

# Japanese reported speech

## Against a direct–indirect distinction \*

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**Abstract.** English direct discourse is easily recognized by, for example, the lack of a complementizer, the quotation marks (or the intonational contour those induce), and verbatim (‘shifted’) pronouns. Japanese employs the same complementizer for all reports, does not have a consistent intonational quotation marking, and tends to drop pronouns where possible. Some have argued that this shows no more than that many Japanese reports are ambiguous. These authors claim that, despite the lack of explicit marking, the underlying distinction is just as hard in Japanese as it is in English. On the basis of a number of ‘mixed’ examples, I claim that the line between direct and indirect *is* blurred and I propose a unified analysis of speech reporting in which a general mechanism of mixed quotation replaces the classical two-fold distinction.

## 1 Introduction

There is an obvious contrast between:

- (1) a. Taro said that I would go to Tokyo
- b. Taro said: “I will go to Tokyo”

The first is an example of indirect speech, in which I report what Taro said on an earlier occasion in my own words; the second is a direct report, where I report Taro by quoting his words verbatim. From these informal characterizations it follows that in (1a) the pronoun *I* is used by (and refers to) me, whereas in (1b) it refers to Taro, which makes these reports semantically incompatible.

There is an ongoing debate about the direct–indirect distinction in Japanese, where, in a colloquial setting, a sentence like (2) can mean both (1a) and (1b) (Hirose, 1995:224):

- (2) Taroo-wa boku-ga Tookyoo e iku to itta  
     *Taro-Top I-Nom Tokyo to go Comp said*

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The received view now seems to be that Japanese reports like (2) are simply ambiguous between direct and indirect. Instead, the current paper offers more Japanese data to argue against the notion of a categorical direct–indirect distinction. I present an alternative in which mixed quotation allows one to ‘shift’ parts of any report complement. But first we take a closer look at this traditional distinction between direct and indirect speech.

## 2 Distinguishing indirect and direct speech

The difference between direct and indirect speech is marked in a number of different ways in different languages. Let’s go through a couple of the better known ones.

**Syntax** English indirect discourse is usually marked by a complementizer *that*; in Dutch, such a complementizer and an additional change in word order are obligatory; in German, indirect discourse requires changes in both word order and mood of the verb. A distinguishing feature of direct speech syntax is its ‘syntactic opacity’ (Oshima 2006), i.e. it blocks movement, (3), quantifying in, (4), and NPI licensing, (5) (Anand and Nevins 2004):

- (3) a. What did Taro say he had seen?  
b. \*What did Taro say: “I have seen”?
- (4) a. There’s something that Taro says he likes  
b. \*There’s something that Taro says: “I like”
- (5) a. Nobody said they had seen anything  
b. ??Nobody said “we saw anything”<sup>1</sup>

**Orthography/intonation** In written languages, direct speech is usually marked with quotation marks. In spoken language this direct speech marking surfaces as a distinct intonational contour (Potts 2005).

**Semantics/pragmatics** As noted above, reporting someone’s words in indirect speech requires adjusting the original utterance’s indexicals to the reporting context. To report the same as (1b) in indirect speech, Taro’s *I* would have to be changed to *he*. In English, the same holds for indexicals like *tomorrow* and the present tense. Note however the cross-linguistic variation: in Russian, the present tense is not adjusted, while in Amharic even first person forms can apparently be retained (Schlenker 2003).

These and other characteristics give the impression of a “binary, categorical distinction” where “a direct report is about a relation between an agent and a linguistic object while an indirect report is about a relation between an agent and a proposition” (Oshima 2006:23). This traditional explanation of the direct–indirect distinction seems to rest on a fundamental distinction between

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<sup>1</sup> The sentence as a whole is grammatical, and likely true. It does not however report the same as (5a).

two functions of language: words can be used to refer to the world (*use*), but also to refer to words and other linguistic items (*mention*). Before arguing against it, let me first clarify the supposed link between indirect–direct and use–mention.

### 3 Modeling the indirect–direct distinction as use vs. mention

Modeltheoretically, language *use* is what’s captured by the familiar Fregean semantics. A proper analysis of indirect speech reporting and indexicality requires Kaplan’s two-dimensional version, which analyzes indirect *saying that* as an intensional operator.  $x$  *says that*  $\varphi$  means that  $x$  uttered some sentence that expressed the same proposition as that expressed by  $\varphi$  in the current report context.

