

## LANGUAGE AND SUBJECTIVITY

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*Este artículo es una reflexión sobre la cuestión de la subjetividad en el lenguaje y se propone:*

- 1) demostrar la importancia de la noción de subjetividad en el estudio del lenguaje y de las lenguas;*
- 2) dar un ejemplo de cómo se puede expresar la subjetividad en una lengua en particular.*

*El artículo se divide en dos partes: en la primera sección se discute el problema desde un punto de vista teórico y en la segunda sección se analiza un fenómeno concreto.*

*En la parte teórica se discute el problema de la subjetividad sobre todo a partir de los planteamientos de Emile Benveniste y de su desarrollo en la teoría de la enunciación.*

*En la segunda parte se analiza la modalidad como forma de expresión de la subjetividad en italiano con particular referencia a los adverbios modales. Se propone una hipótesis sobre el tipo de subjetividad que el hablante puede expresar en el enunciado a través de este tipo de adverbios y se analizan sus características sintácticas y semánticas.*

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*This article is a reflection on the question of subjectivity in language and aims at:*

- 1) showing the importance of the notion of subjectivity in the study of language in general and also of specific languages;*
- 2) giving an example of how subjectivity can be expressed in a specific language.*

*The article is divided into two parts: in the first section the problem is discussed from a theoretical point of view and in the second section a concrete phenomenon is analysed.*

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*In the theoretical section the question of subjectivity is discussed taking the work of Emile Benveniste and its developments in the "theory of the act of utterance" as a starting point.*

*In the second part modality is analysed as a form of expression of subjectivity in Italian with particular reference to modal adverbs. One hypothesis is put forward on the type of subjectivity that the speaker can express through this kind of adverbs in the utterance and their syntactic and semantic characteristics are analysed.*

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*Cet article envisage l'aspect de la subjectivité dans le langage et a pour but:*

- 1) montrer l'importance de la notion de subjectivité dans l'étude du langage et des langues;*
- 2) donner un exemple de l'expression de la subjectivité dans une langue en particulier.*

*Dans une première partie, on discute le problème d'un point de vue théorique et dans la deuxième partie, on présente une analyse d'un phénomène concret. La partie théorique discute le problème de la subjectivité à partir des données théoriques d'Emile Benveniste et de leur développement dans la théorie de l'énonciation.*

*Dans la deuxième partie, on analyse la modalité comme forme d'expression de la subjectivité en Italien en se référant en particulier aux adverbes modaux. On présente une hypothèse quant au type de subjectivité que le sujet peut exprimer dans son énoncé à travers ce type d'adverbes et on analyse leurs caractéristiques syntaxiques et sémantiques.*

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*Dieser Artikel ist eine Reflexion Über die Subjektivität in der Sprechere und setzt sich folgende Ziele:*

- 1) Darstellung der Wichtigkeit des Begriffs der Subjektivität In linguistischen Untersuchungen*
- 2) Anführung von Beispielen, wie die Subjektivität in einer bestimmten Sprache ausgedrückt werden kann.*

*Der Artikel besteht aus zwei Teilen: im ersten Teil wird das Problem aus theoretischer Sicht diskutiert und Im zweiten Teil wird ein konkretes Phänomen analysiert.*

*Im theoretischen Teil wird das Problem der Subjektivität v.a. anhand der Überlegungen von Emile Benveniste und seiner Theorie der Mitteilung diskutiert. Im zweiten Abschnitt wird die Modalität als Form des subjektiven Ausdrucks Im Italienischen untersucht mit besonderer Bezugnahme auf die Modaladverbien. Eine Hypothese wird präsentiert über die Art der Subjektivität, welche der Sprecher mittels dieser Adverbien ausdrücken kann, und es werden deren semantische und syntaktische Charakteristiken analysiert.*

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### *Introduction*

This work is a reflection on subjectivity in language. My objectives are:

- a) To show the importance of a notion of subjectivity in the study of language
- b) To give an example of how subjectivity can be expressed in a particular language.

To do so I divided my work into two sections. In the first I discuss the question of subjectivity theoretically. I take as a starting point Benveniste's views since he was the first linguist who wrote specifically on this topic. I also take into consideration a number of reflections dedicated to the same problem by Lyons and try to show how the concept of subjectivity has opened and can open new perspectives in linguistics.

