

# INDIRECT REPORTS, SLURS, AND THE POLYPHONIC SPEAKER

Alessandro Capone

**Abstract:** In this paper I address several problems raised by Wayne Davis (p.c.) to my treatment of slurring in indirect reports. Although the paper presents several general considerations on slurs, it is mainly a contribution on indirect reports and the social practice in which they are embedded. The author embraces a Wittgensteinian approach concerning the social praxis of indirect reports and claims that, due to pragmatic principles or conventions of language use, the reported speaker is, in general, responsible for the slurring (in indirect reports), while the reporter is usually complicit, because he could have chosen to sum up the report using a more neutral term. It follows from Searle's Principle of Expressibility that one can report a slurring utterance with the intention of criticizing it – in which case it is important to attribute the slur to the reported speaker. Various revisions of a principle for indirect reporting are offered, in the light of criticism by Wayne Davis.

**Keywords:** pragmatics, explicatures, indirect reports, language games, slurring, Wayne Davis's ideas on meaning.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Pragmatics goes beyond sentential semantics and may even intrude into it, if we follow the current trends on the semantics/pragmatics debate. In many cases I have demonstrated the importance of pragmatic intrusion, in connection with belief reports, indirect reports, attributive/referential uses of NPs, knowing that vs. knowing how, «de se», Immunity to Error through misidentification, quotation, etc., although I have been somehow reluctant to accept some of the standard examples of pragmatic intrusion found in the literature. Of course, even the use of the term «pragmatic intrusion» (due to Levinson 2000), may be problematic and controversial. A referee once noted that pragmatics is part of truth-conditional pragmatics, while the term «intrusion» may be misleading and may indicate that one takes pragmatics to be of secondary importance. Anyway, theorists may distinguish between linguistic semantics, which may only provide skeletal information to

be integrated with pragmatic information (at a later stage) and truth-conditional pragmatics (an admission that semantics without pragmatics cannot be truth-conditional).

I quite agree that pragmatics plays an important role in integrating semantic information. In this paper, I deal with the complicated issue of polyphony, pragmatics being involved in the attempt to distinguish voices (the original speaker's voice and the indirect reporter's). As I said about quotation, pragmatics is responsible for allocating quotation marks. In indirect reports, pragmatics is responsible in the complex task of indicating mixed quotation.

The structure of this paper is as follows. I follow general considerations on the issue of slurs and then on the issue of indirect reports. I propose that indirect reports are language games involving a polyphonic activity. The problem for the hearer is to recognize different voices. When slurs are injected into that-clauses of indirect reports, we have interpretative ambiguities. My proposal is that the original speaker is assigned responsibility for the slurring expression present in the that-clause of an indirect reports. I justify this claim by *a*) considerations on processing efforts and contextual effects; *b*) considerations based on Searle's Principle of expressibility; *c*) considerations based on the comparison between quotation and indirect reports; *d*) considerations on critical discourse analysis. Since my pragmatic considerations are based on my paraphrasis/form principle, I have to defend such a principle from reasonable objections by Wayne Davis.

## 2. THE PROBLEM

I would like to make it clear from the start that this is a paper about indirect reporting as a social practice (in other previous papers: Capone 2012; Capone, Salmani Nodoushan 2014), in fact, I discussed indirect reporting as a language game) and this is not a paper about slurs or slurring in general, although I am intrigued by the following question: what happens when one indirectly reports an utterance which contains a slurring expression? An interpretative ambiguity (in the sense of Jaszczolt 1999) is certainly created, as one may have to decide whether the slurring expression belongs to the primary voice (the reporting speaker) or the secondary voice (the reported speaker). Another way of formulating this ambiguity is to say that we have to ascer-

tain whether the slurring expression is part of the reporting utterance or of the reported utterance. Intuitively, this interpretative ambiguity must be captured syntactically, because if the reporting speaker is being attributed the slur, then intuitively the reported utterance must be characterized as containing a neutral counterpart, while the slurring expression must occur in the embedding utterance, probably as a sort of free enrichment (one of the types discussed by Carston 2002 or Alison Hall 2013), being part of an appositive structure:

- (1)  
John said that Mary is a nigger

could be represented as:

John said that Mary is black (which I am paraphrasing as «Mary is a nigger»)

Instead, the interpretation on which «nigger» only belongs to the reported speaker's voice amounts to something like the following:

- (2)  
John said that Mary is a nigger

can be represented as:

John said that Mary is a nigger and what John said contains the words «Mary» and «nigger».

