



**University of  
Zurich**<sup>UZH</sup>

**Zurich Open Repository and  
Archive**

University of Zurich  
University Library  
Strickhofstrasse 39  
CH-8057 Zurich  
[www.zora.uzh.ch](http://www.zora.uzh.ch)

---

Year: 2008

---

## **Fundamentals of Ego-linguistics**

Weiss, D

Posted at the Zurich Open Repository and Archive, University of Zurich

ZORA URL: <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-11557>

Book Section

Accepted Version

Originally published at:

Weiss, D (2008). Fundamentals of Ego-linguistics. In: Birzer, S; Finkelstein, M; Mendoza, I. Perspectives on Slavistics 2. Proceedings of the Second International "Perspectives on Slavistics" Conference. München: KS, 149-163.

## FUNDAMENTALS OF EGO-LINGUISTICS

### Introduction

Since many readers may be somewhat puzzled by the peculiar label “ego-linguistics”, some explanation as to the choice of my topic will be needed: is this a new, little-known linguistic discipline, who represents it, and what are its principal goals? Is it supposed to be just another method of detecting egoistic character traits? Or does it aim to describe the linguistic behaviour of egomaniacs? It actually has nothing to do with any of the above. My objective is a purely linguistic one. The idea of dealing with ego linguistics was born when I was invited to deliver a speech at a graduate seminar at the University of Basel devoted to the analysis of so-called “ego documents”, such as memoirs, diaries, personal letters, etc. This topic turned out to be quite fashionable among historians; what they felt was missing, however, was a general characterisation of such genres from a linguistic point of view. Actually, I had to disappoint my colleagues’ expectations since I chose the opposite direction: instead of providing a global description of ego-oriented texts, I decided on a bottom-up approach, first by enumerating the multifarious egocentric aspects of natural language in general and then by concentrating on a microanalysis of ego-oriented reference. Since then, I have become more and more fascinated by this topic, and I soon realised that the omnipresence of ego-orientation in natural language deserves a fresh look. After all, nobody will deny the egocentric character of language, but it still lacks a systematic elaboration in more than one respect.

To start with, let us briefly recall the different egocentric elements in the notional apparatus of our science. As is well known, innumerable linguistic notions include the component ‘actual speaker’ in their definition. According to Bühler’s and Jakobson’s classical approach, the speaker-oriented function of expression is listed among the three basic sign functions, the whole concept of personal, local, and temporal deixis is based on the speaker as its origin; in speech act theory, speaker-oriented components constitute felicity conditions of all illocutions, performative verbs are by definition used in the first person, epistemic and evidential / quotative modality characterise the speaker’s knowledge, and in a given sentence it is the speaker who decides on the distribution of presuppositional vs. propositional information. To this may be added grammatical categories related to deixis, illocution, and modality, such as person, tense, and mood; moreover, the speaker is responsible for the transformation of the corresponding grammemes when using indirect or reported speech. And finally, lexical units may contain axiological components expressing the speaker’s personal beliefs and evaluations, not to mention the dichotomy of ‘own’ (*svoi*) vs. ‘other’ (*čuzhie*), so dear to Russian linguistics.

Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that many linguistic units reaching from single expressions to complex constructions, from speech acts to whole text genres are “ego-centred”. In a certain sense, all speakers are egomaniacs, willingly or not, guided by linguistic categorisation. On the other hand, some items, e.g. the indefinite-personal zero lexeme of the third person plural in Russian or certain verbs of perception such as *pokazat’ sja*, may exclude ego reference, whereas others combine it with reference to the addressee and/or third persons, cf. *my*, the generic *ty*, *čelovek* or *naš brat*. In the same vein, certain illocutions and text genres such as wishes, self-appraisals, self-critics, oaths, confessions of guilt, etc., are ego-oriented, whereas others are more balanced in that they relate the speaker’s position to that of the hearer, cf. apologies, expression of

thanks, threats, promises and the like; the same holds true for politeness strategies which include honourifics, tact (generosity, modesty) maxims and other face-working techniques.

In this paper, I would like to make a first attempt to classify at least part of this enormous bulk of heterogeneous data according to the three basic domains of reference, predication, and illocution. In order to illustrate their interplay, let me briefly display the well known Searlean formula:

Sentence	⇒	illocution + proposition
Proposition	⇒	predication + reference

At the beginning, special attention will be given to reference, where a first division between direct, indirect, inclusive and inferred ego reference needs to be established. Since the latter two types are subject to gradation, we are dealing with two continua, one of which extends from the 1<sup>st</sup> person pronoun to simple omission, whereas the other operates rather on some Gricean scale of inferential plausibility. Another criterion singles out referential means which relate self to the addressee or third persons, either by adopting (quoting or anticipating) the other's point of view or by denoting self in terms of other persons (cf. "your humble servant").

Next, a quick look will be given at one grammatical category and two sentence types which both seemingly exclude ego reference: imperatives, non-rhetorical yes/no questions and exclamations. Then ego reference will be combined with predication: which classes of predicates are appropriate for the description of the speaker himself, and which ones are less likely to occur with ego reference, but may on the contrary be more suitable in descriptions of the addressee? Could there possibly be an absolute ban on certain types of ego predication? Will we be able to find any language-specific preferences for certain types of ego predications, or are we just reconstructing universal asymmetries which would determine the relation between self and other? In order to structure this discussion, I will be adopting Apresjan's overview of the semantics of the principal human systems which comprise perception, physical needs and sensations, emotions, mental states and activities, etc.

