

## Sentence-mode reporting in free indirect speech

### Contextualization

In reported speech the form and contents of the original text are retained to varying degrees. While direct speech is more likely to reflect the situation of the original speaker, indirect speech tends to align to the perspective of the one reporting the utterance. Such a shift from the original speech situation is compulsory only for person deixis (*ich/I, du/you, etc.*), however. The degree of alignment of other characteristics of the original utterance depends on the type of indirect speech and particularly on the strength of its syntactic integration in the co-text.

This paper attempts to demonstrate that in German indirect speech relayed in the subjunctive this relationship also applies to the sentence mode of the original utterance: in syntactically independent or only weakly subordinate “free indirect speech” with a verb-initial or verb-second clause, the sentence mode used in the original utterance can be cited in the same form as an illocutionary force indicating device; in “dependent indirect speech”, in contrast, the illocutionary potential of the sentence mode must be described in a reporting clause while the subordinate *dass* verb-final clause is reduced to the propositional act.

Thus, in the following example from Little Red Riding Hood, the exclamative mode of the original utterance (“Oh, grandmother, what big ears you’ve got!”), which is also used in direct speech (1a), can be cited in free indirect speech (1b, 1c) in the same form (verb-second position, punctuation, interjection) whereas it must be described in the introductory reporting clause (rief erstaunt/exclaimed in surprise) in dependent indirect speech with a *dass* verb-final clause (1d):

- (1a) Rotkäppchen sagte: „Ei, Großmutter, was hast du für große Ohren!“
- (1b) Rotkäppchen war erstaunt. Ei, was habe die Großmutter für große Ohren!
- (1c) Rotkäppchen sagte, ei, was habe die Großmutter für große Ohren!
- (1d) Rotkäppchen rief erstaunt, dass die Großmutter so große Ohren habe.

Based on examples from Daniel Kehlmann’s novel “Die Vermessung” (2005), this paper investigates whether such differences can also be identified for the other sentence modes. Here, sentence mode is understood as a complex sign with a formal and functional aspect, building on Altmann (1987) and the IDS’s “Grammar of the German Language” (Zifonun/Hoffmann/Strecker 1997).

According to the proposition principle postulated by the IDS Grammar, for any type of indirect speech, only the propositional act of the original utterance can be reproduced literally while the performed speech act has to be described in a reporting clause (*er fragte, behauptete, wunderte sich/he asked, claimed, wondered, etc.*). If, however, in free indirect speech (like in direct speech), the sentence mode of the original utterance is preserved and its “illocutionary potential” is deployed, the scope of this principle is restricted.

## Selected results

In the declarative mode, the differences between both types of indirect speech become clear when the attempt is made to negate the propositional act of the reported speech with the verb *bestreiten/deny*. In the case of free indirect speech, it proves to be as problematic, or rather as ungrammatical, as for direct speech due to its illocutionary independence:

- (2) free indirect speech: ??Er bestritt, er wolle nach Hause. / \*Er wolle nach Hause, bestritt er.  
direct speech: \*Er bestritt: „Ich will nach Hause.“

In contrast, in dependent direct speech, there are no issues as the verb-final clause is reduced to the propositional act of the original utterance in any case:

- (3) dependent indirect speech: Er bestritt, dass er nach Hause wolle.

A further piece of evidence lies in the change of speakers which is possible in free indirect speech and which – as in direct speech – does not require an introductory clause. In contrast with dependent indirect speech (with subordinate *dass*-clauses), the proposition principle obviously does not apply here as neither the speech acts nor the change in speakers has to be made explicit:

- (4) *Ein interessanter Aufbau, bemerkenswert! Allmählich sei es Zeit zum Aufbruch.*  
So plötzlich?  
*Nach alten Berichten gebe es einen Kanal zwischen den Strömen Orinoko und Amazonas. Europäische Geographen hielten das für Legende. Die herrschende Schule behauptete, daß nur Gebirge als Wasserscheiden dienen und keine Flußsysteme im Inland verbunden sein könnten.*  
Darüber habe er seltsamerweise nie nachgedacht, sagte Bonpland. (Vermessung, 77)

In the interrogative mode as well, free indirect speech can reproduce the sentence mode of the original utterance in the same form so that no introductory clause is required:

- (5) Er rieb sich die Stirn. Westfalen, wiederholte er, als würde es klarer, wenn er es sich vorsagte. Jérôme. *Was habe das mit ihnen zu tun?* (Vermessung, 152f.)

Should a reporting clause be used all the same, it generally does not describe the act of asking the question but rather paralinguistic or interactive aspects (*rufen/exclaim, erwidern/retort*):

- (6) Wieso, *rief sie*, sei ausgerechnet er blind für Dinge, die sonst jeder sehe? (Vermessung, 152)

Although the reporting clause is missing or unspecific in these examples, it is clear from the punctuation and the position of the verb, amongst others, that a question is being reported. In dependent indirect speech, in contrast, the act of asking the question must always be described.

