Participant Reference in a Hortatory Discourse

BY ERIN MACSAVENY
GIAL Student

ABSTRACT
The paper argues participant reference is not controlled by any one discourse feature, but accomplishes several communication goals at once. The text under discussion, a particular mitigated hortatory discourse on child-rearing, spoken by Addie Norton as part of an interview collection for the Foxfire book series, supports at least three different discourse effects on the use of different forms of reference to refer to the same participant. The degree of tension in the argumentation fluctuates throughout the text, with sections often beginning objectively and transitioning into greater tension. This feature of the text profile, which is discussed by Longacre (1996) in terms of peak-marking, is another source of variation in participant reference forms. In particular, singular number and first and second person are often used to make the argument more personal and specific, and thus serve to heighten the tension of certain parts of the text.

Introduction
A number of factors interact in the choice of forms to use in participant reference. The speaker must keep in mind the hearer’s state of mind and offer enough information to make communication clear. At the same time, the speaker uses various clues to signal structural features in the text in order to make the whole discourse easier to follow, and these clues sometimes involve participant reference forms. Variation in forms may also correlate with the profile of a text in terms of tension, and may be utilized in various subtle strategies for convincing the hearer of a certain point.

This paper looks at the different concerns that affect participant reference in a particular mitigated hortatory discourse on child-rearing, spoken by Addie Norton as part of an interview collection for the Foxfire book series. The text is in English, specifically a rural Appalachian dialect.

Referential distance

Background
Givón (1983), in a study on discourse topics, introduces a type of discourse measurement that quantifies referential distance, or the number of clauses since the last mention of a particular referent. This measurement was performed on texts from a number of languages, and the results show systematic correlations between referential distance and particular forms of reference. For instance, zero anaphora is associated with highly accessible topics, which is reflected in minimal referential distance, while indefinite NPs are used with discontinuous topics, those with high referential distance measurements.

I have applied a form of the referential distance measurement to the child-rearing text, and the results provide one part of the story behind the use of the different reference forms in the text. To some extent, it is possible to find a simple correlation between referential distance and NP form. The considerations in the following sections will modify the analysis somewhat by examining other factors that affect form of reference, but there is certainly a relationship between the amount of coding material and the discontinuity of the referent. In Givón’s terms, those referents whose discourse files in the mind of the hearer are already open due to recent mention can be referred to with minimal coding material, while the introduction of a new referent, or one that has not been mentioned for several clauses, requires a more explicit form of reference.

Method
In analyzing the child-rearing text in terms of referential distance, I chose to analyze the forms used to refer to the two main participants in the text: children and parents. I considered all references to children in general to be coreferential, whether the forms were plural (“a lot of children”) or singular (“the child”). The forms also varied in terms of person and gender even when they seemed to be referring to the same class of referents. Thus, “you” (S35), “they” (S43), “it” (S25), and “he” (S66) are all used to refer to generic children. The sections where the speaker recounts her own parenting experiences seem to be the only exceptions to the claim that all of these different forms have the same referents. Where the text
gave information about the speaker and her own children rather than unspecified parents and children, I
did not perform referential distance measures on the forms used, and I did not count those forms as
previous mentions for measurements on forms occurring later in the text. For the purposes of this
analysis, these sections were ignored, except that the clauses contained in them were counted when they
intervened between successive mentions of a particular generic referent. Other participants that enter the
text only briefly, such as babysitters in S14-20, were also not analyzed.

In order to establish a basis for counting the number of clauses since the last mention, I divided
the text into minimal clauses. Adverbial, relative, and complement clauses were all analyzed as separate
for the purposes of clause-counting, and the partial clauses corresponding to the two verbs of a merged
sentence were also separated; thus S10, “And they get [to love you],” was analyzed as comprising two
clauses, with the subject of love represented by zero anaphora referring back to the subject of get. This
allowed for all infinitive clauses to have their own independent subjects (consistently represented by zero
anaphora). For coordinate clauses, both bases were counted separately.

In counting the number of clauses since the previous mention of a referent, all possible forms of
the previous mention were counted, including possessives. In particular, zero anaphora was counted as a
mention, so that the number of clauses is counted back only until a particular referent is grammatically
present in the clause, even if it is not overtly stated within that clause. For instance, for “they” in the final
clause of S43, the referential distance is 1 because of the zero anaphora in the preceding infinitive
clause: “If they don’t have somethin’ [ Ø to do at home,] they’re goin’ to do somethin’ out yonder.”

