Jörg Melbauer

7 Only "nur". Scare Quoted (Exclusive) Focus Particles at the Semantics/Pragmatics Interface

Abstract: This article discusses utterances in which the German focus particle nur (Engl. 'only') is used with quotations marks, e.g. in the newspaper headline Spears zahlt Mann "nur" 750.000 Euro ('Spears pays husband "only" 750,000 euro.') Part of the total signification of this utterance is that 750,000 euro is not a lot of money with respect to Spear's income, although it is a lot with respect to the income of the average person. While it is obvious that this meaning effect comes about through the use of quotation marks ('scare quotes'), it is not clear whether these contribute meaning in themselves, or whether they trigger pragmatic inferences such that the literal meaning (the sentence without the quotation marks) is enriched. After a discussion on earlier approaches to scare quotes by Predelli (2003), Cappelen/Lepore (2007), and Gutzmann/Stein (2011a, b), this article proposes an analysis using Levinson's (2000) framework. Scare quotes trigger a conversational implicature based on the I-principle and often go with an ironical interpretation.

Keywords: contextualism, conversational implicature, focus particle, irony, scare quote, semantics/pragmatics interface

1 Introduction

There are numerous utterances in written language in which the German focus particle nur (Engl. 'only') is used with quotations marks: e.g. in the following newspaper headline (Wiesbadener Kurier, 31 Mar 2007) in the context of Britney Spears' divorce from her husband Kevin Federline:

(1) Spears zahlt Mann "nur" 750.000 Euro.
   'Spears pays husband "only" 750,000 euro.'

Part of the total signification of this utterance is that 750,000 euro is not a lot of money with respect to Spear's income, while it is a lot with respect to the income of the average person. In the parlance of Predelli (2003), the quotation marks give rise to a certain "attachment" of the utterance, i.e. the specific meaning that is conveyed through the use of the quotation marks, as opposed to its "message".
Such examples are by no means rare. A corpus search in DWDS (Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache, www.dwds.de), based on the newspaper Berliner Zeitung, done on 1 August 2008, shows that there are quite a number of examples with "nur"; other scare quoted focus particles, such as "lediglich" in example (2), show up occasionally as well.


"According to latest calculations of the BBF, the new building in Sperenberg costs 11,609 billion marks. In Schönewald, however, the completion adds up to merely 10,914 billion marks in the books."

That (1) and (2) are related to numerical expressions is no mere accident: a quick glance at the results of the DWDS search shows that this is typical for most cases of the scare quoted "nur". Typically, the focus constituents are noun phrases. But there are other maximal projections as well. In (3), the focus constituent is an adjectival phrase, in (4) a verbal phrase, and in (5) a prepositional phrase:

(3) Mit diesem Andrang habe niemand gerechnet, denn der Wettbewerb war "nur" bundesweit ausgeschrieben worden. [Berliner Zeitung, 12 Aug 1994, B90]

"Nobody expected such a rush, since the competition had "only" been put out to tender nationwide."

(4) Gleichzeitig aber inspizierten ihre Musik und ihre Dichtung berühmte Künstler, wie etwa Franz Liszt. Bauer bleibt ganz in der Haltung des distanzierten Wissenschaftlers, der "nur" referiert, aber unter der Hand die Vorurteile der Täter abbildet. Er macht sich noch nicht einmal die Mühe, sie zu widerlegen. [Berliner Zeitung, 3 Feb 1994, B18]

"At the same time, however, their music and poetry inspired famous artists, such as Franz Liszt for instance. Bauer remains completely in the position of a distanced scholar who "only" reports, but also represents the prejudices of the offenders underhand. He can't even be bothered to refute them."

(5) Im Vorfeld hatte die FIS vollmundig Sanktionen angedroht, falls die 200m übertroffen werden sollten, denn der kritische Punkt der Schanze liegt "nur" bei 185 Metern. (Berliner Zeitung, 19 Mar 1994, B38)

"Previously, the FIS had pompously threatened to impose sanctions if the 200m was surpassed, since the critical point of the ski jump is "only" at 185 meters."

The gist of this paper is to give a sketch of the use of quotation marks with respect to the meaning of the exclusive focus particle nur (Engl. only). The outline is as follows: In Section 2, I will analyze the meaning of the focus particle nur, drawing largely on the approach of Altmann (1976, 2007) and the discourse-based approach by Beaver/Clark (2008). In Section 3, I will discuss the general question of how quotation marks contribute to scare quoting, applying approaches of Predelli (2003), Guttmann/Stein (2011a, b), and Cappelen/Lepore (2007). In Section 4, I will discuss how the phenomenon of scare quoted focus particles may be analyzed using Levinson's (2000) presumptive meaning theory. In Section 5, I will point out the special properties of ironical scare quoting with respect to focus particles. Section 6 presents the conclusions.

2 On the Meaning of Nur and Only

Since Horn's (1969) seminal article, there has been much research into the semantics of focus particles, especially the semantics of only, even, and too. Most researchers agree that there are two distinct meaning components with respect to a simple sentence like (6), cf. (7) and (8).

(6) Only Lucy came to the party.
(7) [Meaning component 1] Lucy came to the party.
(8) [Meaning component 2] No one other than Lucy came to the party.

Research on only has largely been focused upon the semantic/pragmatic nature of these meaning components: for instance whether (7) has the status of a presupposition or an implicature. Following Horn’s (1996) lead, this meaning element is often called the prejacent. Roberts (2006), in a thorough review of the literature, cautiously calls the first meaning component the prejacent implication, and the second meaning component the exclusive implication. The second meaning component (alias exclusive implication) in (8) is often classified as an assertion (e.g., Altmann 1976, 2007). Since it is this meaning that enters into the truth conditions of (6), it may be considered as its truth-conditional content along the following lines (e.g. König 1991: 34): if it is true that only Lucy came to the party, it must be true that no one other than Lucy came to the party.

In the following section, I summarize findings on the German focus particle nur, before sketching Beaver and Clark’s (2008) discourse-based approach to the focus particle only.

### 2.1 Findings on German Nur

According to Altmann’s (1976, 2007) seminal work, focus particles (alias Gradpar-tikeln) may be classified along two dimensions, namely the inclusive/exclusive dimension and the scalar/quantifying dimension.² The first dimension refers to the meaning of a focus particle with respect to its property of either including the referent of its focus constituent or not. For instance, in Auch Ken kam zur Party (‘Ken came to the party, too.’), Ken is included in the set of party attenders, while in Nur Ken kam zur Party (‘Only Ken came to the party.’), the set of party attenders is restricted to Ken, i.e., all other party attenders are excluded.