Since I believe that modality is one of the linguistic phenomena that indicates the expression of subjectivity in English, Italian and other European languages I have chosen to work in the second section on modal adverbs, taking Italian as my language of reference. I try to show what kind of subjectivity can be expressed through these adverbs and what are their syntactic and semantic characteristics. To do so I analyse how they have been studied previously in the literature and then I propose my own definition of their role in the utterance. I then discuss how this definition is compatible with the syntactic behaviour of these adverbs and in what way it can explain the way utterances containing modal adverbs are interpreted.

### *Benveniste en Subjectivity*

The question of subjectivity in language is particularly complicated because of the connotations that the words 'subjective' and 'subject' inevitably carry. These connotations are different in different philosophical traditions and cultures. When the terms 'subject' and 'subjectivity' appear in the discussions, on the other hand, there is the delicate issue to decide what the term 'subject' refers to, if it refers to the psychological self, to the surface-structure syntactic subject, to the logical subject or what else. In other words, the concept of subjectivity is at the centre of a terminological jungle from which it is hard to escape.

In this section I discuss the notion of subjectivity with particular reference to the ideas that Benveniste and Lyons expressed on this topic. I will compare these two different conceptions and then discuss how certain reflections that Benveniste put forward later developed in the so-called "linguistique de l'énonciation" and what is the place of the subject in this theory. Finally I propose my own view of how this notion of subjectivity can be interpreted and in what sense it can be interesting for linguistic theory. As is well known, Benveniste dedicated to the discussion of the problem of subjectivity a famous article called "De la subjectivité dans le langage" (1958). But this paper should not be considered in isolation because his ideas on subjectivity are scattered in different articles printed in his *Problèmes de linguistique Générale*. (PLG) (1966). Specifically in all the articles collected in the section called "L'homme dans la langue" in Volume I and the two articles of Volume II called "L'appareil formel de l'énonciation" and "La forme et le sens dans le langage".

I will try to retrace the co-ordinates of this reflection, at the same time taking into account Lyons' suggestions and criticisms to Benveniste's ideas.

Subjectivity is defined by Benveniste as:

"La capacité du locuteur à se poser comme sujet"

(PLG, I, p. 259) that I interpret as meaning the capability of the locutionary agent to manifest himself, present himself, as a subject.

This capacity, according to Benveniste, has its foundation and its base in language. By language I think that Benveniste means broadly language faculty or language activity. Language then, is what determines the ability of man to recognize himself as a subject. According to Benveniste man cannot be known or analysed outside his language activity and even the idea of conceiving man as separated from language is "pure fiction".

"C'est un homme parlant que nous trouvons dans le monde, un homme parlant à un autre homme, et le langage enseigne la définition même de l'homme".

(PLG, I, p.259)

Here language is seen as the only instrument of consciousness and identified "tout court" with cognitive activity itself. This conception leads Benveniste to a further, more radical definition of subjectivity in the same article:

"C'est dans le langage et par le langage que l'homme se constitue comme sujet; parce que le langage seul fonde en réalité, dans sa réalité qui est celle de l'être, le concept d'ego".

(PLG, I, p. 259)

Such conception is not very convincing in so far as it identifies both consciousness and the foundation of the concept of the self with the linguistic activity itself, an idea which amounts to denying that man's subjectivity can be realized and apprehended through a much wider range of activities which do not necessarily involve language. And this is much more so when we consider that Benveniste seems to identify language with spoken language and not with symbolic activity in general, which makes his claim even more untenable.

These considerations explain the title of an article by Lyons (1982) where Benveniste's conception of subjectivity

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is summarised in the formula "loquor ergo sum" (I speak therefore I am), which is used by the author half-seriously to point at the dangers of what he calls "phenomenological structuralism" in linguistics and philosophy. This critique is taken up again in a subsequent article (1984) where the same author notices that by saying that the basis of subjectivity is in the exercise of language Benveniste:

"pèche par excès de zèle. Même s'il avait dit que la subjectivité est fondée sur la faculté de langage et façonnée différemment selon les cultures, par l'exercice de la langue, je me serais trouvé dans l'obligation de manifester une certaine réticence. Si la psychologie cognitive et la psycholinguistique de nos jours ont tendance à sous évaluer le côté social dans le développement de ce que l'on peut appeler la subjectivité locutionnaire (et illocutionnaire) Benveniste, comme beaucoup de linguistes et psychologues de sa génération, l'a peut-être, surestimé".

