

ISSA Proceedings 2002 - Using One's Own Words To Argue In Written Interviews: Alain Robbe-Grillet And Reported Speech



Introduction

In this paper, I intend to show how phenomena of self-reported speech (SRS) manifest on the linguistic and pragmatic levels of the text, are related to a discourse's argumentative level. This research stems from studies in the field of argumentation, claiming that arguments can be found in the lexical and syntactic levels of language (Ducrot 1984) and that traces of arguments can be found in discourse itself (Amossy 2002).

In the first part of this paper, I shall define the terrain of RS I'm intending to investigate, then explain some of the generic characteristics of the interview relevant for the analysis of this phenomena. I will then review briefly the texts chosen for the analysis - interviews held with the writer Robbe-Grillet. The second part of the paper includes an analysis of several interview sequences, each demonstrating a different aspect of the usage and effects of self-reported speech. I shall conclude by making remarks and assumptions on the relation between linguistic phenomena and discourse's rhetorical level.

Reported and Self-Reported Speech

Reported Speech (RS) entails various forms: from well defined ones such as direct speech (DS), indirect speech (IDS) - where the speaker explicitly makes place in his utterance for the discourse of another (Authier-Revuz 1982 : 92)(i), to others more problematic and amorphous such as free indirect and free direct speech, as well as forms that can be found in the periphery of RS - reformulations, recirculations, summaries, repetition of utterances and fictitious reports (Jaubert 2002 : 61-64, 81).

Self Reported Speech (SRS) is a subcategory of RS. Reporting one's own discourse or using one's own words is similar to reporting someone else's words, since repeating an old utterance is like repeating the utterance of the person we used to be. It follows that the inclusion of one's own words (lets us call it "quoted

discourse”) within the new discourse (the “quoting discourse”) can be analysed in light of theories of Reported Speech (RS).

In its wider sense, SRS involves diverse functions: it includes the restating of one’s own words emitted elsewhere for the purpose of summary (Jespersen, Reichler-Béguelin 1997 : 105). Reported speech appears in discursive forms such as a commentary, a gloss, alterations, adjustments where a speaker reorganizes and arranges certain elements of his discourse (Authier-Revuz 1982 : 93). It also involves an explicative function vis-à-vis things pronounced in the past and which now need to be repeated or re-stated for the sake of clarification. The usage of Reported speech may also have a distancing or demarcative purpose (Rosier 1999: 106; Authier-Revuz 1984): we may choose to distance ourselves from what someone else had said by indicating on the syntactic level that we are not responsible for the things uttered, or else show that we ourselves have said it, but in the past, thus assuming full responsibility for it **(ii)**.

What’s more, reporting one’s own discourse, that is, inserting it in another context can be part of the larger task of persuasion of the speaker. For instance, RS is the place where counter arguments come into life: it is used “to mention argumentative positions other than the one illustrated by the second [quoting] discourse” (Jespersen, Reichelen-Béguelin 1997: 103). Once transplanted in the argumentative task of the quoting discourse, the utterance bearing the quoted discourse is susceptible to change due to recontextualisation or the reformulation of the quoted discourse in accordance with the new objectives of the quoting discourse **(iii)**. Thus, by analyzing SRS, we are able to identify the rhetorical moves of the speaker.

The written interview and self-reported speech

For various pragmatic and generic reasons, the written interview is a form of communication encouraging the recurrent usage of self-reported speech.

The interview is a meta-discourse: it speaks *of*. The interviewee is nearly always somebody who has acted or written elsewhere, and who is invited to talk about it in an interview. The interviewer, who speaks on behalf of the audience, seeks to extract information and explanations from the interviewee, on his actions and writings. The interviewee is there to defend his work, justify his deeds and utterances, and construct a favorable image of himself. He does so by explaining and clarifying his work and words *in other words*.

On the pragmatic level, the interview is composed of question-answer sequences, where, typically, the interviewer is the dominant participant, that is the person

asking the questions. In addition, the interview is always addressed to an absent audience, the interviewer acting as a spokesperson for that audience. Consequently, the interviewee is often obliged, by an explicit demand on the part of the interviewer in lieu of the audience, to repeat or reformulate his own speech.

