

How Multi-Dimensional is Quotation?*

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Potts' central claim is that the semantic contribution of quoted material has multiple dimensions. As a commenter, I should probably concentrate on the central claim and, if possible, probe its solidity. So, that's what I'll be doing.

I Clausal Quotation

[Potts handout from today]

Final (for this handout) version of say_q

(28) a. $\text{say}_q : \langle u, \langle e, \langle t \times t \rangle \rangle \rangle$

b. $\llbracket \text{say}_q(\ulcorner S \urcorner)(\mathbf{b}) \rrbracket^a = \left\langle \begin{array}{c} \llbracket \text{utter}(\ulcorner S \urcorner)(\mathbf{b}) \rrbracket^a \\ \exists R \in D_{\langle \sigma, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle} : R(\text{SEM}(\llbracket \ulcorner S \urcorner \rrbracket^b))(\llbracket \mathbf{b} \rrbracket^a) \end{array} \right\rangle$

At present, I must stipulate that these are the same entity.

This definition is evolved from the initially somewhat simpler two-dimensional meaning for say_q . It is more complicated for two reasons:

- (i) non-declarative complements to quotational say_q make it so that we can't say that the reported speaker said (in the sense of asserted) the proposition denoted by the quoted material; so instead there is existential quantification over relations (like *assert*, *ask*, *exclaim*, etc.) that the reported speaker might stand in towards the content expressed by the quoted material;

* Comments on "The Dimensions of Quotation" by Chris Potts [8]. It is a pleasure to be asked to comment on a paper in an area of inquiry that I previously knew nothing about. I learned a lot from Chris. I also learned a lot from acquainting myself with some of the existing literature on quotation, in particular Recanati [10], Abbott [1], and Geurts & Maier [4]. What I say here should be seen as the first clearing of the throat by a rank amateur. Caveat Emptor!

- (ii) the content expressed by the quoted material that the reported speaker stands in a speech act relation to must be computed relative to the grammar/language of that speaker; hence the indexing of the interpretation to an individual.

Comments

1. Basically, I wish to try on the claim that we only need the first dimension of Potts' meaning for say_q . That is, we would be working with the following one-dimensional entry:

$$(1) \quad \llbracket say_q(\ulcorner S \urcorner)(b) \rrbracket^a = \llbracket utter(\ulcorner S \urcorner)(b) \rrbracket^a$$

So, all that *Lisa said "Maggie shot Burns"* means truth-conditionally is that Lisa uttered the expression "Maggie shot Burns". Now, if Lisa uttered that expression, then with certain obvious assumptions (which ones those are I will leave as an exercise), one can *infer* that Lisa asserted the proposition that Maggie shot Burns.

So, why not leave this predictable inference out of the meaning of the meaning of say_q ? This would mean that the content of the quoted material does not enter into the semantics of the sentence. But it would still be involved in total utterance meaning. I'm just skeptical that this is to be located in a compositionally active extra dimension, rather than being an extra-semantic inference.

2. Once we say that *Lisa said "Leave me alone!"* just reports that Lisa uttered a certain expression, we can leave it to extra-semantic inferences that she made a demand for the addressee to leave her alone. The complexities of the statement in Potts' second dimension are avoided.
3. What exactly does it mean to say that someone uttered an expression? In Potts' system, the utterance relation holds between an individual and a triple of a phonological representation, a syntactic representation, and a semantic representation. The intention is that what the individual utters is the linguistic object that corresponds to the string of sounds in the individual's language.¹ But maybe we just want to say that the speaker has to utter the given string of sounds and leave everything else to extra-semantic inferences. Some considerations:

- (i) We should make space for cases like this:

$$(2) \quad \text{He said "Ich liebe Dich" without knowing what that meant.}$$

¹ As it stands, Potts' entry in his (28), together with the entry for *utter* in his (10), may not actually say this. I think we need to replace his (10b) with

$$(i) \quad \llbracket utter(\ulcorner S \urcorner)(b) \rrbracket^a = \text{the set of worlds in which } \llbracket b \rrbracket^a \text{ utters } \llbracket \ulcorner S \urcorner \rrbracket^a.$$

(ii) A stripped-down meaning for say_q also straightforwardly extends to cases where what is uttered is not an expression that has a denotational semantics, as in

(3) John opened his mouth and screamed “Aayyyyyyyyyy”. (Abbott)

4. Recanati points out cases such as this:

(4) He said, “We’re going to close early tonight.”

