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Perspective and attribution: The cognitive representation of biblical narrative ¹

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Abstract

Frequently, a narrative leaves room for different interpretations. Perspectival ambiguities, in particular, may lead to different interpretations of narrative discourse. In this paper, it is argued that the analysis of perspectival ambiguities can be grounded in a cognitive-linguistic approach to mental space representations or embedded domains. In such cases, readers may arrive at different possible domain structures as a representation of the narrative. This model is exemplified by the study of the biblical story *Solomon's Judgment*. The domain structure analysis offers explanations for different ways in which translators and readers represent ambiguities in this story. Eleven translations were compared. In a pilot experiment, students of Tilburg University were randomly assigned to an idiolect translation group ($N = 20$), or a dynamic-equivalent translation group ($N = 20$). Differences in the students' representation of the story were found. The implications of these findings are discussed and re-examined by means of a second experiment.

1. Introduction

Perspective taking is an indispensable part of narrative processing. In the representation of a narrative discourse, readers create situational or spatial models of objects and characters located in space, with characters performing actions that evolve over time (Van Dijk and Kintsch, 1983) and inferring causal connections that relate characters' actions to their goals (Bower and Morrow, 1990). Readers 'view' these situations from a

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perspective point, that is, a here-and-now point which is often associated with the narrative protagonist (Morrow, 1994; Sanders and Spooren, forthcoming). Readers of narrative discourse will also incorporate characters' perspectives in the mental representation (Millis, 1995); such perspectives are established in narrative discourse when the perception of the narrative situation is presented from the point of view of (one of) the narrative's protagonists (characters).

The realization of a character's perspective involves the representation of a character's spoken and mental discourse in *direct*, *indirect*, or *free indirect* form (Leech and Short, 1981), as well as more *implicit* types of perspective, which represent a character's mental states and perceptions (Sanders and Redeker, 1993: 70–73; Sanders and Redeker, in press). Dixon and Bortolussi (1995) found that perspective choices (direct versus free indirect speech) influence the situation model that readers represent and lead to different attributions of attitudes and beliefs to narrator and characters. However, in his study of ambiguous narratives, Keysar (1994) found that readers also used perspective-irrelevant information in the attribution of perceptions and attitudes by characters in the discourse (*illusory transparency of intention*).

In this paper, an efficient method of studying the representation of perspective is proposed within the broader framework of discourse representation, as offered by cognitive linguistic theories of discourse domains, mental spaces, or partitioned representations (Seuren, 1985; Fauconnier, 1985; Dinsmore, 1991; and others). The cognitive linguistic approach places perspective in a general framework of related linguistic features such as presupposition, metaphor, and modality. Furthermore, the analysis of discourse perspective in terms of domains offers a structure to represent readers' inferred attributions of emotions and intentions to narrative protagonists, which they make in order to produce a coherent discourse representation of a narrative. Finally, the construction of a domain representation of discourse perspective uncovers and explains ambiguities in perspectives and in the inferred attribution of intentions.

2. A cognitive-linguistic approach to perspective in narrative discourse

In Sanders and Redeker (1993), the notion of discourse perspective was modeled in a cognitive linguistic framework which was based on Fauconnier's (1985) *Mental Spaces Theory*. In the case of perspective, a mental space or *domain* is built that is bound to a person in the (narrative) discourse. The perspectivized information may be this person's purported utterance, thought, dream, opinion, perception, etc. Given these considerations, perspective expresses the attribution of the validity claim of some units of information to a particular person in the narrative. In other words, a narrative segment is perspectivized if its relevant context of interpretation is a person-bound, embedded domain within the narrator's reality (Sanders and Redeker, 1993: 69). Sentence (1b) is an example of an embedded perspective which is attributed to the subject of sentence (1a), Solomon.

(1) (a) Solomon was biting his nails. (b) Oh, this was such a difficult decision to make!

What distinguishes (1b) from purely narrated descriptions of situations and events such as (1a) is that some of the narrator's responsibility for the content of sentence (1b) is delegated to a person in the text (in this case 'Solomon' in (1a)), whose speech, thought, perception, emotion, or intention is represented. The material within a perspective domain such as (1b) is interpreted as valid or factual to the person to whom the domain is bound, while only *possibly* valid outside this domain in the *narrator's reality*. In this definition of perspective, the narrator's reality is whatever is presented as real in the narrative world, regardless of its truth or validity outside of the narrative. This experiencing person (henceforth: *character*) can be any narrative protagonist other than the narrator in the here-and-now, and can, thus, include the distanced first-person narrator in the past, in dreams, and so forth.

The narrator's reality reflects not only the narrator's knowledge but also that of the reader. In the analysis, this narrative reality is segmented and represented in terms of perspective domain structures. Domain (mental space) structures are the presumed products of discourse interpretation; each new discourse fragment can cause changes or updating in already established domain structures through the addition of new information. The reader can thus shift from domain to domain in order to compare, connect, and disconnect the information from different domains (Fauconnier, 1994).

The segmentation of narrative reality into domains makes it possible to distinguish between information in the basic narrative reality that narrator, characters and readers share, and perspectivized information, for which a particular character is responsible. In representing these perspective domains, the analysis will reveal places in which a narrative discourse leaves room for different interpretations. In such cases, readers may arrive at different perspective domain structures as representation of the narrative, both during the interpretation process and as an ultimate result of the interpretation. Thus, they may differ as to whom (narrator, characters) they regard as responsible for which information. The attribution of inferred intentions to characters can also be adequately represented in the analytical framework of domains. In the following section, the consequences of these insights will become clear in a study of a narrative from the Hebrew Bible.

