TIME AND VIEWPOINT IN NARRATIVE DISCOURSE

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This Theme Session brings together cognitive linguistic research on two aspects that are central to narrative discourse: time and viewpoint. Studies on time in narrative and viewpoint in narrative have largely developed into two separate areas of research, although both aspects are closely related. This relation follows from the complex structure of narrative discourse which connects three time loci: the time locus of the narrated, the time locus of the narrator, and the time locus of the reader (Currie, 2007). Temporal references can be linked to either one of these loci, with the result that different viewpoints are profiled and blended as the narrative unfolds in time.

Previous studies have provided initial insights into the interaction between the linguistic manifestation of time and viewpoint in narratives. For example, tense shifts and temporal adverbs typically signal shifts in time frame as well as viewpoint (Sanders, 2010). Likewise, choice of tense affects the temporal distance between the viewpoints of narrator and character, with past tense narration resulting in a larger distance than present tense narration (Dancygier, 2012). In a different way, the stylistic device of Free Indirect Discourse blends the viewpoints of narrator and character by combining the past tense (anchored to the narrator’s time locus) with the temporal adverb now (anchored to the character’s time locus) (Nikiforidou, 2012). All of these linguistic constructions regulate the dynamic alignment between the viewpoints of narrator, character, and reader, thereby modifying readers’ cognitive representation of the progression and regression of narrative time.

This Theme Session builds on this developing area of research and aims to work towards a further synthesis of studies on time and viewpoint in narrative. The interaction between time and viewpoint will be explored in ten paper presentations which focus on the linguistic construction of time in relation to the various distinctive and blended viewpoints involved in the representation of the narrative. The papers address issues relating to the form and function of these various time and viewpoint categories in written and signed narratives, covering a wide diversity of languages and genres. Included are analytical and methodological contributions on the use of pronouns (Virdee), tense (Verhagen, Nijk, Stukker), demonstratives (Dancygier), animacy (Trompenaers), connectives (Oversteegen), body partitioning (Janzen), and deixis (Sanders & Van Krieken) as expressions of (the interaction between) narrative time and viewpoint.

References

TENSE, DEICTIC ADVERBS AND DEMONSTRATIVES: HOW VIEWPOINT NETWORKS STRUCTURE GRAMMATICAL CHOICES IN NARRATIVES

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Narrative discourse poses many questions regarding clusters of grammatical choices, especially constructions of speech and thought representation (see Vandelanotte 2009 for a full overview). The form discussed perhaps most extensively is known as Free Indirect Discourse (FID), the effects of which include, among other things, unexpected deictic combinations, such as proximal now and distal past tense (the 'now-plus-past construction', Nikiforidou 2012, 2015).

However, such choices of deictic expressions in narratives cannot be seen solely in constructional terms; rather, these are choices embedded in the overall structure of the narrative. This paper proposes that viewpoint principles determine a range of combinations of grammatical choices, which in turn establish hierarchies of viewpoint levels and viewpoint networks. These hierarchies and networks, rather than constructions alone, determine the interaction between tense and other deictic expressions – especially temporal adverbs and demonstratives.

In Ali Smith's novel, *The Accidental*, a professor, Michael Smart, has sexual relationships with his students. The narrative is in past tense and third person, and yet, proximal deictic markers such as now, here, and this, are routinely used to represent the character’s (Michael’s) viewpoint. In one case, Michael’s thoughts are represented as he is having sex with one student, Philippa, thinking about another, Rachel. *Would Rachel have been more authentic? Different from this. But then again. This had its satisfactions.* The use of this is here tied with the character viewpoint, as a resumptive pronoun – moving the viewpoint from the loose thoughts Michael is having to the current experience. I argue that in the context, the narrative-wide temporal deixis of the past tense is complemented, via the demonstrative, with a focus on the ongoing event – in other words, this is not only the contrast between narrator and character viewpoint, but the way to structure simultaneously needed temporal viewpoints. Later, Michael falls in love and thinks about the woman on the train: *The trains were an embarrassment when it came to design. But now something in him dismissed what it (the affair) looked like. Now is here resumptive in a way similar to this. Further in the text, the deictic here is used in a very similar way, followed by both now and this: [...] But here was the new truth for Dr Michael Smart. [...] Now he had finally understood, now he knew for the first time [...] what it had been about. This.* The proximal deictics distinguish general temporal viewpoint (tense) from the current experience of the character.

