

## ADVOCATING FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A FORMAL APPARATUS OF ENUNCIATIVE OBJECTIVITY

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**Abstract:** This article is to be regarded as a follow-up to the views contended and upheld in my doctoral dissertation. It therefore aims to further reflect on some aspects of the then coined concept of *Enunciative Objectivity* incepted in my previous research works which aimed at exploring the dichotomy subjectivity/objectivity in contemporary reflections grounded in the framework of Enunciative Linguistics. The article therefore claims to be a part of an on-going and ever-growing project the final goal of which is to favor the advent of a *Formal Apparatus of Enunciative Objectivity* in concurrence with or as opposed to Benveniste’s Formal Apparatus of Enunciation. The project should first and foremost be able to progressively and thoroughly conduct a critical assessment of the framework of Benveniste’s theoretical thought so as to justify the relevance of the ambition it bears.

**Key Words:** Enunciative Objectivity, Formal Apparatus of Enunciation, Formal Apparatus of Enunciative Objectivity

**Résumé :** Le présent article s’inscrit dans le prolongement des vues défendues dans notre thèse de doctorat. Il vise à approfondir certains aspects de la réflexion amorcée sur la problématique du concept d’objectivité énonciative appréhendée à l’aune de la dichotomie fondatrice subjectivité/objectivité qui est de saison dans les réflexions scientifiques contemporaines se réclamant de la linguistique dite énonciative. Il s’agit spécifiquement de faire entrer dans sa phase opératoire le projet dont la finalité ou le but ultime est de parvenir à la construction d’un éventuel Appareil Formel de l’Objectivité Énonciative à l’instar ou à l’opposé du cadre conceptuel benvenistien de l’Appareil Formelle de l’Énonciation. Un tel projet doit pouvoir se donner les moyens de faire un réexamen critique et progressif du cadre conceptuel de Benveniste et de justifier la pertinence de l’ambition dont il est porteur.

**Mots-clés :** Objectivité énonciative, Appareil formel de l’énonciation Appareil formel de l’objectivité énonciative

**Introduction:**

A common belief in the French School of discourse analysis in general, and enunciative linguistics in particular, tends to present language as being exclusively and irrevocably subjective. That perception of language as being subjective was extensively advocated by Benveniste (1966: 258-266; 1974: 79-88) and carried over by many other linguists, Catherine Kerbrat Orrechionni (1999: 39-162), Antoine Culioli (1980; 1984; 1991; 1999) and Oswald Ducrot (1972; 1973; 1980; 1989; 1998) being some of them. Contrary to post-benveniste reflections on human language which favoured the study of subjectivity, objectivity could also be studied in another conceptual framework which we intend to present in a scientific project termed the Formal Apparatus of Enunciative Objectivity.

The scientific project referred to as the Formal Apparatus of Enunciative Objectivity was inspired by Emile Benveniste's *L'Appareil formel de l'énonciation* and Gustave Guillaume's Psychomechanics. However, the project tends to draw a lot more on Antoine Culioli's Theory of Enunciative Operations. The conceptual framework and the methodological approach to this project which is at the crossroads of three linguistic theories aims to turn the concept of objectivity into a special scientific object amenable to study. As such, the project tends to further explore and oppose the concept of "subjectivity", which has informed many research works in the framework of the French School of Discourse Analysis, to that of objectivity. However, the portion of the research program presented here is to be taken as the prolegomena to a bigger research program the tools of which are still under construction.

In this article whose aim is to give a rough idea of the conceptual framework mentioned above, a special emphasis will be laid on the need for such theoretical tool by justifying its reason for being and by unveiling some of its theoretical tools and operating concepts which will help conduct an analysis of the traces of objectivity. The article also revisits and brings out the flaws of some indexicals of subjectivity as developed by Benveniste's theoretical thoughts. The article finally describes some of the anchorage points of objectivity as perceived in the framework of the Formal Apparatus of Enunciative Objectivity.

**1. On the Need for a Formal Apparatus of Enunciative Objectivity**

Generally speaking, the development of a conceptual or theoretical tool obviously aims to meet an accurate, cognitive or scientific need with a view to puzzling out a given phenomenon. It is therefore the existence of that need which justifies the advent of the theoretical or conceptual tool meant to work out the phenomenon targeted. That's why it seems auspicious, at the outset, to justify the relevance of the Formal Apparatus of Enunciative Objectivity.

