

DIRECT REPORTED SPEECH AS A FRAME FOR IMPLICIT REFLEXIVITY

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Abstract

By articulating the notions of reflexivity and participant roles in the context of direct reported speech, the present study aims to contribute to a better understanding of discourse and interaction in storytelling events. Direct reported speech, I find, counts as a reflexive resource not only because it re-presents other speech, but also because it frames the activity of the metanarrator, as attested by the embedding of overtly reflexive elements (instances of direct reported speech, indirect reported speech and performative verbs) and the display of implicitly reflexive processes such as word search, repair and lexical choice. I arrive at the conclusion that those explicitly reflexive resources -such as metanarrative comments- which involve the momentary suspension of the reporting speech, occur only in extreme cases in which the audience's understanding of the narrative is in risk from the teller's perspective. Otherwise, the tendency prevails to keep direct reported speech consistent with the position and point of view of the corresponding figure. The narratives analyzed here were recorded in Spanish among bilingual Totonac-Spanish storytellers from three different villages of the Mexican State of Veracruz.

Keywords: Storytelling; Direct reported speech; Explicit reflexivity; Implicit reflexivity; Lexical choice; Repair; Spanish.

1. Introduction

Direct reported speech - also called direct discourse (Chafe 1994), constructed dialogue (Tannen 1989) and represented discourse (Du Bois 2001) - has been approached from two major tendencies. While the first one privileges the view of reported speech as a whole, as a discourse unit, the second one focuses on reported speech as a frame.

The first perspective has made evident the connections between direct reported speech and a number of discourse and linguistic anthropological issues, such as responsibility and evidentiality (Hill & Irvine 1993), dialogicality (Bakhtin 1981; Voloshinov 1986) intertextuality (Mannheim and Tedlock 1995; Bauman 2004), performance (Bauman & Briggs 1990) reflexivity (Lucy 1993), involvement (Tannen 1989), evaluation (Labov 1972), and more recently resonance and stance (Oropeza 2011).

Attending to the structure of narrative discourse, the introduction of direct reported speech at a certain point of the story has been viewed as an internal evaluative device in contrast with those elements in which the narrator overtly addresses the listener through an evaluative comment (Labov 1972). The concentration of instances of reported speech, on the other hand, has been interpreted as indexing the peak of the story (Hymes 1975; Bauman 1986).

The second perspective examines the internal structure of direct reported speech and its relation to the broader narrative context. Grammatical features as those indexing point of view and deictic center, which contribute to enhance engagement through the sense of immediacy they convey, have been approached by a number of scholars (Chafe 1994; Bowles 2010). The continuity of direct reported speech and the surrounding narrative context through such cohesive means as lexical repetition and the use of deictics has also been documented (Bauman 1992), allowing us to deepen our understanding of intertextuality in traditional narratives. In a similar vein, I have investigated the role of direct reported speech as a context for the introduction of new referents, and the continuity of those referents throughout the story (Oropeza 2010).

Within this theoretical framework, a richer understanding of traditional storytelling involves the articulation of the notions of reflexivity and participant roles in the context of direct reported speech.

Reflexivity, understood as “the capacity and indeed tendency of verbal interaction to presuppose, structure, represent, and characterize its own nature and functioning” (Lucy 2001: 208) includes such everyday activities as reporting speech and commenting upon the current interaction, while participant roles, a key notion to the study of traditional storytelling¹, involves from the broad sociocultural factors influencing the characteristics and dynamics of the narrating event (speech event) to the subtle linguistic devices which shape each narrative as a unique text. According to Irvine (1996: 132), this property derives from the very nature of participant roles, since they are special nexus of grammar, pragmatic relations, emergent stretches of talk, and context (whether social, cultural or diachronic).²

My analysis shows that direct reported speech counts as an explicitly reflexive element not only for the reasons mentioned above, but also because it frames the metanarrative activity of the narrator, thus making especially evident the complexity and dynamic interplay of roles that storytelling involves. In this respect, while assuming the role of animator, the teller is consistently monitoring the accessibility not only of the content and form of the representing speech itself, but, indeed, of the story as a whole. This involves making adjustments at different linguistic and discourse levels as deemed necessary. In other words, as a metanarrator the storyteller adapts the story to specific audiences and circumstances. In terms of Hymes (1981: 132), performers are “masters of adaptation to situation”.

From this perspective I analyze those particular cases in which an explicitly reflexive discourse unit, more specifically, direct reported speech, frames not only explicitly reflexive activities such as the embedding of direct and indirect reported speech and performative

¹ I discuss this issue more deeply in a previous work (Oropeza 2001).

