Anaphoric Relations and Quoting Out of Context

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What does it mean to take a quotation "out of context"?

Misquotation

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I explore context-sensitivity in quotation as an anaphora resolution challenge: listeners must reconstruct the original context by anaphoric reference to entities in the matrix discourse context.

I propose that (some) misquotations arise when the matrix discourse context diverges from the original context in a way that misleads addressees in this anaphora resolution process.

Talk Overview

- The Semantics of Mixed Quotation
- How Do Addressees Understand Quotations?
- Misquotation as Faulty Reconstruction
- Dual-Target Quotations
- Misquotation and Dual-Target Quotations

The Semantics of Mixed Quotation

Mixed Quotation

Mixed quotation is a phenomenon in which a quotation is grammatically integrated into a matrix utterance, as in (1):

1. Ann said that this music was “not mah cup o’ tea.”

(Maier 2015)

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As Davidson (1979) observes, in mixed quotation, the quoted words are both ***mentioned*** and ***used***.

Analyses of Mixed Quotation

Numerous semantic accounts of mixed quotation have been proposed (Cappelen and Lepore 1997; von Fintel 2004; Geurts and Maier 2005; Recanati 2001; Recanati 2008; Shan 2011; Maier 2015; Kirk-Giannini 2024).

Most agree that (1) makes two meaning contributions:

1. Ann said that this music was "not mah cup o' tea."

(Maier 2015)

- *Ann used the literal words "not mah cup o' tea" to refer to a property*
- *Ann said that property applies to the music.*

Analyses of Mixed Quotation

Accounts differ in how to derive these meaning contributions.

I will group existing accounts into two families: **presuppositional** accounts (von Fintel 2004; Geurts and Maier 2005), and **shift** accounts (Recanati 2001; Shan 2011).

Presuppositional Accounts

In presuppositional accounts proposed by von Fintel (2004) and Geurts and Maier (2005), the property picked out by the quoted speaker is not compositionally derived.

Instead, the mention component triggers the presupposition that someone used the quoted material to refer to a property X, and X is added to the at-issue content of the utterance.

Presuppositional Accounts

Following von Fintel (2004)'s analysis:

3. [[Ann said that this music was "not mah cup o' tea"]] =

(a) Presupposition: there is an X such that Ann uttered the words *not mah cup o' tea* to refer to X.

(b) At-issue: Ann said that this music was X.

Presuppositional Accounts

Presuppositional accounts make the right prediction about quotations embedded under negation, which is an issue for some directly compositional accounts, as Maier (2017) discusses.

Presuppositional Accounts

They also account for quotations that may be interpretable in only certain languages or dialects, since the property only needs to be one that the quoted speaker would describe in those words, not the quoting speaker.

4. Nicola said that Alice is a "philtosopher."

(Cappelen & Lepore 1997)

Presuppositional Accounts

However, presuppositional accounts predict a challenging inference task for addressees: to identify the correct property P.

Shift accounts

An alternative approach is to treat quotation as a form of **context shift**.

These accounts seek a compositional interpretation of the quoted content, which requires them to grapple with the interpretation of context-sensitive expressions like indexicals.

Shift accounts

Recanati (2001) proposes that quotation marks and quotation intonation are cues to the listener that a **language shift** is taking place.

This can be a shift to the quoted discourse context, manipulating the context parameter, or to a different dialect or language entirely where words have different meanings.

Shift accounts

For context shift, the effect is similar embedding the quote under a context shift operator (monster) (Schlenker 2003; Anand and Nevins 2004; Deal 2017).

In (5), the indexical "mah" is interpreted relative to the quoted context of utterance, not the matrix context, and therefore refers to Ann rather than the matrix speaker.

5. [[Ann said that this music was “not mah cup o’ tea.”]]^{C,g,C_q} =

say(Ann,P(music)) & P = [[not mah cup o’ tea]]$^{C_q,\ g}$ *where*

C_q = <speaker: Ann, … >

Shift accounts

However, Recanati (2001) envisions this as a pragmatic process, rather than resulting from a grammatical operator.

Shift accounts

In order to deal with examples like (6), shift accounts must allow for a more general kind of language shift in addition to context shift.

6. Nicola said that Alice is a "philtosopher."

(Cappelen & Lepore 1997)

Recanati (2001) posits that this is a pragmatic process; Shan (2011) implements it semantically.

