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Linguistic perspective in short news stories *

José Sanders and Gisela Redeker

Textual perspective is the introduction of a subjective viewpoint that restricts the validity of the presented information to a particular person in the discourse. Strong perspective is accomplished through *quotation* and *focalization*, that is, presentation of narrative material through a character's discourse or consciousness. Subtle perspective that introduces an implicit viewpoint, is accomplished by a variety of linguistic features such as tense shifts and marked choices of referring expressions. The effect of the two kinds of perspective on readers' appreciation of news texts and stories was tested in two experiments. In Experiment 1, news text and story versions with subtle and strong perspective were presented along with neutralized versions. Focalization made news text versions unacceptable, but was unproblematic in story versions. Text versions with focalization were judged as more subjective, more suspenseful, and livelier than versions without perspective. The failure of subtle perspective alone to show reliable effects in this experiment may have been due to the presence of the unacceptable focalized versions. Those versions were excluded from Experiment 2, where versions with subtle perspective were compared to neutralized versions. This restricted comparison yielded a positive effect of subtle perspective on acceptability and affective judgments.

1. Introduction

Discourse is often presented from a subjective point of view, that is, from the perspective of the speaker/writer or of a character in the text. In its broadest definition, perspective includes a range of phenomena as diverse as empathy perspective at sentence level (see, for instance, Kuno, 1987) and subtle shadings of opinions. For an operational concept of linguistic perspective, we define perspective more narrowly as *the introduction of a subjective viewpoint that restricts the validity of the presented information to a particular person in the discourse*.

This notion of perspective can be modeled in a framework of mental spaces. Fauconnier (1985: 16) defines mental spaces as constructs distinct from linguistic structures but built up in any discourse according to guidelines provided by the linguistic expressions. In Dinsmore's framework of partitioned representations, a mental space defines a local, or *parochial*, domain

Correspondence to: J.M. Sanders, Tilburg University, Discourse Studies, P.O. Box 90153, NL-5000 LE Tilburg. E-mail: jsanders@kub.nl

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of reasoning (1991: 44). Examples are belief spaces; hope and wish spaces; possibility spaces; spaces representing specific places and times; and so forth. Spaces can be embedded within each other and thus form complex constructions. In the case of perspective, a mental space (i.e., the subjective viewpoint) is embedded within a basic mental space, that is, the narrator's reality represented by the narrative text (for a more detailed account see Sanders and Redeker, forthcoming). We propose the following definition:

A stretch of discourse is perspectivized if its relevant context of interpretation is a person-bound subspace or embedded space within the universe of discourse.

This definition includes quotation and focalization as special, explicitly marked types of perspective. These forms have in common that they introduce an embedded perspective of a character as the speaker (verbally or mentally) of embedded discourse, such as in example (1a) of quotation, and (1b) of focalization.

- (1a) The three Englishmen had introduced themselves as tourists. John looked them over. He said: "Well, you sure don't look like tourists to me."
- (1b) The three Englishmen had introduced themselves as tourists. John looked them over. They sure didn't look like tourists to him.

We shall show below that such strong perspective is incompatible with the functional requirements of many nonfiction genres, such as news reports. This restriction does not apply for more subtle means of perspective, however, such as tense shifts or referential variation. These subtle linguistic means create perspective without implying that the writer has access to a character's consciousness. Examples of tense shift and referential variation can be seen in Table 1, sentences [g] and [i] respectively. This news text was translated from a Dutch newspaper article (*Volkskrant*, 18 July 1990).

2. Strong perspective: The representation of speech and thought

The most direct way of expressing a subjective viewpoint is the representation or demonstration of a person's speech or thought. In narrative texts, speech and thought can be represented in various ways, which differ in the immediacy of the representation and in the implied claim to authenticity. Three basic types of representation can be distinguished: (i) direct quotation, (ii) focalization or free indirect speech and thought, and (iii) indirect or reported speech and thought.

Typical for both quotation and focalization is that *a new subject of consciousness* is introduced: a *self*, to whom all expressive elements are

Table 1
Example text

[a] SUSPECTED IRA MEMBERS CAUGHT WHILE AT SHOOTING EXERCISE

[b] Two suspected IRA members were arrested near the Belgian-Dutch border area last weekend, after being caught in the process of a shooting exercise by armed Belgian civilians in the neighborhood of Turnhout. [c] A third man, who managed to escape handcuffed and on foot, is still wanted. [d] With these arrests, the supposed perpetrators of a series of IRA terrorist actions in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany have been apprehended. [e] The arrest is the result of chance and good luck.

[f] On Saturday afternoon the police in Turnhout were called by a man who owns a bungalow in the neighborhood of Hoogstraten. [g] He had heard the sound of machine-guns in the woods near his house. [h] Accompanied by his son the informant went out to investigate, armed with a pistol and a shot-gun. [i] On their way they met three English-speaking tourists. [j] They had heard shots as well, but knew nothing else, they said. [k] A little further on, the two found a piece of ground which had been broken up, where, after some digging, a box of explosives and some weapons appeared.

