

Epistemic and subjective expressions in French:
the case of *je pense*, *je crois* and *je trouve*

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Abstract

This research explores the interplay between subjectivity and epistemic modality, by focusing on a small group of expressions in French, namely *je pense* ‘I think’, *je crois* ‘I believe’ and *je trouve* ‘I find’. It draws on more than six hours of conversation.

Firstly, I adopt a constructionist approach (Hoffmann & Trousdale, 2013) and describe the three expressions as interrelated constructions, where the subject clitic *je* ‘I’ and the stance verb are no longer processed as separate items. Despite their similarities, the constructions nonetheless have distinct behaviours and are not always substitutable. *Je pense* and *je crois* can be used either as epistemic or subjective markers, insofar as each element of the constructions contributes a component of meaning. By contrast, *je trouve* can only be used as a subjective marker. Because *je crois* is never used as a subjective marker in my database, I argue that it forms a contrastive pair with *je pense* as an epistemic marker, while *je trouve* forms a contrastive pair with *je pense* as a subjective marker. In the first pair, my data suggest that *je crois* tends to be used when the speaker has knowledge of the state of affairs at hand, while *je pense* indicates an assumption from the speaker. In the second pair, *je trouve* operates a subjective strengthening, while *je pense* has an attenuative effect, due to the epistemic component of meaning it encodes.

Secondly, I show that the multiple functions that *je pense*, *je crois* and *je trouve* may fulfil in interaction are evidence for their status as discourse markers. These interactional functions can be divided into two. Firstly, the constructions may perform discourse-organisational functions, when they are used to demarcate units of speech. Secondly, they may be used to soften a potential or actual face threat, thus fulfilling interpersonal functions. Nevertheless, these interactional functions are concomitant to their semantic meaning, while discourse markers are usually described as non-propositional items. I therefore propose that the three constructions can more appropriately be viewed as peripheral members rather than prototypical members of the category of discourse markers. Finally, as clause-final parentheticals, they predominantly appear as mitigation strategies.

Prosodic aspects are also investigated, and suggest that the three constructions may constitute independent prosodic units, as is observed with discourse markers.

Declaration

I declare that no portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Presentation and objectives of the study

This study explores the interplay between subjectivity and epistemic modality, by focusing on a small group of expressions that are frequently used in French interaction, namely *je pense* ‘I think’ (henceforth *JP*), *je crois* ‘I believe’ (*JC*) and *je trouve* ‘I find’ (*JT*).¹ In various fields of linguistics and across languages, such expressions are typically categorised either as epistemic markers (or markers of epistemic stance) or as expressions of personal opinions. However, the meaning and functions of such expressions can be seen as the complex combination of these two realms. In particular, I will focus in the present study on the semantic, pragmatic, interactional and prosodic properties of these expressions.

This group of constructions, whose common grammatical specificity is the use of the clitic *je* and a mental verb, constitutes the point of departure of this research. I therefore adopt a semasiological approach, following which the meaning and functions they express are investigated without assuming predetermined functions or a priori categories under which they can be subsumed. This approach allows us to encapsulate different areas of research, among which stance-marking, modality and evidentiality. For this purpose, this research is data-driven, based on empirical observations directly taken from authentic and semi-naturalistic conversations.

The three expressions have been selected for reasons of frequency: in comparison with similar constructions involving a first-person subject and a mental verb, such as *je suppose* ‘I suppose’, *j’imagine* ‘I imagine, I guess’ or *je présume* ‘I presume’, there is evidence pointing to the routinisation of the three expressions under investigation.

¹In the present research, *JP*, *JC* and *JT* have been translated into English by their direct equivalents *I think*, *I believe* and *I find*. I acknowledge that the English translation does not necessarily reflect the individual functions of the French expressions. Furthermore, although *that*-deletion is more common in English, ‘that’ has been added when the complementiser *que* follows.

Of course alternative epistemic expressions are frequent, such as *peut-être* ‘perhaps’, *certainement* ‘certainly’ or *il semble que* ‘it seems that’, but they do not include a subjective component. Conversely, subjective expressions such as *à mon avis* ‘in my opinion’ or *pour moi* ‘for me’ are not epistemic in nature. In this research, I argue that *JT* does not, in fact, encode an epistemic meaning (but see Mullan, 2010), but is strictly subjective in meaning. Its comparison with *JP* and *JC* allows us to better grasp the individual meaning of each expression. Furthermore, I will only focus on the use of these three constructions in the first-person singular and in the present indicative tense. Therefore, negative constructions such as *je ne pense pas* ‘I don’t think’ have not been analysed.

By investigating the use of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* in conversation, this research is part of a body of empirical studies on epistemics in naturally occurring interactions, which explore the relation between grammar and social interaction (Keevallik, 2003; Kärkkäinen, 2003; Stivers et al., 2011; Lindström et al., 2016). The authors aim to show how social interaction impacts on grammar and meaning, by showing that speakers use epistemic constructions for a range of interactional purposes. In the present research, each targeted construction is examined in its context of use, relative to the turn and the sequence it is embedded in. Moreover, the meaning of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* are analysed within the framework of Construction Grammar, to underscore their connection as interrelated constructions in speakers’ ‘construction’ (Fillmore, 1988; Goldberg, 2003; Hoffmann & Trousdale, 2013). Furthermore, this research also builds on notions from the field of pragmatics, namely theories of Generalised Conversational Implicatures (Grice, 1975; Gazdar, 1979; Horn, 2004; Levinson, 2000).

The overall objective of this study is to shed new light on the interactional meaning and functions of *JP*, *JC* and *JT*, by presupposing that their use is mainly motivated by pragmatic aspects of conversations. More specifically, research questions include:

- What are their individual meaning and why is an expression preferred to another in a specific context? (cf. chapters 4 and 5)
- How do participants use and orient to these constructions in French conversation? Are there recurring patterns associated with their use in interaction, and are they subject to constraints? (cf. chapters from 6 to 8)
- Are there prosodic aspects reflecting particular meanings or functions? (cf. chapter 9)

Given their frequency and the apparent polyfunctionality of the three expressions in interaction, this study also seeks to contribute to research on discourse

markers, by questioning their categorisation as full-fledged members of this class. Complement-taking predicates (especially those marking stance) have often been described across languages as constructions ranging from more literal uses to more organisational, discourse marker-like uses (Thompson & Mulac, 1991a,b; Aijmer, 1997; Thompson, 2002; Kärkkäinen, 2003, 2007; Laury & Suzuki, 2011; Lindström et al., 2016). Following from these observations, one of the main research questions is to understand whether certain uses of *JP*, *JC* and *JT*, in matrix position, retain a more literal meaning than other uses. The same question can also be applied to their parenthetical uses: do certain uses have a more propositional meaning than others? Finally, this raises the question of whether we observe a variation across the three constructions: has one construction retained a more literal meaning compared to the other two?

1.2 Fields of research

This research is situated at the interface of Construction Grammar and Interactional Linguistics, itself inspired by the methodologies of Conversation Analysis. These fields of study bring together compatible perspectives to arrive at a fine-grained description of the three expressions, both at the level of grammar and at an interactional level.

To describe the meaning of *JP*, *JC* and *JT*, I adopt a constructionist approach (Hoffmann & Trousdale, 2013) and propose that the three constructions can be seen as interrelated constructions, i.e. conventionalised pairings of form and meaning, which are entrenched in the mental grammar of speakers. Each element constituting *JP* and *JC* brings a semantic contribution into the constructional meaning of the constructions: the first-person subject *je* contributes a subjective component of meaning, while the verb forms *pense* and *crois* contribute an epistemic component of meaning. By contrast, each element constituting *JT* only contributes a subjective meaning. With other similar constructions (such as *à mon avis* ‘in my opinion’ or *peut-être* ‘perhaps’), the constructions form paradigmatic alternates such that speakers select the construction which is the most consistent with a given situation.

Furthermore, I draw on Conversation Analysis (hereafter, CA), an approach to the study of social interaction that emerged in the 1970s in the field of sociology, where language use is thought of as a medium for social action. Its objective is to identify recurring structures that form the basis of social interaction. Following CA methodologies, this research takes an empirical approach to language use, in that conclusions about the functions of the three expressions are drawn from a thorough investigation of their actual use in talk-in-interaction, rather than from intuitive judgements. The analysis is therefore based on a detailed transcription of authentic

and semi-naturalistic conversations, whose collection will be described in chapter 2. Moreover, this research mostly uses qualitative rather than quantitative methods. That is, the focus has been put on the examination, in a relatively small database (composed of 111 instances of *JP*, 79 of *JC* and 23 of *JT*), of every occurrence in its context of use, which has led to the observations of recurring patterns paving the way for generalisations. These recurring patterns allow us to identify different sequential environments within which the constructions occur in order to carry out distinct roles associated with the organisation of discourse and the maintenance of the relationship between the participants. Finally, the interdisciplinary nature of CA makes it suitable for my purpose in that it is complementary to the fields of pragmatics, prosody and grammar.

Fundamentally, my research contributes to research in Interactional Linguistics (IL) (e.g. Ochs et al., 1996; Selting & Couper-Kuhlen, 2001). Contrary to CA, IL emerged in the field of linguistics in the wake of “the need of a framework for a systematic and empirical study of spoken, interactive language and its structure” (Lindström, 2009: 97). However, the two fields share a number of assumptions and topics of research, such as the sequential organisation of turns and their methodological approach. Importantly, both CA and IL rely on transcripts of recordings of naturally occurring interactions, such that the phenomena investigated are analysed in their context of use. As CA describes conversational patterns in talk-in-interaction, IL focuses on linguistic structures, either by describing the interactional meanings and functions of a particular linguistic form, or by identifying the linguistic forms carrying out a particular interactional function. Here, I follow the first approach, which will prove to be a useful methodology to embrace the different perspectives under which *JP*, *JC* and *JT* have been studied. The exploration of the relations between these linguistic structures and their functions in interaction will show how grammar is, as Kärkkäinen (2003: 2) states, “an interactionally shaped phenomenon”.

1.3 Presentation of the chapters

The organisation of the dissertation is as follows. Chapter 2 introduces the data used for the present research, how they were collected and what are the profiles of the participants who were involved in the conversations.

In chapter 3, I present a summary of previous studies on the three French constructions, as well as *I think* in English. I also introduce areas of research and notions that have largely been used by scholars to describe them, including subjectivity, epistemic modality, evidentiality, parenthetical verbs and discourse markers.

Chapter 4 presents the model within which the meanings of the three construc-

tions are described. I adopt a Construction Grammar approach and propose that *JP*, *JC* and *JT* can be analysed as micro-constructions (Traugott, 2008) where the subject clitic *je* and the verb form are no longer processed as separate items. With respect to their meaning, I argue that *JP* and *JC* encode a subjective as well as an epistemic component of meaning, one of which being foregrounded in any given use. *JT* differs from the two other constructions in that it only encodes a subjective meaning. It is therefore substitutable by *JP* or *JC* only when the two latter foreground the subjective component of meaning. However, no occurrence of subjective *JC* was found in the database, and we can thus distinguish between two sets: epistemic *JP* and *JC* form a contrastive pair, while subjective *JP* and *JT* form a distinctive contrastive pair. The terms *subjective*, *epistemic* and *evidential* will be defined in the introduction of this chapter.

Chapter 5 focuses on the distinctions of the constructions in each contrastive pair, i.e. how *JP* differs from *JC* when they both foreground the epistemic component of meaning, and how *JP* differs from *JT* when they both foreground the subjective component of meaning. Their individual meaning is entirely worked out through a close inspection of the context where they occur, without applying a pre-established top-down model on the data.

The interactional analysis of the three constructions can be found in chapters 6 and 7. Each of them is devoted to exploring the relationships between the position of the constructions within the clause, the turn and the sequence, the context in which they are uttered, and their interactional work. Specifically, I will show how their individual meaning allows them to be used by speakers to achieve a range of interactional functions, which encompass two main types: functions that are connected to discourse organisation (e.g. by marking transitions between discourse units), and functions that are politeness-driven (by softening a potential or actual face threat). As the most versatile construction in interaction (reflected in the higher number of occurrences across the three corpora), a whole chapter is dedicated to exploring *JP* (chapter 6), while *JC* and *JT* will be the subject of chapter 7.

The observations made in these two chapters will provide evidence that the three constructions are full-fledged discourse markers, in that they share defining characteristics assigned to this category, e.g. they are syntactically optional, they are polyfunctional, their scope is variable, and they are typical of spoken language where they appear relatively frequently. However, I will also argue that the constructions are not discourse markers of a prototypical kind: indeed, uses of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* are never devoid of semantic content, a feature which is inconsistent with one defining aspect of discourse markers. Indeed, items of this category are commonly seen as contributing no propositional meaning. Thus, because the interactional functions performed by the three constructions are concomitant to its

semantic meaning, they can more appropriately be viewed as peripheral, rather than prototypical, members of the category of discourse markers. With respect to their meaning, the constructions inherently express, following Hansen (2008), context-level rather than content-level meaning, which may explain their frequent uses in parenthetical position.

In chapter 8, I focus on the correlations between the syntactic position of *JP*, *JC* and *JT*, their meaning and their interactional functions. While the two preceding chapters focus on the matrix position, where the constructions mainly carry out discourse-structuring functions, in this chapter the focus shifts to the clause-final parenthetical position, where they mostly function as mitigators.

Chapter 9 investigates the role of prosody in interpreting the meanings and functions of *JP*, *JC* and *JT*. I will show that the constructions may be associated with particular prosodic patterns, such as pitch, speech rate, voicing and prominence, that may participate in emphasising particular meanings and functions. Moreover, the prosody of the three constructions (especially *JP* and *JC*) at times shares similarities with that of discourse markers, which have been described as commonly unstressed, shortened, independent prosodic units.

Finally, chapter 10 makes some concluding remarks, proposes hypotheses about open questions and considers the implications of this research for the study of these expressions.

Chapter 2

Methodology and presentation of the data

2.1 Methods of analysis

This section presents the foundations of two analytical models that I employ for the investigation of my database: the methodological approach of Conversation Analysis, and the theory of politeness proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987).

2.1.1 Conversation Analysis

Conversation Analysis (CA) offers a model of the organisation of turn-taking in conversations. As described by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson in their seminal article published in 1974, the fundamental unit of analysis in CA is the turn-constructive unit (TCU), a coherent unit which may be recognised as contextually complete. It is not strictly defined linguistically (it can be instantiated in a sentence, a clause, a phrase or a word), but rather relies on a combination of pragmatic, syntactic and prosodic cues. At the completion of a TCU is a transition-relevance place (TRP), where a change of speaker may occur. Participants to an interaction take turns, which are constructed incrementally out of TCUs, and during which they have primary rights to the floor.

Preference is another major concept of CA I will employ (Pomerantz, 1984; Sacks, 1987; Schegloff, 1988). It is based itself on the concept of adjacency pair (AP), representing a paired action sequence in the structure of conversation. An AP consists of two different parts, which are not necessarily adjacent. This concept reflects the accomplishment of social actions in interaction, insofar as the utterance of the first-pair part of an AP creates an expectation of the utterance of a second-pair part. For instance, a question creates the expectation of an answer, the absence of which would be interpreted as significant. As social actions, not all second-pair parts are equally

considered. For instance, the utterance of an invitation creates the expectation of an acceptance, preferred to a refusal. Thus, the notion of preference organisation refers to what is structurally and socially expected as second-pair parts. Second parts are therefore divided into preferred (i.e. structurally expected) and dispreferred (i.e. structurally unexpected). Typically, a dispreferred is delayed by means of pauses or hesitation, and accompanied by dispreference markers (Pomerantz, 1984) such as apologies and accounts, reflecting the difficulty of performing such acts for the maintenance of social relationships.

A central idea of CA is that conversation is sequentially organised: any TCU/turn is understood to be connected both to the prior and the next TCU/turn, and the meaning of an utterance is dependent on its position in the interactional sequence (Stivers, 2011). Adopting CA principles allows us to investigate the meanings of the three expressions relatively to what precedes, by examining which type of action they respond to, and what follows, by looking at how participants subsequently orient to their use. More broadly, it helps to describe the practices French participants are engaged in when they use these expressions. From chapters 6 to 8, especially, the focus of attention will shift from the level of the utterance to the broader context, i.e. the levels of the turn and sequence. I will show how *JP*, *JC* and *JT* are strategically used in the local organisation of the ongoing talk.

2.1.2 Brown & Levinson's (1987) politeness theory

Brown and Levinson's (1978; 1987) politeness model draws on Grice's (1975) theory of conversational implicature, speech act theory, and Goffman's (1967) notion of "face". All individuals of a society have a face, that is, "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself" (1987: 61), which consists of two aspects: a negative face, representing "the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others", and a positive face, reflecting "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others." (1987: 62) Those types of speech acts that intrinsically threaten either face (of both the speaker and the addressee) are referred to as "face-threatening acts" (FTAs), and Brown and Levinson's model is hence a face-saving politeness model. Examples of FTAs include requests or warnings.

Brown and Levinson propose a set of five different strategies to avoid or minimise an FTA, ranked from highest to lowest imposition (1987: 68-70). Firstly, one can choose not to perform an FTA (strategy 5) if it is deemed to be too threatening. Secondly, one can perform an FTA on record, where their intention is unambiguous, or in contrast, off record (strategy 4), where "there is more than one unambiguously attributable intention so that the actor cannot be held to have committed himself

to one particular intent” (1987: 69). Linguistic realisations of this strategy include metaphor, irony or understatements. Then, an FTA can be performed baldly, i.e. without redressive action (strategy 1, e.g. performing a request by using an imperative), or with redressive action. In the latter case, the FTA can be performed with redress towards the negative face (strategy 3, e.g. by giving deference), or the positive face (strategy 2, e.g. claiming common ground by using in-group identity markers). These two strategies are referred to as negative and positive politeness, respectively. Thus, while negative politeness is oriented toward preserving the negative face of the addressee (avoidance-based strategy), positive politeness is oriented toward their positive face (approach-based strategy) (1987: 70). These strategies are employed while taking into consideration three factors: (1) the relative power (P) of the hearer over the speaker, (2) the social distance (D) between them, and (3) the ranking of imposition (R) involved in doing the FTA.

2.2 Data collection

The data consists of six hours and twenty-seven minutes of informal conversation between friends. They come from three corpora, that will be referred to as Corpus 1, Corpus 2 and Corpus 3. The first two involve exchanges of a duration of approximately ten to twenty minutes each, amounting to, respectively, one hour and seven minutes, and two hours and fifteen minutes. I recorded both corpora in France, the first in Nantes in December 2013, and the second in Coutures in January 2019. The third corpus is composed of four interactions taken from the online database CLAPI (Corpus de LAngue Parlée en Interaction), which amount to three hours and three minutes. This is summarised in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 – Presentation of the database: characteristics of the three corpora

	Year	Location	Duration
Corpus 1	2013	Nantes	1 hr 7 min
Corpus 2	2019	Coutures	2 hrs 15 min
Corpus 3	2009	Lyon	3 hrs 3 min

Corpus 1 and 2 share similarities and are presented together in section 2.2.1, while Corpus 3 is presented in 2.2.2.

I chose to focus on ordinary conversation, in that it is “the prototypical kind of language usage, the form in which we are all first exposed to language” (Levinson, 1983: 284). Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974: 730) describe the organisation of turn-taking in ordinary conversation as “the basic form of speech-exchange system”.

Conversation differs from other forms of talk (e.g. institutional talk, interviews) in that none of its components are pre-established: the number of participants, the topics under discussion and the duration are freely determined, or minimally constrained (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1995: 114). Although these components were determined prior to the recording of Corpus 1 and Corpus 2 for the purpose of my study, the conversations making up these two corpora share other properties of ordinary conversation. Thus, according to Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1995: 114-115), they are spatially and temporally immediate insofar as participants are next to each other, interacting in a direct manner; the conversations are informal and casual (see also Goodwin, 1981: 2), although semi-spontaneous; they are intrinsically purposeless; they involve participants behaving with an equal status (they are good friends, or friends of friends). As will be discussed later on, some of the conversations often display specificities that are characteristic of other forms of talk, namely interviews (e.g. Charaudeau, 1984; Heritage, 1985) and debates (e.g. Morel, 1985).

2.2.1 Corpus 1 and Corpus 2

The collection of my own corpus data was motivated by the ability to control variables, including topics of discussion, some of which being designed to encourage the use of opinion expressions. Each of these two corpora involves four native speakers of French, who were recruited on the basis of several criteria. Subjects were asked to formally consent to participate in this research project, following its approval by the University of Manchester’s Research Ethics Committee. First, all of the participants are in the age range of 20 to 30, with the exception of one participant who is 31. Second, gender is equally represented: each corpus involves two women and two men. Finally, participants were recruited on the basis of their relationship to each other: some are good friends who have known each other for several years, while others are “friends of friends” meeting for the first time. Table 2.2 presents the eight participants involved in both corpora.

Table 2.2 – Presentation of the participants (Corpus 1 and 2)

Participants	Genre	Age	Participants	Genre	Age
Aurore (AUR)	Female	26	Adeline (ADE)	Female	30
Charlotte (CHA)	Female	27	Céline (CEL)	Female	28
Nicolas (NIC)	Male	23	Quentin (QUE)	Male	31
Paul (PAU)	Male	27	Bruno (BRU)	Male	29

The two corpora differ from each other with respect to the last variable: the

first corpus involves both kinds of relationship, while the second involves only good friends. In Corpus 1, Aurore and Charlotte have been friends for several years, while Nicolas and Paul are classmates who have a friendly relationship. The two groups were meeting for the first time during the recordings. In Corpus 2, Adeline, Céline, Quentin and Bruno have all known each other for several years. Adeline and Quentin are in a relationship.

These two corpora also differ with respect to the participants' distribution, time length and final number of interactions. While the first corpus is composed of dyadic conversations only, the second involves grouped conversations of two, three or four participants. For the first corpus, participants were grouped together in pairs so that all of them speak to each other, and it therefore involves six interactions. They were asked to talk for approximately ten minutes. For the second corpus, participants were grouped together in pairs, or in groups of three or four to increase competition for the floor. The distribution has been made so that each of them participates in the conversation five times, leading to a total of eight interactions: five dyadic interactions, two interactions between three participants, and a grouped interaction between all of the four participants. They were asked to talk between ten and fifteen minutes. Table 2.3 shows the distribution of the participants for each corpus.

Participants were given topics of discussion prior to the recordings (see Table 2.4). For the first corpus, a general topic was chosen – food and cooking – and four sub-topics were suggested in the form of a question (cf. topics 1 and 2) or a theme to elaborate (cf. topics 3 and 4). For the second corpus, the topics were designed to encourage different forms of talk, from narratives where speakers were asked to talk about their personal life (cf. topics 1 to 3), to sequences which are clearly oriented towards debate and where stance-taking is more prominent (cf. topics 4 to 6). Indeed, such sequences may share characteristics with debates as an institutional form of talk: the provision of arguments by a participant may lead to the provision of counter-arguments by another, or on the contrary, to agreement. Such actions may involve the use of opinion expressions, including opinion verbs. Topics were given in the form of assertions, so that participants would feel free to choose the perspective under which they wished to broach the topics (especially topics encouraging debate). Unlike Corpus 1, where the four topics were kept constant throughout the six interactions, the topics suggested in Corpus 2 changed according to the number of participants involved in the interaction. This means that the topics were the same for each two-party and three-party interactions. This procedure may enable participants to feel more familiar and comfortable with the exercise they have been asked to do, but also with the topics, which may lead to an evolution of their thoughts and opinions across interactions, and which could be reflected in the use of a marker of opinion. In the five two-party interactions, participants discussed topics 1 and

Table 2.3 – Distribution of the participants (Corpus 1 and 2)

Corpus 1			
<u>Interaction 1.1</u> (09 min 43 sec)	Aurore Charlotte	<u>Interaction 1.2</u> (10 min 43 sec)	Nicolas Paul
<u>Interaction 1.3</u> (12 min 43 sec)	Charlotte Nicolas	<u>Interaction 1.4</u> (10 min 19 sec)	Charlotte Paul
<u>Interaction 1.5</u> (10 min 49 sec)	Aurore Paul	<u>Interaction 1.6</u> (13 min 09 sec)	Aurore Nicolas
Corpus 2			
<u>Interaction 2.1</u> (14 min 59 sec)	Adeline Céline	<u>Interaction 2.2</u> (15 min 50 sec)	Bruno Céline
<u>Interaction 2.3</u> (17 min 33 sec)	Céline Quentin	<u>Interaction 2.4</u> (17 min 40 sec)	Bruno Quentin
<u>Interaction 2.5</u> (20 min 08 sec)	Adeline Bruno	<u>Interaction 2.6</u> (17 min 33 sec)	Adeline Céline Quentin
<u>Interaction 2.7</u> (18 min 47 sec)	Adeline Bruno Quentin	<u>Interaction 2.8</u> (14 min 59 sec)	Adeline Bruno Céline Quentin

4. They were subsequently presented new topics in the three-party interactions, namely topics 2 and 5. Finally, topics 5 and 6 were exclusively discussed in the multiparty interaction involving all of the four participants.

