**Chapter 6**

**Levels of Linguistic Acts and the Semantics of Saying and Quoting**

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Attitudinal–objects semantics of attitude reports has an important extension to verbs of saying and to quotation, based on an extension of the domain of modal and attitudinal objects to speech-related objects. This extension makes use of Austin’s insight that illocutionary acts are performed by performing lower-level linguistic acts, in particular locutionary acts (roughly, acts of conveying a content) and phatic acts (roughly, acts of uttering expressions). Just as illocutionary acts come with illocutionary objects, locutionary and phatic acts come with locutionary objects (what one may refer to as ‘sayings’) and phatic objects (‘utterances’ or ‘tokens’). As with attitudinal objects in general, it is locutionary and phatic objects that play the semantically important role.

Verbs of saying include *say, write, whisper, scream, repeat, praise*, and *think*, a locutionary verb in the realm of the mental. Verbs of saying all take *that*-clauses as complements as in (1a), as well as pure quotes as in (1b) and direct quotes, as (1c):

(1) a. John said that

b. John said ‘shh’.

c. John said ‘I will come’.

Like basic attitude verbs, verbs of saying display the Substitution Problem, as seen in (2a), but permit special quantifiers, as in (2b), which, with non-mental locutionary verbs include NPs headed by *word(s),* that is, *words*-NPs as in (2c):

(2) a. \* John said a proposition / a content / a sentence / a verb.

b. John said something.

c. John said a few words.

The main idea for the semantics of verbs of saying is that their complements (*that*-clauses or pure or direct quotes) may express not just content-related properties (specifying satisfaction conditions), but also form-related properties, to be predicated of phatic objects.[[1]](#footnote-1) While *that*-clause complements of verbs of saying act as predicates of locutionary objects, giving their satisfaction conditions, pure quotes as complements of verbs of saying as in (1b) act as predicates of phatic objects specifying their form, and direct quotes as in (1c) act as predicates of complexes of phatic and locutionary objects, specifying their form as well as their content.

By extending its ontological domain to locutionary and phatic objects, attitudinal-objects semantics allow for a unified account of attitude verbs and verbs of saying with their various sorts of complements.

Making use of phatic objects of various kinds and taking quotations to serve as predicates of phatic objects furthermore promises a novel, unified compositional semantics of quotation of the different sorts. Pure quotes on that semantics convey properties of phatic objects, and direct quotes and perhaps mixed quotes contribute to a property specifying both form and content of a locutionary object. Meanings of quotes as properties of such objects can be obtained compositionally, it will be suggested, based on a novel type of syntactic structure where lower-level linguistic structures (phonetic, phonological or morpho-syntactic structures) form part of the syntactic structure of the sentence that is input to interpretation (LF, as it has been called in generative syntax).

The main part of this chapter will consist in elaborating the ontology of locutionary and a phatic objects and extending attitudinal-objects semantics to verbs of saying with their various complements (including special NPs headed by *word(s)).* In a more sketchy final part, I will outline the semantics of quotational complements against the background of a novel conception of their syntax and their semantic composition.

1**. The ontology of locutionary and phatic objects**

**1.1. Austin’s levels of linguistic acts**

Illocutionary acts (acts of asserting, requesting, promising, or asking a question) are performed by performing lower-level linguistic acts, acts of uttering sentences with a particular structure and words with particular lexical meanings. This hierarchy of linguistic acts plays a central role in Austin’s (1962) theory of speech acts. Austin distinguished first of all *locutionary acts* as acts below the level of illocutionary acts. He further distinguished between *rhetic act*s, acts (roughly) of uttering the words in the sentence with a specific meaning and reference, *phatic act*s, acts of uttering words, and  *phonetic act*s, acts of producing sounds. For Austin locutionary acts consist of rhetic, phatic and phonetic acts.

Rhetic acts are meaning-related acts below the level of illocutionary acts. They are characterized as acts of using words with a specific meaning or reference.[[2]](#footnote-2) As stated, this would not actually be a single act involving the use of a sentence, but a plurality of acts involving the words or relevant constituents of the sentence.[[3]](#footnote-3) Clearly, though, a rhetic act could not be a mere plurality of acts of using the words in the sentence. Rather it should be a coordinated or structured plurality, namely of acts of using expressions with particular meanings *and* with semantically relevant relations that will lead to the composition of the meaning of the sentence. A rhetic act is best taken to be a plurality of acts of conveying semantic values of subsentential expressions *as* entering relations leading to the composition of the meaning of the entire sentence. The product of such a plurality of acts will in turn be a plurality of products, namely products of meaning-related acts involving subsentential occurrences of expressions in a particular meaningful configuration. Natural language in fact reflects products of rhetic acts as pluralities, not as single entities, namely, with plural *words*-NPs, as we will see in the next section.

The linguistic acts of the various levels are ordered by the *by*-relation or what Goldman’s (1970) calls the relation of ‘level-generation’: an illocutionary act is performed by performing a locutionary act, a locutionary act by performing a phatic act. The by-relation is a sort of part-relation, but may involve spatio-temporally coincident acts.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Phatic acts come with products as well, even though they do not have satisfaction conditions. Products of phatic acts will be bearers of phonologically, morpho-syntactically or semantically relevant properties as opposed to the various properties that can be borne by performances. The distinction between phatic acts and phatic objects may be harder to accept. However, the action-product distinction clearly applies more generally to performances with aesthetic aims: a musical performance comes with a product as entity that just carries aesthetic relevant features, as opposed to the ‘mere’ performance that carries properties irrelevant for aesthetic evaluation.

**1.2. The distinction between illocutionary and locutionary objects**

Not strictly following Austin, I take locutionary objects to be the products of acts of saying, the sorts of entities described by the verbs of saying (locutionary verbs) when taking *that*-clause complements. Verbs of saying consist of neutral verbs of saying (*say, write, think*), verbs of manner of speaking (*whisper, scream*), discourse-related verbs of saying ( *repeat, comment,* and *remark*), and verbs of saying with an attitude (*praise, criticize, boast*).[[5]](#footnote-5) Locutionary acts are acts of saying something without that yet amounting to, for example, an assertion or a promise. Just as there are illocutionary objects that are products of illocutionary acts, there are locutionary objects, ‘sayings’ that are products of locutionary acts. Locutionary objects can be components of illocutionary objects of different forces.

