

Uh

Mark de Vries
University of Groningen

In: J. Hoeksema & B. Hollebrandse (Eds.). *Nuts gone flake* [Liber Amicorum voor Dicky Gilbers], 53-86.

1. Introduction

A frequent sound in spoken language is *uh*. Phonetic and/or spelling variants are *eh*, *um*, *uhm*, *ehm*, *er*, and *erm*. Such sounds (whether they consist of one or more phonemes) indicate hesitation on the part of the speaker. Although spoken language is full of disfluencies, we should not hastily conclude that all hesitation phenomena are mere symptoms of problems in speaking. *Uh*, I believe, is not just a symptomatic sound, it is a linguistic signal. As it is conventionalized, it can be considered a word. It may function as a speech act with illocutionary and perlocutionary meaning aspects: “Wait a moment, I’m thinking, but I’m not finished yet, so do not take turn!” At first sight, however, it is not clear what the word itself refers to, or what concept it represents. In this short paper, I will advance the view that *uh* is a particular kind of non-canonical quotation. I will make use of Clark & Gerrig’s (1990) analysis of quotations as pragmatic demonstrations, and argue that it has surprising consequences. Quotations do not necessarily refer to tokens of actual speech; furthermore, there need not be a spatio-temporal distance between the quote and what is being quoted. *Uh*, then, is a conventionalized linguistic demonstration of hesitation, which is a psychological state of mind occurring simultaneously with the corresponding utterance. If this approach is on the right track, it will shed light on a larger class of interjections expressing the speaker’s emotional attitude or state of mind, as well as certain ideophones.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 shows that *uh* acts as a word from various perspectives, and that it behaves on a par with several interjections that can be parenthetically constructed in syntax. Section 3 reviews the idea that quotations are linguistic demonstrations. This has wide-ranging consequences: quotation can be naturally extended to the possibility of quoting non-linguistic matters such as sounds, other aspects of events, and even subjective attitudes. Section 4 argues that interjections and ideophones are indeed quotations on the basis of a number of qualitative criteria. Section 5 is the conclusion.

2. The word *uh*

The methodological distinction between linguistic competence and performance (Chomsky 1965) has proven to be very useful for grammar research. It is also clear that in addition to core grammar, the effects of performance and language use can and should be studied. One of such effects is delay in speaking. I will not discuss the possible causes of delay, but only the linguistic result. Particularly interesting in this respect is the hesitation marker *uh* and variants thereof. Following Clark & Fox Tree (2002) and others, I will show that *uh* behaves as a word (or quasi-word, if one likes). Therefore, it must be syntactically and semantically integrated within the grammatical context. To be sure, it would be odd to assume that *uh* is part of the primary sentence structure. It can, however, be considered to be parenthetically constructed with respect to the syntactic context. As is the case with various other interjections, the meaning of *uh* is not straightforward; this will be discussed in the next sections.

Uh is often called a filled pause. Incidentally, it does not exclusively indicate delay, it can also be used to announce a correction; see e.g. Levelt (1983) or Ginzburg, Fernández & Schlangen (2014) for discussion. The marker *uh* is very frequent. For spoken English, Bortfeld et al. (2001) measure a rate of about 2.5% for fillers. According to De Jong (1979), *eh* (= *uh*) is within the top five of most frequent words in spoken Dutch, both in formal and informal speech, and for all types of speakers (in terms of age, gender, and education); but there is a lot of individual variation. This can be confirmed by looking at the much larger Spoken Dutch Corpus (2004; for a description, see the website <http://lands.let.ru.nl/cgn/ehome.htm>, and Oostdijk 2000), from which I calculated that *uh(m)* is ranked fourth; the rate is 2.86% on a total of eight million words. (Here, texts read aloud are excluded, since they lack many characteristics of spontaneous speech. Furthermore, notice that only instances of *uh* between other words could be counted; they do, however, also occur within words, which increases the frequency even more. Thanks to Herman Heringa for his help with this small investigation, which we did in 2007.) This percentage is comparable to what Bortfeld et al. found for English. A more recent and large-scale comparative study in Wieling et al. (2016) reports a slightly higher percentage for Dutch (over 3% relative frequency). In what follows, I will not be concerned with the relative differences between *uh* and the nasal variant *um*, which can be looked at from a comparative sociolinguistic perspective, but see e.g. Clark & Fox Tree (2002), De Leeuw (2007), Wieling (2014), and Wieling et al. (2016) for relevant discussion.

