ТЕОРИЯ И МЕТОДИКА ПРЕПОДАВАНИЯ

INDIRECT REPORTING. THE ROLE OF THE SENTENCE STRUCTURE IN INDIRECT REPORTING BY L2 SPEAKERS

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Abstract. Currently research into indirect reporting in bilingual speech production is considered important because: a) indirect reporting involves work of cognitive, pragmatic and linguistic mechanisms in L2 speaker, thus reveals different mechanisms of language acquisition; b) indirect reporting is considered to be one of the most challenging tasks for L2 speakers; c) understanding of these obstacles could enable L2 teachers to foster language proficiency skills in L2 learners more effectively. There is a growing body of literature that looks into the relationship between the original utterance and the report, logical and inferential structure of indirect reports, the role of semantic and pragmatic factors in shaping indirect reports. Most of the studies have been based on examples and data in the English language, where subjects of research were bilinguals with the English language as L2 and various mother tongues L1. The central thesis of this paper is that L2 learners tend to overcomplicate the structure of a sentence in indirect reporting. This study therefore set out to assess the structure of indirect reports by bilingual speakers and determine possible reasons for overcomplicating of sentence structure. In addition, this study provides an opportunity to advance our knowledge of L2 acquisition.
Keywords: indirect reporting; L2 speaker; language perception; pragmatic structure.

Introduction

Overview of Reported Speech

Research into indirect reporting in bilingual speech production is a very important issue for the following reasons: a) indirect reporting involves work of cognitive, pragmatic and linguistic mechanisms in L2 speaker, thus reveals different mechanisms of language acquisition; b) indirect reporting is considered to be one of the most challenging tasks for L2 speakers; c) understanding of these obstacles could enable L2 teachers to foster language proficiency skills in L2 learners more effectively.

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in analysis of indirect reporting in bilingual language production. There is a growing body of literature that investigates the relationship between the original utterance and the report, logical and inferential structure of indirect reports, the role of se-

mantic and pragmatic factors in shaping indirect reports. Most of the studies have been based on examples and data in the English language, where subjects of research were bilinguals with the English language as L2 and various mother tongues L1 (Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Russian, Italian, Spanish etc.). Such authors as Capone [1. P. 337–391], Cappelen and Lepore [2], Wieland [3. P. 40–48] focused their research on this issue and the underlying processes of this phenomenon.

Through indirect reporting we share information with the interlocutor about what someone else has said. There are two ways of sharing this information: direct reporting and indirect reporting.

In reported speech we eliminate the borders and focus on the content of the message; this way we construct our report relying on our own perception and taking into account the following factors: actual situational content, illocutionary force of original message [4. P. 10].

There are different types of utterance: statement, question, request or a command, thus the reported clause differs in its structure as well as content. Moreover, we need to bear in mind that an indirect report presents a less detailed summary of what was said than a direct report. Consequently, it decreases the pressure associated with remembering the exact wording of a phrase. In this case the speaker can choose any words from his vocabulary scope to form an indirect report, although one more restriction arises immediately: s / he has to choose appropriate words and grammatical structure to produce a felicitous utterance.

The act of reporting the speech of the others includes a mixture of cognitive, linguistic and pragmatic factors [5].

The linguistic skills involved here are the following: to be able to produce utterances which contain embedded clauses, use various lexical devices, and make use of emphatic and some other tools that represent prosodic features of another person's speech.

Cognitive and pragmatic skills: to be able to remember what another person said, to identify the manner in which it was said, being capable of recalling any implied meaning triggered by this utterance.

A complex process of reasoning that includes use of a wide variety of mind skills forms the basis for the ability to report the speech of the other people. This is especially the case if the interlocutors do not use the mother tongue of the speaker, but acquire L2 instead. Indirect reporting is considered to be one of the most challenging tasks for second language users according to the second language acquisition research [6].