The way locutionary objects are to be conceived, given the present approach should be guided by how they are reflected in natural language, and they are just as well-reflected in natural language as illocutionary objects. Locutionary objects are the sorts of things special quantifiers range over when they are complements of verbs of saying and that free relative clauses like *what John said* refer to. As such locutionary objects come with truth conditions:

(3) What John said / whispered / screamed is true.

Given that having truth conditions means coming with a word/mind-to world direction of fit, locutionary objects cannot be considered force-neutral acts below illocutionary acts; rather they are best viewed as constative acts with a very weak assertive force, involving no commitment to truth beyond the act. That is, unlike claims, locutionary objects do not come with validity

The distinction between illocutionary and locutionary objects is strikingly reflected in natural language, in the unacceptability of reports of content-sharing among locutionary and illocutionary verbs. Thus, (4a) is impossible as a report of sharing relating to (4b) and (4c), and so for (5) – (7):

(4) a. ??? John asserted what Mary said.

b. John asserted that Bill won the race.

c. Mary said that Bill won the race.

(5) a. ??? John said what Mary demanded.

b. John demanded that Bill should leave.

c. Mary said that Bill should leave.

(6) a. ??? John said what Mary asked

b. John said ‘Did Bill win?’.

c. Mary asked ‘Did Bill win?’.

(7) a. ??? John promised what he said.

b. John promised that he would help Mary.

c. John said that he would help Mary.

Reports of sharing as in (4-7) make use of special quantifiers or pronouns standing for kinds of illocutionary or illocutionary objects. Here the one verb requires an illocutionary object and the other a locutionary object, which cannot be as the unacceptability of these reports shows.

Thus, in (4a),*what Mary said* stands for a (kind of) saying, and that cannot be a (kind of) assertion. Note that in (4a) John may have asserted that Bill won the race, yet he also just said that Bill won the race: But (4a) only reports the lower-level speech act of the saying, and makes reference to its product.

The same observation can be made about verbs of manner of speaking and illocutionary verbs:

(8) a. ?? Mary asserted what John said, that Bill won the race.

b. ?? Mary claimed what Bill whispered, that Bill is the winner.

The distinction between locutionary and illocutionary objects is also reflected in the necessary falsity the identity statements below:

(9) a. ??? John’s utterance is his claim.

b. ??? Mary’s scream is her assertion.

The distinction also holds for mental objects that correspond to the locutionary and illocutionary distinction. Acts of thinking are locutionary acts in the realm of the mental and the corresponding locutionary objects thoughts being products of such acts Thus, reports of sharing with *think* and *decide* are impossible:

(10) a. ??? John thought what Bill decided.

b. Bill decided that they should leave the house / ‘let’s leave the house!’. .

c. John thought that they should leave the house / ‘let’s leave the house!’. .

(11) ??? Bill thought what Mary hoped / believed / desired, that the house would be sold.

Decisions are on a par with illocutionary objects such as promises, by carrying satisfaction conditions with a world–to-word/mind direction of fit. They are built on locutionary objects of the sort of thoughts, but they cannot be the identical to thoughts.

Thus, just as locutionary objects such as utterances, sayings, whispers and screams are entities distinct from illocutionary objects such as assertions, locutionary objects in the realm of the mental such as thoughts are distinct from mental objects such as hopes, beliefs, and desires.

**1.3. The basic semantics of locutionary *say* and phatic *say***

On the extension of attitudinal objects semantics to verbs of saying, locutionary and phatic objects play basically the same semantic role as attitudinal objects in attitude reports. Locutionary objects are involved in the semantics of verbs of saying when they take *that*-clause complements, phatic objects when verbs of saying take pure quotes as complements. Locutionary and phatic uses are available with both simple and complex verbs of saying, including manner-of-speaking verbs, and response-stance verbs such as *repeat*.

This gives reason to adopt the same sort of syntactic structure as for attitude reports given in Chapter 5: locutionary and phatic verbs of saying involve an underlying structure containing a light verb- noun combination. For say, which is overtly derived from a noun, the noun will be an abstract noun SAID. Thus (12a) with locutionary saywill have the underlying structure (12b), which will be interpreted as in (12c):

Verbs saying on a locutionary use

(12) a. John said that Mary is happy.

b. John do [SAIDloc [that Mary is happy]]

c. ∃d(do(John, d) & SAID(d) & [*great*](d))

Verbs of saying on a phatic use

(13) a. John said ‘great’.

b. John do [SAIDphat [great]]

c. ∃d(do(John, d) & SAID(d) & [*great*](d))

That is, both *that*-clauses and pure quotes as complements of verbs of saying act as predicates, now of locutionary and phatic objects.

Support for this analysis comes from the fact that the substitution problem arises with locutionary and phatic verbs of saying just as with attitude verbs like *claim* and *believe*. Thus, locutionary *say* disallows substitution of a *that-*clause by an ordinary full NP standing for any entity whatsoever:

(14) a. Mary said that Bill could help.

b. ??? John said that proposition / entity / utterance / suggestion as well.

Likewise phatic *say* disallows replacement by a pure quote by an ordinary expression-referring or utterance-referring NP:

(15) a. John said ‘come’.

b. ??? Mary said that expression / that sentence / the verb ‘come’ / that utterance.

Phatic *say* differs in that respect from *utter*, which is an ordinary transitive verb that takes expressions as arguments, as denoted by ordinary expression-referring terms:[[6]](#footnote-6)

(16) John uttered that expression / that sentence.

The difference between *say* and *utter* manifests itself also in that *utter* and *say* cannot co-occur in reports of sharing:

(17) ??? John uttered what Mary said, ‘Ich liebe dich’.