A priori, it is open for debate whether *uh* is a mere symptom of a problem in speaking (see Levelt 1989, for instance), or an actual linguistic signal – and hence a word. Let me briefly recapitulate the arguments that support the second view in the literature. For what it is worth, *uh* is listed in most dictionaries, and it is usually classified as an interjection. There are indeed several reasons for considering *uh* a word. Firstly, *uh* has a supra-individual character, that is, it is clearly conventionalized. In principle, any sound or gesture may be used to indicate hesitation by an individual speaker on an individual occasion, but *uh* is used and recognized by everyone. In this respect it behaves similarly to normal words; as, for instance, the arbitrary syllable /eɪp/ is used to indicate an ape in English. However, there is more to it. It appears that *uh* is near-universal, perhaps due to intuitive iconic features. A similar case has been made for the interjection *huh?* by Dingemanse, Torreira & Enfield (2013).

Secondly, *uh* and its variants are not just random sounds, but they are adapted to the phonological inventory of a particular language. In English (and many other languages), it is always pronounced with a schwa; and clearly, variants such as [ə:], [ə:m] are acceptable phonemic combinations. Moreover, *uh* behaves prosodically as expected: it can get a parenthetical intonation, and it can cliticize onto a previous word, depending on its position.

Thirdly, if *uh* is a word, we might expect some cross-linguistic variation. Although the schwa is very common, we also find, for example, [ɛ:], [ɛ:m], [m:], and even [ɛstɛ:] lit. ‘this’ (in Spanish), or [ano:] (in Japanese).

Fourthly, *uh* cannot be considered a speech error because speakers have – and sometimes clearly show – control over its use (which is not to say that they are always consciously aware of all minor choices in speaking).

Fifthly, *uh* serves communicative purposes. It can be used as a floor-holding device, but this is certainly not the only possibility. Expressing the fact that one is hesitating is informative, sometimes even important. Consider the following example. If John asks Mary if he can borrow her car, the direct response *No!* is quite blunt. The answer *uh...no* sounds differently. Here, the hesitation particle indicates, by pragmatic implicatures, that she is at least considering his request for a moment.

To conclude, there is strong evidence that *uh* is a linguistic signal.

A comparison with interjections

If *uh* is a word, does it classify as an interjection? This question has been answered positively by e.g. James (1972), Clark & Fox Tree (2002), and myself. However, O'Connell & Kowal (2005) criticize this view (notice that they do not contest the word status of *uh*; neither do they provide an alternative). Let me review some arguments for considering *uh* an interjection, and briefly address the objections made.

Interjections can stand alone like holophrases, but also when they are integrated in a sentence, they have zero valency: they do not select and are not selected by other lexical items. Furthermore, they do not restrict the meaning of other constituents in the sentence, and vice versa. Related to this is the fact that they do not show any inflection. (See also Van den Toorn 1960, Droste 1961, De Groot 1963, Brummel 1978.) *Uh* is no different in these respects. Finally, it is worth mentioning that interjections are usually monosyllabic (apart from instances of reduplication). *Uh* fits this pattern.

As far as I can see, prototypical expressive interjections such as *oh* and *ouch* relate to the utterance time. (More generally, Wilkins 1992 argues that interjections are complex deictics. See also O'Connell, Kowal & Ageneau 2005, who state that an interjection expresses emotion at the moment it is experienced.) For instance, if someone says *Ouch!*, he or she is most probably feeling (or still feeling) pain at that very moment (pain, of course, is durative, and the peak intensity might be right before the utterance – but that does not seem essential). Similarly, *uh* is a real-time expression of hesitation.

Generally, interjections are attitudinal and potentially relational with respect to the hearer or the conversation. There are possible distinctions between expressive, conative and phatic functions (compare *brr*, *shush*, and *hmhm*), but these are not necessarily mutually exclusive; see Dingemanse (to appear a) for some discussion and references. In any case, the meaning can be periphrastically described in terms of usage, unlike what is the case for regular words, which have an inherent sense (a Fregean intensional Sinn). For instance, *ouch* can be roughly defined as “interjection used to express pain”; it does not mean “pain” or “to feel pain”. Similarly, *uh* can be described as “used to express hesitation”, but not as “hesitation” or “to hesitate”. It seems to me that there is a similarity with indexicals. According to Kaplan (1977), certain expressions are ‘directly referential’; these do not have a regular Sinn, but they do have a ‘character’. For instance, the deictic term *I* does not literally mean “(the) speaker”, but its character is ‘a term that indicates the speaker in a given situation’. I will come back to the characterization of interjections below.

Interjections, like other instances of true parenthesis, are speaker-oriented, not subject-oriented. Thus, even if they surface in a subordinate clause, they relate to attitudes of the speaker and not to the subject of the main clause. Consider (1), for instance:

- (1) Mary claimed that John, our neighbor, is, uh, – damn, what was the word again – an ornithologist.

For all we know, Mary once claimed that John is an ornithologist. The secondary proposition implied by the apposition *our neighbor*, namely “John is our neighbor”, must be attributed to the speaker. Also, the curse and the expressed word-finding problem (*damn, what was the word again*) are the speaker's, not Mary's. And similarly, the hesitation expressed by *uh* is hesitation by the speaker, not by the subject Mary (in her original utterance).

