Rethinking quotation, cross-linguistically

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Cross-disciplinary perspectives on quoting and speech reporting
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Outline

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Goals of this talk

- Provide arguments for the claim that direct discourse (as observed in natural languages) differs both theoretically and empirically from quotation (understood as a meta-linguistic device) and, as such, should not be analyzed using the same methodological toolkit;

- Outline the different properties of direct (and indirect) discourse and their related problems, and ultimately suggest that these properties do not suffice to ground direct (or indirect) discourse as a property of natural language structures. Rather, the distinction is a pragmatic one, relating linguistically-encoded meanings and their use in different language systems.

A problem for linguistics

- Do the categories "direct speech" (DS) and "indirect speech" (IS) denote natural categories to be investigated by the linguist?

(1) a. Otto said I am a fool
    b. Otto$_i$ said: "I$_i$ am a fool"
    c. Otto$_i$ said I$_{Spk}$ am a fool

- The answer will likely be negative (but maybe not for the reasons that you think it is!)

The anatomy of reported speech

Property	Direct speech	Indirect speech
Faithfulness	Reproduces the original speaker's words	Assimilates the material presented by the original speaker to the reporting speaker's perspective
Opacity	Syntactically and semantically opaque	Grammatical and semantic dependencies allowed
Shiftiness	Deictics/indexicals anchored to the original speaker	Deictics/indexicals anchored to the reporting speaker

Table inspired by Oshima (2006), Evans (2013) and Maier (2014a) i.a.

The anatomy of reported speech

- However, reality seems to be much more complex than this table suggest.
- DS might very well be less opaque and faithful to was was said...
- ... And IS might also be less transparent and unfaithful than commonly assumed (cf. the beautiful and unjustly overlooked paper by Brasoveanu and Farkas 2007).
- In what follows, I'll focus on the properties of DS.

Outline

A confusion

- Within philosophy of language and formal linguistics, the terms "quotation" and "direct speech" are often used interchangeably.
- This position stems from the use vs mention distinction advocated for by philosophers such as Tarski (1933) and Quine (1940); its extension to speech reports dates back at least to Partee (1973):

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``The immediate semantic conclusion to be explicated is that
it is not the meaning of the quoted sentence that is
contributing to the meaning of the whole, but rather its
surface form'' (Partee 1973:  411)
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- Or, in more technical terms:

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``Direct reports describe a relation between an agent
(reported speaker) and a linguistic object (cf.  Recanati
2000; Potts 2004), while indirect reports describe a
relation between an agent and a semantic object (i.e.  a
proposition).''  (Oshima 2006:  9)
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Varieties of quotation

- In the literature, "Quotation" as a technical concepts overlaps many *denotata* with very different properties:

(2) **Varieties of quotation**
   a. "Boston" is disyllabic. *Pure quotation*
   b. "We may need it for taxes since we have no idea what we're looking at next year," Ms. Felder said. *Direct quotation (or direct discourse)*
   c. Harvey said an inquiry would not be ruled out, "should serious and systemic issues" emerge as a result of the MoD's own investigations. *Mixed quotation*
   d. The "debate" resulted in three cracked heads and two broken noses. *Scare quotes*
   e. We sell "fresh" pastry. *Emphatic or "greengrocer's" quotes* (Abbott, 2005)

   (Adapted from Gutzmann and Stei 2011)

Varieties of quotation

- The philosophical/semantic tradition thus conflates (2)a and b in analyzing DS as quotation.
- Mixed quotation has spawned various works on the philosopher's side ((cf. state-of-the-art articles such as Cappelen et al. 2020, collections such as Saka and Johnson 2017, and most notably Emar Maier's work - Maier 2007a, Maier 2014c, Maier 2014b a.m.o.), but surprisingly not on the linguist's.
- Today's main point of inquiry are the relationships between (2)a-c (I will not be concerned by the last two varieties here, but I think that some parts of the analysis that I will suggest can be extended to them at no cost).
- More specifically, I will try to argue that the identification of categories (2)b-c with (2)a is spurious, being ultimately neither supported by sound theoretical nor empirical evidence.