Finally, although transcribed for the sake of publication, the written interview seeks to preserve the effects of the oral, thus, even in its written form, it enjoys a relative tolerance for palimpsestic phenomena such as repetition or lack of immediate precision. Therefore, the fact that the interviewee repeats himself a number of times in different ways, is a constituent part of the pragmatic characteristic of the interview.

The subject-matter

The texts examined here are extracted from a larger corpus of written interviews conducted from the nineteen sixties to the eighties with the writer and film maker Robbe-Grillet. Widely known as the theoretician of the New Novel, and involved in the literary polemics of the sixties and seventies in France, Robbe-Grillet was also (and still is) an attractive candidate for interviews **(iv)**. Despite his unfavorable attitude towards the interview, which he views as a “bavardage”, a sort of prattle (Brochier 1985 : 118-119), the numerous interviews in which he has participated over the years has mounted and can be summed up into an ample additional setting **(v)** for the explanation of his theories and for clarifying any misinterpretations or misunderstandings which he claims to have had with his critics.

Demonstration

1. SRS related to the specific generic traits of the interview

1.1 Reported speech and constraints of the oral

The first example relates to the usage of SRS and its reformulation as part of an answer to the communicational constraints of the interview. The interview is initially an oral discourse, and therefore requires the use of simple, and often repetitious language. Secondly, it is often published in a magazine, for amateur readers, requiring a reformulation when referring to complex ideas published elsewhere. In the following example, Robbe-Grillet explains in simple terms for the amateur readers of the *Express*, what he had written previously in an essay (“A Path for the Future Novel”, 1956).

(1) Robbe-Grillet - [...] It is by the way the *Express* that invented me as a

theoretician. I had never written the least word on theory when, thirteen years ago, you asked me to write a series of articles that I dubbed “La littérature aujourd’hui” (“Literature today”). *I wanted to tell people “You think that you are in 1860, well, no! things have evolved, you are in another world, you live differently, you think differently. Why try to hold on to an art that no longer corresponds with anything alive, and is simply reassuring for you?”* (*Express* 1968: 142-175).

1.2 Repetition and circulation of concepts and the dialectic aspect of the interview

Another way to analyse the usage of one’s own words is to look at it from the dialogical/dialectic perspective. Assisted by the interviewee, the interviewer seeks “the truth” or certain answers. In the present dialogue, the interviewer concludes that Robbe-Grillet was involved in a polemic with the critics of his time, and implicitly seeks Robbe-Grillet’s confirmation. Robbe-Grillet agrees, and to stress this understanding, he gives an example through the repetition of concepts he used in his book: “objective” Vs. “subjective”. By using quotation marks, he singles out the poles around which polemics was is organized, thereby supplying evidence for the interviewer’s conclusion. Confirmation of the polemical event is thus achieved on two levels: on the explicit level, he responds “yes, that’s right”. On the implicit level, he reconfirms this intuition by supplying verbal and conceptual evidence via quoting the terms he had used in response to the provocation of the critics.

(2) VM - In any case, you were answering a certain number of criticisms at that time. There is therefore a polemical event.

ARG - Yes, that’s right. There is a polemical element. They were points that needed to be emphasized. I remember something that strikes me a great deal when I reread *Pour un nouveau roman*. *It’s that when I insisted upon “objective,” it was really in response. And then, later when the word “objective” gained too strong a hold I insisted on “subjective”.* Do you understand? (p. 36)

VM - Yes. Moreover, the insistence on subjectivity, to my mind, is the most disturbing element in the book now. It is what has least withstood the test of time.

ARG - Yes, yes. It’s very banal. It’s an old story. It’s no longer representation, but expression, which ultimately comes down to the same thing: the novelist expressing himself. No, those are notions I don’t really hold dearly (Mistacco 1976: 36).

2. Effects of coherence

2.1 Intra-textual reference and coherence

Preceding this interview sequence, Robbe-Grillet points out that reading and writing are both activities of a productive nature. In the following passage, then, the interviewer seeks to find out whether there is symmetry between the two. When responding to the interviewer, the interviewee is referring to things he had mentioned earlier on in the interview. The effect achieved by this allusion is twofold: first, it contributes to the thematic coherence of the interview, on the structural (the reference to an earlier stage of the interview points out to the structure of the interview) as well as on the thematic levels (the interviewee clarifies his ideas); secondly, it reinforces the interviewee's positive image by showing the consistency of his opinion.

