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Perspective and perspectivation in discourse

An introduction

Carl F. Graumann and Werner Kallmeyer

University of Heidelberg / Institute for the German Language, Mannheim

In ordinary language perspectival terms are quite common. Words like perspective, viewpoint, aspect are frequently used and easily understood, at least for the practical purposes of everyday communication. With “perspective” and “viewpoint” we refer to a position from which a person or a group view something (things, persons or events) and communicate their views. With “aspects” we refer to those sides, attributes or features in which the objects of our perception or cognition appear. These basic meanings are appropriate for everyday communication and understanding.

It is only when we sit back and reflect that we begin to understand how these terms are interrelated, namely, as perspectival terms, i.e., as elements of a perspectival structure (perspectivity). It is from a given position in space that spatial objects are viewed in one of their aspects; when the viewing subject changes his/her position or viewpoint other aspects of the same object come into view.

But moving around an object or moving the object itself are not the only ways of experiencing something in more than one of its aspects. Humans coexist and they communicate with other humans most of the time they are awake. Hence, they learn what others see from their vantage-points and they learn to take the others’ perspectives. Neither the experience of viewing the world from a changing point of view nor the achievement of taking another person’s perspective are restricted to visual perception. In our communication with others we learn that any cognition, sensory or non-sensory, perceptual or judgmental, may turn out to be position-related. Growing up together with others and talking with them we experience the relativity and perspectival structure of human knowledge: one and the same thing can be viewed, judged and evaluated from more than one viewpoint, but, above all, one and the same thing, person, event or state of affairs can be named and communicated in different ways. Names or, more generally, words for the same

can be so different that the sameness of the differently named is perfectly hidden - reason as well as motive for many a heated argument.

This brief look into a common experience may serve as a propaedeutic to two major conceptions of perspectivity which, at least for the time being, exist side by side:

- an epistemological conception of perspectivity as a general characteristic of human consciousness and knowledge as it has been initiated mainly (but differently) by Leibniz, Nietzsche, Husserl. Graumann (in his chapter on explicitness and implicitness of perspectives) refers to this conception as “egological” in Husserl’s sense of the word (Husserl 1950);
- a social-interactional conception of perspective-setting and -taking as it was initiated by George Herbert Mead (1934) and Alfred Schütz (1962). For these social philosophers and sociologists the mutuality of perspective-taking is a prerequisite of human communication, which, in turn, contributes to and endorses what Schütz (1962) called the “general thesis of reciprocal perspectives”.

Accentuating the distinction between these two conceptions of perspectivity we may state that while the first one is ego-centered the second is alter-centered in the sense that it takes the encounter with another person to develop one’s self. Or, as Theodor Litt (1924), a German philosopher, put it independently from Mead: the fact that I see others see me enables me to see myself as others do.

For Mead these others, who are significant if their perspectives have to be taken frequently, were conceptualized mainly in terms of social roles. Hence, role-taking became synonymous with perspective-taking. Some of these roles have become significant also for empirical research. Here it has been mainly social psychologists who have studied the relationship between roles and perspectives, preferably with antagonistic dyads, in which opposing roles engender divergent perspectives. .

A paradigmatic adversative relationship is to be found in the case of aggression when aggressors and victims of aggression tend to perceive and, above all, to evaluate their opponents and whatever may be relevant for the critical incident in different ways (Mummendey et al. 1984). As a rule, the incident is called (unjustified) “aggression” only by the “victim” who is, of course, not a victim at all for the other actor or initiator, who frequently does not even consider him/herself an “initiator” but a “reactor” who only did what one would do in the (justified) defense of one’s rights, property, dignity, etc. (Mummendey et al. 1982, 1984; cf. Otten & Mummendey, this volume). This holds true even for aggressions that are “merely verbal” or “only words” (MacKinnon 1993; Graumann 1995, 1998). The role of language in all this is obvious: the identification of a role (as aggressor or victim), of an act (as intentional or incidental), of violence (as unjustified or justified), of effects (as harmful or harmless) is accomplished by the differential use of linguistic

categories suggesting causes, reasons, motives, dispositions (Semin & Fiedler 1991; Schmid, this volume).