[l] The son kept watch at this spot, and the father went for help. [m] After some time one of the suspects appeared at the spot. [n] The son fired a warning shot, after which the man took flight. [o] The father, who had heard the shot, returned to the son with a forester and on the way came across the two other suspects. [p] They kept the two – a man and a woman – at gunpoint until the police arrived, according to the informant. [q] After their arrest, the now handcuffed man managed to escape anyway. [r] The police are still looking for him.

[s] Late Saturday evening the Dutch police arrested the third suspect in Baarle-Nassau, a few hundred meters across the border. [u] According to a spokesman the man was “clearly on the run from the police.” [v] He did not have any papers and does not want to give his name. [w] It is expected that Belgium will ask for his extradition.

Note. Sentences are labeled for reference only.

attributed (see Banfield, 1982: 93). In quotation, this new subject is introduced explicitly by a phrase like *she said*. No such introduction is present in focalization, which is therefore not easy to distinguish from representation in reportive mode. An example of free indirect thought is given in the third sentence of (1b) above. In contrast to this focalized representation, the indirect thought representation in (1c) below describes in the narrator's words what was on the character's mind (see, for instance, Cohn, 1978).

- (1c) The three Englishmen had introduced themselves as tourists. John looked them over and concluded that they did not look like tourists.

Reports like in (1c) can be based on inferences from characters' behavior or from verbal reports of their thoughts. They do not require direct *access to a character's consciousness*. But focalization, as in (1b), where the narrator articulates in the characters' own “words” what they think, perceive, or feel, does require access to their consciousness. This makes focalization a priori a natural element in fictional discourse, where the narrator has free access to the characters' consciousness.

3. Implicit viewpoint

There are various linguistic devices that can represent a subjective point of view by presupposing the presence of some character's consciousness or reporting what a character thinks, perceives, or feels. The restriction of validity to a subjective point of view by these more implicit means creates an *implicit viewpoint*. The linguistic "domain builders" that establish implicit viewpoints are compared in Table 2 to the stronger and more explicit forms of perspective in the representation of speech and thought.

The strongest manifestation of implicit viewpoint, which is most closely related to the immediate representation of speech and thought, is the reportive mode, where a character's discourse or thoughts are reported in indirect form. Specialized domain builders for reported speech and thought are speech verbs, parentheticals like *according to X*, and the *quotative conditional* (for the latter see Lyons, 1982). They mark discourse material that is obviously formulated by the narrator as presenting a particular character's opinion (which need not be shared by the narrator). See for instance the construction "according to" in sentences [p] and [u] of Table 1.

Other types of implicit viewpoint are created by modal verbs, whose semantics entails subjectivity (see Langacker, 1990), for instance by describing a person as obliged or able or willing to do something. Example (2) was taken from another original Dutch news text:

Table 2
Characteristics of perspective in narrative texts

IMPLICIT VIEWPOINTS	SPEECH AND THOUGHT
The narrative describes the contents of a character's consciousness	The narrative is presented through a character's discourse of consciousness
<i>Space builders</i>	
Reported (indirect) speech or thought	Direct quotation of speech or thought
Opinion indicators (e.g., <i>according to</i> or <i>thus</i>)	Free indirect representation of speech or thought (focalization)
Quotative conditional	
Tense (e.g., shift from simple past to pluperfect: embedding of narrative line)	
Stative sentence aspect	
Focalizing constructions:	
verbs of perception and cognition	
modals	
consciousness presupposing expressions	
<i>Related manifestations</i>	
"Late" indefinites	Shift of deictic center
"Late" descriptions	Shift in person
Referential choice (direct or derived)	Expressive elements
Def-NP/pronoun switch	Subjective, evaluative content

- (2) The suspect, a 24-year-old man from Apeldoorn, *could* be arrested by the police. About his motives the police *could* not say anything.

Shifts in tense or aspect, too, can establish perspective. A shift from simple past towards a stative sentence aspect creates a new, embedded narrative line of events, such as in sentence [g] in Table 1. The sentence aspect of pluperfect is stative, which in itself creates perspective because of its observational suggestion: This activates the question who is describing or watching some state of affairs, in other words, whose subjective point of view is chosen (Caenepel, 1989). Often such a perspectivized interpretation is enhanced by focalizing constructions that describe or presuppose a character's active consciousness, such as verbs of perception (*to see*) or cognition (*to think*) – see for instance sentence [g] in Table 1. Finally, references to persons as well as syntactic choices (object/subject position) can show the empathy perspective of the narrator: The description places the camera-angle closer to one person than to another (Kuno, 1987). Persistent empathy perspective with one character above others can create a subjective viewpoint, as if the narrator was identifying with this character and giving the character's subjective version of events and states of affairs. In the example text of Table 1, the camera-angle is placed closer to the informant than to his son (referential form “his son” is derived from the referential entity of the informant). However, in sentence [1], the camera moves closer to the son who remains at the spot, while the informant moves out of the picture. The informant is now referred to as “the father”, a relational form that takes the son as its reference point. Implicit viewpoints can have other manifestations, such as “late” indefinites and descriptions, which are related to the characteristics mentioned here; this will be explored in more detail below.