The second dimension has to do with typical readings of focus particles being salient in the context of an utterance. According to Altmann (1976, 2007), the focus particle nur is compatible with two readings, namely the quantifying reading and the scalar reading. The quantifying reading, for instance, may be seen in Ken besuchte nur Hamburg (‘Ken visited only Hamburg.’), where Hamburg is one city taken from a set of other cities, e.g. <Bremen, Hamburg, Kiel>, which is not ranked according to the attractiveness of its members. The speaker only wants to convey that Ken did not manage to visit the other cities, without involving an evaluation of these cities. In counter distinction, if Hamburg is ranked low on a subjective scale of attractive cities, e.g. <Hamburg, Lisbon, London>, we face the scalar reading, e.g. Ken besuchte nur Hamburg means that Ken did not manage to visit cities more attractive than Hamburg.

According to the taxonomy proposed by Altmann (2007: 359f.), not all focus particles in the nur-group allow for both readings: nur, bloß, and lediglich do, but allein, ausschließlich, einzig, and einzig und allein allow for a quantifying reading only. It goes without saying that most sentences containing nur are ambiguous with respect to the quantifying/scalar dimension. When using scare quotes, it seems that an evaluation is imposed on both readings. Thus we might have:

(9) Ken besuchte „nur“ Hamburg (‘Ken visited ‘only’ Hamburg’).

a. [Quantifying reading] ... aber das ist ja besser als gar nichts besucht zu haben. (‘... but this is better than visiting no city at all’)

b. [Scalar reading] ... aber Hamburg ist ja auch eine ganz schöne Stadt (‘...but Hamburg is an attractive city after all’).

Besides the prejacent and the assertion, two additional meaning aspects of the German nur have been discussed. The first is the meaning component WENIG (‘little’), and the second is a generalized conversational implicature (GCI).

Firstly, consider the meaning component of nur in association with scales. It is clear that the scales involved in scalar meaning are gained from the context of utterance. Moreover, the ordering relation between the elements on that scale needs to be established. On the basis of a specific ordering relation, utterances containing the scalar nur show an additional meaning aspect, such as for example (i) without the quotation marks (Spears pays husband only 750, 000 euro):

(10) 750,000 euro is not a lot of money.

In this case, the value of focus ranges low on the scale of income. It is not clear how that meaning aspect is captured. For Jacobs (1983: 161), this meaning component is part of the overall assertion and thus enters into the truth conditions. Note that Jacobs postulates an operator WENIG (‘little’) to model that meaning. Similarly, König (1991: 101) proposes an operator Min, symbolizing that an item is ranked low on a contextually given scale. But for König, it is not exactly clear what the status of this meaning component is; thus, he occasionally speaks of “evaluative presuppositions” (1991: 44, 101). However, he is also aware of the problem of distinguishing between standard semantic presuppositions (being triggered by a certain lexical item, surviving the negation test, etc.) and these evaluative presuppositions. He concludes that these meaning elements are most

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² The focus of this article is on the semantics and pragmatics of nur. For matters of syntax, prosody, and information structure see Sudhoff (2010).
likely conventional implicatures (CI), claiming that they have an essentially deictic character (König 1991: 55–58). I am inclined to side with Jacobs on that matter. Thus, if a certain scale is active, as in example (1), a sentence like (11) does not make any sense. Only always marks a point on a scale that is ranked as low.3

(11) # Spears pays husband only 750,000 euro and this is a lot of money.

In (11), the second clause may only be understood as a comment or denial of the first conjunct.

Secondly, Altmann (1976, 2007) proposed that there is also a generalized conversational implicature (GCI) at play. He gives the following example (Altmann 2007: 374):

(12) Unsere Sekretärin bekommt nur 1.000 Euro brutto.
    ‘Our secretary only gets 1,000 euro before tax.’

(13) Presupposition [= prejacent implication] of (12):
    Unsere Sekretärin bekommt 1.000 Euro brutto.
    ‘Our secretary gets 1,000 euro before tax.’

(14) Assertion [= exclusive implication] of (12):
    Unsere Sekretärin bekommt nicht mehr als 1.000 Euro brutto.
    ‘Our secretary gets no more than 1,000 euro before tax.’

(15) Generalized Conversational Implicature (GCI) of (12):
    Unsere Sekretärin bekommt nicht weniger als 1.000 Euro brutto.
    ‘Our secretary gets no less than 1,000 euro before tax.’

Why is (15), according to Altmann’s analysis, a GCI? The idea is that if the speaker had known that a lower value on the scale was correct, he would have said so. Assuming that he was observing the Gricean Maxim of Quantity, a lower value can be excluded.

However, if (15) really is a GCI, it should be cancellable in principle. But this does not appear to be possible.4

(16) # Unsere Sekretärin bekommt nur 1.000 Euro brutto, und noch nicht einmal das.
    ‘Our secretary only gets 1,000 euro before tax, and not even that.’

Since (16) does not work as a cancellation, I doubt the status of (15) as a conversational implicature. For me, utterance (16) does not sound so much like a cancellation than it does a clarification. While a cancellation aims at suspending an implicature without any logical contradiction, a clarification makes the intended meaning more clear, and this might go together with revising or repairing the utterance under scrutiny (see Burton-Roberts 2006, 2010). Moreover, the assumption of such a generalized conversational implicature is not necessary, if the boundaries of scales are clearly marked. Thus, in Jacobs’ theory of scales, every scale has a lower and an upper boundary value. If a certain lower boundary value is given, e.g. 1.000 euro in (12), it makes no sense to assume a GCI of the type in (15).

To sum up, I believe that the exclusive implication (Altmann: assertion) and the scalar assertion (Jacobs: WENIG operator) are together truth-conditionally relevant. Thus, the intuitive truth-conditional meaning of (17a) should be rendered as in (17b):

(17) a. Spears pays husband only 750,000 euro.
    b. Spears pays husband no more than 750,000 euro & 750,000 euro is not a lot of money.

Although the second conjunct in (17b) seems to be part of the truth-conditional meaning of (17a), it is clear that it is likely to provoke its denial, since 750,000 euro is, for most of us, a lot of money. Here the need to make another perspective available comes in, since we have to ask for whom and under what circumstances is 750,000 euro not a lot of money (see § 2.3); e.g., the writer assumes that this is not a lot of money for Britney Spears, since s/he knows that she is wealthy.

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3 The hash symbol indicates that an utterance is pragmatically unacceptable.
4 Note that Altmann (2007: 373) remarks that the GCI is not essentially bound to focus particles.
2.2 A Discourse-Based Model of Exclusives

Beaver and Clark (2008) developed a discourse-based account to the exclusive particle only, drawing on the earlier work of Craig Roberts. At the heart of their theory is a general approach to the meaning of exclusives that is rendered in (18) (original emphasis):

(18) Meaning of exclusives (Beaver/Clark 2008: 251)
The lexical meaning of exclusives is exhaustively described by:

Discourse function: to make a comment on the Current Question (CQ [ ...]), a comment which weakens a salient or natural expectation. To achieve this function, the prejacent must be weaker than the expected answer of the CQ on a salient scale.

