

A different perspective on epistemics and deontics

Conveying story evaluation through the construction of status-stance relations via direct reported speech

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Thus far, few studies have investigated the evaluative points narrators may convey through the sequential features of reported exchanges in their stories. In this article, we conduct a micro-oriented narrative analysis on how epistemic and deontic status-stance relations are depicted by narrators in sequences of reported turns. We thus uncover how hierarchies and potential transgressions between the characters in the storyworld are “shown” rather than “told” to the story recipients, who are in this way equipped to evaluate the story as a whole and the story characters’ accountability for their interactional behavior in particular. Furthermore, we argue that the narrators’ discursive set-up of epistemic and deontic relations in these reported exchanges also displays their *emic* perspective to them. Therefore we believe that our approach can pave the way for a novel approach to epistemics and deontics, complementing the insights gained in the conversation-analytic examination of these phenomena *in situ*.

Keywords: narrative, evaluation, epistemics, deontics, direct reported speech

1. Introduction

Narratives constitute a prevalent locus for people to make sense of their experiences (Labov, 1972, Van De Mieroop, 2021), which encompasses their specific usefulness allowing people to portray the interactional processes “through which individuals actively negotiate relationships between others and the social contexts



in which they interact” (Moore, 2006, p.617). For a narrative to fulfill such pragmatic uses, its evaluative aspects become critical. According to Labov and Waletzky (1966), evaluation is one of the crucial functions of a narrative as it transforms “the primary sequence, based on the a-then-b relationship, into the more complex normal form of the narrative” (p.41). Yet, evaluation is “the most difficult element of narrative to define in structural terms” (Johnstone, 2016, p.555), as it tends to be dispersed across the various segments of a story.

Evaluation is particularly critical in narratives about transgressions, which revolve around an event in which social expectations are violated (Drew, 1998, Heinrichsmeier, 2021, Ruusuvuori & Lindfors, 2009, Selting, 2010). To display these evaluative points, retrospective accounts of such incidents frequently involve reported speech. This is not surprising, as direct reported speech enhances the tellability, vividness, and apparent authenticity of the reported situations (see e.g. Van De Mieroop & Clifton, 2013). The highly dramatizing effect of direct reported speech—its seeming ability to “show” the listener what happened rather than just “telling” them (Buttny & Williams, 2000, p.122)—is often harnessed by using it in the climax of the story (see, e.g., Drew, 1998, Holt, 2000). Yet, it is important to emphasize that rather than orienting to the reported words as an exact reproduction of the original words, it is suggested that they should be seen more as a transformation (Bakhtin, 1981). This is because even if the words are literally repeated, reporting them in a new context fundamentally changes their discursive functions, leading some researchers to use the alternative term “constructed dialogue” (Tannen, 1989).

Reported speech is strongly intertwined with the story’s evaluation (Labov, 1972), which may be internal or external. In the latter case, “the speaker may explicitly comment on what another said externally to the narrative itself”, while in the former case, “the speaker’s word choice or the prosody in restaging the words can internally indicate his or her evaluative stance toward this speech” (Buttny & Cohen, 2007, p.739). Such internal evaluation thus seemingly reduces the storyteller’s “personal responsibility” for the story, because storytellers then position themselves as mere animators rather than the sources of what is being said (Goffman, 1979). In particular, it has been shown that the ways in which the speech of interaction partners is reported, conveys “a version of events and the persons involved in doing them” (Buttny, 1997, p.484) to the story recipients in a seemingly authentic way. Moreover, focusing on chains of reported utterances—i.e., “reported exchanges” (Buttny, 1997)—Van De Mieroop and Clifton have argued that one can apply insights concerning the sequentiality of turns—which is typically studied in the domain of conversation analysis (CA)—to these sequences of reported turns. Such “constructed sequentiality” (Van De Mieroop & Clifton, 2013) shows how narrators set up the relation between these

reported turns, offering a window into the evaluation they aim to convey through the reported exchanges in their stories. In this article, we take this line of reasoning further by teasing out how narrators engage with *epistemics* and *deontics* in reported exchanges to convey certain evaluative points in relation to the transgressions of social expectations their stories revolve around. In our analysis, we tease out this process of “showing”—rather than “telling”—the story characters’ transgressions to the story recipients, who are thus equipped to evaluate the story in general, and the story characters’ accountability for their interactional behavior in particular.

Literature review: Epistemics and deontics

The notions of *epistemics* and *deontics* capture two key facets of social-relational expectations—those related to knowledge, on the one hand, and to power, on the other (for overviews, see e.g., Heritage, 2013, Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2014, Stevanovic, 2018). The distinction between epistemics and deontics can be clarified with reference to the notion of *authority* (Bochenski, 1974). *Epistemic authority* involves “rights to identity-bound knowledge in self-other relations” (Raymond & Heritage, 2006, p. 678). Epistemic rights get their strength from the character of the participants’ access to knowledge—be it first-hand experience or derivative of what others have said (Pomerantz, 1984). Research in CA has shown how actions such as assessments and complaints, which *prima facie* are not about claiming knowledge, are systematically performed in ways that put the participants in specific positions vis-à-vis their knowledge about what is being talked about (Raymond & Heritage, 2006, Heritage, 2013). Through the particularities of their utterances participants inevitably make claims about the extent to which they are to be seen as knowledgeable in the matter at hand in relation to their co-participants. In making such publicly observable claims participants are said to take an *epistemic stance*. Epistemic stance needs to be kept conceptually separate from the notion of *epistemic status*, which denotes the rights and responsibilities that a participant is considered to have or not to have (Heritage, 2012, 2013). Epistemic status is thus a conceptual heuristic that can be used to capture participants’ orientations to the knowledge-related aspects of their social relations and identities as they, at each new fleeting moment of interaction, precede and inform their utterances and actions. As we maintain in this paper, epistemic status is also something that narrators orient to in their narratives of past interactional exchanges, which inevitably involves various forms of epistemic stance-taking. It can therefore also be taken as a target of truly empirical research efforts—a matter that has been a topic of debate (see e.g., Lynch & Macbeth, 2016).

Deontic authority refers to the capacity of a person to determine action, involving both the right of a person to expect another person's compliance and the right of a person to launch autonomous action with consequences for another person (Stevanovic, 2018). Thus, deontic authority is typically realized as the right to announce, propose, or decide (Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2012). In addition, orientations to deontic authority become visible proximally, when people comply with institutionally grounded asymmetrical turn-taking systems that endow them with quite different amounts of freedom and rights to control the agenda of the emerging interaction (e.g., Clifton, Van De Mieroop, Sehgal, & Aneet, 2018). The study of deontics has also made use of the distinction between stance and status, *deontic stance* referring to the publicly displayed rights to determine action and *deontic status* to the latent capacity of a person to do so.