4. Perspective in news texts

When news texts, personal narratives, and written fictional narratives are compared with respect to perspective manifestations, it is clear that some types of perspective are relatively infrequent in news texts. One could argue that news texts are not real narrative texts, because they often do not follow a linear temporal sequence, which is typical for narratives. News stories violate temporal sequence in favor of a complex, non-chronological cyclical order (Bell, 1991). The story point, which constitutes the final climax in written fictional narratives (Wilensky, 1983), precedes the main body of the news text as the *lead*, followed by one or more so-called *takes* that present the events in more detail (Van Dijk, 1983). There are two reasons for this cyclical order. First, readers who do not want to spend much time or effort reading the entire story can still obtain the essential information. Second, the authors

(journalists) often do not know how much space there will be for their story in the newspaper. In order to leave the choice to the editor, they provide several possible cut-off points in the news text.

The cyclical order of news texts is not as alien to narrative as it may appear. The presence of an initial summary of the main point need not disqualify news texts as narratives, because this feature is prevalent in conversational narratives (see Labov, 1972, who called this the *abstract*). Moreover, the presentation of information in news texts is not achronological or arbitrarily ordered, but chronological within each take. Consider the typical “hard” news story, which conveys a unique, unscheduled event that occurred or has come to light since the previous issue of the paper, for instance, a fire story (see Bell, 1991). These news stories have the following structure: lead, chronological account of the events, and, optionally, extended chronological versions of events and background information. Short hard news texts generally do not have more than one cycle after the lead. They have all the essential characteristics that are needed in narratives or stories in the sense that they satisfy Fleischman’s (1990: 103) criteria of narrativity: They have a story point, namely, something that makes them relevant or newsworthy; they have past reference time; and they refer to unique events and persons.

Another characteristic that is shared by news texts and personal narratives is “a penchant for direct quotation” (Bell, 1991: 155). Direct quotation can be used in a wide variety of ways, depending on pragmatic factors such as text functions and context. In narratives, quotation typically has a dramatizing function, creating involvement and liveliness (Redeker, 1987, 1991; Mayes, 1990; Clark and Gerrig, 1990). In reportive texts such as news reports, dramatization conflicts with the text’s purpose of giving an accurate and objective account of the news event. When quotation is used in such texts, it serves as evidence or documentation. It creates the impression of the representation of an authentic utterance by a detached and objective writer attitude. In a corpus of Dutch hard news texts, we found few direct quotes. Quotation was restricted to authorities (police spokesmen, lawyers, judges, etc.) who were quoted as reporting or commenting on the newsworthy events at a press conference or in a court of justice. Example (3) illustrates a particularly marked form of a writer’s dissociation from quoted material.

- (3) According to a spokesman the man was “clearly on the run from the police.”

Strong perspective through direct quotes and focalization is unusual in hard news texts. More subtle manifestations of subjective viewpoint, however, did occur regularly in our corpus of hard news texts. An example can be found in the news story in Table 1. There are no direct quotes and no cases

of represented consciousness in this text. Yet, some of the information appears to be presented from a subjective point of view, that is, the perspective of one of the characters.

When analyzing this text with respect to perspective, we find many manifestations of perspective. It appears that a narrator can let characters give their subjective viewpoint without calling on them to speak (verbally or mentally). This occurs especially in sentences [f] through [k]. In [f], we learn that the police was called by a man. In the light of this information, [g] is understood as presenting what the man told them – and what the police in turn presumably told the journalist. Sentence [g] contains the focalizing verb *to hear*, which suggests a perspectivized interpretation of the subsequent text. This perspectivized interpretation is supported by the fact that sentence [h] shifts the temporal reference point to the events the caller experienced: From the pluperfect of sentence [g], we shift to simple past in [h], while the narrative line is still the embedded narrator's. Within this embedded line, the IRA members are referred to with the indefinite noun phrase *three English-speaking tourists* (in [i]). This “late” indefinite description of referents that were already introduced (see DuBois, 1980) must be interpreted from the perspective of the man and his son, for whom the three persons are indeed “new”. The information presented from this point of view is opaquely embedded in the narrator's reality. In other words, the narrator is not responsible for the validity of the embedded information. What is embedded may even be counterfactual to the extent that a character in the text is mistaken.

Various linguistic devices can co-operate in establishing implicit viewpoints. In Table 3, the effect of implicit viewpoints is shown by contrasting the original IRA news report with a neutralized version with respect to perspectivization. This version was stripped of perspectivizing elements as listed in Table 2.

In the de-perspectivized version, the story is told by an external, omniscient narrator, both retrospectively and chronologically. No subjective versions of the events by one of the characters are presented, and there are no “late” indefinite references. This causes changes in three sentences: In [f], the indefinite reference *a man*, licensed in the original text by taking the police's perspective, was replaced by an anaphoric description; in [h] *the informant* was replaced by *the man*; and in [i], *three English-speaking tourists* was replaced by *the three suspected IRA members*. If one wanted to retain the information that the IRA members posed as English tourists, this could easily be inserted. It should be noted that a strange effect would occur in that rewritten version if the IRA members were still referred to as *three English-speaking tourists*, as illustrated in (4).

