

Language and subjectivity*

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RESUMEN

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 se analiza un fenómeno concreto. En la parte teórica se discute el problema de la subjetividad sobre todo a partir de los planteamientos de Émile 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.

ABSTRACT

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. In the theoretical section the question of subjectivity is discussed taking the work of Émile 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

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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.

RÉSUMÉ

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.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Artikel ist eine Reflexion über die Subjektivität in der Sprache 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 Modaladverben. 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.

INTRODUCTION

This work is a reflection on subjectivity in language. My objectives are: 1. To show the importance of a notion of subjectivity in the study of language; 2. 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 how it can explain the way utterances containing modal adverbs are interpreted.

Benveniste on 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 it 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: 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 : 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: 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 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 (1984: 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: 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 *langue*, 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 (Lyons, 1982: 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 underlying) disposait d’un “indicatif ” distinct (...) il y aurait pratiquement autant de langues que d’individus et la communication deviendrait strictement impossible (*PLG*, I: 254).

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 *I* 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 dît ‘ego’. Nous trouvons là le fonde-

ment de la subjectivité, qui se détermine par le statut linguistique de la personne (PLG, I: 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 Kawaqkchi (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 (1984: 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 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 whoever 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 (1982: 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 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, etcetera 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 ou 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 oui 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 disponibles et qui deviennent "pleins" dès qu'un locuteur les assume dans chaque instance de discours (*PLG*, I: 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: 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 où 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: 242).

In all 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.¹ 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: 265). This intuition is

¹ Urmson (1952) provides a very interesting analysis of these verbs which he called *parenthetical verbs*.

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 for the fulfillment of the speech act.²

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.

² See on this point what Ducrot (1978: 515) 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 come relativo a un soggetto".

The subject in the theory of the act of 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 utterance' and *l'allocutaire* or *coénonciateur* 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 judgment 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*, II: 80).

The act of utterance introduces a locutionary agent insofar as it constitutes an individual realization. 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, declara-

tive and jussive insofar as they reveal the presence of the subject either as communicating commitment, or as requiring answer or as demanding an action.

In this first formulation *l'énonciation* is characterized 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: 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 (1980: 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 subpart 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 recherche 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-Orecchioni, 1980: 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 (*allocataire*) that, according to Jacques: "sont des instances suscitées par et dans le discours, plutôt que d'individus concrets" (1983: 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*

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 non commitment 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 Wittgenstein³ and that therefore its presence has to be reconstructed in terms of *traces* within the utterance itself.⁴ I think that the great merit of the linguists who are trying to formalize 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

³ Parret (1983: 87-87) 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 “monstratoire” du discours sont la *personalisation*, la *temporalisation* et la *spatialisation*”.

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: 233) 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”.

are devices to self-refer or co-refer, others have to do with the sphere of values, judgments 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 the hearer and at the other extreme a conception where there is:

un sujet énonçant omniprésent, hypertrophié, quand 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 (1983: 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 *langues*, 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, etcetera 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.

SUBJECTIVE ADVERBS

In this section I discuss how subjectivity can be expressed in Italian (and in other European languages) through the use of adverbs. I want to show that certain classes of adverbs are particularly relevant in the analysis of the act of utterance insofar as they signal in the utterance itself the presence of the locutionary agents' involvement.

Among these adverbs I shall specifically concentrate on the so-called 'modals', whose function, I will argue, is to express the locutionary agent's commitment to the speech-act that he is performing. But there are also other classes of adverbs that can be considered subjective in the same way, such as the so-called *evaluative adverbs* (like *surprisingly* or *strangely*) that convey the locutionary agent's emotive reaction to the content of his utterance and the so-called *speech-act adverbs* (like *honestly* or *frankly*) through which the locutionary agent qualifies the act of utterance itself. I think that the adverbs classified by Jackendoff (1972) as *subject-oriented* (like *intelligently* or *stupidly*) are also partly relevant to a study of subjectivity given that they convey the locutionary agent's evaluation of the behaviour of somebody else. I will confine my discussion specifically to modal adverbs, but I will, when necessary, compare them with evaluative and speech-act adverbs. I will not take into account adverbials because I could not be exhaustive on this point as well. I take as my language of reference Italian modal adverbs, but I think that most of the conclusions valid for them can be applied to English modal adverbs too. *Modal, evaluative* and *speech-act* adverbs are classified as sentence adverbs, that is adverbs that can modify the whole sentence, as opposed to adverbs that modify the predicate, this is why in the first subdivision of this section I will discuss different criteria that have been proposed to distinguish between sentence and predicate adverbs. Then I will briefly analyse how subjective adverbs have been studied within the framework of generative grammar and the limitations of this approach. In the following subsection I will concentrate on modal adverbs specifying what are their syntactic and semantic properties and the kind of subjective meanings that they express.

Distinction of sentence and predicate adverbs: semantic criteria

As I have said before, the subjective adverbs on which I concentrate in this paper are generally classified as sentence modifiers. In fact while adverbs like Italian

(It.) *velocemente* ‘quickly’ or It. *bene* ‘well’ generally only modify the predicate to which they are attached, other adverbs like It. *certamente* ‘certainly’, It. *probabilmente* ‘probably’ modify the whole sentence in which they occur. This distinction looks innocent enough but, as a matter of fact, no clear semantic or syntactic criteria have been offered to make it unambiguously and without exceptions. Moreover, there are a number of adverbs that seem to have both functions like It. *francamente* ‘frankly’, and It. *sinceramente* ‘sincerely’.

An attempt to offer criteria for distinguishing between sentence and predicate modifiers was made by Thomason and Stalnaker (1973) in a classic article on the semantics of adverbs, which is a reformulation of earlier hypotheses. The distinction is made within the framework of intensional logic. Sentence adverbs are defined as denoting functions that take propositions into propositions, while predicate adverbs are defined as denoting functions that take singularly propositional functions into singularly propositional functions. The difference between these two kinds of adverbs is defined in terms of difference in scope. The authors propose four criteria based on semantic principles:

Criterion 1: only if an adverb is a sentence modifier can it give rise to opaque contexts everywhere in a sentence in which it occurs.

Opacity arises when there is substitution failure under identity. I take and adapt to Italian an example given by Henry (1973: 218) which I think is clearer than the one given by the authors:

7) *Il presidente degli Stati Uniti é necessariamente un cittadino degli USA.*

If one substitutes the expression *Il presidente degli Stati Uniti* with the expression *Reagan*, one obtains

8) *Reagan é necessariamente un cittadino degli USA.*

The two sentences do not have the same truth-conditions, therefore the adverb generates opacity, which means that it is a sentence modifier. The authors notice that this criterion does not apply to all sentence modifiers. For example it does not apply to *actually* (which has no correspondent adverb in Italian).

Criterion 2: only if an adverb is a sentence modifier can it give rise to quantifier scope ambiguities in simple universal or existential sentences.

In other words if there is a contrast between *Someone Q-ly F's* and *Q-ly someone F's*, then *Q-ly* is a sentence modifier. In Italian *Q-ly* is equal to *Q-mente*. For example:

9) *Frequentemente qualcuno si ubbriacó*

10) *Qualcuno si ubbriacó frequentemente*

which can be transcribed respectively as:

9') $F (\exists x) Px$ where F modifies a closed formula

10') $(\exists x) FP$ where F modifies an expression

As the authors point out this criterion does not apply to *actually*, and I think that it does not apply to *ovviamente*, *chiaramente*, *probabilmente* and a number of other adverbs that are considered sentence modifiers and that are freely movable in different positions in the sentence without altering its meaning.

Criterion 3: if an adverb contains within its scope an adverb or adverbial phrase that has already been shown to be a sentence modifier, and if the whole of the rest of the sentence is within the scope of that sentence modifier, then the original adverb is also a sentence modifier.

The authors exemplify this criterion using the *if-clause* which is, by criterion 1, a sentence modifier. See the examples:

11) *Frequentemente se John andava a scuola a piedi, Mary andava con lui.*

This sentence cannot be paraphrased by the following:

12) *Se John andava a scuola a piedi, Mary frequentemente andava con lui.*

Therefore the adverb has the whole sentence within its scope.

Again this criterion does not work for *actually* and I think that it does not work for *ovviamente*, *probabilmente*, and others, for the same reasons given with respect to the second criterion.