Thus, there are clear qualitative arguments for classifying *uh* as an interjection. Now let me briefly dissect O'Connell & Kowal's (2005) counter-arguments, which are directed specifically against Clark & Fox Tree's (2002) proposal.

Firstly, O'Connell & Kowal note that Clark & Fox Tree cite James (1972) in that "interjections are used for commenting on a speaker's on-going performance". Since O'Connell & Kowal argue that *uh* does not reliably signal delay (but see below), it is unclear which comment *uh* would make on a speaker's (objective) performance, and hence there is no foundation for considering *uh* an interjection. However, O'Connell & Kowal do not adhere to James's characterization of interjections themselves. Prototypical interjections such as *oh!* are used to express emotions or attitudes. Furthermore, *uh* is described as being part of several hesitation phenomena. And hesitation, I would say, is a psychological state of mind that fits this pattern seamlessly (see also further below). Thus, this objection is no longer valid.

Secondly, O'Connell & Kowal note that *uh* and *um* are generally in accordance with the phonological-phonotactic rules of the language in which they occur, whereas interjections are not necessarily. However, notice that many interjections *are* regular syllables, so not being a regular syllable cannot be a condition for interjectionhood. Therefore, the phonological shape of *uh* is no objection to its classification as an interjection.

Thirdly, O'Connell, Kowal & Ageneau (2005) found that 21% of the interjections in their small corpus served to introduce citations, whereas none of the hesitation markers did. Again, I do not see what can possibly be concluded from this. If *all* other interjections can directly precede citations but *uh* cannot, then there might be an argument. This is not the case.

Fourthly, O'Connell & Kowal report frequency differences between the occurrences of interjections and *uh* with respect to possible surrounding pauses. There are four possibilities: i) no pauses, ii) only a pause before, iii) only a pause after, iv) pauses before and after. For interjections and *uh* respectively, the following rates are obtained: i) 45% – 31%, ii) 22% – 45%, iii) 14% – 13%, iv) 19% – 11% (see O'Connell, Kowal & Ageneau 2005:161 and O'Connell & Kowal 2005:567). According to O'Connell & Kowal, these data suggest that *uh* is not an interjection. But this is an incorrect inference. The percentages show that *uh* behaves a bit different (not even that much) from the *mean* of all interjections in the corpus. They do not show that *uh* behaves unlike any individual interjection. The only valid conclusion that can be drawn from these data is that interjections as a class can be pronounced with and without pauses before and after, and so can hesitation particles.

All in all, the best that can be concluded from O'Connell & Kowal's (2002) argument is that *uh* does not statistically behave as a prototypical run-of-the-mill interjection in all respects. From this it does not logically follow that *uh* is not an interjection; and the strong arguments in favor of classifying *uh* as an interjection still stand.

Why do we use 'uh' and what does it mean?

Clark & Fox Tree (2002:79) distinguish between *uh* and *um*, and define the basic meaning of these interjections as "Used to announce the initiation, at *t*('uh/um'), of what is expected to be a minor/major delay in speaking". However, according to their own data only roughly 30% of *uh* and 60% of *um* is followed by a (short) pause. So it seems that the announcement of delay cannot be a defining property of *uh/um*, contrary to what Clark & Fox Tree claim. The same critique has been expressed by O'Connell & Kowal (2005), who measure even lower percentages in their own corpus, namely about 20% and 40% for pauses after *uh* and *um*, respectively. Furthermore, they show that even though the *mean* delay measured for *uh* and *um* differs significantly, the *range* overlaps at least 85%, which implies that the choice between *uh* and *um* is not a reliable predictor of the duration of a delay (minor or major). What is also strange is that about half of the fillers are preceded by a (short) pause. If so, it seems odd to define *uh* as an item *announcing the initiation* of a delay. Rather, then, one would like to say that *uh* expresses the *occurrence* of a delay. Of course, the hesitation particle itself can also be understood to be part of the delay; in that case, the presence of delay is true by definition. Still,

this does not prove that announcing delay is why *uh* is there, since delay may be an epiphenomenon. Let me make an absurd comparison. Suppose we do not know what the meaning of the word *hirquiticke* is. We hypothesize (incorrectly) that it indicates a short pause in meaningful speech. We then measure instances of *hirquiticke*, and find out that its pronunciation, including possible short silences before and after, takes about 0.5 seconds on average, which is a significant interval. Quod erat demonstrandum? – only, it is a self-fulfilling prophecy. In short, even apart from the question if the statistics presented is convincing, it seems to me that the meaning and function of *uh* can only be determined qualitatively.