The Hebrew Bible provides excellent narrative material for demonstrating the construction of perspective domains and the inference of attributions. Biblical narrators are non-intrusive, in that they seldom reveal their characters' emotions and intentions, while the speech and acts by characters are represented in a direct and clear fashion. In a corpus of six narrative episodes (Genesis 3; Genesis 25: 19–34; Exodus 1: 1–2: 10; II Samuel 10–11; I Kings 3: 16–28; and Ruth 3, in total 810 clauses)² it was found that the majority (59.1%) of all clauses were direct speech clauses; indirect speech and thought were practically absent (0.4%). Most of the remaining clauses (33.1%) were directly narrative, reporting acts and situations, while only a small part of all clauses (5.4%) showed implicit perspectivization by the narrator as to characters' perceptions

² In the corpus analysis, the Dutch translation of the Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap (NBG 1951) was used. This is a literal (idiolect) translation, in which each word and each syntactic construction is preserved as much as possible (see section 3).

and emotions (see Sanders and Redeker, 1993). The story of Solomon's Judgment (I Kings 3: 16–28) is a concise example of a complete narrative from this corpus.

3. Perspective domain structure of 'Solomon's Judgment'

The story of *Solomon's Judgment* is used in a literal translation from the original Hebrew text. In the text, the indicators in italics signal where an embedded perspective domain is opened or closed; the linguistic signal which opens the domain is printed in bold print.

(2)

Context: Solomon is king of Israel. In the previous context (chapters 1–2) it is related how the king enforces his reign by killing rivals and former allies, who had previously betrayed him. After this he has a dream in which he asks JHWH God for great wisdom and has his wish granted (1 Kings 3: 1–15).

16. Two women, harlots, came to the king
and stood before him.
17. And the one woman **said**,
[domain 1: O my Lord, I and this woman dwell in one house;
and I was delivered of a child with her in the house.
18. And it happened on the third day after I was delivered
that this woman was delivered also;
and we were alone;
there was no stranger with us in the house,
just we two were in the house.
19. And this woman's child died in the night,
because she lay on it.
20. And she arose in the night,
and took my son from my side,
while your maidservant slept,
and laid him in her bosom,
and laid her dead son in my bosom.
21. And I arose in the morning to nurse my son,
[domain 1.a: **and see**, he was dead]:
and I looked at him closely in the morning,
[domain 1.b: **and see**, it was not the son I had borne].]
22. And the other woman **said**,
[domain 2: No, my son is the living,
and your son is the dead].
And this one **said**,
[domain 1: No, your son is the dead,
and my son is the living].
Thus they spoke before the king.
23. And the king **said**,
[domain 3: The one says,
[domain 3.a: This is my son, the living one,
and your son is the dead one]:
and the other says,
[domain 3.b: No, your son is the dead one,
and my son is the living one].]

24. And the king **said**,
 [domain 3: Bring me a sword.]
 And they brought a sword before the king.
25. And the king **said**,
 [domain 3: Cut the living child in two,
 and give half to the one,
 and half to the other.]
26. And the woman whose son was the living one **said** to the king
 [domain 4: truly her bowels had grown warm because of her son],
 and she **said**,
 [domain 4: O my Lord, give her the living child,
 and in no wise kill it].
 And this one **said**,
 [domain 5: Neither mine nor yours it will be,
 cut.]
27. And the king answered
 and **said**,
 [domain 3: Give her the living child,
 and in no wise kill it:
 she is its mother.]
28. And all Israelites heard of the judgment
 that the king had given;
 they stood in awe of the king.
 Truly they **saw**
 [domain 6: that the wisdom of God was in him to do judgment.]

Analysis of this text reveals three aspects of its perspective domain representation:

- the construction of perspective domains;
- the inference of attributions that are represented within the domain structure in order to arrive at a coherent text;
- the uncovering of ambiguous places in the perspective domain structure (three cases: A, B, and C).

In the first sentence of the story, v.16, three characters are introduced: two women, who are not distinguished from each other, and a king. One of the two women – it is not made clear who she is, so we will call her woman 1 – speaks. The word ‘said’ opens a perspective domain that is attributed to the speaking woman in the story. In Fig. 1, this attribution is represented by the arrow between woman 1, ‘said’, and embedded speech domain 1. Within the embedded speech domain, the information that must be attributed to the speaking woman 1 is represented. The woman claims that she is the mother of the living of two infants, the other one of which is dead.

Within this embedded perspective domain (1), there are two pieces of information that contradict each other. Speaking about her son, woman 1 says in v.21 *and see, he was dead* and two clauses later *and see, it was not the son I had borne*. The statements in these subclauses cannot both be true, which implies that at least one of them must be represented in a separate, more deeply embedded domain. Indeed, both statements contain a domain indicator ‘*and see*’, which is a translation of the particle ‘*wʿhinneh*’ in the original text. This element is commonly used to introduce a character’s perception, an invitation to the listener/reader to imagine what follows as seen through a particular

Fig. 1. Perspective domain representation of v.16–22

character's eyes (Schneider, 1993: 268; Berlin, 1983: 62). This construction results in two doubly embedded domains (1.a) and (1.b) which represent two different viewpoints which the woman had at different moments of perception, the latter perception correcting the first; the linguistic form is comparable to the modern representation type of the free indirect mode (see also Sternberg, 1985).

In v.22, one of the two women – the other one, so we will call her woman 2 – speaks. Again, a domain is opened with the word 'said'; this domain must be attributed to woman 2. This woman also claims that she is the mother of the living of the two infants. The information in this fragment (v.16–22) is represented in Fig. 1.

In v.23, the king verbally repeats parts of what the women said. In order to understand this repetition as a meaningful part of the story, readers will have to draw *inferences* as to the king's intentions. In general, the narrator's and protagonists' intentions, which cause their behavior, must be inferred in addition to the perspectival attributions as to who is said to say or think what. The preconceptions governing such

causal inferences and likelihood assessments may best be regarded as a schema or ‘script’ in which a succession of ‘scenes’ (acts and events) are linked in a single coherent structure (Nisbett and Ross, 1980: 30; Schank and Abelson, 1977); such scripts will be evoked by particular words or situations. The inferences that are based on scripts are presumably added to the mental domain structures that readers produce in order to achieve a coherent representation of the narrative discourse.