Criterion 4: only if *Q-ly* (*Q-mente*) occurs as a sentence modifier can one paraphrase the sentence by deleting the adverb and prefacing the resulting sentence by *it is Q-ly true that*.

See examples below:

- 13) *John frequentemente succhia limoni*
- 14) *É frequentemente vero che John succhia limoni*

but not

- 15) *Sam succhia limoni lentamente*
- 16) **É lentamente vero che Sam succhia limoni.*

This criterion is put forward as the most important one by the authors, nonetheless it rests on the validity of a paraphrase that is not always applicable without generating problems. First of all it is arguable that the following sentences are synonymous and have the same truth conditions:

- 17) *Ovviamente é mattina.*
- 18) *É ovviamente vero che é mattina.*

Secondly, this criterion, like all the previous ones, is only with difficulty applicable to speech-act adverbs like *francamente* and *onestamente*. In fact if the previous paraphrase was doubtful, the following does not seem acceptable in the sense that is certainly not synonymous with the paraphrased sentence:

- 19) *Francamente ti sbagli.*
- 20) *É francamente vero che ti sbagli.*

I think that this brief account of Thomason and Stalnaker's criteria confirms the impression that the analyses of adverbs carried out within the framework of logic are often not entirely adequate to deal with the function of such adverbs in natural languages, and that without further refinements they do not allow a distinction between sentence and predicate modifiers.

Syntactic criteria

A number of syntactic criteria for distinguishing between sentence and predicate modifiers have been proposed for English by Allerton and Cruttenden (1974). I try to apply them to Italian adverbs given that they do not, in my opinion, behave very differently from English adverbs. The criteria put forward by the authors are co-occurrence, position and intonation.

A. Co-occurrence

Sentence adverbs are generally neutral with respect to co-occurrence restrictions, while manner and time adverbs, for example, have co-occurrence restrictions with the lexical verb and the auxiliary respectively. So, for example, given a sentence like:

21) *Gianni dorme*

it is possible to add any sentence adverb without producing a meaningless sentence. We can say *Gianni dorme probabilmente, certamente, francamente*, etcetera, but we cannot say

22) *Gianni dorme velocemente*

because the occurrence of *velocemente* is determined by the lexical verb that it modifies.

This criterion does not allow us to distinguish those adverbs that can function as sentence and predicate modifiers, because given (21) we can add *francamente* only if we take it as a sentence modifier and not as a predicate modifier, but given

23) *Gianni parla*

we can add the adverb in both cases and cannot decide what its role is.

B. Position

Four positions may be taken by most sentence adverbs in the sentence: initial, medial before the auxiliary, medial after the auxiliary, medial after the auxiliary but before the lexical verb, after the lexical verb, final.

See the examples:

24) *Probabilmente Gianni fu ferito*

25) *Gianni probabilmente fu ferito*

26) *Gianni fu probabilmente ferito*

27) *Gianni fu ferito probabilmente*

are all acceptable, but

28) **Leggermente Gianni fu ferito*

29) **Gianni leggermente fu ferito*

30) *Gianni fu leggermente ferito*

31) *Gianni fu ferito leggermente.*

This criterion does not work in all cases because many predicate adverbs can be moved in all positions. What happens in these cases, however, is that the movement of the adverb may provoke a change in its scope. For example:

32) *Giorgio raccolse i suoi vestiti lentamente*

33) *Lentamente Giorgio raccolse i suoi vestiti.*

The scope of the adverb seems different in (32) and (33).

C. Intonation

The authors present a study of the intonational patterns of English sentence adverbs which cannot of course apply in detail to Italian, given the differences between the two languages in this respect. The general principle can be retained that functional differences between adverbs correlate with intonational patterns. In fact sentential adverbs tend to constitute autonomous intonational units more than predicate adverbs.

In other words the 'normal' intonation of a sentence containing a sentence modifier tends to separate the modifier (when it is in initial or final position) from

the rest. This intonational behaviour would support the comparison between sentence adverbs and parenthetical expressions that can also be separated from the sentence in which they appear by means of intonation.⁵

The last criterion proposed is:

D. *Non focusability*

These adverbs cannot, generally, constitute the focus of a question or negation. For example:

34) *Marina é arrivata lentamente.*

35) *Marina é arrivata lentamente?*

In 34) and 35) the focus of the question is the adverb. But in the following:

36) *Marina é arrivata certamente*

37) *Marina é arrivata certamente?*

38) *Marina non é arrivata certamente*

the focus is not on the adverb. Moreover (37) is not obviously acceptable but this problem of the occurrence of modal adverbs in questions will be discussed later.

This criterion does not work with adverbs that can be both sentence and predicate modifiers and it is not infallible with sentence modifiers either.

As we have seen, both semantic and syntactic criteria proposed to distinguish between different kinds of adverbs have serious limitations and can only be taken as very general directions for recognizing the function of the adverb. It is because of these difficulties that some authors have reacted against the category of adverb itself which has been defined since the antiquity as a sort of dustbin of grammar.⁶ Feuillet (1981), for example, only classes predicate adverbs as adverbs in the sense of invariable parts of the sentence, and classes sentential adverbs as *unités sublocutives*, that is “les unités qui sont chargées d’apporter la marque du locuteur dans l’énoncé

⁵ See Lonzi (1981) in this point. The author proposes to derive all sentence adverbs from parenthetical structures.

⁶ See Matthews (1967: 159): “Definitions of the term ‘adverb’ have been vitiated by the tendency to use this class as a dustbin for items which do not fit anywhere else”.

(jugement sur le contenu propositionnel, émotions, opérations logiques, etc.)” (p. 22). In this definition sentence adverbs are only defined on semantic grounds.

Adverbs and the performative analysis

Subjective adverbs like modal, evaluative and speech-act adverbs have been analysed within the framework of generative grammar from two points of view:

- a) Their derivation
- b) Their relation to the performative analysis of sentences proposed by Ross (1970).

Both questions have been treated by Schreiber in two subsequent articles (1971, 1972). Let me start from the second point which is the most important because it is the performative analysis of speech act adverbs that justifies a separation of those adverbs from the other sentence modifiers and their different derivation. Schreiber takes as his starting point the analysis of declarative sentences put forward by Ross. According to such an analysis all declarative sentences have above them, in underlying representation, a superordinate performative clause which is later deleted by a rule. Any simple declarative sentence would be derived from an abstract structure of the sort:

I tell (declare, state, etcetera) you that + surface sentence.

Such an analysis was devised to eliminate the difference between performative and constative sentences by giving them a unified description in deep structure. Before going on I must clarify that neither Ross nor his followers draw a distinction between sentences and utterances and this is why they talk about performative sentences. I think that the term performative should be used to refer to utterances, but since I am referring to Ross I shall call performative a sentence which is declarative in form and can be used in a performative utterance.

According to Schreiber *style disjuncts* (what we called speech-act adverbs) can be viewed as evidence for the validity of the performative analysis. They would be the superficial trace of the transformation that erased the performative clause, but in deep structure they would be adverbs of manner modifying a verb of telling. The same would hold for adverbials like *in all frankness*, *to be honest*, among others. Style-disjuncts, or “permanner adverbs”, as he calls them, are therefore not sentential adverbs. The evidences provided for this analysis are the following:

- a) There is similarity between manner and permanner adverbs in that both occur with performative verbs, while other sentential adverbs do not.
- b) There are structural differences between permanner adverbs and other sentence adverbs, namely:
 - i. Permanner adverbs, but not modal or evaluative appear initially in interrogative sentences.
 - ii. Permanner adverbs cannot appear in phrasal negated sentences either interrogative or negative, while evaluative can.
 - iii. Permanner adverbs, unlike modals, cannot constitute an answer to a yes/no question by themselves.
- c) The final argument is that permanner adverbs cannot appear in imperative sentences that are derived from a structure of the kind: *I command you S*, but only from *I suggest you S*.