(p. 131)

I agree with Lyons that in this first formulation of the question of subjectivity Benveniste was certainly too extreme and that man's self consciousness and language should not be too readily identified, although I think, as I will argue below, that there is a development in the conception of subjectivity in Benveniste. A second criticism put forward by Lyons refers to the fact that Benveniste states, talking about the study of the role of personal pronouns that:

"C'est un fait remarquable que parmi les signes d'une langue de quelque type, époque ou région qu'elle soit, jamais ne manquent les pronoms personnels".

(PLG, I, p. 261)

To which statement Lyons object that it is in fact possible to imagine a language that works without personal pronouns,

only using definite descriptions and meaning by that, that it is necessary to separate what is a fact of "language", from what is a fact of "langue". I believe that Benveniste's perhaps over-hasty statement about personal pronouns is due to an ambiguity between two senses of 'subjectivity' which are often interplaying in his work, but that, in my opinion, it is important to distinguish. The two senses of 'subjectivity' that I would distinguish are:

1) Subjectivity as previously defined: the capacity of the locutionary agent to present himself as a subject in language.

2) Subjectivity as self-expression.

The second definition is the one generally retained by Lyons. In his article of 1982 he defines his notion of locutionary subjectivism as presupposing that:

- a) the term self-expression is to be taken literally and cannot be reduced "theoretically" to the assertion of a set of propositions
- b) there is a distinction in the structure and use of language between a subjective component in which the speaker (or, more generally, the locutionary agent) expresses himself and an objective component comprising a set of communicable propositions. (p. 104)

I think that the confusion between these two ways of looking at the problem of subjectivity can lead to a great deal of theoretical muddle. In fact, as I argued before, in certain passages of the PLG, Benveniste seems to be operating with both notions at the same time. So, talking about the function of personal pronouns in language he says:

"Si chaque locuteur, pour *exprimer le sentiment qu'il a de sa subjectivité irréductible*. (my underlining) disposait d'un "indicatif" distinct (...) il y aurait pratiquement autant de langues que d'individus et la communication deviendrait strictement impossible"

(PLG, I, p.254)



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Here Benveniste seems to be confusing the fact that 'personal pronouns' allow the locutionary agent to refer to himself by saying 'I', with the expression of a feeling of subjectivity which is something completely different, firstly because the fact of saying 'I' does not in principle imply the expression of something subjective and secondly because one can express one's own subjectivity without saying 'I'. The same problem seems to appear when Benveniste declares:

"(...) or nous tenons que cette 'subjectivité', qu'on la pose en phénomologie ou en psychologie, comme on voudra, n'est que l'émergence dans le langage d'une propriété fondamentale du langage, est 'ego' qui dit 'ego'. Nous trouvons là le fondement de la subjectivité, qui se détermine par le statut linguistique de la personne".

(PLG, I, p. 260)

These passages reveal two ambiguities in Benveniste:

- a) ambiguity between self-expression and self-reference
- b) ambiguity between the linguistic and the metalinguistic plan.

Such ambiguity is indicated also in an article by Kawauchi (1984) on the concept of person. This author says:

"En effet, la tentative Benvenistienne de fonder la catégorie de la personne à partir du sujet locuteur en s'appuyant sur des morphèmes ne peut se justifier que si ces morphèmes sont rapportés à un paramètre métalinguistique. On est donc fondés à dire que les termes *je* et *tu* sont en fait, contrairement à ce que dit Benveniste, des emplois métalinguistiques notant des sujets énonciateur et co-énonciateur, et ce d'ailleurs d'une façon qui n'est pas dépourvue de considérations extérieures".

(p. 122)

but in the work of Benveniste it is not always clear when he is using the term 'je' to indicate the linguistic morpheme 'first personal pronoun' and when he is using it to refer to the locutionary agent.