Whereas *utter* is an ordinary transitive verb, taking an expression as an argument, whereas phatic *say* has the underlying structure and semantics of attitude verbs. With *utter*, direct quotes act as referential arguments referring to expressions, with phatic *say*, they act as predicates of the phatic object that is described.

Pure quotation complements may also act as predicates of conceptual objects, products of rhetic, concept-conveying acts, namely with the verb *mean*, as in (18a), with an agentive subject referent, and in (18b), with an abstract symbol as subject referent:

(18) a. By ‘dislike’ John meant ‘hate’.

b. ‘Red’ means ‘red’.

On both uses *mean* disallows substitution of the complement by an explicit concept-referring term, but allows substitution by special quantifiers:

(19) a. ??? By ‘dislike’ John meant the meaning of ‘hate’.

b. ??? ‘Red’ means the concept red.

c. ‘Red’ means something.

The logical form of (20a) will be parallel to (13a), based on the underlying structure in (20b) involving an abstract nominal root MEAN, a structure that will be interpreted as in (20c):

(20) a. ‘Rouge’ means ‘red’.

b. Rouge’ have [MEAN ‘red’]

c. ∃d(have(‘rouge’, d) & MEAN(d) & [*‘red’*](d))

Thus, the Substitution Problems obtains for locutionay verbs just as it does for phatic verbs of both saying and meaning.

**1.4. Pure quotations as predicates**

The view of pure quotations as predicates of phatic objects deviates from the received views of pure quotations. On current views, quotations are be expression-referring terms, managing, in some way, to refer to the relevant expression type, by acting as a description (Geach 1970), as a name (Reichenbach 1947), or involving a demonstrative (quotation marks) pointing to a displayed token (Davidson 1967, 1979, Cappelen/Lepore 2007, Clark/Gerrig 1990, de Vries 2008), or else by ‘presenting’ it (Washington 1992, Saka 1998). The present view is that pure quotations may, but need not, act as referential terms. Rather, their primary use ought to be predicative rather than referential since pure quotations express properties of particular phatic or phonetic objects.

There is further syntactic evidence that quotations may occur as syntactic predicates, namely from *as*-phrases with the verbs *translate* and *pronounce*:

(21) a. Mary translated red as ‘rouge’.

b. Sue pronounced ‘red’ as ‘rett’.

*As* requires predicative, rather than referential complements (*John as a father, Mary treated John as a brother*), and thus the pure quotations in (21a, b) must be predicative.[[7]](#footnote-7) *As*-phrase can also act as adnominal modifiers of the corresponding product nominalizations:

(22) a. the translation of ‘red’ as ‘rouge’

b. the pronounciation of ‘red’ as ‘rett’

Standard views of quotations do not acknowledge a predicative function of quotation, but assume that quotes always act as referential terms. The present view accommodates the predicative function of quotation. In (21a), the property expressed by *rouge*, a property of phatic products, is predicated of ‘the translation’, the product of the act of translating, and in (21b) the property expressed ‘rett’, a property of phonetic products, is predicated of the ‘pronounciation’, the product of the act of pronouncing.[[8]](#footnote-8)

**1.5. The distinction between locutionary and phatic acts**

Phatic verbs of saying take pure quotes, whereas locutionary verbs take *that-*clauses as complements; pure quotes act as predicates of phatic objects and *that*-clauses as complements of locutionary verbs as predicates of locutionary objects. How then is the distinction between phatic and locutionary objects to be understood? I will not strictly follow Austin’s own (not always consistent) characterization of different acts below the level of locutionary acts, but rather introduce notions of my own, using in part Austin’s terms.

I will take a ‘locutionary act’ to be an act of saying something or thinking something, as an act displaying a truth-directed content. [[9]](#footnote-9) Locutionary acts thus won’t include form-related acts (unlike what Austin sometimes suggests). The motivation for that is that verbs of saying with *that*-clause complements describe objects with truth conditions and whose content is ordered by the relation of partial content; they cannot describe objects with fulfillment conditions, as is made clear by the free relative clauses which make reference to locutionary objects:[[10]](#footnote-10),[[11]](#footnote-11)

(23) a. What John said / wrote is partly true.

b. ??? What John said / wrote cannot be fulfilled.

This holds even if what John said served to make a promise. It is the promise that has fulfilment conditions, not the object that is the saying:

(24) a. What John promised cannot be fulfilled.

b. ??? What John said cannot be fulfilled.

This is further supported by the fact that only *that*-clauses can give the content of locutionary objects complements, not interrogative and infinitival complements for the purpose of specifying a question or a request as the content of the described locutionary object:

(25) a. \* John said /wrote / thought what he should do.

b. \* John said / wrote / thought for Bill to leave.

The fact that locutionary objects have truth conditions rather than satisfaction conditions does not mean that they can be part only of assertions. Reports of saying such as (26) allow for illocutionary acts such as threats and promises being performed:

(26) John said / wrote that he will leave.

Locutionary objects differ from phatic objects not only in having truth conditions, but also in having a part structure based on partial content. *Part of* in (27a) applies to a locutionary object, picking out a partial content, and in (27b) to a phatic object, picking out a temporal part of an utterance event:

(27) a. Part of what John said is true.

b. Part of what John said was inaudible.

Locutionary objects are objects whose content is of the very same sort as that of assertions, but which do not yet come with a commitment to truth (which would allow it to have validity beyond the time of the locutionary act). If commitment is the characteristic feature of assertions, the assertion that it is raining will consist in the locutionary product *d* of a saying that S together with a commitment to d. If thoughts are locutionary products in the realm of the mental, then, following Kant, the judgment that S will consist in the locutionary product d that is the thought that S and a second-order illocutionary object that is the approval of d.

Locutionary acts may be part of illocutionary acts, but they need not be. Certainly, there are locutionary acts that are performed without performing illocutionary acts, say utterances for the purpose of grammatical exercise and entertaining thoughts for mere consideration.