We are to imagine that the speaker was actually an Italian restaurant owner. It seems that (4) “can be used to report an utterance in Italian, provided the Italian sentence had a meaning sufficiently similar to that of the English sentence *We’re going to close early tonight*”. Recanati refers to Sperber & Wilson [12: p. 228].

Recanati’s analysis is that the claim is really that the reported speaker uttered something that is a token of a type that the quoted expression is also a token of. I don’t know whether one should try to build cases like these into the semantics of say_q .

5. Lastly, I’d like to mention cases pointed out by Abbott, where the quoted material enters in positions other than the complement of verbs of reported speech:

(5) These are not “I really should” radishes . . . (Jon Carroll, *San Francisco Chronicle*, cited in Clark & Gerrig [3: ex. 5b])

(6) His speech abounded in “I think so”s. (from Jespersen’s *Philosophy of Grammar*, cited in Clark & Gerrig [3: ex. 5e])

(7) Dutch is a “that I him have helped” language. (Abbott, crediting Philippe De Brabanter, pc)

2 Subclausal Quotation

[Potts handout from today]

(29) a. **quote-shift** : $\langle u, \langle e, \sigma \times t \rangle \rangle$

b. the context must supply this entity

$$\llbracket \text{quote-shift}(\ulcorner S \urcorner) \rrbracket^a(d) = \left\langle \begin{array}{c} SEM(\llbracket \ulcorner S \urcorner \rrbracket^d) \\ \llbracket \text{utter}(\ulcorner S \urcorner) \rrbracket^a(d) \end{array} \right\rangle$$

We are now dealing with much sexier cases like Potts'

- (30) a. Burns: *The Godfather II* is a total snooze.
 b. Homer: Well, Pauline Kael said that this “total snooze” is a defining moment in American cinema.

The quoted material contributes to the composition the semantic value that it has relative to a contextually supplied speaker (and presumably at least sometimes a contextually supplied time of speaking or event of speaking – particularly because people might have different idiolects at different times, cf. Potts' apricot example for example). It also in an extra dimension supplies the claim that that speaker uttered the quoted material.

Recanati calls such cases “hybrid”. He distinguishes between cumulative hybrids (where the quoted material has the same interpretation relative to the main speaker as it has relative to the reported speaker) and non-cumulative hybrids. Potts' analysis makes non-cumulativity the general case, probably properly so.

Comments

- I. Again, I would like to consider the possibility that we only need one dimension of meaning. Here are two ways to go:

- (i) Maybe, the quoted material is interpreted as “the X that α call(ed/s) Q”. The idea is that this semantics would (i) induce an existential presupposition, viz. that there is something that α call(ed/s) Q, which in turn entails that α uttered Q, and (ii) contribute to the semantic composition the semantic value that Q had for α . This is not a multi-dimensional treatment, unless one is committed to treating presuppositions as extra-dimensional. To split the difference, let's call this the 1.5-dimensional analysis. [As far as I can tell, this is the analysis Geurts & Maier [4, 5] propose, if I could only work my way competently through their DRT-style formulation.] Possible entry for the **quote-shift** operator:²

$$(8) \quad \llbracket \text{quote-shift}(\ulcorner S \urcorner) \rrbracket^{\alpha}(d, w, t) = \\ \text{the } X: d \text{ uttered } \ulcorner S \urcorner \text{ in } w \text{ at } t. X = \text{SEM}(\llbracket \ulcorner S \urcorner \rrbracket^{\alpha, w, t}).$$

⇒ *Excursus* I find it interesting that many cases of subclausal quotation can be successfully paraphrased using a certain kind of free relative (a fact noted by Geurts & Maier):

- (9) a. George says Tony is his “bestest friend”.
 b. George says Tony is his [what George calls “bestest friend”].