² Indeed, in referring to narratives embedded in conversation, Goffman (1981: 152) summarizes some overall properties of the storytellers as follows:

“The teller embeds “in his own utterances, the utterances and actions of the story characters... A narrator’s extended pauses and utterance completions are not to be understood as signals that he is now ready to give up the floor... The teller is likely to break narrative frame at strategic junctures:... to provide gratuitous characterizations of various protagonists in the tale; or to backtrack a correction for any felt failure to sustain narrative requirements such as contextual detail, proper temporal sequencing, dramatic build-up and so forth”.

verbs, but also implicitly reflexive activities: More specifically, word search, lexical choice, and the correlated repairs and pauses. While I discuss and illustrate the variety of resources that can be embedded in direct reported speech, I focus on those implicitly reflexive. The question that guides my study is whether the occurrence of these implicitly reflexive activities in a stretch of quoted speech, should be interpreted as the production of the narrator as metanarrator or rather as a deliberately constructed part of the direct reported speech, produced by the figure being animated in the narrative.

2. Direct reported speech, reflexivity, metanarration and their mutual interaction

Once the purpose and theoretical perspective of the present work have been addressed, I turn into a more detailed examination of the studies concerned with direct reported speech and metanarration.

According to Babcock (1977), metanarration³ involves those devices that index or comment on the narrative itself (its message, generic form and function, and discourse) or on the components or conduct of the storytelling event (including participants, organization and action). Viewed from the perspective of reflexivity, metanarration can be either explicit or implicit. In the first case, narrative form, narrative content, or the participants in the storytelling event become the focus of the current interaction, including such activities as clarifying the meaning of a referent, word or expression in a particular context, or commenting on a specific narrative action. Those discourse units - such as reported speech - which re-present another speech whether real or fictitious are also seen as explicitly reflexive.

Implicit reflexivity, or, in this particular case, implicit metanarration, operates in the very construction of utterances (Lucy 1993: 209), as in the case of deictics and tracking devices, which require the speaker's attention to the immediate context of use for their proper interpretation.

In addition, implicit metanarration embraces whole sections of the story (such as orientation and coda) (Labov 1972), as well as those devices that make evident the dialogic nature of metanarrative comments, by bridging the gap between the content of the narrative and the listener's needs for information (Bauman 1986).

In the performance of a narrative genre known as "tall tale", characterized by its high level of exaggeration and surprise, Bauman (1986) identifies the functions of what he calls "overtly metanarrational statements", on the one hand, and "non explicit metanarrative statements", on the other. The teller's clarification of part of the action for those members of the audience not fully familiar with the practices recounted is an instance of the former kind of metanarration. Other functions involve telling the audience more about the storyteller as person; bridging the gap between the narrated event and the storytelling event

³ Among the functions of language identified by Jakobson (1960), the metalinguistic one has to do with the fact that language can be used to describe and represent itself: "The metalinguistic function of language can refer to any aspect of language use, including their own structure (the sounds of language; grammatical structures; differences in word meaning, intended meaning of utterances, or people's strategic purposes in talk; styles and genres of talk and make comparisons between languages and dialects" (Collins 1998). In this respect, metanarrative function refers to a specific discourse genre.

by reaching out phatically to the audience; and making brief references to himself as a speaker and the audience.⁴ The rest of the functions Bauman identifies are closely related to the specific genre under study (“tall tale”), and involve commenting on the believability of the story itself, as well as addressing and commenting on the communicative interaction by emphasizing the teller’s own ability to induce the audience to believe his account.⁵

Overtly metanarrational statements represent shifts in the alignment the teller takes to himself and others present (Goffman 1981: 128). They are shifts out of the recounting of narrative events to refer to himself or the audience as participants in the present storytelling event. As mentioned above, direct reported speech has been seen in itself as a reflexive element to the extent that it re-presents other speech whether real or fictitious (Lucy 1993: 2). Non-explicit metanarration, on the other hand, refers to the story itself. Thus, in the case of the specific narrative-genre analyzed by Bauman (1986: 100) “any element that addresses believability is a metanarrational comment upon the story”.

As can be seen, metanarration includes a host of heterogeneous statements, centered either on the narrator himself, on the narrative (generic form, function, message, etc.), and/or on the storytelling event or performance situation (participants, organization, actions) (Bauman & Briggs 1990; Bauman 1986; Hymes 1981). Its richness, diversity and relevance warranty the success and continuity of the narrative event as a whole.