Shift accounts

Shift accounts capture the behavior of indexicals under quotation in a fully compositional way. However, to account for quoting between dialects, they treat language dependence and context dependence in the same way, which may be undesirable.

Shift accounts

Like presuppositional accounts, they also pose a challenging task for the addressee, who must infer the correct context and dialect used by the quoted speaker.

How Do Addressees Understand Quotation?

Challenges for Addressees

Both families of approaches to mixed quotation pose interpretative challenges for the listener.

Presuppositional approaches:

Infer the property picked out by the quoted content.

Shift approaches:

Infer the context and language used by the quoted speaker.

Normal Semantics Assumption

I will focus on cases where no dialect shift is happening. In these cases, the addressee can assume that the quoted content has an ordinary semantics.

However, since some context-sensitive content shifts in quotation, the Normal Semantics Assumption allows the context parameter and assignment function to differ from the matrix utterance context.

Normal Semantics Assumption

7. **Normal Semantics Assumption**: the quoted content has an ordinary semantics, but may be interpreted according to a quotative context.

$$[[\text{“X”}]]^{C,g} = [[X]]^{C_q,\, g_q}$$

This notational step allows us to rework the shift and presuppositional accounts to be more similar.

Normal Semantics Assumption

8. Quine said that quotation has "a certain anomalous feature."
9. Presuppositional account: $[[8]]^{C,g}$ =
   a. Presupposition: there is a quotative context C_q, g_q such that Quine uttered *a certain anomalous feature* to refer to X
   b. At-issue: Quine said that quotation has X.
   c. X = $[[\text{a certain anomalous feature}]]^{C_q, g_q}$ (by NSA)
10. Shift account: $[[8]]^{C,g}$ =
   a. Presupposition: there is a quotative context parameter C_q.
   b. At-issue: Quine uttered *a certain anomalous feature* to refer to X.
   c. At-issue: Quine said that quotation has X.
   d. X = $[[\text{a certain anomalous feature}]]^{C_q, g_q}$ (by NSA)

Challenges for Addressees

Both approaches to mixed quotation pose an interpretation challenge for addressees: how to infer the correct context for interpreting the quoted material.

Although quoters typically have access to the original context (by physical witness or through recording), addressees rarely do.

Challenges for Addressees

This challenge becomes apparent when we consider quotations that contain **context-sensitive** expressions:

11. YSL said of Marrakech that "**this city** taught **me** color."

Presuppositional account:

12. [[YSL said of Marrakech that "this city taught me color."]]^{C,g} =
    a. Presupposition: there is an X such that YSL uttered *this city taught me color* to refer to X.
    b. At-issue: YSL said of Marrakech that X.
    c. X = [[this city taught me color]]$^{Cq,\ gq}$ by NSA

Reconstructing the Quoted Context

How do addressees infer C_q and g_q when they lack direct access to the original context of the utterance?

I propose:

For indexicals:

Addressees reconstruct the quoted context parameter by anaphoric reference to the matrix discourse context.

Reconstructing the Quoted Context

How do addressees infer C_q and g_q when they lack direct access to the original context of the utterance?

I propose:

For anaphoric expressions:

Addressees rely on the matrix discourse context.

$g_q = g$

Understanding Quoted Indexicals

For indexicals, I draw on Eckardt (2014)'s bi-contextual treatment of Free Indirect Discourse. She posits that underspecified fields in the embedded context parameter are resolved anaphorically to referents in the matrix context parameter.

However, I posit that **any referents in the matrix discourse context are valid referents**.

Understanding Quoted Indexicals

In (13), the indexical *me* picks out the speaker field of a context parameter.

13. YSL said of Marrakech that "**this city** taught **me** color."

The addressee cannot directly access the original utterance context; however, since the original speaker is named by the quoter, the listener can accurately reconstruct the speaker field of the embedded context.

Understanding Quoted Indexicals

Minimally, the reconstructed context parameter must contain defined entries for all fields that are referenced within the quotation.

In this example, the time and addressee fields can be undefined, because there are no quoted indexicals that refer back to them:

C_q = <speaker: YSL, addressee: *undefined*, location: Marrakech, time: *undefined*>

Understanding Quoted Anaphoric Expressions

I posit that quoted anaphoric expressions are resolved anaphorically to the matrix discourse context.

