

# **FAITHFULNESS/VERBATIM REPRODUCTION IN DIRECT REPORTED FORMS: AN OVERVIEW**

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## **Abstract**

The paper is concerned with the concepts of faithfulness and/or verbatim reproduction in relation to various forms of representation, especially direct forms. These concepts have been traditionally applied with the aim to define and differentiate between direct and indirect forms. Furthermore, different approaches seem to employ the two notions to refer to different aspects of the presumed original. Subsequently, a number of opposing views have sprung up, criticising the concepts as untenable for various reasons. The paper tries to at least partially present an overview comparing both views. It will be shown that faithfulness is more a pragmatic and functional concept and cannot be applied indiscriminately to all reporting contexts. As a result, it should not be understood as a distinctive criterion in delimiting various forms of presentation. Instead, formal criteria seem to be a more reliable and applicable option.

## **Key words**

direct and indirect reported forms, faithfulness, verbatim reproduction, deictic centre, genre, function

## **1 Introduction**

Reported language has received much attention of philosophers, linguists, sociolinguists as well as discourse and literary analysts. Forms of reported language have been studied from a myriad of angles and different linguists have focused on different aspects, ranging from purely theoretical and conceptual, formal to semantic and pragmatic. Consequently, nowadays reported language represents a well-researched area in linguistic and literary studies, offering innumerable and often conflicting approaches and insights into the topic. Its function in different contexts relies heavily on the exploitation of its communicative potential based on its formal and semantic properties, with different degrees of relevance of these features to different communicative purposes and strategies. Not surprisingly, indiscriminate generalization or transfer from one context to another may result in misunderstanding and context-insensitive treatment of the issue.

One of the notorious bones of contention in the study of reported language has been the notion of faithfulness or verbatim representation of the original, traditionally applied in order to distinguish direct forms of representation

(speech, writing, thought) from indirect or free indirect ones (Coulmas 1986, Banfield 1973, Semino et al. 1997, Semino & Short 2002). However, a number of opposing views have sprung up (Sternberg 1982, Vandelanotte 2009, Tannen 2007, Ikeo 2009), criticising the concept as untenable on grounds of its inapplicability to a number of situations. The reasons speaking for abandoning the concept relate to the conditions of production and perception of discourse, limitations on human memory, absence of the original, re-contextualization and the overall subordination of direct forms to the communicative purpose of the reporting context. This paper focuses on direct forms, presents an overview introducing both sides of the argument and tries to reconcile both views and interpret the concept of faithfulness/verbatim reproduction in connection to genre and communicative purpose.

## **2 The concept of faithfulness/verbatim reproduction: proponents**

In more traditional accounts, the notion of faithfulness/verbatim reproduction is often applied to differentiate between direct and indirect forms of representation. Direct forms are defined in terms of faithfulness to or verbatim reproduction of form and content; in the case of indirect forms, on the other hand, the notions are applicable to content only. The concept of faithfulness/verbatim reproduction is captured by various labels. For example, in referring to direct forms Quirk et al. (1985: 1021) talk about “exact words that someone (who may be the reporter) utters or has uttered in speech or writing” and Coulmas (1986: 42) refers to the reporter’s commitment to “faithfully rendering form and content of what the original speaker said”.

Among the more recent proponents of the concept belong Semino et al. (1997) or Semino and Short (2002). In their approach to reported forms of speech, writing and thought scales, they extend the assumption of faithfulness beyond form and propositional content, and include in their treatment also the claim of faithfulness to speech act value. More particularly, direct forms are marked for the presence of faithfulness claims to form and structures used, propositional content and speech act value; indirect forms are marked for the presence of faithfulness claims to propositional content and speech act value only (cf. Semino et al. 1997: 23). The faithfulness claims pose problems in their application especially to thought-scale since the concept of faithfulness seems to presume an existence of prior discourse. But as will be shown later, even writing and speech scales are not unproblematic. In the following paragraphs more comments will be made on the applicability of faithfulness to direct forms used in various communicative contexts.