Presupposition: the strongest true alternatives in the CQ are at least as strong as the prejacent.

Descriptive Content: the strongest true alternatives in the CQ are at most as strong as the prejacent.

The main idea behind this approach is that utterances containing only are answers to a Current Question (CQ). According to the dynamic model favoured by Beaver/Clark (2008: 249), the Current Question “associated with an utterance is the question which that utterance addresses, the most specific of the questions on the stack. If the utterance answers the question fully, and the answer is accepted, that question will then be popped off the stack.”

For instance, Only Jane smokes is the answer to the Current Question Who smokes? In a given context. Current questions come with a salient or natural expectation on the part of the speaker. Such an expectation could be, in a given context, that there are several smokers. Yet, if the answer is Only Jane smokes, this is weaker on a given scale <Jane smokes, several people smoke>, where the strength of the information is ordered from left to right.

Thus, the presupposition that Only Jane smokes is at least as strong as the prejacent Jane smokes. In addition, the descriptive content of Only Jane smokes is at most as strong as the prejacent Jane smokes. Note that “descriptive content” in (18) is another term for assertion/exclusive implication. The prejacent (prejacent implication) is said to be an entailed presupposition (Beaver/Clark 2008: 244); the authors follow Horn (2002) in this assumption.6

All in all, this approach is thought to spell out the idea that the function of exclusives “is partly mirative, to say that the true answer to the Current Question is surprisingly weak, and control the flow of discourse by resetting expectations about that answer” (Beaver/Clark 2008: 250). Beaver and Clark are not particularly clear about the question of why a speaker would entertain these expectations in the first place. But it seems safe to assume that these expectations are pragmatic in nature, being bound to general or personal experience. Interestingly, they claim that “the presence of an expectation that something is stronger than the prejacent is true is an essential part of the meaning of only” (Beaver/Clark 2008: 252).

I think that this observation fits to the meaning component WENIG that has been discussed with respect to the meaning of the German nur. Beaver/Clark (2008: 252) present examples, such as the following, in order to support their claim (presupposing that a suite is preferred to a single room):

(19) a. I really expected a suite but only got a single room with 2 beds. [web example]

b. # I really expected a single room with 2 beds but only got a suite [constructed variant]

With respect to the scales involved, Beaver and Clark draw a distinction between pre-orders (quasi-orders) and partial orders. While pre-orders are reflexive and transitive, partial orders are not.7 According to them, most scales discussed in the literature are pre-orders.

In their sketch, they elaborate on three scenarios of scale use and the respective meaning components of only. These are, in turn, the objective invite scale, the subjective invite scale, and the subjective autograph scale.

These cases are analysed with respect to the following mini-discourses (as usual, focus is marked by the index “F”):

(20) A: Who did Jim invite?
   B: Jim only invited [Mary and Sam].

6 Standard cases of presupposition, as in the case of presuppositions triggered by factive verbs, are entailed presuppositions. If they can be suspended, this happens through a rhetorical strategy called “letting the hearer down gently” (Beaver/Clark 2008: 246).

7 Beaver and Clark (2008: 251, Fn. 6) explain: “A partial order is a pre-order which is antisymmetric, meaning that two distinct propositions cannot each be as strong as the other.” Note that Beaver/Clark (2008: 68–70) assume that all exclusives are scalar. For them, non-scalar uses are “simply” “more constrained” (p. 69).
(21) A: What celebrity signatures did Brady get at the Philosophy of Language party?

B: Brady only got a [Soames].

The exchange in (20) is compatible with the objective scale, where the information sought is "purely for information", and the subjective scale where the questioner's "primary concern is to evaluate whether the party will rock". In the latter case, the expectation is that inviting many people is functional for the intended effect. Note that the distinction between these cases is similar to the distinction between quantifying and scalar readings in the traditional approach by Altmann (1976, 2007).

The subjective autograph scale in (21) is also connected to an evaluation on the part of the hearer because Soames is ranked low on a scale which includes famous philosophers of language, like Putnam or Searle. According to Beaver/Clark (2008: 258), the ordering is not a partial ordering, because "it is no better to get both Putnam's and Schmuckski's autographs than to get Putnam's alone, because, after all, who's ever heard of Schmuckski?" Hence "it is the irrelevance of Schmuckski that means that what we are dealing with here is not partial order but only a pre-order." (This means that considerations of relevance may have an influence on the contextually adequate scale.)

In the framework of Beaver/Clark (2008), our initial example in (1) would be analysed according to the subjective invite scale. The expectation would be that it is in Federline's interest to get a lot of money. Then we may develop the following scheme:

(22) A discourse based analysis of Spears pays husband only 750,000 euro.

[Current Question] How much does Spears give to her husband?

Spears pays to her husband only 750,000 euro.

Prejacent proposition: Spears pays X, with X = [750,000 euro].

Breakdown of alternative values of X:

Stronger: any value significantly higher than 750,000 euro.

Weaker: any value significantly lower than 750,000 euro.

Presupposition: Spears pays more than 750,000 euro or less than 750,000 euro.

Entailment: Spears pays no more than 750,000 euro.

Overall implication: Spears pays 750,000 euro and no more.

However, we have to explain how the quotation marks in the scare-quoted version trigger the interpretation that 750,000 euro is not a lot of money for Britney Spears, while it is a lot of money for the average person.

2.3 Is 750,000 Euro a Lot of Money?

Let us now have a closer look at example (1), which was actually taken from a newspaper headline; note that the meaning element 'comparatively modest sum' is explicated with the main text:

(23) Spears zahlte Mann „nur“ 750.000 Euro

'Spears pays husband "only" 750, 000 euro.'

[... Dass der Ex-Background-Tänzer von Spears nur den vergleichsweise bescheidenen Betrag erhält, liegt an dem Ehevertrag, den Spears’ Anwältin vor dem Ja-Wort 2004 ausgehandelt hatte. [...] The fact that Spears' ex background dancer only received this comparatively modest sum is due to the prenuptial agreement which Spear's lawyer had negotiated before the wedding [Wiesbadener Kurier, 31 Mar 2007]

Supposing an average reader sees this article, there is likely some knowledge about Britney Spears stored in this reader's long-term memory. Of particular salience is the information that Britney Spears is quite rich. Let us assume that the average reader tends to estimate that her fortune is roughly 25,000,000 euro. Furthermore, the average reader tends to think that in a typical divorce, the overall fortune of the couple should be shared. Thus, s/he would assume that Federline would get roughly half of Spear's fortune, i.e. 12,500,000 euro.

However, on reading the headline and the article, s/he is informed that Federline got only 750,000 euro. This is not a lot when taking into account that Spears is wealthy. However, there are the quotation marks on nur. These signal that 750,000 euro is quite a lot from one perspective: each of us would probably be happy to get 750,000 euro.

Thus, in the interpretation of the headline, two scales play a role. The first scale is connected to the literal meaning of Spears pays husband only 750,000 euro. This scale ranges from 750,000 euro up to the value of the estimated fortune of Spears, say 25,000,000 euro.