Here too we have free enrichment, which I have characterized as conjunction. But I could have characterized it as I did in Capone (2008) and in Capone (2013a) as a sentential null appositive. I will not go into this, because the topic of this paper is not the issue of «opacity» *per se*, but the issue of multiple voicing and the issue of who is responsible for the slurring expression in indirect reporting.

### 3. ON SLURS

We need to say a little bit on slurs, but only as a way of getting into a more general problem about indirect reporting. A slurring expression

is an expression which is derogatory and often used with the purpose of inflicting harm to some category of people (see Saka 1998; 2007), of stabilizing a situation of dominance/inferiority, an expression which society as a whole should not use due to some convention that officially bans its usage (a social stipulation according to Anderson and Lepore, who even write about an «edict») even if certain segments of society, in fact, use it. Those who use slurs can be recognized as having racist intentions. Slurs, however, can be used by the members of the categories slurred, because by re-appropriating a slur one can show a sense of solidarity with those who suffer due to an unjust society and neutralize its potential to cause harm. Re-appropriation is an important topic, and I can here recommend two papers by Claudia Bianchi (in press) and Andrew Jacobs (2002) on this.

Most importantly, I should say that contexts can take away the bite from slurs, as happens in academic papers and, in particular, in this paper. Of course, it is possible that the menacing features of slurs do not completely dissolve, as they are still associated with a history of injustice and sadism as pointed out by Kennedy (2002) in his magisterial work on slurs (in afro-american communities) and American history.

#### 4. ON THE CONNECTION BETWEEN INDIRECT REPORTS, SLURS AND CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Now apropos of the issue of making use of examples in academic contexts, consider the following situation: you enter a classroom and read a sentence on the blackboard. You know that this lecture room usually hosts lectures on syntax by a certain professor Higginbotham. You do not know who authored the sentence and specifically you do not know whether the sentence has to be counted as a mere sentence or as an utterance. You need to assign some illocutionary force to that sentence, to make sense of it from a communicative point of view. Now, in this case it is clearly difficult to know what to make of the sentence, but as a default you would tend to think the sentence is merely an example of a sentence if utilized in say a grammar class. In this case, I am utilizing sentences as examples, but even as examples they have the potential to offend. I do not know whether it is enough to profess that I have always been opposed to racism, as the history of these sentences per-

colates up from the blackboard or from the pages of this paper, but at least in these prefatory considerations I will do whatever is in my power to neutralize language's ability to do harm and cause suffering. I believe we can use language to disarm racist discourse and that to do so, we need to be able to make reference to that discourse by a method which is the counterpart of indirect reporting. In a sense I am anticipating the main line of my argument, as it is crucial to my considerations that we need *expressive power* to disarm slurring expressions and such expressive power needs to be reflected in the ability of talking about slurring utterances without being complicit with those who uttered the slurring utterances.

## 5. INDIRECT REPORTING AS A SOCIAL ACTIVITY

Indirect reporting is a discourse practice which is social, being learned in the course of interacting with people, although certain presumably innate principles of human rationality determine the direction of the inferential processes that are involved in it. Presumably indirect reporting is different from direct quotation, so the literature says, although in my paper on quotation (Capone 2013b) I have done my best to say that the interpretation of quotation is radically pragmatic and although important cases of mixed quotation in indirect reports are recognized by the current literature. If such considerations are held in mind, it is clear that the border-line between direct and indirect reports is being corroded more and more. To give you an example of the extent to which this demarcating line can be corroded, take the following:

- (3)  
 Mary:  
 John said: «Louise is very intelligent»

However, it is not true that John uttered «Louise» or «intelligent» as literal constituents of what he said. Although I should say that these cases are rare, I would not want to say that they are special or parasitic uses. Even if they were, pragmatics would have to intervene. If the hearer replied: «But John never calls me “Louise”», it would be clear that the presuppositions of discourse would militate towards an interpretation of the direct report as an indirect report, to be reconstructed on the basis of assumptions that are in the air during the con-

versation. (Now I should probably add that my competence as Italian speaker colors these considerations).