Uh is usually defined as expressing hesitation (in the broad sense of the word), which seems correct to me. Hesitation obviously implies delay, but it is more than that. From a functional perspective, verbally expressing hesitation is a choice that may serve a range of pragmatic purposes. These can be constructed as conversational implicatures in the sense of Grice (1975). Descriptions of such implicatures are, for example, “Bear with me”, “Note that I am thinking”, “Pay attention to what comes next”, “Help me out”, “Ignore what I just said – correction follows”, and so on. This view is in line with O’Connell & Kowal’s (2005) general argument that hesitation phenomena are deliberately employed rhetorically. It is worth noting that *uh* can be used both to hold and to cede the floor. Therefore, I agree with Clark & Fox Tree (2002) that these apparently contradictory functions must be viewed as implicatures and cannot constitute the basic meaning of *uh*.

That leaves us with a still unanswered question: what is this basic meaning? We have already established that it is not *delay* in any objective sense. Hesitation is subjective in that it expresses a state of mind. It is a complex psychological concept, sometimes described as “Hesitation happens when you feel uncertainty or doubt”. Wikipedia asserts that it is “the psychological process of pausing in the course of making a decision or taking an action, typically due to uncertainty as to the best course of action.” If so, it is not a complex emotion, feeling or attitude in an immediate sense, but rather a possible psychological result of such things in a specific way. When related to speech, temporarily pausing the intended speech signal for any of the reasons mentioned counts as hesitation, it seems to me, if during the pause there is an activity of thinking about how to proceed. And when hesitation is linguistically marked by means of a particle like *uh*, the meaning of this marker directly reflects that complex state of mind.

In what follows, I will ignore the cognitive-psychological question *why* speakers hesitate and for which reasons they may decide to express it (one straightforward possibility is that a speech production problem occurs for whatever psychological reason, e.g. an urge to find the exactly right wording considering the specific situation, which is then expressed by saying *uh* in order to buy time). Instead, I will focus on the issue of *how* speakers can link a word to a state of mind from a theoretical linguistic point of view. In other words, what is happening when one verbally expresses hesitation? I will argue that this involves a special kind of quotation. In order to be able to do so, I first have to discuss some independent characteristics of quotation. This is the subject of the next section.

3. Intermezzo: Quotations as demonstrations

Direct and indirect speech are two ways of referring to an earlier occasion involving language. This is illustrated in (2), pronounced by an unidentified speaker X. Supposing there are two speech events (one by John and one by X) that are one day and some distance apart, the two utterances in (2a) and (2b) could be semantically equivalent (at least in terms of their truth values, or *Bedeutung* in the sense of Frege 1892, if you like).

- (2) a. John said, “I will meet Noam Chomsky here this afternoon.” (direct speech)
 b. John said that he would meet Noam Chomsky there yesterday afternoon.
 (indirect speech)

The perspective of the speaker X with respect to the reported clause is different in (2a) and (2b). This affects all elements that have a deictic component (spatial, temporal, or directional). In (2a/b), the pronoun *I* corresponds to *he*, the tensed verb *will* to *would*, the location *here* to *there*, and the temporal phrase *this afternoon* to *yesterday afternoon*.

In quoting, the speaker assumes the point of view of the subject of the reporting verb at the time and place of the original utterance, which might suggest that a quote is a verbatim rendering of an earlier formulation. Indeed, this is a major claim of semantic approaches to quotation (see for instance Davidson 1984 and Cappelen & Lepore 1997/1999/2003). However, it is contested by more pragmatically oriented theories (Clark & Gerrig 1990, Saka 1998/1999, Recanati 2001). For an overview of the literature, I refer to De Brabanter (2003) and Cappelen (2005). Below, I will indicate why I think a version of the pragmatic approach is on the right track. It should be noted, however, that what is not directly explained by a pragmatic theory are the syntactic and semantic opacity effects of quotations. For instance, *wh*-movement from a quotation is impossible, embedded quoted clauses are main clauses, etc.; see De Vries (2006, 2008) for details. Such effects are clearly the result of a recursive syntactic derivation: a potentially complex expression (here, a quoted clause) can be used as a ‘word’ in a larger syntactic environment (see also Zwart 2011 for related discussion on layering). Here, I will concentrate on the function of quotation.

Clark & Gerrig (1990) analyze quotations as demonstrations. In citing, it is demonstrated what was said or written, and, crucially, how. If only the contents were of interest, indirect speech would suffice. But this is not the case. The decision to quote is made for rhetorical purposes. It follows that the form is important. Thus, a demonstration is a ‘selective depiction’ that does not simply inform the listener about the original event, but also enables him or her to experience relevant aspects of it.