*Mention* requires the addition of a separate expression type ( $u$ ) and domain ( $D_u$ ) of utterances to our models (Potts 2004). Mentioning is modeled as an operator  $\ulcorner \urcorner$ , the formal counterpart of (pure) quotation, that turns any utterance into a term of type  $u$  referring to that utterance. Strictly speaking,  $D_u$  contains phonetic or alphabetic surface representations of utterances (say, finite strings of symbols in a finite alphabet). The formal quotational language,  $\mathcal{QL}$ , consists of triples containing a linguistic object ( $\in D_u$ ), a semantic type, and a standard logical representation:<sup>2</sup>

- (6) a. notation:  $\text{fool}' := \langle \mathbf{fool}, et, \lambda x[\text{fool}(x)] \rangle \in \mathcal{QL}$   
 semantics:  $\llbracket \text{fool}' \rrbracket =$  the set of fools  $\subseteq D_e$   
 b. notation:  $\ulcorner \text{fool} \urcorner := \langle \mathbf{fool}', u, \ulcorner \text{fool}' \urcorner \rangle \in \mathcal{QL}$   
 semantics:  $\llbracket \ulcorner \text{fool} \urcorner \rrbracket = \mathbf{fool}' \in D_u$

This logic of mention extends to a straightforward semantics of direct speech: Simply analyze ‘say’ in its direct discourse sense as a transitive verb that takes as direct object a term of type  $u$ , and analyze quotation marks as mention, capturing the traditional view of direct discourse being a relation between an individual and an utterance.

To summarize, the direct–indirect discourse distinction can be cashed out formally in an intensional logic with a mention operator. Indirect discourse saying translates as  $\text{say}_{id}'$ , an operator of type  $(st)et$ , as in (7a), while direct discourse translates as  $\text{say}_{dd}'$ , an operator of type  $uet$ , as in (7b):

- (7) a. Taro said I’m going to Tokyo  
 $\rightsquigarrow \text{say}_{id}'(\text{taro}')(\wedge \text{go.tokyo}'(i'))$   
 b. Taro said: “I will go to Tokyo”  
 $\rightsquigarrow \text{say}_{dd}'(\text{taro}')(\ulcorner \text{I will go to Tokyo} \urcorner)$

<sup>2</sup> The last two slots may be empty, to allow for quotations of speech errors, meaningless sounds or ungrammatical utterances (Maier 2007): underestimate  $\approx \langle \mathbf{misunderestimate}, eet, - \rangle$ , grrr  $\approx \langle \mathbf{grr}, -, - \rangle$ .

The distinguishing characteristics of direct and indirect speech listed in the first section all follow from this semantics.

**Syntax** Direct speech’s ‘verbatimness’ with respect to clause structure and word order, among other things, follows from the fact that in (7b) it is the original utterance itself that is the object of the  $\text{say}_{dd}$  relation. The fact that mentioning turns the quote into a referential term of type  $u$  with no internal semantic structure, explains the syntactic opacity with respect to movement and NPI licensing.

**Orthography/intonation** The various forms of quotation marking in direct speech fall out as simply the linguistic realization of the mention operator,  $\lceil \rceil$ .

**Semantics/pragmatics** Indexical adjustment in indirect speech follows from the Kaplanian semantics of indirect speech where we have to match the proposition that was expressed in the reported context with the proposition expressed by the complement clause in the reporting context.

## 4 Challenging the indirect–direct distinction: the case of Japanese

Despite this apparent success of a rather simple semantics, Maier (2007) challenges the strict indirect–direct distinction by pointing out that even English direct discourse is semantically somewhat transparent. This claim is backed by the observations that (i) anaphoric and elliptical dependencies can cross direct discourse boundaries (as in “*My girlfriend bought me this tie,*” *said John, but I don’t think she did,* from Maier 2007), and (ii) a direct report comes with a rather strong (but cancellable) implicature that the corresponding indirect version is also true (for example, the direct (1b) implies that Taro said that he will go to Tokyo).

For so-called mixed quotation (Cappelen and Lepore 1997), consisting of an indirect report in which only a certain part is directly quoted, Maier’s (2007) case is strengthened by additional syntactic/semantic evidence. But, focusing on genuine direct discourse, it may well be possible to get around both of the transparency arguments by adding a distinct pragmatic mechanism that leaves the separation of direct and indirect discourse intact at the semantic level.<sup>3</sup> In the remainder of this paper I present some further evidence against the direct–indirect distinction.