This case reminds us of the radical pragmatics involved in Bezuidenhout's (1997) examples in which a NP (in particular a pronominal) which is preferentially associated with a referential interpretation, is interpreted in context as having an attributive interpretation. Context, we know well, has such transformative powers.

The problems of mixed quotation (discussed by Cappelen, Lepore 2005) do not scare the pragmatologist, because the polyphonic game is an essential part of indirect reporting (as I proposed in Capone 2013c). The participants to a conversation can recognize the voice of a certain person, through certain linguistic clues (style may be an important indicator), or through some phonetic qualities (one should not exaggerate to what extent people are capable of imitating a person's voice (this is certainly true for Italian speakers who have great dramatic potential). However, in the absence of such clues, one would mainly have to rely on the cognitive makeup of the speakers/hearers who are capable of drawing inferences that assign by default a certain token of a lexeme to a certain speaker. In any case, rationality principles à la Grice would also make the same kind of predictions, without having to place a burden on the cognitive make-up of the conversationalists.

Indirect reporting, as a social practice or a language game, involves a certain number of transformations. Ignoring the most obvious ones, that concern pronominals and tense, there are some transformations on which interesting discussion might focus. An utterance (or rather a sequence of utterances) can be reported by providing a summary. Certain modifiers could be omitted. Syntactic errors could be amended. (However, I exclude that the opposite process of injecting syntactic errors is licit (if the reporting speaker does so, he will be perceived as responsible for the errors). Pauses could be deleted. Identificatory materials might be added (say appositive clauses). Is there a limit to what can be done in indirect reporting? I would like to say that one limit is the speaker's meaning (although there are important qualifications to be made here). Another limit is the reported speaker's perception that the paraphrase of his or her utterance has not been fair (We shall see here an important qualification, in response to an objection by Wayne Davis).

Speaker's meaning, by default, is or should be the aim of indirect reporting (see Wieland 2013, Capone 2013c). This is perhaps most

evident in the case of the law. When we interpret the law, as a number of scholars including Carston (2013) say, we are basically interested in what the law-maker said – the literal import is not of interest to us, but we need to contextualize what was said to arrive at some plausible intentions (of course speaking of intentions in the case of the law is not devoid of difficulties as pointed out by Marmor 2013). I am interested in the law, because the acts of interpretation after all are nothing but indirect reports of what the law-makers said or decided. Now, the case of the law shows without doubt that indirect reporting involves deciphering the speaker's meaning. In this paper, we are interested in speaker's meanings, but we should say that there are cases in which indirect reports focus on literal meanings. This should not be impossible because if direct reports can be used to produce indirect reports, indirect reports can be used to achieve something similar to direct reports (perhaps with an important difference, direct reports usually provide all of what is said, even small details, while indirect reports cannot promise to deliver all small details of what was said, given the possibility of summing up what was said. In the cases in which indirect reports focus on literal meanings, we expect strong clues (in the sense of Dascal, Weizman 1987) to be there to indicate how the utterance has to be taken.

## 6. RESPONSIBILITY FOR SLURS IN INDIRECT REPORTS AND PRAGMATICS

Anderson and Lepore propose that in indirect reports the reporting speaker, rather than the reported speaker, is responsible for the slurring expression appearing in the embedded that-clause. Now, while I accept that in some cases, the reporting speaker can be complicit in uttering the slurring expression, I am inclined to accept that the reported speaker has greater responsibility than the reporting speaker – intuitively because the indirect report is about the reported speaker and NOT the reporting speaker.

I would say that the pragmatic considerations I expressed in Capone (2010; 2012; 2013c) assign responsibility for the slur to the reported speaker, while the responsibility of the reporter consists in not having avoided the slur choosing a more neutral counterpart. However, if a more neutral counterpart had been chosen, how could we know that the original speaker was responsible for slurring? This is a damn

complicated question. We may get the idea that the reporting speaker was complicit in the slurring, however his responsibility for the slurring was inferior. And there are contexts in which the responsibility of the reporter has been completely corroded (take the current paper or a judiciary proceeding).

