

Editorial

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Editorial: Exploring subjectivity and intersubjectivity in language

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Subjectivity and intersubjectivity are at the core of any interaction between people, including artistic communication. Subjectivity refers to the fact that speakers and writers, authors, and presenters do not only convey content but also express themselves, weaving attitudes, assessments, and emotions into their texts and works. Intersubjectivity refers to relations with the discourse partner(s) woven into the text or creative work: the listener, reader, audience, co-presenter, another character, or another work.

This special issue, “Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity in Language” (Part I 2023, Part II 2024), is inspired by the conference “Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity in Language and Culture” held in Tartu, Estonia, in May 2022. The main organisers of the conference were the Centre of Excellence of Estonian Studies and the working group of the Estonian Research Council research project PRG341, “Pragmatics overwrites grammar: subjectivity and intersubjectivity in different registers and genres of Estonian,” PRG1290 “The grammar of discourse particles in Uralic,” and the project teams for reference practices and language, literature, and folklore studies within the Centre of Excellence of Estonian Studies.

The topics discussed at the conference included different aspects of subjectivity and intersubjectivity in language, literature, folklore, religion, and music. This issue contains contributions to linguistics, mainly based on conference presentations. Concepts of subjectivity and intersubjectivity have been defined in various ways in linguistics (e.g., Narrog 2017). Generally speaking, subjectivity (speaker orientation) is understood as the expression of the speaker’s/writer’s attitudes, opinions, and beliefs. At the same time, intersubjectivity (hearer orientation) is the consideration and involvement of the listener/reader expressed in the text or dialogue. There are overlaps and interplay between these two concepts, areas of transition, and different possibilities of interpretation, which is why they have also been considered together as (inter)subjectivity (e.g., Haddington 2004, Mortensen 2012, Nuyts 2012, Thompson 2014, Narrog 2017, Rozumko 2019). Subjectivity and intersubjectivity are expressed by linguistic means on all levels of language, such as discourse markers, pragmatic particles, deictics, modal, speech and mental verbs, moods, persons, impersonal voice, conversational routines, directives, interrogatives, etc. (e.g., Baumgarten et al. 2012, Haselow 2012, Ghesquière et al. 2013, De Cock 2015). On the other side, intersubjectivity is linked to consideration of the interactional and other needs of the partner. Interactional (im)politeness practices caught increased attention in the wake of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) seminal work on politeness theory. Since then, theoretical approaches to (im)politeness and appropriate interactional practices have developed in different directions (e.g., Watts 2003, Mills 2003, Culpeper 2011, Haugh and Kádár 2017). The important assumption in all these directions is that a person cannot be polite or impolite alone; there is always another person to whom one is polite or impolite. This means that (im)politeness is an inherently intersubjective phenomenon. However, the ways of considering another person

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vary across languages, situations, and cultures and (im)politeness theories are not the only theoretical framework to describe these phenomena.

The issue contains 14 studies focusing on (inter)subjective aspects of (1) interactional practices (including (im)politeness), (2) use of repetition in discourse, (3) structures of interrogatives and questions, and (4) use of (lexico)grammatical devices in interrogatives.