As we shall see, the acceptability of ego predications is closely related to epistemic modality: the less convincing a given predication looks, the more the need of adding some modal marker increases in order to make the given utterance acceptable. This holds true for predications about the addressee, but in specific cases also about the speaker himself. Moreover, even less preferred modally unmarked predications may be acceptable if they function in appropriate speech acts, e.g. blames, rhetorical questions and the like. All these observations will hopefully lead to a more systematic and profound account of the asymmetrical behaviour which manifests itself in predications about the speaker's and the addressee's bodily sensations, feelings, thoughts, desires, etc. Finally, I would like to shed some light on the enigma of ego predications with quotative (hearsay) modality: in what contexts are we inclined to characterise ourselves in terms of others' statements?

It should be emphasised that in the existing literature on some aspects mentioned so far, such as predicate classes or epistemic modality, observations concerning restrictions of ego-oriented statements are not totally absent, but information is scarce and scattered, and it needs to be expanded and generalised. To sum up, I do not claim that ego linguistics should constitute a separate linguistic discipline, but I do claim that it deserves a more careful, coherent and systematic approach, which may eventually provide some interesting general conclusions.

## Techniques of self-reference

Besides such simple techniques as dialogue with oneself or quotation of another person's utterance about the speaker, one should carefully keep apart the different techniques of non-direct reference. Tentatively, one might distinguish the indirect, inclusive and inferential mode of reference, all of which may be applied to ego-reference. For the sake of simplicity, only individual personal ego-reference will be considered, whereas collective and especially institutional 'speakers' will be left aside.

A first approach to the domain of ego-reference (Weiss 2008) was devoted to the ego-referential potential of Russian personal pronouns including the *vy* of politeness, the generalising *ty* 2 ("obobščennno-ličnaja forma") and the so-called indefinite personal form of the 3<sup>d</sup> pers.pl. It was shown that all these lexemes may establish self-reference, either directly or as an indirect, inferential or inclusive device. Inclusive reference is represented by *my* (on this subject see Hopman 2002) and *ty* 2, but also by the 3<sup>d</sup> pers.plur. in generic or contrastive sentences and in pragmatic idioms of the type *Tebé govoryat* or *Vas bespokojat iz MVD*, etc. and the generic use of the quasi-pronoun *\_elovek* (see Weiss 1996). The least appropriate form is *vy* 1, which only refers inclusively to the speaker in quotations of others' utterances. Due to the preference for zeroes and ellipses in colloquial Russian, there exist quite a few cases that remain ambiguous for ego- and other-referential use. Further studies will examine the indirect ego-referential use of full NPs, such as *ministr finansov* (talking about himself in an interview), *surovyj uznik* (self-designation by the writer Jurij Daniel' as a prisoner), or more standardised expressions functioning in scientific discourse (*avtor*) or in legal documents (*istec*, *otvetčik* etc.). These self-designations may contain indexical expressions referring to the speaker himself (*moja osoba / persona*, *moja golovuška*) or the addressee, such as *Vaš pokornejšij sluga*, *Tvoj lysen'kij suprug* (= A. Čexov), the speaker's name (*tovarišč Stalin*, *Doktor Čexov*), etc. Further possible subclassifications of indirect self-reference are based on semantic criteria such as proper vs. common noun, designation of the referent's role in the on-going communication or his permanent function / profession, metonymical reference by means of a body part designation (cf. *moja golovu\_ka*) or replacement by the possessive adjective *moja* as in two Russian-based pidgins, i.e. Russenorsk and the Kjaxta Pidgin. Moreover, social and aesthetic functions should also be taken into account: they arise when the speaker uses pseudonyms, nick names in chats and humorous self-designations, to mention but a few.

The most indirect allusion to one's own person is realised in contexts with inferential ego-reference. This type may be illustrated by an excerpt of M. Gorbačev's speech during the 1996 electoral campaign:

- (1) За последнее десятилетие на политической арене России появилось немало талантливых молодых политиков, способных участвовать в создании в России правового демократического государства, основной задачей которого станет достижение благоденствия каждого члена общества. Эти политики уже накопили достаточный опыт, ясно увидели трудности, стоящие перед страной, получили определенную известность у россиян и их доверие. Опыт управления такой сложной страной, как Россия, у них маловат. Но в команде *умелого, много испытавшего, сумевшего сломать* тоталитарный коммунистический режим и дать людям реальные свободы *президента* они приобретут его и, надеюсь, принесут немало пользы своему Отечеству. (Gorbačev 4. 6. 1996 NNS).

And finally, the speaker may simply omit reference to himself as in the passive voice (*byli soveršeny ošibki*) or in nominalisations. All these indirect procedures have multifarious motivations, among which one might mention the adoption of the addressee's or a third person's point of view, quest for empathy, politeness strategies,

aesthetic and humorous strategies, defining oneself by one's role in society or in relation to the addressee, etc.

Ego predication: grammatical restrictions

Among 'ego-sensitive' grammatical categories, mood occupies a prominent place. The key position is the *imperative*, since by definition it should exclude the speaker as subject in its "canonical" meaning, i.e. as a marker of a directive speech act. On the other hand it is well known that Russian imperatives may occur in various derived and often quite remote uses (cf. Fortuin 2000), such as the optative, conditional, concessive and even narrative ones, which combine freely with the 1<sup>st</sup> pers., cf. *Vernis' ja ran'she!*, *Pridi ja vovremja*, ..., *Bud' ja prokljat*, *Xot' umri ja*,... or *Ja i skaži emu odin raz*:... In one of these derived uses, called 'necessitive' by Fortuin (2000:114ff.), we still can reconstruct the missing link to the directive meaning: the utterance *Oni gonjajut lodyrja, a ja rabotaj!* may be traced back to a quasi-quotation of the type *A ty rabotaj!*<sup>1</sup> What is more, Russian offers two particles (*-ka* and *daj*) that may mark even directives addressed to the speaker himself, cf. *Zajdu-ka k sosedu vzgljanut', kak ustroilsja, Daj sletaju v Moskvu*, or (with both particles combined) *Daj-ka pročtu ešče raz*.

