

Research on Classical and Medieval Languages

1.1 Biblical Hebrew

Introduction

Our treatment of research on Biblical Hebrew speech margins is subdivided into three sub-sections. In these sub-sections we focus, respectively, on participant reference (1.1.1), report verbs (1.1.2), and structural variation (1.1.3). These three features are basic formal properties of speech margins, common to reported speech across most languages.

1.1.1 *Participant Reference*

Study of this issue should be prefaced with an important cautionary note:

In Biblical Hebrew references to participants in narratives in some cases appear to be *overspecified* while in other cases they appear to be *underspecified* for speakers of modern Indo-European languages [emphases original]¹

With this caution in mind, we turn to Robert E. Longacre's stimulating suggestions concerning participant reference within the speech margins of *OT narrative*.² He proposes that different combinations of speaker/addressee reference (via noun phrases, pronouns, or zero reference) are used to capture the socio-linguistic dynamics of dialogue, such as: relative social status; control of the dialogue; redirection of the dialogue; degree of tension. Longacre's suggestions may be summarized as follows:³

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- 1 Christo H.J. van der Merwe, "A Critical Analysis of Narrative Syntactic Approaches, With Special Attention to Their Relationship to Discourse Analysis," in *Narrative Syntax and the Hebrew Bible: Papers of the Tilburg Conference 1996*, ed. Ellen van Wolde (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 149.
 - 2 *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989), 158–184.
 - 3 *Ibid.*, 184. The following abbreviations are used: N = noun or noun phrase; pr = pronoun; \emptyset = zero; Sp = speaker; Add = addressee.

Dialogue Location of Margin	Sp + Add	Information conveyed by speech margin
Dialogue Initiation	any + any	identification of participants
	N + pr	possible speaker-dominance
Dialogue Continuance	φ + pr	Sp/Add = peers
	φ + φ	social gap between Sp/Add
Dialogue Redirection	N + N	fresh beginning
Mid-Dialogue	N + N	tension; important confrontation
	φ + φ	no tension
	N + pr	speaker-dominance
	N + φ	speaker-centeredness
	φ + N	addressee-dominance

This very worthwhile proposal invites comment regarding some of the issues that it raises. (One should note that Longacre himself is very well aware of all of these issues.) Firstly, there is the question of the extent of its applicability. Secondly, it is worth asking about the different kinds of noun phrase available to represent the participants. Thirdly, there is the very broad question of Biblical Hebrew participant representation in general (i.e., both inside and outside of speech margins). We will comment, in order, on these three issues.

1) Discourse analysis increasingly stresses the context-sensitivity of patterns. The OT was written by many authors over a long period of time. Will a pattern of form/function correlations necessarily transfer from one OT book to another? Mindful of this problem, Longacre selected a broad corpus: excerpts from Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, and the whole book of Ruth.⁴ However, an alternative analysis of speech margins in the book of Ruth has been offered by Basil Rebera.⁵ Rebera's scheme may be depicted as follows:

⁴ Ibid., 174, n. 7.

⁵ "The Book of Ruth: Dialogue and Narrative—The Function and Integration of the Two Modes in an Ancient Hebrew Story" (Ph.D. diss., Macquarie University, 1981), 137–181. (I regret that I was unable to obtain a copy of Rebera's dissertation; I utilize the summary by Cynthia L. Miller, *The Representation of Speech in Biblical Hebrew Narrative: A Linguistic Analysis* (Harvard Semitic Museum Monographs 55; Atlanta: Scholars, 1996), 6–7.)