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## Definitions: Mutual Intelligibility, Adjustment, Readjustment and Intersubjectivity

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### 1.1. Preliminary reminders: language activity, language as a specific system, discourse and the role of subjectivity

Before diving into the heart of our subject, let us be reminded of a few definitions relating to the recurring terms that will be used. For this, we will adopt an approach that consists of progressively sharpening the focus, by starting with an expression as broad as “language activity”: this is, in fact, a whole concept of communication involved in the study of readjustment phenomena, and it is therefore necessary to spend a moment on fundamental notions.

Language can be defined as a function, the “expression of thought and communication between people” (*Le Grand Robert de la langue française*<sup>1</sup> that we adapt in English here). According to Benveniste [BEN 66, p. 60], human language differentiates from communication in animals, in that it calls for a response from the surrounding people (rather than a particular behavior, which is not a response so to speak, but a reaction). Now, according to this author, dialogue is the very “condition of human language”<sup>2</sup>. This reminder has its consequences in the study of readjustments, as these cannot be separated from an intersubjective dimension. Another property that has been highlighted, and which is also of primary interest,

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1 Electronic version, 2005.

2 The author describes communication in bees in particular, used as examples due to their elaborate system of communication, in that it demonstrates the ability to formulate and interpret signs, these themselves referring to extralinguistic reality.

is the ability for human language to give rise to communication relating to linguistic data itself. According to Benveniste [BEN 66, p. 60], we can, then, see the difference between communication in animals, which does not construct messages on the basis of other messages, and human language, which enables dialogues in which “the reference to objective experience and the reaction to the linguistic manifestation are intertwined together freely, endlessly” (our translation). This characteristic of human language is also manifested through readjustments, in which human language is taken more or less explicitly as the object. Let us note here that communication in animals in its entirety<sup>3</sup> relies on code, meaning, a set of fixed signs, whereas human language is characterized by the possibility of attaching our subjectivity to it. The subjectivity in question here is “the locutor’s ability to make him/herself the “subject”, that is to say, to appropriate to him/herself an entire language by designating him/herself as ‘I’” [BEN 66, pp. 259–260]. Personal, as well as deictic pronouns are the most obvious manifestations of the expression of this subjectivity. But the fact that language is not a code is also manifested by the often equivocal character of signs, a parameter that we will come back to in detail in the second chapter.

Human language activity is implemented into language as a specific system which, according to the *Grand Robert*, is a set of vocal signs (speech) and, possibly, graphic signs (writing). It is a system for expressing the mind and for communication, which is common to a social, human group (a linguistic community). This shared system must, however, be compatible with individual representations, intervening on an infralinguistic level. It is, therefore, on this level that the need for readjustment(s) is triggered. The concept of language as a specific system is often used interchangeably with that of language as an activity. When we distinguish the first from the second, it is ultimately to “apply to it to a particular form of language, limited to a group” Marouzeau (see [MAR 43, p. 128]). Language as a specific system must, in addition, be understood as a potential system of expression, as opposed to discourse or speech, which corresponds to its momentary expression. Such a distinction is particularly present in Saussure [SAU 16], according to whom:

“By separating language [from speech], by the same token we separate:

- the social from the individual;
- the essential from the incidental or more or less accidental.

Language is not a characteristic of a speaking subject, it is the product registered passively by the individual [...]. Speech is, on the contrary, an individual act.” (our translation).

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3 The animal kingdom presents, however, very elaborate cases of communication (deserving further study to specify its parameters) particularly within primates or even whales.

Speech, here, is understood in the sense of discourse, that is to say, as language production in context. More precisely, discourse relates to the set of utterances produced by a person or a set of people. In the framework of this study, the distinction between language and discourse is of capital importance, as readjustments can only take place in discourse. But, we will see that this discourse activity can be intended to clarify an element presented in language as being equivocal, or ambiguous, for example. Even more frequently, discourse is taken itself as the object, to specify or rectify itself, in a perspective of mutual intelligibility.