Another domain of doing ego-linguistics is constituted by sentence types. *Yes/no-questions* seem to block 1<sup>st</sup> person subjects, cf. *\*Ja ustal?*, *\*Ja ne ustal?* However, if we transform them into the type called 'neuverennyj refleksivnyj vopros' by Пестран (1969), the 1<sup>st</sup> pers. is no longer an obstacle, cf. *(Ne) Ustal li ja?* The same holds for deliberative questions of the type *Čto že skažu emu? Skažu, čto ljublju drugogo?* Obviously, this is due to the implicit modal semantics of this subtype, cf. the more explicit paraphrase 'What shall I tell him?' And finally, the 1<sup>st</sup> pers.sg. sounds fine in counter-questions within dialogues such as the following: *My pojdem v kino. — A ja (pojdu s vami)?* In this way, ego reference is excluded in one subtype of yes/no-questions, but freely admitted in other subtypes. As will be shown in the next section, yes/no-questions should be considered in a broader context since they fill in a gap where the corresponding assertions sound odd; to illustrate this, we have to enlarge our object by including 'you predications'.

*Exclamations* would require a more profound examination than what can be offered in the present study. A few remarks may do to illustrate the fundamental asymmetry between ego and other within this domain:

(2a) Какой ты / он ужасный бабник!

(2b) ?Какой я ужасный бабник!

(3a) С каким увлечением ты коллекционируешь / он коллекционирует марки!

(3b) ??С каким увлечением я коллекционирую марки!

The variants (2b) and (3b) would only be acceptable in an ironical or joking context. Note that the negative evaluation is by no means an obstacle to ego in itself, since we have not only *Kakoj ja molodec!* but also, for instance,

(4) Какой я (однако) тупица / дурак / болван!

On the other hand, not every positive evaluation can be asserted about oneself, cf.

(5a) Как ловко ты танцуешь / ловко она танцует!

---

<sup>1</sup> The hybrid variant ... *a mne rabotaj* owes its dative probably to the synonymous modal infinitive construction, cf.: *a mne rabotat'*.

(5b) ?Как ловко я танцую!

In general, the question of what kinds of actions, behaviour, properties etc. can cause one's own surprise, astonishment or admiration is far from being evident. First of all, one should probably separate expressions of mere astonishment from other emotional ego-oriented speech acts, such as boasting, self-appraisal or self-criticism (as in 4): the component of unexpectedness, which is crucial in the surprise type, is not implied by the latter illocutions. For the time being, we will have to restrict ourselves to the statement that time reference plays a crucial role: exclamations in the 1<sup>st</sup> pers. are odd when referring to an ongoing process (i.e. with the progressive meaning of the imperfective aspect). This conclusion is already suggested by ex. (5b) and corroborated by examples as the following:

(6a) Как ты потеешь / он потеет!

(6b) ? Как я потею!

Note that both (5b) and (6b) sound much better if we insert *(po)smotri*, since by means of this the speaker adopts the addressee's perspective, so that the process in question may really be unexpected.

The main asymmetries of self vs. you

We may now tackle our main subject, i.e. the field of ego predication. As is well known, the first author to have tackled this subject was Benveniste (1971). In order to structure this enormous field, it seems however advisable to adopt the overview of 'basic human systems', established in Апресян (1995:355-366). Among the domains enumerated there, the following ones merit to be singled out as especially 'ego-sensitive':

- perception
- physical needs and sensations
- emotion
- desire, will
- mental activity
- speech

In what follows, we will only discuss the first three categories from this inventory. First of all, we must distinguish assertions from yes/no-questions; as will be shown, this dichotomy is fundamental for the discussion of the asymmetrical behaviour of utterances in the 1<sup>st</sup> pers.sg. and 2<sup>nd</sup> pers.sg. For the sake of simplicity, we will further limit the discussion to utterances in the present tense; as for mood, both indicative and conjunctive will be taken into account. The following observations are divided into three sections: first, modally unmarked sentences will be examined, then sentences containing markers of epistemic and quotative modality.

To begin with, *sensual perception* is not likely to be subject to any restrictions at the first glance, since what we see, hear, smell etc., is usually also accessible to the addressee's senses; hence, we would not expect there to be any asymmetrical behaviour of linguistic expressions. However, two cases should be mentioned where ego reference is almost excluded. The first is presented in Апресян (1995:640), where two classes of expressions with built-in deixis are discussed, viz. verbs such as *vidnet'sja*, *belet'* or *pokazat'sja* and the spatial adverbs *vdaleke*, *vdali*, *vblizi*. To illustrate their 'deviant'

behaviour, I just quote the author's own examples (the preterit can of course be changed into the present forms *pokazyvajus'* and *stoim*):

(7) На дороге показался ты / он /\*я

(8) \*Вдалеке стояли мы с Володей

Both types of expressions contain an built-in observer point which coincides with the place of the speaker. Since the latter cannot see himself standing somewhere in a remote distance, example (7) blocks ego reference, and the same holds for (8). There is, however, a way how to save the 1<sup>st</sup> pers. subject: if we describe the whole scene as imaginary or perceived by somebody else, ego reference becomes possible. This type of 'imagine'-contexts will turn out to be useful in other situations with dispreferred ego reference as well. As is shown in Падучева (2007), the verb *vygljadet'* behaves in a similar, though not identical way, since it opens a slot for an external observator. Moreover, it occurs freely in direct and indirect questions and with epistemic markers, i.e. in contexts which generally help to make otherwise impossible statements acceptable (see below).