- (4) [f/g] On Saturday afternoon a man who owns a bungalow in the neighborhood of Hoogstraten heard the sound of machine-guns in the

Table 3
Original and neutralized versions of the IRA news text

<i>Original version</i>	<i>Neutralized version</i>
[f] On Saturday afternoon the police in Turnhout were called by a man who owns a bungalow in the neighborhood of Hoogstraten. [g] He had heard the sound of machine-guns in the woods near his house. [h] Accompanied by his son, the informant went out to investigate, armed with a pistol and a shot-gun. [i] On their way they met three English-speaking tourists. [j] They had heard shots as well, but knew nothing else, they said. [k] A little further on, the two found a piece of ground which had been broken up, where, after some digging, a box of explosives and some weapons appeared.	[f/g] On Saturday afternoon one of the Belgian civilians, who owns a bungalow in the neighborhood of Hoogstraten heard the sound of machine-guns in the woods near his house. [h] Accompanied by his son, the man went out to investigate, armed with a pistol and a shot-gun. [i] On their way they met the three suspected IRA-members (, who posed as English-speaking tourists). [j] They said that they had heard shots as well, but knew nothing else. [k] A little further on, the two found a piece of ground which had been broken up, where, after some digging, a box of explosives and some weapons appeared.
[l] The son kept watch at this spot, the father went for help. [m] After some time one of the suspects appeared at the spot. [n] The son fired a warning shot, after which the man took flight. [o] The father, who had heard the shot, returned to the son with a forester and on the way came across the two other suspects. [p] They kept the two – a man and a woman – at gunpoint until the police arrived, according to the informant.	[l] The son kept watch at this spot, the father went for help. [m] After some time one of the suspects returned to the spot. [n] The son fired a warning shot, after which the man took flight. [o] The father, who had heard the shot, returned to the son with a forester and on the way came across the two other suspects. [p] They kept the two – a man and a woman – at gunpoint until the police arrived.

Note. Only the relevant central passage is presented here. For the full text see Table 1.

woods near his house. [h] Accompanied by his son the man went out to investigate, armed with a pistol and a shot-gun. [i] On their way they met *three English-speaking tourists*.

After removing the element of the call to the police (which introduces the embedded subjective viewpoint of the informant), it is hard to interpret the English-speaking tourists as having the same identity as the IRA members. Our intuition is that an interpretation in which these tourists know where the shots came from, but are not the IRA members, is more natural in this case. A definite NP “*the English-speaking tourists*” is impossible in both the original and the rewritten version, since there are no referential entities known at that point in the narrator’s reality who can be positively identified as English-speaking tourists.

Additional changes were made in neutralizing the perspective in this text. The free indirect speech in [j] was formulated as indirect speech in the neutralized version, and the Dutch verb *liet zichzelf zien* (*let himself be seen*),

which has a perspectivizing effect, was replaced by *returned*, which is more neutral in this respect. Finally, the explicit signal *according to the informant* was removed from [p].

Although the neutralized version in Table 3 is an acceptable news text, there are important differences in effect compared to the original version. By creating an objective and neutral text, the liveliness and suspense that were present in the original text have decreased. However, it is also possible that the lead of the news text, which reveals the point of the story at the beginning of the text, contributes to the decrease of the liveliness and suspense in news texts.

In conclusion, some types of perspectives are atypical in non-fictional narratives such as news stories, whereas others are permitted. Strong perspective, like focalization (which requires access to a character's consciousness) appears to conflict with the genre requirements of news texts. However, the more subtle perspective forms seem admissible and may even have positive effects on the reader's evaluation of a news text.

5. Experiment 1: Readers' judgments of perspective

If perspective is a relevant element in all narrative texts, then it should affect readers' interpretation and evaluation of news texts and fictional stories. Texts with perspective should be judged as more subjective, livelier, and more suspenseful than texts without perspective. Perspective that includes focalization should have a stronger effect than the use of subtle perspective alone. For news texts and other non-fictional narratives, focalization is inappropriate in principle, because writers cannot presume to have access to the consciousness of a person. Focalized news texts, therefore, should be less acceptable than non-focalized news stories. For fictional stories, on the other hand, focalization should not decrease acceptability, because access to the characters' consciousness is the fiction writer's prerogative.

5.1. Method

5.1.1. Materials

Four reports of short newsworthy episodes were selected from various Dutch newspapers. They all contained implicit viewpoints like those in the IRA text discussed above. The texts were shortened slightly without major changes in form or content. The headers (i.e., headlines, location, and news agency), were replaced by short descriptive titles. For example, the title "SUS-

PECTED IRA MEMBERS CAUGHT WHILE AT SHOOTING EXERCISE" was replaced by "SHOOTING EXERCISES". Perspective and global text structure (the presence of a news text "lead") were manipulated to yield the following five versions of each text, three news text versions and two story versions.

