1. Introduction
(1) Aims of this talk:
a. To reassess Lyons’ notion of subjectivity and the speech act theory’s performativity.
b. To argue that subjectivity and performativity should be seen as separated notions.

(2) The advantages with our framework are shown with examples of English epistemic modals.

2. Subjectivity and Performativity Proposed Prior to Verstraete (2001)
2.1. Lyons’ (1977) Subjectivity
(3) Lyons’ subjectivity: 
THE SPEAKER's “opinion or attitude towards the proposition that the sentence expresses or the situation that the proposition describes” (1977: 452).

(4) ex) Alfred must be unmarried. (1977: 789)
a. Subjective interpretation:
The speaker makes a conclusion based on his/her own opinion or belief.
b. Objective interpretation:
The speaker makes a conclusion depending on some factor(s) external to the speaker.


2.2. Performativity in Speech Act Theory
→ The state in which the speaker utters a sentence and at the same time does something other than uttering it.
ex) “I name this ship Queen Elizabeth” (Austin 1962: 5)

(6) ex) Mary may/will/must have arrived by now. (Palmer 2001: 33)
→ Inferences or conclusions expressed by epistemic modals are performative in that they “are actually made by the speaker, at the time of speaking” (ibid.)

3. Verstraete’s (2001) framework
3.1. Verstraete's View on the Notions Above

(7) Verstraete finds it difficult to consistently apply Lyons' subjectivity to epistemic modals (2001: 1516).
→ Lyons (1977): Epistemic modality is either subjective or objective.
→ Halliday (1970): Epistemic modality is only subjective
(although Lyons and Halliday defines subjectivity in virtually the same way)

(8) Verstraete argues that performativity exhibited in subjective modality is different from performativity in speech act theory (or “interactive performativity”) (2001: 1517).

3.2. Alternative Notions of Subjectivity and Modal Performativity

(9) Verstraete’s notion of subjectivity:
→ Bringing into existence “a particular position of commitment with respect to the propositional content of the utterance” (2001: 1517)
→ (In other words) involving what he calls “modal performativity”

(10) Subjective modality is modally performative, expressing SOMEONE's particular position of commitment with respect to the propositional content (2001: 1518).

(11) ex) The flood of letters must have had some impact after all (2001: 1507)
→ The speaker here “presents himself as being committed to the status of the proposition as an inevitable conclusion” (2001: 1517).

(12) Objective modality is modally non-performative, not involving any position of commitment with respect to the propositional content (2001: 1518).

(13) ex) But to reach orbit an object must accelerate to a speed of about 17,500 miles per hour (28,000 kilometers per hour, called satellite speed or orbital velocity) in a horizontal direction (2001: 1508)
→ The speaker here merely describes some existent obligation.

(14) Subjective modality is necessarily modally performative.
Objective modality is necessarily modally non-performative.
→ Verstraete’s model virtually reduces subjectivity to (modal) performativity.

(15) Verstraete adopts modal performativity in order to give a more comprehensive account for behaviors and interpretations of subjective modality in interrogatives.
(16) Can subjective modality occur in interrogatives?
      → It expresses a particular position of commitment on the part of someone
         other than the speaker.

(17) ex)
   THOMPSON: If the trials are successful, might this be used as the first line of
         treatment of cancer?
   THORPE: Well that’s exactly where we are going. We are hoping that this will
         replace conventional chemotherapy.               (2001: 1522)
   → The speaker is transferring toward the interlocutor a responsibility for the
      epistemic position.

4. Discussion
4.1. Reassessing Lyons’ Subjectivity
(18) There are some behavioral differences of modals that Verstraete’s approach
      cannot well account for but Lyons’ can.

4.1.1. Epistemic Must and Epistemic Have to in Interrogatives
(19) In Lyons’ framework:
      → Epistemic must is subjective in that the necessity is based on the speaker’s
         own belief or opinion.
      → Epistemic have to is objective in that the necessity is based on some fact
         external to the speaker.

(20) In Verstraete’s framework:
      → Both epistemic must and epistemic have to are subjective.
      → Given this and (16b), we can predict that epistemic must and epistemic have
to can both appear in interrogatives.