The divergence of perspectives may be most conspicuous in aggressive interactions, but it can also be observed in all conflictuous or antagonistic relationships. Baumeister et al. (1990) have demonstrated the perspectival divergence for “victim and perpetrator accounts of interpersonal conflict in autobiographical narratives about anger”. Mikula and his associates have, for several years, studied perspectival differences in the differential experience of injustice with partners of close and intimate relationships (Mikula 1993; this volume).

Similar divergences of perspectives may be expected in any of the many agent-patient role dualities of our society, such as service agent-customer or client, seller-buyer, judge-defendant, doctor-patient, etc., and, underlying all verbal communication, the speaker-hearer dyad.

Where the position taken is evident, intrinsic to, or “defined” by the role or the situation the perspective from which an utterance is to be understood may remain implicit and has to be inferred by the hearer (cf. Levelt 1986, 1989). In other situations the perspective is explicitly stated. Conditions for the explicitness or implicitness of perspectives are presently discussed (cf. Graumann and Linell, this volume).

Underlying many of the social psychological studies of perspectival divergence is the (frequently endorsed) assumption that there is a basic perspectival divergence between Self and Other, leading to different causal attributions (Watson 1982). The first to discover this attributional difference between actors and observers were Jones and Nisbett (1971), after whom a long series of experimental investigations followed in which attributional biases were considered to be effects of psychological, mainly cognitive, processes. It took some time till social psychologists, spear-headed by Fiedler and Semin, “reperspectivated” the cognitive bias by assuming that “many psychological phenomena which are usually conceived as cognitive, motivational or emotional processes within the minds and brains of individual people are *permanently installed in language as an autonomous system above and beyond the individual*” (Fiedler & Semin 1992: 79; italics by CFG). Language is here treated like an environment which, if we may borrow the Gibsonian term, “affords” perspectives and causalities (cf. Schmid, this volume).

While the “Linguistic Category Model” provides a new bridge between psychology and linguistics, there always has been common ground shared by literature and psychology as may be illustrated by the transindividual perseverance of social (e.g., national) stereotypes in literary genres. From fairy-tales to jokes biased perspectives, such as ethnocentric views on out-groups, are “permanently installed” in linguistic forms that may last very much longer than individual minds and memories. The linguistic analysis of social stereotypes starting with the interest in their linguistic form turned rapidly to the specific rhetoric features of the more or less

implicit and evasive use of stereotyped evaluations and prejudice (Quasthoff 1978; van Dijk 1984). Actually there is a confluence of the analysis of social stereotypes and the sociological and sociolinguistic study of social categorization as conversational practice (Sacks 1972a, b). At least in conversation analysis social categorization gets a pivotal function in an increasing number of studies on the definition of social or ethnic identities, discrimination and social exclusion (Czyzewski, Gülich, Hausendorf, & Kastner 1995). Even if this approach is not always theoretically located in a framework of perspectivity the social typification of individuals and their normal, expectable behavior is of course highly relevant to the definition of habitual perspectives and their representation in discourse and interaction (Kallmeyer & Keim 1994; Keim, this volume; Shethar, this volume).

In linguistics, the explicit reflexion on perspective and perspectivation in language and discourse generally follows two lines. One point of departure is the insight that perspectivity is deeply incorporated in language structure as a result of the anthropomorphism of language (Canisius 1993); the analytical interest orients to the search for overt and hidden perspectival elements in the structure of language. The other line of research considers perspectivation, i.e. the verbal practices speakers use to represent perspectives – own and others' and their interrelations. The question here is what speakers are doing with their linguistic possibilities of expressing perspectives.