3. Method and data

The specific speech events analyzed for this paper, took place during the Spring of 1990 as part of my graduate work leading to M.A. degree in Social Anthropology⁶. The field research aimed at collecting traditional narratives in the region of Papantla, located in the Mexican state of Veracruz. Most people in this region are bilingual Totonac-Spanish. The corresponding speech events can be characterized overall as an “open-ended interview”. To be more precise, the kind of interviews carried out match the ‘folkloristic interview’ type as described by Briggs (1986: 11)⁷

Most people in this region are bilingual Totonac- Spanish. The stories analyzed here were recorded in Spanish. For the present analysis I focus on the Old Thunder myth, as told by three storytellers coming from different communities of the region. According to the story, a boy lost in the forest (or taken to an unknown place by a huge eagle), arrives at the place where the Twelve Thunders live. The boy is allowed to stay, so that he can help the Thunders (or their mother in a particular version) by keeping the house and cooking. He is warned, however, not to open the Thunders’ trunks. One day, the boy opens the forbidden trunks and finds the clothes and swords employed by the Thunders to produce rain, wind,

⁴ For example, “*I tell you I’s astonished*”; “well, *you know*, I was really intrigued” (Bauman 1986: 100).

⁵ Which, as Bauman (1986: 99) points out, means to probe the efficacy of the narrative communication.

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⁷ In terms of Briggs (1986: 11), collectors travel to communities for short intervals. Once there, they query passerby with regard to the identity of the person ‘who notes the most’ items of the desired genre (ballads, tales, etc.). When permission to tape-record or transcribe the materials is given, the informant is asked to tell (or sing) all the items that he or she knows. As a result, a vast number of items are collected in a relatively short period of time.

and clouds. He wears the most powerful one, and unchains a terrible storm. The Thunders finally stop him with the help of The Holy Virgin Mary (or the Thunders' mother) and take him to the bottom of the sea, where he lies to date.

A specific treatment was given to the stories on the basis of Labov's (1972) conception of narrative discourse as composed by structural sections (abstract, orientation section, complicating action, coda), given the pertinence of situating reflexivity within a broader discursive frame, whether it consists in whole structural sections (abstract, coda), direct reported speech or metanarrative comments. For the purpose of this paper, within the ample gamut of reflexive devices mentioned above, I made a distinction between those implicitly reflexive (such as Labov's narrative sections) and the explicitly reflexive resources referred to earlier. It is important to mention that the introduction of reported speech or metanarrative elements entails changes in point of view that could be relevant to lexical choice (Oropeza 2010).⁸

Finally, the clause that frames reported speech -also called attributions (Chafe 1994)- was considered independently from both reported speech and metanarrative elements for methodological reasons, although it is usually included in the latter category.

4. Characteristics of direct reported speech and other explicitly reflexive elements in the corpus.

Direct reported speech in this discourse genre tends to be framed by a clause containing a verb of saying or thinking, most commonly *decir* ('to say', 'to tell') and *pensar* ('to think'), but it is not unusual to find other resources, such as those identified for Puerto Rican Spanish (Cameron 1998), which include a bare noun phrase and freestanding quotation with no frame, as a means to convey engagement. The opposite case in which multiple instances of the framing clause occur interspersed in direct reported speech is also attested in my data, especially in long instances of direct reported speech, as a means to prevent confusion regarding the identity of the speaker.

As for the internal structure of reported speech, previous work (Wierzbicka 1974; Mayes 1990) has shown that direct quotation is less constrained than indirect quotation, since it indeed includes a variety of linguistic forms such as interrogatives, imperatives, vocatives as well as special intonation. The fact that direct reported speech can embed instances of reported speech, whether direct or indirect makes still more evident the high degree of elaboration that direct reported speech can reach. Excerpt one, below, 9 supports this position. Here, the Thunders address Juan to let him know how to behave once he has arrived at the place where they live. More precisely, they instruct him as to the appropriate wording he needs to utter in order to get some food.

Excerpt 1

1 Thunders: *Si quieres plátano,*
'If you want to get some banana,'

⁸ For example, while the narrator employs the term *Truenos* "Thunders", their mother - as animated by the storyteller - refers to them as *mis hijos* "my sons" (Oropeza 2010).

- 2 *tú no vayas a agarrar un plátano,*
‘you mustn’t take a banana,’
- 3 Thunders/Metanarrator:⁹ *tú vas a decir,*
‘you are going to say,’
- 4 Thunders/Juan: *¡que caiga un platanito!*
‘(I want) a little banana to fall down!’

As can be seen, the result is the embedding of quotation, with its respective framing clause or attribution (lines 4 and 3, respectively), in the Thunders’ turn of speech.

In the next excerpt, which indeed follows the previous one, a case in which indirect thought is embedded in direct reported speech, takes place (lines 6-7):

Excerpt 2

- 5 Metanarrator: *Pero entonces él ((REFERRING TO JUAN)) pensó:*
‘But then he thought’
- 6 Juan: *bueno ¿por qué me dicen que si se me antoja un plátano,*
‘Well, why they tell me that in case I want to get a banana
- 7 *voy a pedir que caiga uno?*
‘I should ask for just one to fall?’
- 8 *Un plátano no me va a alcanzar.*
‘A banana is not going to be enough for me.’
- 9 *¿Por qué me dicen eso?*
‘Why do they tell me that?’