Version 1: News text without implicit viewpoints or focalization (neutralized version). The neutralized versions were created by eliminating all forms of perspective, with little or no effect on the informational content of the text. For the IRA text this was shown in Table 3 above.

Several changes were made in the neutralized versions. All characters that were already introduced in the lead were treated as "known" to the reader and therefore referred to with definite expressions. Representations of a character's speech were replaced by the narrator's version of the events, e.g., *They had heard shots as well, but knew nothing else, they said* versus *They said that they had heard shots as well, but knew nothing else*. We removed or replaced verbs of speech representation and phrases that attribute an account to a speaker, such as *according to the informant*. Focalizing verbs, which refer to cognition or perception, represent the viewpoint of a character in the text. They were replaced by non-focalizing verbs, e.g., *he saw that his mother was drunk again* versus *his mother was drunk*. It should be noted that *again* was removed as well, because it is an evaluative element that refers to the subjective viewpoint of a character. Some other verbs also give a strong suggestion of a particular point of view; they were replaced by more neutral ones: *discover* versus *found*; *appeared to be* versus *was*; *let himself be seen at the spot* versus *returned to the spot*. Evidentials, such as modal verbs, represent a particular view of events or states in the text. Therefore, they were removed or replaced as much as possible: *she wanted to get some beer* versus *she went to get some beer*; *the police could arrest the man* versus *the police arrested the man*. Finally, choices of syntactic and semantic point of view were neutralized as much as possible. However, it is often impossible to avoid expressing more empathy with one character more than with another, e.g., *Mrs. A. was hit by her son* versus *Jan A. hit his mother*. In such cases, we distributed empathy between characters throughout the text.

Version 2: News text with implicit viewpoints. These versions were essentially the original news text versions. For two of the texts, the difference between the neutralized and the perspectivized versions was slightly enhanced by adding a few extra perspective devices, for instance *he saw*.

Version 3: News text with implicit viewpoints and focalization. Focalization was introduced by adding articulated thoughts and perceptions of the characters wherever that seemed appropriate. The italicized sentences in (5) illustrate how this version of the IRA text was created.

(5) SHOOTING EXERCISES

Two suspected IRA members were arrested near the Belgian-Dutch border area last weekend, after being caught in the process of a shooting exercise by armed Belgian civilians in the neighborhood of Turnhout. A third man, who managed to escape handcuffed and on foot, is still wanted. With these arrests, the supposed perpetrators of a series of IRA terrorist actions in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany have been apprehended. The arrest is the result of chance and good luck.

On Saturday afternoon the police in Turnhout were called by a man who owns a bungalow in the neighborhood of Hoogstraten. He had heard the sound of machine-guns in the woods near his house. *That was strange – he had never heard anything like that before.* Accompanied by his son the informant went out to investigate, armed with a pistol and a shot-gun. On their way they met three English-speaking tourists. They had heard shots as well, but knew nothing else, they said. *They were not really at ease, though.* A little further on, the two found a piece of ground which had been broken up, where, after some digging, a box of explosives and some weapons appeared. (...)

There were no versions with focalization only, because focalization implies perspective: It is impossible to articulate thoughts and perceptions without explicitly presenting the experiencer's subjective viewpoint.

Version 4: Story with implicit viewpoints. Story versions were created by removing the lead of the news texts. Compare the original IRA text (see Table 1) with (6) below.

(6) SHOOTING EXERCISES

On Saturday afternoon the police in Turnhout were called by a man who owns a bungalow in the neighborhood of Hoogstraten. He had heard the sound of machine-guns in the woods near his house. Accompanied by his son the informant went out to investigate, armed with a pistol and a shot-gun. On their way they met three English-speaking tourists. They had heard shots as well, but knew nothing else, they said. A little further on, the two found a piece of ground which had been broken up, where, after some digging, a box of explosives and some weapons appeared. (...)

Version 5: Story with implicit viewpoints and focalization. For the focalized story version, the same articulated thoughts and perceptions of characters as in the news text version (V 3) were added to the story version (V 4).

5.1.2. Subjects

Twenty-two advanced students of Discourse Studies at Tilburg University participated in the experiment. Their presumably heightened sensitivity to textual structures was expected to reduce idiosyncratic content-induced variation between readers and between texts. The students were not aware of the hypotheses of this study. They were paid f 7,50 (\$4) for their participation.

5.1.3. Design and procedure

Every participant read all five versions of all four texts. The order of the texts was kept constant across participants. Two orderings of the five versions were prepared, such that the adjacent versions were as different as possible. The position and sequencing of versions were varied between the two orderings; for instance, one ordering started with a story version, the other with a news-style version. The four texts were presented in separate booklets. One half of the readers saw Texts 1 and 3 in Order I and Texts 2 and 4 in Order II, the other half read Texts 1 and 3 in Order II and Texts 2 and 4 in Order I.