Inspired by Bühler's theory of language linguistic research turned rather early to the field of deixis as one key to linguistic pragmatics. Fillmore's analysis of implicit deictic categories in verb semantics (1968), the deictic approach has been transformed into a more generalized view of perspectivity in cognitive grammar and semantics. The concept of "perspectivation" (or, occasionally, "perspectivization") is used to grasp the selective character of any representation of a state of affairs, depending on actor roles and the respective viewpoints. Schemata of perspectivation are grammaticalized in the case structure and in the semantics of verbs, adverbs, and other word categories (Zifonun, this volume). A grammatical domain which really calls for an analysis in perspectival terms is modality (Zifonun, Hoffman, & Strecker 1997; Sanders & Spooren 1997).

The search for linguistic elements which may communicate perspectival categories in discourse allowed the discovery of a multitude of perspectival aspects of verbal expressions (Sandig 1996) and, in the last consequence, demonstrates the linguistic realization of the ubiquity of perspectivity in human perception, cognition and action. This puzzling richness of perspectival elements in verbal utterances provokes attempts to clarify systematically, on which level of utterance production which type of perspectival category comes into play. Or, in other words: what is really in language and what is the effect of speaker's choices of topics, expression or relevance marking (von Stutterheim & Klein, this volume).

The study of perspectivation poses questions with respect to the role that communication of perspectives plays in text and interaction, and what important strategies of perspectivation one can observe in different contexts. For the analysis of human strategies of orientation in space and time spatial reference, e.g., in route directions, proved to be of primordial interest (Weissenborn & Klein 1982). From here it is only a short step to the analysis of referential movements in texts (Klein & von Stutterheim 1989) and its interpretation as representation of perspectival moves.

The influence of perspective-setting on textual structure and on the choice of verbal expression always had been an important point in literary analysis. Here the interest in perspectivity was stimulated, on one hand, by the distinction of narrative styles on the basis of different narrative perspectives (Stanzel 1979). Significant types of perspectivation can be considered as constitutive of specific narrative paradigms such as the narration of the 19th century and the “modern” one (Canisius, this volume). In addition to the analysis of the author’s perspective the – implicit – reader’s perspective (Iser 1972) turned out to be a constitutive element of literary creation. On the other hand, under the influence of Bakhtin’s concept of multiple voices, the richness of perspectives and their layering especially in narratives have a strong appeal to textual analysis. Both aspects of the perspectivation in literary texts became very fruitful for linguistics, too. In the last years, in linguistic discourse analysis and conversation analysis one can notice a (re)discovery of the richness of expression in everyday speech. In this context, special attention is paid to reported speech and the characteristic layering of the reported and the reporting speaker’s perspectives expressed by verbal and prosodic means (Kallmeyer & Keim 1994; Keim 1996; Günthner, this volume; Quasthoff, this volume).

The study of perspectivation in verbal interaction adds the observation of the interplay – and often power play – of perspective-setting and -taking in verbal exchanges to the analytical program of textual analysis mentioned so far. The analysis of verbal interaction, based on the theoretical framework of Mead and Schütz, the symbolic interactionism of Goffman, the ethnomethodology of Garfinkel as well as the cognitive sociology of Cicourel, paid specific attention to the mutual understanding of participants as an interactive process. Special attention was paid to formal structures of cooperation in order to elucidate the participants’ work of establishing interactional order and maintaining a common interpretation of what is “going on”. Participants are constantly forced to display at least partly their interpretation of what happened so far and to cope with the requirement of recipient design, i.e. the recognizable incorporation of the speaker’s assumptions about the hearer’s conditions of understanding (Schegloff 1972). Establishing the formal structure of a sequentially ordered interaction demands perspective-setting and -taking and the construction of a common perspective on a basic level. This elementary feature of perspective does not prevent perspective divergences on a

higher level, but it is a necessary condition for the chance to negotiate divergences of positions and goals in a constructive and socially acceptable manner.

Studies in verbal interaction draw attention to the more or less explicit management of perspectival differences in situations where the difference of perspectives is used as a resource for problem solving, such as consultation and advice giving (“in your place I would do ...”), to the confrontation of perspectives in discussions, and to conflictual divergences of perspectives. Metacommunication in conflictual situations is in large parts talk about perspectives. Making explicit one’s own perspective and one’s own interpretation of others’ perspectives is indeed the most powerful countermeasure in critical interactions (Kallmeyer 1979). But we still lack systematic knowledge about the verbal strategies of explaining one’s own and others’ perspectives and their functions in processes of establishing mutual understanding and negotiating controversial goals and interests (Kallmeyer 1996; Keim 1996).

