This paper is a study of reported speech in Nez Perce (Sahaptian), an endangered language presently spoken in the southern Columbia Plateau region of western North America. In its most basic form, Nez Perce reported speech can be characterized as an utterance or set of utterances whose main purpose is to initiate a new universe of discourse (Givon 1990:532) among speech participants. A pattern discerned in a recent elicited narrative indicate that reported speech can be used as a means of signaling positive and negative behavior. Evidence of this type of use suggests that Nez Perce reported speech can serve a larger cultural function, one that “involves discourse in the service of collective social purpose” (Urban 1993:241). This paper therefore will focus on the use of reported speech in Nez Perce narrative to determine 1) the range and types of reported speech registers, and 2) discern how such reported speech registers might be patterned so as to indicate their cultural functions.

1. ?ipnetxsúukt
(introducing, introduction)

Contemporary research into Native American discourse analysis has yielded important insights into the structure of indigenous communicative practice. The various theoretical perspectives that have been adopted center on two fundamental issues of discourse: the what perspective or "what is being talked about" and the how perspective or the "structure of what is being talked about" (Goutsos 1997). From a descriptive standpoint, in-depth linguistic documentation commonly adopts
the latter approach with the intent on revealing the structure of human communication or the "discovered shape and quality of discourse, the organization of its form, and the information to be conveyed" (Kinkade and Mattina 1996:260).

Reported Speech thus displays important grammatical features that are in direct correspondence to the structure of discourse. The challenge of this paper therefore is to make generalizations about the kinds of typifiable cultural practices that tend to emerge in the use of reported speech forms. Such generalizations rely upon an attribution of form to function. In this respect, “Function, or purposive use of language, is characterization from the perspective of what speakers think or believe they are doing with their language as communicators using a goal directed interpersonal medium” (Silverstein 1985:132).

Narratives then, rather than dialogue and conversation, provide a unique opportunity to examine the uses of reported speech because narrators tend to exercise greater control over their linguistic resources in the course of language production. It is assumed therefore that “control” over one’s linguistic resources allow speakers and narrator’s to strategically employ the grammatical and lexical elements of their language so as to maximize its communicative force in interaction. The mobilizing effects this has on narrative and the various patterns that emerge from it can provide us with an “index” to sociocultural information (Ochs 1990:293) at the level of the narrative producing action.

3. ke yóx hitamtáaycaqá číqinpa
   (that which is reported in talk)

Archie Phinney, a Nez Perce speaker/scholar and student of the famed anthropologist Franz Boas, is among the first scholars to note the use of reported speech and other similar phenomena in Nez Perce narrative.

A form very effective in narration is direct discourse. The adroitness of this usage is revealed in the striking way it adds to the vividness of tales. A similar stylistism is that of address in the third person. If a person speaks to another with deep feeling, perhaps in anger, ridicule, or pity, the statement is made doubly emphatic by use of the third person (Phinney 1934:xii).

Writing 45 years later, Haruo Aoki (1979:10) observes that Nez Perce narrative does not utilize reported speech as is common elsewhere in the world languages but rather Nez Perce typically utilizes direct discourse and other undefined reporting phenomena.

In the sections that follow, I will briefly review and offer a descriptive analysis of each of these reported speech forms drawing upon Nez Perce data from
Aoki (1979), Aoki and Walker (1989), and Phinney (1934) as well as data from my own research.

Reported speech. Naturally, the most common form of reported speech in Nez Perce narrative is direct discourse¹. A simple estimate on the frequencies of direct discourse in Nez Perce narrative demonstrate its overall position in Nez Perce communicative practice. For example, in the narrative ‘Cottontail Boy and Snowshoe Rabbit,’ the first narrative of Phinney’s 1934 publication, direct discourse accounts for 75 percent of the total utterances (Phinney 1934:1-3). Immediately following this narrative is ‘Coyote and Bull’ where direct discourse accounts for 46 percent of the overall utterances (Phinney 1934:4-10). In contrast, a modern ethnographic text in Aoki (1979:67-73) showed direct discourse comprising 8 percent of the total utterances. My impression is that direct discourse will typically range on the lower end of the spectrum, that is somewhere between 10-40 percent of the total utterances in any given stretch of text.

Nez Perce direct discourse is represented in the following text example.

(1) kałá náaqna háamana pũuyimteqaqa séepńite.
   kaa pekiyúuqaña.
   kaa péenqaqa,
       “ʔée hiwéwluqse!”
   kaa péenqaqa,
       “táaqc hikúukum!”
   pecúukwecene konyín piiteńwesix

   Jona Hayes, speaker.