I first learned about such free relatives from Roger Higgins, who had an amazing collection of naturally occurring examples. More recently, they have been discussed under the term “transparent free

² Using the λ -notation introduced by Heim & Kratzer.

relatives” by among others Wilder [13], van Riemsdijk [11], Grosu [6]. Some approaches, in particular van Riemsdijk’s, are multi-dimensional, but as Grosu points out, that account runs into trouble with examples like

(10) George picked up what he mistakenly took to be a hammer,

which have what looks like the very property that Recanati called non-cumulativity in the case of subclausal quotation. – I don’t know what more to make of this connection, but I wanted to draw your attention to this construction. *End of Excursus*

(ii) An even more stripped down semantics would be something like the one suggested by Recanati. The idea is that at the semantic level there are simply shifting operators that interpret their argument expression in someone else’s language etc. There is no semantic content claiming that that someone else actually uttered the expression. What happens is that the speaker obviously mimics someone else’s utterance and the hearer figures out that that is a hint that a shifting operator is present in the semantics.

2. Potts’ analysis involves indexing the interpretation to the reported speaker. Something like that is clearly needed. But we should get clear about the fact that there are at least two kinds of examples and that we will probably need to refine the analysis. The basic idea might be that there is a family of shifting operators rather than just one.

(i) One kind of example involves the reported speaker speaking a different language, mostly because they have a (sometimes only slightly) different idiolect. Here are three examples discussed by Recanati:

(11) Paul says he’s due to present his work in the ‘paper session’.

“where the speaker is understood as mimicking Paul’s deviant use of the phrase ‘paper session’. what Paul meant when he said what (11) reports was the he was due to present his work in the *poster* session. The speaker ironically echoes Paul’s mistaken use.” (p.658)

(12) Look who is coming! ‘Quine’ wants to speak to us.

“Suppose it is mutually known to the speaker and his addressee that James misidentified a certain old man (Tim McPherson) as the famous philosopher Quine. The speaker can then ironically use the name ‘Quine’ in quotes to refer to McPherson.” (p. 658)

(13) Nicholas believes that his father is a ‘philosopher’. (due to Capelen & Lepore [2])

“In each case the expression within the quotation marks is not used with its standard meaning, but with the meaning it has *for the person whose use is being echoically simulated.*” (p. 674)

- (ii) Another kind of example involves not a difference in language but a difference in beliefs. Potts’ “total snooze” example is arguably such a case. Here is one from Recanati, first introduced in a 1987 paper [9]:

(14) “Suppose it is mutual knowledge between John and myself that Peter wrongly believes that Mary is my sister. Spotting Mary at a distance, John says to me”

Look! ‘Your sister’ is coming over.³

- (iii) Lastly, one might wonder whether there is the possibility of shifting the reference of indexicals by quoting material. Recanati presents two such examples:

(15) Mr Greenspan said he agreed with Labor Secretary R.B. Reich ‘on quite a lot of things’. Their accord on this issue, he said, has proved ‘quite a surprise to both of us’. (from the *New York Times* cited by Cappelen & Lepore, p. 429)

(16) Levi Foster, in fact, is the great-great-grandfather of Gov. Mike Foster of Louisiana, who said recently on a radio program that it would be ‘news to me’ if anyone in his family had owned slaves. (also from the *New York Times* found by Recanati)

Note that both examples involve mixed quotation under *say*. It seems hard to construct such cases otherwise:

(17) [Suppose Harry thinks that Mary is my sister.]
#I guess I should be happy because ‘his sister’ is coming.
cf. I guess I should be happy because my ‘sister’ is coming.

Fortunately, I expect that we’ll learn much more about context shifting and indexicals in the next talk.

³ I find some of Recanati’s discussion of this example confusing, probably at least partially because he assumes that the second person pronoun “your” is part of the quoted material here – which I’m not convinced is right.

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