

Air Quotes – “Simply” a Measure to Indicate Distancing?

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This paper aims at an analysis of air quotes as a multimodal phenomenon. The quotation marker in the audio-visual modality is suggested to express a dissociation of the speaker with respect to the mapping of a respective expression to the intended concept. To account for such a function for this specific type of quotation, formal features rooted in multimodality are described based on previous work and observations derived from an examination of a set of qualitative data. These aspects are subsequently summarised as the formal dimension of air quotes. The functional dimension is linked back to the dissociation concerning the attribution of expression to concept. Such a mapping is not able to instantiate the intended denotation if not interpreted correctly. The function is described as an indication that the mapping itself is dependent on association with a non-prototypical intension. Hence, the interpretation relies on inference. Additionally, the speaker may want to encode attitudinal components via expressive content. The latter is understood to influence the formal aspects like prosody, accompanying gestures and facial expressions of the utterance.

Keywords: quotation, mapping, inference, expressive content, multimodality, co-speech gestures

1. Introduction

The frequency of use of air quotes (AQs) seems to increase steadily, and the range of conversational settings in which such use is attested does so as well. Thus, these gestures, which seem like imitations of quotation marks (QM) in the written modality, are used by a variety of speakers and in a variety of contexts. While a popular pop-cultural topic concerning air quotes addresses failed applications, linguistic formal and functional accounts are rare. The aim of this paper is therefore to look at them from a multimodal perspective and work towards a functional account of AQs. Previous observations by Lampert (2013) and Cirillo (2019) addressed the formal and functional dimension of the phenomenon and will be built upon.

This paper will propose a core function of distancing that may optionally be enriched with expressive content. As formal features of the phenomenon appear to be diverse, it will be examined if differences in application through the accompanying facial expressions, gestures, and, to a certain extent, prosodic features may be explained by means of assuming the proposed secondary function. To address the above-mentioned endeavour, chapter 2 will introduce the phenomenon, addressing the problem of access to reliable and adequate data (§2.1) as well as shifting the focus with respect to this quotation marker from a perspective influenced by the written modality. Formal features therefore include a first look at prosodic aspects and a brief description of the range concerning accompanying gestures and facial expressions. The incorporation of features from the audio-visual modality invokes assumptions concerning the functional range (§2.2). This culminates in a proposal of a typology that represents different degrees and motivations for distancing.

Due to parallels to the quotation type of scare quotes (SQs), a short comparison is drawn to clarify the status of AQs (§2.3). Chapter 3 addresses the assumption that AQs essentially are instances of distancing (§3.1) and differences in implementation are not caused functionally.

They are classified as byproducts of their available additional expressive dimension. The proposed hypothesis, therefore, implies two dimensions of meaning for AQs (§3.2), and it is explored how these two dimensions interact. The paper then focuses on this additional layer and discusses the potential for expressiveness (§3.3), using the properties presented in Potts (2007a) to distinguish descriptive and expressive content. After drawing a preliminary conclusion (chapter 4), the outlook (chapter 5) highlights a selection of theories which may be promising to help formalise an analysis of the phenomenon. It furthermore points to questions that, albeit being crucial for a complete account of AQs, at this point are left unanswered.

2. The phenomenon

Speech is often accompanied by gestures as well as other non-verbal means. This accompaniment occurs unintentionally, intentionally and optionally in the case of AQs. AQs, which are dominantly perceived as gestures, are connected to specific parts of an utterance and are therefore, while being highly conventionalised, dependent on the presence of verbal material. They are co-speech gestures, and in contrast to other gestures cannot occur in place of verbal elements (cf. Wagner et al. 2014: 210). The alignment of gesture and targeted verbal element is flexible to a certain degree, however. The gesture is generally realised by flexing at least one finger of at least one hand at different points above the waistline. This visual dimension in addition to the necessary connection to an auditive impulse qualifies the phenomenon as multimodal, as it fulfils the requirement of involving at least two modalities (cf. Uhrig 2020: 345; Lampert 2013: 54). As such, the phenomenon involves not only speech but also gestures, facial expressions and further non-verbal means. Annotations of examples therefore include these different dimensions. Kinetic descriptions of the gestures, when given, are positioned under the occurrence of the AQ. The quoted expression is parenthesised according to its morphosyntactic status. Time stamps indicate the start of transcript, time stamps next to quotes indicate the time of quotation event. The interpretation of air quotes is dependent on the context of the utterance, which is why the latter will be provided to the necessary extent. Annotations apart from these components follow the method described by Birkner (2020):

(1) AQ HagHü deep talk/tiefgründig 52:42¹

01 Mi	glaubst du der snape hat WIRklich	
02	keinen trank mehr oder der lügt weil er cool ist?	
	‘Do you think Snape really didn't have any more potion or did he lie because he is cool?’	
03 Ma	jaaa((sighs))(.)ich hatte dir ja schon gesagt wenn du so	
04	TIEF gründige diskussionen willst ((laughs quietly, stops))	
	‘Look, I did tell you: If you want a “deep” debate’[...]	
05 Mi	((nodds, raises eyebrow)) {tief}AQ gründig	52:52
	““deep””	
	AQ = ONE-HANDED (RIGHT), TWO FLEXED FINGERS (2 FLEXES), EYE-LEVEL RAISES, EYEBROWS BEFORE AQ AND AFTER, SMILES	

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMrXfawL3fw>

Like in example (1), gestures, facial expressions and other non-verbal means like laughter are used simultaneously or concomitant to speech and function as markers to accentuate parts of the current utterance. Variance concerning these formal features of AQs could be attributed to functional differences. If, on the other hand, these formal features are not distinctive indicators concerning different functions of AQs, an alternative explanation for said variance could be traced back to an additional dimension of meaning; one that enriches one common function by ways of gestures, facial expressions, and prosody. Thus, instead of assuming a variety of functions, AQs may be understood as phenomena with a primary and an optional secondary function. Predelli's (2003) analysis of SQs as indicators of nonstandard interpretation will be applied to AQs and extended concerning a potential secondary function:

Hypothesis: AQs primarily encode distancing as descriptive content and may be enriched with additional expressive content through means of prosody, facial expressions and gestures.

This hypothesis will be discussed after addressing formal and functional features. So far AQs as a linguistic phenomenon have been given limited attention in the literature. One of the few accounts was brought forward by Cirillo (2019), who works with data collected in an academic environment, specifically in form of recorded presentations. To my knowledge, she delivered the first extensive systematic account, describing gestural and – to a certain extent – prosodic features of AQs and isolating two possible functions for the phenomenon.² Lampert (2013) also examines the phenomenon and outlines a functional approach as well as laying out a first formal description. However, in this approach AQs are not the centre of examination but are addressed in conjunction with verbal quotation markers like *be like*.

This chapter will discuss potential functions of AQs. As scare quotes, a device restricted to the written modality, and air quotes seem to display certain parallels, these functions will be compared to those attributed to SQs. This resemblance will be addressed mainly in §2.3 and observations of SQ literature (cf., among others Predelli 2003, Brendel et al. 2011: 19, McCullagh 2017) will be taken into account. A main difference, however, concerns modality. While SQs rely on context and graphematic cues, AQs are associated with a surprisingly big set of non-verbal features. The examination of these features should be based on suitable material, but unfortunately this requirement is not easily fulfilled. Therefore, before turning to an analysis of the phenomenon itself, problems concerning access to data will be shortly addressed in the following chapter.

2.1 *The issue of data collection*

Annotation systems for conversational analysis over the years have been extended to comprise aspects like prosodic features, gestures, facial expressions, as well as laughter, coughs, pauses, etc. In addition, kinematic analysis in linguistic contexts is facilitated by technological progress and impacts the research of certain linguistic phenomena in a substantial way. However, it is still an extensive and labour-intensive task to collect multimodal data to integrate all relevant aspects in the analysis of AQs (concerning challenges of building multimodal corpora cf. Knight 2011; Wagner et al. 2014: 224; Hamilton & Holler 2023). Accordingly, many approaches dealing with AQs only selectively take prosody into account. Cirillo (2019), e.g., focuses on the gestural component of the phenomenon and gives some indication in terms of

² §2.2 and chapter 3 will convey in more detail which insights were related.

prosodic characteristics of the examined utterances. Apart from the collection method and annotation possibilities, the source also raises issues. As recording and recording settings influence communication and behaviour, the extensive collection of relevant data of spontaneous speech is challenging. Furthermore, settings that try to elicit a specific gesture phenomenon in spontaneous speech are notoriously unreliable. Alternatively, one may neglect the aspect of spontaneity. Cirillo (2019), hence, collects data from a genre that shows characteristics of pre-planned speech, which, as well as the academic context, influences the nature of discourse (cf. Cirillo 2019: 4). Possible interferences of the genre and supposed functions will be addressed in the next subsection.

The very small and preliminary collection of data that was used for this paper is in no way a representative sample and displays a very similar problem to the ones tied to academic presentations. The data mainly originates from a random selection of YouTube videos, which allows for a wide range of topics, idiosyncratic styles and discourse settings in general. Unfortunately, this means that the data set comprises pre-planned and edited speech (concerning aspects of artificial speech events cf. Schuller et al. 2011; Laukka 2000). Data from scripted TV shows as well as movies was excluded to account for spontaneity, though the phenomenon occurs regularly in these genres. The influence of pre-planning and editing may be reduced by the dominantly unintended use of AQs, which most likely extends to prosodic and non-verbal features. The implementation of the latter seems to occur automatically. Due to these features, the samples may be classified as semi-spontaneous. The effects of pre-planning and editing still have to be accounted for, which is one of the desiderata addressed in the outlook.

The aim is to formulate a theoretical background to, at a later time, base potential empirical approaches upon. The data were therefore chosen with respect to variation concerning formal and functional features, to hopefully cover the spectrum within which AQs may be used.