In my opinion, there should be ways to signal that the reporter is not primarily responsible for the slurring expression (here contextual clues could be mobilized to convey that that reporter's standard vocabulary does not include slurs and therefore by deduction, responsibility for the slurring is shifted to the reported speaker. Furthermore, pragmatic default inferences also contribute to assign responsibility to the reported speaker, as the interpretation that the perspective of the reported speaker is being adopted is more relevant – relevance being the ratio between contextual effects and processing efforts. An interpretation according to which either the reported speaker or the reporting speaker or both could be responsible for the slurring is clearly non-economical with respect to the possibility that one alone was responsible. If the reporting speaker was responsible for the slurring (and not the reported speaker), the reporting speaker could certainly be guilty of lack of clarity and the processing efforts would be greater. However, if the original speaker was responsible for the slurring, the interpretation would be the most relevant one since the perspective of the original speaker is what counts and what the hearer is interested in. The hearer does not want to know what the reporting speaker thinks, but only what the reported speaker thinks.

In Capone (2010, 2013c) I drew the readers' attention to the following.

## 7. PARAPHRASIS/FORM PRINCIPLE

The *that*-clause embedded in the verb «say» is a paraphrasis of what Y said, and meets the following constraints:

Should Y hear what X said he (Y) had said, he would not take issue with it, as to content, but would approve of it as a fair paraphrasis of his original utterance. Furthermore, he would not object to vocalizing the assertion made out of the words following the complementizer 'that' on account of its form/style (Capone 2013c, 174).



In Capone (2010) I drew this principle from the principle of Relevance, but this is not at stake here.

Now, the paraphrasis/Form principle clearly predicts that if a speaker did not utter a slurring expression in her utterance, she would not like/accept being reported as having uttered that word. Hence the obligation by the indirect reporter to avoid using that word, as such use would cast a sinister shadow on the reported speaker depicting her as racist (when she is not). There is a complication here, because while the reported speaker never uttered the word «nigro» or «nigger», she may have wanted to utter it. The indirect reporter knows well that the slur was not uttered, but she also knows that if she had been permitted, the speaker would have willingly uttered it (she was prevented by political circumstances). Perhaps the reported speaker used the word «black» with derogatory intonation, or perhaps when this word was uttered the speaker's face was illuminated by a sinister grimace. Perhaps the reporting speaker merely guessed at the intention behind the word. So, should we take the reporting speaker who injects «nigger» into the that clause of his report at face value and attribute it to the reported speaker or not? My story predicts that even if the reporting speaker was wrong in his choice of «nigger», pragmatics says that the reported speaker is represented as being racist.

That these semantic/pragmatic considerations should be taken into account is obvious, if one considers that accepting the alternative account by Anderson and Lepore (2013) commits one to the view that an indirect report of a slurring expression is subject to a double prohibition (both the original speaker and the reported one are prohibited from uttering the slurring expression) and nevertheless the indirect report of a slurring expression gets by. Why is it that it gets by? Because it is important to someone that she know about the slurring utterance in the first place and this can be achieved only through reporting the slurring expression. It appears that the prohibition was evaded twice. Instead, a view that the reporting speaker is simply quoting (admittedly mixed-quoting) a speaker would ensure that only one person is guilty for the slurring – and this is the desired result, because ideally we would want to make a difference between the original culprit and the reporter who may be non-racist and whose purpose is (possibly) to denounce a racist remark. In Anderson and Lepore's (2013) view accusing someone of slurring is something that can occur in the court (presumably) but not in ordinary conversation. Yet, we have evidence

that in ordinary conversations too we utter pronouncements against immoral and illicit conducts.

## 8. ARGUMENTS FOR THE VIEW THAT THE REPORTED SPEAKER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SLURS IN THAT-CLAUSES OF INDIRECT REPORTS

In the remainder of this paper, I will expatiate on the reasons for believing that the story of indirect reports and slurs should proceed the way I have depicted it. I will advance a number of arguments, examining their consequences.