The inclusion of non-arguments such as possessives in the referential distance counts allows
clauses to contain more than one mention of the same referent; thus referential distance can be 0 for a
referent that has already been mentioned within the clause. Reflexives also allow a referential distance
of 0. This feature of the analysis differs from Givón, whose minimum distance is 1, presumably because
his counts do not include non-arguments. I followed Givón in stopping the counts at 20 clauses, so that
20 is the maximum referential distance; it is also used for the first mention of each participant.

Results

The results of the referential distance (RD) measurements were consistent with Givón’s
generalizations regarding the relationship between topic continuity and form of reference (see Table 1). In
the text, full NPs represented the most discontinuous referents, as indicated by high referential distance
figures. Lower referential distance was associated with pronouns, and lowest of all with zero anaphora.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of reference</th>
<th>Number of uses</th>
<th>RD average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full NP</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zero anaphora</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within each of these categories, further divisions can be made that are relevant for an
examination of continuity. Full NPs can be either definite or indefinite. Since indefinite NPs are often used
to introduce referents for the first time, they are expected to be maximally discontinuous. This prediction
holds for the text at hand; indefinite NPs have a higher RD average than definite NPs (see Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of NP</th>
<th>Number of uses</th>
<th>RD average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indefinite</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definite</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indefinite NPs can be divided into those with an indefinite article, those with quantifiers that
indicate indefiniteness, and those that are in plural form and represent generic reference to categories
(see Table 3). When the RD figures are tabulated for each of these types in the child-rearing text, generic
NPs and those with indefinite quantifiers turn out to be more discontinuous than those with indefinite
articles. The reason for this is not immediately clear, and it may be a consequence of the small number of
tokens. It could also relate to a difference in discourse operations, with generics and indefinite NPs with quantifiers expressing first mention and reinstatement after a long gap, while NPs with indefinite articles are associated more with boundary marking, where the referent has not necessarily been absent in the preceding discourse. A survey of the indefinite NPs in the text gives some support to this idea, although the correlations are not strong. This hypothesis would be better tested in a longer text with more indefinite NPs.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of indefinite NP</th>
<th>Number of uses</th>
<th>RD average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NP with indefinite article</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indefinite NP with quantifier</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic NP</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>8.5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Definite NPs can also be broken down into four subcategories, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of definite NP</th>
<th>Number of uses</th>
<th>RD average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NP with definite article</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP with possessive pronoun</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP with demonstrative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proper name</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here the NPs with possessive pronouns have a significantly higher RD average than the other types of definite NPs. The high figure for NPs with possessive pronouns is derived in large part from two NPs referring to parents in terms of their relationship to children: “their mama and daddy” (S1) and “their parents” (S44). The first of these is the initial mention of parents and thus has an RD of 20, and second has an RD of 17 due to a long gap consisting partly of a reminiscence of the part of the speaker; without these two occurrences, the RD for NPs with possessive pronouns reduces to 4.6. Both of these occurrences follow the use of an indefinite NP to refer to children. This use of different forms to introduce parents may be attributable to differences in the degree of centrality of the different participants, as discussed by Longacre and Hwang (in press). The use of definite NPs rather than indefinite to refer to the parents initially or after a long gap may be a result of their secondary status in the text; they are important because they bear a relationship to the children whose behavior and upbringing are the primary focus of the text.