Another explicitly reflexive resource contained in this instance of direct reported speech is *pedir* ‘to ask for’ (line 7), a performative verb (Austin 1962), which counts as an explicitly reflexive resource.

Metanarrative elements can center on the teller himself, as well as on different properties of the narrative action or on the storytelling event. Phatic signals such as *¿no?* ‘right?’ (literally ‘isn’t it?’, ‘isn’t she/he?’), *¿verdad?* ‘right?’ (lit. ‘true?’) are also attested in my corpus, as illustrated by the following stretch, in which the older Thunder asks Juan how he arrived at the place they live in.

Excerpt 3

- 1 Narrator: *Le empezó a hacer preguntas*
‘He started to make questions’
- 2 *y el muchacho no sabía, no sabía ni por dónde se había venido,*
‘and the boy didn’t know, he didn’t know the way he had taken,’
- 3 *ni a dónde había llegado,*
‘not even where had he arrived,
- 4 Metanarrator: *¿no?*
‘right?’

⁹The reason why I use the label “metanarrator” - rather than “narrator”- has to do with the fact that, as mentioned earlier, the attribution counts as an explicitly reflexive element that frames the speech reported. Another convention employed in the present work is the use of a slash to make explicit the corresponding role of the teller as narrator, metanarrator or figure.

The particle *¿no?* ‘right?’ works in this context as a metacommunicative device that allows the narrator to check whether the communicative channel is open (McCormick et al. 2010: 557)

The clause framing the quotation, that is, the device that allows the speaker to delimitate the domain of represented discourse, as well as to express the identity of the reported speaker, is another kind of reflexive element which explicitly marks some boundary between the reported message and the narrator’s message (Hickmann: 63). The fact that the framing clause tends to involve a verb of saying - usually ‘say’ (Spanish *decir*) - has to do with the semantically neutral character of such a verb, which acts as a “minimal pragmatic anchoring” (Lucy 1993: 96) that sets up the conditions for a maximal foregrounding of the represented utterance and its pragmatic force. The next excerpt takes place at the beginning of the story. The boy (*Juan*) hears the sound of a person cutting wood. He approaches the place in which the sound originates, only to realize that the axe is acting by itself:

Excerpt 4

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Metanarrator: <i>Entonces dijo Juan:</i>
‘So, Juan said:’ |
| 2 | Narrator/Juan: <i>Y esa leña ¿cómo se va a ir?</i>
‘So, that wood, how is going to go?’ |
| 3 | <i>No veo a nadie,</i>
‘I don’t see anybody’ |
| 4 | <i>Ahora ¿cómo se va a ir? ((REFERRING TO THE AXE))</i>
‘How is it going to leave?’ |

In this case, the framing clause involving the verb *decir* ‘say’ in past tense and third person singular (*dijo*), told by the narrator – in his role as a metanarrator - refers to Juan. The quotation involves a shift in point of view, so that, as can be appreciated in line 3, the first person marked on the verb (*veo* ‘I see’) is to be understood as referring to Juan.

According to my data, the teller, in his/her role of metanarrator, makes the content of a comment precise by referring to the relation between the comment itself and the element of the story subject to clarification. For example, he assesses as a “presupposition” the comment he has just expressed (*vamos a suponer*, ‘let us suppose’), or shows uncertainty (*¿Cómo se dice?* ‘How do you say?’), insistence on a point (*Ya te digo* ‘So, I say’), or an approximation to the intended meaning: (*Se puede decir* ‘you could say’). Self-reference comments are sometimes introduced to reinforce the truth of a particular action or situation described in the narrative, by offering his/her own testimony as strong evidence¹⁰. In other cases, the narrator projects himself as a member of a collectivity (as a human being, as a member of a cultural group, etc.), which involves the use of the plural first person pronoun *nosotros* (‘we’), rather than the first singular person pronoun *yo* (‘I’), as in the following example:

¹⁰ In a story dealing with Jesus’ life, the teller, after describing the huge rock put on Jesus’ tomb by his enemies, says *Ahí tengo una oración de eso* ‘I have a prayer about that’, thereby confirming the veracity of that narrative passage.

Excerpt 5

- 1 Narrator: *Pero resulta que esa señora tenía doce hijos*
 ‘but it turns out that that lady had twelve sons,’
 2 *y los doce hijos salían a trabajar,*
 ‘and the twelve sons went out to work,’
 3 *que son los Truenos*
 ‘who are the Thunders’,
 4 Metanarrator: *que les decimos.*
 ‘as we call them.’

