

# Quotation Marks

A matter of what people do with words

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# 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’s (1980) characterisation of QM as “Implikatursignal” (*implicature signal*).

# The pragmatic mechanism

## Cooperative principle

(Grice 1989: 26)

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-Principle

(cf. Horn 1984)

Say as much as you can (given I).

## I-Principle

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Say no more than you must (given Q).

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## Horn's division of pragmatic labour

(Horn 1984: 26)

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

## The well known example

(McCawley 1978)

- (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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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” (Klockow 1980) or what Recanati calls the “point of quotation” (Recanati 2001).
- ▶ In the cases of MQ, SQ, and EQ this “target” is inferred by means of a conversational implicature.

## 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. Berlin is populous.
  - b. "Berlin" is disyllabic.

## Semantic effect in DQ: Context shifts

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

- (8)
- a. [Mary<sub>i</sub> :] Peter<sub>k</sub> said my<sub>i</sub> bagels are fresh.
  - b. [Mary<sub>i</sub> :] Peter<sub>k</sub> said, "My<sub>k</sub> 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 mentioning (cf. Saka 1998).
- ▶ 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*.

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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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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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## 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.
  - c. Cats is a noun.

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## The argument from ungrammaticality

“I am not convinced by these examples. Doesn’t mentioning without quoting yield ungrammatical sentences?”

This worry rests on a confusion of genuine rules of natural language and stylistic norms. Whereas mentioning is part of the former, the prescription to use QM to mark mentioned expressions is part of the latter.

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## Predictions made by the argument from ungrammaticality

The more obvious a rule of grammar, the less frequent its violations. The less obvious the rule the more frequent its violations.

- ▶ More QM in rich contexts, less QM in dubitable contexts.

## Predictions made by the argument from style

The more obviously a marked interpretation is intended, the less frequently stylistic marking is used. The less obvious the marked interpretation, the more frequent the stylistic marking.

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- Empirical data may support the argument from style.

## Names

- (15) a. Er hat sich den **Namen Klaus Zumwinkel** gemerkt, und er hat hin und wieder darüber nachgedacht, ob nicht Oskar Lafontaine zu folgen sei mit seinen Versprechungen von der großen Gerechtigkeit. („Zeit der Krokodile“ DER SPIEGEL Nr. 41, 6.10.2008)
- b. He remembered the **name Klaus Zumwinkel** and from time to time thought about following Oskar Lafontaine and his promises of great justice.

## Further metalinguistic appositives

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

## Further examples

- (17) Scientists study the **if**. (Weinreich 1970: 94, after Klockow 1980: 53)
- (18) Er wurde mit vielen **Ahs** und **Oh**s begrüßt. (Klockow 1980: 56)  
He was appreciated with many **ahs** and **ohs**.
- (19) **Terebi** bedeutet "television" [...] (Klockow 1980: 62)  
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## Word parts and characters

(20) Das Wort „Doktorand“ wird am Ende mit **d** geschrieben.

The word “Doktorand” is written with a **d** at the end.

(Interpunktions-Duden 1968: 196, after Klockow 1980: 70)

(21) 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**.

(Duden-Gramm.1966: 233, after Klockow 1980: 55)

(22) The face has a Scandinavian sharpness and clarity, with sharply broken **f, j, y** and **!** in the roman. (Bringhurst 2005: 217)

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## 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.

- (23)
- I have read “Chomsky’s” new manuscript.
  - I have read Chomsky’s new manuscript.

## A rich context

- (24) 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.
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# What to do next?

- ▶ Testing the predictions of our *argument from style* by 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”!**

# Quotation Marks

A matter of what people do with words

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