With regard to pronouns, a distinction can be made between first and second person pronouns vs. third person. Since first and second person referents are always considered accessible to the hearer, pronoun forms are almost always used regardless of referential distance or other discourse considerations, except when zero anaphora is used for subjects (see Table 5). Thus, we would expect third person pronouns to be consistently associated with low continuity, and therefore to have lower RD averages as compared to first and second person. This prediction turns out to be supported by the data from the text, which also demonstrate that first and second person pronouns can be used for maximally discontinuous referents (RD up to 20), while third person pronouns are not used after gaps of more than nine sentences, with the vast majority having an RD of only 1.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pronoun type</th>
<th>Number of uses</th>
<th>RD average</th>
<th>RD range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st/2nd person</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>82</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>0-20</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finally, a few observations can be made with regard to grammatical relations. Certain forms occur more frequently in subject position than object position (see Table 6). Out of the 13 occurrences of indefinite NPs in the text, 10 are in subject position, while only one appears as an object (the other two are prepositional objects). The reason for this is not entirely clear. All else being equal, we expect indefinite NPs to introduce new, discontinuous referents. On the other hand, subject position is often associated with sentence topics, which are more continuous than the comment elements that generally follow in the predicate. However, the referents named in the comment are not necessarily the new information (focus), as the verb itself may be the new information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form of indefinite NP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NP with indefinite article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indefinite NP with quantifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic NP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is the most extreme case of association between a form of reference and a particular grammatical relation. All forms have somewhat higher numbers for subject than object, but this follows from the fact that there are more subjects overall because not all verbs take an object. There is an absolute correlation between zero anaphora and subject position, but this is easily explained by the facts of English grammar, which allow zero anaphora only in subject position.

**Structure and discourse operations**

**Background**

Longacre and Hwang (in press) discuss the correlation between certain forms of participant reference and what they call discourse operations, which are positions or roles that can be assumed by referents within a discourse. Their discussion focuses on narrative discourse, where they identify ten such discourse operations, including first mention, routine tracking, and boundary marking.

In Longacre and Hwang’s schema, more explicit forms of reference are used for certain discourse operations such as first mention, reinstatement, and boundary marking, while the least explicit forms (pronouns and zero anaphora) are used in routine tracking.

This perspective adds a new dimension to the generalizations made by Givón. Rather than participant reference forms reflecting simply the length of the gap since a participant was last mentioned in the text, they also reflect the overall structure of the text. We might expect that cases where more or less coding material is used than we would expect from referential distance alone, an examination of the paragraph structure of the text might lead to insightful explanations.

**Method**

In order to apply Longacre and Hwang’s ideas to the participant reference forms found in the text, I examine each of the reference forms used in order to identify how each one is used to signal particular discourse operations or features of text structure. As a part of this analysis, I look for outlying cases in the sense that the RD value for a specific use of a particular form is outside the general RD range for that form. I then examine the discourse context to look for a reasonable explanation in terms of text structure.

**Results**

Beginning by looking at the indefinite NPs, it is clear that they have an unusually large range in RD values, from 1 to 20 clauses. Those on the higher end of the range are expected due to the function of indefinites in introducing or re-introducing inactive participants. An indefinite, “lots of children,” is used for the first mention of children in S1. Two others, the generic “children” in S59 and “a lot of mothers” in S60, are used after a gap in which the parents and children have been absent for about 20 clauses. This can be seen as an instance of the discourse operation reinstatement. The resumption of reference to the central participants correlates with a minor structural break between S59 and S60, which divides the section S47-62 into two Joint sections, as analyzed according to Rhetorical Structure Theory. There is
also a shift in person at this point, with the narrator returning to third person after giving a first person account from her own past.

The cases where indefinites are used to refer to participants that were already active in the immediately preceding discourse are less expected and warrant a closer look. The generic “women” is used in S14 to refer to mothers, even though mothers have been under discussion in the immediately preceding section. Again, this correlates with a shift in person (mothers were referred to as “you” in S9-13) as well as a boundary between text sections. This time the structural break is more major; S14 begins the second of three major thematic sections of the text.

Likewise, “a child” is used in S65, marking the highest-level RST structural break in the text, which divides the Motivation section, S1-64, from the nuclear appeal section, S65-66. Here there is no change in person, but there is a shift in number, with children referred to as plural in S63-64, but singular in S65-66.

In S37, we have another case of indefinite NPs being used to refer to active referents. Here the speaker has been referring to children with second person forms, but steps out of second person to make a comment on the thoughts she has just attributed to children, “A lot of people feel that way – not everybody, but a lot of children do.” She then reverts back to second person to continue her argument. Here, there seem to be two possible explanations for the use of the two indefinite NPs. First, there is a change in discourse operation. Longacre and Hwang propose evaluation or comment by the narrator as one of the major discourse operations in narrative. Here, we might use the more neutral term composer (after Longacre 1996:29) and refer to S37 as an instance of comment by the composer. Or simply, speaker or writer would work, too. Another reason behind the use of the indefinite could be that the speaker is limiting her claim by attempting to roughly quantify the portion of children who share the viewpoint she is ascribing to them. Thus, “a lot” is perhaps used here more because of its literal meaning as a quantifier than because of its effects in creating an indefinite expression.