At the beginning of this story, the women’s representations of the fatal event are different. The (implicit) accusation that the other is telling lies is part of a cognitive frame of judging (Fillmore, 1982). This, combined with the fact that the women present the king with their contradictory stories, may activate a script of *jurisdiction* in the memory of readers. In other words: on the basis of world knowledge, one may assume that the women brought their conflict to the king for a particular reason, i.e., to decide who is right and who is wrong. Thus the king, in his role as judge, is confronted with a problem, and the reader, with him, is confronted with a riddle (see Lasine, 1989): Who should get the child? This can explain why the king repeats the women’s statements: he is pondering the problematic situation, either by himself or in communication with the two women. In the domain structure representations, such inferred attributions are indicated in brackets, which are connected to the characters they are attributed to.

A. Inner or spoken perspective by the king?

The king’s speech act could be interpreted as communicative speech, but, more likely in the present context of judgment, as the king’s thoughts. Such non-communicative ‘speech’, called *collective monologue*, is not uncommon in biblical narrative as a method of representing inner thoughts of characters (Niehoff, 1992).

Even if the king’s words are interpreted as his private thoughts, they do not provide a clue to his intentions, which are represented by a question mark in Fig. 2. Readers may know the previous biblical context in which the king has been ruthless before (for instance, 1 Kings 2: 42–46: Solomon orders the death of his enemies). On the other hand, the episode directly preceding the present episode (1 Kings 3: 5–15: JHWH promised Solomon great wisdom, see Parker, 1992) and the jurisdiction script may guide readers to expect a clever question or a wise decision by the king, rather than his surprisingly cruel demand: *Cut the living child in two*. In the representation of this fragment, both ‘wise’ and ‘cruel’ must be inferred as possible contradictory intentions attributed to the king. The inferred relations are pictured as dotted lines in Fig. 2.

The king’s demand may not reveal a clear goal or reason, but it does have a clear effect: it forces a break-through in the situation. The women’s interest is no longer central; the mother of the living child puts the child’s interest before her own. Note that v.26 is the only instance of explicitly internal perspectivization in the narrative, that is, the maternal feelings (‘her bowels had grown warm’) of the real mother. Thus, the reader is directly informed that the woman who would rather give the child up is the mother. In this verse, the second ambiguity arises.

B. Who is the real mother of the living child, the first or the second woman to speak?

Curiously, it is not made clear which of the two women is the real mother, woman 1 or woman 2. In Fig. 3, this position is represented by indicating the women by using

Fig. 2. Perspective domain representation of v.23–25

new labels, woman *a* and woman *b*. Contrary to the narrator and reader, the king *does see who speaks when*, but he is *not informed who the mother is*: he infers it from the women's reactions to his demand. In the representation, therefore, relations of consequence must be added as the king's conclusions between the embedded domains and the narrator's reality. These relations are represented in Fig. 3 by dotted lines between the women's embedded domains and the king's attributed conclusions in the narrator's reality.

The question arises whether it is possible and necessary to disambiguate the reference between woman 1 and woman 2, and woman *a* and woman *b*. If a law of economy is presumed to be operating in the representation of narrative, readers will solve such ambiguities if a relevant and obviously unambiguous interpretation is available. In the case of ambiguity between characters, readers may be guided towards identification with one character rather than with the other, thus disambiguating in favour of this character.

narrator's
reality

Fig. 3. Perspective domain representation of v.26

In this case, however, decisive cues that might guide readers' identification with characters are not provided:

- neither woman is referred to by a proper name (Sanford et al., 1988);
- neither woman is more important to the plot as a thematic character than the other (Morrow, 1985);
- there is no difference between gender or the social position of the two women, with one appealing more to the readers' own perspective than the other (Pichert and Anderson, 1977, among others);
- woman 1 speaks first and most elaborately about the crucial episode, which might define her as main character of the story (see, for instance, Bower, 1978: 227), thus leading readers to interpret her version, by default, as true, and woman 2's short denial as false (in terms of the domain structure, woman *a* would be woman 1 and woman *b* would be woman 2 in Fig. 3). However, one may also interpret woman 1's lengthy statement as unverified and unverifiable.

In fact, it is undecidable which of the two is woman *a*, the one who has these maternal feelings. This ambiguity places the reader in a similar position as the king, and is thus part of the story's plot. In his reconstruction of the king's inferences, the reader

Fig. 4. Updated perspective domain representation of v.24–25

will be convinced of the king's wisdom as it is materialized in v.27: the child can be given to its mother.

Yet, it is not clear exactly where the king's wisdom originates. The classical interpretation is that the king *deliberately* gives a fake cruel judgement to provoke the real mother's (woman *a*) predictable reaction. In this case, readers have to go back in their domain structure to update their representation of v.24–25 by attributing an inferred intention to the king, which overrules the original uncertain and abstract attributions of wisdom versus cruelty, as represented in Fig. 4.

Interestingly, attention has recently been focussed on an alternative interpretation in which it is the king's willingness to change his cruel mind as a reaction to the real mother's plea that is his real wisdom (Van Wolde, 1995; see also Van Heijst, 1994). In this case, the expectation of a wise decision in the representation of v.24–25 is replaced by the attribution of indifference and cruelty to the king, which in v.26 is changed into wisdom as a result of the mother's plea. This shift of opinion is required in order to explain the king's second decision, that is, to spare the child's life, as represented in Fig. 5. The third ambiguity arises in this same verse (v.27):

C. Who gets the child, the mother who wants the child to live or the woman who wants the child to die?

It is not clear from his command to whom the king gives the child, the woman who spoke to save the child, 'give it to her' (woman *a*) or the woman who spoke last, 'cut' (woman *b*).³ In Fig. 5, this position is represented by denoting the woman who gets the child as woman #.

