

**Loosely portrayed speech in interaction: Constructing multiple
complainable utterances**

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The interactional uses of loosely portrayed speech in complaining

Conversation analysis is used in investigating the interactional uses of loosely portrayed speech (LPS) in interaction. The device combines elements of direct and indirect portrayal, conveying some fidelity to an original at the same time as indicating that it is not verbatim enactment of specific utterances. The instances in the current collection are in English, deriving from informal interaction, mainly telephone calls recorded in the UK and USA. They occur in complaints about a third party, recurrently by portraying the reported speaker's criticisms of the current speaker. The reported speaker is depicted as making multiple criticisms, which adds to the reprehensible nature of their actions. By constructing the reported speaker's actions, and, at the same time, indicating the stance of the current speaker towards them, the complained-about speaker's behaviour is portrayed as infringing the moral order, and, therefore, the complaint as legitimate.

Angelica rattles on. 'Oh, she has ever talked this way, "indentured servitude", and "legal prostitution" and la la la - one wonders how she got to be where she is, she is not so very beautiful...' (P.120, From *The Mermaid and Mrs Hancock*, by Imogen Hermes Gower, Penguin Random House, UK, 2018)

In describing events speakers simultaneously convey the rightness or wrongness of actions; thus, morality "suffuses conversation" (Drew, 1998). We can see orientation to morality in both the way participants design their talk to implicitly or explicitly take stances towards matters discussed, and construct their contributions, orienting to how they themselves may be judged. Descriptions may be evaluated "in terms of the fairness or justice or accuracy with

which we have reported some (external) events" (Drew, 1998: 296). In complaint sequences - where participants convey negative stances towards the actions of others - moral work is visible and perhaps particularly salient (Drew, 1998; Edwards, 2005). According to Drew "one of the central tasks of complaint narratives is to describe the other's behaviour, in the circumstances, as having constituted a transgression" (Drew, 1998: 322). However, in doing so speakers need to avoid potentially provoking negative attributions of intent. As Edwards (2005: 5) points out, "rather than simply reporting factual and complainable matters, a complainer may (also, or instead) be heard as moaning, whinging, ranting, biased, prone to complaining, paranoid...". The participant's task is to portray the complained-about actions as accountable and reprehensible, at the same time as presenting the complaint as justified.

Direct reported speech (DRS) is recurrent in complaints about an absent third party (Traverso, 2009), conveying the egregious nature of the actions in question (Benwell, 2012; Drew, 1998; Holt, 2000). Previous research has revealed how aspects of its design equip it for use in this sequential environment (Benwell, 2012; Drew, 1998; Edwards, 2005; Heinrichsmeier, 2020; Holt, 2000; Berger and Pekarek Doehler, 2015). DRS is ideally suited to complaining in that it provides evidence of what was said (Holt, 2000: 434-435) and does so in a highly granular fashion (Schegloff, 2000), as part of a detailed and often extended telling (Holt, 2000, 2017). An upshot of this kind of portrayal is that it gives the recipient "access" to the incident (Holt, 2000: 429). Due to the purported authenticity and granularity of the telling the recipient can "see for themselves" what occurred and thus assess it (Drew, 1998; Clift, 2007). In such narratives the teller regularly recalls the incident without explicit assessment of the complaint, enabling the recipient to be the first to do so (Holt, 2000).

Thus, interactional affordances accrue to the fact that DRS can portray utterances, suggesting verbatim enactment. Similarly, affordances accrue to conveying speech in a way that does not suggest that it necessarily conveys the words or delivery of the reported speaker, as in indirect reporting (IRS). IRS portrays a gloss or summary, with no indication of the "actual" words or delivery (Holt 2016: 168).

But sometimes interactional affordances accrue to suggesting looser portrayal than in direct reporting, yet at the same time purporting to give some indication of what was said and how it was delivered (unlike in indirect reporting). This article presents analysis of instances of reporting that combine elements of direct and indirect reporting. Speakers use a range of methods to construct a "flavour" of the reported speech: that, while some insight is given into what was (purportedly) said and/or how it was uttered, the reporting is not a verbatim portrayal of actual utterances from a specific occasion. These include elements that precede and follow the report that indicate it depicts multiple utterances, the design and prosody of the report that includes both direct and indirect aspects, and the addition of items that convey more extended complaining. These are illustrated by the following extracts from the current corpus, analysed in greater depth below.

(1) [Holt:1:1:7]

19 Lesley:→ Oh::: all about sh:-he lea:ves'er too l:on:g
20 → an:d um .tch.hh An' I: wz RUDE tuh MISSI:Z
21 → uhm:: someb'ddy or other once...

(2) [F:TC:1:1]

16 Shirley:→ W'she got u:p, en she starts yelling at me:.
17 → .hhh like who em I t'tell her thi:s. .hh en

18 → I'm her frie:nd, .hh en all'v this stuff

(3) [A21ME:4]

7 Pam:→ .hhh And I'm really freakin out because: all
8 → along our realtor has told us don't worry
9 → don't worry don't worry you guys are (.) you
10 → know perfect candidate blah blah [blah]

The instances in the current collection overlap with what has been called quasi-direct or free-indirect speech/discourse. It has mainly been analysed in literary texts with a focus on considering distinguishing elements of the form (Delfitto et al. 2016; Maier, 2015; McHale, 1978; Sarvit, 2008). But while these terms have been used to refer to a range of techniques for presenting speech in a way that combines direct and indirect portrayal, the current sequential analysis focuses on a specific device, identified in interaction and characterised by a cluster of elements. It adds to analysis of reporting in interaction showing that participants sometimes combine direct and indirect portrayal, or do not disambiguate between them (see, for example, Benwell, 2012; Günthner, 1997 and extracts 1 and 3 in Stokoe and Edwards, 2007).

In referring to *loosely portrayed speech* (LPS) I use *loosely* to avoid the implication that these are more closely related either to direct or indirect forms - the analysis reveals various recurrent aspect of their design, including that some convey mainly direct reporting while others suggest mainly indirect. I use *portrayed* rather than *reported* to reduce the potential implication of authenticity to some "original" utterance.