Locutionary objects may seem on a par with propositions, as they appear to be force-neutral yet are truth-evaluable. However, locutionary objects are products of acts of saying and thinking, whereas propositions (on the standard view) are meanings of sentences and play a semantic role in all contexts in which sentences occur.

Phatic acts are form-related acts, consisting of the utterance of simple and complex expressions with the intention of realizing a particular morpho-syntactic or phonological structure. Phatic acts include phonetic, phonological morpho-syntactic acts, that is, acts with the intention of realizing a sound, a phonological or a morpho-syntactic form). They also include acts of uttering words with particular intended lexical meanings. The product of a phatic act carries relevant form-related features (say phonological or morpho-syntactic features), whereas the act may carry irrelevant performance-related features.[[12]](#footnote-12)

**1.6. Thin locutionary and illocutionary objects**

A locutionary or illocutionary act certainly could not have been performed without performing the phatic act. But this does not mean that the illocutionary or locutionary object has the product of the phatic act as a part[[13]](#footnote-13) The locutionary object could have been produced by performing a different phatic act. For example, John could have said what he said in French or in a lower voice, using a different syntactic constructions etc. This intuition is reflected in reports of sharing of kinds of locutionary objects with different physical realizations .For example, (28a, b, c) can be true at once:

(28) a. John said the same thing as Mary (that Bill won the race).

b. John whispered that Bill won the race.

c. Mary screamed that Bill won the race.

Note also that the properties that locutionary objects consist in their relatedness to an agent, their satisfaction conditions, and their part structure based on partial content. While they may display properties such as being perceived or being causally efficacious, locutionary objects generally do not share the properties of the product of the phatic act that was performed in order to perform the locutionary act.

The same holds for reports of sharing with illocutionary acts. (29) may be true while also (28b, c) are true:

(29) John asserted the same thing as Mary.

Intuitions formulated in terms of the use of nominalizations reinforce the point. ‘The very same assertion’ could have been made in English by using a softer voice or by way of writing, and Joe could have made ‘his request’ in writing.[[14]](#footnote-14)

The illocutionary and locutionary objects reported in (28a) and (29) can be called ‘thin locutionary objects’ and ‘thin illocutionary objects’ respectively. As abstractions, in a sense, from a ‘full’ illocutionary product, ‘thin’ illocutionary and locutionary products will have only those properties relating to their conditions of satisfaction and force (or direction of fit), but not properties regarding its physical realization or choice of names or concepts, an issue I will come to in Chap. 7.

Thin locutionary also play a role as denotations of subject clauses, for example with the predicate *correct*. On the one hand, there is good evidence that subject causes with predicates like *correct* stand for assertions: *correct* does not apply to propositions and subject clauses involve a topic effect, relating to a previously made suggestion or remark:

(30) a. That John is late is correct.

b. ??? The proposition that John is late is correct.

On the other hand, as Moulton (2021) observed, predicates of concreteness - causal predicates and predicates of perception – are unacceptable in nonrestrictive relative clauses modifying a subject clause, as opposed to explicit assertion-referring NPs:

(31) a. That John is late, which caused consternation and was overheard by many, is correct.

b. The assertion that John is late, which concerned consternation and was overheard by

many, is correct

The subject clause in (31a) thus stand for a thin illocutionary object, an assertion abstracted from its physical manifestation.

**1.7. Manner of speaking verbs**

Manner of speaking verbs such as *whisper, muster, scream,* and *shout* have locutionary and phatic uses and thus behave just like simple verbs of saying. First, they take *that*-cause complements, describing a truth-evaluable object:

(32) a. John whispered / screamed / muttered that he will come.

b. What John whispered / screamed / muttered is correct.

Second, like *say*, manner of speaking verbs take quotes of the three sentence types as complements, but not interrogatives or infinitival clauses representing the content of what would be an imperative:

(33) a. John whispered / screamed / muttered ‘who did that?’ / \* who that did.

b. John whispered / screamed / muttered ‘Come!’ / \* for Bill to come.

This means that manner-of-speaking verbs with non-quotational CP complements describe truth-directed, locutionary objects.

Manner-of-speaking verbs moreover take pure quotes as well as *words*-NPs as complements:

(34) John whispered / screamed / muttered ‘hey you!’.

On both phatic and locutionary uses, manner-of speaking verbs permit replacement of the complement by special quantifiers:

(35) John whispered / screamed / muttered something.

Like simple verbs of saying, verbs of manner of speaking don’t permit sharing with illocutionary verbs:

(36) a. ??? John whispered the same thing that Mary asserted / demanded / asked.

b. ??? John whispered the same thing that Mary asserted / demanded / asked.

One might take this to indicate that manner of speaking verbs describe the same locutionary products as *say*. But this cannot be right: reports of sharing with a manner of speaking verb and a simple verb of saying are impossible:

.

(37) a. ??? John said what Mary whispered.

b. ??? John said what he screamed.

c. What John said is what Mary whispered.

By contrast, reports of sharing are possible with different verbs of manner speaking:

(38) a. ?(?) John screamed what Mary whispered.

b. ? John shouted what Bill yelled.

Manner of speaking verbs involve a more complex object that simple verbs of saying. Let us call those ‘locutionary manner of speaking objects’. How should such objects be understood? Here the view helps that attitudinal objects may be ontologically dependent on acts. If locutionary objects are products of acts of conveying (or forming) a content, then locutionary manner-of-speaking objects are ontologically dependent on both acts of conveying / entertaining a content and the manner of speech by which the content is conveyed. Unlike a phatic object, it does not represent linguistically relevant features of the phatic act as by which the act of conveying a content was performed. A kind of locutionary manner of speaking object is shared if the two agents engage in instances of it, that is, produce locutionary objects with the same manner of speech.[[15]](#footnote-15)

**1.8. *Words*-NPs as complements of verbs of saying**

Both phatic and locutionary verbs of saying, we have seen, permit special quantifier, without giving rise to the Substitution Problem. But verbs of saying (including verbs of manner of speaking) also permit another type of special NP, NPs headed by the noun *word(s)*, that is, *words*-NPs:

(39) a. John said / whispered / screamed ‘hey’.

b. John said / whispered / screamed just one word / the word ‘hey’.