Research on epistemics and deontics has also made use of the notion of *congruence* and *incongruence* between stances and statuses. Epistemic/deontic stance is congruent with epistemic/deontic status when participants' claims of epistemic/deontic rights are justified in light of cultural expectations and endorsed by their co-participants *in situ* (see Heritage, 2013, Stevanovic, 2018). Heritage (2013) has suggested that there may be a "preference" (p.570) for the participants' publicly displayed epistemic/deontic stances to be congruent with their epistemic/deontic statuses, which could serve the maintenance of social hierarchy. However, incongruence between epistemic/deontic stance and epistemic/deontic status is also possible, which happens when a participant makes a claim of epistemic/deontic rights that runs against cultural expectations and is challenged by the co-participants *in situ*. Experiences of epistemic/deontic incongruence may cause feelings of frustration and resentment, and thus call for retrospective narration. Yet, when narrating a past interactional exchange involving such an experience, it is a key task for the narrator to clearly construct the incongruence for the story recipient, so as to warrant the tellability of the story.

Aims of this study

In this article, we take a new perspective to the study on epistemics and deontics, which radically deviates from the ways in which these concepts have been used in conversation analysis. Rather than studying these in interactions, we explore narratives reporting on interactional transgressions to scrutinize the depictions of social relationships that narrators may set up through their use of reported speech. In particular, we ask ourselves: How do narrators depict epistemic and deontic stances in relation to the statuses they attribute to their story characters? Furthermore, we also aim to tease out how the formulation of these reported

utterances can be related to story evaluation. In so doing, we also address the issue of accountability—that is, to the ongoing requirement in interaction to make one’s actions understandable (Garfinkel, 1967). The concept of accountability involves both intelligibility and normativity of action, which become highly relevant in stories of interactional transgressions, as the teller needs to make their story “tellable” (e.g., Ochs & Capps, 2001), so as to justify the occupation of extended periods of talk (Sacks, 1992), and to construct a relationship between the story characters in which one party is accountable for their inappropriate behavior. In this article, we describe the construction of such accountability relationships as key to the emergence of story evaluation.

Data and method

The data for this study are drawn from five audio and/or video recorded data sets recorded in a variety of geographically spread settings which were transcribed using CA-transcription conventions. We briefly describe these datasets here.

First, we use a corpus of 12 Dutch spoken interviews with professional women in Belgium that were collected in collaboration with one of the authors between 2008 and 2014. All the interviews lasted for about one hour and focused on challenges these women faced in their particular—often male-dominated—workplaces.

Second, we draw on a data set of thematic Finnish spoken interviews collected by one of the authors in 2020–2021, focusing on the experiences of sexist discrimination and other negative treatment among members of a specific student community. There was a total of 11 interviews, each lasting approximately 1–2 hours.

Third, we studied a corpus of English spoken interviews with Indian women about their experiences in the workplace. The data were collected in 2013 in collaboration with one of the authors and consisted of 24 interviews of about 0.5–1 hour each.

Fourth, we analyzed a corpus of Finnish spoken interactions among family and friends, owned by the Department of Finnish, Finno-Ugrian, and Scandinavian Studies, University of Helsinki. From this large corpus (approx. 500 h), a sub-corpus of 6,5 hours of data was investigated in detail for the purposes of this study.

Fifth, and finally, we use a set of a total of 29 Finnish spoken research interviews concerning problematic interaction situations at work. The data were collected by one of the authors in 2022–2023. The length of interviews was between 1 and 2 hours.

Methodologically, our analyses are situated in the field of qualitative narrative analysis (cf. e.g., Van De Mieroop, 2019). We study these data from a micro-oriented

perspective that teases out the discursive features of the talk, as well as the ways in which the turns of reported speech are constructed in relation to one another and how they function within the story as a whole. For this, we draw on concepts of epistemics and deontics that have been used in prior research in the field of conversation analysis, but, as mentioned above, we use them in a different way. Instead of examining epistemic and deontic negotiations *in situ*, as has been done in CA studies, we analyze the retrospective construction of such negotiations in narratives. Such discourse/narrative analytical usage of these concepts is relatively novel, but it allows us to bring in important contextual elements (e.g., hierarchies of power and expertise) into our analysis (for examples of this type of approach, see Van De Mieroop, 2020, Zayts & Schnurr, 2017).

In this study, we focus, in particular, on the ways in which reported exchanges are used by tellers to construct stories of high social-relational, epistemic and/or deontic relevance. In the first phase of the analytic process, we investigated the transcripts of each data set to identify descriptions of transgressive interactional experiences. Next, we investigated the original video- or audio-recordings related to these problem descriptions, improving, refining, and augmenting the transcripts of these data segments. Finally, for the purposes of the present study, we focused our detailed analytic efforts on those data segments that presented reported exchanges of the story characters with a clear indication of epistemic and/or deontic incongruence. English translations were produced for the data extracts presented in this article. These were as close as possible to the original, and thus unidiomatic English reflects unidiomatic formulations in Dutch or Finnish.

Analysis

In this section, we first discuss stories that primarily revolve around epistemic relations, and then around deontic relations. In both cases, we will first analyze fragments in which the overall framing of the story involves congruence between status and stance, while the key aspect of the story's tellability still hinges on those parts of the reported exchanges that exhibit incongruence. Thereafter, we will zoom in on cases in which the story is fully framed as being about incongruence. We end the analyses with the discussion of a final fragment in which a mixture of epistemic and deontic incongruence constitutes the key element of the reported exchange. Notably, however, some elements of epistemic and deontic (in)congruence are present in all interactions, which is why the analyses and section titles should be seen to refer only to what we consider to be most relevant for each story. Finally, to situate the reported exchanges within the stories, we will occa-

sionally refer to elements of the canonical narrative structure (abstract – orientation – complicating action – resolution – coda – evaluation) as described by Labov and Waletzky (1966). This is appropriate as most of the relevant stories in our data turned out to be examples of personal experience narratives focusing on past events in which the narrator is also the story protagonist—which was to be expected given our research focus and the fact that our data mostly consisted of interviews which are prone to such “big stories” (Freeman, 2006)—which typically adhere to this structure.

Epistemic relations

In the first fragment, the overall framing of the story involves epistemic congruence, while those features in the reported exchanges that most clearly warrant the story’s tellability still exhibit epistemic incongruence. The fragment is selected from a Dutch spoken interview in Belgium. In this part of the interview, the interviewee is talking about a conversation she had with a colleague. In the conversation, she found out that she had once been the target of gossip about her and a male colleague with whom she allegedly had had a romantic relationship.

