

Dynamic Construction of Intersubjectivity in Discourse by Integrating Philosophical and Cognitive Perspectives

BINGZHUAN PENG, XIN WEI

School of Foreign Languages, Harbin University of Science and Technology, 52 Xuefu Road, Harbin, 150080, China

Email: pengbingzhan@163.com

Intersubjectivity, the existing way of humans in discourse, is the speakers' concern over the hearers. A framework for the dynamic construction of discourse intersubjectivity by integrating philosophical and cognitive perspectives was proposed to reveal the essential philosophical and cognitive attributes of discourse intersubjectivity. Qualitative analysis and speculative methods were employed. Intersubjectivity in discourse and its dynamic construction process were investigated from speaker orientation, hearer orientation and social interaction orientation. The results show the following: (1) the proposed framework clarifies the dynamic construction of discourse meaning from objectivity to subjectivity and intersubjectivity; (2) speaker orientation focuses on the dynamic construction of discourse meaning from objectivity to subjectivity; (3) hearer orientation emphasises the dynamic construction of discourse meaning from subjectivity to intersubjectivity; (4) social interaction orientation concerns the interaction between speakers and hearers in social discursive practices. The study broadens the research perspective of intersubjectivity, provides a feasible analysis framework to deeply explore intersubjectivity, helps dig up the role of humans as communicative subjects in discourse and communication, and explores the implicit interaction between speakers and hearers.

Keywords: intersubjectivity, philosophy, cognition, discourse, construction, speaker, hearer

INTRODUCTION

Language, the home of human existence, is a communicative tool and the product of communication among communicative subjects (the speaker and the hearer). Human existence in the real world triggers the creation of meaning (Heidegger 2006: 63). Moreover, humans are intermediaries between their inner mind and outer world (Ricoeur 1986: 3). A single word has the power to evoke a designated label of an object and subsequently generate a mental image (Gadamer 2004: 62). Thus, language, which consists of words, is closely interrelated with human's mental image. Language comprises a total of objective propositions (Wittgenstein 2019: 1), besides, speakers also encode their views, emotions and opinions in discourse,

which is the subjectivity of language or subjectivity in this study. Subjectivity is a characteristic of language, that is, discourse expresses the speaker's 'self' and reflects the speaker's attitude, feelings, affect, and cognitive stance. Meanwhile, apart from expressing personal subjective factors, the speakers will also pay attention to the hearer's 'self', such as social identity, status, or cognitive states, to better achieve their communicative purpose when producing discourse, which is called the intersubjectivity of language or intersubjectivity in this study. Intersubjectivity is the linguistic realisation of the speaker's concern over the hearer (Brems 2021: 333). The speaker organises and expresses discourse from the perspective of the hearer, and the speaker concerns the hearer's attitude toward the discourse contents and their understanding of the discourse contents (Ding 2019: 333). Like subjectivity, intersubjectivity is also a characteristic of language. Intersubjectivity is the proposition that the experience of humans appears during the shared and embodied knowledge, which is influenced by culture and language (Tembo et al. 2023: 1). As a basic attribute of language, intersubjectivity is the way people act as communicative subjects in language. Recently, intersubjectivity has gradually become a hot topic in the field of linguistics and philosophy (Traugott 2010; Nuyts 2012; Luft, Schlimme 2013; Li 2023; Brems 2021; Zhang 2023; Paolucci 2022; Ding 2019; Huang 2019; Tembo et al. 2023).

The relationship between subjectivity and objectivity occupies an important place in Nagel's philosophy (Zhang 2023: 71). In philosophy, subjectivity and objectivity are often used to explain people's practical and cognitive activities. Objectivity is often associated with the apparent certainty of publicly observable events, whereas subjectivity tends to be related to unsubstantiated and unverifiable personal feelings, beliefs, or values (Mascolo, Kallio 2020: 6). Usually, subjectivity is a concept as opposed to objectivity, mainly concerned with the speaker's self-expression and the reflection of the speaker's views and opinions, or the speaker's self-imprint in discourse. Specially, personal pronouns, not only 'I' but also 'he', are closely related with subjectivity (Paolucci 2022: 1257). Objectivity focuses on the proposition of the objective world and is a concept relative to subjectivity, whereas subjectivity emphasises the speaker's views, beliefs, attitudes, or stance toward objective events. Speakers cannot convey the information or proposition in a completely neutral and objective way when describing the objective world. They inevitably encode subjective elements, such as their attitudes, feelings, or viewpoints toward the proposition or information. Subjectivity and intersubjectivity are closely associated with each other. Regarding the same proposition, the speakers not only express objective thoughts, describe objective things and state objective facts, but also express their subjective attitudes, thoughts and perceptions, and consider the hearer's 'self'. Intersubjectivity is the process of cognitive coordination and communicative interaction between the speaker and the hearer in social discursive practices. The construction process of intersubjectivity is dynamic, interactive and social. The speaker, hearer and their social interaction play important roles in constructing intersubjectivity.

