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Citation

Verhagen, A. (2012). Construal and Stylistics - within a language, across contexts, across languages. *Stylistics Across Disciplines.conference Proceedings.*, 1-16. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/20133>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Construal and Stylistics – within a language, across contexts, across languages

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1. Introduction and overview

In this paper, I want to explore some consequences, both practical and theoretical, of a cognitive linguistic approach to style. While these consequences follow in a rather straightforward way from basic principles of cognitive semantics (in particular the principle of construal), they have, as far as I know, not been stated in such a degree of explicitness that directions for future research can be formulated. So what I will first do is discuss how close, in my view, the relationship is between the study of style and the study of semantic construal in cognitive linguistics (section 2).

On the one hand, this close relationship has the consequence that the same linguistic items (words and/or constructions) play a similar role in producing stylistic effects in different contexts. On the other hand, it entails that when the grammars of different languages provide different conventional construals, stylistic options will be irreducibly different as well. I will demonstrate and discuss both kinds of consequences. The first point will be illustrated especially by means of causal expressions in Dutch (section 3) and passive constructions (section 4), the second also by means of passive constructions in Dutch and in English (section 4), and especially modes of speech and thought representation in Dutch, English, and Mandarin (section 5).

2. Style and construal

In the words of Jeffries & McIntyre (2010: 72), echoing many previous formulations, “... style is made up of a series of choices among options provided by the language.” If these options would be basically equivalent, just alternative ways of expressing essentially the same meaning, then the study of style would not be a very interesting enterprise, at least not from a linguistic point of view. But in a cognitive linguistic perspective, options provided by a language are hardly ever, if at all, alternative ways of expressing the same meaning; rather, they normally provide alternative construals. Langacker (1990: 61) introduces the idea as follows:

A speaker who accurately observes the spatial distribution of certain stars can describe them in many distinct fashions: as a *constellation*, as a *cluster of stars*, as *specks of light in the sky*, etc. Such expressions are semantically distinct; they reflect the speaker’s alternate construals of the scene, each compatible with its objectively given properties.

There are a number of proposals for distinguishing different types of construal (cf. Verhagen 2007 for discussion), but the main point here is the pervasiveness of the phenomenon. There is no linguistic meaning without some form of construal.

If construal is actually so pervasive, a natural question to ask is: Why? What is it in human language that makes it so ordinary, so to speak, to have multiple ways of construing some object of conceptualization? The answer lies in one of the special features of ordinary human communication, its triadic and therefore inherently perspectival nature. Tomasello (2008: 344) succinctly states it as follows:

participating in conventional linguistic communication and other forms of shared intentionality takes basic human cognition in some surprising new directions. Although it is taken completely for granted by cognitive scientists, human beings are the only animal species that conceptualizes the world in terms of different potential perspectives on one and the same entity, thus creating so-called perspectival cognitive representations [...]. The key point here is that these unique forms of human conceptualization depend crucially on shared intentionality—in the sense that the whole notion of perspective presupposes some jointly focused entity that we know we share but are viewing from different angles [...].

The special conditions that characterize human communication are illustrated in figure 1.

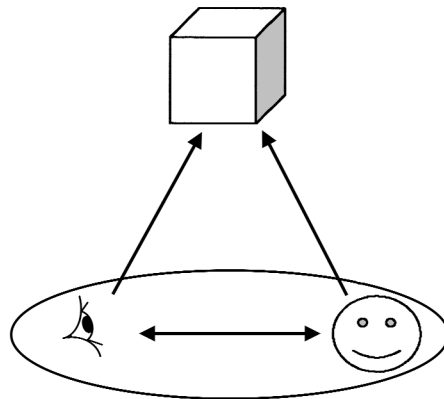


Figure 1: Human communication is triadic and based on common ground

The ellipse represents what Clark (1996) calls “common ground”, the knowledge that speakers and addressees know they mutually share. Gradually widening the scope, this includes knowledge of the communication situation itself, of the shared personal history of the interlocutors, and shared knowledge of the culture.¹ In most linguistic communication, the participants are not only coordinating their mental states, as represented by the horizontal double arrow, but also jointly attending to some object of conceptualization;² this makes most of human communication triadic (for an exception, consider greeting) rather than dyadic, like much of animal communication. The common ground thus includes awareness of the other as participant in the ongoing communication, and of the fact that the object of conceptualization may be shared, but still viewed in different ways.

Different descriptions of the same object of conceptualization involve both different domains of common ground and different concepts. Consider the following three formulations instructing an addressee to look at the same specific part of the night sky.

- (1) *Look at constellation X!*
- (2) *Look at that cluster of stars!*
- (3) *Look at those specks of light!*

1. Largely because of the latter, human communication rests on large amounts of mutually shared knowledge even if the participants do not know each other personally. When there is evidence of belonging to the same cultural group, for example from speaking the same language, large amounts of knowledge can be assumed to be mutually shared, so not in need of being introduced into the discourse. See Clark (1996) for elaboration, and discussion of several implications.

2. The role of the coordination dimension for several linguistic perspectivization phenomena is demonstrated in Verhagen (2005) and other research on intersubjectivity in language.