These arguments are closely related to the different derivation in the transformational analysis of the other subjective adverbs. Both evaluative and modal are derived from sentences containing simple adjectives. Schreiber (1971) puts forward this hypothesis distinguishing these two kinds of adverbs on semantic and syntactic grounds. I shall have occasion to come back to this distinction. But here it is sufficient to say that Schreiber maintains that a sentence like

39) *Clearly Nixon is beholden to Strom Thurmod*

can be given the same deep structure as

40) *It is clear that Nixon is beholden to Strom Thurmod*

41) *That Nixon is beholden to Strom Thurmod is clear.*

On the other hand

42) *Ironically Agnew loves Orientals*

is related in deep structure to

43) *Agnew loves Orientals and it is ironical that he does.*

Criticisms of the performative hypothesis

I do not have the time or space here to go into the details of the criticisms directed against the preceding analysis, and also I think that the performative analysis has already been largely discredited. I shall concentrate on what seem to be the main objections against such analysis. Some objections came from inside the framework of generative grammar. The main one is that, contrary to what Schreiber says, sentence adverbs do occur in performative utterances. It is perfectly possible to say, for example:

44) *Obviously I concede that I lost the elections*

as Micheli (1974: 436) notices. Such evidence either led to the rejection of the performative hypothesis or to readjustments of it to allow for these facts.

Other syntactic difficulties raised by the analysis were discussed by Jackendoff (1972) leading him to propose a classification of adverbs which allowed their generation on the base and which was more closely based on superficial syntactic properties of the adverbs themselves. An example of these syntactic difficulties is given by the derivation of permanner adverbs occurring in subordinate clauses. For example, Mittwoch (1977) discusses the intricacies in the derivation of a sentence like

45) *I voted for John because, frankly, I don't trust Bill*

where to maintain the performative analysis it would be necessary to postulate an underlying structure like:

I tell you that I voted for John and I tell you frankly that I voted for John because I do not trust Bill.

Then it would be necessary to delete the so-called “performative clause” and the second occurrence of *that I voted for John*, and shift the adverb from its position thus violating one of the constraints proposed by Schreiber to prevent the adverb from moving out of a higher clause. I quote this example to show that in fact the performative analysis created more problems than is solved.

From outside the field of generative grammar the criticism of the performative hypothesis were motivated by a distrust of the attempt to eliminate the difference between performative and constative sentences. But objections have been raised also against the fact that the performative hypothesis leads to wrong conclusions. There are, in fact, adverbs or adverbials that can modify a verb like *tell* without belonging to the same class of *permaner adverbs*. An example from Italian would be the adverb *risolutamente* and the adverbial *con sincerità* that can modify a verb of telling, nonetheless it would be wrong to predict sentences like:

- 46) **Risolutamente* Pietro *é* venuto
 47) **Con sincerità*, Pietro *é* venuto.

I think that the main criticism of Schreiber's analysis refers to the legitimacy of deriving adverbs from corresponding adjectives both from a semantic and a syntactic point of view. This criticism is particularly important here because the identification of adjectival constructions and adverbs, as it will be seen, obscures the subjective value of adverbs, and I think that this subjective value determines the strongest difference between adverbs and adjectival constructions. Such difference is confirmed by semantic and syntactic considerations. Some are noticed by Mørdrup (1976). According to him the paraphrase of the adverb through the construction *it is adg. that* is sometimes impossible and sometimes misleading. See for example: *Decisamente / é deciso che*, that mean two different things; or in French: *Il est capital / *capitalement*, where the adverb does not exist.

See also the possibility of focusing the adjective but not the adverb:

- 48) *É evidente che* Pietro ama Maria?
 49) **É evidentemente che* Pietro ama Maria?

The lack of semantic equivalence between the adverb and the corresponding adjective is evident in question-answer pairs. For example:

- 50) Q: *É naturale che* Pietro ami Maria?
 A (a): *Si, é naturale*
 (b): *Si, naturalmente.*

In A (a) the scope of the adjective is the clause *che Pietro ami Maria*, while in A (b) it is the whole sentence.

The same happens with negation. If we take:

51) *É probabile che Pietro ami Maria*

52) *Probabilmente Pietro ama Maria*

and deny them with

53) *Non é vero.*

The negation of 51) would refer to the probability that Peter loves Mary, but the negation of 52) would refer to the whole proposition expressed by the sentence.

These differences reflect, as I said at the beginning, a semantic difference between subjectivation and objectivation. The paraphrase obscures the role played by the speaker when using a modal or evaluative adverb. Corum (1977) notices that even if one could say that the following sentences are grammatically equivalent:

54) *It is fortunate that Burrows was elected*

55) *Fortunately Burrows was elected*

that is that they have the same descriptive content, it is obvious that 55) expresses the speaker's attitude much more evidently and strongly than 54). This point is central in my discussion.

In fact these considerations show the limits of the performative analysis but also the importance of defining what adverbs mean in utterances, what kinds of meanings are associated with them. Only an answer to these questions can allow us to see the specific subjective value of these adverbs. The performative analysis and, I think, any purely syntactic analysis of adverbs cannot provide this answer. I have not taken into consideration other analyses of adverbs which have attempted to give a classification of these linguistic elements because in such analyses adverbs are classified according to syntactic tests without any consideration of semantic characteristics. I am referring to studies like the one carried out by Greenbaum (1969) for English adverbs or Pisacane and Pecoraro (1984) for Italian, where it is not possible to find any semantically unitary class.

Modal adverbs

As I said in the previous section, if we look at adverbs from the point of view of the expression of subjectivity, we can identify a class of adverbs that can be seen as a trace⁷ of the involvement of the locutionary agent in the act of utterance, which has been left in the utterance itself. Within this class it is possible to make a number of subdivisions according to the kind of subjective intervention that they express. There is a general agreement in the literature on the fact that it is possible to make a distinction between *modal* adverbs, *evaluative* adverbs and *speech-act* (or pragmatic) adverbs. All these adverbs are generally considered of the sentential type and in fact they respond positively to most of the criteria that have been sketched in the previous section. Using a terminology introduced by Greenbaum (1969) and then widely accepted, all these adverbs are *disjuncts*, that is “they are not integrated within the clause to which they are subordinated” (1969: 25) as opposed to *adjuncts* (like *ora*, *fuori*, *bene*) that are integrated within the clause and *conjuncts* (like *tuttavia*, *però*, *allora*) that also are not integrated but link two clauses. Before discussing the different semantic characteristics of these adverbs I shall indicate which Italian adverbs belong, in my opinion⁸, to the modal, the evaluative and the speech-act group.

Modals: *certamente, forse, probabilmente, presumibilmente, possibilmente, necessariamente, evidentemente, chiaramente, indubbiamente, ovviamente, sicuramente, effettivamente, naturalmente.*

Evaluative: *stranamente, sorprendentemente, incredibilmente, fortunatamente, sfortunatamente, ironicamente, paradossalmente, disgraziatamente.*

Speech-act: *francamente, onestamente, sinceramente, confidenzialmente, seriamente, incidentalmente.*

⁷ I am using the term *trace* in the same sense as Culioli uses it, that is as an overt indication of the illocutionary agent's involvement in the act of utterance.

⁸ The only study of Italian modals that I have found is Venier (1983), but unfortunately this author does not give an explicit list of the adverbs that she calls modals. I have found a tentative list of modal, evaluative and speech-act adverbs in a work by Lonzi (1981: 394, footnote 5), but this author does not give an exhaustive list since her work is on sentential adverbs and their derivation.

I am not considering in this analysis what are frequently referred to as “Subject-oriented” adverbs (*i.e.* adverbs like *intelligentemente* or *stupidamente*) because they have somewhat different syntactic properties from the other classes. Generally they modify something that is predicated of the subject of the utterance, but at the same time they reflect the viewpoint of the locutionary agent and that is, presumably, what is meant by the term subject-oriented. For example:

56) *Luigi intelligentemente ha rifiutato.*

Here the adverb modifies something that is predicated of Luigi but reflects the appreciation of the locutionary agent on Luigi’s behaviour.

The semantic differences between modal and evaluative adverbs have been discussed by Schreiber (1971) and Bellert (1977). According to Schreiber (197*):

While an evaluative adverb presupposes the positive truth value of the (surface) predication with which it is in construction and offers an evaluation (value judgement) of it, a modal adverb assigns a degree of likelihood (a probability truth-value) to the associated predication.