### 3 The concept of faithfulness/verbatim reproduction: opponents

Due to the amount of attention devoted to the phenomenon of direct forms of presentation, one cannot wonder at the disagreement on various issues. The objections raised relate mainly to the concept of faithfulness/verbatim reproduction and point to a number of differences in the approaches adopted. Some studies (cf. e.g. Sternberg 1982) embrace a broader understanding of the concept, including, for example, phonic/graphic features whose reproduction is only partially attainable, especially if the media of the (presumed) original and subsequent report differ. Others like, for example, Semino and Short (2002) seem to distinguish between faithfulness and verbatim reproduction; faithfulness to form is reduced only to lexico-grammatical features, whereas verbatim reproduction may also include “where communicatively relevant, contrastive stress and other speech/writing production factors” (Semino & Short 2002: 328). They, however, do not treat these aspects systematically and do not incorporate them anyhow in their faithfulness claims. Unless used specifically in Semino and Short’s (2002) sense or in Sternberg’s (1982) sense, faithfulness and verbatim reproduction/representation are employed here interchangeably without specification as to what kind of features the terms embrace. The decision also reflects the functional approach adopted here.

Sternberg (1982) points out a number of contexts where verbatim representation is untenable. Let me adduce only a few examples taken from BYU-BNC: The British National Corpus supporting his objections.

- (1) *Wycliffe was unresponsive; his look said: “Are we getting there?”* (BNC/GWB)
- (2) *A man came and said to me, one will come with money and you will do thus and thus.* (BNC/HTX)

Example (1) can be classified as the so-called ‘semiotic transfer’ (Sternberg 1982: 89-93). The concept of verbatim reproduction proves untenable here since there is clearly no prior verbal discourse to be represented in any form, making the concept inapplicable. Consequently, the use of direct quote must be explained by recourse to other than (verbatim) reproduction. The quote in this context seems rather to interpret or translate between two different semiotic systems (ibid.: 90); in this case, the meaning expressed by means of a facial expression is rendered via the system of the English language. Example (2) pertains to a class of phenomena generally labelled by Sternberg as ‘reportive deparicularization’ (ibid.: 93-100). Here the use of direct speech cannot be explained by the need

to report faithfully since this aspect is overtly undermined by employing *thus and thus* in the last clause of the quote. In this case the function is to summarize rather than to offer a word for word reproduction (cf. Clark & Gerrig 1990: 780-781). Looking at the two examples above, the fact that verbatim reproduction can be in some cases unattainable, and even unaimed at, is beyond doubt. It is not without interest to note that although the above forms cannot purport to reproduce faithfully, they all share the ability to express certain interpersonal meanings (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004) in a manner achievable also in non-reported, primary discourse. This, as will be mentioned briefly below, seems to be of primary importance for the function of direct discourse.

A textual and pragmatic perspective is offered by Ikeo's (2009) inspiring research into direct quotations (originally literary reviews) printed on paperback covers of literary works, demonstrating the interaction between the reported direct form and the reporting context. His aim was to examine how Semino and Short's (Semino et al. 1997; Semino & Short 2002) faithfulness claims described above are adhered to in the passages excerpted from the reviews and presented as direct quotes on paperback covers, praising or highlighting some positive aspects of a given title. He focuses on the way the process of structural modification, such as omission of language material, and the process of re-contextualization affect the final interpretation. Though his study offers examples of structures ranging from phrases, clauses, whole sentences and series of sentences, only one example will be offered here for consideration (Ikeo 2009: 1011).