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<sup>3</sup> I know of no actual proposal to this effect, but I envisage a kind of system that takes the strictly separatist semantics of direct speech as mention and combines it with a strengthening mechanism that adds the corresponding indirect version of a direct report, the *use* inference, to the semantic representation. Assuming that the resolution of ellipsis and anaphora triggered by the following discourse apply after pragmatic strengthening of a direct report, would derive (i) as well.

#### 4.1 A rumor about Japanese speech reporting

As “rumor has it that there is no such [direct–indirect] distinction in Japanese” (Coulmas 1985:53) I turn to that language in hope to seal the fate of the classical report distinction. My ultimate goal is to replace it with an analysis of speech reports as indirect discourse (analyzed as section 3’s *say<sub>id</sub>*) with optional mixed quotation of any notable parts. Unfortunately, some work remains to be done as Coulmas continues the sentence quoted above by remarking that the rumor about Japanese is “obviously not true.”

Let’s reconstruct how the rumor might have started originally. Recall our enumeration of the ways in which direct and indirect discourse can be kept apart. First, syntactically, Japanese does not distinguish direct and indirect discourse by a special complementizer. The marker *to* is used for all speech reporting. Tense and word-order are consistently retained in speech reports, nor is there a special mood for indirect discourse. Then, orthographically, direct discourse in written text may often be recognizable from the quotation marks, but in colloquial spoken language these may go unnoticed.<sup>4</sup>

So, of the previously listed tests for distinguishing the two modes we are left with indexical adjustment and syntactic transparency as indicators of indirectness. Unfortunately, these characteristics are invisible in a single given sentence itself, so less useful for the task of classifying reports that are not otherwise marked. In addition, the clearest examples of indexicals, person pronouns, tend to be dropped in colloquial Japanese. For these reasons our current test battery will indeed fail to classify many reports as either direct or indirect. Following Coulmas, this is the source of our rumor.

So what does this mean for the interpretation of Japanese reports? Given a strict, logical direct–indirect separation (Coulmas, Hirose, Oshima *op. cit.*), many reports must be simply ambiguous between the two distinct logical forms demonstrated in (7). So, even with overt pronouns, we will often have to rely on the context to disambiguate. A case in point is (2), where taken on its own perhaps no more than a slight pause distinguishes the readings (1a) and (1b).<sup>5</sup> Presumably, the context will favor one of these readings, so, as Coulmas rightly observes, this syntactic/semantic ambiguity need not hinder communication, yet a genuine ambiguity it is nonetheless.

Separatists, like Coulmas, Hirose and Oshima, point out that, to facilitate contextual disambiguation, Japanese can rely on a very rich repertoire of what Hirose (1995) calls “addressee-oriented expressions.” These include particles like *yo* and *ne*, imperatives, and honorifics like the polite *-masu* verb forms. Like

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<sup>4</sup> One informant speaks of a distinct quotation intonation, another of a short pause after the quote should clarity demand it. Further research is required, but it seems that the intonational clues in Japanese are more subtle than in English. Note that even in English colloquial speech quotation may go unmarked.

<sup>5</sup> If the report was made in Tokyo, *kuru* (‘come’) could be used to indicate indirect discourse, though *iku* (‘go’) would still be compatible with indirect discourse too, as indirect discourse is known to shift the indexical goal parameter of *come/go* in Japanese. More on this below.

traditional indexicals, the meanings of such expressions are tied to the actual utterance context (Potts and Kawahara 2004) and “semantically presuppose the existence of an addressee” (Hirose 1995) in that context. For speech reporting this means that such expressions can only occur in direct speech, or else, when they do occur embedded in an indirect report, apply only to the actual reporter and her relation to her addressee. Unfortunately for the separatist’s cause, this prediction is not borne out, as I show next.

## 4.2 Neither direct nor indirect: the data

Take the embedded honorific *-masu* form in:

- (8) kare wa watashi ga matta machigaimashita to iimashita  
*he Top I Nom again was.wrong-Polite Comp said-Polite*  
 a. ‘He said: “I was wrong again”’  
 b. ‘He said that I was wrong again’ [(Coulmas 1985:57)]

The embedded first person pronoun could well be the reported speaker’s, as in the direct reading (8a), but, according to Coulmas, it could also refer to the reporter, in which case we should be dealing with indirect discourse, (8b). The question is, who is being polite to whom with *machigaimashita*? Unless it’s a direct quote it must refer to the context of the report, but the reporter has already expressed his politeness to his addressee sufficiently in the matrix verb. Coulmas claims that even in the indirect reading, (8b), it could indicate politeness of the reported speaker, apparently contradicting the indexical addressee-orientation of *-masu*. For now let’s use the term ‘shifting’ for the phenomenon of (arguably) addressee-oriented expressions used in (arguably) indirect speech and interpreted with respect to the reported context/speech act.

