

Chapter 17. LITERAL REPORTED SPEECH AS FICTIVE INTERACTION STRATEGY IN CONVERSATIONS OF BRAZILIAN CHILDREN WITH AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER^{*}

Aline Dornelas and Esther Pascual

[To appear in: Pascual, E. & S. Sandler (eds.). *The Conversation Frame: Forms and Functions of Fictive Interaction*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins]

This study explores how fictive interaction (Pascual 2002, 2006, 2014), manifested as literal reported speech, is used language pathology as a compensatory strategy in conversation. Four Brazilian autistic children between the ages of 4 and 12 were video-recorded during interactions with adults in weekly therapy sessions. These autistic children do not use direct quotation only to represent prior speech, as in ordinary reported speech. They mainly use direct quotation fictively as a metonymic means of demanding needs, describing situations, and referring to people, animals, and events. The instances of reported speech were classified into three categories, depending on the kind of interactional setting they emerge from: (i) socio-communicative event type, (ii) socio-cultural event type, and (iii) specific prior interaction(s).

Keywords. echolalia, language pathology, literal reported speech, metonymy

^{*} Aline Bisotti Dornelas was supported by a PhD internship grant (nr. 5554.14.04) for the University of Groningen in the Netherlands from the CAPES Foundation, Ministry of Education of Brazil, and a PhD grant from the Linguistics graduation program at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora, under the supervision of Luiz Fernando Matos Rocha. Esther Pascual was supported by a Vidi grant from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (nr. 276-70-019). We are grateful to Aliyah Morgenstern and Luiz Fernando Matos Rocha for useful comments on an earlier version of this chapter. We further wish to thank the children in this study, as well as their parents and therapists, for granting us permission to record them. All shortcomings are naturally our own.

1. Introduction

Fictive interaction constructions, as in “‘*are you kidding me*’ look” or “attitude of ‘*I’m better than you (and you, and you, too)*’” (Pascual 2014: 75, 45), invariably express viewpoint. In fact, fictive interaction more often than not involves taking someone else’s viewpoint or even mixing different viewpoints (Pascual 2006, 2014, Xiang and Pascual in press, Jarque and Pascual forth.). Autistic Spectrum Disorder (henceforth ‘ASD’) is characterized by a difficulty in adopting the perspective of others. It is thus interesting to explore whether autistic children use fictive interaction, and if so, how they do. In the following pages we show that these children’s use of fictive interaction in naturalistic conversation is restricted to direct or loose quotation of prior speech.

Such an endeavor is important since most work on embedded fictive interaction has focused on creative one-time instances like “the knowledge that *YES, YOU APPRECIATE ART*” or “*oh my God the pain poetry*” (Pascual 2014, p. 71). However, occurrences based on literal or loose quotation, such as “*How are you? Fine. relationships*” (based on the social ritual of greeting), “the emperor has no clothes experience” (arising from cultural knowledge of folk tales), or “*I Have a Dream foundation*” (stemming from the famous speech by Martin Luther King) (Pascual 2014, p. 66–67), are crucial for better understanding this phenomenon. Such instances present a direct relation to a fictive source, thereby enabling us to

get a closer look at the possible origins of fictive interaction. Indeed, even though fictivity departs from a direct representation of reality (Talmy [1996] 2000), fictive usages emerge from their factive counterparts. Just as fictive motion and change stem from actual motion and change, so does fictive interaction have its roots in actual talk-in-interaction (Pascual 2006, p. 250; 2014, ch 1). It is therefore interesting to look at the language acquisition of autistic children, which involves a stage characterized by direct quotation production or echolalia (Paccia and Curcio 1982).

2. Echolalia

Echolalia, a stage in language development of all autistic children able to speak (Paccia and Curcio 1982), is defined as the repetition of the exact words from a prior speech event (Kanner 1943). Echolalia may occur immediately after the production of the represented speech sequence, what is called ‘immediate echolalia’, or after a short or long period of time, what is called ‘delayed echolalia’. Both types may also be integrated with some old or novel information in speech production, ‘mitigated echolalia’ (Wetherby 1986). The great majority of echolalia in ASD naturalistic conversation seems to have a communicative function (Schuler 1979; Prizant and Duchan 1987; Rydell and Mirenda 1991; Fernandes 2003; Dobbinson *et al.* 2003; Sterponi and Shankey 2014).

Although the functions of echolalic speech in autism have been identified and described, they have, to this date, not been fully analyzed. Moreover, only a few studies on echolalia rely on valid naturalistic data analyzed qualitatively (Prizant 1983; Prizant and Rydell 1984; Prizant and Duchan 1987; Roberts 1989, 2014; Sterponi and Shankey 2014). Observing the language use of autistic children in therapy sessions is necessary, since these provide a naturalistic albeit controlled setting in which the children are constantly being challenged and encouraged to communicate. In more familiar settings, autistic children are less productive. Also, the qualitative analysis of situated (semi-)spontaneous instances of echolalic speech is particularly revealing, since this is a pragmatic phenomenon that requires enough understanding of its context of occurrence, as well as the common ground shared by interlocutors.

