Notes on the Syntax of Quotation

Mark de Vries
University of Groningen

Quotation has received ample attention in philosophy of language, and to some extent in the related semantic and pragmatic literature, but less so in syntax. In this talk, I will review various aspects of quotation that seem to be syntactically relevant, and discuss where this might take us. There are three general issues:

- How can something be introduced into the grammatical system as a (direct) quotation in the first place?
- In which syntactic contexts can dependent quotations be embedded and what is their syntactic status?
- Reversely, where and how can a parenthetical reporting clause be added to an independent quotation, and what is its internal syntax?

1. When compared to indirect speech, it is immediately clear that quotation enhances the possibilities of the grammar. A quote can be used as a constituent in a matrix clause. What is quoted might be a verbatim report of a previous linguistic utterance, but it need not be. In many cases, it is not even composed of regular parts of the lexicon of the language at hand. This constitutes a challenge to the common assumption that the grammar generates a potentially unbounded number of sentences based on a finite resource. Rather than doing away with generative grammar altogether for such reasons (P. Postal 2004, *Skeptical Linguistic Essays*, OUP, 173-203), we can try to find out where and how the system may be adapted in order to provide the means for what we might call 'creative lexicalization'. I will relate this to a more general discussion of opacity effects, including idioms, binding, and syntactic islands. I argue that a recursive system of cycles/phases and derivation layering is essential.

2. Quotations can be embedded, but they can also be used independently or as parentheses. When they are embedded, they may surface in various syntacic positions, as full arguments or as modifiers. It seems that quotations behave as either nouns or noun phrases, which can at least partly be understood in a bare phrase structure.

3. There is some work on the internal syntax of reporting clauses and on quotative inversion (see also the lecture by Gärtner & Gyuris). Since we find similar behavior in certain comment clauses, a basically construction-specific solution is unlikely. Nevertheless, there are interesting things to be noticed. First, certain (less frequent) verbs can be creatively used as parenthetical but not embedding reporting verbs, which requires a manner interpretation rather than a simple anaphoric reading of the quotative operator. Second, reporting clauses can be inserted linearly inside the quote. How can this be if a quote is opaque? Third, in such cases the anaphoric link is to the material surrounding the anaphoric operator. Time permitting, I will discuss more instances of 'circumreference', which appears to be allowed only in parenthetical contexts.