The instances of LPS in the current collection occur in complaints about a non-present third party. In each case, then reported speaker is constructed as complaining about the current speaker. The LPS conveys utterances by the non-present speaker which are either critical of the current speaker or, as in one instance, part of a longer telling which criticises the reporting speaker (see extract 3 below). Rather than occurring at the climax of a complaint, as is recurrently the case with DRS (Holt, 2000), these are embedded into the telling (both narrative and non-narrative), supporting previous negative assessments by the complainer of the reported speaker

A "layering of voices" (Günthner, 1999) conveys both the reported speaker's stance (e.g. that they used a critical tone) and the reporter's (e.g. suggesting that the reported speaker moaned on and on). Consequently they give some insight into the words and/or delivery of the reported speaker without the suggestion of objective, verbatim portrayal present in many occurrences of direct reporting in complaints. In so doing, they portray the reported speaker as acting in a complaint-worthy or reprehensible way. Thus, speakers orient to the need to present the complainable actions in a manner that shows how the reported speaker infringed the moral order, and in this way they are made accountable for their actions, and, thus, the complaint as justified. Since the reports in the corpus concern complaints against the current speaker, conveying them in a way that simultaneously presents them, but undermines them is well-fitted, especially when the recipient is not affiliating with the complaint (as is the case in the majority of these instances).

After introducing the data and method, I analyse the three instances reproduced above in detail. I then use further instances from the collection to focus on the defining features of

LPS, presenting the various methods speakers use to portray speech loosely. This leads to discussion of how they construct both the complaint-worthy actions of the speaker and their stance towards them (i.e. how they present the reported speaker as acting in a complainable manner). Finally, I return to consideration of the sequential environment, showing how the reports recurrently support prior assessments and, therefore contribute to sequences where the speaker's stance towards the reported speaker is explicit, and where the recipient's affiliation has not been forthcoming

Data and method

The current research arose out of a more extensive project using conversation analysis to analyse reported speech in naturally occurring interaction. At an initial stage, I analysed a large collection of instances drawn from a range of recorded, mainly informal, phone interactions to identify whether they were direct or indirect reported speech (see Holt, 1996, 2000, 2016, 2017). This also identified collection of thirteen instances that were combinations, and which form the collection on which the current paper is based.

The instances in the current collection mainly come from recorded phone conversations, predominantly those that make up the Holt and NB corpora, transcribed by Gail Jefferson. These were collected under the conventions of recording current in universities. These are in the public domain and have been widely used in CA: extracts have been included in multiple publications over the previous decades. A further extract was taken from a collection of calls recorded by students of Robert Hopper in Texas, USA. Throughout these data, names have been anonymised and identifying features changed. One other instance came from a Radio 4 show called the Listening Project where two participants (who were face-to-face in a studio) were tasked with talking about whatever they wished, which was then broadcast. Here, I

present six instances to demonstrate the range within the collection, using ones that represent the cluster of attributes that typify the device.

LPS in complaints

To begin, I present three instances to introduce the phenomenon and the sequences in which it recurrently occurs. I show that these are complaints - in the first two they report criticisms from a third party of the current speaker; in the third the reports add to a complaint about a third party, who criticised the current speaker. The reports and the turns into which they are embedded use loose reporting: they mix elements more typically associated with direct and indirect reporting to give some insight into what was said without purporting to fully enact specific utterances in detail. As with other forms of reporting, we are presented with a cluster of elements of design, delivery and sequential position that regularly coalesce, but sometimes occur individually. The boundaries of LPS (and other forms of reporting) are not clear-cut. Speakers use a range of methods to present utterances to suggest more or less verbatim portrayal.

The first instance comes from a call where Lesley is complaining about her mother-in-law, Mrs Field. Prior to this extract Lesley has been talking about the fact that Mrs Field stayed in bed for a week claiming to be ill.

(1)[Holt:1:1:7]

1 Lesley: But ↓really: (.) I mean: talk abou:t making the
2 best'v it,h
3 (1.3)
4 Lesley: I m'n th'z ha:rdly anything th'matter with'er.
5 (.)

6 Mum: No:. (),

7 (0.7)

8 Mum: Ah well- (0.2) y'won't cure'er ↓now love it's

9 too late

10 Lesley: No an'she wz ever so na:sty tuh Mark when'ee

11 ca:lled l[as'week]

12 Mum: [Was she]:?

13 Lesley: Oh: ↓yes.

14 (0.8)

15 Lesley: He came: back r:ea::lly: sh:aky

16 (0.4)

17 Mum: Oh:. () what'd she say to'im.

18 (0.7)

19 Lesley:→ Oh:: all about sh:-he lea:ves'er too l:on:g

20 → an:d um .tch.hh An' I: wz RUDE tuh MISSI:Z

21 → uhm:: someb'ddy or other once ↑SIX YEARS AGO

22 this was hhuh hah[h°ah

23 Mum: [Oh:.

24 Lesley: .hh She wz moaning on about m-me:: an:' (.)

25 m:oaning on about him'n[ohh

At the beginning (and prior to this excerpt), Lesley complains about her mother-in-law malingering. In lines 10 to 11 she turns to a new complainable: that she was nasty to her son (Lesley's husband) when he went to visit. Her Mum asks "Was she]:?" (line 12), Lesley confirms and a pause emerges. She then does another assessment, this time of Mark's state following the visit, "He came: back r:ea::lly: sh:aky". Mum asks what she said to him (line 17), and Lesley then portrays what Mrs Field said to her son. But rather than conveying specific utterances in detail, she glosses the kinds of things said. However the design and

prosody suggest some fidelity to what the reported speaker said, and its delivery, thus making it mainly indirect, but with shades of direct reporting.

Lesley introduces the report, not with a pronoun plus speech verb (common in other forms of reporting [Holt, 1996]), but with "all about". This contributes towards portraying this as not verbatim enactment of specific comments but a looser indication of multiple utterances. The design of the report is indirect in terms of the pronouns. However, the prosody and voice quality convey some direct reporting. The stretching of "lea:ves" and "l:on:g", the slow pace, and a low pitch suggest a moaning tone. The loudness and emphasis on "RUDE" also construct Mrs Field's critical tone.

The beginning of the report is marked by a change of prosody around "he" in line 19. Another change at "↑SIX YEARS AGO", with a marked rise in pitch, increased loudness and emphasis on "YEARS", helps indicate the return to her own voice as she implicitly conveys her stance towards the complaint (though whether "once" is also reporting is unclear, though the rise in pitch following it appears to constitute it as part of the report).