I think that the question of distinguishing subjectivity as self-expression from subjectivity as the presence of the subject in discourse and to separate the concept of subject and the linguistic concept of personal pronoun is central. In fact the same ambiguity is responsible for the identification between deixis and subjectivity that is another point raised by Lyons. He says:

"I have taken the view that, whereas modality is basically subjective and may be objectivised to a greater or lesser extent in different languages, the basic function of deixis is to relate the entities and situations to which reference is made in language, to the spatio-temporal zero-point, the here-and-now of the context of utterance. Admittedly, this zero point is egocentric, as everyone who ever talks about deixis would agree. But its egocentricity is not necessarily subjective in the sense of this paper: space and time can be treated as objective dimensions of the external world in which speaker and addressee are located (...) From this point of view it is simply a matter of convenience that speakers should use the place and time of utterance as a part of the point of reference: they might, in principle, use the spatiotemporal location of something else, fixed or variable, in the physical environment".

(p.121)

This objection is perfectly understandable if one takes deixis as being subjective in the same way as modality, for example, is subjective, and it is not always clear in Benveniste whether he makes a distinction between these two kinds of subjectivity. Now, deictic expressions can be "subjective" in the sense that they can convey meanings related to the feelings and attitudes of the speaker (Lyons

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himself quotes certain selections of 'come' and 'go' in English or the incorporation of a first-person reference in a pronominal adjective of address, and other similar phenomena), but, in general, the kind of "subjectivity" that deixis expresses is different from that of modality. A distinction between "deictisation" and "modalisation" is made by Parret (1983), who says that whereas the latter is basically "opaque" and determines a distance of the subject with respect to what he is asserting or to how he is asserting it, the former is instead manifest and based on the fact that the subject declares his presence. In this sense I take it to be subjective and I think that the reason why Benveniste showed such a great interest towards it will become clearer once I discuss the way the notion of subjectivity developed in his work. On whatever grounds we make a distinction between these two types of subjectivity, it seems to me that such a distinction should be made in order to avoid the possibility of reducing the notion of subject to a psychological all-embracing category.

In fact in some of the French literature on the topic of subjectivity this ambiguity is not resolved in the sense that there is no distinction between modes and degrees of presence of the subject(s) in language. But once this distinction is made, it seems to me that it is in fact useful to take the term "subjectivity" in the broad sense of presence of the subject, or better subjects, in language activity and to see all the possible consequences that an attention to this phenomenon carries for the study of language and languages ('langues'). A broadening of the concept would include self-expression as one of the possible modes of presence of the subject and would point at the necessity of studying subjectivity at different levels. One is the level of the "langues" or systems, that is how much and in what way lexical items, morphological elements, syntactic constructions, etc. can carry or be associated with subjective meanings and how different languages can vary in the degree of subjectivity that they allow (or oblige) their speakers to express, as Lyons suggests. The other level is the level of discourse which is the one that most interested Benveniste and that in the end motivated all his reflections on subjectivity and also explains the sense in which he took deixis to be subjective. This interest is at the origin of a shift in his conception of subjectivity

as the expression of the individual self, to a more social idea, where subjectivity is often related to "intersubjectivity". This second way of looking at the problem seems the most natural development of the idea discussed before that subjectivity can be viewed as "the presence of the subject in language" in a broad sense and explains why Benveniste was led to put the basis of the theory of "L'enonciation" (the act of utterance). Such development brought him far away, I think, from the "loquor ergo sum" argument.

The fact that language is identified by Benveniste with human activity brought him to pay particular attention to the linguistic signs that determine the conversion of language into "discourse", where "discourse" is to be understood as linguistic activity as realized by individuals. The study of this mechanism of conversion arises from the dissatisfaction that Benveniste felt with the identification of the Saussurean "parole" with individual and idiosyncratic usage of the language. Benveniste postulates the existence of an intermediate level between language as a system (langue) and individual idiosyncratic behaviour and this level is discourse. In this perspective he studies with particular interest all those "signs" that allow this conversion of language into discourse in so far as they cannot be fully interpreted without reference to a particular "instance de discours" (occasion of discourse). These signs belong to a level which, following Morris, he calls pragmatic, that relates signs and users of the language.