Important elements of perspectivation in discourse are contextualization and intertextuality. Contextualization establishes references to frames of interpretation which may be located within the actual text or interactional unit but also establish links to a wide range of discourse events (Gumperz 1982, 1992a, b; Auer & di Luzio 1992). Contextualization is an integral part of verbal production. Its perspectival impact lies in its function to display how speakers want their utterances to be interpreted and therefore what choice of informational background characterizes their speaking stance or position. Intertextuality is the equivalent concept for references from texts to texts and the links which may be established when we interpret one text in the light of others (Bakhtin 1981). This process of interpreting utterances or texts putting them in new contexts which do not necessarily correspond to the original contextualization can be described as decontextualization and recontextualization. Recontextualization also means reperspectivation (Linell, this volume). Processes of this type are very common and can be found not only in the intertextuality of extended texts and wide-spanned discourse worlds but also in the local structuring of interaction sequences.

Altogether, the present volume reflects the major research interests in the actual social, psychological, and linguistic study of perspectivity in human interaction. The growing mutuality of knowledge and the incipient cooperation between linguists and social and behavioral scientists in the study of perspectivity has recently concentrated on four major issues. Since they help define the present field of research we have used them to organize this volume.

In **Part A** the structure and the communicative functions of perspectivity in discourse are discussed:

Klaus Foppa approaches the question of whether the participants’ reference to knowledge in interaction is always perspectival and relevant to perspective setting. From a strictly phenomenological position knowledge and perspective can be re-

garded as functionally equivalent if and only if they are treated as equivalent by the interlocutors. It can be shown that participants make a clear distinction between perspectives which are negotiable and knowledge taken for granted which is not negotiable. Carl Graumann and Per Linell turn to the question of implicitness of perspectives. Both consider perspectivity as a fundamental and general concept. **Carl Graumann's** interest is to structure the problem area of explicitness/implicitness in perspectivity. In this context he discusses terms such as mono- and multiperspectivity, awareness of one's own perspective, and approaches to the process of growing awareness and of defending monoperspectivity (or opening one's perspectival frame). **Per Linell** presents a general view of the properties of perspectivity, underlining the primary status of implicitness and the role of the recipients' active construction of textual perspectives based on textual properties and intertextuality. Recontextualizing the original document and, thus, reperspectivating it appears to be an integral element of reception. The following two linguistic chapters turn to the structural, that is grammatical, incorporation of perspective. The paper of **Christiane von Stutterheim and Wolfgang Klein** focuses on the distinctness of linguistic perspective (L-perspective) from other aspects of perspectivity, for example, actor's perspective. In the linguistic system incorporated perspectival categories impose strict constraints on other aspects of speech production whereas the speaker has more freedom in the selection of other elements of perspectivation. **Gisela Zifonun** revisits the grammatical discussion about perspectivity starting with Fillmore and demonstrates the relevance of the concept of perspectivity for grammar concentrating on the thorny case of grammatical converses.

Part B is dedicated to the forms and the dynamics of perspectivation, i.e., the setting of perspectives in verbal interaction:

The common framework into which all contributions to part B fit can be called conversational rhetoric. **Werner Kallmeyer** concentrates on types and functions of elaborated perspective explicitation in conflictual interaction. The analysis of an extended sample of conversational examples works out basic elements of recurrent strategies of grounding, legitimizing and projecting possibilities of problem solving. In her case study, **Inken Keim** shows how a speaker incorporates her professional self concept of a mediator between antagonistic groups in Germany after the unification into her self-presentation in interaction. It can be seen how the dynamic of a highly complex perspectivation in an explication of the actual situation triggers rhetorical problems and almost failure at a point where perspectival inconsistencies come into play. **Ursula Bredel**, too, uses documents of eastern and western German narratives about unification. Her analysis of the self-referential use of "du" (you) introduces a rich differentiation of polyphonic contrasts and their typical functions in the corpus. **Alissa Shethar** analyzes perspectival shifts and rhetorical tactics involving other perspectives among speakers who are in some ways discursively marginal, precisely because their perspectives are not mainstream