- (3) *"His prose sparkles"*  
*Scotsman* (Amis, 2004)
- (4) ... *His prose sparkles. But it's an essayist's prose, or the prose of an upmarket journalist. It's not a good prose for a novelist, any more than his hero Nabokov's was ...* ('Has Amis gone to the Dogs?', *Scotsman*, September 6, 2003)

Example (3), a quote printed on a paperback cover of one of Amis's works, shows how a complete sentence found to be faithful to the original (Example (4)) the aspects of words and structures used as well as propositional content undergoes – once re-contextualized – a major reinterpretation of its illocutionary force. In the review, the quoted sentence, itself a praise, is functionally subordinated to the more general macro-speech act (criticism); when, however, placed into a macro-speech act of a new context (praise), the interpretation is significantly altered (Ikeo 2009: 1012). The new meaning is arrived at in the most straightforward and relevant way and in the light of the new context changes to praise. It is then clear that faithful rendition of form and meaning cannot guarantee conformity to faithfulness to speech act value (ibid.: 1014-1015).

The following example illustrates the use of direct speech in an informal conversation between two friends discussing their experience of motherhood.

- (5) DAISY        *The minute the kids get old enough to do these things  
                         themselves  
                         that's when*  
MARY            *"You do it yourself."*  
DAISY           *Yeah that's when I start to say ...*  
→                *"Well, I don't think I'll go in the water this time.*  
→                *Why don't you go on the ferris wheel.*  
→                *I'll wave to you."*

The excerpt, taken from Tannen (2007: 113), is worth mentioning for two reasons. First, it points to the inapplicability of the concept of faithfulness. Second, Tannen offers a social and pragmatic perspective on the use of direct quotes, covering aspects of reinforcing a mutual relation based on shared experience and appreciation. As for faithfulness, neither Mary's, nor Daisy's quotes seem to refer to any particular situation(s) (ibid.: 113, 117) and seem to correspond to one kind of Sternberg's (1982) reportive deparicularization in that they are stripped of their concrete spatial-temporal specification and summarize or typify actual and uniquely occurring interaction between parents and children. Interestingly, the pronouns *you* used in Mary's and Daisy's contributions do not refer to speech participants, i.e. Daisy or Mary, but to Daisy's children. This is important especially for the interpretation of Mary's contribution. By using the quote as she does, Mary seems to speak for Daisy and her turn relies on shared experience and appreciation of Daisy's point of view (Tannen 2007: 117). Keeping Tannen's perspective on the issue, direct speech should not be viewed as a mere report, but an "active, creative, transforming move which expresses the relationship not between the quoted party [e.g. Daisy] and the topic of the talk [e.g. *You do it yourself*] but rather the quoting party [e.g. Mary] and the audience [e.g. Daisy] ... [but it] is not to say that it was necessarily not uttered by the speaker to whom it is attributed" (ibid.: 111). If we attempt to compare Tannen's perspective with, for example, that of Semino et al.'s (1997), it becomes clear that Tannen's approach is applicable irrespective of the existence of prior discourse since she interprets direct quotes not in terms of faithfulness but is concerned rather with what the quote *says* about the participants' relationship and socio-cultural standing. In different contexts such as scientific writing or newspaper reports, expressing appreciation of and respect to the quoted party may, on the contrary, hinge on the expected conformity to propositional content, speech act value or even words and structures used.

A different approach to faithfulness in direct quotes is offered by Clark and Gerrig (1990). They view direct quotes as demonstrations, i.e. in using a quote reporters demonstrate or “illustrate by exemplification” the previous discourse (Clark & Gerrig 1990: 764, Note 2). One of the most important aspects and the one with far-reaching repercussions for the concept of faithfulness as such is their principle of selectivity (ibid.: 768-769, 774-780). According to this principle, reporters are selective in what they present as direct quotations. The aspects chosen for demonstration may relate to various features of communication, such as the language, dialect or register used. Also, reporters are free to present as demonstration, in dependence on their communicative purpose, different types of acts: propositional content, illocutionary force, locution or features of utterance act and delivery aspects of spoken/written language, such as voice pitch or quality (ibid.: 775). The following examples illustrate their treatment.