- Fragment 1.
- 01 IE ik heb onlangs gehoord dat er ne roddel was
i have recently heard that there was gossip
 02 over mij ooit en- (.) dan (heb 'k)
over me once and- (.) then (i have)
 03 ik was echt enorm verbaasd
i was really extremely surprised
 04 ik zeg ja ne roddel over ↑mij
i say yes gossip about ↑me
 05 ↑ja ge zijt gelinkt aan iemand binnen ((company X))
↑yes you were linked to someone within ((company X))
 06 ooit 'ns en ik zeg van HEU↑ (.) wabliefte
once and i say HEU↑ (.) whatt
 07 en=eu:h ik had ('t) nog NOoit gehoord
and=e:rm i had NEVER heard (it) before
 08 echt nog ↑nooit en dan heeft ze gez-
really ↑never before and then she has s-
 09 en dan heeft de persoon gezegd
and then the person said
 10 ja: inderdaad jawel d'er is er enen geweest
ye:s indeed yes there has been one
 11 over u en (.) *iemand anders*
*about you and (.) *someone else**
 12 (>'k=zeg<) ALLE: meende da ↑nu
(>i=say<) COME O:N are you serious
 13 >'k=zeg< één zo ne lelijke gast en
>i=say< one such an ugly guy and
 14 *É*tw=@ twee allé (jongen)É
Étw=@ two come on (boy)É
 15 ge zegt mij niiks
you don't tell me anything
 16 JA(=ja) toen kende ik u nog niet zo goed
YES(=yes) then i did not know you so well
 17 om het te kunnen zeggen dus eu:h (.)
yet to be able to say it so e:rm (.)
 18 (dan) dacht ik van hein↑
(then) i thought huh↑

In the initial lines of the fragment, the interviewee formulates a story abstract in which she not only formulates the topic of the story (i.e., there was gossip about her), but in which she also constructs her identity as an unknowing recipient of the gossip content through the description of herself as ‘really extremely surprised’ (line 3). In this way, she claims a very low epistemic status towards the gossip for herself as protagonist in the storyworld, and she also implicitly establishes the untruthfulness of the gossip. This is because gossipees would only have a low epistemic status if the gossip were untrue, otherwise, they would of course at least have a hunch what the gossip is about. In this way, the narrator avoids any suspicion towards herself as the story protagonist and protects her identity as an innocent gossipee. Then, from line 4 onwards, there is a long direct reported exchange between herself as story protagonist and the antagonist, who is the gossiper. Given this membership of the category gossiper, it is of course implied that the latter has a high epistemic status regarding the content of the gossip. In this reported exchange, the narrator “shows” the listener how she received the news of this gossip.

The protagonist first makes a general inquisitive statement about the gossip, implying that the topic has been initiated by the antagonist before (line 4). Next, the antagonist responds affirmatively and factually summarizes the content of the gossip (lines 5–6). This is received by a loudly spoken expression of surprise followed by an unspecified next-turn repair-initiator (Sidnell, 2010) (‘HEY’, ‘what’, line 6), which both express the protagonist’s low epistemic stance towards the gossip content. This is then further underlined by another description of the extremely low epistemic status of the protagonist by the repeated, boosted and prosodically emphasized claim that she had ‘never heard it before’ (line 7–8). After this description, the narrator picks up the reported exchange-format again and continues the reported interaction by formulating the antagonist’s response to the repair initiation in line 10. This is mainly characterized by a repetition of the gossip content preceded by repeated affirmative expressions (‘yes indeed yes’), of which the two final ones are emphatically affirmative (i.e., in the last word through the addition of *wel* (Hogeweg, 2009)). The factual statements by means of which the antagonist answers the protagonist’s questions express her high epistemic stance regarding the content of the gossip, which is of course congruent with her epistemic status as gossiper. This is then followed by a prosodically emphasized expression of disbelief mixed with irritation by the protagonist (*allé*, ‘come on’, line 12), which again enacts her low epistemic stance regarding the content of the gossip, while—at the same time—calling into life her high epistemic status as the person who knows the truth about the details of her personal life. This epistemic shift is launched by an abrupt switch to a list—marked by ‘one’ and ‘two’—of her responses to this news. First, in line 13, she addresses the

truth-value of the gossip. Interestingly, however, she does not refute the content of the gossip by a personal epistemic claim, but instead utters a short statement about the alleged lover's looks ('such an ugly guy', line 13). It is implied here that one would never have an affair with someone who is unattractive, and the factual way in which she states this unattractiveness presents it as common knowledge, rather than a personal opinion. At the same time, however, she relies also on her epistemic status as a person who knows not only the truth about the past events, but also regarding her sexual preferences. From this perspective, her display of epistemic stance is in alignment with her epistemic status. Second, in lines 14–15, the protagonist addresses the gossip directly by another expression of disbelief mixed with irritation (*allé*, 'come on', line 14) and the informal *jongen* ('boy', line 14), and then formulates the reason for her irritation, namely that the antagonist did not tell her about this gossip earlier (line 15). This is immediately followed by the reported response of the antagonist, which consists of an account in which 'knowing each other well' (line 16) is presented as a precondition for 'being able' (line 17) to share gossip, thus pointing at the social function of gossip (for a study on gossip from the perspective of pragmatics, see Finkbeiner, 2023). So, the gossip's moral obligation to inform the gossipee about the gossip, for which the protagonist now holds her accountable, is framed as only applicable to colleagues who 'know each other well'. The reported exchange is then closed by a reported thought by the protagonist in which surprise is once again expressed (line 18).

Thus, we observed that in this fragment, the narrator puts quite a bit of effort into claiming her low epistemic status about the content of the gossip prior to and in between the reported utterances, as well as expressing a low epistemic stance in her direct reported turns. This is not surprising, as it prevents the potential interpretation of the gossip as having some truth value and it thus protects the protagonist's identity as an innocent gossipee who has to be informed by the gossip who has a high epistemic status in this domain of the gossip content. Yet, at the same time, the gossipee has a high epistemic status regarding the truth behind the gossip, but this is only partially emphasized through high epistemic stance expressions in the storyworld. Instead, the narrator situates the refutation of the truth value of the gossip in the domain of common knowledge, viz. the alleged lover's unattractiveness which, in general, dismisses him as a potential candidate for a love affair. As judgments of (un)attractiveness can nonetheless be subjective, the protagonist brings to the fore and relies on her undeniable authority in the domain of her own sexual preferences. By downplaying the personal involvement of the protagonist here, the untruthfulness of the gossip is thus presented as a fact that does not necessitate much substantiation. As the protagonist's low epistemic status regarding the content of the gossip is crucial for her identity as an innocent

gossipee—and a positive evaluation by the story recipients—the enactment of congruent epistemic stances in direct reported speech serves as further proof for this identity work. However, the key aspect of the story that warrants its tellability still hinges on epistemic incongruence. The story is essentially about the morality of the epistemic statuses of the protagonist and the antagonist: the antagonist is accountable for her unjustifiable epistemic claims, whereas the protagonist’s lack of knowledge regarding the content of the gossip is a problem that a good friend or acquaintance should have sought to remedy.