### 1.1 *Justification of the Project*

«De longues perspectives s'ouvrent à l'analyse des formes complexes du discours, à partir du cadre formel esquissé ici.» (Benveniste 1974, p.88). It was by means of that utterance that Benveniste then concluded the presentation of what he later termed the *Formal Apparatus of Enunciation* (*L'appareil Formel de l'Énonciation* in French). Further construed in an article, titled *L'appareil Formel de l'Énonciation*, and published in the second volume of his fundamental book titled *Problems in General Linguistics* (*Problèmes de Linguistique Générale*), the Formal Apparatus of Enunciation has turned into a key concept in the frame of the French School of Discourse Analysis. In so doing, Benveniste paved the way for an ever-evolving and fruitful field of knowledge and research program grounded in the framework of theoretical and formal linguistics; framework which upheld and raised discourse to the rank of an object of science amenable to study. Thus, by mere serendipity, the developments of contemporary research works in the field of enunciation have taken pathways and directions Benveniste himself surely did not expect nor did he predict. Therefore, the current article is to be considered as a part of the building block of the conceptual and methodological framework under construction termed the Formal Apparatus of Enunciative Objectivity.

Just as the way Saussure deliberately made the epistemological choice to prefer *langue* to *parole* to guarantee the falsifiability of the findings of research works in early Modern Linguistics period to meet the requirements of the then positivist exigences, the conceptual framework we intend to develop intentionally aims to exclusively trace the indexicals of objectivity in language, meaning *langue* in the saussurean sense of the word. That epistemological choice aims to trigger and favor a certain balance between studies whose objective is to retrieve and single out markers of subjectivity in discourse on the one hand and the ones which will be devoted to identifying markers of objectivity in discourse on the other hand.

With a view to stepping progressively toward the final stage of the conceptual and methodological framework under construction, an appropriate metalanguage made up with operational concepts likely to describe it with accuracy will primarily be coined. Those operational concepts were prompted out or popped up as a result of the observation of a few facts of language noticeable in the analyses therein. It is those facts of language which are likely to justify the relevance of the concepts to be coined. However, those concepts the description of which will be limited in this article will further be accounted for in future articles.

### 1.2 *Coinage of a few Theoretical tools and Operational Concepts*

Still in its embryonic stages, the conceptual framework under construction will primarily rest on basic concepts or theoretical tools among which we could name:

- *The Formal Apparatus of Enunciative Objectivity (FAEO) itself,*

- *The Impersonalization Effect,*
- *The Objectivity Effect,*
- *The Property of Delocution,*
- *The Aoristic Value,*
- *Aoristicization.*

As a matter of fact, the FAEO designates the scientific framework in which we intend to later conduct the analyses meant for tracing the “*linguistic individuals*” aiming to objectivize the discourse of the utterer. On the long run, that theoretical ground should be able to provide the necessary tools likely to help list some “*objectivemes*”, that is, markers of objectivity in discourse.

As for the *Impersonalization Effect*, though it was inspired by the Guillaumian concept of *Speech Effects*, it should not be semantically and conceptually equated with it. The two concepts rather run in opposite directions. The concept of *Speech Effects*, amply systematized and described in Gustave Guillaume’s theory and later literally carried over in Henri Adamczewski’s Meta-Operational Grammar, refers to the different values a given linguistic unit takes in different contexts or places of occurrence. Those different contextual values derive from a core or invariant value. That invariant value is unique and absolute. Hence the pluralization of the word “*Effects*” in the phrase “*Speech Effects*”.

Contrarily to the Guillaumian concept of *Speech Effects*, the concept of *Impersonalization Effect* rather refers to a set of linguistic forms or a bunch of various occurrences of linguistic units likely to yield a unique or single effect. The terms “*Effect*” and “*Impersonalization*” have been carefully chosen given that objectivity is basically an ideal in the sense that an enunciation always originates from a more or less personified instance. The figure provided below brings out the difference and gives a good account of the opposition between the psychomechanic concept of *Speech Effects* and that of *Impersonalization Effect* that is being developed. In the figure below, the following acronyms *SE*, *LF* and *LU* respectively stand for *Speech Effects*, *Linguistic Form* and *Linguistic Unit*.

Under those circumstances, *SE* would range from 1 to *n*, meaning that the invariant value of a linguistic unit is likely to yield several *Speech Effects* while different *Linguistic Forms* and/or *Linguistic Units* ranging from 1 to *n* could be used objectively to yield an *Impersonalization Effect*.