The first argument is based on expressivity. We must be able to express what we think. Searle says: «Whatever can be meant can be said» (Searle 1969, 20). In the case of indirect reporting, we must have a way to report an offensive speech event (for the purpose of denouncing it) without committing/repeating the same offence. Clearly, one can resort to euphemistic ways of saying things or one can be indirect and use convoluted sentences that give the hearer an idea of what was done in the offensive utterance. To give you an example, one of our colleagues, who was known by everyone to be crazy, once said in the common room that «Berlusconi ha il pisello piccolo» (Berlusconi has a small dick). I then interpreted this utterance literally, although now it occurs to me that this was probably a way of saying that Berlusconi is not capable of governing the country, if an analogy is followed with another expression which idiomatically means that «Berlusconi non ha le palle (per governare il paese)». Perhaps this teacher had transformed the idiomatic form into an unidiomatic form. Whatever the case, I wanted to tell other colleagues what had happened, but I was terribly embarrassed to let the female teachers know. The taboo associated with this sentence was making its sting felt. However, there was no way to report the utterance without appearing to commit the same offence. But surely, if one had to report the utterance, one had to do so in a way that revealed the words used. Thus, as a consequence of Searle's principle of expressibility, a speaker must be in a position to make an indirect report of something that is obscene relying on the context or pragmatic principles to impute the offensive phrase to the reported speaker. There must be contexts, such as a court, where one must be able to tell the whole truth about what was said.

The second argument exploits a parallel between quotation and indirect reporting. If we accept Anderson and Lepore's view that there is a societal prohibition against uttering a slurring expression, it is clear that this should apply to quotation as well. Thus a sentence such as

- (4)  
Mary said: John is a nigger

should be as infelicitous as the corresponding indirect report «Mary said that John is a nigger». Here my opponent may reply that, after all, Anderson and Lepore think of a prohibition against using, rather than against «mentioning» (in the sense of Lyons 1977) a slurring expression. I quite agree that quotative structures, in general, are associated with opacity and sometimes mention, rather than using, certain expressions. However, even accepting the using/mentioning distinction, it should be said that the distinction does not neatly correlate with the distinction between indirect reporting and quoting. In fact, we have seen that quotation structures can, in context, amount to indirect reporting. Furthermore, as Cappelen and Lepore (2005) themselves note, indirect reports exhibit the phenomenon of mixed quotation. Thus there are segments of indirect reports that are mentioned. We can easily have reports such as John said that «apple» has five letters. If anything, we would expect quotations to host slurring expressions, while indirect reporting should not. However, in practice there is not much difference between quotation and indirect reporting.

The third argument is based on critical linguistics (on this, see Linda Waugh *et al.* 2014). If we want to expunge racism, we should be able to denounce it and we should be able to talk about it, rather than being scared to talk about it. Denouncing racism involves describing the kind of speech acts performed by people during their racist practices. It is clear that in doing so, we should be able to report utterances verbatim or close to verbatim, our moral authority sufficing to exclude that we are complicit in this kind of discourse. We should take position in public and this should be enough to label us as non-racists and to bracket the racist linguistic practices. Indirect reporting is a way of bracketing slurring expressions, which appear as enveloped in inverted commas. Contextual considerations combined with default interpretations should be enough to bracket slurring and racist expressions in general.

## 9. OBJECTIONS BY WAYNE DAVIS

The job is done egregiously by my Paraphrasis/Form Principle, which however was attacked by Wayne Davis in a personal communication. There are two fundamental objections.

Consider the following example:

(5)

Billy: The first black person was elected U.S. president in 2008.

Tommy: Billy said that the first nigger was elected U.S. president in 2008.

Wayne Davis writes:

I would say that Tommy's report is false. But your constraint need not be violated. Billy may not object at all to Tommy's way of reporting what he said and may have been just as happy using «nigger» in place of what he said. Billy may take it as a fair paraphrasis of what he said. But it is not, so Tommy's report is false. It is also an unacceptable thing to say, whether or not Billy objects to it.