DS properties under scrutiny

Opacity

Quotations/DS reports form a closed domain with respect to syntactic and semantic operators.   (Anand 2006: 81)

Faithfulness

A quotation/DS q presupposes another utterance u to which it is identical in form and meaning.   (see also Anand 2006 for a similar proposal).

Shiftiness

WIthin a quoted/DS environment, every context-sensitive element obtain its semantic value from the original context.

- I will assume without further ado that the above properties are those of pure quotation.

- An interesting question for the linguist: are those properties those of direct speech constructions as well? Two possibilities:
  ✓: Of course they are!
  ✗: Hey, WAM...
- The above distinctions, as emphasized by many in the literature, has mostly been drawn from a scholarly tradition focusing mostly on Indo-European languages and/or written form (Coulmas 1986, Davidson 2015)
- A look at other languages or other modalities (e.g. sign languages) reveals a completely different picture.

Case study 1: shifted readings of indexicals

- Some languages seem to allow very fine grained forms of direct discourse, in which only one single element seems to be anchored to the original utterance.
- This is the case with so-called "shifted" indexicals:

(3) jon jəgna nə-ññ yɨ-l-all
John hero COP-1SG.S 3SG.M.S-say-AUX.3SG.M.S
John$_i$ says that he$_{i,Spk}$ is a hero (Amharic: Schlenker 1999)

(4) Hɛsen-i mɨ-ra va kɛ ɛz dɛwletia
Hesen-OBL 1SG-OBL say COMP 1SG.NOM rich.be.PRS
Hesen$_i$ tells me$_{Spk}$ that he$_{i,Spk}$ is rich
(Zazaki: Anand and Nevins 2004)

Case study 1: shifted readings of indexicals

- There was a time at which the status of these examples was debated: are (3)-(4) instances of **direct** or **indirect speech?**
- **Indirect:** Anand and Nevins (2004), Anand (2006), Sudo (2012), Deal (2013, 2017, 2020), Shklovsky and Sudo (2014)... and most of the current formal literature on indexical shift.
- **Direct/mixed**: Maier (2007b) and...?
- The main arguments from treating the above examples as cases of indirect speech came from literature on quotation: the authors (mainly tacitly) assimilated direct discourse to (pure) quotation, and argued that the properties of the latter would not appear in structure such as (3)-(4).
- But these arguments are only valid if one accept its central premise - namely, that DD and quotation are one and the same linguistic objects.

(5) a. What did John say he liked *t*?
   b. #What did John say: 'I like *t*'?

(6) a. Qu'est-ce que Jean a dit qu'il aimait?
   b. #Qu'est-ce que Jean a dit: 'j'aime'?

(Schlenker 1999: (14-15))

Arguments from opacity: extraction out of speech report clauses

- However, the same construction seems perfectly licit in Amharic and many other indexical shifting languages:

(7) Piyaa-o$_i$ kɛ   Rojda va   kɛ   mɨ   paci kerdɛ Ali biyo
    Person   COMP Rojda say.PST COMP I.OBL kiss did   Ali be.PST
    'Ali was the person that Rojda$_i$ said I$_{i,Spk}$ kissed'.

                                                    (Zazaki, Anand and Nevins 2004: (12))

(8) Yeri Margaret segha   woshi   nehdi
    What Margaret **1SG.DAT** 2SG.will-make 3SG.tell.2SG.PST
    'What did Margaret tell you to make for her?'.

                                                    Slave, (Anand 2006: (233c))

- However, if one rejects the premiss that DS is pure quotation, one could argue that these are just cases of mixed quotation (with refinements; see Maier 2007b, and below):

(9) Their accord on this issue, he said, has proved "quite a surprise to both of us". [Cumming 2003: (6)]

(10) Otto said I am a fool.

(11) *Context: John and Peter each said: "I am a hero"*

Jon-inna	Peter	jagna	ndn	alu
John and	Peter	hero	be.1PL.PRS	say.3PL.PST

'John$_i$ and Peter$_j$ said that they$_{i \oplus j}$ were heroes'

(Amharic, Schlenker 1999): (16)

$\nrightarrow$ John and Peter produced a token u of the form "we are heroes"

A counter-argument: direct discourse need not reproduce an utterance

- However, again, this type of reasoning can be presented as an argument against DS if one assumes Faithfulness as defined above to hold for not only for pure quotation, but for DS as well.
- There are many reasons, however, to doubt that such a strong principle holds for DS:

(12) a. My cat was like: "feed me."
   $\nrightarrow$ the cat uttered "feed me"
   b. Bob saw the spider and was like: "I can't kill it!"
   $\nrightarrow$ Bob uttered "I can't kill it"

[Davidson 2015: (21-23)]

- There is ample evidence that Faithfulness or *verbatimness* is a mere assumption in the conversational setup (cf. Clark and Gerrig 1990)
- I will argue in what follows that Faithfulness is a special case of manner implicature.

