S-selection and presupposition in quotational complementation

Jan Wiślicki
University of Warsaw, j.wislicki@uw.edu.pl

1 Introduction. I discuss direct quotation, disproportionately less described than complementation in indirect reports. First, I show how the data support the approach of Wurmbrand & Lohninger (2019) where the categorization of complements involves a hierarchy and should be defined in terms of semantic properties. Second, I provide arguments for extending this approach by the presuppositional dimension. Third, I propose a formal account based on dependent types as developed by Cooper (2005) *et seq.*

2 Data. Though dual to indirect complements within reported speech, direct quotation complements are not subject to the same mechanisms. First, they are insensitive to the tense-mood-aspect and phasal properties, allowing complements smaller than any phase, e.g. a single word. Second, at least for some root verbs, they have the unique property of allowing any material, including gibberish as in (1):

(1)   Peter said 'gwlch'.

Still, direct quotation complements are not insensitive to formal relations. Consider, first, negation:

(2)   a. Peter didn't say/claim 'Alfred is not smart'.

   b. Peter didn't agree 'Alfred is not smart'

Without prosodic markers, (2a) means that Peter did not utter the expression *Alfred is not smart*. By contrast, (2b) means that Peter expressed his disagreement by uttering the expression *Alfred is not smart*. The former effect is typical for complementation, the latter for adjunction (Griffiths 2015).

Second, such complements are not atomic nouns (Potts 2007) blind for formal properties of root verbs. While *say* as in (1) is not a sensitive tester, interesting effects arise for more demanding verbs, e.g. *ask*. Contrary to indirect reports, those involving direct quotation do not require overt *wh*s:

(3)   Peter asked *(whether) you were coming.

(4)   Peter asked 'You are coming↑?'   [↑ stands for rising intonation]

Assuming the traditional approach (Chomsky 2015), where *ask* selects the INTERROGATIVE feature appearing on *wh*s, (4) might suggest that for quotational complements this mechanism is blocked. This goes in hand with the fact shown in (1); if such complements can be formed from gibberish, no selection of formal features by the root verb can be an option. But the problem is more complex. First, note that (4) becomes problematic if the intonation marking question is missing:

(5)   ?/*Peter asked 'You are coming'.

The problem is that though (5) is clearly odd, the source of this effect is not clear. As shown in (4), it does not lie in the selection of the INTERROGATIVE feature. This might suggest that the problem with (5) follows from the S-selection failure requiring the complement to pick out a question. Still, as mentioned above, direct quotation allows any material, including gibberish; thus the standard selection is not an option. An important hint comes from the *hey-wait-a-minute* test, applied for the first time to quotation by Maier (2014). To see this, assume a dialogue between two English speakers studying Japanese:

(6)   A: Tanaka asked 'Suzuki-ga kita'.

   B: Hey, wait a minute, I didn't know that's a question. I thought it's a declarative.

The phrase quoted by A is indeed a declarative. However, as shown by the *hey-wait-a-minute* test, direct quotation, rather than ungrammaticality as such, gives rise to presupposition failure. This suggests that instead of undergoing standard S-selection by root verbs, the relevant properties of quotational complements are presupposed. Thus the complement in (2b) is presupposed to represent what can be felicitously used to express disagreement. In the same vein, *ask* in (4)–(6) presupposes that the complement represents a question, hence the presupposition failure effect in (6). This line of reasoning is supported by the fact that the acceptability of the verb-quotation relation is gradable:

(7)   Peter didn't agree ?'green'/??'from'/#'the'.

A context where a single adjective expresses disagreement is conceivable. The same is harder for a preposition and hardly possible for an article. While neither C- nor S-selection are standardly taken as gradable notions, this approach is natural for judgements concerning the presupposition satisfaction.

Interestingly, the effects discussed so far do not arise for all root verbs. To see this, consider (8):

(8)   Peter began/finished/avoids 'I promise you'.

Contrary to examples (1)–(6), neither of the verbs in (8) involves a relation with the content or formal properties of the quoted phrase. Instead, in each case the complement is treated as a bare string of letters, meaning that Peter began/finished/avoids writing, uttering,... the string *I promise you*. This patterns with the long-observed effect of such verbs requiring nominalised or even lexicalised complements.

So, the above data show three important facts. (**i**) depending on the root verb, quotation shows the effect of complements or adjuncts. (**ii**) relations between root verbs and quotation involve selection of

presupposed formal properties, rather than standard C-/S-selection. (**iii**) for some root verbs, quotation must be interpreted as a bare string of symbols, regardless of the content they represent.

3 Analysis. The effects observed above are closely related to the classification of root verbs into three categories, proposed by Wurmbrand & Lohninger (2019). These are attitude (*announce, claim, say, forget*), irrealis (*agree, decide, desire, want*) and tenseless (*avoid, begin, finish, try*) verbs. A quick look at the data shows the following tendency. Most of attitude verbs allow quotations, taking them as complements, as in (1)–(2a). Irrealis verbs allow quotational phrases less often and combine with them via adjunction, as in (2b), (7). Finally, only some tenseless verbs allow quotations and always treat them as bare strings of symbols as in (8), without entering formal relations with the content they carry.