As will become more explicit in the following chapters, the form of talk where instances of the three constructions (and especially *JP* and *JT*) occur is an important criterion to take into account. At times the conversational style is more casual and relaxed: the goal of the participants can be described as purely conversational rather than transactional, insofar as it is based on nurturing the relationship between the participants. This can be observed especially in topics 1 to 3, i.e. topics involving narratives about the participants' life and personal experience. At other times the participants' motives go beyond maintaining a social relationship. This is especially

Table 2.4 – Presentation of the topics (Corpus 1 and 2)

Corpus 1

-
1. People speak about “culinary arts”. Would you agree that cooking is an art?
 2. These last years, a lot of TV cooking shows have appeared. What do you think about them?
 3. Traditional cuisine *versus* gastronomic cuisine.
 4. Cooking: domestic activity to meet a biological need *versus* hobby

Corpus 2

-
1. (*2 participants*) The hobbies that you spend the most time on in your free time.
 2. (*3 participants*) Your best holiday memories.
 3. (*4 participants*) Your favorite type of food.
 4. (*2 participants*) The importance of social networks.
 5. (*3 participants*) More space has to be devoted to artistic and cultural education at school.
 6. (*4 participants*) It is necessary to stop eating meat in order to adopt a sustainable mode of living.
-

the case in topics 4 to 6, which were designed to encourage debates. Speakers have different motives, whether they seek to defend their viewpoint or to tell a narrative, which has consequences for the interactional functions of the constructions. Furthermore, in Corpus 2, there seems to be a reciprocal influence between the number of participants involved and the forms of talk: the five dyadic conversations mostly take the form of stories co-constructed by both participants, or narratives of participants’ personal experiences, i.e. feelings or tastes; they differ from those involving three or four participants, in which they tend to engage in debates more frequently when topics from 4 to 6 are under discussion.

All the interactions were both audio- and video-recorded. While I started recording the conversations through both formats, participants were asked to stop the audio recording themselves, thereby giving them more independence. These non-standard closing sequences turned out to be generally interesting locations for the purpose of my research, as several display instances of *JP* (see paragraph below and chapter 6). Audio recordings (as well as their detailed transcriptions) have constituted the main source of data, while video recordings were used to resolve any ambiguous excerpts (e.g. when the speaker’s speech was unclear) but also to support the analysis through the observation of nonlinguistic actions (e.g. gaze). I transcribed large excerpts displaying instances of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* following Conver-

sation Analytic transcription conventions (see section 2.4 below).

The methodology used for these two corpora is directly inspired by Cosnier and Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1987: 7), who describe the conversations obtained as a hybrid genre, between debate and naturally-occurring conversation. The interactions clearly are artefacts and not spontaneous insofar as they were pre-arranged and constrained in terms of topics, time, and number of participants. In particular, this methodology means that my data is characterised by two features that are not common in spontaneous verbal interaction, but specific to the kind of encounters constituting these two corpora. First, it was a tacit condition that the participation of all participants was required, which led some speakers to explicitly designate another for the next turn. Secondly, because participants were given topics to talk about for a specific duration, those topics are sometimes shifted more abruptly than would be the norm in non-elicited conversation. Indeed, there is a standard preference for changing topics in a stepwise fashion, around topical pivots that connect them (Jefferson, 1984; Sacks, 1992; Levinson, 1983: 312-16). Furthermore, conversational closings are achieved explicitly rather than through the production of the typical structure sketched by Conversation Analysis, namely, sequences of closing-implicative utterances, passing turns, and terminal greetings (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973; Levinson, 1983: 316-18). These two characteristics must be kept in mind as they may be responsible for triggering the use of the target constructions: whenever a current speaker chooses to designate someone as the next speaker by asking for their opinion, the use of a marker of opinion may become relevant; moreover, sudden shifts of topics and conversation endings can be seen as actions that require mitigation. The following chapter will show that the target constructions are in fact frequently used in both situations, although not without preferences (*JP*, especially, is the most frequent in these contexts). Nevertheless, the fact that turn-taking was essentially free and that the chosen topics reflect everyday ones, the recordings arguably approximate naturalistic conversation sufficiently for the purposes of the research.

2.2.2 Corpus 3

The last corpus is taken from the online multimedia database CLAPI (Corpus de Langue Parlée en Interaction). The choice of an additional corpus to my own database was motivated by the ensuing increase of the data, but also to allow for comparison with more naturalistic conversations – that is, conversations that were not constrained in terms of topics and arguably in terms of time length and number

Table 2.5 – Distribution of the participants (Corpus 3)

	Participants	Genre	Age range
<u>Interaction 3.1</u> (31 min 55 sec)	Julie (JUL)	Female	20-30
	Claire (CLA)	Female	20-30
	Laurent (LAU)	Male	20-30
	Jean (JEA)	Male	20-30
<u>Interaction 3.2</u> (1 hr 21 min 23 sec)	Judith (JUD)	Female	20-30
	Patricia (PAT)	Female	20-30
<u>Interaction 3.3</u> (37 min 32 sec)	Anne (ANN)	Female	20-30
	Julie (JUL)	Female	20-30
	Romain (ROM)	Male	20-30
<u>Interaction 3.4</u> (33 min 00 sec)	Albine (ALB)	Female	20-30
	Justine (JUS)	Female	20-30
	Arnaud (ARN)	Male	20-30

of participants.¹ The CLAPI database contains audio (sometimes combined with video) data, as well as their transcripts, of various types of interactions such as institutional, private, commercial or medical, to name just a few. I chose to examine four recordings which are part of a group of interactions recorded in Lyon in November 2009, which are labelled “Apéritif between friends” (*Apéritif entre ami(e)s*). In addition to the transcripts, both the audio and the video recordings of these interactions were accessible, which was another important factor involved in the choice of this additional corpus. All of the four interactions can be found in the category of “private interactions”: I therefore assumed that the participants have a friendly relationship. They involve between two and four participants, all native speakers of French aged between 20 and 30. Their distribution in the four interactions is detailed in Table 2.5. Note that one of the participants, Julie, is involved in two different interactions (3.1 and 3.3).

The four interactions have been transcribed by the contributors to CLAPI following the transcription conventions ICOR. However, excerpts taken from the CLAPI corpus will be presented with the same transcription conventions used for Corpus 1

¹In the CLAPI database, it is difficult to know whether the number of participants and the time length had been pre-established by the data collectors.

and Corpus 2, for conformity reasons.

2.3 Presentation of the data

A total of 111 occurrences of *JP*, 79 occurrences of *JC* and 23 occurrences of *JT* were found in the whole database. The breakdown of these occurrences by corpus is presented in Table 2.6.

Table 2.6 – *Je pense, je crois* and *je trouve* by corpus

	Corpus 1	Corpus 2	Corpus 3	Total
<i>Je pense</i>	27	40	44	111
<i>Je crois</i>	23	23	33	79
<i>Je trouve</i>	10	9	4	23

Interestingly, Corpus 1 and 2 show a proportionally significant number of instances of the three constructions in comparison with Corpus 3, which is longer with respect to time. This legitimates the methodology used to collect the data constituting Corpus 1 and Corpus 2, and in particular the design of specific topics to encourage the use of opinion markers. The use of *JT* is especially more significant in the two first corpora, where it occurs more than double when compared to Corpus 3. One environment where instances of *JP* and *JT* typically cluster is when participants are presenting debatable opinions. Such environments mainly occur in the two first corpora when the participants are discussing the topics oriented towards debates. However, similar environments appear in Corpus 3, especially in Interactions 3.1 and 3.3.

Notable differences can also be observed across the interactions within each corpus. Interaction 2.1, for instance, displays only one instance of *JP*, while Interaction 2.5, which involves the same number of participants and lasts an approximately similar amount of time, displays five instances of the same construction. A similar observation can be made with *JT*, which occurs six times in Interaction 2.6 and only once in Interaction 3.4, while the latter interaction is approximately 15 minutes longer. In addition to the topic under discussion, other possible explanations for these discrepancies include personal preferences (see following paragraph) and mimicry. Indeed, some instances (especially instances of *JP*) seem to prompt the use of the same or another construction in the next speaker's turn, which is in turn likely produced by mimicry (Tannen, 1989: chapter 3). This will be developed further in chapter 6. Finally, the relationship between the participants does not appear as a contributing factor.

Next, Table 2.7 details, for each corpus, occurrences of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* by speaker. It is interesting to point out differences in the use of the three constructions across each speaker, which may reflect personal preferences. For instance, in Corpus 1, Nicolas is the participant with the highest frequency of the three constructions. In Corpus 2, Adeline and Bruno display no less than 13 and 14 instances of *JP*, respectively, while their co-participants display only eight and five instances of the same construction. In Corpus 3, Julie uses 16 instances of *JP*, however, no significant observation may be made as she is the only participant to be involved in two different interactions. Instances of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* by speaker and by interaction are presented in Appendix B.

Tables 2.8, 2.9 and 2.10 detail occurrences of *JP*, *JC* and *JT*, respectively, by sentence structure. They can occur in matrix position followed or not by the complementiser *que* ‘that’, as reduced parentheticals in the midst of or at the end of their host utterance, or as standalone, separate constructions.² Note that in French, the complementiser *que* ‘that’ is normatively required, unlike English *that*. As for standalone expressions, their complement is omitted but can be recovered from the immediate preceding context (usually the previous speaker’s turn).

First, Table 2.8 shows the distribution of the 111 instances of *JP*. Of this total, 72 instances (64.9%) of *JP* occur in matrix position with respect to the proposition over which it takes scope. This is thus its unmarked position. Of these 72 instances, 14 (12.6%) do not include the complementiser *que* ‘that’. Interestingly, ten of them occur in Corpus 3. This will be discussed further in chapter 8. Moreover, *JP* takes the form of a reduced parenthetical in 27 instances (24.3%). In this case, it occurs without a following complementiser in either medial or final position *vis-à-vis* the proposition in its scope. As a reduced parenthetical, *JP* preferentially occurs in clause-final as opposed to clause-medial position: the database displays 21 instances (18.9%) of clause-final *JP*, against only six instances (5.4%) in clause-medial position. Seven instances of *JP* (6%) are used as standalone expressions. In such cases, the marker in fact never occurs completely on its own, but is in most cases accompanied by *ouais* ‘yeah’, an informal version of the positive response particle *oui* ‘yes’. Finally, five instances (15%) of *JP* have been classified in the category “Other”. In such cases, either no embedded clause can be identified because the speaker self-interrupts before delivering a pragmatically complete message, or the structure of the turn is ambiguous. This is exemplified in (1) below, where it is not clear whether *JP* introduces a subordinate clause (*moi-même je le fais rarement* ‘I myself do it rarely’). The presence of the hesitation marker *euh* ‘um’ and the reformulation

²See also “disjoint constructions” (Blanche-Benveniste & Willems, 2007).

Table 2.7 – *Je pense, je crois* and *je trouve* by participant**Corpus 1**

Participant	<i>je pense</i>	<i>je crois</i>	<i>je trouve</i>
Aurore	6	5	3
Charlotte	5	2	2
Nicolas	12	9	4
Paul	4	7	1
Total	27	23	10

Corpus 2

Participant	<i>je pense</i>	<i>je crois</i>	<i>je trouve</i>
Adeline	13	8	3
Bruno	14	7	1
Céline	5	3	0
Quentin	8	5	5
Total	40	23	9

Corpus 3

Participant	<i>je pense</i>	<i>je crois</i>	<i>je trouve</i>
Albine	1	0	0
Anne	3	5	0
Arnaud	4	6	1
Claire	1	2	0
Jean	2	2	0
Judith	6	5	0
Julie	16	1	2
Justine	1	3	0
Laurent	1	0	0
Patricia	9	9	1
Romain	0	0	0
Total	44	33	4

Table 2.8 – Occurrences of *je pense* by sentence structure

	Corpus 1	Corpus 2	Corpus 3	Total
Matrix clause (<i>je pense que</i>)	17 (63%)	24 (60%)	17 (38.6%)	58 (52.3%)
<i>Je pense</i> ∅ in matrix position	1 (3.7%)	3 (7.5%)	10 (22.7%)	14 (12.6%)
Parenthetical constructions	8 (29.6%)	7 (17.5%)	11 (25%)	26 (23.4%)
Standalone constructions	0 (0%)	5 (12.5%)	2 (4.5%)	7 (6.3%)
Other	1 (3.7%)	1 (2.5%)	4 (9.1%)	6 (5.4%)
Total	27 (100%)	40 (100%)	44 (100%)	111 (100%)

marker *'fin*, a shorten version of *enfin* ‘I mean’ (line 1, arrowed), suggest that Nicolas self-interrupts after *je pense euh* and redesigns his turn, therefore beginning a new TCU.

(1) Interaction 1.2 - Nicolas / Paul

1	NIC →h 'fi n quand t' es (f-) 'fi n quand on euh: 'fi n I mean when you're (f-) I mean we um I mean
2	quand on fait pas l'effort et j' pense euh 'fi n when we don't make the effort and I think um I mean
3	moi-même je 'fi n j' le fais rarement... myself I I mean I do it rarely

Secondly, Table 2.9 shows that 39 instances (49.4%) of *JC* occur in matrix position, amongst which only one instance does not include the complementiser *que* ‘that’. The matrix position competes with the parenthetical position, which comprises 33 instances (41.8%). As was the case with *JP*, there is a preference for *JC* to occur as a clause-final (29 instances, 36.7%), rather than a clause-medial (four instances, 5.1%), parenthetical. Finally, two instances (2.5%) occur as standalone constructions, and five instances (6.3%) have been classified in the category “Other”.

Finally, Table 2.10 presents the 23 instances of *JT*. Fifteen instances (65.2%) of the construction occur in initial position, which is its unmarked position. Among

Table 2.9 – Occurrences of *je crois* by sentence structure

	Corpus 1	Corpus 2	Corpus 3	Total
Matrix clause (<i>je crois que</i>)	13 (56.5%)	15 (65.2%)	10 (30.3%)	38 (48.1%)
<i>Je crois</i> ∅ in matrix position	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	1 (1.3%)
Parenthetical constructions	8 (34.8%)	7 (30.4%)	18 (54.6%)	33 (41.8%)
Standalone constructions	1 (4.3%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	2 (2.5%)
Other	1 (4.3%)	1 (4.3%)	3 (9.1%)	5 (6.3%)
Total	23 (100%)	23 (100%)	33 (100%)	79 (100%)

these fifteen instances, only one does not include the complementiser *que* ‘that’. In matrix position, *JT* is the only construction, among the three under investigation, to be characterised by the insertion of material (namely the adverbial phrase *en fait* ‘actually’) between the subject-verb combination and the complementiser. Five instances (21.7%) take the form of a reduced parenthetical, amongst which four (18.2%) are clause-final parentheticals and one (4.3%) occurs in clause-medial position. Finally, two instances (8.7%) have been classified in the category “Other”.

A few initial observations on the three constructions will be outlined here. If they present similarities, they also present distinct features suggesting that they have individual characteristics, which will be the focus of the following chapters. First, all three of them display a preference for the matrix position, especially with the complementiser *que*. This position can therefore be taken as their preferred, unmarked position. However, with respect to *JC*, this preference is not overwhelming compared to the parenthetical position. Indeed, while 39 instances (49.4%) occur in matrix position, 33 instances (41.8%) occur parenthetically (the percentage difference is therefore 7.6). This gap is more significant for *JP* (where the percentage difference is 41.5) and *JT* (43.5). Whilst less than a quarter (23.4%) of instances of *JP* occur as reduced parentheticals, they represent approximately 42% of instances of *JC*. By contrast, less than 22% of instances of *JT* occur in parenthetical position. This suggests that *JC* has more syntactic freedom in the utterance within which it occurs. The overwhelming preference of *JP* in matrix position may account for the more frequent deletion of its following complementiser. Indeed, 19.4% of instances of *JP* occurring in matrix position are not followed by the complementiser, while

Table 2.10 – Occurrences of *je trouve* by sentence structure

	Corpus 1	Corpus 2	Corpus 3	Total
Matrix clause (<i>je trouve que</i>)	7 (70%)	6 (66.7%)	2 (50%)	15 (65.2%)
<i>Je trouve</i> ∅ in matrix position	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Parenthetical constructions	0 (0%)	3 (33.3%)	2 (50%)	5 (21.7%)
Standalone constructions	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (4.3%)
Other	2 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (8.7%)
Total	10 (100%)	9 (100%)	4 (100%)	23 (100%)

this represents only 2.6% of instances of *JC* and none of the instances of *JT*.

2.4 Transcription method

I transcribed relevant excerpts from the recordings of Corpus 1 and Corpus 2 according to Conversation Analytic transcription conventions. Specifically, I used elements from two different sources, the ICOR conventions³ and the Jeffersonian system (Jefferson, 2004b), to arrive at a detailed transcription to facilitate the analysis (cf. Appendix A). As mentioned, for reasons of conformity, I adapted excerpts from the CLAPI database to the transcription conventions given in Appendix A.

The conversational excerpts presented follow a standard layout used by conversation analysts to present transcripts (Hepburn & Bolden, 2013: 58): each line of each excerpt is numbered so that relevant phenomena can clearly and easily be referred to in the analysis; speakers are identified (by the three first letters of their name) at each transitional point;⁴ a fixed width font is used to align simultaneous talk. Note that each line does not represent one turn-construction unit as is the case in some conventions. Except for silences which have been measured with the software Praat (see below), all phenomena appearing in the transcripts have been measured

³See http://icar.cnrs.fr/projets/corinte/documents/2013_Conv_ICOR_250313.pdf

⁴This excludes cases of overlapping talk where there is continuous talk from one or several speakers, or cases where a speaker continues speaking after a silence (cf. below).

intuitively.

Each conversational excerpt is characterised by what follows:

- Each excerpt is introduced by a heading displaying relevant information: it is numbered to facilitate references; the interaction from which the excerpt is taken from is given: for instance, “Interaction 2.6” refers to the sixth interaction in Corpus 2 (cf. Tables 2.3 and 2.5 above); the full names of the participants involved are given.
- An English translation is included in each excerpt on a line-by-line basis to allow readers to understand the original talk as it unfolds. While the first line represents the original interaction in French, the second line is an idiomatic English translation. Note that paralinguistic elements such as silences and laughter do not appear in the second line. Moreover, as mentioned in the introduction, *JP*, *JC* and *JT* have been translated by their direct English equivalents, namely *I think*, *I believe* and *I find*. Finally, the English complementiser *that* has been added when *que* is used in French.
- To highlight occurrences of *JP (que)*, *JC (que)* and *JT (que)*, these are displayed in bold. Moreover, to make certain lines more visible, these are marked by a rightwards arrow (\rightarrow) between the speaker’s name and (part of) their turn.
- The beginnings and/or ends of some excerpts display incomplete turns, i.e. turns that are not given in their entirety for reasons of space; when this is the case, ellipses (a series of three dots: ...) are used to indicate prior or subsequent talk from the current speaker.

The remainder of this section describes in more detail some of the symbols and phenomena included in the transcripts. A comprehensive list of these symbols and their corresponding meaning is available in Appendix A.

First, overlapping talk by two or more speakers is aligned and marked with square brackets ([]): a left square ([) bracket indicates the overlap onset and a right square bracket (]) the overlap offset. However, in some excerpts, overlapping talk appears across several lines due to horizontal space restrictions. Moreover, an overlapped but continuous talk from one speaker is framed by equals signs, as exemplified in (2).

(2) Interaction 2.6 - Adeline / Céline / Quentin

1 QUE ... i' [faut vraiment qu'on]=
do we really have to

2 CEL → [ʔah ah ahʔ]
 3 QUE =[parle des deux?]
 speak about them both?
 4 ADE → [ʔah ah ah] ah ah .hʔ. . .

In line 2 (arrowed), Céline’s laughter overlaps part of Quentin’s talk in line 1: both phenomena are therefore aligned and framed into square brackets across both lines. In line 4 (arrowed), Adeline’s laughter similarly overlaps the end of Quentin’s turn in line 3: these two phenomena are once again aligned and framed into square brackets across both lines. The continuity of Quentin’s turn is indicated by the equals signs at the end of line 1 and at the beginning of line 3, thus indicating the absence of a break in his ongoing turn. This layout allows the alignment of temporally simultaneous phenomena. Note that because they mark the absence of any break or gap between two units of talk, equals signs are also used to mark latching between two turns, i.e. the absence of any silence at transition spaces.

Next, the transcripts rely on absolute measures of silences (Stivers et al., 2009). Silences are therefore not marked relatively to the tempo of the surrounding talk. Any silences have been measured in the software Praat to the nearest tenth of a second. A period in parentheses indicates a brief interval (a *micropause*) of less than two-tenths of a second. The precise measure of silences longer than 0.2 second are given in parentheses. Silences longer than 0.5 second are placed between turns, and those shorter than 0.5 second are placed within turns. Finally, beats of silence between turn-construction units are unmarked.

Punctuation marks, and more specifically periods (.), commas (,) and question marks (?), represent TCU-final intonation (Hepburn & Bolden, 2013: 61): periods indicate a falling intonation contour; commas indicate continuous intonation; question marks indicate strongly rising intonation. They may respectively coincide with assertions, ends of clauses and interrogatives (i.e. they may coincide with grammatical punctuation in writing), but it should be pointed out that this is not necessarily the case. TCU-final intonations which are not discernible (due to overlapping talk, for instance) are left unmarked.

Finally, comments have been inserted in some excerpts in double parentheses. They include descriptions of events or nonlinguistic actions such as facial expressions, gestures and gaze. However, nonlinguistic actions that are relevant for the analysis are more often detailed directly in the analysis.

This chapter presented the data used for the present research as well as the collection method. Unless indicated otherwise, examples that will be used in the following chapters all come from this database. They will provide empirical evidence for the use of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* as constructions fulfilling interactional functions.

Chapter 3

Previous Studies

The constructions *JP*, *JC* and *JT* have received attention from different perspectives and have been investigated in different frameworks as: markers of subjectivity, markers of epistemic modality or evidentiality in a semantic perspective, parenthetical verbs losing their governing status, “hedges” or mitigators downgrading the speaker’s commitment, or as discourse markers at a more interactional level. In this chapter, I present an overview of previous studies on the French expressions, but I also present certain notions that have been used to label them. I also make reference to studies on the English expression *I think*, which has been the focus of various studies and which can be considered an equivalent of the three French constructions. For reference, by comparison to *I think*, far fewer studies focus on *I believe* and *I find*. This chapter is organised as follows: first, I detail a body of research focusing, from a semantic perspective, on French *JP*, *JC* and *JT* (section 3.1). Then, section 3.2 is dedicated to studies on parenthetical verbs, at the crossroads of syntax, pragmatics and discourse. It briefly presents the emergence of this notion as well as seminal studies, and includes a presentation of studies involving the three French expressions. Finally, studies presented in section 3.3 were undertaken within a more interactional perspective. In particular, *JP*, *JC* and *JT* have been described as discourse markers, a category which is discussed at the beginning of this last section.

3.1 Semantic perspective

Several studies have investigated in depth the semantic meaning of *JP*, *JC* and *JT*, almost systematically as part of a wider range of expressions of personal opinion. Only Martin (1988) focuses on *JP* and *JC* exclusively, without referring to other expressions. This body of research is presented in this section chronologically.