(3) VM -You have spoken of a kind of second-stage activity of the reader which would reproduce or re-create the text. Should the codes of reading, if you like, correspond to the rules or codes of generation? Should there be a convergence?
ARG - No. There can't be, precisely since, as *I noted earlier*, there are, at every moment, elements of the architectural structure which necessarily escape the reader because they belong to the author (Mistacco 1976 : 35-43).

2.2 Quotation and demarcation

The idea that RS can refer to aspects of the interview itself, and at the same time also "say something" about the interviewee's relation to the interview can be further advanced by the following example. The fragment is extracted from the *VH-101 Journal's* special number on "Theory", hosting a number of prominent critics and academics who specialize in theory(vi). Robbe-Grillet is then invited to speak as an active theoretician. After reluctantly defining theory, he explains that there is no one single "Theory". In response to the interviewer, demanding a definition of the different theories in his books, Robbe-Grillet announces twice that he is not a theoretician. First, by alluding to things he had said in the past ("since I'm not a theoretician") then, by explicitly stating it, through a *direct quotation* from the inaugurating sentence of *For a New Novel* ("I am not a theoretician of the novel") (Robbe-Grillet 1996 : 10). Thus, Robbe-Grillet *demarcates* himself from the general purpose of the Journal (to speak of theory as a theoretician), but in doing so he calls attention to, albeit *via negativa*, the very purpose of the number (define "theory").

(4) ARG - [...] Between *les Gommages, le Voyeur, la Jalousie, la Maison de rendez-vous* at least four different "theories" if not more are brought into play!

Q - Which ones?

ARG - *But I do not know.... since I'm not a theoretician! Anyway, it is the first sentence of my collection of theoretical essays: "I am not a theoretician of the novel."* Like any other novelist, I have theoretical intuitions, and I have attempted more than others to develop them. But I do not understand how you can entirely theorize a work before writing it (Hahn and Essellier 1970 : 93-94).

2.3 Re-circulation and overall coherence

In the following interview, Robbe-Grillet and the interviewer discuss the question of representation in literature. According to the former, the imagination is "more real" than its counter part, real-life experience. What is imagined is more vivid thus more tangible. This idea has already been advanced in his articles, and in particular, in an article entitled "From Realism to reality" (1963) as he so mentions it himself, where he recounts the story of the seagulls. The repetition of the same story within different frameworks - be it an essay or an interview - creates a thematic consistency in his writings. We therefore see how a re-circulation of one's own discourse contributes to a general effect of coherence in the ideas of a person, and in extrapolation, of his personality.

(5) ARG - [...] I'm completely honest, sincere, when I say that I don't make a difference between the character of a novel and a "real person". My two grandfathers, who died rather young, about fifty years ago, exist in my memory. Mathias, the travelling merchant in *Le Voyeur*, exists in my memory. And even in the same manner. That is to say that I cannot bring myself to attribute an imaginary status to one while [giving the other] a real status. To a point where, when I speak of my grandfather to people who have known him, if they contradict me here and there, I do not complain to them. Moreover, what they tell me does not interest me.

JJB -You do not speak of the same person.

ARG - He is in my head, and in a certain way. *In For a New Novel, I recount something analogous about seagulls (recounts the story from Towards a New Novel)*. When I wrote *Le Voyeur*, I had the occasion to travel to the Britton Islands and watch real seagulls. All of a sudden, they seemed fictive to me. The only real ones were present, dense. As though real life experience nourished the imaginary, but for the same reason and at the same time as a number of other things, and it is the imaginary which becomes the real while being constituted as a text [...] (My translation) (Brochier 1985: 147).

2.4 Recontextualization and explanation

The story of the seagulls is repeated here, albeit for different purposes: in this context Robbe-Grillet uses the seagull anecdote for the sake of explaining the method of his work: he does not necessarily base his settings on real objects or places. In the larger picture, of course, the story once again contributes to the coherence of his utterances in general.

(6) Q - These minutely loyal descriptions of objects which characterize your books, do they require a local investigation?