- (6) *General Mattis, of the Marine Corps, told an audience five years ago: “Actually, it’s a lot of fun to fight. You know it’s a helluva hoot. I’ll be right up front with you. I like brawling.”* (The Times, July 9, 2010)
- (7) *Gen Mattis was reprimanded at the time by the Marine Corps for telling a conference in San Diego, California: “It’s fun to shoot some people. I’ll be right up front with you, I like brawling.”* (The Daily Telegraph, July 8, 2010)

The above quotes were published in newspaper reports in *The Times* and *The Daily Telegraph* and represent a controversial view of the fighting in Afghanistan, expressed by general Mattis during his lecture at a conference in San Diego. Since the quotes show a considerable degree of overlap, it can be assumed that they represent an identical speech event, which is corroborated also by the quotes employed in other newspaper reports. Apart from minor differences in vocabulary (*fight* in (6) vs. *shoot some people* in (7)) and the combination of the last two separate sentences in (6) into one sentence in (7), Example (6) is more extensive, containing items edited out of Example (7), for example, discourse markers *actually, you know*, the modifier *a lot of* in *a lot of fun* and the slang expression *a helluva hoot*. In the light of these alterations, it may be assumed that *The Times* quote is closer to the spoken original than the one employed in *The Daily Telegraph* report. Applying the concept of selectivity, we can find a noticeable difference in how style and register are handled. In *The Times* quote, these aspects were deemed relevant and intentionally demonstrated. Furthermore, by using unconventional spelling in *a helluva hoot* the reporter demonstrates one aspect of the utterance act, namely the original pronunciation. None of these options have been made use of in *The Daily Telegraph* quote, which exemplifies common journalistic practice of tidying up direct quotes so that they match the style of the report. It is generally known that these corrections are mostly related

to the level of formality, features of interaction and on the spot production, whereas ideational meaning is more likely to be preserved.

The concept of selectivity naturally leads to the question of motivation for the differences in what is demonstrated. There are many reasons for which direct quotes are employed in the discourse of newspaper reports. Those often enumerated are, for example, persuasiveness, newsworthiness, evidentiality, personalization, objectivity, reliability and credibility (Waugh 1995, van Dijk 1988). Like in this case, direct quotes are also especially convenient for presenting controversial or unpopular views, but they may also serve as a means of portrayal of the reported speaker. This example also shows that what the reporter selects as demonstration and what not is a purposeful decision, a decision subordinated to the overall communicative intention and resulting in interaction between primary (reporting) and secondary (reported) discourse and manipulation of the latter.

The inclusion of the notion of selectivity in the treatment of direct quotations seems to avoid the problems approaches like, for example, Semino et al. (1997) and other similar studies face because of low flexibility and too sweeping a character of the delimitation of direct forms. Consequently, defining direct quotes in terms of the three faithfulness claims makes it impossible for them to account for cases which show different degrees of conformity to faithfulness on the one hand, or, on the other hand, seem to demonstrate aspects not addressed systematically in their treatment. In Clark and Gerrig's (1990) approach, however, faithfulness is selective and covers only those aspects which are intended for demonstration. Thus, it can be said that direct quotes are always faithful since the aspects which have not been selected are automatically excluded from consideration. If we define faithfulness of direct quotes in terms of selectivity, the resulting concept may seem more elusive or under-defined but at the same time more flexible and able to reflect contextual factors such as communicative purpose and conventional peculiarities of genre, its requirements and expectations.

## **4 Faithfulness and genre**

In our discussion we have briefly touched upon the connection between faithfulness and genre. The following paragraphs will focus more on what "counts as faithful" (Semino & Short 2002: 353) in the realm of newspaper reporting, more specifically in newspaper headlines. Consider the following examples:

- (8) *Failure to recognise state 'is unjust and unfair'*
- (9) *"Spain, Greece and the others kept telling us they were waiting for the ICJ opinion. Now it is extremely clear. Not recognising Kosovo now is unfair and will unjustly delay our European perspective."* (The Times, 28 July, 2010)