## 1.2. Mutual intelligibility, adjustment, readjustment

Mutual intelligibility, which can be defined simply as the mutual understanding between enunciators, relates to a zone of connection between subjectivities. This intersecting zone is defined here within the field of language, and more precisely, linguistics. Put otherwise, in this study we are essentially considering the level of verbal expression, leaving the field of body language, including paraverbal communication, to one side. Mutual intelligibility is supposed to be reached through a fusion, or at least a partial harmony, of the representations of the enunciator and the other he/she is speaking to. Now this fusion, on the linguistic level, generally goes through notional representations that are not obvious, as previously mentioned. How can we characterize these (re)adjustment phenomena?

First of all, let us take the dictionary definitions, in order to pinpoint the meanings of these notions in current language. This will allow us to define them better on the linguistic level. Reviewing these usual definitions is especially important as the metalinguistic use of these terms is derived from a metaphor, and is borrowed from ordinary language. The use of such metaterms is, then, close to the activity of language itself, in that its outlines are not absolutely fixed and predefined. To use a phrase by Culioli (quoted by Normand [NOR 12, p. 29]), “metalanguage belongs to language”.

The first definition provided by *Le Grand Robert* (that we adapt in English here) for the term “adjustment” is technical: it denotes the degree of tightness or looseness between two assembled components. A figurative meaning then comes from this definition: that of adaptation, bringing together (so that the various parts of a set come together as a whole). By extension, adjustment (often used in the plural, in this sense) is also understood as a form of accommodation, a means of conciliation. Whatever the level on which adjustment is considered, each time it is a question of bridging the gap, of connection, and complying with a certain level of expectation.

Now, regarding the notion of “readjustment”, the same dictionary provides as an older meaning: “giving back correctness, precision to [something]”, and for a current meaning: “putting back in the right place, or in a satisfactory state, for convenient use”. The synonym “redo” is also given.

Following these definitions, several points are raised:

- contrary to the term “adjustment”, the term “readjustment” is not defined on a technical level, and it is therefore not an initial assembly of components which is evoked;

- the current meaning of the term “adjustment” seems quite close to that of “readjustment”, where a target value seems to be aimed for;

- a notable difference does exist, however, in that “readjustment” can be given as a synonym of “redo”, which is not the case for adjustment. We can, therefore, say that adjustment will be considered as a first phase of utterance construction, whilst readjustment will be considered as a second stage, implying that it comes afterwards.

Jalenques [JAL 02], in a study of the prefix *re* and its variants (the French allomorphs *ré* and *ra*), distinguishes three main values for this morpheme: an iteration value (when a phenomenon, denoted by the base that the prefix attaches to, is repeated), a return value (to an initial or expected situation), a modification value (from the phenomenon denoted by the base, that is to say the term adjustment; we understand the synonym “redo” given by the dictionary in this sense). In the present case, it seems that the iteration value is not the most relevant. On the other hand, we will particularly hold on to the value of returning to an adjusted situation, and also take into account the modification value, considering that a readjustment may eventually come to modify an initial operation of adjustment.

Let us see how these notions can be applied to the linguistic level. Adjustment, from an enunciative viewpoint, “relates to putting the utterance in contact with the referent according to a relationship of compliance with the mental representations that the enunciator has about this referent” [FIL 12, p. 341] (our translation). It is, therefore, the harmony between forms and meaning which is at play here. This mechanism takes place “more often than not without fully being aware of it” [FIL 12, p. 342]. In a normal, ordinary exchange, meaning when there is no obstacle present, the work of regulation that enunciators engage in happens discretely. This is a question of “implicit adjustment”, according to Culioli [CUL 99b, p 137]. However, the selections of markers used by the enunciator do not always produce the intended representations with the co-enunciator (this lack of harmony can either be acknowledged or anticipated). Sometimes, the enunciator also finds him/herself faced with situations where the selected markers do not, or no longer, suit them. It is

precisely in such circumstances, that is to say, in the case of marked adjustment, “when the enunciator makes him/herself not a producer but also an interpreter”, according to Filippi-Deswelle [FIL 12, pp. 342–343], that we can speak of readjustments. Readjustments relate to either preventing or eliminating discrepancies or non-coincidences. Various types of linguistic non-coincidences have been highlighted by Authier-Revuz [AUT 93]. Here we will take the categories that are most relevant to this study, namely those that may give rise to readjustments:

- **interlocutory non-coincidences**, which concern the relationship between co-enunciators, particularly when the words used are not shared, or when the enunciator anticipates a problem of harmony, or balance;

- **non-coincidences between the words themselves**, given other meanings, associated with other words (through, in particular, the play on polysemy or homonymy); the wording is, then, ambiguous;

- **non-coincidences between words and things**, mainly relating to flaws in nomination.

