

How Quotation Marks What People Do With Words

Daniel Gutzmann Erik Stei



JOHANNES
GUTENBERG
UNIVERSITÄT
MAINZ



September 16, 2009

Nachdenken und Vordenken -
Herausforderungen an die Philosophie

Reflections and Projections -
Challenges to Philosophy

GAP.7

Outline

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Minimal pragmatic indicators
- 3 In defence of the MPI account
- 4 Conclusion

1. Introduction

Varieties of Quotation

- (1) a. “This theory is difficult to understand” is a sentence.
pure quotation (PQ)
- b. Alice says, “This theory is difficult to understand.”
direct quotation (DQ)
- c. Alice says that this theory “is difficult to understand”.
mixed quotation (MQ)
- d. This “theory” is difficult to understand.
scare quotes (SQ)
- e. (headline of today’s newspaper) Alice’s “new” theory!
emphatic quotes (EQ)

Definition

- ▶ Quotation: an expression between quotation marks (QM)

Aim

- ▶ Provide an account that is able to deal with all types of quotation sketched in (1)

Theses

- ▶ QM are pragmatic markers.
- ▶ QM do *not* have a proper semantic “meaning”.

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2. Minimal pragmatic indicators

Minimal Pragmatic Indicators (MPI)

MPIs are:

- ▶ *Minimal* (M): They do not have a proper semantic meaning.
- ▶ *Indicators* (I): Using a MPI indicates something regarding the utterance or the context.
- ▶ *Pragmatic* (P): What is indicated by the use of a MPI is the need of further pragmatic inferences, e.g., conversational implicatures, etc.

We propose:

- ▶ Quotation marks are MPI, i.e., QM have no “meaning” at all. They only indicate the need for processing further inferences by pragmatically marking the expression they enclose.
- ▶ This interpretation of QM is inspired by Reinhard Klockow’s¹ characterisation of QM as “Implikatursignal” (*implicature signal*).

¹Klockow, Reinhard (1980): *Linguistik der Gänsefüßchen*. Frankfurt am Main: Haag und Herchen.

The pragmatic mechanism

Cooperative principle²

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

Q-Principle³

Say as much as you can (given I).

I-Principle

Say no more than you must (given Q).

²Grice, H. Paul (1975): Logic and Conversation. In: Cole, Peter & Morgan, Jerry (eds.) *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press, 45.

³Horn, Laurence (1984): Toward a New Taxonomy for Pragmatic Inferencing: Q-based and R-based Implicature. In: Schiffrin, Deborah (ed.) *Meaning, Form, and Use in Context: Linguistic Applications*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 11-42

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Horn's division of pragmatic labour⁴

Unmarked forms tend to be used for unmarked situations and marked forms for marked situations.

The well known example⁵

- (2) a. Black Bart killed the sheriff.
 b. Black Bart caused the sheriff to die.

The basic idea

An expression between QM is more marked than the same expression without QM. Therefore, putting an expression between QM increases its markedness.

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⁵McCawley, James D. (1978): Conversational Implicature and the Lexicon. In: Cole, Peter (ed.) *Syntax and Semantics IX: Pragmatics*. New York: Academic Press, 245-259.

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Consider the following example:

(3) Peter's new "theory" is difficult to understand.

The pragmatic inference -- Part 1:

- (4) a. The writer (W) wrote *Peter's new "theory" is difficult to understand.*
[assumption]
- b. By (a) W said that Peter's new theory is difficult to understand.
[MPI thesis]
- c. If W only meant that Peter's new theory is difficult to understand, W would have violated (I) as she provided more information than necessary.
[Horn's division + I + Q]
- d. Given W is cooperative, she will not violate (I). [CP]
- e. W wanted to convey something more/other than that Peter's theory is difficult to understand. [(4c) and (4d)]

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- ▶ Up to this point, the QM only indicate that the reader has to do some additional pragmatic reasoning.
- ▶ The reader still needs to flesh out the “target of the quotation”⁶ or what Recanati calls the “point of quotation”⁷.
- ▶ In the cases of MQ, SQ, and EQ this “target” is inferred by means of a conversational implicature.

