



## Subjectivity and the Speaking Subject in Linguistic Neoteny: Historical Overview and Conceptual Panorama\*

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THE study of subjectivity is one of the first elements of research in linguistic neoteny. Such a statement is never a simple association of words to convey contractual information exclusively. The primary content of an utterance includes the situation of the utterance, the information of the enunciator as well as information that does not find a linguistic expression but is nevertheless present in the utterance. The presence of the speaker in his speech, therefore, refers to the subjectivity of the speaker in linguistic neoteny. In this perspective, the question is to know where the emergence of the speaker's subjectivity in his statement appears. This philosophical approach will highlight an extremely rich concept and very varied aspects: we must hold together all these dimensions to reach a satisfactory definition of the subjectivity of the speaker, between language *feri* and language in *esse* in linguistic neoteny. Our approach is, therefore, to evoke the three theories of the speaker's subjectivity – never abreast but always indirectly – tackled different realities but closely related by G. Guillaume, E. Benveniste and A. Culioli. We will first focus on summarizing the various theories before explaining the fundamental points to identify the main contributions to the concept studied. This analysis based on the philosophy will allow us to situate them better in our conceptual panorama, and so it will help us reach a general definition as complete and exact as possible. The objective is therefore to establish, in what sense the term of subjectivity is understood in linguistic neoteny.

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We are optimistic to address the case of the subjective language in *esse*, languages perfectly controlled – in the sense that the speakers are able to communicate in spontaneity – and that language in *fieri* – language in which one can communicate to varying degrees, but of which one does not have a developed linguistic feeling – in a more complete way.

Descartes never treated the subject or used the term of its modern sense. On the other hand, it is the metaphysical discovery of the subjectivity that we owe to the author of *cogito, sum*. As for the meaning of the *subject* in the sense of person, it goes back to the eighteenth century, where it is found under the feathers of Leibniz and Locke, the bend of theological debates about the Trinity i.e. subject, person, and conscience.

The historical and theological context is all the more important because it has largely contributed to forging the notion of a classical *subject*. Kant defines man as a being endowed with intendment. It is still the unity of consciousness that defines the human person, whose understanding can be understood as the right to represent oneself to oneself, so to say oneself "I".

In linguistics, the term subjectivity refers to the presence of the speaking subject in the speech, manifested in particular by the engagers. It is a characteristic – that we can even say constitutive – of the natural language to always contain traces of the enunciative activity.

At the end of this research, it is obvious that evoking "*subjectivity*" as a self-evident term is illusory, if not derisory. The variety of meanings and their manifestations have been sufficiently demonstrated to be repeated here: the presentation would be redundant. But the review of the historical and conceptual panorama needs to be summarized in order to identify the underlying fundamental issues common to the various approaches.

Subjectivity is perceptible at the semantic level of the language, in particular by the choices made between different possible terms: to use a noun or a verb in the infinitive leads to variations of meaning of which the speaker has the control over. Within the same grammatical category, the subject can vary the levels of information by being variably present in his statement: this is the case when a speaker chooses to use neutral terms, appreciative or even emotional, which transmit or betrays in varying degrees its "*subjective*" point of view. It is the same for the voluntary deviations with a linguistic norm, which are so many stylistic variations for a similar content, but substantially different. In addition, the insertion of adverbs in the utterance can testify to a perception specific to the enunciator.

**Keywords**— Linguistic neoteny, subjectivity, language in *esse*, language in *fieri*, G. Guillaume, E. Benveniste, A. Culioli.