I quite agree that this is a plausible objection. But this is seen from the point of view of a racist speaker. So my prediction makes a difference between racist and non-racist speakers. It works in the case of non-racist speakers but not in the case of racist speakers.

We could try to revise my Principle:

Should Y hear what X said he (Y) had said, he would not take issue with it, as to content, but would approve of it as a fair paraphrasis of his original utterance. Furthermore, in case he were to accept certain norms that are standard or should be standard in society, he would not object to vocalizing the assertion made out of the words following the complementizer «that» on account of its form/style. (Capone 2013c, 174)

Now, I should say that these contextual injections of clauses could go on in case other objections are raised. I doubt that all such clauses should be made explicit, as principles should have a general validity even if they are in need of being constantly enriched through contextualizations.

A better treatment of Wayne Davis' objection could be the following:

An indirect report of an utterance by X cannot be felicitous UNLESS X is inclined to approve if it on account of its content and form/style or some impartial judge is inclined to accept it on account of its content/form/style given what was said by the original speaker.

The case by Davis is ruled out because the reported speaker did not utter a slurring expression and although he would probably have approved of it, either he or the impartial judge would agree that what he said did not include a slurring expression: thus, if the slurring expression features in the indirect report, despite the fact that it was not uttered by the original speaker, it must be construed as under the responsibility of the reporting speaker.

The upshot of this is the following: if a slurring expression features in the that-clause of an indirect report, assume that the slur is under the responsibility of the original speaker, because if the original speaker had not uttered it, the reporter would not have had the right to report it, given that either the original speaker or the impartial judge would object to its presence in the that-clause of the indirect report.

I take that indirect reports typically display the words used in speech by the original speaker. I believe that it is more natural that the indirect report should express the words used by the reported speaker rather than those of the reported speaker, because the indirect report is intended to reflect the utterance of the reported speaker.

Wayne Davis objects to this. He says:

This may be true in some cases, but only when the reporter is using the same language as the reported speaker. It is also false in the same-language case when the reported speaker uses a lot of contractions or regionalisms that are inappropriate in the reporter's context or uses misspellings or mispronunciations.

Let us leave aside the different-language case, as here contextual considerations advert the hearers that it is not possible that the same words uttered by the original speaker are used by the indirect reporter. This is a notable exception, but I never claimed that my principle covers all cases. It is predictable that defaults in interpretation can be overridden by contextual considerations.

It is true that as Davis says, indirect reports can change the words, they can eliminate grammatical errors, misspellings, regionalisms etc. However, there is intuitively a difference between an indirect report that eliminates all such problems and an indirect report

that introduces such problems. In the former case, a speaker should not be entirely unhappy about the reporter's charitable attitude and thus my principle may not be refuted by such a case. In the latter case, errors are being introduced on purpose (or perhaps involuntarily). But certainly, the original speaker should not be happy with the result. Such an attitude is clearly reflected in my Principle. Of course, a third case could be pondered on. A person who is particularly proud of belonging to a certain region, objects to the fact that the indirect reporter eliminated a certain regionalism. But this case too is covered by my Paraphrasis/Form Principle. In fact, the original speaker objects to the change or interpolation by the reporter, as I predicted. Whatever the success of my reply strategy, I would like to say that though I greatly appreciate the merit of Wayne Davis's objection, I object to his objection on general grounds. Of course I never said or would like to say that all the words used in the indirect report belong to the original speaker. In some cases, it may not be important to decide whether a word was part of the original speaker's speech or was just a synonym used for convenience. The Paraphrasis/Form principle applies only when it is relevant, that is in the case of problematic words. If a word rather than another makes an important difference, in that the indirect report ends up reporting a different speech act (as I said in Capone 2010) or the indirect report ends up being offensive to the audience, then an interpretative problem arises and the interpretative ambiguity I discussed at the beginning of this paper arises, which needs to be resolved by pragmatic interpretation. So Davis might now be relieved by my conclusion that like him I do not think that every word of the original utterance must be in the that-clause of the indirect report.