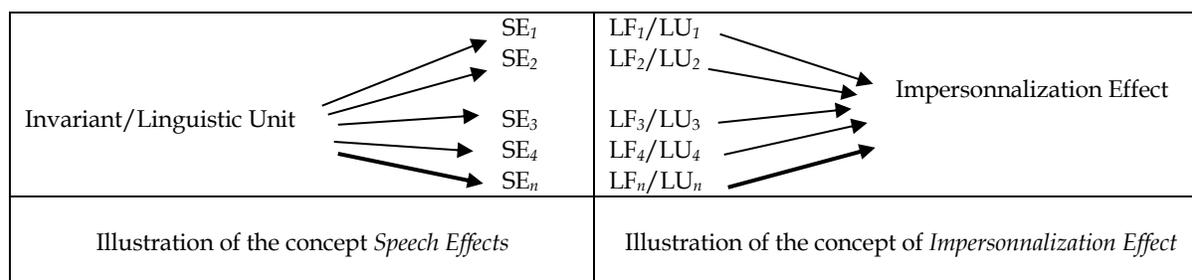


Figure 1: Comparison between the Concepts of *Speech Effects* and that of the *Impersonnalization Effect*

We postulate the existence of a correlation between the concept of *Impersonnalization Effect* and that of *Objectivity Effect*. In fact, The *Objectivity Effect* semantically and conceptually refers to the scope or the perlocutionary value of an utterance or a discourse which seems truthful by virtue of the iconicity it establishes between the said discourse and the data or elements of the extralinguistic world. That perception of the concept of *Objectivity Effect* draws on that of truth-correspondence developed in Lena Soler's *Introduction à l'épistémologie*<sup>1</sup>.

As for the concept of *Delocution Property*, it refers to a set of features formerly associated with the third person and to all its possible variants in many theories of enunciation. For years, it has been taken for granted that the alleged traits of objectivity were not associated but only with the third person. That established and engraved perception will somewhat be questioned in the sense that the effect of objectivity attached to the third person could further be extended to the other persons, that is to the first and second persons of conjugation, under the modalities yet to be presented in utterances which will serve as an exemplification of the concept of extended objectivity. However, while the concept of *Delocution Property* aims to bring out the objectivity expressed through personal deictics or indexicals, the concept of *Aoristic Value* helps analyze the objectivity based on the occurrence, on the surface structure, of verbal tenses. The concept of *Aoristic* here may be equated with the one developed in the framework of the Theory of Enunciative Operations. In effect, *Aoristicization*, is to be perceived as that process by means of which the utterer mobilizes a set of discourse strategies marked by linguistic constructions or utterances which embody verbal tenses featuring the *Aoristic Value*. Constructions of that type, be they motivated or not, aim to yield an *Objectivity Effect*. To enable my readers to be progressively familiar with them, those basic concepts will be used concurrently with the already existing metalanguage of

<sup>1</sup> Léna Soler (2000) presents what he calls three types of scientific truths. He first of all presents scientific truth as a correspondence between scientific discourse and the extra-linguistic reality. He then defines scientific truth as coherence. In other words, within the framework of that second type of scientific truth, a theory is believed to be true if it is devoid of any contradictions. Finally, when scientific truth is perceived as a consensus, it is accepted by the scientific community as being valid.

enunciative theories. The final goal is to smoothly get rid of the already known terminology of Enunciative Linguistics so as to let the one which is being suggested within the framework of the Formal Apparatus of Enunciative Objectivity to surface.

## 2. Revisiting a few Indexicals of Subjectivity in Enunciative Linguistics

Today, it is an established knowledge in Linguistics, especially in Generative Syntax, that the sentence is made up with two major constituents, that is the noun phrase and the verb phrase. In accordance with that basic segmentation of the sentence, the re-examination of the indexicals of subjectivity will target the realizations or manifestations of those two major constituents. Therefore, a special emphasis will be laid on personal pronouns as a realization of the noun phrase while verbal tenses will be analyzed as elements of the verb phrase.

### 2.1 Questioning the objectivity of the benvenistian «non-person»

For Benveniste,

Il y a des énoncés de discours, qui en dépit de leur nature individuelle, échappent à la condition de personne, c'est-à-dire renvoient non à eux-mêmes, mais à une situation « objective ». C'est le domaine de ce qu'on appelle la « troisième personne. »

La « troisième personne » représente en fait le membre non marqué de la corrélation de personne. C'est pourquoi il n'y a pas truisme à affirmer que la non-personne est le seul mode d'énonciation possible pour les instances de discours qui ne doivent pas renvoyer à elles-mêmes, mais qui prédisent le procès de n'importe qui ou n'importe quoi hormis l'instance même, ce n'importe qui ou n'importe quoi pouvant toujours être muni d'une référence objective.