Properties of shifty languages

Faithfulness: %

Flexibility seems allowed within shifted clauses to some extent (e.g., some elements can be read *de re*, cf. Sudo 2012 for Uyghur); However, some degree of faithfulness seems to be enforced by speakers (personal fieldwork on Tigrinya)

Shiftiness: ✓

Indexicals must be interpreted from the perspective of the original speaker; however, languages vary as to which indexicals can shift (person vs locative/temporal), and in which environments (cf. Deal 2020 i.a.).

Opacity: %

Most of IS languages allow for extraction out of reported clauses, but not all (see e.g. Stockwell 2018)
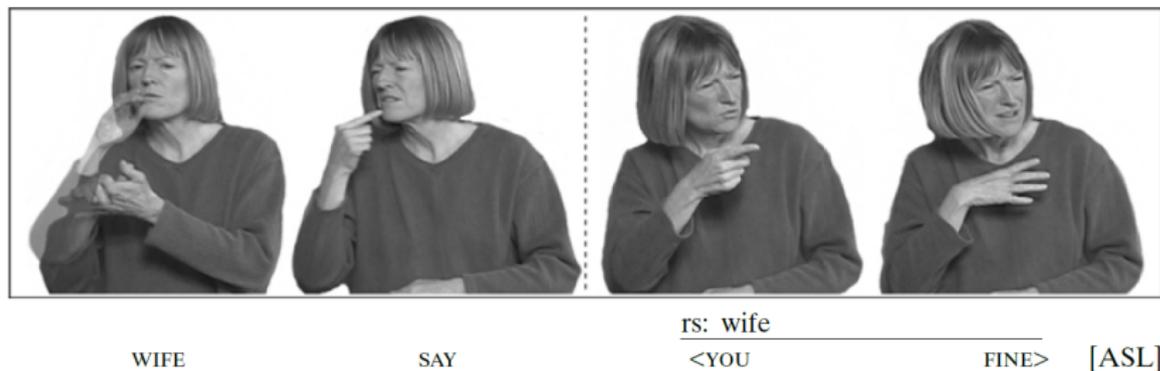
Figure 1: RS NMMs: eye gaze shift, body lean, head turn in American Sign Language (from Lillo-Martin (2012): 369.)

Case study 2: sign language role shift

Faithfulness in SLs: ✓

Elements that are signaled by non-manual markers must be interpreted maximally iconically, i.e. as pertaining to the original reported material as much as possible (Davidson 2015; Schlenker 2017b)

Shiftiness in SLs: ✓

Indexicals under role shift must be interpreted from the perspective of the original speaker ((**?**; Meier 1990) for ASL; Quer 2005 for LSC; Herrmann and Steinbach 2012 for DGS; Schlenker 2017a for LSF)

Opacity in SLs: %

Seems to vary from language to language:

- ASL: % (Koulidobrova and Lillo-Martin 2016; Schlenker 2017a)
- LSF: ✓ (Schlenker, 2017a)
- HKSL: ✓ (Gan, 2021)

Case study 2: sign language role shift

- Can we therefore assimilate role shift structures with direct speech *qua* quotation? Not quite!
- SLs make use of dedicated reporting predicates when they want to introduce a quotation that needs to be taken *verbatim*.
- A case in point is Catalan Sign Language (Quer, 2013), which makes use of predicates such as *VOICE, SAY-SENTENCE, AUTHOR*, and *DECLARE*:

(13) ANNA$_i$ EXPLAIN SAY-SENTENCE $\overline{\text{IX-1}_i \text{ BROTHER MAN 3-IGNORE-1}}^{\text{rs-i}}$
     'Anna told me: "my brother ignores me"'

[Quer 2013: (6)]

Interim summary

- A closer look at the data does not support a direct-indirect distinction based on the properties under scrutiny (opacity, shiftiness, faithfulness).
- Rather, it seems that languages vary to the extent they exhibit these properties in reported speech structures.
- Each of the aforementioned property thus needs a separate analysis, that could possibly explain why it is recruited in speech report constructions.
- In what follows, I want to propose an analysis of the faithfulness property of direct speech structures in English in terms of implicature.

