Ca’ Foscari

Venice, December 13, 2016

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

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Austin (1962) distinction between levels of linguistic acts

‘illocutionary act’: act of asserting, requesting, promising, or asking a question

‘locutionary act’: consists in various acts ‘below’ the level of an illocutionary act:

* ‘rhetic act’: act of uttering the words in the sentence with a specific meaning and reference
* ‘phatic act’: act of uttering words
* ‘phonetic act’: act of producing sounds.

Goals

1. Develop novel, compositional and unfied semantics of verbs of saying and quotation making use of Austin’s distinction among levels linguistic acts. This semantics is cast within an independently motivated novel semantics of attitude reports and of sentences in general according to which sentences do not stand for propositions, but serve to characterize various attitudinal (and modal) and objects, entities of the sort of claims, beliefs, requests, thoughts, decisions etc.

2. Outline a novel syntax for quotation on which the semantic interpretation of quotation involving Austin’s distinction among linguistic acts is based.

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**1. The background: the propositions-based and the attitudinal objects-based semantics of attitude reports**

The standard view about attitude reports (and reports of saying)

- Clausal complements stand for propositions, abstract meanings of sentences that have truth conditions.

- Attitude verbs take propositions as arguments.

The Relational Analysis of attitude reports

(1) a. John claims that Mary is happy.  
   b. claim(John, [*that Mary is happy*])

Problems

No application to direct quotes.

Conceptual problems: attitudes are not attitudes about or towards propositions

Empirical propositions:

* Constraints on reports of sharing
* The Substitution Problem and Objectviezation Effect (Moltmann 2003, 2013)

Attitudinal objects

claims, requests, promises, thoughts, decisions, beliefs, intentions, …

The action product-distinction :Twardowski (1911)

(2) a. John’s claim is true.

b. ??? John’s act of claiming is true.

(3) a. John’s command was satisfied / complied with.

b. ??? John’s speech act was satisfied / complied with.

c. ??? A proposition was satisfied / complied with.

(4) a. John fulfilled / broke his promise.

b. ??? John fulfilled / broke his act of promising.

c. ??? John fulfilled / broke a proposition.

Products are ‘abstract’ artifacts produced by illocutionary or cognitive acts – the event arguments of attitude verbs.

The Attitudinal Objects Analysis of attitude reports

(5) a. John claims that Mary is happy.  
   b. ∃e(claim(e, John) & [*that Mary is happy*](product(e)))

Analysis accounts for alternation with complex predicates of the form light verb – noun for attitudinal object:

(6) John made the claim that S.

Same semantics for verbs of saying, with direct quote as complement:

(7) a. John says ‘Mary is happy’.

   b. ∃e(say(e, John) & [*‘Mary is happy’* ](product(e)))

The semantics of response-stance verbs (Cattell 1978)

(8) a. John confirmed that S.

b. ∃e(confirm(e, John, d) & [*that* S](d)), d a contextually given illocutionary products

(9) John partially confirmed / ??? thought that S.

Special quantifiers as nominalizing quantifiers: Moltmann (2003, 2013)

(10) a. John asserted something shocking.

b. John dreamt something nice.

c. John demanded something impossible to comply with.

d. ∃e’∃e (assert(e, John) & shocking(e’) & e’ = product(e))

Reports of sharing involving kinds of attitudinal objects

(11) a. John asserted what Mary asserted.

b. ∃e’∃e’’∃e(assert(e, John) & e’ = product-kind(e) & assert(e’’, Mary) & e’ = product-

kind(e’’))

Constraints on reports of sharing (Moltmann 2003, 2013)

(12) a. ??? John promised what Mary asserted, that he will come back.

b. ??? John asserted what Mary demanded, that he will be back in an hour.

(13) a. John suggested what Mary asserted.

b. John requested what Mary demanded.

The satisfaction-related meaning of sentences based on Fine’s (to appear ) Truthmaker Semantics

(14) For a sentence S, [S] = λd[∀i(i ╟ d 🡪 S is true in d) & ∀i(i ╢ d 🡪 S is false in d)]

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**2. The semantics of verbs of saying**

The hyperintensionality of locutionary verbs

(15) a. John literally said that he was really incapable of doing the job.

b. John was thinking that he was really incapable of doing the job.

Locutionary verbs

*say*, *write*, and *think*

*Say*, *write*, and *think* may also take direct quotes as complements

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

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

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

(17) a. John said / wrote / thought something, namely ‘Leave!’.

b. What John said / wrote / thought was ‘Leave!’.

(18) a. What John said / wrote / thought was ‘I should leave!’.

b. What John said / wrote / thought was ‘what should I do?’.

Illocutionary verbs vs locutionary verbs:

Only illocutionary verbs perrmit complements standing for questions or imperative that are not of the form of direct quotes.

(19) 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?’.

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

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

Constraint on reports of sharing with illocutionary and locutionary verbs

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

b. John asserted that Bill won the race.

c. Mary said that Bill won the race.

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

b. John demanded that Bill should leave.

c. Mary said that Bill should leave.

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

b. John said ‘Did Bill win?’.

c. Mary asked ‘Did Bill win?’.