⁶ Klockow, Reinhard (1980): *Linguistik der Gänsefüßchen*. Frankfurt am Main: Haag und Herchen.

⁷ Recanati, François (2001): Open Quotation, *Mind* 110(439), 637-687.

The pragmatic inference -- Part 2:

- (5) a. I know that W is a very critical scientist and has a very strict understanding of the term *theory* in scientific contexts. [world knowledge]
- b. W wrote (3) in a scientific context. [assumption]
- c. I can infer from this utterance that she does not take the proposal in question to be a theory at all. [(4f) + (5a) + (5b)]
- d. W knows that I can infer this from her use of QM and she has not stopped me from inferring that. [CP + I + Q]
- e. Therefore, by uttering (3), W implicates that Peter's new proposal is only a wannabe-theory. [(5c) + (5d)]

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An example

- (6) a. What did *Coffee & Bagels* say about Peter's bagels?
b. **Well, Peter's bagels are always "fresh".**
+> Peter's bagels are always fresh-in-a-non-standard-way.
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The argument from truth-conditional impact

MPI account for PQ and DQ?

“Well . . . , the MPI account might work for ‘open quotation,’ but obviously there is an impact on truth-conditions in direct and pure quotation!”

Semantic effect in PQ: Reference

- ▶ In PQ, the quoted expressions do not have their ordinary referent. Instead, pure quotations refer to an expression.

- (7)
- a. Bremen is populous.
 - b. "Bremen" is disyllabic.

Semantic effect in DQ: Context shifts

- ▶ In DQ, the context is shifted to the reported utterance.

- (8)
- a. [Mary_i :] Peter_k said my_i bagels are fresh.
 - b. [Mary_i :] Peter_k said, "My_k bagels are fresh".

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Worry 1: Pragmatics and truth-conditions?

“How can QM play a purely pragmatic role, given that in direct and pure quotation they seem to have an impact on truth-conditions?”

- ▶ We do *not* deny that there is a semantic effect in direct and pure quotation.
- ▶ Yet, this effect is not contributed by QM themselves, but by *independent* mechanisms of context shift and mentioning⁸.
- ▶ Thus, the distinction between semantic and rather pragmatic kinds of quotation is not a distinction of types of quotation but a *distinction in what is quoted*.

⁸Saka, Paul (1998): Quotation and the Use-Mention Distinction. *Mind*, 107(435): 113-135.

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The basic idea

- (9) a. This “theory” is difficult to understand. (SQ)
quotation
- b. “This theory is difficult to understand” is a sentence. (PQ)
mentioning + quotation
- c. Alice says, “This theory is difficult to understand.” (DQ)
context shift + quotation

The marking functions can play a role at any stage of the derivation of the overall meaning of an utterance. Hence, there is no single stage to which the effect contributed by QM can be ascribed to.

Yet, whichever stage is affected, the marking function of QM solely directs the reader's attention to certain specific aspects of the quoted expression and thereby triggers non-semantic inferences like disambiguation or implicatures.

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Yet, whichever stage is affected, the marking function of QM solely directs the reader's attention to certain specific aspects of the quoted expression and thereby triggers non-semantic inferences like disambiguation or implicatures.

If QM trigger the inference of an implicature (by suggesting a marked interpretation instead of the standard one), there is no impact on truth-conditions.

Quotation without semantic impact

- (10) a. Charles G. Taylor is “Innocent”.
 b. In aller „Freundschaft“ Servus!



If QM trigger a disambiguation process (by suggesting a marked interpretation instead of the standard one), they can have an impact on truth-conditions, since disambiguation has to take place before the assignment of truth-conditions.

Quotation with semantic impact

(11) a. “Lobster” is a word.

There are instances of “meta-ambiguity” of quoted expressions in which only contextual knowledge can help to determine whether QM trigger disambiguation or implicatures, since any linguistic clues are lacking.

Meta-ambiguous quotation

(12) “Bill” is short.

↪ The name *Bill* is short.