To summarize, indefinite NPs are used when a participant is judged to be inaccessible to the hearer because of a lengthy gap since last mention, as well as to mark a different type of discontinuity: that which results from structural breaks in the text. These breaks are often associated with a shift person or number used to refer to a given participant.

Definite NPs are generally associated with referents that are more continuous than those represented by indefinite NPs, but less continuous than those represented by pronouns or zero anaphora. A large majority of the definite NPs found in the child-rearing text have an RD value of six or less.

In many of these typical cases, the use of a full NP rather than a pronoun may have to do with the idea of potential topic interference, another concept discussed by Givón. When more than one participant is active in the hearer’s discourse file, a full NP may be necessary to disambiguate which of the participants the speaker is referring to. For instance, in S3-4 of the child-rearing text, we read, “Their mother and daddy both work away from home all day and some at night. And I don’t think that’s good for the child.” It would make sense that the speaker uses the child rather than the pronoun them because them would be potentially ambiguous, since it could refer to either the parents or the children.

Other uses of the definite NP in the absence of a potentially interfering referent can be explained by structural boundaries. Where a new structural paragraph has begun since the last mention of a referent, but where the actual gap in reference to that participant is not long, a definite article is often used. This seems to be the case in S45-46, where we read, “The children are not to blame. The parents are to blame.” Both the children and the parents were referred to S44, so the RD values are small (two and three, respectively). However, S45 begins a new paragraph serving as an Elaboration on the problem presented in S42-44.

Some definite NPs have RD values that are significantly higher than the average, and these may require separate explanations. As mentioned above, NPs with possessives may be used for the first mention of a participant that is not the most central, and this also seems to be the case for the reintroduction of a participant after a long gap. After the main structural break between S64 and S65, an indefinite is used to reintroduce the child as discussed earlier, but the definite NP “his parents” is used to reintroduce parents after a gap of seven clauses. The same basic pattern is found in S44, where “their parents” is used with an RD of 17.

The main functions of the definite NP seem to be disambiguation in the presence of multiple possible referents, marking of structural breaks in the text, and introduction or reintroduction of a participant other than the one that is most central.
The functions of pronouns and zero anaphora are much more limited. Both are used with referents that are already active and have low RD values. An exception is the first and second person pronouns, which can be used with discontinuous referents. For example, in S35, *you* and *your* are used to refer to a generic child, although children have been out of the discourse file for 20 clauses. Because pronouns are the only type of overt reference used to refer to first and second person participants, we expect to see them being used for all discourse operations, and this appears to be the case, with the exception that they are not used for first mention in the text. Generally, first and second person referents are identifiable from the communication context: first person refers to the speaker, and second person to the hearer. In a text like the one under consideration, however, participants other than the actual speaker and listener are cast in these roles for rhetorical reasons to be discussed in the next section. Thus, the identification of the first and second person referents in this text is dependent on the hearer’s knowing who the participants are, so using first or second person in the first mention would be confusing because the participants have not yet been identified in their most natural form, third person NPs.

Third person pronouns are rarely used in this text when the referent has not been mentioned within the last clause or two. Only one third person pronoun in the text has an RD of more than four. It is *them* in S9, referring to children. The reason for this longer-than-usual gap is not apparent, but there does not seem to be any difficulty in identifying the referent. The function of third person pronouns appears to be routine tracking of active participants.

Zero anaphora is limited to occurring within the same sentence as an overt reference to the same participant, so it too is used for routine tracking.

**Shifts in person and number**

**Background**

Hortatory texts by their very nature are oriented toward a specific addressee, so second person forms and imperatives are expected to be present in them. Because the text under consideration maintains a mitigated form throughout, the addressee is never directly addressed and no imperative forms are found. Second person is used in several sections of the text, but its referent is not stable. Likewise, first person is used to refer to participants other than the speaker.

Longacre (1996) discusses the use of shifts in person to increase vividness, a strategy that is often used in the peak episode of a narrative along with other peak-marking features such as tense shift, change in length of constituents, and “mystery” particles. First and second person are considered more vivid than third person.

In the child-rearing text, the speaker makes use of all three persons and both singular and plural in referring to the two main participants, parents and children. This section explores possible explanations for the shifts in person and number that occur throughout the text.