On each page of the booklets, the text version was followed by six questions. The first three questions asked for affective judgments of subjectivity, liveliness, and suspense. The next two questions requested a forced-choice genre classification (what genre does this version belong to or remind you of: narrative fiction, news text, or non-fiction book/magazine article?) and a contingent acceptability judgment (how acceptable do you find this version for that genre?). Finally the participant was asked to indicate through which character's eyes (if any) the story was told in this version of the text.

The affective judgments as well as the acceptability judgments were given on continuous seven-point scales (see Osgood et al., 1957). The scales' endpoints were labelled as follows (in approximate translation): *objective* versus *subjective*; *dull* versus *lively*; *dry, flat* versus *suspenseful*, and *unacceptable* versus *perfectly acceptable*.

5.2. Results

5.2.1. The recognition of perspective

More than one fourth of all readers recognized the intended perspective (94 of all 351 judgments), but when perspective was by implicit viewpoints alone without focalization, this proportion was only one fifth (32 of 175 judgments for Versions 2 and 4, $z = -2.54$; $p < 0.01$). De-perspectivized versions were judged as reflecting a character's perspective in eight percent of the cases (7 of 87 judgments for Version 1, $z = -3.78$; $p < 0.001$).

In the story versions, increasing the perspectivization by adding focalizing sentences had hardly any effect on perspective recognition in the story versions (18 of 87 judgments for Version 4 versus 21 of 88 judgments for Version 5). But in the news text versions, where a lead was present,

focalization led to three times as many perspective recognitions as perspectivization by domains alone (14 of 88 judgments for Version 2 versus 41 of 88 judgments for Version 3, $p < 0.001$; McNemar test).

5.2.2. Genre choice and acceptability

Most of the text versions were more often classified as news texts than as stories or articles from a non-fiction book or magazine (see Table 4). Overall the News Text choices accounted for 235 of the 440 judgments (53%).

Perspectivized versions were more often classified as news texts when they contained a “lead” (Version 2) than when they did not (Version 4). The decrease from 69% to 40% (61 versus 35 of the 88 judgments) was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$, McNemar test). An equally large difference was found for the focalized versions (3 and 5), where the percentage of news text choices decreased from 51% to 28% (45 versus 25 of the 88 judgments, $p < 0.001$).

Texts that did not conform to the conventional structure of the news text genre (“lead absent”) received considerably higher acceptability ratings from readers who classified them as stories than from those who considered them as news texts (0.03 versus 1.2 for the perspectivized versions, $t(58) = 2.67$, $p < 0.01$, and 0.34 versus 1.06 for the focalized versions; $t(57) = 3.10$, $p < 0.01$).

The readers’ genre assignments and acceptability ratings show that they recognized focalization as an atypical element in news stories (see Table 4). When focalization was added to the news text versions, the number of readers who classified the version as a news text decreased significantly from 61 to 45 ($p < 0.05$); the decrease from 35 to 25 news text choices for the fiction story versions was not statistically significant. Readers who classified the focalized news text version as a news text averaged a very low -0.09 in rating the text’s acceptability as a news text. Readers who classified those versions as stories rated their acceptability somewhat higher with an average of 0.75; this difference was not statistically reliable ($t(63) = 1.54$, $p = 0.07$).

Table 4
Genre choice and means of acceptability ratings for texts with and without perspective

Classified as	Lead present (news text)						Lead absent (story)			
	Neutralized		Viewpoint		Focalized		Viewpoint		Focalized	
	<i>n</i>	acc. ^a	<i>n</i>	acc. ^a	<i>n</i>	acc. ^a	<i>n</i>	acc. ^a	<i>n</i>	acc. ^a
News text	69	1.28	61	0.89	45	-0.09	35	0.03	25	0.34
Story	7	0.14	9	0.78	20	0.75	25	1.20	34	1.06
Other	12	0.83	18	0.11	21	0.24	28	0.11	29	0.76

Note. Maximum *n* per cell = 88.

^a Not acceptable = -3; very acceptable = 3

Table 5
Average affective judgments for texts with and without perspective

Affect type	Lead present (news text)			Lead absent (story)	
	Neutralized	Viewpoint	Focalized	Viewpoint	Focalized
Subjectivity	-1.03	-0.69	-0.03	0.71	0.76
Liveliness	-0.04	0.19	0.36	0.96	0.92
Suspense	-0.16	-0.15	0.17	0.23	0.50

Note. Negative judgment = -3, positive judgment = +3.

News text versions that contained only implicit viewpoints were judged to be significantly more acceptable as news texts than the focalized news text versions ($t(34) = 4.09$, $p < 0.001$; the t -test is based on the ratings of those readers who classified both versions as news texts ($n = 35$)), with average scores of 0.89 and -0.09 respectively. Readers who classified those versions as stories did not find the focalized versions less acceptable than the ones with just implicit viewpoints (0.78 versus 0.75). For the story versions, no significant difference was found between texts with implicit viewpoints and with focalization.