A certain number of readjustments are therefore produced when such non-coincidences are either anticipated, or detected afterwards by the enunciators. The objective is to reduce this lack of harmony, on the one hand to make discourse comply with the enunciator’s representations, and on the other, to make these representations coincide with those of the co-enunciator.

Ultimately, we can distinguish two levels of regulation by the enunciator; in a first stage of utterance construction, the enunciator will make adjustments by working on notions, to delimit them better. Let us specify here, in line with Culioli’s works, that a notion is attached to a given term, and can be defined as a set of physical and cultural properties. In the second stage of utterance construction, on the discourse level, the enunciator will eventually make readjustments. These consist of modulations (clarifications, rectifications, added elements, minor or even major re-elaborations) on the discourse taking place, performed after a reflexive view on its production, leading to more or less important re-elaborations. In any case, it is a matter of seeking harmony from self to self, from the self to reality, or from the self to the other. We can distinguish two configurations in this last case: polemic and non-polemic contexts. In the first configuration, the enunciator is not necessarily looking to share opinions, but rather means of expression. In the second, the enunciator is aiming more for a coincidence of opinions.

Using (re)adjustment presupposes, in any case, that there is a gap in language – as Culioli pointed out – or at least in discourse. The gap here is understood in the sense of an interval, a crack, an area lacking connection or junction between two elements. It shows that language, in fact, is not a code. This means that there is no univocal relationship between signs and their extralinguistic referents. A single referent does not necessarily relate to a sign (an object named in reality, whether concrete or mental) and, conversely, an extralinguistic referent is not necessarily named by a single sign. Hence the gaps that can exist, on the level of the enunciator, between the latter's representations and the formulations used. Even more so, gaps between the enunciators' representations can be observed. This is why putting our mental representations into words is not always easy, and why communication is often awkward.

### 1.3. Exploring the starting point: adjustment in TEO by Antoine Culioli

As the term adjustment is our starting point, we will characterize it more specifically by putting it back in the theoretical framework where it was formed, namely the TEO. Adjustment, as used by Culioli, is given an epistemological dimension, since an entire vision of speech is being developed. TEO thus presents the construction of reference by taking into account the absence of term to term relations between the objects of thoughts, the words of language and the extralinguistic universe<sup>4</sup>. In TEO, three operations correspond to enunciative activity: these are the operations of representation, reference assignment, and regulation [CUL 99b, p. 161].

Operations of representation, as Mélis points out [MEL 12, pp. 64–65], are present across several levels:

- 1) the notional level, that of mental representations;
- 2) the level of arranging markers, interpreted as traces of the first level;
- 3) the level of metalinguistic representations, referring to the way language itself functions.

The operations of reference assignment relate to the construction of reference. To be interpreted, the lexis (propositional content that can be predicated or uttered, but that has not yet been predicated or uttered) needs to be situated, meaning, set into a relation of location with a set of space-time and intersubjective parameters. Thus, some operations make it possible to construct an utterance from a predicative

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4 These absences of correspondence that underpin the reference construction are recalled by Filippi-Deswelle [FIL 12, p. 11].

relationship, that is to say, “a representation of a state of affairs which can potentially be validated” [CUL 99a, p. 167].

Operations of regulation, which are closely linked to operations of reference assignment, mean that the enunciator, when constructing a system of referential values, completes this construction in relation to another subject (the co-enunciator), with whom his/her representations can be shared. Adjustments precisely correspond to these operations of regulation<sup>5</sup> of the enunciator’s activity. When the term adjustment is used by Culioli, it therefore describes the set of processes allowing enunciators to make their formulations (supposedly) more in harmony with the described reality, and more understandable for the other. According to Culioli [CUL 99b, p. 91] (our translation):

“The relationship between enunciators leads to a complex adjustment because we do not function as pre-set and synchronized machines, that have a common set of fixed representations. In summary, there is no pre-settings or pre-established harmony. This means that we harmonize and adjust ourselves to others so that our subjective representations are within reach of the other”.