Scholars have studied the intersubjectivity of language from different perspectives and made great achievements, such as the pragmatic perspective (Traugott 2010; Manns et al. 2022; Lepadat 2023) and the cognitive perspective (Nuyts 2012; Conrad 2022). Some scholars have noticed subjectivity from a philosophical perspective (Peng 2021, 2022; Joldersma 2022; Leidenhag 2022; Garrison 2022; Jaros, Brentari 2022; Groenhout 2023). However, few studies on the intersubjectivity of language, especially discourse, are conducted from a philosophical standpoint, not to mention integrating the philosophical and cognitive perspectives. Also, the dynamic construction process of intersubjectivity in discourse is rarely explored by scholars.

Taking the actual discursive practices as examples, this study integrated philosophical and cognitive perspectives, employed qualitative analysis and speculative methods, and proposed a framework for the dynamic construction of intersubjectivity. It explored the dynamic construction process of discourse meaning from objectivity to subjectivity to intersubjectivity from three orientations: speaker, hearer, and social interaction orientations. The findings can provide valuable references for more deeply and thoroughly understanding the discourse meaning, especially its subjective meaning, and exploring the crucial role of humans in discourse and communication.

STATE OF THE ART

Cognitive Study of Intersubjectivity

Scholars have made various interpretations of intersubjectivity from the cognitive perspective. Intersubjectivity is considered not a means of encoding but representing meaning. Evaluations are intersubjective if the speakers indicate that they share evaluations with others. Verhagen defined intersubjectivity as the mutual manipulation of the cognitive states between the interlocutors and believed that the speaker and the listener are active participants in communication (Verhagen 2005: 1). However, little attention has been paid to the role that social contexts played in constructing intersubjectivity. Li explored the intersubjectivity mechanism of stance expressions in discourse from the perspective of cognitive grammar, manifesting that the current spatial patterns of discourse are conducive to grasping the intersubjectivity of stance expressions in communication (Li 2020: 37). However, Li ignored the role of different modes in the stance interaction. Brems proposed the subtypes of intersubjective meaning (i.e. attitudinal, responsive and textual) and attempted to propose some formal identification criteria for this pragmatic-semantic concept (Brems 2021: 333). Ding summarised the research status of intersubjectivity and pointed out the existing problems in the current research on Chinese intersubjectivity (Ding 2019: 333). Huang introduced and summarised the intersubjectivity theory of Nuyss and pointed out that the theory still has some improvements (Huang 2019: 72).

Philosophical Study of Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity

Scholars have conducted many studies on subjectivity and intersubjectivity, but few are from a philosophical perspective. Subjectivity and objectivity are a pair of interrelated co-existing elements, language is the home of humans as the subjects of life, and human life and language exploration share the same identity (Liu 2009: 9). Peng constructed a philosophical cognitive analysis framework of subjectivity and explored its philosophical and cognitive existence (Peng 2022: 219). However, she focused only on the exploration of subjectivity and lacked the investigation of intersubjectivity in discourse. Husserl noted that all existence is formed in the subject of human consciousness (Husserl 2012: 198) but did not mention the importance of human consciousness in meaning construction.

Intersubjectivity is the basis of human behaviours and actions. Specifically, intersubjectivity involves the structural analysis of others' bodies, psychological experiences and social interaction behaviours. Generally, intersubjectivity includes structural analysis of space-time objectivity, the natural and spiritual world, and interactive cultural understanding. Accordingly, the research of scientific theories such as natural science and social science is bound to

involve intersubjectivity. Malpas studied the philosophical conceptions of intersubjectivity and believed that it reflected the relationship between people (Malpas 2000: 587), but paid insufficient attention to the social interaction between people. Luft and Schlimme integrated the two statements of Jaspers and Husserl about intersubjectivity and applied them to psychiatric practice to explain interactions and the feelings of others (Luft, Schlimme 2013: 345). Tembo et al. discussed the different philosophical structures of intersubjectivity and their contributions to phenomenological nursing inquiry based on the philosophical views of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger and Gadamer (Tembo et al. 2023: 1). However, they overlooked the specific connotations of intersubjectivity.