This is desirable because mixed quotations can contain anaphoric expressions that refer back to entities introduced in the matrix utterance or within the quotation itself.

Understanding Quoted Anaphoric Expressions

13.

a. Mrs. Oglander said that she "had never seen Valerie Saintclair$_i$ before she$_i$ burst through the window on that fatal night."

b. Mrs. Oglander said that she had never seen Valerie Saintclair$_i$ "before she$_i$ burst through the window on that fatal night."

As the quotation is processed, any referents it introduces will be added to the matrix discourse context:

14. Mrs. Oglander$_j$ said that she "had never seen Valerie Saintclair$_i$ before she$_i$ burst through the window on that fatal night."But in fact she$_j$ was her$_i$ mother!

Understanding Quoted Anaphoric Expressions

In (15), the listener can resolve *this city* by anaphoric reference to the matrix discourse context, since the matrix speaker has named Marrakech.

15. YSL said of Marrakech that "**this city** taught **me** color."

Understanding Quoted Indexicals

The addressee therefore can derive the update to the matrix discourse context shown in (14).

14. [[YSL said of Marrakech that "this city taught me color."]]^{C,g} =

    a. Context Inference: C_q = <speaker: YSL, addressee: undefined, location: Marrakech, time: undefined> and $g_q = g$

    b. Presupposition: there is an X such that YSL uttered *this city taught me color* to refer to X.

    c. At-issue: YSL said of Marrakech that X.

    d. X = [[this city taught me color]]$^{C_q,\ g_q}$ (by NSA)

        = TAUGHT(g(i), C_q[speaker], color)

        = TAUGHT(Marrakech, YSL, color)

Misquotation as Faulty Reconstruction

Reconstructing Gone Awry

I propose that **misquotation** arises when the discourse context makes the wrong referents prominent.

This leads the addressee to misidentify the property intended by the original speaker.

Reconstructing Gone Awry

For **anaphoric expressions**, the discourse-prominence of the intended referent must not be blocked by a more prominent referent of the same type.

16. *Context: Alex is addressing an art class in Mumbai.*

Alex: Yves Saint Laurent said "this city taught me color."

Reconstructing Gone Awry

16. *Context: Alex is addressing an art class in Mumbai.*
    Alex: Yves Saint Laurent said "this city taught me color."

17. [[YSL said "this city taught me color."]]^{C,g} =
    a. Context Inference: C_q = <speaker: YSL, addressee: undefined, location: undefined, time: undefined> and $g_q = g$
    b. Presupposition: there is an X such that YSL uttered *this city taught me color* to refer to X.
    c. At-issue: YSL said of Marrakech that X.
    d. X = [[this city$_i$ taught me color]]$^{C_q,\, g_q}$ (by NSA)
        = TAUGHT(g(i), C_q[speaker], color)
        = TAUGHT(Marrakech, YSL, color)

Reconstructing Gone Awry

For indexicals, the key attributes of the original discourse context must be made clear so that the addressee can reconstruct the original context parameter (or at least, any fields referred to by quoted indexicals).

Reconstructing Gone Awry

(19) is a misleading quotation of (18), because the addressee cannot infer that the original referent of *here* was NASA, rather than Swarthmore.

18. *Context: Sally Ride is addressing a crowd of junior colleagues at NASA.*

    Sally Ride: I didn’t come here to make history.

19. *Context: A guide is giving a tour of Swarthmore College.*

    Guide: Sally Ride, Class of 1972, said that she "didn’t come here to make history," yet she is one of our most important alums.

Reconstructing Gone Awry

The only available location referent for *here* in the matrix discourse context is Swarthmore College.

This leads to the reconstructed context parameter in (21a). The location cannot be undefined, since there is a quoted indexical that refers to it.

20. Matrix context for (19)
    a. C = <speaker: guide, addressee: tour, location: Swarthmore, time: now>
    b. g = {i:Sally Ride}
21. Reconstructed context for (19)
    a. Cq = <speaker: SR, addressee: undefined, location: Swarthmore, time: undefined>

Reconstructing Gone Awry

The addressee consequently infers the wrong meaning for the quotation's use component (22).