One man was put in charge of asking.
And he used to go over to her.
And he used to say to her,
   “He likes you!”
And she used to say to him,
   “Now he can come!”
With that, they knew they were courting each other. (Cash Cash 1999:36)

This segment of text comprises the opening lines of a narrative describing Nez Perce courtship that was originally recorded in 1907 by Herbert J. Spinden (1879-1967), then an anthropology graduate student of Harvard. Although this example of Nez Perce direct discourse appears to be fairly typical, its use as

¹ For expository purposes, I will retain the use of the term direct discourse as originally applied in Phinney (1934) and Aoki (1979) rather than referring to this phenomena as “direct speech,” “quoted speech,” etc.
linguistic interaction suggest that these types of utterances can count as actions since they are minimally informed by a set of expectations regarding appropriate behaviors within a particular cultural frame of reference. Thus, direct discourse can be imbued with intentionality and routinized to the extent that such utterances can cause “actors to typify themselves, situating and monitoring their own conduct and persona relative to the roles, categories, and routines that they apply to others and that they perceive others apply to them” (Hanks 1990:71).

Nez Perce direct discourse is not only straightforwardly descriptive but it is also a significant feature of historical reportage. That is, these types of speech acts are fully represented as being equal to the wording of the original utterance (Besnier 1992:169). Consider the example below as related by Nez Perce speaker Agnes Moses in ‘My Childhood’ (Aoki 1979).

(2) kawóʔ koná takáycix kicúuynim haníitx ?atkáycix célmene.
ka hinéescix,
    “wáaqoʔ kíye cawcáaw kúutecix kúumtk̓u!”
cawcáaw kawóʔ wáaqoʔ pecúuke’yks.

Agnes Moses, speaker

At that place we watched Chinese making (panning) gold.
And they told us,
    “Now we go to chowchow (eat), come along!”
Then we marched on following them. (Aoki 1979:87-89)

Naturally, it is presumed here that the Chinese miners successfully communicated to the Nez Perce despite their mutual linguistic barriers. Evidence of this is found in the use of the onomatopoeic expression cawcáaw which Aoki later glosses as chowchow, a Chinese expression meaning ‘eat’. Thus, Agnes Moses is attempting to accurately report the speech of the Chinese miners as she herself once heard it. On a minor note, however, it is curious that the current translation underspecifies Moses’ predicative use of this expression in her later statement (see the last line in 2). Alternatively, this can be amended to read, “Then we marched on following them to eat.”

The direct discourse in example (2) takes on further significance when we consider that, in addition to an accurate reportage of events and speech utterances, it can also establish a referential frame by which the sources of the original utterance(s) are identified in terms of their cultural origin. In (2), a simple one-to-one correspondence is formed between the source of the utterances and the identity of the interlocutors by Agnes Moses’s use of the Nez Perce ethnic descriptor célmene ‘the Chinese’ and her reproduction of Chinese speech cawcáaw ‘eat’.
Another simple form of direct discourse is the reporting of individual thought. Consider, in (3), a text excerpt from the opening lines of ‘Coyote and Fox’ recorded by Herbert J. Spinden in 1907 (Cash Cash 1999).

(3) kúnku hitéwyenikeʔniqe ?iceyéeye kaa tilípe.
kawá tilípe hitmíipniye,
    “kex weye ?anasaʔyóox̣oʔs!”

Jona Hayes, speaker

Coyote and Fox they always lived together.
Then Fox thought (to himself),
    “Let me now search for them!” (Cash Cash 1999:58)

It is suggested here that the representation of thought in direct discourse is a micro-level function, one serves to impart volition and animacy in the immediate reality of the perceiving agent. In excerpt (4), we readily obtain the reading, “Then Fox thought (to himself).” On semantic grounds, the literal or direct translation of hitmíipniye ‘he thought (to himself)’ shows timí- ‘heart’ as the source and púuí- an object "coming out," hence the thought of it. This interpretation assumes that Fox, via his heart, is a kind of experincer who undergoes a physically realized thought process. The use of this expression to report one’s thoughts as direct discourse thus indexes an embodied field of perception as to the depth and quality of one’s thoughts and experiences. This suggests that in the thought world of Nez Perce speakers deep lived experiences and human memory are stored in the heart and can be reported upon as direct discourse.

The data further indicate that a referential frame has other more dramatic uses in Nez Perce direct discourse. For example, consider the following synopsis and excerpt (4) from ‘Bluejay and the Well-Behaved Maiden’ (Phinney 1934).

Bluejay and the Well-Behaved Maiden.

