncts ('but' and 'though') as markers of contrast. The role of negation as a key phenomenon in relation to opinion and disagreement has been noted in the literature (Scott, 2002; Benamara et al., 2012) and is of particular interest here because of its use for the denial or rejection of statements; consequently, its role in rejection and disagreement, together with its inherent connection to the expression of alternatives or contrast, led to the inclusion of negation for our analysis. Adverbial emphasisers, such as 'really', 'surely' and 'clearly', are included as indicators of emphasis (Quirk and Crystal, 1985). The role of adverbial emphasisers as possible indices of disagreement (Scott, 2002) and for the expression of stance (e.g. conveying attitudes towards the content of a sentence), have been highlighted in the literature (Biber and Finegan, 1989; Conrad and Biber, 2000). We also track frequencies of a manually compiled list of common swearwords informed by previous studies and frequency data that surfaced those common to the BNC dataset ('bastard', 'bitch', 'bloody', 'bollocks', 'fuck', 'piss off', 'shit' and 'wanker') which can be used for the expression of emotions, especially frustration, anger and surprise (Jay and Janschewitz, 2008).

2 Predictions

Building on the three general hypotheses presented above and the discussion of different markers of agreement, disagreement and stance we can summarise eight basic predictions:

1. Politeness: Markers of agreement should always be more common than markers of disagreement in all speech.

2. Politeness: Markers of disagreement should be more common in reported speech than direct speech.

3. Politeness: Expletives should be more common in reported speech than direct speech.

4. Self-Presentation: Markers of disagreement should not be more common in self-reported speech than direct speech.

5. Self-Presentation: Markers of disagreement should be less common in self-reported speech than other-reported speech.

6. Self-Presentation: Expletives should be less common in self-reported speech than other-reported speech.

7. Contrastive Stance: Update markers should be more common in reported speech than in direct speech.

8. Contrastive Stance: Contrast and Emphasis should be more common in reported speech than in direct speech.

3 Method

The corpus analysis used the spoken dialogue component of the British National Corpus (BNC), comprising approximately 10 million words. This sizeable collection of naturally occurring conversations offers scope to explore patterns of reported speech across a large sample. The transcripts include annotations for some key paralinguistic features such as laughing, overlapping speech and significant pauses, although the transcription conventions vary. Our analysis is based on the BNC's *s-units* which are sentence-like divisions of the transcribed utterances. We used SCoRE, a web interface for dialogue corpora, to gather our data from the BNC (Purver, 2001). It can be used to search for any regular expression, and for word or phrase repetitions, including repeats across sentence/turn boundaries.

For each set of markers their frequency in the BNC was gathered and analysed. Reported speech can be introduced in a number of ways, for example, 'I went', 'I says', 'he goes', 'she was like'. We focused on 'pronoun + said + report' as with produced a good sized dataset. Using the SCoRE interface (Purver, 2001) it was possible to extract all instances of 'I said' (5315 turns), 'he said' (3310

turns) and 'she said' (2579 turns), which were then checked by hand to ensure they were consistent samples of reported speech. A further 5315 turns were randomly selected from the spoken dialogue section of the BNC to provide a comparable sample of general direct speech.

In order to control for the possibility that reported speech tends to occur in particular dialogue contexts or with particular audiences (e.g., storytelling to friends) a second sub-sample of 500 turns of direct speech was selected from the same context by identifying the nearest preceding turn to an identified instance of self-reported speech ('I said') by the same speaker, that did not contain an instance of reported speech. This is referred to below as the *Local Context* sample.

The samples were analysed for a number of turn-initial features: agreement and disagreement markers, update markers 'oh' and 'well'. Turn-initial in the reported speech samples constituted what immediately followed I/(s)he said, while in the direct speech sample it was simply the initial words of the turns. Non-turn-initial features were also investigated: adverbial emphasisers (often indicators of stance or opinion markers), 'oh' (change-of-state tokens), negations and swearwords.

4 Results

4.1 Exposed Disagreement

As Table 1 shows, both exposed agreement and disagreement are rare, although exposed agreement is, as expected, more common than disagreement. Only 0.8% of the turns sampled contain strong expressions of disagreement whereas 5.2% contain strong expressions of agreement. Strikingly, over 97% of these instances of exposed agreement/disagreement occur in direct speech. This observation is clearly counter to the initial politeness hypothesis for reported speech and incompatible with the self-presentation hypothesis.

Chi Square analysis of the frequency of strongly exposed agreement and disagreement indicates that their distributions are different in reported and direct speech ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 15.23, p<0.01). [5] There is approximately a 7:1 bias toward overt expression of agreement over disagreement in direct speech compared with approximately 1:1 in re-

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[5]Throughout we use p<0.05 as our criterion level but report computed probabilities to two decimal places for completeness.