³ At this point, the Hebrew original does not give an explication.

narrator's
reality

Fig. 5. Perspective domain representation of v.26–27

The function of this ambiguity could be (as it is in B) to make the reader decide, as did the king, who deserves to be the mother. However, this case is less clear and more disturbing: if one presumes 'her' to refer to the nearest referent (Clark and Sengul, 1979), it is the latter woman *b* who gets the child. This would suggest that the woman who would rather have the child die than give it up, deserved to get the child; this point of view is defended by some analysts (see Lasine, 1989). On the basis of world knowledge about what is good and fair, it seems unlikely that the narrator would support such a viewpoint. Rather the king would indeed give the living child to the other woman, who wants to save it, simply because she had the better intentions. Another way of solving this ambiguity is offered by the *illusory transparency of intention* (Keysar, 1994) which could be working here. The fact that readers have privileged information about woman *a*'s motherly intentions may lead them to believe the king likewise perceives this intention and thus gives the child to this woman.

Either way, it makes sense to attribute to the king the wisdom to decide who is the mother *and* to give the living child to the mother. In this interpretation, woman # would be woman *a* in Fig. 5. In v.28, the story is concluded with the confirmation of the king's wisdom by the people of Israel, thus enforcing the story's rhetorical goal. This

conclusion presupposes the interpretation that woman *a*, who is the living child's mother, gets the child. The story would in fact be difficult to understand if the king did *not* give the child to its real mother, woman *a*.

4. Representation of ambiguous perspective in translations

In the reconstruction of discourse domains in the story of *Solomon's Judgment*, three ambiguities were found, each different in nature.

A (v.23) is ambiguous as to the *type of perspective* (spoken or thought); the choice is dependent on readers' inferences as to the quality of the situation at hand.

B (v.26) is ambiguous as to the *attribution of perspective*: to whom should the utterances '*give the child to her*' and '*cut*' be attributed. This choice cannot be made on the basis of the information in the story itself. Rhetorically, this ambiguity is relevant because it contributes to the effect of the king's wise decision.

C (v.27) is ambiguous as to the *reference within a perspective*: to whom does the king refer with '*give the child to her*'? Disambiguation is clear on the basis of the script of jurisdiction: she who is right will be put in the right.

A means of verifying the predicted disambiguations is offered by the availability of numerous translations of this story. In this section, a comparison is made between eleven English and Dutch translations from different times and traditions.

The majority of these translations can be characterized as more or less *idiolect*, that is, each individual word and sentence is translated as literally as possible. The King James translation (KJ, 1611), the Jewish Publication Society translation (JPS, 1988), the Revised Standard Bible (RSB, 1952), the Dutch Statenvertaling (ST, 1637), and the Nederlands Bijbel Genootschap translation (NBG, 1951) are more strongly idiolect than the Revised English Bible (REB, 1989), the Dutch Leidsche translation (L, 1914), the Canisius translation (CAN, 1929), and the Willibrord translation (WIL, 1977); the latter four translations are modern, but still remain quite close to the original text. The Dutch Groot Nieuws [*Great News*] translation (GN, 1982) and Het Boek [*The Book*] (HB, 1988), on the other hand, are *dynamic-equivalent*, that is, translations of discourse meaning as a whole into modern language, rather than literal translations of individual words or even sentences.⁴

All eleven translations were compared to the original text at the three potentially ambiguous points, A (v.23), B (v.26), and C (v.27), which resulted from the perspective domain analysis in the previous section.

A. Inner or spoken perspective of the king? (ad v.23)

The idiolect translations (ST, KJ, JPS, RSB, L, NBG), as well as CAN and WIL adhere to the original text, which says the king *speaks*, but do not make explicit whether this speech is communicative or not, thus preserving the ambiguity. The dynamic-equivalent ones (GN, HB), as well as REB, explicitly present the situation as either

⁴ An edition with six Dutch bible translations, including the Statenvertaling, Leidsche, NBG, and CAN, is provided by Boekencentrum B.V. (1979).

communicative or non-communicative. HB opts for a communicative interpretation, in which the women are addressed directly: *Thus they went on quarreling in the presence of the king. Then king Solomon began to speak and said: "Let us put one and one together. Both of you say that the living child is yours and each of you says that the dead child belongs to the other. Right, bring me a sword."*⁵ By contrast, GN (as does REB) opts for a non-communicative interpretation, in which the king is thinking. GN: *When they were thus quarreling before the king, he thought: "The one states: The living boy is mine, and the dead one is yours; the other one denies it and says: Not true, the dead boy is yours, and the living one is mine."* Then the king began to speak: *"Fetch a sword!"*⁶

Apart from the choice between 'speaking' and 'thinking', there are several differences between the two translations. In the HB version, the spatial standpoint of the women's argument is neutral ('in the presence of the king'). As in the original text, the women's quarreling and the king's utterances are presented as separate acts, divided by a sentence boundary. The communicative act of speaking to the women leads to the inference that the king has chosen to confront the women with their contradictory statements. In the GN version, on the other hand, the women's arguments are presented as subordinate to the king's thoughts: it is possible that they are the cause of his thought (note that the temporal connective 'when' can have a causal reading). The translation of 'thinking' reveals the inference of the king's contemplation with respect to the situation and possible solutions. Furthermore, GN presents the argument from the spatial vantage point of the king ('before the king'). As a result, the perspective lies more firmly with the king and his (presumed) line of thought in the GN translation. The conclusion is that the 'modern' translations solve this ambiguity, and do so in dramatically different ways, which reveal different inferences as to the quality of the represented situation.