Politeness and impoliteness from the perspective of (inter)subjectivity were the topics of one of the conference workshops, aiming to bring together researchers from various research fields to discuss how interactional practices are connected to the notion of intersubjectivity: people's mutual awareness of each other's knowledge and attitudes. Five of the articles in the issue are more or less connected to (im)politeness and/or interpersonal relations in the broadest sense. The article by **Orsolya Sild**, "Address forms in Tatar spoken in Finland and Estonia," discusses address forms among Tatar minorities compared to a particular majority culture. The results suggest a parallel tendency of variation in the address forms among the Finnish and Estonian Tatar minorities. Specifically, the Tatars in Finland are more likely to use *sin*, the second-person singular form (T-form), than the Estonian Tatars. This is similar to Finnish, where the T-form is more extensively used than in Estonian and Russian, which are the main contact languages of Tatar in Estonia. Cultural practices in intersubjectivity are also discussed by **Katri Priiki**, who studies in her article "Constructing the perception of 'annoying' words and phrases in interaction: An analysis of delegitimization strategies used in interviews and online discussions in Finnish" the Finnish linguistic metadiscourse on expressions perceived as 'annoying' and the strategies used to justify this perception. Two data types are examined in which verbal hygiene is practiced in interaction: language biography interviews and anonymous online discussions. Perception as 'annoying' is caused by an intersubjective conflict faced when confronted with language use that goes against people's values and ideologies. The article by **Andra Kalnača** and **Ilze Lokmane** "Attitude dative (*dativus ethicus*) as an interpersonal pragmatic marker in Latvian" explains the functions of a grammatical construction, the attitude dative in Latvian. An optional pronominal clitic serves two broad functions: first, it expresses the speaker's authority and the affectedness of the speaker or the addressee in a speech-act situation, and second, it expresses the speaker's stance towards the contents of the utterance. The attitude dative in Latvian is used for giving orders, expressing prohibition and threats, as well as showing disagreement, disappointment, and regret, which makes it a means of expressing (inter)subjectivity. **Chingduang Yurayong** and **Seppo Kittilä** present in their article "A typological approach to intersubjective uses of the Finnish clitic markers *-hAn* and *-se* from the perspectives of engagement and their interrelations with subject person" a typological view on two Finnish morphemes used partly similarly, the clitic *-hAn* and the postposed demonstrative clitic *se*. The results reveal that the two Finnish clitics semantically inherit their referential meanings from their lexical forms and further extend them towards marking interlocutors' intersubjectivity, enriching the engagement system of Finnish. Interpersonal relations in interaction are studied in the article "Reducing the severity of incidents or emergency in Estonian emergency calls" by **Tiit Hennoste**, **Andriela Rääbis**, **Kirsi Laanesoo-Kalk**, and **Andra Rumm**. The authors analyse calls to the Estonian Emergency Response Centre, focusing on instances where callers reduce the severity of an incident or emergency in their first turn. The data reveal that reducing severity does not lower the probability of sending assistance, which means that call-takers do not rely on callers' assessments; instead, they use other cues indicating the severity of the incident intersubjectively.

The **repetition in discourse across languages and genres** was also one of the topics of the conference. This topic is represented with two contributions, which reveal the universally important role of repetition as an intersubjective medium in texts created in different languages and genres.

The article by **Kamal Abdullayev**, **Azad Mammadov**, **Misgar Mammadov**, and **Shaban Huseynov**, "Repetition in discourses across languages and genres," explores the role of phonetic and lexical repetitions in the pragmatics and cognition of both epic texts and modern literary discourses across different languages. The study employs discourse and contrastive analysis methods to explore how repetitions function as crucial linguistic devices in discourse production, enhancing pragmatic intent and cognitive understanding. Repetition, particularly in intersubjective behaviours, directs emotional dynamics and strengthens discourse cohesion. Phonetic and lexical repetitions, such as alliteration and word repetition, play a critical role in constructing meaning, coherence, and perception in texts. Examples from *Beowulf*, *The Book of Dede Korkut*, and modern

Azerbaijani and English fiction illustrate the importance of repetition in discourse development. **Benjamin Schweitzer**'s contribution, "Repetition and variation in a Finnish music-related discourse: A case study," addresses the roles of repetition and variation in music-related discourse, focusing on how these elements function in written texts over time. Using a discourse linguistics approach, the author highlights how patterns of repetition and variation shape the perception of texts within a larger discourse, particularly in the context of music reviews. This article explores the use of semantically basic figures to analyse discourse-structuring patterns, explicitly focusing on the figures of 'difficulty' and 'austerity' in concert reviews of Jean Sibelius's *Fourth Symphony*. By examining repetitions and variations of these concepts over time, the author demonstrates how such patterns shape public perception of the musical piece and how conceptualisations are rooted in intertextual and social-cultural practices.