↪ The person that Alice has mistakenly called *Bill* is short.

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↪ The name *Bill* is short.

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Worry 2: Mentioning without quoting?

“But is the disconnection between quoting and mentioning tenable?”

Quoting without mentioning

- (13)
- a. You look “great” today.
 - b. We sell “fresh” bagels.

Mentioning without quoting

- (14)
- a. My Name is Peter.
 - b. The expression cats is a noun.
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Metalinguistic appositives

- (15) a. das **Wort Frieden** (*the word peace*)
 b. das **Wort Schriftsteller** (*the word writer*)
 c. der **Begriff Mitbestimmung** (*the expression codetermination*)

Further examples

- (16) Scientists study the **if**.⁹
- (17) Er wurde mit vielen **Ahs** und **Ohs** begrüßt.¹⁰
 He was appreciated with many **ahs** and **ohs**.
- (18) **Terebi** bedeutet "television" [. . .]¹¹
Terebi means "television"

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¹⁰Klockow, Reinhard (1980): *Linguistik der Gänsefüßchen*. Frankfurt am Main: Haag und Herchen, 56

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Word parts and characters

- (19) Das Wort „Doktorand“ wird am Ende mit **d** geschrieben.
The word “Doktorand” is written with a **d** at the end.¹²
- (20) Das Endungs-**e** auszuwerfen ist nicht nur in besonderen Fällen, wie z.B. der Dichtung üblich. [. . .] Man vermeide aber, das “e” der Komparativendung **-er** wegzulassen.
Omitting the ending **-e** is not only common in particular contexts, e.g. in poetry. [. . .] However, you should not omit the “e” of the comparative ending **-er**.¹³
- (21) The face has a Scandinavian sharpness and clarity, with sharply broken **f, j, y** and **!** in the roman.¹⁴

¹² Interpunktions-Duden 1968: 196, after Klockow, Reinhard (1980): *Linguistik der Gänsefüßchen*. Frankfurt am Main: Haag und Herchen,

¹³ Duden-Gramm.1966: 233, after Klockow, Reinhard (1980): *Linguistik der Gänsefüßchen*. Frankfurt am Main: Haag und Herchen, 55

¹⁴ Bringhurst, Robert (2005): *The Elements of Typographic Style*, Hartley & Marks, 217.

Omission of quotation marks

- ▶ The phenomenon of omission is easily conceivable in pragmatic kinds of quotation, e.g. scare quotes, as well.
- ▶ If the context is rich enough, the marked interpretation can arise even without the use of QM.

- (22)
- I have read “Chomsky’s” new manuscript.
 - I have read Chomsky’s new manuscript.

A rich context

- (23) One of Peter’s colleagues is pretty pretentious and thinks of himself as an outstanding linguist. He repeatedly states that the book he is writing will be as influential as the work of Noam Chomsky. Now suppose that a) this colleague convinced Peter to proofread his manuscript, b) Peter and his friend John both know all this and c) both know that the other one knows that.

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- ▶ We have presented a radical pragmatic account of quotation that treats QM as minimal pragmatic indicators.
- ▶ The role of QM is reduced to marking function that -- in accordance with Horn's division of pragmatic labour -- signals the reader to interpret an expression in a non-standard way.
- ▶ If QM apply on a post-semantic pragmatic stage of interpretation like in case of SQ and EQ, QM trigger purely pragmatic processes like conversational implicatures.
- ▶ If QM apply on a pre-semantic pragmatic stage of interpretation like in case of PQ and DQ, QM may help to disambiguate between different semantic interpretations.

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What to do next?

- ▶ Testing the predictions of our account by means of a more systematic corpus study.
- ▶ Discuss the MPI-account of quotation with respect to different architectures of the semantics/pragmatics-interface.
- ▶ Apply the MPI-account to other expression of natural language.

Thank you for your “attention”!

How Quotation Marks What People Do With Words

Daniel Gutzmann Erik Stei



JOHANNES
GUTENBERG
UNIVERSITÄT
MAINZ



September 16, 2009

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Reflections and Projections -
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GAP.7