

# Armenian speech reports: blurring the quotative line

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- 1 Introduction
- 2 The behavior of indexicals under *t'e*
- 3 The semantics and pragmatics of *t'e*
- 4 At-issueness, eventivity and demonstration
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# Goals of this talk

- To explore the semantics and pragmatics of complementizer *t'e* in Modern Eastern Armenian, used to introduce speech reports.
- To argue that the very existence of this kind of element in natural languages forces us to rethink the rigid distinction between direct and indirect speech.

# Modern Eastern Armenian: the picture

- Modern Eastern Armenian (Indo-European: isolate), spoken in Yerevan region, Armenia, uses two different complementizers to introduce finite complement clauses: *or* and *t'e*.
- Both *or* and *t'e* can be used to introduce either direct or indirect speech:

- (1) a. Narek-ə                      Anna-in      asel-a                      **or/ t'e**    kez  
Narek-NOM-DEF   Anna-DAT   say.PST-3SG   COMP   2SG.DAT  
sirum                      em  
love.PTCP.PRS   be.PRS.1SG
- b. 'Narek<sub>i</sub> said to Anna<sub>j</sub> that he<sub>i</sub> loves her<sub>j</sub>' (indirect speech)
- c. 'Narek said to Anna: 'I love you' (direct speech/quotation)
- d. Narek said to Anna that I<sub>Spk</sub> love you<sub>Add</sub> (indexical reading)

- I will focus on readings (1c) and (1d).

# Main features of *t'e*

- *t'e* reports are **at issue**: under the quotational reading, *t'e* introduces a proposition that can be used to address the ongoing **question under discussion** (Roberts 2012, Simons et al. 2010).
- *t'e* reports presuppose the existence of a **previous and salient speech event, which is at-issue in the conversation** (Brasoveanu and Farkas, 2007)
- *t'e* has an **evidential component**: it conveys that the speaker is unsure about the truth of *p*, something that *or* lacks.

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# Does *t'e* reports involve indexical shift ?

- The fact that 1st and 2nd person pronouns can have ambiguous reference in attitude reports has now long been studied in various languages, a phenomenon known as *indexical shift* (Schlenker 2003, Deal 2020).
- IS is exemplified in (2) and (3), in which pronouns and agreement markers are ambiguous between an indexical reading (referring to the actual speech event participants) or a shifted reading (referring to the reported speech event participants):

- (2) jon jəgna nə-ññ yil-all  
John hero be.PFV-S 3SG-M.say-AUX.3SG-M  
John<sub>i</sub> says that he<sub>i,Spk</sub> is a hero (Amharic: Schlenker 1999)
- (3) Hesen-i mi-ra va kε ez dɛwletia  
Hesen-OBL I-OBL say COMP I rich.be-PRS  
Hesen<sub>i</sub> tells me<sub>Spk</sub> that he<sub>i,Spk</sub> is rich  
(Zazaki: Anand and Nevins 2004)



# The behavior of indexicals under *t'e*

- Sentences like (2) and (3) could in principle be analyzed as instances of quotation.
- Contrary to their indirect counterparts, it is often assumed that quotational reports are grammatically and semantically opaque, alongside the lines of (4):

## Grammatical opacity

(Anand 2006: 81)

(4) Quotations form a closed domain with respect to syntactic and semantic operators.

- Preview: I will argue that *t'e* reports do not involve indexical shift, but nevertheless challenge (4) in a number of ways.
- A number of tests can confirm that MEA *t'e* reports do not involve indexical shift:

## *t'*e clauses cannot be extracted out of

- One of the tests involves *extraction*: being opaque environments, quotations should not allow for movement of any constituent out of their domain.
- As a consequence, *wh*-movement out of quotes is typically ruled out in English:

(5) \*Who<sub>i</sub> did Hesen say, 't<sub>i</sub> kissed me'? (Anand 2006: (232))

- However, for an indexical shifting language like Zazaki, *wh*-movement out of embedded complements is perfectly possible, as illustrated by the following:

(6) Piyaa-o<sub>i</sub> [kε    Rojda va        kε       mɨ    t<sub>i</sub> paci kerdε] Ali  
Person    COMP Rojda say.PST    COMP I.OBL t kiss did    Ali  
biyo  
be.PST

'Ali was the person that Rojda<sub>i</sub> said I<sub>i,Spk</sub> kissed'.