As can be appreciated, the narrator starts by characterizing the Thunder’s mother, to immediately introduce her twelve sons. Then the narrator, in his role of metanarrator, explains to her interlocutor, by introducing a sort of parenthetical device (line 4), that the lady’s sons are called *Truenos* (‘Thunders’) in his community.

Thus, metanarration clearly shows the narrator as assessing, step by step, the feasibility of the event and the understanding of the narrative plot on the basis of the assumed knowledge or degree of engagement of the audience. The assessment thus achieved, as pointed out above, results in specific actions, since the narrator will put into play the linguistic or communicative devices deemed necessary or appropriate.

5. Reflexive elements and discourse processes embedded in direct reported speech.

A characteristic shared by the previous examples is that, in spite of the large variety of explicitly reflexive elements involved, the role of the teller can be easily identified. Thus, in excerpt 1 it is the Thunders who utter both the quotation embedded in the larger instance of reported speech (line 4) and the corresponding framing clause (line 3). Thus, the narrator, while animating the Thunders, tells the boy the literal expression or formula he must say in order to get the right amount of food, which involves temporally adopting the identity of the boy. As the story unfolds, the relevance of the exact wording is made evident, given that a seemingly small variation on the behalf of the boy will unchain unexpected and dangerous situations¹¹.

¹¹ In a close version of this story, the Thunders address Juan to instruct him on how to act in case he gets hungry. As we can see, the teller also embeds an instance of direct reported speech in direct reported speech (lines 6-7). In this case we have, in addition, a performative verb (*pedir* ‘to ask for’), in the framing clause (line 5).

- 1 Thunders: *Tú te quedas.*
 ‘Stay here.’
 2 *Cuando quieras comida,*
 ‘When you want some food,’
 3 *acércate a la mesa.*
 ‘go to the table.’
 4 *Tú pide qué quieres comer.*
 ‘Ask for what you want to eat.’
 5 Metanarrator: *No más tú pídele,*
 ‘Just ask for it,’
 6 Thunders/Juan *Yo quiero comer;*
 ‘I want to eat;’
 7 *quiero una comida,*

At this point, I would like to undertake the analysis of the interplay between reported speech and the corresponding implicitly reflexive elements embedded. I am especially concerned with those cases in which a further, more detailed consideration, is necessary in order to determine the entity (narrator, metanarrator, figure) responsible for the reflexive element or process in course.

Contrarily to the fragment presented in the previous section, there are other cases in which it is not clear whether it is an animated figure or rather the narrator - acting as metanarrator - who makes a decision at a certain point of the quotation. I found cases in which lexical choice is revised, or a reformulation is made to introduce relevant information that should have been provided earlier in the telling. The following examples illustrate this circumstance.

At this point of the story, the boy arrives at the Thunders's place and is allowed to stay in order to help the Thunders with housekeeping and cooking while they are away from home. In this context, the Thunders take the floor:

Excerpt 6

- 1 Thunders: *Ahora te vas a quedar aquí con nosotros,*
 'Now you will stay here with us'
 2 *porque nosotros no tenemos quien cuide las casas.*
 'because we don't have anybody who can keep our houses.'
 3 *Queríamos **que entrara...que llegara** alguien*
 'We wished somebody would come into...would arrive'
 4 *a trabajar aquí.*
 'to work here.'

As can be seen in line 3, the teller, in animating the Thunders, chooses a particular word (*entrara* lit. 'came in') to express a narrative action, but then (line 4), after making a pause, introduces a semantically closely related word (*llegara* 'arrived'). Although the first choice is clear enough in the particular context in which it occurs, the teller seems to assess as more appropriate the second one. The shift from *entrar* to *llegar* is, in my view, a repair on the part of the narrator, that is, a metanarrative action. The first choice, *entrar*, in the light of the broader narrative frame, might be associated by the audience to the preceding allusion to *las casas* 'the houses', in such a way that its use might be confusing. More specifically, the audience might interpret the term as meaning 'to come into the houses', or more precisely: 'We wished that somebody would come into the houses.' Given the potential ambiguity of the verb *entrar* in the referred context, the narrator, accomplishing a metanarrative function, introduces the phrase *llegara a trabajar* '(he) arrived here to work',

8Metanarrator	'I want a meal,' <i>díle no 'más.</i> 'say only that.'
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In this case, embedded reported speech is easily identifiable, given that the Thunders use the first person singular pronoun and/or the corresponding verb inflection (*yo quiero* 'I want') in line 6; *quiero* '(I) want' (line 7)) in the quotation. In other words, a figure animated by the narrator (The Thunders) assumes the role of another figure (Juan, the boy).

although the construction *entrar a trabajar* ‘to get a job’ is otherwise appropriate.

