Philippe De Brabanter
Empirical adequacy and semantic vs. pragmatic theories of quotation

Early discussions of quotation in philosophy (there were hardly any in linguistics) were stipulative (Tarski, Carnap, Quine): they fixed how quotations should be used and signalled, so as to clearly demarcate between object language and metalanguage. They were not attempts at exploring the empirical phenomenon of quotation (or everyday talk about language and discourse).

Over time, the empirical coverage of theories of quotation has gradually been extended, a development driven less by an urge to achieve empirical adequacy than by a desire to prove someone else's theory wrong (more often than not Quine's distinction between use and mention, and this shows that that theory *was* taken to make empirical claims). Thus, scholars began to pay attention to quotation of meaning (Garver 1965; Christensen 1967), simultaneous use and mention (Partee 1973, Davidson 1979; Searle 1983), scare quoting (Recanati 2000; Predelli 2003), 'noncitational' quotation (Abbott 2005).

Today's theories are freer from stipulations than they initially were. But not entirely free. That is due notably to the following facts:
- the choice of the range of phenomena that fall under the heading *quotation* is not usually based on empirical grounds. Thus, Cappelen & Lepore have always claimed that scare quoting fell outside the scope of a theory of quotation, while indirect speech reports were counted in.
- there is a clear written bias, reflected notably in the excessive importance accorded to quotation marks.

This second aspect will be my starting-point in this talk. In writing, direct and mixed speech reports almost exclusively reproduce *linguistic* features of the utterance they are a report of. This may be because many non-linguistic features of utterances can simply not be reproduced in writing. This, I believe, induces a bias such that philosophers are led to take quotation to be, in essence, a linguistic behaviour allowing one to refer to linguistic or discursive entities. Thus, what it would take for an utterance containing a direct or mixed speech report to be true is that it should reproduce (more or less) verbatim the words enclosed in quotation marks (a constitutive ingredient of quotation) and attribute them to the right agent. Full stop.

I believe a more pragmatic — some would say *looser* — approach is required if our theory of quotation is to be empirically viable. Such a theory exists. It was first sketched by Cornulier (1978), then fully worked out by Clark & Gerrig (1990) and Clark (1996), and later given a form more palatable to philosophers by Recanati (2001). What this theory does is treat quotation as essentially a *non-linguistic* phenomenon. Basically, quotation is just a variety of 'demonstration', a type of communicative acts that work by depicting their target(s). Thus, quotation belongs with my gestural imitation of a Rafael Nadal sliced backhand, or my vocal imitation of the song of the California Jay. This is empirically desirable because quotations of verbal material shade into quotations of pseudo-linguistic material, and then into quotations of human and animal and mechanical noises, and from there into quotation of gestures, with no principled cutoff point along this continuum. (Note that many semanticists-about-quotation accept that 'just about anything can be quoted'.)

Such a pragmatic theory has little trouble dealing with the non-verbal aspects of quoting, which are explicitly allowed for from the outset. Besides, when equipped with the additional tools of 'pragmatic enrichment' and 'context-shifts' of various types (as in Recanati 2001), it does a good job of what the semantic accounts are assumed to be good at, namely the determination of the truth-conditions of the utterance embedding the quotation. Actually, in terms of capturing the variability of the echoed speaker in mixed quotations of the strict Cappelen & Lepore-type (*Alice says that life "is difficult to understand"*) — the echoed speaker is not systematically the referent of the subject of the saying verb — it does a better job than several semantic accounts (Cappelen & Lepore, Benbaji, García-Carpintero).

Another thing it also does well, which usually goes unnoticed, is to account for so-called 'free direct speech' or 'free-standing quotation' (Clark & Gerrig 1990: 772). Many semantic accounts have little to say about these, precisely because they take the semantics of direct discourse to be predicated upon its being governed by a saying verb, but there's none here:

(1)   I sat on the grass staring at the passers-by. Everybody seemed in a hurry. **Why can't I have something to rush to ?** (Quirk et al. 1985: 1033)

Semantic theories may take refuge in the contention that the quotation in (1) has no truth-conditions. Actually the Clark/Recanati theory would concur. But the latter can account for this: here is a quotation that is not 'linguistically recruited'. It therefore only has "the meaning of the speaker's act of ostensive display. That meaning is pragmatic: it is the meaning of an act performed by the speaker, rather than the semantic content of an expression uttered by the speaker" (Recanati 2008). The semantic accounts, by contrast, are left with nothing to say about an utterance which they nevertheless assume to be linguistic in essence, an awkward situation.