(Anand and Nevins 2004: (12))

# *t*'e clauses cannot be extracted out of

- It seems that MEA patterns with English in not permitting this kind of movement:

(7) *Context: Anna and Mariam are attending a party. At some point Anna sees Narek entering the room and reports his arrival to Mariam. But because of the music, Mariam could not hear properly and asks:*

- a. \*Intf<sub>i</sub> as-ɛts-ir        te        jɛs    t<sub>i</sub>    tɛ-sa        gali-sa?  
Who say-AOR-2SG COMP 1SG *t* see.AOR-1SG come.AOR-1SG  
'Who did you say that you saw coming ?'

## *De re* substitution

- Another test for telling apart quotations from indexical shifting complements is the *de re* replacement test (Deal 2013, Shklovsky and Sudo 2014).
- The test succeeds if two coreferential terms can be substituted *salva veritate* within the report and judged felicitous in the same context.
- Consider an example from indexical shifting language Nez Perce (Penutian; Idaho, Washington and Oregon, USA), from Deal (2013):

(8) *Context: Beth told me she met Harold. She doesn't know he is a teacher. When we are in class, I say to someone else:*

a. Beth-nim hi-hi-n-e *pro*<sub>Obj</sub> *pro*<sub>Subj</sub>  
Beth-ERG 3SBJ/1OBJ-say-PRFVE-PST *pro* *pro*  
'e-wewkuny- $\emptyset$ -e sepehitemenew'etuu-ne  
1SBJ/3OBJ-meet-PRFVE-PST teacher-OBL  
'Beth<sub>i</sub> told me she<sub>i</sub> met the teacher'. (Deal 2010)

- But in *t'e* reports, a coreferential element cannot be substituted to the term that was used by the speaker in the original utterance:

(9) *Context: Anna and Mariam are back to school and are classmates. Anna sees the teacher for the first time and falls in love, but since she wasn't paying attention, she hasn't heard his name. She says to Mariam: "I love the teacher". Unbeknownst to her, Mariam and the teacher, Narek, know each other from relatives. Mariam reports what Anna said to a friend:*

- a. #Anna-n            asel-a            **t'e**    Narek-in    sirum  
Anna.NOM-DEF say.PST-3SG COMP Narek-DAT love.PTCP.PRS  
em  
be.PRS.1SG  
'Anna<sub>i</sub> said that she<sub>i</sub> loves Narek'

# Quantifying in

- The postulate GRAMMATICAL OPACITY in (4) is traditionally taken to imply that quantification into embedded clauses is impossible (Quine 1953, Tarski 1956).
- However, a number of natural language examples seem to contradict that claim.

(10) The dean asked that a student 'accompany every professor'.  
(Cumming 2003: (11))

- In (10), the universal quantifier *every* takes inverse scope over the existential indefinite, a rather puzzling fact for any account of quotation as opaque constructions, that should *a priori* exclude any type of movement such as quantifier raising.

- Other problematic examples display binding dependencies within quoted material:

(11) Bush<sub>*i*</sub> also said his administration<sub>*j*</sub> would 'achieve our<sub>*i,j*</sub> objectives' in Iraq. (Cumming 2003: (8))

- It thus seems that, *pace* advocates of the pure opacity account for quoted complements, quotation(at least, in its mixed form) is more porous than traditionally assumed.

- MEA complements introduced by *t'e* display such a flexibility; note that, in that case, the use of *t'e* is required, the same sentence being infelicitous with *or*:

- (12) lurakanfiur usanox as-um e t'e / #or fat  
Each student say-PTCP.PRS be.PRS3SG COMP a lot  
em afxat-el-u orpeszi kennutjune lav handzn  
be.PRS1SG work-INF-DAT in order to exam well perform  
em  
be.PRS1SG  
'Each student<sub>i</sub> said: 'I<sub>i</sub> will work a lot in order to pass the exam'



# The bottom line

- Embedded reports involving indexical shift differ from those involving quotation: IS complements show a greater amount of syntactic flexibility, allowing movement out of embedded clauses and *de re* substitution.
- However, the fact that quantification and binding are possible within quoted complements show that quotation is not an all-or-nothing affair, and that opacity must be scalar.
- MEA *t'e* reports can be characterized as involving a form of loose quotation, with some of its properties patterning with indirect speech (binding and quantification), and some others patterning with more conservative forms of quotation.
- In what follows, I want to suggest that the availability to resolve ambiguity of reference for first and second person towards a reportative quote, rather than an indirect indexical report, is strongly tied to the evidential component of *t'e*.