Examples (8) and (9) are the headline and a more detailed quote excerpted from the body of the report respectively. The headline exemplifies a combination of primary discourse and secondary discourse, in this case, however, with no overtly marked attribution (cf. Clark & Gerrig 1990, Waugh 1995 or Semino & Short 2004). The material enclosed in quotation marks seems to correspond to the last sentence of example (9); the quotes show, however, only a minor overlap based on the items *unjust/unjustly* and *unfair*. As mentioned before, direct quotes in newspaper reports frequently undergo minor stylistic improvements. As Short (1988: 69) shows, the quoting practice applied to headlines seems to be even more relaxed compared to the body of the text itself. Quotes in headlines seem to show a greater propensity for not following to different degrees the three faithfulness claims, instead summarizing the content of the original discourse (if applicable) but at the same time retaining the dramatic and eye-catching effect. This is naturally connected to different functions that headlines and the rest of the report perform. In addition, a degree of imprecision in combination with no overt attribution protects the reporter from libel, without impinging on the intended rhetorical effect.

The preceding paragraphs have focused mainly on showing that the concept of faithfulness cannot be applied indiscriminately to all uses of direct discourse. We have seen the effects of re-contextualization, functional subordination and assimilation of the original to the style of the reporting context with concomitant breach of faithfulness/verbatim reproduction. At the same time, a genre may evince different tendencies in adherence to or breach of faithfulness in dependence on what part of the generic structure a quote is employed in, in other words, to what function it is put to. In some contexts *reporting* function can be overridden by the function of summary, interpretation or maintenance of social relationship. This is not to say, however, that faithfulness should be done away with completely, since there are a number of contexts where faithful reproduction is of vital importance, for example, legal or academic discourse or to a certain extent also newspaper reporting. In a more fact-based discourse the odds of faithful rendition are much higher since it is precisely (what normally in the given context amounts to) faithful rendition that can show one's appreciation of the findings or views of others' or that is needed for a fair and objective treatment in the case of disagreement. If, then, verbatim reproduction and/or faithfulness cannot be applied to distinguish generally between direct and indirect forms, a need arises of a more reliable and less context- and function-bound criterion that would allow a more satisfactory and general application. This issue is addressed in the following paragraphs.



## 5 The role of deictic centre in distinguishing direct and indirect forms

This section aims to argue for a more reliable criterion than faithfulness/verbatim reproduction is for the delimitation of direct forms of representation. It draws mainly on Sternberg (1982) and Vandelanotte (2009) since their views are considered to a degree compatible and offer fruitful contribution to the topic. Nevertheless, for the purpose of explanation it might be convenient to return to one of the proponents of verbatim reproduction. Banfield (1973: 9) notes that "... the different types of clauses that co-occur with direct and indirect speech suggest that the former must be considered as a word for word reproduction ... while the latter should not". This quote is interesting since in her view on direct speech Banfield seems to bring together two different perspectives. By referring to "different types of clauses" she raises the question of restrictions on the reported clause in indirect forms, such as mood or interrogative structure. These restrictions may be extended to include also exclamations, vocatives, interjections, discourse markers or incomplete sentences, i.e. phenomena serving to express interactive, interpersonal meanings connected to the *I – you* axis of the original speech situation (Banfield 1973: 6-10, 27, Vandelanotte 2009: 41-50, Sternberg 1982: 108-112). All these are, however, permissible in the direct reported clause. Apart from her view of word for word reproduction, Banfield was right in laying emphasis on structures expressing interpersonal meanings since they are crucial for the functional differentiation of direct and indirect forms and some authors consider them decisive in the delimitation and definition of different forms of reported language. The meanings expressed on the *I – you* axis naturally lead us to the problem of deictic centre.

Deictic centre, as understood by Vandelanotte (2009: 60), comprises the whole "situatedness" of one participant in a speech situation, and plays a vital role in the function of direct and indirect forms. In direct speech, the original deictic centre and the deictic centre of the current/reporting speaker are clearly separated, the former being left *uncontaminated*, preserving its speech-functional responsibility (ibid.: 188). As a result, in direct reported clause the deictic centre retains its "full operativity" and the reported clause "re-enacts" (ibid.: 240) fully the original speech situation, expressing independently speech function and other interpersonal meanings. In indirect speech, the deictic orientation of reported clause (as well as reporting clause) is geared to the orientation of the current speaker (ibid.: 188), leaving the interpersonal level of the original situation accessible only via the reporting situation. In other words, the operativity of the original deictic centre is very low, reducing independent speech function re-enactment to zero (ibid.: 240).