B. Who is the real mother of the living child, the first or the second woman to speak? (ad v.26)

All of the translations preserve this ambiguity, which confirms the idea that this particular ambiguity is crucial to the story's plot: it is the king's/reader's task to infer who is the mother of the living child.

C. Who gets the child? (ad v.27)

This ambiguity is solved in some of the translations. Of the idiolect translations, KJ, JPS, NBG, and CAN preserve the ambiguity, as does the dynamic equivalent translation

⁵ Dutch original: *En zo ruzieden zij maar door waar de koning bij was. Toen nam koning Salomo het woord en zei: "Laten we de zaken eens op een rijtje zetten: U zegt allebei dat het levende kind van u is en dat het dode kind aan de ander toebehoort. Goed, breng mij een zwaard."*

⁶ Dutch original: *Toen ze zo voor de koning aan het bekvechten waren, overdacht hij: 'De een beweert: het levende jongetje is van mij, het dode van jou; de ander ontkent het en zegt: Niet waar, het dode jongetje is van jou, het levende van mij.' Toen nam de koning het woord: 'Haal een zwaard!'*

Likewise, REB also opts for a non-communicative interpretation, in which the king is thinking: *So they went on arguing before the king.*

The king thought to himself, 'one of them says, "This is my child, the living one; yours is the dead one." The other says, "No, it is your child that is dead and mine that is alive." ' Then he said, 'Fetch me a sword.'

GN. In contrast, several idiolect translations disambiguate with different degrees of clarity. ST translates: *Giveth the living child to that* (as opposed to *this*);⁷ WIL translates *Give the living child to the first woman*,⁸ and the Leidsche translates: *Give the boy to her who has said: give her the living child, and do not kill it: she is the mother*.⁹ Likewise, RVS and REB translate: *Give the living child / baby to the first woman*. The dynamic-equivalent translation HB states *Do not kill the baby; give it to the woman who wants to let it live*.¹⁰ In other words, if the ambiguity in this passage is resolved, it results in the predicted interpretation, although the words that are used may differ.

In conclusion, the analysis of the eleven translations shows that they treat the three ambiguities in different ways, depending on the type of ambiguity and its function in the story as they were found in the perspective domain analysis. The type of translation is, likewise, a factor: idiolect translations will be more reserved in their disambiguation choices.

5. Exploring readers' disambiguation choices

Translators obviously are not 'ordinary' readers. They read and write at the same time, keeping readers who will read their text in their mind. The question is whether ordinary readers would make those disambiguation choices in their representation as predicted by the perspective domain analysis. Readers may represent the text in a less precise way, disambiguating at some points, while omitting other ambiguities altogether.

Various research methods in the study of narrative comprehension, such as question-guided interpretation, reading aloud, and association, require that subjects rethink their interpretation in order to verbalize it. Such tasks may stimulate a meta-level of reflection that goes beyond normal comprehension. Readers may not be able to give such meta-evaluations. In order to minimize such problems as much as possible comprehension can be studied directly by having readers simply recall the story and, somewhat less directly, by eliciting readers' prediction of how the story will proceed using interruption questions (see Feldman et al., 1990, for an extensive discussion of the matter).

In a pilot experiment, these methods were used to explore readers' reactions to the story of *Solomon's Judgment*. It was investigated, whether readers used the same disambiguation strategies as the translations did, i.e., according to the type and function of the ambiguity.

5.1. Method

First, the subjects' ability to represent perspectives was explored by comparing their recall of different perspective choices in the same situation. The availability of transla-

⁷ Dutch original: *Geeft het levende kind aan die* (as opposed to *deze*).

⁸ Dutch original: *Geef het levende kind aan de eerste vrouw*.

⁹ Dutch original: *Geeft het knaapje aan haar die gezegd heeft: geef haar het levende kind, en dood het niet: zij is de moeder*.

¹⁰ Dutch original: *Dood de baby niet; geef hem aan de vrouw die hem in leven wil laten*.

tions with different perspective choices at point A (v.23) of *Solomon's Judgment* offered this opportunity. Two translations were chosen, the idiolect NBG translation with an ambiguous, communicative version ('the king *said*') of v.23, and the dynamic-equivalent GN translation with an explicitly non-communicative version ('the king *thought*') of v.23 (see previous section). Ambiguities B and C were preserved in both translations. After they read the passage in which the king recalls what both women said (v.23), the subjects were asked to produce a first sentence to continue the story and to write a short summary of a possible follow-up. The instructions (on two separate pages) were:

How do you expect the story will continue?

Write down the first sentence by which the story proceeds.

Give a summary in one or a few sentences of how the story could proceed and end.

Then, the disambiguation strategies were investigated by studying whether subjects disambiguated the perspectival ambiguities in their recall as expected at points A (v.23), B (v.26), and C (v.27) in *Solomon's Judgment*. Subjects were presented the entire story which they (re-)read thoroughly from beginning to end. After 20 minutes of distraction by another, unrelated experiment, they were asked to write down in a coherent fashion what they recalled of the story. The instructions were:

Try to recall the story you read in the first part of this experimental session (that is, the complete, original version that you read last).

YOU ARE UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES ALLOWED TO GO BACK AND READ THE STORY AGAIN.

Now write down what you remember. Provide a coherent story in your own words. You can use the rest of this page for this purpose.

A frame, covering 75% of an A4 page, was given to suggest the requested length of the recalled story.

The two translations were almost equally long (66 and 64 clauses, respectively). Some minor alterations had to be made in the older NBG version, because it used quite archaic and stylistically 'oldfashioned' Dutch at some points in comparison to the GN version.¹¹ The complete texts are presented in the appendix.