Overall, there are several regularities that structure narrative viewpoint in past tense stories: 1. Past tense remains a general governing viewpoint. 2. The consistent use of third person pronouns is the next level down. 3. These patterns are then quite variably enhanced with deictics (like now or here) and demonstratives (mostly this). These grammatical choices enhance the texture of viewpoints in the narrative, rather than creating clashes. The mechanism which underlies such choices enhances viewpoint complexity of a narrative, and organizes viewpoint into networks. These networks, rather than temporal or deictic consistency, guide the comprehension of narrative discourse.

References


SHARED SPACES, SHARED MIND: CONNECTING PAST AND PRESENT VIEWPOINTS IN AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE NARRATIVES

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Keywords: ASL; shared space; intersubjectivity; viewpoint; body partitioning.

In American Sign Language (ASL) narratives, signers build scenes in part by conceptualizing the scene space and mapping their discourse entities and actions to a relational version of that space onto their articulation space. Most often, the articulation space includes the signer, and thus the signer’s body, such that the signer takes on the various viewpoints of the characters in the narrative scene (Janzen 2004, 2006). These perspectivized enactments, then, are the constructions in the narrative sequence that push the action forward, and the spatial referencing represents a dynamic past space. But within narrative, the author also inserts descriptive passages, evaluates aspects of the unfolding event, and may check in with her interlocutor to make sure she is being understood. These aspects of narrative structure take place in the present between the storyteller and the addressee, and are interspersed throughout. As well, these parts of narrative are intersubjective in that they represent interactions between interlocutors that shape their joint view of the narrative story (Janzen 2012).

In this study, I look at how the ASL signer integrates these past and present spaces, and in particular, integrates the viewpoints associated with each. Data are taken from an ASL conversational corpus where narratives are embedded within spontaneous conversation. Importantly, the study shows that body partitioning (Dudis 2004) occurs at these junctures. Body partitioning is where some parts of the signer’s body correspond to one perspective-taking character and other parts correspond to a different character, actor, or participant. As the signer produces utterances in the present, directed toward the addressee, parts of her body—perhaps a hand, a bodily stance—maintains a past time perspective. In this way, multiple perspectives are presented simultaneously that intersect past and present. The usage-based data reveal that signers use a number of strategies to integrate past and present viewpoints, including not only simultaneously enacted stances and perspectives, but also differentiate utterance types—character viewpoints correspond to depicting sequences where the signer enacts past actions and talk, while a present viewpoint corresponds to utterance types such as topic-comment constructions where the topic phrase contains information the signer assumes the addressee can identify, thus it is an intersubjective marker of present space and present function.

References


The use of the present to refer to past events (‘Historical Present’, HP) is a hot topic in the domain of Tense/Aspect/Modality research. Most scholars subscribe to the intuitively plausible view that talking about the past in the present tense invests those past events with a certain ‘immediacy’. Under the prevalent interpretation, the HP is believed to involve a shift in viewpoint – either a complete shift (base shift, see especially Cutrer 1994), or, as has been more recently suggested, a partial shift (mixed viewpoint, Sweetser 2013).

While such shifted usages of the present do exist, the term ‘historical present’ is generally employed to designate usages of the present to refer to the past where the idea of a viewpoint shift is contradicted by the context. The most glaring problem with the base shift approach is that the HP can be used in collocation with adverbials expressing temporal distance. In the Classical Greek corpus, which is the object of my study, we find the HP accompanied by, for example, the adverbs τότε ‘then’ and ποτέ ‘once’.

The mixed viewpoint approach seeks to address this deictic paradox by postulating a multiplicity of viewpoint spaces. The distal adverbs reflect the viewpoint of the narrator, while the present tense reflects the viewpoint of a displaced consciousness (inversely to the past + now construction, Nikiforidou 2012). But there are other contextual features of the HP that are at odds with the construal of a narrative-internal viewpoint: in particular the aspectually perfective construal of events of long duration.

I argue that we should account for this non-shifted use of the HP not in terms of a multiplicity of viewpoint spaces but in terms of multiple event spaces. What is designated by this ‘present for preterite’, as I call it, is not the past events as seen from a narrative-internal viewpoint, but a representation of the past events that is taken to be currently accessible (see also Gosselin 2000, Langacker 2011). Imagine, for example, that we are watching security camera footage, and a narrator tells us what is going on: Then the suspect enters the store. What happens here is that the present tense designates the present representation space (the video), while the use of the adverb then is a sign that the past event space is still active at the same time. We may contrast Now the suspect enters the store, where the reference is exclusively to the representation space.