We aim to demonstrate how fictive uses of reported speech are a way for autistic children to make mental contact with prior interactional experiences and effectively use them as an adaptive strategy to communicate. Also, we discuss how the gestural version of echolalic speech, namely mimetic gesture or echopraxia (Schneider 1938), can be equally used metonymically as a communicative strategy.

3. Methodology

Four Brazilian children diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder were videotaped in weekly therapy sessions with one psychologist and two speech pathologists. Each child was recorded in four sessions of about 30 to 50 minutes over a period of one month, resulting in a total of approximately 10 hours. The recordings took place at the *Centro de Atenção ao Desenvolvimento Integral* ('Attention Center for Integral Development'), a clinic for children with developmental difficulties in the city of Juiz de Fora, Brazil. The data gathering was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Juiz de Fora. Parents, therapists and clinic owners had all previously signed an informed consent form.

The four children recorded, native speakers of Brazilian Portuguese, are a six year-old female ('Child 2') and three males of four, seven, and twelve years of age ('Child 1', 'Child 3', and 'Child 4', respectively). Their level of autism was determined by a children's psychologist, using the Childhood Autism Rating Scale (CARS) (Schopler et al. 1986). According to this scale, Child 2, the only female, presents a moderate degree of autism, whereas Children 1, 3 and 4 present severe autism.

The interactional contexts of the sessions may be considered semi-spontaneous. Therapists selected a number of activities including children books, computer games, puzzles, miniatures and puppets, and different kinds of toys. Children were generally allowed to choose the activities. The

therapists based their work on a socio-cognitive approach to language development and tried to interpret the children's contributions as much as possible. In no case did they adapt the available activities to the present study or consult the researchers for advice.

For the data analysis, we first manually transcribed all examples previously selected from the recordings and specified for each one of them: the child who produced it, the time of occurrence, and all relevant contextual information. In some cases it was necessary to contact the parents and/or therapists in order to get information about the children's common ground, so as to determine whether some instances were related to prior communicative scenarios unknown to us.

4. Data analysis

In almost 10 hours of recordings we found 55 instances of fictive reported speech. The examples were categorized into three types according to their source, the kind of prior situation they echoed:

1. Socio-communicative event type
2. Socio-cultural event type
3. Specific prior interaction

The 'Socio-communicative event type' refers to formulae of social exchange, namely conventional expressions or gestures related to everyday communication in a given community (e.g. saying '*Alô*' when answering

phone calls). The ‘Socio-cultural event type’ concerns pieces of speech that constitute part of encyclopedic world knowledge (e.g. the sound of specific animals). The ‘Specific prior interaction(s)’ category involves quoting a piece of a prior communicative event, either one the utterer was involved in as an interlocutor (e.g. produced earlier in the ongoing conversation) or one experienced as a bystander (e.g. a line from a movie).

These three types are not distinct clear-cut categories but part of a continuum with more prototypical and peripheral instances. The occurrences in the three types can be verbal, non-verbal, or onomatopoeic. Most of them are so-called ‘linguistic units’, namely groups of words that function as a whole, such as “I love you” (Langacker 1999). We will now analyze some representative examples of each type.

4.1. Socio-communicative event type

This type represents formulae associated with given everyday social exchanges. These are similar to some examples of fictive interaction used in ordinary conversation, such as the nominal compounds “*Good night kiss*”, “*Hi honey, I’m home happiness*”, and ““*How-are-you-fine-thank-you-and-you-fine-thank-you*’ syndrome” (Pascual et al. 2013).

Examples (1) to (3) are instances of this type. In (1), therapist and child are talking about a book they are looking at. When the therapist turns to the next page, the child cuts her finger with the paper.

(1) Child 2: moderate autism (session 4/23':40"–23':50")

THERAPIST: Machucou?

'Are you hurt?'

CHILD: *Me desculpa.*

'I'm sorry'

In Brazilian Portuguese, the expression "Me desculpa" ('I'm sorry') is practically automatically produced when someone hurts someone else or when people accidentally bump into each other in a crowded space such as a bus or elevator. In (1), this polite formula is not used to apologize, since the child is not the one who hurt the other but the one who got hurt. The expression is used metonymically to set up the whole event of unwillingly hurting another person as a means of expressing that she had gotten hurt as a result of the therapist's oblivious action. Consider now a similar example involving gesture in (2), in which the child tries to open the door and leave the room.

(2) Child 1: severe autism (session 2/2':24"–2':32")

THERAPIST: Que que você quer?

'What do you want?'

CHILD: [*waves his hand, with the palm turned towards himself*]

THERAPIST: Tá na hora de ir embora não!

'It's not time to go!'

With the conventionalized gesture for farewell in Latin and other cultures, the child sets up the social scene of people saying goodbye to each other when leaving a location. With this gesture, he could get his message across, which was perfectly understood by the therapist, as is evident by her reaction (“It’s not time to go!”). By turning the palm of his hand towards himself rather than towards his interlocutor, the boy shows his difficulty in adopting the point of view of others in reversal imitation. He enacts what he always sees when someone gestures goodbye to him.¹

Examples (3) and (4) show more creative instances of the socio-communicative type. In (3), therapist and child are talking about fictional characters in different pictures. The child thinks that the character in one of the pictures is startled by something.