**Method**

In surveying the use of different person and number forms used in the child-rearing text, I have considered third person forms to be basic and unmarked when referring to parents and children. The text may be aimed at influencing parents, but it does not address parents directly but rather makes observations and states opinions about the parent-child relationship.

I have also considered plural to be more basic than singular as a way of referring to the two main groups of participants. The speaker is discussing generalities about parents and children, although she occasionally frames her discussion in terms of a singular hypothetical or representative member of each class.

On this assumption, I look for sections of text where first or second person or singular numbers are used to refer to parents or children. I look at the function of these sections within the text as a whole, both in terms of their relations and nuclearity from an RST viewpoint and in terms of their possible functioning as zones of tension in the text. Using these observations, I attempt to make a preliminary statement of the discourse function(s) of person and number shifts as they are used in the example text.

**Results**

The first shift in number occurs between S1-4 and S5-8. Beginning in S5, a representative singular mother is referred to in the parent role. This correlates with a structural break in the RST analysis; S5 begins the nucleus of the Solutionhood relation that characterizes section one.
In the next section, S9-13, there is a shift in person so that the mother is referred to as you. In RST terms, this section serves as Motivation for the preceding section. The speaker is presenting an argument, and the section gives the impression that she is reasoning directly with a hypothetical parent, attempting to exploit her maternal emotions to persuade her to stay home with her children so that she can “cuddle them up and love them” (S11).

The beginning of section two reverts to third person plural, but two shifts occur within S14-24, which introduce the problem in the Solutionhood relation for this section. First, there is a shift back to the singular mother in S19a (“a poor woman”), which is quickly followed by a switch in person. From S19c-21, the mother is referred to in the first person singular, and the potential babysitter is addressed in the second person. Here again the tone is argumentative; the speaker/mother becomes protective of her role in her children’s lives and asserts that only she can discipline them effectively because she truly cares about them.

The end of this section, S22-24, recounts the speaker’s own experiences raising her children. It is worth noting that the previous section seems to be transitioning into this. In S19c-21, the speaker has cast herself as a representative mother, and this naturally leads into a section where she is a specific mother: herself.

In S25-27, the speaker offers her solution to the problem that has been presented. Here the parent is addressed in the second person, and the child is singular and not specified for gender (“it” in S25c). There are also first person forms used in this section, which appear to refer to the actual speaker.

The speaker offers a concession to her opinions in S28-33, claiming that she understands the plight of young parents. Here she refers to herself in first person and to parents in the third person plural. This can be seen as a removal of herself from the argument in order to make a cool-headed statement about her own ability to empathize. The use of the generic third person here lends itself well to the speaker’s establishing her credibility as an objective observer of parent-child interaction.

The preceding section (S25-33) has presented discipline as a loving act, and the next section (S34-41) gives evidence of this. With the exception of S37, which can be considered another instance of stepping out of the text to make an objective comment utilizing the third person, the span from S34 to S38 uses second person to refer to the child, while third person is used for the parent. This section resembles an explanation that someone would make to a child about why their mother has disciplined them. The section begins with, “When your mother gave you a whippin’ when you was young,” implying that she is actually addressing an adult. This helps to tie this section together with those where the parent is addressed in second person, because it implies that she is still talking to the parent, but making an argument with them based on their childhood experiences. Since the young parents she is addressing are presumably of her children’s generation, they most likely received the same kind of strict discipline that she gave her children, and they are likely to understand in hindsight that it was done in love.

In this section, the tone is less argumentative but has the sense of reasoning with a person based on incontrovertible evidence. The gist is, “Your parents disciplined you because they loved you, right? And you’re thankful for that now, aren’t you? Well, then, don’t you want to do the same for your child?” Therefore, the second person referent here is not seen so much as an opponent, but rather a target for persuasion.

In S39-41, the speaker again uses her own experience as part of her argument. She can attest to her own loving motivation for spanking her children, and she implicitly argues that this same motivation is shared by other parents.

Section three, like the other two sections begins by stating a problem (S42-62). This section primarily refers to both children and parents in the third person plural. One part (S51-58) uses first person with reference to the speaker in an explanation of how her children did chores, which serves as an Antithesis to the current unfavorable situation and as an example of how things should be done. There is also one reference to children in the singular (“the child” in S62), which is continued in the following section.