A recent hardcore semantic attempt by Markus Werning (2011) may however improve the chances of semantic accounts to achieve empirical adequacy. Werning proposes a transparent theory of quotation that seeks to also explain the 'fancy cases' put forward by the pragmaticist-about-quotation. The basic principle, as I understand it, is that the truth-conditions always include a phonological description of the quoted string and that the meanings of phonological terms are computed by a compositional meaning function. In the

remainder of this paper, I try to asses how Werning's framework can handle examples where non-linguistic features of the quotation seem to matter.

In (2), a case of syntactically recruited direct speech report, the choice of block letters is meant to indicate that the inscription on the notice was itself in block letters. Given an appropriate context, this aspect may be part of the truth-conditions of (2):

(2)   The notice is headed 'ONE DAY STRIKE—WED. JANUARY 15TH.' (Clark & Gerrig 1990)

Though letter shape is not part of the phonological (here, rather, orthographic) representation, I assume that a resourceful compositionalist could add an extra feature for the shape of characters (and presumably some others for size and colour, for instance). Thus the truth-conditions of (2) might look something like:

$[[(2)]]$ = The notice [announces]$_e$ [a one-day strike on Wednesday, January 15th]$_r$, where in that$_e$ that$_r$ is referred to by O-N-E-_-D-A-Y-_-S-T-R-I-K-E-—-W-E-D-.-_-J-A-N-U-A-R-Y-_-1-5-T-H [+ some additional notation accounting for the choice of block letters]

The *that* with an *e* subscript refers to the speech event, the next *that* refers the propositional content of the speech event. In (3), the deviant spelling is supposed to capture the reported speaker's accent:

(3)   Alice does indeed speak with a French accent. Just the other day she said that life "eez deefeecult to ernderstend." (Reimer 2005: 172)

As Reimer suggests, one might disagree with the report in (3) just on the grounds that Alice didn't speak with a French accent. This means that accent in this case is part of the truth-conditions. Once again, provided the phonological representation is replaced with a phonetic one, the compositional theory could presumably deal with this.

But perhaps the compositional theory works so far just because the non-verbal features are features that directly affect linguistic units (graphemes of phonemes). What happens if we interpret the following example (Reimer 2005: 181) as a spoken utterance, the larger letters being a mere means of representing high volume?

(4)   She said that life is difficult to understand. (Reimer 2005: 181)

Here, I don't see which extra notation could transparently account for the truth-conditional relevance of loudness. If you further think of (spoken) quotations that contain truth-conditionally relevant gesturing or facial expressions, it seems to me that the compositional account will not be able to represent those aspects. And yet, since — as I claim — those aspects can be part of the truth-conditions, one would wish that it did.

In conclusion, I have no beef with a compositional approach to quotation, and certainly Markus Werning's theory can do things that other semantic accounts cannot. However, I believe that even this theory can only hope to achieve an account of the *linguistic* (plus some paralinguistic) aspects of quotation. Therefore, it still falls short of achieving what the Clark/Recanati theory does, namely, empirical adequacy.

References

Abbott, B. 2005. Some notes on quotation. *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* 17.13-26.

Benbaji, Y. 2005. Who needs semantics of quotation marks?. B*elgian Journal of Linguistics* 17.27-49

Cappelen, H. and Lepore, E. 2005. Varieties of quotation revisited. *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* 17 : 51-76.

Christensen, N. E. 1967. The alleged distinction between Use and Mention. *Philosophical Review* 76.358-67

Clark, H. 1996. *Using Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Clark, H., and R. J. Gerrig. 1990. Quotations as demonstrations. *Language* 66.764-805.

Cornulier, B. de 1978. L'incise, la classe des verbes parenthétiques, et le signe mimique. *Cahiers de Linguistique* 8: 53-95.

Davidson, D. 1979. Quotation. *Theory and Decision* 11.27-40.

García-Carpintero, M. 2005. Double-duty quotation : The deferred ostension account. *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* 17 : 89-108.

Garver, N. 1965. Varieties of use and mention. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 26.230-38.

Partee, B. 1973. The syntax and semantics of quotation. *A festschrift for Morris Halle,* ed. by S. R. Anderson and P. Kiparsky. New York, etc.: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc, 409-18.

Predelli, S. 2003. Scare quotes and their relation to other semantic issues. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 26.1-28.

Recanati, F. 2000. *Oratio obliqua, oratio recta: an essay on metarepresentatio*n. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Recanati, F. 2001. Open quotation. *Mind* 110.637-87.

Recanati, F. 2008. Open quotation revisited. *Philosophical Perspectives* 22.443–471.

Reimer, M. 2005. Too counter-intuitive to believe? Pragmatic accounts of mixed quotation. *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* 17.167-86.

Searle, J. R. 1983. *Intentionality. An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press.

Werning, M. 2011. Making quotation transparent. PowerPoint presentation, SPE meeting at Bochum University.