2.2 Features of AQs

AQs, as quotation marks, are limited to the audio-visual modality and seem to have been adapted from the written modality (cf. Brendel et al. 2011: 9; Lampert 2013: 46; Yu 2013; Cirillo 2019: 12). The gesture as centre of the mechanism may be classified as an iconic depiction of quotation marks in written contexts. Their form is iconic, but their function is not. The phenomenon is an inference-based mechanism that is context-dependent. The latter distinguishes AQs from iconic gestures, whose interpretation is strongly connected to conventionalisation (concerning different types of gestures cf. McNeill 1992, 2007). Cirillo (2019) accordingly classifies them as pragmatic gestures. Seemingly redundant, they may be accompanied by verbal markers like in *Anführungszeichen/Gänsefüßchen*, *quote/unquote* and others.³

The question of face-to-face use of AQs has been addressed with different assessments (cf. Lampert 2013: 45; Brendel et al. 2011: 6). Due to possibilities to record or otherwise preserve audio-visual content, speakers are no longer dependent on simultaneously sharing an audio-visual space, which allows for asynchronous use, in contradiction to Lampert's (2013:

³ The use of expressions like *so-called*, *be like* and other expressions that may function as verbal quotation markers add certain nuances, which will be excluded from the analysis for the time being. For *be like* cf. e.g. Lampert (2013) and concerning *sogenannte* (so-called) in German cf. e.g. Härtl (2018).

45) description as a face-to-face phenomenon. The gesture can be used at the start of the targeted expression or parallel to major parts of it, albeit mostly throughout the lexical phrase (cf. Lampert 2013: 46, 53). It does typically co-occur with one morpheme (2) or phrase (3) (cf. Lampert 2013: 52). As mentioned before, it is always tied to a verbal element, though.

(2) AQ summer break/Sommerpause 0:10⁴

- 01 Jonas: ich weiß nicht warum ich das sommerpause nenn wenn ich
02 TROTZdem videos produziere?
03 [...]jetzt ist gerade eine kleine TIERSchutz {sommer}AQpause... **0:15**
AQ = TWO-HANDED, TWO FLEXED FINGERS(2 SMALL FLEXES), AT NOSE LEVEL
'I don't know why I am calling this *summerbreak* if I am producing videos anyway. Right now there is a small “summer” break concerning animal welfare'

In (2) the gesture is synchronised with the noun 'summer', not extending to the complete compound. While the target concept is referred to by the head of the compound, only its modifying constituent is marked by the AQ. The gesture thus occurs before the targeted concept (cf. Cirillo 2019: 7). (3) on the other hand displays an occurrence of AQs marking a phrase that refers to a concept by means of a collocation.

(3) AQ true love/große Liebe 0:24⁵

- 01 Nico: lena ist 20 jahre alt bereits mutter geworden und hat
02 bei princess charming [**die große liebe**]AQ gesucht **0:27**
AQ = TWO-HANDED, TWO FLEXED FINGERS(2 SMALL FLEXES), ARMS WIDE FOR GESTURE, ABOVE EYE LEVEL, LOOKS DOWN TO THE RIGHT HAND SIGHT AFTER AQ, HARDLY ANY FACIAL CUES
'Lena is 20 years old, already a mother and looked for “true love” on Princess Charming.'

The gesture co-occurs with the targeted verbal segment, a complex syntactic phrase in this case. Cirillo (2019) additionally identifies AQs after the target expression, as well as *empty* AQs, which are not executed parallel to the verbal material but follow it.

(4)AQ regular/normaler 0:25⁶

- 01 Rob: hat jonas [...] sich verändert vom normalen, ne { }AQ äh youtuber was heißt **0:28**
schon normal?
AQ = TWO-HANDED, TWO FLEXED FINGERS(2 SMALL FLEXES), ARMS WIDE FOR GESTURE, AT NOSE LEVEL, TURNS HEAD TO FACE AUDIENCE (EYEBROWS SLIGHTY RAISED) BEFORE AQ ANDAFTERWARDS TO CENTER AGAIN
'Jonas changed from a regular, ehm youtuber, but what does “regular” actually signify?'

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sBLV7xcjZKk>

⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ozn8d_f6rPg

⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rp1bAVD4-FQ>

The gesture follows the target expression 'regular', giving the impression of an afterthought.

Facial expressions like the raising of eyebrows to different degrees, changing of head position, including nodding, and line of sight, smiling in different variations and speaking through gritted teeth seem to correlate with the aforementioned gesture. The limited data show that these accompanying features occur in addition to prosodic and manual aspects and may be summarised as facial expressions and head gestures. A systematic overview of such means in instances of AQs has, to my knowledge, not been formulated yet.⁷ Unfortunately, this paper will not be able to address these features in detail either, though there are frameworks like McNeill's (1992, 2007), Wagner et al. (2014) and Uhrig (2020), among others, to base such endeavours on.

The gesture itself may be exercised with one or two hands. The unilateral version in general seems to be restricted to occurrences where speakers hold on to something with the second hand (cf. e.g. (1), also Cirillo 2019: 6). At least one finger (index finger) is used, but the use of two fingers (index and middle finger) seems to be the default setting. Cirillo's (2019: 5) data include instances with more fingers. The majority of examples feature at least one finger flex, frequently two. There are exceptions as well, e.g., an occurrence in which the hands and fingers are raised but not flexed. The movement to raise the hand/s may be conducted in a vertical, potentially energetic as well as a casual lateral movement, in front of the body but also starting there and being conducted away from it (5):⁸

(5) AQ entirely at 0:43⁹

Pupil shows his piano teacher compositions which supposedly are his:

01 Dan-teach: that's what a wonderful world! [...]

02 Dan-pup: just for a fair warning this next one isn't **{entirely}AQ** original, **0:50**
AQ = TWO HANDED, BUT ONE AT HEIGHT OF CHEST, OTHER
CLOSE TO PIANO, TWO FINGERS, MULTIPLE FLEXES, ROTATES
HAND IN DIRECTION OF PIANO, SQUINTS, RAISES ONE EYEBROW,
CURLS LIP ON THE RIGHT SIDE

Facial expressions, gestures, as well as additional use of other non-verbal means, seem to vary. Turning to prosodic features, a similar picture emerges. Prosodic features of quotation in general have been the subject of analysis, like Kasimir (2008), Apel et al. (2020) and Schlechtweg & Härtl (2020), resulting in different assessments about the possibility to identify quotation based on prosody and to substitute the quotation markers prosodically. Kasimir (2008) examined three categories of sub-clausal quotation (name-informing, scare and mixed quotation) and concludes that quotation marks are not necessarily and systematically represented on an acoustic level. The examination of Schlechtweg & Härtl (2020) on the other hand, suggests that quotation marks may be articulated and isolate lengthening of the initial segment of the relevant expression. Their approach distinguishes between name-informing uses, in which the focus lies on the mapping of the quoted expression to its conventionalised denotation, and a use that indicates a non-standard interpretation of the marked term. Features used for marking target expressions, however, are potentially abundant. Cirillo (2019) only touches upon this aspect in her work specifically addressing AQs. She analyses pauses as

⁷ Cf. De Brabanter (2023) concerning the importance of non-verbal markers in pragmatic analysis.

⁸ For a typological proposal for gesture annotation and analysis cf. among others McNeill (1992); Boutet (2018). Cf. Cirillo (2019) for an analysis specific to AQs.

⁹ Scripted sketch; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G57uh-XuUFw>

indicators of quote boundaries and indicates that other relevant aspects are pitch and voice quality. Lengthening, specifically of the vowel, is associated with the phenomenon as well (cf. Lampert 2013: 55).

Even the small data set indicates that, similar to the wide range of gestural features, facial expressions and prosodic markers (like higher intensity, prolonged pitch), the strategic use of pauses as well as non-verbal means (like laughter in variant forms) are options in AQ use. To complement the features that Lampert (2013) and Cirillo (2019) cited, a preliminary analysis of pitch and intensity variables was conducted with Praat (version 6.1.27). The observations for two examples will be elaborated on to illustrate the potential variance. They both display two instances of the targeted expression, one unmarked and one AQd which should help with comparison of prosody. As in (6) the tokens are uttered by different speakers, potential idiosyncrasies have to be taken into account.

(6) AQ HagHü talking/reden 02:00:44¹⁰

- 01 Ma ((mimics talking by moving lips, grins))
02 Mi: was? ((squints))
'Pardon?'
- 03 Ma ((repeats MA's mouthing))
04 Ma: haste geMERKT? ((gestures with left hand, points to audience))
05 jetzt hab ich AUCH geredet weil die geLACHT haben und
06 haste AU nich gehört ne? ((repeats mouthing, grins))
'Did you notice? Now I talked also and because everyone laughed you didn't hear anything, did you?'
- 07 Mi: ja. (---)
08 auf einmal so aggressIV ((grins, mimics Ma's mouthing)).
09 SO machst du{REDen}AQ nach ((mimics Ma's mouthing, laughs)). **02:00:54**
AQ = ONE-HANDED (RIGHT, LEFT HAND ON NOTEBOOK), TWO FLEXED FINGERS (1 FLEX), AT EYE-LEVEL TURNS HEAD TO THE RIGHT BEFORE AQ AND AFTERWARDS TO CENTER AGAIN, SMILES
'Yes. Suddenly you are very aggressive. That is how you mimic "talking".'
- 10 Ma: ((laughs)) Scharade: Können Sie mal *REden* nachmachen?
'Charades: Would you mind to mimic talking?'

In this example, the speaker Mi distinctly uses facial expressions and head movement to accompany the gesture. In terms of duration the AQd expression (0.43 seconds) is considerably longer than the unmarked equivalent (0.27 seconds). In addition, the pitch minimum is higher for the marked expression but afterwards stays lower than as for the unmarked token. Figure 1 shows the pitch spectrum of both instances. The unmarked expression is realised with a considerably steeper heightening of pitch.