The use of *constellation* in (1) invokes joint cultural knowledge (“you and I mutually know what configuration of stars is labeled X in our community”), and also evokes the conceptualization as a single, coherent phenomenon. The use of the indexical *that* in (2) directs the addressee’s attention to a particular object in a specific way (different from *this*, in particular) that is identifiable in the ongoing speech situation, and the use of the singular nominal with a plural modifier, imposes a conceptualization as a compositional entity. In (3), finally, *those* is again indexical, and the nominal, the head being plural, now imposes compositionality and multiplicity. The difference between lexical nouns in (2) and (3) (*cluster*, *stars*, *specks*, *light*) also contribute to difference in construal, again by invoking different culturally shared cognitive categories clusters of knowledge to which different aspects of the situation are assigned.

Given the ubiquity of construal, we can say that style emerges when certain construals, through the choices of lexical items and grammatical constructions, consistently dominate in a certain stretch of discourse. Seen in this way, style links construal at the item-level of language use to the discourse level, and is this quite directly related to linguistic analysis as such. In fact, semantic analyses should be able to support the explanation of stylistic phenomena and the experience of a piece of discourse exhibiting a particular style may be used as evidence supporting or contradicting a semantic analysis.

3. Linguistic construal of causation across contexts

The *reasons* for selecting a particular construal, and hence for a particular style, may be different in different situations. One important type of reasons concerns the common ground mentioned in the previous section. If you and I mutually share cultural expertise about a particular phenomenon, e.g. that it is normally construed as a constellation named X, then the optimal formulation from me to draw your attention to it is “X”, especially if, for instance, I cannot point it out to you, for whatever reason. On other occasions, I may want you to draw certain specific inferences concerning the phenomenon at hand, at that can be a reason to select *cluster of stars* over *specks of light*, even if they would referentially do the job equally well. Although the construal is the same whatever the reason, the latter is especially interesting from a stylistic point of view, i.e. the point of view of *choosing*, because it can motivate a non-standard use of formulations. Let me illustrate this with some of the different ways in which causal relations may be construed (in Dutch), both in clauses and at the discourse level; for the first part, I rely on Verhagen & Kemmer (1992, 1997), for the second on Stukker et al. (2009) in particular.

Dutch causative constructions basically come in two kinds, one marked with *doen* as a causal verb, the other with *laten*. In general, the first construes the causal event as some kind of simple and direct form of causation, the latter as relatively complex and indirect (as there are more causal factors at play than just the one denoted by the grammatical subject of the clause). Understandably, *doen*, marking direct causation, is strongly associated with inanimate causers as in (4) and (5).

- (4) *De extreme kou deed zelfs de rivieren bevriezen.*
The extreme cold did even the rivers freeze
“The extreme cold caused even the rivers to freeze.”
- (5) *Deze storm deed ons beseffen hoe kwetsbaar we waren.*
This storm did us realize how vulnerable we were
“This storm made us realize how vulnerable we were.”

Laten, on the other hand, is completely normal with animate causers, also when coercion rather than permission is involved, as in (6).

- (6) *De sergeant liet de recruten door de modder kruipen*
 The sergeant let the recruits through the mud crawl
 “The sergeant had the recruits crawl through the mud.”

There is one clear exception to this pattern in present day Dutch, however, and that concerns the use of *doen* in governmental discourse (a.k.a. ‘officialese’). In these texts, *doen* is quite regularly used with animate causers. An example is (7).

- (7) *De regering zal de reorganisatie gefaseerd doen plaatsvinden.*
 The government will the reorganization in-phases do take-place
 “The government will have the reorganization take place in stages.”

Verhagen & Kemmer argue that the construal is still the same. The point is that the construal of direct causation is motivated by rhetorical goals: due to the use of *doen*, the actions and policies of governmental bodies are being presented as *sufficient* for the effects to follow, making them not depend on other causal (human) factors.

Stukker et al. (2009) argue that a similar analysis is applicable to ‘non-prototypical use’ of forward causal connectives in Dutch (*daardoor*, “as a result”; *daarom*, “that’s why”; *dus*, “so”), so markers of causality at the discourse level. In particular, *daardoor* parallels *doen* in being typically associated with direct, i.e. non-volitional causation, while *daarom* parallels *laten* in typically marking volitional causality. But there are instances of ‘non-prototypical’ use for both cases. The hypothesis that these are, at least often, motivated by rhetorical goals, is supported by the fact that the linguistic contexts of such instances also contain *other* indicators that favor an interpretation in the direction of the typical use of the connective; in particular, events related by a volitional cause but marked with *daardoor* also contain other markers of reduced volitionality. Using the same kind of reasoning and a similar methodology, Stukker (in prep.) shows that the systematic difference in relative frequencies of connectives in newspaper articles on the one hand and novels on the other, can be explained on the basis of differences in the ‘rhetorical goals’ of these different kinds of texts, while precisely maintaining the idea that the construal evoked by the connectives is the same across the genres.