5.2.3. Affective judgments

Perspective and focalization clearly increased the subjectivity, liveliness, and suspense in the texts relative to the neutral version (see Table 5). For focalization these differences were quite large and statistically significant ($F(1,21) = 64.66$, $p < 0.001$ for subjectivity; $F(1,21) = 38.98$, $p < 0.001$ for liveliness; $F(1,21) = 11.35$, $p < 0.005$ for suspense).

The genre manipulation (lead present or absent) also showed the expected effect on the affective judgments. The news text versions were judged to be less subjective ($F(1,21) = 4.25$; $p < 0.05$) and less suspenseful than the story versions ($F(1,21) = 6.16$; $p < 0.05$). News texts also scored somewhat lower on liveliness, but this difference was not statistically significant.

5.3. Discussion

The results confirmed our hypothesis that focalization is judged as an atypical element in news texts. However, focalization in news texts led to higher subjectivity, liveliness and suspense ratings. This confirms the assumption that focalization is primarily a dramatizing device. Implicit viewpoints on the other hand, did not influence genre judgments or acceptability ratings, in spite of a slight increase in the affective judgments. This suggests that a limited dramatizing effect of subtle kinds of perspective is compatible with the demands of objectivity and validity of information in non-fiction narratives.

The readers in Experiment 1 always saw all texts in all versions. It is likely that focalization is such a strong device that it overwhelmed the effect of more subtle methods of perspectivization. Therefore, a second experiment was conducted to test the effect of implicit viewpoints in news stories more specifically.

6. Experiment 2: Readers' judgments of implicit viewpoints

Only the perspectivized and the neutralized versions of the texts from Experiment 1 were used in Experiment 2, thus excluding the focalization manipulation. We expected to confirm the earlier result that the presence of implicit viewpoints does not affect the acceptability of news texts. Nonfiction narrative texts with implicit viewpoints should be judged as more subjective, lively, and suspenseful than texts without implicit viewpoints.

6.1. Method

6.1.1. Subjects

One hundred and twenty advanced students of Discourse Studies at Tilburg University participated in the experiment; they were not aware of the hypotheses of this study.

6.1.2. Design and procedure

Each participant saw both versions of one of the four texts. The texts were presented in two orderings, perspectivized first or neutralized first. The participants were instructed to read both versions carefully. The versions were followed by eight questions, all to be answered on continuous seven-point scales (see Osgood et al., 1957). The first six items asked for affective judgments. There were three pairs of items: *objective* versus *subjective* and *neutral* versus *biased*; *dry, flat* versus *suspenseful* and *predictable* versus *surprising*; *dull* versus *lively* and *descriptive* versus *narrative*. Finally, the readers judged the presumable text genre (*news text* versus *story*) and the text's acceptability as a news text (*perfectly acceptable* versus *unacceptable*). Each text was judged by thirty readers, fifteen for each of the two orderings.

6.2. Results

6.2.1. Genre and acceptability judgments

The versions containing implicit viewpoints showed significantly higher ratings for story genre choice than the neutralized versions (means 0.13 versus -0.49 respectively, with +3 = story and -3 = news text; $t(119) = 2.10$, $p < 0.01$). In other words, readers thought that this version was more "story-like"

Table 6
Average affective judgments for texts with and without perspective

Affect type	Perspectivized version	Neutralized version
Subjectivity	0.23	-0.42
Biasedness	0.61	-0.29
Liveliness	0.31	0.07
Narrativity	0.54	-0.50
Surprise	0.05	-0.63
Suspense	0.37	-0.27

Note. Negative judgment = -3, positive judgment = +3.

than the neutralized version. However, they were at the same time judged as significantly *more* acceptable as news texts than perspectively neutralized news stories (means 0.63 versus -0.15 respectively, with +3 = very acceptable and -3 = not acceptable); $t(119) = 2.75$, $p < 0.01$). We will return to this point in the discussion.

6.2.2. Affective judgments

A reliability analysis was performed to determine whether the three pairs of affective judgment items could each be combined into one scale. Only the first pair, *subjective* versus *objective* and *biased* versus *neutral*, had a reasonably high reliability coefficient (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.70$). The items were therefore analyzed separately and not combined into three scales. The average affective judgments are presented in Table 6. A multivariate analysis of variance showed significant main effects for the two versions ($F(6,107) = 3.03$, $p < 0.01$), for the order in which the versions were presented ($F(6,107) = 2.20$, $p < 0.05$), and for differences between the individual texts (approximate $F(18,303) = 2.22$, $p < 0.005$). There were also interaction effects of version with texts (approximate $F(18,303) = 1.86$, $p < 0.05$) and with order ($F(6,107) = 3.10$, $p < 0.01$). The four texts and the two orders differed only in the size, not in the direction of the difference.

The significant interaction between the perspective manipulation and the individual texts was due mainly to one of the texts' yielding rather poor results. None of the affective response scales showed a significant difference in the expected direction for this text. Examination reveals that the perspective manipulation was rather weak in this particular text (see Table 7). The density of the manipulations was much lower than in the other three texts. The manipulations affected 43% of the clauses in this text, compared to 66%, 56% and 70% in the other three texts.