ARG - But precisely, there is no fidelity. [...] *I have recounted in Towards a New Novel how, finding myself in Bretagne at the time I was describing the seagulls in Le Voyeur, I came up with the idea of watching real seagulls in order to see what they were like. I noticed that there was no resemblance, it doesn't matter, I said to myself, these seagulls are simply other seagulls: those of the imagination.*

Notice that curiously enough, the fact that I do not worry about representation does not prevent me from borrowing all of my books settings from real places, including Hong-Kong [...]

You realize that it's not about realism. Any way, I never carry a pencil to take notes, let's just say that some settings strike me more violently than others, acting in a way as generators (de Rambures 1976 : 17).

3. Combining Strategies

So far, we have looked at examples of SRS related to the pragmatic aspects of the interview. We shall now revert to SRS related to the rhetorical dimension of the interview, and demonstrate how it is coupled up with other argumentative strategies.

3.1 Implicit RS and Analogy

RS techniques are not a stand-alone activity. They are often combined with other strategies. In the following example, an implicit reference to one's own ideas is combined with an analogy. Here Robbe-Grillet implicitly **(vii)** refers to an article in his *For a New Novel* ("A Path for a Future Novel"), by summarizing its principal argument, namely, that the novelist today is still confronted with models of writing of the classical novel. He foretells the future of television by offering us an analogy to the novel, and offers a solution similar to that of the novel: just like the novel, Television should seek new forms instead of imitating old ones:

(7) ARG - [...] let's assume that it is an inevitable inconvenience of culture that

the novel tends to freeze under the 19th century novelistic forms; but that the newly born TV is immediately shutting itself in forms that have never been televised [...] is rather scary.”

[...]

ARG - [...] But an adaptation [to TV] cannot be interesting if it doesn't create a new work, instead of seeking to reproduce by other means an already existing work [...] (Benmussa 1964 : 22-23, 31).

3.2. *Direct quotation and assuming responsibility*

In this sequence, Robbe-Grillet seemingly attempts to set an excuse for any apparent contradiction in his theories and terms. He does so by admitting the pamphletary nature of his essays: generic constraints are then responsible for any such inconsistency, since essays are just that, a palimpsestic attempt to explain the same things over and over. However, as soon as he points out the incongruities, he actually *admits* them as an inherent, *conscious* part of his “simplistic theoretical endeavor”, by supplying a living proof for it, by quoting a subtitle of one of his essays (“The New Novel aims only at a total subjectivity”). Complaining that people refused to see the contradiction, he thus transfers the responsibility of misunderstanding to the readers: having explicitly stated the contradiction, he expects them to have noticed it, without further explanation.

(8) ARG - [...] *In the interview we held nearly twenty years ago, I speak of fighting Depth.* This combat was also simplistic, simplifying, at any rate simplified. My rough theoretical ideas were never great treatises on literature. Only rough estimates.

JJB - Pamphlets ?

ARG - Yes, after all, [writings] that suffered from the limits of the genre, the magnifying of features. *I therefore had to incessantly rectify my shot and, once successful, had to change the target. There are already rectifications even within Towards a New Novel. I notably wrote there: “The New Novel aims only at a total subjectivity.” A sentence printed in capital letters, isolated by a blank line, in order to emphasize it.* However, when the book appears, very early on, [...], one does not see these rectifications, one does not read this sentence although it goes against all the stereotypes (“*idées reçues*”) on the New Novel” (Brochier 1985: 144-145).

3.3 *The hypothetical RS*

In the following sequence, the interviewer seeks an account for the difference in

style between Robbe-Grillet's autobiography (*le Miroir qui revient*, 1984) and his previous novels, explaining it by the assumption that Robbe-Grillet is "resetting the clock". Robbe-Grillet explains the difference in style by viewing writing as a dynamic process(viii). When explaining his point of view, Robbe-Grillet resorts to a complex clause: ("if I say that Barthes has simplified, has only taken and emphasized a part of what I wrote while neglecting the rest, I have to accept the fact that I, too, have done the same concerning my [own] books."). This complex clause comprises a subordinate clause resembling the conditional mood(ix): "Barthes has simplified, and [therefore] I have to admit [that I have done the same]". By using it, Robbe-Grillet provides an indirect answer for the matter of style alteration by appealing to Barthes' authority: if he can do it, so can I, and I have done it elsewhere. The "elsewhere" is signaled by the usage of the past tense (*I have done the same*, concerning my books), combined with a proof: I *consciously* wrote a book full of metaphors while denying metaphor in an essay I was writing at the same time: ("*I don't signal it out there*, that I am writing a metaphorical novel. *I know it, but I don't say it*"). This negative allusion - in other words, stating what he does not say, but could say or could point out - reinforces his claim that it is not about contradiction, but about a conscious move, not a contradiction in style, but rather an inherent part of the dynamics of writing. Coupled with an appeal to authority, this hypothetical RS helps to supply a rational account for apparent contradictions between theory and practice.