This analysis implies that the form of a quotation approximates the form of a previous utterance, but does not necessarily equal it. After all, it may depend on the situation which aspects of the previous utterance are relevant for the present communicative purposes. Let us dwell on this for a moment. With the possible exception of scientific and juridical quoting, quotations are almost never exactly the same as the original utterance in natural language data. This may be regarded irrelevant for linguistic theorizing if it is only a performance effect (that is, the consequence of a limited memory capacity or simply sloppiness). However, there are clear indications that it is not. The crucial question is what *the same* means in this respect. It is more than just the same meaning. Is it the same words? The same intonation? The same accent, phonetic characteristics, speech rate, hesitations, speech defects, timbre, emotions, nonverbal communication, background noise? Or, for written texts, the same notation, spelling, letters, symbols, handwriting, font, font size, color, contrast, layout, markings, or even coffee stains? This list – however exaggerated it may seem – shows that it is not a priori clear how similarity should be defined in this context. In fact, it can be argued that it must not be fixed. The reason is that the situation determines which formal aspects of an utterance are relevant; that is, in each particular case it is pragmatically decided which form features are of interest. For instance, if a written poem is quoted, it is essential that end-of-line markings are included. Furthermore, it is no coincidence that in oral quotation the diction and/or accent of the original speaker are often imitated. These characteristics can be essential parts of direct speech. Put differently, why else if it was not for these formal traits would one cite rather than paraphrase?

The compelling presence of form features (of whatever nature) that can neither be traced back to the propositional meaning composition nor to the abstract word string is clear-cut

evidence for the demonstration theory of quotation. It should also be noted that a quote may be enriched with (subjective) information by the speaker. A demonstration is not a play in the narrow sense of the word, and the speaker is not a temporary ventriloquist of the quotee, just taking over the essentials of the relevant utterance. Although the deictic perspective is prescribed, there is room for evaluative elements and annotations. For instance, there is the possibility of ironizing by piling on the quotee's accent or particular choice of words (again, this may be one of the *raisons d'être* of quotation). Furthermore, additions, substitutions, and hesitations turn out to be quite frequent in natural language data (see Redeker 1991 and Wade & Clark 1993).

Quoting non-linguistic matters

So far, I have described a quotation as a demonstration of a previous utterance. Interestingly, the existence of an actual previous utterance is not a requirement. It is clear that forms of autonymy ('pure quotation' as in '*Dog*' has three letters) can also be regarded as demonstrations. In what follows, I will briefly show that a quotation can in fact be a linguistic or quasi-linguistic demonstration of *anything*, be it a potential utterance, a thought, a sound, an event, or even an emotion or state of mind. To be sure, from the idea that quotations are demonstrations, it does not logically follow that every demonstration is a quotation (and obviously there are nonlinguistic demonstrations), but we can make a plausible case that many linguistic demonstrations are in fact quotations of some kind.

A common type of quotation that is slightly different from the canonical type illustrated in (2a) is translation. The English quote in (3) does relate to a previous utterance, but of course Caesar's original wording was in Latin.

- (3) Caesar said, "I came, I saw, I conquered."

The quotations in (4) are imitations of sounds that are themselves not utterances of human language:

- (4) a. "Cock-a-doodle-doo," said the rooster to the crow.
b. "Swish swash swish," said the wind.

Another possibility is illustrated by the quotes in (5), which are formulations of previously unspoken thoughts:

- (5) a. And then I thought, "John, pull yourself together."
b. When she asked me to come, I thought "Hell, no!" but I didn't say a thing.

A variant of this is anthropomorphism, where a quotation is attributed to a non-human entity:

- (6) a. The telephone was whining, "Pick me up. Now! Now! Now!"
b. "Open me!" it seemed that the purple envelope shouted.

The quotations in (4) through (6), although they do not relate to a previous linguistic utterance, are still concrete in the sense that they relate to an actual situation. However, even this is not a prerequisite. Quotation of a type instead of a token is also possible. The examples in (7) show that *potential* or generic utterances can be quoted:

- (7) a. If you dare to say "I quit," I will never talk to you again.

- b. It is considered impolite to say “I and you” or “me and him”.
- c. “Go to hell!” means that someone is angry with you.
- d. The play is called “Let’s kill the bosses!”

In conclusion, I reviewed the idea that quotations are demonstrations, and I showed that a quotation does not necessarily relate to a previous linguistic utterance. In the next section, I argue that the combination of a number of non-canonical properties leads to surprising further possibilities; this will shed new light on interjections and the like, including the hesitation marker *uh*.

4. Interjections and ideophones as quotations

Section 2 showed that *uh* behaves as a word, and also that it functions as an interjection. Now let us see what interjections have to do with quotation. First, consider the example in (8), where *crack!* is an onomatopoeic interjection, sometimes called an ideophone:

- (8) John fell – crack! – trough the ice.

Whether ideophones are an independent word class does not concern us here (see Dingemanse to appear b for relevant discussion). Syntactically, an integrated interjection (or ideophone) as in (8) functions as a short form of parenthesis. It can also be used as a stand-alone expression. What is interesting for our purposes here is that *crack* in (8) is clearly a linguistic demonstration of how it sounded when John cracked trough the ice. As in (4) above, the sound is represented by a quasi-word. Therefore, it seems reasonable to consider the expression a particular kind of quotation: the onomatopoeia is a cited ‘name’ for a particular sound by demonstrating it.