In earlier work on a partially overlapping set of connectives, Van den Hoven (1997) had already made a similar point. He discusses the marking of intended versus non-intended consequences, as illustrated in (8) and (9), respectively

- (8) *Ik ben ziek, zodat ik niet naar het werk kan komen.*
 I am ill so-that I not to the work can come
 “I am ill, so that I can’t come to work.”
- (9) *Ik ben ziek; daarom blijf ik maar thuis vandaag*
 I am ill that’s-why stay I PRT home today
 “I am ill; that’s why I’m staying home today.”

The impossibility of coming to work in (8) is an unintended consequence; no decision lies at the basis of this situation. Staying home, on the other hand, is an intended consequence of being ill; there is a decision underlying it; hence the use of *daarom* in (9), where *zodat* definitely fits much less. But Van den Hoven observes that *zodat* actually *is* frequently used by judges in court rulings, and there is definitely a important difference between the two formulations in the second clause of (10).

- (10) *Het hof ziet geen termen om het verzoek in te willigen,*
 “The court does not see grounds for granting the request”
zodat dit verzoek wordt / daarom wordt dit verzoek afgewezen.
 so-that this request becomes / that’s-why becomes this request rejected
 “so that / that is why this request is rejected.”

Van den Hoven convincingly argues that the preferred use of *zodat* in court decisions is rhetorically motivated in view of the institutional role of the judge, viz. to apply the law and not to take personal decisions.

4. Differences in construal with cross-linguistic differences in grammatical constructions

4.1. Words and constructions

Studies such as those mentioned up till now first of all demonstrate how the cognitive semantic notion of construal can be related to style as a particular set of choices from options available in the language, with a particular kind of conceptual content (not just formal alternatives). They also demonstrate how the construal imposed by linguistic items can be considered constant across different contexts, including different text types, thus maintaining the idea that construal is indeed a function of the item chosen. But such a position –maintaining a strict connection between linguistic items, construal, and style, does raise an important question: If style is determined by choosing between options provided by the language, can different kinds of construals and different kinds of stylistic choices and their effects, also be considered constant across languages? The point is, of course, that different languages do not provide exactly the same sets of options, and this suggests that the answer to this new question must be expected to be negative; indeed, in the remainder of this paper, I want to give some examples of phenomena that may not, perhaps, prove the point yet, but that definitely suggest that stylistic phenomena are, normally, *not* the same across languages, precisely because the linguistic options underlying style are not the same across languages.

An indication that we should seriously consider such a negative answer is already present in the markers of causality used in the previous section. The point is that there are no exact parallels of the Dutch causatives even in the closely related languages English and German. For example, there are several causative constructions in English (with *let*, *make*, and *have* as causal verbs, among others), but the semantic differences between these do not coincide with those between the Dutch causal verbs *doen* and *laten*. Similarly, German has a several forward causal connectives (e.g. *also*, *darum*, *dadurch*, *deshalb*, *deswegen*, among others), but again the differences between (some of) these do not coincide with those between the parallel Dutch connectives.

These cases clearly involve differences in the *options* provided by the languages: each language has multiple ways of construing a causal relation, and the construals involved may thus be expected to be different. How about grammatical constructions that do not (seem to) have multiple variants, and that also seem to be functionally parallel across languages? For instance, how about the construction traditionally labeled “passive”? Shouldn’t we expect the construals imposed by, and ultimately also the stylistic consequences of the use of, the passive in English and Dutch to be the same? We can try to answer this question, indeed about passives, on the basis of previous work, especially by Cornelis.

4.2. Passives in Dutch and in English

I start from the consensus view that passive constructions play a role in the organization of Figure and Ground in a discourse. In general, passive clauses background the role of agentivity in the conceptualization of an event (whether for the purpose of backgrounding the agent referent, or the role of volition and intention of the ‘causer’; see Cornelis (1997) for discussion). As has often been recognized, it should not come as a surprise that the use of passive clauses is strongly associated with impersonal, institutional discourse, where personal opinions and decisions are less relevant than, for example, the rules of the institution. These observations in general appear to be cross-linguistically valid.

As for the formal structure of passive, a similar point holds. What characterizes passive constructions is that, some modification of the default form of the verb is necessary (like the addition of an affix or an auxiliary), and some modification of the agent (as compared to the way the latter would be expressed in a canonical clause, usually called ‘active’).

However, within this general framework of similar form and function, passive constructions in different languages can differ substantially from each other. The question is: are these only formal/structural differences, or do they regularly also involve differences of construal? If the latter, then this is also bound to have consequences for style, i.e. cross-linguistic stylistic differences. Let us have a more detailed look at passive constructions in Dutch and in English, starting with the basic grammatical and semantic/pragmatic properties (cf. Verhagen 1992).