The second case where the speaker cannot act as the visual perceiver has to do with the construction of our body: we may be able to hear ourselves, smell ourselves, even taste ourselves, but we will not see our back nor our face without the aid of a technical device, say a mirror. This is why the following sentences require a specific context:

(9) \*Я на глазах пьянею. (but cf.: Ты на глазах пьянеешь)

(10) ?Мои глаза горят любовью. (but: Твои глаза горят любовью)

Again, both sentences become acceptable in a fictitious situation where the speaker observes himself from outside; moreover, example 10 fits well into a frame such as 'Look at me', e.g. in a confession of love. They would equally be acceptable as yes/no-questions of the type *Moi glaza ne gorjat ljubov'ju?* And finally, epistemic marking would make the assertions possible, cf. *Moi glaza naverno gorjat ljubov'ju*.

The situation changes when we turn to the expression of physical needs, bodily sensations, emotions, desires and thoughts. The overall picture that obtains in all these domains remains constant: the speaker knows better than anybody else what he feels, wants, thinks, etc., whereas the addressee's feelings, thoughts etc. are a sort of black box to him. Due to this fundamental asymmetry, we may predict that in all these domains ego assertions are preferred and you assertions dispreferred. On the other hand, we may still ask about what we do not know, and here the picture is reversed: you-questions will be preferable to I-questions since the addressee knows better than the speaker what he feels, experiences etc. (this is of course reminiscent of our discussion above on the pair *Ja ustal?* vs. *Ty ustal?*). The following table represents this distribution:

Figure 1: predications about inner states

Ego vs. addressee	1 <sup>st</sup> pers	2 <sup>nd</sup> pers
assertion	preferred	dispreferred
Yes/no-question	dispreferred	preferred

Note that this contrasts sharply with the distribution of perceptive statements discussed above, examples (9) and (10):

Figure 2: predications about visual perception not accessible to the speaker

Ego vs. addressee	1 <sup>st</sup> pers	2 <sup>nd</sup> pers
assertion	dispreferred	preferred
Yes/no-question	preferred	dispreferred

According to figure 1, we may predict the following preference hierarchies:

- (11a) Я голоден. > Ты голоден. (11b) Ты голоден? > Я голоден?  
 (11c) Меня тошнит. > Тебя тошнит. (11d) Тебя тошнит? > Меня тошнит?

Yet it seems beyond any doubt that the dispreferred variants do occur in appropriate contexts. For instance, in the following case, the speaker may well describe his own sensations by using the generalising ‘you’, cf.

- (12) Я чувствую острую боль > Ты чувствуешь острую боль.

As may be recalled from what was said in the beginning, such sentences are ego-inclusive, even if they appeal also to the addressee (‘you know the same type of situation and therefore can feel what I felt’). In order to avoid this ego-component, we will exclude sentences with *ty* 2 in what follows. It should however be pointed out that limited contexts like the ones to be found in the Russian National Corpus often do not allow an unequivocal decision which meaning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person is realised in the given case; this aggravates the search of data considerably.

There are, however, other contexts where no ego-component is lurking behind the use of the 2<sup>nd</sup> pers. One is represented by the following fictitious example:

- (13) Вы голодны. Холодильник пуст. Но рядом – Snickers....

This sequence could be part of an advertisement. It would realise what Медведева (2003) calls the hypnotic effect of advertising. The original version looks somewhat more sober:

- (14) Hungry? Grab a Snickers [www.mikescandywrappers.com](http://www.mikescandywrappers.com)

Instead of the dispreferred you-statement, we find a simple question (“Hungry?”), which according to our basic hypothesis represents the preferred version. The same procedure is of course possible in Russian (“Goloden?”). Note that instead of the yes/no-question we could have a conditional clause as well, cf. “If you are hungry,... / “Esli ty goloden, ...”). This substitution reflects the semantic affinity of conditional clauses and yes/no-questions: both offer a choice between two possible worlds which might equally be true.<sup>2</sup> Both variants alternate in our next example:

- (15) **Мужчина:** Если ты голоден, мы можем поесть, мама сказала, что в холодильнике есть йогурт... Ты голоден? Нет? Ты не особо, не особо нацелен на контакт со мной... Мне продолжать читать?.. Послушай, мне тяжело угадывать твои желания, Макс... твоя мама будет недовольна, если мы... если ты ляжешь спать голодным... (www.esquire.ru/articles/13/play/)

<sup>2</sup> Note that there is another *esli*, whose meaning roughly coincides with *raz* in that the truth of the whole clause is presupposed; cf. Иорданская, Мельчук (2007:495).



But both variants belong to the preferred, non-assertive type of context since both conditional and yes/no-question express an offer. A temporal clause with *kogda* behaves in a similar way if it denotes a repeated action, cf.

(16) Голод не тетка, *когда ты голоден*, все кажется вкусным

What is stated here is not the addressee's hungriness, but an implicational link of the type 'whenever p, q is true'.