3.1.1 Ducrot (1980)

Argumentation Theory (Anscombe & Ducrot, 1983) aims to show the argumentative potential of expressions (e.g. connectives such as *mais* ‘but’), whose meaning cannot be captured by truth-conditional semantics. Within this theory, Ducrot (1980) offers an in-depth analysis of *JT*, by examining the precise conditions under which it can be used. First of all, he distinguishes between two uses of the verb, on the basis of syntactic aspects: *trouver*₁ refers to a personal opinion and is illustrated in (3a), while *trouver*₂ is similar to *découvrir* ‘discover’, *inventer* ‘invent’, as in (3b).¹

(3) (Ducrot, 1980: 60-61)

a. *Elle trouve que son mari ne s’occupe pas d’elle.*

‘She finds that her husband does not look after her.’

b. *La voyante a trouvé qu’il était célibataire.*

‘The clairvoyant has found that he was single.’

Ducrot’s focus is on the uses of *trouver*₁ (hence subsequently referred to as *trouver*) in the first-person subject. In order to fully capture the meaning of *JT*, it is compared to seven other verbs of opinion, including *penser* and *croire*. Their classification is given in Table 3.1 (1980: 84), on the basis of five different criteria.

Table 3.1 – Classification of eight verbs of opinion (Ducrot, 1980)

<i>Considérer</i> (‘consider’)	+ P	+ M	+ O	+ C	+ R
<i>Trouver</i> (‘find’)	+ P	+ M	+ O	– C	– R
<i>Estimer</i> (‘reckon’)	+ P	+ M	– O	+ C	+ R
<i>Juger</i> (‘judge’)	+ P	– M	– O	+ C	+ R
<i>Avoir l’impression</i> (‘have the impression’)	+ P	– M	– O	– C	– R
<i>Être sûr</i> (‘be sure’)	– P	– M	– O	+ C	– R
<i>Penser</i> (‘think’)	– P	– M	– O	– C	+ R
<i>Croire</i> (‘believe’)	– P	– M	– O	– C	– R

1. Criterion P: the verb implies a personal judgement founded on experience;
2. Criterion M: the verb implies an experience of the thing “itself”;
3. Criterion O: the verb implies an original predication, i.e. the item described is associated with a new predicate;

¹Dendale and Van Bogaert (2007) add that with *trouver*₂, “[the] discovery is presented as something objective – a fact – which has a truth value” (2007: 68), while *trouver*₁ does not present the predicate as a fact.

4. Criterion C: the speaker always presents themselves as certain of the opinion expressed in the proposition;
5. Criterion R: the speaker always presents their opinion as the product of a reflection.

As shown in the table, Ducrot concludes that *JT* expresses a personal judgement (criterion P) based on an experience of the “thing itself” (criterion M), and which constitutes an original predication (criterion O). The three criteria are further developed by Ducrot, but the last two (criteria C and R) are added without any discussion.

First, Ducrot distinguishes between *jugement personnel* ‘personal judgement’ and *jugement rapporté* ‘reported judgement’ (1980: 73-75). If I am asked for my opinion about a movie I have read positive reviews about, but I have *not* seen (direct experience) or been told about (indirect experience), I can use the verbs in (4a), whereas the verbs in (4b) would be misleading for my addressee:

- (4) (Ducrot, 1980: 73)
- a. *Je crois / Je pense / Je suis sûr qu’il est intéressant.*
‘I believe / I think / I am sure that it is interesting’.
 - b. *Je trouve qu’il est / J’estime qu’il est / Je le considère comme intéressant.*
‘I find that it is / I reckon that it is / I consider it (to be) interesting’.

According to Ducrot, there is a difference between the group of verbs in (4a), which may indicate a reported judgement, and those in (4b), which express a personal judgement based on experience (either direct or indirect). This is supported by the fact that the interrogative utterance *Trouves-tu que ce film est intéressant ?* ‘Do you find that this movie is interesting?’ would be preferred when I assume that my interlocutor has seen the movie, or that they have a certain representation of it.² Ducrot then adds *juger* ‘judge’ and *avoir l’impression* ‘have the impression’ to the second category of verbs, alongside with *trouver*, in that both of them, although they can be used when the speaker only relies on reviews of the movie, presents a personal, rather than reported judgement. At this point, Ducrot distinguishes between two different ways of expressing opinion based on someone else’s opinion: on the one hand, the speaker considers someone else’s opinion as an “authority” (1980: 74) that substitutes a personal judgement; on the other hand, this opinion is considered an indication, a “sign” (1980: 74) that serves as basis for a personal

²By this Ducrot refers to indirect experience, that is, if my interlocutor relies on external elements such as the director or the cast.

judgement. In the first case, the speaker makes someone else's opinion their own, while in the second case, they draw conclusions from this opinion. In (4) above, *croire*, *penser* and *être sûr* are representative of the first type of opinion; they are opposed to *avoir l'impression* (and probably *juger*, although this is not made explicit by Ducrot), which belongs to the second category.

The second criterion (M) allows for a further distinction within the second group of verbs (i.e. verbs that express a personal judgement), where *trouver* occurs. Ducrot introduces a distinction between *prédication intrinsèque* 'intrinsic predication' and *prédication extrinsèque* 'extrinsic predication' (1980: 75-77). *Trouver* (alongside *estimer* and *considérer*) expresses intrinsic judgements – that is, personal judgements based on (in)direct experience of “the thing itself” (1980: 76). By contrast, *avoir l'impression* and *juger* are extrinsic judgements: they refer to personal judgements based on external circumstances, where “*the aspect [of the thing] that we experienced is not the one that we are speaking about*” ('l'aspect dont nous avons l'expérience est autre que celui dont nous parlons') (1980: 82). Ducrot notes that an intrinsic experience of “the thing itself” can be indirect: thus, to use the same example as above, *trouver* can be used if I have *not* seen the movie but I have been told about it.

The third and last criterion developed by Ducrot (O) sets apart *trouver* and *considérer*, which mark a *prédication originelle* 'original predication', from the other opinion verbs, which mark a *prédication seconde* 'secondary predication' (1980: 77-83). The predication is original when the item described is associated with a new predicate. By contrast, secondary predication here refers to preliminary, established judgements, which are consistent with a preexisting classification. For instance, in the example *Paul a acheté une voiture chère* 'Paul has bought an expensive car', two different intentions can be attributed according to the discourse situation.³ On the one hand, the speaker may intend to give their opinion about the car: the predication is original insofar as the speaker attributes a new predicate ('expensive') to the (previously unmarked) item “car”. On the other hand, the predication is secondary when the speaker's intention is not to express an opinion about a car, but to point out that it belongs to the established, preexisting category of expensive cars. In this case, the attribution to a car of the predicates 'expensive'/'not expensive' is consistent with a preexisting classification. According to Ducrot, a sentence such as *Paul a acheté une voiture chère* can be marked by *JT* only in the first scenario: the attribution of a certain predicate to a certain item must be presented as original.

³The example provided by Ducrot is *une voiture confortable* 'a comfortable car'. However, I substituted *confortable* by *chère* because the distinction between the two types of predication is more straightforward with a predicate such as *acheter une voiture chère* 'buy an expensive car'.

Through the use of *JT*, the speaker claims responsibility for attributing such a (new) predicate. Ducrot comes to the conclusion that the conditions of use of *trouver* are not associated with the predicates the expression occurs with, but with the attitude of the speaker *vis-à-vis* this predicate.

The position of adjectives which can be placed on either side of the noun they modify can be used as a possible test to distinguish between original and secondary predications. Since post-modifying adjectives tend to express new information about the noun they modify (Hansen, 2016: 191), *il a acheté une voiture petite* will more naturally mark an original predication, and *il a acheté une petite voiture*, a secondary predication. Subsequently, *JT* sounds more natural with the first sentence.

The difference between *trouver* and *considérer* is not developed beyond Criteria C and R (see Table 3.1): unlike with *trouver*, the speaker is certain of their opinion with *considérer* (Criterion C), which is the product of a reflection (Criterion R). Mullan (2010) points out that the negative polarity of Criterion C appears to contradict the fact that *trouver* expresses a personal opinion. According to her, this can be explained by the fact that *trouver* “limits the validity of the opinion to one’s own individual experience; in other words, the speaker is sure of what they think, but is aware that it is not a universal truth, and that not everyone thinks the same since everyone will have a different experience.” (2010: 136) I will add a relatively intuitive criterion, which relates to the debatable nature of the item described. Indeed, in comparison to *je considère que cette soupe est bonne*, *je trouve que cette soupe est bonne* sounds more natural and spontaneous, while *je considère* implies that the predicate is being challenged. *JT* thus appears as the unmarked way of expressing opinion.

Ducrot convincingly shows the conditions under which *JT* is possible. Associated with predicates such as *ce film est intéressant* ‘this movie is interesting’, *JT* expresses a personal (rather than reported) judgement based on experience. Furthermore, he points out that *JT* indicates that the item described is being attributed a new predicate.

It is easy to imagine a situation where *JT* would clarify the fact that the speaker relies on their own experience, rather than, for instance, positive reviews they have read about the movie.⁴ However, in my database, predicates occurring with *JT* all

⁴For this reason, Dendale and Van Bogaert (2007) describe *JT* as an evidential marker (see section 3.1.3 below). However, I argue that an utterance such as *ce film est intéressant* (without *JT que*) already invites the inference that the speaker has seen the movie, i.e. that they rely on experience. This is even clearer when the adjective is modified by a degree adverb implying a stronger degree of commitment from the speaker, such as in *ce film est très intéressant/bon* ‘this movie is very interesting/good’, or with a stronger adjective such as *superbe* ‘superb’. Indeed, such utterances would be misleading for the addressee if they subsequently discovered that their interlocutor has not seen the movie in question.

occur in contexts where it is clear that the speaker relies on experience. My interest therefore lies in the role performed by *JT* in the interactional sequences where it occurs: I will argue that the main role of *JT* is to enhance the speaker's subjective stance towards their utterance.

In chapter 4, I present the distinction between objective vs subjective predicates as the only criterion that licenses the felicity of *JT*. Indeed, I propose that as a subjective marker, *JT* is only compatible with subjective predicates, whose truth values are difficult to verify. By contrast, it is not compatible with objective predicates⁵ such as *sa voiture est une Citroën* 'their car is a Citroën' (1980: 67) insofar as the expression of opinion is not compatible with a fact which cannot be challenged (either a car is a Citroën, or it is not). The meaning of *JT* is analysed in comparison to *JP* when the latter is associated with subjective predicates. Finally, when the predicate that it occurs with includes an evaluative adjective, *JT* is considered the "unmarked" way of expressing opinion based on experience. By contrast, *JP* and *JC* are neutral, and may in some contexts invite the inference that the speaker relies on indirect experience. In this case, the role of *JP* and especially *JC* is more to signal a reduced commitment than a personal opinion.

I will address three comments on Ducrot's study. My first comment concerns the possibility of intrinsic experience to be based on indirect experience (cf. Criterion M). According to Ducrot, *je trouve que ce film est intéressant* 'I find that this movie is interesting' is acceptable if I have not seen the movie but have been told about it. However, I will introduce a more nuanced point: in saying *je trouve que ce film est intéressant* (when I have not seen it), I am not so much referring to the movie itself, as to the idea that I have in relation to it. This example may be paraphrased by *je trouve qu'il a l'air intéressant* 'I find that it seems interesting' or *je trouve que l'histoire est intéressante* 'I find that the storyline is interesting'. This subtle distinction supports the assumption according to which *JT* is compatible with direct, but not indirect experience of the speaker,⁶ when experience is involved in the predicate *JT* occurs with. As a matter of fact, these predicates may not involve any direct experience from the speaker, and this is my second comment on Ducrot's study. For instance, *JT* is compatible with a sentence such as *Pierre a eu raison de démissionner* 'Pierre was right to quit his job', which is not based on any kind of experience of the speaker's. The utterance of *je trouve que Pierre a eu raison de démissionner* 'I find that Pierre was right to quit his job' may be based on the speaker's knowledge of the reasons for Pierre's resignation, which would

⁵Ducrot refers to such predicates as *jugements de réalité* 'reality judgements' (1980: 67).

⁶I will refer later on to predicates based on a subjective judgement, instead of a direct experience, by arguing that the second can be grouped under the first.

not constitute an experience of the thing “itself”. It is more reasonable to say that *trouver* implies an experience of the thing “itself” when the speaker describes sensory aspects or gives subjective evaluations, which is the case with all of Ducrot’s examples. In such cases, *JT* seems to be widely used with evaluative adjectives (see chapter 5: section 5.2.1). Therefore, with predicates such as *Pierre a eu raison de démissionner* ‘Pierre was right to quit his job’, it is not convincing to oppose *trouver* and *penser* with the use of Criterion M. Finally, my database displays examples of *JP* with judgements that are likely to be spontaneous, suggesting that the distinction between *penser* and *trouver* regarding Criterion R is invalid. If *JT* is the unmarked way of expressing opinion, as mentioned earlier, *JP* is marked insofar as it signals a reduced commitment.

3.1.2 Martin (1988)

Martin (1988) focuses on the semantic differences between *penser que p* and *croire que p*. According to him, the two verbs differ in two ways: first, *croire* is a *verbe de connaissance* ‘verb of knowledge’ while *penser* is a *verbe de jugement* ‘verb of judgement’ requiring reasoning (1988: 547-549); second, the status of the embedded proposition differs in terms of “universes of belief” described by *penser* or *croire* (1988: 549-552).

Let us begin with the knowledge *vs* judgement distinction, and consider the sentences in (5).

- (5) Martin (1988: 547)
- a. *Je pense que Pierre a vendu son appartement.*
‘I think that Pierre has sold his flat.’
 - b. *Je crois que Pierre a vendu son appartement.*
‘I believe that Pierre has sold his flat.’

According to Martin, if the speaker knows that Pierre was looking to sell his flat several months ago, they are likely to use (5a). To utter (5b), the speaker would need additional, new, information justifying their belief. Moreover, if the speaker has a vague recollection of being told that Paul has sold his flat, (5b) will be used in this situation. *Penser* thus marks a judgement and “*does not go outside of a construction of the mind*” (‘ne va pas en dehors d’une construction de l’esprit’) (1988: 548): since it has been several months, the speaker draws conclusions about a situation. By contrast, *croire* marks a knowledge which is “*subjectively sufficient for the [speaker’s] commitment to p as a possible proposition*” (‘subjectivement suffisante pour la prise en charge de *p* comme une proposition vraisemblable’) (1988: 548).

Secondly, *croire* and *penser* describe two “universes of belief” each.⁷ One of them belongs to the person referred to in the sentence by the grammatical subject. It represents, for instance, the universe of Marie in *Marie croit que Pierre a vendu son appartement* ‘Marie believes that Pierre has sold his flat’. Martin refers to this as the *univers évoqué* ‘evoked universe’. The second belongs to the speaker, and is referred to as the *univers sous-jacent* ‘underlying universe’. These two universes of belief are parallel to each other (except, evidently, when the grammatical subject is the first person *je* and therefore deictically refers to the speaker).

Martin hypothesises that in the *univers évoqué*, *penser* and *croire* suggest that the proposition *p* is true,⁸ while in the *univers sous-jacent*, *croire* (only) suggests that *p* is false. Thus, reporting someone else’s thoughts (via *croire*) implies opposing thoughts from the speaker. However, according to Martin, *penser* behaves differently: reporting someone else’s opinion (via *penser*) does not suggest that the speaker holds the same opinion, nor that they have an opposing opinion. Thus, a sentence such as *Marie croit que Pierre a vendu son appartement* ‘Marie believes that Pierre has sold his flat’ implies that the speaker believes that Marie is wrong, while *Marie pense que Pierre a vendu son appartement* ‘Marie thinks that Pierre has sold his flat’ merely reports Marie’s opinion. This difference between the two verbs is developed by the author through a certain number of arguments. Most importantly, Martin shows that when the speaker describes, in their universe of belief, a state of affairs which is no longer ongoing, *croire que p* suggests that the speaker no longer believes it:

(6) Martin (1988: 551)

Je croyais qu’il était là. J’ai cru qu’il viendrait (= “*je ne le crois plus*”).

‘I believed that he was here. I have believed that he would come (= “I no longer believe it”).’

This is also the case with *penser que p* when it is used with the imperfect, such as in (7a), which implies that the referent of the embedded subject did not come, similarly to *croire* with both the *passé composé* and the imperfect. However, Martin notes that when *penser* is used with the *passé composé*, the speaker may still think that *p* is true. This is exemplified in (7b).

(7) Martin (1988: 551)

⁷ “Universes of belief” (*univers de croyance*) is one of the three fundamental notions of a semantic theory developed by Martin, next to “fuzzy truth” (*vérité floue*) and “possible worlds” (*mondes possibles*) (Martin, 1976, 1983, 1987).

⁸ For this reason, Martin argues that a sentence such as *Marie croit que Pierre a vendu son appartement* ‘Marie believes that Pierre has sold his flat’ cannot be followed by *mais elle en doute* ‘but she doubts it’ or *mais elle se le demande* ‘but she wonders about it’.

- a. *Je pensais qu'il viendrait.*
 'I thought that he would come.'
- b. *J'ai pensé que cela vous ferait plaisir.*
 'I have thought that it would make you happy.'

Nevertheless, Martin shows that the addition of certain linguistic features make the imperfect structure *je pensais que p* compatible with an interpretation where *p* is true. This is the case with the adverb *bien* 'well' such as in (8a). By contrast, *bien* is not felicitous with *croire*, as shown in (8b).

- (8) Martin (1988: 551)
- a. *Je pensais bien que cela vous ferait plaisir.*
 'I thought that it would make you happy.'
- b. **Je croyais bien que cela vous ferait plaisir.*
 *'I believed that it would make you happy.'

This *croire/penser* opposition results in differing behaviour when the two verbs are negated. First, in the case of *croire*, Martin argues that the contradiction between the two universes of belief is cancelled, or at least downplayed: while (9a) suggests that the speaker thinks that the referent of *elle* will come (i.e. that the referent of *il* is wrong), (9b) preserves the neutrality of the speaker.⁹

- (9) Martin (1988: 552)
- a. *Il croit qu'elle ne viendra pas.*
 'He believes that she will not come.'
- b. *Il ne croit pas qu'elle viendra* (or: *qu'elle vienne*).
 'He does not believe that she will come.'

Since *penser* already preserves the neutrality of the speaker, there is no difference between (10a) and (10b) beyond the scope of the negation entailed by diverging sentence structures (which is also true of *croire*): in (10a), the negation scopes over the subordinate clause, while in (10b), it scopes over the whole sentence (1988: 553).

- (10) Martin (1988: 553)
- a. *Il pense qu'elle ne viendra pas.*
 'He thinks that she will not come.'

⁹Martin (1988: 552-553) notes that the opposition between the two universes of belief may be reactivated in some contexts, e.g. *Il ne croit pas qu'elle vienne, et pourtant elle viendra / et je ne le crois pas non plus* 'He does not believe that she will come, and yet she will / and I don't think she will either'. The implicature discussed is thus cancelled.

- b. *Il ne pense pas qu'elle viendra/qu'elle vienne.*
 'He does not think that she will come.'

As a consequence, Martin posits that the difference between the two sentences in (11) is only subtle.

- (11) Martin (1988: 553)
- a. *Il ne croit pas qu'elle viendra.*
 'He does not believe that she will come.'
- b. *Il ne pense pas qu'elle viendra.*
 'He does not think that she will come.'

When the 'evoked universe' is the universe of the speaker, deictically referenced with the first-person subject, Martin notes that the difference between the two sentences in (9) does not hold. In either case, the speaker expresses their belief that *elle* 'she' will not come:

- (12) a. *Je crois qu'elle ne viendra pas.*
 'I believe that he won't come.'
- b. *Je ne crois pas qu'elle viendra (or: qu'elle vienne).*
 'I do not believe that she will come.'

Finally, Martin explains that (13a) and (13b) below differs from (13c) and (13d) in that the sentences in the second set have a controversial value, that is, they reject a prior hypothesis.

- (13) Martin (1988: 554)
- a. *Je crois qu'il ne viendra pas.*
 'I believe that he won't come.'
- b. *Je pense qu'il ne viendra pas.*
 'I think that he won't come.'
- c. *Je ne crois pas qu'il viendra/qu'il vienne.*
 'I don't believe that he will come.'
- d. *Je ne pense pas qu'il viendra/qu'il vienne.*
 'I don't think that he will come.'

Thus, (13c) or (13d) may follow a prior utterance such as *Si elle vient, tu lui feras visiter la maison* 'If she comes, you will give her a tour of the house' or *C'est très probable qu'elle vienne* 'It's very likely that she will come'.

It will be shown in the following chapters that my data supports Martin's conclusions regarding the knowledge/judgement difference between *croire* and *penser*, at least when the former is used as an epistemic marker. Indeed, *JC* predominantly

occurs in contexts where the speaker presents some knowledge of the state of affairs described, while *JP* is based on an inference (cf. also Gosselin (2018) in section 3.1.4 below).

Moreover, Martin points out the discrepancy between the beliefs of the person referred to by the grammatical subject, and those of the speaker (when the speaker is not the grammatical subject). Although this discrepancy only pertains to *croire* according to Martin, it may also pertain to *penser*, as its use in the present tense may also invite the inference, in some contexts, that the speaker thinks that the person referred to by the grammatical subject is wrong. In chapter 4, I refer to this discrepancy in terms of (non-)commitment: with other subjects, *penser* and *croire* often carry the implicature that the speaker does not commit to the utterance. Furthermore, it is also possible for *penser* to be used with the *passé composé* when the speaker no longer thinks that *p* is true: similarly to (6), *j'ai pensé qu'il viendrait* would be felicitous if upon arrival at a social event, I realise that *il* has not come.

Finally, the difference between the sentences in (13a)-(13b) and those in (13c)-(13d) is less intuitive. In my own database, negative uses of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* are too low to allow for convincing conclusions. However, occurrences of *je (ne) pense pas*, *je (ne) crois pas* and *je (ne) trouve pas* have been found in non-controversial contexts, rejecting Martin's conclusions. A possibility would be to consider the difference between the two sets of examples in terms of their discourse-marking roles in interaction, with the hypothesis that *JP*, *JC* and *JT* fulfil more discourse-marking functions than their negative uses.

3.1.3 Dendale & Van Bogaert (2007)

Dendale and Van Bogaert's (2007) analysis has its starting point in Ducrot (1980), which they consider a study on evidentiality 'avant la lettre' (2007: 67). Their interest is in the evidential status of a group of lexical markers similar to those investigated by Ducrot (*trouver*¹⁰ 'find', *avoir l'impression* 'have the impression', *penser* 'think', *croire* 'believe', *paraître* 'appear' and *sembler* 'seem'), and grammatical markers (*devoir* 'must' and the conjectural future). Their position is therefore different from the one taken by authors working within a typological framework, who are concerned with grammatical means to express evidentiality (e.g. among many others, Lazard, 2001; Aikhenvald, 2004). They argue that *JP*, *JC* and *JT* "can be considered evidential markers or at least evidential strategies/extensions in Aikhenvald's (2004: 105-151) (and also Willett's 1988) terminology" (2007: 66). They aim to show that at least certain uses of the verbs, with the first-person subject,

¹⁰In the sense of *trouver*₁ (Ducrot, 1980).

indicate the way the speaker acquired the information presented. These uses form a paradigmatic relationship with other expressions, and the semantic distinctions between them can also be understood in terms of source of information.

With respect to *JP* and *JC*, Dendale and Van Bogaert note that their exclusion from studies on evidentiality comes from the difficulty in distinguishing an evidential from an epistemic use in an example such as (14) (2007: 67).

- (14) *Je pense/crois qu'il est dans son bureau.*
 'I think/believe he is in his office.'

The two expressions are typically considered markers of epistemic modality. However, the authors show that when they are compared with other opinion verbs, including *JT*, their semantic difference can be accounted for in terms of information source. In their study, evidentiality and modality (specifically, epistemicity) are therefore treated as two distinct categories.

