

## WHERE DOES THE ILLOCUTIONARY FORCE COME FROM IN INDIRECT SPEECH?



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The term INDIRECT SPEECH understood as a variety of reported speech intersects with other grammatical terms in which the adjective INDIRECT is also used, namely INDIRECT QUESTIONS, not all of which involve reporting, and INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS as used by Searle (1975:59). Within the Spanish grammatical tradition only the expression ESTILO INDIRECTO is available. In English we find other alternatives such as INDIRECT STYLE (Zandvoort 1957:796), INDIRECT QUOTATION (McCawley 1973:131) and INDIRECT DISCOURSE (Davison 1975:156) which can be said to have the same meaning.

I will quote three definitions, or rather explanations, which seem to me to convey the basic features of indirect speech. The first is by Leech and Svartvik (1975:117):

«To report what somebody has stated you can either use quotation marks (DIRECT SPEECH) or a *that* clause (INDIRECT SPEECH).»

The second is by Thomson and Martinet (1960:78):

«In indirect speech we give the exact meaning of a remark of speech without necessarily using the speaker's exact words.»

The third is Gili Gaya's (1970:228):

«En el estilo indirecto el que habla o escribe refiere por sí mismo lo que otro ha dicho.»

These explanations are given by ordinary grammarians of the type consulted by language teachers and other applied linguists not particularly prone to philosophical speculation. The outstanding philosopher J. L. Austin, however, describes indirect speech basically in the same way. (Austin 1962:70-71) «That clauses in indirect speech or *oratio obliqua* are of course cases where I report what someone else or myself elsewhere and elsewhere did say: for example typically 'he said that...', but also possibly 'he promised that...' (or is this a double use of 'that'?) or 'on page 456 he declared that...'.»

Austin himself in a footnote refers to the obscurity of the treatment of *that*-clauses in most grammar texts. It is worth remarking that in the four explanations we find the description of a process with two involved participants: the speaker and the reporter and the latter does not necessarily repeat the speaker's original words. Thus what we have is a process of reporting somebody else's utterances maintaining just its deep structure, or what is perhaps interchangeable with it, its meaning.

Zwicky (1971:73) in a short illuminating article on reported speech insists upon the two roles involved in reporting:

«In my exposition I shall distinguish the (original) 'speaker' which gives a 'speech' and the person who describes the content of this speech the 'reporter', who supplies a 'report'.»

Hence we can exclude from the class of indirect speech utterances structures of the kind 'we don't know where to go' or 'I want you to come' because they do not actually report although in the first we have an indirect question and an embedded imperative in the second. From a purely syntactic point of view, however, the borderline between indirect speech clauses and other types of object clauses is not a clear-cut one. Jespersen (1933:268) treats as indirect speech clauses whose main verbs are not only 'say' but also 'think'. In several English grammars indirect speech clauses are grouped together with rest of object clauses. Such is the case in Nida (1960:109), Stockwell,

Schachter and Partee (1973:529), Hudson (1971:172), Long (1961:62) and Francis (1958: 396), all of them descriptive texts belonging to different linguistic schools.

In Spanish grammar we find the same line of approach. Two grammars so far apart as those by Andrés Bello (1875:336-38) and Marcos Marín (1975:262) do not devote separate chapters or sections to indirect speech clauses but simply mention them as a subset of object clauses.

Nevertheless we do find specific and detailed treatments of our topic in both English and Spanish language studies, among them Gili Gaya (op. cit.), «Esbozo para una Gramática de la Lengua Española» (Royal Academy 1975:518-20), Alcina and Blecua (1975:1120), Quirk, Greenbaum et al (1972:785), Palmer (1965:250), Thomson and Martinet (op. cit.) and Christophersen and Sanved (1969:250), the last two significantly being of the kind recommended to students of English as a second language.

Indirect speech is indeed brought into prominence if we abandon a narrow syntactic perspective in favour of a wider one in which semantic and pragmatic aspects are taken into consideration. Traditional attitudes towards indirect speech have insisted upon quasimechanical transformations in the embedded clause, mostly when the reporting verb is in the past tense, backshifting of verbs, pronoun and adverb replacement and so on. It has been pointed out, though, that those grammatical rearrangements are not purely automatic, but have to do with the reporter's perspective. Palmer (1965:70) mentions two exceptions to the normal backshifted pattern, and the so called 'eternal truths' are nearly always alluded to. These deviations from the assumed regularly shifted forms can be thoroughly exemplified in both English and Spanish. I shall give a few instances taken from newspapers.

1. «Vatican sources said that while Pope Paul appears frail, suffers from a painful form of arthritis and has referred several times to his own impending death, he is in a remarkably good health for a man of 80» (D T Feb. 22.78:19).