In indirect reported speech the reporter is allowed to adjust the content to the actual situational context. Furthermore, he can change the sentence structures as he wishes. For non-native speakers it is supposed to be the easiest option and they employ it more often than direct reporting, because they can focus more on expressing the content. Another reason for this preference

is the fact that the speaker can avoid some unnecessary details, and depending on the level of his / her proficiency s / he can skip some details that are not clear [4. P. 12].

Indirect Reporting Current Theories

Analysis of pragmatic factors is essential according to the current research into indirect reporting. Formulation of indirect reports is significantly affected by the peculiarities of actual communicative situations. These situations cannot be systematised or generalised. However, according to Cappen and Lepore, this approach could be summarised as follows:

– Indirect reports are pragmatic in nature. The information about a particular act in a particular context C is reported to a particular audience in a different context C*.

– There is a say-relation between the original utterance and the indirect report. And further semantic analysis is required here.

– Indirect reports share some solid semantic features. Their pragmatic features are neither systematic nor generalizable [7. P. 278–296].

Philosophers define metarepresentation as a higher-order representation of some kind that is a representation of a representation [8]. Data from several studies suggest that there is pragmatic equivalence between the original utterance and the indirect report [1, 3]. This relation is represented in metarepresentation that can be analysed.

Mey [9] developed a theory of pragmemes which refers to an instantiated pragmatic act and Capone claimed that we can employ this theory to explain pragmatic equivalency [1]. There are more supporters of this point of view. According to Geis's theory of speech acts, there are broad mappings (correlations) between sentence types and illocutionary forces. Furthermore, Kecskes puts forward the dynamic model of meaning (DMM) in which core sense represents the invariant pragmatic function or content while consense(s) are possible instatiations of that invariant. Kecskes [10] stated that the explanatory movement in any pragmatic theory should go in both directions: from outside in (actual situational context prior to context in utterances used) and from the outside in (prior context encoded in utterances used in an actual situational context). In the language production and interpretation for the non-native speakers this has crucial importance because non-native speakers understand the literal meaning of the utterance prior to its actual situational meaning [11. P. 345].

According to the socio-cognitive approach the speaker's individual salience affects the process of production subconsciously. Both social and individual (salience) factors shape the communicative process and utterance production. The important role in indirect reporting is given to the emergent situational salience. This is evident in the case of sample utterances where the reporters did not care much about the content of the original message, alternatively they focused on what was the most salient for them in this mes-

sage. In these instances, the reporters generally give a preference to a more condensed report focusing on the content of the original message and reporting what they found most salient (prominent) in it.

Kecskes postulated that "Salience is described as the main driving force which is shaping the indirect report" [4. P. 15]. An individual can quickly rank large amounts of information by importance and this way focus on what is more important thanks to relative salience of certain words in a context.

In pragmatics the term salient information may be defined as given information that the speaker assumes should be in central place when the speaker produces the utterance. In graded salience hypothesis (GSH) salient meanings of lexical units are processed automatically, irrespective of contextual information and strength of bias. According to GSH hypothesis, salient information and contextual knowledge run in parallel in language processing [12].

Many recent studies (e.g. Cappelen and Lepore [2]; Wieland [3]) have shown that indirect reports always have to report the minimal propositional content of the original utterance. In this paper we share the same point of view. However, a search of the literature revealed few studies which focus on the changes in the structure of indirect reports by L2 speakers. Nevertheless, a full discussion of indirect reporting lies beyond the scope of this study.

In this way, the hypothesis of our study is the following: the central thesis of this paper is that L2 learners tend to overcomplicate the structure of a sentence in indirect reporting. This study therefore set out to assess the structure of indirect reports by bilingual speakers and determine possible reasons for overcomplicating of sentence structure.

This investigation will enhance our understanding of indirect reporting issues that L2 speakers face. Besides, this study provides an exciting opportunity to advance our knowledge of bilingual language production and L2 acquisition.