Phrase	RS	DS	Total
You're wrong	6	17	23
I disagree	0	15	15
I don't agree	2	46	48
You're right	5	224	229
I agree	5	318	323

Table 1: Instances of Exposed Agreement and Disagreement in the BNC. *RS* = Reported Speech and *DS* = Direct Speech

ported speech. This suggests that although explicit, exposed disagreement is much less common in reported speech there is no particular bias in that context toward overtly positioning a relayed turn as agreement or disagreement.

4.2 Agreement and Disagreement markers

The distribution of turn-initial markers of agreement and disagreement identified by (Walker et al., 2012) for each subsample are shown in Tables 2 and 3.

Marker	DS	(s)he said	I said	Context
Really	3	5	4	1
No	173	128	190	12
Actually	3	5	2	1
But	85	63	51	13
So	108	30	17	19
You mean	0	0	0	0
Total	**372**	**231**	**264**	**46**
Total turns	5315	5889	5315	500
% total turns	7.00	3.92	5.00	9.20

Table 2: Frequency of Disagreement Markers

As Table 2 suggests, the overall frequency of markers of disagreement is higher in direct speech than all reported speech ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 48.3, p<0.01) and also higher in the Local Context sample (i.e. preceding direct speech turn by the same speaker) than in the self-reported speech of the same speaker ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 16.22, p<0.01). Comparison of self-reported speech with other-reported speech (he/she said) shows markers of disagreement are less common in other-reported speech ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 7.22, p=0.01). These patterns are opposite to the predicted pattern for the Politeness and

Marker	DS	(s)he said	I said	Context
Yeah/Yes	647	139	181	26
I know	12	16	22	4
I believe	0	1	1	1
I think	31	22	27	3
I just	4	10	6	2
Total	**694**	**188**	**237**	**36**
Total turns	5315	5889	5315	500
% total turns	13.06	3.19	4.46	7.20

Table 3: Frequency of Agreement Markers

Self-Presentation hypotheses for reported speech.

The same pattern is observed for the markers of agreement. They are more common in direct than reported speech ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 489, p<0.01) and more common in the Local Context sample from the same speaker than in self-reported speech ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 7.63, p=0.01). They are also more common in self-reported speech than other-reported speech ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 12.2, p<0.01).

Overall the results show that explicit and implicit markers of agreement and disagreement are more common in direct speech than reported speech and more common in self-reported than other-reported speech.

4.3 Turn-Initial Update markers

Marker	DS	(s)he said	I said	Context
Oh	170	292	218	17
Well	202	299	502	22
Total	**372**	**591**	**720**	**39**
Total turns	5315	5889	5315	500
% total turns	7.00	10.04	13.55	7.8

Table 4: Frequency of Update Markers

The raw frequencies for the distribution of turn-initial update markers are provided in Table 4. The 'reactive' change of state token 'oh' is more common in reported speech than all direct speech ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 16.7, p<0.01) but there is no difference in frequency between self-reported speech and the Local Context turns by the same speaker ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 0.58, p=0.45). 'Oh' is however, slightly more fre-

quent in other-reported speech (he/she) than self-reported speech ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 4.72, p=0.03).

As Table 4 shows, differences in the use of the 'prospective' update marker 'well' are more marked. It is approximately twice as common in reported speech as direct speech ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 70.9, p<0.01). Most of this difference is accounted for by the use of 'well' in self-reported speech where it is approximately twice as common as in the Local Context speech turn by the same speaker ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 14.2, p<0.01) and approximately twice as common in self-reported speech than other reported speech ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 80.3, p<0.01).

Overall, in contrast to markers of (dis)agreement, signals of updates are more common in reported speech. The use of the reactive 'oh' is more strongly associated with other-reported speech whereas the use of the prospective 'well' is associated with self-reported speech.

4.4 Contrast and Emphasis

The counts for markers of contrast and emphasis i.e. negations, contrastive conjunctives (but, though), adverbial emphasisers (actually, certainly, clearly, definitely, indeed, obviously, plainly, really, surely, for certain, for sure, of course) and common swearwords are provided in Table 5. For all these markers occurrences at any position within a turn were included for analysis.

Feature	DS	(s)he said	I said	Context
Negation	624	1300	1211	148
Swearwords	6	90	132	3
Contrastives	298	316	411	62
Adverbials	187	162	158	40
Total	**1115**	**1868**	**1912**	**253**
Total turns	5315	5889	5315	500
% total turns	20.98	31.72	35.97	50.6

Table 5: Frequency of Negations and Adverbial emphasises

It is immediately clear from Table 5 that swearwords are much more common in reported speech than in direct speech ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 92.5, p<0.01); they are also more common in self-reported speech than other-reported speech ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 76.8, p<0.01). Swearwords are also four times more common

in self-reported speech than in the Local Context turns by the speaker ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 7.15, p<0.01).