He says:

"On a traité trop légèrement et comme allant de soi la référence au "sujet parlant" implicite dans tout ce groupe d'expressions. On dépouille de la signification propre cette référence si l'on ne discerne pas le trait par où elle se distingue des autres signes linguistiques (...) L'importance de leur fonction se mesurera à la nature du problème qu'elles servent à résoudre et qui n'est autre que celui de la communication intersubjective. Le langage a résolu ce problème en créant un ensemble de signes "vides", non référentiels par rapport à la "réalité", toujours dispo-

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nibles et qui deviennent "pleins" dès q'un locuteur les assume dans chaque instance de discours".

(PLG, I, p. 254)

I think that in this passage the sense in which deictics are subjective becomes clearer. Benveniste refers to all the signs that are at the same time symbols and indexes and quotes personal pronouns, demonstratives and tenses as deictic categories, that is categories that constantly point at particular uses and users of the language. The shift in interest is towards intersubjectivity, towards the linguistic activity of the subjects. At this stage he distinguishes between semiotics as the study of the "langue" and semantics as the study of the activity of the speakers who "put language in action" (PLG, II, p. 225). He had already recognized earlier, in his article on subjectivity, the dialogic nature of discourse and the fact that the emergence of the subject in discourse presupposes the recognition of "the other". In another article "discourse" is opposed to "history" as a mode characterized not only by a stronger and more manifest participation of the locutionary agent in what is said, but also as:

"toute énonciation supposant un auditeur et un locuteur, et chez le premier l'intention d'influencer l'autre en quelque manière (...) bref tous les genres ou quelqu'un s'adresse à quelqu'un, s'énonce comme locuteur et organise ce qu'il dit dans la catégorie de la personne".

(PLG, I, p. 242)

In §11 these quotations there would be much to say about the terminological looseness characteristic of Benveniste, but I will not go into details on this point and will rather try to concentrate on this evolution in the conception of subjectivity expressed by Benveniste. An evolution towards intersubjectivity that has been noticed as the source of a singular coincidence between certain analyses in the PLG and the theory of speech acts proposed by Austin

Such coincidence can be explained by the fact that both

Benveniste and Austin reintroduce, in different ways, the subject at the centre of the reflection on language. It is then not surprising that Benveniste analyses the verbs of propositional attitude and notices the asymmetry that the use of the first person pronoun determines in their meaning. To say 'I suppose' is not the same as to say 'he supposes', in that while the latter is a description, the former is the expression of a subjective attitude.<sup>1</sup> Benveniste notices exactly the same asymmetry in another class of verbs (the performatives), where the utterance of the verb at the first person constitutes the performance of an act (PLG, I, p. 265). This intuition is openly compared with Austin's distinction between constative and performative in a later

The reason why I point at this coincidence, as said before, is that the common displacement of interest by the two thinkers towards language use also determines, at different levels, a discovery of subjectivity. In Benveniste subjectivity develops in the sense of a study of the relationship between users of the language and language, while in Austin subjectivity enters indirectly through the consideration of the intentions and mutual presuppositions of the speakers in the performance of a speech-act. Particularly Austin's notion of *illocutionary force* is related to the recognition that the speaker, by uttering a certain utterance, manifests the intention to accomplish a particular illocutionary act. The illocutionary force with which the speaker invests his utterance determines the way a particular utterance should be taken by the addressee. By accomplishing particular illocutionary acts speakers also assign to themselves and others specific roles realizing through language a number of intersubjective functions. In Austin's theory the subject is involved not directly in the utterance, but in the felicity conditions that determine the success of a speech act. There are speech-acts that require from the speaker that he has the authority to perform them, others that require commitment to certain beliefs and intentions and these conditions are the background

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1. Urmson (1952) provides a very interesting analysis of these verbs which he called "parenthetical". "Parenthetical Verbs", *Mind*, No. 61, pp. 480-496.

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for the fulfilment of the speech act.<sup>2</sup>

These points of coincidence should not obscure the fact that speech-act theory and the theory of the act of utterance (*énonciation*) have different preoccupations and come from different traditions. They both rediscover the subject, one insofar as it aims at incorporating language use into a more general theory of action, the other Insofar as it aims at describing the relationships between an utterance and the individuals that produced it.

### *The Subject in the Theory of the Act Utterance*

I have now come to the last in this series of reflections, that is what is the place of the notion of subject in the "theory of the act of utterance" that Benveniste sketches and how this notion develops in later formulations of the theory.