Methodology

Research Design

Data were collected from 15 bilingual subjects. The non-native speakers represent Russian as L1, but 2 of the subjects also speak Buryat and Tuvan languages as their mother tongue, i.e. both Russian and Buryat / Tuvan are their native languages. All the subjects were bachelor students in Tomsk State University's Faculty of Radiophysics. They were aged between 17 and 22. Most of the non-native speakers had intermediate comprehension skills in English, their level in accordance with Common European Framework of Reference was B1–B2. The intensity of English studies was two classes a week for the period of checking (2017). Nevertheless, none of them have ever lived in English-speaking countries. These facts are very important because intermediate com-

prehension skills in English indicate that the non-native speaker subjects acquired reported speech having small-scale hindrance in comprehension when they were executing the reporting tasks. Each participant received a worksheet that contained the questions and information about what the participants were expected to do. The questions aimed to identify the language background and age of the subjects. The following task was given to them:

Please listen to each utterance of the speaker (John/Mary) on the screen carefully, and report it.

Prompts by John
1) _____

Prompts by Mary
1) _____

The worksheet contained twelve utterances that the subjects were expected to report to someone else. These utterances represented three functions: statements (4), questions (4) and requests / commands (4). Firstly, subjects listened to the utterances in the videos which were shown to them via OHP. Then the recording played for the second time and there was a stop after each utterance. The instructions were given to the subjects to listen to each utterance and repeat after every stop. This way they were supposed to remember the statements better. 70% of the subjects did the reporting in writing, the other 30% – orally. The oral part of the experiment was held with help of the audio recorder, the results were fixed in a written form and analysed afterwards. The 11 subjects worked in the same room under the supervision of the instructor, 4 of the subjects who did the oral part listened to it separately.

Discussion of Results

Before coming to the analysis of the answers, it is necessary to pay attention to two factors for achieving pragmatic equivalency in reporting: grammar and meaning. To evaluate the equivalency we can use the following criteria while making research:

1) complexity of grammatical structure in the *reporting statement*;
2) difficulty of meaning in the *reporting statement*;
3) complexity of grammatical structure used in the *reported statement* by the subject;
4) accuracy of transferring meaning in the *reported statement*.

We emphasize these aspects because of the importance of stored information. In the research it is of great significance for us to find the gap in transferring different utterances when reporting.

Statements Reporting

There were six statements used in the production survey.

J (1): – I think I will need your help in an important matter.

J (2): – I do not want to tell you what I think about Tom.

M (3): – I am tired of answering your silly questions.

M (4): – Mary knows what Jim is hiding from us.

Four of the utterances are complex sentences. 1 demonstrates an intention to ask for help, 2 has the function of refusing to tell the opinion, 3 expresses a negative opinion, 4 illustrates the speaker's assumption. The subjects were familiar with the lexis used in the reporting phrases, so it was not challenging to report them.

The answers of the subjects were overloaded with grammar which misrepresented the sense, for instance:

S 1: – He said that he thought that he would need my help in an important matter.

S 15: – He said that he didn't know what he wanted to tell me about Tom.

The meaning of the reported statements was distorted because of the incorrect choice of the grammatical structure by the subjects. Even though they understand the meaning, they cannot use reporting properly due to the concentration on the grammatical rule but not the lexical meaning.

Besides, we can mention that there was not big diversity in choosing the reported verb by which we can judge on the subjective way of indirect speech reporting and comprehension extent of the subject:

S 3: – She confessed that she was tired of answering these questions.

S 2: – She told that she was tired of answering these silly questions.

Questions Reporting

The four utterances that count as questions represent three types: 1 and 4 are the special questions, 2 is a self-reporting question, and 3 is a general question. All of the questions are complex in structure except for the last one. Three out of four utterances do not represent yes / no questions, so most part of the utterances require open answer that makes it quite difficult for comprehension.

J (1): – Where do you think Jill has put the book?

J (2): – I wonder why you look so happy.

M (3): – Do you know when the accident happened?

M (4): – How much money can I spend on the trip?

Now we can see the same overcomplication – the majority of reports demonstrated the endeavor to include both the usual pattern given during the lesson and preserve the structure of the reporting sentence, which sometimes resulted in quite complex utterances.

S7: – He asked where I thought Jim had put the book.