(9) JJB - In *Le Miroir qui revient*, one gets the feeling that you wanted to reset the clock regarding the reading of your own books.

ARG - Rather: I'm interested in literature, in its history, and I believe that it moves perpetually. Not only because other books are written, but since old books move [as well]. Shakespeare's work moves, in recent years Flaubert's work has been seriously changed. One should incessantly reread the books, and if we were to admit a certain importance of my books, I also have to admit this permanent re-examination [of them].

As much as *if I say that Barthes has simplified, has only taken and emphasized a part of what I wrote while neglecting the rest*, I have to accept the fact that *I, too, have done the same concerning my [own] books*. When I *condemn metaphor* in *Pour un Nouveau Roman*, at the same time I write *La Jalousie*, which is a festival of metaphorical writing.

JJB - A metaphor for its sake only.

ARG - This condemnation of the metaphor evidently exists in the text entitled

“Nature, Humanism, Tragedy”. *I don't signal it out there*, that I am writing a metaphorical novel. *I know it, but I don't say it*. I also indulge in an enterprise of simplification that seems necessary to me, for such a combat, at such a moment (my translation) (Brochier 1985 :143-144).

3.4 Second hand RS and an implicit appeal to authority

A last example of strategy amalgamation is the combination of definition and an implicit appeal to authority underlying a direct quotation. Following an explicit demand for clarification of a concept (“objectivity”), Robbe-Grillet defines it as “inclined towards the object”, a definition he borrows from Barthes’1954 essay “Littérature objective” (x). Although this time Robbe-Grillet does not pay explicit tribute to Barthes, the reknown theoretician, one can sense the presence of the latter by the content of the quotation marks. Although Robbe-Grillet does not mention Barthes explicitly, he does demarcate the words of the latter by the usage of quotation marks: “inclined towards the object”, thus hinting at its borrowed nature.

(10) Q - What do you make then of that objectivity you claim for the novel ?

RG - This objectivity is an intention that the critics attribute to me. *I myself have used this word very little in my theoretical essays. If I had done so, I always specified in what particular sense: in the sense of “turned towards the object”, that is, towards the material world (L'Express 1959 : 31-34).*

3.5 DS and IDS as Precision tools

As we noticed in previous examples, the variants of RS can act as “precision tools”, assisting in the clarification of ideas. In the following example, Robbe-Grillet uses direct and indirect speech to reject the rigorous theory hypothesis brought forth by the interviewer. He first demonstrates it linguistically, by quoting the difference between the definite and indefinite articles, then goes on to explain the impossibility of such a hypothesis first *via negativa* (“I didn't say either, what the future novel had to be like”) then *via positiva* (“and I insisted upon the necessity of a continual renewal”).

(11) Q - Nevertheless you were blamed and praised for loving rigorous constructions.

RG - [...] My theoretical writings - they should be called so - are a perspective on the novels that I have just published, but afterwards I can write a novel in repsonse to the theoretical writings.

For instance, I have entitled one of my articles that provoked a scandal: “*A path for the future novel*”. They thought that I defined what the future novel had to be absolutely like. *I have nevertheless made very clear: “A” path, and not “the” path. I didn’t say either, what this future novel had to be like because I only pointed out a direction; and I insisted upon the necessity of a continual renewal.* What’s more, a direction is not necessarily straight ahead but may also be oblique, bifurcate or diverge [...] (Robbe-Grillet 1965 : 3).

