

A Multimodal Perspective on Cognitive Semantics: Integrating the Verbal, Vocal, and Gestural -- A Look at Quot(ativ)es

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This paper outlines the incipient stage and the perspective of a larger-scale research project on the multimodal(ity) dimension of quotatives, i.e., introducers to quotations, so far constrained to the context of interactive communicative settings. Selected for examination, four verbal variants, *say*, *quote*, *be like*, and *quote unquote*, as well as the manual-visual air-quotes may be said to instantiate Talmy's (e.g., 2000) conceptual alternativity, conceivable as the quotatives' Attentional Profiles (see M. Lampert 2009).

Conceptually rooted in Len Talmy's (2007, forthcoming) powerful model of *The Attention System in Language*, the study advances the view that attention, as a fundamental cognitive principle, proves a major, if not the determinant, factor in selecting one quotative over its competitor-alternative(s), whose differential is defined as selective attention to a modality-specific concomitant of the original speech event.

Proceeding from Talmy's own comparative analysis of *say*, *be like*, and *quote*, I will present findings from two initial studies, expanding the scope of both items and modes scrutinized (M. Lampert 2012, in press, forthcoming; M. Lampert & Gläser in press) to integrate *quote (unquote)* and their cross-modality counterpart, the air-quotes. On closer inspection, the competitors' (alleged) semantic and usage particulars appear to essentially follow from attentional effects captured by two specialized factors from Talmy's Linguistic Attention: As long as the quote is 'running,' quotatives act as triggers to instruct addressees to discriminately target and reallocate their attention to concomitant non-verbal attributes of the quote inherent in the original communicative interaction, typically conveying quoters' attitudinal stances toward the quote(e), (re-)enacted through characteristic vocal and gestural styles of delivery indicative of the reported speech event. Under such cognitive semantics perspective, the quotatives reveal a systematic, and in fact discriminating, pattern of responsiveness to language modalities, conveyed via both the vocal and the visual channels in the face-to-face context: Typically, quotatives will 'induce' a characteristic (?) vocal overlay on the subsequent quote, varying, however, it seems, along a continuum of perceptual distinctness, with *say* representing its low end, agnostic of a(ny) modality and, accordingly, unlikely to invite expressive gesturing; *be like*, in contrast, represents the marked pole, criterially directing attention to mimetic re-enactment and expressive prosody, while *quote (unquote)* and the air-quotes, recruiting another prosodic format, highlight the quote's exact formal representation suggestive of writing.

To support my argument, I will offer a brief multimodal documentation of the 'quoters' Serena Williams (*be like*), Barack Obama (*quote, quote unquote*), and John McCain (air-quotes). A fairly in-depth multimodal case study on quotative *like*'s prosodic and gestural dimensions along the rationale of the proposed attention-differential approach (using the acoustic tool Praat and McNeill's reference system for gestures), reveals some clues about an intriguing pattern of in- and interdependence between the three constitutive dimensions of any event of (reported) speaking, which in fact give rise to a distinctive scheme of interaction: a non-random relation between the vocal mode and beat gestures, concurring with higher pitch and/or dramatic fall, and between the verbal mode and iconic gestures.

Though yet tentative and provisional, the initial findings seem to sensibly support the idea of an attentional profile as a valid theoretical and explanatory construct: Quotatives differentially highlight multimodal concomitants of the quote available to interactive communicative settings, and they accommodate constraints as well as options of the linguistic modality's verbal, vocal, and visual production and reception circumstances, variably responding to contextual factors; in effect, quotatives indicate their own characteristic 'situatedness' as modality-sensitive conceptual alternatives, accounting for speakers' selectional preferences and invoking definitional attributes of their 'home' modality motivated by the principle of iconicity.