Some terminological clarifications: I shall translate "l'*énonciation*" as "the act of utterance", "l'*énoncé*" as "the utterance" (intended as the concrete occurrence of a sentence), "le locuteur" as "the locutionary agent", "l'*énonciateur*" or "sujet d'*énonciation*" as "the illocutionary agent", "le sujet d'*énoncé*" as "the subject of the utter-

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2. See on this point what Ducrot (1978) says talking about the structure of the act of utterance and that I think clarifies my view: "Ciò che porta a collocare un locutore alla fonte della enunciazione è il fatto che l'esistenza dell'enunciato, in tutte le qualificazioni che ne dà il senso, appare come il compimento di un atto. Soprattutto nella sua qualificazione illocutiva (in quanto ordine, affermazione, domanda, etc) il fatto di parola è visto sotto forma di un dire. Proprio per questo si è prima dovuto parlare a volte di "atto di enunciazione", mentre le definizioni preliminari qui presentate ponevano solo un evento. Tuttavia questo evento, anche se distinto dall'attività linguistica, è visto come un atto, cioè- cerne relativo a un soggetto." (p.515) Ducrot, O.: "Enunciazione" Enciclopedia Einaudi, Vol. 5.

ance" and "l'allocutaire" or "l'énonciateur" as "the addressee". The difference between "locutionary" and "illocutionary" agent will become clearer when I discuss Ducrot's views on subjectivity, nonetheless I shall introduce it here. The locutionary agent is the speaker, while the "illocutionary agent" is the subject who takes responsibility for the illocutionary act, and they might not coincide.

If we take, for example, an utterance like:

(1) I love bad movies

we can say that the illocutionary agent who takes responsibility for the judgement of certain movies as "bad", does not coincide with the locutionary agent who is responsible for the whole utterance.

Another clarification refers to the fact that the term "subject" can refer both to the referent of an expression and to the expression itself, when I translate "sujet d'énoncé" with "subject of the utterance" I intend it to refer to the linguistic expression and not to its referent.

In his latest formulations Benveniste (1970) defines the act of utterance as:

"Cette mise en fonctionnement de la langue  
par un acte individuel d'utilisation."

(PLG, I I, p. 80)

The act of utterance introduces a locutionary agent insofar as it constitutes an individual realisation. But at the same time that it brings a locutionary agent into existence it also postulates an addressee to whom the former relates. Benveniste considers as pertinent to the study of the act of utterance all those linguistic elements whose function is that of converting the system into discourse. He quotes the deictics of space and time and the paradigm of verbal tenses. But then he expands the list of deictics to the forms of the sentence: interrogative, declarative and jussive insofar as they reveal the presence of the subject either as communicating commitment, or as requiring answer or as demanding an action.



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In this first formulation "l'énonciation" is characterised as an act. It has been noticed that the study of the act itself is not, in fact, possible given that every individual exercise of the language is a historical event that comes into being and then disappears. That is why later the study of the act of utterance is conceived as the study of the relationships between the utterance, the protagonists of the act and the spatio-temporal situation in which they speak. A more extended view includes as its object "the general conditions of production and reception of the message" (see Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1980, p. 30). There is a shift from the study of the act to the study of its product. On this point Kerbrat-Orecchioni says:

"Faute de pouvoir étudier directement l'acte de production, nous chercherons à identifier et décrire les traces de l'acte dans le produit, c'est-à-dire les lieux d'inscription dans la trame énonciative des différents constituants du cadre énonciatif."

(p. 30)

In this view the study of the act of utterance becomes the study of the utterance as a product in which the traces of the operations performed by the speakers are still present. But there is a further shift from the early formulation of Benveniste where the act of utterance implied a speaker, an addressee and a situation, towards a different view in which it is only the locutionary agent's presence that interests the analyst. The study of the act of utterance becomes, and is now basically, the study of the emergence of the subject in the utterance. Such study is defined by Kerbrat-Orecchioni as "a restricted theory" which only takes into account the subjective components of the utterance, even recognizing that such "subjective traces" are only a sub-part of the units that are pertinent for the study of the "énonciation" ("les unités énonciatives"). The new definition of the object of this linguistic theory is then:

"La problématique de l'énonciation (...)  
peut être aussi définie: c'est la recher-

che des procédés linguistiques (shifters, modalisateurs, termes évaluatifs, etc.) par lesquels le locuteur imprime sa marque à l'énoncé, s'inscrit dans le message (implicitement ou explicitement) et se situe par rapport à lui (problème de la distance énonciative)."