Bluejay lets his legs wrapped in pine-moss dangle into a girl’s menstrual lodge. When the people see the girl peeping at Bluejay, she follows him in shame. The moss unravels and entangles her legs while the two are crossing a stream revealing Bluejay’s thin bones. He feeds his wife pitch gum (Phinney 1934:493).
(4) míiwacpaʔáayat hihiíne,
   “námax?ítúunm wéeyux hiweyesítkeýse?”
   ?iske hóopop; mínx hiyéewikse ʔáta hóopop?”
   wíitac wáaqo? hipatqítana;
   koná quyéesquyes hiwalátqíikika.
   koná,
   “quyées, quyées,”
   hitqéece.

Weyíiletpuu, speaker

Shortly, the woman said to him,
   “Just what is this tangling about my legs?
   Like pine tree moss; whence floats this pine tree moss?”
   All the way across it entangled her legs in this manner.
   They were about to wade ashore
   when Bluejay dashed ashore alone.
   There he suddenly gave the call of the bluejay...
   (Phinney 1934:15-18)

Alternatively, in more expressive terms, an amended gloss of the last line is possible which conveys a more “Nez Perce” style translation.

There,
   “quyées, quyées!”
   He is suddenly saying.

In (4), Bluejay has been revealed in his deception of the Well-Behaved Maiden and, as a consequence, his identity as deceptor is surrendered and he reverts back to his true identity as plain Bluejay. As plain Bluejay, he is no longer capable of uttering human-style speech instead he only utters what all bluejays are capable of uttering, “quyées, quyées!”

The use of direct discourse in this instance is a function of contrast in that the referential frame that is established here consists of two identities in contrast. That these identities are constructed through the canonical uses of language clearly offers the notion that the reproduction of linguistic forms in a Nez Perce universe of discourse are contextually salient much to the same degree as pure indexicals (Eggart 1998:112). Thus, the larger cultural function implicated in the use of direct discourse is its ability to serve as an index to ideal and expected behaviors among speech act participants.
This is evident in the following elicited text that I recorded in the field in cooperation with fluent Nez Perce speaker, Eugene Wilson. The text is tentatively titled Yeléept which means ‘friends sworn to die together’ and was told to Eugene by his mother while they were traveling in the mountainous region near the Idaho/Montana border. I present a synopsis of the story followed by a text excerpt in (5) showing the dramatic use of direct discourse as a function of contrast.

Yeléept

Two friends lived in a village. One had a beautiful wife whom the other much desired. While gathering eaglets in a high mountainous place, the covetous friend lowered the other down a cliff face to a nest of eaglets whereupon he cut the rope and left his friend to die. The covetous one returned to the village and reported that his friend had died thus claiming his wife. The stranded friend ties himself together with matured eaglets and flies to safety. Upon returning to the village, he interrupts a wedding feast in progress to confront his covetous friend thus revealing his deception. Greatly shamed, the covetous friend goes into the forest and kills himself.

(5) kaa hinéesne,
    “kuʔús ʔekúuye Tipyaláhnim,
    kexkaa hisepteqeʔlwetíyeke
    kexkaa síiks papáayna kíi
        kaa ?alláay peečéxicilkinya,
        peečéxicilkinya wáaptas.
    kaa hinéeke,
        “konó? hitíньxnú?.” kaa hickílinime.
    neeʔé yeléept?”
kaa Tipyaláhna kicéeyniń
    Kómayć kicéeyniń ?ewéwteleqe
        kaa misemiyíix peʔemsteqeʔénpe
        “ʔuunnée!”
qóʔ misemiyíix yóx hihíice,
    “ʔeehée kúus ʔée ʔekúuye yeléept.”
kaa kuu málaham péene,
    “kúus neeʔ? píkume yeléept.”
And he told them,

“That is what Tipyaláhna did,
when he deserted me up there,
when I arrived to the nest,
and down below he cut the rawhide rope,
he cut the rawhide rope (there among) the eagles.

And he thought,

“There he will be dead” and here he came home.
Isn’t that so, Yeléept?”

And Tipyaláhna (became) ashamed.
Utterly ashamed he hung his head
And the lying one answered him,
“Yes!”

Indeed that lying one said,
“Yes, I did that to you, Yeléept.”
And again he said it, “Yes!”

Tipyaláhna was greatly ashamed.

Similar to (4), the significance of this text is found in the assertion of guilt given by Tipyaláhna after he had been revealed as a deceptor. The choice of expression given by Tipyaláhna is ʔuunée, a Flathead Salish term meaning ‘yes’ rather than the Nez Perce expression ʔeehée. Again, the concern raised here in the use of direct discourse is its referential salience in the signaling of positive and negative behavior (i.e. its function of contrast).