2. «The statement said the decision on whether to actually produce the weapon is one for the U.S. Administration» (T G Feb. 24.78:6).

3. «Their directors in their comments said that it is too early to predict the outcome for the full year» (T G Feb. 24.78:2).

4. «Mr. Silvino Trompetto, the Savoy's head chef, told me that kippers are still a great favourite» (E N Feb. 18.78:14).

5. «The government has promised that pension rises will be backdated if they cannot be paid on July 22» (T S T Jun. 22.74:2).

6. «Felipe González estimó que los resultados que hasta ahora consiguen CC OO no son preocupantes» (E P Jan. 22.78:1).

7. «Precisó que en el plazo de un año la UGT se convertirá en la principal central sindical del país» (E P Jan. 22.78:1).

8. «Felipe González precisó que su criterio es que el Rey no debe hacer política de partido» (E P Jan. 22.78:3).

9. «El presidente aseguró que las decisiones en este campo deben pasar por la prueba de la libre discusión» (E P Jan. 21.78:6).

10. «Dijo también que el PSP está firme y cohesionado, y que son inexactas las noticias sobre su supuesta desintegración» (E P Jan. 21.78:12).

It seems to be up to the reporter to evaluate the current relevance of what has been said and its intended time reference, so the reporter acts as a filtering out device for the hearer/reader.

Besides the classical clause embedding procedure mentioned so far, there are other ways of reporting, as Austin indeed remarked. A common one seems to be the use of nouns (some of them etimologically related to verbs) by which whole predications are compressed. With this technique the speaker's original words are hardly recoverable. Again I will quote a few examples.

11. «He even suggested the end of the U S tactical support» (T S T Jun. 2.74:34).

12. «Kissinger restated the October 1971 proposal» (T S T Jun. 24.74:34).

13. «A leading Paris newspaper reported a crisis yesterday in France's foreign intelligence services» (T G Feb. 28.78:7).

14. «He also reports negotiations in hand for a number of other significant property sales» (E S Feb. 20.78:34).

15. «El primer ministro israelí explicó ayer las razones de la decisión adoptada por su gobierno» (E P Jan. 24.78:3).

16. «La policía barcelonesa informó anoche de la detención de los otros presuntos autores del atentado contra la sala de fiestas Scala» (E P Jan. 22.78:14).

17. «Suárez prometió su asistencia para una ulterior sesión». (E P Jan. 22.78:1).

18. «La CAMPSA anunció hace unos días su traslado a la estación de Linares-Baeza» (E P Jan. 22.78: 14).

Another procedure which seems readily available is the use of adjectives standing in an intensive relation with the main verb. e. g.:

19. «A DIFFICULT year was reported by Mr. R. W. Johnson» (R T T Feb. 17.78:11).

20. «Last night the company described the man's actions as unofficial and unconstitutional» (D T Feb. 22.78:2).

21. «Felipe González calificó de 'respetable' el intento de Areilza de crear un partido» (E P Jan. 22.78:9).

22. «Consideró positivos los resultados de las elecciones sindicales en Hunosa» (E P Jan. 22.78:9).

We also find non-finite clause objects in both languages. e. g.:

23. «When Mr. Oakes urged the universities to admit more mature students...» (T G Feb. 24.78:3).

24. «The attack was reported to have come from Espungabera» (E S Feb. 20.78:3).

25. «Villiers was ordered to pay 60p. witness expense» (R T T Feb. 8.78:6).

26. «Elliot agreed to raise the matter with the housing minister» (T S T May. 5.74:4).

27. «Sadat acusó a Israel de haber tratado de retrasar las cosas en el curso de las negociaciones» (E P Jan. 22.78:4).

28. «En cualquier caso manifestó no haber leído aún la mencionada entrevista» (E P Jan. 22.78:1).

29. «Manuel Fraga se negó a comentar nada de sus contactos con Osorio» (E P Jan. 19.78:13).

30. «El nuevo Rector de la Autónoma invitó a los estudiantes a asumir su papel de protagonistas en la Universidad» (E P Jan. 21.78:19).

Whatever reporting device we may choose it is clear that the reporting verb plays a central role in it. Grammarians have always acknowledged a wide range of verbs used qua reporting verbs. They form a coherent group of 'verba dicendi' many of them sharing the same structure of complementation. In fact it is the similarity of their syntactic behaviour (whether they are used in reports or not) that has encouraged grammarians to ignore them in that specific function. Fortunately, interest in such verbs grew in different areas of linguistic research, namely wherever linguists decided to pay attention to semantic and pragmatic aspects of language, as I mentioned earlier.