The design of the reporting in lines 19-21 constructs the reprehensible nature of Mrs Field's complaining. First, Lesley suggests that the reported speaker went on and on: "all about" conveys extended complaining, and the two complaints reported suggest a comprehensiveness in that Mrs Field complained about both her son and Lesley. Second, Lesley conveys that the complaint about her was unreasonable. Her description of the woman that Lesley was rude to as "Mrs someb'ddy or other" suggests its lack of significance in that she (or Lesley) can't even remember her name. And this is further enhanced by Lesley adding

that it was "six years ago" and then laughing, thus, also indicating the irrelevance and ridiculousness of her accusation.

The nature of Lesley's complaint is particularly delicate. For a start, she is presenting criticism of herself. There is a possibility that the recipient could be more sympathetic to the reported speaker, and may see the complaint against Lesley and Mark as justified. In building the complaint Lesley both constructs (to an extent) what Mrs Field (purportedly) said, while simultaneously undermining it. The design and prosody contribute to conveying this as the kinds of things she said, and that she made multiple, unreasonable complaints. Thus, Lesley attends to the twin contingencies of conveying what was said in a way that suggests its reprehensibility, while simultaneously suggesting that her complaint about Mrs Field is justified. Enacting her moaning tone (later assessed as such by Lesley) both portrays the reported speaker negatively and conveys Lesley's stance towards her actions. By loosely portraying Mrs Field's extended complaining (rather than, for example, enacting multiple utterances in detail, giving the recipient more access to the complaints) Lesley presents them in a way that is heavily coloured by her stance. Part of the complaint is that Mrs Field went on and on,; loosely portraying multiple utterances suggests this in an economical way, without portraying multiple complaints.

Lesley's complaint evidences the fact that members can indeed complain about others for "moaning, whinging, ranting". However, Lesley, as complainer in the current telling, can also be seen to orient to the potential negative attributions of complaining too much or without justification. Mrs Field is made accountable for her actions through the negative portrayal of them - complaining at length in an unreasonable way, which justifies the stance Lesley is taking towards her (and therefore, the earlier assessment of her as being "nasty" to her son).

In the second instance loosely portrayed speech occurs during a storytelling and is used to convey the utterances of one of the participants in a dialogue¹. Shirley is complaining about an acquaintance who was drinking alcohol under the legal age in the bar where she works.

(2)[F:TC:1:1]

1 Shirley: .hhhh I s'd not only tha:t, .hh but the
2 fact remains that it is against the law, en
3 thet yer jeopardizing. .hhhh not only Jack's
4 liquor license, .hh b't also, his means of (.)
5 of income. .hh en evrybuddy else's means of
6 income who works here.
7 (0.4)
8 (S): .pt.hhh
9 Shirley: Yihknow,
10 (0.3)
11 Geri: Y[e:[ah,]
12 Shirley: [.h[i s]aid, (.) if (.) yihknow I s'd if yer
13 so god da:mn, .hh determine'tih drink.h.hh
14 Why 'ontche j's stay home'n do it. .hh yihknow?
15 .hhh So I took the drink en I poured it ou:t.
16 → W'she got u:p, en she starts yelling at me:.
17 → .hhh like who em I t'tell her thi:s. .hh en
18 → I'm her frie:nd, .hh en all'v this stuff en
19 ↑finally I ↑looked et'er. I s'd jihknow, .t.hhh
20 I said I c'd very very easily have you kicked
21 out.
22 (1.2)
23 Shirley: I said no questions asked. Very easily. .hhh
24 en I said tih her. .hh I'm not g'nna ↑do it.
25 (0.2)

While Shirley uses DRS to report what she said to her, the other speaker's utterances are conveyed in a way that mixes direct and indirect reporting. The pronouns are commensurate with the current context, however, tenses and form suggest that what was said is, to an extent, directly reported. She says "who em I t'tell her thi:s." rather than the more indirect "she asked me who I was to tell her that", and "Im her frie:nd," rather than "she said that I was her friend". Prosodically these two units of portrayed speech sound similar: there is a pitch peak on the two uses of "I" which contributes towards suggesting the accusing tone of the reported speaker (as in "who are you to tell me this, you're my friend") and thus, a directness to the report. Then, Shirley shifts away from reporting; saying "en all'v this stuff" suggests these are indications of the kind of thing she said, and that she made further, similar comments.

Elements of the framing of the report portray this as not straightforward enactment with "she starts yelling at me:." together with "like" suggesting this is an indication of what was said (Fox and Robles, 2010). The introducing clause and "en all'v this stuff" contribute to this being more closely embedded into the turn, since there is less of an overt shift in footing at the start and end of the report, than is often the case with direct reporting². Again, then, the speaker portrays these utterances using mainly indirect elements, but aspects of the design and delivery construct some fidelity.

The design and the delivery contribute to making the reported speaker sound irrational and angry - she is assessed as "yelling" and the delivery of the report constructs an angry voice. Shirley, on the other hand is presented as remaining calm and considered. Direct speech is used both before and after the LPS to convey her words: first she suggests drinking at home, and then says that while she could have her thrown out, she will be reasonable and "give her

the benefit of the doubt" since they know each other. Other parts of the telling cohere with the granularity of the direct reporting to convey her deliberate and measured actions in contrast to those of her acquaintance, including "So I took the drink en I poured it ou:t." and "↑finally I ↑looked et'er."(see Drew, 1998: 318).

Thus, using DRS, Shirley gives the impression that she was calm and logical, behaving in a reasonable, and in fact, laudable way, while, through LPS, the reported speaker is portrayed as angry, aggressive and extreme in terms of her response. In this way, Shirley portrays her behaviour as justified both at the time, and now, in complaining, and the reported speaker as accountable and worthy of criticism.

The third instance is also a complaint, but unlike the previous two, here the reported comments are not criticisms of the current speaker, rather, they are used to criticise the third party, on the grounds that he contradicted himself. He gave repeated reassurances that that they were very likely to be able to purchase a property, then, when she bought some items for it, he criticised her for being presumptive.

(3) [A21ME:4]

(Prior to the excerpt Pam says they could be moving into their new house soon, but she is remaining cautious due to the fact that the sale is not guaranteed.)