S4: – He said where I thought Jim had put the book.

S9: – He said he wondered why I looked so happy.

S11: – She said that she knew how much money she could spend on the trip.

Meanwhile, the answers of subjects having a higher command of English reflected the better comprehension of the utterances. They were able to process the sense of the utterances and to achieve the purpose of the statement by replacing some of the words, at the same time not losing semantic properties and the main idea. Moreover, they did not overload the statements produced.

SS 6,14,8: – He / John wondered why I looked so happy.

– She asked (me) if I knew where the car crash / accident had happened.

– She asked when the accident had happened.

– She asked how much money she could spend on the trip.

– Mary asked you how much money she could spend on her trip.

Requests Reporting

All requests differ drastically not only in grammar, but also in meaning. Requests / demands appear to be more cognitively demanding because they induce subjects to adapt message and adjust the content of reporting utterances due to the level of politeness. There are two types of requests / demands presented: 1 and 3 are formed with help of direct imperatives, they contain negations. 2 and 4 use modal verbs. All sentences are simple in structure. They are not complicated in terms of lexis.

J (1): – Don't open the window, please. It's chilly here.

J (2): – You should meet with the professor on Friday.

M (3): – Don't even think about lying to me.

M (4): – They must be more careful with loud music.

In this type of reporting subjects transferred the meaning in a very simple sentence which does not require much cognitive load and does not reflect the full meaning.

S 3: – He told me not to open the window.

S 13,2: – She said / warned me not to lie.

S 10: – She ordered not to think about lying to her.

Many subjects used complex sentence in reporting that facilitated cognitively demanding solution because it allows the reporter to make grammatical changes without losing semantic meaning of a message.

S 11: – She said that I shouldn't think about lying to her.

S 11: – John said that I shouldn't open the window because it's chilly here.

S 1,5: – He warned / said / proved me that I should meet the professor on Friday.

S 13: – She said that I had to be more careful with loud music.

S 7: – She told me that they must be more careful with loud music.

S 15: – She ordered them to be more careful with loud music.

Conclusion

Having analysed the answers divided into three categories, we come to the conclusion that one of the problems faced by non-native speakers which concerns all types of reporting is their tendency to overuse patterns as a result of which their speech becomes unnatural and too complicated both for the communicator and the recipient.

Considering reported statements we can notice that the individual approach in producing meaningful utterances is mostly absent. Most of the utterances reported start with: "He said…" or "She asked…" followed by the reporting statement, changed or unchanged in tense. Individual activity is inextricably linked to comprehension, as a result of which versatile vocabulary is acquired. The ability to choose his / her own acquisition strategy and modify it depending on the context determines the student's readiness for using foreign language fluently. Although even if reporters have a broad vocabulary they may not or may poorly be able to use the grammatical structure correctly because of the peculiar salience of L2 which is laid in the initially different principle of sentence formation in comparison with L1.

It should also be mentioned that those subjects having 2 native languages from their birth have a higher command of English because of their flexible cognitive skills. It is more natural for them to use different noncognate grammatical structures.

The findings demonstrated that there was a great difference between natural and artificial acquisition of L2, the latter represented in using too complicated and stereotyped grammatical constructions and also in meaning losses. It was salience that played a decisive role in what subjects actually reported from the original message, and how they shaped the reported message [4. P. 15]. Although indirect reports usually have quite standard formulation starting with construction "He said / asked / told…", they are heavily affected by the peculiarities of subjective comprehension and capability of reporter's natural acquisition of L2.

When reporting, subjects should be able to:

1) fully comprehend the reporting sentence including pragmatic features implied in the original utterances;

2) use appropriate reported verb adjusting to the meaning, intonation, context of the utterance in order to make the reporter's subjectivity detectable;

3) not overload their utterances with complex grammatical structures;

4) fully correspond the reporting utterance without losing semantic content.

On this basis, we determine that the actively managed practice of the reported speech with native speakers and self-educational activity of students is an essential condition for successful foreign language acquisition.

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