8 Estimates to be found in the web resources differ; however, a fortune of 100,000,000 US dollars seems to be the minimum.
However, when noticing the scare quotes, another scale is activated by the reader, namely the one in (25):

(25) 0 <..........................> 750,000
Scale 2

This has the effect that the amount of 750,000 euro is the right boundary of the scale in (25). Hence, what is not a lot when regarding Scale 1 is a lot when regarding Scale 2. And this relativization of scalar values is the intended effect. After all, for the average person 750,000 euro is a lot of money. Hence the way Scale 1 is represented does not reflect the perspective of the average reader (or of the writer), thus, to preclude that this is the only perspective induced, the quotation marks are used to signal the relevance of the second perspective, represented in Scale 2.

Hence the complete content of the headline in (23) (= example (1)) may be represented as in (26). Note that it is left open here as to whether this content is the truth-conditional content; earlier it was argued that at least the first two conjuncts constitute the truth-conditional content. So we have still to consider where the conversational implicature (= the third conjunct) fits in; this will be done in §4.

(26) Spears pays husband no more than 750,000 euro & 750,000 euro is not a lot of money (for Spears) & 750,000 euro is a lot of money (for the average person).

The point being is that the information that 750,000 euro is a lot of money (for the average person) is somehow derived through the operation of pragmatic principles based on appropriate background knowledge. The quotation marks serve as a means to trigger this information. I will assume that this information is a conversational implicature. According to standard criteria for conversational implicatures (Grice 1989; see the overview in Meibauer 2006), they are cancellable, either by the addition of a cancelling phrase, or by assuming another (plausible)

context. In (27), it is shown that a denial of the (putative) implicature is possible in principle:

(27) Speaker A: Spears will pay her husband “only” [air quotes] 750,000 euro. 
-> 750,000 euro is a lot of money (for the average person).
Speaker B: That’s not right./You’re wrong./Bullshit. 750,000 euro is not a lot of money (even for the average person).
or
Actually/nowadays/where we live/in some neighbourhoods, 750,000 euro is not a lot of money (even for the average person). 10

Thus, we can assume that the cancellability criterion for implicatures applies. Also, when the quotation marks are omitted, the additional meaning connected to the second scale and the related scale will not arise. Moreover, conversational implicatures are sensitive to conversational Maxims or Principles that play a role in a process of Greicean inferencing. I will go into this issue in §4 below.

What about the bracketed material in (26)? Is this information about the relevant perspectives connected to the scales a proper part of the overall content, or does it merely serve as a hint at how to interpret the scales with respect to background knowledge? Note that König (1991: 45) said that the index "c" in his operator Min, “is also meant to indicate that the evaluation usually expresses the speaker’s point of view.” This means that the selector of a scale is sort of responsible for the evaluation connected with that scale. In the same vein, if (1), the headline of (23), is an answer to the Current Question How much did Spears pay her husband?, then this would imply the average reader’s expectation that she gave him, say, half of her fortune, i.e. 12,500,000 euro.

In the headline of (23), the writer simultaneously makes two perspectives available to the reader. In the default reading without the quotation marks, the writer expresses that 750,000 euro is not a lot of money. (Here, the writer’s and Spears’ perspectives overlap)11. With respect to another vantage point, namely that of the average person (or the alter ego of the journalist who penned (1)), it is expressed that 750,000 euro is a lot of money. This latter perspective is triggered by the quotation marks.

9 Obviously, there is a contrast between the second and the third conjunct, so that coordination with but would be in order (Wolfram Bublitz, p.c.). I refrain from inserting but into (26), not only because notorious truth-conditional difficulties with but, as discussed broadly in the literature, but also because I assume that the contrast has to with the opposing perspectives, and hence it is pragmatic in nature.

10 Thanks to Wolfram Bublitz for proposing these cancelling phrases.
11 At least with respect to the fact that 750,000 euro is not a lot in relation to Spears’ total fortune. Depending on Spears’ degree of avunculosity/generosity, standards with respect to similar divorces, a prenuptial agreement, etc., Spears may very well come to the conclusion that 750,000 euro is very generous.
In order to avoid a contradiction in (23), it should be made clear to whom the points of view are attributed. It is tempting to view these additional pieces of information as implicatures in the sense of Bach (1999, 2010). For instance, there are cases of missing constituents, unspecified scope of elements, underspecificity/underspecification or weakness of encoded conceptual content, overspecificity/overspecification or narrowness of encoded conceptual contents (Carston 2002). In all these cases, additional inferential steps are necessary to understand what the speaker intends to say.\(^\text{12}\)

Let us take stock. If it is assumed that the quotation marks trigger an additional scale that is connected with the point of view of someone else (the average person, the writer’s alter ego, etc.), and that the total signification of the sentence containing “nur” matters, then it must be asked which pragmatic principles are in play here.

3 On the Status of Quotation Marks in Scare Quotes

From a general linguistic point of view, quotation marks are graphemes that have certain functions in the process of reading and writing (Nunberg 1990, Brendel 2008). As graphemes, they are not treated as lexemes, i.e., as lexical elements possessing a certain form-meaning pairing, though they are of course related to the various linguistic levels (including phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics). There are several functions of quotation marks to be distinguished which may be illustrated by cases of direct quotation, mixed quotation, pure quotation, and scare quotation (cf. Brendel/Meibauer/Steinbach 2011):\(^\text{13}\)

(28)  a. Direct quotation. Ken said: “The theory is hard to understand.”
       b. Mixed quotation. Ken said that the theory is “hard to understand”.
       c. Pure quotation. “The theory is hard to understand” is a sentence.
       d. Scare quotation. Ken said that the “theory” is hard to understand.

Since it is understood that bona fide cases of “nur” are scare quotations, we will focus on analyses of scare quotes in the following (see also Finkbeiner, this volume). It goes without saying that a general theory of the use of quotation marks should cover this case. Whether this use is inherently related with the other types of quotation shown in (28), is beyond the scope of this paper.

With regard to the functioning of quotation marks in scare quotes, we may distinguish the following three hypotheses (see Levinson’s 2000 architecture in §4 below):

(H1) Postsemantic pragmatics. Quotation marks in scare quotes are pragmatic indicators that trigger pragmatic inferences. They have no influence on the semantics of the construction that contains the quotation marks.

(H2) Presensemic pragmatics. Quotation marks in scare quotes have an influence on the semantics of the construction that contains the quotation marks. This influence may come about indirectly, by shaping the truth conditions through pragmatic inferences.

(H3) Semantics. Quotation marks in scare quotes have an influence on the semantics of the construction that contains the quotation marks. This influence may come about directly, e.g., by way of a semantic operator.