In the second fragment, from a Finnish research interview, the story is more explicitly framed as being about epistemic incongruence. In this story, the interviewee talks about how a fellow student at a party ambivalently evaluated her positively in contrast to the negative stereotypes he has about students in her field of study (pseudonymized to field X). Then, at a later party, the fellow student uttered similar comments in relation to her plans to change her major to another field (pseudonymized to field Y). The fragment starts after the narrator has set the scene of the story, namely a party where she, as the story protagonist, was present. Then in line 1 we can observe the introduction of the antagonist, namely ‘someone’.

Fragment 2. 01 IE mut just sellast niinku että (.) joku tulee et
but just like that (.) someone comes like
 02 @vitsi sä et oo yhtää niinku tommonen #perus ((field X))#@
@gosh you are not at all like a #basic ((field X)) student#@
 03 (0.3)
 04 IE ja (0.3) sit niinku (.) kun kysyy et minkäläinen se on
and (0.3) then like (.) when i ask that what is that like
 05 @no tommonen tiität sä välittää vaa jostain Emeikeist (h) ä@E
@well like you know one that just cares about some Emeike-u (h(p)@E
 06 (0.2) [nä]in
(0.2) and [so] on
 07 IR [mm]
 ((lines 08–14 omitted in which M situates the event in a later time and space and says that she told others of her plans to change her major to another field))
 15 IE sillo mut se oli niinku et @vitsi toi ((field Y))
then he was like @gosh that ((field Y))
 16 sopii sulle kyl paljon paremmin ku ((field X)) @
works for you a lot better than ((field X)) @
 17 >ja sit mä olin sillee niinku et< (.)
>and then i was like< (.)
 18 @mist sä sen niinku tiedät@ tai sä teet tos
@how would you like know that@ or you are making
 19 jonkun oletuksen siit minkäläinen ihminen mä oon@
some assumption there about what kind of person i am@
 20 IR mm
 21 IE ku mä en vastaa sitä (.)
because i don't match that (.)
 22 minkäläinen hänen mukaansa on tää niinku
what he thinks is this like

In the first line, the unfamiliarity of the antagonist with the protagonist is highlighted, on the one hand by the description of the former’s abrupt entry in the storyworld (cf. ‘but just like that’, line 1), and on the other hand by the very neutral

reference to the antagonist as ‘someone’—instead of some reference to some kind of relation with this person (e.g. a friend of a friend). This establishes the antagonist as someone who does not know the protagonist, and his low epistemic status is thus constructed by the narrator. Then, in line 2, the narrator switches to a specific voice quality which functions as an enquoting device signaling that the utterance is to be understood as direct reported speech (cf. Couper-Kuhlen & Klewitz, 1999, Estellés-Arguedas, 2015, Günthner, 1999)—which she does quite consistently throughout the fragment. The first turn of the reported exchange consists of the antagonist’s somewhat ambiguous positive evaluative statement of the protagonist (‘gosh you are not at all like a basic [field X] student’, line 2). The reference to students in the specific field of study functions as a categorization device, of which membership entails certain category bound features and activities (Sacks, 1992, Stokoe, 2012). This is reflected in the fact that the antagonist uses the qualifier ‘basic’ student, which functions as a reference to a stereotypical student of this category. Interestingly, the protagonist is evaluated as ‘not at all like’ this stereotypical student through a factual statement, whereby the antagonist displays a high epistemic stance in the matter at hand. Yet, as the antagonist is unfamiliar with the protagonist, nor presented as knowledgeable in relation to this field of study, this epistemic stance is thus incongruent with his epistemic status. As a response to this statement, the protagonist inquires in a general way what the implications of this membership category are (line 4). This can be interpreted as ironical, as, without disaffiliating from this statement explicitly, it is self-evidently implied that she is knowledgeable of her own study field and of course also about what she herself ‘is like’. She thus enacts a low epistemic stance that is of course incongruent with her epistemic status. In the next reported turn, the antagonist, however, is not at all sensitive to the irony in the protagonist’s prior turn but, instead, makes a negative category bound feature explicit (i.e. just caring about some make-up, line 5), thus characterizing the students of this field as superficial, and this is presented as “known-in-common” through the addition of the “common knowledge component” ‘you know’ (Stokoe, 2012, p. 291). Again, the antagonist thus enacts a high epistemic stance that is incongruent with his status.

Then, the narrator explains that when she made plans to change her major to another field (omitted here for reasons of space), she again had a conversation about this. She immediately launches another reported exchange started by the same antagonist, which is implicitly emphasized through the parallel use of the word *vitsi* (‘gosh’, lines 2 and 15), which once again signals that the protagonist has somehow managed to impress the antagonist (Heinonen, 2019). This time, the turn factually evaluates the match between the protagonist and this new field (lines 15–16) in a similarly epistemically incongruent way as in the previous reported exchange. Yet, this time, rather than (ironically) inquiring about the

implications of this category membership, the protagonist challenges the incongruence between the antagonist's epistemic stance and status explicitly. She does this by asking a rhetorical question how he 'would like know that' (line 18) and by making explicit that the claims by the antagonist are 'assumptions' (line 19) rather than factual statements, thus foregrounding the incongruence between his epistemic stance and status in his direct reported utterances. By these challenges, the protagonist now enacts an epistemic stance that is congruent with her own high epistemic status, thus shifting her approach in comparison to line 4. Finally, she explicitly formulates the mismatch between herself and these assumptions ('because I don't match that what he thinks is this like,' lines 21–22).

Hence, this story is tellable (Labov, 2006) because of the incongruence between the antagonist's epistemic stance and status and this is not only "shown" to the listener through direct reported speech, but it is also explicitly addressed by the story protagonist's final reported turns, as well as commented on in the course of the story. In this way, the narrator foregrounds the antagonist's accountability for his inappropriate epistemic claims and evaluates his actions negatively.