However, adjustment is more of an activity than a result. It is an attempt to reduce existing gaps between what is said, and what is meant, or between the representations of the enunciators themselves, but it is not a path to total harmony.

This irreducible margin, for that matter, can be found in the inherent ambiguity of the term adjustment. According to Normand’s terms (translated here): “adjustment means establishing a set of references as well as the alterations, rectifications and fine tuning, that allow us to get as close as possible to the targeted result” [NOR 12, p. 31]. Moreover, Culioli himself states that we must not confuse “adjustment” with “fitting”. The notion of fitting – on the side of result – evokes more of an assembly sized to fit exact dimensions, when we have made a component the perfect size to make it fit with another. Adjustment, on the other hand, relates to phenomena allowing the enunciator to move towards and aim for fitting, but it seems that the latter corresponds to an asymptomatic limit, one that is never truly reached. Thus, according to Culioli, we must not understand adjustment “as the work of adjusting to the nearest micrometer” [CUL 02, p. 232]. Ultimately, adjustment must be perceived in a dynamic perspective, one that takes the targeted values into account.

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<sup>5</sup> Such is the point of view of different authors, such as Albresprit, Bourdier or Mélis, in [FIL 12].

It is also possible to take the image of negotiation into account. To use Huart's terms [HUA 12, p. 18], we may speak of a "negotiation between an intended meaning and a formulation, which is nearly never adequate". Even if this adequation, or harmony, is not perfect, what counts the most in the end, is the "semiotic loop" at work<sup>6</sup>. Indeed, the text or discourse created is "produced with a view to being recognized as being produced to be recognized" [CUL 03, p. 144]. Additionally, adjustment may happen more or less consciously. In any case, it corresponds to an activity that we can describe as epilinguistic. This is a question of "everyday metalinguistics", metalinguistics that "gives access to the speaker's sensations about speech (about language, meaning, communication)" (see Authier-Revuz [AUT 93, p. 240]).

The phenomena of adjustment remind us in addition that, in dialogue, meaning is constructed collectively: we can, therefore, speak of "co-construction" of meaning. This means that in no case can we bring the utterance back to an operation of producing meaning by a single enunciator. Here, it is a matter of building meaning together with the co-enunciator. We find, then, at the heart of the theory, the interaction of the enunciator and co-enunciator's parameters; this phenomenon relates to what Descl  s [DES 02] describes as the "construction of dialogic systems". Put differently, the symbolic representations linked to the function of dialogue (which is fully distinct from simplified communication, that depends solely on good utterance formation), as well as symbolic representations linked to the expression of thought, are at play here. Moreover, for Culioli, the term adjustment is generally used in conjunction with "intersubjective", and is applied to the construction of mutual intelligibility between enunciators. The notion of intersubjectivity will be developed further on in this chapter.

In addition, it seems that the notion of adjustment can sometimes be applied to the field of intersubjectivity, and sometimes outside this field. Still according to Culioli, language "is used to regulate us, in relation to the other and ourselves" [CUL 02, p. 196]. There are, indeed, situations where the enunciator does not aim directly for mutual intelligibility, but firstly looks to improve nomination, to make his/her thoughts and words coincide, or the words used and the things referred to. This field of regulation could be described, not as intersubjective, but "intrasubjective". This last label is not present as such as in Culioli's work. It is, however, used afterwards as a suggestion, in the collective work presented by Filippi-Deswelle [FIL 12]. The field in question ultimately focuses on the harmony between thought and speech.

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<sup>6</sup> This phenomenon is set out in detail in the introduction.



#### 1.4. Delimiting adjustment and the importance of the concept of readjustment

Although TEO does not explicitly limit the concept of adjustment to a notional field, it seems that these types of phenomena are targeted as a priority. For Culioli [CUL 90, pp. 129–130], indeed, adjustment is linked to the ability of linguistic systems to become deformed:

“Deformation is a transformation that modifies a configuration so that some properties remain invariant throughout transformation while others vary. In order for there to be deformability, there has to be a schematic form (in that there may be both modification and invariance), and deforming factors as well as a margin of flexibility, i.e. a space for adjustment endowed with topological properties” (our translation).