1 Pam: You know they don't tell you whether you've
2 been approved or not until the day you go in
3 there for your meeting.
4 (0.3)
5 Glo: Oh my Go:d=

6 Pam: =So: we're kinda freakin out

7 Pam:→ .hhh And I'm really freakin out because: all

8 → along our realtor has told us don't worry

9 → don't worry don't worry you guys are (.) you

10 → know perfect candidate blah blah [blah]

11 Glo: [°yeah°

12 Pam: cause Steve has all that money you know that

13 he inherited?

5 lines omitted

19 Pam: Go::d. .hh anyway- u:m ((1.2) so's all along

20 the realtor has been telling us don't worry

21 and so today I went out- .hhhh and bou:ght

22 (0.2) shower curtains and to:wels?

23 Pam: for the bathroom?

24 Glo: Yeah=

25 Pam: =And when I- the realtor called and when I

26 told him that I did it- he goes .hhh I

27 wouldn't do that ye:t. Not until you're approved.

28 (0.6)

29 Pam: And that started freakin me ou:t. Because >all

30 along he'd been tellin< me not to worry.

31 Glo: Nyeah

Pam suggests some fidelity to the realtor's utterances by directly reporting "don't worry" and "don't worry you guys". However, the non-grammatical "perfect candidate", preceded by "you know" (which is ambiguous as reporting), moves away from the suggestion of faithfulness - it conveys some possible verbatim portrayal, but the lack of the surrounding talk indicates that it is an abridged impression of what he said. This is taken a step further with "blah blah blah" which makes no attempt to represent his words. These, the introduction

with "all along our realtor has told us", and the repeat of "don't worry" convey that he made similar comments on multiple occasions. Thus, although some elements are directly reported, suggesting a degree of faithfulness, others portray this is a loose gloss of multiple sayings; with "blah blah blah" suggesting that similar comments were made while giving no indication of their form.

The reported speaker is portrayed as producing multiple turns of reassurance regarding the couple's likelihood of succeeding in purchasing the house, through the use of "all along", the repeat of "don't worry" and the inclusion of "blah blah blah". These comments are not criticisms of the current speaker, however, they form part of the complaint about the realtor: the numerous and positive assurances by him contrasting with the critical stance he took subsequently (lines 26-27). He is portrayed as being inconsistent. In this way, his actions are constructed as accountable and reprehensible, and therefore, her complaint as justified.

In this section I have analysed three instances from the collection to demonstrate that speakers use elements of direct and indirect reporting to loosely construct the words of a complained-about third party. They convey the reports in ways that do not suggest verbatim portrayal, as recurrently is the case with DRS in complaints - where the complained about person's words are presented in a way that suggests objectivity, and allows the recipient to see and assess them for themselves. In the current instances, the emphasis is on portraying recurrent actions of the complained-about party rather than specific utterances. But still the reported speaker's words and manner are conveyed, to an extent; enough to present them as condemned by their own actions.

Loosely portraying speech

In order to explore this type of reporting further, I now outline characteristics of the LPS. There are a variety of ways of suggesting that talk is loosely reported - i.e. not verbatim enactment of utterances as suggested by DRS, but conveys some indication of the words spoken or the manner in which they were said, unlike the summaries or glosses portrayed by IRS. Features cluster together to give some indication of the reported speaker's words, while at the same time not suggesting granular enactment of specific utterances. These features include the design of the report itself and the turn into which it is embedded. Research suggests that forms of reported speech occupy a continuum, rather than having clear-cut boundaries (Günthner, 1997; Holt, 2017). What is important is how elements of design and sequential position coalesce to perform interactional tasks involved in conveying more or less verbatim enactment of utterances.

Having analysed examples from the collection to illustrate these elements, I then show how they coalesce to provide two related interactional affordances which are central to the use of this form: first, that they construct multiple utterances - either from a specific reported occasion, or the kinds of things the speaker says/speakers say regularly; second, that they convey the current speaker's critical stance towards the reported speaker.

The design and delivery of the report

In this subsection I consider the prosody and the design of the reports, including the use of non-grammatical units, multiple units of reporting, formulaic constructions such as three-part structures and contrasts, and inclusion of extreme case formulations.

In extract 1 we saw how the report of Lesley's mother-in-law's complaining is built using pronouns associated with indirect speech, but other elements of the design and the prosody construct more direct indication of examples of what was said and the manner of its delivery. Similarly, in the following instance the speaker uses pronouns appropriate to indirect reporting, but the design and delivery help convey some direct portrayal.

(4)[NB:IV:7:2]

(Emma is talking to her daughter about her husband - Barbara's father- walking out on her.)

1 Emma: .hhh En I: talk'to'im la:s'night I been kahnda
2 sick about it en:d .hhhhhhh uh::: h It's a
3 pro:blem I-ah'll ah'll tell you when I see:you
4 ah mean it'll work out I knou!*:w, hh I don't know
5 whether we're g*unnuh s::eparate I: don't know
6 what the wh*o*:le th*ing's a[b*out]h h]
7 Barbra: [Oh: r]eal]↑ly?
8 Emm: .hhh[hh
9 Barbra: [Is this been goin on lo:ng er wha:t.
10 Emma: OH::: I DON'T KNOW I JIS CA:N'T SEEM TUH SAY
11 BLUE IS BLUE HE AR:GUES e-WITH ME ER:: *u- (.)
12 → u-SOMETHING EN: AH: DON'T DO THIS RI:GHT'n
13 → THAT RI:GHT. .hhhhh I NEED hhHE:L:P.hh
14 (.)
15 Emma: EN BARBRA wouldju CA:LL im dihni:ght for me,h
16 (.)

Emma loosely portrays the criticisms made of her by her husband prior to him walking out. No detail is given of the exact nature of the complaints, rather she glosses multiple criticisms. But, as in previous extracts, prosody constructs his tone. This occurs in lines 12 and 13 where Emma says "AH: DON'T DO THIS RI:GHT'n THAT RI:GHT.". The emphasis on "THIS"

and "THAT" along with the stretching at the start of the two uses of "right" give a list-like delivery to the two parts. Emma does not directly report his criticisms but the voice quality constructs him as whinging while the design suggests multiple criticisms.

In other instances the utterances take a mainly direct form. However, the inclusion of non-grammatical units conveys a loose depiction of utterances. In extract 3, above, Pam included "you guys are (.) you know perfect candidate", similarly in the next instance a non-grammatical unit is included.