Thus, overall, in both fragments, we observed that the point of these stories revolved around the story characters' epistemic statuses—which were constructed prior to or in between the reported turns—in relation to how these were expressed in stances. Importantly, these are not only described to the story recipient, but also enacted through the direct reported exchanges. In these exchanges, epistemic stances are constructed to be more or less congruent or incongruent with epistemic statuses, while the tellability of the story still critically hinges on those reported exchanges that exhibit epistemic incongruence. Finally, through the use of direct reported speech, the recipients have been offered a window into how the antagonists behaved interactionally. As explicit evaluations by the narrator are largely absent from these stories, it is thus up to the story recipients themselves to evaluate this behavior based on their—seemingly first-hand—observations of the reported exchanges.

Deontic relations

Analogously to the previous section, we will discuss two fragments that capitalize on deontic relations. In the first fragment, we analyze a case in which the overall framing of the story involves deontic congruence, while the tellability of the story revolves around those aspects of the story that exhibit deontic incongruence. The fragment comes from an English spoken interview that took place in India, where male norms and hierarchies are particularly strong in professional contexts (see Chatterjee & Van De Mieroop, 2017). In this fragment, the interviewee recounts how she, as a junior employee, refused to attend social events with her male boss,

after which the latter started to intimidate her at work. In this case, regarding the establishment of the story characters' deontic statuses, few explicit claims are made, but much is based on the inference-rich nature of the standardized relational pair (Sacks, 1972) of the membership categories "superior"/"subordinate". While the story mostly revolves around reported utterances in the work domain expressing a high deontic stance congruent with the boss' high deontic status, this congruence relation is then put under pressure when the deontic domain changes.

Fragment 3. 01 IE i was a puppet in his hands=
 02 IR =mmm=
 03 IE =and even if i had to- there were instances
 04 when i >wanted to go to the washroom
 05 i couldn't go for five hours altogether<
 06 IR why is that
 07 IE because he kept on standing on my head
 08 and said do this right now
 09 you complete >this report right now
 10 complete this *report right now"
 11 and i said excuse me (.) i just want to go
 12 to the washroom and< he said go afterwards
 13 (2.0)
 14 IE he would torture to that extent
 15 that he would stand there and just (.) enjoy

In the first line, the interviewee formulates an abstract description of the work relation with her boss, which underlines the latter's control over herself as story protagonist. This abstract description is then illustrated by an anecdote that takes the form of a habitual narrative (Carranza, 1998) in which repeated behavior (cf. the plural 'instances', line 3), rather than one specific story climax, makes the story tellable (Van De Mieroop, 2021). This is first described in lines 4–5 (i.e. 'when I wanted to go to the washroom I couldn't go for five hours altogether') and after a probe for further explanation by the interviewer, the interviewee elaborates on this by means of a brief account (line 7) and a reported exchange. We first see turns by the antagonist which seem to revolve around professional tasks and which take the form of imperatives (lines 8 ('do') and 10 ('complete')) and an assertion, i.e., a declarative in the indicative mood that presents future facts (Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2012) ('you complete this report right now', line 9). None are mitigated in any way. These turns take the form of directives, rather than requests, which are on a steep deontic gradient (Landmark, Gulbrandsen & Svennevig, 2015) and which do not "orient to noncompliance as a response option" (Craven & Potter, 2010, p. 426). Furthermore, the triple repetition of the time element 'right now' (lines 8, 9 and 10) "increases the urgency of the directive" (Craven & Potter, 2010, p. 435) and thus leaves even less choice for the protagonist to define her own work routine. All the antagonist's turns in lines 8–10 concern the work domain and they display a very high deontic stance which is congruent with his status implied in his membership of the category "superior".

However, in lines 11–12, the protagonist utters a turn herself in which she picks up the topic of personal hygiene again, which she already introduced in lines 4–5. This takes the form of a request that is not only mitigated by an initial apology, but of which the impact is also downplayed by the addition of ‘just’ (‘I just want to go to the washroom’, line 11), and it is thus on a shallow deontic gradient. Yet, this request explicitly revolves around a non-professional deontic domain about which each person should self-evidently have deontic primacy. So, while the protagonist has a high deontic status in this domain, she nevertheless enacts a low deontic stance in her request, thus orienting to the boss’ high deontic status in the work domain, while simultaneously anticipating that her own high deontic status in this very personal field will self-evidently be recognized by the boss as well. Yet, as she is requesting work time for her personal activities, the two domains are somewhat entangled. In his response, the antagonist expresses another imperative that refuses the request (‘go afterwards’, line 12), thus once again displaying a high deontic stance. As it concerns a personal request during working hours, it is congruent with his high deontic status in the work domain. Yet, given that it concerns the domain of the protagonist’s personal hygiene, this stance is incongruent with the antagonist’s low deontic status in this domain. The story is then finished by a further description of the boss’ cruel behavior (lines 14–15).

Hence, while in this fragment, the antagonist’s high deontic stance is initially congruent with his status as implied through his category membership as the protagonist’s superior, this status becomes much more questionable and unjustifiable when the deontic domain shifts explicitly from pure work activities to personal hygiene. In spite of this, the two story characters keep on enacting the same work-related deontic stance imbalance, thus ignoring that another deontic domain came into play here. It is this move from congruence to incongruence that warrants the tellability of the story, as exemplified here by the narrator labeling the antagonist’s refusal to let her use the washroom as “torture”. This is exactly what qualifies the antagonist’s behavior as transgressive, namely that his stances ignore the fact that his high deontic status is limited to work-related domains only. Through direct reported speech this deontic incongruence is “shown” to the story recipients, allowing it to become subject of evaluation.

Next, we will turn to a case in which the story also revolves around deontic incongruence, but which is then negotiated by additional story characters. The fragment is selected from a Finnish mundane conversation among friends. In this story, the narrator talks about a ‘weird house committee meeting on a Sunday at six o’clock’ (as she literally formulates it herself prior to the fragment) in which she, as the story protagonist, participated and where she was sort of forced to drink alcohol. Again, deontic domains are important here for the point of the story, as the main antagonist in this story is the chairman of the committee, of

whom category-bound rights may be implied in relation to the domain of managing the meeting, but not in relation to a personal domain such as the choice to consume alcohol. In order to ensure a correct understanding of the fragment, it may be good that the reader knows that in line 16, it is suggested that the alcohol would be diluted by a Finnish soft drink named “Ed”.