Taking into account recent discussions on the semantics-pragmatics interface, these hypotheses may turn out to be far too simple. Nevertheless, H1-H3 may be helpful in the understanding of the following sketch.\(^\text{14}\)

Predelli (2003) proposed a theoretical approach to scare quotes that may be called the message-and-attachment theory. He discusses the following examples (Predelli 2003: 2–4) (scare-quoted expressions given in single quotes):

(29) in offset printing ‘printing proofs’ of illustrations come from the darkroom, not the proof press

(30) had it not been for Bryce, the ‘coppers mark’, Collins would have made his escape

\(^{12}\) There are other concepts in the literature developed to cover types of (presemantic) enrichments, for instance explicature (Carston 2002), pragmatic intrusion (Levinson 2000), or modulation (Recanati 2010). For lack of space, I cannot go into a detailed discussion here.

\(^{13}\) Further uses of quotation marks include: free indirect quotation, book titles, and emphatic quotation (“greengrocer’s quotes”); indirect quotations, e.g., Ken said that the theory is hard to understand, generally lack quotation marks.

\(^{14}\) A close analysis, however, is beyond the scope of this paper, because that would imply an in-depth discussion of recent disputes on minimalism vs. vis-a-vis contextualism (cf. Borg 2010, Huang 2012). In the following section, I will briefly discuss two approaches to scare quotes, namely those of Predelli (2003), Gutzmann/Stein (2011a, b), and Cappelen/Lepore (2007).
national greed has disguised itself in mandates to govern ‘inferior’ races
the ‘debate’ resulted in three cracked heads and two broken noses
this remarkable piece of ‘art’ consists of a large canvas covered with mud and old bus transfers
myths of ‘paradise lost’ are common in folklore
life is ‘the farce which everybody has to perform’
life is ‘what happens while you are making other plans’

In (29), the writer assumes or knows that the word in quotation marks is not really adequate. In (30) the writer uses a slang expression, i.e. the writer excuses himself. In (31), the speaker wants do express a reserved attitude towards the content of the word in quotation marks. Sentences (32) and (33) display sarcasm. In (34), the quotation marks indicate a phrase that is presupposed to be mutually known, and in (35) and (36) the quotation marks indicate quotations whose authors are presupposed to be known (Arthur Rimbaud and John Lennon).

In all these cases, the expressions in quotation marks are used, not mentioned. The quotation marks signal that the quoted expressions have certain specific properties, be it that they are used in an unusual way, or that they are attributed to a mutually known source. Let me add that I would not classify (34–36) as scare quotes at all. Note that Klockow (1980), who discusses scare quotes at length, does not include examples of this type either.

Predelli (2003: 7) proposes drawing a distinction between the ‘message’ of an utterance and its ‘attachment’. The message is the content of the utterance, while the attachment is the specific meaning that is conveyed by the use of the quotation marks. Hence, the quotation marks in (29–36) function as ‘attachment triggers’. These are compared with expressions like but and therefore, which, according to Bach (1999), are also connected with information that surmounts the message of an utterance. For Predelli, it is important that the attachment be a matter of an utterance’s semantic profile:

Truth-functionality of attachments
“[…] the content triggered by the quotes is truth-functionally relevant, in the sense that, at least with respect to some contexts, sentences such as (29)–(36) display a truth-functionally different profile than their counterparts without quotation marks." (Predelli 2003: 18).

The reason for that claim is that negations may relate to attachments. For instance, if an American speaker utters We don’t watch colour TV here (thereby insisting on the difference between English and American spelling), it is not the message that is negated, but the attachment. However, since this is a case of metalinguistic negation, it does not really prove the need for the notion of attachment. Furthermore, the quoted elements are mentioned, not used.

It appears to me that the major drawback of such an analysis is the introduction of new terminology. Firstly, it is not really clear what the message and the attachment are in terms of the notions used in recent debates about the semantics/pragmatics interface, or what their differentia specifica are. Thus, one could suspect that the notion ‘message’ is similar to ‘what is said’, while the notion ‘attachment’ is similar to ‘conventional implicature’ (Horn 2008: 24). The latter is also suggested with respect to the comparison of information triggered by but and therefore, but this is not clear. At least in a Gricean framework (Grice 1989; see also the articles in Gibbs/Colston 2007) irony and sarcasm are conversational implicatures on the basis of an apparent violation of the Maxim of Quality. They are definitely not conventional implicatures because the cancellability criterion for conversational implicatures applies.

Secondly, as Gutzmann/Stei (2011a, b) point out, there is the problem that in ironical scare quotes the total semantic profile (as a unit that collapses message and attachment) might contain two contradictory pieces of information, e.g., in Peter’s bagels are “fresh”, the informations that Peter’s bagels are fresh and not fresh holds at the same time. That is, Predelli has to account for the substitutivity of ironies: the fact that ironical implicatures are intended to substitute the ironical utterance, and not, as other (additive) implicatures, to be added to utterances.

We can conclude that, as far as scare quotes influence the so-called semantic profile, Predelli’s theory fits with H3, at least when “semantics” is equated with “semantic profile”.

However, instead of treating scare quotes as “attachments”, their treatment as conversational implicatures is far more promising. This idea has already been proposed by Klockow (1978, 1980) and was elaborated on, among others, in Meibauer (2007) and Gutzmann/Stei (2011a, b). Pragmatic approaches to quotation marks hold that quotation marks per se do not have a meaning on their own. Instead, they function as pragmatic indicators, telling the readers that they should interpret the material within the quotation marks in a certain way (cf. Klockow 1980, Clark/Gerrig 1990, Saka 1998, Recanati 2001). There is a long tradition of analysing quotation marks as pragmatic indicators, a tradition opposed to genuine semantic approaches.

Looking at the different uses of quotation marks, we find that in (28a) and (28b), the quotation marks signal that the material within them is taken to rep-
resent an original utterance or a part of that utterance; in (28c), the quotation marks signal that the material within the quotation marks is to be taken as an example of a sentence; in (28d), the quotation marks signal the ironic attitude of the speaker, and finally, in (28e), the quotation marks have an emphatic or highlighting function.

The main advantage of a pragmatic approach to quotation marks is that one is not forced to assume the polysemy of quotation marks, or to ignore certain uses of quotation marks altogether – as Cappelen/Lepore (2007) do with respect to scare quotes (but see the next section). On the other hand, the pragmatic approach receives the burden of explaining all the effects of quotation marks with respect to pragmatic principles.

In particular, there are two major problems for a pragmatic approach to quotation marks. Firstly, the observation that quotation marks signal, at least in the case of direct quotation, that a certain string of elements has been uttered by an original speaker. Secondly, the observation that the use of quotation marks in direct quotation regularly goes with a context shift (see Bublitz/Hoffmann 2011, Bublitz this volume). For instance, in the sentence Rory said: “I love blues rock.”, the first person pronoun refers to Rory, not to the speaker of the sentence. In contrast, in indirect quotation, e.g. in Rory said that I love blues rock, the first person pronoun refers to the speaker. Thus, the quotation marks have an influence on the computation of indexicals, and hence on the truth-conditions of the sentences containing the quotation.