(5)[NB:IV:10:47]

(Emma is talking about a conversation she had with her daughter, Barbara, after her husband walked out.)

1 Emma: SO THEN I CA:LL'Barbr'en I said loo:k.
 2 (1.0)
 3 Emma: → Yer FATHER LE:FT ME THE OTHER night'n he
 4 → siz well yer ↓alweez ↓bitchin en: ↓this:
 5 → 'n tha:t yih don'like the a↓paa:rtment en
 6 → .t.hhh.hhh a:nd eh: .hhh.hhh ha:rd dih ↓live
 7 → wi:th↓ en ih wen'aroun this bing thet ah
 8 wz gonna ↓khill eem I said a couple a'
 9 ti:mes udrop dea:d'n I sid dih th- wisht

Emma reports a conversation she had with her daughter following her falling out with her husband, to Lottie. She portrays the argument with her husband (thus it is a reported conversation within a reported conversation) that she recounted to Barbara. Certain elements are designed to suggest direct reporting (i.e. what her husband said to her and what she then conveyed to her daughter) - "well yer ↓alweez ↓bitchin", "yih don'like the a↓paa:rtment", and "ha:rd dih ↓live wi:th↓". The inclusion of "en: ↓this: 'n tha:t", along with the fact that "ha:rd

dih ↓live wi:th↓" is not a grammatically complete phrase, contribute towards suggesting this is not a portrayal of actual utterances, but a summary indication of the kinds of things said.

A feature of the design of the reports in the collection is that they recurrently take the form of formulaic devices including two-part structures as in Emma's use of "this right'n that right" in extract 4, and three-part structures as in the following:

(2) [Detail]

```
W'she got u:p, en she starts yelling at me:.  
1→ .hhh like who em I t'tell her thi:s. .hh  
2→ en I'm her frie:nd, .hh  
3→ en all'v this stuff en
```

In extract 3 "don't worry" occurs three times, and these three parts are followed by a fourth part - "blah" used three times.

(3) [Detail]

```
Pam: =So: we're kinda freakin out  
Pam: .hhh And I'm really freakin out because: all  
along our realtor has told us  
1→ don't worry  
2→ don't worry  
3→ don't worry you guys are (.) you  
know perfect candidate  
4→ blah blah [blah]  
Glo: [°yeah°
```

In extract 2 the third part is a generalised list completer (Jefferson, 1990), "en all'v this stuff", and in extract 3 the inclusion of "blah blah blah", contribute towards constructing these as examples of multiple utterances.

As well as using multiple parts to suggest an extensiveness or reoccurrence of the reported utterances, extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986; Edwards, 2000) are sometimes employed to suggest the "overdone" nature of the comments. Notice the use of "everywhere" and "everything" in the three-part structure in instance 6. Ian, who is blind, and his girlfriend, Chikodi, are complaining about the critical reactions of people who see he has a sighted girlfriend and conclude that she should help him get about.

(6) [The Listening Project: Ian&Chikodi:2/3/16:17.32]

1 C: I think people↓ (0.2) percei:ve that erm
2 → well you know you've got a sighted girlfriend
3 1→ so you can just↑ (0.7) she can just take you
4 → **everywhere**↑ you know (.)
5 2→ she can just (.) do **everything** (.)
6 → you know
7 3→ why are you↑=
8 I: =f wuhhhf [wh- wh- wuh- -wuh wuh (huh)]
9 C:3→ [fwhy are you going out on your own you knowf]
10 I: [fwhat about] when people mistake you for my carerf↓
11 C: [I think]
12 C: errr:: fyes↓f yeah↓=

The pronouns and reference to "girlfriend" are commensurate with the reported context, and the final part of the report (line 7), is a question and therefore takes direct form. Furthermore

the prosody suggests an insistent, complaining quality to the report, especially around the emphasis on "do" (line 4).

Chikodi reports three elements to how the "people" say Ian should rely on her. The two extreme case formulations add to the suggestion of the overdone and excessive nature of these bossy comment. These contribute towards suggesting that "people" expect Ian to be totally reliant on Chikodi, and contribute towards portraying their comments as unreasonable and as critical of both (i.e. that she should do everything for Ian, and he should be completely reliant on her).

The turn into which the report is embedded

Elements of the design of the turn in which the report is embedded also contribute to constructing the report as loosely portrayed. This includes the way the report is introduced, as in the previous instance where the report is preceded by "I think people↓ (0.2) percei:ve that erm". By evoking the category "people" Chikodi sets it up as the kind of thing recurrently uttered, rather than a specific comment.

Further, in this instance potentially unreported, or at least, ambiguously reported, units are included in the reporting: "you know" occurs at the end of each of the three items, suggesting that this is a gloss of the kinds of things said rather than specific utterances, possibly inviting the recipient to infer similar utterances.

In several instances the reports are accompanied by further glossing of the reported speaker's actions that do not take the form of LPS but contribute to the immediate environment into

which they are embedded. In extract 4, it is preceded by a characterisation of the kinds of things her husband criticises her that does not suggest his manner or words.

(4) [Detail]

9 Barbra: [Is this been goin on lo:ng er wha:t.
10 Emma: OH:::: I DON'T KNOW I JIS CA:N'T SEEM TUH SAY
11 → BLUE IS BLUE HE AR:GUES e-WITH ME ER:: *u- (.)
12 u-SOMETHING EN: AH: DON'T DO THIS RI:GHT'n
13 THAT RI:GHT. .hhhhh I NEED hhHE:L:P.hh
14 (.)

Saying that she "JIS CA:N'T SEEM TUH SAY BLUE IS BLUE" characterises her husband as excessively critical and argumentative. However, here, Emma does not use prosody to hint at the way in which he does this, and "BLUE IS BLUE" does not represent examples of the kinds of things he objects to, but is a figurative exaggeration.

In extract 1 the loose reporting is followed by a gloss that is more removed from conveying utterances, but adds to the characterisation of the speaker's stance and culpability.