Austin himself made a pioneering attempt to classify speech acts according to their illocutionary force and he sets up five verb classes: (Austin 1962:150) veredictives, exercitives, commissives, bahabitives, and expositives. He was not altogether happy with these names nor are they likely to be accepted as current grammatical terms. Austin clearly separates their function as reporters from the true performative use (in the first person, present tense).

Katz more recently classifies the same verbs as follows: requestives, advisives, expresives, permissives, obligatives, expositives, and stipulatives (Katz 1977:215).

Bruce Fraser (1975:109-93) proposes a much easier taxonomy. His classes are: (again it is speech acts that he classifies) acts of asserting, evaluating, reflecting the speaker's attitude, stipulating, requesting, suggesting, exercising authority and committing. These terms seem to me self explanatory and very likely candidates for general adoption in descriptive grammars.

Travis's classification of illocutionary force somehow falls back into Austin's awkwardness. His classes are: (1975. Ch. 2) incomplete illocutionary forces, tentative illocutionary forces, constitutive illocutionary forces (full or partial) and obligative illocutionary forces (the feature labelled 'scope' further distinguishes promises from orders). Travis is concerned with the distinction between

verbs used performatively, in Austin's sense, and their use in reports or, as he terms them 'descriptions'. He stresses the relevance of choosing the proper reporting verb. He says (op. cit.: 22).

«'Request' and 'implore' are different verbs with which what has been said may be described. If I say to someone 'Please get your car off my lawn'. We may report what I said either by saying that I requested or that I implored him to get his car off my lawn. One of these reports may well be true where the other is not. Requesting and imploring are by no means the same thing.»

Travis offers very profound and helpful insights into indirect speech to which I shall return later. Current literature, faithful to its philosophical origins seems to be paying a lot of attention to points of highly theoretical import such as propositional content, truth value and the like. The focal point is ILLOCUTIONARY ACTS and indirect speech is touched upon in so far as it helps to clarify matters connected with the theory of illocutions and illocutionary force. The role of the reporter, contextual conditions and performance factors have not been given the same prominence. Performance factors immediately relevant for even the most tentative approach to indirect speech and the same can be said of usage conventions and other variables having to do with levels of usage, jargon and register.

Before trying to explore the circumstances governing the choice of a reporting verb and to trace what illocutionary force they have, if any, it seems convenient from a descriptive point of view to provide the reader with a list of verbs which in both English and Spanish are actually used in indirect speech. All of them are taken from newspapers from clear instances of indirect speech stated earlier in the paper. No doubt many more could be added.

I will not quote the whole utterance in which they occur to avoid undue length. They all belong to both/either Austin's and Fraser's lists or else are close synonyms of those in the lists.

Predictably, neither Austin nor Fraser tried to write down an exhaustive repertory.

The purpose of those verbs, their pragmatic function is, just as Davison puts it (1975:158) to specify the kind of illocutionary act performed.

#### ENGLISH

admit	lament
agree	make clear
allege	make plain
announce	order
argue	point out
assure	praise
claim	promise
complain	reject
concede	restate
confirm	reiterate
deny	remark
describe	report
estimate	serve notice
explain	speak
express	state
forecast	stress
indicate	suggest
inform	urge
intend	warn
insist	wonder

#### SPANISH

aclarar	insistir
acusar	invitar
adelantar	manifestar
afirmar	negar
aludir	notificar
anunciar	precisar
añadir	prometer
asegurar	puntualizar
calificar	recordar
considerar	referirse
declarar	reiterar
desmentir	revelar
esbozar	señalar
estimar	sugerir
exaltar	urgir
exigir	
explicar	
expresar	
indicar	
informar	

Let us consider first the unique status of the verb 'say' ('decir') which is the superordinate or most generic verbum dicendi. This is clear from the fact that it can stand as the main verb of a pushed down reported clause: 'dijo que prometía, que aseguraba, que preguntaba...'. Everything

that has been promised, asserted, denied, etc. can be reported by the initial formula 'it was said that...' but the converse does not hold true. 'Say' is the verb used to elicit information to which one does not have a previous clue. I don't think one would abruptly ask 'What did he evaluate, judge, lament?' of a friend who tells us he has just met a former school-mate. 'What did he say (tell you)?' would be the normal sort of question.

'Tell' is used interchangeably with 'say' when the addressee is mentioned but it has a requesting force in many contexts as shown by 'he told me to fetch newspaper'. In Spanish 'decir' shares the same properties stated above and is also found in requests as 'me dijo que fuese a buscar el periódico'.

So 'say', immediately followed by 'ask' ('preguntar'), a long-rooted grammatical tradition confirms this fact, are the most typical colourless verbs for reports and their force when used performatively seems to be weak. As for the selection of other illocutionary verbs in indirect speech it is based on the intersection of various features belonging to the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic dimensions of language.