22. Presuppositional semantics for (19)

    a. Context Inference: C_q = <speaker: SR, addressee: undefined, location: Swarthmore, time: undefined>

    b. Presupposition: there is an X such that Sally Ride uttered *didn't come here to make history* to refer to X.

    c. At-issue: Sally Ride said X of herself.

    d. X = [[didn't come here to make history]]$^{C_q,\ g_q}$ (by NSA)
       = λx.COME(C_q[location], x, MAKE-HISTORY)
       = λx.COME(Swarthmore, x, MAKE-HISTORY)

Reconstructing Gone Awry

An intervening reference to NASA, either in the matrix utterance (23) or the quotation (24), would allow the addressee to correctly reconstruct the original context.

23. *Context: A guide is giving a tour of Swarthmore.*

    Guide: Sally Ride, Class of 1972, told her NASA colleagues that she "didn’t come here to make history."

24. *Context: A guide is giving a tour of Swarthmore.*

    Guide: Sally Ride, Class of 1972, said that she "didn’t come here to make history, but to contribute to NASA’s scientific mission."

A Simpler Alternative?

A Directly Anaphoric Alternative

I have argued that understanding indexicality in quotation involves anaphora resolution. Could we simplify the process further by positing that indexicals, like anaphoric expressions, are resolved directly through anaphoric reference to the matrix context?

A Directly Anaphoric Alternative

The directly anaphoric approach is simple and does not make incorrect predictions for any of the examples discussed so far.

Although in theory it predicts that an indexical could pick out a discourse-prominent referent that is not in a context parameter, this cannot occur truthfully for simple mixed quotations:

25. YSL said to my dear friend Anna that Marrakech "taught me color."

Dual-Target Quotations

Dual-Target Quotations

A more challenging form of quotation is what I will refer to as ***dual-target quotations***: mixed quotations that change the referent of their embedded indexicals.

26. Context: Alex is addressing an art class in Mumbai.

Alex: As Yves Saint Laurent said about Marrakech, Mumbai "taught me color."

Dual-Target Quotations

27. Context: Alex is addressing an art class in Mumbai.

Alex: As Yves Saint Laurent said about Marrakech, Mumbai "taught me color."

28. [[As Yves Saint Laurent said about Marrakech, Mumbai "taught me color."]]^{C,g} =

a. Mention: YSL used *taught me color* to refer to property P

b. First use: YSL said P of Marrakech.

c. Second use: Alex said P of Mumbai.

Context Reconstruction Approach

29. [[As Yves Saint Laurent said about Marrakech, Mumbai "taught me color."]]^{C,g} =

    a. Context Inference: C_q = <speaker: YSL, addressee: undefined, location: undefined, time: undefined> and $g_q = g$

    b. Presupposition: there is a P such that YSL uttered *taught me color* to refer to P .

    c. P = [[taught me color]] (by NSA)

    d. At-issue: YSL said P of Marrakech in context C_q, g_q.
    = YSL said [[taught me color]]$^{C_q, g_q}$ of Marrakech
    = YSL said λy.TAUGHT(y, C_q[speaker], color) of Marrakech
    = YSL said λy.TAUGHT(y, YSL, color) of Marrakech

    e. At-issue: Alex said P of Mumbai in context C,g.
    = Alex said [[taught me color]]^{C,g} of Mumbai
    = Alex said λy.TAUGHT(y, C[speaker], color) of Mumbai
    = Alex said λy.TAUGHT(y, Alex, color) of Mumbai

Directly Anaphoric Approach

30. [[As Yves Saint Laurent said about Marrakech, Mumbai "taught me color."]]^{C,g} =

a. g = {i: YSL}

b. Presupposition: there is a P such that YSL uttered *taught me color* to refer to P .

c. P = [[taught me color]] (by NSA)

d. At-issue: YSL said P of Marrakech in context C_q, g_q.

= YSL said [[taught me color]]^{C,g} of Marrakech

= YSL said λy.TAUGHT(y, g(i), color) of Marrakech

= YSL said λy.TAUGHT(y, YSL, color) of Marrakech

e. At-issue: Alex said P of Mumbai in context C,g.

= Alex said [[taught me color]]^{C,g} of Mumbai

= Alex said λy.TAUGHT(y, C[speaker], color) of Mumbai

= Alex said λy.TAUGHT(y, Alex, color) of Mumbai

Dual-Target Predictions

This dual-target example is compatible with either a directly anaphoric account or a reconstructed account.