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMrXfawL3fw>

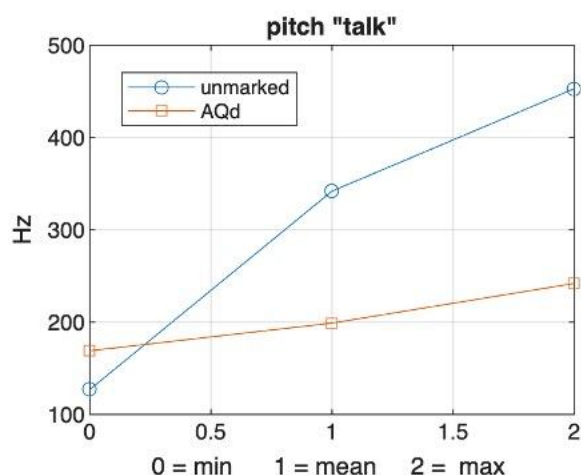


Figure 1: Pitch minimum, mean and maximum of “reden” (Hz)

The intensity of articulation, on the other hand, is proportionally higher:

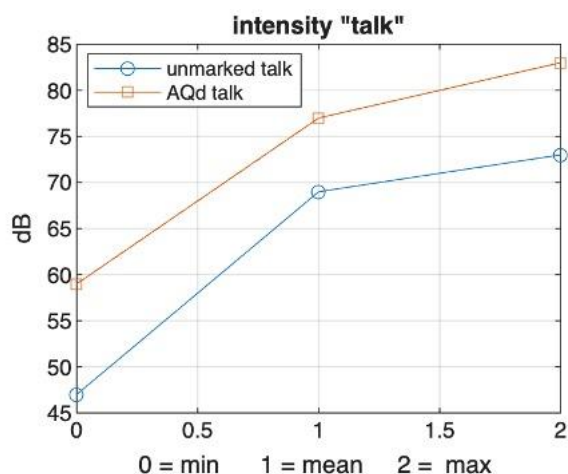


Figure 2: Intensity minimum, mean and maximum of “reden” (dB)

The quoted material therefore seems to be marked by an overall higher intensity, but with a less distinctive pitch. These graphs (as well as the following) do not represent pitch- and intensity contours over time. They merely illustrate relations between relevant value points.

As both AQ instances (6&7) will later be classified as potentially falling into the same specific class of function, they might share prosodic markers. Both speakers reject the quoted expression as suitable for the intended denotation. This rejection could be expressed by distinctive prosodic or non-verbal features.

(7) AQ fish sticks/Fischstäbchen 13:20¹¹

- 01 A: aber es gibt wenig SCHNITZel [...] die richtig SCHLECHT
 02 sind (.) tatsächlich
 ‘There are only a few outlets that are really bad.’
 03 B: sind halt alles fritTIERte (.) ((shrugs))

¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5sVm1-KF9SY&t=508s>

‘They are all fried...!’

04 A: ist bei **FISCH**stäbchen ähnlich (.) {**FISCH**}AQstäbchen 13:31
 05 ähnlich.

AQ = ONE-HANDED (LEFT, RIGHT HAND ON PRODUCT), TWO FLEXED FINGERS (2 FLEXES), AT CHIN LEVEL, MINIMAL RAISING OF EYEBROWS, TURNS HEAD TO FACE AUDIENCE BEFORE AQ AND AFTERWARDS TO CENTER AGAIN

‘Similar to fish sticks, to “fish” sticks’

As mentioned, the addressed category of formal markers may be indicative of the function attributed to these instances of AQs. However, the picture being presented after a preliminary examination does not corroborate this notion. In terms of duration, the marked expression (0.14) is not a prolonged version of the unmarked one (0.41) but actually a distinctively shortened realisation. The pitch values also do not fulfil the prospect elicited by (6).

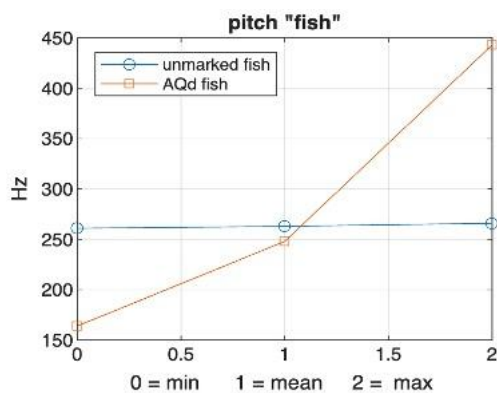


Figure 3: Pitch minimum, mean and maximum of “fish”

The unmarked expression is realised within a narrow pitch spectrum. Minimum, mean and maximum are very similar and do not leave room for much variation during the utterance. The AQd expression displays a lower value as pitch minimum, a comparable pitch mean, but a distinctly higher pitch maximum. The relation of marked and unmarked expression, concerning pitch values, therefore, is characterised as contrary to the one observed for the first unmarked/marked pair in figures 1 and 2.

This lack of common tendencies also emerges concerning a comparison of intensity.

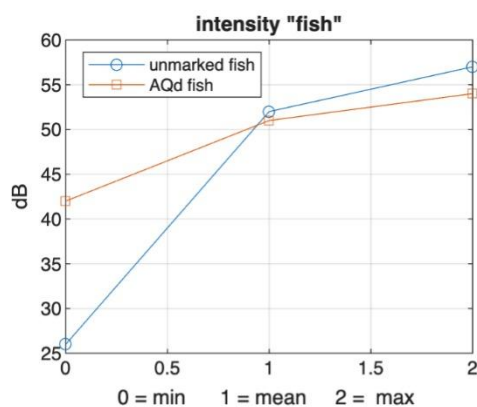


Figure 4: Intensity minimum, mean and maximum of “fish” (dB)

The comparison of both pitch and intensity values for all four expressions shows that there seems to be a tendency for AQd material to display lower pitch and higher intensity, but the pitch maximum in (7) is highest for the marked token. The intensity values in (6) seem to be surprisingly parallel, albeit with a difference of around 10dB. (7) displays an overall lower intensity of the unmarked token, and the mean is almost identical, but the intensity minimum for the marked token is higher, while the unmarked term features a higher maximum.

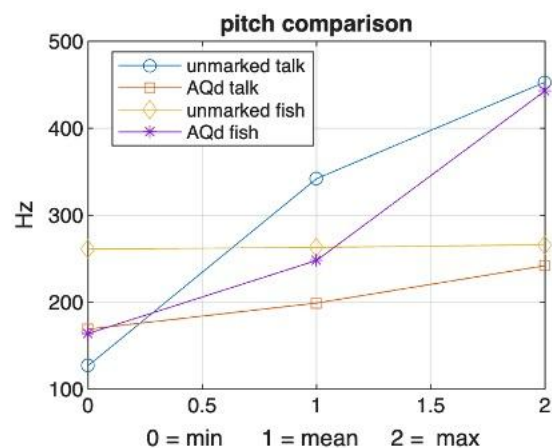


Figure 5: Comparison of pitch

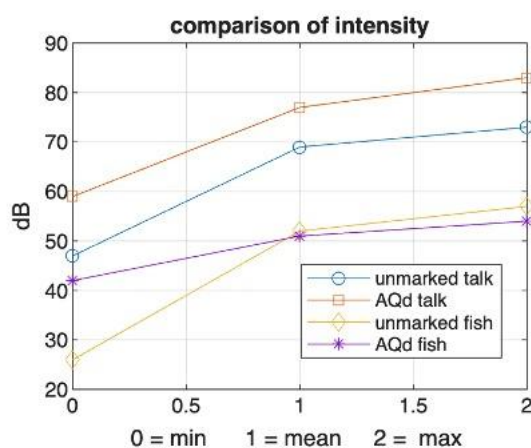


Figure 6: Comparison of intensity

In addition, distances between the three values differ for all conditions. In conclusion: Both instances seem to deviate in terms of these prosodic features. It is therefore unlikely that these prosodic aspects are indicators for a common function. Parallel to differences concerning the implementation of other cues, the variation could be due to attitudinal differences. Lampert (2013: 54f.) also describes differences concerning pitch peaks for two instances of AQs, which she analyses as occurrences of insinuation and an attempt to reduce sarcasm. She thus links those prosodic differences to diverging mechanisms of manipulating sarcastic effects. This assumption is compatible with a hypothetical secondary nature of phenomena like sarcasm in combination with AQs. The preliminary prosodic analysis even then highlights problems concerning generalisations for AQs in this area. A comparison with respect to prosodic aspects is challenging, as the utterances do not necessarily contain an unmarked and an air-quoted (AQd) token of the same type to single out idiosyncratic and contextual influences. Concerning context, there are various factors influencing prosody that will have to be accounted for, e.g., contextual aspects like focus and other unaccounted influences. A detailed examination concerning pitch profiles could be beneficial, and this line of inquiry would most likely be robust in terms of speaker-dependent variation. For the time being, however, prosodic aspects do not seem to be distinctively connected to a potential dissociation function.