Among all the lexical expressions under study, *JT* is considered “the best candidate for the status of evidential marker” since, following Ducrot, “constraints apply as to the type of evidence on which an utterance with *JT que* can be founded” (2007: 72). While for Ducrot, *JT* may be used with both direct and indirect evidence,¹¹ Dendale and Van Bogaert point out that with some predicates, the experience can hardly be mediated. This is the case, for instance, with predicates describing a visual aspect such as *est beau* ‘is beautiful’. According to the authors, *JT* is mainly a direct evidential.

With respect to the *JP/JC* opposition, they draw on Martin (1988) and offer two different interpretations of the markers. First, in some contexts, the contrast between *JT* and *JP/JC* is a contrast of direct vs non-direct evidence.¹² In such contexts, *JT* is an evidential marker of direct evidence and differs from *JP* and *JC*, which are evidential markers of indirect experience. *JP* and *JC* are inferential markers and this is especially true for *JP*, which has been associated with a reasoning process (Dendale & Van Bogaert, 2007: 75ff, 85f). As for *JT*, the type of direct evidence is not specified: it can be “visual, auditory, or otherwise sensory (tasting, smelling, feeling).” (Dendale & Van Bogaert, 2007: 73) Furthermore, the marker contains an evaluative feature and is therefore not compatible with predicates that cannot be interpreted in a scalar way, such as in (15).

- (15) Dendale & Van Bogaert (2007: 74)
 ?**Je trouve qu'il est à l'université.*

¹¹See discussion of Ducrot’s Criterion M above.

¹²This distinction was pointed out by Ducrot (1980) and is illustrated in (4) above.

‘?*I find that he is at the university.’

Yet, in some other contexts such as in (16), *JC* and *JP* are used with direct evidence. In those cases, they function as epistemic modal markers signalling an uncertainty.

(16) Dendale & Van Bogaert (2007: 75)

J’ai goûté ce vin. Je crois qu’il n’est plus bon.

‘I have tasted this wine. I think it is not good any more.’

Unlike Ducrot (1980), Dendale and Van Bogaert discuss the status of *JP* and *JC* as epistemic markers when both of them occur in contexts where the speaker has a personal experience of the state of affairs presented. Nevertheless, contrasting *JP/JC* and *JT* in terms of evidentiality has limits. Indeed, the authors do not discuss the fact that if *JT* is taken out from a sentence such as in (17), the assertion of *ce livre est bien* ‘this book is good’ would already suggest that the speaker has read it, i.e. that the speaker relies on direct experience. In other words, the speaker’s experience does not result from the presence of *je trouve*.

(17) *Je trouve que ce livre est bien.*

‘I find that this book is good.’

If I pick up a book in a bookshop and tell someone *Ce livre est bien*, they will expect me to have read it, since I am able to reflect on the quality of the book. If I have not read it but have read positive reviews about it, I am more likely to mark my experience of this book as based on indirect evidence, i.e. to utter *Apparemment, ce livre est bien* ‘Apparently, this book is good’ or *J’ai lu que c’était un bon livre* ‘I have read that it was a good book’. Put differently, I argue that the absence of any source of information (e.g. *apparemment* ‘apparently’ or *j’ai lu que...* ‘I have read that...’) will suggest that the speaker relies on a direct, first-hand experience.

This is one reason to argue against the evidential status of *JT*, insofar as the marker does not mark the utterance in its scope as being based on direct evidence. However, it does force this interpretation, thus making the information source unequivocally clear. An alternative account of the distinction between *JP/JC* and *JT* will be outlined in the next chapters and on the basis of the type of predicate they are compatible with.

Furthermore, as discussed earlier, *JT* may occur with predicates which do not involve any experience from the speaker (such as *Pierre a eu raison de démissionner* ‘Pierre was right to quit his job’). With such predicates, the distinction between *JP/JC* and *JT* in evidential terms does not hold. This will be elaborated on in chapter 5 (section 5.2.2).

Finally, my view differs from Dendale and Van Bogaert’s clear-cut distinction between epistemicity and evidentiality. In chapter 4, some arguments will be given for the status of *JP* as simultaneously an epistemic marker and an evidential of indirect evidence: in my model epistemicity and evidentiality thus overlap.

3.1.4 Gosselin (2018)

Within his framework of the Modular Theory of Modality (see Gosselin, 2010), Gosselin (2018) describes the constraints that a group of French expressions of personal opinion, namely *JC que* ‘I believe that’, *JP que* ‘I think that’, *JT que* ‘I find that’, *j’estime que* ‘I reckon that’ and *je considère que* ‘I consider that’ impose on the embedded predicates. With the purpose of challenging a “unitary view” (2018: 180) of the semantic (subjective and epistemic) and discursive (attenuative) role of such expressions, Gosselin aims to show the individual meaning of each expression.

The Modular Theory of Modality distinguishes between *intrinsic modalities* and *extrinsic modalities*. Intrinsic modalities (see Gosselin, 2010: 102-114) are expressed by lexical constituents and are subdivided into four types, as illustrated in (18): “[the] alethic modality corresponds to a judgement of reality presented as objective, epistemic modality to a judgement of reality made in a subjective assessment, appreciative modality to a value judgement about the (un)desirable character of an object or a situation, and axiological modality to a value judgement about the (blame) worthiness of an individual or situation.” (2018: 181-182)

- (18) (Gosselin, 2018: 181)
- a. *Cette table est rectangulaire.* (alethic modality)
‘This table is rectangular.’
 - b. *Ce champ est assez grand.* (epistemic modality)
‘This field is quite extensive.’
 - c. *Ce pain est bon.* (appreciative modality)
‘This bread is good.’
 - d. *Cet homme est malhonnête.* (axiological modality)
‘This man is dishonest.’

The judgements of reality exemplified in (18a) and (18b) differ from each other in that (18a) is “presented as true regardless of the subjective point of view of the speaker”, while (18b) “assumes a norm of evaluation, which remains implicit, and depends on the speaker” (2018: 181). The value judgements illustrated in (18c) and (18d) depend, respectively, on the subjectivity of the speaker or on a system of conventions.

However, the distinction between the examples illustrating the epistemic and the axiological modalities is questionable in that they both similarly involve a benchmark with respect to what can be considered *grand* ‘extensive, big’ or *malhonnête* ‘dishonest’. More generally, the distinctions between the epistemic, appreciative and axiological modalities may not be always clear-cut since they all imply a subjective viewpoint. These possible overlaps question the existence of separate modalities.

In the Modular Theory of Modality, intrinsic modalities can be combined with expressions of extrinsic modalities such as *JC que* and *JP que*. According to Gosselin, both expressions are compatible with all four intrinsic modalities, but while *JC que* expresses an extrinsic epistemic modality, *JP que* has a dual function, according to the type of predicate it occurs with: with alethic predicates, it expresses an epistemic modality and is therefore comparable to *JC*; with axiological predicates, *JP que* refers to the speaker’s personal opinion and therefore shares a resemblance with *JT que* (as well as *je considère que* and *j’estime que*); with epistemic and appreciative predicates, the two interpretations may appear.

Gosselin explains that generally, the role of *JC que* is “to introduce the judgements as belonging to the individual subjective opinion of the speaker (her belief)” (2018: 183). With alethic predicates, it differs from *JP que* in that, following Martin (1988), “the judgement denoted by *JC que* must be based on knowledge about the situation, which gives positive reasons for belief, while the judgement expressed by *JP que* may rely only on general knowledge and the absence of arguments against it.” (2018: 190) Gosselin gives the two examples in (19), where someone is asked about their colleague’s presence in an office.

- (19) Gosselin (2018: 183, 189)
- a. *Je crois qu’elle est ici.*
‘I believe she’s here.’
 - b. *Je pense qu’elle est ici.*
‘I think she’s here.’

While (19a) implies that I have positive reasons to believe that she is here (for instance, her car is parked outside), (19b) implies the absence of arguments against a general knowledge (for instance, she is usually in her office at this time) (2018: 190). Gosselin’s observations seem to be based on Martin’s (1988) (presumably based, in turn, on Martin’s intuition), and this distinction between *JP* and *JC* is indeed what I observe in my own database.

Gosselin explains that the extrinsic epistemic modality expressed by *JC que* and *JP que* convey mitigation. To explain this effect, he draws on the “logic of conviction” (Lenzen, 2004), following which knowledge and conviction may hardly be dissociated. Indeed, if a speaker is convinced that p, they believe that they

know that *p*.¹³ Gosselin also draws on the distinction between factive verbs such as *savoir* ‘know’, which presuppose their predicates, and non-factive verbs such as *croire* ‘believe’, which do not (among others, see Karttunen, 1973). From this follows that “a speaker who is convinced that *p* will assert *je sais que p* ‘I know that *p*’, or even simply *p*” (2018: 184), *p* and *je sais que p* being, according to Gosselin, equipollent (Gosselin, 2014, 2018). On the other hand, the use of a non-factive expression such as *JC que* will trigger the implicature that the speaker does not believe that they know that *p*, and are therefore not convinced that *p*.¹⁴

In line with Martin (1988), he shows that such an implicature does not hold when the belief is attributed to a third party, since the principle of conviction does not apply. Thus, in (20) (2018: 183), Pierre may be convinced that his colleague is here. (However, Gosselin does not mention that often the speaker is not.)

- (20) *Pierre croit que sa collègue est ici.*
 ‘Pierre believes his colleague is here.’

When *JP* is used with subjective predicates, there is no mitigation effect since the expression does not express an epistemic modality in this case.

As for *JT*, Ducrot (1980) and Blanche-Benveniste and Willems (2007) (cf. section 3.2.2) already pointed out its incompatibility with certain predicates, namely, within Gosselin’s framework, intrinsic alethic modalities (see (18a) above), which are objective. When combined with other types of intrinsic modality, he argues that *JT* does not express an additional, extrinsic modality. Rather, its role is “to clarify the nature of the subjectivity intrinsically associated with the predicate by restricting it to the *individual* subjectivity of the speaker” (2018: 185). Indeed, Gosselin explains that an intrinsically subjective predicate refers by default to common opinion, or *collective* subjectivity. However, this concept is hard to verify beyond intuition. For instance, there is no reason to believe that the utterance of *ce pain est bon* ‘this bread is good’ (see (18c) above) refers to common, rather than individual, opinion.

Since mitigation is associated with epistemic modality, *JT* consequently does not systematically express mitigation. Finally, *JC* differs from *JT* in that the former expresses a belief of the speaker with respect to a collective evaluation. Finally, Gosselin concludes that the nature of the subjectivity varies with respect to the discourse situation: it may correspond either to an attenuation (where the speaker does not impose their opinion on other participants) or a strengthening (where the

¹³In chapter 4, this will be explained with regard to the commitment of the speaker toward their utterance.

¹⁴This is also true, according to Gosselin, of *je suis certain(e)/persuadé(e)/convaincu(e) que*, although these expressions literally express certainty.

speaker's opinion is presented in opposition to common opinion). In chapter 8, I argue, following Caffi (2007), that both attenuation and strengthening can be expressed at the same time.

Similarly to *JT*, *j'estime* and *je considère* do not introduce an extrinsic modality, but specify the nature of the predicate. According to Gosselin, *JT* “marks a higher degree of variability of the judgement” (2018: 188). *J'estime* and *je considère* are more suitable with axiological judgements implying a stability of judgement, while *JT* is more suitable with appreciative judgements describing temporally unstable predicates. This is exemplified in (21).

- (21) Gosselin (2018: 188)
- a. *Je considère/estime/?trouve qu'il est coupable.*
'I consider / reckon / find that he is guilty.'
 - b. *Je trouve/?considère/?estime que la soupe est brûlante.*
'I find / consider / reckon that the soup is hot.'

However, (21a) is arguably easier to classify as an intrinsic alethic predicate corresponding to a judgement of reality presented as objective. Indeed, the predicate has a truth value which can be objectively verified, which would explain the incompatibility of the predicate with *JT*. Note also the acceptability of *je trouve qu'il est malhonnête* 'I find that he is dishonest', the adjective given by the author to illustrate the axiological modality, suggesting the acceptability of *je trouve* with predicates implying a stability of judgement (the speaker may find that someone else has done several dishonest actions in their life so that they can be described as “dishonest”). As for (21b), *je considère/estime* 'I consider / reckon' would be suitable with *la soupe est brûlante* 'the soup is hot' in a context where someone asserts their opinion with a certain conviction when hearing diverging opinions. Therefore, the difference between *trouver* and *considérer/estimer* may be more successfully explained with regard to the immediacy of the experience (via *JT*) or the need for reflection (via *considérer* and *estimer*).

Gosselin presents important points about the compatibility of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* with different types of predicates, and especially about the dual status of *JP* (as an expression of epistemic modality and of personal opinion). I will argue in the next chapter that this dual status is not only true of *JP*, but also of *JC*. Gosselin discusses the comparable work achieved by *JC* and *JP* when they are combined with alethic predicates, but *JC* can also be viewed primarily as an expression of opinion. Thus, when the speaker expresses their opinion, *je crois que cette décision est juste* 'I believe that this decision is fair' can be interpreted as achieving a similar work to *je pense que cette décision est juste* (the example given by Gosselin to illustrate the combination of *JP* with an axiological predicate), putting aside the possible

semantic differences between the two expressions.

As mentioned earlier, Gosselin’s four-modality system does not seem to be always justified, and may be narrowed down into two types of context-bound predicates: objective facts and subjective judgements. In the next chapter, I argue that *JP* and *JC* semantically encode both subjectivity and epistemicity, without establishing a clear-cut distinction between them. On the contrary, when the verbs are in the first person, subjectivity and epistemicity can be seen as interconnected.

Finally, I will argue that mitigation is present in every use of the three markers (see Schneider, 2007), as a by-product of their status as constructions. According to Gosselin, mitigation is only associated with epistemic expressions; yet, the utterance of *je pense que cette décision est juste*, where *je pense* is not an epistemic but a subjective marker according to the author, is weaker than *cette décision est juste*.

3.2 Studies on parentheticals

3.2.1 Early studies

A category within which *JP*, *JC* and *JT* have frequently been described is that of “parentheticals”. The term dates back to Urmson (1952), whose interest centres on a group of verbs which he calls “parenthetical verbs” due to their syntactic mobility. According to Urmson (1952: 481), a parenthetical verb is “[a] verb which, in the first person present, can be used (...) followed by ‘that’ and an indicative clause, or else can be inserted at the middle or end of the indicative sentence”, as exemplified in (22). Note that for him, the absence of the complementiser *that* is not a necessary condition for the parenthetical status of the group of verbs he describes, as shown in (22a).

- (22) Urmson (1952: 481)
- a. I suppose that your house is very old.
 - b. Your house is, I suppose, very old.
 - c. Your house is very old, I suppose.

Urmson (1952: 495) notes that the three sentences above virtually mean the same and that wherever parenthetical verbs occur, “the assertion proper is contained in the indicative clause with which they are associated.” Among the verbs cited are, in addition to *suppose*: *know*, *believe*, *deduce*, *regret*, *guess* or *admit*. They are psychological verbs, but Urmson points out that they do not have any descriptive sense insofar as they do not describe a mental process. Rather, they are “signals guiding the hearer to a proper appreciation of the statement in its context, social, logical, or evidential.” (1952: 495)

Urmson's (1952: 484) main interest in parenthetical verbs is their pragmatic function: for him, "the whole point of some parenthetical verbs is to modify or to weaken the claim to truth which would be implied by a simple assertion *p*". This idea has subsequently been referred to as a mitigating or hedging function. He adds that "even if we say 'He is, I suppose, at home', or 'I guess that the penny will come down heads', we imply, with however little reason, that this is what we accept as true". More generally, parenthetical verbs indicate to the hearer how a statement is to be understood, similarly to adverbs.

As briefly mentioned above, a point mentioned by Urmson (1952: 485) is the ability of some parenthetical verbs "to indicate the evidential situation in which the statement is made (though not to describe that situation), and hence to signal what degree of reliability is claimed for, and should be accorded to, the statement to which they are conjoined." Such verbs include *know*, *believe*, *guess* or *suppose*. Thus, when uttering the sentence in (23) below, the speaker assumes that this is the right road, while *I guess* indicates a lack of information, as opposed to *I know*.

(23) I guess that this is the right road to take.

Urmson (1952: 486) adds that if the use of a parenthetical verb is not sufficient, the hearer can ask for a more detailed description of the evidential situation. The evidential(-like) status of French *JP*, *JC* and *JT* is discussed throughout this research. Among the three expressions, I argue that *JP* is the only one which can be described as an evidential, in that the two others do not semantically encode the information source.

Since Urmson, parenthetical constructions have been investigated from different perspectives, under a vast array of terms, e.g. *comment clauses* (Quirk et al., 1985; Biber et al., 1999), *verbes recteurs faibles* 'weak governing verbs' (Blanche-Benveniste, 1989), *epistemic phrases* (Kärkkäinen, 2003). To date there are no agreed-upon criteria for the selection of constructions they cover. Some studies (e.g. Blanche-Benveniste, 1989; Thompson & Mulac, 1991a,b; Thompson, 2002; Kaltenböck et al., 2015) have taken an interest in the syntactic property of parentheticals, pondering their relationship with the host clause and questioning their governing status in sentence-initial position, while other studies (Schneider, 2007) are dedicated to their pragmatic/discourse functions. Furthermore, the syntactic status of these units is not clear: they have been described, as exemplified above, as verbs, phrases or clauses (see Schneider et al., 2015: 3). In what follows, I present several studies that discussed *JP*, *JC* and *JT*, as well as Thompson and Mulac's (1991a; 1991b) studies on the grammaticalisation of subjects and main verbs into epistemic phrases.

During the same period as Urmson (1952), Benveniste (1966) recognises, in his

work on subjectivity in language (originally published in 1958), that some French verbs, in the first person present, do not describe actions or states of affairs, but indicate subjectivity (1966: 264), that is, the speaker's attitude towards their utterance. According to Benveniste, the syntactic complement of such verbs semantically expresses the main information:¹⁵

Puis-je considérer ce *je crois* comme une description de moi-même au même titre que *je sens* ? Est-ce que je me décris croyant quand je dis *je crois (que...)* ? Sûrement non. L'opération de pensée n'est nullement l'objet de l'énoncé ; *je crois (que...)* équivaut à une assertion mitigée. En disant *je crois (que...)*, je convertis en une énonciation subjective le fait asserté impersonnellement, à savoir *le temps va changer*, qui est la véritable proposition. (Benveniste, 1966: 264)

'Can I consider this *je crois* 'I believe' a description of myself similarly to *je sens* 'I feel'? Am I describing myself believing when I say *je crois (que...)* 'I believe (that...)'? Surely not. The thinking operation is by no means the object of the utterance; *je crois (que...)* 'I believe (that...)' is equal to a mitigated assertion. By saying *je crois (que...)* 'I believe (that...)', I turn into a subjective enunciation the fact asserted in an impersonal way, that is *le temps va changer* 'the weather is going to change', which is the actual proposition.'

Among verbs that indicate subjectivity, Benveniste distinguishes between *verbes d'opération* 'operation verbs' such as *supposer* 'suppose', *présumer* 'presume', *conclure* 'conclude' or *croire* 'believe', and *verbes de parole* 'speech verbs' such as *jurer* 'judge', *promettre* 'promise', *garantir* 'guarantee' or *certifier* 'certify'.

3.2.2 Syntactic status of parenthetical clauses

Even though this research fundamentally adopts a pragmatic and semantic approach to the meaning of *JP*, *JC* and *JT*, I will discuss several studies focusing on their syntactic status. In French, Blanche-Benveniste's (1989: 60) description of a group of verbs as *verbes recteurs faibles* 'weak governing verbs' is similar to Urmson's (1952) parenthetical verbs:

¹⁵However, this is not a characteristic held by parentheticals only. As noted by Port-Royal scholars (Arnauld & Nicole, 1662: 153), in *Je soutiens que la terre est ronde* 'I insist that the Earth is round', for instance, *je soutiens* is described as an incidental proposition, while *la terre est ronde* is the main proposition.

... on peut les trouver en tête de la construction, suivis d'une que-phrase qui a les apparences d'un complément (...) ou en incise, après la séquence à apparence de complément (ou à l'intérieur de cette séquence)...

'... they can be found at the beginning of the construction, followed by a que-sentence which looks like a complement (...) or in parenthesis, after the sequence which looks like a complement (or inside this sequence)...

She gives the following examples with *JC bien* (literally 'I well believe'):

- (24) Blanche-Benveniste (1989: 60)
- a. Je crois bien *que c'était signalé dans le journal*.
'I believe that it was stated in the newspaper.'
 - b. *C'était signalé dans le journal*, je crois bien.
'It was stated in the newspaper, I believe.'
 - c. *C'était*, je crois bien, *signalé dans le journal*.
'It was, I believe, stated in the newspaper.'

Contrary to Urmson (1952), she is more interested in the governing capacity of the group of verbs described, which she argues is reduced (hence the terminology *weak verbs*). In contrast, *verbes recteurs forts* 'strong governing verbs' govern the following *que*-clause. To distinguish between these two types of verbs, Blanche-Benveniste uses as a test the pronominalisation of the complement. This criterion can easily be applied to strong verbs such as in (25a), but with difficulty to weak verbs such as in (25b), suggesting that the complement is not required by the valency of weak verbs.

- (25) Blanche-Benveniste (1989: 62)
- a. *Je vous ai prouvé que c'était dans le journal*. / *Je vous l'ai prouvé*.
'I proved to you that it was in the newspaper. / I proved it to you.'
 - b. *Ça n'empêche qu'on pouvait poser des questions*. / *?*Ça ne l'empêche*.
'It does not stop one to ask questions. / *?*It does not stop it.*

Blanche-Benveniste points out that some verbs, such as *il paraît que* 'it appears that' or *on dirait que* 'it seems that', can only be used as weak governing verbs. *Croire* is discussed as a verb which can behave both as a weak or a strong verb, while each role is linked to different semantics held by the verb: as a strong governing verb, *croire* means "*accorder sa croyance*" 'attribute one's belief', and the following *que*-clause can be pronominalised as in (26a) below; as a weak governing verb, *croire* means "*à mon avis*" 'in my opinion', and in this case the *que*-clause cannot be pronominalised, as shown in (26b).

- (26) Blanche-Benveniste (1989: 62)
- a. *Je crois qu'il est innocent, je le crois.*
'I believe that he is innocent, I believe it.'
 - b. *Je crois bien qu'il va pleuvoir. / Il va pleuvoir, je crois bien. / ?Je le crois bien.*
'I believe that it's going to rain. / It's going to rain, I believe. / ?I believe it.'

However, in the case of *penser* and *croire*, I argue in this research that it is difficult to completely distinguish between two meanings of the verbs, one meaning being associated with a weak governing role, and the other with a strong role (see also Gachet, 2009). In my database, some occurrences of *penser* whose meaning is closer to “*accorder sa croyance*” ‘attribute one’s belief’ – what I refer to as *subjective meaning* – do appear in sentence-final position.

Blanche-Benveniste observes a correlation between the status of the verb (weak or strong) and the pronunciation of *que* ‘that’ in spoken French. In particular, she notes that when the complementiser follows a strong verb, it tends to be realised in its full form /k@/, even when it precedes a vowel, and it may even be followed by a pause. By contrast, with weak verbs, *que* tends to be reduced to the consonant /k/ so as to form a single unit with the weak verb (1989: 64). Thus, the author notes that while *que* is deleted in parenthetical position, it is already “weakened” in initial position. In my own database, the low number of *que*-deletion does not permit us to confirm whether *JP/JC/JT* \emptyset in matrix position differ from *JP/JC/JT que*. Nonetheless, the frequent realisation of *que* does not seem to suggest a weakening of the verbs in initial position.

Interestingly, Blanche-Benveniste (1989: 66) points out that some verbs are weak due to the person or tense used. For instance, she notes that the use of *JC bien* as a weak verb is restricted to the first person *je* ‘I’:

“Je crois bien qu’il pleut” n’a pas pour équivalent : “tu crois bien qu’il pleut”, ni “il croit bien qu’il pleut”. “Croire” est ici restreint à la fois dans sa modalité assertive, dans sa personne et dans son pouvoir rectionnel.