The present for preterite in narrative depends upon a similar arrangement. When using the present in this way, the narrator takes for granted the assumption that the designated events are somehow accessible in a present representation – even though this construal is implicit and may even be wholly fictional (a ‘covert scenario’, Langacker 2008, 531-535). This virtual representation can take on different forms, but the central one is the concept of ‘the story’. By using the present tense in narrative, the narrator signals that something ‘happens’ in the story that is evolving in the here and now, while at the same time retaining a distal perspective with respect to the actual past events.


TEMPORAL PERSPECTIVE AND THE FLOW OF TIME

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In order to represent the flow of time as we conceive it, at least two modes of structuring are required. In our conceptual representation here, as in Oversteegen (2005), we will employ two conceptualizations of time as proposed by McTaggart in 1927: The A-series (deictic, dynamic and subjective) and B-series (non-deictic, static, and objective). We will argue that these two series explain the moving time and the moving ego metaphor, often used for representation purposes in Cognitive linguistics. For this reason, and given the expression of temporal relations in diverse languages, the A-B-distinction would fit in a cognitive linguistic theory. In this paper, we will argue how this interaction of two types of structuring could be implemented in existing cognitive linguistic representation – an endeavor comparable to Irandoust (1999).

By mapping point of view onto the A-series and eventualities onto the B-series, we intend to create an extension of the mental spaces model. We will make our case by analyzing and representing a set of (minimally) varying Dutch narrative sentences, focusing on the interaction of tense, causality, event type and temporal connective. In 1 to 5, the interpreted relation between the eventualities in sub- (Es) and main sentence (Em) is indicated to the right:

1. Toen Bart een goal maakte lette de keeper niet op
   ‘When Bart scored, the keeper did not pay attention’
   \( E_s = E_m \)

2. Toen Bart een goal miste verliet Marie hem
   ‘When Bart missed, Marie left him’
   \( E_s < E_m \)

3. Toen Bart een goal maakte was Marie in Nepal
   ‘When Bart scored, Marie was in Nepal’
   \( E_s \subseteq E_m \)

4. Toen Bart een goal maakte had Marie hem verlaten
   ‘When Bart scored, Marie had left him’
   \( E_m < E_s \)

5. Toen Bart een goal miste had Marie hem verlaten
   ‘When Bart missed, Marie had left him’
   \( E_s < E_m \)

In (1), (2), and (3), the configuration of mental spaces is comparable. However, the causal relation between the eventualities in (2), forces a temporal precedence relation, while (1) invokes simultaneity, and (3) temporal inclusion. In (4) and (5), from the viewpoint space (corresponding to a Reichenbachian point of Reference) constructed in the first sub sentence, a second space representing the second can be accessed. However, the succession of eventualities is different: straightforward in (4), but inversed in (5), as a consequence of the causal relation suggested there. Moreover, a new subject of conscience is introduced in the latter.

We will present building instructions for mental space representations, dividing the burden to explain these varying interpretations between the connective toen (‘when’), tense, causality, and event type, and their interactions. Our aim is to show how application of this framework helps elucidate how narrated eventualities and the flow of time are mentally represented.

References


INTERACTIONS BETWEEN TIME AND VIEWPOINT IN NEWS NARRATIVES

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Keywords: Tense, Temporal Deixis, Viewpoint, Narrative, Blending

In processing fictional narratives, readers shift their deictic center to the narrative world such that temporal expressions (later, yesterday) are interpreted in relation to the narrative world’s here-and-now rather than the reader’s here-and-now in the real world (Segal, 1995). Time representations in newspaper narratives, by contrast, have correlates in the real world that are mapped onto a time line running from the here-and-now of the narrative world in which the news events took place to later moments in time and finally to the here-and-now of the journalistic narrating in the present. Processing news narratives requires readers to shift back and forth on this time line (Van Krieken, Sanders, & Hoeken, 2016).

In the present paper we employ a cognitive linguistic model of mental spaces and conceptual blending (Fauconnier, 1985; Turner & Fauconnier, 2002) to examine shifts between the Narrative News Space in which the past news events are represented and the Present Space in which the narrator/journalist’s and the news readers’ here-and-now is the deictic center. To that end, we analyze a corpus of Dutch news narratives on the use of tense and temporal deixis.