The same holds true for contexts where *ты голоден* is not stated by the speaker himself, but attributed to somebody else:

(17) Бог заметил, что *ты голоден* и придумал МакДональдс, Баскин Робинс. Он заметил, что *тебя мучает жажда* и придумал PEPSI, сок, кофе и воду. Бог увидел, что *тебе темно* и придумал свет; а Бог заметил, что у тебя нет Очаровательного, обожаемого, ДРУГА..... и он придумал М Е Н Я ([planeta.rambler.ru/users/zhuravlljova/10299145.html](http://planeta.rambler.ru/users/zhuravlljova/10299145.html))

Contrary to all this, the you-assertion in (13) posits the truth of one alternative and is therefore more suggestive than a conditional clause or a yes/no-question. However, since Russian advertising most often uses the politeness form, i.e. the 2<sup>nd</sup> pers.pl., it would be hard to find attested examples such as (13) (note that 17 is not an advertisement!) apart from real cases of hypnosis. What we do find, however, are examples such as the following:

(18) Ради моей жизни, ешь, не стыдись! Эй, мальчик, - крикнул он затем, - подай нам мясо в укусе и жирных куропаток!" И сказал моему брату: "Ешь, гость, *ты голоден* и нуждаешься в этом". ([www.skazka.com.ru/vzros/1001/0000049-1001.html](http://www.skazka.com.ru/vzros/1001/0000049-1001.html))

Again, one might wonder what enables the speaker to utter such a statement. The previous context unveils this secret: the hungry guest had already uttered an ego-statement:

(18')...и брат сообщил ему, что он *нуждается*. И, услышав слова моего брата, этот человек проявил сильное огорчение и, взявшись рукою за свою одежду, разорвал ее и воскликнул: "Я живу в этом городе, а ты в нем голодаешь! Мне не вынести этого!" И он обещал ему всякие блага и сказал: "Ты непременно должен разделить со мной соль". И мой брат ответил: "О господин, у меня нет терпения, и я *сильно голоден!*"

Thus the speaker in (18) simply repeats what he has been told by the addressee. Still another case is represented by cases like the following:

(19) — Ты лесная птица или вырвался из клетки?  
Я равнодушно ответил:  
— И то и другое.  
— Понимаю. *Значит, ты голоден.*  
Был ли я голоден! Они говорили спокойно о голоде и не подозревали, что мне свело кишки.

This time, what is uttered is a conclusion (cf. *značit*). Thus, once more we are not dealing with a direct observation since the addressee's bodily sensations are a kind of black box to us.

This said, we still have to reckon with possible contexts where the bodily condition of the addressee is at least partly accessible to the speaker's perception. For instance, if Яковлева (1994:225) posits the following asymmetry:

(20) У меня / \*у тебя внутри все пересохло. ,

one might imagine a context where the speaker is examining the addressee's dried out throat. On the other hand, there exist idioms that do not allow for any deviation from ego reference, including yes/no-questions, cf.

- (21a) Я себя что-то плохо чувствую сегодня.  
 (21b) \*Ты себя что-то плохо чувствуешь сегодня.  
 (21c) \*Ты себя что-то плохо чувствуешь сегодня?

Obviously, the obstacle lies in the indefinite particle *что-то* that marks the speaker's own vague evaluation.

Our next topic is emotional predicates. Again, according to the Russian proverb *čuzaja duša – vsegda potemki* we expect ego-assertions and you-questions to be preferred, whereas ego-questions and you-assertions would require special contexts. This holds equally for positive and negative feelings independently from their degree of intensity. Moreover, the surface realisation (verb, adjective, predicative) should not have any impact on the acceptability. Consequently, we may for instance predict the following preference scales according to figure 1 presented above:

- |       |             |   |              |             |               |   |              |
|-------|-------------|---|--------------|-------------|---------------|---|--------------|
| (22a) | Мне страшно | > | Тебе страшно | <i>but:</i> | Тебе страшно? | > | Мне страшно? |
| (22b) | Я раздражен | > | Ты раздражен |             | Ты раздражен? | > | Я раздражен? |
| (22c) | Я радуюсь   | > | Ты радуешься |             | Ты радуешься? | > | Я радуюсь?   |
| (22d) | Мне грустно | > | Тебе грустно |             | Тебе грустно? | > | Мне грустно? |

A first glance into the Russian National Corpus (September 2006) confirmed our expectation. The following figures obtained for a search of the 1<sup>st</sup> pers. sing. and the 2<sup>nd</sup> pers. pl. of the verb *radovat'sja* (recall that for the purpose of avoiding ambiguous examples with interfering generic reading, we excluded the 2<sup>nd</sup> pers. sg.):

Радуюсь:	396
Радуетесь:	21
радуетесь?	20

Again, one wonders what might be appropriate contexts for the dispreferred you-assertions. The following examples provide a convincing explanation: as the expressions put into italics indicate, they all contain the speaker's evaluation that the addressee's feelings are not justified:

- (23) *Рано радуетесь!*  
 (24) *Напрасно радуетесь, москвичи!*  
 (25) А вы человека *убили* и радуетесь!

In other words, what is really asserted (i.e. focalised or part of the rhematic part of the sentence) is the evaluation, whereas the statement *raduetes'* belongs to the pre-supposition. 16 out of the 20 dispreferred examples represented cases of such a disapproval. More often than not, what results is a reproach of the type illustrated in 25.

Three examples contain a generalised temporal clause, cf.

- (26) Грех, - он говорил им во время своего вынужденного кругосветного путешествия, - это *когда вы не радуетесь* жизни. [Марина Москвина. Небесные тихоходы: путешествие в Индию (2003)]

Once more then, *raduetes'* does not express the speaker's assessment of a current state of affairs; the imperfective aspect is not used in the progressive, but the iterative

meaning. In the two remaining examples the verb is either part of a conditional clause or embedded in a quotation of somebody else's utterance.