In a similar vein, a repair takes place (excerpt 7, line 5) in a context in which the first lexical choice might be interpreted - given the broader context of occurrence - in a sense different to the intended one. A dialogue between the Thunders and the boy is animated after the boy has followed the Thunders’ directions for some time.

Excerpt 7

- 1 Narrator: *Entonces al otro día llegaron otra vez.*
‘Then, the next day they came back again.’
- 2 *Acabaron de comer; cenaron todo.*
‘They had lunch; they eat everything for dinner.’
- 3 *Entonces:*
‘Then,’
- 4 The Thunders: *Mañana te vas a quedar otra vez.*
‘Tomorrow you will stay again.’
- 5 *Ora vamos a probar...a calar ora.*
‘Now we are going to check...to test now.’
- 6 *Vamos a llegar temprano; si te da hambre, pide lo que tú quieras;*
‘We will be back early; if you are hungry, ask for whatever you want;’
- 7 *pero no vayas a pedir mucho. Ya sabes: uno.*
‘but you don’t ask for a lot. You already know: just one.’
- 8 Narrator *Entonces ya se dio cuenta: lo que pide, que sea de a uno.*
Then he realized; whatever he asked for it should be one at a time’
Pues ya sabe.
‘He already knows.’

While the word *probar* (‘to test’, ‘to taste’) could be understood as ‘to taste’ - rather than the intended ‘to test’ - in association with the previous reference to having lunch and having dinner (line 2), the word *calar* ‘to test’ clarifies in this context the sense of the word just uttered, which is consistent with the fact that the Thunders are following and assessing every action carried out by Juan.

Thus, in this case, although the repair takes place in the quotation, thereby giving the impression that it is the animated character who makes the repair, it is indeed the narrator who accomplishes the clarifying, metanarrative action in the light of the broader narrative frame.

While in the previous excerpts the scope of the metanarrative action is a single word, a larger discourse unit can also be the object of metanarrative consideration. Here, an exchange between one of the Thunders and the boy takes place, in which the Thunder warns the boy not to do anything forbidden or unexpected.

Excerpt 8

- 1 Narrator/Metanarrator: *Y este...pues ya le dice:*
‘And well...he (The Thunder) says to him (the boy)’
- 2 The Thunder: *Bueno, no vayas a tentar,*
‘Well, do not touch,
- 3 Thunder/Metanarrator *dice,*

- 4 ‘(he) says’
 ...*nosotros nos vamos a trabajar,*
 ...we are going to work,’
 5 *no vayas a tentar alguna cosa: te lo anticipamos.*
 ‘Do not touch anything. We are warning you.’

In this case, in the middle of a clause (line 4), the narrator pauses and then provides the audience with information deemed necessary to understand the sense of the Thunder’s words. The missing information is that the warning derives from the fact that the Thunders are about to leave. Interestingly, the features that index point of view are not affected, so that although the metanarrator is ultimately responsible for the repairing action, it gives the impression that it is the Thunder who makes the repair.

Let us examine another example in which a single word seems to be the focus of the metanarrative action. In this excerpt, Juan (the boy) talks to the members of his village about the way he could kill an unusually big eagle that took away those people who did not cover their heads with a basket.¹²

Excerpt 9

- 1 Metanarrator: *Después dice Juan,*
 ‘Then Juan says,’
 2 Juan: *así comoquiera nos estamos escapando,*
 ‘Well, in any case we’re getting out of it well’,
 3 ...*pero yo la voy a matar.*
 ‘but I’m going to kill her’
 4 *Quién tiene pistola?*
 ‘Who has a gun.’
 5 ...*Tiene fulano?*
 ...Does John Doe have one?’¹³
 6 *Pues que me la preste,*
 ‘Well, lend it to me,’
 7 Metanarrator: *dice.*
 ‘he says.’

Interestingly, in line 5 the narrator uses a cover term for referring to any person who might own a gun. Rather than providing a specific name, he chooses an abstract lexical item that allows him to go ahead and continue to report the boy’s speech without getting involved in a time-consuming activity. In this case, the narrator, in his role of metanarrator, makes a decision different from the previous storyteller, who pauses and re-elaborates the text of the speech reported. Similarly to the alternative interpretation discussed in the previous example, the narrator might be viewed as trying to characterize the boy’s attitude as reflected in his speech (a person that does not care about details, or does not bother himself

¹² In this version of the story, the boy is trying to get a gun to kill the eagle. Once he is taken by the huge animal to a high mountain, he kills it. He then goes down the hill and accidentally arrives at the Thunder’s home.

¹³ An alternative translation would be ‘does what’s-his-face-have one?’

learning the names of his companions). However, a similar example presented below supports my first interpretation.