The analysis reveals interesting patterns in the use of tense and deixis which create complex interactions between temporal shifts and viewpoint blends. The temporal adverb yesterday, for instance, may signal a move forward in time rather than backwards. Similarly, shifts from present to past tense may signal a move forward in time rather than backwards. Consider the following excerpt (De Telegraaf, 1992):

(1) Already in a first interrogation, V. blurs out his atrocities.
(2) Yesterday in court, V. persisted: “I loved her”.

The present tense in (1) refers to the day the news event (murder) took place. Here, readers should blend their temporal viewpoint with the temporal viewpoint of news actor V. in the Narrative News Space in order to process the progression of time, while yesterday in (2) refers to a time after this event rather than before; specifically, it refers to the day before the real here-and-now journalistic narrating of events. Here, readers should blend their viewpoint with the viewpoint of the narrator/journalist in the Present Space. Shifting from present to past tense thus signals a shift from the Narrative News Space to the Present Space, moving readers forward in time. We show that both types of time representation are found in Dutch news narratives, but function differently: the first (1) enhances narrative engagement, and the latter (2) enhances the truthfulness of the narrative construction of the events.

In addition, in news narratives frequent quotative conditionals such as in (1a) represent implicit viewpoints of other sources, blending the Narrative News Space with a Legitimizing Space at a later point in time.

(1a) Already in a first interrogation, V. was said to (“zou”) to have blurted out his atrocities.

We thus show how the use of tense and temporal deixis in news narratives prompts various interactions between time and viewpoint, creating a complex cognitive representation of blended spaces which enhance both liveliness and legitimacy.

References

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LINGUISTIC CONSTRAUL OF ‘TIME’ ACROSS NARRATIVE GENRES

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Keywords: narrative, genre, time, discourse structure, usage-based theory of language

Storytelling is a powerful tool for communication. It is used in a wide variety of genres for a wide variety of communicative purposes. The linguistic form of verbally presented stories tends to be adapted to their specific situational contexts of use (Page, 2015). However, systematic descriptions at the level of individual linguistic constructions of how this is done, and an adequate theoretical framework explaining why, have been lacking so far. This paper contributes to a more profound understanding of these issues by 1) investigating form-function relations in a contrastive corpus analysis manipulating linguistic forms and situational functions in a controlled manner and 2) by interpreting similarities and differences found within the broader theoretical frameworks of genre and register theories (Biber & Conrad, 2009) and usage-based cognitive linguistics (Barlow & Kemmer, 2001; Bybee & Hopper, 2001).

By way of a case study I analyze how concepts of temporal structure relevant in any type of story (chronology of story events and their the position with respect to the communicative here-and-now) are linguistically construed using temporal connectives, adverbial phrases, verb tenses, aspects of duration and order of presentation in three Dutch narrative genres: fictional short stories, journalistic feature articles and a narrative weblog used by the Dutch National Police as a communication tool for image building Politieverhalen (‘Police Stories’).

My findings partly corroborate the widely accepted assumption that selection of one specific linguistic element for expressing a given concept rather than another option available in the language is guided by situational elements, and is motivated by the element’s inherent meaning, thus construing the genre from the bottom up (Biber & Conrad, 2009). A more surprising finding, however, is that situational aspects of the genres themselves in some cases seem to affect the expressive potential of individual linguistic elements in a top-down manner as well. An example concerns the usage of Simple Present tense, which is widely considered to be ‘anti-narrative’ unless used in the rhetorical strategy of historical present use (Fludernik, 2003), but which turned out to be frequently used in the journalistic feature article genre, expressing its conventional and more neutral ‘temporal overlap’ meaning. This interpretation was absent in the fictional and Police stories. I will argue that this type of cross-generic differences can be explained with reference to the situational dimensions conventionally associated with the genres as well.

I will propose that both the idea of genre-specific linguistic conventions construing situationally defined narrative temporal structure from the bottom up AND the idea of situational conventions as distinct ‘constraints on interpretation’ affecting the interpretation of individual time markers in a top down manner fit in with the usage-based theoretical concept of cognitively entrenched usage ‘schemas’ fundamentally rooted in concrete human experience with language use, including conditions of use associated with the situational characteristics of discourse genres.