In principle, however, the accounts make different predictions.

The anaphoric account predicts that indexicals could shift to a discourse-prominent referent that is not in a context parameter. As discussed in Section 5, for the first use, this would result in falsehood.

However, it should be possible for the **second use** in the directly anaphoric account.

Second Uses

Can "me" refer back to someone other than the quoted or matrix speaker?

31. Alex$_i$: To my dear friend Anna$_j$, it seemed that as YSL said of Marrakech, Mumbai "taught me$_{i/*j}$ color."

Second Uses

To refer to Anna, we need to unquote the indexical:

32. Alex_i: To my dear friend Anna_j, it seemed that as YSL said of Marrakech, Mumbai "taught [her]$_j$ color."

Thus, first person indexicals seem restricted to refer only to individuals who serve as speakers in either the matrix or the embedded context.

Other Candidates

33. Anne (disapprovingly): Your socks are mismatched.

    Bess (unabashedly): Well, you know, "to thine own self be true."

Other Candidates

33. Anne (disapprovingly): Your socks are mismatched.

    Bess (unabashedly): Well, you know, "to thine own self be true."

This is pure quotation, not mixed quotation.

Other Candidates

In the mixed quotation, we again need to unquote the indexical:

34. *Bess: I_i strive to always "to thine$_i$ own self be true."

35. Bess: I_i strive to always "to [mine$_i$] own self be true."

Other Candidates

36. Context: Liz is doing a presentation in history class.

Liz: But like Jay said on Love Island, Anne Boleyn "isn't here for seasonal boyfriends." She wants Henry VIII to marry her. She wants to be the queen at Hampton Court, not just a mistress.

Here refers to Hampton Court in the second use. However, this passage is in historical present, which licenses indexical shift on independent grounds (Schlenker 2004).

Dual-Target Quotations

Summary:

Quoted indexicals are restricted to referents in either the matrix or quoted context parameter, supporting the context reconstruction account over a directly anaphoric approach.

Misquotation and Dual-Target Quotations

Misquotation and Dual-Target Quotations

Dual-target quotations are a useful testing ground for understanding how addressees interpret quotations, and the challenges they pose are not entirely resolved by the context reconstruction account I have sketched.

A Predicted Misquotation

37. *Context: Alex is addressing an art class in Mumbai.*

Alex: I've loved my time here! As Yves Saint Laurent said, I "learned color from this city."

An Unpredicted Non-Misquotation

38. Billy: My friends made fun of my goose t-shirt today.

    Bess: Ignore them! As Polonius advised, you should always “to thine own self be true.”

In (38), the original addressee (Laertes), is not mentioned or made clear in either the matrix or quoted discourse context. Nonetheless, we do not interpret this quotation as asserting that Polonius advised Billy.

Accommodation

I posit that in some circumstances, the addressee accommodates the existence of an unknown addressee, adding this unnamed individual into the matrix discourse context.

This then allows the addressee to reconstruct a quotative context parameter with a defined addressee field.

Accommodation

39. $[[38]]^{C,g}$ =
    a. Matrix Context: C = <speaker: Bess, addressee: Billy, location: here, time: now>, g = {i : x} (By existential accommodation)
    b. Context Inference: C_q = <speaker: Polonius, addressee: x, location: undefined, time: undefined> ∧ g_q = g
    c. Presupposition: there is a X such that Polonius uttered *to thine own self be true* to refer to X.
    d. X = [[to thine own self be true]] by NSA
    e. At-issue: Polonius said X in context C_q, g_q.
        = Polonius said [[to thine own self be true]]Cq ,gq
        = Polonius said BE-TRUE(Cq[addressee], Cq[addressee])
        = Polonius said BE-TRUE(x, x)
    f. At-issue: Bess said P in context C,g.
        = Bess said [[to thine own self be true]]C,g
        = Bess said BE-TRUE(C[addressee], C[addressee])
        = Bess said BE-TRUE(Billy, Billy)

More Misquotation

More Misquotation

Although I have proposed incorrect context reconstruction as one kind of misquotation, there are other kinds as well:

40. NYT: Harris is seeking to significantly raise taxes on the wealthiest Americans and large corporations.

41. According to the NYT, Harris plans to “significantly raise taxes.”

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