As in English, passive clauses in Dutch are characterized by a morphologically special form of the verb, the past participle, in combination with an auxiliary that also has, in other parts of the grammar, a copular function. However, whereas English uses only forms of *be* as a passive auxiliary, Dutch uses forms of *zijn* (equivalent of *be*) as well as forms of *worden* (equivalent of *become* in copular constructions). The English sentence *The floor is polished* may be translated into Dutch with either of these, demonstrated in (11):

- (11) *De vloer wordt gepoetst.* ← *The floor is polished.*
 The floor becomes polished

De vloer is gepoetst. ← *The floor is polished.*
 The floor is polished

On the other hand, unlike the Dutch passive, the English passive may be combined with other constructions, in particular the aspectual/temporal progressive form and the perfect. Each of these combinations unambiguously translates only one of the Dutch passives, as represented in (12).³

- (12) *De vloer wordt gepoetst.* ← *The floor is being polished.*
 The floor becomes polished

De vloer is gepoetst. ← *The floor is polished.*
 The floor is polished

De vloer is gepoetst. ← *The floor has been polished.*
 The floor is polished

What this indicates is that the Dutch *worden*-passive profiles the *process*, in this case that of polishing, whereas the *zijn*-passive does not; it rather profiles the end-state of being-polished.

3. As we will see below, this is not to say that a Dutch *worden*-passive may always be translated by an English progressive – on the contrary.

This difference also has consequences for the backgrounding of agentivity. While this plays a role in both cases, the backgrounding is in a real sense more marked in the case of the *worden*-passive; the agent does not have to be a participant anymore once the end-state has been reached, so backgrounding it is less noticeable, requires less cognitive energy so to speak, then when we are dealing with the process, in which the agent necessarily is a participant. This is not only manifest in the effect of a passive sentence of one type or another in a discourse context, the consequences are sometimes observable within the passive clause itself; consider example (13).

- (13) *Haar lijfwacht werd/was uitgerust met automatische wapens.*
 Her bodyguard became/was equipped with automatic weapons
 “Her bodyguard was equipped with automatic weapons” (see note 3, and below).

When *was* is used, the implicit agent responsible for the equipping may be the referent of the possessive pronoun: She took care to equip her bodyguard with automatic weapons. But when *werd* is used, this interpretation is not really possible: the agent responsible for the equipping has to be someone not mentioned in the clause at all.

A second grammatical difference between passive constructions in Dutch and in English is that Dutch has a subtype of passive constructions called ‘impersonal’ formed with a locative ‘pro-adverb’, prototypically *er* (derived historically from unstressed *daar*, “there”), which lack a (pro)nominal subject; they have a relatively broad range of use, in particular allowing passives of certain intransitive verbs, as in (14).

- (14) *Er werd veel gelachen.*
 There became much laughed
 “There was much laughter”/“People were laughing a lot”

The Dutch sentence describes a process of laughing (hence the second translation, although the Dutch does not put any people ‘on stage’). These differences between English and Dutch passives may well be considered relatively minor, in view of the overall pattern of usage of active versus passive clauses. Still, they do give rise to the question: do the differences also have stylistic consequences? The answer apparently has to be positive, as I will now argue.

For one thing, the processual *worden*-passive of Dutch allows a series of subsequent processes to be construed with strongly backgrounded agentivity. Consider the fragment below from the novella *Kinderjaren* (1984), by Jona Oberski. This novella tells the story of a small Jewish boy who has been in the camps in World War II, where his father died, and he was separated from his mother. After the camp is liberated, his sister takes him to a hospital where their mother is; she is terminally ill. This fragment relates what happens when they have arrived in the hospital (instances of passive constructions are underlined).

- 1 ‘Dat is geen drinkwater. Jij wilt mij zeker dood hebben, hè?’ werd er uit het bed
- 2 geschreeuwd. Trude nam zelf een slok en zette de beker bij het bed. Zij zei dat nu de
- 3 pillen geslikt moesten worden.
- 4 De deken werd op het bed gelegd. De haren bleven naar alle kanten wijzen. Ze
- 5 hingen ook voor het gezicht.
- 6 ‘Als ik doodga is het jullie schuld,’ krijste de stem achter de haren. De pillen
- 7 verdwenen in de mond die ik bijna niet zien kon en het water werd gedronken.
- 8 ‘Het zijn mijn aardappels. Ik moet ze terug hebben,’ werd er geschreeuwd.
- 9 Trude liep naar de vrouwen sprak even met haar. Zij beloofde dat zij haar nieuwe
- 10 aardappels zou brengen. De vrouw haalde haar schouders op en zei: ‘Ze is gek’. Ik
- 11 riep naar Trude dat het tasje onder het bed lag. Zij pakte het en legde het op het
- 12 andere bed. Het tasje werd gepakt en er werd in gekeken. Toen verdween er een hand

13 in het tasje. Hij kwam eruit met een aardappel. De aardappel werd bekeken. Het tasje
 14 werd omgekeerd op het bed. De hand met de aardappel werd opgetild en naar de
 15 muur bewogen. De vrouw die ons geholpen had schreeuwde ‘pas op’ en pakte haar
 16 kussen. De aardappel raakte haar midden in haar gezicht.

1 ‘That water’s not fit to drink. You want me dead, don’t you?’ it was shouted from the
 2 bed. Trude took a sip herself and put the cup down by the bed. She said the pills had
 3 to be taken now.

4 The blanket was laid on the bed. The hairs kept pointing in all directions. They
 5 also hung in front of the face. ‘If I die it will be your fault,’ screamed the voice be-
 6 hind the hairs. The pills disappeared in the mouth I could barely see and the water
 7 was drunk.