Let us note, following Albrespit [ALB 12, p. 84], that this conception underlines the ambivalent character of the representation brought about by the markers themselves: we observe a “hard, undeformable, stable part, which ensures a minimum understanding, and a soft, variable part, which allows intersubjective play, regulation, adjustment”. The notion of adjustment, thus presented, seems to function at a local level, and to be the consequence of one of the essential elements of TEO: the construction of the notional domain. Any mention of a notion can indeed be accompanied by a topological diagram, called a notional domain. This diagram has an interior, marked I (establishing everything relating to this notion), and an exterior, marked E (establishing everything that does not relate to the notion). In addition, defining an organizational center (made up of the occurrences possessing the characteristic properties of the notion) comes down to placing a gradient and a frontier marked F (or an intermediate zone<sup>7</sup>) relating to a “space of adjustment”, to use Culioli’s words. This space allows the enunciator to play on the fact of belonging, or not belonging, to a category, and correlatively translates the fact that notions cannot be categorized in an all or nothing approach.

Albrespit [ALB 12, pp. 85–89], in addition, gives examples of the leeway offered by language as well as the possible variations around a notion. According to the author, “with derivatives ending in *ish* or *like*, for example, the play is qualitative in nature, in that there is a selection of characteristic features and properties”. He also quotes approximation markers as typical examples of adjustment: gradient markers (represented by adverbs such as *exactly*, *absolutely*, *completely*, *perfectly*,

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<sup>7</sup> This intermediate zone establishes that which does not truly relate to the notion.

*totally*), from the most precise (*precisely*) to least precise (*approximately, almost, nearly, partially, roughly, some, about*), and epistemic markers, going from the most certain (*definitely, positively, for sure*) to the least certain (adverbs *maybe, like*). Other authors, such as Huat [HUA 12, p. 125], list QLT A NP form constructions amongst the forms of adjustment (*such a fuss, what a mess, rather a chore, quite a dilemma, how big a piece*).

The markers at play are the traces of operations regarding the way of apprehending words, their denotation, and their articulation. The corresponding work, being essentially notional, is a constituting step in the construction of the utterance. But, the fundamental reasons motivating this adjustment – namely, the willingness to reach a harmony between enunciators (intersubjective harmony) or harmony between thought and speech (intrasubjective harmony) – can, in some cases, lead to regulation involving another level: the assessment of uttered segments, or even whole utterances, that have just been produced. Moreover, operations of regulation can intervene not only at the moment when the utterance is constructed, but also afterwards. This later stage corresponds to a stage of re-elaboration (or reexamining) of the segment, or the utterance, in question. The configurations at play are necessarily discursive in nature, since they link uttered segments (or even entire utterances). Only this act of connection can reflect the reworking process, that is, the retroactive evaluation [FIL 12, p. 349], for which we have chosen the label, “readjustment”.

Authors such as Ranger [RAN 12], Gilbert [GIL 89] or Deléchelle [DEL 11] study these types of phenomena. Ranger examines, for example, *post hoc* rectifications, marked by WH-EVER forms (for example: *She wants to move to the country, wherever that is*<sup>8</sup>). The author suggests in the title that the label “readjustment” would be relevant. In fact, he entitles the work *Adjustments and readjustments: operations and markers*. Gilbert focuses on constructions with *rather*, when this marker takes an epilinguistic dimension, and particularly X, (*or*) *rather* Y and *not* X, *but rather* Y. Deléchelle studies the complex connector *but then (again)*, which is also used within a post-utterance, in the framework of “a personal evaluation, which brings a new perspective, in a non-polemic way” [DEL 11, p. 233]. The author states that this type of phenomenon not only favors regulating speech between enunciators, but also contributes to the discursive cohesion (a dimension that we will return to in the analysis of various markers).

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8 The very example is borrowed from Ranger [RAN 12, p. 55].

A large number of linguistic phenomena should also be taken into account under the “readjustment” label, namely:

- reformulations<sup>9</sup>, whether they are paraphrastic or corrective (of type: X, *in other words* Y; X, *or rather* Y);
- recentering (by X *in fact* Y for example), upgrading processes (using the X *or even* Y sequence in particular) or downgrading processes (using X *or at least* Y);
- distancing phenomena (by X *anyway* Y) and revising an element to give way to another (in X *after all* Y type constructions);
- play linked to the use of metalinguistic expressions (X *I almost said* Y) or parenthetical segments;
- the use of discourse structuration markers (for example, X. *You know*, Y).