In other words, the main difference between evaluative and modal adverbs lies in the fact that while the former are factive predicators, the latter are not. Schreiber uses the term *factive* in the sense that in a sentence containing a factive predicator (like the verb *to know*) the speaker is committed to the truth of the proposition expressed by the utterance, given that the truth is presupposed by the predicator. In this respect see the difference between:

57) *Stranamente, hanno superato gli esami*

58) *Probabilmente hanno superato gli esami.*

While in 57) the truth of the proposition expressed by the utterance is presupposed, in 58) it is not. Bellert (1977) rephrases this distinction saying that evaluative adverbs are predicators, the argument of which is the fact, event, or state of affairs denoted by the sentence in which they occur, while modal adverbs are predicators whose argument is the truth of the proposition expressed by the respective sentence (see p. 342). Speech-act adverbs, on the other hand, reflect the attitude of the

speaker towards the act of utterance itself, through them the locutionary agent qualifies his act of utterance as sincere, honest, confidential, etcetera. In a sense one could say that they operate on the form, not on the content of the utterance. According to Bellert, only this last kind of adverb can truly be said to be speaker-oriented. I think that, on the contrary, they are all speaker-oriented in that they all reflect subjective attitudes in different ways, and that the main characteristic of speech-act adverbs is that they are related to the act of utterance, while the others are related to the utterance itself. This property is confirmed, as it will be shown later, by syntactic facts. Let me retain, for a moment, these definitions of the three kinds of adverbs in order to see what differences they show in syntactic behaviour and then I shall come back to this point to show that the semantic characterization given by Bellert and Schreiber is not adequate.

First it should be noticed that modal adverbs can be subdivided according to whether they express certainty or uncertainty. Allerton and Cruttenden (1974) propose to call them dubitative and indubitative. The dubitative class includes *forse*, *presumibilmente*, *possibilmente*, *probabilmente*, while the indubitative includes *certamente*, *evidentemente*, *sicuramente*, *indubbiamente*, *chiaramente*, *naturalmente*, *effettivamente*, *necessariamente*, *ovviamente*. This distinction is necessary to justify the different behaviour of the two subclasses in certain kinds of utterances. The difficulty of applying syntactic criteria to describe the behaviour of these adverbs has already been noticed in connection with the fact that some of them can also function as predicate modifiers. The following observations are therefore only valid when they function as sentence modifiers.

Following some of the criteria proposed by Greenbaum (1969) to distinguish between different classes of adverbs, I shall mention below some of the characteristics of modal adverbs comparing them to evaluative and speech-act adverbs.

A. Modal adverbs can appear in front of a clause that is being negated. They share this property with evaluative and speech-act adverbs:

- 59) *Certamente* Giorgio non verrà
- 60) *Probabilmente* Giorgio non verrà
- 61) *Fortunatamente* Giorgio non verrà
- 62) *Onestamente* Giorgio non verrà'

B. Modal adverbs are ‘uncomfortable’ in interrogative sentences, that is, whether they are unacceptable or their presence calls for an explanation. For example:

- 63) **Certamente, finirai a tempo?*
- 64) *Probabilmente finirai a tempo?*
- 65) *Francamente, finirai a tempo?*
- 66) **Fortunatamente, finirai a tempo?*

As can be seen speech-act adverbs can appear in front of an interrogative clause, while the evaluative adverbs are ungrammatical. This is consistent with the fact that speech-act adverbs are related to the act of utterance: *Francamente* here can refer either to the fact that the question is presented as frank by the speaker or to the fact that he is requesting a frank answer from the hearer. Evaluative adverbs, on the other hand, are incompatible with the interrogative sentence because of their character of factive predicators. The case of modal adverbs will be discussed when I analyse their role in different kinds of utterances.

C. Modal adverbs cannot appear in imperative sentences. In this respect they are like evaluative adverbs, but unlike speech-act adverbs.

- 67) **Certamente, apri la porta*
- 68) **Probabilmente, apri la porta*
- 69) **Fortunatamente, apri la porta*
- 70) *Francamente, apri la porta.*

Not all authors agree with the acceptability of speech-act adverbs in imperative sentences, but I think that their appearance in imperative sentences is consistent with their characteristics, given that their function is that of qualifying the act of utterance.

D. Modal adverbs cannot be placed after *parlando* ‘speaking’, like evaluative, but unlike speech-act adverbs. See examples:

- 71) **Parlando probabilmente, Luigi non ha capito niente*
- 72) **Parlando certamente, Luigi non ha capito niente*

and this characteristic enables us to distinguish speech-act adverbs from the others and confirms their intimate relationship with the act of utterance itself.

E. Modal adverbs can, alone, constitute an answer to an interrogative sentence used as a question. They share this property with evaluative but not with speech-act adverbs.

- 73) *Gianni ha finito il suo lavoro?*
a) *Probabilmente/certamente*
b) *Fortuna tamente*
c) **Francamente*

The unacceptability of (c) again, is due to the fact that a speech-act adverb does not qualify the content of an utterance and therefore cannot stand elliptically for the utterance itself. *Francamente* by itself can only be taken as introducing a new utterance and not as refer ring back to the previous one.

F. Modal adverbs, unlike evaluative but like speech-act adverbs, can appear in hypothetical sentences. For example:

- 74) *Se verrai con me, probabilmente ti divertirai*
75) *Se verrai con me, certamente ti divertirai*
76) *Se verrai con me, francamente, ti divertirai*
77) **Se verrai con me, fortunatamente ti divertirai.*

This confirms the character of factive predicators of evaluative adverbs.

G. Another property of modal adverbs that has been noticed in the literature (see Mørdrop (1976) and Schreiber (1971)), but is not among Grenbaum's criteria, is that no modal adverb has an equivalent with a negative prefix, unlike evaluative, but like speech-act adverbs. While we have the pairs *fortunatamente* / *sfortunatamente*, we do not have a pair for *insiceramente*, *incertamente* or *probabilmente* / *improbabilmente*. It is true that the adverb *indubbiamente* exists but here the negative prefix has the effect of reinforcing the positive meaning of the adverb (without any doubt).

H. All three classes of adverbs cannot be denied independently.

78) **Non probabilmente avete fatto un affare*

79) **Non certamente avete fatto un affare*

80) **Non fortunatamente avete fatto un affare*

81) **Non francamente avete fatto un affare.*

This fact seems to differentiate English and Italian. In English certain evaluative adverbs can be denied independently. For example, *not surprisingly you made a bargain* is acceptable in English. According to Schreiber (1971) all evaluative adverbs in English can be denied, but it does not seem to be so in all cases. I do not think that *not hopefully* and *not luckily* are possible in English either.

The syntactic properties listed above allow us to distinguish the three classes of adverbs and to talk about a class of modal adverbs that shows a unitary syntactic behaviour. The interpretation of this syntactic behaviour must be given in connection with a hypothesis about the semantic properties of modal adverbs and I shall try to explain their syntactic properties or at least part of them, on semantic grounds in the following pages. To do so I must go back to the definitions of modal adverbs given by Schreiber and Bellert.

Modal adverbs are defined by these authors, and in most works that I have consulted, as modifiers expressing the speaker's commitment to the truth of the proposition expressed by the sentence he is uttering. Borillo (1976), for example, calls them *modalisateurs d'assertion* because their function is that of indicating the affirmative opinion of the speaker towards the truth of the proposition that he formulates. These views justify the name given to this class insofar as modality is traditionally associated with the assignment of degrees of truth to the propositional content of sentences. These studies disregard two important things, one is the fact that modal adverbs can appear in utterances that are not statements like promises or in utterances containing an explicit performative verb, and this would require a redefinition of modal adverbs. The second question is that they disregard the subjective value of these adverbs. In fact, according to Bellert for example, a sentence like 82) can be paraphrased as 83), where the speaker's opinion is totally objectified.

82) *Possibly John has come*

83) *The truth that John has come is possible.*

A different approach is taken by Venier (1983) who proposes an interesting definition of modal adverbs as the linguistic expression of the *neustic* as defined by Hare (1971: 90) that is as a sign of subscription to the assertion or other speech-act. This thesis, in my view, allows both a unified treatment of modal adverbs and an account of their subjective value. But, as I shall argue below, it cannot be consistently sustained if the *neustic* is identified, as in Venier's work, with the subscription to the truth of the propositional content of the sentence, and if no clear distinction is provided of the way different modal adverbs contribute to the meaning of utterances. I shall come back to this point presently. I think that to give an account of the meaning of modal adverbs it is necessary to distinguish clearly between sentences and utterances and to verify what function they can carry not only in different types of sentences, but also in different types of utterances in order to show how the definition that we give of these linguistic items allows us to interpret their function in different concrete occurrences. To do so I shall discuss the role of modal adverbs in declarative sentences when they are used to make statements both positive and negative and when they are used to make promises, in interrogative sentences when they are used to issue commands. I shall also discuss the case when modal adverbs appear in explicitly performative utterances.