8 ‘They are my potatoes. I must have them back,’ it was shouted. Trude walked
 9 towards the woman and talked to her a while. She promised that she would bring new
 10 potatoes. The woman shrugged her shoulders and said: ‘She is mad.’ I called out to
 11 Trude that the bag was under the bed. She took it up and laid it down on the other
 12 bed. The bag was taken up and it was looked into. Then a hand disappeared into the
 13 bag. It came out with a potato. The potato was observed. The bag was turned around
 14 on the bed. The hand with the potato was lifted and moved towards the wall. The
 15 woman who had helped us shouted ‘watch out’ and grabbed her pillow. The potato hit
 16 her in the middle of her face.

Somebody is performing all kinds of unpleasant actions, and these are all presented by means of the processual passive, i.e. with *worden*.⁴ Notice the impersonal passives in lines 1 and 8 (“was shouted”). Due to the repeated emphatic backgrounding of agentivity, the effect is that the author at the same time makes the reader understand quite clearly that it is the boy’s mother who is doing and saying these horrible things, and that the young boy at the time simply was not capable of recognizing or accepting that this was his mother. This effect cannot be achieved in the same way in ‘normal’ English, as this has no unitary signal for a processual passive and the progressive cannot be used either, because this would construe the events as overlapping rather than sequential (Boogaart 1999), witness, for example, the following way of rendering lines 13ff in English:

- (15) #*The potato was being observed. The bag was being turned around on the bed. The hand with the potato was being lifted and moved towards the wall.*

There is no way then, to avoid the conclusion that the grammatical differences between the passive constructions of Dutch and English, even though they may be relatively small, do have stylistic consequences. The kind of (combined) construals one can create with the grammatical tools of one language does not coincide exactly with that allowed by the grammar of the other.

5. Modes of speech and thought representation with different grammatical systems

5.1. Introduction

Finally, I would like to start exploring some possible consequences of this line of thinking for an important stylistic phenomenon at a still higher level of abstraction: the representation of the speech and thought of characters in a narrative, in particular the blended kind known as “free indirect discourse” (FID). The question is, again: given that languages do not provide

4. The novella has been translated into English as *A Childhood*; the translation used here is not from that text, however, but the one given in Cornelis (1997).

(exactly) the same kind of conventional tools for representing speech or thought, may we consider the modes of speech/thought representation to be essentially the same across languages? If not, then there is no language independent category of FID (and maybe not of direct and indirect discourse, either), and the way the phenomenon is defined and understood will have to be re-conceptualized.

I take it to be a generally recognizable idea that FID is defined in opposition to both direct discourse (DD) and indirect discourse (ID) (cf. Leech and Short 1981, among many others). The former is characterized by a complete shift of the deictic centre to the character in the narrative; the first person refers to the character whose speech or thought is being represented, the tense of the verb and deictic temporal and spatial expressions take the event of that speech or thought as their deictic centre, the syntax is that of the speech act as performed (i.e. main clause syntax), e.g. *He shouted: “From now on I will do the job myself!”*. In the latter, the syntax of the represented discourse is that of a subordinate clause, and the deictic centre remains with the narrator for all deictic elements, as in *He shouted that from then on, he would do the job himself*. FID is a specific kind of blend of these modes of representation: the deictic centre for the grammatical elements tense and person is the narrator (making the representation indirect), so in prototypical cases past and third person, respectively; but the deictic centre for deictic adverbs is the character, and the syntax is that of the represented discourse itself (making the representation ‘free’, hence the label): *He shouted – from now on he would do the job himself!*

Notice that such a characterization does not seem to refer to highly language specific grammatical structures: whatever the way a language formally distinguishes subordinated from main clauses, it will serve to express the difference between direct and indirect discourse; and if main clause syntax and character-centered adverbs are combined with the narrative past tense, it will serve to express FID. But then, in the case of the passive we also started with a seemingly non-language specific characterization (backgrounding of agentivity) and we still ended up, upon closer inspection, concluding that the grammatical difference between Dutch and English passives, resulting in differences in construal possibilities, may have stylistic consequences. So let us have a more detailed look into the actual structures realizing these three different modes of representation in Dutch and English again.

5.2. Free Indirect Discourse in English and in Dutch

The characterizations of DD, ID, and FID given above, which were illustrated with English examples, appear to carry over in a straightforward manner to Dutch – as they should, given the fact that they are formulated in apparently language independent terms (‘deixis’, ‘subordination’). The examples in (16) are idiomatic Dutch parallels of the English examples above.

- (16)a *Hij schreeuwde: “Van nu af doe ik die klus zelf!”*
 He shouted From now off do I that job self
 “He shouted: “From now on I will do the job myself!””
- b *Hij schreeuwde dat hij van toen af die klus zelf deed.*
 He shouted that hij from then off that job self did
 “He shouted that from then on, he would do the job himself”
- c *Hij schreeuwde – van nu af deed hij die klus zelf!*
 He shouted – from now off did he that job self
 “He shouted – from now on he would do the job himself!”

