Quotation as marked referential imitation: A compositional analysis of an allegedly opaque phenomenon

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According to the received view, quotations are regarded as paradigmatically opaque contexts. Most theories of quotation focus on the opaque features of quotation and try to explain them. The non-compositionality of quotation is often assumed quasi as an axiom for any analysis of quotation. However, many cases of quotation have transparent features as well. Moreover, opacity is a semantic anomaly and ought to discomfort any semanticist. Contrary to the received view, I will argue that the appearance of opacity results from neglecting the fact that quotation is a means of reference to surface expressions by – what I call – marked referential phonological or more generally subsymbolic imitation. I will show that it is possible to give a radically transparent semantics of quotation that is formally explicit, allows for the proof of compositionality and explains virtually all of the data, i.e. (i) the allegedly opaque aspects of quotation, (ii) the transparent aspects of quotation, (iii) the relevance of phonology to quotation, and (iv) many other interesting phenomena.