As for the first problem, pragmatic approaches to quotation marks argue that the verbatim assumption – the assumption that a direct quotation renders an original utterance verbatim – cannot be upheld anyhow (Clark/Gerrig 1990), and that similar suggestions of strictly verbatim quotations are possible without any use of quotation marks.15

As for the second problem mentioned above, the case of deixis (context shift), it might be argued that the distinction between direct quotation (with context shift) versus indirect quotation (without context shift) has nothing to do with quotation marks, for, if other graphemes are used instead of quotation marks, e.g. My friend Peter said – my bagels are very fresh, the same effects show up as in direct quotation (Gutzmann/Steil 2011a). However, this argument hinges on the acceptability of the given examples.

A typical property of pragmatic approaches to quotation marks is to treat certain effects of quotation marks as conversational implicatures. This is also the case with Gutzmann/Steil (2011a). Thus, their theory fits with H1 above. The triggering force of quotation marks is due to the operation of the I-principle (in Levinson’s framework, see Levinson 2000: 114), which is related to Grice’s second Maxim of Quantity “Do not make your contribution more informative than is required”. Since quotation marks are, strictly speaking, superfluous devices, they give rise to the derivation of conversational implicatures. Below, I will discuss in more detail whether this is plausible with respect to scare quotes.

The crucial observation with respect to the use of quotation marks in writing is of course that, if they are omitted, there is no clear signal towards interpreting the utterance as ironic. Thus, the quotation marks are used in order to block a possible literal interpretation on the part of the hearer. This is in line with traditional approaches to irony, where either an explicit signal (such as an ironic tone or air quotes in spoken language, a certain evaluative predicate, etc.) or context information are necessary to trigger of ironical interpretation.

Proponents of a semantic approach, such as Cappelen/Lepore (2007), tend to neglect scare quotes. However, in an “Appendix” (to their second chapter) called “Scare-quotung”, we read that “a slightly less implausible view would be that scare-quotung and mixed-quotung are somehow, intimately connected.” However, Cappelen/Lepore deny that this is the case. They argue that “the quotes in mixed quotation cannot be dropped” while “in scare-quotung they can be dropped without a loss of semantic content [...]”. (Cappelen/Lepore 2007: 17)

In contrast, I would like to argue that scare-quotung and mixed-quotung may be “intimately connected”. Look at the following quotes from the DWDS (Digitales Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache, see www.dwds.de), in which we face a mixed-quotung/scare quotng ambiguity:

15 I think, however, that Johnson/Lepore (2011), pace Clark/Gerrig (1990), are right in pointing out that quotation is regularly connected to the hearer’s expectation that the quoted material had been uttered verbatim.
Der Mörder selbst hofft bei der türkischen Justiz auf „Verständnis“, indem er sein Opfer zum Staatsfeind macht: Er habe in Deutschland „ja nur“ einen Mann der verbotenen kurdischen PKK lixiert. Im Klartext, so schlimm könne nicht sein, was er getan habe. [Wiesbadener Kurier, 22 Dec 2009]

The murderer himself hopes for some understanding from the Turkish judiciary by making his victim a public enemy. He “[MP] only” liquidated one man from the prohibited Kurdish PKK in Germany. In plain English, what he did can’t be so bad.

I take it that the material in quotation marks is part of what the original speaker said. If mixed quoted, the writer invites the reader to a scare quote reading. More generally, there has to be a motive for the writer to choose only the elements from an original utterance to go into a mixed quotation. This motive is, typically, to draw attention to a typical wording, or to bring in ironical attitudes.

Pace Cappelen/Lepore, I think that (like in ironies) the cancellability of scare quote readings is not plausible. For instance, in (47) a possible scare quote reading associated with “theory” is cancelled by the content of the adversative sentence. Consequently, the mixed quote reading of “theory” is forced:

(47) ?? Paula insisted that his “theory” is wrong, but I think it is a very respectable approach.

Finally, there is an argument that to my knowledge has not been discussed in the literature yet. Note that in written as well as in spoken language quoted material can be marked by adding the phrase in Anführungszeichen (‘in quotation marks’). The use of quotation marks can even be found in addition to this prepositional phrase, e.g. Das ist in Anführungszeichen „absolut“ falsch (‘This is, in quotation marks, “absolutely” false’). The prepositional phrase in Anführungszeichen has a literal (compositional) meaning, and this literal meaning certainly has to do with giving an instruction on how to read material in its scope. This shows that there may be a need for explicitly marking scare quotation, be it by quotation marks or be it by lexical constructions.

I conclude from the foregoing sketch that the function of the quotation marks in scare quotes is to trigger a conversational implicature. But we still do not know how this function is related to the meaning of nur, and on which level of semantic/pragmatic analysis conversational implicatures come into play. In the next section, I will concentrate on H2, and discuss it with regard to Levinson’s (2000) presumptive meaning framework.

4 “Nur” and Presumptive Meaning

There are many rivaling approaches to the semantics-pragmatics interface (see Jong 2010, Huang 2012, Melbauer 2012 for reviews). In this section, I will go into the (Neo-Grecian) approach of Levinson (2000), also dubbed the presumptive meaning model.

This model contains three pragmatic components, namely Indexical Pragmatics, Gricean Pragmatics 1 and Gricean Pragmatics 2, and two semantic components, namely Compositional Semantics and Semantic Interpretation (model-theoretic interpretation). The output of Compositional Semantics and Indexical Pragmatics is the input for Gricean Pragmatics 1. The output of Gricean Pragmatics 1 is the input for Semantic Interpretation, and its output (“sentence meaning, proposition expressed”) is the input for Gricean Pragmatics 2, whose output is “speaker meaning, proposition meant by the speaker”.

The following diagram offers a visualization of the overall architecture of Levinson’s (2000: 188) framework:

Table 1: Presemantic and postsemantic pragmatics (Levinson 2000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compositional Semantics</th>
<th>Indexical Pragmatics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gricean pragmatics 1</td>
<td>‘pragmatic intrusion’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semantic Interpretation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gricean pragmatics 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whereas Indexical Pragmatics and Gricean Pragmatics 1 are presemantic pragmatic components, Gricean Pragmatics 2 is a postsemantic pragmatic component. It seems that Gricean Pragmatics 1 deals with Generalized Conversational
Implicatures (GCIs) ("disambiguation, fixing reference, generality-narrowing, etc."), while Grician Pragmatics 2 deals with Particulised Conversational Implicatures (PCIs) ("indirection, irony and tropes, etc."). but Levinson is not very explicit here.