The picture obtained for the distribution of *ja rada* vs. *ty rada*<sup>3</sup> in the Russian National Corpus (September 2006) looks even more impressive:

<i>Я рада:</i>	Найдено документов: 501, контекстов: около 1 тысячи
<i>Ты рада.</i>	Найдено контекстов: 43

Most contexts of the dispreferred you-assertions are reminiscent of example (25) in that they express a blame:

- (27) *Ты рада бы*, чтобы я совсем не... не просыпался!
- (28) — *Ты как будто не рада*, что я жив, — вдруг с обидой произнес Ваня. — Знаешь, наверное, ты хотела, чтобы я умер, да?
- (29) Ерофеев мне по поводу предстоящего моего визита к зубному врачу: "*Ты* ведь так *рада*, что не придешь в пятницу и отдохнешь от меня". [Наталья Шмелькова. Последние дни Венедикта Ерофеева (2002)]

Moreover, the you-assertion in (27) is in the conditional and followed by a counterfactual clause, and in (28) it is epistemically marked by *kak budto*.

The following example does not even show a shadow of a reproach: on the contrary, it denotes an event of utmost positive significance for the addressee (pregnancy). However, it does not contradict our main prediction since *ty rada* expresses an imagined state, introduced by the speaker's 'empathetic' statement *Ja predstavljaju*:

- (30) Я представляю, как *ты рада*, наконец –то!  
[Беременность: Планирование беременности // Форум на eva.ru, 2005]

On the basis of the examples examined so far, we may conclude that our prediction works fairly well: dispreferred assertions about the addressee's sensations and feelings do occur, but they never function as real statements about a current state of affair. Instead of this, first they can be marked modally by lexical means such as adverbs, particles, superordinated verbs or by the conditional mood and realise suppositions, acts of imagination or conclusions. Besides this, they may be embedded in a quotative hypersentence, cf. example (17). Even when modally unmarked, they may accomplish a quotative function by pointing back to an ego-assertion as in example (18). Second, their lexical filling may indicate specific illocutions such as blame or surprise. Third, they may denote non-actual (habitual, iterative) actions. To complicate things even more, in all three cases the you-statement may function as a presupposition rather than an autonomous predication. On the whole, our prediction that there are no true assertions about the other's sensations and emotions remains valid.

What should still be tested (but cannot be tested in the present study) is the other side of the coin, i.e. the preference for you-questions over ego-questions as in *Ty rada?* > *Ja rada?* It is evident that here, too, appropriate contexts for the dispreferred variant can be found, for instance echo questions of the type *Ty naverno rada ego uxodu? – Ja, rada?* Due to the lack of space, this topic will, however, not be examined in the present

---

<sup>3</sup> The choice of the feminine gender helps to avoid the generic ego-inclusive meaning of *ty* 2, although in principle the latter is also possible with female reference. As for the personal pronouns, we are aware of the possibility of zero marking (ellipsis), but the account of such not very numerous cases would take too much space within the modest frame of the present study.

study, but cf. the preliminary remarks on questions with a verb in the 1<sup>st</sup> pers. sing. in the previous section..

The reversed picture: epistemic modality

Since implicit (unmarked) modality has already turned out to be a crucial factor for our discussion, our next concern will be the study of epistemically marked utterances. On the basis of our main hypothesis, their behaviour is fairly predictable: their distribution will be parallel to that of modally unmarked yes/no-questions, both types of utterances being related to the speaker's uncertainty about the real state of affairs. Hence, we obtain a picture reverse to that presented by assertions in the previous section:

Figure 3: epistemically marked utterances

Ego vs. addressee	1 <sup>st</sup> pers	2 <sup>nd</sup> pers
assertion	dispreferred	preferred

On the other hand, the distribution of epistemically marked yes/no-questions will be roughly the same as that of simple yes/no-questions, or else that of epistemically marked assertions.

This allows us to predict the following preference pattern for expressions of bodily sensations:

- (31a) Ты, кажется / наверно / быть может / видимо голоден >>  
 (31b) Я, кажется / наверно / быть может / видимо голоден.  
 (32a) У тебя, кажется, / наверно / быть может / видимо внутри все пересохло. >>  
 (32b) У меня, кажется, / наверно / быть может / видимо внутри все пересохло.

In a similar vein, expressions of emotions should exhibit the following pattern:

- (33a) Ты, кажется / может / видимо / вероятно / несомненно / бесспорно / по-моему раздражен >>  
 (33b) Я, кажется / может / видимо / вероятно / несомненно / бесспорно / \*по-моему раздражен  
 (34a) Ты, кажется / может / видимо / вероятно / несомненно / бесспорно / по-моему не рад нас видеть >>  
 (34b) Я, кажется / может / видимо / вероятно / несомненно / бесспорно / \*по-моему не рад вас видеть.

At this point, we are forced to take into account the diverging degrees of acceptability, characteristic of the epistemic expressions used in these contexts. What is most striking is the ban for *po-moemu* with ego-predications, but there are different acceptability rates all throughout the quoted variants; for instance, in 33b *nesomnenno* sounds odder than *kažetsja*, etc. The reason for this seems obvious: epistemic modality is very heterogenous in that it marks not only different degrees of certainty, but above all different sources of knowledge. For instance, *po-vidimomu* says nothing about the probability of the event in question but expresses a conclusion based on empirical (visual, auditive etc.) or cognitive evidence, thus excluding the speaker's direct experience. A different approach is proposed by Булькина, Шмелев (1997:293-304), who distinguish the following types: merely hypothetical modality (*dolžno byt'*, *naverno(e)*, *nesomnenno*, *verojatno*, *vozmožno*, *možet (byt')*), so called "impressives" (*vrode, kažetsja, kak budto*) and finally the "operators of uncertain evaluation"