Consider now a different case. I happened to send a paper to P & C. During the proofs something strange happened. I had no reply to my corrections and no revised proofs were sent to me. The result was that an uncorrected paper was published. Thomas Gray, whom I cited to embellish the paper, became Thomas Grey. Although the Press is now remedying this problem, which really horrified me (but was just one case out of many of bad publishing), I was certainly not happy to have been reported as saying that Thomas Grey and NOT Thomas Gray had written the *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*. I certainly object to my having been reported in that way. I understand that these things happen, but the real problem is when indirect report-

ers are either inaccurate and sloppy or dishonest. So there must be something general in defense of my principle.

## 10. ON TRANSLATION

Translation may be a problematic area in the issue of indirect reports. While my form/style principle predicts that forms should be as close as possible to those of the original utterances (and utterers), I have allowed, in some cases, that the principle can and must be surmounted in case heavy contextual clues indicate that the words originally uttered cannot be in the language of the indirect report. In other words, it is possible that the original utterance is in Russian, while the reporting utterance is in English or Italian. I have also made it clear that, even when the context does not make us suspicious that the original utterance was in a language different from the one of the indirect report, we should not expect a coincidence between every word in the reporting utterance and every word in the reported utterance (the original utterance). We expect Relevance to be involved in selecting the lexical items which are under the scope of the Form/Style Principle.

Now suppose that there are some slurring expressions in the that-clause of the indirect report, which as the context may indicate, is expressed in a language non-coincident with that of the reported utterance. What should we make of those slurring expressions? Should we ignore them altogether, assuming that due to the translation we should give up the hope of reconstructing the original speaker's words? While I must agree that, in this case, things are much more complicated, my intuition is that the words used by the indirect reporter/translator still give us some indication as to the general quality of the words used by the original speaker. The use of a slur in the that-clause of an indirect report, in my opinion, should correspond to a use of a slur in the reported utterance. And this may be imputed to some presumed *Principle of Translation*:

Do not translate an expression occurring in the original utterance (reported) with a word which gives the impression that the original speaker was slurring, using foul language, insulting, etc. unless the original speaker was indeed slurring, using foul language, insulting, etc.



In other words, the form/style principle seems to survive despite the complications of translation. The Principle of Translation, in fact, seems to be necessitated by the Form/Style Principle. In fact, even by translating one can somehow give the hearer some indication about the original voice. It is not a matter of words, but of style, and thus despite the fact that the words may be different, because they come from a different language, the style seems to be preserved despite translation.

These may not be the final words on the matter, but I take these to be an important step forward.

## II. CONCLUSION

The issue of indirect reports is very important in so far as it is a testing bed for a theory of pragmatics. In this paper, we have seen that indirect reporting is a social activity which can be described in terms of language games that regulate possible transformations. Unlike direct reports, indirect reporting involves – with some notable exceptions – speaker's meaning and can involve transformations such as deletions, additions, syntactic amendments, but most importantly involves the phenomenon of voicing, as an indirect report can express a number of different voices, being a polyphonic language game. The pragmatic task for the hearer is to separate such voices on the basis of abstract universal principles of cognition or of language use or on the basis of heavy contextual clues which orient the hearer towards the right direction. In this paper, my main claim has been that when a slur is present in the that-clause of an indirect report, responsibility for the slurring expression is assigned to the reported speaker. I have offered a complex battery of arguments to prove that this must be acceptable.

Alessandro Capone  
 Università di Palermo  
 Dipartimento di Filosofia del linguaggio  
 Viale delle Scienze  
 Palermo  
 alessandro.capone@unipa.it