Modal adverbs and the sign of subscription

Venier (1983) proposes to identify modal adverbs with the *neustic* as defined by Hare. Let me go back to what Hare says in order to discuss this proposal. Hare (1971), in an article in which he defends a conception of meaning based on speech-act theory, draws a distinction between different elements of meaning present in the sentence: namely the *neustic*, the *tropic* and the *phrastic*. He does not make a distinction between sentences and utterances. He takes the idea of the *neustic* from the assertion sign used by Frege and Russell, but defines it as "the sign of subscription to an assertion or other speech-act" (1971: 90).

In other words, he substitutes for the concept of assertion sign, that of subscription sign in order to be able to generalise this sign also to speech-acts that are not statements. The *tropic* is defined as the sign of mood and the *phrastic* as: "The part of sentences which is governed by the tropic and is common to sentences with different tropics" (1971: 90).

According to Hare:

Although a sentence may have an indicative tropic, it cannot be used to make an assertion unless a neustic be added or understood. Neustics are normally understood with uttered sentences unless something special is done to indicate that they are not being subscribed (1971: 92).

To explain further the distinction between tropic and neustic he adds:

(...) although a neustic has to be present or understood before a sentence can be used to make an assertion or perform any other speech-act, it is in virtue of its tropic that it is used to make an assertion and not to perform some other speech-act (1971: 92).

The *tropic* is, then, a sign of mood indicating what speech-act is being performed. The *neustic*, on the other hand, is that part of a sentence (I would say of an utterance) that implies the subjectivity or the speaker, his commitment to the speech-act that he is performing. This distinction is rephrased by Lyons (1977) who says that in a statement the *tropic* can be viewed as the ‘*it-is-so*’ component and the neustic as the ‘*I-say-so*’ component, while, for example, in commands the *neustic* is still ‘*I-say-so*’ but the *tropic* is ‘*so-be-it*’:

Both categorical assertions and commands (...) contain the same unqualified I-say-so component, indicating that the speaker commits himself to the factuality (it-is-so) or desirability (so-be-it) of what is described by the phrastic. The difference of illocutionary force between categorical assertions and commands is therefore, a function of the difference between “it-is-so” and “so-be-it” (1977: 751).

These notions are very important, I think, for a study of subjectivity because they introduce the idea that there is no utterance lacking an explicit or implicit subscription from the locutionary agent. The implicit subscription is what determines the apparently neutral status of non-modalised utterances, while the explicit subscription is what defines a modalised utterance. It is not surprising then that we should find a very similar idea in Halliday (1970), precisely, in an article on modality. According to this author:

An utterance usually embodies an element of content, ‘this is what I have to say’; an element of speaker’s involvement ‘this is where I come in’; and a third element, ‘this is the kind of message I want’, which gives the sentence the status of a text (1970: 326).

These three elements have to do respectively with the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual component of the utterance and reflect, according to Halliday, the three main functions that language carries out. It is not difficult to see in these definitions Hare’s *phrastic*, *neustic*, and *tropic*, and again, the interpersonal element is the indicator of subjectivity, I think that the notion of neustic is now clear enough to see its possible application to modal adverbs.

I believe that there are two problems in Venier’s proposal: the first is the identification between the neustic and the propositional attitude of the speaker. In fact according to Venier (1983): “Il neustic sembra essere un mezzo per indicare il grado di credenza del parlante in ciò che dice, cioè il grado di verità che assegna alla proposizione che enuncia” (1983: 98) and again “il segno di sottoscrizione opera su, verte sul valore di verità della proposizione” (1983: 103).

I think that Hare’s definition of the neustic is wider insofar as he makes clear that the neustic is a sign of subscription to the assertion or other speech-act, therefore it does not only operate on the truth value but on the factuality or desirability of what is described by the phrastic.

The second problem with Venier’s proposal is that, given this definition of the neustic, she cannot easily adjust to this theory a number of adverbs that do not appear to refer to the truth value of the proposition, but to other aspects of the utterance (like *obviously* or *evidently*, to name a few).

The question is then, is it possible to apply Hare’s original definition of the sign of subscription to modal adverbs? And how? Is it possible to account for the differences among modal adverbs saving a homogenous definition of their function? I will try to show that it is possible. The idea of a relationship between modal adverbs and the neustic is interesting, I think, and worthwhile exploring, provided that we maintain the distinction between the different values of the neustic in different illocutionary acts. I would prefer this term to the term speech-act, because it is more precise. On the other hand, I do not agree with the identification of the neustic and modal adverbs, since I think that the neustic is an abstract element, something that describes the relationship between the speaker and his own utterance and that is al-

ways present, the “this is where I come in” element, following Halliday’s terminology. I would therefore go back to the perhaps more traditional view that the function of modal adverbs is that of qualifying the subscription of the speaker to the illocutionary act, indicating whether it is complete, partial and of what nature it is. They do so in different ways: there are modal adverbs that only operate on the content of the utterance and others that also operate on the conditions of validity of the utterance. Their relationship to the neustic is therefore more one of modification than one of identification. I shall now consider how, in the light of this hypothesis, it is possible to explain the behaviour of modal adverbs in different kinds of utterances.

Modal adverbs in statements

As discussed previously, the most common descriptions of modal adverbs are based on the kind of modification that they introduce in statements. If we take two statements containing a modal adverb like:

84) *Probabilmente il treno é arrivato*

85) *Certamente il treno é arrivato*

what the adverb does is modify the value of the content of the statement in relation to certainty and probability and therefore reflects the degree of commitment of the speaker to the truth of the content of his utterance. This particular kind of modification explains the fact that modal adverbs are generally studied together with verbs like *may, can, might* (in Italian *potrebbe, può*) as indicators of modality. Now, the modality of an utterance can be treated as something totally objective or as something fundamentally subjective, depending on whether the speaker is taken into account or not. If we take the kind of modality expressed, in an utterance to be related to the expression of some kind of commitment on the part of the speaker, then we cannot expect to describe it in terms of traditional modal logic which is basically concerned with *aletheic* modality.

According to Lyons

The only kind of modality recognised in traditional modal logic is that which has to do with the notions of necessity and possibility insofar as they relate to the truth

(and falsity) of propositions: *Aletheic* modality (*aletheic* comes from, the Greek word for truth) (...) We noted that aletheic necessity and possibility are interdefinable under negation. To take an example (...) “Necessarily, the sky is blue” is logically equivalent to “It is not possible that the sky is not blue” ($Np = M p$); and “Possibly the sky is blue” is logically equivalent to “It is not necessarily the case that the sky is not blue” ($Mp = N p$). (...) Aletheic modality, then, like propositional negation, is by definition truth-functional (1983: 237).

But Lyons (1977) notices that the way modality works in everyday use of language cannot adequately be described by this model which takes modal elements to contribute objectively to the propositional content of sentences. He suggests then that modality in natural languages can be described in terms of epistemic logic. Epistemic logic deals with: “The logical structure of statements that assert or imply that a particular proposition, or set of propositions, is known or believed” (1977: 793).

The way Lyons applies this particular concept to the analysis of utterances is of particular concern here because I think that it can throw light on the function of modal adverbs. He says that we can describe straightforward statements of fact as epistemically non-modal.

The speaker, in uttering an unqualified assertion, is committing himself to the truth of what he asserts. By virtue of the felicity conditions which govern the illocutionary act of assertion, but he is not explicitly laying claim to knowledge in the utterance itself: he is not asserting the epistemically modalised proposition “I know that p”; he is saying without qualification of the I-say-so component or the it-is-so component of this utterance, that (it is the case that) p is true (of the world he is describing). Any utterance in which the speaker explicitly qualifies his commitment to the truth of the proposition expressed by the sentence he utters (...) is an epistemically modalised utterance (1977: 792).