4. RS and Ethos

In previous examples, we have put an emphasis on message construction and coherence within the framework of a single interview or in reference to the writer’s other works. It was shown that RS is not always a stand-alone technique, and how, combined with other techniques, it contributes to this coherence. In what follows, I would like to point out how the usage of RS participates in the construction of the interviewer’s image.

4.1. Summarizing and creating a self image

The following example exceeds the narrow framework of SRS. Here, Robbe-Grillet does not report his wording, but instead *summarizes* his writing activities. By doing so, he *justifies* the fact he’s considered as the leader of the New Novel, a role implicitly attributed to him by the interviewer, as is reflected in the latter’s remark (Let’s say it was you who cried out: “The emperor has no clothes”...). While responding to the interviewer, Robbe-Grillet actually complies with the latter’s implied suggestion that he is a leader. This move signals out the role played by the dialogical nature of the interview in the formation or confirmation of ideas and truths.

(12) JJB - Let’s say it was you who cried out: “The emperor has no clothes”...

ARG - Which means that around me were gathered writers who thought so without always admitting to it, all of whom wanted to invent the novel again. The kind of influence I had over them and the critics, was sort of catalysing. *I gathered, I polarized those scattered denials of the academic forms traditional criticism was trying to impose on novelists*” (Brochier 1985: 128).

4.2 Distancing and imaging

RS is instigated here by a demand of clarification on the part of the interviewer. She asks the interviewee to explicitly state whether an essential change has occurred in his theory (the passage from perceiving reading as an act of *creation*

to viewing it as *production*), or whether it is just a change in vocabulary. In this first attempt, Robbe-Grillet declines the use of the term “production”, without actually answering the question. The interviewer insists upon the matter equipped with a new question (“Yes, but do you view the reader’s activity now in the way you did *when you wrote the theoretical essays published in Pour un nouveau roman?*”). This time she puts an emphasis on the interviewee’s theoretical activity, referring explicitly to his essay collection, and under such pressure, Robbe-Grillet is left with no choice but to address the matter.

In so doing, he dismantles himself from his theoretical writings(xii), not only by stating it explicitly (“You know, I don’t attach very much importance to my theoretical essays”), but also by introducing a temporal scale: that is, by attributing a certain outdatedness to his theoretical activity (we’re talking about things I have done or said 20 years ago). This move coincides with his overall project which consists of directing the critics’ attention towards his novelistic activities while simultaneously declaring the unimportance of his theoretical activity, a tendency already apparent in the opening sentence of his manifesto *For a New Novel*, where he openly declares “I am not a theoretician” (Robbe-Grillet 1963 : 10). This is also part of an overall strategy designated for the creation of a novelistic rather than an essayistic image of himself: Robbe-Grillet wants to be better known as a novelist rather than as a theorist.

(13) VM - In the beginning of your career as a novelist, you spoke of creation, of the active involvement of the reader in the creative process. Now you seem more inclined to speak of production. Does this merely represent a change in vocabulary, *or is it a correction due to a refinement of your theory?* Does it correspond to a real change in the kind of activity you expect from the reader?

RG - I don’t like the word production

VM - Yes, but do you view the reader’s activity now in *the way you did when you wrote the theoretical essays published in Pour un nouveau roman?*

RG - *You know, I don’t attach very much importance to my theoretical essays.* They are some thoughts that come to me, just like that, but which do not at all constitute an overall dogma. Furthermore, those thoughts began twenty-five years ago and evidently they have evolved. Besides, I don’t feel at all bound by *theoretical observations I make or that I may have made twenty years ago.* These theoretical observations are more like questions for me; they are questions which arise. And when I make believe I am giving answers , I am only making believe. [...] When I publish articles...Take a book like *Pour un nouveau roman*: it’s a

collection of little articles which had appeared in newspapers and journals. Well, no, historically, it looks like a kind of manifesto of the New Novel or something. But it's not that at all. It simply represents elements of reflection. And I can't say that I am entirely in agreement today *with what I said then*, nor that I was entirely in agreement at the time. It does not imply for my any notion of truth, a *fortiori* of normative truth (I underline) (Mistacco 1976 : 36).