(40) a. John said / whispered / screamed that he won the game.

b. John said / whispered / screamed just a few words.

*Words*-NPs differ in that respect from ordinary expression-referring NPs, which do give rise to the Substitution Problem as complements of verbs of saying:

(41) a. ??? John said a few expressions.

b. ??? John whispered a sentence.

c. ??? John screamed a noun.

Plural *word*-NP do not range over unordered pluralities of words or utterances of words, but rather over meaningfully structured configurations of words or, better, utterances of words. This is well-reflected in German, which shows a distinction between the plural of the special noun word, *Worte*, and the plural of the ordinary noun *Woerter*, the plural of the ordinary noun *Word*:

(42) a. Hans sagte ein paar Worte.

‘John said a few words.’

b. ??? Hans sagte ein paar Woerter.

‘John said a few words.’

Given this particular form of plural suggests that *words*-NPs range over ordered pluralities of products of rhetic acts, that is, utterances of words with a particular meaning or reference. The applicability of evaluative and causal predicates to *words*-NPs supports that:

(43) a. John said a few nice / shocking words

b. The words John said shocked everyone.

c. Mary did not like the words Mary whispered.

It is not obvious that the ordered pluralities of products of rhetic acts that *word*-NPs range over make up locutionary objects. Intuitions that they are truth-evaluable are not very sharp:

(44) a. John said I never committed the crime.

b. John said something which is true.

c.?? John said a few words, which are true.

d. ?? The words John said are true.

e. ?? Mary’s words, the words ‘The world will end tomorrow’, are not true.

Certainly, though, they do not make up illocutionary objects since satisfaction predicates are inapplicable:

(45) a. ??? The words ’Finish the paper by midnight!’ cannot be complied with.

b. ??? John fulfilled / broke the words ‘I will help you!’.

Moreover, *words*-NPs are impossible with illocutionary verbs (Grimshaw 2015):

(46) a. ??? John asserted a few words.

b. ??? John promised the words ‘I am always ready to help’.

c. ??? John demanded / asked a few words.

It is not important, though, to decide whether *words*-NPs range over phatic or locutionary objects. Verbs of saying can all, it seems, can be used as phatic and as locutionary verbs and they have the same semantics on the phatic and the locutionary reading. This semantics, on which the complement acts as a predicate of the described (phatic or locutionary) object, will be spelled out in detail in the next sections.

**2. The syntax and semantics of locutionary verbs**

**2.1. The syntax and semantics of simple locutionary *say***

The semantics of verbs saying *say* on a locutionary reading is almost the same as that of the semantics of attitude reports, except that the clausal complements of those verbs serve to characterize locutionary objects, not illocutionary objects. Complement clauses of illocutionary verbs act semantically as predicates of the described illocutionary objects, specifying their satisfaction conditions, as in (47b) for (47a), based on the syntactic analysis of *claim* in (47b) as an underlying light verb-noun complex:

(47) a. John claims that Mary is happy.

b. John make [NP claim [CPthat Mary is happy]]]  
   c. ∃d(make(John, d) & claim(d) & prop([*that Mary is happy*])(d))

As defined in Chap. 4 and 5, ‘prop([*that S*])’ stands for the property of objects of sharing their (truthmaker-based) content with the sentence S, more precisely, sharing their verifiers (or satisfiers) with S and, if they have falsifiers (violators), sharing their violators with S. The very same derived sentential meaning of the *that*-clause is applicable to locutionary objects. Locutionary objects come with truth conditions, which means, in truthmaker-semantic terms, they come with a set of verifiers and a set of falsifiers.

Locutionary verbs likewise should be based on underlying complex predicates involving a nominal root *said* (standing for ‘what is said’) and the copula verb *do*. The nominal root *said* will originate in the specifier position of the force projection headed by a feature [+SAY] and subsequently moves up to the specifier position of the VP:[[16]](#footnote-16)

(48) a. John said that Mary is happy.

b. John [VP[SPEC(VP) SAID [V’do [DP ~~SAID~~ ] [CP he is happy]]]

Interpreting the underlying structure then gives (49) as the logical form of (48a):

(49) ∃d(do(John, d) & said(d) & prop([*that Mary is happy*])(d)]

The analysis of special quantifiers will be parallel to special quantifiers in attitude reports as well. That is, the light noun *–thing* in *something* will be analysed as a classifier of the nominal root *said*, and *said* will move up (via phrasal movement, from specifier position to specifier position) into the specifier position of the VP:

(50) a. John said something.

b. John [[SAID] SPEC(VP) [V’do [DPsome [ClP [thing]Cl [NP-~~SAID~~]]ClP]DP]]VP

The underlying syntactic structure of (51a) will be as in (51b), which is interpreted as in (51c), where ‘dd’ is a plural variable ranging over ordered pluralities:

(51) a. John said a few words.

b. John [SPEC(VP) SAID [V’do [NP a few words ~~SAID~~]]]

c. FEW dd(do(John, dd) & SAID(dd) & words(dd))

What determines that the derived meaning of the *that*-clause is applied to a locutionary object is simply the lexical semantics of locutionary verbs. The meaning of the  *that*-clause with locutionary verbs is the very same as with attitude verbs in the narrow sense.

In addition to agentive say, English also has a stative use of *say*, as below:[[17]](#footnote-17)

(52) a. The sign says that access is forbidden.

b. The thermometer says that it is 30 degrees.