The overall impact of Levinson’s (2000) Neo-Grician approach is the assumption that GCIs intrude on the presemantic level. This is of course one variant of an underdeterminacy model that is widespread in recent contextualist pragmatics (see Meibauer 2012 for a review). In this section, I will first discuss in more detail the kind of pragmatic principles that apply in the derivation of scare quotes, and then, whether the third conjunct in (26) – "750,000 euro is a lot of money (for the average person)" – is of the presemantic or postsemantic kind.

To begin with, let us discuss the M-principle, the I-principle, and the Q-principle, as outlined in Levinson (2000) (cf. Meibauer 2006 for an overview).

The M-principle, according to Levinson (2000: 136–137), requires that the speaker “indicate an abnormal, nonstereotypical situation by using marked expressions that contrast with those you would use to describe the corresponding normal, stereotypical situation”, or, as in the expression ("recipient’s corollary"): “What is said in an abnormal way indicates an abnormal situation, or marked messages indicate marked situations [...].” The M-principle is said to cover a number of cases, among them lexical doublets, rival word formations, nominal compounds, litotes, certain genitive and zero morpheme constructions, paraphrase and repetitions (Levinson 2000: 138–153). Arguably, “nur” is more marked than nur. In fact, the addition of the quotation marks may be seen as an act of marking. However, because the quotation marks are lexically void (they are not lexemes), the marked version (with the quotation marks) cannot be seen as a lexical alternative having the same denotation as the unmarked version (without the quotation marks).

Next, let us have a look at the I-principle (Levinson 2000: 114–115) that is intended to cover, among others, cases like and-coordination (Conjunction buttressing), bridging, and inference to stereotype. Here, it is required that the speaker “say as little as necessary” and “produce the minimal linguistic information sufficient to achieve your communicational ends (bearing Q in mind)”, whereas the recipient needs to “amplify the informational content of the speaker’s utterance, by finding the most specific interpretation [...].”

If this principle is applied to our case of the scare quoted “nur”, it can be argued that the speaker says Spears only pays her husband 750,000 euro, this being “the minimal linguistic information”. Furthermore, by using quotation marks, the writer invites the recipient to enrich this information such that the implicature that 750,000 euro is a lot of money (seen from the perspective of the average person), comes into play.

Recall that Gutzmann/Steil (2011a, b) hold the view that the operation of quotation marks is generally connected to the I-principle. So in essence, it would be fitting that in the special case of scare quoted nur the I-principle also is at work, such that the implicature “750,000 euro is a lot of money (for the average person)” may be derived.

The Q-Principle (Levinson 2000: 76) is devised to cover scalar and clausal implicatures. The Speaker’s maxim is: “Do not provide a statement that is informationally weaker than your knowledge of the world allows, unless providing an informationally stronger statement would contravene the I-principle. Specifically, select the informationally strongest paradigmatic alternate that is consistent with the facts.”, and the recipient’s corollary demands: “Take it that the speaker made the strongest statement consistent with what he knows [...].”

With regard to our Britney Spears example, the additional activation of Scale may be said to be due to the compliance with the Q-principle (Meibauer 2007). In fact, the writer is more informative here than without the use of quotation marks. Specifically, if the relevance of another perspective is informative for the reader, the writer should give this information instead of suppressing it: what is a lot of money for the average person, is not a lot of money for Britney Spears. In fact, this information may be very important for the reader. Obviously, if s/he does not understand that information, s/he has not understood how the quotation marks work at all. However, while it is plausible to assume that informativity is enhanced, this process does not fit nicely into Levinson’s framework. We simply have not a scale <“nur”, nur> or the like.

When we compare Q-inferences with I-inferences, as Levinson (2000: 119) does, we find the following characteristics (see Table 2). In the third column, the properties of “nur” are listed in comparison to standard inferences related to the I-principle and the Q-principle.

I conclude, then, that – at least in Levinson’s framework – the conversational implicature triggered by the quotation marks is most likely an I-Inference. (In a classical Grician approach, however, observing the Maxim of Quantity remains plausible.)

Let us now ask whether the third conjunct in (26), repeated here for convenience, is of the presemantic or postsemantic kind.

(26) Spears pays husband no more than 750,000 euro & 750,000 euro is not a lot of money (for Spears) & 750,000 euro is a lot of money (for the average person).

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18 "M" relates to modality, "I" to informativeness, "Q" to quantity.
Table 2: Characteristics of I-versus Q-inferences (Levinson 2000: 119)\textsuperscript{19}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I-Inferences</th>
<th>Q-Inferences</th>
<th>&quot;nur&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More specific interpretations (e.g., inference to stereotype)</td>
<td>more precise interpretations (e.g., scalar implicature is a subcase of what is said)</td>
<td>the addition of the second scale is more specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive in character</td>
<td>negative in character</td>
<td>the second scale is positively added</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>guided by stereotypical assumptions</td>
<td>no reference to stereotypical or indeed any background (nonlinguistic) knowledge</td>
<td>stereotypical assumptions about scales play a role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>absence of a metalinguistic element</td>
<td>metalinguistic in character: they make reference to something that might have been said but wasn't</td>
<td>there is no Horn scale\textsuperscript{19} or contrast set involved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An argument pro presemantic analysis would hinge on the assumption that focus particles are regularly connected with scales and that the derivation of the necessary scales should be modelled in a localist fashion (all content-related information at one place). However, if one sticks to a localist approach, one has to show that the case of scare quoted exclusives really patterns with the other intrusive (GCI-based) phenomena discussed by Levinson (2000). Or, alternatively, that (26) is identical to what Predelli (2003) calls the "semantic profile", as explained above. Furthermore, since we are dealing with scare quotes, the analysis should extend to scare quotes in general.

So a postsemantic pragmatic analysis with respect to the conversational implicature is simpler. Here, we can model this in a globalist (or modular) way, where the truth conditions of the sentence containing nur are just like in (17b) above, and the pragmatic inferences at the Gricean pragmatics 2 level do all the rest.

Data on language processing might help to gain further support, but this is beyond the scope of this paper. Thus, the reader is referred to the works of Noveck/Sperber (2007), Katsos (2012), and Doran et al. (2012) where experimental findings related to the GCI-PCI-distinction, the distinction between 'what is said' and 'what is implicated', and the context-dependency of implicatures in general are discussed.

\textsuperscript{19} Scale named after Laurence Horn where the left (strong) element entails the right (weak) element, while the negation of the right element implicates the left element, e.g. <hot, warm>.

5 A Note on Ironical Interpretation

As seen in (32) and (33), scare quotes often serve to indicate irony or sarcasm. As Klockow (1980: 247–249) has already observed, the writer may have the aim of dissociating herself/himself from a possible speaker (be it an original speaker or an alter ego) who uses the sentence without quotation marks. Telling examples can be given in the context of reported speech; for instance in the following report on a boxing event:


'Prancing in the style of the "Greatest" [= Muhammad Ali] could – against a true puncher – end in pain. Culcay found this evening in Schwerin to be "super" and was "totally happy" with his debut.'