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ADOPTING THE INANIMATE VIEWPOINT IN NARRATIVE FICTION

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In narrative fiction we are not uncommonly invited to share the first-person perspective of a non-human narrator, such as an inanimate object (e.g. Mulisch’s *The statue and the clock*, Otten’s *Specht en Zoon*, Carey’s *Autobiographies*). These inanimate viewpoints present us with a seemingly obvious contradiction: In the real world, having a viewpoint entails being animate, and communicating a viewpoint linguistically entails being human, as only human beings are capable of using language to refer to themselves by uttering a word like ‘I’. How is this apparent contradiction resolved linguistically for inanimate narrators?

The linguistic reflection of animacy has been extensively attested in a wide variety of domains (cf. e.g. Dahl & Fraurud 1996, de Swart, Lamers & Lestrade 2008, Comrie 1989). To explore the linguistic properties of the inanimate narrator we carried out a corpus study in which we compared a first-person inanimate narrator (a painting in Willem Jan Otten’s Dutch novel *Specht en Zoon* (2004)) with a more traditional human narrator in a novel by the same author. We targeted verb types and Thematic roles specifically as these are strongly correlated with animacy: Agents are animate in a majority of cases, as most Proto-Agent (Dowty 1991) properties entail animacy (Primus 2012); Experiencers are necessarily animate, as conscious experience implies animacy.

We found that the inanimate narrator displays clear features of animacy in terms of person, grammatical distribution and Thematic role assignment in opposition to those traditionally associated with inanimate objects. The specific distribution of Thematic roles between the inanimate and animate narrator did display significant differences, however: The animate is attracted to the Agent role (42.5%), whereas the inanimate (associated with just 16.7% agentive verbs) is predominately an Experiencer (43.8%), undergoing and commenting on the events in the story rather than actively participating. This reflects the inanimate narrator’s inability to act on its environment due to its inanimate biology and morphology, i.e. the painting remains a painting and its viewpoint may be restricted by e.g. being placed facing a wall, and as a consequence being relegated to the role of a passive observer.

What does this mean for our ability to identify or empathize with the narrator? Non-human narration has been argued to always give rise to a mix of distancing and identification effects among readers, or defamiliarization and empathy (Bernaerts et al. 2014), but it is unclear whether this is due to the narrator’s (in)animacy per se. In a follow-up study we investigate whether the previously observed differences in the distribution of Thematic roles offers an alternative or complementary explanation. Empathy and identification may differ as a result of a character’s dominant Thematic role: Recent studies suggest differences in identification and empathy for more action- versus more mental-oriented narratives in a variety of domains (e.g. Kuipers et al. 2014, Nijhof & Willems 2015). In a narrative engagement study (N=200) we present participants with short stories in which we manipulated the animacy of the main character under different distributions of Thematic roles. We expect the dominant Thematic role adopted by the main character to influence readers’ empathy for or identification with the character in addition to but independent of the character’s animacy.

References


SHIFTING TENSES, BLENDING VIEWPOINTS, AND THE NATURE OF NARRATIVE COMMUNICATION

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Keywords: tense, viewpoint shifting, narrative, blending, intersubjectivity

In languages that exhibit (obligatory) tense marking like Dutch, English and other European languages, especially the difference between past and present is well known to be used for viewpoint effects in narratives. The term “historical present” is used for narrative fragments in which the story events that succeed each other and thus create the perception of temporal progression are represented in clauses in the present tense and not in the (ordinary) narrative past tense; it is generally characterized as having the effect of closeness, immediacy of the perception of the events. The present tense may also be used (in the context of a story that is basically told in the past tense) for other functions than the narration of events, such as background information or (implicit) representation of non-narrative text types (cf. Daalder & Verhagen 1993 for an analysis of the latter in a specific Dutch novella). Yet another possible role of the tense distinction in a narrative is to help marking the distinction, especially in first person narratives, between the role of the “I” as the teller of the story (interacting with the reader), and the “I” as a participant in the story events (interacting with the other characters). While acknowledging the reality of such functional differences, there is also a common denominator. Building on the three-dimensional model of intersubjectivity proposed in Van Duijn & Verhagen (to appear), I will argue that the common features pertain to the degree of directness of the ‘impact’ or ‘argumentative relevance’ of the situations being represented (whether dynamic story events, static descriptions, or meta-communicative utterances) in the common ground of author and reader. In order to illustrate this point I will use fragments from the references mentioned and specifically an analysis of two stories that start with narration in the past tense, but shift, rather subtly, to present tense narration (a short story by the Flemish author Willem Elsschot and a chapter containing a frame story in The Republic of Wine, the English translation by Howard Goldblatt of the novel Jiu Guo by Nobel prize winning Chinese author Mo Yan).