Shifted addressee-orientation in indirect speech is not restricted to the occasional embedded *-masu* form (as Coulmas seems to suggest). Here is an example of what Kuno (1988) would call ‘blended quasi-direct discourse’ with an imperative. My boss tells me:

- (9) asatte made ni kono shigoto-o yare  
*day after tomorrow until this work-Acc do-Imp-Impolite*  
 ‘Finish this work in two days!’

If I want to report this to you the next day, I might say:

- (10) ashita made ni sono shigoto-o yare to jooshi-ni  
*tomorrow until that work-Acc do-Imp Comp boss-by*  
 iwaremashita  
*was told-Polite*  
 ‘I was told by the boss that I should finish that work by tomorrow’

The adjustment of the indexicals (*asatte* to *ashita*; *kono* to *sono*) clearly indicate indirect speech. On the other hand, the impolite imperative form *yare* is strictly

addressee-oriented and as such indicates direct speech. To see this last point, note that in Japanese, as in English, imperatives simply do not embed under indirect reports at all:

(11) \*The boss said that finish that work!

It may not be technically impossible to devise a system that allows indirect discourse to shift the relevant addressees for the examples in (8) en (10). Discussing an example like (10) Oshima for instance argues that

Except for the imperative form, what Kuno calls blended discourse has all the characteristics of indirect discourse. For example, a *wh*-phrase in a ‘quasi-direct quote’ can take matrix scope:

(12) Taro<sub>i</sub>-wa [yatu<sub>i</sub>-no uti-ni nanzi-ni ko-i] to  
*Taro-Top he-Gen house-Dat what.time-Dat come-Imp Comp*  
 it-ta no ka?  
*say-Past Q Q*  
 ‘What time did Taro<sub>i</sub> say, [come to his<sub>i</sub> house ]?’

[(Oshima 2006:13)]

According to Oshima we’re dealing with indirect discourse, we just need to add some shiftable parameters to the semantics of the imperative form to account for this non-addressee-oriented interpretation.

I argue that the phenomenon is much more widespread, so a more general shifting or mixing mechanism would be less *ad hoc*. Note for instance that it’s not just the imperative force that is shifted in (10), the honorific marking of *yare*, impolite, is also shifted, as it is not something I, the reporter, would dare say to you. In fact, such boldness would even directly contradict the matrix verb’s politeness marking. Oshima himself also provides two more classes of speaker/addressee-oriented expressions that retain their original form inside an otherwise indirect report: deictic predicates and empathy-loaded expressions.

As an example of a deictic predicate, take *iku* ‘go’, indicating movement away from the context’s speaker:

(13) kinoo, Matsushima-kun-wa [kyoo boku-no uti-ni ik-u] to  
*yesterday Matsushima-Top today I-Gen home-Dat go-Pres Comp*  
 it-ta  
*say-Past*  
 ‘Yesterday, Matsushima said that he would go to my home today.’

[(Oshima 2006:15)]

As the reported movement is toward the speaker’s own house, we’d expect *kuru* (‘come’), so we’re dealing with a perspective shift here.

As an example of an empathy-loaded expression, finally, take *yaru* ‘give’, indicating the speaker empathizes more with the giver than with the receiver:

- (14) kinoo, Matsushima-kun-wa boku-ni [kyoo boku-ni purezento-o  
*yesterday Matsushima-Top I-Dat today I-Dat gift-Acc*  
 yaru] to itta  
*give-Pres Comp say-Past*  
 ‘Yesterday, Matsushima said to me that he would give me a gift to-  
 day.’ [(Oshima 2006:16)]

Here too we have an indexical, speaker-oriented expression embedded in an indirect report, and interpreted with respect to the reported rather than the actual speech context.

## 5 Towards a unified analysis: mixed quotation in speech reporting

The problem separatists have in dealing with the examples above is an apparent shifting and mixing of perspectives in indirect speech. There are ways to deal with such indirect shifting, but they involve a substantial overhaul of the semantics of indirect speech reporting or of indexicality/addressee-orientation (cf. Schlenker’s analyses of indexical shifting in Amharic). I claim that we need not go there, we already have everything we need with (i) Kaplan’s (1989) classic semantics of indexicals and indirect speech and (ii) an account of mixed quotation. Both of these mechanisms are independently motivated and relatively uncontroversial, but the second one may need some explanation.