Students of Tilburg University in various disciplines were invited to participate on payment of 10 Dutch guilders in a one-hour experiment. 40 students, who were unaware

¹¹ In the NBG version, some verbs and pronouns were replaced by their modern equivalents like the ones used in the GN version: 'jij' *you* instead of 'gij' *thou*; 'jouw' *your* instead of 'uw' *thy*; 'zei' *said* instead of 'zeide' *saieth*; 'geef' *give* instead of 'geeft' *giveth*, 'maar' *but* instead of 'doch' *still*; furthermore, quotation marks were added to direct quotes, as in the GN version. Owing to the difference in tradition of translation, some stylistic variances can be pointed out between the two translations. The idiolect NBG translation makes fewer concessions to the translation of individual words and constructions than the dynamic-equivalent GN translation, which aims at translating the discourse meaning in general. Thus, the latter is less 'stiff', using sentences such as *Then the mother of the living child could not control her feelings any longer and said: '...'*, instead of the more literal version in the NBG version: *Then the woman, whose the living child was, said to the king, because her motherly feelings for her son had been raised: '...'*.

of the hypotheses, volunteered to participate. They were randomly assigned to two groups ($N = 20$, 10 male and 10 female). Members of each group read one of the two versions of the story.

5.2. Results

The subjects' answers to the two interruption questions were interpreted and analyzed by means of chi-square analyses.¹² It appeared that subjects represented the perspective they had read: subjects who read the GN version with the king's inner perspective more frequently continued the story by giving the king's inner thoughts or cognitive activity than subjects who read the NBG version, where the king speaks directly (NBG: 4 of 19 versus GN: 13 of 20; $\kappa^2 = 7.65$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.01$.)¹³ Likewise, subjects who read the NBG version without the king's inner perspective responded with fewer summaries which continued with the king's perspective than did subjects who read the GN version, although the numbers were too small to reach statistical significance (NBG: 5 of 12 versus GN 7 of 12; $\kappa^2 = 0.66$).¹⁴

The protocols of subjects' recalls were subsequently interpreted with respect to the aspects relevant to disambiguation strategies: Was the king's perspective represented as uttered words or as inner thoughts (A)? Was unambiguous reference made to woman 1 as the real mother or not (B)? Was unambiguous reference made to the real mother as the woman who gets the child or not (C)? The overall results were calculated and analyzed by means of chi-square analyses; in addition, comparisons were made between the two groups.

A. Does the king speak or think when he repeats what the women said? (ad v.23)

It appeared that subjects did not recall this element at all. Free recall permits subjects to recall only those elements in the narrative that they choose, and thus to omit those they did not remember or did not consider important enough to recall. The king's words verbally repeat part of the previous utterances by the women; apparently, the subjects did not consider this repetition as a crucial event needed to provide a coherent representation of the story's plot.

¹² In the pilot experiments reported in this paper, chi-square analyses are calculated for small values of N . For each analysis, it was checked whether one of the expected frequencies was under 5; in that case, *Yates correction for continuity* should be applied. However, this appeared not to be the case, except for one case which was far from significant.

¹³ NBG version: 12 cases of king's direct speech, 3 cases of ambiguity between direct speech and direct thought, 1 case of king's cognitive activity, and 3 cases of king's acts, vs. GN version: 2 cases of king's direct speech, 5 cases of king's direct thoughts, 8 cases of king's cognitive activity, and 5 cases of king's acts. The results were summarized as direct speech and acts on the one hand and direct thoughts and cognitive activity on the other, as presented in Table 1. In the analysis, the three cases in the NBG-version that were ambiguous between direct speech and direct thought were interpreted in the position that was most unfavourable to the hypothesis, i.e., as direct thoughts. Note that in some of the following analyses, N is less than 20. In those cases, one or two of the subjects in a group did not provide an answer to the question at hand or did not represent the particular part of the discourse at hand.

¹⁴ Only those subjects (12 in each group) were included in the analysis that afterwards indicated that they had not known the story before or had not recognized it until they had read the complete version.

B: Who is the mother of the living child, woman 1 or woman 2? (ad v.26)

In contrast to the translations, which all preserve this ambiguity, a large minority of the subjects unambiguously referred to woman 1 as the mother of the living child. This was done by various means such as backward reference to woman 1 as the mother or explicitly pointing out woman 1 as the mother. Interestingly, a significant difference was found between the two translations: more subjects who read the NBG version referred to woman 1 as the mother of the living child than did readers of the GN version (NBG: 10 of 20 versus GN: 2 of 20; $\kappa^2 = 7.62$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.01$). In most cases, such reference was established by the fact that the subject chose to present the episode that was originally told by woman 1 (i.e., the episode of the two women at home and/or the death of the baby) as a part of the narrative reality. By omitting domain building elements which embed this episode as a story, each reference to the mother is unambiguously a reference to woman 1, as in the following translated protocol (3).

(3)

1. There were two women who had given birth to a child on the same day.
2. Woman A rolled on the child during the night
and then exchanged it for the child of woman B.
3. When woman B woke up,
she found out
and they went to the king for advice.
4. The king wanted to divide the child in two,
one part for each.
5. Woman A agreed with that,
but woman B said:
[domain 1: "Give it to her,
but please do not kill it"].
6. At that point the king decided
that woman B should have the child,
[domain 2: because she was],
according to him,
[domain 2: the real mother.] (...)

The representation of this recalled protocol is different from the original representation presented in section 2. Here, it is not necessary to force a distinction between the women as woman 1 and woman 2, since the recalling subject him/herself explicitly calls the women A and B. In Fig. 6, the story of woman B is not explicitly embedded, but presented in the narrator's reality. Note that it is hard to tell from this protocol, as in the original story, whether the narrator thinks the king was wise or cruel in his demand to divide the child. It is also remarkable that the subject represents the king's demand by a volitional modal verb (*want*), thus presenting the king's *thoughts* or *intentions* from his implicit perspective (instead of presenting the king's *utterances* and *acts* as in original text).