In the light of this definition all statements containing a modal adverb can be seen as epistemically modalised utterances. So when I say:

86) *Indubbiamente la situazione politica é grave*

the adverb conveys a strong commitment of the speaker to the truth of what he is saying, in the absence of other indications (like an ironic intonation, for example). But there is a further distinction drawn by Lyons which is necessary to take into account here, between epistemically subjective and objective modality. In fact possibility, certainty, and others can be presented by the speaker as something that holds independently of his own evaluation of the facts, as something given in relation to objective considerations. Therefore a modal expression can be construed subjectively or objectively. An utterance like:

87) *Potrebbe piovere*

can be given the subjective interpretation paraphrasable as “In the light of what I know it is possible that it rains” or an objective interpretation paraphrasable as: “The light of what is known, it is possible that it rains”. In the subjective reading there is a kind of I-think-so component which disappears in the objective reading.

It is interesting to notice that a distinction between a) “In the light of what is known” and b) “In the light of what the speaker knows” is found in recent works on modality. Karttunen (1972), for example, maintains that an expression like *it is possible that p* can be read as: ‘For all A knows it is possible that p’, introducing the speaker as the source of the judgment. But such introduction of the speaker is, in a sense, more apparent than real because the locutionary agent’s involvement is propositionalised, that is, embedded in a proposition *It is true that*. Therefore even epistemic models that appear to take the speaker into account fail to capture the essence of subjectivity in modalised statements.

Lyons puts forward the idea that epistemic modality is normally subjective in languages, that is, that modalised utterances are interpreted by speakers as expressing a subjective appreciation of some state of affairs which is presented by the locutionary agent as exclusively grounded in his own judgement and beliefs. If modal adverbs are modifiers of the neustic, which is the subjective element in the utterance, then it is arguable that the only epistemic modality that they can express is subjective rather than objective.

In this sense the interpretation of utterances like:

88) *Probabilmente pioverá*

89) *Certamente pioverá*

is normally given in terms of what the speaker believes to be the case. The distinction between subjective and objective modality is valuable in the sense that there are expressions of the language that allow the objectification of epistemic modality and others that do not. I think that in Italian while modal adverbs always express epistemic subjective modality, the corresponding constructions with the adjective can also be used to objectify modality. Compare the following utterances:

- 90) (a) *É possibile che lui venga /*
 (b) *Possibilmente lui verrá*
 91) (a) *É probabile che lui venga /*
 (b) *Probabilmente lui verrá*
 92) (a) *É sicuro che lui verrá /*
 (b) *Sicuramente lui verrá.*

It seems to me that while the expressions of the (b) type are most naturally interpreted as subjectively modalised, the expressions of the (a) type also allow an objective reading. This would be confirmed by the fact that if we imagine a situation in which some kind of statement is not asserted by the speaker, but presented as having been made by somebody else, or as having been made by somebody unknown, the most natural construction would be with an expression of the (a) type.

Compare:

- 93) (a) *Secondo fonti ufficiali é probabile che il Presidente si dimetta*
 94) (b) *Secondo fonti ufficiali probabilmente il Presidente si dimetterá.*

93(a) seems more natural insofar as (b) introduces an element of subjectivity which is not appropriate in the utterance. Similar facts are noticed for German by Kratzer (1981).⁹

The claim that the epistemic modality expressed by modal adverbs is subjective can only be sustained on the grounds of interpretation. I think, though, that there is a further consideration that might confirm such a hypothesis. I referred above to the impossibility for modal adverbs to be directly negated, except for *necessariamente*. But *necessariamente* is somewhat a particular adverb because

⁹ See her discussion of different ways of expressing modality in German in this article, esp. p. 57.

it is strongly connected with logical argumentation and therefore would need a more specific treatment. Except for this adverb, all the others cannot be negated, while the corresponding adjectives can. I can say:

95) *Non é possibile che lui venga*

96) *Non é certo che lui venga.*

But I cannot say:

97) *Non certamente lui verrá*

98) **Non possibilmente lui verrá*

and no other modal adverb can appear in such a construction, which, incidentally, confirms the difference between adverbs and adjectival constructions. It is not very easy to show that this fact has to do with subjectivity but I think that it can be related to the problem of the deniability of the neustic. If it can be shown that the neustic cannot be negated, then it cannot be given a negative qualification either. I do not want to go too deeply into such a complicated matter, but let me briefly refer to the problem. According to Hare (1971) (and many other authors), two kinds of negation are possible: external and internal.

The internal negation of 'I promise to pay you before the end of the tax year' is 'I promise not to pay you before the end of the tax year'. The external negation of the same promise is 'I do not promise to pay you before the end of the tax year'. Nearly all speech-act can be negated in this two ways (1971: 82).

Lyons (1977: 769) takes external negation to be the negation of the neustic. In a statement like:

99) *I do not say that the door is open*

there would be a negation of the subscription sign. But I think that not even in this case is the subscription sign being negated. What the person uttering (100) is denying is that he is asserting such and such, but this person is still subscribing to the utterance, by asserting that he does not say such and such. In other words my impression is that one can deny an utterance recursively by adding elements and

negating them without ever getting to deny the abstract element of subscription which is inescapably there, whenever a sentence is uttered. The neustic “I-say-so” is in abstract element, if I say “I-do-not-say-so”, I am not negating the neustic itself, but only asserting my unwillingness to make a certain statement. The non-deniability of the subscription sign would therefore be a good explanation for the non-negability of modal adverbs and would also account for the ambiguous effect of the “performative negation”. Such an effect is obvious when somebody says something like *I do not say that you are wrong* and his utterance is interpreted as implying “I do not say that you are right” as well. In a sense I think that this is what Halliday means when he says that modality is always positive (see 1970: 333).

As I noticed previously, modals can easily appear in front of negative clauses, therefore they can qualify negative statements, *e.g.*:

100) *Certamente non ci siamo capiti*

101) *Probabilmente non ci siamo capiti.*

Such utterances are perfectly acceptable and this is consistent with the idea that both negative and positive statements can be treated as assertions. I can indicate my degree of subscription to a negative statement in the same way as I do for a positive statement.

At this point I would like to note that even if most modal adverbs can be used to express epistemic modality, that is to assign degrees of commitment to the truth of the propositional content of statements (on a scale from possible to necessary), some of them have more specific functions as I shall explain presently. In this sense I would not call these adverbs “epistemic modal adverbs” (like in Venier, 1983) but simply *modal*, if modality can be interpreted in the general sense that Halliday (1970), for example, gives to the term. He says:

Modality is a form of participation by the speaker in the speech event, the speaker associates with the thesis and indication of its status and validity in his own judgment; he intrudes and takes up a position. Modality thus derives from what we called above the ‘interpersonal function’ of language, language as expression of role. (1970: 335)

This definition of modality is looser than the one given in logical terms and allows us to treat together the adverbs that I have been considering up to now

without obscuring their differences. I think that it is precisely a lack of distinction within the category of modals itself that I responsible for the contradictions and confusions that sometimes are present in works devoted to this kind of adverb.

Let me give a few examples. Compare the following utterances:

102) A: *Questo film é pessimo*

103) B: a) *Sicuramente é stato fatto con pochi soldi*

b) *Ovviamente é stato fatto con pochi soldi*

c) *Evidentemente é stato fatto con pochi soldi.*

All variants of B are responses to A, they all indicate that the speaker thinks that his statement is true. But there are differences among them not only in the degree of commitment, but also in the way commitment is expressed. *Sicuramente* only indicates that the speaker fully subscribes to his statement, but does not make any other kind of claim. But *ovviamente* and *evidentemente* also indicate that the validity of the statement can be verified by the hearer, that there is some kind of proof that can be invoked to support it.