In both languages, the deictic centre in the reported clause is shifted to the character in the DD case (16), with a *now*-adverb, 1st person subject, and present tense; it remains with the narrator in ID (*then*, 3rd person, past tense) as illustrated in (16), which also exhibits subordinate syntax (notice the complementizer). The FID-case (16) exhibits a mixture of deictic centers (*now*, 3rd person, past tense), and main clause syntax. Notice two formal differences. First, whereas the subordinator is optional in ID in English, at least in most ordinary cases, it is obligatorily present in Dutch. Second, whereas there is no word order difference between subordinate and main clause syntax in English, Dutch main clauses have the finite verb in second position, while it is in final position in subordinate clauses.⁵

The two tables below summarize the characteristics of DD, ID, and FID in English and Dutch, respectively, for the case of a third person, past tense narrative;⁶ features shared between FID and one of the other modes of discourse representation are marked in grey, bringing its ‘mixed’ character into relief.

	DD	ID	FID
<i>tense</i>	present	past	past
<i>person</i>	1st, 2nd	3rd	3rd
<i>deictic pro/adv</i>	proximal	distal	proximal
<i>subordinator</i>	absent	optional	absent

Table 1: Features of Direct, Indirect, and Free Indirect Discourse in English

	DD	ID	FID
<i>tense</i>	present	past	past
<i>person</i>	1st, 2nd	3rd	3 rd
<i>deictic pro/adv</i>	proximal	distal	proximal
<i>subordinator</i>	absent	present	absent
<i>clausal word-order</i>	V-second	V-final	V-second

Table 2: Features of Direct, Indirect, and Free Indirect Discourse in Dutch

The question I now want to address is: Do the formal/structural differences ever lead to a difference in distinguishing modes of representation in the two languages, or is it only a difference in the formal ‘implementation’, so to speak, of the same underlying conceptual categories? Without giving a final judgment on the issue, let me present some indications that the first of these two answers may actually be the correct one.

Having observed the general optionality of the complementizer in ID in English, Leech & Short (1981) go on to consider the status of sentences in which the represented discourse precedes the representing clause, as in (17)b.

- (17)a *John said he would be a bit late.*
 b *He would be a bit late, John said.*

-
5. Not always at the *very* end of the clause (it is followed by complement clauses, and optionally by certain prepositional phrases). There may be a connection between the features of subordinator presence and word order (at least diachronically), but that does not have to concern us here.
6. Features typical for written discourse (quotation marks, exclamation mark) are left out of this overview. For the time being, I do not consider them crucial, defining characteristics, as they are, of course, absent in speech which still allows all three modes of representation, and moreover, they are not even always used (by all authors/publishers) in written discourse.

Since (17)a is considered a case of ID (with the subordinator dropped), and since (17)b only differs from (17)a in the order of the two clauses, without any difference in the grammatical structure of each of the two clauses as such, they consider (17)b the “inversion” of (17)a. It is true that the reversal of the order of the clauses has a stylistic effect, but it is a weak one: the fact that the reported clause precedes the reporting one makes the former, at least temporarily, somewhat more ‘free’ in (16)b than in (16)a, and Leech & Short (1981: 333) thus call it “janus-like”, “somewhere in between IS and FIS”. But the main point remains that (16)b is basically a case of ‘inverted ID’.

Jeffries & McIntyre (2010: 89) follow this line of thinking when they introduce and illustrate the distinction between DD, ID and FID. They assign each of the sentences in (18)a to the categories listed in (18)b.

- (18)a *People who had metal piercing in their heads were asking for trouble, Grace had once said. Isabel had asked why this should be so. Hadn’t people always worn earrings, and got away with it? Grace had replied that metal piercings attracted lightning, and that she had read ...*
- b
- ID *People who had metal piercing in their heads were asking for trouble, Grace had once said.*
 ID *Isabel had asked why this should be so.*
 FID *Hadn’t people always worn earrings, and got away with it?*
 ID *Grace had replied that metal piercings attracted lightning, and that she had read ...*

Clearly, categorizing the first sentence of this fragment as ID is in line with the view of Leech & Short (1981), and given the grammar of English, this certainly looks like the most plausible analysis. For Dutch, however, things look different, quite different in fact. Compare (19)a, the Dutch translation equivalent of the first sentence of (18)a, with (19)b, the translation of the reverse order (with the reporting clause preceding the reported discourse).

- (19)a *Mensen met metalen piercings in hun hoofd vroegen om moeilijkheden, had Grace eens gezegd.*
 People with metal asked for trouble had Grace once said piercings in their heads
- b *Grace had eens gezegd dat mensen met metalen piercings in hun hoofd om moeilijkheden, vroegen.*
 Grace had once said that people with metal for trouble asked piercings in their heads

Dutch students who have learned the distinction between DD, ID and FID on the basis of standard examples with the reporting clause preceding the reported discourse, not only identify (19)b as ID (parallel to English), they also consistently categorize cases like (19)a as *free* indirect discourse, not as ID (nor as something in between). And as can be seen from the glosses, the two exhibit several differences beyond inversion of the two clauses. The internal syntax of the reported discourse in (19)b is that of a subordinate clause (with complementizer and verb-final word order), while it is that of a main clause in (19)a (no complementizer and verb-second), characterizing it as ‘free’; the combination of these features with the narrative past tense apparently turn the latter into an unmistakable case of FID, for speakers of Dutch.⁷

