

Rethinking quotation, cross-linguistically

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Introduction. Quotation has often been taken to be one of the key features of human languages, allowing us to perform a wide range of linguistic actions ranging from referring to expressions themselves, as in ‘pure quotation’ (Cappelen and Lepore 1997; De Brabanter 2010) to producing faithful speech reports (Geurts and Maier 2003; Potts 2007). The mere fact, however, that quotation serves as an umbrella term for such a wide variety of constructions should give rise to suspicion. Notwithstanding, quotation has traditionally been assumed by formal linguists to be a quite homogeneous phenomenon, governed by the following principle:

(1) **Grammatical opacity** (Anand 2006: 81)

Quotations form a closed domain with respect to syntactic and semantic operators.

However, I argue that (1) is quite moot when applied to the analysis of speech reports cross-linguistically, and that any definition of quotation assuming such a principle will likely prevent us from achieving a satisfying analysis of speech reports across languages.

Reported speech: the view from natural languages. What cross-linguistic research tells us is that the traditional direct/indirect discourse divide is not as clear-cut as (1) would predict; while some languages readily make use of different syntactic constructions to encode this distinction, like English, others do not. Some languages like Amharic (Schlenker, 2003) or Tigrinya have no indirect reporting mode; Japanese makes use of a ‘hybrid mode’ that allows for the embedding of imperatives (Kuno 1973; Shimamura 2018); others allow for a shift in interpretation of verbs of motion (Bylinina et al. 2014; Anderson 2021), evidentials (Korotkova, 2016) and indexicals (Anand 2006; Deal 2020), while yet other make use of dedicated logophoric pronouns (Culy 1994, Nikitina 2012) or quotatives (Korotkova 2017, AnderBois 2019) in order to signal speech reports. Languages using a different modality, such as sign languages, make use of a distinct set of non-manual markers to signal speech reports constructions, with only a dedicated subset of those signaling direct speech/pure quotation (Quer 2011; Herrmann and Steinbach 2012; Schlenker 2017).

The proposal. In light of such data, I propose that reported speech should be viewed as a continuum, based on the different categories of perspectival elements a given language can dispose of in its lexicon, and how these elements may shift towards the reported speaker’s perspective in speech reports (cp. Anderson 2021, Bylinina et al. 2014). Languages can then be represented along a ‘perspectival scale’, where the possible shift of a perspectival category in speech reports for a given language, such as evidentials and indexicals, determine where it stands on the scale. It is assumed that languages with a high number of shiftable perspectival elements, such as Matsigenka (Ludwig et al. 2010; Munro et al. 2012) or Japanese, are unlikely to make use of dedicated indirect speech constructions, and therefore, exhibit a clear cut direct/indirect distinction, while languages with a smaller set of shiftable perspectival items, such as English, have a stronger tendency to make use of it - which seems empirically correct. The phenomenon of pure quotation, as it occurs in English, can then be reanalyzed as a special kind of manner implicature (Rett, 2020), where an utterance of the form

(2) John said, “I am a hero”

triggers a verbatim effect, in which the meaning as well as the form of the whole construction is attributed to the reported speaker.

Word count (title and references excluded): 481

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