Outline

Faithfulness as a manner implicature

- The second central property of DS, **faithfulness** can be reduced to more general pragmatic principles.
- I'll argue that it is essentially the result of a manner implicature, obtained over competing less-marked forms associated with IS.

Manner implicatures in a gricean framework

Grice's maxim of manner

- Avoid obscurity of expression.
- Avoid ambiguity.
- Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
- Be orderly.

Cases of manner implicatures

- lexical blocking (McCawley, 1978)

(14) a. pale red
b. *pale black
c. ALT(pale black) = grey

- Lexical vs periphrastic causatives (Katz 1970):

(15) a. Black Bart killed the sheriff
b. Black Bart caused the sheriff to die
c. ⤳ Black Bart did not murder the sheriff in a typical manner

- (Crude) generalization: use of marked forms over less marked ones convey marked meanings.

Markedness and implicature

- Here, markedness can be understood either as **prolixity** or **complexity**.
- Generalization: the use of a form ψ will trigger a manner implicature if there is a form ϕ which is simpler and conveys the same meaning as ψ.
- We can formalize this intuition using Meyer (2014, 2015) Efficiency principle (see also Rett 2020 for an analogous proposal):

Efficiency   (Meyer, 2015)

An LF ϕ is ruled out if there is a distinct competitor ψ s.t.

- $\psi < \phi$
- $[\![\psi]\!] \equiv [\![\phi]\!]$

Where "$<$" denotes the "strictly-simpler-as" relation (Katzir, 2007)

- In such a context, an utterance of ϕ will force the hearer to salvage the speaker's conversational move by triggering a manner implicature.

Markedness and implicature

- In what sense direct discourse structures can be said "more complex" in English?
- DS often comes with a distinct prosodic marking, called the Quotative Prosodic Contour (Potts, 2005); basically, a rise-fall-rise intonation:

(16)

	H* L H%	H*L H%	H* L H%
They made phone calls to three	"prominent	Indian	government

H*L H%
officials".

- As such, the DS report *cum* its distinctive prosody is more marked than its IS counterpart, and as such its use triggers a manner implicature.

Faithfulness as implicature

- Due to the conversational setup, the markedness implicature in that context will likely convey that the speaker does not endorse the content of the report she is making.
- In other words, the distinctive prosody used in reported speech helps convey a shift of perspective/authoring source, where it signals a shift in authority regarding the content of the report.
- This is in line with analyses of e.g. scare quotes as triggering implicatures of non-stereotypicality (Gutzmann and Stei 2011; Schlechtweg and Härtl 2020):

(17)   H* L H%
    The "debate"   resulted in three cracked heads and two broken noses.

[Adapted from Gutzmann and Stei 2011: (1d)]

Faithfulness as implicature

- Therefore, it is likely that the hearer will infer that the content being reported is not under the responsibility of the current speaker, and that she is merely displaying it (though the precise details of this process still need to be worked out).

- This accounts for the *verbatimness* or *faithfulness* assumption conveyed by DS structures.

Outline

Conclusion

- I have been arguing that, contrary to what has been claimed so far, the names "direct discourse" and "indirect discourse" do not denote categories of any kind in natural language.
- Rather, it is the **properties** commonly attributed to such constructions - **opacity, shiftiness** and **fatihfulness** - that are of relevance for linguistic inquiry.
- Languages vary as to which properties are instantiated within their reported speech constructions.
- Finally, I have argued that the particularly strong faithfulness effect associated with DS structures in languages like English can be cashed out as a kind of manner implicature governed by an economy principle (Meyer's Efficiency), whose distinctive flavor is due to the peculiar contexts in which it appears.

I just wanted to say

"Thank You!"

and I just did!

Feedback much welcome:
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thank you

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