

Non-Locutionary Functions of Reported Speech Constructions: A Crosslinguistic Analysis

The present study aims to propose a typological analysis based on a crosslinguistic sample of 100 languages that identifies and classifies possible non-locutionary functions of reported speech constructions (henceforth RSC) in the languages of the world. The term non-locutionary functions of reported speech refers to constructions that morphosyntactically resemble speech reports, but do not represent utterances and are therefore extended meanings of RSCs (cf. Spronck & Casartelli 2021). Consider example (1) for a RSC with the function of representing an utterance, and example (2) for a non-locutionary RSC with the function of expressing an intention:

(1) Lao (Kam-Tai, Laos)

muu1	vaa1	qooj4	jaan4	man2	taaj3	lèew4
[group	say]	[INTJ	afraid	3.B	die	PRF]

‘The others said, “Oh, we suspect it’s dead!”.’ (Enfield, 2007: 435)

(2) Gumer (Semitic, Ethiopia)

asa	ni-t’iβt’	bar-əc-im	mərəβ	t’əβət’-əc-im.
[fish	1sS-take.JUS]	[say.PFV-3sfS-CV.M	net	take.PFV-3sfS-M]

(literal translation of the interlinear glosses: ‘She took a net saying: “Let me catch fish”’)

Actual meaning: ‘She took a net to catch fish’ (Völlmin, 2017: 171)

Several functions of RSCs have been described independently for different areas of the world: Güldemann (2008) proposed a typological analysis for the languages of Africa, Matic’ & Pakendorf (2013) for Siberia, Saxena (1988) for the Himalayas, Chappell (2012) for greater China, McGregor (2014) for Australia, and Reesink (1993) for Papua New Guinea. The present study aims to integrate and expand on previous research including languages from the Americas, to propose a broad scale crosslinguistic typological analysis.

To be able to compare RSCs and their different non-locutionary functions crosslinguistically, taking into account various language-specific grammatical structures of speech reports, this study adopts the comparison strategy proposed by Spronck & Nikitina (2019). They propose to analyze reported speech constructions as constructions that reflect bi-clausal semantic structures that are neither subordinating nor coordinating (ibid.: 124) following McGregor (1994). The morphosyntactically complex bi-clausal structures of speech reports are represented as semantic units M and R as in Spronck & Nikitina (2019). The semantic unit of M represents the reported speaker and R represents the reported utterance, indicated with the square brackets in examples (1) – (2) above.

Semantic parsing into M and R for complex structures of RSCs allows for a standardized broad scale crosslinguistic data comparison and analysis. The data for the present analysis is prepared and analyzed in two stages. In the first stage, all M and R elements and non-locutionary functions from all examples of all languages sampled are coded using the R software extension package RQDA for qualitative data analysis (Huang 2016). This first stage is a qualitative stage that allows standardizing all examples from all sampled languages for further quantitative analysis in the second stage. In the second, the quantitative stage, the over-all distributions of non-locutionary functions are analyzed based on the codes from the qualitative analysis. The use of RQDA presents a novel methodological approach for a typological analysis, allowing for a bottom-up data analysis process.

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