

Quote–unquote in one variety of German: Two interactional functions of pivot constructions used as frames for quotation in Siebenbürger Sächsisch

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Abstract

This conversation analytic study investigates pivot constructions used as frames for quotation in German. Specifically, it describes the use of a systematic lexical final boundary for reported speech (an ‘unquote’). German has various resources to mark boundaries of quotes but is said to lack overt grammaticalized ways of ‘unquoting’ (e.g., enclitics, final particles). The present study documents a lexico-syntactic unquote and outlines two distinct interactional functions. It focuses on the use of syntactic pivots in Siebenbürger Sächsisch, a settlement variety of German that developed in Romania.

In Siebenbürger Sächsisch, mirror-image frames delimit short, direct self- or other-quotes. A (past) form of *sän* (‘to say’) is used in the frame. Most occur in storytelling sequences. Two functions of the quote–unquote construction are identified: (1) marking or projecting the upcoming story climax by framing the first unit of the climax and (2) dealing with problems in uptake in different action environments by recompleting a turn. These two functions correspond to two distinct constructional patterns of the pivot: interactionally embedded (for marking story peaks) vs. interactionally exposed (for response pursuit).

These findings further our understanding of the structuring of storytelling, the negotiation of problems in reciprocity, and the importance of prosody for action formation.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Marking the boundaries of reported speech

Spoken German has various resources to mark the boundaries of reported speech: Existing research on reported discourse (Golato, 2000, 2002a,b; Günthner, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2007; Streeck, 2002) shows that speakers may introduce quoted material with the quotative *und ich so/und er so* in enactments that are part of storytellings (Golato, 2000; Streeck, 2002; cf. English *and I’m like/and he’s like*, Tagliamonte and D’Arcy, 2004). For reporting on past decisions and in troubles telling, Golato (2002a,b) further finds that speakers typically use the verb *sagen*/‘say’ in the German conversational past tense as a verb of saying (or laminator verb)¹ to introduce a quote, followed by the quoted material in direct discourse.

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¹ Different terms are used in the literature on reported speech for such ‘verbs of saying.’ They include ‘quotative’ (Blyth et al., 1990) and ‘laminator verb’ (Goffman, 1974). In the remainder of this paper, I will use the term ‘quotative’ for the initial boundary of a quote in my data and unquote for final boundaries. These terms reflect more clearly the interactional linguistic view taken in this study that talk and ‘voices’ emerge sequentially and incrementally in interaction.

Consider excerpt 1 as an illustration for the use of verbs of saying in one variety of German, Siebenbürger Sächsisch. Maia recounts an encounter with a gypsy woman on her way home from work. The woman offered her some grapes to eat (not shown). Maia introduces her reported rejection of the offer (line 3) with the present perfect form of *sân* ('to say' in Siebenbürger Sächsisch). She then delivers the woman's response, an emphatic rejection of Maia's account (line 4) and a second offer (line 5). The attribution of the quoted material is again made with a past tense form of *sân* (line 4).

(1) *weimern*/'grapes' [O 04-B 286]², verbs of saying highlighted

- 1 Thea: no *se*[tjst et dä.]
 well w[hat do you know!]
 []
 2 Maia: [.hhhh]da Höt ne- n- te **hun ich gesät**
 [.hhhh]she HAd no- n- then I said
 3 #<HI:R HA:R FRA;> ech hun esiefelt weimern >derhim;<#=
 listen here woman I have so many grapes at home
 4 =#NIMIKASCH;# **hot se gesät.**
 nonsense!((Romanian)) she said
 5 #tau miest haier zwe ketscher ni↓a.#
 you must take two (grape) berries from here
 6 (0.1)
 7 Maia: .hh #da sien derhi:m, diet sien niet denj.#(h)[hhh
 .hh those are at home these are not yours (h)[hhh
 8 Thea: [ha haha

In close succession, two verbs of saying are used in this excerpt: the first is pre-positioned and projects a quote from Maia. The second is post-positioned and orients to the quoted response by the woman, demarcating the first unit of the woman's response from the rest of the quote. German has been described as lacking overt grammaticalized ways of marking the ends of quotes (Golato, 2002a), because its speakers do not use a specific, dedicated lexical or morphological marker such as a particle or enclitic for this purpose. Instead, supra-segmental features are typically used. In example 1, unit ends and thus the ends of both quotes (lines 3 and 4) are recognizable through features of prosody (unit-final intonation and pitch changes that indicate voice shifts³). Other systematic strategies for marking final boundaries of quotes or parts of quotes in German include code-switching (also illustrated in example 1, line 4) and switching back to one's normal voice (Günthner, 2002; Golato, 2000), laughing (Golato, 2000), pausing, in combination with non-verbal behavior (Golato, 2000), lexical relativizing/distancing markers, e.g. *oder so (ähnlich)* 'or so' (Günthner, 1997, 2002; Golato, 2000), and uttering a response solicitation marker, for example the turn-exit device *ne?/right?* (Jefferson, 1980; Golato, 2000).

All of these strategies are recognizable as 'unquotes' only through their turn and sequential placement; they are not dedicated unquotes. Typologically, then, we can classify German as lacking overt grammaticalized ways of unquoting. This is similar in English, where gaze in reenactments (that is, the return of gaze to the primary recipient, Sidnell, 2006), prosodic changes (e.g. loudness, speech rate) in the vicinity of boundaries (Klewitz and Couper-Kuhlen, 1999) or laughing (Jefferson, 1984, 1985) can serve to mark final boundaries. Dedicated lexical or morphological quotative markers do exist in other languages. Those that have been documented include enclitics or particles in the Caucasian languages Karvelian and Abkhaz (Hewitt and Crisp, 1986) and the verb *ruma* ('to say') added to the ends of quotes in Nepali and Chamling of Nepal (Ebert, 1986).

1.2. Pivot constructions as frames for quotation: an initial sketch of the practice

Verbs of saying that identify the quoted person *can* appear at the ends of quotes or parts of quotes in German (see excerpt 1, line 4; excerpt 2, line 2) and thus serve as unquotes. In this paper, I take a closer look at such unquotes, but I will focus only on those that are used when there has already been an introductory quotative (as in example 2, line 1). That is, I will focus on practices in which the use of an unquote can arguably be separated from the task of attributing the just quoted material to a source. Examples 2 (line 2) and 3 (line 2) provide instances of the practice.

² Transcription conventions can be found in Appendices A and B. Note that '#' frames quoted speech.

³ That is, pitch changes that index a shift between two different quoted persons or pitch changes that mark a shift from enacting a quoted person's voice to speaking in one's normal voice again.

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