Turning to the visual modality, facial cues and gesture realisation display even bigger variations. Some speakers like Mi in (6) laugh, while others do not display any non-verbal cues, like the speaker in (7). These features are optional and not distinctive for distancing through AQs. Instead, the auditive and visual cues may be caused by a correlating mechanism. The quotation gesture has to be realised, but its form is not fixed beyond a few core parameters (raising of hands, isolated and extended positioning of the index finger, flexing it once). Deviation from these potential core elements can be accommodated due to the conventionalisation of the gesture. Additional cues may vary depending on the expressive

content. The latter is related to the emotional state of the speaker. Phenomena that involve these states have been known to be associated with non-verbal cues. The reason for the lack of systematic accounts of prosodic and gestural features for quotation as well as facial expressions and other non-verbal indicators might be rooted in the focus on quotation in the written modality. Phenomena like e.g. irony, in contrast, have been targeted much more extensively from a non-verbal perspective (cf. Poyatos 1993; González-Fuente et al. 2015; Bettelli et al. 2024).¹²

However, the semantic and pragmatic aspects of quotation have been addressed frequently. In an early seminal work on different kinds of quotation marks, Klockow (1975, 1980) distinguishes a conventionalised use (e.g. in cases of pure quotation, direct discourse and titles) from a modifying use. He assumes that the latter may be used to express concerns with respect to the applicability of an expression and the adequacy of the intended reference ('Applikationsvorbehalt', cf. Klockow 1980; Bredel 2008: 135) or to reject the use of an expression completely ('Begriffsvorbehalt', cf. Klockow 1980; Bredel 2008: 135). A preliminary examination of the limited data set suggests that a slightly extended classification would be beneficial to account for the different levels of distancing.¹³

To analyse hedges, Lakoff (1973: 477) isolated different categories of features that may possibly modify commitment. Such a modification also can be used to encode distancing. In his framework of *fuzzy logic* (cf. Lakoff 1973) the assignment to a class of entities depends on the intended and available level of precision. Some features allow for members to be central members of that class and some to be peripheral members (cf. Lakoff 1973: 461). Features may carry a different weight in determining if an entity is a member of a class and what its status is (CENTRAL, that is, prototypical or PERIPHERAL/less prototypical). Depending on the context, the lack of a specific feature may or may not disqualify the entity from membership of the target class. If a speaker classifies 'viviparous' as a definitional feature for the class 'mammal', they will not accept the classification of a platypus as a member of that class. They will thus distance themselves from the potential mapping of the expression 'platypus' to the concept of 'member of class of mammals'. The level of distancing depends on the classification of each particular feature. If the feature is viewed as non-essential for the definition, the distance will be less crucial than with e.g. primary features.

Building on this, different categories of feature applicability are assigned to different degrees of distancing. A speaker who does not assign, incidental, albeit characteristic or secondary features to a referred-to entity might just want to indicate that the mapping of the chosen expression and the concept is slightly inappropriate but not unsubstantiated. They will want to express that said feature of the represented concept does not apply to the intended referents. AQs function as an indication that the feature set has to undergo are partial modification to achieve a completely appropriate mapping.

Klockow's (1980) APPLIKATIONSVORBEHALT, which he earlier named "die partielle Unangemessenheit eines Ausdrucks" (Klockow 1975: 239; partial inadequacy of expression), indicates that some aspects of intension differ from the conventionalised meaning. The meaning is suggested to be only partially adequate (cf. Dreesen 2019: 28, Klockow 1980: 242). The intended meaning may be derived via consideration of conventionally attributed features.

¹² On the prosody of sarcasm cf. e.g. Camp (2011: 25ff.).

¹³ Bredel (2008:136) suggests that function, questioning the applicability of a term ('Applikationsvorbehalt'), affects the reference as the expression does not fit the potential referents. The general rejection of the term ('Begriffsvorbehalt') is described as operating on the propositional level.

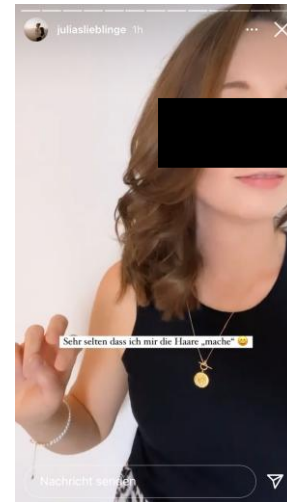
This derivation is only possible by inferring which features are viewed as inadequate in the current context. It also requires that the features causing the mismatch are not essential, as concerns about the affiliation of essential features and targeted concepts lead to a total rejection (BEGRIFFSVORBEHALT, Klockow 1980) of the expression.

The following example illustrates the encoding of such a partial inadequacy.

(8) Hairdo/Haare machen¹⁴

Figure 7

01 Jul: sehr selten dass ich mir die Haare {mache}AQ
 ‘I rarely “do” my hair.’



The influencer Julia describes an activity which primarily is associated with agency and purposefulness in applying a certain hairdo. The feature of competency merely classifies as a secondary or even incidental feature. Her concern, however, is expressed in regard to her being a competent agent in this situation. The referent of the expression only partially fits the intension of the concept. She thus wants hearers to adjust the intension for the current context, to partially modify (PM) it in this particular instance.

If the concerned features are of a primary or definitional nature, distancing has to be interpreted as more striking. The speaker rejects the expression as applicable to potential referents of the targeted class or anticipates that others may reject such a mapping. This mechanism is one of total rejection (TRa):

(9) AQ summer break/Sommerpause 0:10¹⁵

01 Jon: ich weiß nicht warum ich das sommerpause ((chuckles slightly)) nenn', wenn ich
 02 TROTZdem videos produziere?
 03 [...]jetzt ist gerade eine kleine TIERschutz {sommer}AQpause... 0:15
 AQ = TWO-HANDED, TWO FLEXED FINGERS (2 SMALL FLEXES), AT NOSE LEVEL
 ‘I don't know, why I am calling this *summerbreak* if I am producing videos anyway? Right now there is a short “summerbreak” concerning animal welfare’

Jon refers to a “summer break” but proceeds to indicate that the term may not be fitting the notion of the concept adequately. He specifies that he is not taking a break from producing videos for his channel but has not posted videos addressing animal welfare for a little while.

¹⁴ @julasieblinge Instagram-Story dated 20th of August 2021.

¹⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sBLV7xcjZKk>; repetition of (2).

The potential definitional feature of stopping an activity for an unspecified amount of time is not fitting for the situation. The use of expression is rejected completely, based on the features the speaker views as essential for the concept *break*. He initially chooses the expression and quotes himself in the aftermath of the original use. This instance matches Cirillo's (2019: 9) classification of a speaker-orientated AQ-type. She classifies this type as "managing attribution" (Cirillo 2019: 3), encoding the speaker's attitude towards the mapping of expression and concept and thus having an evaluative character. Self-repairs like these may co-occur with different attitudes.

(4) AQ regular/normaler 0:43¹⁶

01 Rob: und in letzter zeit (.)– wir geh'n hier nochmal REIN –

02 hat jonas wohl (.) ganz ganz viele videos in

03 sachen TIERSchutz gemacht (.), also sich verändert vom

04 normalen, ne { }_{AQ} äh youtuber was heißt schon normal? von 0:50

AQ = TWO-HANDED, TWO FLEXED FINGERS(2 SMALL FLEXES), ARMS WIDE FOR GESTURE, AT NOSE LEVEL, TURNS HEAD TO THE FACE AUDIENCE (EYEBROWS SLIGHTY RAISED) BEFORE AQ AND AFTERWARDS TO CENTER AGAIN

05 einer richtung youtube hat er sich [...]

'and lately we will look at that again Jonas produced a lot of videos on animal welfare. He thus changed from a regular, ehm youtuber but what does "regular" actually signify? He changed directions on Youtube.'

Rob indicates that definitional features of the concept 'regular' may not be applied to the person he is talking about. He distances himself from the possibility of an adequate definition of the concept as a whole and therefore completely rejects the use of the expression (TRb). While this also falls under *managing attribution*, the dissociation has the potential to be more extreme than in (9). It might be useful to distinguish different kinds of rejection. For one thing, the interpretation of rejection of the TRb-type seems to be less context-dependent. This is a striking feature, considering that AQs are a highly context-dependent mechanism (cf. Cirillo 2019: 8). Like (9) shows, there are instances in which the rejection only applies to the specific context of utterance being of the TRa-type. The different types of distancing are context-dependent to different extents. Hence, while AQs are a highly conventionalised phenomenon concerning core aspects of form, they are context-dependent in terms of function.

Contrary to Rob in (9), the speaker Mi does not target his own choice of expression in (1) and (6) but one used by the other participant (Ma). In his view the depiction of talking ("reden") lacks primary features. The depiction would rather qualify for the use of expressions like *shout*. Speakers as well as recipients have to decide which status features hold for the concept. The speaker seems to reject the mapping of the expression to the concept represented by the non-verbal representation of Ma.¹⁷ He therefore distances himself from the mapping suggested by Ma and not his own choice of words. The rejection does not target the mapping in general, but in the current context, while Rob questions the intension of *regular* in general.

¹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rp1bAVD4-FQ>; completed version of (5).

¹⁷ Individual speakers and hearers will potentially differ in their assessment concerning the status of features. Even intensions of conventionalised expressions will vary depending on individual conceptualisation (cf. Sperber & Wilson 1997).

Mi's utterance can be classified as a hearer-orientated use. Cirillo (2019) defines the latter as instances in which a lack of knowledge on the hearer's side is rectified. To achieve this, the speaker, e.g., introduces expressions that are assigned to definitions delivered beforehand or after the marked term. Mi then would be intending to improve Ma's definition of *talking*. Cirillo (2019: 8) classifies instances like these as *managing the match*.¹⁸ The AQs are used to rectify a lack of precision or presence of vagueness of the marked expression.

The distinction of speaker- and hearer-orientated use is a promising one, but it should be investigated how this distinction is tied to the aspect of evaluation. Distancing in itself implies an evaluation by the speaker. They have to evaluate if the respective match is appropriate or not. However, this evaluation is not necessarily emotional.

The other type of total rejection (TRb) does not involve considerations concerning features which may or may not qualify potential referents as members of the targeted class. Expressions rejected in this manner often have a pejorative meaning or are associated with a socio- or idiolect, etc.