The solution for section three is given in S63-64. The parent is addressed in second person, which seems appropriate given that this is a mitigated command slot. Children are referred to in third person singular (S63) and third person plural (S64). The reason for the shift in number is not apparent.

The last section, S65-66, is the nucleus of the whole text. Here the child is referred to with third person singular, and parents in third person plural (S65). In S66, however, you is used to refer to parents, once again highlighting this section as a mitigated command.
The overall picture is complicated, as it seems that each person and number form is used for a variety of reasons. However, some hypothetical generalizations can be made.

In this text, first person usually refers to the speaker herself. Sometimes it serves to highlight her role as the text generator and source of the opinions and commands stated there (e.g. where she asserts her opinion with “I think” [S6a]). Sometimes it is used in sections that recount her child-rearing experience, and here it serves the purpose of showing that her opinions are supported by personal experience.

The first person is also used to cast the speaker in a certain role, that of a parent in section one. This is part of an argumentative section, where she contends with a hypothetical opponent in an attempt to argue for the idea that mothers should stay at home with their children. Thus, first person can be used to heighten the tension of the text and to allow the speaker to argue effectively from a particular viewpoint.

Second person is used with two main functions. First, it can be used to cast a certain participant as an opponent in an argumentative section. The primary example of this is in section one, where the speaker argues with a hypothetical babysitter. The use of the second person adds greatly to the tension of the text and allows the speaker to refute a particular viewpoint.

Second person is also used to create a hypothetical addressee that the speaker can attempt to persuade of her opinions or that she can encourage to adopt certain behaviors. In this text, all such sections seem to use second person as a way of addressing present-day parents. The use of the second person in such sections highlights the thrust of the text, which is underlyingly hortatory, by increasing the explicitness of the addressee.

Both first and second person, therefore, seem to have the effect of heightening vividness, so their use in this text is in some respects parallel to their use as a peak-marking feature in narrative discourse. Third person is used in low-tension text spans such as, in this text, the beginnings of each section, where problems are presented in objective terms. Third person can be used to withdraw the speaker from a subjective argument so that she can make comments from an outsider's perspective, thus increasing the sense of objectivity and her own credibility.

The use of singular forms to refer to parents and children do not seem to be associated with any obvious discourse effect, but they do serve as transitions from the generic third person plural sections to the more argumentative sections that utilize first and second person. It is possible that the use of the singular implies a more concrete situation in the mind of the speaker, one that may develop into a vivid scene where different participants are cast as speaker or addressee. The sections that utilize singular forms have the effect of creating a specific scene for the hearer, whereas the plural forms make generalizations that are less vivid. Singular number, like first and second person, seems to increase vividness and perhaps add to the tension of a text span.

Conclusion

Participant reference is not controlled by any one discourse feature, but accomplishes several communication goals at once. The text under discussion supports at least three different discourse effects on the use of different forms of reference to refer to the same participant.

First, Givón’s (1983) claims about the effect of referential distance on topic reference are shown to be applicable here. The speaker is constantly gauging the hearer’s mental state and making judgments about what participants are accessible in the current discourse file. Participants that have been out of focus longer require more processing effort to identify, so speakers use more coding material to make their identity explicit. In the child-rearing text, full NPs are used after longer gaps, while pronouns and zero anaphora are used for participants that are already active in the discourse file. There is also a correlation between referential distance and definiteness, with indefinite NPs expressing more discontinuous participants than definite NPs.

Longacre and Hwang’s (in press) discourse operations also factor into the use of participant reference forms in the text under discussion. Different forms tend to correlate with different operations. Indefinites and definite with NP possessors tend to be used for first mention and reinstatement after a lengthy gap. Definite NPs are strongly associated with boundary marking, and certain indefinites, especially those with the definite article, also serve this function. Pronouns and zero anaphora are used primarily for routine tracking.

Finally, in a [+ tension] hortatory text like the one studied here, the degree of tension in the argumentation fluctuates throughout the text, with sections often beginning objectively and transitioning...
into greater tension. This feature of the text profile, which is discussed by Longacre (1996) in terms of peak-marking, is another source of variation in participant reference forms. In particular, singular number and first and second person are often used to make the argument more personal and specific, and thus serve to heighten the tension of certain parts of the text.

References