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# The semantics and pragmatics of *t'e*

- In previous literature, use of *t'e* has been described as implying that the speaker expresses doubts about *p* (Giorgi and Haroutyunian, 2019), or that the speaker defers the responsibility of *p* to the agent of the reported speech event (Donabedian-Demopoulos, 2018).
- This can be verified that an utterance like (13a) can be followed by explicit denials of *p* by the speaker (13 b and c):

- (13) a.   Narek-ə                   Anna-in       asel-a           **t'e**       kez  
          Narek.NOM-DEF   Anna-DAT   say.PST-3SG   COMP   2SG.DAT  
          sirum                   εm  
          love.PTCP.PRS   be.PRS.1SG  
          ‘Narek said to Anna: “I love you” ...
- b.   ... But I don't believe it'.
- c.   ...But that's not true'.

# Reportative evidentials

- This brings us close to a class of morphemes that are called *reportative evidentials* in the literature (Faller 2002, 2019, Matthewson et al. 2007, Murray 2010, 2014, AnderBois 2014 i.a.).
- When a speaker uses *t'e* in order to report a proposition *p*, she actually makes a weaker assertion than she would be doing in reporting *p* with *or*.
- The proposal here is, roughly, to say that an assertion of the form *t'e p* is a proposal to discuss *p* while conveying that the speaker remains agnostic about whether *p* is true.

# Reportative evidentials

- In Cuzco Quechua, for instance, a reportative morpheme *s* can be used when the speaker does not want to commit to the truth of the proposition reported:

(14) Pay-kuna=s    qulqi-ta        saqiy-wa-n        Mana=má,    ni    un  
3SG-PL=REP    money-ACC    leave-1OBJ-3    NEG=IMP    not    one  
sol-ta        saqi-sha-wa-n=chu  
Sol-ACC    leave-PROG-1OBJ-3=NEG.  
'They left me money (I was told). (But) no, they didn't leave me  
one sol.'  
(Faller 2002: 191)

# Reportative evidentials

- According to Faller (2002, 2019), the reportative morpheme *s* has two key components:
  - It signals an *absence of commitment* from the speaker towards *p* (which goes against it being used in an assertion);
  - But in the same time, asserting *p-s* can be used to address the QUD - in other words, propose *p* as a candidate to update the *common ground* (Stalnaker, 1978).
- This could at first glance seem like a paradox: how can a speaker utter *p* but not properly assert it (being not committed in believing that *p* is true) while in the same move, propose to update the *cg* with *p* ?

# Reportative evidentials

- When a speaker utters  $p$ -s, he does not genuinely assert that  $p$ , but merely *present*  $p$  as being the assertion of some other speaker distinct from herself.
- We therefore need a way to distinguish these two components within a single discourse move. This is precisely how Faller (2002) accounts for sentences involving Quechuan evidential  $s$  above:

- (15) a.  $ILL(14) = PRESENT('They\ left\ me\ money')$   
b.  $SINC(14) = \exists s[Assert(s, p) \wedge s \notin s_c, h_c]$

- The sincerity conditions for uttering (14) stipulate that there exists a speaker which sincerely asserted  $p$  and who is distinct from the speaker and hearer of the actual context.

- The same analysis, I argue, can be reconducted for MEA *t'e*: it introduces a report that is not asserted, but presented as an assertion previously made from a third party. In other words, *t'e* complements are both *used* and *mentioned*.
- Further support comes from the fact that, when no other discourse referents are available to serve as 'anchors' for the proposition introduced by *t'e*, the reportative reading is lost.
- In that case, pronouns must be interpreted indexically, i.e. as referring to participants in the actual context. This is illustrated in (16).



## *t'e* as an evidential

- (16) a. Annai          maman   asɛl-ə          (**Anna-in**) **t'e**    du  
Anna.GEN   mom    say.PRS-3SG   Anna.DAT   EVID   you.NOM  
pɛtk-ə    indʒ    ognɛs            tun-ə        makrelu  
need-COP   me.DAT   help-PRS.2SG   house-DEF   clean-PTCP.FUT  
hamar  
for
- b. 'Anna's mother said (**to Anna**) *t'e* you<sub>Add</sub> should help me<sub>Spk</sub> with the cleaning' (indexical)
- c. 'Anna<sub>j</sub>'s mother<sub>i</sub> said **to Anna<sub>j</sub>** *t'e* 'you<sub>j</sub> should help me<sub>i</sub> with the cleaning' (reportative)
- d. #'Anna<sub>j</sub>'s mother<sub>i</sub> said *t'e* 'you<sub>j</sub> should help me<sub>i</sub> with the cleaning' (reportative).