It is a difference to which Halliday (1970) refers by means of a double characterisation of modal adverbs. He places them on a matrix that indicates horizontally what position they occupy on a scale going from possibility to certainty and vertically what kind of force they have. So, for example, he gives neutral force to *possibly* or *certainly*, tentative force (undertone) to *perhaps* and strong force (overtone) to *surely*. I think that he captures the fact that by using certain adverbs the speaker makes stronger claims about the validity of a statement, that they have what one could call an 'argumentative' force. This definition came to my mind reading some observations made by Ducrot (1977) on the power that illocutionary acts have and their ability of modifying the relationships between the partners in conversation. He says:

Se puede establecer una observación análoga a propósito de la orden —que confiere (pretende conferir) al destinatario una obligación de hacer— o de la promesa, que no tiene ningún valor si el locutor no manifiesta adquirir a causa de ella una obligación nueva. La demostración será menos simple para la afirmación, pero resulta difícil describirla sin decir que el locutor, al realizarla, se hace responsable de la verdad de lo que afirma, acepta que se le cuestione a él personalmente si lo asertado

resulta ser falso. Último ejemplo, si se admite un acto ilocutorio de argumentación, a mi entender indispensable, este acto consiste en imponer al destinatario una determinada conclusión como la única dirección en la que el diálogo puede continuar (el valor argumentativo de un enunciado es, de este modo, una especie de obligación relativa a la manera en que el discurso debe ser continuado. Incluso me parece posible (pero eso es todavía muy vago y problemático) integrar el acto de argumentar al acto de afirmar: se atribuiría, pues, a la afirmación la segunda propiedad de conferir al destinatario una especie de “deber de deducir”. Lo que también implicaría una tercera propiedad: “un deber de creer” (1977: 251).¹⁰

I think that among the adverbs that express certainty some have this argumentative force, that is the speaker presents what he says as strongly supported by facts and therefore he is also appealing directly (and not implicitly like in normal statements) to the hearer’s duty of deducing and believing. I think that these kinds of adverbs exemplify how subjectivity and intersubjectivity interrelate in that whenever the speaker asserts his own views he also involves the hearer. Adverbs like *clearly*, *obviously*, *evidently*, *naturally* indicate not only that the locutionary agent believes that what he says is true, but that the validity of what he says can be confirmed and verified by the hearer.

Consider the following dialogue:

- 104) A - *Ieri sono andato a lavorare...*
 B - *Ovviamente sei arrivato tardi.*

The adverb *ovviamente* does not only express that B assigns a high degree of certainty to the truth of what he is stating, but also makes the claim that the speaker is presenting his conclusion as following some kind of premise, as highly motivated by certain reasons. The addressee is then forced to look for these reasons and find them in the context of utterance. It might be that there was a strike

¹⁰ This quotation is taken from the article “Illocutoire et performatif” and appeared in *Linguistique et Semiologie*, 1977, n. 4, but I found it reproduced in the Spanish edition of *Dire et ne pas dire*, Anagrama, published in 1982. This is why I quote in Spanish. I find Ducrot’s idea that illocutionary acts modify the “juridical” relationship between partners in conversation very interesting because it allows us to see that subjectivity and intersubjectivity are often interrelated in language, a point which, I hope to have shown, Benveniste captured very clearly in his later works.

in the transport system or that the speaker means that A always arrives late because he has the habit of doing so. In any case the speaker, by using an argumentative modal adverb is obliging the hearer to the duty of verification. No such thing happens with *sicuramente* or *certamente* which do not present any claim to verification and merely indicate that the speaker makes himself fully responsible for what he says. When somebody says *certamente* the only thing that is communicated is that he personally believes in what he says, but when somebody says *ovviamente* the hearer is also involved. This fact is also noticed by Michell (1974) when she says: "Certain assertions (...) are picked out by the speaker as having the force of conclusions, as following from certain evidence or premises, by use of modal adverbs". (1974: 500)

And consequently she proposes subdividing modal adverbs according to the kind of proofs that they invoke, so that *certamente* and *presumibilmente* would be based on inference, while *chiaramente*, *evidentemente*, *ovviamente* would be based on perception. I do not find this kind of subcategorization particularly useful, however, because it does not allow us to see the differences between neutral and argumentative adverbs and also because I do not think that *ovviamente* is more perceptual than *certamente*, or *chiaramente* more perceptual than *sicuramente*. Neither *ovviamente* nor *chiaramente* necessarily appeal to visible or audible evidence.

As I said before, by using a modal assertive adverb, the speaker indicates that he commits himself to his statement because he can defend it. This appeal to validity is only implicit in neutral modal adverbs. Therefore the basic difference between the two kinds of modal adverbs is that the argumentative type refers to the conditions of validity of the statement by making it clear that the speaker can defend it not only on the basis of his own personal judgement. There is in argumentative modal adverbs a reference to the felicity conditions of the statements which is not present in neutral modal adverbs and not necessary in dubitative modal adverbs. Among the felicity conditions for making a statement there is that the speaker be in a position to state whatever he is stating, Austin (1975) notices, talking about the infelicity of illocutionary acts, that

Statements too are liable to infelicity of this kind in other ways also parallel to contracts, promises, warnings, etc. Just as we often say, for example, 'you cannot order me', in the sense 'you have not the right to order me', which is equivalent to

saying that you are not in the appropriate position to do so: so often there are things you cannot state—have no right to state—are not in a position to state (1975: 138).

In this sense I think that what I have called argumentative modal adverbs indicate the speaker's commitment to the truth of his statement by stressing its validity and therefore by operating on its felicity conditions.

Modal adverbs in other illocutionary acts

While modal adverbs in statements operate on the truth or validity of what is said, they seem to have different functions in other types of utterance. Let us take a promise, for example. Promises, unlike other illocutionary acts, are not associated in Italian (and English) with sentences of a certain type. Declarative sentences are generally used to make statements and imperative sentences to issue commands, so generally statements and commands are associated with those kinds of sentences, but promises are a type of illocutionary act which can only be recognized in context.¹¹

Suppose X asks Y whether he is going to give back the money that he owes and that Y replies:

105) *Certamente ti pagheró*

or

106) *Probabilmente ti pagheró.*

If the illocutionary force of these utterances is that of a promise, the function of the adverb will not be that of modifying the truth of the propositions expressed by the relative sentences, but the factuality of the propositional content. The case is not obvious with *probably* because generally a promise requires full commitment, but I think that (106) can be taken as a half-promise, a half-commitment in

¹¹ But for a critique of the distinction between direct and indirect illocutionary acts, see the article by Recanati (1982).

virtue of the fact that the speaker does not say openly *I promise*. Y is saying that certainly or probably it will be the case that he will pay and not that the proposition *Y will pay X* is certainly or possible true. In other words the use of the adverb will be interpreted in a different way from statements. But the fundamental function of the adverb remains the same in both utterances. In a statement the adverb indicates that the locutionary agent presents the content of his utterance as more or less true, more or less valid, and therefore shows the extent to which he subscribes to the statement. In a promise, on the other hand, the adverb indicates that the locutionary agent considers the facts described in his utterance as more or less realizable and therefore that he subscribes more or less strongly to his promise. The general function of the adverbs allows users to interpret them according to the kind of illocutionary act in which they are used. From what has been said before, it is clear that the interpretation of

107) *Ovviamente ti pagheró*

will be that not only is the speaker subscribing to the factuality of the content of the utterance, but also that the reasons for his subscription should be something known or inferred by the hearer and that therefore the promise is particularly valid.

Modal adverbs in questions

In the previous section I noticed that modal adverbs are at least uncomfortable in interrogative sentences. That means that it is not impossible to imagine cases in which a modal adverb would appear in an interrogative sentence, but that to explain and interpret this appearance it is necessary to look at the utterance, that is at the type of question that is being asked by means of that interrogative sentence. A difficulty with Italian is that often the only device that allows us to distinguish between a statement and a question is intonation and therefore the only way to check whether modals really appear in questions would be to collect data from conversations.

Given this difficulty I shall use as a starting point a question that I have heard. First of all, is there any reason why modals should not appear in questions? I think

that the main reason lies in the type of neustic that is attached to questions. According to Lyons (1977) while statements have an I-say-so neustic, questions have an I-don't-know neustic, that is the locutionary agent's subscription to the content of his utterance is suspended. It is not surprising therefore that in most types of questions the modal adverb sounds unacceptable. If the locutionary agent does not know whether the content of his utterance is true or not there would be no sense in qualifying his subscription to it. Consider the following examples of yes/no questions, X-questions, deliberative questions.

- 108) **Certamente, hai finito di studiare?*
- 109) **Chi ha scritto, probabilmente, la Divina Commedia?*
- 110) **Cosa devo fare oggi, evidentemente?*

None of these utterances is acceptable. Let me now give an example of a question that has been addressed to me with a modal adverb:

- 111) *Hai un pezzo da 10 pence, forse?*

Between the first part of the utterance and the adverb there was a significant pause, I think that in this case the use of the modal adverb signals a change in the utterance from a question into a conjecture. The speaker was going to ask a question and then added the adverb to indicate that he thought that the addressee actually had the ten pence piece. In this sense the utterance does not have an I-don't-know sign of subscription, but the same sign of subscription of a tentative statement. So if somebody says:

- 112) *La tua amica é arrivata, probabilmente?*

he is not really asking a question but advancing an hypothesis to which he partially subscribes.