4.3 Irony and the lightness of being

In the following example, Robbe-Grillet uses his own discourse for the sake of constructing a certain humble image of himself, while confronting the unfavorable portrait painted by the interviewer. However, this modest image is not without a pinch of irony. While the interviewer attempts to emphasize the cynical and arrogant sides of Robbe-Grillet's personality, the latter tries to stress the practical, "engineer-like" aspects of his own persona, disarming the ironical remark of the interviewer by answering comically at first, then supposedly seriously (by distinguishing manual labor (defined seriously as "big works") from the action of writing (defined as "small work"). In the end, the effect achieved is that of an image of a person (Robbe-Grillet) who does not take himself too seriously, since he is capable of slight self ridicule.

(14) ARG - This conviction, would I have conserved it had I not been encouraged to do so? It is difficult to say. I am very persistent, I am loyal to people, to things, to convictions too. I find it hard to imagine that I would lose the idea of the importance of *my small works*.

L'Express - Why do you always say "*my small works*?" By false modesty?

ARG - Let's say *my masterpieces*, if you prefer...

L'Express - You could say *my works*.

ARG - When I say works, I think of armed cement. I have produced a lot of big works, I have worked with my hands. Now, *those are small works*, it is meticulous, and problematic (*L'Express* 1968: 169).

5. Reformulation and audience construction

In an interview held for a woman's magazine, Robbe-Grillet reformulates an idea expressed elsewhere, in the sub-titles of the essay "New Novel, New Man" (1961): "The New Novel is addressed to all men of good faith". Instead of using the denigrating and somewhat cynical expression proposed by the interviewer "simple minds" (perhaps implying "stupid"), as an interpretation of "men of good faith", he chooses to use the adjective "naive". In addition, aware that his current

readers are ladies, he changes the word “men” appearing in the original form, and replaces it with the neutral term “people”.

(15) Q - In fact, your work is designated for “*simple minds*”?

RG - It is intended, yes, for the *naïve*, for *people* of good faith, for everybody. I think that, I regret to state it as simply, that a work that one can call “intelligent”, but it is wrong to believe that intelligence is the enemy of sensibility (Bergeron 1967 : 54-55).

This passage shows the delicacy of such a task of conforming one’s message with the type of audience one is addressing. Robbe-Grillet succeeds in his effort only partially. Although trying to sense the level of the journal’s audience, and trying not to insult them by reverting to more neutral terms, he fails to do so by addressing them through common stereotypes of women: naïve and sensible...

Conclusion

In what preceded, I have shown the functions of Self Reported Speech in the framework of the interview on the linguistic (syntactic), pragmatic and rhetorical levels. In what follows, I would like to sum up the examples in a few remarks pertaining to discourse analysis in general, as well as to the specific case study I have chosen.

We saw how SRS is regularly used as part of the generic traits of the interview whether as part of its pragmatic or rhetorical aspects. On the pragmatic level, its orality, as well as its dialogical-dialectic nature require continuous repetition and rephrasing. From the rhetorical perspective, restating and recirculating and reformulating one’s own words is part of the task of constructing the image the interviewee is seeking to convey to a certain type of audience. In all of these cases, the message, the image or the audience are all created by retorting to SRS. However, we realized that SRS is not a stand-alone technique, and that coupled with other rhetorical devices, such as an appeal to authority and analogy, it functions as a powerful linguistic and pragmatic tool on the rhetorical level.

Finally, the usage of SRS contributes not only to the local coherence of a given interview, but also to the global cohesion of an interviewee’s discourse. Repeating one’s words creates a certain agenda, a private jargon and a set of personal arguments that join together in portraying the speaker.

For scholars in literature and discourse analysts, the examination of a given linguistic phenomenon is senseless unless given a significance related to its usage. Here we did so by showing the passage from the tactical level (the usage

of SRS) to the strategical level, namely, explaining the objective of the usage of SRS as part of the speakers's general/ global program. But, in order to terminate our analysis, we have to find out what function SRS has for Robbe-Grillet.

In light of the examples presented, specialists of Robbe-Grillet can see a correspondance between his usage of SRS and his polemical positioning in the literary arena. As head of the New Novel, and since he is involved in the literary quarrel between the Ancient and the Modern of the twentieth century, he often needs to justify himself, a thing which shows up in his repeated usage of SRS. In addition, in his frequent participation in interviews he is confronted with diverse audiences - from specialists to strict amateurs, to whom he has to explain each time in a different manner, often complex theoretical ideas. Finally, the frequent employment of SRS corresponds with his general poetic style - characterized by what we may dub "la reprise" (a title reserved for his last novel): it involves the constant repetition and recounting of the same ideas and events albeit from different angles and perspectives.