As the story unfolds, once the Thunders have instructed the boy as to how to proceed in order to satisfy his hunger when in their absence, the boy does not follow the corresponding directions exactly. Instead of using the diminutive word *platanito* ‘little banana’, he employs *plátano* ‘banana’ (see excerpt 1), so that a great deal of bananas fall over him, and the Thunders, who immediately realize this, return to help him.

Excerpt 10

- 1 Metanarrator: *Entonces que le dicen al otro día,*
‘So they told him the next day,’
- 2 Thunders: *pues ahora sí,*
‘Well now for sure,’
- 3 *nosotros vamos a ir a tal parte.*
‘we are heading to such-and-such place.’
- 4 *Ahora sí vas a poner el nixcón,¹⁴*
‘Now for sure you ar going to prepare nixcón;’
pero vas a poner un granito de maíz,
‘but you are going to put just one grain of maize,’
- 5 *no vayas a poner un puño,*
‘don’t you add one handful of it,’
- 6 *porque si echas un puño no va a caber ahí, en esa olla,*
because if you add a handful (of maize),there’s not going to be
enough room in that pot,’
- 7 *el nixcón*
‘for the nixcón.’

In line 3 we have another abstract word (*tal* ‘such-and-such’) to refer to a place. It seems that the narrator, in his metanarrative role, does not assess as important, at this particular point of the story, to provide a more explicit or detailed characterization of the place the Thunders are heading to. Contrarily, the way in which the boy needs to prepare dinner (*nixcón*) (lines 4 to 7) is very carefully described.

While in the previous narrative excerpt (excerpt 9) is the boy who seems to utter the abstract form *fulano* to refer to a non-specific person, in this case it is the Thunders who seem to avoid providing details when referring to a place. The expression *tal lugar* ‘such-and-such place’ is thus the appropriate choice. According to the story, there are no affinities between the two characters; indeed they are rather to be seen as opposite in most (if not all) respects. Thus, we could hardly attribute the corresponding lexical choice to the scatterbrained nature or carefree behavior of the boy, and make it extensive to the Thunders. After comparing the two excerpts one concludes that is a metanarrative decision of the narrator¹⁵.

¹⁴ Also called *nixtamal*, the *nixcón* is prepared adding approximately 1 kg of grains of maize and a handful of lime to four liters of boiling water. This mixture is then processed and used to make *tortillas*, one of the most important elements of the Mexican cuisine.

¹⁵ A similar treatment is identified by Chafe (1994: 216) in conversational narrative: “Sometimes a quote contains a variable expression introduced by the proximal speaker”, as in the excerpt below:

a ..And she said well,

In spite of the richness and variety of reflexive elements framed by direct reported speech (direct reported speech, indirect reported speech, reported thought, performative verbs), the question arises: Are there some others that does not occur at all? And if so why? In order to answer this question, I refer to excerpt 11, below, which involves the introduction of an explicitly reflexive resource that had not been approached thus far in this particular context, namely a metanarrative comment.

The following fragment involves an exchange between the Thunders and Juan, relatively early in the course of the narrative. Although the Thunders have already been introduced by the narrator, the kind of activity they carry on - which is altogether relevant for the audience to follow the narrative plot- has not been addressed yet.

Excerpt 11

- 1 Metanarrator: *Bueno, al otro día en la mañana que le dicen: ((REFERRING TO JUAN))*
 ‘Well, the next day in the morning they told him
- 2 The Thunders: *Juan, te vas a quedar. Nosotros vamos a ir a trabajar.*
 ‘Juan, you are going to stay here. We are leaving to work’
- 3 Metanarrator: *Porque donde de veras se estaban muriendo los animales,*
 ‘Because in those places where animals were dying,’
- 4 *se estaba secando todo;*
 ‘everything was withering;’
- 5 *donde hacía mucha falta el agua,*
 ‘where water was very necessary,’
- 6 *entonces los mandaba Dios.*
 ‘then God sent them’
- 7 *allá se está muriendo la gente porque no hay agua,*
 ‘There people is dying because there’s no water,’
- 8 *ya no se dá nada porque está seco ahí.*
 ‘Nothing grows because it is very dry there.’
- 9 *Se van y empieza a llover, empieza a llover.*
 ‘They go there and it starts to rain, it starts to rain.’

Once the clarification dealing with the kind of work carried out by the Thunders has been made (lines 3 through 9), the quotation is resumed and closed as excerpt 12:

Excerpt 12

- 10 Thunders: *Nosotros nos vamos a ir muy lejos,*
 ‘We are going faraway’
- 11 Metanarrator: *que le dicen a Juan.*
 ‘(they) told Juan’
- 12 Thunders: *Te vas a quedar.*
 ‘You’re going to stay here.’
- 13 *No vayas a ninguna parte,*

b ..so and so lives here,

c ..and so and so lives there.