In general, it seems that a productive way of incorporating extra-linguistic elements in a sentence is by quoting them, and various kinds of interjections fit this pattern. Often, there is a language-dependent conventionalization to some degree, but this does not seem to be essential because the process is productive and recognizable: creative sound imitations can be produced and linguistically used as we speak. Needless to say, there are also other verbal means to incorporate extra-linguistic information in a sentence; for instance, phonological stress or lengthening can give rise to connotations about importance.

Not only sounds can be used as interjections. *Zooffff* in (9) is a demonstration of fast motion and how it sounds. In (10), *whoops* and *ups-a-daisy* suggest sudden motion and assisted motion, respectively; there is no relevant sound involved.

- (9) Zidane shot the ball – zooffff – past the goalkeeper.

- (10) a. The cat jumped – whoops – onto the counter.
b. And ups-a-daisy, there you go.

It can be concluded that not only sounds but more generally certain aspects of events can be demonstrated and quoted by means of (quasi-)linguistic, usually conventionalized expressions. Such expressions are often onomatopoeic or suggestive and iconic in other ways. Interestingly, there are relevant differences between individual languages. For instance, the sound of a barking dog is rendered as *bow-wow* in English, *meong meong* in Korean, and *waf waf* in Dutch.

Various demonstrations discussed so far concerned affairs that are spatio-temporally dissociated from the speaker (that is, which originate outside of the speaker, and which occur prior to the speech time). This, however, is by no means a prerequisite for quotation. The answer

is clearly negative if we look at the spatial and temporal components separately. First, one may quote oneself, as is shown in (11):

(11) Yesterday I said, “I will quote this sentence tomorrow.”

Second, one may linguistically demonstrate something which is occurring simultaneously (or practically simultaneously). It is easy to imagine real-time reporting of or commenting on some event, enlivened by interjections of the type in (9) and (10). In (10b), for instance, it is possible that the expression *ups-a-daisy* accompanies a brief but at that instance ongoing action of lifting a child. Another example is (12), where a radio reporter is covering a football match in the following way:

(12) ... Zidane shoots ... and bang! the ball hits the post...

Here, *bang!* is for all practical purposes a relevant live demonstration (at least in the perception of the listeners). Thus, there need not be a temporal dissociation between the quote and what is being demonstrated. This is strengthened by the fact that there can be demonstrations of mere thoughts or ideas that are not concretely part of the conversation or situation, as was illustrated in the previous section.

Quoting emotions and other states of the mind

Let us take stock. A canonical quotation is a linguistic demonstration of a previous utterance by someone else, introduced by a reporting verb. However, we have established that a quotation can be non-canonical in a number of ways:

- A linguistic demonstration may concern non-linguistic matters.
- A demonstration can be simultaneous with the original event/antecedent.
- Speakers may quote themselves.
- A quotation can be syntactically constructed as a (parenthetical) interjection.

It would be interesting to see if all these non-canonical characteristics can be combined. In particular, is it possible to quote oneself simultaneously? Indeed it is – however counterintuitive this may seem at first sight. Since humans have only one speech organ, it can only be the case if what is being demonstrated linguistically is itself of a non-linguistic nature. Consider (13):

(13) Today, we are celebrating the, uh, fifteenth anniversary of the volleyball club.

What is happening at the point where the marker *uh* is inserted? The speaker is briefly hesitating; hence, the stream of words temporarily stops. There could have been just a silence, but that might have the disadvantage that the audience gives up listening. Therefore, we might guess, the speaker decides to make the hesitation public. As we have discussed, hesitation is a particular state of mind. Of course, it can be described by literally saying “I am hesitating”, but usually that is a bit cumbersome and puts too much weight on it. There is, however, another possibility, namely to directly demonstrate it by means of the word *uh*. The conventionalized particle *uh* expresses hesitation in a more or less iconic way. Thus, I suppose that it functions as a quotation combining several non-canonical properties described above: *uh* is constructed as an interjection; it is a demonstration of a non-linguistic matter, namely a state of mind; this affair is occurring simultaneously with the linguistic demonstration of it; and finally, the relevant state of mind is the speaker’s – hence, he or she is in fact quoting himself or herself.

Uh is not the only expressive (and/or conative and/or phatic) interjection that functions as a demonstration. Consider the example in (14).

(14) Shh, the movie has already started.

The sound *shh* is a conventionalized expression, and therefore a (quasi-)word. (In fact, the derivative *hush* can even be used as a regular verb in English.) It is a demonstration of the speaker's wish that others be quiet. Consequently, it functions as a fully-fledged speech act. Other examples are listed in (15), where the relevant interjections are italicized. Notice, by the way, that interjections – despite the name – are often sentence-initial or sentence-final, like other parentheses; they can also be used in isolation.