(3) Child 2: moderate autism (session 2/26’:20”–26’:40”)

THERAPIST: Quem é essa aí? E o que que ela está fazendo?
‘Who is this? And what is she doing?’

CHILD: Está: *que susto!*
‘She is: what a shock!’

¹ Austistic children cannot imitate from the point of view of others, only from their own (Carpenter *et al.* 2005). For instance, if one taps the nose of autistic children, they will have difficulty in imitating this action by taping another person’s nose. By contrast, if one taps one’s own nose, autistic children are able to repeat the action themselves by taping their own nose.

Child 2's "Que susto!" ('What a shock!') presents what the character could say to express its state. This strategy involves the ability of taking the character's perspective and demonstrating rather than describing its state through an expression commonly produced when in such a state. It should be noted that the child introduces this piece of speech with "Está" ('She is'), thereby embedding the enactment of the character's reaction in a sentential structure. Although Child 2 demonstrates a very simple and common expression, this instance does not seem to be purely echolalic. Indeed, "Que susto" was both introduced by "Está" ('She is') and, according to the parents and therapists, it was not heard by that child earlier in this session, nor was it produced by that character in this or another story.

Consider now (4), produced by the same child, in which therapist and child are working on a puzzle and talking about the process of finding the pieces. The child is looking for a piece with bees on it.

(4) Child 2: moderate autism (session 1/27':56"-28':18")

CHILD: *Abelhas!! Abelhas!!*

'Bees!! Bees!!'

[The child finds the piece with the bees.]

CHILD: *Oi!!*

'Hi!!'

When looking for the bee piece, the child calls the bees with her own voice pitch, as though she was looking for an actual group of individuals

who could actually answer back. When she finally finds the piece, she changes to a lower voice pitch and enacts the bees answering her fictive call (“Hi”). Instead of describing the event (i.e. looking for a piece of the puzzle and eventually finding it), Child 2 engages in a brief non-actual interaction with the animals portrayed in that piece. Rather than being presented in the third person as the topic of conversation, the two-dimensional animals become her conversation participants. Strictly speaking, this occurrence is not echolalic, since it does not represent a specific dialogue the child encountered in the past. It is, however, not entirely creative, since it naturally reproduces a common interactional routine. Examples (3) and (4) show that Child 2 can communicate better than the other children in this study, as predictable from her moderate degree of autism.

4.2. Socio-cultural event type

This type involves using certain fixed utterances and expressions in order to refer to individuals to whom these are generally ascribed (animals, fictional characters, real people) or to refer to or introduce something socio-culturally associated with them (concepts, events, scenes, or places). Direct quotation from overall knowledge of the world also occurs in ordinary non-autistic conversation. Typical developing pre-school children often use the sound of an animal to refer to that animal (‘*woof-woof*’ for ‘dog’), and both children and adults may refer to a type of individual by their stereotypical verbal

behavior (“*not-in-my-backyarder*”, Pascual 2014, p. 20). Also, as Fauconnier (1981) points out, when a particular linguistic expression (“I do”) always occurs in a specific symbolic act, this expression is conceptualized as a symbol of that act (wedding). This enables the use of the ritualized expression “I do” as the first element of a compound to refer to entities, events, or concepts related to the wedding day or the state of being married (“*I do ring*”, “*I do kiss*”, “*I do fear*”, Pascual et al. 2013).

Consider (5), involving onomatopoeia and the imitation of facial expression, in which the therapist shows the child a picture of a cockroach playing guitar and singing like a rock star.

(5) Child 2: (session 2/32':57”–33':00”)

THERAPIST: Quem que é essa?
'Who is this?'

CHILD: *Béééé!!!* [with her tongue outside her mouth and screaming]

This occurrence shows the dramatic/theatrical enactment of a rock star's prototypical behavior on stage in order to name a character playing a rock star. A type of communicative behavior socio-culturally ascribed to a person of a given profession thus metonymically serves to refer to a character with that profession. Similarly, the children in our data commonly used sounds of animals fictively, as a means to either refer to them (e.g.

“*Uri uri uri!!!*” for a parrot, Child 4: session 2/46:30–46:46) or to describe their behavior (e.g. “The lion *urraw!*” for “The lion is roaring”, Child 4: session 1/21:26–22:15).

Example (6), below, involves a literal quotation retrieved from cultural knowledge, which appears integrated in the ongoing conversation, giving rise to a novel form. The child is asked to put pictures of objects or people in their correspondent places in a bigger picture of a small city with a circus, church, houses, etc. The child chooses the picture of a man playing a bell.

(6) Child 4: severe autism (session 3/25’:18”–25’:40”)

CHILD: Sino!
‘Bell!’

THERAPIST: O sino fica aonde?
‘Where is the bell supposed to be?’

CHILD: *Respeitável público! Com vocês, o melhor tocadador de sino de todos os tempos!*
‘Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls! With you, the best bell player of all times!’

THERAPIST: Ele trabalha no circo?
‘Does he work in the circus?’

CHILD: Sim!
‘Yes!’