7. In a sense, the syntax of the reporting clause is also different in the two cases in (19): in (19)a, the subject follows the finite verb, in (19)b it precedes. This could be interpreted as an indication that the first clause is a constituent of the second, a feature shared with subordination and thus contributing to its ‘mixed’ character. But this word order might also be seen as a feature of a more or less independent ‘reporting clause construction’: clauses of this kind can also be inserted (as a kind of parenthetical) into a reported clause, and they may

The syntax (especially the difference between V-second and V-final) thus makes the difference between DD and ID in Dutch more pronounced than in English. As a consequence, certain instances of ID in English do not have straightforward parallels in Dutch; they cannot be rendered as a special kind of ID (called “janus-like” by Leech & Short), but only as FID.⁸

What this suggests is that categories like DD, ID, and FID cannot be considered general, language-independent concepts, but rather have to be defined relative to a particular language. A consequence of that conclusion would in turn be that the linguistic tools used by authors to create representations of speech and thought of characters are, as this formulation suggests, *constitutive* of the mode of representation, rather than ways of ‘realizing’ or ‘implementing’ an a priori given mode of representation. As a matter of fact, I think that this perspective is very useful for a better understanding not only of cross-linguistic phenomena, but also of (sometimes subtle) variations in mode of discourse representation that precisely depend on the actual linguistic tools used. However, I will postpone that issue until another occasion, and limit the discussion here to the cross-linguistic usage of the categories.

5.3. Free Indirect Discourse in Mandarin and in English

If the relatively small grammatical differences between Dutch and English complementation can underlie different styles of speech and thought representation, then what about the consequences of larger grammatical differences, between unrelated languages? Let us have a brief look at Mandarin Chinese (based on Hagenaar 1996; see also Hagenaar 1992). As is well known, Mandarin has no tense marking, and no complementizer introducing complement clauses (nor a difference in word order setting off subordinate from main clauses). Relative to Dutch and English then, the linguistic tools distinguishing different modes of speech and thought representation appear limited, as indicated in Table 3.

	DD	ID	FID
<i>person</i>	1st, 2nd	3rd	3rd
<i>deictic pro/adv</i>	proximal	distal	proximal

Table 3: Features of Direct, Indirect, and Free Indirect Discourse in Mandarin

Now consider the following fragment (cf. Hagenaar 1996: 294-5).

- (20) *Mei-you, jue-wei-de mei-you suo-shang, bu-ran, weishenmo ta jiyi zhong*
 Not-have definite-LINK not-have lock-up not-so why (s)he memory in
mei-you zhe-yi dongzuo a?
 not-have this movement PRT
 “__ have not, definitely not, locked it; why else she have no recollection of this movement?”
Mei-you ba baoguan xiang suo-shang? Zhende? Zhe-yi shi hedeng zhonghyao
 Not-have take deposit vault lock-up Really This be what-level serious
de shi!
 GEN thing
 “Have __ left the safety deposit vault unlocked? Really? How serious!”

also be added to multi-clause stretches of discourse, for which it does not really make sense to consider them syntactic constituents. Pending further research, I leave this point undecided here.

8. Theoretically, it would seem possible to propose that the ‘inverted’ ID cases should actually be seen as FID. Of course, that would just amount to claiming that the distinction really is there but invisibly so in English, effectively taking the syntax of Dutch as the general standard rather than analyzing the grammar of each language in its own terms. In any case, the conclusion that FID in English and in Dutch are not completely equivalent would remain valid.

The translations given here differ somewhat from the ones given by Hagenaar, because I have tried to keep the lack of person and tense marking ‘visible’, using the non-finite form of the verb *have* and “__” where no person marking is present in the Mandarin text.⁹ This way, it is transparent that the second sentence of the fragment does not contain any mixture of linguistic items associated with DD on the one hand and ID on the other; in other words, there are no linguistic cues indicating that this should be read as FID. The first sentence, however, does contain a mixture of linguistic items indicating different modes of speech or thought representation: the third person pronoun *ta* on the one hand, and the proximal deictic *zhe-yi* on the other. This may therefore justifiably be said to constitute a kind of FID in Mandarin. Moreover, the fragment contains some other elements that evoke a subjective response to the narrated situation (e.g. “Really?”), not to the narration, so it should be attributed to the relevant character. In the first clause, such an element is the emphatic “not, definitely not”, but its influence is not limited to its own clause; the rhetorical question in the next clause might in itself be read as coming from the narrator, but being connected to the previous clause, it is actually more naturally read in the same subjective perspective: the second motivates the statement in the first, and thus should also be (primarily) coming from the character, not the narrator. Similar comments apply to other passages.