- | | | |
|---------|---|------------------------|
| (15) a. | <i>Ouch</i> , my toe. | [pain] |
| b. | <i>Ugh/yikes</i> , what a filthy habit. | [disgust] |
| c. | <i>Phew</i> , that was close. | [relief] |
| d. | <i>Wow</i> , that's what I call an adventure. | [surprise] |
| e. | <i>Grr</i> , I forgot my purse. | [irritation, anger] |
| f. | Belgian waffles are <i>oh</i> so tasty. | [ecstasy] |
| g. | That's a good one, <i>ha ha</i> . | [joy, irony] |
| h. | <i>Huh</i> , are you still here? | [amazement] |
| i. | <i>Hmhm</i> , that is true. | [confirmation] |
| j. | <i>Aha</i> , now I get it. | [jubilant recognition] |
| k. | It's freezing in here, <i>brr</i> . | [cold] |

In each case the speaker demonstrates a feeling, emotion, attitude or other mental state by means of a more or less conventionalized expression. Thus, we can analyze these interjections (possibly parenthetically constructed) as quasi-linguistic demonstrations of sounds, emotions, etc.,. Therefore, they can be regarded as quotations of a non-canonical type.

To be clear, I do not claim that every interjection is necessarily a quotation of this kind. For instance, it seems much less likely that expressions like *yes* or *damn* can be regarded as demonstrations. Despite some similarities in use and their holophrastic character, such word forms are far from iconic or universal.

5. Conclusion

The nature of the hesitation particle *uh*, a very frequent 'filler', has been subject to debate. In this paper, I proposed a novel view on the matter, thereby integrating and extending ideas put forward in the literature. First, I argued that *uh* is not merely a symptom of a problem in speaking causing delay, but it must be considered a conventionalized linguistic signal with a supra-individual character – hence a word. The behavior of *uh* can be subsumed under that of a larger class of interjections, and its meaning is surprisingly complex. Second, I showed that the analysis of quotations as linguistic demonstrations can be naturally extended to the possibility of quoting non-linguistic matters such as sounds, other aspects of events, and even emotions and other states of the mind. Combining these ideas, it follows that the hesitation marker *uh* as well as other expressive interjections and ideophones can be considered as non-canonical quotations. By means of verbal demonstration, *uh* directly and more or less iconically expresses the subjective complex state of mind we call hesitation. In a way, this makes such particles complex deictic expressions, which are believed to be directly referential, and hence different from normal words that have a Fregean sense. Using the word *uh* comes with an

automatic implication of delay but also with all sorts of pragmatic conversational implicatures, which serve a higher communicative purpose that bears on the reason why it is being used. Thus, depending on the situation, *uh* may serve not only as a floor-holding device, it could also indicate that the hearer is requested for help, that a correction is to follow, that it is to be noted that the speaker is thinking, that something is important, and so on.

References

- Bortfeld, Heather et al. 2001. Disfluency rates in conversation: Effects of age, relationship, topic, role, and gender. *Language & Speech* 44, 123-147.
- Brummel, Gerard. 1978. Enkele opmerkingen over interjuncties. In *Proeven van Neerlandistiek. Aangeboden aan Prof.dr. Albert Sassen*, eds. Arrie van Berkel et al., 155-175. Groningen: Nederlands Instituut.
- Cappelen, Herman. 2005. Quotation. *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*.
<<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/quotation>>
- Cappelen, Herman & Ernie Lepore. 1997. Varieties of quotation. *Mind* 106, 429-450.
- Cappelen, Herman & Ernie Lepore. 1999. Using, mentioning and quoting: a reply to Saka. *Mind* 108, 741-750.
- Cappelen, Herman & Ernie Lepore. 2003. Varieties of quotation revisited. *Belgian Journal of Linguistics* 17, 51-75.
- Chomsky, Noam. 1965. *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2005. Three factors in language design. *Linguistic Inquiry* 36(1), 1-22.
- Clark, Herbert. 2006. Pragmatics of language performance. In *The Handbook of Pragmatics*, eds. Laurence Horn & Gregory Ward, 365-382. Wiley Online Library.
- Clark, Herbert & Jean Fox Tree. 2002. Using *uh* and *um* in spontaneous speaking. *Cognition* 84, 73-111.
- Clark, Herbert & Richard Gerrig. 1990. Quotations as demonstrations. *Language* 66, 764-805.
- De Brabanter, Philippe. 2003. *Making sense of mention, quotation, and autonymy: A semantic and pragmatic survey of metalinguistic discourse*. PhD Diss. Université Libre de Bruxelles.
- Dingemanse, Mark. To appear a. Interjections. In *The Oxford Handbook of Word Classes*, ed. Eva van Lier. Oxford University Press.
- Dingemanse, Mark. To appear b. Ideophones. In *The Oxford Handbook of Word Classes*, ed. Eva van Lier. Oxford University Press.
- Dingemanse, Mark, Francisco Torreira & Nick Enfield. 2013. Is “Huh?” a universal word? Conversational infrastructure and the convergent evolution of linguistic items. *PLOS ONE*, 8(11).
- Droste, Flip. 1961. Het stiefkind onder de woordsoorten: de interjunctie. In *Levende Talen*, ed. Johannes van der Schaar, 495-511. Groningen: Wolters.
- Frege, Gottlob. 1892. Über Sinn und Bedeutung. *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* 100: 25-50
- Gilbers, Dicky & De Vries, Mark. 2021. Prosodic and syntactic asymmetries in the language system. Manuscript, University of Groningen (under revision, 2022).
- Ginzburg, Jonathan, Raquel Fernández & David Schlangen. 2014. Disfluencies as intra-utterance dialogue moves. *Semantics and Pragmatics* 7(9).
- Grice, Paul. 1975. Logic and conversation. In *Syntax and Semantics, Volume 3: Speech Acts*, eds. Peter Cole & Jerry Morgan, 43-58. New York: Academic Press.
- de Groot, Willem. 1963. De interjunctie. In *Studies op het gebied van het hedendaags Nederlands*, ed. Willem de Groot & Henk Schultink, 13-22. The Hague: Mouton.

