INTERSUBJECTIVE POSITIONING  
IN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INTERVIEWS

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to examine linguistic means of intersubjective positioning used in the genre of interview, which is typically connected with establishing speaker’s identity and position. The theoretical framework for this study is the Appraisal Theory proposed by Martin and White (2005), in concrete terms the category of Engagement, which enables us to analyse how speakers adopt and express their attitude not only to the proposition but also to a potential audience. Modal expressions modify the strength of the illocutionary force of propositions. Thus, intersubjective positioning overlaps with such concepts as hedging, boosting, evidentiality, and modality. A corpus of political and economic interviews will be analysed with the aim of investigating and comparing markers of intersubjective positioning, and further, of explicating their pragmatic functions.

Key words

Appraisal Theory, Engagement, intersubjective positioning, political interviews, economic interviews, speaker involvement

1 Introduction

“(Inter)subjectivity is concerned with the linguistic expression of the speaker’s relation to textually referenced or allowed statements, assumptions and inferences” (Defrancq & De Clerck 2011: 40). These are traditionally referred to as ‘points of view’. As Defrancq and De Clerck state, many scholars consider the concept of ‘points of view’ being assigned to the hearer, whereas the term ‘subjectivity’ is reserved “for instances in which the statements, assumptions and inferences are the speaker’s own” (ibid.: 40). In this sense, (inter)subjective positioning overlaps with hedging, boosting, evidentiality, and modality since hedging and boosting devices and expressions of modality modify the illocutionary force of utterances and hence show speaker involvement with the propositions expressed.

This paper attempts to analyse markers of intersubjective positioning, namely, modal and cognitive verbs and modal adverbs. The use of these expressions in the genre of political and economic interview is compared, and, also, their pragmatic functions are explicated. The theoretical framework for this study is Martin and White’s model of the Appraisal Theory (Martin 2000, White 2003, Martin & White 2005), or to be more specific, the category of Engagement.