### 5.1 Geurts and Maier’s presuppositional account of mixed quotation

My preferred semantic analysis of mixed quotation is Geurts and Maier’s (2005) presuppositional account. In that framework, quotation marks trigger the presupposition that someone used precisely the words mentioned within them (necessitating an underlying mention logic, as developed above in 3 already) to express something, while that something is left embedded in an indirect report, as in (15) (the  $\partial$  symbol marks a presupposition).

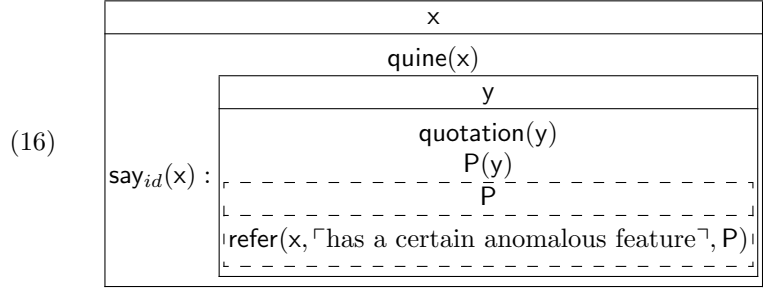
- (15) Quine says that quotation “has a certain anomalous feature”  
 $\rightsquigarrow$  Quine said that quotation has  $\partial$ [the property he refers to as  
 ‘has a certain anomalous feature’]

For those interested in, but unfamiliar with, the DRT formalization of this idea, let me go over the basics. The uninterested reader can safely skip the rest of this subsection.

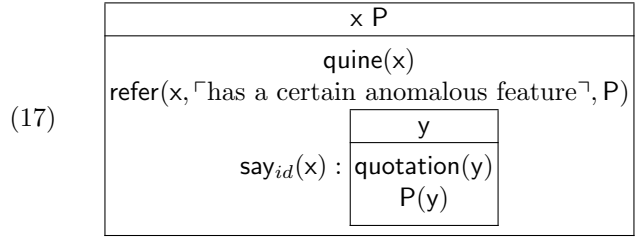
To formalize the presupposition *the property he refers to as* ‘has a certain anomalous feature’, we need not only a device to mention the quoted expression, but also to relate it to its utterer (as in *say<sub>dd</sub>*, section 3) and to the object, property, quantifier etc. that the utterer used it to mean. The type of this third argument depends on the category of the quoted expression as it fits in the

sentence, i.e. in (15) it's a property (*et*). We'll call this new three place relation *refer*. Otherwise, the DRS just represents an indirect report, using the Kaplanian monster-free *say<sub>id</sub>* from section 3 above.

More specifically, after some trivial resolutions the DRS representing (15) is:



Now, the remaining presupposition searches the global context for a speech event of Quine uttering the mentioned phrase to bind to. If that fails, an appropriate antecedent will be accommodated. In any case, we get an output DRS as in (17), that states that Quine uttered “has a certain anomalous feature” to refer to some property (not otherwise specified), and says<sub>(id)</sub> that quotation has that property:



In this way we get an account of the hybrid use/mention character of mixed quotation. The analysis suggests an extension to direct discourse, analyzing it as mixed quotation of an entire sentence (i.e. type *t* rather than *et*). This would effectively blur the line between direct and indirect discourse. The following picture emerges: to report another's speech there is only indirect discourse, within which the device of mixed quotation can be used to mimic a particular phrase of the reported speech act verbatim.<sup>6</sup> Direct discourse, in this picture, is merely a limiting case of mixed quotation. The aim of the current paper is to present independent evidence for this blurring of the direct–indirect distinction.

For more details and a comparison with Potts' (2004) related framework, I refer the reader to Geurts and Maier (2005) and Maier (2007).

<sup>6</sup> The reporter can have a variety of reasons for wanting to do this: he may not have understood the original words, the words may be meaningless, the reporter may be uncomfortable using the phrase, may want to liven up his whole report, may consider that phrase exceptionally well put, etc.



$\rightsquigarrow$  My father screamed that he would never allow me to marry  
 $\partial$ [the individual he refers to as 「that bastard Webster」]

Anand argues that the quotational shift analysis of ‘non-speaker-oriented expressives’ is empirically superior to Potts’ analysis that meddles with the Kaplan’s contexts by adding a ‘expressive judge’ parameter.