A. We could set up a first group of those selected just by convention i. e. as a matter of usage and/or register. Leech and Svartvik (1975:119) mention 'assert', 'confirm', 'state' as verbs occurring mainly in reported speech. Some of these verbs are associated with journalese or spoken prose and are seldom heard in colloquial language. 'Indicate', 'inform', 'report', 'state'; 'manifestar', 'notificar', 'informar', 'indicar', are good candidates for this group. They are unlikely to be used performatively by the speaker himself and are often found in reports of messages issued by unknown or vague institutional sources.

31. «El Frente Polisario anunció, a la vez, que acababa de instalar un campo en el territorio del Mali» (E P Jan. 24.78:3).

32. «Fuentes de la CNT informaron anoche de la detención de otro de los presuntos autores del atentado contra la sala de fiestas Scala» (E P Jan. 24.78:4).

33. «In London a spokesman for the Australian High Commission announced that Sir Robert will be accompanied by Sir James Houghton» (T G 24.78:2).

34. «The Arts Council has expressed grave concern about the soured relations between the North-West Arts Association and the Great Manchester Council» (T G Feb. 24.78:2).

Those verbs are very close to neutrality and quite often they are chosen to avoid the monotonous repetition of 'say'. Most of Fraser's asserting verbs seem to fit into this category. Within this class we could establish a subset based on contextual restrictions, as Fraser does, e. g. 'restate', 'reiterate' presuppose the previous utterance of the same thing. Other verbs are similarly so restricted and Fraser calls them ASSERTING II.

B. At the opposite end of the scale we have the group of verbs used by the speaker himself performatively and the reporter just changes person and tense. One would suspect that most strong performatives are so reported.

C. A third group could be established composed of verbs that reflect aspects of performance found in the direct speech text (paralinguistic features of all sorts, facial expression, tears and so on). Travis's example of 'implore' is a case in point.

D. A most interesting group is formed by those verbs selected on the ground of propositional content according to the rules of language use regardless of the speaker's intentions. For example, although 'Mr. X robbed a bank' may be mere statement of fact, the indirect speech version may lay the blame on Mr. X for his evil doing in virtue of the normal usage of the reporting verb 'accuse'. e.g.

35. «Doctores warn that budget cuts could kill health services» (T S T Jun. 19.74:5).

36. «Sadat acusó a Israel de retrasar las cosas en el curso de las negociaciones» (E P Jan. 22.78:4).

In these examples the verbs may not have been used performatively by the speaker and the original sentences may have been uttered in a rather neutral way, but the ordinary uses of 'warn' and 'acusar' justify the selection of such reporting verbs. Sometimes speakers forget this fact refusing to take responsibility for what they have actually said.

E. Another class is that of verbs chosen according to lexical information in the text. Travis mentions examples of this kind. Words such as 'maybe', 'perhaps' help the reporter to describe utterances as guesses. In:

37. «Mr. Sheldon lamented that the Tory party was no longer lead by a man like Mr. MacMillan» (TDT Feb. 22.78:36).

38. «Los Cabildos rechazan de plano la participación de la Junta General de Canarias en la Administración de los fondos de la Junta Interprovincial de Arbitrios Insulares» (E P Jan. 22.78:3).

One could guess that the original source used words of the type 'it is a pity' (37), 'de ningún modo', 'en ningún caso' (38). Verbs which reflect the speaker's attitude are likely to belong to this group.

F. There is a last and most embarrassing set, verbs which just come out of 'the reporter's fancy, wishful thinking, prejudices or even desire to lie to the listener. This is a calculated risk in all human communication situations which affects indirect speech no more than the descriptions of events and so on. Misunderstanding does affect indirect speech severely, but I think it should be treated as «noise» in the total transmission chain.

So if we take for granted that the reporter himself as hearer/reader behaves in tacit compliance with the various laws and postulates which govern human communication as stated by authors such as Gricce (1975:45-47) Gordon and Lakoff (1975:84 and ff) and Searle (1965:221-39), we could add just two more postulates in connection with his role of reporter:

i) The postulate of SHARED RELEVANCE: given nothing to suggest the contrary what the reporter himself finds relevant is assumed to be relevant for the contemporary members of his speech community.

ii) The postulate of PERSONAL INTEGRITY: given nothing to suggest the contrary a reporter does not try to deceive or misinform the listener/reader.

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#### NEWSPAPERS

D T — The Daily Telegraph  
E N — Evening News  
E P — El País  
E S — Evening Standard  
R T T — Richmond and Twickenham Times  
T G — The Guardian  
T S T — The Sunday Times