With the vocative “Respeitável público!”, which is the prototypical introductory speech of Brazilian circus directors, Child 4 metonymically sets up the circus frame. Interestingly, he adds to this report the novel information about the bell player, thereby implying that this picture should be in the circus. This seems to be a structure with fixed parts (i.e. “Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls! With you, the best X of all times!”) and variable slots (i.e. “bell player”), a so-called ‘pivot schema’ in the language acquisition literature (Tomasello 2006).² One may also analyze this example as a grammatical ‘blend’ (Fauconnier and Turner 1994, 2002, see also Pagán Cánovas and Turner, this volume). Socio-cultural linguistic information from the circus frame is mapped onto and fused with the information from the ongoing situation of communication. This results in a new emerging structure, which would have been different if the situation in the here-and-now did not involve a bell player.

Hence, even though Child 4 presents a severe degree of autism, his use of language is not entirely echolalic. He is able to integrate information from the ongoing conversation into the expression socio-culturally associated with the circus frame. This is therefore an instance of mitigated echolalia.

² Typically developing children start using such schemas around 18 months of age. These constructions consist of the use of linguistic expressions based on experiential scenes with multiple word combination possibilities, such as “Where is the X?”, “More X!” or “X gone”.

4.3. *Specific prior interaction type*

The occurrences of this category are related to previously occurred communication. This kind of fictive interaction is also found in non-autistic conversation, as in the cartoon dialogue below, in which the utterances in one conversational turn become nominal modifiers in the next turn (Pascual 2002, p. 256):

- (7) A: All the good Halloween candies are gone!
B: Maybe these aren't so bad.
A: ...Now all the '*maybe these aren't so bad*' ones are gone.
B: I didn't even like these when I was a kid!
A: ...Now all the '*I didn't even like these when I was a kid!*' ones are gone.
B: These are so gross!
A: ...And now all the '*these are so gross*' ones are gone!

In humor the use of the specific prior interaction type obviously arises for different reasons and has a different communicative goal than in autistic speech. In our data, autistic children often reproduce an utterance produced by the therapist earlier in the session as an adaptive strategy in order to say something related to that utterance. They may also quote their caregivers to explain situations related to experiences outside the therapy sessions or report the speech of entirely fictional characters from movies as a means to name them or to describe a scene they are involved in.

Take example (8), in which the child hurts his hand by accidentally hitting it on the table.

(8) Child 3: severe autism (session 1/10':28"–10':31")

CHILD: *Machucou?*

'Did you hurt?'

Here, the child asks a question about getting hurt in order to let the therapist know what had happened. He not only produced a question intonation to make an assertion, but also used a second person verb conjugation to refer to himself. This occurrence is in between the socio-communicative and the specific prior interaction type. It is both an expression related to a given socio-communicative event (comforting a child after an accident or fall) and a frequent question this child is asked by his parents and therapists every time he gets hurt. This occurrence is similar to (1), when Child 2 used "I'm sorry" to mean she had just gotten hurt. Both use an expression related to the event of accidentally hurting somebody or addressing somebody who got hurt as a means to evoke such scenes. These examples are also similar to (2), in which Child 1 waved his hand gesturing goodbye, turning the palm of his hand towards himself rather than to his interlocutor. Child 3 produced other similar examples, for instance saying "Take it" to ask the therapist to give him an object. All of these examples support the claim that autistic children's echolalic speech reflects a

difficulty in switching perspectives in imitation tasks (Carpenter *et al.* 2005).

Consider now (9), in which therapist and child are playing the game ‘Pop up, pirate!’, consisting in inserting plastic swords of different colors in a barrel with a puppet pirate inside until the pirate jumps up. As a way to practice color names, the therapist had told the child that he would get the swords only if he named them by the right color. Thus, almost every time she gives the child the sword, the therapist says ‘Take the sword’ or ‘Take the (color) sword’ (e.g. ‘Take the red sword!’).

(9) Child 3: severe autism (session 1/10’:57”–11’:39”)

a. THERAPIST: Espada azul! Muito bem!
‘Blue sword! Very good!’

CHILD: *Toma a espada?*
‘Take the sword?’

b. THERAPIST: Que cor é essa espada?
‘What color is this sword?’

[...]

CHILD: *Toma a espada!*
‘Take the sword!’

In (9a), the child reproduces the exact words the therapist usually uses when giving him the sword in order to request the sword rather than give it to her. To do so, he uses an interrogative intonation instead of the imperative intonation from the original utterance. This prosodic change

intonation seems to involve the integration of a literal quotation (when the therapist gives the sword to the child) with the child's communicative goal in the here-and-now (wanting the sword to be given to him). This may be explained by the child's improved reading intention ability, a development in viewpoint-taking. Obviously, this is still not the most effective way to make a request, but it is certainly more sophisticated than in similar examples without a viewpoint shift (1 and 8). In (9b), the same child says 'Take the sword' again to request the sword, but without changing the original intonation. This shows an oscillation between more and less adequate uses of reported speech by a child who is still in the process of functional language learning. Also, this child produces 'Take the sword' only four communicative turns after the psychologist last said it. This time, he had not provided the correct color but seemed to want to receive the sword all the same, therefore trying to evoke the desired scenario through an imperative, originally associated with getting it right.