The above studies revealed scholars' different understandings of intersubjectivity. However, these studies lacked to dig into the speaker's deeper meanings encoded in language. Moreover, the previous exploration of intersubjectivity was mainly carried out from a single perspective, such as the perspective of cognitive linguistics. Research from a philosophical perspective is scarce, not to mention the research by integrating philosophical and cognitive perspectives. Meanwhile, the dynamic construction of intersubjectivity was not given enough attention.

The current study integrates philosophical and cognitive perspectives, employs qualitative analysis and speculative methods, proposes a framework for the dynamic construction of discourse intersubjectivity, and examines the dynamic construction process of discourse meaning from objectivity to subjectivity and then to intersubjectivity from three dimensions: speaker orientation, hearer orientation and social interaction orientation. The study aims to better understand the communicative subjects' existence in discourse, cognitive interactions and subjective factors behind discourse, and to explore the philosophical and cognitive attributes of discourse intersubjectivity.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

In communication, the speaker invites the hearer to participate in reasoning caused by the linguistic expressions, changes the hearer's cognitive system and accordingly adjusts the common basis of the two communicative subjects. The basic communicative process consists of at least two subjects and one object and is the interaction of the subjects with the object. Discourse with implicit or explicit subjective elements reflects subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Subjectivity is also the negotiation and interaction between the subjective attitudes of the two communicative subjects toward the same object (Liu 2009: 10). Intersubjectivity highlights the cognitive coordination between communicative subjects to achieve the epistemological balance with the communicative objects. Accordingly, the present study proposes a framework for the dynamic construction of discourse intersubjectivity by integrating philosophical and cognitive perspectives to explore the construction process of discourse meaning from the objective and systematic to intersubjective use meaning (Figure).

The figure lists three orientations: speaker, hearer and social interaction orientations. The construction process of discourse meaning is from objectivity to subjectivity and intersubjectivity. First, speaker orientation reflects the speaker-centred orientation of discourse meaning, focusing on the process of discourse meaning from the objective propositional meaning to the speaker's subjective meaning. Second, hearer orientation presents the hearer-centred orientation of the discourse meaning, reflecting the intersubjective process in which the speaker pays attention to the hearer's shared knowledge and cognitive coordination.

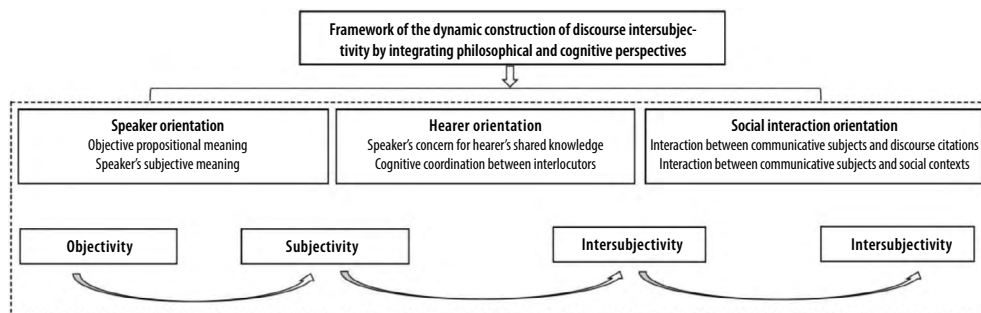


Figure. Framework for the dynamic construction of discourse intersubjectivity by integrating philosophical and cognitive perspectives

This process reveals the shift of discourse meaning from the speaker's attitude or perspective to the hearer's understanding, attitude, and response to the discourse contents. Finally, the social interaction orientation is embodied in the interaction between the communicative subjects, the discourse citations and the social contexts, emphasising that communication is a process of social interaction. The speaker and the hearer are regarded as active participants, influencing each other and adjusting conceptualisation to achieve the cognitive balance of a conceptualised object through cognitive coordination. Speaker, hearer and social interaction orientations are important construction processes of intersubjectivity.