(10) AQ Boomer¹⁹

- 01 Yas: [...]die aktivisten verurteilt wie wir dann halt [**die boomer**]AQ generell als klimaschänder bezeichnet werden was ja auch nicht stimmt.
'The activists then blame ...we then blame - "the boomers" in general as climate change perpetrators which is not correct.'

The journalist Yas quotes the term, which is stereotypically assigned to the vocabulary of GenZ speakers. At the same time, she wants to distance herself from the term and its use. Thus, it is marked as borrowed from the vocabulary associated with speakers of this Generation though the speaker is a member of GenZ as well. The AQs indicate that the speaker deems the match of expression and intended concept inappropriate. She distances herself from this instance of sociolect.

(11) (constructed)

Context: Ab's and Bo's mutual friend Pepe calls his wife 'Schnäbelchen', which Ab and Bo are aware of.

- 01 Bo: why is pepe so irritated lately? did he fight with his wife?
02 Ab: yes. pepe is really angry with {schnäbel}AQchen.

Ab would normally not refer to Pepe's wife in such a manner but uses the term to make a point in this context, namely, that the pet name is contrasted with Pepe's feelings for his wife at the moment. He does, however, feel the necessity to mark the chosen expression as not belonging to his vocabulary. He borrowed it from Pepe's idiolect. Predelli (2003: 2) described this for SQs as well. The distancing in these cases is used to indicate the exclusion of the marked term from one's vocabulary.

The distinctiveness of features results in different degrees of distancing, culminating in three types of addressing such mismatches.

¹⁸ Cirillo's (2019) examples center around subject-specific expressions, but their predominance in her 'managing the match'-category might be due to the genre of academic presentation.

¹⁹ Studio Schmitt, episode 30, Yasmine M'Barek, German TV premiere on 21.04.2022 on ZDFneo.

Table 1: Typology of distancing classes

type of distancing ↓	prevalent domain of mismatch				
	characteristic but incidental features	secondary features	primary features	definitional features	vocabulary
Partial modification (PM)	X	X			
Total rejection a (TRa)			X	X	
Total rejection b (TRb)					X

Almost negligible concerns are encoded when AQs concern incidental features. With a feature’s increasing significance for the intension, the amount of concern rises until it is insurmountable, and the expression has to be rejected for the intended reference in particular or even in general. While AQs can be used to criticise one’s own choice of words, like in (2), or that of a specific different speaker, like in (6), the exact source of the quoted expression does not have to be known, as seen in (10) and as noted for SQs by Predelli (2003).

The use of available non-verbal and prosodic features could be linked to the different types of AQ, to either reject the mapping of the chosen term and intended referent completely (TRa or b) or to indicate that the mapping would lead to a mismatch (PM) which should be addressed. Prosodic and gestural indicators, as well as e.g. strongly raised eyebrows, might then help to differentiate between cases of TR or PM. Unfortunately, even the small dataset, used as testing grounds for first assumptions, indicates that the co-occurrence of such features and different types of AQ only correlate. However, this was only shown for a limited set of potential cues, and further work is necessary to corroborate this assumption.

Cirillos (2019) analysis asserts the importance of non-verbal features. It is, however, possible that the genre of academic presentation influences certain aspects of implementation. This context probably leads to a more conscious use of means like AQs, and, due to its instructive character, it probably manifests functional convergences that spontaneous speech and other genres lack. The analysis of gestures focuses on the core hand gesture, but head movements and changes in the line of sight appear frequently during AQ implementations. A detailed account covering prosodic, gestural, and facial markers could lead to interesting revelations.

Not taking said markers into account, AQs and SQs seem to function very similarly. They might even be instances of the same phenomenon in different modalities. This issue will be addressed in the next subsection.

2.3 Are AQs just SQs in a different modality?

The distancing paradigm, described in the last chapter, could very well be applied to SQs. Differences concerning modality aside, AQs might just be SQs. The latter have been described to indicate distancing, irony and sarcasm, euphemisms and idiolects (cf. Predelli 2003; Brendel et al. 2011: 19; McCullagh 2017). Expressions uttered in these contexts have in common that their match to the intended concept is not judged as appropriate by the speaker. These effects can be observed in instances of AQs as well. As pointed out in the last subsection, the marked expressions raised concerns with the respective speakers because they perceived a mismatch between the quoted term and its denotation (cf. this function of scare quotes Predelli 2003; Brendel et al. 2011: 19; McCullagh 2017; Schlechtweg & Härtl 2018).

Thus, AQs seem to display features that may be attributed to SQs (cf. *inter alia* Lampert 2013: 50, 53; Yu 2013; Predelli 2003; McCullagh 2017; Gómez-Torrente 2017) but may possibly be able to represent all other types of quotation as well: pure quotation, direct discourse, mixed/hybrid quotation (cf. amongst others Cappelen & Lepore 1997; Maier 2021; De Brabanter 2023).²⁰

Following Gutzmann & Stei (2011), all types of quotation could possibly be indicators of non-stereotypical denotations. Pointing to such denotations implies distancing and is possibly the core function of AQs.

(11) “Pepe” is an unusual name. (construed)

A pure quotation like (11) can be interpreted as a case where the expression does not refer to the intended concept but to the linguistic form. The denotation would therefore not be prototypical (cf. De Brabanter 2023: 289). Even if the use of AQs in an emphatic quote is to my knowledge not attested yet, it could be used to illustrate the distancing effect as well.

(12) We sell “fresh” pastry.²¹

An emphatic quote supposedly enforces the application of the marked expression, it inflates the features associated with the concept. The expression thus does not denote stereotypical members of that class but optimal ones. The pastries in (12) are, supposedly, not only fresh but fresher than most. The attitude towards such a mapping of expression and denotation will probably be positive, while contexts of irony, sarcasm, euphemisms and idio- as well as sociolects probably correlate with a negative attitude, at least with mockery and derision. Readings that induce SQ-readings seem to be much more accessible than other types of quotation, however.

A potential reason for this could be relevance. As described by Sperber & Wilson (1998:10) with the “communicative principle of relevance”, listeners expect the utterance to be of an elevated relevance if the production and interpretation is costly. A computation of meaning which is not encoded by conventionalisation and that has to be inferred causes a bigger cognitive effort and is consequently more costly. Its meaning should therefore be of adequate relevance to justify the higher cost. As there are other, more frequent traditional indicators (e.g. lexical means) and ways to decode pure quotation and direct discourse, the contexts that would make the use of AQs relevant enough are scarce. Cirillo’s (2019) data includes instances that

²⁰ Unfortunately, the discussion of the adequate terminology for instances of mixed quotation and its exact nature has to be ignored at this moment.

²¹ Example from Gutzmann & Stei (2011: 2).

can be categorised as name-informing. The latter can be categorised as pure quotation, as it is the formal side of an expression that needs to be connected to the mentioned concept (cf. Härtl 2018).

(13) We really look at the household decisions how they kind of try to be better off
Λ<maximize>Λ utilities as we like to say in economics.

FLEXES INDEX AND MIDDLE FINGER OF BOTH HANDS TWICE AT EYE
LEVEL MOVING OUTWARDS (Sept C-14, 10:32)

Cirillo (2019: 9).

Cirillo's (2019:9) example illustrates an instance in which the speaker introduces a mapping of the term *maximize* and a subject-specific concept. Instances of introducing an expression like this one are dependent on the expression's frequency and familiarity. An expression with either low frequency or familiarity may be introduced without violating the relevance principle. Subject-specific language must frequently be introduced as long as it is not established. This status then manifests in a low frequency and familiarity. Listeners who are not informed concerning this aspect, therefore, will identify the m-marked (cf. Levinson 2000) form as being worth the costly interpretation. Academic presentations are in principle pre-planned, and they are part of a genre that features speakers who, in general, try to be precise. The aim to substitute vague and colloquial expressions like *try to be better off* by precise terminology may therefore justify the use of AQs. The introduction of the term through AQs is legitimated by its low frequency. A higher frequency and familiarity of expression will, however, lead to the inference that the speaker intends a non-stereotypical mapping.²² The quotation is not likely to indicate an introductory character if frequency and/or familiarity levels are high. The use of AQs is only relevant if it carries another meaning which has to be inferred. Hence, depending on certain factors, AQs seem available to cover most of the functions attributed to quotation in the written modality, as long as this is justified in terms of relevance. While it is not empirically confirmed yet, it seems like AQs are not restricted to implementing the functions described for SQs. Its use seems to be expandable to other instances of quotation as well.

Even a cursory examination of AQ data suggests that there is no systematic use of gestural features and facial expressions that can be tied to potential functions like the ones attributed to SQs. There are instances like (7) in which speakers exhibit no change concerning these aspects and instances that may be analysed as repair mechanisms which display no non-verbal similarities at all: In (2), the self-repair is accompanied by a small chuckle, while (4), another self-repair, exhibits other markers which, instead of softening critique, seem to indicate anticipated pushback. This might be caused by the reasons for the repair sequences. There is not too much risk in (2) for the speaker to be made liable for an error concerning his statement that he is taking a break. He does, however, rectify an imprecise use of expression. In contrast, in (4) the attribution, which is not only modified but actually cancelled (TRb), is caused by the possibility of critique from someone else, not the speaker himself, like in (2). The speaker therefore has to anticipate that he could be made liable. The emotional involvement thus seems to be more distinctive.

(6) is an example of laughter, used to soften the notion of derision. Speaker and hearer are friends and family, and they cultivate a playful discourse with each other. The correction, therefore, is not delivered sternly but playfully.

²² Härtl (2018) describes this mechanism for the verbal marker *sogenannt*, which translates to *so-called*.