Theoretically, the analysis also supports a network view of the organization of viewpoint in discourse (cf. Dancygier & Vandelanotte 2016); the analysis makes clear that while the stories progress, the shift of the narrative tense from past to present is indicative of the emergence of an (inextricable) blend of initially distinct viewpoints, while for the grammar of the languages involved, the conclusion is rather that the past tense is a tool for blocking, or at least impeding, such blending (rather than as primarily a ‘shifter’, in the sense of Jakobson 1971).

References


This paper proposes a theoretical framework for analyzing what might be referred to as ‘narrative deixis’ and defines narrative time as a generic subjective construal from the viewpoint of a narrator-cum-character, aligned with a blend of spatio-temporal aspects of the story, rather than one deictic centre.

In spoken discourse, the pronoun ‘I’ refers to the speaker in a discourse situation defined by time (now or then) and space (here or there). Typically, the deictic ground is ‘here’ and ‘now’, whereas in narrative the deictic ground is usually in the past. Narrative is in fact free to postulate any number of ‘now’s for the time of narration, whether future (as in Ted Chiang’s ‘Story of Your Life’ (2002)) or past (as most narrating ‘now’s eventually become). When ‘I’ refers to a narrator in extended narratives the relationship between personal reference, time, and space is complicated by additional factors:

- first-person narratives use ‘I’ consistently, while setting up a complex and non-linear network of narrative episodes, events, and sub-plots (each with a different spatial- and temporal signature) building up a conceptualized narrative geometry with ‘I’ as the unifying factor. When a narrator ‘says’ “I run back up the corridor, across the courtyard, down the next corridor to the room”, ‘I’ is aligned with a process spatiotemporally distinct from, but that implicitly joins up with (Currie, 2012), that of the speaker. Due to the implied anteriority of narrative viewpoint, the immediate referent of ‘I’ in narrative is not at the spatiotemporal location of the speaker. To express this in speech, a speaker would have to explicitly acknowledge two separate deictic centres. Narrative deixis thus differs significantly from spoken discourse deixis;

- negation also produces this effect (imagine the previous example beginning with ‘I didn’t…’) only in this case an alternative space (Dancygier and Sweetser, 2005; Dancygier, 2012; Dancygier and Sweetser, 2012) is produced in which the inverse events occur simultaneously; the only difference between the statement ‘I didn’t run’ and silence is the alternative space in which ‘I run’. Alternative spaces thus maintain blended concepts of personal identity which are nevertheless causally distinct. This paper will propose that catachresis (cf. Fludernik, 2011) of deictic terms implicitly produces alternative spaces;

- narrative deixis in first-person narratives has no clearly profiled role of the hearer. The reader participates in construction of temporality by transforming the narrative deixis of the multiple spatio-temporal settings of what is told through his/her own singular, linear reading of the text, and mental reorganization of the story’s events into a coherent, sequential received narrative (cf. Chafe, 1994; Dancygier, 2012; Genette, 1983; Herman, 2013);

- the sequentiality imposed by the reader of a text in English is typically, like the writing system of English, conceptualized as left-to-right, e.g. ‘1066, 1789, 1945’ (Amis, 2003) (this is not necessarily the case in languages with different writing systems (Bergen and Chan Lau, 2012; Boroditsky, 2000 & 2001; Goody and Watt, 1963; Majid et al., 2013));

- the goal of narrative discourse in first-person narratives is not to create a generic, linear sense of time and space (as Ermarth, 1983 argued of Realist narratives). What is expected to emerge is a blended, coherent, temporally and spatially motivated concept of subjective temporal experience;

- the narrating self is thus the variable but constant aspect of narrative deixis, built on the basis of a range of events (with their different temporal and spatial characteristics), and the reader’s construal.

Using the example of backwards time in Martin Amis’s *Time’s Arrow*, this paper will show the complex nature of narrative deixis, examining the function of ego viewpoint in generating narrative ‘time’. The flexibility of the shared temporal construal between reader and narrating ‘I’ will be explored, paying special attention to alternative spaces. Comparing narrative usage with examples from colloquial discourse will further show what we can learn about standard deixis by looking at literary narratives.
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