Thus, woman B is automatically identified as the mother of the living child, who was wronged and who needs the king to solve her problem. The king's attributed dilemma (who should get the child?) is no different from the representation of the original text, for he supposedly cannot see who the mother of the living child is and who is not. In this version of the story, the narrator and the reader know more than the king does. The

narrator's
reality

Fig. 6. Perspective domain representation of s.1–4

question which causes the suspense is whether the king will make the decision which the reader knows is right, and not *what is* the right decision. Thus, the king's decision to give woman B the child is still the right ending (Fig. 7), because he had to find out she was its mother.

In their recall protocols, some subjects produced domain building elements that establish the attribution of the crucial episode to the woman who spoke first (woman 1), such as the information that this episode was a *story*, or was *told*; some subjects even summarized the embedding domain by stating 'it was unclear whose the dead baby was'. By contrast, other subjects gave non-embedded representations of woman 1's story, sometimes even a chronologic, non-original structure, starting the story with what was originally woman 1's perspective.

Summarizing the results of all protocols, it appeared that significantly fewer subjects who had read the NBG version produced domain building indications than did subjects who had read the GN version; instead, subjects who had read the NBG version tended to give a non-embedded version of the first woman's story (NBG: 8 of 19 embedded versus GN: 17 of 20 embedded; $\kappa^2 = 7.79$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.01$). Note that a non-embedded version does not imply chronology: readers of the NBG version used the chronological

narrator's
reality

Fig. 7. Perspective domain representation of s.5–6

structure more often than did readers of the GN version, but not significantly so (NBG: 9 of 19 chronological versus GN: 5 of 20 chronological; $\kappa^2 = 2.12$, $df = 1$). Subjects who gave a non-embedded story could still opt for an original, non-chronological structure. An example: *Two women, whores, come to the king. They had both given birth to a child, the one three days after the other. One of the two children had died because its mother had laid upon it (...).*

Ad C: Who gets the living child, woman a or woman b?

While only some of the translations resolve this ambiguity, most subjects of both versions disambiguated in their recall that the real mother, woman a, got the child.¹⁵ Subjects showed their disambiguation in various ways, for instance, by explicit reference by the king to woman a as the one who gets the child: *'One of the women said: In that case give her the baby, let it live. The other woman said: Dead or alive, she will not*

¹⁵ 33 of 40 subjects referred to the real mother (directly or indirectly) as the woman who gets the child (NBG: 16 of 20; GN: 17 of 20).

have the child. Then the king decided that the first woman was the real mother and he gave her the child'. Examples of other means are the omission of woman *b*'s statement, in which case the king's reference is unambiguous, or the factive representation of the king's knowledge of motherhood: 'The king recognized the real mother and gave her the child'.

5.3. Discussion

In their recall, readers represented the story of *Solomon's Judgment* and the ambiguities in it in many more varied ways than the translations show. Yet, the strategies they used make sense in the light of the function the three ambiguities have in the story.

What remains to be explained is why the two translations evoke such differences in disambiguation strategies at point B (v.26). It appeared that in contrast to readers of the GN version with the king non-communicatively '*thinking*', for the majority of subjects who read the NBG version with the king communicatively '*speaking*', the story of woman 1 is no longer a story, but is 'factive', to be represented in the narrator's reality domain instead of an embedded domain attributed to this woman. The question is, of course, whether these different representations are caused by the perspectival difference at point A (v.23) between the translations. The explanation would then be that perspective choices cause particular attributions of intentions to the character with whom the reader identifies himself (Pollard-Gott, 1993), thus foregrounding different discourse patterns (Hoey, 1983; Culley, 1992). Identification with the king's inner perspective would evoke a problem-solution pattern for the king (to decide who is the mother of the living child), identification with the women's situation would lead to a problem-solution pattern for the real mother (to persuade the king to give her the child).

However, since the two translations differ in more aspects than the disambiguation with respect to the king's words or thoughts, it is possible that this perspective choice cannot fully explain the effects that were found. A control experiment was performed to test this possibility. The procedure was repeated with a new group of 20 subjects of Tilburg University. They read a new version in which the perspective choice of the dynamic-equivalent GN version was inserted into the idiolect NBG version (see appendix). It was expected that representations of the new version III, due to its perspective choice (representation of inner thoughts by the king), would be similar to those of the GN version and different from the NBG version. However, it was found that the subjects of version III did not significantly less often identify woman 1 as the mother of the living child than did readers of the NBG version without inserted perspective (NBG: 10 of 20 versus III: 8 of 18; $\kappa^2 = 0.12$, $df = 1$). With respect to the number of subjects who represented the episode as embedded, the results of the pilot and the control experiment are presented in Table 1.

A small, non-significant increase of the number of subjects who represented the first woman's story as an embedded story was found in version III in comparison to subjects who had read the NBG version ($\kappa^2 = 1.25$, $df = 1$). In comparison to the GN version, version III resulted in considerably less subjects who gave embedded recall of the first woman's story than did the GN version, though not significantly so ($\kappa^2 = 3.13$, $df = 1$).

Table 1

Frequency of responses: Is the first woman's story presented as a story?

Version	Embedded story	Non-embedded story
NBG (<i>N</i> = 19)	8 (42%)	11 (58%)
GN (<i>N</i> = 20)	17 (85%)	3 (15%)
III (<i>N</i> = 20)	12 (60%)	8 (40%)

The results suggest that the style of the two translations used in the reported experiments must also be taken into account as an explanatory factor for the effect that was found. Probably, the 'stiff' language in the NBG version made it easier for readers to identify with the very first character that comes along and stay with her, rather than giving any thought to new characters' viewpoints. Conversely, the modern language use in the dynamic-equivalent GN version makes it easier to adopt other characters' viewpoints. For instance, the second woman's reaction to the first woman's story (v.22) is translated as a forceful 'Lies!' in the GN version, whereas the utterance 'Not true!' may be interpreted as weaker and thus less trustworthy.