A different combination of grammatical and discourse-pragmatic factors in different languages *may* thus lead to considerable similarity in the way in which information is attributed to perspectives in parallel text passages (translations). But this is not to say that such similarities will always result when languages differ in their explicit, encoded tools for managing perspectives. One straightforward case is when we are not dealing with a third person, but with a first person narrative. As Hagenaar (1996) notes, there is then no linguistic marking of any difference between DD and FID; the difference between the two is ‘neutralized’: compare Table 4 with Table 3 above.

	DD	ID	FID
<i>person</i>	1st	1st	1st
<i>deictic pro/adv</i>	proximal	distal	proximal

Table 4: Neutralization of DD-FID distinction in 1st person Mandarin narrative

Moreover, both kinds of reading may fit the context equally well. The example given by Hagenaar (1996: 295) is in (21):

- (21) *Yi ge ren ziyou zizai, wo bian zong xihuan ziji pei-zhe ziji*
 One CLASS man free unrestrained I just always like REFL company-IMPF REFL
 “A man alone, free, unrestrained, I always LIKE- accompany self”

Again, I tried to keep the lack of tense and person ‘visible’, the verbal predicate is non-finite (represented by “LIKE-”), and the reflexive item *ziji* is non-distinct for person (1st, 2nd, 3rd). Below, I cite the translation of a larger passage of which (21) is a part given by Hagenaar (1996: 296), with the equivalent of (21) underlined:

The train had already passed three stations and the other berths in the compartment were still empty, maybe nobody would come, that would be really welcome! When

9. I want to thank Wei-lun Lu for his assistance on this point. The translation provided by Hagenaar reads: “She had not, definitely not, locked it; why else did she have no recollection of this movement? Had she left the safety deposit vault unlocked? Really? How serious!”. As can be seen, the narrative past tense has been used, making the FID more pronounced in English than it actually can be said to be in Mandarin – an unavoidable consequence of taking the grammar of English seriously.

you had no familiar companions on a long trip, it was better to have no company at all; alone and free, I always enjoy(ed) keeping myself company. Dream away quietly. Is one only free with no people around? But what fun is it living where there are no people?

Hagenaar's own translation has a past tense, which makes it look like FID in English. But she rightly observes (p.295/6):

This sentence could also be interpreted as direct speech. In that case, it would have to be rendered in English in the present tense [...] In the context, this would imply that the sentence represents a reflection by the narrator-I, instead of the character-I. This interpretation is equally acceptable [...]

Arguably, the best way to characterize the Mandarin passage is to say that one simply does not have to choose between DD and FID, i.e. that this would be beside the point here, given the linguistic items and the context. Of course, the consequence would be that we no longer regard DD and FID as general categories of speech/thought representation, which in turn has consequences for their applicability in stylistic analysis in languages like Dutch and English as well. In fact, this may well be a very useful perspective *in general*. Interestingly, the neutralization of the distinction between narrator and character in a first person narrative might be said to have a somewhat similar effect in English. The past tense sentence *I always enjoyed my own company* may be read as a distancing comment by the narrator on his past self ("I used to be like that, but I no longer am") and as a kind of remembered reflection of his past self (the "character-I", in Hagenaar's words), and one might also say that the distinction is not really relevant in this context. Thus, there would still be a stylistic difference between the Mandarin and the English texts (based on the difference of marking tense or not), but the 'neutralization' of a particular feature (here: person) may still be to have a parallel stylistic effect.

Another point is that a comparison of the type undertaken in this section, undeniably has a bias towards English (or more generally: tense-marking languages) in defining types of speech/thought representation. From this point of view, Mandarin is especially seen as *lacking* certain features that English has (cf. the Tables above). But we should, of course, actually also consider the possibility that Mandarin has (grammatical and/or lexical) tools of perspective management, and possibly certain mixed modes of speech/thought representation based on these, that are lacking in English.

The considerations in the two last paragraphs together provide an invitation to rethink the precise nature of the relationship between the conventional functions of linguistic items, which are intrinsically language specific, and modes of speech/thought representation, which are usually not thought of in this way in stylistics. This will be an important issue for future research, both theoretically and cross-linguistically.

6. Summary, conclusion, prospect

In this paper, I have first of all argued on theoretical grounds (from a cognitive semantic perspective) that the study of linguistic meaning and the study of style are closely connected. It is the fundamental concept of construal – embodying the insight that it is normal for different words and constructions in natural languages to signal different ways of conceptualizing, i.e. 'construing', the same objective content – that provides the link; style results from specific choices from options available in a language, and the relevant options consist of differences in construal. Secondly, I argued that one consequence of such a view – that the same elements

should contribute to style in the same way in different contexts – in fact provides a very useful analytical tool for stylistic analysis, also across contexts and discourse types.

Perhaps more controversially, I also argued that another consequence – that cross-linguistic differences in construal by linguistic items have stylistic ramifications, making certain kinds of style irreducibly language dependent – should also be taken quite seriously. This was especially demonstrated for the stylistic phenomenon known as Free Indirect Discourse. The question “How is FID realized in language X?” presupposes that FID is a cross-linguistically identifiable mode of representation, but this view really turns out to be rather problematic. Especially this last point must be taken as a strong incentive to re-conceptualize modes of speech/thought representation much more strictly in terms of the conventional items for perspective management, and of their combination, in each individual language.

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