The common point in all these constructions, even if a detailed analysis will show pragmatic and intersubjective orientations of a different nature, lies in the fact that the Y segment is systematically formed on the basis of X: it is presented as a reworking of this X, and cannot be understood without it, because it is attached to it. A marker (which can also consist of a fixed phrase or a punctuation sign), establishes a link between the segments. The nature of the elements able to play this role will be detailed afterwards. In all cases, the pattern is the following:

X + linking marker + Y (= reworking based on X)

It is, therefore, no longer the notion that is directly worked on here, it is rather an operation performed afterwards on all or part of the utterance given in the first segment. We are dealing with a validated relationship which is constructed in a first stage of enunciation, and then reconstructed afterwards. In addition, segment Y constitutes each time a “meta-utterance” in relation to X, to use the wording of Authier-Revuz [AUT 95b]. To refer to this linguist’s works, “meta-utterances” will describe all the loops that the discourse generates on itself, when it is taken as the object. This self-representation of the utterance within an utterance can take many forms, from the most explicit (possibly using italics or speech marks) to non-marked forms such as well-developed complements, for example. With the readjustment markers mentioned above, a reference is made to earlier speech, but the latter is more or less explicit (we find, for example, the term *words* in *in other words*; on the other hand, the reference is less marked in a fixed phrase such as *or rather*). In any case, meta-enunciative comments signal a problem in coincidence between the locutor’s intention (relative to the co-enunciator’s interpretation or to the encoding of his/her own thought), and the words that express it.

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9 In French linguistics, Richard [RIC 14] also speaks of readjustments in regard to phenomena such as reformulations.

In some configurations, we can establish connecting points between notional work and discourse readjustment:

- (1) None the less, the scholar from Utrecht exhibits in this paper a certain short-sightedness, **or rather** *strabismus*<sup>10</sup>.

(FLOB D0114)

A notion is actually brought into play in this example, and is reworked using the expression *or rather*. None the less, the structure here is a form of readjustment, given that it is a reworking made afterwards (and not at the same time as selecting the notion). The same construction lends itself the most often to the readjustment of a segment or entire utterance, as illustrated in this example:

- (2) Life lives on life; **or rather** *physical bodies live on physical bodies*.

(BNC BMY 1848)

This time, the entire propositional content is re-elaborated but the work of readjustment is, actually, comparable to that in (1): it is derived from a reflexive view on the wording preceding *or rather*, to improve it, either with regard to the intersubjective relationship or to the harmony between thought and formulation.

It so appears that the same overall motivations can underpin adjustments and readjustments, although the associated configurations differ. We will in fact examine the notions of intersubjectivity and the harmony between thought and speech (corresponding to what will henceforth be called *the field of intrasubjectivity*) one after the other. The objective is to better characterize them, and to understand their relevance in relation to the phenomena of adjustment and readjustment. In order to put these notions into perspective and to allude to their complexity, we will first of all put them back in their philosophical context, a hotbed of numerous debates on the subject.

### 1.5. The notion of intersubjectivity: when philosophy and linguistics meet

Intersubjectivity, as a philosophical notion, was initially developed by Kant [KAN 81], in *The Critique of Judgement*. This notion is based on the idea that men are thinking beings, able to take into account the thought of others into their own judgement. By definition, intersubjectivity therefore provides the foundation for a theory of communication. This notion was taken up again and later redeveloped by

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<sup>10</sup> In this example, as in the following examples, readjustment is indicated in italics. The readjustment introducer appears in bold.

several philosophers, such as Husserl, Arendt, Sartre, Levinas, Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze.

Let us ponder for a second on Husserl's contribution, and particularly on the point of view developed in the fifth edition of *Cartesian Meditations* [HUS 31]. The author attempts to answer the question – among others – of the modalities of conscience. Husserl then develops his theory by which, in addition to the modes of conscience relating to the self, the Ego includes ways of apprehending the world that are not limited to the self, and that take the Other into account, even when not present. Let us note that the concept of co-enunciator, used from a purely linguistic standpoint, does not require the physical presence of an interlocutor, either.