Creating a neutralized version was particularly difficult for this text. In several cases, the alternative formulation still suggested an embedded perspective. The phrase *witnesses reported that*, for instance, was replaced by *happened under the eyes of witnesses*. This eliminates the implicit viewpoint

Table 7
 Perspectivized and neutralized versions of the kidnapping text

<i>Perspectivized version</i>	<i>Neutralized version</i>
KIDNAPPING The kidnapping of a six-year-old girl in Apeldoorn on Sunday ended well after a large-scale action of the police. This was announced by the police on Sunday. Witnesses reported to the police that a girl was dragged into a car and taken away by a man. The police immediately started a pursuit with twenty policemen and an aircraft from the transport department, but lost the car. About a quarter of an hour later a policeman who was working on another investigation in the woods outside Apeldoorn discovered a man who had a girl with him. The man appeared to have taken pity on the girl, but no trace was found of the kidnapper. A little later a car driving suspiciously was seen by a witness. It appeared to be the kidnapper who was on the run. One hour and a half after the kidnapping, the suspect, a 24-year-old man from Apeldoorn, could be arrested by the police. About his motives the police could not say anything.	KIDNAPPING The kidnapping of a six-year-old girl in Apeldoorn on Sunday ended well after a large-scale action of the police. This was announced by the police on Sunday. <i>Under the eyes of witnesses</i> the girl was dragged into a car by the kidnapper who took her to the woods near Apeldoorn. The police immediately started a pursuit with twenty policemen and an aircraft from the transport department, but lost the car. About a quarter of an hour later the girl was found by a policeman who was working on another investigation in the woods outside Apeldoorn. She had been let out of the car by the kidnapper and a passer-by had taken pity on her. A little later the car with the presumed kidnapper was <i>discovered</i> by a witness of the kidnap. The suspect, <i>a 24-year-old man from Apeldoorn</i> , was arrested by the police one hour and a half after the kidnapping. About his motives the police <i>could</i> not say anything.

introduced by presenting the witnesses as the agents of an act of speaking. The expression *under the eyes of*, however, while presenting the witnesses in a subordinate semantic role, allows a focalized interpretation. The manipulation thus may in fact have increased the perceived subjectivity at this point in the text. Other problematic cases were the focalizing verb *to discover* and the modal *could* in the last paragraph of the neutralized version and the pluperfect (She *had been* let out...) introducing an embedded temporal line in the third paragraph. Finally, the information about the kidnapper (*a 24-year-old man from Apeldoorn*), which is known in the narrator/journalist's perspective, is presented at the end of the text in both versions. This enhances an interpretation of both texts as presenting the perspective of the police at the time of the arrest instead of the narrator's perspective. Our failure to create a truly neutralized version of this text suggests that perspective is not only admissible in news texts, but may sometimes be unavoidable.

6.3. Discussion

The results of Experiment 2 give strong support to our claims about the function of implicit viewpoints and other subtle perspectivizing devices. Our

hypothesis that this type of perspective increases readers' affective response to the news stories was largely confirmed. The affective judgments may also explain the surprising result that the texts containing implicit viewpoints were considered more acceptable as news texts than the neutralized version. They simply are better news stories. We may conclude that the embedding of subtle perspective is a critical part of news discourse.

7. Conclusions

Theories of fictional narrative describe perspective in terms of speech representation and focalization. In non-fiction narratives, such as news stories, these types of perspective cannot be used as freely as in fictional discourse, because they presuppose that the narrator has direct access to the events or to a character's consciousness. A journalist writing a news story does not have such access. However, this does not mean that perspective is absent in news stories. Writers do have the freedom to create implicit viewpoints within their texts. Such implicit viewpoints represent the subjective perspective of characters involved in the news story without explicitly representing their words or thoughts. Implicit viewpoints are signalled by tense shifts, focalizing verbs, marked references, deictic viewpoint, and other subtle linguistic devices.

The type and degree of subjectivity used in a narrative text interacts with the function of the text genre. The experiments presented in this paper have provided empirical evidence that a limited dramatizing effect of subjective viewpoint is compatible with the demands of objectivity and validity of information in news stories. Subtle dramatization by implicit subjective viewpoints in news texts appeared to be not only admissible, but even desirable.

Both strong perspective and implicit viewpoints can be described in terms of the partitioning of the discourse into embedded subdomains or mental spaces, based on Fauconnier's Mental Space Theory. Thus, the narrator can embed subjective viewpoints within the discourse reality by using various linguistic devices as space boundaries. This approach places perspective and subjectivity in a framework of similar linguistic phenomena such as epistemic, temporal, and local modifications. The mental space model of subjective viewpoint offers an explanation for complex discourse phenomena with respect to variations in degree of subjectivity. In this paper it is shown how the embedded character's influence on the story determines the perceived degree of subjectivity of a text. If the character's viewpoint is represented directly in the narrator's reality (by direct quotation or focalization), the narrator is merely *showing* (mimesis) and not *telling* (diegesis) what happened – and it is this showing that causes the dramatizing effect (see Redeker, 1991).

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