(Kerbrat-Oracchioni, 1980, p. 32)

It is now possible to see how the theory that Benveniste had sketched in his later writings has evolved into a theory of the expression of the subject in language. But which subject? There is a great deal of terminological variety in the works that have set out to explain the objectives of a linguistic theory of the act of utterance. It is therefore not easy to give a straightforward answer to this question. In fact one is tempted to think that the term "subject" always refers to the speaker himself. But, as I anticipated, more subtle distinctions are drawn. Most of the authors use the term "sujet d'énonciation" as opposed to that of "sujet d'énoncé" to refer to an opposition which is internal to discourse between a subject of what is uttered and a subject who takes responsibility for the utterance (some French authors use the expression "mettre à son compte"), this is why I have translated it as illocutionary agent". The term "sujet d'énonciation" then, does not refer to an individual, but to a linguistic reality. The same can be said of the distinction between locutionary agent (locuteur) and addressee (allocutaire) that, according to Jacques (1983):

"sont des instances suscitées par et dans le discours, plutôt que d'individus concrets."

(p. 58)

The necessity of separating the illocutionary agent (sujet d'énonciation), from the subject of the utterance (sujet d'énoncé) can be seen more concretely through examples. If we consider the utterance

(2) John came to Paris

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the verb came allows us to postulate the presence of a subject ( $S_0$ ) that is different from John ( $S_1$ ), in that there is an indication that  $S_0$  is in Paris. In this case  $S_0$  is the illocutionary agent. Or in an utterance like the following:

(3) John pretends to know everything

we can give a paraphrase like

(4) John ( $S_1$ ) thought that he knew everything

( $S_0$ ) thinks that what John thinks is false

since the verb 'pretend' introduces the illocutionary agent.

Or again given the following utterance in Italian:

(5) Reagan avrebbe incontrato il Primo Ministro francese the conditional form indicates the fact that  $S_0$  is expressing his noncommitment to the truth of the information given.

In all these cases  $S_0$  would be the illocutionary agent expressing himself in the utterance. Obviously such presence of  $S_0$  should be seen according to a principle of relevance, otherwise all utterances could be analysed as introducing a subject that can be different from the subject of utterance. In other words one can say that all utterances presuppose a speaker who says something like "I say that such and such", but I think that it is precisely the fact that the presence of the speaker is manifested or implied by certain morphemes or constructions or other elements that makes this distinction interesting.

The interplay between different subjects in the utterance has been described in a very interesting way by Ducrot—This author conceives such interplay as a "polyphony", a multiplicity of voices. In Ducrot's terminology it is necessary to distinguish the locutionary agent (locuteur) from the illocutionary agent (énonciateur) and the hearer (auditeur) from the addressee (énonciataire). In fact the locutionary agent and the hearer are respectively the person who speaks and the person who listens, while the illocutionary agent and the addressee are respectively the agent and the patient of an illocutionary act. According to Ducrot there

are morphemes of the language that allow a polyphonic interpretation, that is that introduce in the utterance all these characters like in a piece of theatre, something that is very coherent with his vision of language as "une mise en scène". To give an example, consider an utterance in French like:

(6) Sortons (puisque') il fait beau  
           $E_1$    $E_2$

Supposing that  $E_1$  and  $E_2$  are different utterances, the morpheme 'puisque' allows an interpretation in which the subject of  $E_1$  and that of  $E_2$  do not coincide. According to Ducrot the utterance could be paraphrased with something like "Let us go out since (as you say) the weather is nice", where the subject who takes responsibility for utterance  $E_1$  does not take responsibility for the utterance  $E_2$ . 'Puisque' is then one of those morphemes that allow an interplay of subjects, a polyphony.