(1)[Detail]

19 Lesley: Oh::: all about sh:-he lea:ves'er too l:on:g
20 an:d um .tch.hh An' I: wz RUDE tuh MISSI:Z
21 uhm:: someb'ddy or other once ↑SIX YEARS AGO
22 this was hhuh hah[h°ah
23 Mum: [Oh:.
24 Lesley: → .hh She wz moaning on about m-me:: an:' (.)
25 → m:oaning on about him'n[ohh

The LPS (lines 19-21) is followed by an even looser version - this time giving less indication of the kinds of things said, but glossing it as "moaning on". The gloss adds to the previous reporting by suggesting the unimportance and irrelevance of her complaints, and the fact that she "went on and on", which is itself reprehensible. The repeat of the phrase with the substitution of "me" for "him" contributes to conveying the repetitive, prolonged nature of the complaint.³

Thus, it has become apparent that elements of design and delivery both within the report itself, and the talk in which it is embedded, contribute towards constructing what was said at the same time as conveying it in a negative light. Central to the device in the instances in my collection is the suggestion that these are indications of either further utterances by the reported speaker, or examples of the kinds of things the speaker has said repeatedly. This can involve portraying multiple critical comments by the same speaker, as in extract 1, using a general list completer, as in extract 2, and depicting further comments in the talk surrounding the report, as in extracts 1 and 4. Additionally, LPS can construct loose reports of what a generalised category of people say recurrently, as in extract 6.

By portraying multiple and often overdone infringements the complainer helps present the reported speaker's actions as unacceptable. In this way the reported speaker (or multiple speakers, as in extract 6) are portrayed as acting in a complaint-worthy way multiple times. In some cases, this contributes towards portraying them as serial offenders and therefore, potentially, the complained-about action (e.g. constantly moaning and criticising as in extracts 1 and 4) as being part of their character (they are "a moaner" or are unreasonably critical). Thus, the moral order (including that people should not moan too much, and should

not be overly critical or argumentative) is implicitly evoked to portray the reported speaker's actions as reprehensible.

In so doing, the recipient is given insight into both the reported speaker's actions, as well as the critical stance of the speaker: the stance of the reported speaker and the reporting speaker are superimposed to contribute to the robustness of the complaint (Svahn, 2017). This duality of stances is central to the device and is explored in the next section.

Layering of voices

Günthner (1999) refers to the combining of the current and reported speaker's stance as the "layering of voices", where several voices are superimposed, which "is employed to implicitly present various perspectives within one utterance: the perspective of the quoted figure and the perspective of the reporter" (p. 705). Günthner is concerned with prosody and voice quality, but the current analysis demonstrates that several elements (both within and surrounding the report) can implicitly communicate the stance of the complainer, by constructing the complaint-worthy actions of the reported speaker in a negative light. The elements that contribute to this are: first, the design and delivery of the report itself. Prosody and voice quality give insight into how the utterances purportedly sounded (and therefore the stance of the reported speaker). The design of the report, including the use of three-part structures, list-completers and extreme case formulations, suggests it indicates more extended, overdone or repeated complaining. Second, the talk into which it is embedded also contributes, including indications that there was more (e.g. "Oh::: all about" in extract 1) and that it was delivered in a reprehensible way (e.g. "she starts yelling at me:." in extract 2).

The stance of the reporting and reported speaker are more entwined than is prototypically the case with direct reporting (Holt, 1996, 2000; but see Günthner, 1997). On the other hand, further insight is given into the nature of the complaining than is typically conveyed through indirect portrayal (Holt, 2000: 427-432). Consideration of the wider sequential environment to which these reports and the surrounding talk contributes, sheds light on how this duality contributes to the sequences in which they occur.

The sequential position of the reports

In loosely reporting speech there is recurrently less of a distinction between the report itself and the talk it is embedded in than is the case with direct reporting. In contrast, direct reporting recurrently occurs in narrative environments where the stance of the teller has not been made explicit (Drew, 1998; Holt 2000, but see Günthner, 1997 and Buttny, 1998).

Clues, in terms of prosody, voice quality and the design of utterances, may be given as to the stance of the speaker, but the report itself, and preceding details are recurrently delivered in ways that suggests an objective telling (at least superficially). Direct reporting is recurrently marked off from the surrounding telling, making a clear distinction between the words of the reported speaker and those of the current speaker⁴.

In the current collection, uses of LPS differ from recurrent sequential positioning of DRS.

They do not occur at the peak of tellings, enacting utterances in granular detail, and enabling the recipient to assess the action conveyed in the report. Rather, more typically, like indirect speech, they occur mid-telling as in the following extract.

(5)[NB:IV:10:47]

- 1 Emma: SO THEN I CA:LL 'Barbr'en I said loo:k.
2 (1.0)
3 Emma:→ Yer FATHER LE:FT ME THE OTHER night'n he

4 → siz well yer ↓alweez ↓bitchin en: ↓this:
5 → 'n tha:t yih don'like the a↓pa:rtment en
6 → .t.hhh.hhh a:nd eh: .hhh.hhh ha:rd dih ↓live
7 → wi:th↓ en ih wen'aroun this bing thet ah
8 wz gonna ↓khill eem I said a couple a'
9 ti:mes udrop dea:d'n I sid dih th- wisht
10 the boat ed ↓sa:nk er b'd I didn' say thet
11 he tol' me a couple a'times 'e c'd (0.2)
12 ↓cho:ke me duh death ↓too: so (.)
13 let's face it wutche say in a:ng↓*er.
14 Lottie: Ye::ah,

Emma loosely reports three criticisms of her by her husband. These take direct form, and the voice quality, along with the emphasis and elongation of "a↓pa:rtment" and "ha:rd dih" constructs a critical tone. The inclusion of "en: ↓this: 'n tha:t" and the three-part design of the reports suggests that these are examples of more extensive complaints. After the non-grammatical "ha:rd dih ↓live wi:th↓" (lines 6 and 7), Emma continues talking about negative comments she is purported to have made to her husband and there is no response from Lottie until line 14.

Rather than forming the focus of a complaint sequence the LPS contributes to the detailing and is followed by further, non-reported details of what she said to him. Recipients recurrently do not respond following the loose reporting, or minimally, as in extract 1. Thus, the reporting is more embedded into the telling, with less separation, than in direct reporting, and the utterances are less foregrounded.

In the extended storytelling in extract 2, the shift from direct reporting to loosely reporting the words of the complained-about party, contributes towards foregrounding her reprehensible stance rather than the utterances themselves, and in this way, helps to construct a telling which portrays the current speaker's utterances and actions with great granularity in contrast to the reported speaker.