Fragment 4. 01 T .hhh mt fsit siel oli sillei et puheenjohtaja
 .hhh mt fthen there it was like the chairman
 02 #oli ihan sikaväsny
 #was really really tired
 03 ja sitä otti joku päähän#£,
 and he was irritated by something#£,
 04 (0.3)
 05 T .hhh fni se oli sillei totetaas kossua nyt£
 .hhh fso he was like !let's have some booze now£
 06 hh .hhh Eet kuka haluu kossuu #sit mä olin
 hh .hhh Elike who wants booze #then i was like
 07 sillee et no mä en kyl ota kossuu
 well i am not going to have any booze
 08 et mä oon just ollu vatsat(h)aud(h)issa
 because i had just had a stom(h)achfl(h)u
 09 et en kyl ota#£ .hh
 so i am certainly not going to have#£ .hh
 10 ENO OTAT SÄ nyt kossua=sit se niinku kaikki
 EOH YOU WILL HAVE booze now= then like everyone
 11 rupees juomaan kossuu *s(h)iel n(h)iinku*£ .hhh
 started to drink booze *th(h)ere like*£ .hhh
 12 (0.2) £s(h)unn(h)unt(h)ai<£ .hhh £#illal=
 (0.2) £in the s(h)un(h)d(h)ay<£ .hhh evening=
 13 =mä olin et no emmä kyl nyt halua#£ hh .hhh,
 =i was like well i really don't want #£ hh .hhh,
 14 (0.6)
 15 T fsit mä jouduin ottaa niinku vä#häsen
 fthen i had to take like a lit#tle
 16 ku kaikki vaan et# totat sä siihen jotai Edii #sekaan=
 because everyone was like# you take some Ed #with it=
 17 =mä olin et no voim mä kyl ottaa=
 =i was like well maybe i can take some=
 18 =emmä nyt raakan rupee juomaa#£ hhh .hhh,
 =i'm not drinking it straight#£ hhh .hhh,

In the opening lines, we see the last part of the orientation phase of the story, in which the antagonist is presented (viz. ‘the chairman’) and his mood is sketched (lines 2–3), which already hints at upcoming trouble. Then, after a brief pause, the reported exchange starts with two turns by this antagonist in which he suggests to start jointly consuming alcohol. Both turns are on a shallow deontic gradient, as the first one consists of a hortative *otetaas* (‘let’s have’, line 5) which underlines the collaborative nature of the potential future activity, and the second one has the form of an offer depending on the volition of the recipient (‘who wants booze’, line 6). These low deontic stances are congruent with the chairman’s low deontic status, given that the choice to consume alcohol is really up to each person him/herself. The protagonist then refuses by factually stating a future state of affairs (‘well I am not going to take any booze’, line 7), which is mitigated by some turn-initial delay (‘well’) as well as an account (‘because I had just had a

stomach flu, line 8). She then concludes her turn by a repetition of her preceding factual statement ('so I am certainly not going to take,' line 9). Hence this turn enacts a medium deontic stance, as the protagonist on the one hand uses factual statements for her refusal, but on the other hand also provides an account for not wanting to drink. Given that it concerns her personal choice whether or not to consume alcohol, she has a high deontic status in this domain, so her stance is slightly incongruent, and can thus be considered as quite careful. Interestingly, this is then followed by a loudly spoken assertion by the antagonist, which sounds even more compelling due to the addition of the time element 'now' ('OH YOU WILL HAVE booze now,' line 10). This expresses a high deontic stance, which is of course incongruent with the chairman's deontic status in this respect. Before uttering her response, the narrator first describes that everyone else complied with the chairman's orders (lines 10–11). Then, after a short pause, the narrator repeats the time of the event (which she already mentioned prior to the fragment) in a smile voice ('in the Sunday evening,' line 12), thus hinting at this contextual aspect that makes the activity even more inappropriate. She then pursues the reported exchange further and utters her response to the chairman's preceding directive. In this response, she expresses her negative volition, which is emphasized by the booster 'really', thus through a congruent high deontic stance ('I really don't want,' line 13).

However, after another pause, the narrator continues by describing that she was forced to consume alcohol anyway, as established by the prosodically emphasized modal verb of obligation (*jouduin*, 'had to,' line 15), which is at the same time also downplayed by the minimalization of the amount (*vähäsen*, 'a little,' line 15). This is explained in the next line, in which the group ('everyone,' line 16) is now presented as another collective story character that contributed to the interaction. This group's choral reported turn (Buttny & Cohen, 2007) consists of another assertion which on the one hand aligns with the chairman's directive to consume alcohol, mirroring his high deontic stance, but on the other hand it also offers a compromise by proposing a milder version (i.e. to dilute the alcohol with the soft drink "Ed", line 16). So even though the stance of this utterance is incongruent with the deontic status of others over someone's alcohol consumption, this is nevertheless mitigated by the compromise proposal. In the final lines, the protagonist is then reported to have conceded in a hedged way ('well maybe I can take some,' line 17), thus enacting a low deontic stance which is incongruent with her status. Yet, she then continues to formulate a boosted precondition, namely of 'certainly' not consuming the alcohol 'raw' ('certainly I'm not drinking it raw,' line 18). In this way, she still enacts a high deontic stance, which is congruent with her status, but, importantly, it only concerns a strongly reduced deontic domain—namely the

right to decide whether to consume alcohol pure or in a diluted form, rather than the right to decide whether or not to consume any alcohol at all.

Overall, this story revolved around the chairman's high deontic stances in relation to the group's consumption of alcohol. While everyone has deontic primacy for themselves in this domain and is thus accountable for their own decisions, the chairman ignores this basic premise and enacts a stance which is incongruent with his status—which can be considered as vaguely related to his irritable mood as sketched at the start of the fragment. While the other people in the group comply with the chairman's offers and directives to consume alcohol, the protagonist initially refuses. Even though she has equal deontic status as the rest of the group and thus has every right to refuse, she nevertheless shifts back and forth between high and low deontic stances. While the former are congruent with her status, the latter are not, and this indecisiveness can be related to the dilemma between, on the one hand, resisting group pressure and thus making one's own decisions regarding what one eats and drinks, and, on the other hand, surrendering to the group and thus joining in the alcohol consumption against one's own volition. The compromise of consuming alcohol in a diluted form finally forms the solution for this dilemma enacted through the oscillation in deontic stances, and it allows the protagonist to still enact a high deontic stance congruent with her status, albeit concerning a very narrow deontic domain (i.e., in which form to drink alcohol). Overall, in her narration, the protagonist highlights the inappropriateness of the chair's and the group's expressions of high deontic stances in this respect, thus orienting the story evaluation implicitly in the direction of the accountability of the other story characters.

Thus, as was the case in the fragments revolving around epistemics, these two final fragments revolved around how people exerted their rights to determine what others could or should do in relation to highly personal deontic domains in which each person should have the highest deontic status him/herself. In both cases, it was the element of deontic incongruence that best served the tellability of the story—even in fragment 3, in which an authoritative boss also made deontic claims that were as such congruent with his superior deontic status in the workplace. In both cases, the forceful character of these high-deontic-stance directives is really demonstrated—rather than merely described—by means of reported turns. Through reported turns, the narrator makes the unjustifiable nature of the antagonists' deontic claims visible to the story recipients and highlights their accountability in this respect, without explicitly drawing attention to this in the narrative turns surrounding the reported speech.