In these kinds of questions only dubitative adverbs can appear but I think that it is possible to imagine cases where both types of adverbs would appear. For example, in questions asked by a lawyer to a defendant or witness in court. Consider the following:

113) *Lei probabilmente conosceva la vittima?*

114) *Lei, evidentemente, non era sul posto in quel momento?*

The functions of these adverbs would appear to be the same as in (112), in fact in this type of “conducive” question what the speaker is doing in reality is asserting something to influence the addressee and the hearers and doing so in a way that cannot be openly recognized. In fact I think that modal adverbs can appear, for the same reason in tag-questions:

115) *Probabilmente partirai, non é vero?*

Whether these questions are true questions or not is not of concern here,¹² what is important here is that they exhibit a different kind of neustic from that of ‘normal’ questions, and which could be described as a mixed neustic between statement and question.

Modal adverbs in commands and requests

It was said at the beginning that modal adverbs are incompatible with sentences containing imperatives. This does not mean that they are always incompatible with utterances that have the illocutionary force of commands and requests. How can we account for this fact?

According to Venier (1983):

Gli avverbi modali non possono fungere da segno di sottoscrizione dell’ordine perché essi assegnano un grado di verità alla proposizione su cui vertono: per gli ordini, invece, non si pone il problema della verità, il problema della giustificabilità di un ordine é diverso da quello della giustificabilità di una asserzione (1983: 128).

I think that, if we relate modal adverbs exclusively to the function of assigning degrees of truth to propositions, then there are too many things about their

¹² But see Cornulier (1982) on the critique of an “innocent” view of questions that tends to consider that the normal attitude of the speaker in a question is that of not knowing the answer.

behaviour that cannot be explained (like their appearance in explicit performative utterances, as it will be seen later). On the other hand, if we think of the grammatical structure of an imperative, for example, we notice that it is addressee-oriented. This reflects, I think, a semantic property. When issuing a command the speaker is only present implicitly. He obviously subscribes to his act of ordering, but his subscription must be full and unquestioned. The felicity conditions for a command require that the person who issues the command really wants the addressee to act accordingly. It is true of commands and requests that they do not require the speaker to comment on his own subscription, since this subscription is not at stake. On the contrary in promises, that have the same so-be-it tropic as commands and requests, it is primarily the speaker's commitment that is at stake. This, I think, might explain semantically why modal adverbs do not occur with imperative sentences used to issue commands or with utterances with the force of requests, *e.g.*:

- 116) **Probabilmente fai come ti dico*
- 117) **Sicuramente fai come ti dico*
- 118) **Ovviamente, vai a casa*
- 119) **Certamente, mi faresti un favore?*
- 120) **Presumibilmente, potete comprarmi un gelato?*

Modal adverbs are acceptable in utterances like:

- 121) *Certamente, aiuterete vostro fratello*
- 122) *Evidentemente, tornerai a casa presto*
- 123) *Sicuramente, farai i compiti*

but these utterances are all presented like statements and acquire their value of orders in context. The speaker is indirectly indicating that his assertion has to be taken as an order through intonation or other devices, therefore the modal adverbs have their normal function discussed for statements. Obviously, *possibilmente* and the other dubitative adverbs are not possible here because they would violate the felicity conditions for issuing commands and making requests that have been discussed before.

Modal adverbs in explicitly performative utterances

Let me make clear that when I talk about explicit performative utterances I refer to utterances containing an explicit performative verb, that is utterances that have an overt indication of their illocutionary force. This distinction was made by Austin in the last part of *How to do things with words*, and replaces the original distinction between constative and performative.

The occurrence of modal adverbs in this kind of utterance was noted by various authors in connection with the debate on the performative hypothesis. Micheli (1974) observed that the following utterance is perfectly acceptable:

124) *Obviously I concede that I've lost the elections*

and in fact it is not difficult to imagine similar utterances:

125) *Chiaramente, apro la seduta*

126) *Ovviamente, dichiaro lo stato d'assedio*

127) *Evidentemente, mi dimetto.*

As is obvious, such occurrences constitute a problem not only for the performative hypothesis, but also for the hypothesis that their function is that of assigning degrees of truth to propositions. Michell, who sustains this thesis, is obliged to notice that in such cases:

The adverb does not modify a sentence with truth conditions, because whereas non performative sentences may be true or false, as Ross points out, performative sentences have instead of truth-values, various conditions pertaining to appropriateness of use. (1947: 437)

A formulation which is somewhat ambiguous given that it seems to imply that statements do not have felicity conditions. In all cases the author proposes that in performative utterances the function of the adverb is that by using it the speaker emphasizes that the felicity conditions for performing a certain act are met.

It seems to me that this is indeed what the speaker conveys. Suppose the case when somebody says:

128) *Ovviamente battezzo questa nave con il nome di Maria.*

Let us try to give a context to such an utterance. Suppose Maria is the name of the wife of the shipbuilder and everybody knows this. The speaker is then referring to the reason for his illocutionary act and therefore is openly subscribing to it.

Let us take another example: in a country devastated by civil war the president says on television:

129) *Naturalmente dichiaro lo stato di assedio.*

Again, what does *naturalmente* mean in this context? It means that the president is presenting his action as something justified by the emergency situation of the country.

Suppose further that somebody involved in a serious scandal utters:

130) *Evidentemente, mi dimetto.*

Here I do not think that *evidentemente* means something like ‘as everybody can see’; but rather it has a meaning paraphrasable as ‘the reasons why I resign are evident’. In all these cases the modal adverb seems to have the function of strengthening the subscription of the speaker to the speech-act by pointing at its validity, and it appears to be exactly the same function that these adverbs carried out in statements. It is perhaps superfluous to say that no dubitative modal could be used in this context, because it would be an open contradiction to realize an illocutionary act and at the same time to doubt that one is realizing it.

But the question that should be put forward here is whether all modal adverbs can appear in explicitly performative utterances, I do not think that

131) **Sicuramente dichiaro lo stato d’assedio*

132) **Certamente apro questa seduta*

are acceptable. It seems that only what I called, following Ducrot, argumentative modal adverbs can appear in such contexts because of their property of pointing at the felicity conditions of illocutionary acts. It seems therefore that a difference should be maintained between those adverbs that are used by the speaker to modify the content of his own utterances and that express degrees of commitment to

the truth or factuality of that content and modal adverbs that are used by speakers to stress the validity of illocutionary acts. They all express the subscription of the speaker, but in different ways. It may be that this observation is necessary in order to avoid a confusion the consequence of which is that of saying that statements do not have felicity conditions but only truth conditions, or that the felicity condition of a statement is its truth.

CONCLUSIONS

In the first part of this paper I have discussed the importance of the notion of subjectivity in the study of language and particularly the value that this notion acquires in a conception that opposes the reduction of language to an instrument for the transmission of information. Such reduction has led to an exclusive attention to the propositional content of sentences and to the abstraction of language from its conditions of usage.

I have argued that subjectivity should be interpreted as the presence of the speaker in language. This presence is, according to me, very often implicit in utterances or texts and even when it is made explicit it still belongs to a level of the language which is not the same as the one to which the descriptive content of utterances belongs. The notion of subjectivity forces us to see a difference between what is said and what is shown in language. In this sense I have argued, following certain ideas put forward by the linguists developing the *theory of utterance*, that subjectivity can be studied by looking for the traces of the speaker's presence in the utterance.

I have also argued that modality is among the means that the speaker can use to express his own attitudes towards what he is saying. I have studied modal adverbs as signs that are generally used to make explicit a qualified commitment of the speaker towards the content of his utterance, and I have analysed how different modal adverbs can make explicit different kinds of commitment. In this sense I have argued that a modalised utterance is an utterance that shows an explicit trace of the speaker's involvement. I have also tried to show how in treatments of modality that objectivise it this presence of the speaker is eliminated leading to an interpretation of modalised utterances which is, according to me, far away from the one that speakers generally give.

My analysis of modal adverbs is an attempt to provide an example of how subjectivity can be expressed through the use of particular linguistic items. This does not mean, of course, that the expression of subjectivity is always related to particular words or constructions but simply that there are devices of the language that are consistently used by speakers to make their attitudes explicit.

The study of these linguistic devices is, in my view, central to show that we can have a greater understanding of the way language works only if we relate utterances or texts to the speakers that produce them and interpret them.

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