The notion of intersubjectivity is also the central focus in hermeneutic philosophy. It is particularly present in Gadamer's works, and also in those by Ricœur. In his work entitled *Truth and Method*, Gadamer [GAD 60] presents intersubjectivity as a necessary condition of communication. Understanding is founded on mechanisms that go through questions and answers. Thus, in Gadamer's hermeneutics, the possibility of intersubjectivity is neither born from identification with the Other, nor from integrating this Other, but from the construction of a temporarily common language. This vision is based on the idea that beyond words, whose definitions are globally shared, the connotations that we attach to them differ from one individual to another. This question finally joins the question of prejudices, to use the same terms as Gadamer. Far from denying their existence, the author presents them positively, not only because they are universal (and even necessary, because they are the basis of all acts of communication), but also because of the possibility that they can be overstepped.

The objective underpinning the construction of a temporarily common language is therefore to allow the Self and the Other to have a view on an object that belongs to neither one nor the other. This process corresponds to what Gadamer calls the "fusion of horizons". Each time intersubjectivity is at work, the Self arrives with his/her past and own baggage (intellectual, cultural, psychological and social) and displays an adaptation to the Other's baggage. This process is not necessarily conscious, but represents a condition that is necessary to using language. According to Gadamer, the first fusion of horizons relates to the harmony between thought and language (or, from a linguistic point of view, the objective for an enunciator is to make his/her mental representations and words coincide); it is, therefore, a matter of internal process. The second fusion of horizons is that of language and things (the perspective being to make the words we use and the extralinguistic reality coincide). A third type of harmony aimed for can be added here: the harmony between individuals. The latter must make the representations upheld by each of them

coincide with the words they use. Let us emphasize here that the crucial character of this operation is the skill that it requires. The consequence, in linguistic terms, is that adjustment – or readjustment – will be more or less successful depending on the individual.

Using Gadamer's idea that intersubjectivity is an adaptation to the other's baggage, it is possible to leave the philosophical domain and establish a link with the concept of dialogism, as put forward by Bakhtin [BAK 24, pp. 157–158]. The author, starting from the principle that the Other is vital for achieving consciousness, deduces that the human being in itself is communication with the Other. We do not forge a language for the needs of our subjectivity, but to communicate with other locutors, meaning, to create meeting points for our different subjectivities.

These are, then, the foundations for apprehending intersubjectivity and which will be especially useful as the concept is used in linguistics without any real definitions provided<sup>11</sup>. Let us now look at the phenomena located on a lower 'strata', namely those regarding the enunciator in harmony with himself/herself.

### **1.6. Intrasubjectivity or the question of harmony between thought and speech**

This is another important theme in philosophy. On the one hand, any thought developed seems to pass through language, but on the other hand, our thoughts do not always seem to be realized through verbal language (particularly in the case of perceptions or the imagination). Hence the following questions that are a source of numerous philosophical debates: is thought independent, pre-existing? Could it exist without being put into words? Is language not (through its coming into existence across languages, and more precisely, via discourse), the necessary condition of thought? The connecting question which must be asked is in regard to the possible harmony between thought and language. Is this not, in the end, a myth? The fact we often look for words or consider that they betray us could be interpreted in favor of this theory. This is, in fact, what Culioli [CUL 67, p. 65] is expressing in this sentence: "we have the feeling that words are betraying us, coming between us as "the unspeakable", this "unspeakable" thing that we cannot manage to express in the sound chain" (our translation).

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11 Thus, in Culioli's TEO, the term intersubjective is frequently associated with adjustment, but without intersubjectivity being defined beforehand. We understand, however, throughout the references that are made to it, that intersubjective adjustment relates to the processes enabling the co-enunciators' mental representations to coincide, or at least, to become closer.

Some philosophers have thus shown the limits of conceptual thoughts, or the limits of concepts – and the words that translate them – to express the forms of thoughts that are linked to perceptions and sensoriality. More specifically, Bergson has highlighted how it is impossible to conceptually grasp certain phenomena, by using the example of life itself: it is particularly difficult to apprehend from a time-flow standpoint, due to the associated concept being somewhat fixed. Grasping how we live this time-flow is more a question of intuition than concept. The whole issue is a matter of saying, of communicating this feeling, because it goes beyond language. There is precisely a lack of harmony between thought and speech. Speech can therefore always use metaphors and negative descriptions to try to put these sorts of intuitive thoughts into words, but it would never achieve this with total perfection.