- The generalization is the following: if no distinct hearer than the actual one is introduced as a potential discourse referent, the 2SG pronoun retains its indexical value, and the reportative interpretation is lost.
- See Özyıldız (2012) for similar data about indexical shift in Turkish.

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## $t'e$ introduces a demonstration

- As previously mentioned, I would like to suggest that the quotational features of  $t'e$  reports are directly linked to their evidential component, which confers them the ability to refer to events in a demonstrative fashion.
- Here, I follow Davidson (2015), Maier (2017) and Bary and Maier (2021) in treating direct speech reports as involving a demonstrative component referring not only to the content of speech events (a proposition), but also to their form.
- I use a neo-davidsonian event semantics to implement the idea that  $t'e$  is semantically some kind of quotation operator that takes both linguistic forms and events as arguments:

$$(17) \quad \llbracket t'e \rrbracket = \lambda q_u. \lambda e [form(e) = q]$$

## $t'e$ introduces a demonstration

- The semantics for the  $t'e$  report previously discussed would then amount to the following:

- (18) a. Narek said to Anna  $t'e$  I love you.  
b.  $\exists e[\text{say}(e) \wedge \text{agent}(e, \text{Narek}) \wedge \text{patient}(e, \text{Anna}) \wedge \text{form}(e, \ulcorner \text{I love you} \urcorner)]$

- In this,  $t'e$  reports pattern with so called cases of mixed quotation (Davidson 1979, Geurts and Maier 2003, Maier 2007, 2014, 2015, 2018), which are illustrated in (19):

- (19) Bill Watterson said that reality 'continues to ruin my life'.  
(Maier 2014: (7))

## *t'e* introduces a demonstration

- (19) is an instance of mixed quotation because the quoted complement *continues to ruin my life* is both syntactically and semantically integrated to its host .
- The fact that the quoted parts are 'recruited' by the syntax and the semantics does not prevent them to be genuine quotes and therefore, to defer the interpretation of its elements to another speaker: in (19), the indexical *my* refers to the speaker of the reported context, Bill Watterson.
- In *t'e* reports, indexicals tend to be systematically interpreted as referring to the participants of the original speech act, not the current one.
- Mixed (and pure) quotation also does not allow for substitution of coreferential terms *salva veritate* (Maier, 2014), which patterns with the data reported in (9).

## *t'*e introduces a demonstration

- Since quotation forces the speaker to endorse the perspective of the agent of the *say*-event, what he reports has to be read *de dicto* per definition.
- This is a consequence of what Maier (2015) dubs the VERBATIM constraint:

### Verbatim

(Maier, 2017)

(20) In direct discourse, faithfully reproduce the linguistic form of the reported utterance.

- This constraint will likely prevent any *de re* intrusion within speech reports like (9).

## *t'e* introduces a demonstration

- Even more interestingly, Maier (2015) proposes another constraint operative in direct discourse that is of relevance here, that of **ATTRACTION**:

### Attraction

(Maier, 2017)

(21) When talking about the most salient speech act participants, use indexicals to refer to them directly.

- The **ATTRACTION** constraint, as I see it, can help explain why indexicals in ambiguous sentences like (16) lose their reportative value when no other discourse referents are made available.
- In the absence of any salient entity at the discourse level, **ATTRACTION** will force the hearer to resolve indexical reference at the level of the actual speech context, and the indexical meaning is selected over the reportative one.



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- Indexicals under *t'e* reports in MEA exhibit an interesting behavior with respect to their referential properties: they are ambiguous between a direct speech/quotative reading and an indexical reading.
- The quotative reading is triggered by the evidential properties of *t'e*, which acts upon the force of the embedded sentence: it turns an assertive act into a *presentative* act, which can nevertheless still be used to address the QUD (i.e. *mentioned* and *used* at the same time).
- Under the quotative reading, *t'e* reports share many features with the phenomenon of 'mixed' or 'open' quotation reported for other languages, suggesting for the possibility of a unified account in terms of demonstration, along the lines of Davidson (2015) i.a.

I just wanted to say  
**‘THANK YOU!’**  
and I just did !

Feedback much welcome: [david.blunier@unige.ch](mailto:david.blunier@unige.ch)

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