As seen from the previous discussion the theory outlined by Benveniste has evolved into a theory of the subject in language. Such theory is based, according to Parret (1983), on the principle that the subject shows himself, does not tell himself that he attributes to Wittgenstein<sup>3</sup> and

3. Parret says on this point: "Le sujet se montre, ne se dit pas." Wittgenstein reprend dans les *Investigations Philosophiques* une opposition - celle du *dire* et du *montrer* - que l'on retrouve tout au long des théories du discours: c'est ainsi que la logique de Port-Royal la développe dans une perspective rationaliste, et Condillac dans une perspective empiriste. *Dire* versus *montrer* n'est absent ni chez Austin, ni chez Benveniste, mais c'est à Karl Bühler que l'on doit ce beau syntagme: le discours comme "champ monstratoire". En utilisant les trois composantes classiques de la deixis (personne, temps, espace) on pourrait dire que les dynamismes "monstratoires" du discours sont la *personalisation*, la *temporalisation* et la *spatialisation*" in "L'énonciation en tant que déictisation et modalisation", *Langages*, 1983, No. 70, pp. 87-88.

that therefore its presence has to be reconstructed in terms of "traces" within the utterance itself.<sup>4</sup> I think that the great merit of the linguists who are trying to formalise a theory of the act of utterance is in their attempt to overcome the "descriptive fallacy" of which Austin spoke in his works, that is the idea that language is basically used to describe the world and to give information and that the message is a kind of transparent concatenation of morphemes that can be analysed and understood in abstraction from the speaker that produced it and the addressee to whom it is directed, and that all those elements of meaning that relate the utterance to the speaker (s) are peripheral and secondary with respect to its "basic meaning".

There are, however, a few points that I would like to raise with respect to this theory. One problem is that I am treating with a common label a variety of approaches and methodologies that are often very far away from each other. The second problem that I see is that there is a tendency to use the concepts of 'subjects' and 'subjectivity' without any clear distinction of modes of presence of the subject in language. I believe that subjectivity can appear in different forms; some are devices to self-

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4. Some French authors use the term "marque" to refer to the traces of the presence of the locutionary agent in the utterance. See Desclés (1974) on this point: "Une linguistique de l'énonciation n'a pas pour unique objet d'étude le message produit mais vise également les conditions linguistiques de production du message ou du texte par un énonciateur. Elle n'assigne pas une fonction principale au langage (soit expression de la pensée, soit communication), mais plusieurs fonctions dont celle de dialogue, ce qui amène à inclure dans les modèles les paramètres propres aux sujets énonciateurs pour toute description linguistique. Les paramètres doivent cependant être associés, plus ou moins médiatement, à des marques repérables dans les textes:", p. 223. Desclés, J.P. "Description de quelques opérations énonciatives" in J. David and R. Martin (eds.) (1974) *Modèles logiques et niveaux d'analyse linguistique*, pp. 213-236.

refer or co-refer, others have to do with the sphere of values, judgements and expectations, others with the impersonation of social roles.

in this sense there is a danger of reducing language to self-expression. Landowski (1983) notices this danger when he opposes at one extreme a conception of communication as a simple transfer of a message from the speaker to hearer and at the other extreme a conception where there is:

"un sujet énonçant omniprésent, hypertrophié, qu'end bien même aucun énoncé sortirait de sa bouche. Car cette fois ce n'est plus la consistance du message ni sa bonne transmission qui sont en jeu, mais bien la forme et la substance d'un sujet: son identité."

(p. 74)

To summarize: I have argued that talking about subjectivity it is necessary to distinguish between:

- a) The expression of feelings, beliefs and attitudes of the subject in language
- b) The presence of the subject in language.

An ambiguity between these two senses of 'subjectivity' can lead to a conception of language as self-expression with which I do not agree. On the other hand I argued that a definition of subjectivity as the presence of the subject in language allows us to see the connection between the language and the users of language and between what is subjective and what is intersubjective.

I also argued that subjectivity can be studied at different levels: at the level of 'languages', to see how languages differ amongst each other in the codification of subjectivity and how in each language there are particular morphemes, lexical items, syntactic constructions, etc. that can be used to express subjectivity. At the level of discourse to analyse how the presence of the locutionary agent and the addressee are manifested in the utterance, and to what extent this presence can be used to understand

the sense of utterance. This kind of study is what the theory of the act of utterance is trying to formalise with the merits and limitations that I have discussed before.

I think that these levels should all be explored to show that language is not simply an instrument for the transmission of propositional content and that descriptive meanings are only part of the meanings that language organises. It is precisely the exclusive attention to this descriptive function that has allowed linguists to ignore the presence of the subject in language.

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