## REFERENCES

- Anderson L., Lepore E. (2013), *Slurring words*, in «Noûs», 47 (1), 25-48.
- Bezuidenhout A. (1997), *Pragmatics, semantic underdetermination and the referential/attributional distinction*, in «Mind», 106 (423), 375-407.
- Bianchi C. (forthcoming), *Slurs and appropriation. An echoic account*, in «Journal of Pragmatics».
- Capone A. (2008), *Belief reports and pragmatic intrusion. The case of null appositives*, in «Journal of Pragmatics», 40, 2019-40.
- Capone, A. (2010), *On the social practice of indirect reports*, in «Journal of Pragmatics», 43, 377-391.
- Capone A. (2012), *Indirect reports as language games*, in «Pragmatics & Cognition», 20 (3), 593-613.
- Capone A. (2013a), *The pragmatics of pronominal clitics and propositional attitudes*, in «Intercultural pragmatics», 10 (3), 459-485.
- Capone A. (2013b), *The pragmatics of quotation, explicatures and modularity of mind*, in «Pragmatics and Society», 4 (3), 259-284.
- Capone A. (2013c), *The pragmatics of indirect reports and slurring*, in A. Capone, F. Lo Piparo, M. Carapezza (eds.), *Perspectives on linguistic pragmatics*, Cham, Springer, 131-152.
- Capone A., Salmani Nodoushan M. (2014), *On indirect reports and language games: Evidence from Persian*, in «Rivista Italiana di Filosofia del Linguaggio».
- Cappelen H., Lepore E. (2005). *Varieties of quotation revisited*, in «Belgian Journal of Linguistics», 17, 51-76.
- Carston R. (2002), *Thoughts and Utterances. The Pragmatics of Explicit Communication*, Oxford, Blackwell.
- Carston R. (2013), *Legal texts and canons of construction. A view from current pragmatic theory*, in M. Freeman, F. Smith (eds.), *Law and Language: Current Legal Issues*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 8-34.
- Dascal M., Weizman E. (1987), *Contextual exploitation of contextualization clues in text understanding: An integrated model*, in J. Verschueren, M. Bertucelli-Papi (eds.), *The Pragmatics Perspectives*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, 31-46.
- Davis W. (2003), *Meaning, Expression and Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Davis W. (2005), *Nondescriptive Meaning and Relevance*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Hall A. (2013), *Relevance theory, semantic content and pragmatic enrichment*, in A. Capone, F. Lo Piparo, M. Carapezza (eds.), *Perspectives on Linguistic Pragmatics*, Cham, Springer, 99-130.
- Hom C. (2010), *Pejoratives*, in «Philosophy Compass», 5 (2), 164-185.
- Hom C. (2012), *Apuzzle about pejoratives*, in «Philosophical Studies», 159, 383-405.
- Huang Y. (2006), *Pragmatics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Jacobs A.T. (2002), *Appropriating a slur. Semantic looping in the African-American usage of Nigga*, in «M/C: a journal of Media and Culture», 5 (4).

- Jaszczolt K. (1999), *Discourse, Beliefs and Intentions*, Oxford, Elsevier.
- Kennedy C. (2002), *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word*, New York, Vintage.
- Levinson S.C. (2000), *Presumptive Meanings*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press.
- Lyons J. (1977), *Semantics*, voll. 1-2, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Marmor A. (2013), *Can the law imply more than it says? On some pragmatic aspects of strategic speech*, in A. Marmor, S. Soames (eds.), *Language in the Law*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 83-104.
- Pennisi A., Falzone A. (2010), *Il prezzo del linguaggio*, Bologna, Il Mulino.
- Potts C. (2005), *The Logic of Conventional Implicature*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Potts C. (2007), *The expressive dimension*, in «Theoretical Linguistics», 33 (2), 165-198.
- Saka P. (1998), *Meaning and the ascription of attitudes*, Doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, reprinted in Saka (2007).
- Saka P. (2007), *How to Think about Meaning*, Dordrecht, Springer.
- Searle J. (1979), *Expression and Meaning*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Sperber D., Wilson D. (1986), *Relevance. Communication and Cognition*, Oxford, Blackwell.
- Waugh L., Catalano T. et al. (2014), *Critical discourse analysis: history, approaches, relation to pragmatics, critique, trends and new directions*, in J.L. Mey, A. Capone (eds.), *Interdisciplinary Studies in Pragmatics, Culture and Society*, Heidelberg, Springer.
- Wieland N. (2013), *Indirect reports and pragmatics*, in A. Capone, F. Piparo, M. Carapezza (eds.), *Perspectives on Pragmatics and Philosophy*, Dordrecht, Springer.
- Wilson D., Sperber D. (2012), *Meaning and Relevance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.