While the first quote is a scare quote (\textit{Applikationsvorbehalt} 'reservation of application') according to Klockow (1980), the other two are mixed quotes. In the context of the critique in the first sentence, however, these mixed quotes may also be interpreted as ironical scare quotes, since Culcay naively portrays what was actually quite risky as "super" – dancing in the style of Muhammad Ali when not possessing his outstanding boxing abilities. Hence, as already pointed out above, there is sometimes an interesting overlap between three aspects of a scare quoted utterance, namely (i) the mixed quote interpretation, (ii) the scare quote interpretation, and (iii) the ironical attitude of the writer towards the utterer of the mixed quote content.

Let us now discuss in more detail whether our example concerning Spear's divorce can be interpreted in an ironical way. I will briefly allude to aspects of irony discussed in the recent literature; for a more comprehensive account, see Gibbs/Colston (2007). To begin with, scare quoted focus particles are not used ironically \textit{per se}. Irony requires a special context. While scales are typically connected with evaluations, more or less neutral scare quote uses are possible. For instance, in \textit{Bayern München wurde diesmal nur zweiter} ("Bayern München came in "only" second"), this use does not necessarily evoke an ironical interpretation, because a specific context supporting the construction of Bayern München as the ironical target would be needed.

(a) Most theories agree that irony is often used to criticize some behaviour or norm. In addition, an ironical target may exist. In our case, several targets come into mind: Britney Spears, Kevin Federline, or VIPs in general. The
irony may be targeted at Britney Spears, who seemed stingy on the occasion of her divorce; at Kevin Federline for whom the amount of 750,000 euro is not enough; the rich and famous in general for whom hypocrisy is believed to be a typical trait; someone who holds in earnest that 750,000 euro is not a lot of money without even considering the perspective of people who do not belong to the small group of the very rich, etc. The extent to which an ironical target is selected, will depend on the attitudes of the writer and the reader. This is one important function of scare quoting: to invite the reader to evaluate an event from his or her own point of view.\footnote{A more complete scenario would provide sentences with and without the quotation marks, and would also provide the respective utterances containing the focus particle \\textit{sogar}. This cannot be done here for reasons of space.}

(b) There are several major theories of irony on the market (e.g., pretense theory, echo theory, allusional pretense theory, etc.; see Gibbs/Colston 2007), but there is general acceptance of the idea that contrast between a norm, an expectation, a recent utterance, etc., and the content of an ironical utterance play an important role (cf. Glora 2012). In our example, contrast is built into the description of the truth-conditional content, according to which 750,000 euro is a lot for the average person, whereas it is little for Britney Spears (conceived of as a wealthy pop star). For example, one particular expectation is that her ex-husband would get 50 \% of her income. (Note that in the main text in (23), "the comparatively modest sum" is explained with reference to the prenuptial agreement.)

(c) The distinction between ironical blame (positive utterance used to convey a negative attitude) and ironical praise (negative utterance used to convey a positive attitude) is much disputed. There is some evidence that the second type of irony is harder to achieve. It appears that both types of irony are available with the scare quoted focus particle "nur".\footnote{Conventionaled ironies and the indication of irony through special prosodic clues (ironical tone, mocking voice, special accents, etc.) are problematical for this claim, cf. Anoill/Ciceri/gleode Infantino (2007).}

In (49), Maurice wants to cheer up Peter insofar as he reminds him that the third place is a relative success. And in (50) he praises Peter's success while alluding to his restricted expectations.

The coming about of an ironical interpretation builds on literal meaning (involving a contrastive perspective), but is not automatically triggered by it. While in standard cases like \textit{What a piece of art!} or \textit{There were many "pieces of art" to be seen.}, there is a substitutive effect, having roughly to do with the "opposite" of what is said; in the case of scare quoted focus particle "nur" the literal meaning remains intact. In (1) \textit{Spears zahlt Mann "nur" 750.000 Euro.} ("Spears only" pays husband 750,000 euro.\footnote{Conventionalized ironies and the indication of irony through special prosodic clues (ironical tone, mocking voice, special accents, etc.) are problematical for this claim, cf. Anoill/Ciceri/gleode Infantino (2007).}), it remains a fact that Spears pays her husband no more than 750,000 euro & 750,000 euro is not a lot of money (for Spears) & 750,000 euro is a lot of money (for the average person). Irony comes into play when further aspects of the context are observed. Thus, the ironical implicature adds an additional, contrastive perspective.

While for Predelli (2003) ironical meaning goes into the attachment and hence is part of the semantic profile, Levinson (2000: 386, Fn. 2) argues that irony and sarcasm are cases of particularized conversational implicatures (PCIs) (Levinson 2000: 386, Fn. 2). Following this proposal, the ironical interpretation of scare quoted focus particles is delegated to postsemantic pragmatics (Gricean pragmatics).\footnote{Conventionaled ironies and the indication of irony through special prosodic clues (ironical tone, mocking voice, special accents, etc.) are problematical for this claim, cf. Anoill/Ciceri/gleode Infantino (2007).}

Scare quoted focus particles are not inherently ironical, but their special scalar meaning along with a necessary evaluation may give rise to ironical interpretations in a fitting context. It goes without saying that there are many further questions to be asked, e.g., what the role of contextual clues is (accent on the focus particle, air quotes, lexical indicators like in \textit{Anführungszeichen} 'in quotation marks', and other elements in the context, such as for instance evaluating predicates, see Chapter X in this volume), whether sincerity conditions or conversational maxims are being violated or exploited (cf. Colston 2007), and what the social motives for using this kind of irony are (Dews/Kaplan/Winner 2007).
6 Summary

The gist of this paper was to explore the idea that, in the case of the scare quoted focus particle "nur", the addition of a further perspective signalled by the use of quotation marks is crucial. After reviewing the meaning components of nur, it was assumed that the literal meaning of nur in the case of our example "Britney Spears only pays husband 750,000 euro" is "Spears pays husband no more than 750,000 euro & 750,000 euro is not a lot of money". The additional information "750,000 euro is a lot of money (for the average person)" was argued to be a conversational implicature, most probably derived by an I-inference. Moreover, examples of mixed quote/scare quote ambiguity and cases of additional interpretation were discussed.

Drawing on the earlier work of Klockow (1978, 1980), Meibauer (2007), and Gutzmann/Stein (2011a, b), scare quotes were analysed as pragmatic indicators. This is in line with Gutzmann/Stein (2011a, b), who analyze quotation marks as pragmatic indicators across the board. Cappelen/Lepore (2007), in contrast, defend the view that quotation marks contribute to the semantics of an utterance. Predelli’s (2003) account of scare quotes, which argues that scare quotes contribute to the semantic profile of an utterance and thus have a truth-conditional impact, was dismissed because of the unclear status of the notions message and attachment. What I hope to have achieved in this article, is to have shown that an apparently minor fact like scare quoted focus particles can give rise to 'bigger' questions of the semantics/pragmatics distinction.

References