Deontic and epistemic relations

In this final section, we now turn to a fragment in which the ways in which epistemic and deontic relations become intertwined with each other constitutes the key aspect of the story, as epistemic incongruence on the part of one story character is presented here as causally related to deontic incongruence for another story character. The fragment comes from a Finnish interview in which an interviewee is talking about the trouble she, as the story protagonist, has with her superiors and how some of it may be related to one of the middle managers discrediting her to the top manager, who is the story antagonist in this fragment. As the story concerns a work-related domain, deontic and epistemic statuses are implied through the invocation of the story characters' organizational roles, which were once again made concrete and tangible for the story recipients through the membership categories of "subordinate"/"superior" as a standardized relational pair (Sacks, 1972). Prior to the fragment, the narrator explained that next to her regular work, she also worked overtime on weekends. She is now reporting on a chat she had with the top manager about her work schedule. The fragment starts with a first turn by the latter.

- Fragment 5. 01 IE se sitten sano: sano johtaja jotenki jännästi että
 then s/he sai:d the top manager said a bit curiously that
 02 (0.7) nii että ku sä (1.3) sä oot tehny vaan
 (0.7) yea that since you've (1.3) you've only worked
 03 viikonloppu#töitäh#(0.2) mä sit sanoin että no mm >en oo kyllä
 on week#ends (h) # (0.2) i then said that well mm >i certainly
 04 todellakaan tehny< että mä oon tehny myös arkena töitä,
 haven't< that i've worked on weekdays also,
 05 (0.7) et hoitanu ne mitä t-mulla on ne kaks(h) t(h)yötehtävää
 (0.7) doing what t-i have the t(h)wo t (h) asks
 06 plus sitten näitä verkkotyöhommia (1.0) >että tuota< ihan
 plus the internet work (1.0) >so like<
 07 täysii työpäiviä oon tehny kyllä viikollak(h)i
 that i've done full workdays on weekdays as w(h)ell
 08 ja nää on si'tte ylimääräsiä #ne viikonloput# (0.3)
 and #the weekends# are on top of that (0.3)
 09 ni hänellä ei ollu tämmösestä niinku mitään tietoooh se
 so s/he didn't have any knowledge of this
 10 et se ei oo väliportaana esimies kertonu
 that s/he hasn't the middle manager hasn't
 11 #ollenkaan# >et mitä< mitä mä oikeesti teen töissä.
 #at all# told >like what< what i really do at work.
 12 IR mmm.
 13 (2.3)
 14 IE että se on vähän liikaa niinku (0.9) mä t-sanoinkin hänelle et
 that s/he has a bit too much like (0.9) i -told her/him that
 15 sä oot pikkusen liikaa antanu (1.0) antanu tuota noin
 you've a little bit too much let (1.0) let erm
 16 tämän meidän väliportaana esimiehen (0.4) hoitaa meidän asioita
 the middle manager (0.4) manage our affairs
 17 että ku sulla ei oo oikeesti tietoo itellä
 because you don't really have the information yourself
 18 että mitä mitä me tehään ja(h) (0.9) ja miten me tehään,
 on what what we do and (0.9) how we do (it),

The enquoting phrase in line 1 is characterized by a self-initiated same turn repair (Sidnell, 2010), and in this repair the narrator already hints at the fact that there is something problematic with the upcoming turn by the antagonist, as she adds a prosodically emphasized qualifier of the upcoming talk (i.e., ‘a bit curiously,’ line 1). The reported turn then takes the form of a subordinate clause (cf. the initial subordinating conjunction *ku*, ‘since,’ line 2). This marks this utterance as commonly shared knowledge that functions as a background to a main clause that is to follow—but never does. By means of this turn (lines 2–3), the antagonist enacts a high epistemic stance regarding the protagonist’s work schedule, and this is expected to be congruent with her high epistemic status implied in her organizational role as top manager. Yet, in her response, the protagonist emphatically refutes this (cf. the booster *kyllä todellakaan*, ‘certainly,’ line 3) and then factually provides more details on her work schedule (lines 4 and 7–8) and her tasks (lines 5–6). In her turns, she enacts a high epistemic stance, and this is of course congruent with her status as an employee whose own work schedule the discussion is about. So by means of her reported turns, the protagonist exposes the top manager’s knowledge as wrong and the latter’s knowledge source as unreliable. This conclusion is then also formulated explicitly in lines 9–11, and, in addition to this, the middle manager is identified as the cause of this epistemic trouble on the part of the top manager.

After a pause (line 13), the interviewee starts commenting on the top manager’s way of working in line 14, but then changes the format to reported speech again. This now consists of a long turn by the protagonist (lines 15–18) in which she starts reprimanding the top manager regarding the latter’s way of working. This is done in a direct way (cf. the direct address by means of 2nd person pronominal forms (lines 15 and 17)) and by means of some colloquial language (i.e., the use of *pikkusen*, ‘a little bit’ in ‘you’ve a little bit too much let let erm the middle manager manage our affairs,’ line 15). This language use on the one hand downgrades the criticism, but on the other hand it also aggravates it as it makes the talk quite informal and thus reduces the distance between herself and her superior. In this way, she constructs a high deontic stance through the way this reprimand is formulated, and this is of course incongruent with her status as subordinate vis-à-vis the top manager.

Interestingly, the content of the reprimand is targeted at the indirect way in which the top manager acquires knowledge about the employees (such as herself). Thus, the latter’s epistemic status is presented here as closely related to his/her deontic status as superior, as it is part of the responsibilities of the top manager to have correct information about the employees’ work schedules. Given that it has now been shown that these responsibilities are not taken up, this is presented as having implications in terms of deontic rights. Thus, the top manager’s

epistemic trouble that is exposed in the first part of the reported exchange, creates room for the subordinate to challenge the superior through the former's enactment of an incongruent deontic stance in the final part of the reported speech, thus demonstrating how deontics and epistemics can become consequentially intertwined.

Thus we could again observe that the narrator establishes deontic and epistemic statuses for which the story characters can be held accountable through the invocation of the standardized relational pair of organizational roles. Furthermore, we showed once more that congruent and incongruent relations are constructed in front of the story recipients' eyes by displaying—rather than *talking about*—these various stances through reported speech. In this way, they are made accessible for the recipients' evaluation, which again remains largely implicit in the narrator's own descriptions surrounding the reported utterances.