As a cultural indicator, the expression ʔuunée realigns Tipyaláhna’s identity outside the Nez Perce realm and forces us to reexamine his un-Nez Perce like behavior from an ecological standpoint given the fact that this story is geographically situated on the borders of the Nez Perce-Salish contact area. Thus, the code-switching situates it within a specific cultural and geographic space and strongly suggest that the linguistic components of interethnic contact are operating as symbols of ethnic identity.

A near identical linguistic phenomena is found in a text entitled, “How Porcupine Went to the Plains” (Aoki and Walker 1989:107-120). In this myth text, Porcupine travels east to the Buffalo Country and is linguistically portrayed here as a bilingual who speaks both Nez Perce and Flathead Salish. His bilingual abilities is represented in his use of the Flathead Salish utterances ʔootáa ‘no’ and ʔuunée ‘yes’.
In my last example, direct discourse also serves as a signal of extralinguistic phenomena such as we saw earlier in (4). In this instance, however, it is not speech that is being replicated or reported rather it is more an echoing of sounds that are symbolic in origin or, more properly, onomatopoeia like. Compare the following synopsis and text excerpt in (6).

Bear and Racoon Boy

While out searching for crawfish, Racoon Boy encounters a bear and kills her by thrusting her thorn needle into her ear. His grandmother cuts her hand while helping him roast the bear and he sends her to a menstruation lodge. In the meantime, he pretends guests have arrived and eats up the entire bear roast. His grandmother leaves him, wrapping herself in a bearskin. When he comes upon her, she crushes him to death. (Phinney 1934:494-95)

(6) Qáacaʔcin hitéewyecine ʔKaykayóochacwal.
hitiʔláyixqana
 ?etke páayqopnax konyá.
 kal’a “xaw xaw” hipqána,
 kaa wéet'u mis hiwyéeʔnikse.
kuʔús hiwéwitise
péewyepeʔwise tiʔláana
 kímet kaa “setúux”
 ?ipnéetewyeke.

Weyíiletpuu, speaker

Racoon Boy and his grandmother were dwelling there. He would go around looking for crawfish because he was very found of them. he would devour them on the spot with a crunching noise, and he never thought to save any to take home. Thus, one day, he went along the stream searching for crawfish when suddenly, he felt a presence hovering about him. (Phinney 1934:259-260)

The text excerpt in (6) is the opening lines of the myth text ‘Bear and Racoon Boy.’ An amended literal translation of Phinney’s text is given below. Here, I have attempted to incorporate the sound symbolic utterances into the text.
Racoon Boy and his grandmother were dwelling there. He would go around looking for crawfish because he relished them.

Just so, “χaw χaw,” he would devour them, and he never saved any at all.

Like this he goes along down stream searching for crawfish when suddenly, “setúux” he felt a presence hovering about him.

First, the use of onomatopoeia identifies Racoon Boy’s manner of eating crawfish, given here as χaw χaw. This reporting of extralinguistic phenomena is significant because it immediately links Racoon Boy’s manner of eating with his antisocial behavior which later contributes to his ultimate demise.

Second, a sound symbolic utterance is given in setúux, a unique expression which is translated as an “indefinable awareness that someone is present” or “noiselessness in movement” (Aoki 1994:635). Here, its use as direct discourse is unique due to the fact that it does not possess “metapragmatic transparency” (Silverstein 2001:396) rather its use is contextually dependent upon a larger referential frame of sensory perception. Thus, a Nez Perce cultural logic allows unknown entities and states of affairs to erupt into our perceptual field as discernable presences. Experientially, these types of discernable presences have affective force and the limits of ordinary perception are satisfied simply as dramatized extralinguistic phenomena.

4. hínaq̓itpa
   (conclusion)

Nez Perce narratives open a universe of discourse where speech within speech is reproduced both as direct discourse and as extralinguistic phenomenon. I have reviewed each of these occurrences with the purpose of describing their form and function. The evidence indicate that direct discourse is a process of communication that constructs and organizes a range of conventionalized communicative behaviors and perceptual awareness as encoded linguistic structures of reference. The evidence presented here favors the argument that our developing notion of linguistic interaction is informed by a larger cultural function, one that engages direct discourse in a dynamic interplay between individual behaviors and collective social purpose. Thus, reported speech is an active linguistic force that contributes to the formation of a Nez Perce sense of self.
yóx ke tiwíkce číiqin
(that which is following the words, i.e. references)


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