Benveniste (1966, pp.255-256)

The third person perceived as a personal deictic referred to by Benveniste as the «non-person» is thus presented as the utmost expression of enunciative objectivity. However, by raising the third person to the rank of a marker of objectivity, it is the semantic value of it which is underscored and highlighted more than its formal and material representation. But a cursory look at the argument put forth by Benveniste to support his views will help understand that the notion of «non-person» conveys an idea of impersonalization. That's one of the reasons why the third person is very often kept away from the interlocution framework while the first and the second persons, in many or almost all languages, are considered as being highly subjective. If we consider the interplay between the concept of objectivity and that of impersonalization, the latter should not be limited to and can go far beyond the third person and be extended to the first and second persons, and

even to all personal pronouns in general. Thus, the correlation between objectivity and impersonalization can be corroborated through the following statement by Benveniste, "Je crois (que...) équivaut à une assertion mitigée. En disant je crois (que...), je convertis en une énonciation subjective le fait asserté impersonnellement, à savoir le temps va changer, qui est la véritable proposition." (Benveniste, 1966, p.264).

Benveniste's thought indicates that the personalization of a stated fact raises the latter fact to the rank of a subjective enunciation. Conversely, one could be led to say that an impersonally-stated-fact is non-subjective. In other words, it is objective. Whereas there is no better way of impersonally asserting than resorting to the third person that Benveniste calls the non-person.

Impersonalization which is substituted for by the concept of *Impersonalization Effect* takes shape through all types of pronouns. The defining features of impersonalization can therefore be extended to all the other persons of conjugation in accordance with the perspectives opened by the Guillaumian theory.

Obviously, it is under those circumstances that A. Joly and D. O'Kelly, whose approach to the matter carries over the position held by Guillaume within the framework of Psychomechanics, underscore the irrelevance of the perception of the third person as a "non-person". That very position held by A. Joly and D. O'Kelly grapples with and brings out some flaws of Benveniste's views related to the third person. The "non-person" is consequently substituted for by that of "intercolutive non-person". For, even though the third person does not basically seem to share in the communicational or conversational space governed by the interlocutive relation between the "I" and the "you", this does not question its very status of person of conjugation.

It could therefore be contended that the *Delocution Value* or *Delocution Property* which seems intrinsically inherent in the third person (the Delocuted) could also be found in the other persons with regard to some particular literary uses or occurrences of personal pronouns. This state of fact can be ascertained in the utterances below borrowed from Joly and O'Kelly:

(1) "It will keep me", says I, "If you will let me live with you"; and this I said =in such a poor petitioning tone, that (...).

(D. Defoe, *Moll Flanders*)

(2) I was just walking out of a dance hall, when this geezer nabs me. "What do you want?" I says. "Information," he says. (

B. Behan, *The Hostage*)

In the two utterances (1) and (2) under study, the *Delocution Value*, which is basically the defining property of the third person (possibly *He*, *She* or *It*), is transferred to the first person "I". The *Impersonalization Effect* which is thus expressed semantically actually originates from the *Delocution Property* associated with the third person. By transitivity, it is that very impersonalization which is generally equated with objectivity, but particularly with the objectivity of the non-person from Benveniste's perspective. The second person also abides by the principle mentioned above as illustrated in utterance (3) below:

(3)

"You always **gets** it at pore, dear Mrs Heregroves"

(H.F Head, *A Taste for Honey*, p.13)

The phenomenon of delocution and impersonalization is actualized through the second person as shown in utterance (3) above. Beyond the fact that the verb "gets" is associated with the formal mark of the third person, that is, -s in English, basically, there seems to be an effect of detachment from the latter. It is that very detachment, regarded as a discourse strategy deployed by the speaker-utterer, which is very often taken as objectivity in discourse.

Eventually, one comes to the conclusion that Benveniste's views aiming to raise the third person to the position of an objective linguistic form is limited and ineffective to some extent. Objectivity should rather be derived from the *Impersonalization Effect* conveyed by what Benveniste refers to as the *non-person*. For the *Impersonalization Effect* can well be associated with the third person as well as with the second and first persons. Hence the postulate that the objectivity of personal deictics is rather dependent on their *Impersonalization Effects* more than it is on their formal representations. That *Impersonalization Effect* does not seem to be limited to pronouns only. It is likely to be extended to the various manifestations of the verb and the grammatical categories associated with it.