Here *say* applies to material content bearers, artifacts meant to convey a particular message (perhaps under particular conditions). Such content bearers are also material products of locutionary acts. Hence can be considered locutionary objects that fall under the nominal root *say* as well. Material content bearers such as a sign or thermometer (at a space and time) furthermore have satisfaction conditions, namely just those of the message they are meant to convey. The structure underlying (52a) is then as below, with the light verb *be*:[[18]](#footnote-18)

(53) The sign [SPEC(VP) SAID [V’ be [NP~~SAID~~ [that [access is forbidden]]]

It is uncontroversial to assume that *be* makes no semantic contribution except to ensure that the subsequent predicate is predicated of the subject referent at the time of evaluation. This then yields the logical form of (52a) in (54a) or equivalently (54b):

(54) a. λd[SAID(d) & prop([*that* S])(d)]([*the sign*])

b. SAID([*the sign*]) & prop([*that* S])([*the sign*])

Here *say* is simply a predicate that is true of material and non-material locutionary products. entities that came with satisfaction conditions.

**2.2. The syntax and semantics of pure and direct quotes as complements of verbs of saying**

The semantics of phatic verbs that take pure quotes as complements is analogous to that of attitude verbs and locutionary verbs taking *that-*clauses as complements:

(55) ∃d(do(John, d) & [*shh*](thing-SAID(d)))

In addition to pure quotes, verbs of saying can also take direct quotes, which, unlike pure quotes, convey both a form and a propositional content:[[19]](#footnote-19)

(56) John said / wrote / thought ‘I will leave’.

Direct quotes are at once predicates of phatic objects, specifying their form, and locutionary objects, specifying their satisfaction conditions. Like direct quotes, they are complements of the verb and can be replaced by special quantifiers (Munro 1980, Grimshaw 2015):[[20]](#footnote-20)

(57) John said / wrote / thought something, namely ‘I will leave’

Even though locutionary and phatic *say* describe different objects (locutionary and phatic objects), their semantics is alike in that in both cases, the complement acts semantically as a predicate.

In (56), the *that-*clause could be a direct quote or a pure quote. Yet, pure quotation is to be distinguished from direct quotation syntactically and semantically. Pure quotations can be of any linguistic category (or just be linguistic material), and they convey just a (phonetic, phonological, morphosyntactic) form or the conceptual content of individual words. However, pure quotations as complements of verbs of saying are syntactically DPs and as such fill in positions requiring a DP.[[21]](#footnote-21) Direct quotes, by contrast, are CP-complements, though they take the form of main clauses. This difference between sentential direct quotations and pure quotations is particularly manifest in German. A sentence as a pure quotation must appear in NP-position, in the middlefeld, whereas as a direct quotation it must follow the verb:[[22]](#footnote-22)

(58) a. weil Hans endlich ‘Ich liebe dich’ sagen kann

because John finally ‘I love you’ say can

‘because John can finally say ‘I love you’’

b. weil Hans endlich sagen kann ‘Ich liebe dich’

because John finally say can ‘I love you’

‘because John can finally say ‘I love you’’

Whereas (58a) can report only a linguistic ability (the ability to pronounce a particular sentence, say), (58b) can report the readiness to express an emotional state (or the ability to admit to one).

**2.3. The semantics of pure quotes as complements of verbs of saying**

The question now is, through what kind of compositional semantics are quotes able to act as predicates of phatic objects? I will just give a general suggestion of a compositional semantics of quotes as such predicates. Elaborating it in detail will go far beyond the present context, which is focused on the role of attitudinal, modal and locutionary objects in semantics.

On the present view, pure quotation as complements of verbs of saying are semantically predicates of phatic objects, more precisely, they are predicates of the product of phonetic acts, as in (59a), the product of phonological acts (phatic acs with the aim or realizing a particular phonological structure), as in (59b), the product of a morpho-syntactic acts (phatic acts with the intention of realizing a particular morpho-syntactic structure), as in (59c), or the product of rhetic acts (collections of utterances with the aim of referring, conveying concepts, and predicating), as also possibly in (59c):

(59) a. John said ‘shhiaiii’.

b. John said ‘umarina’.

c. John said ‘Joe loves Sue’.

The semantics of quotation faces a considerable challenge of how it can be integrated within a general compositional semantics of sentences, and how different types of quotation (pure, direct, mixed) may be analysed in a unified way. In what follows, I will only present a general idea of how to develop the semantics of quotation that may meet those challenges. A detailed formal development will have to await another occasion. This semantics of quotes as predicates of phatic objects is based a novel syntactic view of quotation, which permits treating quotation in a compositional and strictly semantic fashion.

The central idea regarding the semantics of quotation is that expressions can be interpreted not or not just by assigning them their usual semantic value, but also as properties of products of lower-level linguistic acts. This shift in interpretation is not arbitrary or ‘pragmatic’, on that view, but rather has a strict syntactic basis. It is based on a lower-level linguistic structure being part of at the syntactic structure that is input to interpretation. I will sketch the idea first for pure quotation and indicate in the next sections how it can extend to direct quotation and mixed quotation.

The proposal is that pure quotes can be interpreted as properties of phatic objects because pure quotations involve a lower-level linguistic structure as part of the syntactic structure of the sentence that is input to interpretation (L(ogical) F(orm)). More precisely, a pure quotation may involve several lower-level linguistic structures as part of LF, a syntactic and a phonological structure, say. I will assume that pure quotations form quotational phrases (KPs). The syntactic structure of (59a) will then roughly be as below:

(60) John [SPEC(VP) SAID [V’do [~~SAID~~ [[e]K[shh]]KP]NP]VP

Following Giorgi (2016), one may assume that the head K of a quotational phrase reflects a quotational pause.

The suggestion then is that K is a special category that will act as a sort of coordinator, setting up a sort of coordinate structure involving other syntactic planes in a three-dimensional syntactic structure (Goodall 1987, Moltmann 1992). On standard three-dimensional syntactic theories of coordination, coordination involves a three-dimensional syntactic structure, so that ordinary grammar applies to the various different planes representing the different conjuncts or disjuncts. The difference with quotation would be that the lower-level linguistic structures of quotations are represented at other planes precisely in order to escape the application of rules of ordinary grammar. Quotations need not be grammatically correct; they may be part of other languages; and they may involve linguistic structures below the relevant linguistic level of the rest of the sentence. The structures in the other planes will all be interpreted as properties of products of phonetic or phatic acts, and their conjunction (intersection) will make up the semantic value of the entire quotation. Thus, *shh* in (59a) will have a phonetic structure at a plane different from that of the rest of the sentence and that structure will be interpreted as a property of products of phonetic acts.