The occurrences in (9) illustrate the phenomenon of resonance, which is also common in ordinary non-autistic conversation. This is "the catalytic activation of affinities across utterances" (Du Bois and Giora 2014, p. 351) by creating a parallelism between linguistic elements in the discursive process, only available to the participants of the ongoing conversation (ibid.). In a study on autistic adolescents, Du Bois et al. (2014) show how these individuals are able to sustain conversational interaction using the parallelism of prior utterances in discourse. Treating autistic

language use in terms of resonance allows us to show how engaged in interaction they can actually be and how communicative their echolalic speech most frequently is.

In the next example, therapist and child are playing ‘Crosswords’. The boy only writes the initials of political parties and the therapist plays along with his game.

(10) Child 4: severe autism (session 3/14’:40”–15’:03”)

THERAPIST: Vou botar outro ‘P’. Vamos ver se você lembra de outro partido.

‘I’m going to put another ‘P’. Let’s see whether you remember another political party name.’

[The child completes the ‘P’ with an ‘R’]

CHILD: PR!!!

THERAPIST: O que que é PR?
‘What is PR?’

CHILD: *Representa a sua voz! É a sua vez!*
‘It represents your voice! It is your time!’

THERAPIST: É partido também!
‘It’s a political party too!’

Child 4 uses the quotation “*Representa a sua voz! É a sua vez!*” (‘It represents your voice! It is your time!’) in order to communicate that ‘PR’ stands for a political party. This utterance may either be directly associated

with a particular political party (i.e. PR or *Partido da República*, ‘Republican Party’) or be a slogan from the electoral campaign of any political party or from a specific candidate, neither the therapist nor the child’s mother could tell us. Either way, in (10) the child seems to have extracted a piece of discourse from its specific interactional frame in order to refer to a party he associates with this utterance or the entire category of political parties, as the therapist indeed interpreted it.

The next occurrences, based on interactions the children had experienced as bystanders rather than interlocutors, illustrate the same type. In (11), the therapist points to the picture of a few characters from a cartoon that the boy is very familiar with and asks him to say their names.

(11) Child 3: severe autism (session 4/47’:06”–47’:13”)

THERAPIST: Quem é esse?
‘Who is this?’

CHILD: *Ladrilhar!*
‘To pave it!’

THERAPIST (to the camera):
Ah! É a música! Ele associou o menino à música!
‘Ah! It is the song! He associated the boy to the song!’

This fragment involves the report of a piece of prior speech in order to refer to an element in the scenario in which it had been produced. In the children’s cartoon referred to, a woman sings a song to a little boy to put him to sleep. The ditransitive verb ‘ladrilhar’ (‘to pave’) is prominent in this

song, since it appears at the beginning, it rhymes with verbs at the end of all verses and its last syllable is produced prolonged (“*ladrilhaaaaaaaaaaar!*”). This is also the part of the song that Brazilian children are most familiar with. In order to name the young character to whom this song is sung, its addressee, the child reproduces a part of the song. This is considered a functional delayed echolalia because apparently a considerable period of time had passed since the last time the boy had listened to that song. The therapist’s reaction, explaining to the camera why the child used this word in order to refer to the character, confirms how effective his strategy was. The fact that an explanation was considered necessary naturally also indicates that it is based on common ground of prior experiences shared by child and therapist, which may escape others. A similar case is that of Child 4 saying “*Quasimodo! Onde ele se meteu?*” (“Quasimodo! Where is he?”, session 3/58’:35”–58’:59”) in order to refer to the character of a priest who produced this in the Disney movie ‘The hunchback of Notre Dame’.

Example (12) shows a paraphrase of a piece of speech from an observed scene, which is slightly more creative than the previous examples of this type. Therapist and child are looking at and conversing about a Snow White picture book. In one picture, Snow White is running away to the forest after talking to the hunter.

(12) Child 2: moderate autism (session 3/6’:41”–6’:50”)

THERAPIST: Quem levou ela na floresta?

‘Who took her to the forest?’

CHILD: *Quer fugir? Quer fugir, Branca de Neve?*

‘Do you want to run away? Do you want to run away,
Snow White?’

Notice that the enunciation in italics is not literally quoted from the book itself, the movie that this book is based on, or the therapist’s earlier narration of the story. In the original Disney movie, which the child has seen, the hunter lets Snow White run away and at that point he says (in the Portuguese dubbed version that the child is familiar with): “Vá! Fuja, menina! Vá! Para bem longe!” (‘Go! Run away, girl! Go! Far away!’). Thus, the child paraphrases the hunter’s words to Snow White at that point in the story in order to refer to him. This shows a development of functional echolalia and it is a step forward to more creative speech, as in the next example.

In (13) an interactional pattern from the Snow White Disney movie is used as a schema to create a novel dialogue, as a means to answer a question. Therapist and child are looking at the Snow White book and talking about the pictures in it. The current picture now shows Snow White feeding the birds.

(13) Child 2: moderate autism (session 3/4’:38”–4’:51”)

THERAPIST: O que que o passarinho estava fazendo com o milho?

‘What was the little bird doing with the corn?’

CHILD: *O que está comendo? O milho!*
'What are you eating? Corn!'

THERAPIST: Ah! "O que você está comendo? O milho!"
Ele está comendo o milho mesmo!
'Ah! "What are you eating? Corn!"? It is
eating corn, indeed!'

