

Quotes and phrases

Atoms with a structure. Quotations and phrasemes share the property that a complex linguistic expression is processed as if it were an atomic unit. In the case of phrasemes, the whole phraseme is stored in the lexicon, forming a single entry with a non-compositionally assigned meaning. In the case of (direct) quotations, the quotation is in many respects treated as an anonymous noise string representing somebody's utterance, unfiltered by linguistic analysis so that e. g. errors remain uncorrected, characteristic speech properties (like accent) are carried over, etc.

Still, both phrasemes and quotations are accessible to linguistic analysis (by both speaker and hearer), given that (in the usual case) they do constitute linguistic expressions. The compositional meaning and syntactic structure of a phraseme (especially an idiomatic one) can be exploited when adjusting to the current situation (1), and the contents of a direct quotation (especially in the case of so-called *mixed quotation*) may be accessed on various levels (syntactic (2-a), semantic (2-b), discourse (2-c)).

- (1)
 - a. *hit the road* ~ leave
 - b. One day the unsuccessful marksman finally hit, if only the road.
- (2)
 - a. [*Which house*]₁ did they tell you to “search *t*₁ without warrant”? (Extraction)
 - b. [*xx % of the participants*]₁ assented to the statement that they₁ would “expend whatever time and money needed to secure *my*₁ family's welfare”. (Binding)
 - c. “I saw *Mary* yesterday”, John told me and went on to confess he was in love with *her*. (Anaphora)

Implications for processing. The double nature of phrasemes and quotations suggests that speakers and hearers may entertain multiple possible analyses (“atomic” versus “compositional”) of a given input *in parallel*. What is more, cross-referencing between the different layers seems not only possible, but widespread.

Formal analysis. A technical treatment of these observations will have to account for multiple analyses of a given expression being simultaneously available to its context. Both the lexical and the compositional meaning of a phraseme must be present in the logical form of the sentence containing it. Analogously, a (direct) quotation introduces (at least) two semantic objects: one representing the original utterance as a whole (with all its errors and other peculiarities), and another representing the meaning that can be assigned to it on a compositional basis. For cases where no particular features of the utterance itself (other than its being an utterance) are relevant, it is tempting to conflate the two semantic objects back into one, consisting in the compositional meaning enclosed in quotation marks. One of the functions of the quotation marks then is to provide a context abstractor to account for indexical shift in cases like (3) and (4) (the latter being a simplified version of (2-b)). (It will be part of the semantics of *say'* that its object is applied to a context where its subject is the speaker.)

- (3)
 - a. John said “I saw Mary”.
 - b. $\lambda c_0 \lambda w_0 \text{say}'(w_0)(\ulcorner \lambda c_1 \lambda w_1 \text{see}'(w_1)(m)(\text{SPEAKER}(c_1)) \urcorner)(j)$
- (4)
 - a. Everyone will “protect my family”.
 - b. $\lambda c_0 \lambda w_0 \forall x \exists c_1 (\text{SPEAKER}(c_1) = x \wedge \ulcorner \lambda c_2 \lambda w_2 \text{protect}'(w_2)(\text{family}'(w_2)(\text{SPEAKER}(c_2))) \urcorner)(x) \urcorner (c_1)(w_0)$