From an intonational perspective, yes-no questions are particularly interesting in free indirect speech with a postponed reporting clause:

- (7) Sei etwas Enthusiasmus zuviel verlangt ↑, fragte er ↑.

As in direct speech („Ist etwas Enthusiasmus zuviel verlangt?“ ↑ fragte er ↑./“Is it too much to demand a bit of enthusiasm?“ ↑ he asked ↑.), the intonation of the declarative mode of the postponed reporting clause can be affected by the interrogative mode of the reported utterance, which testifies to the illocutionary force of free indirect speech.

Similarly, the optative mode can be reproduced in the same form only in free indirect speech (8a) whereas dependent indirect speech (8b) could refer to an original utterance in the declarative mode and requires an explicit description of the speech act:

- (8a) Er unterbrach das Schweigen. Wenn sie doch schon zu Hause wären! (Or: Wären sie doch schon zu Hause!)
- (8b) Er unterbrach das Schweigen und äußerte den Wunsch, dass sie schon zu Hause wären. (The original utterance was potentially: „Ich wünsche mir, dass wir schon zu Hause wären.“)

The “Heische” mode, a special subcategory of the optative mode, can only be interpreted as such in free indirect speech (9a) while it appears to refer to an utterance in the declarative mode when realized in dependent indirect speech (9b):

- (9a) Wie hat einer einmal gesagt? Derjenige, der ohne Schuld sei, werfe den ersten Stein! (Glau- ser: Matto regiert)
- (9b) Einer hat mal gesagt, dass derjenige, der ohne Schuld sei, den ersten Stein werfe!

As already demonstrated in the example from Little Red Riding Hood, also the exclama- tive mode can be realized in the same form only in free indirect speech:

- (10) Schloß, Kinder, Weimar. *Das sei doch etwas!* (Vermessung, 142)
- (11) Helfend faßte Daguerre nach seinem Ellenbogen, aber Gauß fuhr ihn an. *Was ihm einfalle!* (Vermessung, 240)

Only in the imperative mode does the compulsory shift of the listener deixis inhibit, even in free indirect speech, the identical reproduction of the sentence mode. Here – like in dependent indirect speech – the text falls back on the modal verbs *mögen/like*, *might* or *sollen/should*:

- (12) *Er solle es schon sagen*, rief Humboldt. Er habe noch anderes zu tun. (Vermessung, 125)

## **Conclusions**

These findings show that it makes sense to differentiate between two types of indirect speech which differ fundamentally in their capacity to cite the sentence mode of the original utterance (with the exception of the imperative mode):

- In *free indirect speech*, which prototypically appears in the form of verb-second or verb-initial clauses, the illocution of the original utterance does not have to be described in a reporting clause as the sentence mode of the original utterance (with its illocutionary potential) is cited in the reported speech itself *in the same form*. If a reporting clause is used, it does not have to describe the speech act.
- In *dependent indirect speech*, in contrast, which prototypically appears in the form of verb-final clauses introduced by *dass/that*, *ob/whether* or *wh*-deixis, it is necessary to include a reporting clause describing the speech act (mostly in the form of an introductory clause before the reported utterance) as the sentence mode of the original utterance (with its illocutionary potential) *cannot* be cited in the reported speech itself *in the same form*.

This refutes the proposition principle in relation to its claim that the speech act performed by the original utterance has to be described in all cases by the indirect speech quotative (reporting clause).

Admittedly the link between the formal and functional characteristics of both types of indirect speech is not always compulsory. A mixed form occurs in indirect interrogatives without a speech introduction but with verb-final position, which allows the illocutionary act to be integrated (as indicated by the use of a question mark or rising intonation):

- (13) Er habe ja nicht einmal ein anständiges Fernrohr, sagte er bedrückt. *Was denn passiert sei?* (Vermessung, 154)

Further exceptions pertaining to the link between illocutionary independence and verb-initial or verb-second position have been identified in *wenn/if*-clauses in the optative mode as in (8a) and in verb-final clause exclamatives with *dass/that, als ob/as if, wenn, if* or in *wh*-phrases as in (11).

If we are aiming at a grammatical description that highlights important form-function relationships, it seems reasonable to use such pragmatically relevant prototypes instead of making the presence of a speech introduction in complex clauses the primary criterion for the formation of types.

The concept of the propositional act does not only abstract from the illocution of the original utterance but also from its concrete linguistic form. The well-known fact that indirect speech with verb-second clauses (i.e. free indirect speech) is interpreted as being a literal reproduction also suggests that it does not comply with the proposition principle. The tendency of literal reproduction in free indirect speech applies to numerous linguistic elements relating to speaker and speech situation, from temporal, spatial and object deixis via interjections, modal particles, evaluative adverbials, discourse markers and responses to hesitations, anacolutha and repetitions. Further research is needed here in order to investigate the extent to which free and dependent forms of indirect speech differ in these dimensions of literal reproduction.

## References

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