“I believe that it’s raining” is not equivalent to: “you believe that it’s raining” nor “he believes that it’s raining”. “Believe” is here restricted by its assertive modality, by its person and by its governing capacity.’

This idea will be developed in chapter 4, where the three constructions are considered, in a constructionalist perspective, in opposition with other persons and tenses/moods.

Finally, *trouver* is given as an example of a weak governing verb in the following example:

- (27) *Je trouve que la maison est bizarre / la maison est bizarre, je trouve.*
 ‘I find that the house is weird / the house is weird, I find.’

According to Blanche-Benveniste, *trouver* illustrates a particular characteristic of weak verbs, that is, the selection of a particular semantic value. In the case of (27), *trouver* selects an evaluative value. However, it seems hard to argue that these semantic characteristics are correlated with the status of the verbs as weak.

The work of Blanche-Benveniste (1989) is developed by Blanche-Benveniste and Willems (2007), with a special focus on *JP*, *JC* and *JT*. The authors point out that these verbs can occur in three different positions: in initial position followed by *que* (*VqueV* constructions); in parenthetical (especially clause-final) position;¹⁶ and as disjoint constructions as in (28). Disjoint constructions are capable of scoping over a preceding utterance, as in (28a) where *JC* occurs in a response turn. In (28b), *JC pas* introduces a contrast with a preceding modality.

- (28) Blanche-Benveniste & Willems (2007: 234) (my translation)
- a. L1 *en bas toujours près de la rue Bonnetterie*
 ‘down the road always near Bonnetterie street’
 L2 *oui je crois oui*
 ‘yes I believe yes’
- b. *je sais pas si ça s’est déjà fait dans le passé mais je crois pas hein ça serait peut-être même une première*
 ‘I don’t know if it already happened in the past but *I don’t believe* so huh it would perhaps even be a first’

Blanche-Benveniste and Willems observe that all of the three verbs occur predominantly as weak verbs, especially as *VqueV* constructions.¹⁷ In parenthetical positions, they note that the scope of the verbs is more limited than that of *VqueV* constructions.

Semantically, the authors show that as weak verbs, *JP*, *JC* and *JT* select contents that are subject to validation (as opposed to validated contents), such as evaluative contents. Thus, those verbs, when they are weak, are associated only with difficulty

¹⁶Occurrences of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* in initial position without *que* ‘that’ are treated as parentheticals. However, Blanche-Benveniste and Willems notes that such occurrences seldom occur in their corpus.

¹⁷As is the case with my database, *JC* is the one which occurs in parenthetical position the most, representing 710 occurrences out of a total of 720. By contrast, weak verbs represent 791 of 854 occurrences of *JP* and 248 of 337 occurrences of *JT*.

with personal experiences as in (29a) (in the present tense) or shared knowledge as in (29b). By contrast with (29a), (29c) is possible in that the content is not presented as validated, but as having a lesser degree of validity.¹⁸

- (29) Blanche-Benveniste & Willems (2007: 240) (my translation)
- a. *je pense que je construis une maison*
'I think that I am building a house'
 - b. *je crois que les triangles ont trois côtés*
'I believe that triangles have three sides'
 - c. *je pense que je construis une maison et pas une villa*
'I think that I am building a house and not a villa'

Since the three verbs exhibit individual semantic specificities, they are not always substitutable for each other. Thus, *JC* is scarcely associated with evaluative contents, and preferred with approximations related to quantity. Moreover, its scope is more restricted than *JP* and *JT*. *JP* has a 'prediction value' ("*valeur de prédiction*") since it often collocates with the future tense and the conditional (2007: 242). Finally, *JT* is predominantly used with evaluations (especially adjectives), cannot concern a quantification and have a more local scope. My database also shows the same tendencies with respect to collocations and scope for the three verbs.

Rather than describing weak verbs as semantically bleached verbs obtained from strong governing verbs (through a grammaticalisation process), the authors view them as two different lexical categories (2007: 243). This implies (1) considering *penser*, *croire* and *trouver* as polysemous, with distinct weak and strong uses and (2) considering weak governing verbs as still belonging to a verbal category, as opposed to an adverbial category. The three weak verbs under study are referred to as *constructions* (the English term "construal" is used) insofar as there is a link between a syntactic behaviour and a specific meaning (2007: 244). They are seen in opposition with other verbs, particularly those verbs which can only be used as *VqueV* constructions (e.g. *démontrer* 'demonstrate'). The three different syntactic realisations of the three weak verbs *penser*, *croire* and *trouver* are in complementary distribution, but with distinct degrees of autonomy: disjoint constructions are the most independent constructions, and *VqueV* constructions the least. According

¹⁸The authors later claim that the validation of the content is mitigated insofar as its application is restricted to the speaker (2007: 248). However, this applies to (29c) with difficulty. Indeed, the reason why the content has a lesser degree of validity is arguably related to the classification of what the speaker is building (as a borderline case between a house and a villa), rather than to the restriction to the speaker. In chapter 4, I argue that mitigation via the restriction of the content to the speaker is particularly relevant to subjective claims; however, the content in (29c) involves objective categories (house/villa). Furthermore, (29b) is perfectly acceptable if uttered by a child who is studying geometry and is unsure about the number of sides of triangles.

to the authors (2007: 243), their differences lie at a macro-syntactic level in that they are more or less syntactically integrated into the rest of the utterance. Finally, Blanche-Benveniste and Williams note that the primary function of the complementiser *que* ‘that’ is not to mark a subordination, but “*l’intégration de l’énoncé verbal dans une entité qui l’englobe*” ‘the integration of the utterance within an encompassing entity’ (2007: 247). Although weak verbs govern the following *que*-clause, there is no subordination between the two entities.

Apothéloz (2003) examines the morpho-syntactic and semantic properties of governing clauses constructed with verbs expressing a cognitive or epistemic state such as *penser*, *trouver* or *croire*. According to the author, such clauses are characterised by a specific type of variation, following which they can express three different semantic values: (1) a value in which the verb is used with its full lexical meaning (*sens lexical ‘plein’*); (2) a value of parenthetical modality; (3) a value of socio-interactional mitigator. To distinguish between the two first values, Apothéloz uses Blanche-Benveniste’s (1989) notions of weak/strong governing verbs and gives the following couple of examples:

- (30) Apothéloz (2003: 243)
- a. *j’aurais dû téléphoner avant. et puis voilà je pensais que c’était tacite euh quoi. que: de toute façon ça marchait*
 ‘I should have called before. and then I thought that it was tacit um then. that anyway it was working’
 - b. *c’est vendredi soir. huit heures. je pense que vous êtes déjà partis. en Amérique du Sud. hein/on se rappelle à bientôt*
 ‘it’s Friday night. eight pm. I think that you’ve already left. for South America. huh/let’s call each other again see you’

Apothéloz describes *je pensais que* in (30a) as a strong governing verb with an assertive value: here, “*il est question de ‘pensée’*” ‘it is a matter of “thought”’ (2003: 244). By contrast, the meaning of *JP que* in (30b) is modified: the verb is not used to describe a cognitive state, but to modalise the propositional content of the subordinate clause. Here, *penser* is a weak governing verb.

Weak verbs as in (30b) are referred to as *adverboïdes modaux* ‘modal adverboids’, due to their resemblance to adverbial clauses such as *certainement que* ‘certainly that’, *peut-être que* ‘perhaps that’ or *bien sûr que* ‘of course that’: they occur in parenthetical, flexible position, they have a modal (epistemic) value, and they do not convey the topic under discussion (2003: 249-250). In contrast with grammaticalisation, Apothéloz argues that the verbs discussed followed a path of *dégrammaticalisation* ‘ungrammaticalisation’, describing a transition from full verbs

to adverboids.¹⁹ Adverboids are no longer governed by the subordinate clause on a syntactic level (in other words, there is no syntactic inversion between the governing and the governed element), but they are still on a semantic/pragmatic level.

With respect to the third value, Apothéloz notes that the modal value of some adverboids are weakened due to politeness considerations – in this respect, Apothéloz refers to Goffman (1967) and Brown and Levinson (1987). This is illustrated with several examples of *JC que*, among which the following where the adverboid is used to mitigate a request, in order to preserve the negative face of the addressee:

- (31) *Bonsoir Charles c'est B. euh je crois que j'aurais bien besoin d'un p=tit peu de L. pour euh: prendre un peu un peu plus de confiance pour ces examens en mars*
 'Good evening Charles it's B. um I believe that I would need L. a bit to um gain a bit a bit more confidence for these exams in March'

However, Apothéloz (2003: 254) recognises that it is not always possible to distinguish between these three values, and the model I present in chapter 4 rests on this idea.

In English, Thompson and Mulac (1991a) focus on the interplay between *that*-deletion in English from a sentence as in (32a), and the grammaticalisation of what they refer to as “epistemic phrases” (EPs), as in (32b) and (32c).

- (32) Thompson & Mulac (1991a: 314)
- a. I think *that* we're definitely moving towards being more technological.
 - b. I think *o* exercise is really beneficial, to anybody.
 - c. It's just your point of view you know what you like to do in your spare time *I think*.

Thompson and Mulac argue that in (32a), *I* and *think* are main subject and verb, and *that* introduces a complement clause. By contrast, in (32b) and (32c), *I think* is an EP expressing the degree of speaker commitment, and functions in a similar way to epistemic adverbs such as *maybe*. EPs that occur in a parenthetical position, as in (32c), are referred to as *epistemic parentheticals* (EPARs).

The authors' hypothesis is that the use of EPs as EPARs is evidence of the grammaticalisation of EPs in spoken English. This is buttressed by two phenomena: (i) the relation between the frequency of subject/verb combinations occurring as EPs and as EPARs; (ii) the semantic meaning of the verbs most frequently occurring as

¹⁹Instead, Haßler (2014) refers to the diachronic development of parenthetical uses of *croire* in terms of pragmaticalisation.

EPs (verbs of belief). Thus, the most frequent subjects (*I* and *you*) and verbs (epistemic *think* and *guess*) are not only the combinations occurring without *that* the most frequently, but they are also those occurring the most frequently as EPARs. The authors conclude that such combinations no longer function as main clauses introducing a complement, but that they have been reanalysed as unitary EPs and are therefore “‘free’ to occur in other positions, just as other epistemic phrases, such as epistemic adverbs, do in English” (1991a: 317). The grammaticalisation undergone by the subject/verb combinations under discussion involves a category shift from a *phrase* to a grammatical category (EP). Once reanalysed, an EP behaves “as a member of the grammatical category of adverb” (1991a: 318), although Thompson and Mulac point out that its grammatical status is unclear (1991a: 324).

While Thompson and Mulac (1991a) specifically focus on the developmental path of EPs as a phenomenon of grammaticalisation, another paper published the same year (1991b) chiefly centres on *that*-deletion. *That* is not analysed as an optional element, but as closely related to features of discourse. In particular, three findings determine the conditions under which *that* is used (1991b: 242): (1) the most frequent main verbs (*think* and *guess*) and subjects (*I* and *you*) are those which typically occur without *that* and which are characteristically associated with epistemicity; (2) the use of a pronominal subject in the complement clause significantly reduces the use of *that*; (3) the presence of other elements, such as adverbs and auxiliaries, in the main verb phrase favours the use of *that*: by adding semantic content, they simultaneously reduce the ability of the subject and the verb to function as an epistemic phrase, and increase their literal use as independent lexical items. However, this hypothesis has been questioned (e.g. Rissanen, 1991; Aijmer, 1997: 8-10), and the frequency of the complementiser *que* ‘that’ in the present study (on French, see also Blanche-Benveniste & Willems, 2007 and Mullan, 2010) suggests that the status of what Thompson and Mulac call EPs is not dependent on the deletion of *que*.

Thompson and Mulac’s (1991a; 1991b) findings are corroborated by Thompson’s (2002) interactional analysis, which is based on a corpus of conversational English. She argues that there is no evidence that the relation between complement-taking predicates (CTPs) involving a subject and an utterance-cognition verb, and the following clauses (usually described as “complements”) can be explained in terms of complementation, i.e. that “complements” are “subordinate” to CTPs. Rather, for Thompson (2002), these CTPs can be best described as formulaic epistemic/evidential/evaluative fragments expressing speaker stance.

3.2.3 Parentheticals as mitigators (Schneider, 2007)

Schneider (2007: 1)²⁰ is interested in clauses with finite verbs that “are neither the main clause nor a subordinate clause, but are inserted into or adjoined to the end of the sentence in a way similar to sentence adverbs”. He refers to them as Reduced Parenthetical Clauses (RPCs). His results are based on a corpus study of RPCs in contemporary spoken French, Italian and Spanish.

Schneider’s point of departure is Urmson (1952). However, what he defines as “parentheticals” are not verbs but (reduced) clauses, as for him it seems impossible to describe a lexical class of parenthetical verbs. Moreover, Schneider does not restrict RPCs to verbs in the first person singular of the present indicative, since expressions which are not in the first person singular (e.g. *on dirait* ‘it seems’ or *vous savez* ‘you know’) are also found in parenthetical position. He also discusses RPCs which had not until then been considered in studies on parentheticals, for instance RPCs based on utterance verbs (e.g. *on va dire* ‘we will say’, *disons* ‘let’s say’). Furthermore, Schneider (2007: 74) sees RPCs “as a general term independent of discourse function”, and excludes any pragmatic or communicative function as a formal property characteristic of this class. This allows for the discussion of other discourse functions that RPCs may fulfil, e.g. a phatic function.

Schneider selects seven formal criteria:

1. RPCs are based on a finite verb. This is the only morphological restriction that Schneider ascribes to RPCs. There is no restriction of person, number or tense.
2. There is no overt syntactic link between the RPC and the host clause, which are thus related only by adjacency. This distinction thus excludes clauses followed by complementiser occurring in sentence-initial position.
3. The position of RPCs within their host is free: they can occur in an initial, medial or final position.
4. They have the ability to interrupt a close syntactic relationship in medial position.
5. The host structure is structurally independent from the parenthetical clause. RPCs are therefore optional and do not affect the grammatical acceptability of the host.

²⁰Since one of Schneider’s (2007) main interests is to describe parentheticals as mitigators, this study could have also been presented from an interactional perspective, in the next section. I include it in this section since his monograph aims above all to delineate the characteristics of parentheticals.

6. RPCs are “reduced” insofar as their verb lacks one of the arguments required by their valency (usually either the subject or the object).
7. Semantically, the missing argument of the verb can be recovered from the host: it should be represented by the host itself.

Schneider’s analysis draws on Hare’s (1970) fundamental components contributing to the meaning of an utterance (the phrastic, the tropic, and the neustic), and on Caffi’s (1999; 2001) classification of mitigating devices (bushes, hedges and shields). In Hare’s (1970) terminology, the phrastic conveys the propositional content, the tropic indicates the illocutionary force and the neustic expresses the speaker’s commitment. Caffi (1999, 2001) adopts a broad sense of “mitigation”. In her framework, *bushes* focus on the propositional content, introducing vagueness (e.g. *something like that, a kind of*); *hedges* focus on the illocution and/or the speaker’s commitment (e.g. *I think, maybe*); with shields, mitigation operates on deictic origin, i.e. the ‘I-here-now’ of the utterance (e.g. impersonal constructions) (for a more detailed presentation of Caffi’s model, see chapter 8: section 8.3.1).

Based on their deictic orientation, the mood of the verb and the sentence type (declarative, imperative or interrogative), Schneider identifies three broad classes of RPCs: those that mitigate or downgrade speaker commitment, those that function as phatic, and those that function as reporting devices (2007: 110). Furthermore, these functions may be combined with others, such as self-correction or hesitation. Mitigating RPCs is the focus of Schneider’s study. The downgrading of speaker commitment can be accomplished either by alleviating, removing or sharing responsibility. Schneider further classifies mitigating RPCs into four main groups: RPCs mitigating the phrastic (i.e. the propositional content) by affecting the precision of the element in its scope (e.g. *disons* ‘let’s say’); RPCs indicating the tropic (i.e. illocution) and mitigating the phrastic or neustic (i.e. speaker commitment), represented by (hedged) performatives (e.g. *je veux dire* ‘I mean’); RPCs directly mitigating the neustic, represented by clauses expressing belief and clauses expressing absence of knowledge of the speaker (e.g. *je sais pas* ‘I don’t know’); and finally, RPCs indirectly mitigating the neustic, represented by evidential expressions and expressions of knowledge (e.g. *je me rappelle* ‘I remember’). Schneider points out that some RPCs can mitigate more than one utterance component.

As clauses expressing belief, *JP*, *JC* and *JT* are representative of the third class, that is, they are RPCs directly mitigating the neustic. Specifically, they are responsibility alleviating devices, insofar as they directly alleviate the speaker’s burden of responsibility. In this third category, Schneider mentions French *croire* (alongside its Italian and Spanish equivalents) as a basic verb, while French *penser* and its equivalents are less common. In comparison to *JP*, my own database also

shows a higher frequency of *JC* in parenthetical position, especially in final position. In Schneider's corpus, among the three expressions, *JC* has the highest frequency (representing 10.2% of all French RPCs), followed by *JP* (3.9%) and eventually *JT* (1.5%).

Finally, Schneider examines the pragmatic difference between sentences with, say, governing *je crois*, and parenthetical *JC* (2007: 191). Specifically, he addresses the capacity of governing clauses to mitigate, rather than to state. He concludes that in the majority of cases, there is no difference between the two types of clause, which both have a mitigating function (see also Schneider, 1999). This is particularly true of *JC* (and its Romance equivalents), which is rarely used with an assertive meaning (2007: 196; on English *I think*, see also Kärkkäinen, 2003).

In chapter 8, I concur with Schneider and argue, based on Caffi's (2007) framework, that in medial and especially final position, *JP*, *JC* and *JT* are mainly mitigating devices. However, I argue that only *JP* and *JC* are responsibility alleviating devices, a by-product of their epistemic component of meaning. With regard to their classification, I propose that when they are used as epistemic markers, both *JP* and *JC* are mainly *bushes* focusing on the propositional content. Specially, they are used to introduce vagueness in the propositional content of an utterance. This is always the case for *JC*, which is consistently used with a predominantly epistemic meaning in my database. By contrast, as a subjective marker, parenthetical uses of *JP* are hedges that focus on illocutionary force, similarly to *JT*. Furthermore, my chapter 8 concludes (based on observations made in chapters 6 and 7) that while in initial position (followed or not by the complementiser *que*) the three expressions also fulfil mitigating functions, their role is mainly connective and related to discourse coherence.

3.3 Interactional perspective

This section presents accounts and studies that have described the three French expressions (or part of them) at the level of discourse and interaction. This body of research is frequently narrowly linked to politeness. First, section 3.3.1 gives a brief overview of several studies pertaining to *I think*. The English expression has been mainly included in studies of epistemic stance-taking, and the findings are in many ways significant for its French equivalents. Section 3.3.2 turns to studies on *JP*, *JC* and *JT*, which have mainly been described as “discourse markers”. This notion is presented at the beginning of this second section.

3.3.1 *I think* in English

Within speech act theory, epistemic modality in English has been regarded as a strategy to modify the illocutionary force of speech acts. In particular, *I think* has been described as a “hedge” (Lakoff, 1972: 490; Hübler, 1983), a “pragmatic particle” (Holmes, 1990) or a “pragmatic force modifier” (Nikula, 1996: 45). Many studies were undertaken within Brown and Levinson’s (1978; 1978) politeness theory (see chapter 2: section 2.1.2).

Brown and Levinson describe *I think* as a Quality hedge²¹ on the illocutionary force, satisfying the speaker’s want insofar as it “may suggest that the speaker is not taking full responsibility for the truth of his utterance” (1987: 146). Its face-saving function is due to the speaker’s desire not to coerce the hearer by assuming that they are willing to cooperate and comply with the speaker’s utterance. It is therefore in their model a negative-politeness strategy, in that it addresses redressive action to the hearer’s negative face. In chapter 6 (section 6.5), I argue that French *JP* fulfils a similar face-saving function than its English equivalent.

According to Holmes (1985, 1987, 1990), *I think* can express two distinct and contrasting functions, which she refers to as “tentative” and “deliberative”. To illustrate these functions, she gives the following examples, each given with a particular context:

- (33) Holmes (1987: 61)
- a. [Elderly man recounting past experience to friends] It’d be about two o’clock *I think*
 - b. [Teacher to pupil] You’ve got that wrong *I think*
 - c. [Statusful interviewee on TV] *I think* that’s absolutely right

In (33a), *I think* expresses uncertainty about a precise time. By contrast, in (33b) the teacher has no doubt that the pupil’s answer is wrong: *I think* is used as a negative politeness marker. These two examples represent the “tentative” function of *I think*. In (33c), the interviewee expresses certainty and reassurance (1990: 199). Here, *I think* is used to “add weight to the statement rather than to hedge its illocutionary force” (1990: 187). This is the “deliberative” function of *I think*.

While expressing (un)certainty is part of the modal (epistemic) meaning of *I think*, Holmes notes that as a softener or a confidence marker, it encodes an affective meaning. Furthermore, she points out that the two functions described correlate with prosodic and syntactic features, and in some cases with the context of utterance.

²¹In the sense of Grice (1975: 46), whose Quality’s maxim says “Try to make your contribution one that is true.”

Thus, *I think* is pronounced with a fall-rise intonation when expressing tentativeness, while *think* gets level stress when expressing deliberativeness and confidence. Moreover, *I think* tends to occur in parenthetical position in the first case, and in initial position in the latter.

In my own model (cf. chapter 4), examples such as (33c) are described as subjective claims where the role of *I think* (or its French equivalents) is to highlight the subjective stance of the speaker, rather than to add weight to the statement (this would be the role of *absolutely* in that example). In turn, subjectivity can be a strategy of non-imposition, in that the limitation of the claim to the speaker does not constrain the addressee to cooperate.

In her study of epistemic modality in spoken discourse (including *I think*), Coates (1987) states that she is against Holmes' (1990) neat distinction between a "modal meaning" and an "affective meaning". She advocates for a "polypragmatic" view of epistemic modals, in which one use can mean many different things (1987: 126). She argues that "speakers employ forms such as (...) *I think* not just to express doubt and certainty about propositions, but also to avoid commitment to propositions which they may want to withdraw from." (1987: 120)

Aijmer (1997) argues that *I think* "developed into a discourse marker or modal particle which is syntactically a speech-act adverbial." (1997: 1) In particular, *I think* is described from the viewpoint of pragmaticalisation. She takes on Holmes' (1990) distinction between tentative and deliberative functions, and her classification is based on prosodic, grammatical and positional criteria. Thus, *I think* is deliberative when *think* bears prosodic prominence and occurs in initial position. All other uses are classified as tentative. Like Holmes, Aijmer sees the tentative *I think* as a negative politeness marker, associated with social distancing. Furthermore, she considers the deliberative *I think* a marker of positive politeness and "rapport" (1997: 22).

Kärkkäinen's (2003) study of epistemic stance markers in American English is novel in many respects. She adopts a bottom-up approach and claims that certain uses of *I think* fulfil functions that have less to do with stance than with discourse organisation. She describes stance-taking as a highly regular and routinised phenomenon, in that "only a *limited set of epistemic stance markers* are used by speakers with any frequency" and it "is predominantly expressed *initially*, i.e. before the actual issue or question at hand", thus helping the recipient to align to the unfolding turn (2003: 15).

Kärkkäinen's analysis of the functions of *I think* drives her to identify two distinct semantic extremes expressed by *I think*, as suggested by previous studies (e.g. Arndt, 1987; Aijmer, 1997). She proposes to identify them on a continuum between 'doubt/uncertainty' (cf. 'insufficient evidence', 'belief ') and 'lack of

doubt/certainty’ (cf. ‘personal attitude or conviction’, ‘opinion’) (2003: 111). With respect to the ‘lack of doubt/certainty’ end of the continuum, Kärkkäinen points out that only a few instances of *I think* convey a clear opinion, i.e. where the proposition involved is clearly non-verifiable. Therefore, she chooses to analyse *I think* in view of the degree of certainty it expresses.