- Jackendoff, Ray. 2009. Parallels and nonparallels between language and music. *Music Perception* 26(3), 195-204.
- James, Deborah. 1972. Some aspects of the syntax and semantics of interjections. *Papers from the eighth regional meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society*, 162-172. Chicago, IL: Chicago Linguistic Institute.
- de Jong, Eveline (ed.) 1979. *Spreektaal. Woordfrequenties in gesproken Nederlands*. Utrecht: Bohn, Scheltema & Holkema.
- Kaplan, David. 1977. Demonstratives – An essay on the semantics, logic, metaphysics, and epistemology of demonstratives and other indexicals”. In *Themes From Kaplan*, eds. Joseph Almog, John Perry & Howard Wettstein, 481-563. Oxford University Press, 1989.
- de Leeuw, Esther. 2007. Hesitation markers in English, German, and Dutch. *Journal of Germanic Linguistics*, 19(2), 85-114.
- Levelt, Willem. 1983. Monitoring and self-repair in speech. *Cognition* 14, 41-104.
- Levelt, Willem. 1989. *Speaking*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- O’Connell, Daniel & Sabine Kowal. 2005. *Uh* and *um* revisited: Are they interjections for signaling delay? *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* 34, 555-576.
- O’Connell, Daniel, Sabine Kowal & Carie Ageneau. 2005. Interjections in interviews. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* 34, 153-171.
- Oostdijk, Nelleke. 2000. Building a corpus of spoken Dutch. In *Computational Linguistics in the Netherlands 1999. Selected Papers from the Tenth CLIN Meeting*, ed. Paola Monachesi, 147-157. Utrecht: Utrecht Institute of Linguistics (OTS).
- Recanati, François. 2001. Open quotation. *Mind* 110, 637-687.
- Redeker, Gisela. 1991. Quotation in discourse. *Artikelen van de eerste Sociolinguistische Conferentie*, 341-355.
- Saka, Paul. 1998. Quotation and the use-mention distinction. *Mind* 107, 113-135.
- Saka, Paul. 1999. Quotation: a reply to Cappelen and Lepore. *Mind* 108, 751-754.
- Schreuder, Maartje, Laura van Eerten & Dicky Gilbers. 2006. Music as a method of identifying emotional speech. In *Proceedings of the workshop on Corpora for research on Emotion and Affect*, Genua, Italy 2006, eds. Laurence Devillers & Jean-Claude Martin, 55-59.
- van den Toorn, Maarten. 1960. De interjectie als woordsoort. *De Nieuwe Taalgids* 53, 260-264.
- de Vries, Mark. 2006. Reported direct speech in Dutch. *Linguistics in the Netherlands* 23, 212-223.
- de Vries, Mark. 2008. The representation of language within language: a syntactico-pragmatic typology of direct speech. *Studia Linguistica* 62, 39-77.
- Wade, Elizabeth & Herbert Clark. 1993. Reproduction and demonstration in quotations. *Journal of Memory and Language* 32, 805-819.
- Wieling, Martijn. 2014. *Um* and *Uh* in Dutch. *Language Log*, Sep. 16, 2014.
- Wieling, Martijn, et al. 2016. Variation and change in the use of hesitation markers in Germanic languages. *Language Dynamics and Change* 6(2), 199-234.
- Wilkins, David. 1992. Interjections as deictics. *Journal of Pragmatics* 18, 119-158.
- Zwart, Jan-Wouter. 2011. Recursion in language: a layered-derivation approach. *Biolinguistics* 5, 43-56.