

CREDO (I BELIEVE): Epistemicity and the syntactic representation of the speaker

In this talk we consider the dependencies in Italian from forms such as *credo* (I believe) and *dicono* (they say). The main focus will be on *credo*, and only at the end of the discussion we will extend the analysis to cover *dicono* as well. *Crede* (I believe) is the subject-less first person present tense verbal form of the epistemic verb *credere* (to believe). *Dicono* (they say) is the subject-less third person plural present tense verbal form of the verb *dire*.

These verbal forms can be followed by a subordinate clause. However, under certain circumstances - for instance in Complementizer Deletion structures - the (apparently) embedded clause exhibits several properties typical of main clauses, which are incompatible with the syntax of subordinate sentences. Moreover, in these cases, from the semantic point of view, both the main verbal form and the alleged complement clause present some peculiarities, which call for an explanation. We will argue that the sequence consisting of *credo* or *dicono* followed by a complementizerless clause should be seen as a mono-clausal structure and that *credo* (I believe) and *dicono* (they say) are better treated as heads occupying functional projections, expressing an epistemic and an evidential value respectively.

Other verbal forms exhibiting roughly the same properties as *credo* are: *immagino* (I imagine), *suppongo* (I suppose), *penso* (I think). The form *si dice* (impersonal clitic-says, i.e., 'one says') exhibits the core properties of *dicono*. Other items sharing the same properties as *dicono*/ *si dice* are *si mormora* (one murmurs) and *si favoleggia* (one narrates).

We will not discuss in depth the very nature of the epistemicity and evidentiality. For the sake

of this work we will use the term epistemicity as referring to the (internal) relationship between a subject and a given propositional content. The term evidentiality, on the other hand, refers to the source of the reported content, as known to the speaker. Implicitly, by means of an evidential the speaker often provides an assessment of the reliability of the information.

The fact that *credo* bears first person features, and that *dicono* - or *si dice* - third person ones, is therefore intuitively connected with the distinction between epistemicity and evidentiality: the internal state of the speaker, on one side, and the external source of information on the other one. The theoretical question we address concerns the architecture of the so-called "left periphery" with respect to the epistemic and evidential projections in the clause. These projections are deeply connected with the speech event in itself and with the role of the speaker in the conversational situation.

We propose that such a role should be further articulated into the speaker's own psychological epistemic state - the epistemic projection - and her evaluation of the source of evidence - the evidential one.

This issue is particularly relevant in that it contributes to clarifying what the representation of the speaker is in the syntactic structure of the sentence. The role of the speaker and the treatment of the conversational background from a semantic point of view, are in fact much clearer and have been long since addressed. But the interface level connecting the semantics with the syntactic representation is so far still vague and in demand of a systematic investigation.