Deictic centre is upheld as essential also by Sternberg (1982: 110-112), who like Vandelanotte, lays emphasis on the difference between single-centredness of indirect forms and double-centredness of direct forms. The deictic autonomy of reported clause in direct forms then allows the occurrence of the above mentioned structures. Sternberg (ibid.: 111), however, explains that deictic independence is by no means to be equated with communicative autonomy evinced by non-reported, primary discourse. In that he alludes to the subordination of direct forms to the communicative purpose of the reporter. Let us now look at the examples discussed in the preceding sections, using the concepts of deictic autonomy resulting in full operativity of the deictic centre and the original speech function re-enactment on the one hand and the absence of the communicative autonomy on the other.

All examples illustrate deictic autonomy of reported element by retaining the original (if applicable) or at least different spatial-temporal and personal coordinates from those found in the reporting clause. Moreover, Examples (1) and (5) contain re-enacted question/suggestion in interrogative form (*Are we getting there? Why don't you go on the ferris wheel.*); Example (5) also re-enacts a request in imperative mood (*You do it yourself.*); and Examples (5) and (6) contain discourse markers (*well, actually, you know*). Thanks to the high degree of operativity of the original deictic centre and full re-enactment, the speech function and other interpersonal meanings remain intact and can be exploited, for example, for their vividness, immediacy or dramatic and enlivening effect. It will have been noticed that these effects are not diminished by the non-existence of prior discourse in one or five. Even though (5), for example, has been deparicularized from a unique speech situation, the “incongruence” (Sternberg 1982: 111) of reporting and reported deictic centres has not been affected. In (2), the items *thus and thus* affect the meanings expressed on ideational rather than interpersonal plane (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004). The reduction of propositional content in Example (2) contributes to an irrevocable impingement upon the communicative (though not speech-functional) independence of the reported structure. All these examples testify to deictic duality and re-enactment and show the way the reporting speaker exploits direct speech for his/her communicative purpose: to interpret in (1); summarize in (2), (5) and (8); praise in (3); or express recognition and agreement in the process of maintaining relationship in (5). This functional differentiation points out to a necessary “penetrable [and thus] manipulable” nature of the reported structure (Sternberg 1982: 111), leading to its communicative dependence. In other words, as long as the deictic centres of the reporting and reported structures are kept apart, the *presence* of the reporting speaker in the reported element offers cues as to the function of direct forms in the text and help to explain how the reporting speaker employs a given form to achieve his/her communicative purpose.

## 6 Conclusion

The preceding sections have tried to show that the concept of faithfulness/verbatim reproduction should be handled with care and always considered in connection with genre and function. Examples were given of instances where it has proven inapplicable; on the other hand, certain degree of faithfulness can be expected in contexts where direct forms are employed for the function of objectivity or evidentiality. As such, however, faithfulness/verbatim reproduction cannot be relied upon in delimiting direct forms conceptually. Also, various approaches view direct forms from different angles, but it is assumed they can be brought together under the common denomination of function. Thus, a reporter selects features that he/she wants to demonstrate, which makes an act of quoting a creative and active process. This selection is, however, governed by his/her communicative intention and expected conventions of a given genre or text-type. The overall subordination to and interaction with the reporting context and its aim do not detract from the advantages offered by deictic duality of direct forms, deictic autonomy enjoyed by direct reported clause and all the pragmatic consequences. On the contrary, these can be actively exploited irrespective of whether faithfulness is applicable or not. They enrich discourse by a number of rhetorical effects indirect forms cannot achieve, be it vividness, dramatization, personalization or, for that matter, faithful reproduction, objectivity and credibility.

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