It is, however, possible to see things from another angle, by limiting the concept of thought in order to make it coincide with conceptual activity, this itself being linked to denomination. According to Kant [KAN 81], thought corresponds to an act of reason, of articulation, that produces the unity of judgements, concepts, and reasoning. In this perspective, total harmony between thought and language could be considered. But we still need to determine if, alongside this conceptual thought, there is not a far more complex intuitive thought (even reluctant to being put into words). According to Hegel, the same as for Kant, there are no intuitive thoughts (this is a lure): thought necessarily goes through concepts, or at the very least, through being put into words. This is the theory presented by Hegel [HEG 17, p. 462], according to whom “we are only conscious of our determined and real thoughts when we give them objective form, when we differentiate them from our interiority”. Hegel proposes that thought can only be produced by the intimate union of the internal (subjectivity) and the external (objectivity of the word). In other words, the unspeakable would not exist, and it would be possible to resolve any lack of harmony between thought and language. The unspeakable would therefore correspond to an unfinished thought, “in the state of fermentation, and which only becomes clear when it finds the word”. All in all, it would be a flaw in discourse. From this point of view, language would not be a simple, unsatisfactory instrument for expressing one’s thought: it would be, on the contrary, an adequate instrument, but to be used very specifically. In this perspective, it is now possible again to resolve the non-coincidences between thought and language. The phenomena of readjustment once again find their *raison d’être*.

According to the theories that we have illustrated, each time language is only perceived as an instrument for thought. Is it not possible to question this dichotomy? According to philosophers such as Merleau-Ponty, language cannot, in any case, be considered as a simple instrument, but it is however the necessary condition of all thought – this can only be put into form in and through words. Thus, according to Merleau-Ponty [MER 45, chapter 4]: “speech is not the “sign of thought””, because

thought itself is not internal. Pure thought is only an illusion, reduced to a void of the consciousness, and it would ultimately be impossible to have thought without language, because they are both formed simultaneously. Merleau-Ponty agrees ultimately with Hegel, except that the interlacing of thought and language would be even stronger. In fact, theoretically nothing would be unspeakable. Some things can be difficult to express, but this is a matter of working on forms and playing with them. Such a conception preserves the relevance of readjustment processes, while accounting for their limits.

Following these reflections, we propose, in a purely linguistic field, to use the term “intrasubjective” to designate the phenomena related to the fact of “putting into words”. This field, in the end, brings together all forms of work relating to notional and referential levels, whether they take place during a first stage of formulation (during a process of adjustment), or in a second formulation (in the perspective of readjustment). This being so, we must recognize that any willingness from the enunciator to make his/her speech and thoughts, or also speech and extralinguistic reality, coincide with one another is never totally disconnected from an intersubjective aim, but it is only indirectly bound to it. In conclusion, it seems possible to consider that there are directly intersubjective readjustments, and others that are only indirectly intersubjective.

## **1.7. Conclusion**

The term “readjustment” can, as we have seen, be used to denote the phenomena of re-elaboration and reworkings performed on a whole utterance or a simple enunciative segment. These readjustments take place when the enunciator performs regulation activity on his/her discourse production, and during negotiation between enunciators that characterizes communication. These last activities systematically reveal the discrepancies perceived by the enunciator, either in relation to what he/she wants to say, or to the co-enunciation itself.

Following these first characterizations, some points will have to be defined, particularly the nature of the obstacles that are inherent in a situation of classic communication. In addition, we must determine the modalities by which enunciators adapt to each other. These questions, based on the potential difficulty, problems and failures manifested in conversations, have essentially been raised by the conversational analysis, pragmatics, and sociolinguistic branches of linguistics. Consequentially, they will be approached following this section focused on definitions, but will not be the main subject. They will, however, form a contrast, being added in occasionally to the heart of our analyses.



In a field essentially devoted to enunciative linguistics, throughout this study we will answer a series of more central questions, namely:

- Why are specific forms favored for producing readjustments?
- What types of operations do these forms manifest?
- How can these be formalized?

Parts 2 to 6 will offer answers to these questions. At present, the reasons that motivate readjustment phenomena will be examined.

