

SPEECH ABOUT SPEECH

A developmental study on form and function of direct and indirect speech

Abstract

The present study explores the emergence and development of forms of direct and indirect speech, and functions connected to them, from a long-term perspective. More specifically, the research questions examined concern at what point in time children start to use direct and indirect speech, what the course of development looks like, and how direct and indirect speech are used by children and adults in different activities and in speech in comparison to writing. Four types of direct and indirect speech are distinguished according to their grammatical-structural and deictic properties: *indirect*, *free indirect*, *framed direct*, and *free direct speech*. These forms are argued to be used either to pass on information contained in earlier actual utterances (*speech reporting*) or to project speech onto fictional characters (*speech projection*). Different types of information can be packaged simultaneously into a form of direct or indirect speech (e.g., gestures, intonation, voice quality) to express several functions (e.g., to convey speaker perspective, express evaluation and plot advancement, and describe the referent).

The empirical data examined include longitudinal and cross-sectional data, and the use of direct and indirect speech by Swedish-speaking monolingual children who have just started to produce their first words, pre-school children telling a picture-elicited narrative and playing with a doll house, and school children and adults narrating a story in speech as well as in writing, are investigated. Quantitative as well as qualitative types of analysis were carried out, and the results showed that direct speech appeared before (around 26 months) indirect speech (around 35 months) in the children's production, and that the first occurrences were typically prompted by the parents. The emergence and development of use of the forms were found to be intimately connected with the development of understanding the minds and perspectives of others. The results of the 3-year-olds' language use, indicate a pragmatic awareness in that different types of forms were used in different types of activities, information was packaged simultaneously into the forms to express multifunctionality, and direct and indirect speech were integrated in narrative frames. The majority of the school-age children (i.e., 9-, 12- and 15-year-olds) included few speech projections in their spoken and written narratives, and the narratives had a detached feel. Shifts of speaker perspective were more successfully employed in their spoken narrations than their written narratives, suggesting that they master *speaking within speaking* better than *speaking within writing*. The adult group of narrators was the only one clearly differentiating between the two modes of production, in that they included significantly more speech projections, and a greater number of descriptive speech act verbs and forms of free indirect speech in their written narratives than in their spoken ones.

KEY WORDS: direct and indirect speech, speech projections and speech reporting, long-term language development, linguistic information structuring, speech and writing, narratives

The thesis is written in English.