**2.4. The semantics of direct quotes as complements of verbs of saying**

Being CPs allows direct quotes to be interpreted as properties of content bearers. Direct quotes do so by conveying both a content and a form. An important observation is that both locutionary and illocutionary verbs take direct quotes as complements:[[23]](#footnote-23)

(61) a. John demanded ‘help her!’

b. John asked ‘When did you help her?’

This means that direct quotes specify the content of both locutionary and illocutionary objects as well as the form of the phatic objects on which the latter are based.

The difference between pure and direct quotation, on the present view, consists in the following. A clause that has the status of a pure quotation has only lower-level linguistic structures (including possibly a syntactic structure that is as such not input to semantic interpretation). This means it does not have a syntactic structure on the same plane as the LF-structure of the sentence. By contrast, a direct quote *also* has a syntactic structure that is input to semantic interpretation, which allows it to express a property of locutionary or illocutionary objects in addition to expressing a property of phatic objects.

Direct quotation exhibits selectivity. This means that not everything inside the ‘quotation marks’ matters for characterizing the phatic act in question, but only whatever features the speakers intends to matter. This means that direct quotation may involve just partial lower-level linguistic structures, depending on the speaker’s intentions. As with pure quotation, the level of structure(s) that plays a role for characterizing the locutionary object depends on the speaker’s intentions (in fact more so than with pure quotation).

Direct quotation will express a conjunction of two properties: a property of locutionary objects and a property of phatic objects. The former is based on the ordinary syntactic structure of the complement clause; the latter is based on a lower-level linguistic structure on a different plane.

The view I have sketched considers quotation a semantic phenomenon based on syntactic structure of a particular sort. It is compositional because of the way in which sentential meaning is conceived, as properties of attitudinal and phatic objects. The account differs fundamentally from current approaches to quotation, on which the utterance of the quotation (the token) matters for what the quotation contributes to the meaning of the sentence. This holds both for the tradition of Davidson (Davidson, 1968, 1979, Cappelen/Lepore 2007) and for the more recent identity theory of quotation (Washington 1992, Saka 1998). On the present view, the semantic contribution of quotation is based on structure, and the quotational structure is interpreted as a property of phatic objects

To summarize the idea, both pure and direct quotation involve linguistic structures below the level of Logical Form; structures whose interpretation consists in properties of products of phatic acts of he various sorts. Such properties are just what those structures can be taken stand for, given the grammatical level to which they belong, However, when those structures represent quotation and are part of a three-dimensional syntactic structure, those properties of phatic objects will make up the semantic contributions of pure and direct quotes to the composition of the overall meaning of the sentence.

**2.5. Mixed quotation**

With some further modification this proposal may also extend to mixed quotation, along the following lines. In addition to its normal semantic value, a mixed quotation conveys a property characterizing the product of a phatic act. In a sentence embedded under a verb of saying, this act may be the act described by the embedding verb, as in (62a), or a contextually given phatic act, as in (62b):

(62) a. John said that he ‘resides’ in Paris.

b. John ‘resides’ in this neighborhood.

In (62a, b) the quotation may characterize part of John’s utterance, specifying John’s choice of words in a statement of where he lives. Like a direct quotation, a sentence containing a mixed quotation has two meanings: its ordinary meaning, a property of locutionary or illocutionary objects, and a property of phatic objects The difference is that with direct quotation the utterance property is expressed by the entire embedded sentence, whereas in the case of mixed quotation, it is expressed by a subsentential part. Moreover, with mixed quotation the utterance property may serve to characterize a contextually given utterance part, rather than the product of the act described by the embedding locutionary verb.

The syntactic structure involved in mixed quotation will be similar to that of direct quotation: the quoted expression will have an additional, lower-level linguistic structures at a different plane, which will be interpreted ‘literally’ as a property of products of phonetic or phatic acts. Sentences with mixed quotations will have the same sort of compositional semantics as direct quotations, which consists in interpreting an LF-structure containing an additional partial lower-level linguistic structure as a property partially specifying the form of an utterance (a phonetic or phatic product). But with mixed quotation, this property may be predicated of a contextually given utterance, which means that mixed quotation involves a pragmatic element not present with direct quotation.

**3. Conclusion**

This chapter has shown that the semantics of attitude reports developed in the previous chapter can be extended rather straightforwardly to verbs of saying once the ontology of attitudinal objects is expanded so as to include locutionary and phatic objects. This extension naturally goes along with Austin’s hierarchy of speech acts according to which illocutionary acts are performed by performing locutionary acts, which are performed by performing phatic acts. Phatic and locutionary objects thus play the same sort of semantic roles in reports of saying as attitudinal objects in the semantics of (simple) attitude reports.

The extension of the semantics was made possible by a novel semantics of quotations on which quotes can act as predicates of phatic objects (possibly based on a syntactic structure that allows lower-level syntactic structures to be part of the syntactic input to interpretation). . The semantic treatment of quotational complements as predicates of objects received independent support from the possibility of quotation occurring in predicative positions of various sorts.

The semantics was able to account for the characteristic properties of verbs of saying, on a locutionary and a phatic reading summarized below:

(63) a. Locutionary (uses) of verbs of saying

- take *that*-clauses and direct quotes as complements

- take special quantifiers and *words*-NPs as complements

- describe truth-evaluable, locutionary objects

b. Phatic (uses of) verbs of saying

- take pure quotes, which are DPs, as complements

- take special quantifiers and *words*-NPs as complements

- described a phatic, non-truth-evaluable objects

Direct quotes, we have seen are applicable also to illocutionary objects, which, as thick illocutionary objects, may include phatic objects as parts.

A novel compositional semantics of quotation was suggested, on which quotation is based on a lower-level linguistic structure which is part of the syntactic structure that is input to semantic interpretation (Logical Form). This general idea, still to be elaborated in any detail, addresses a major challenge for the semantics of quotation, namely its integration within compositional semantics.