NOTES

i. It is the "other" of the Reported Speech: the syntactic forms of Direct and indirect speech designate in a clear manner in the sentence, another speech act (utterance). In the case of indirect speech, the speaker acts upon as a translator: by using his own words, he points out to another as a source of the "meaning" of the things he is reporting. In direct speech, the actual words of the other occupy the time or the space of the quotation clearly defined in the sentence, the speaker thus acting merely as a spokesman. Under these two modes of expression the speaker makes place explicitly in his discourse, for the discourse of another. (My translation) (Authier-Revuz 1982: 92)

ii. Contrary to the assertion considering that "quoting the words of another speaker is [...] reporting something, saying it without taking responsibility for it" (I underline) (Maingueneau 1994, quoted in Jespersen, Reichler-Béguelin 1997 : 101), I agree with Jespersen and Reichler-Béguelin, that one often uses the words of others to assume responsibility for them.

iii. According to Bakhtin's observation, the quoting discourse changes the initial meaning of the RS by the mere fact it creates a different horizon of expectations: "La parole d'autrui, si exactement transmise soit-elle, subit toujours certaines modifications de sens. Le contexte qui englobe la parole d'autrui crée un fond dialogique dont l'influence peut être importante. En recourant à des procédés

d'enchâssement appropriés, on peut parvenir à des transformations notables d'un énoncé étranger, pourtant rendu de façon exacte. [...] Voilà pourquoi, lorsqu'on étudie les différentes formes de transmission du discours d'autrui, on ne peut séparer le procédé d'élaboration de ce discours du procédé de son encadrement contextuel (dialogique)." (Bakhtine : 1978) (quoted in Jespersen and Reichler-Béguelin 1997: 109)

iv. A few words need to be said about the literary context of the period to which Robbe-Grillet refers to in the interviews. In the late 50's and the early 60' Robbe-Grillet published a series of press articles, some of which were later transformed into essays in literary journals, then gathered into an essay collection known as "Towards a New Novel" or "For a New Novel", depending on the translation. In this series of articles, Robbe-Grillet claims that the novel should rid itself of ancient conceptions of writing, stemming from the classical, Balzacian novel, and move on to new forms of writing. The norms of classical writing à la Balzac, such as the creation of a character, the adherence to a time frame and a plot are rejected in favor of a new kind of writing that abandons the psychology of the hero putting an emphasis on the research of form. While making theory de facto, Robbe-Grillet's general strategy consists of disclaiming this kind of activity, by saying that he is no theoretician of the Novel (as goes his famous introduction) or explaining that he is only doing so in reaction to critics who have attacked his novels, thus making him the victim of misinterpretation.

v. Other than his essays, of course.

vi. Amongst the list of participants we find Roland Barthes, Claude Levi-Strauss and other leading theoreticians in humanities and the Social Sciences of the 60's.

vii. This is what Maingueneau would probably dub "constitutive heterogeneity": that is, an implicit reference to things said elsewhere or by someone else, without an explicit mention in the quoting discourse.

viii. This idea was initially advanced by Robbe-Grillet at the Cerisy Conference in 1972, and has been advocated by him ever since.

ix. It is not a true conditional: a true conditional would be: if I say that... I would have to admit that... But we are only referring here to the reading "effects".

x. The article commences by an epigraph containing the Littré's definition of "objectif": objectif, ive (adj): Terme d'optique. Verre objectif, le verre d'une lunette destiné à être tourné du côté de l'objet qu'on veut voir. (Barthes 1954: 32-43)

xi. [...] Just as they surmise an outside [world] in relation to which discourse is constituted, these forms postulate another external [world]: that of the speaker, able to place herself at any given moment at a distance from her own language,

her own discourse, that is, to hold [...] the external position of an observer. [By this we mean] every form designating distance relating to the speaker, the user and the thinker, but this figure is particularly present in glosses of rectification, of reservation... [which the speaker] specifies as a judge, a commentator [...] of his own saying (I underline) (My translation) (Revuz 1982: 106)

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