(‘operatory neuverennoj ocenki’) of the type *mne kažetsja, po-moemu*.<sup>4</sup> Let us briefly illustrate the difference between hypothetical and impressive modality by the authors’ own example: When the phone is ringing, the speaker may utter a hypothesis like *Naverno, éto zvonit redaktor* before picking it up, but if he is already listening to the caller’s voice and wondering who he could be he can only say *Kažetsja, éto zvonit redaktor* (ibid:299). In other words, impressive statements are triggered by some physical perception that cannot be interpreted unequivocally (cf. also *Kažetsja, paxnet gazom*). Another appropriate context is provided by vague remembrance, cf. *Kak že ee zvali, ne pomnju... kažetsja (\*naverno), Nataša*. It goes without saying that this distinction has a huge impact on the asymmetry under discussion in that impressives are more likely to occur with ego reference, whereas hypothetical modality is typical of you-statements. And finally, the operators of uncertain evaluation mark the speaker’s subjective opinion about something he has perceived or experienced himself: in *Mne kažetsja, fil’m xorošij* or *Fil’m, po-moemu, xorošij* the speaker emphasises that he does not pretend his judgment to be generally valid. This helps to explain why *po-moemu* sounds particularly odd in predications about one’s own feelings, cf. sentences (33b) and (34b) above.

What has been said so far on the subtypes of epistemic modality is but a first approximation; for more details, see Булыгина, Шмелев (1997:300 –304). Let us now illustrate the hypothetical type using statements about the other’s feelings:

- (35) мда куда мир катиться!!! бывшая не бывшая а она человек а *ты видимо рад* что она загремела в больничку!!! Бог накажет тебя!!!  
[www.jjournal.ru/Lovekiller/Dezhavyu.html](http://www.jjournal.ru/Lovekiller/Dezhavyu.html)
- (36) - Что-то я не пойму, *ты, кажется, рад*, что тебе уши оторвут? - Каждый раз, когда рестлер сжимал ухо еще сильнее, Тацуо быстро перебирал ногами и издавал крик.  
[users.gazinter.net/kbee/book/deti.htm](http://users.gazinter.net/kbee/book/deti.htm)
- (37) Борька со своей фразой заложил основу для распада России, чему *ты несомненно рад*.  
[www.voinenet.ru/forum/showthread.php?t=763&page=14](http://www.voinenet.ru/forum/showthread.php?t=763&page=14)

All examples cited meet our hypothesis that hypothetical modality fits well into you-predications, notwithstanding the additional illocutionary marks in (35), which is a blame much as (27-29) above, and (36), an astonished question. The next series shows, however, that the same type of modality is compatible with ego-predications as well:

- (38) *Я может рад* что она чемпионка, *но* гордиться только этим нельзя. Пусть себя нормально ведёт.  
[www.kavkazweb.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=36087&sid=16217f3c21aee9a958f50f22f3632f99](http://www.kavkazweb.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=36087&sid=16217f3c21aee9a958f50f22f3632f99)
- (39) Как приверженец Фри, *я несомненно рад*, что любимая операционка сделала рывок, *но* если в каком-то бенчмарке фри провалит тест, я не собираюсь разводить демагогию по поводу того, что где-то что-то не так сделали за исключением вопиющих фактов, что и всем советую. ([www.opennet.ru/openforum/vsluhforumID3/36788.html](http://www.opennet.ru/openforum/vsluhforumID3/36788.html))
- (40) "Конференцией честно говоря не доволен. Слишком уж все благодушно. *Я бесспорно рад* вместе со всеми за те позитивные перемены, которые произошли за последние годы при участии министерства, общественных объединений. *Но* согласитесь, два дня говорить о

<sup>4</sup> The authors add quotative (hearsay) modality to this list. According the approach of van der Auwera, Plungjan (1998) I adhere to, however, the latter (in other words: the *govorjat*-type) does not belong to epistemic modality in the narrow sense and will be discussed separately in the next section below.

All three excerpts share one common property, though: the epistemically marked utterance is followed by the adversative conjunction *no*. In this way, the modal adverbs *možet*, *nesomnenno* and *bessporno* serve rather as discourse markers than real epistemic expressions: they signal that the ego-statement is going to be somehow corrected (restricted, attenuated) in the following sentence. As for *možet*, this comes as no surprise, since this expression functions in the same way with you-predications. More striking, however, is the behaviour of *nesomnenno*: a search done by the Google search machine (3/10/2005) revealed an overwhelming majority of uses with ego-reference (*ja nesomnenno rad*: 268 instances, *ty nesomnenno rad*: 5 instances). Since the majority of cases were found in blogs and internet forums, the variant with 1<sup>st</sup> pers.sg. might be a formulaic expression typical of these genres. However this may be, the behaviour of epistemic markers with ego and you-predications constitutes a topic of its own and deserves an in depth analysis, which by far exceeds the scope of the present study.

#### Quotative ego-predication

Finally, a few very sketchy remarks will be made about hearsay modality. Here, one is tempted to formulate the same assumption as with epistemic modality: you-statements will be preferred, ego-statements dispreferred, since the speaker seldom speaks about himself in terms of somebody else's statements. As the following examples show, the picture is, however, much more tricky. The first example seems to confirm our expectation:

- (41a) ? Кажется, / ?говорят, я ?вроде / ?как будто собираюсь во Францию.  
(41b) Кажется, / говорят, ты вроде / как будто собираешься во Францию.

Note, however, that even 41b rather calls for a tag question of the type *Ty kak budto sobiraeš'sja vo Franciju?* ("isn't it?"). With the 1<sup>st</sup> pers.sg., such a tag question would be out of place, cf. *\*Ja kak budto sobirajus' vo Franciju?*

But the next pair already shows that the predicates involved may be more crucial since here, both ego- and you-predications sound equally odd:

- (42a) Говорят, я болен / ? голоден / ? плачу / ?? приехал. *but also:*  
(42b) Говорят, ты болен / ? голоден / ? плачешь / ?? приехал.