common knowledge – in this case eastern perspectives after the German unification. **Helga Kotthoff** turns to irony and similar forms of discursive polyphony or staged intertextuality. Her objective is to clarify the distinction between consonant and dissonant processing of two simultaneous voices, and on this basis she builds a typology of staged intertextuality, including quotation, parody, pseudo-quotation and irony.

Part C addresses the important topic of dealing with differences and divergences in multiperspectival communication:

Sabine Otten and **Amélie Mummendey** argue that the perspective-specific evaluation of aggressive interactions and their social context are crucial features in the analysis of aggression. In-group favoritism and out-group derogation not only serve a need for cognitive structure and a need for a positive self-concept, but can only be fully understood by taking into account the dynamic, interactive character of the social context in which they take place. **Gerold Mikula** focuses on the differences in the interpretation and justice evaluation of negative incidents in close relationships between individuals who occupy different perspectives in relation to the incident (recipient or victim, and actor or victimizer). The experiments show that the evaluation of incidents as just or unjust and of one's own responsibility depends on the definition of the personal relationship. **Ivana Marková** and **Sarah Collins** focus on the problem of perspective setting and taking in dialogues between persons with impaired and persons with unimpaired speech. On the empirical basis of 60 video-recordings the authors analyze both parties' difficulties and practices of perspective work. Interestingly, the unimpaired speakers have difficulties with perspective taking whereas the impaired speakers are quite able of taking their partners' perspectives but have to do a complex and innovative kind of communicative work to make their perspectives understandable to the unimpaired partners. **Jeannette Schmid** applies the Linguistic Category Model, which is based on the differentiation of four word categories ordered according to the degrees of abstractness and globality of information, in order to analyze the verbal strategies of defendants and prosecutors in the closing speeches of the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal and in the closing speeches within a role play of lawyers in training. The differences between defendants' and prosecutors' strategies are very consistent, even if the speakers are unaware of the connection between abstractness of language and the related attributions.

Part D focuses on the nature of perspectivity in reconstructive, mainly narrative, genres of text:

Peter Canisius analyzes the grammatical correlates of an important transition in the history of narration: the change from a "telling" to a "showing" mode, i.e. from an outer to an inner perspective. The analysis extends to the specific uses of personal pronouns and tense, and the author describes the "showing" use of these forms as "logophoric". **Uta Quasthoff** presents an approach of narrative analysis

which combines micro- and macroanalytic elements in perspectivation in narration vs. reporting. Based on examples of expert witnesses in court, she distinguishes an event-reconstructing discourse which is a two-context format with a layering of perspectives, and a generalizing discourse which is a one-context-format. **Susanne Günthner** describes reporting another's speech as a process of decontextualization and recontextualization. The analysis of the speaker's polyphonic strategies takes into account linguistic and paralinguistic means such as prosody, voice quality and code-switching. Based on a series of experiments about the effect of narrative perspective on the cognitive processing of texts **Janós Lázló** and **Tibor Pólya** show the effect of the specifically meaningful quality of internal perspective in comparison to outer perspective. One theoretical conclusion of the discussion is that not only mental images, but also abstract mental models are sensitive to input variations related to perspectivation.

This very short characterization of the contributions may already give hints to their dense intertextuality throughout the volume. The reader is invited to follow the lines of contextualization linking, for example, papers raising the question of explicitness and implicitness of perspectives in a more general or in a more case-oriented way, or papers dealing with the speakers' forms of constructing objectivity and subjectivity, or, to take a last example, papers analyzing the consistent expression of role differences and the complex interplay between the presentation of actor roles as part of the event talked about and the actual interaction.

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