The piece of dialogue in italics is entirely constructed, as it does not reproduce any dialogue in the book, the movie on which the book is based, or the therapist's prior speech. What this interaction seems to imitate is Snow White talking to birds in the Disney movie, which this child has seen. It should be emphasized, however, that the content of the dialogue in the Snow White scene differs from that in the child's. The first time Snow White talks to the birds in the Brazilian Portuguese dubbed version, she asks them: "Sabem de um segredo? Não irão contar? ('Do you know a secret? Won't you tell it?'), to which the birds respond by chirping. The second time Snow White asks them "O que fazem quando levam susto?" ('What do you do when you are frightened?') and the birds chirp a song, to which Snow White exclaims "Ah! Cantam uma canção!" ('Ah! You sing a song!'), and the birds reply affirmatively by chirping again. In (13) the child is thus reproducing the interactional pattern of a question by a human and an answer by the birds. Note that the child could have answered the therapist's question "What was the bird doing to the corn?" merely by saying "eating", which is a verb the child has access to. Instead, he inserted that verb in a whole constructed verbal exchange with the birds, thereby turning the topic

of conversation into a conversational participant, by addressing the birds and subsequently speaking for them.

5. Discussion

The four children recorded for this study produced different instances of fictive reported speech, belonging to three different types. Table 1 shows the division of the occurrences found into the types presented, and the amounts per child. We distinguished between the kinds of constructions produced and how many times each occurred in individual instances. Such a distinction is important to measure the children's creativity. Child 1, for instance, produced one kind of construction of the socio-communicative type (waving his hand, with the palm turned towards himself, in example 2), but he repeated this construction, with the same form and function, six times in the recordings.

Table 1. Amounts of fictive reported speech per child and type

Children			Types			Total per child
No.	Age	Degree of ASD	Socio-communicative event type	Socio-cultural event type	Specific prior interaction(s)	
1	4	severe	1 kind (6 inst.)	-	1 kind (2 inst.)	2 kinds (8 inst.)
2	6	moderate	5 kinds (5 inst.)	2 kinds (3 inst.)	6 kinds (6 inst.)	13 kinds (14 inst.)
3	7	severe	1 kind (1 inst.)	1 kind (1 inst.)	7 kinds (25 inst.s)	9 kinds (27 inst.)
4	12	severe	-	3 kinds (3 inst.)	3 kinds (3 inst.)	6 kinds (6 inst.)

Total	7 kinds (12 inst.)	6 kinds (7 inst.)	17 kinds (36 inst.)	30 kinds (55 inst.)
--------------	-----------------------	----------------------	------------------------	------------------------

Similarly, although Child 3 produced the most individual instances, he only produced 9 different kinds, all of them being fully echolalic. His fictive reported speech is thus very non-creative. By contrast, Child 2, the only one with moderate autism, produced 13 kinds, 6 of which are not echolalic but illustrate the use of reported speech as a schema. Child 4, the oldest one, produced only 6 kinds, of which only one is of mitigated echolalia. This points to the beginning of a more creative speech, probably due to the severity of his autistic condition. Child 1 was the least productive one, with only two kinds produced, which correlates to his severe autism and very young age (4 years old).

It seems that in the first stage of their communicative development autistic children need a basis, a concrete communicative scenario they can reproduce or draw upon to support their discourse. They select a part of speech from this familiar scenario in order to metonymically refer to the whole scene (or an element related to it) in a new interaction. Later, as they experience more and more interactional events, they are able to use that strategy as a pattern. At first, parts of the original speech event, still anchored in the specific base scene, are partly reported and integrated with new information (examples 6 and 9). Then, paraphrases of speech are

produced (example 12), and finally, an altogether new interaction is created in order to provide information in the ongoing conversation (example 13).

It is also interesting to note the amounts of occurrences per category. Socio-communicative and cultural event types were instantiated by 7 and 6 kinds of constructions respectively, while specific prior interaction types became manifested in as many as 17 constructions and 36 individual occurrences, more than twice the amount of each of the other two types. Most of the 36 specific prior communication type occurrences are from interactions seen by the children in TV cartoons and movies. This reflects their difficulty in properly engaging in social interactions with interlocutors, which characterizes autism. Moreover, the fact that specific prior interaction expressions seem to be more useful for autistic children than conventionalized ones from social events and cultural knowledge shows these children's need to anchor their speech in previous concrete instances of talk-in-interaction rather than creating new utterances based on general, social and/or cultural linguistic knowledge.

A remaining explanation for more creative uses of fictive direct speech by autistic children is why they use fictive speech at all, when they have access to the right vocabulary to refer to or describe a given situation or cognitive state. Why talk *for* or *to* characters, people, or animals instead of just talking *about* them? The answer may lie in their neurological and cognitive structure. Autistic children seem to have a better memory for events –including communicative ones– performed by others than by

themselves (Millward et al. 2000). Also, they show difficulties in changing viewpoints in imitation (Carpenter et al. 2005), and in inhibitory control (Courchesne and Pierce 2005), which affects their language use. Since functional repetitive speech and gesture allow autistic children to successfully communicate with their interlocutors, their schematic conversation style is fundamentally based on this strategy. Moreover, when they are finally able to produce a more creative, non-echolalic discourse, they use the reported speech pattern in order to engage in conversation.