Discussion and conclusions

The analyzed cases show that narrators use direct reported speech to construct epistemic and deontic stances in relation to the respective statuses of the story characters that are either implied through the invocation of inference-rich category memberships (cf. Sacks, 1972, 1992) or described by the narrators prior to and in between reported utterances. These stances and statuses may be either congruent or incongruent with each other, while it seems to be incongruence in particular that best serves the point of the story, or, in other words, its evaluation. The process through which this happens, in an abstract format, consists of three steps, namely: first, details or meta comments related to the story and relevant aspects of the story characters' epistemic and/or deontic statuses are highlighted and this refers to the domains and extent in which both antagonists and protagonists bear accountability for their communicative actions. Second, reported speech is then invoked in which epistemic and deontic stances are constructed as if it were happening on a turn-by-turn basis in the "original" interaction that is being reported. Finally, the implicit relation between these two offers the story recipients a window into the hierarchies and transgressions between the characters in the storyworld without the narrator him/herself necessarily having to draw explicit attention to them. The story recipients are in this way equipped—and implicitly invited—to evaluate the story characters' accountability and draw their own conclusions regarding the appropriateness of their behaviors, which then, in turn, constitutes the point of the story. Given the illusion of authenticity that reported speech creates (Schiffrin, 2003), the story evaluation is made quite immune to criticism on the part of the story recipients, as it actually seems to be them who

drew this evaluative conclusion, rather than the narrator. Yet, the task of the narrator has of course been to carefully construct the status-stance relation that is relevant to, and needed to convey, the desired point of the story.

Moreover, while the tellability of the stories may be most clearly based on their epistemically and deontically incongruent elements, the wide range of variations of epistemic or deontic (in)congruence can constitute a central point for doing moral and identity work. In the case of epistemic relations, even though both story characters' epistemic stances matched with their statutes in Fragment 1, these pertained to slightly different matters. By displaying a low epistemic stance for the protagonist, the narrator was able to distance herself from any negative implications of her telling and to indicate that she had had no chance to act against the possible devaluation of her character. In Fragment 2, the antagonist presented a high epistemic stance that sharply contradicted his epistemic status in the story. By using both an ironic low epistemic stance that contradicted her actual high epistemic status and a high epistemic stance that was congruent with her epistemic status, the protagonist was able to hold the antagonist accountable for his insensitivity and stereotype-based treatment of her. In this way, the story could count as a proper account of an instance of discriminatory behavior.

The cases of deontic relations (Fragments 3 & 4) bring the issue of consent to the fore: how the versatile construction of the status-stance relationship may bring about victimization, powerlessness, and restricted agency. While all this could be problematic in terms of the presentation of self, in both cases this challenge was diminished in distinct ways. In Fragment 3, the deontic stance by the boss could be seen to be largely congruent with his superior deontic status. Yet, the case also included a transgression regarding his legitimate domains of power, authority, and influence. By contrasting her polite behavior with the rude manner of her superior, the narrator was able to present herself as having the moral high ground. Thus, the detailed construction of reported speech aided in stressing status differences and the morally reprehensible behavior of the antagonist, for which he is thus implicitly held accountable. Our analysis of Fragment 4 specifically highlighted the ways in which the narrator gradually narrowed down her domain of deontic status to match the social pressures in the situation, which allowed her to present a consistent deontic stance throughout the story—one in which she was an autonomous agent with the right to decide “independently” about her alcohol consumption. The construction of such illusions of independence have been shown to be a general characteristic of human interactional behavior (see e.g., Stevanovic, 2021). Moreover, the incongruence of the deontic stances of the other story characters helped this narrator to portray herself as the protagonist in a way that downgraded her own accountability regarding alcohol consumption.

The final case (Fragment 5) serves as a counterpoint to the previous examples in that it indicates how epistemic and deontic stances may be challenged and how epistemics and deontics may intertwine during the process of such challenging. By showing the epistemic stance of her superior to be false and portraying herself as capable of holding her superior accountable for it, the protagonist was able to expand her deontic space and transgress the deontic boundaries in the storyworld. This notion is in line with prior literature that has described the ways in which storytellers may construct social statuses, social relationships, and discursive rights in the storyworld in empowering ways (Van De Mieroop & Clifton, 2013). The power of a good story is apparent also in the ways in which stories may point to problems that need to be remedied. Indeed, often the skill in casting specific interactional exchanges as problematic seems to be in how to define, manage, and make visible the boundaries between epistemic and deontic stances and statuses. These skills are therefore essential also for the possibilities of social change.

All in all, our analysis has pointed to many advantages of reported exchanges for the narrator. In addition to dramatizing the story and enhancing its seeming authenticity, we have also shown that reported speech plays a crucial part in story evaluation, as was already hinted at before (cf. Buttny & Cohen, 2007). Its unique advantage in this respect is that narrators do not have to formulate the point of the story themselves, as they can leave the evaluation of the story largely up to the story recipients through the specific way in which deontics and epistemics are integrated in the storytelling process. As the reported exchanges serve as vivid proof for the often inappropriate nature of the specific stances that are expressed—letting the antagonists “incriminate themselves [...] directly to the audience of the narrative” (Hamilton, 1998, p. 64)—they are often thus also crucial for the construction of the particular identities that narrators display in the storyworld and they guide the recipients to see the social barriers that stand in the way of the realization of the former’s identity-related desires.

Overall, we have shown that the analysis of the turn-by-turn construction of reported exchanges in narratives may be a fruitful way to tease out the evaluative points that narrators (implicitly) insert in their stories. This is yet another means for internal evaluation, next to, for example, the speaker’s word choice, their prosody and their use of certain linguistic and voice registers (Buttny & Cohen, 2007, Couper-Kuhlen & Klewitz, 1999, Estellés-Arguedas, 2015, Günthner, 1999). Moreover, through the analysis of reported turns, we can obtain an insight into narrators’ emic perspective on the machinery of talk and how they can portray its operations for pragmatic use. Van De Mieroop and Clifton (2013) already showed how through “constructed sequentiality”, power relations may be built up in front of the story recipients’ eyes from one reported turn to the next. In this article, we have taken this line of reasoning further by drawing on the CA con-

cepts of epistemics and deontics. By applying these in a discourse/narrative analytical way and scrutinizing the potential tensions between statuses and stances in narratives containing reported exchanges, we can not only tease out how these contribute to story evaluations, but we can also obtain an insight into language users' own ways of making sense of their epistemic and deontic negotiations. In this way, our study demonstrates, and paves the way for a novel approach to epistemics and deontics, which can complement the insights gained in the analysis of these phenomena *in situ*.

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