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

b. John promised that he would help Mary.

c. John said that he would help Mary.

Mental correlates of locutionary and illocutionary acts

(25) 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!’. .

Rhetic acts

Rhetic acts are in fact pluralities of acts of using meaningful subsentential constituents of the sentence. Product of arhetic act: plurality of products of uses of meaningful constituents

The status of (products of ) rhetic acts as pluralities is well-refelected in natural language! (pace Searle 1968)

Rhetic products in the semantics of verbs of saying

(26) a. John said that S.

b. ∃e(say(e, John) & [*that* S]loc(product(e)))

Here e will be a rhetic act (or locutionary act), not an illocutionary act, though it may be part of an illocutionary act.

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**3. Explicit reference to rhetic acts**

*Words*-NPs stand for products of rhetic acts

(27) John said a few words / those words / the words ‘I forgive you’.

(28) ‘Leave the house!’ / ‘When should I leave?’, John himself has said precisely those words.

¨Products of rhetic acts do not have truth or satisfaction conditions

(29) a. ??? Mary’s words, the words ‘The world will end tomorrow’, are not true.

b. ??? The words ’Finish the paper by midnight!’ cannot be complied with.

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

(30) ?? John’s thought that the world will end tomorrow is not true.

Illocutionary verbs rhetic products, but illocutionary products in their semantics

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

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

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

Rhetic products as arguments of other verbs than locutionary verbs

(32) a. John repeated / understood / interpreted / read those words.

b. John believed / remembered / feared those words.

Restriction of *words*-NPs to products of linguistic acts

(33) ??? John thought those words.

Rhetic acts vs phatic acts that are part of illocutuionary acts

(34) a.??? John demanded / asked a few words.

b. John demanded ‘help her!’

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

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**4. Quotation**

Pure quotation

(35) a. John said ‘shhh’.

Direct quotation  
(35) b. John said 'I will come'.

Mixed quotation  
(35) c. John said that he ‘resides’ in Paris.

Special quantifiers and quotational compements (Munro 2018, Moltmann 2013)

(36) a. John said ‘shh’.

b. John said something.

The semantics of pure quotation complements:

(37) ∃e(say(e, John) & [*shh*](product(e)))

The syntax of pure quotation

(38) John [said [[[shh]XX]QP]NP]VP

XX: say a phonetic category

The idea

Quotation involves a lower-level linguistic structure: a phonetic, phonological, or morpho-syntactic structure (or several such structures at once).

Outline of a novel account of the syntax of quotation

Q is a special category acting 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).

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.

Three-dimensional syntax for quotation

The lower-level linguistic structures of quotations are represented in other planes in order to escape application of rules of ordinary grammar: Quotations need not be grammatically correct, may come from other languages, and involve structures below the relevant linguistic level of the rest of the sentence.

The semantics that goes along with the new syntax of quotation

The lower-level structures in the other planes will all be interpreted as properties of products of phonetic or phatic acts, and their conjunction will make up the semantic value of the entire quotation.

Application to (36a)

*shh* will have a phonetic structure on 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.

Pure vs direct quotation

A pure quotation has only lower-level linguistic structures and does not have a syntactic structure on the same plane as the LF-structure of the entire sentence.

A direct quotation has a lower level structure (on a different plane) and a structure on the same plane as the LF structure of the entire sentence.

Syntactic difference between pure and direct quotation: only direct quotes are CPs

(37) 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’’

The account of direct quotation

A direct quote also has a syntactic structure at LF, in addition to having a lower-level structure. LF structure is input to semantic interpretation and allows direct quote to express a property of products of rhetic acts as well.

A direct quote expresses a conjunction of two properties:

a property of rhetic products and a property of phatic or phonetic products.

The property of rhetic products is based on the ordinary syntactic structure of the complement clause. The property of phatic products is based on a lower-level linguistic structure that belongs to a different plane.

General feature of the account

- Quotation considered a semantic phenomenon, based on syntactic structure

- Compositional semantics of quotation because of the particular way sentential meaning is conceived.

- The account differs fundamentally from current approaches to quotation where the utterance of the quotation, the token, matters for what the quotation contributes to the meaning of the sentence, both in the tradition of Davidson (1968, 1979) and recent identity theories of quotation (Saka 1998).

Further application: predicative quotations

(38) a. She translated red as ‘rouge’.

b. She pronounced ‘red’ as ‘rett’

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

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

Pure quotations in close appositions

(40) a. the morpheme ‘un’

b. the sentence’ it is raining’

c. the concept ‘horse’

d. the phoneme ‘a’

e. the sound ‘shhh’

Pure quotations in object position as parts of close appositions, involving silent noun:

(41) a. ‘Mary’ is disyllabic.

b. The name ‘Mary’ is disyllabic.

But not so in general for pure quotations in object position

(42) a. ‘Red’ means ‘red’.

b. The word ‘red’ means ‘red’.

c. ???? ‘Red’ means the concept red.

d. ‘Red’ means something.

Extension of the account to mixed quotation

Pure quotation characterizes product of contextually given locutionary act or (part of) locutionary act described by embedding verb of saying:

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

b. John ‘resides’ in this neighborhood.

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