Although the way autistic children use fictive interaction may seem atypical, it does show striking similarities with its use in another kind of language pathology, aphasia, an acquired neurocognitive condition that affects language production and/or reception. Indeed, non-fluent aphasic speech involves the use of fictive reported speech as adaptation interaction strategy (Pascual and Versluis 2006; Kleppa and Versluis [2008] this volume). Both speakers with autism and aphasia use quotations metonymically in order to evoke the entire quoted scenario, as well as to refer to an individual or event related to it. An example is a Dutch speaker with Broca's aphasia saying "test test test" ('testing testing testing') in order to ask his interlocutor whether she had checked that her tape-recorder was working (Kleppa and Versluis [2008] this volume). This is similar to an instance in our data, saying "Alô! Alô!" (used when answering for phone calls in Brazil) in order to ask the therapist to play with a toy telephone. In a different, elicitation study, most aphasic speakers produced fictive direct

speech (e.g. “*My Godness! How much!*”) to describe the thoughts of a woman depicted on a weight scale and looking unpleasantly surprised at the number on the scale (Bánrėti 2010). A similar example from our autistic data is saying “*Que susto!*” (‘What a shock!’) to describe a character’s startled state in a picture (example 3). Speakers who do not suffer from any speech pathology, may naturally also describe emotions and attitudes through fictive speech ascribed to the experiencer, but this appears to happen less frequently (Bánrėti 2010). Aphasic speakers also use onomatopoeia as referential strategy, as when a speaker said “KRRRRK” to describe someone trying to break through a locked door (Pascual and Versluis 2006; Kleppa and Versluis [2008] this volume). Some onomatopoeias produced by autistic children for similar purposes also occur in our data, such as “*Béééé!!!*” to refer to a rock star (example 5) and sounds of animals, like the use of “*Uri uri uri!!!*” to refer to a parrot (Child 4: session 2/46’30”– 46’46”).

As was pointed out in the analysis session, the three types of fictive reported speech mentioned are also used in ordinary conversation. A few instances of these types are creative, that is, not entirely echolalic. The conversation frame is creatively used in many situations in ordinary language, as in advertisements (e.g. “*Say hello to the new you!*”, “*Say no to wrinkles!*”, see Brandt and Pascual, this volume). This is comparable to autistic children saying “*Bees? Hi!*” in order to say that the speaker is looking for the bee piece of the puzzle and finally finds it (example 4) and

“What are you eating? Corn!” to answer a question on what the bird is doing with the corn (example 13). The aforementioned autistic and ordinary instances equally use face-to-face interaction as a pattern to achieve given communicative goals.

6. Final Remarks

Previous work has argued that direct speech is rarely a literal reproduction of previous discourse (Tannen 1986, 1989), since it typically is a selective and not entirely uncreative demonstration (Clark and Guerrig 1990). Also, direct speech may not just be used to reproduce prior discourse, but may also serve to refer to or characterize a feeling, attitude, or situation related or relatable to the communicative event represented, for instance (Pascual 2002, 2006, 2014). Hence, direct speech is not an objective representation of prior discourse, but carries information related or relatable to a prior event for the purposes of ongoing discourse.

In this chapter we showed how autistic children use reported speech as a useful compensatory strategy in conversation. They use literal quotation to metonymically set up different aspects of the communicative scenario (re)enacted in order to adjust to the interactional needs of the here-and-now. As other instances of intra-sentential fictive interaction, the ones discussed here further evidence that linguistic connotation is as important as denotation (Fauconnier [1985] 1994; Lakoff 1987; Langacker 1987, 1991).

The pattern of metonymically evoking frames, individuals and events through reported speech also seems to be used as a basis for a more original discourse construction. That is, a conversational structure is used as the basis for more creative speech, as in (6), in which a circus director's introduction of a bell player serves to set up the entire circus frame, and in (13), in which a fictive conversation with birds serves to answer the question on what they are doing.

To conclude, individuals with autism seem to compensate their difficulties in cognition, social communication, and language, by strategically using prior conversational experiences in new face-to-face interactions. The instances discussed show how fictive interaction stems from and is related to its factive counterpart. The results further suggest that the strategic use of the conversation frame in general and reported speech in particular are fundamental for language development and communicative competence in autism.

References

- Bánréti, Z. (2010). Recursion in aphasia. *Clinical Linguistics & Phonology*, 24(11), 906–914.
- Carpenter, M., Tomasello, M., & Striano, T. (2005). Role reversal imitation and language in typically developing infants and children with autism. *Infancy*, 8(3), 253–278.