One of the conference's central topics was **non-canonical interrogatives**, dealt with from different angles and within different theoretical frameworks. The (inter)subjective dimensions of the **structures of interrogatives and questions** are discussed in four articles.

The article "On the overlapping discourse functions of Spanish 'cómo que' and French 'comment ça' interrogatives" by **Jan Fließbach**, **Lisa Brunetti**, and **Hiyon Yoo** argues that HOW THAT-interrogatives in Spanish (*cómo que*) and French (*comment ça*) – despite the syntactic differences induced by *ça* 'THAT_{demonstrative}' and *que* 'THAT_{complementizer}' – share three functions: clarification requests, mirative questions, and expressions of disagreement. The authors also test the relative importance of seven linguistic factors for the attribution of the functions. **Agnès Celle**, in the article "Surprise questions in English and French," shows that surprise questions form a distinct category of interrogatives, differentiated from rhetorical and exclamative questions. The communicative function of surprise questions is explained based on three constructions – *what the hell* questions in English, *qu'est-ce que* questions, and *c'est quoi ce* followed by a right dislocation in French. The article "Between rhetorical questions and information requests: A versatile interrogative clause in Estonian" by **Marri Amon** investigates the pragmatic and functional aspects of Estonian questions introduced by the adjective *huvitav* ('interesting'). Amon shows that this question is usually not used to elicit an answer. Instead, its uses vary from self-addressed to rhetorical questions, also allowing the addition of a biased (critical, ironical) positioning to the interrogation. **Tue Trinh** and **Itai Bassi**'s article "Excursive Questions" analyses questions about a question act. They argue the performative hypothesis, which says that what is expressed by the logical form of the sentence also contains information about the speaker, the hearer, and the illocution of the utterance. The analysis relies on the assumption that speech acts are represented in the grammar.

Three articles on questions and interrogatives focus on **grammatical and lexicogrammatical means** for varying the intersubjective interpretations of questions so that the question functions differently from the information-seeking function.

Makoto Kaneko's article "Two past forms inducing conjectural or non-intrusive questions" deals with the use of past forms in interrogative sentences to imply that the interlocutor is not really expected or not pressured to answer, but rather the speaker is reasoning with himself. The analysis focuses on i) polite questions involving the so-called French market imperfective past and its Japanese counterpart and ii) recall questions involving an evidential past in some languages. Similar uses of past tenses are also found in other languages. In his article "Irrealis-marked interrogatives as rhetorical questions," **Colin Brown** shows how the irrealis subordinator in Sm'algayax (Tsimshianic) signals in the interrogative that the question is rhetorical. Rhetorical questions with an irrealis marker have also been observed in some other languages, notably those spoken near Sm'algayax. These findings have implications for the presence of irrealis and subjunctive morphology appearing in rhetorical questions cross-linguistically. **Matteo Fiorini**'s article "Biased interrogatives in Camuno" discusses the properties of interrogative structures biased in the set of their possible answers by the particle *po* in Camuno, an endangered Gallo-Italic variety. On the other hand, the article also discusses the property of a discourse particle as the source of bias of marked interrogative structures. The article also analyses the relation between the functions of the particle *po* and the history of the development of the particle. This contribution also offers perspectives that are of interest to the analogous phenomenon in other languages.

The articles in this issue open up perspectives on (inter)subjectivity in human language and its different nuances and ways of expression, bringing together languages spoken around the Baltic Sea (Estonian, Finnish, Latvian, Tatar in Estonia and Finland) and elsewhere in Europe (English, German, French, Spanish, Camuno (Italian), Azerbaijani, and Russian) as well as Japanese and Sm'algyax in Alaska, seeing in them peculiar characteristics and looking for common and general phenomena in this relatively new field in the study of language and its use.

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