Quotational Indefinites: Bulgarian and Beyond

Introduction  Beyond their regular meaning as existential quantifiers, indefinites can trigger a range of additional implications, e.g. they can invite specific vs. nonspecific interpretations (see [4], [8], a.m.o.) or convey ignorance towards the identity the referent (see [5], [1], a.o.). In this paper, I discuss one less known variety of indefinites, which I call quotational indefinites (QIs). While I focus on QIs in Bulgarian (e.g. edi-koi si ‘one-who.MASC REFL’), such indefinites are also found in German (see [2]) and Japanese (see [9]), and are akin to English placeholders like whatshisface or so-and-so. I claim that (i) QIs range over expressions (i.e. linguistic objects) that (ii) are referring and that (iii) were uttered in a previous conversation. Taken together, these claims imply that indefinites can range over quotations (i.e. pieces of language that can be attributed to another speaker) and thus can serve reportative functions. More generally, this work uncovers important interactions between phenomena such as indefiniteness, quotation, and reportativity and forwards our understanding of the typology of indefinites.

Core empirical properties  QIs can be regarded as fillers for referring expressions: they can fill in for proper names or definite descriptions but not for quantified DPs or indefinites (whether specific or nonspecific), see (1)-(2). In addition, the use of QIs triggers the implication that an antecedent expression was uttered in a previous conversation. Importantly, this implication projects, i.e. it survives embedding under entailment-canceling operators like negation or modals (3). Thirdly, QIs can also occur in direct quotations, as in (4). This sentence is ambiguous between (4a), a verbatim reading in which the QI is part of the previous utterance, and (4b), a non-verbatim reading in which the QI fills in for some referring expression in the original utterance.

(1) Maria: Ima-m srešta s Ivan / šef-a mi / edna prijatel-ka / mnogo xora. Maria: ‘I have a meeting with Ivan / my boss / a friend of mine / many people.’

(2) Maria ima srešta s edi-koi si / edi-koi si / #edi-koj si / #edi-koi si. Maria has.3SG meeting with QI / QI / QI / QI ‘Maria has a meeting with someone.’

(3) Maria ima / n-jama / može da ima srešta s edi-koi si. Maria have.3SG / NEG-have.3SG / might.3SG SUBJ have.3SG meeting with QI a. Assertion: ‘Maria has / doesn’t have / might have a date with someone.’
   b. Reportative implication: ‘Maria’s date was mentioned in a previous conversation.’

(4) Ivan kaz-a: “Maria celun-a edi-koi si”. (ambiguous) Ivan say-3SG Maria kiss-3SG QI a. Verbatim reading: ‘Ivan uttered “Maria celuna edi-koi si”.’
   b. Non-verbatim reading: ‘Ivan uttered “Maria celuna z”, where z is an r-expression.’

Previous work on QIs  Since Japanese QIs like dare-dare ‘who-who’ are claimed to only occur in quotations, [9] analyzes these as existential quantifiers over expressions that denote individuals (or objects of type e). This account then requires some adjustments for Bulgarian QIs, which routinely appear outside quotation. According to [2], German QIs of the form der und der ‘the and the’ existentially quantify over individuals (not expressions) that were uniquely identified in a previous
conversation. On this view, it is less clear why Bulgarian (as well as German) QIs can occur in direct quotations and obtain non-verbatim readings, which refer to expressions. Neither of these two accounts readily explains why specific indefinites are not good antecedents for QIs, given that specific indefinites have previously been analyzed as type e expressions (see e.g. [4]) and that such indefinites uniquely identify the referent. I build on this previous work and propose a single meaning for QIs in Bulgarian that derives all the empirical properties mentioned above.

**Formal proposal** I assume a new logical type u for linguistic expressions and a corresponding domain \( D_u \), which contains all possible concatenations of symbols (see [7]). I also introduce an expression interpretation function \( E : D_u \rightarrow D \) such that \( E(\alpha) = [] \alpha \) if \( \alpha \) is a term of the language and otherwise \( E \) is the identity function. That is, \( E \) maps expressions that are part of the language back into more familiar domains, e.g. \( E(\text{Ivan}) = \text{ivan} \in D_e \) because Ivan \( \in D_u \) is also a term of the language. To accommodate arguments of type u (e.g. quotational arguments or traces of raised QIs), I extend the inventory of lexical meanings such that if \( [\alpha]^E = \ldots ?x_e \ldots \phi \) is part of the lexicon then so is \( [\alpha]^E = \ldots ?x_u \ldots \phi[x/E(z)] \), where \( \phi[x/y] \) is just like \( \phi \) but with all free occurrences of \( x \) substituted by \( y \). For example, we now have as lexical meanings both \([\text{sleep}]^E = ?x_e \text{sleep}(x) \) and \([\text{sleep}]^E = ?x_u \text{sleep}(E(z)) \). Finally, I adopt a partial semantics along the lines of [3] and borrow from these authors the (static) presupposition operator \( \partial \), where \( \partial \phi \) is true if \( \phi \) is true and undefined otherwise.

I propose that QIs are interpreted as existential generalized quantifiers over expressions (5). For example, a sentence of the form as in (6) receives the interpretation as shown. I assume that (6) has the LF of [QLz [Maria date z]], where the QI raises from its object position and leaves a trace of type u. The semantic derivation uses the enriched lexical meaning \([\text{date}]^E = ?x_u ?x_e \text{date}(x, E(z)) \) to get to the (lambda abstracted) meaning \([\text{Maria date z}]^E = ?x_u \text{date(maria, E(z))} \), which then directly combines with the QI meaning in (5) and derives (6).

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(5) \quad [\text{QI}]^E = ?x_u (?x_e \text{r-expression}(z) \land P(z) \land \partial \exists y_e \text{utter}(y, z))
\]

\[
(6) \quad [\text{Maria is dating QI}]^E = \exists y_u (?x_e \text{r-expression}(z) \land \text{date(maria, E(z))} \land \partial \exists y_e \text{utter}(y, z))
\]

The meaning in (6) correctly predicts that the antecedent expression is a referring term, assuming that the predicate \( \text{r-expression} \) singles out proper names and definite descriptions. The conjunct \( \partial \exists y_e \text{utter}(y, z) \) describes the reportative implication. This implication projects because if \( \phi \) and \( \psi \) are defined, the following logical equivalences hold: \( \neg (\partial \phi \land \psi) \equiv \partial \phi \land \neg \psi \), \( \exists x (\partial \phi \land \psi) \equiv \exists x \partial \phi \land \exists x (\phi \land \psi) \), \( \exists x \partial \phi \equiv \partial \exists x \phi \) (see [3]). These equivalences ensure that presuppositional terms can always be pulled out of operator embedding. Finally, the puzzling non-verbatim readings of QIs in direct quotations follow if we allow raising out of quotation, as proposed in [9] and [6]. If (7) below has the LF of [QLz [Ivan said: “Maria is dating z”]], then the lambda abstracted meaning of [Ivan said: “Maria is dating z”] is \( ?x_u ?x_e \text{say}(\text{ivan, Maria is dating z}) \), which can be directly fed into the meaning of the QI in (5) to produce (7).

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(7) \quad [\text{Ivan said: “Maria kissed QI”}]^E = \exists y_u (?x_e \text{r-expression}(z) \land \text{say(ivan, Maria kissed z)} \land \partial \exists y_e \text{utter}(y, z))
\]

**References**

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