And on the other hand, the following attested and wholly acceptable quotative ego-statements were found by a Google search:

- (43) Говорят, я ужасный бабник / я умный / я возрождаю Третий Рейх / я не умею общаться.

All these predicates combine equally well with 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> pers. reference. The reason is evident: they all denote permanent properties of the subject, whereas the predicates in 42 refer to temporally limited states, *boлен* being the only one that may extend over a longer time span. Moreover, *priexal* contains an built-in deictic reference to the place of the ongoing speech event, which makes quotations of other persons even more implausible. Consequently, time reference associated to the predicate in question seems to overrule the preference for you- rather than ego reference. This is, however, only part of the story. The following parameters were found to play an important role for the distribution of quotative ego-statements:

## preferred

- Permanent characteristics (Generic states)
- General evaluations
- Habitual appearance (outfit, etc.)
- Past activities / location / outfit / emotions

## dispreferred

- Location at speech time
- Current emotions
- Current bodily sensations
- Current physical activities
- Current mental states and activities

Again, this topic needs a separate analysis and cannot be dwelled upon any further.

## Conclusions

Our little overview was to serve a twofold purpose: it should demonstrate the main asymmetries predications about ‘inner states’ of speaker and hearer are subject to in a systematic way, and it was meant to provide some hints in what respect such an analysis could be useful. As for the first aspect, the following distribution was found to be crucial: the choice between a modally unmarked assertion and an epistemically marked assertion or else a yes/no-question depends above all on the accessibility of the information for the speaker. The first strategy works well when he is dealing with his own sensations, feelings, thoughts, desires etc., whereas the other’s bodily, emotional and mental states usually require the adoption of the second strategy. Information obtained by direct sensual perception is fairly neutral to the aforementioned distinction with certain exceptions, including seeing one’s own face or back or perception of oneself at a place which is not identical with one’s place during the current speech event. All these restrictions can be overruled by more sophisticated techniques of the ‘imagine’ type, i.e. by taking over the addressee’s point of view. Moreover, we have detected a whole series of other criteria that seemingly allow the speaker to violate the restrictions described above, among them habitual time reference, conditional semantics, conclusions based on perceptual or cognitive evidence, and the resumption of previously established information. Yet, none of these cases constitutes real counterevidence, since none of them can be said to directly denote a state of affairs present at the time of the given speech event.

As for the second aspect, i.e. the practical profit to be taken from such an analysis, it turned out that the systematics outlined in this study can serve as a kind of heuristic tool that allows to describe more precisely the restrictions on exclamatory sentences and quotative modality or the idiosyncratic behaviour of many lexical items, to mention but the indefinite particle *čto-to* (example 21), the subtle differences between the various subtypes of epistemic modality or the discourse properties of particular epistemic markers (recall the sequence *nesomnenno...*, *no* as in ex. 39). A thorough analysis of epistemic and quotative ego predications will certainly add much more details relevant for the description of particular lexical units expressing these meanings.

Finally, typologists will easily detect the link between our topic and the grammatical category known as Conjunct/Disjunct systems to be found in a whole range of languages in the Himalayan area and the Barbacoan group spoken in the lowlands of Ecuador and Colombia (cf. Cysouw 2003). This peculiar person marking system is closely linked with the opposition ‘witnessed event vs. evidentiality’ and consists roughly of two forms, one for the first person and the other one for non-first (second and third) person in declarative sentences and second vs. non-second person in interrogative sentences. It would be tempting to compare the precise distribution of

these forms with our findings within the opposition of ego vs. other reference and predication.

## References

- Benveniste E. 1971. *Problems in General Linguistics*. Miami, Fla.
- Cysouw M. 2003. *The paradigmatic structure of person marking*. Oxford.
- Fortuin, E.L.J. 2000. *Polysemy or monosemy: Interpretation of the imperative and the dative-infinitive construction in Russian*, Amsterdam.
- Van der Auwera J., Plungjan V.A. 1998. Modality's semantic map. *Linguistic Typology* 1(2), 79-124.
- Weiss D. 1997. Russisch *čelovek*: Versuch eines referentiellen Porträts. In: Kosta W., Mann E. (eds) *Slavistische Linguistik 1996*. München, 309-365.
- Weiss D. 2008. L'autoréférence en russe contemporain. In: Roudet R.; Zarembo Ch. (eds.), *Questions de linguistique slave*. Etudes offertes à Marguerite Guiraud-Weber. Aix-en-Provence, 367-382
- \*
- Апресян Т.В. 1995. *Интегральное описание языка . и системная лексикография*. Москва.
- Булыгина Т.В.; Шмелев А.Д. 1997. *Языковая концептуализация мира*. Москва.
- Иорданская Л.Н.; Мельчук И.А. 2007. *Смысл и сочетаемость в словаре*. Общая редакция Е.И. Саввина. Москва.
- Медведева Е.В. 2003. *Рекламная коммуникация*. Москва.
- Норман Б.Ю. 2002. Русское местоимение *мы*: внутренняя драматургия. В: *Russian linguistics* 26 2, 217-234.
- Падучева Е.В. 2007 В поисках Наблюдателя: Глаголы выглядеть и быть. In: *Международная конференция Диалог 2007 (Бекасово, 30 мая – 3 июня) Диалог 7* (to appear)
- Рестан П. 1969. *Синтаксис вопросительного предложения*. Oslo, Bergen, Tromsø.
- Яковлева Е.С. 1994. *Фрагменты русской языковой картины мира (модели пространства, времени и восприятия)*. Москва.