The effect discussed in the context of (1) makes this tendency hardly accountable for in terms of morphosyntactic dependencies. However, the data support another proposal made by Wurmbrand & Lohninger (2019), i.e. that the relevant effects align with syntactic structures, but can be properly defined in terms of semantic dependencies. If, as discussed in the context of (3)–(7), root verbs select presupposed properties, rather than C-selection they seem to involve a more fine-grained version of S-selection. In order to capture this, I make use of the TTR framework (Cooper 2005), adequate for the present considerations for at least two reasons. First, rather than assuming simple semantic terms, e.g. $\lambda x_e.dog(x)$, it provides sets of fields representing various pieces of information. Second, rather than assuming simple typing, e.g. $\langle e, t \rangle$, it provides dependent types regulated by functions.

First, I let root verbs select the relevant type of argument, e.g. QUEST by *ask*, as in (4)–(6), or PROP by *agree*, as in (2b), (7). While this idea was implemented by Ginzburg & Cooper (2014), I extend it in harmony with the above findings, letting selection involve presupposition, not just straightforward types. Thus assuming the content argument arg_1 (Kratzer 2006), (4) has a simplified representation as in (9):

$$(9) \quad [\![(4)]\!] : \begin{bmatrix} arg_1 = You\_are\_coming \uparrow & : presup(\text{QUEST}) \\ arg_2 = Peter & : e \\ sem = ask(Peter, You\_are\_coming \uparrow) & : t \end{bmatrix}$$

This captures the puzzling data from selection. As a result of less strict and apparent morphosyntactic dependencies, verbs S-select presupposed properties, rather than involving standard selection. In this sense weaker morphosyntactic selection is rendered by correspondingly weaker and more fine-grained semantic selection. Accordingly, despite the lack of overt *wh*, (4) is fine because the relevant presupposition encoded as a type is satisfied thanks to the raising intonation. (5) and (6) involve presupposition failure, hence the *hey-wai-a-minute* test effect in (6). Still, they are not ungrammatical *simpliciter*. Finally, composing the quoted complement with the rest of CP explains the effect in (2a), where the predicate with all the arguments is within the scope of negation. Contrary to this, I let the character of adjuncts be captured by the fact that they are added to the record as arguments not appearing in the argument structure of root verbs. They enter another relation with the subject formalized as a dependent type, but they are not within the scope of negation; hence the effect in (2b) and the representation in (10):

$$(10) \quad [\![(2b)]\!] : \begin{bmatrix} arg_1 = Alfred\_is\_not\_smart & : presup(\text{PROP}) \\ arg_2 = Peter & : e \\ rel = r & : utter(Peter, Alfred\_is\_not\_smart) \\ sem = \neg agree(Peter) & : t \end{bmatrix}$$

The expected effect is that the type $presup(\text{PROP})$ captures the special character of S-selection involving presupposition, while the separate field within the record keeps quotation outside the scope of negation. Assuming this general mechanism, accounting for the third category illustrated in (8) becomes easy. Such verbs, rather than properties following from the content carried by quoted expressions, select bare strings of letters, i.e. the type-theoretically simple nominal $arg_1 = I\_promise\_you$ of type STRING.

4 Summary. The contribution of this paper is three-fold. **First**, it shows that direct quotation complements pose a challenge for formal approaches to clausal complementation. While they are not subject to standard morphosyntactic dependencies, their seeming lack requires higher complexity at different levels of computation. **Second**, they are subject to the general classification proposed by Wurmbrand & Lohninger (2019) in that (i) their formal properties retain systematicity revealed by the hierarchy of three categories of root verbs, i.e. attitude, irrealis and tenseless; (ii) this hierarchy should be formalized in terms of semantic dependencies. **Third**, these effects require a fine-grained semantic account where (i) S-selection and not at-issue parts of content are formally related by means of functions regulating the predicate-argument structure; (ii) this effect emerges as a result of less apparent morphosyntactic dependencies that do not involve standard selection, but are not blacked-out in the course of derivation either; (iii) the relevant pieces of information are encoded separately from each other. Such an account can be formulated in the TTR framework proposed by Cooper (2005).

References

Chomsky, N. 2015. Problems of projection: extensions. In, *Structures, Strategies and Beyond: Studies in honour of Adriana Belletti.*

Cooper, R. 2005. Records and record types in semantic theory. *Journal of Logic and Computation.*

Ginzburg, J. & R. Cooper. 2014. Quotation via dialogical interaction. *Journal of Logic, Language and Information.*

Griffiths, J. 2015. Speaker and quote reduced parenthetical clauses. In, *Parenthetical Verbs.*

Kratzer, A. 2006. Decomposing Attitude Verbs (2006). *Handout, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.*

Maier, E. 2014. Mixed quotation: The grammar of apparently transparent opacity. *Semantics and Pragmatics.*

Potts, C. 2007. The dimensions of quotation. In, *Direct compositionality.*

Wurmbrand, S. & M. Lohninger. 2019. An implicational universal in complementation—Theoretical insights and empirical progress. In, *Propositional Arguments in Cross-Linguistic Research: Theoretical and Empirical Issues.*