DYNAMIC CONSTRUCTION OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY IN DISCOURSE

Speaker Orientation: Discourse Meaning from Objectivity to Subjectivity

Subjectivity and objectivity are closely related to the subject and object. In philosophy, subjectivity and objectivity of language are a matter of degree, and objectivity can be viewed as the minimum degree of subjectivity. The subject refers to an individual or a social group with consciousness and active cognition, whereas the object is what is observed by the cognitive or other activities of the subject. The objectivity of language is the statement of facts, such as the common sense of life, natural laws, scientific truth, customs, or other objective existence and social rules agreed by social groups.

(1) 'Grain Rain originates from the old saying, "Rain brings up the growth of hundreds of grains," which shows that this period of rainfall is extremely important for the growth of crops. The Grain Rain signals the end of cold weather and a rapid rise in temperature' (*China Daily*).

Example (1) objectively expounds the climate laws existing in nature and introduces the climate characteristics of grain rain in the Chinese 24 solar terms without the speaker's subjective elements. After the grain rain solar term, the warm and humid air mass, the temperature, the air humidity and the rainfall will gradually increase, which is conducive to crop growth.

Given that language is not an objective proposition without humans and their experiences (Peng 2022: 217), meaning is constructed by the speaker's opinions, beliefs and experiences. Speakers' personal experience or cognition will inevitably influence how they perceive or evaluate the events described, that is, how the speakers express their opinions

and suggestions to the hearers. Therefore, besides objectivity, the speaker's subjective meanings embodied in example (1) should also be noticed. By saying the discourse, the speakers want to arouse the hearers' attention to make a good use of the rainfall, indicating their love for the grain rain and the expectation for the healthy growth of the grains and a bumper harvest in autumn.

Hearer Orientation: Discourse Meaning from Subjectivity to Intersubjectivity

One aspect of the hearer orientation is the speakers' concern over the hearers' shared knowledge. People with different cultural backgrounds have diverse cultural models. After the speakers produce some discourse, the hearers will make certain reasoning to interpret the speakers' meaning behind the discourse better. Moreover, although the communicative subjects are in the same cultural model, their language expression, cognitive ability and speech behaviour will also be influenced by specific social and cultural contexts. In other words, social groups in different regions have their specific cultural backgrounds, cognitive styles and ways of thinking.

(2) 'You know what they say: If you don't ask, you don't dance. **You know what they say: Every dog has his day. You know what they say:** If anything can go wrong, it will' (COCA 2012).

In example (2), the speaker uses the repeating expression '*You know what they say*', attempting to make an assumption and convey a consensus to the hearer. The assumption is that based on the premise that the hearer already knows, the hearer and the speaker can form a shared understanding. In the social and cultural contexts, the proverb '*Every dog has his day*' shows that every individual will have a good fortune someday and that even the unluckiest people will have a chance to succeed. It reflects the Western value that everyone has the opportunity to achieve success, honor, or happiness sometime. The speaker here tries to convey to the hearer that risks, uncertainties, opportunities and possibilities for success exist in life. This cognitive coordination can trigger hearers to dig into the deep meaning behind proverbs and, to some extent, trigger their emotional resonance.

Another aspect is the cognitive coordination between the communicative subjects. The first function of language use is to coordinate cognitive states between the communicative subjects (Verhagen 2005: 8). Speakers establish the consciousness of the hearer's existence in discourse and express their concern over the hearer's cognitive 'self' and social image 'self' to realise certain communicative purposes. During the process, intersubjectivity is presented, the cognitive coordination between communicative subjects is emphasised, and different linguistic expressions are employed to coordinate the cognitive states of the hearer, thus, promoting the communicative subjects' cognitive interaction.

(3) 'Although I guess I, personally, don't ever HAVE to be right... because I KNOW I am. So **I guess you could say** I am the one that wants to be happy. Hope that brought a smile to your face' (COCA 2012).

In example (3), the personal demonstrative pronoun '*you*' narrows the psychological distance between the speaker and the hearer, delivering the speaker's cognitive coordination. Meanwhile, '*I guess you could say*' indicates the speaker's subjective judgment on the hearer's understanding of the discourse meaning, transmitting the cognitive interaction between the communicative subjects. Therefore, communication is a dynamic psychological process that can convey the discourse meaning and realise the communicative functions.