It is possible that notions of irony and sarcasm in contexts of AQs are subcategories of expressions of attitude. The notion of irony or sarcasm then arises through using similar prosodic features, gestures and facial expressions attributed to those phenomena. Speakers express equivalent emotions via the expressive content of the marked material, and in this fashion, they create ironical, sarcastic and other similar secondary effects (cf. Potts 2007a: 179 for a small list of prosodic and gestural elements to encode expressive content). Laughter, for example, may be used as a trigger for an SQ-effect (cf. Ginzburg et al. 2015: 144f.) in itself or accompany such a mechanism. As hypothesised, effects of irony, sarcasm and other functions attributed to SQs might merely be accompanying effects, expressing an attitude that co-occurs with the essential distancing mechanism.

The audio-visual modality of AQs offers possibilities to encode such attitudes by non-verbal cues like laughter and raising of the eyebrows, among others. Such non-verbal elements, specifically laughter, can be analysed as markers for incongruity (cf. Ginzburg et al. 2015) on top of the distancing mechanism. They can indicate the speaker's attitude. In this case, the laughter is part of the expressive content that is added to the descriptive content of the utterance.

3. Focusing the functional dimension

As mentioned before, Gutzmann&Stei (2011) suggest a unified approach for all types of quotation, namely, that they are used to induce a non-stereotypical interpretation. This function then represents a distancing concerning the stereotypical mapping of expression and the intended denotation. The approach for AQs in this paper is based on an equivalent assumption for the audio-visual modality. Such an assumption requires directing attention to the distancing mechanism.

3.1 *What gives rise to the distancing effect?*

Cirillo (2019) identifies two classes of AQ-use: One with an informing and one with an evaluative function, as mentioned earlier. The first is a hearer-orientated use in which the speaker tries to rectify a lack of knowledge concerning the relation between term and represented concept (MANAGING THE MATCH). This supposedly addresses the level of vagueness or preciseness of the expression. The second function serves as a possibility for the speaker to evaluate a mapping (MANAGING THE ATTRIBUTION). It is thus classified as speaker-orientated. Both may co-occur, but one will be dominant depending on the stronger orientation on either speaker or hearer.

Instead of distinguishing a matching and an attribution function, this paper takes a look at the possibility of these being two layers of one mechanism. As assumed for SQs and in some accounts for QMs in general, the assumption of a distancing mechanism is compatible with the different kinds of AQs described by Cirillo (2019). The two functions she describes, therefore, will be analysed as one default function of distancing which leaves room to encode attitude as expressive content on top.²³ The type of distance which is suggested depends on the context of

²³ As described by Wiślicki (2023: 421) for SQ, the rejection of mapping a concept and chosen expression might operate on reference as well as propositional level (cf. Bredel 2008: 136). The latter corresponds to both intensities of TR, while PM targets the reference.

the utterance in which the marked expression is embedded. The default function of distancing or dissociating can be realised without the expression of attitude, but it also can be accompanied by content referring to “affective attitudes” (Yus 2016a).

Under this assumption, proposed functions like irony, sarcasm, indication of euphemisms, idio- and sociolect are encoded in addition to this primary function. Bertuccelli (2016) e.g. analyses irony as a complex attitude that includes such a dissociative dimension. Speakers thus express that they distance themselves from content and potentially communicate their respective emotions (affective attitudes). These emotions can be elicited in AQ-instances, but speakers first of all want to distance themselves from the mapping of expression and intended denotation. This applies with or without the encoding of irony. Irony, sarcasm, etc. are only optionally encoded. This again would be compatible with the assumption that AQs suggest a non-canonical interpretation. The expressions are marked, and thus the m-principle suggests that they should be interpreted in a non-standard way through a conversational implicature (cf. Sperber & Wilson 1997; Levinson 2000: 136; Gutzmann & Stei 2011). Apart from the question of whether all speakers really share precise and consistent knowledge of what a stereotype really encompasses²⁴, other problems like conceptual flexibility lead to the assumption that the interpretation of some concepts relies heavily on context. If the concept is not matched to an expression which represents the intension in a precise way, the denotation has to be calculated with respect to its context. Expressions thus may be mere placeholders for concepts with certain definitional features, while their other features may differ depending on the context (cf. Sperber & Wilson 1998).

The reference also is subsequently heavily context-dependent. In contrast to e.g. the non-lexicalised concepts the authors refer to, AQd material is in general lexicalised – except in name-forming context addressed in the last chapter – but the speaker wants to convey that the lexicalisation is not applicable per se. Incidentally, an exact mapping of expression and concept is not necessary in every instance. An approximation frequently is sufficient to ensure successful communication (cf. Sperber & Wilson 1998). However, this vagueness is not permitted in all contexts. (13) illustrated one in which the speaker felt that they had to aim for precision and use AQs in an attempt to self-repair the utterance (cf. Cirillo 2019: 9).

To summarise: Speakers can use AQs to indicate that they view the mapping of expression and intended concept as inappropriate. The significance of the mismatch can be perceived differently (PM, TRa, TRb). With PM and TRa, the intension of the marked expression supposedly exhibits some features that disqualify the expression concerning reference to suitable referents. In the case of TRb, the speaker rejects the expression because its conventionalised intension is not one they can commit to (potentially due to political, ideological, aesthetic or ethical considerations cf. Carduff 2009: 156). Expressions can also be rejected due to membership concerns.

Saka (2007) has developed an analysis for pejorative language that connects truth-conditions to the affiliation of speakers to a certain group as well as to their attitude. Not being part of a group to whose vocabulary an expression is restricted might motivate the use of AQs when using the expression anyway, like illustrated by (10). To avoid negative consequences of such an unauthorised use, the increase in interpretation cost caused by the marked expression might be accepted by the speaker, as described earlier. In this manner, the speaker expresses that this is not an expression that they would use to refer to the intended concept. They distance themselves from such a mapping, which justifies the higher processing costs. In (10), the

²⁴ Sperber & Wilson (1998) suggest that prototypical interpretations are just a possibility but not a must.

speaker intended to address the use of the – in her view – inappropriate term, to elaborate on the introduced attitude attributed to members of GenZ. The nature of this attitude towards the referred-to generation (baby boomer generation) is conventionalised knowledge which is made salient by use of the marked term. It is then available as basis for other further attributions of attitude, while the AQs simultaneously indicate distancing concerning the mentioned terms.

Härtl (2018: 140) argues in this fashion with respect to the verbal marker *sogenannt/so-called*. Used with a highly conventionalised morpheme, a name-forming function of the verbal marker *sogeanante* violates the principle of relevance, as illustrated earlier.

(14) Dieser **sogeannte** Kaffee ist fast durchsichtig. (construed)
'This so-called coffee is almost see-through.'

An already established mapping of expression and concept does not adhere to this principle. The mapping of *coffee* to the corresponding conventionalised concept renders the use of *so-called* superfluous. If it is used anyhow, the speaker must have a reason to accept the higher cost of interpretation. This therefore leads to the inference that speakers actually want to distance themselves from such a mapping. The author also assumes that non-verbal quotation marks induce a similar effect of distancing by suggesting that the expression does not display the conventionalised intension. SQs are singled out to indicate concerns about the mapping of expression and intended concept (cf. Härtl 2018: 143f.).

As discussed earlier, the mechanism of distancing may correlate with an emotional involvement on the speaker's part, depending on the reason for expressing distance. Emotions subsequently may influence prosody (cf. inter alia Laukka 2000; Mairano et al. 2019) as well as facial expressions and gestural aspects. Differences concerning formal features observed in the data might thus not be tied to different types of AQs but to an expression of attitude. These features could be correlations of the affective attitude of the speaker (cf. Yus 2016) and not be connected directly to the different quotation types which AQs seem to be able to represent.

3.2 Piggybacking on distancing: The potential of expressive content on top of the distancing mechanism

Kasimir (2008: 68) suggests that the prosodic markers which have been attributed to reported speech (cf. Brünner 1991; Buttny 1997; Couper-Kuhlen 1998) and/or quotation markers are means to comment on the source of the original utterance. Such evaluations are connected to the speaker's attitude towards the original speaker, as Kasimir (2008) suggests, or perhaps just towards the quoted speech event. This line of thinking will be explored in this subsection.

The examples of AQd *reden* (6), as well as *Fischstäbchen* (7), both indicate that these expressions with their conventional meaning are not necessarily applicable to the target. In (7) the speaker might find no fault in applying the term to the target, but he seems to think that others might. The AQs are used in anticipation of a challenge of the mapping of expression and intended referents because of intensional aspects of the referred-to concept. AQs show this as well as optionally expressing additional content with respect to such a potential mismatch. This context of utterance, however, is one where controversy is not likely. The participants of the conversation are comparing vegan products, which permits the assumption that they do not exhibit adversarial attitudes toward veganism and the associated products. As a result, there is no motivation for the speaker to express a corresponding attitude. He only does his due diligence in indicating that some might object to the mapping of expression and concept.

Consequently, the utterance is performed with hardly any facial cues and no other additional non-verbal cues. If the utterance had been realised in a context with different addressees, the potential for controversy could have led to more emotional involvement. Anticipation of opposition can influence the emotional state of the speaker. If a speaker anticipates that the use of the expression in the intended way might create a bigger need for persuasion to convince the participant, this can result in a stronger emotional involvement of the speaker (cf. Rocklage et al. 2018 and concerning attitude openness as foundation for successful persuasion Teeny & Petty 2022).

The challenge that arises from controversy is palpable in (6). While in (7) AQs were used to refute a challenge with respect to the expression and its intension, the AQs in (6) are used to perform the challenge itself. The speaker refers to the preceding depiction and wants to distance himself from a reference to the depicted concept by the used term. While doing this, he displays cues which indicate his attitude and express his emotional state concerning certain aspects of this speech event. Accordingly, gestural and facial markers suggest a derisive attitude which is softened by laughter. The corresponding markers may suggest irony.