6. Conclusions

Readers build mental models of the narrative discourse they read. In mental models, perspective domain structures are incorporated that make explicit who said and thought what. In addition, the domain structure represents causal inferences as to the intentions and attitudes of the narrator and protagonists. In constructing such representations, readers may arrive at different conclusions as to the precise domain structures. As a result, they will have different conclusions about what is 'true' in the narrator's narrative reality, and what is restricted to some character's perspectivized view of this reality. Ultimately, such differences may lead to various perceptions of what happened in the story. The analysis of the *Solomon's Judgment* narrative, which contains several ambiguous places, revealed the different representations that readers could construct. Pilot experiments suggest that disambiguation is dependent on various factors, such as availability of contextual information in favour of a particular interpretation, differences in discourse perspective choices in the text, and stylistic variations. These insights are particularly important for the study of biblical narratives. Biblical narrative, in comparison to modern (fictional) narrative discourse, is extremely 'bald' in its reference to protagonists' emotions and intentions (Campbell, 1989). Translations that fill in the intentional gaps and update style may influence readers' interpretation considerably.

Appendix: The original (Dutch) versions of the translations used in the pilots

NBG version (corrected for archaic usages)

Toentertijd kwamen twee vrouwen, hoeren, tot de koning en stelden zich voor hem.

En de ene vrouw zei: "Met uw verlof, mijn heer, ik en deze vrouw wonen in één huis,

en ik heb bij haar in huis gebaard. Op de derde dag nadat ik gebaard had, heeft ook deze vrouw gebaard, en wij waren tezamen, er was geen vreemde bij ons in huis; alleen wij tweeën waren in huis. Toen is de zoon van deze vrouw 's nachts gestorven, doordat zij op hem gelegen had. En zij is te middernacht opgestaan en heeft mijn zoon naast mij weggenomen, terwijl uw dienstmaagd sliep, en heeft hem in haar schoot gelegd, en haar dode zoon heeft zij in mijn schoot gelegd. Toen ik 's morgens opstond om mijn zoon te voeden, zie, hij was dood; maar ik gaf in de morgen acht op hem, en zie, het was niet de zoon, die ik gebaard had." Maar de andere vrouw zei: "Niet waar! de levende is mijn zoon, en de dode is jouw zoon. En deze zeide weer: Niet waar! de dode is jouw zoon en de levende is mijn zoon." *Zo krakeelden zij in tegenwoordigheid van de koning.*

Toen zei de koning: "*De ene zegt: 'Deze, de levende, is mijn zoon, en de dode is jouw zoon'; en de andere zegt: 'Niet waar! de dode is jouw zoon en de levende is mijn zoon.'*" Daarop zei de koning: "Haal mij een zwaard." En zij brachten een zwaard bij de koning. En de koning zei: "Snijd het levende kind in tweeën en geef de helft aan de ene en de helft aan de andere." Toen sprak de vrouw van wie het levende kind was, tot de koning, omdat haar moederlijk gevoel voor haar zoon was opgewekt; zij zei dan: "Met uw verlof mijn heer, geef haar het levende kind, maar dood het in geen geval." Maar de andere zei: "Het zal noch van mij noch van jou zijn, snijd door." Toen antwoordde de koning en zei: "Geef haar het levende kind en dood het in geen geval: zij is de moeder."

Toen geheel Israël het oordeel vernam, dat de koning had uitgesproken, werden zij met ontzag voor de koning vervuld, want zij merkten, dat de wijsheid Gods in hem was om recht te doen.

'Groot Nieuws' version

Op een keer kwamen twee publieke vrouwen bij de koning hun opwachting maken. Toen ze voor hem stonden, nam een van hen het woord. 'Majesteit, ik vraag uw aandacht. Deze vrouw en ik wonen in hetzelfde huis en in dat huis heb ik pas een kind ter wereld gebracht. Zij was erbij. Drie dagen na mijn bevalling bracht ook zij een kind ter wereld; we waren samen thuis, we hadden geen vreemden op bezoek, alleen wij beiden waren in huis. Maar 's nachts stierf haar kind; in haar slaap was zij er bovenop gaan liggen. Midden in de nacht, toen ik nog sliep, stond zij op, nam mijn zoontje bij mij weg en legde hem bij haar in bed; haar eigen zoontje legde zij bij mij neer. Toen ik 's morgens opstond om mijn zoontje te voeden, ontdekte ik dat hij dood was. 's Ochtends bekeek ik hem nog eens goed en toen bleek dat het niet mijn zoontje was.' 'Leugens!' riep de andere vrouw. 'Het levende jongetje is van mij, het dode van jou.' 'Niet waar!' antwoordde de eerste. 'Het dode jongetje is van jou, het levende van mij.'

Toen ze zo voor de koning aan het bekvechten waren, overdacht hij: '*De een beweert: Het levende jongetje is van mij, het dode van jou; de ander ontkent het en zegt: Niet waar, het dode jongetje is van jou, het levende van mij.*' Toen nam de koning het woord: 'Haal een zwaard!' Toen ze hem een zwaard gebracht hadden, beval hij: 'Hak het levende kind in tweeën en geef beide vrouwen een helft!' Toen kon de moeder van het levende kind haar gevoelens niet meer de baas en smeekte: 'Alstublieft, majesteit, geef de levende baby aan haar, maar dood hem niet!' 'Niets ervan,' zei de andere

vrouw, 'hak hem maar door. Krijg ik hem niet, dan jij ook niet!' Toen deed de koning uitspraak: 'Geef haar de levende baby! Dood hem niet, zij is de moeder!'

Toen de Israëlieten hoorden wat voor vonnis de koning geveeld had, kregen ze ontzag voor hem. Want ze zagen in dat God hem, om het recht te handhaven, met wijsheid had vervuld.

Version III

NBG version with inserted perspective from 'Groot Nieuws' (see marked sentences).

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