Social Interaction Orientation: Interaction Between Communicative Subjects and Discourse Citations and Social Contexts

Speakers and hearers have diversified understandings of citations in discourse given different factors, such as encyclopedic knowledge, cultural background and cognitive level. The speaker needs to select proper citations to achieve the shared information in cognition and culture by the communicative subjects by constructing a common communicative situation with the hearer. Moreover, with an understanding of the citations and the specific communicative contexts, the hearer also tends to infer the speaker's subjective intention. In certain social contexts, the speaker and the hearer conduct cognitive coordination through discourse citations and reach a consensus on a certain event.

(4) 'Because the world is changing. As the Irish poet said, "**All changed, changed utterly: A terrible beauty [has been] born.**" We must choose to be a nation of hope, unity, and optimism or a nation of fear and division and hate' (Remarks by President Biden at the United We Stand Summit on September 15, 2022).

In example (4), the speaker Biden expresses his feelings, proposes his opinions toward the social context and provides the choices to the changing world by citing '*All changed, changed utterly: A terrible beauty [has been] born*' to make the hearer support him, understand and accept his subjective opinions. The citation is from *Easter 1916* by William Yeats, emphasising that the world has changed, and has completely changed. Moreover, Biden uses the first-person plural form '*we*' to close the psychological distance with the hearer, increase the chance to succeed in communication, and form a united stance that we should change in response to changes in the world.

CONCLUSIONS

The dynamic construction process of intersubjectivity in discourse by integrating philosophical and cognitive perspectives was explored. The study provided a feasible framework to apprehend intersubjectivity in discourse and its dynamic construction process. The following conclusions can be drawn:

(1) The proposed framework clarifies the dynamic construction of discourse meaning from objectivity to subjectivity and then to intersubjectivity.

(2) Speaker orientation focuses on the dynamic construction of discourse meaning from objectivity to subjectivity.

(3) Hearer orientation emphasises the dynamic construction of discourse meaning from subjectivity to intersubjectivity.

(4) Social interaction orientation concerns the interaction between speakers and hearers in social discursive practice.

The study is conducive to exploring the existence of humans in discourse further, explaining the dynamic construction process of discourse intersubjectivity through the surface phenomena of discourse, and providing references for systematically analysing the phenomenon of discourse intersubjectivity. It is also helpful for speakers to effectively express their subjective components according to the hearers' knowledge or experience perceptions in social interaction. However, the examples in this study are limited. More examples will be analysed for future research to make the study more convincing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was supported by the National Social Sciences Foundation Project in China (Grant No. 23BYY102).

Received 3 October 2023

Accepted 18 January 2024

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BINGZHUAN PENG, XIN WEI

Dinaminis intersubjektyvumo konstravimas diskurse integruojant filosofinę ir kognityvinę perspektyvas

Santrauka

Intersubjektyvumas kaip žmonių diskurso būdas yra kalbėtojų rūpinimasis klausytojais. Siekiant atskleisti esminius filosofinius ir pažintinius diskurso intersubjektyvumo požymius, pasiūlyta dinamiško diskurso intersubjektyvumo konstravimo sistema, integruojant filosofinę ir kognityvinę perspektyvas. Naudota kokybinė analizė ir spekuliatyvūs metodai. Intersubjektyvumas diskurse ir jo dinamiškas konstravimo procesas buvo tiriamas atsižvelgiant į kalbėtojo, klausytojo ir socialinės sąveikos orientaciją. Rezultatai rodo: 1) siūloma struktūra išaiškina dinamišką diskurso prasmės konstravimą nuo objektyvumo iki subjektyvumo ir intersubjektyvumo; 2) kalbėtojas orientuotas į dinamišką diskurso prasmės konstravimą nuo objektyvumo iki subjektyvumo; 3) klausytojo orientacija pabrėžia dinamišką diskurso prasmės konstravimą nuo subjektyvumo iki intersubjektyvumo; 4) orientacija į socialinę sąveiką yra susijusi su kalbėtojų ir klausytojų sąveika socialinėje diskursyvinėje praktikoje. Tyrimas praplečia intersubjektyvumo tyrimo perspektyvą, pateikia įmanomą analizės pagrindą, leidžiantį išsamiai ištirti intersubjektyvumą, padeda išsiaiškinti žmonių, kaip komunikacinių subjektų, vaidmenį diskurse ir komunikacijoje bei tiria numanomą kalbėtojų ir klausytojų sąveiką.

Raktažodžiai: intersubjektyvumas, filosofija, pažinimas, diskursas, konstrukcija, kalbėtojas, klausytojas