(2) [Detail]

12 Shirley: [.h[i s]aid, (.) if (.) yihknow I s'd if yer
13 so god da:mn, .hh determine'tih drink.h.hh
14 Why 'ontche j's stay home'n do it. .hh yihknow?
15 .hhh So I took the drink en I poured it ou:t.
16 → W'she got u:p, en she starts yelling at me:.
17 → .hhh like who em I t'tell her thi:s. .hh en
18 → I'm her frie:nd, .hh en all'v this stuff en
19 ↑finally I ↑looked et'er. I s'd jihknow, .t.hhh
20 I said I c'd very very easily have you kicked
21 out.
22 (1.2)

Following the loose reporting, Shirley continues to portray the interaction and there is no response from the recipient at this point.

In extract 1, the reporting occurs in response to a question, therefore it forms the second pair part to an adjacency pair. Furthermore, the loosely reported speech supports a prior assessment of the complained-about speaker's actions. Lesley assesses her mother-in-law's behaviour towards her son as "ever so na:sty", then, uses reporting to convey what she said after her Mum asks for more details in line 17.

(1) [Detail]

10 Lesley:→ No an'she wz ever so na:sty tuh Mark when'ee
11 ca:lled l[as'week]
12 Mum: [Was she]:?
13 Lesley: Oh: ↓yes.
14 (0.8)
15 Lesley: He came: back r:ea::lly: sh:aky
16 (0.4)
17 Mum: Oh:. () what'd she say to'im.
19 Lesley:→ Oh::: all about sh:-he lea:ves'er too l:on:g
20 → an:d um .tch.hh An' I: wz RUDE tuh MISSI:Z
21 → uhm:: someb'ddy or other once †SIX YEARS AGO
22 this was hhuh hah[h°ah

The reports support prior assessments and therefore they are delivered in an environment where the teller's stance is explicit. This conveying of stances (i.e. the current teller's and the reported speaker's) contributes towards making a robust complaint by simultaneously providing some insight into the words of the reported speaker while at the same time undermining the validity of the complaining (for example, by suggesting they went on and on). In this instance, as in the majority in the collection, the teller is reporting criticism of herself. In such circumstances it can be useful to convey the reprehensibility of the critical remarks rather than letting the recipient judge them for themselves.

In non-narrative environments direct reporting is sometimes preceded by an assessment in the same TCU (Couper Kuhlen,2007).). In the current collection the majority occur in non-narrative environments and follow prior assessments: not in the immediately preceding talk,

but in preceding units. This coheres with the fact that these sequences are more explicitly stance-laden than is recurrently the case with DRS in storytelling where the reported speaker is given "allowed to speak for themselves" (Drew, 1998: 321) and explicit assessment by the participants often follows (Holt, 2000).

That LPS can be used to support an explicit assessment of the complained-about speaker (i.e. using their own words to condemn them in a way that makes the reprehensibility of their actions clear), is particularly useful in environments where the recipient's affiliation is not be forthcoming (Selting, 2012). In several instances in the corpus the loosely portrayed speech occurs in sequences where there has been either lack of affiliation, or incipient disaffiliation prior to the reporting. Extract 4 is a case in point.

(4)[Continuation]

- 1 Emma: .hhh En I: talk'to'im la:s'night I been kahnda
2 sick about it en:d .hhhhhhh uh::: h It's a
3 pro:blem I-ah'll ah'll tell you when I ↓see: you
4 ah mean it'll work out I kno↓*:w,hh I don't know
5 whether we're g*unnuh s::eparate I: don't know
6 what the wh*o*:le th*ing's a[b*out]h h]
7 Barbra: [Oh: r]eal]↑ly?
8 Emm: .hhh[hh
9 Barbra: [Is this been goin on lo:ng er wha:t.
10 Emma: OH::: I DON'T KNOW I JIS CA:N'T SEEM TUH SAY
11 BLUE IS BLUE HE AR:GUES e-WITH ME ER:: *u- (.)
12 → u-SOMETHING EN: AH: DON'T DO THIS RI:GHT'n
13 → THAT RI:GHT. .hhhhh I NEED hhHE:L:P.hh
14 (.)
15 Emma: EN BARBRA wouldju CA:LL im dihni:ght for me,h

16 (.)

17 Barbra: Ye:ah,

18 Emma: .h HU:H?h

19 Barbra: Well if ↑he dezn't co:me I won't uh:: (0.2) t-

20 dra:g (.)Hugh en ↓evrybuddy do:wn↓

The report is delivered in an environment where there has been no display of affiliation by the recipient in the preceding turns. Prior to this excerpt Emma has announced the problem and asked Barbara to call her father. Barbara has focused on practical issues rather than orienting to the emotional side of her mother's complaint. This is apparent again at the start of the extract where Emma asks Barbara to talk to her father about what is wrong (thus implicating her own confusion and unhappiness at the current situation), while Barbara continues to orient to the facts of the matter - asking how long they have been apart. In line 7, after Emma has mentioned that they might separate, Barbara simply gives a news receipt then asks about the history of the problem. Her incipient lack of affiliation becomes more overt after the report. When Emma asks again that she call her father she gives a minimal response "Ye:ah", which Emma responds to with the repair initiation "HU:H?", giving Barbara another opportunity to respond. Then, instead of talking about the situation between her mother and father, Barbara attends to her own concerns by saying that she will not bring the family down for the forthcoming Thanksgiving celebration.

Similarly, another look at extract 1 reveals lack of affiliation by Mum during this complaint. Lesley has been complaining that her mother-in-law has taken to her bed claiming illness, resulting in Lesley having to shop for her.

