

Linguistic Patterns and Pragmatic Inferences in the Representation of Narrative Discourse

When processing narrative discourse, readers construct a network of mental spaces through which they move as the story unfolds. Different spaces can be profiled at different points in the narrative and transfers between spaces occur frequently. Keeping track of this dynamic network is a complex process that, despite the cognitive load it demands, progresses miraculously smoothly. This study examines how linguistic structures and pragmatic inferences guide this process.

To that end, a quantitative discourse-analytical study of news narratives is conducted. News narratives construct a complex network of mental spaces: a Reality Space representing the viewpoints of reader and journalist *here-and-now*; a Narrative Space representing the newsworthy events *there-and-then*; and a Legitimizing Space representing information provided by the news actors at a time *in-between* the newsworthy events and the present.

A corpus of 100 Dutch crime news narratives was analyzed on the linguistic marking of transfers between the three Spaces. The narratives were divided into sentences ($N = 3,923$) and subsequently analyzed by two coders. First, the space in which each sentence was anchored was determined (Reality-; Narrative-; Legitimizing Space; $\kappa = .88$). Second, all sentences marking a transfer from one Space to another Space were identified ($N = 648$) and analyzed on the type of linguistic element signaling the transfer (temporal adverb or tense shift; speech or thought report; other; none; $\kappa = .92$).

The results reveal clear patterns in the use of adverbs, tense, and speech and thought reports to mark transfers between the various Spaces. In absence of such markers, readers have to draw pragmatic inferences to process the transfer. The results indicate that both narrative-based inferences and genre-based inferences play a role. These findings shed new light on the

pragmatics of news narratives and elucidate the relation between the linguistic and cognitive representation of narratives.