1. The theory of quotation of Ginzburg / Cooper (2014), which is an application of an act-related view of meaning to quotation, shares similarities with the present approach to quotation, for example by making use of ‘locutionary propositions’ for direct quotation. However, its empirical motivations and theoretical framework are rather different, and the present space does not permit a more detailed discussion. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Austin actually gave various not entirely consistent characterizations of the notion of a rhetic act. I will just focus on one of them. See Searle (1968) for further discussion. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This was noted by Searle (1968). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. It is not reflected, though, as a part relation in natural language: part of an illocutionary or phatic act cannot be a lower level act, but only a partial content. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. According to Austin (1962), indirect quotes, that is, *that*-clause complements of verbs of saying, characterize rhetic acts, whereas direct quotes characterize phatic acts (though Austin is not always consistent in what he takes indirect quotes to characterize). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In English, *whisper* behaves more like *utter*, but not so in German:

   (i) ??? Hans fluesterte den Satz ‘Ich komme’.

   ‘ John whispered the sentence I am coming.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. By contrast, the direct object position of *translate* and *pronounce* is not predicational, but referential, allowing substitution by an explicit expression-referring term:

   (i) Mary pronounced / translated the word ‘red’ as ‘rouge’. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Pure quotations of course have also other syntactic functions than that of a predicate, including other nonreferential roles in close appositions, as below:

   (i) a. the morpheme ‘un’

   b. the sentence’ it is raining’

   c. the concept ‘horse’

   d. the phoneme ‘a’

   e. the sound ‘shhh’

   The nonreferential status of the quotation is indicated by the impossibility of replacing the quotation by an explicit referential term (\* *the word the word ‘maison’*, *\* the concept what ‘horse’ expresses*).

   Some occurrences of pure quotations may be referential in the sense of involving an implicit close-apposition structure containing an unpronounced sortal noun. This is arguably the case for pure quotations in subject position, as below, where a pure quotation is replaceable by an overt close apposition of a suitable sort:

   (ii) a. ‘Mary’ is disyllabic.

   b. The name ‘Mary’ is disyllabic. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Searle (1968) disputes the existence of such neutral occurrences of embedded sentences, but see Green (2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. An exception are locutionary verbs whose content involves a performatively used modal, such as (ia), (iia), and (iiia):

    (i) a. John said that Mary may leave the room.

    b. ?? What John said is true.

    (iii) a. John said that Bill must read the announcement.

    b. ?? What John said is true.

    (iii) a. John said / wrote that Mary should leave.

    b. ?? What John said became later true.

    The acceptability of performatively used modals may be traced to the fact that performatively used modal sentences entail the corresponding descriptively used modal sentences. (ia), (iia) and (iiia) may then actually display a descriptive use, but carry an implicature of a stronger statement. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. For some reason truth attributions to thoughts are not very good, despite of what philosophers generally assume:

    (i) a. ?? John’s thought that the world is round is true.

    b. ?? What John thought is true. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The notion of a product of a phatic act in fact matches the familiar notion of a token (as opposed to an utterance act). A token has only relevant properties, properties of the linguistic structure that the act is meant to realize such as phonological, morphological or syntactic features. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. It appears that there is also a form of composition of acts in which lower-level acts could have been performed without performing the higher-level acts. If killing the king was done by pulling the trigger, the killing has the trigger-pulling as a non-temporal part and the pulling of the trigger could have been done without thereby killing the king. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Note that independently of speech acts, we have a notion of an act, or better product of an act, that need not have the lower-level act that generates it as an essential part. The murder of the king could have been done by throwing a bomb instead of by pulling the trigger. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Locutionary manner-of-speaking objects also seem to be involved in the semantics of verbs like *laugh* and *cry*, which can take a *that*-clause adjunct:

    (i) a. John laughed that he will be back.

    b. Mary cried that she was in pain.

    But *laugh* and *cry* would just contribute the manner-of speaking part of locutionary manner-of speaking objects to which the clausal adjunct applies. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Major (2021, Chap. 2), proposes a somewhat similar analysis positing a *say-*phrase headed by the verb *say* which selects the CP as complement. *Say* then moves up, adjoining to the light verb *do.* Major / Torrence (to appear) show that in any languages *say* bears a close connection to complementizers, and in fact may act as a complementizer.. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. For a thorough discussion of the properties of active and stative *say*, see Major (2021). Not all languages display the two readings of *say*, for example German does not. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Major posits a rather similar structure for stative *say*, involving *be* and the absence of a voice projection. However, he does not give a semantic interpretation. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Direct quotes may be of all three sentence types

    (i) a. John said /write/thought ‘Mary is late’.

    b. John said / wrote / thought ‘leave!’

    c. John said / wrote / thought ‘what should I do?’.

    One might take this to indicate that verbs of saying may describe illocutionary objects after all. However, this cannot be as we have seen from reports of sharing with locutionary and illocutionary verbs and with the truth-evaluability of clausal complements of locutionary verbs. Rather, more plausibly the locutionary verbs in (i) take pure quotes as complements. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. When taking quotes as complements, verbs of saying allow for parentheticals and quotational inversion, constructions not available with non-quotational clausal complements:

    (i) a. ‘I will leave’, John said / wrote / thought.

    b. ‘I will leave’, said / wrote / thought John. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Pure quotations are not DPs in all contexts. They may also occur in positions in which no complements may appear, such as in close appositions as in (ia) and following verbs that take no complements as in (ib):

    (i) a. the word ‘hello’

    b. John went ‘Hey, hey, hey’. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. For similar syntactic observations about Dutch see de Vries (2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Grimshaw (2015) argues that also direct quotes of the three sentence types may satisfy the semantic selectional requirements of illocutionary verbs :

    (i) a. John told Mary that he will come / ‘I will come’.

    b. John demanded to be given one more day / ‘Give me one more day!’.

    c. John asked where the exit was / ‘Where is the exit?’. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)