The intonation unit (IU) is taken as the analytical unit. *I think* seldom constitutes a separate IU, but is usually in the same IU than the unit which follows or precedes. As mentioned above, the most frequent, and thus unmarked, position of *I think* is the IU-initial position, where *I think* performs three main types of functions: IU-initial instances “routinely bring in the speaker’s personalized perspective in the discourse at a given point, either to mark boundaries and act as a frame in discourse (at points of transition), or to display that the upcoming turn will contain a new or different perspective to what was said in the prior turn (in second pair parts)” (2003: 171); the third type of function is not organisational but recipient-oriented to maintain face. In this position, the functions of *I think* are therefore associated with discourse organisation, with its actual content or with the relationship between participants (2003: 172). As for the few instances of pre-positioned *I think* encoded as a separate IU, they are restricted to on-line planning, as an opportunity for the speaker to think ahead (2003: 79). Finally, the work of post-positioned *I think* forming a separate IU is mainly organisational, signalling completion of a sequence or turn. Interactional functions are also correlated with prosodic features (e.g utterance stress, intonation or pauses). Kärkkäinen concludes that *I think* is a full-fledged discourse marker (2003: 175).

My approach is comparable to Kärkkäinen’s in that the French expressions *JP*, *JC* and *JT* are seen as conversational actions in the present study. Moreover, I adopt a bottom-up approach, similarly to Kärkkäinen, whereby no pre-established definitions or functions are applied to the expressions. Rather, their semantic/pragmatic and interactional functions are revealed by a close examination of each occurrence in conversation.

3.3.2 *Je pense, je crois* and *je trouve* in French

The three French expressions are the focus of a study by Mullan (2010). They are also discussed by Andersen (2007) who focuses on the discourse-marking functions of a group of parentheticals. Both authors argue that the French expressions underwent a process of grammaticalisation into discourse markers. These two studies are presented below, after a brief presentation of studies on discourse markers.

As *I think*, its French equivalents have been cited as strategies mitigating a potential threatening act, in a speech act-oriented perspective. Thus, referring to G.

Lakoff (1972) and R. Lakoff (1977b), Roulet (1980: 93) proposes the term *atténuateur* as an equivalent for *hedge* and gives *JP* as an example.

In her typology of politeness markers, Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1992: 196) describes *JP*, *JC* and *JT* as *adoucisseurs* ‘softeners’, which correspond to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) *softeners* or what other scholars have referred to as *mitigators* (e.g. Labov & Fanshel, 1977; Fraser, 1980). *Adoucissement* ‘softening’ is defined by Kerbrat-Orecchioni as a strategy of negative politeness: an act is perpetrated but softened because the speaker judges it as potentially threatening for the addressee’s negative face. This strategy corresponds to Goffman’s (1967: 19-23) “corrective process”. According to Kerbrat-Orecchioni, it involves both linguistic and non/paralinguistic resources. *JP*, *JC* and *JT* are sub-categorised as *modalisateurs* ‘modalisators’ (1992: 221-222). They accompany a speech act and “*instaurent une certaine distance entre le sujet d’énonciation et le contenu de l’énoncé, et par là même donnent à l’assertion des allures moins préemptoires, donc plus polies*” ‘establish a certain distance between the subject of the enunciation and the content of the utterance, and by that means give to the assertion less assertive appearances, therefore more polite’ (1992: 221).²² With respect to *JP*, Kerbrat-Orecchioni’s view is similar to Holmes’ (1985, 1988) view on *I think* in English.

3.3.2.1 Discourse Markers

Discourse Markers (henceforth DMs) have received a growth of interest in the 1980s. To date there is no agreed-upon and coherent definition to describe the items belonging to this category, which therefore constitutes a large and imprecisely defined group of words (e.g. *et* ‘and’ in French, *but* in English), interjections (*bon* ‘well’, *oh*) or multi-word-expressions (*tu sais* ‘you know’, *I mean*). This lack of cohesion is mainly due to the different approaches and theoretical frameworks within which DMs have been studied, as well as the objectives of research. These different perspectives are reflected in the various names given to these items: *discourse markers* (Schiffrin, 1987; Schourup, 1999; Blakemore, 2002), *pragmatic markers* (Redeker, 1990; Brinton, 1996; Fraser, 1996; Andersen, 2001), *discourse particles* (Hansen, 1998b; Fischer, 2006), *pragmatic particles* (Beeching, 2002), or in French *mots du discours* (Ducrot, 1980), *connecteurs pragmatiques* (Roulet et al., 1985), etc.

DMs are mainly discussed as items that do not fit the lexical meaning of traditional categories of grammar, by virtue of the functions they perform in discourse. Thus, among the first studies of French DMs, Gülich (1970) shows how they are

²²Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1992: 222-223) distinguishes *modalisateurs* from *hedges* (Lakoff, 1972), but she notes that the second group have a similar softening functions to the first one.

used by speakers to structure their discourse. Within Argumentation Theory, Ducrot et al. (1980) focus on their semantic role in argumentation (see section 3.1.1). Roulet et al. (1985) (and more broadly, the Geneva School) are interested in the way they connect different components belonging to different hierarchical levels of discourse, namely *exchanges*, *moves* and *acts* (see also Auchlin, 1981).

In English, Schiffrin's (1987) definition of DMs has been extensively used and developed. Within the framework of Interactional Sociolinguistics, she focuses on the role of various particles (e.g. *oh*, *well*, *I mean*) to help discourse coherence. She suggests that the following conditions allow an expression to be used as a DM: syntactic detachability from a sentence, common use in initial position of an utterance, capacity to have a range of prosodic contours (e.g. phonological reduction), and capacity to operate at both local and global levels of discourse.

Some researchers prefer the term *pragmatic markers* to highlight their interactional, rather than connective role, often distinguishing them from *discourse markers* (Fraser, 1996; Aijmer & Simon-Vandenberg, 2006). Following Fraser's (1996: 186) classification, for instance, DMs constitute a subtype of pragmatic markers. From this perspective, some researchers have investigated the effects they can have on interpersonal relations (Beeching, 2002).

With respect to their properties, it is commonly admitted that DMs do not contribute to the propositional, truth-conditional content of their host unit. They are often recognised to have a procedural meaning (Wilson & Sperber, 2012; Blakemore, 1987, 2002): according to Hansen (1998b: 75), they “function as instructions from the speaker to the hearer on how to integrate the host unit into a coherent mental representation of the discourse”; for Fraser (1996: 186), DMs “[signal] the relationship of the basic message to the foregoing discourse.” Schiffrin (1987: 328) points out that they have no meaning, or only a vague meaning. Hansen (1998b: 75) adds that the non-propositional characteristic of DMs entails the exclusion from this category of any markers which operate on propositions. Indeed, as Dostie and Pusch (2007: 4) point out, DMs often have an equivalent form which does not operate on the discourse level but retains a literal meaning, such as *tu vois* ‘you see’ (verb phrase) *vs tu vois* (DM) or *toujours* ‘always’ (adverb) *vs toujours* (DM).

Furthermore, DMs have been described as having a connective function in that they “bracket units of talks” (Schiffrin, 1987: 31) and signal how a new unit of talk relates to the previous one. In addition, a feature of DMs which is commonly assumed is their variable scope. Thus, Hansen (1998b: 73) argues that “the discourse segment hosting a marker may be of almost any size or form, from an intonational pattern indicating illocutionary function (...) through subsentential utterances (...) to a segment comprising several utterances”. Moreover, the capacity of an expression “to operate at both local and global levels of discourse, and on different planes

of discourse” is, as briefly mentioned above, one specific condition allowing this expression to be used as a DM according to Schiffrin (1987: 328).

In Interactional Linguistics, the emphasis has been put on their interactional meanings and functions. In particular, their use in talk-in-interaction has been scrutinised so as to highlight the types of actions they fulfil, such as hesitation, repair, functions associated with the organisation of turns (turn-taking/yielding functions) or with the conversational content (topic switcher/maintainer), etc. Within this field of research, contributions on stance-taking and epistemics in interaction emerged (among others, Kärkkäinen, 2003; Englebretson, 2007; Lindström et al., 2016).

The non-propositional property of DMs inevitably raises the question of whether and to what extent *JP*, *JC* and *JT* can relevantly be classed as DMs. As will be shown in the next chapters, the semantic meaning of the three expressions is always present at some level, especially regarding epistemic uses of *JP* and *JC*. Indeed, whilst DMs are generally viewed as optional elements, both at the syntactic and semantic levels, the deletion of *JP* and *JC* may lead to a modification of the propositional content (see chapter 4). Thus, *Je pense/crois qu’il est cinq heures* ‘I think/believe that it’s five o’clock’ is not semantically equivalent to *Il est cinq heures* ‘It’s five o’clock’ in that the first sentence casts doubt on the veracity of the proposition. Since I argue that an epistemic component is always present, to some extent, in every use of *JP* and *JC*, the question of their classification as DMs therefore pertains to every use.

Another feature commonly assigned to DMs is not a main characteristic of the set of French expressions, namely their frequent use in (or even their restriction to) the sentence-initial position (e.g. Brinton, 1996). As shown above in section 3.2, one property of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* is their capacity to occur in parenthetical position. Even though the initial position is the preferred position (see table 8.1 in chapter 8), the three expressions similarly fulfil interactional functions in parenthetical position (cf. chapter 8).

That said, *JP*, *JC* and *JT* share several properties with DMs. Firstly, the interactional work served by the three expressions is evidence for their status as DMs. This will be detailed in chapters 6 and 7, which describe them as polyfunctional markers insofar as a single use is capable of accomplishing several functions. This is especially the case with *JP*, which is the most versatile of the three.

Moreover, the three French expressions typically do not convey the main information, as opposed to their host utterance, a characteristic associated with their parenthetical status. Furthermore, it is the information conveyed by the host utterance which is usually oriented to, as opposed to that expressed by *JP*, *JC* and *JT*. Nevertheless, there are cases where the addressee reacts to the expressions. This is usually done in the form of a question, inquiring about the speaker’s opinion, e.g.

tu penses? ‘(do) you think (so)?’.

In light of the different characteristics of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* mentioned thus far, I argue in this research that the three expressions are DMs, albeit non-prototypical. Indeed, they do not seem to have pragmaticalised to the same extent as other markers such as *bon* ‘well’ or *alors* ‘then, so’, which make them peripheral members of a prototypical category of DM. In the next chapters, I will use the term DM to cover both discourse-organisational functions ensuring discourse coherence and guiding the interpretation of new discourse units, and interpersonal functions associated with the relationship between the participants to the conversation.

3.3.2.2 Andersen (2007)

Andersen (2007) describes a group of parenthetical expressions as *marqueurs discursifs propositionnels* ‘clausal discourse markers’ (MDPs). She distinguishes first-person, including *JP*, *JC* and *JT*, from second-person MDPs (e.g. *tu sais* ‘you know’, *tu vois* ‘you see’). Contrary to Mullan (2010), sentence-initial parentheticals are considered MDPs when they are not followed by *que*.

Andersen argues that MDPs have become fixed formulae through a process of grammaticalisation, by which they lost their governing status as matrix clause. She shows that they share the following features with prototypical DMs: on a morphological level, they have invariable form; on a syntactic level, they are optional and their position is relatively free within the hosting utterance; on a semantic level, they do not contribute to the propositional content and do not modify its truth value; finally, the core meaning of MDPs is weakened and has evolved towards a more subjective and intersubjective meaning.

Generally, the role of MDPs is to describe the speaker’s attitude towards the truth of the proposition (2007: 19). Furthermore, Andersen notes that one of the most important functions of MDPs is a discourse structuring function, helping the speaker to divide their message into units of information. This, according to the author, involves a loss of semantics (2007: 26). However, she acknowledges that while the verbs involved in each MDP described is semantically “bleached”, especially second-person MDPs, some semantics remains.

First-person MDPs are described as distance, commitment and evidentiality markers (in that they indicate who is responsible for a given utterance), while second-person MDPs as interaction markers with a phatic function (2007: 14). Second-person MDPs are also described as further along in their grammaticalisation into MDPs.

3.3.2.3 Mullan (2010)

In a cross-cultural perspective, Mullan (2010) investigates the ways in which speakers express their opinions in French and Australian English conversation. In French, *JP*, *JC* and *JT* are seen as interactional strategies for expressing opinions and are compared with *I think* in English. To reveal their functions in conversation, Mullan adopts a multidisciplinary approach including Interactional Sociolinguistics, principles of Conversation Analysis, Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, and the notions of "semantic primes" and "cultural scripts" (Goddard, 2003; Wierzbicka, 1996). Her work shares similarities with that of Kärkkäinen (2003): one of her main objectives is to show that the expressions under investigation are discourse markers (DMs), and the unit of analysis used is the intonation unit (IU).

Mullan identifies three main functions that the four markers can fulfil: an *organisational* function, referred to as the fundamental function of DMs; a *semantic* function, which consists in expressing either doubt or opinion; a *pragmatic* function, whereby the expressions are used for face-saving purposes. Firstly, the organisational role comprises the following functions: marking a boundary in discourse, e.g. to initiate a topic, frame a side sequence or to sum up in discourse; marking a new or different perspective from the prior turn (or speaker); on-line planning; marking finality to a proposition (IU-final position); signalling turn completion and pursue speaker response (turn-final position) (2010: 254). Secondly, unlike Kärkkäinen (2003), Mullan establishes a clear-cut distinction between the expression of opinion and doubt. When expressing doubt, "the speaker wishes to show that they are unsure of the validity or truth of the proposition in the subordinate clause"; when expressing opinion (or belief), they "[give] their subjective evaluation on a topic" (2010: 254). Mullan points out that while *JP* and *JC* can either express opinion or doubt, *JT* can only express opinion. Lastly, the pragmatic, face-saving function can be achieved by expressing either opinion or doubt.

According to Mullan, the semantic core meaning of each expression is "the main reason that one expression is chosen over another, even when it carries out an organisational function." (2010: 143) To determine the inherent semantic content of each expression, Mullan adopts a top-down approach and draws on dictionary definitions and previous studies. Firstly, the core meaning of *JP* is that of expressing an opinion based on reflection, and therefore comprises an "intellectual process" (2010: 150). The speaker indicates a viewpoint based on facts, known or inferred events. Secondly, the core meaning of *JC* is that of expressing belief or conviction. As opposed to expressing an opinion, this is "something more fundamental to, and strongly held by, the speaker." (2010: 191) Finally, the core meaning of *JT* is "that of expressing an opinion discovered through personal experience, whether by direct

(explicit) or indirect (inferred) discovery.” (2010: 223)

Although Mullan acknowledges that one particular instance can have several functions at the same time, she claims that one of them tends to be more salient. On this basis, her aim is to highlight the predominant role of each instance, which in her view can be determined as a combination of three fundamental factors: the prosody of an expression, its position in the intonation unit and the context of the surrounding discourse. Mullan finds that prosody and context are the most important criteria that determine the role of an expression as an organisational DM, while the position in the intonation unit determines the type of organisational function.

Thus, Mullan concludes that the most frequent function of *JC* (75% of 36 occurrences) (like *I think*, 65.5% of 281 occurrences) is that of a DM performing organisational work. As such, it is mostly used to mark a boundary in discourse (2010: 71). *JC* is used with a primarily semantic function in 25% of cases, with a slight preference to express opinion (6 occurrences) over doubt (3 occurrences). Next, *JT* (59.3% of 59 instances) retains a more semantic function, by which it is used to express the speaker’s opinion, and fulfils an organisational role in 40.7% of cases. Finally, the 133 occurrences of *JP* present an almost even distribution across a semantic (46.6%) and an organisational function (53.4%). As an organisational DM *JP* is used mostly to mark a boundary in discourse, as is the case with *JC* (and *I think*), but it is also used more frequently than the two other markers in on-line planning. When it is primarily used with a semantic function, *JP* almost exclusively expresses an opinion (59 occurrences) over doubt (3 occurrences). The pragmatic function is not found to be dominant for any of the expressions, and therefore Mullan concludes that none of the French constructions are primarily used to save face (by comparison, only one occurrence of *I think* was found to primarily achieve this function). According to Mullan, this can be explained by the fact that disagreements or differing opinions in French conversation do not constitute major interactional trouble (2010: 40).

The frequency of the organisational function is taken as a measure of the grammaticalisation process of the four expressions into DM. Thus, Mullan argues that all of the four expressions are in the process of grammaticalising into DMs, however to varying degrees. While some expressions mainly developed organisational functions (*I think* and *JC*), others (*JP* and *JT*) “have retained more of a semantic content than is usually attributed to DMs” (2010: 41). Indeed, the dual function of *JP* shows, according to Mullan, that its role as a marker of opinion is still dominant, which illustrates the importance for French speakers of expressing their opinion. In addition, she notes that all of the expressions share characteristics and functions commonly assigned to DMs, e.g. they mainly occur in initial position, cases

fulfilling organisational functions are semantically bleached, they are syntactically optional, they mark boundaries in discourse and they have a connective function (2010: 44-48).

With regard to organisational functions, Mullan recognises the polyfunctional role of the expressions, but their categorisation according to their predominant function does not always appear to be justified. In particular, it is not clear why some instances are ascribed a primarily organisational role over a semantic role (and sometimes vice-versa). In the next chapters, I argue that the discourse-marking role of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* is the result of a complex combination of functions, which are often difficult to hierarchise and which cannot be limited to discourse organisation. Therefore, I do not allocate one primary role to an expression, but equally consider all of its possible roles. Beeching (2002: 10) points out that this polyfunctionality “may respond to some or all of the spontaneous, interactional, social, sociable and polite functions served by ordinary everyday conversation simultaneously”, which underlines the complexity of any expression. In a more general perspective, I show that integrating stance into the context as a clue for the addressee on how to process information also contributes to the role of the French markers as DMs.

On a semantic level, my database challenges Mullan’s claim that the semantic difference between the French expressions is based on the speaker’s viewpoint being based on reflection (*JP*), belief or conviction (*JC*) or experience (*JT*). First, the high frequency of epistemic markers in my database questions the view that *JP* only has conviction, and *JC* belief (or conviction), as their core meaning. Mullan indeed points out that “expressing doubt is not part of the core meaning of *JP* (or *JC*) in the same way as disclaiming knowledge of the upcoming proposition is part of the core meaning of *I think*; rather these expressions permit the inference of doubt or uncertainty where other contextual information indicates the same” (2010: 140). As her main concern is to investigate the expressions as markers of opinion, this perspective may account for the fairly low number of occurrences of *JP* and *JC* expressing doubt in her database.²³ By contrast, in my database *JP* occurs more often as an epistemic marker reducing the speaker’s commitment to their utterance, while *JC* is never used as a subjective marker.²⁴ It is also possible that what I refer to as “epistemic marker” and “subjective marker” do not precisely coincide with Mullan’s expression of doubt and opinion, respectively, or that her criteria to

²³Mullan’s database consists in ten hours of separate French and English conversations, during which she was present. Thus, the topics chosen for discussion may have elicited specific uses of the expressions, namely opinion-oriented uses (Mullan, 2010: 15, 20-21, 129).

²⁴My data is therefore not aligned with the idea that “the use of *JC* in discourse will generally reflect certainty arising from firm belief” and that “French speakers often refrain from using *JC* to express uncertainty or doubt” (2010: 192).

distinguish opinion from doubt are not similar to mine. Furthermore, my database displays instances of *JT* that are not based on the speaker's experience, or at least not transparently. For this reason, my position differs from Mullan's, who considers *JT* an evidential marker in that it marks the source of information as personal experience (2010: 135).

Contrary to Mullan, I do not start from pre-established core meanings when analysing my data, but I adopt a bottom-up approach and propose individual semantic/pragmatic meanings of the markers based on their context of occurrence. Thus, I observe that the choice of one expression over another is not necessarily associated with the speaker's viewpoint being based on reflection, belief or experience.²⁵ For instance, most cases of *JC* signal a potential faulty memory from the speaker (rather than belief), while the choice of *JT* over *JP* sometimes seems to be related to a strategy of non-imposition.

Finally, in Mullan's research, the face-saving role of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* is overshadowed by the description of the expressions as organisational devices and/or opinion markers. Face-saving might not be a predominant function of any of the French expressions in Mullan's database, but it is a central function in my own database.

²⁵Explaining the difference between *JC* and *JP* in terms of degree of certainty is a plausible perspective, especially with subjective state of affairs. But since my database does not display any uses of *JC* as a subjective marker, this cannot be verified on the basis of empirical evidence. Associated with verifiable statements, I argue in chapter 5 that *JP* tends to signal that the proposition is based on inference, and *JC* on previous knowledge. As a consequence, we may suggest that previous knowledge implies a higher degree of certainty than inference insofar as a piece of information used to be known to the speaker.

Chapter 4

Semantic and pragmatic aspects of *je pense, je crois, je trouve*: a Construction Grammar approach

In order to model the meanings of *JP*, *JC* and *JT*, a constructionist approach is adopted (Hoffmann & Trousdale, 2013). The assumption of Construction Grammar that sequences of linguistic items “that have been used often enough to be accessed together” (Bybee, 2013: 51) can form constructions (i.e. conventionalised form-meaning pairings) makes it a suitable theoretical framework for describing their meaning and functions. As proposed by Angot and Hansen (2021), *JP*, *JC* and *JT* are considered interrelated constructions, with nonetheless distinct behaviours.¹ First, section 4.1 explains how *JP*, *JC* and *JT* qualify as constructions, and more specifically as “micro-constructions” (Traugott, 2008) where *je* and the stance verb are no longer processed as separate items. Second, I describe the constructional meaning of the three expressions. Section 4.2 discusses *JP* and *JC*, which encode two semantic components of meaning anchored in each element of the constructions – a subjective and an epistemic component of meaning. I argue in section 4.3 that the semantic contribution of either the subject or the verb form may be foregrounded at the expense of the other element of the micro-construction. Section 4.4 shows that *JT* differs from the two other constructions since it does not encode an epistemic component of meaning. Section 4.5 concludes the chapter.

The terms subjective, epistemic and evidential, as applied to the three expres-

¹See also Tuchais (2020), who similarly considers the relationship between the syntactic behaviour and the pragmatic/discourse role of expressions such as *JP* or *JC* from the perspective of constructionalisation (Traugott & Trousdale, 2013). His study is conducted from a cross-linguistic approach, as the French constructions are compared with their Japanese equivalents (see also Tuchais, 2014). This study was published after the submission of Angot & Hansen (2021).

sions throughout this chapter, will be defined as follows. Subjectivity is broadly defined as the speaker’s presence in their speech, where the focal point is the first of the basic components of deixis (*‘I-here-now’*). *JP*, *JC* and *JT* express a subjective stance which is reflected both in the first-person subject *je*, whose status as a deictic expression makes it intrinsically subjective (e.g. Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1980), and in the finite verbs, as “occasional” subjective verbs in that they express an evaluative judgement only when they are used with first-person pronouns (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1980: 101). Used with the first-person subject, the evaluative judgement expressed by the speaker is only true from their point of view (1980: 101). The term epistemic describes linguistic items that convey the speaker’s (reduced) commitment to the proposition expressed by their utterance. As such, epistemicity is a category of modality. Finally, the term evidential is broadly used here to refer to linguistic items specifying the information source or evidence on which a statement is based, whether this item be of a grammatical or lexical category.

4.1 *Je pense, je crois and je trouve as constructions*

The concept of ‘construction’ is central to the theory of Construction Grammar in that it serves as a basis to understand linguistic knowledge: in the minds of speakers are constructions, which are interrelated in a structured network. This network forms a speaker’s knowledge of a given language. Constructions are defined as conventional, learned pairings of form and meaning (including discourse or pragmatic meaning) that are directly connected, without intermediate structures. That is, unlike mainstream generative grammars, Construction Grammar does not involve transformations or derivations.

Constructions range from morphemes to lexical items and larger sequences of words. They appear at all levels of grammatical description, which means that there is no clear-cut division of lexicon and syntax (Hoffmann & Trousdale, 2013). Rather, constructions are placed in what is referred to as a ‘constructicon’, that is, a mental network of schematic and substantive constructions (Fillmore, 1988; Goldberg, 2003). This so-called ‘constructicon’ forms a lexicon-syntax cline (Goldberg, 2003: 220; Croft & Cruse, 2004: 255), where the lexical end is represented by substantive constructions, i.e. lexically fully specified idioms (e.g. the word *green*, cf. Croft & Cruse, 2004: 255), while the syntactic end involves fully schematic, abstract constructions (e.g. the ditransitive construction [*sbj Verb-tns obj₁ obj₂*] such as in *Brad baked his wife a cake*, cf. Hoffmann, 2013: 307). Along this cline, constructions thus vary in terms of complexity and schematicity.