(1)[Holt:1:1:7]

1 Lesley: But ↓really: (.) I mean: talk abou:t making
2 the best'v it,h
3 (1.3)

4 Lesley: I m'n th'z ha:rdly anything th'matter with'er.
5 (.)

6 Mum: No:. (),
7 (0.7)

8 Mum: Ah well- (0.2) y'won't cure'er ↓now love it's
9 too late

10 Lesley: No an'she wz ever so na:sty tuh Mark when'ee
11 ca:lled l[as'week]

12 Mum: [Was she]:?
13 Lesley: Oh: ↓yes.
14 (0.8)

15 Lesley: He came: back r:ea::lly: sh:aky
16 (0.4)

17 Mum: Oh:. () what'd she say to'im.
18 (0.7)

19 Lesley: Oh::: all about sh:-he lea:ves'er too l:on:g
20 an:d um .tch.hh An' I: wz RUDE tuh MISSI:Z
21 uhm:: someb'ddy or other once †SIX YEARS AGO
22 this was hhuh hah[h°ah

23 Mum: [Oh:.
24 Lesley: .hh She wz moaning on about m-me::: an:' (.)
25 m:oaning on about him'n[ohh

26 Mum: [() she's got
27 a ba:d meh- uh long mem'ry abou:t (0.2) that
28 sort'v thing now what do you think the
29 people here'v got long mem'ries abou:[t.

Her mother does not affiliate with Lesley's complaint. In fact, in lines 8 and 9 she mildly disaffiliates by saying "y'won't cure'er ↓now love it's too late" (which could be taken to imply that there is no point in complaining). Lesley then brings in another reprehensible aspect of her mother-in-law's behaviour - she was nasty to her son. Thus, her bad behaviour has not just impacted Lesley and goes beyond malingering. Also "ever so na:sty" is a strongly negative assessment. In a similar way to extract 7, rather than overtly affiliating with the complaint, her mum suggests surprise with "was she:?" then asks for further details with "what'd she say to'im". Thus, the report is occasioned by Mum's question and delivered in an environment of insipient non-affiliation. This continues after the report with Mum giving a minimal response at line 23. Lesley continues the complaint and, in response, her mother focuses on what others might remember critically, without directly assessing her current behaviour or overtly affiliating with Lesley.

In responding to Mum's question at line 17 Lesley is prompted to give details of the nature of her mother-in-law's "nastiness" towards her son. The complaints that she recalls her making are potentially reprehensible actions - leaving an elderly mother on her own for long periods and being rude to an acquaintance. Coming in an environment where Mum has, so far, not affiliated with Lesley's complaints both give an insight into her mother-in-law's complaints at the same time as undermining them. Delivering the reporting in a way that is less (at least superficially) neutral than in many instances of direct portrayal, is attuned to an environment where the recipient's affiliation cannot be counted on. Further, it foregrounds Mrs Field's reprehensible behaviour rather than the specific complaints she made against the couple. In this way, the LPS contributes to defensive detailing, portraying Mrs Field as culpable while somewhat glossing over the criticisms she made which may be deemed to be deserved.

Similarly, in the extended complaint about an under-aged drinker from which extract 2 is taken, the recipient provides very few responses. In an analysis of the hendiadys within this telling by Drew, Hakulinen and Heinemann, et al (2021), the authors point out that there is evidence throughout its entirety that Geri is not affiliating with the complaint. There are multiple pauses where Geri does not take the chance to respond: in fact, over 54 lines of transcript Geri responds only four times with minimal responses, and there are 11 pauses between segments of the telling. The authors account for recurrent uses of hendiadys as potential ways to close the narrative down in ways that will elicit affiliation from Geri. Thus, in this instance too, LPS, occurs in a sequence where there has been a lack of affiliation by the recipient.

Conclusion

The current research adds to our understanding of the role reporting speech in complaining. While previous analysis has demonstrated the interactional affordances of directly reporting speech in these sequences, this shows that affordances also accrue to loosely portraying speech. There are a number of reasons why LPS is well fitted to the sequences in the collection: 1. In these instances tellers are recurrently reporting criticisms of self. In such circumstances it is useful to convey the reprehensibility of the critical remarks rather than letting the recipient judge them for themselves. 2. The form is ideally suited to conveying multiple remarks economically. 3. By not purporting to enact utterances verbatim, but by giving some insight into the nature of the reported speaker's words and manner, a layering of voices is created, indicating the current speaker's and the reported speaker's stances. 4. In this way the reported speaker is portrayed as acting in a complaint-worthy way - as infringing the moral code, by, for example, moaning on and on. 5. Contributing to this is the fact that these reports foreground the action rather than the utterances themselves (as in direct reporting),

and help to make them accountable for their behaviour. 6. By suggesting repeated infringements, the speaker constructs a repetitiveness to the complained-about actions, implicitly contributing to negative portrayal of that person's character. In this way, the LPS contributes to defensive detailing which constructs the reported speaker's criticisms of the current speaker, while at the same time, undermining them.

Analysis of LPS contributes to the growing body of analysis which highlights the complexity of reporting and related ways of doing voicing, such as in enactments (Sidnell, 2006) and animation (Cantarruti, 2020), and the interactional affordances that accrue to this range of techniques. It adds to analysis of the relationship between reported speech and complaints, showing that employing forms that suggest loose portrayal can provide interactional affordances in this environment. Third, it attests to the importance of analysing reporting in terms of how participants design their reports to contribute to the action sequence, rather than concentrating on the structure of, and boundaries between forms. Furthermore, it contributes to exploring the relationship between reported speech and doing moral work (see Berger and Pekarek Doehler, 2015; Clift, 2013; Svahn, 2017), and in conveying stance or affect (Couper-Kuhlen, 1999; Günthner, 1997; Svahn, 2017).

Future research may identify LPS in other kinds of environments, and, analysis of further instances may shed more light on the cluster of attributes that contribute to constructing loose reporting, and its relationship to other ways of constructing speech.

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¹ See Günthner (1997: 253-4) for discussion of how different ways of reporting speech can contribute to distinguishing speakers in a reported dialogue.

² See Bolden (2004) for analysis of the marking of the boundaries of reported speech in Russian. She shows how speakers can "fade out" of reporting can be deployed for particular interactional ends. Also, see Klewitz and Couper-Kuhlen (1999) on the prosodic marking of quotes.

³ Interestingly even in this loose (highly non-granular) gloss of her actions, the prosody gives some insight into both the delivery and Lesley's assessment of her actions: the voice quality and prosody enacts a moaning voice, particularly through the emphasis on the first part of both uses of "moaning" and the emphasis and stretching on "me" and "ohh". Further, the "n ohh" at the end suggests a possible continuation, with a tail-off. The breathiness of the "ohh" simultaneously conveys the continued, self-pitying moaning of the mother-in-law, at the same time as her stance towards the reported complaint.

⁴ While the beginning of DRS is often clearly marked, the end by be less so (Holt, 1996; Bolden, 2004)