I claim that in both cases of shiftiness in reports the mixed quotation analysis is simpler and more compatible with tried and tested semantic theory than the alternatives: Schlenker’s monsters, which overturn Kaplan’s famous prohibition thereof and even threaten the notion of rigidity,<sup>9</sup> in the case of Amharic shifted *I*; and the *ad hoc* addition of shiftable expressive judges to the utterance context (cf. Anand 2007), in the case of expressive shift.

### 5.3 Mixed quotation in Japanese and beyond

My analysis of the Japanese data is now easily stated. The examples in 4.2 appear to mix direct and indirect discourse because they do; they are indirect reports with a mixed quoted phrase. Let’s go through a couple of our examples.

The intended ‘indirect’ reading (8b) of (8), the report with the embedded *-masu* form, corresponds to a logical form where that form (and perhaps some more, but not the first person pronoun) is mixed quoted:

- (21) kare wa watashi ga “matta machigaimashita” to iimashita  
 he Top I Nom again was.wrong-Polite Comp said-Polite  
 $\approx$  ‘He said that I was “wrong again”’,<sup>10</sup> [cf. (8)]  
 $\rightsquigarrow$  he said that I was  $\partial$ [what he referred to as 「wrong again」]

Note again that this involves quotation marks that are invisible on the surface. I have defended this assumption for Amharic briefly above. In fact, I share it with direct–indirect separatists like Coulmas, who appeals to them to get the other reading, (8a). For us, that so-called direct discourse reading brings nothing new, the only difference with (21) is that the first person pronoun is now also part of the mixed quote, which presumably now covers the whole clause:

- (22) He said that “I was wrong again”

The next two examples, (10) and (12), feature (invisible) mixed quoted imperatives:

<sup>9</sup> Schlenker argues that his system upholds Kaplan’s fundamental distinction between rigid/directly referential and descriptive terms, but this is much less clear in e.g. Von Stechow’s (2002) related account where shifted indexicals correspond to mere bound variables.

<sup>10</sup> My English translation’s quotation does not include the *was*, which is included in the Japanese version. In English it would sound strange to include the auxiliary because of the clash of third vs. first person inflection. Note also that the inclusion of the past tense morpheme in both Japanese and English is not theoretically necessary; the theory predicts that it should also be possible to mix-quote just the politeness morpheme, for instance.

- (23) ashita made ni sono shigoto-o “yare” to jooshi-ni  
*tomorrow until that work-Acc do-Imp Comp boss-by*  
 iwaremashita  
*was told-Polite*  
 ≈ ‘I was told by the boss that I should “finish!” that work by tomorrow’  
 [cf. (10)]

The quotation marks correctly defer the impolite imperative force to the reported speaker, the boss.<sup>11</sup>

To get a fully unified account of shifting through mixed quotation, the logical form of (13), finally, requires mixed quotation of *iku* (‘go’), which yields the interpretation *Matsushima said he would do ∂[what he referred to as ‘go’] to my house*. And similarly for (14). Of course, on the basis of only these particular examples we cannot discard the possibility that *iku* and *yaru* are simply descriptive terms that can be freely shifted by binding to any salient reference point. To decide between these alternative analyses, shifting by quotation or by binding, the behavior of the predicates in non-report clauses is crucial: if they can shift their reference point there as well the predicate is not truly context-oriented and quotation is not needed. If shifts occur only in reports, however, the by now properly motivated mixed quotation mechanism can take care of the perspective shifting without added semantic machinery. To determine which way to go with the predicates at hand more empirical research is required.

I have provided a principled account of shifting without complicating our contexts or the semantics of indexicals and reports. We have essentially given up the two-fold direct–indirect distinction. In fact, we have given up the whole notion of direct discourse: speech reporting follows Kaplan’s semantics of indirect discourse except for the parts (in some cases the whole clause, or more) that are mixed quoted. These quoted parts are automatically (by presupposition resolution) deferred to the reported speaker. For Japanese in particular, this means we can keep the intuitive analysis of speaker/addressee-oriented expressions as indexicals, so that indeed in reported speech “addressee-oriented expressions are, by definition, used only as public expressions [= direct discourse/quotation].” What we reject is the, often implicit, assumption that “phrases and sentences containing addressee-oriented expressions are also addressee-oriented, functioning as public expression [= direct discourse].” (Hirose 1995:227)

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<sup>11</sup> Spelling out the whole story here requires that we settle on a proper semantics of imperatives, a rather tricky but independent problem that I cannot go into here.

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