To refer to the stratification of constructions in these different levels of schematicity, I draw on Traugott's (2008) terminology (see also Traugott & Trousdale, 2013: 13-17). At different levels of the mental constructicon, she suggests that constructions are hierarchically ordered between macro-constructions, meso-constructions, and constructions, which she refers to as micro-constructions, for the sake of consistency. The highest level in the hierarchy represents the syntactic end of the lexicon-syntax cline, and comprises functional superordinate macro-constructions. At an intermediary level, meso-constructions are sets of similar individual constructions. At the lowest level in the hierarchy, which is the more lexical end of the cline, micro-constructions are representative of meso-constructions, but may have idiosyncratic properties. They are individual and phonetically filled constructions which are entrenched in the mental grammar of speakers. These three levels are abstractions and have to be distinguished from concrete utterances, actually occurring expressions: in Construction Grammar, these are referred to as 'constructs'.

With respect to the three French constructions, at the most abstract and schematic level in the hierarchy, we find the macro-construction [Subject + Epistemic Verb] as a structural template. Neither element is lexically specified, but both are defined by function and represent a syntactic pattern. The construction further includes the optional third element [(complementiser *que* 'that') + proposition], which is syntactically the direct object of the former two and constitutes their semantic scope. Importantly, due to its optionality, this third element will sometimes have to be recovered from context. In other words, the macro-construction is specified for the possible null instantiation (i.e. the possible omission) of its complement (Hilpert, 2014: 44), a property which is inherited by lower levels of the constructional hierarchy. On the next level, meso-constructions are partly substantive, partly schematic: [Subject + *penser*], [Subject + *croire*], [Subject + *trouver*]. The schematic slot 'subject' can be filled by any (pro)nouns, but the specific verbs are fixed, although they can be used with different tenses and moods. These meso-constructions are inter-related, but they are also related to other similar-behaving meso-constructions with broadly similar meanings, for instance [Subject + *considérer* 'consider'] or [Subject + *estimer* 'consider, reckon']. Finally, at the lowest level of the mental constructicon, we find the individual constructions [*je pense*], [*je crois*] and [*je trouve*], consisting of the first-person subject *je* and the corresponding verb, *penser* 'think', *croire* 'believe' or *trouver* 'find', in the present indicative. At this micro-level, the three constructions are lexically and phonologically fully specified. Table (4.1) summarises the three constructions at the different levels of the hierarchy.

In sum, *JP*, *JC* and *JT* have a special status in that their meaning is not fully compositional: they can be understood as chunks to which are assigned a meaning as a whole, rather than a fully compositional meaning constructed out of two

Table 4.1 – *Je pense, je crois* and *je trouve* on the lexicon-syntax cline

Construction type	Construction
Macro-construction	[sbj + epistemic verb] ([[<i>que</i> ‘that’] + prop])
Meso-construction	[sbj + <i>penser</i>] [sbj + <i>croire</i>] [sbj + <i>trouver</i>]
Micro-construction	[<i>je pense</i>] [<i>je crois</i>] [<i>je trouve</i>]

meanings (encoded in the subject *je* and the finite verb) achieving their work in an independent manner. This, however, does not preclude the fact that each part of the constructions contributes their own meaning to the whole. In contrast, the meaning of counterparts such as *tu penses*, *je trouvais* or *ils croient* is formed compositionally, i.e. as the sum of the respective meaning of the subject and the finite verb. They are derived from the partly substantive, partly schematic meso-construction [Subject + *penser/croire/trouver*], without forming micro-constructions.

In the next sections, I show how each element composing the micro-constructions *JP*, *JC* and *JT* contributes a central component of each construction’s semantics. I also show how they interact with others possible combinations which can be found at a more abstract level of the hierarchy (i.e. macro-level), that is, combinations involving different subjects and tenses. First, section 4.2 examines together *JP* and *JC*, since their individual meaning exhibits similarities. Then, section 4.2 turns to *JT*, whose meaning differs from the two other constructions.

4.2 Constructional meaning of *je pense* and *je crois*

The semantics of *JP* and *JC* can be seen as composed of two elements of meaning, arising from each element of the micro-constructions. Each element of meaning is tied to the fact that at the meso-level of the constructional hierarchy, each element of the constructions contrasts paradigmatically with related linguistic items, such that the speaker selects the paradigmatic alternate which is the most consistent in a specific situation. Thus, the first element contrasts with other person/number combinations (*tu* ‘you’, *il/elle* ‘he/she’; etc.), while the second element contrasts with other verbs denoting degrees of epistemic commitment (e.g. *sais* ‘know’, *con-*

sidère ‘consider’) including each other. In addition, the verb forms contrast with different tenses/moods of the same verb, e.g. *pensais* ‘thought’ / *croyais* ‘believed’, *vais penser* ‘am going to think’ / *vais croire* ‘am going to believe’. I refer to the semantic contribution of the first-person subject *je* as the *subjective meaning*, and that of the verb forms *penser* or *croire* as the *epistemic meaning*.

To account for the epistemic meaning of *JP* and *JC*, I build on the theory of Generalised Conversational Implicatures (GCIs), initially developed by Grice (1975). GCIs are inferences which arise by default, but can be cancelled in particular contexts. By contrast, Particularised Conversational Implicatures (PCIs) are inferences which arise from a particular context. The GCIs I am interested in here are scalar and clausal implicatures, which fall under Grice’s (1975: 26) first maxim of Quantity, “make your contribution as informative as is required”.²

Scalar implicatures arise from the existence of linguistic alternates of different strengths, or Horn scales (Horn, 1972, 1984, 2004). Scalar expressions from the same semantic field are ranked as informationally weaker or stronger, such that a stronger expression unilaterally entails a weaker expression. Horn scales take the form $\langle x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n \rangle$, as illustrated by the examples below.

- (34) $\langle \text{all, most, many, some} \rangle$ (Quantifiers)
 $\langle \text{boiling, hot, warm} \rangle$ (Adjectives)
 $\langle \text{adore, love, like} \rangle$ (Verbs)

In each scale (represented in angle brackets), the stronger expressions entail the weaker expressions: for instance, *all* entails *most*, which entails *many*, which entails *some*. Therefore, *all* is semantically stronger than *most*, which is in turn stronger than *many*, itself stronger than *some*. Conversely, the assertion of a weaker expression implicates the negation of any of the semantically stronger expressions in the ordered set. Thus, *warm* implicates $\sim \text{hot}$, $\sim \text{boiling}$ (\sim indicating the negation).

According to Neo-Gricean theories (Gazdar, 1979; Horn, 1984; Levinson, 2000), clausal implicatures account for inferences of epistemic uncertainty associated with, for instance, *perhaps*, conditional *if* or modal *may*. Similarly to scalar implicatures, the inference rests on informationally stronger or weaker pairs of expression, where the stronger expression entails or presupposes the embedded sentence(s). In the case of embedding constructions, many verbs, typically verbs of propositional attitude and verbs of saying, form contrastive pairs (Gazdar, 1979: 61; Levinson, 2000: 110) or Horn scales (e.g. Horn, 1984) such as *believe/know*, *say/reveal* or *think/realise*. Each pair involves a strong verb (the second verb of each pair above) that entails or presupposes its complement, and a weak verb (the first verb of each pair above) that

²See also Levinson’s (2000: 35) Q-heuristic: “What isn’t said, isn’t meant”.

does not. For instance, the utterance of *think that p* carries the clausal implicature that the speaker does not know whether *p* holds, since *think that p*, in contrast to *realise that p*, does not entail *p*. Consider now (35a) and (35b) below.

- (35) Levinson (2000: 110)
- a. John knows Sue came.
 - b. John believes Sue came.

The sentence in (35b) carries the clausal implicature “For all the speaker knows, Sue came, or Sue did not come” (i.e. “Sue may or may not have come”). The speaker is therefore not in a position to use the stronger alternative sentence in (35a), which entails that “Sue came”. Since $\langle believe, know \rangle$ also form a scale, (35b) additionally gives rise to the distinct, scalar implicature that “(For all the speaker knows,) it is not the case that John knows that Sue came”. Thus, scalar implicatures indicate epistemic uncertainty about “the speaker’s knowledge of (or belief about) the negation of the matrix clause” (*it is not the case that...*), while clausal implicatures “indicate epistemic uncertainty about the truth of the embedded sentences” (Levinson, 2000: 110).

Similarly to its English equivalent *know*, French *savoir* is a strong verb entailing its complement. It forms a contrastive pair of the same type with epistemic *penser* and *croire* which, by contrast, are weak verbs that give rise to inferences of epistemic uncertainty. Thus, (36a) and (36b) below, similarly to the English examples in (35), differ in that the embedding construction in (36a) entails the embedded clause *Laura a déménagé à Chicago*, while the embedding construction in (36b) fails to entail it.

- (36) a. Jean sait que *Laura a déménagé à Chicago*.
 ‘Jean knows that Laura has moved to Chicago.’
- b. Jean pense/croît que *Laura a déménagé à Chicago*.
 ‘Jean thinks/believes that Laura has moved to Chicago.’

The use of a semantically weaker expression in (36b), or in other words the non-utterance of a semantically stronger expression, gives rise to the clausal implicature that Jean is ignorant of whether Laura has moved to Chicago: perhaps she has, or perhaps she has not. Moreover, via the scale $\langle savoir, penser/croire \rangle$, (36b) carries the scalar implicature that for all the speaker knows, it is not the case that Jean knows that Laura has moved to Chicago.

Levinson (2000: 110) notes that scalar implicatures arising from sentences such as (36b) are compatible with the speaker knowing whether the embedded proposition obtains or not. For this sentence, the scalar implicature that “it is not the case that Jean knows that Laura has moved to Chicago” is compatible with the speaker knowing that Laura has or has not moved to Chicago. As pointed out by Angot and

Hansen (2021), in many contexts, sentences such as (36b) are, in fact, associated with the speaker's knowledge or belief that the embedded proposition is false. This is an additional implicature (see also Martin, 1988).³ Thus, (36b) will additionally carry the implicature that the speaker knows or believes that Laura has not moved to Chicago.

Similarly, the use of a first-person subject followed by the past or future tense of *penser* or *croire* will often have the implicature that the speaker, indexed in the subject *je*, knows or believes that the embedded proposition is false. Below, (37a) and (37b) carry the implicature that the speaker now knows that Laura has not, in fact, moved to Chicago. In most contexts, (37c) and (37d) have the implicature that the speaker currently believes that Laura has not moved, but that they may change their belief in the future.

- (37) a. *Je pensais/croyais que Laura avait déménagé à Chicago.*
 'I thought/believed that Laura had moved to Chicago.'
- b. *J'ai pensé/cru que Laura avait déménagé à Chicago.*
 'I have thought/believed that Laura had moved to Chicago.'
- c. *Je penserai/croirai que Laura a déménagé à Chicago.*
 'I will think/believe that Laura have moved to Chicago.'
- d. *Je vais penser/croire que Laura a déménagé à Chicago.*
 'I am going to think/believe that Laura have moved to Chicago.'

In contrast to what was shown for (36b) and (37), the micro-constructions *JP* and *JC*, used with the first-person subject and in the present indicative, always display the speaker's belief that the proposition denoted by the complement is true, as shown in (38).

- (38) *Je pense/crois que Laura a déménagé à Chicago.*
 'I know/believe that Laura has moved to Chicago.'

These contrasts justify considering *JP* and *JC* as micro-constructions: each of them have idiosyncratic semantic and pragmatic properties that distinguish them from other uses of the meso-constructions [Subject + *penser*] and [Subject + *croire*].

When used with a first-person subject, *penser* and *croire* similarly give rise to both types of implicatures. Thus, the clausal implicature arising from (38) above

³See my discussion of Martin (1983) in chapter 3; see also Apothéloz (2003: 256) regarding *il pense que p*: "Ici l'enchâssement de *p* dans le tour *il pense que ne peut être justifié que par la volonté du locuteur de marquer une dissociation entre le point de vue qu'il rapporte sur *p* et le sien propre, dissociation pouvant aller jusqu'au désaccord complet.*" ('Here the embedding of *p* in the turn *il pense que* 'he thinks that' can only be justified by the speaker's wish to mark a dissociation between the point of view they relate about *p* and their own, dissociation which can mark a complete disagreement.')

is that Laura may or may not have moved to Chicago; the scalar implicature is that it is not the case that the speaker, indexed in the subject *je* ‘I’, knows that Laura has moved to Chicago. By using the semantically weaker epistemic verbs *penser* and *croire*, the speaker implicates that they are not in a position to utter the stronger utterance “(Je sais que) Laura a déménagé à Chicago” ‘(I know that) Laura has moved to Chicago’ without breaching the maxim responsible for the clausal implicature, that is, Grice’s maxim of Quantity. Therefore, both micro-constructions express an implicit acknowledgement that the speaker’s beliefs may potentially be in conflict with another person’s beliefs, including those of the addressee.

That said, as mentioned above, the micro-constructions *JP* and *JC* signal that the speaker commits to their utterance, although this commitment is reduced. Thus, I will consider the relationship between the speaker and the utterance in terms of degree of commitment, rather than in terms of attitude to knowledge. This allows us to include in this model subjective propositions. By contrast, when epistemic *penser* and *croire* are used with other subjects or tenses/moods, there is no implicature that the speaker commits to the proposition denoted by the complement. In fact, as mentioned above, a sentence such as (36b) will often carry the implicature that the speaker does not commit to the utterance.

This absence of commitment of the speaker with persons other than *je* is further exemplified by the two excerpts below, which provide evidence for both *penser* and *croire*, respectively. Excerpt (39) is taken from the database. Céline is telling Bruno that she likes to tidy up, which involves throwing things away. Her partner Corentin, on the other hand, is used to keeping things such as old clothes (line 1). In her first turn (lines 1-3), she recounts or imagines a short dialogue between them, where Corentin justifies wanting to keep his old clothes by the fact that he wears them to help some friends (Quentin and Adeline, the two other participants in Corpus 2 and mutual friends of Céline and Corentin) who are refurbishing their home. In line 7 (arrowed), the use of *il pense* by Bruno (*il* referring to Corentin) invites the inference that the speaker believes that one element of their mutual friends’ house, the swimming pool, will not be refurbished in time before the summer, or that it is very unlikely.

(39) Interaction 2.2 - Bruno / Céline

- | | | |
|---|-----|---|
| 1 | CEL | ... genre ses vieux vêt' ments, (0.2) ça on jette
<i>like his old clothes</i> <i>let's throw them</i> |
| 2 | | corentin, . tsk (0.3) ((i mi tati ng Corenti n)) nan mai s
<i>Corentin,</i> <i>no but</i> |
| 3 | | quand on bri cole euh: chez quenti n et adeli ne, |

- when we do DIY jobs um at Quenti n' s and Adeline' s
- 4 (0.8)
- 5 CEL ben: t' as j amai s fbri col é [chez euxÉ]
well you never did DIY jobs at theirs
- 6 BRU [Éeh eh eh] eh eh eh eh eh
- 7 → ehÉ (0.3) .hh c' est pa' ce que i' **pense qu'** on va fai re
i t' s ' cause he thinks we' re going to
- 8 fai re la pi sci ne avant c' t été, =
refurbi sh the swi mmi ng pool before thi s summer,
- 9 CEL =É. h ouai sÉ .hh [donc euh : :]
yeah so um
- 10 BRU [j' ai un peu envi e d' fai re] ça avant
I kind of wanna do that before
- 11 moi aussi .
me too.

Excerpt (40) is taken from an interview of the French singer Raphaële Lannadere (LAN) by the radio presenters Charline Vanhoenacker and Alex Vizorek (VIZ).⁴

(40) *Par Jupiter !* (France Inter) - Alex Vizorek / Raphaële Lannadere

- 1 LAN ... pa' ce qu' i' m' semble que les- dans l' monde par
'cause it seems to me that the- in the world for
- 2 exemple on s' méfi e aussi mai ntenant des sci enti fi ques.
i nstance peopl e are al so wary now of sci enti sts.
- 3 souvent, .h par exemple on sai t que mai ntenant on: des-
often, for i nstance we know that now we- some-
- 4 → **des gens croient** vraiment qu' la terre est: plate,
some peopl e believe real ly that the Earth is flat,
- 5 donc on n' est- on n' est pas rendu
so we' ve got- we' ve got a long way to go
- 6 VIZ attendez vous i nsi nuez quoi là?
wai t what do you mean?

In line 4, the verb *croire* is used with the third-person plural subject *des gens* 'some people'. The inference that the speaker, Raphaële Lannadere, believes that the

⁴The interview is taken from the radio program *Par Jupiter !* broadcast on the French public radio station France Inter (31/10/2019).

embedded proposition *la terre est plate* ‘the Earth is flat’ (line 4, arrowed) is false (i.e. that the earth is not flat) is made explicit by Alex Vizorek’s sarcastic reaction in line 6 (*attendez vous insinuez quoi là?* ‘wait what do you mean?’), and more particularly the verb *insinuer* ‘to insinuate, imply’. Alex Vizorek’s question, whose nature is evidently rhetorical, is thereafter met by a laughter from his two co-participants, in that the proposition ‘the Earth is flat’ is inconsistent with background assumptions shared by the participants. In this example, the clausal implicature “the Earth may or may not be flat” does not arise but is contextually defeated.

Below are examples of the speaker’s non-commitment to their utterance when the first-person subject *je* is followed by *penser* or *croire* in the past tense. My database does not contain any occurrence of *JP* and *JC* in the future tense. The first excerpt features an instance of *je pensais* ‘I thought’. In line 1, Julie self-interrupts in the middle of her sentence (*je pensais que les Suédois ils sont très* ‘I thought the Swedes were very’). However, the missing part can fairly easily be recovered from the context, on the basis of the contrast between the first part of her turn (namely, what she used to think of the Swedes) and the second part (what she now thinks of them, cf. line 2). *Je pensais* implicates that the speaker is no longer (but used to be) committed to what the construction scopes over (*les suédois ils sont très*). This inference is helped by the expressions *pas du tout* ‘not at all’ and *en fait* ‘actually’ (line 2), emphasising the contrast between what Julie used to, and now thinks.

(41) Interaction 3.1 - Julie / Claire / Laurent / Jean

- 1 JUL moi **j’ pensai s que** les suédois ils sont très euh voi là
for me I thought the Swedes were very um well
- 2 pas du tout en fait ils sont très ouvert très sympa:
not at all actually they’re very open very nice

The excerpt in (42) displays an instance of *je croyais* ‘I believed’ carrying the same implicature. In line 1, Laurent is trying to remember the name of a restaurant. He is helped by Jean in the next turn, who provides the correct name (“La paterie”). Like *je pensais*, *je croyais* marks the non-commitment of Laurent towards his utterance.

(42) Interaction 3.1 - Julie / Claire / Laurent / Jean

- 1 LAU la papa: la papaperie? [la papèt’rie]
the papa the papaperie? the papèterie

- 2 JEA [l a patat' ri e] ouai s
"La pataterie" yeah
- 3 l a papèt' ri e
the papèteri e
- 4 LAU ah j' croyai s qu' c' étai t l a papèt' ri e
ah I believed i t was the papèteri e
- 5 JEA eh ouai s [non c' est]=
eh yeah no i t' s
- 6 LAU [ah ouai s]
ah yeah
- 7 JEA =l a patat' ri e
La Pataterie

Thus, the excerpts above show that *je pensais* and *je croyais* report a discrepancy with what the speakers used to believe, in opposition to what they now believe or know. In English, it has also been shown that “I thought” is not only used to display stances or reported thoughts, but also to index changes in the speaker’s epistemic status (Jefferson, 2004a; Kärkkäinen, 2009, 2012). From a Conversation Analysis perspective, Smith (2013) shows how “in deploying an ‘I thought’-initiated turn, a speaker indexes an emergent discrepancy in the prior talk in relation to what he or she presumes is mutual knowledge” (2013: 320). According to him, an ‘I thought’-turn simultaneously “implicates the recipient’s responsibility for the discrepancy” (2013: 319) and selects them for the next turn to account for that discrepancy.

4.3 A Gestalt theoretic account for the polysemous meaning of *je pense* and *je crois*

As argued in Angot & Hansen (2021), I propose that in any given use of *JP* and *JC*, one of the two components of meaning – either epistemic or subjective – typically comes to the foreground, at the expense of the other component of meaning which recedes into the background. Thus, in some uses, *JP* and *JC* mainly work to express a subjective stance towards the utterance, while in other cases they are chiefly used to reduce the speaker’s commitment to the propositional content of their utterance. Both components of meaning therefore persist, to some extent, in all uses of the two constructions. I will refer to *JP* and *JC* either as ‘subjective markers’ or ‘epistemic markers’, depending on the element of meaning in the foreground in a particular context.

The semantic relation between the two components of meaning encoded in *JP*

and *JC* can be seen as a ‘metonymic polysemy’ (Koch, 1999). In this view, the two constructions are metonymically polysemous and the two components of meaning are connected in every use, whatever the foregrounded meaning.

The foreground/background distinction referred to has been proposed by the Gestalt theory (cf. in linguistics, among others: G. Lakoff, 1977a; Talmy, 2000; for an account of the foreground/background distinction in metonymic change, see Hansen, 2008). It allows us to account for the distinct roles of the constructions in discourse. Which element of meaning will be foregrounded is, in fact, a function of context, such as: (1) associated with objective, and in principle verifiable, facts, the epistemic meaning is in the foreground insofar as the speaker flags a genuine uncertainty towards the propositional content of their utterance; (2) with claims that are grounded in personal beliefs or opinion (i.e. where there are no objective facts), the subjective meaning is in the foreground and the propositional content reflects the speaker’s own stance. I therefore adopt a clear-cut distinction between states of affairs that are based on objective facts, and those based on subjective judgements. The latter includes any types of judgements that are not characterised by an externally verifiable benchmark, from value judgements to personal points of view. Features of the context are crucial in order to determine which of the two components of meaning is foregrounded. Consider again the example in (36b), repeated below in (43a), in comparison with (43b).

- (43) a. *Je pense/crois que Laura a déménagé à Chicago.*
 ‘I think/believe that Laura moved out to Chicago.’
 b. *Je pense/crois que le discours de Laura est remarquable.*
 ‘I think/believe that Laura’s speech is remarkable.’

In (43a), the embedded proposition *Laura a déménagé à Chicago* describes an objective fact, whose accuracy can in principle be verified. By using *JP* or *JC* as an epistemic marker, the speaker flags an uncertainty about Laura moving out to Chicago. In this case, the speaker’s epistemic commitment is more important than the subjective belief of the speaker, and the epistemic meaning, which rests on the existence of the $\langle \textit{penser/croire, savoir} \rangle$ scale, is in the foreground. The subjective meaning remains present in the background, and relates to the displaying of the speaker’s own belief, in contrast with possible alternative beliefs held by other people, including the addressee(s).

In contrast, the embedded proposition *le discours de Laura est remarquable* in (43b) expresses a purely subjective stance, where interpersonal consensus may never be reached (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1980). One person may think that Laura’s speech is remarkable, while another would think that it is not. Here, it is the semantic contribution of the first-person subject that is more salient, and the subjective meaning

moves into the foreground. The epistemic meaning recedes into the background but is still present to some extent, as the speaker cannot vouch for the intersubjective truth of the asserted proposition. In other words, the speaker is not in a position to *know* that Laura's speech is remarkable, in that no absolute knowledge is conceivable with subjective utterances. When the epistemic meaning lies in the background, it can be accounted for, in a Conversation Analysis perspective, in terms of *epistemic status* (Heritage, 2012) in that nobody has primary epistemic status, that is, "primary access to a targeted element of knowledge or information" (2012: 3). *JP* or *JC* thereby signal that the speaker does not claim an absolute epistemic advantage, as the targeted information does not allow for only one interpretation or evaluation.