## 2.2 Aoristicization or the Expression of Temporal Objectivity?

Briefly presented in this paper, Aoristicization appears as a marker of discourse objectivization. Though it does not seem to be a concept which is new to enunciative linguistics, the way aoristicization is used in the conceptual framework under construction calls for further clarifications to better grasp its scope. Two key notions which will be used within this work need to be recalled before being combined and turned into an operational concept. Those two notions are on the one hand the concept of *narrative* deriving from Benveniste's dichotomy *Discourse/Narrative* and on the other hand that of *Aoristic* as it was introduced into the field of discourse analysis and further developed by Antoine Culioli and his many followers within the framework of the Theory of Enunciative Operations. The narrative whose

kingpin is the verbal tense termed *passé composé* in French was presented by Benveniste as the absolute marker of temporal objectivity. It is that very primary perception of temporal objectivity which informed the taxonomy of verbal tenses in terms of *Tenses of Discourse* ("*passé composé*", "*présent*" and "*futur*") on the one hand, and tenses of *Narrative* ("*prétérit*" or "*passé simple*" and certain uses of the "*imparfait*") in French, the latter tenses being regarded as objective.

One of the first attempts to theorizing the Aoristic by Culioli (1999: 140) within enunciative linguistics reshuffled the then classificatory perception of verbal tenses. Hence, the *passé simple*, the *imparfait*, the *passé composé*, the *présent*, and the *futur* which were held close together in their relation to objectivity were all unified within a single concept referred to as the *Aoristic*. That new status raises them to the rank of potential markers for the expression of aspecto-temporal objectivity.

The unification of those verbal tenses under a homogenous fact or reality seems to present the *Aoristic* as the absolute characteristic or defining property common to all those tenses considered as objective. The objective expression of verbal tenses will therefore be dependent on that property. Though constructed in different verbal tenses, the utterances<sup>2</sup> provided below feature that property of the *Aoristic* which further yields an impersonalization effect. That impersonalization effect is finally likely to be perceived as the expression of aspecto-temporal objectivity.

(4)

Young, naive mathematician Andrea Aspinall **comes** to Lisbon in 1944 to spy on a man suspected of involvement in making Germany's ultimate "secret weapon". She **meets** Karl Voss, Military Attaché to the German Delegation, and they **have** an urgent clandestine love affair (...)

(The Gardian Weekly).

(5)

The last few days at Gaze had been exceptionally somnolent. She **had started** reading *La Princesse de Clèves* with Hannah and they **had almost fallen** asleep over it (...) Feeling today lively and more than usually liberated from shyness, she resolved to question Jamesie about a lot of things before the journey should be out.

(I. Murdoch)

(6)

They're **leaving** at 2:30

<sup>2</sup> These utterances were borrowed from Jacqueline Guillemin-Flescher, especially from her book titled *Autour des prédicats: variables aspectuo-temporelles et sémantiques* (page 11).

(7)

Il [Naruse] préférait rester reclus chez lui, dans un silence quasi-total, négligeant ses épouses comme ses amis, qui **finiront** par le laisser seul, et ne semblait éprouver d'amour réel que pour le saké.

(Le Monde, 10/01/2001)

(8)

Le lendemain, lors de ce repas en tête à tête, il **avait pris** brusquement conscience de l'importance que Catherine avait acquise dans sa vie (...)

(Déetective, cité par J. Simonin, 1984)

(9)

On le retrouve quelques années plus tard, chantant en yaourt dans un groupe de rock. Il **entend** sur Europe 1 le Lonely Woman d'Ornette Coleman avec Don Cherry à la trompette. "Un choc énorme". Il **s'acoquine** alors avec quelques musiciens en marges de la scène de jazz (...)

(Le Monde 10/01/2001)

Those utterances feature the Aoristic value of various verbal tenses which are respectively the past simple, the plu-perfect progressive and the present progressive for utterances (4), (5), (6) in the English language, and the *futur simple*, the *plus-que-parfait* and the *présent simple* for utterances (7), (8), and (9) in the French language. Though the third person seems to be on focus here, the different occurrences of verbal tenses rather evidence the recourse to an *Impersonalization Effect* for the facts presented or the events "narrated". Finally, it stems from this short account of the tools of analysis presented therein that markers of objectivity can possibly be traced in discourse. However, it is to be understood that the theoretical tools which inform the FAEO were presented in a raw state. This means that those tools are yet to be refined in a more systematized and rigorous manner so that the conceptual and methodological framework under construction may be worthy of the ambition it claims to bear.

## Conclusion

This article tried to argue against the ingrained postulate that "linguistic individuals" traditionally presented as traces of subjectivity could well, and seriously, be regarded differently. Their status of subjective entities, that is "subjectivemes", could be questioned as a result of the position held in this article. Even though those very indexicals which have always been believed to be markers of subjectivity from a certain standpoint, with regard to some of their particular manifestations or occurrences in discourse, they could at the same time be considered

as linguistic forms expressing and conveying an idea of objectivity. This revisited perception of the concept of objectivity as opposed to subjectivity would only be possible through the lenses of the Formal Apparatus of Enunciative Objectivity, a conceptual framework under construction.

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