Chafe concludes (216): “*So and so* are obviously the words of the proximal speaker, not the quoted one”.

- 14 ‘Don’t go anywhere,’
ni vayas a agarrar nada.
 ‘You don’t touch anything either.’
- 15 *Si quieres plátano,*
 ‘If you want to get a banana,’
- 16 *tú no vayas a agarrar un plátano,*
 ‘you mustn’t take a banana,’
- 17 *tú vas a decir,*
 ‘you are going to say,’
- 18 Thunders/Juan *¡que caiga un platanito!*
 ‘(I want) a little banana to fall down!’
- 19 Thunders: *Te va a caer uno o si no dos.*
 ‘It’s going to fall down one, or maybe two.’

As can be noticed, the framing device of the metanarrative comment is altogether consistent with the resources employed by the narrator outside the scope of the quotation. The use of *porque* ‘because’ without a principal clause is a frequent means of introducing comments, as discussed in Oropeza (2001: 26).

The introduction of this metanarrative resource in the context of the quotation is indeed crucial for the audience to make sense not only of this particular narrative fragment, but actually of the whole story, given that it bridges the gap between the content of the speech reported and the succeeding narrative action.

Excerpts 11-12 show the crucial importance of explicitly reflexive devices, and the fact that they are displayed whenever relevant to guarantee an adequate interpretation of the story by the audience, even in the context of direct reported speech. Those fragments also exhibit the teller’s mastery on handling the situation and coming up with the best possible solution. In the particular case at hand, if we proceed to extract the metanarrative comment, we realize that the surrounding text is highly cohesive.

Excerpt 13

- 1 Narrator/Metanarrator: *Bueno, al otro día en la mañana que le dicen:*
 ‘Well, the next day in the morning they told him:’
- 2 Thunders: *Juan, te vas a quedar. Nosotros vamos a ir a trabajar.*
 ‘Juan, you are going to stay here. We are leaving to work.’
- 10 *Nosotros nos vamos a ir muy lejos,*
 ‘We are going fareway’,
- 11 Metanarrator: *que le dicen a Juan.*
 ‘(they) told Juan.’
- 12 Thunders *Te vas a quedar.*
 ‘You’re going to stay here.’
- 13 *No vayas a ninguna parte,*
 ‘Don’t go anywhere’,
- 14 *ni vayas a agarrar nada.*
 ‘You don’t touch anything either.’
- 15 *Si quieres plátano,*
 ‘If you want to get a banana,’
- 16 *tú no vayas a agarrar un plátano,*

- 17 'you mustn't take a banana,'
tú vas a decir,
- 18 Thunders/Juan 'you are going to say,'
¡que caiga un platanito!
- 19 Thunders: '(I want) a little banana to fall down!'
Te va a caer uno o si no dos.
 'It's going to fall down one, or maybe two.'

Cohesion is maintained in spite of the fact that the embedded metanarrative comment is long and syntactically complex.

6. Concluding remarks

In the present paper I have discussed the relation between direct reported speech, reflexivity and participant roles. After a detailed review of the properties and functions of each of these elements in the narrative genre under study, I have arrived at the conclusion that direct reported speech can frame not only explicit reflexivity, but also the implicitly reflexive activity of the teller. This involves from word search and lexical choice - as triggered by such phenomena as forgetfulness, inexactitude, or hypercorrection - to a reelaboration of the syntactic structure of the quote in order to incorporate information relevant for the audience successfully follow the narrative plot.

A tendency prevails, in the context of direct reported speech, to use the most subtle possible means to repair or reformulate any felt gap or inexactness. The avoidance of such resources as overtly addressing the audience by verbal means, which would involve a switch in point of view or deictic center, is highly consistent in my narrative sample. Similarly, I could not find any instance in which the narrator made explicit reference to himself as a speaker through deictic resources, such as first person pronoun or verb form, circumstance this that is however common in metanarrative elements outside the scope of direct reported speech. Subtlety thus seems a consistent feature of the reflexive activity that takes place in the context of direct reported speech.

My analysis shows the high complexity of the participant roles structure in traditional storytelling, characterized by the dynamic interplay between the roles of figure, narrator and metanarrator, to the degree that it is hard, even for the analyst, to determine who is responsible for the corrective action. This fact makes evident the need for revising the models of participant roles developed on the basis of other traditional genres.

Those overtly reflexive elements, such as the metanarrative comments, which not only involve a change of point of view, but also the momentary suspension of the reporting speech continuity, occur only in those cases in which the audience's understanding of the narrative is in risk from the perspective of the storyteller. Except for this crucial commitment of the narrator, the tendency prevails to keep direct reported speech consistent with the corresponding figure's perspective and point of view.

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