Thus, differences in the implementation of AQs may be caused by anticipation of perlocutionary effects (cf. Hundsnurscher 2001: 369). The much more subtle use of AQs in e.g. (7) vs. (6) is compatible with such an assumption. The situation in which *fish sticks* refers to a product void of fish is uncontroversial in the given context, and it seems to induce less emotional involvement of the speaker than in (6), which is used as direct critique concerning the previous utterance of the former speaker/now hearer.

The following corresponding assumptions have to be confirmed, however: Evaluations that Cirillo (2019) observes and classifies as a function of *managing the attribution* are merely part of expressive content, and the default and primary function is distancing. The latter necessarily is encoded by AQs while the expressive content is optional. The indication of distancing is realised with respect to specific aspects of the targeted mapping.

This may lead to a shift of different variables of the context tuple (cf. Schlenker 2004) or, in terms of Bühler (1943), of the I-here-now-origo. AQs seem to occur in a variety of situations that have a common denominator, which includes a version of 'not': not me, not them, not my vocabulary, not literally. The speaker indicates e.g. that they do not want to be liable for the use, that other possible agents are not liable and also that people using the term are indeed liable. They may also want to indicate that they distance themselves from the use now and here in contrast to another time and space or group of addressees. Returning to Cirillo's (2019:9) example in (13), the speaker would use the AQs to indicate that they might have used the term *maximize* in a context with informed addressees, but that the current context did not warrant an uncommented use of the term. The relevant context variable here is the one relating to addressee(s) of the utterance. (15) illustrates another example in which the speaker deems it necessary to indicate that they judge the marked expression as not applicable for the current context, at least not uncommented.

(15) When I visit my friends on a Sunday, I always make sure that they have had a **{siesta}AQ**.
(construed)

In another context with other addressees, e.g. friends with whom the speaker shares the habit of using the loanword *siesta*, the speaker will probably not mark its use. Pejorative expressions are only marked by speakers who deem them pejorative and wish to express this judgement. In this line of argumentation, one can assume that users of sociolect expressions will also not use

AQs to mark terms they use specifically to address their peers. Cirillo's (2019) hearer-orientated example can therefore be classified as one where the speaker does not anticipate that all addressees are peers and use the same vocabulary. In (16), the relevant context variable is the one relating to the time of a different speech event.²⁵

(16) Speaker points at guitar:

A: Früher habe ich immer **{Ditarre}**AQ dazu gesagt. (construed)
'I used to call this "duitar".'

All context variables seem suitable domains for distancing.

Similar to some approaches to analyse irony beyond the focus on literal/non-literal discrepancies (cf. Grice 1989, echoic assumptions Wilson 2006, Wilson & Sperber 2012 and the pretence approach Clark & Gerrig 1984), it will be assumed that propositional and non-propositional attitudes both play an essential part in conveying the meaning encoded by AQs (cf. Bertuccelli 2016: 87 and Gibbs 2000; Wilson 2006; Sperber & Wilson 2012; Bertuccelli 2016; Yus 2016 concerning the involvement of attitudes in the use of irony). Outside the context of AQs, verbal irony comprehension is based on a combination "of the recovery of the intended proposition and the inference of affective states" (Yus 2016b). AQs with ironical effect, like (6), focus on the choice of expression, towards which they express a dissociative attitude (concerning the dissociative effect of irony cf. Wilson 2006; Bromberek-Dyzman 2012: 99; Sperber & Wilson 2012; Bertuccelli 2018; Green 2017; Yus 2016b) more than towards the situation. However, AQs direct the notion of dissociation specifically towards the aforementioned choice of expression and can optionally elicit secondary effects of irony.

Without non-verbal cues, the distancing effect cannot be calculated by aligning the propositional content and the context of utterance, which in contexts of irony will yield a mismatch and, at least through accommodation, point to an appropriate interpretation.²⁶ Other aspects like prosodic features, facial expressions, and gestures are necessary to induce irony (cf. Ginzburg et al. 2015; Bertuccelli 2018) or sarcastic effects in instances of AQs. Without them, the only meaning that is actually encoded is distancing. As these cues are restricted to the audio-visual modality, recipients of SQ need to rely on contextual information like incongruity for adequate interpretation, while these cues can be taken into account for AQd material.

Does this line of reasoning apply to other suggested functions of SQs and AQs as well? Euphemisms like (17) per se are cases of non-stereotypical mapping of expressions to concepts as speakers use them "to attenuate, or, on the contrary, to reinforce" (Casas Gómez 2009) the mapping of a somehow offensive deemed concept and the term it is prototypically associated with.

(17) He showed her his **{stamp}**AQ collection. (construed)

²⁵ For a description of a context tuple including such a variant, cf. Lohnstein & Staratschek (2020: 218ff.).

²⁶ If one concurs with Yus' (2016b) hypothesis that the speaker's attitude, including affective attitudes, is an essential component for irony interpretation, the interpretation of irony without non-verbal cues can only be achieved by accommodation. For a discussion of the influence that affective attitudes might hold over propositional content cf. Yus (2016a).

Additionally, the utterance of *Mi* in line 05 is not interpretable if taken out of context (NONDISPLACE-ABILITY). The content that expresses mockery seems to fit this criterion. If the distancing is deleted, the utterance violates the relevance principle. The utterance of the adjective in an unmarked fashion would yield no positive cognitive effect, meaning no change concerning the addressee's mental state (cf. Sperber & Wilson 1997, 1998). The result would merely be a repetition without enrichment of the common ground. The cost would therefore not warrant the effort of interpretation.

In addition, the mockery would have to be assigned to a different proposition because it necessarily is tied to propositional content. Potts (2007a: 169) assumes that the class of semantic types is composed of two complementary sets. One is the set of descriptive types σ , and the other consists of expressive types ϵ , the latter being defined as an ordered pair $\langle \sigma, \epsilon \rangle$. The descriptive component can be complex, which allows for propositional content being classified as descriptive. Mockery e.g., hence, has to be attributed to descriptive content σ .

(19) altered (7)

01 A: You seem to love **{fish}AQ**sticks.

If the distancing caused by the AQs is removed from (19), the mockery is expressed towards a different propositional content, as the denotations for the noun in (19) and (20) are not identical. While the marked expression in (19) refers to a vegan product, the same unmarked expression in (20) refers to actual fish sticks.

(20) altered (7)

01 A: You seem to love fish sticks.

Thus, removal of the distancing changes the meaning of the utterance, and the mockery is attached to the altered descriptive content. The speaker now addresses a different proposition. That the distancing influences the descriptive content may also be deduced from (21):

(21) altered (7)

01 A: You never buy **{fish}AQ**sticks, because you obviously only like fish sticks.

Deleting the distancing component, introduced by m-marking, would render the utterance incoherent. Hence, the distancing is not independent.

As mentioned above, the mockery in (18) can only be interpreted with respect to the descriptive content of the utterance. It is unfortunately too early to classify the distancing function as NONDISPLACEABLE. A detailed description of how exactly this effect is interpreted will be necessary for that. This question therefore has to remain for another time.

The mockery in (18) expresses the attitude of the speaker. The respective content is highly dependent on the perspective of the assumed judge *J*, which fits the property of PERSPECTIVE DEPENDENCE. Such a judge is by default identical to the speaker, but it also may vary (cf. Potts 2007a: 173).²⁹ Based on Lasersohn (2005), Potts (2007a) uses the CONTEXTUAL JUDGE *J* to account for utterances which seem to encompass different perspectives. This approach allows modelling AQs without assuming that the context variables are manipulated (concerning criticism of such a manipulation cf. Potts 2007a).

²⁹ Potts (2007a: 173) mentions the corresponding examples.

AQs indicate that there are non-prototypical aspects to the mapping of expression and intended concept. This results in distancing from a prototypical interpretation of the marked expression.

The distancing by AQs could accordingly be interpreted as indicating that the judge for this portion of the utterance is not the speaker. As seen in (22), AQs can be used in contexts in which the speaker anticipates the rejection of the term and therefore marks it.

(22)³⁰

04 A: ist bei FISCHstäbchen ähnlich (.) {FISCH}AQstäbchen
05 ähnlich.
 ‘Similar to fish sticks, to “fish” sticks.’

The distancing is not caused by his perspective and judgement but by an anticipated judgement. The speaker expresses that the mapping of expression and intended concept might be judged as inadequate by others. This seems to fit the possible interpretation that AQs are a means to shift the judge variable automatically away from the default. But as other instances of AQs show, this is not always the case. In (18) the AQs indicate that Ma might judge the referred-to topic as being *profound*, but that does not correspond to Mi’s judgement. The speaker himself judges the mapping of expression and intended concept. The distancing mechanism still seems to be dependent on the perspective. Distancing necessarily is the consequence of an evaluation, even if it does not necessarily lead to emotional involvement.

While the property of DESCRIPTIVE INEFFABILITY is not undisputed (cf. Schlenker 2007: 239), it seems reasonable that the interpretation of distancing leaves less room for miscalculation as mockery, bemusement and e.g. emotions which indicate a displeased judge. These phenomena are less precise than distancing in terms of description, as the expressive content of the majority of AQd terms is not linked to a morpheme or phrase. They are implemented by non-verbal and prosodic means and therefore lack any kind of specific semantic dimension.³¹

Concerning IMMEDIACY, both the distancing and the attitudinal component seem to behave similarly. The distancing is realised upon use as well as the expression of attitude. But, as Potts (2007a: 180) himself points out, this property is not one exclusively attributed to expressive content.