- Clark, H., & Gerring, R. (1990). Quotation as demonstration. *Language*, 66(4), 784–805.
- Courchesne, E., & Pierce, K. (2005). Brain overgrowth in autism during a critical time in development: Implications for frontal pyramidal neuron and interneuron development and connectivity. *International Journal of Developmental Neurosciences*, 23(2–3), 153–170.
- Dobbinson, S., Perkins, M., & Boucher, J. (2003). The interactional significance of formulas in autistic language. *Clinical Linguistics and Phonetics*, 17(4/5), 299–307.
- Du Bois, J. W., & Giora, R. (2014). From cognitive-functional linguistics to dialogic syntax. *Cognitive Linguistics*, 25(3), 351–357.
- Du Bois, J. W., Hobson, P., & Hobson, J. A. (2014). Dialogic resonance and intersubjective engagement in autism. *Cognitive Linguistics*, 25(3), 411–441.
- Fauconnier, G. (1981). Social ritual and relative truth in natural language. In K.D. Knorr Cetina, & A.V. Cicourel (Eds.), *Advances in social theory and methodology: Toward an integration of micro and macro sociologies* (pp. 175–202). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Fauconnier, G. [1985] (1994). *Mental spaces: Aspects of meaning construction in natural languages*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Fauconnier, G., & M. Turner. (2002). *The way we think: Conceptual blending and the mind's hidden complexities*. New York: Basic Books.
- Fernandes, F. (2003). Terapia de linguagem em crianças com transtorno do espectro autístico: Um estudo transversal. *Revista da Sociedade Brasileira de Fonoaudiologia*, 1, 49–56.
- Jarque, M.J., & Pascual, E. (Forth). From sign-in-interaction to grammar: Mixed viewpoints for non-reports across signed languages. In B. Dancygier, L. Wei-lun-Lu, & A. Verhagen (Eds.), *Mixed points of view in narrative*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Kanner, L. (1943). Autistic disturbance of affective contact. *Nervous Child*, 2, 217–250.
- Lakoff, G. (1987). *Women, fire and dangerous things*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Langacker, R.W. (1987). *Foundations of cognitive grammar. Vol. I: Theoretical prerequisites*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Langacker, R.W. (1991). *Foundations of cognitive grammar. Vol. II: Descriptive application*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Langacker, R. (1999). Virtual reality. *Studies in the Linguistic Sciences*, 29(2), 77–103.
- Millward, C., Powell, S., Messer, D., & Jordan, R. (2000). Recall for self and other in autism: Children’s memory for events experienced by themselves and their peers. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 30(1), 15–28.
- Paccia, J., & Curcio, F. (1982). Language processing and forms of immediate echolalia in autistic children. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 25, 42–47.
- Pascual, E. (2002). *Imaginary dialogues: Conceptual blending and fictive interaction in criminal courts*. Utrecht. LOT.
- Pascual, E. (2006). Fictive interaction within the sentence: A communicative type of fictivity in grammar. *Cognitive Linguistics*, 17(2), 245–267.
- Pascual, E. (2014). *Fictive interaction: The conversation frame in thought, language and discourse*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Pascual, E., & C. Versluis. (2006). Verbale demonstratie als strategie van functionele adaptatie bij Broca-afasie: Een gevalstudie. *Voortgang*, 24, 169–182.
- Pascual, E., Królak, E., & Janssen, Th.A.J.M. (2013). Direct speech compounds: Evoking socio-cultural scenarios through fictive interaction. *Cognitive Linguistics*, 24(2), 345–366.
- Prizant, B., & Duchan, J. (1987). The functions of immediate echolalia in autistic children. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 46, 241–249.
- Prizant, B., & Rydell, P. (1984). Analysis of functions of delayed echolalia in autistic children. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 27, 183–192.
- Prizant, B. (1983). Language acquisition and communicative behavior in autism: Toward an understanding of the “whole” of it. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 48(3), 296–307.

- Roberts, J. (2014). Echolalia and language development in children with autism. In: J. Arciuli & J. Brock (Eds.), *Communication in autism*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Roberts, J. (1989). Echolalia and comprehension in autistic children: A developmental perspective. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 18(4), 657–668.
- Rydell, P., & Mirinda, P. (1991). The effects of two levels of linguistic constraint on echolalia and generative language production in children with autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 19(2), 271–281.
- Schneider, D. E. (1938). The clinical syndromes of echolalia, echopraxia, grasping and sucking: their significance in the disorganization of the personality. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 88(2), 200–216.
- Schopler E., Reichler R. J., & Renner, B. R. (1986). *The childhood autism rating scale (CARS) for diagnostic screening and classification in autism*. New York: Irvington.
- Schuler, A. (1979). Beyond echolalia: Promoting language in children with autism. *The National Autistic Society*, 7(4), 455–469.
- Sterponi, L., & Shankey, J. Rethinking echolalia: Repetition as interactional resource in the communication of a child with autism. *Journal of Child Language*, 41(2), 275–304.
- Talmy, L. (2000). *Toward a cognitive semantics*. Vol. 1. Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- Tannen, D. (1986). Introducing constructed dialogue in Greek and American conversational and literary narratives. In F. Coulmas (Ed.), *Direct and indirect speech* (pp. 311–322). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Tannen, D. (1989). *Talking voices: Repetition, dialogue, and imagery in conversational discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tomasello, M. (2006). Construction grammar for kids. *Constructions*, 11(1), 1–23.
- Xiang, M., & Pascual, E. (Forth.). Debate with Zhuangzi: Fictive interaction blends in ancient Chinese philosophy. *Pragmatics*.
- Wetherby, A. (1986). Ontogeny of communicative functions in autism. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders*, 16(3), 295–316.

