

Anaphoric Relations and Quoting Out of Context

Carolyn Jane Anderson
Wellesley College

There is a substantial body of work on the semantics of quotation, yet relatively little attention has been paid to misquotation: quotations that are deemed misleading or false. This paper focuses on quotations that consist of verbatim speech by the quotee, yet are nonetheless judged to be misleading. I propose first, that all quoted context-sensitive expressions are resolved anaphorically; and second, that misquotation arises when the matrix discourse context diverges from the original context in a way that misleads addressees in this anaphora resolution process.

The Semantics of Mixed Quotation There is a large body of work on the semantics of quotation. Since I am interested in the boundary between quoted and ordinary speech, I focus on *mixed quotation* (Davidson 1979), and work with Maier 2015's analysis, in which quotes have both a use and mention component (Geurts and Maier 2005; Potts 2007). In this analysis, the quotation in 1 makes two meaning contributions: the assertion that Ann used the literal words "not mah cup o' tea" to refer to a property, and the assertion that she meant that property to apply to the music.

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

2. Ann used 'not mah cup o' tea' to refer to property $P \wedge$ Ann said that this music was P .

Formally, the use component is a property variable that ranges over semantic objects of the type corresponding to the syntactic category of the quoted material. The quotation operator takes a string and returns an expression referring to that string, represented with the corner brackets ' '.

How Addressees Understand Quotations Although Maier 2015's approach to quotation provides flexibility over semantic types, it poses an interpretation challenge for addressees: how do they infer the intended property? Although quoters typically have access to the original context (by physical witness or through recording), addressees rarely do. To judge the truth conditions of a quotation, the addressee must infer the property in the face of uncertainty about the original speech context. This challenge becomes apparent when we consider quotations that contain context-sensitive expressions, such as 3 below, which in Maier 2015's analysis, makes the meaning contribution shown in 4.

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

Alex: Speaking of Marrakech, Yves Saint Laurent said "This city taught me color."

4. YSL used 'this city taught me color' to refer to property $P \wedge$ YSL said P .

To infer the property, the addressee must resolve two context-sensitive expressions: *me* and *this city*. How is this done, when the addressee lacks direct access to the original context of the utterance?

Quoted Expressions are Resolved Anaphorically The quote in 3 contains two context-sensitive expressions: an indexical, which refers to the context parameter, and an anaphoric expression, which refers to the discourse context. In ordinary speech, these are two distinct grammatical mechanisms. However, I propose that in quotation, both classes are resolved *anaphorically*.

I draw on Eckardt 2014's treatment of Free Indirect Discourse, which uses an embedded context parameter in addition to the matrix context parameter. She posits that underspecified fields in the embedded context parameter are resolved anaphorically to referents in the matrix context parameter. Similarly, I propose that addressees resolve all quoted context-sensitive expressions by anaphoric reference to the matrix discourse context.

To see how this works, consider the context-sensitive expressions in 3. The indexical *me* picks out the speaker field of a context parameter. The addressee cannot directly access the original utterance context; however, since the original speaker is named by the quoter, they are available as a referent

in the discourse context, allowing the addressee to resolve the indexical via anaphoric reference. Similarly, they can resolve *this city* by anaphoric reference, not to the original discourse context, but to the matrix discourse context, since the quoter has named Marrakech as the topic of the quotation. The addressee therefore can derive the update to the matrix discourse context shown in 5.

5. (a) Assertion: YSL used ‘this city taught me color’ to refer to the property Marrakech taught YSL color.
- (b) Assertion: YSL said that Marrakech taught YSL color.

It is tempting to propose that addressees reconstruct the context of utterance, allowing indexicals to be resolved indexically. A key piece of evidence in favor of anaphoric resolution comes from what I call *dual-target* quotations: mixed quotations that change the referent of their embedded indexicals.

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

Alex: I’ve loved my time in Mumbai! As Yves Saint Laurent said about his time in Morocco, “this city taught me color.”

In this kind of quotation, the quoter intentionally shifts the referent of *this city* from Marrakech to Mumbai, and of *me* from the quotee to themselves. The meaning contribution of 6 is more complex than 5, since it must account both for the original intent of the quote and its adaptation.

7. (a) Assertion: YSL used ‘this city taught me color’ to refer to the property Marrakech taught YSL color.
- (b) Assertion: YSL said that Marrakech taught YSL color.
- (c) Assertion: Alex used ‘this city taught me color’ to refer to the property Mumbai taught Alex color.
- (d) Assertion: Alex said that Mumbai taught Alex color.

If indexicals were resolved indexically to a reconstructed context parameter, their referents could not be shifted like this. However, if they are resolved by anaphoric reference to the matrix discourse context, which may or may not contain elements of the original context of utterance, then we can explain both the shifted and unshifted indexical referents.

Misquotation as Incorrect Reconstruction Having argued in favor of an anaphoric treatment of all context-sensitive content in quotations, I propose that *misquotation* arises when the discourse context makes the wrong referents prominent, leading the addressee to resolve context-sensitive expressions in a way that changes the property intended by the quotee. For instance, if the YSL quote is spoken as shown in 8, the only available referent for *this city* is the current utterance location, Mumbai, leading the addressee to infer a property that the quotee did not originally intend (9).

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

Alex: Yves Saint Laurent said “This city taught me color.”

9. (a) Assertion: YSL used ‘this city taught me color’ to refer to the property Mumbai taught YSL color.
- (b) Assertion: YSL said that Mumbai taught YSL color.

Thus, to quote felicitously, the discourse context must be updated so that all context-sensitive expressions can be resolved anaphorically to the referents intended by the original speaker. Misquotation is thus the result of anaphoric reference going awry: to take a quote “out of context” is to place it in a discourse context that leads to an unintended resolution of its context-sensitive content.

[1] D. Davidson. *Theory and Decision* (1979). [2] R. Eckardt. *The Semantics of Free Indirect Discourse*. 2014. [3] B. Geurts and E. Maier. *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* (2005). [4] E. Maier. *Mind and Language* (2015). [5] C. Potts. *Direct Compositionality*. 2007.