REPEATABILITY, however, is an aspect in which distancing and the attitude component of the utterances with AQs differ. Turning back to (22), it would be reasonable to assume that the distancing effect is not strengthened by repetition. Similar to what Potts (2007a: 190ff.) describes for pronouns which refer to an addressee, many AQd expressions cannot be omitted. AQs often mark nominal phrases or verbs, resulting in the impossibility to reduce the instances of use. They need to be uttered as often as necessary for the computation of the utterance, due to their function as arguments or predicates. Cases of AQd attributions like (1, 18), however, should also show that distancing does not strengthen when repeated (Potts 2007a: 182 & 191). While distance per se is a gradable concept, it also has a binary component. As soon as there is distance, it is automatically true that the assessment of judge J is divergent from the

³⁰ Partial repetition of (7).

³¹ In contrast to the expressive terms that Potts (2007a, b) discusses, instances in which AQs indicate that the expression is part of a divergent idio- or sociolect as well as euphemisms are exceptions, as they provide a semantic dimension that may be addressed specifically.

respective speaker's position at the utterance index. As soon as it is not the one the judge shares, distance is manifested. It is possible to express the extent of distance, but this task seems to fall to the expressive content. The speaker in (7) does not seem to attach emotions to the mapping of expression and intended concept. Therefore, the utterance does not encode information about this domain but merely expresses that the expression may not be judged as adequate by some. The relation of adequacy is a strictly binary concept, which means that upon expression of lack of adequacy, no modification, e.g. strengthening, is possible. Hence, a reiteration of the distancing component would violate the principles of relevance.

(23) alteration of (22)³²

04 A: ist bei FISCHstäbchen ähnlich (.) {FISCH}AQstäbchen {FISCH}AQstäbchen
 {FISCH}AQstäbchen ähnlich.
 ‘Similar to fish sticks, to “fish sticks” “fish sticks” “fish sticks”.’

(23) also does not seem to transport a sense of a heightened emotional state on the speaker's side associated with distancing. This, however, supposedly happens if the distancing corresponds to expressive content (cf. Potts 2007a: 173). The attitudinal component, however, accordingly might be strengthened by repetition. The emotional state assigned to a speaker of (23) will probably differ from that of (22). Thus, reiteration seems to strengthen the effect and point to it being expressive content. All in all, the attitudinal component exhibits the properties assumed for expressive content, while distancing mainly behaves like descriptive content.

To summarise: AQ as distancing markers address the mapping of expression and concept explicitly. This function creates contexts in which the attitude of the speaker towards this mapping mechanism can be relevant but does not have to be. The distancing mechanism modifies the descriptive content of the utterance. However, it is potentially connected to the expressive content which can be encoded additionally. Thus, the primary function described in the hypothesis corresponds to encoding descriptive content, while the secondary function targets expressive content. The denotation of the marked expression does serve as an argument in the expressive index that Potts (2007a) describes to capture this kind of meaning. As seen above, a change in denotation would, therefore, also change the descriptive content and as a consequence create an alternative expressive index. This interpretation is only possible if we allow for expressive meaning which is not encoded by morphemes but also by prosodic features as well as facial expressions, gestures and other non-verbal cues. Potts (2007a) analyses expressive content as a shifting mechanism from one expressive index to another. This would then be the optional secondary function of AQs, while the descriptive content of AQs indicates the necessity of a contextual judge J to achieve the intended interpretation. As the distancing mechanism seems to fulfil the requirements for descriptive content and the additional content does so for expressive content, the hypothesis seems to be adequate. How exactly this additional expressive content is elicited remains unanswered for now.

4. Conclusion

After a description of the formal features of AQs which tried to expand the one given in Cirillo (2019), this paper suggested that AQs may be analysed as a basic dissociation mechanism. The

³² Partial repetition of (19).

latter incorporates concerns with respect to a specific mapping of expression and intended referents. The m-marking by AQs leads to a conversational implicature, the implicature pointing to an atypical interpretation of the marked term. The standard interpretation is rejected, as suggested by Gutzmann & Stei (2012) for quotation in general, which results in a distancing effect, which in turn adds to the descriptive content of the utterance. The distancing was characterised as gradient, resulting in a proposal for a typology that links the amount of distancing to different features of the targeted intension. Distancing was thus described as being caused by a mapping mismatch of concept and expression. The mismatch, based on Lakoff's (1973) analysis of hedging devices, was characterised as a lack of incidental, secondary, or primary feature attribution or as instances in which the expression is not part of a specific vocabulary.

The variance concerning formal aspects of AQ occurrences were attributed to being potential indicators of expressive content, instead of different kinds of distancing. This approach is based on differences in implementation of gestural, facial and non-verbal features of AQs. These may be attributed to different attitudes, which can be assumed to be encoded by such formal features. A range of possibilities to add attitudinal components to the descriptive content, therefore, influences the profile of AQ instances. Instead of perceiving them as being caused by different functional categories, it was argued that they all exhibit the same core mechanism of distancing, independent of their formal features. This paper proposes that divergence in formal features correlates to divergence in attitude. To corroborate this assumption concerning the division of different meaning components, the criteria for expressive content formulated by Potts (2007a) were examined for the distancing function as well as the attitudinal component. While the latter displays the assumed criteria, distancing does not. It does, however, qualify as the counterpart of expressive content and exhibits a descriptive nature.

5. Outlook

A formal analysis of the distancing mechanism as well as the encoding of expressive content has yet to be worked out. This however, among others things, depends on further validation of the proposed hypothesis. This endeavour, on the other hand, depends on access to more diverse and reliable data. Hence, achieving a stable and sufficiently big data set is the next step.

Further examination concerning the applicability of the criterion to be nondisplaceable is necessary as well. Concerning a potential formalisation, Potts' (2007a, b) analysis for expressive content seems a promising approach to model the interaction of descriptive and potential expressive content of AQ instances. Additionally, the distancing mechanism induces ideas of a context shift analysis that is different from the one proposed in Potts (2007a, b). In contrast to the latter, a double context analysis, as proposed by Schlenker (2004) for free indirect discourse, not only shifts the expressive index but other parts of the context as well. An advantage of this "more liberal [handling-NST] of context parameters" (Potts 2007a: 174) would be that it offers the possibility to account for instances of self-repair. As described, the speakers use AQs as a means of self-repair.³³ While some speakers anticipate that others might

³³ Cf. also Cirillo (2019) for such uses.

judge the mapping as inadequate (judge-shift), others themselves judge the expression as unfitting.³⁴

Further inspirations could be drawn from an account that places the dissociation on a pre-semantic level. McCullagh (2017:12, following Kaplan 1977) suggests a lexicon shift, allowing for the diverging content being provided before semantic computation. A shift of the time variable or a potential variable for speech events may account for such cases with a double context analysis (cf. Schlenker 2007: 237). Further inspiration for this could also be gathered from the analysis Potts (2004: 18) proposed for sub-clausal quotation, which among other things seems applicable to non-specific sources of marked material. He formulates a representation in which the existence of a salient speaker is introduced as source of the intension of the marked expression. A sub-clausal quotation then induces a “quote shift” (Potts 2004: 19) which can be attributed to a specific entity but also can be represented as an individual that is merely represented as existential. AQs seem to display such unspecific source attributions frequently. Though Wiślicki’s (2023) e.g. does not interpret irony as additional expressive content of SQs, his analysis of the latter as deontic model might also be applicable to AQs.³⁵

If all the related functions that have been described for SQs are also reducible to a core function of distancing as suggested by Predelli (2003), it would seem reasonable to subsume them under the heading of mixed quotation.³⁶ AQs behave like mixed or hybrid quotation, e.g. in that they are applied to an already grammatical utterance and in themselves encode a propositional content (cf. De Brabanter 2023: 291). They are like SQs used and mentioned, which is a property of mixed quotation (cf. Maier 2014a, 2017 and described for specific uses of *sogenannte* by Härtl 2018: 144, 151). On the other hand, the implicit encoding of attitudes, both propositional and non-propositional, seems to be more dominant in AQs than in other cases of mixed quotations. They also very frequently seem to rely on a non-specific speech event which, following Cappelen & Lepore (2007), distinguishes them from mixed-quotation. A further investigation concerning the status of AQs and perhaps SQs as well might be useful.

Apart from the above-mentioned need for formalisation, the analysis of AQs as a multimodal phenomenon should focus on specifics that are rooted in this property. The different formal options, like the timing of the gesture described by Cirillo (2019), might have functional causes, but it could also just be linked to idiosyncrasies of speakers and other context parameters. Lower values concerning pitch for AQd material might be due to salience, as the concepts are retrievable from the previous context (cf. Chafe 1973). It is non-verbally addressed by mimicking in (6) and verbally in (7) before the AQ is used. The material may therefore be de-accentuated (cf. Baumann et al. 2015 for a detailed observations on this complex mechanism), but a quantitative analysis could help evaluate the potential influence of salience, realisation of prominence versus expression of emotion. An explanation for the diversity concerning intensity levels could additionally emerge from a quantitative analysis. In addition, an examination of pitch and intensity contours should be beneficial. This also applies to a kinetic analysis of gestures and facial expressions as well as work on additional non-verbal aspects of AQs.

³⁴ As mentioned in the discussion of (10), the source of the quoted material does not have to be known. The speaker variable, which must exist parallel to the speech event, may possibly be validated generically or institutionally (cf. for such a proposal concerning FID and mixed quotation Geurts & Meier 2005:13).

³⁵ He discusses the aspect of at-issuiness for scare-quoted material as well, which is an aspect that has been neglected in this paper (cf. Wiślicki 2023: 418). However, aspects like that will certainly influence prosody.

³⁶ The treatment of SQs as a type of mixed quotation is not new (cf. Wiślicki 2023: 423).

Last but not least, such considerations may at some point shed some light on the question whether quotation in general is predominantly a semantic or a pragmatic phenomenon.

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Abbreviations

AQ	air quote
AQd	air-quoted (Adj.)
PM	partial modification
QM	quotation mark
SQ	scare quote
SQd	scare quote (Adj.)
TR	total rejection

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