Negations follow a similar pattern. They are approximately twice as common in reported speech as direct speech ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 266, p<0.01) and approximately twice as common in self-reported speech as other-reported speech ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 350, p<0.01). However, negations are less frequent in self-reported speech than in the Local Context turns by the same speaker.

Contrastive conjunctives are also more common in reported speech than direct speech ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 4.82, p=0.03) and more than twice as common in self-reported speech than in other-reported speech ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 207, p<0.01). However, like negations they are less frequent in self-reported speech than in the Local Context turns by the same speaker ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 13.3, p<0.01).

The pattern for adverbial emphasisers is different to the other markers of contrast. Emphasis is both slightly more common in direct speech than reported speech ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 5.31, p=0.02) and equally frequent in self-reported and other-reported speech ($\chi^2_{(1)}$ = 0.48, p=0.48). It is also approximately twice as common in the Local Context sample of the speaker (context sample) than in their self-reported speech. Overall, emphasis is slightly more common in direct speech overall and particularly common in turns introducing reported speech.

5 Discussion

Although the results show a clear preference for agreement in direct speech in conversation they also show that, contrary to the predictions of the politeness hypothesis, reported speech does not appear to be a context in which explicit disagreements are more likely to be exposed. On the contrary, people are far less likely to include explicit markers of agreement or disagreement in reported speech than they use directly. Moreover, where they do formulate a reported utterance with an explicit marker it is equally likely to be agreement or disagreement.

Explicit makers of agreement and disagreement are rare of course and not an essential part of actually enacting an agreement or disagreement. However, the results show the same pattern for the less direct markers of agreement and disagreement identified by Walker et al. (2012). Again, markers of both disagreement and agreement are more

common in direct speech than reported speech. Overall, it appears that reported speech is not a context in which disagreements are normally represented or rehearsed as disagreements.

These results also run counter to the hypothesis that the format of reported speech turns is constrained by concerns with self-presentation. The results are contrary to predictions 5,6 and 7. Although the self-presentation hypothesis predicts that disagreement should not be more common in reported speech, it is incompatible with the observation that it is more common in direct speech and more specifically more common in self-reported speech than other-reported speech. A self-presentation account is also difficult to reconcile with the observation that ostensibly taboo swearwords are more common in direct than reported speech; self or other.

The hypothesis that provides the best fit to the preceding results is Contrastive Stance. The results suggest that reported speech is not used for the re-presentation of (dis)agreements, or at least not in the same way in which they are actually enacted in direct speech. Firstly, the update markers 'Oh' and 'Well' appear to be quite strongly associated with reported speech. This suggests people are deliberately highlighting moments of change more than they actually mark them in direct speech. Although not directly predicted the additional observation that people are more likely to 'well'-preface a self-report of their own remarks and 'oh'-preface reports of another's remark suggests individuals position themselves as delivering updates and report on others receiving them. This asymmetric highlighting of changes in epistemic stance fits with a concern to re-present the newsworthy and contrastive elements of prior conversations. Within these reports what is selected for inclusion also appears to focus on the substance of a dispute, i.e. on expressions of contrast and features that indicate shifts in stance. This is compatible with the relatively low frequency with which 'meta' agreement and disagreement markers are used. It is also compatible with the increased use of use of negations and contrastive conjunctives.

However, there are also some challenges to the Contrastive Stance hypothesis in the data presented above. It doesn't directly account for the observation that swearwords will be used more frequently unless these are also construed primarily as markers of contrast, perhaps acting as and emphasis device. This is plausible but post-hoc. Also, its prediction that markers of emphasis should be more common in reported speech is not borne out. The results show that the turn preceding reported speech (the 'Local Context' turn) does tend to include emphasis so this might reflect a marking of stance but again, this is a post-hoc explanation.

As such, it appears that highlighting points of contrast and representing stance and shifts in assessed parameters are key functions of reported speech. While this study shows that reported speech is not used to re-present how disagreements were enacted, it is possible that other forms of report may. The dataset we worked with predominantly included direct reported speech or quotatives ('he said cats are bad'), but also some indirect reported speech ('he said that cats are bad'). Further work to investigate how the more descriptive indirect reports, and the wider gamut of reported thoughts might be used to re-present disagreement may provide further insights into the reporting of disagreement.

Acknowledgments

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