(21) Sanada (2007) shows that epistemic must occurs in interrogatives more easily
      than epistemic have to.
   a. Must John be a liar?                  (Papafragou 2000: 98)
   b. Well, obviously the girl isn’t here, so we’d better look for her on the
      campus. → Must she be on the campus? She could have gone to Pete’s
      digs.                   (Declerck 1991: 408)
      → If epistemic must in (21a) and (21b) is replaced with have to, the resultant
         sentences cannot be interpreted epistemically.
4.1.2. Epistemic Might and Epistemic Could

(24) a. * This picture might be a Chagall, but it is in fact a Braque.
   b. This picture could be a Chagall, but it is in fact a Braque.  
      (Johannesson 1976: 58)

(25) a. The speaker in (24a) asserts the possibility and falsehood of the truth of 
      the proposition “this picture is a Chagall” at the same time, thus 
      contradictory.
   b. The above contradiction is not brought about in (24b), where “the speaker 
      does not indicate that he is inclined to believe in the truth of the basic 
      proposition (which he does if he uses might)” (Johannesson 1976: 58). 
   → These accounts are in line with Lyons’ notion of subjectivity.

4.2. Reassessing Performativity in Speech Act Theory

(27) The speech act theory’s performativity is sufficient for achieving the aims of this 
     talk.

4.2.1. Have to in Interrogatives Again

(28) Deontic have to and epistemic have to:
   → Both are objective, involving some external factor rather than the speaker.
   → The former can easily occur in interrogatives, but the latter cannot.
   ex) Do you have to go now?  (Leech 2004: 81)  → deontic / *epistemic

(29) Deontic have to is non-performative, while epistemic have to is performative. 
   → The latter, but not the former, clashes with a function of suspending “speaker 
     commitment” (cf. Dancygier 1998: 14-24)
4.2.2. Epistemic *May* and Epistemic *Can* in Interrogatives

(30) a. *May* Emma have gone shopping? (Swan 2005: 316)
    b. *Can* she get in trouble? (Kashino 2012: 57)

(31) Izutsu’s (2002) account:
   a. Epistemic *may* expresses “the simple judgment of the possibility of an event” (2002: 9). The judgment made of his/her own (i.e., the subjective judgment) cannot be questioned or denied by the speaker (2002: 10).
   b. Epistemic *can* sets up an entity and makes “a statement about one of the possible properties of the entity” (2002: 9). In this case, we can cast doubt on or deny a nature or natures of an entity.

(32) Izutsu’s account is compatible with the following performativity-based account.
   a. Epistemic *may* is performative because the speaker actually expresses his/her own judgment.
   b. Epistemic *can* is non-performative (i.e. descriptive), in that it makes a statement of some entity, rather than actually expressing the speaker’s judgment.

→ The former clashes with the function of interrogatives, but the latter does not.

4.3. Separating Subjectivity and Performativity

(33) It is of importance to (Lyons’) subjectivity and (speech act theory’s) performativity, against the way Verstraete seems to be doing.

(34) a. PERFORMATIVE AND SUBJECTIVE:
    There *must* have been something I was reminded of but I couldn’t remember what. (*Corpus of Contemporary American English*)

b. NON-PERFORMATIVE AND OBJECTIVE:
    This picture *could* be a Chagall, but it is in fact a Braque. (= (24b))

c. PERFORMATIVE AND OBJECTIVE:
    “The guy ain’t on the plane.” “He *has to*. He didn’t get off.”
    (Kashino 2002: 131)

d. NON-PERFORMATIVE AND SUBJECTIVE:
    When he asked me, I said there *should* be multiple packages.
    (*Corpus of Contemporary American English*)

[PERFORMATIVE]: the speaker is actually making an inference/a conclusion at the time of utterance.
[NON-PERFORMATIVE]: the speaker is merely stating some inference/conclusion.
[SUBJECTIVE]: the speaker’s inference/conclusion is based on his/her own belief or opinion.
[OBJECTIVE]: the speaker’s inference/conclusion is based on some external factors.
5. Conclusion

What this talk discussed:

a. empirical advantages of Lyons’ subjectivity (Section 4.1)

b. empirical advantages of speech act theory’s performativity (Section 4.2)

c. validity of separating subjectivity and performativity (Section 4.3)

References


Electronic Corpus

Corpus of Contemporary American English. (http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/)