When *JP* and *JC* foreground the same component of meaning, I consider the two constructions to form a contrastive pair, where each element of the pair are substitutable by one another. Thus, the epistemic markers *JP* and *JC* in (43a) above form a contrastive pair, while the subjective markers *JP* and *JC* in (43b) above belong to a contrastive set with *JT* which, as will be developed in chapter 5 (cf. section 5.1), is pragmatically successful with subjective claims only. However, as micro-constructions, *JP*, *JC* and *JT* have idiosyncrastic semantic and pragmatic properties that distinguish them from one another. This means that the substitution of one of the micro-constructions by another would lead to semantic changes (cf. chapter 5).

One crucial distinction between the two components of meaning, and therefore between the two different (primarily epistemic/subjective) pairs, is that the omission of *JP* or *JC*, when used as epistemic markers, will lead to the modification of the speaker's degree of commitment to their utterance. This is also a criterion that enables distinction between objective and subjective claims. With objective facts as in (43a) above, *JP* and *JC* reduce the speaker's commitment towards the propositional content denoted in the complement. The absence of the constructions, on the other hand, would suggest that they are fully committed to it. This is due to weak epistemic verbs not entailing their complement. Thus, the utterance of *Laura a déménagé à Chicago* signals that the speaker knows that Laura has moved out to Chicago, similarly to the use of the strong verb *savoir* in *Je sais que Laura a déménagé à Chicago* 'I know that Laura moved out to Chicago'. On the other hand, when *JP* or *JC* are used as subjective markers, their omission (e.g. the assertion of *Le discours de Laura est remarquable*) does not lead to the softening of the speaker's commitment to their utterance. Rather, *JP* and *JC* make explicit the subjective and potentially contestable nature of the utterance. Chapter 6 will show that in addition to their semantics, the constructions may fulfil interactional functions accounting for their presence in the speaker's discourse (e.g. mitigation). Furthermore, since *JT* is not compatible with objective facts, a felicitous substitution of *JP* or *JC* by *JT* is

another criterion to distinguish between their two meanings. In this case, the subjective meaning is foregrounded. An additional test proposed by Angot and Hansen (2021) is to ask whether the sequence *je ne pense/crois pas que p ; je sais que p* ‘I don’t think/believe that p; I know that p’ would be a possible alternative to *JP* or *JC*, without markedly changing the contextual interpretation of the proposition designated as *p*. In that case, it is the epistemic meaning that is foregrounded.

By considering the existence of two components of meaning in any given use of *JP* and *JC*, my model differs from Mullan’s (2010: 6). Indeed, she views what she refers to as expressions of opinion and doubt as discrete concepts, and thus establishes a clear-cut delimitation between uses expressing opinion, and uses expressing doubt. My model is, on the other hand, closer to Kärkkäinen’s (2003) analysis of the meanings of English *I think*. As I mention in chapter 3, the expression is analysed in view of the degree of certainty it expresses, on a continuum between ‘*doubt/uncertainty*’ and ‘*lack of doubt/certainty*’ (2003: 111). Although Kärkkäinen posits two distinct semantic extremes, representing different meanings along a continuum does not reject the presence of some epistemicity when the expression appears at the ‘*lack of doubt/certainty*’ end of the continuum, which also includes opinions (2003: 111). Furthermore, regarding *JP* and *JC* as micro-constructions with individual characteristics is compatible with Kärkkäinen’s view of epistemic stance-taking as a highly routinised phenomenon.

The examples below illustrate *JP* and *JC* foregrounding, in turn, each component of meaning in authentic conversation. All of the examples come from my database, except (47) which comes from a radio program. This excerpt displays a subjective use of *JC*, since no occurrence was found in my database. A breakdown of the data is presented at the end of this section.

The excerpt in (44) displays a parenthetical use of *JP*, occurring clause-medially, and used as an epistemic marker. Bruno talks about a former colleague of his,⁵ and the proposition expressed by the host utterance (*il arrive bientôt à la quarantaine*, line 4, arrowed) concerns an objective fact, toned down by the epistemic marker *JP*. In this case, the omission of *JP* would have consequences for the speaker’s degree of commitment, insofar as the assertion of *il arrive bientôt à la quarantaine* only would display the speaker’s full commitment to the proposition.

(44) Interaction 2.4 - Bruno / Quentin

- 1 BRU l e: seul collègue parisien avec qui j’ai gardé euh:
the only colleague from Paris I kept um

⁵The name of the city has been changed for anonymity.

- 2 des contacts,
i n touch wi th,
- 3 (...)
- 4 BRU → il arrive à: il arrive **j' pense** bientôt à la quarantaine,
he's soon he's soon I think going to turn forty,
- 5 i' doit avoir entre trente-cinq et quarante
he might be between thi rty-five and forty

Similarly, in the following excerpt in (45), *JC* is used as an epistemic marker. Its absence would lead to the strengthening of Bruno's commitment to the proposition *c'(est/était) un pote de la famille de Luc* 'it (is/was) a mate of Luc's family'.

(45) Interaction 2.2 - Bruno / Céline

- 1 CEL ah oui chez l' pote de Thi baud là ou j' sai s pas quoi ?
ah yes at Thi baud's fri end's or I don't know what?
- 2 (0.8)
- 3 BRU euh: j' sai s pas qui c'est.
um I don't know who he i s.
- 4 CEL c'est pas [un mec de la fnac.]
doesn't he work at the Fnac?
- 5 BRU [j' **croi s que** c' (est/était) un pote] de
I believe that he (i s/was) a mate of
- 6 la famille (.) de Luc.
the fami ly. of Luc.

In contrast, *JP* in (46) is used when the foregrounded message is the subjective stance of the speaker. Aurore and Paul are discussing one of the topics that were suggested to them, namely whether they agree with the fact that food and its preparation can be referred to as *culinary arts*. In what precedes the excerpt, Aurore takes a strong stance against this. Nevertheless, she acknowledges that some exceptions exist where food can be considered an art, and gives the example of chocolate sculptures (lines 1-2, arrowed). Her utterance is characterised by the use of *JP*, and the proposition expressed by the utterance hosting *JP* displays a personal opinion, which may vary from one person to another. The omission of *JP* would not modify the truth value of the proposition, in that it underscores a subjective claim.

(46) Interaction 1.5 - Aurore / Paul

- 1 AUR → ... le côté- **j' pense que** oui on peut: avoir un côté
the side- I think that yes it's possible to have
- 2 → artistique quand on fait des sculptures en chocolat
an artistic side when somebody does chocolate sculptures
- 3 et cetera mais. .hh une assiette que tu vas dév- 'fin
and so on but. a plate that you'll ea- I mean
- 4 dévorer en deux s'condes euh
eat up in two seconds um

The excerpt presented in (47) is taken from an interview of the French actress Sophie-Marie Larrouy (LAR) by Charline Vanhoenacker (VAN),⁶ and displays a subjective use of *JC*. The proposition expressed by the utterance hosting *JC*, namely *l'intime est politique* 'privacy is political' (line 8, arrowed) is inherently subjective.

(47) *Par Jupiter !* (France Inter) - Charline Vanhoenacker / Sophie-Marie Larrouy

- 1 VAN vous avez toujours eu recours à l'intime, euh: =mh là vous
you've always resorted to your private life, um now you
- 2 passez à celui des autres dans ce podcast où
move onto others' private lives in this podcast where
- 3 vous allez à la rencontre de français plutôt dans la
you go and meet French people rather in the
- 4 semi-périphérie et mondes ruraux. .h euh: alors
semi-periphery and in the countryside. um so
- 5 est-ce que vous poursuivez c' travail de l'intime avec
are you continuing this work around privacy with
- 6 les autres, ou est-ce que c'est
others, or is it
- 7 une démarche un peu plus politique.
more a political approach.
- 8 LAR → .tsk bah **je crois qu'** l'intime est politique,
well I believe that privacy is political,
- 9 Éde toute façonÉ...
anyway

⁶The interview is taken from the radio program *Par Jupiter !* broadcast on the French public radio station France Inter (25/05/2021).

The propositions associated with *JP* and *JC* in (46) and (47) are compatible with *JT*, in that they are grounded in subjective judgements. The three subjective markers can therefore replace each other without difficulty. However, the propositions in (44) and (45) represent objective facts, and are not compatible with *JT*.

The excerpt in (48) is further evidence of the coexistence of the epistemic and subjective components of meaning.

(48) Interaction 2.5 - Adeline / Bruno

- 1 ADE → ɛ. hɛ (.) .hh j' **pense qu'** on est bon,
I think that's it's enough,
- 2 BRU → .hh tu penses?=
tu penses?
- 3 ADE mouai s,
m=yeah,

This excerpt occurs approximately twenty minutes into the interaction. It follows a 0.5 second pause which marks a potential end of topic, and after which Adeline initiates a move to closing (line 1, arrowed). She is looking in direction of the recorder, very likely taking a look at the time, which in my database systematically serves as a benchmark to close the conversation. With respect to time, participants were asked to talk for approximately twenty minutes. As shown in several studies undertaken in Conversation Analysis, gaze withdrawal may be a resource for closing topics, as a way of displaying reduced participation in the conversational activity (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987; Rossano, 2013). In line 1, *JP* is used as an epistemic marker displaying Adeline's reduced commitment to reaching a potential closing.⁷ In the next turn (line 2, arrowed), on the other hand, Bruno's question focuses on the subjective component of meaning of the marker, by inquiring about her personal commitment, indexed in the second-person subject *tu* 'you'. There is therefore a change of focus from one component of meaning (line 1) to the other (line 2).

Another illustration is given in (49), with the same participants.

(49) Interaction 2.5 - Adeline / Bruno

- 1 BRU je sais pas à quelle heure on a commencé.
I don't know at what time we begun.

⁷Note that *JP* may also fulfil a face-saving function, by which Adeline may be trying not to impose on her interlocutor. However, this section focuses mainly on the primary semantic meaning.

2		(...)
3	ADE	je sais pas du tout du coup. <i>I don't know at all then.</i>
4		(1.1)
5	BRU	eh ouai s <i>eh yeah</i>
6	ADE →	oh ça doi t bi en fai re ci nq mi nutes, °enfi n j' pense° <i>oh i t must be a good fi ve mi nutes, I mean I thi nk</i>
7		É(h) [(h) (h) (h) . hhhÉ]
8	BRU →	[j' pense ouai s (0.5) . hh (0.7) okay] bah euh <i>I thi nk so yeah okay well um</i>

Bruno and Adeline are tacitly negotiating the closing of the conversation, based on the time that has gone by since the beginning of the recording, a reliable indication with respect to the management of the interaction (topic shifts, conversation closings, etc.). In line 6 (arrowed), *enfin je pense* closes Adeline's turn and appears as an increment (e.g. Schegloff, 1996; Ford et al., 2002; Horlacher, 2015; Pekarek Doehler et al., 2015) seemingly to tone down an over-assertive utterance. *JP* scopes over an objectively verifiable sentence (*ça doit bien faire cinq minutes* 'it must be a good five minutes') and therefore foregrounds the epistemic component of meaning. The subjective component of meaning, backgrounded, invites the inference that Bruno's opinion is potentially different from Adeline's, and that her perception of time may be disputable. Bruno's agreement in line 8 (arrowed) also displays an epistemic use of *JP*, followed by *ouais* 'yeah'. This second use of the marker makes visible its subjective, although backgrounded, component, by changing the deictic orientation from Adeline to Bruno.

To conclude this section, Tables 4.2 and 4.3 list the 111 instances of *JP* and the 79 instances of *JC* in the database according to their predominant function and by corpus. While *JP* is preferred as an epistemic marker but still displays uses as a subjective marker, *JC* only occurs as an epistemic marker in my database. In both tables, the separate category "Other" includes instances that cannot be assigned any predominant meaning because the turn in which they occur is abandoned halfway through its production, either self-interrupted (potentially to be later reformulated), or interrupted by another participant.

The total number of instances of *JP* foregrounding an epistemic meaning (60%) is higher than those foregrounding a subjective meaning, which represents a bit less than a third (30%) of the total number. Corpus 3, especially, shows a significant

Table 4.2 – Predominant function of *je pense* by corpus

Function	Corpus 1	Corpus 2	Corpus 3	Total
Subjective	8 (30%)	14 (35%)	11 (25%)	33 (30%)
Epistemic	14 (52%)	23 (58%)	30 (68%)	67 (60%)
Other	5 (19%)	3 (8%)	3 (7%)	11 (10%)
Total	27 (100%)	40 (100%)	44 (100%)	111 (100%)

difference between the two functions, with 68% of instances occurring as epistemic markers, against 25% of instances used as subjective markers. In Corpus 1 and 2, the distribution across both meanings presents a relatively more moderate discrepancy. This suggests that the predominant meaning of *JP* may vary, either on the basis of the conversational topic or of individual speaker preference.

Although *JC* can foreground the subjective meaning, as illustrated in (47), Table (4.3) shows that the construction is consistently used as an epistemic marker in my database.

Table 4.3 – Predominant function of *je crois* by corpus

Function	Corpus 1	Corpus 2	Corpus 3	Total
Subjective	0	0	0	0
Epistemic	23 (100%)	23 (100%)	33 (100%)	79 (100%)
Other	0	0	0	0
Total	23 (100%)	23 (100%)	33 (100%)	79 (100%)

These findings differ from Mullan’s (2010) (cf. section 3.3.2.3), who conclude that both *JP* and *JC* predominantly serve to express opinion in interaction. While this is the case of less than a third occurrences of *JP* in my data, no occurrence of *JC* is first and foremost opinion marking. This difference may be explained by the variation of the predominant function of the construction resulting from different topics or individual preferences, as suggested in chapter 2 to account for the variation across different corpora of my data.

To conclude this section, Table 4.4 summarises the characteristics of *JP* and *JC* as epistemic and subjective markers.

Table 4.4 – Characteristics of *je pense* and *je crois* as epistemic and subjective markers

<i>JP</i> and <i>JC</i> as epistemic markers	<i>JP</i> and <i>JC</i> as subjective markers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foregrounding of the epistemic component of meaning. • Main semantic role: expression of the speaker's reduced commitment towards their utterance. • The expression of a subjective judgement is backgrounded. • Utterances that are scoped over by <i>JP</i> or <i>JC</i> are presented by the speaker as objective claims. • The omission of <i>JP</i> or <i>JC</i> would enhance the speaker's commitment to the proposition. • <i>JP</i> and <i>JC</i> are not substitutable by the subjective marker <i>JT</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foregrounding of the subjective component of meaning. • Main semantic role: expression of a subjective judgement. • The expression of the speaker's reduced commitment towards their utterance is backgrounded. • Utterances that are scoped over by <i>JP</i> and <i>JC</i> are presented by the speaker as subjective claims. • The omission of <i>JP</i> or <i>JC</i> would not alter the speaker's commitment to the proposition. • <i>JP</i> and <i>JC</i> are substitutable by the subjective marker <i>JT</i>.

4.4 Constructional meaning of *je trouve*

The construction *JT* differs from *JP* and *JC* in that it is only pragmatically felicitous with judgements that are inherently subjective, that is, that are grounded in personal beliefs or opinion. It is therefore not compatible with objective claims such as (43a), repeated in (50a)⁸ below, but it is with the one in (43b), repeated in (50b).

- (50) a. *Je pense/crois/*trouve que Laura a déménagé à Chicago.*
 'I think/believe/find that Laura moved to Chicago.'
- b. *Je pense/crois/trouve que le discours de Laura est remarquable.*
 'I think/believe/find that Laura's speech is remarkable.'

This suggests that in its semantics, *JT* is marked for subjectivity only. It is not interchangeable, and thereby does not form a scalar pair, with the stronger structure *je sais* 'I know', which entails its complement. That said, *JT* and *je sais* are to some extent in contrast with each other in that the verb *trouver* (similarly to *penser* and

⁸ *Je trouve que Laura a déménagé à Chicago* 'I find that Laura moved to Chicago' is possible when the meaning of *trouver* is similar to *découvrir* 'discover' (see the meaning of *trouver*₂ in Ducrot (1980)). However, this meaning is not part of this study.

croire), unlike *savoir*, does not entail its complement. The utterance of (50b) does not entail that Laura's speech is, in fact, remarkable, insofar as the proposition expresses an evaluative judgement which rests on the speaker's subjective opinion.

Thus, *JP* and *JC* do not form a contrastive set with *JT* when they occur with objective facts, i.e. when they are epistemic markers downgrading the speaker's commitment to their claim, as in (50a). *JT* forms a contrastive set with *JP* and *JC* when they are subjective markers, that is, when they are combined with subjective judgements. In this case, the three constructions are intersubstitutable, as exemplified in (50b) above. As suggested in section 4.3, the felicity of *JT* with subjective claims only is an additional test to distinguish the subjective from the epistemic meaning of *JP* and *JC*.

I take a different view from Dendale and Van Bogaert (2007), who consider the distinction between *JP/JC* and *JT* in evidential terms. Recall from chapter 3 that according to them, *JP* and *JC* are in a paradigmatic relationship with *JT* in contexts where the two former constructions may indicate indirect evidence, while the latter indicates direct evidence. However, in chapter 3, I argued against the evidential status of *JT*, arguing that its semantic role is not inherently to mark direct evidence. Indeed, the interpretation of the utterance in (51a) that the speaker has read the book is already available without *JT*: thus, in comparison with (51b), the addition of *JT* in (51b) does not bring any new information with respect to the speaker's experience.

- (51) a. *Je trouve que ce livre est bien.*
 'I find that this book is good.'
- b. *Ce livre est bien.*
 'This book is good.'

However, what *JT* does in (51a) is to force the interpretation that the utterance is based on direct evidence, since the marker is incompatible with indirect experience. More particularly, the absence of any source of information (e.g. *apparemment* 'apparently' or *j'ai lu que...* 'I have read that...') will tend to suggest that the speaker relies on direct experience. Indeed, if I have not read a particular book but have read positive reviews about it, I am more likely to linguistically mark the source of information, for instance through the utterance of *Pierre m'a dit que c'était un bon livre* 'Pierre told me that it was a good book'.

As will be further detailed and exemplified in chapter 7, the addition of *JT* to a subjective judgement can be said to enhance subjectivity, or to use Kerbrat-Orecchioni's words, to make subjectivity explicit (1980: 151). The author distinguishes explicit subjectivity, illustrated in (52a), from implicit subjectivity, illustrated in (52b). With explicit subjectivity, the evaluation is linked to an individual

evaluative source, while implicit subjectivity creates an “objectivity effect” supposing that the addressee and most people would agree with the speaker – in other words, the evaluation is objectified.

(52) Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1980: 151)

- a. *Je trouve ça beau.*
‘I find that beautiful.’
- b. *C’est beau.*
‘That is beautiful.’

In section 4.2, I showed how each component of the constructions *JP* and *JC* paradigmatically contrasts with other person/number combinations, and with other tenses/moods. When *penser* and *croire* are used with other items of the same paradigmatic set, the speaker does not implicate that they commit to the proposition denoted by the complement. These observations justified regarding *JP* and *JC* as micro-constructions, and the same can be said with respect to the micro-construction *JT*. For instance, *elle trouve* ‘she finds’ in the excerpt below not only reports the opinion of the grammatical subject, but it also implicates the speaker’s non-commitment to the proposition. This excerpt is taken from the CLAPI database and occurs in a bakery.

(53) CLAPI - Customer / Merchant

- | | | |
|---|-----|---|
| 1 | CUS | ... pa' ce que c' est l' croustillant vous m' avez dit
'cause it's the croustillant you said |
| 2 | | qu' étai t carré?
that was a square? |
| 3 | | (0.2) |
| 4 | MER | le croustillant [aus]si =
the croustillant too |
| 5 | CUS | [ouai s]
yeah |
| 6 | MER | =ouai s.
yeah. |
| 7 | CUS | mai s elle trouve qu' ça fait beaucoup d' chocol at: don: c
but she finds that it's a lot of chocolate so |
| 8 | | [eu: h elle voul ai t poi re cho]col at, =
um she wanted pear and chocolate, |
| 9 | MER | [ah bah y a beaucoup d' chocol at (oui)]
ah well there's a lot of chocolate (yes) |

10 CUS =pa' ce que: . . .
'cause

The customer is deciding which cake to buy for her daughter's birthday. After discussing the option of a "croustillant", she expresses her daughter's preference for the taste of pear and chocolate, rather than chocolate only. In line 7, *elle trouve* 'she finds' reports the daughter's personal opinion, independent of the customer's.

Similarly, examples of *je pensais* 'I thought' and *je croyais* 'I believed' were given in section 4.2 as reporting a discrepancy with what the speaker used to know or believe. With the verb *trouver*, the utterance of *Je trouvais que c'était une bonne idée* 'I found that it was a good idea', for instance, could implicate in a certain context that the speaker is not committed anymore to their utterance. Several occurrences of *je trouvais* (or *je* followed by a tense other than the present) were found in my database, but none of them carry this implicature, which is in all cases defeated by the context. For instance, in (54), the imperfect *je trouvais* 'I found' displays the speaker's subjective opinion about a matter further back in time, and does not suggest that the speaker is not committed to the utterance anymore.

(54) Interaction 2.1 - Ombeline / Pauline

1 OMB . . . donc j' l' ai fait à un moment, pendant un ou deux
so I did it for a while, for a year or two,

2 → ans, et en fait c' était trop lourd et trop long=
and in fact it was too heavy and too long

3 PAU =oui
yes

4 OMB a- au niveau des informations à trier et cetera quand
to- about information to sort out et cetera when

5 t' en as beaucoup alors que euh du coup vi a facebook
there's a lot of it though um then vi a Facebook

6 **j' trouvais qu'** ça passai t mi eux euh
I found that it went better um

7 PAU ouai s
yeah

Before the beginning of the excerpt, Adeline was saying that she used to use a news aggregator to help reduce her time checking various websites. From line 1, her turn makes explicit the fact that she no longer uses it. This is particularly marked by the contrastive use of *et en fait* 'and in fact' (line 2, arrowed), which introduces

reasons for changing to Facebook (lines 2/4-5). In line 6, *je trouvais* ‘I found’ does not report a discrepancy between her former and current beliefs, but displays her thoughts at the time.

4.5 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I presented the model within which the three markers under investigation are described. I suggested that the three constructions can be seen as a set – at the micro-level of the hierarchy outlined by Traugott (2008) – where they may be, but are not always, intersubstitutable. On the one hand, *JP* and *JC* form a contrastive pair when they are epistemic markers. On the other hand, *JT*, which is compatible with subjective judgements only, is part of a contrastive set with *JP* and *JC* when they are subjective markers. However, these contrastive sets are not exclusive in that the constructions of each set may also contrast with other similar constructions. As epistemic markers, *JP* and *JC* contrast with epistemic constructions such as *peut-être* ‘perhaps’ or *il est possible que* ‘it is possible that’. As subjective markers, *JP*, *JC* and *JT* are in contrast with other subjective constructions such as *à mon avis* ‘in my opinion’. The next chapter focuses, in turn, on the semantic and pragmatic differences of the constructions in each set. More particularly, it will address how *JP* differs from *JC* when they are both epistemic markers, and how it differs from *JT* when they are both subjective markers.

Even though the data indicates a preference for *JP* to be used as an epistemic marker, it is still widely used as a subjective marker. Thus, it does not appear to be overwhelmingly restricted to one of its two components of meaning, unlike *JC*, which is limited to epistemic uses in my database. On the basis of the characteristics of each construction outlined in this chapter, I propose to arrange them along a continuum: at the more epistemic end appears *JC*, at the more subjective end appears *JT*, and *JP* in the middle of these. Among the three constructions, the latter is therefore the one which presents the most intricate meaning.

Chapter 5

Contrasting the meaning of *je pense*, *je crois* and *je trouve*

The preceding chapter mainly focused on the similarities shared by the three constructions, although it was shown that *JT* differs from *JP* and *JC* in several respects. The present chapter turns to the contrasts between the semantics of each construction. As interrelated micro-constructions, it will show that their individual meanings can better be grasped by contrast with each other. I proposed in chapter 4 that *JP* and *JC* form a contrastive pair when they are epistemic markers, while *JP* and *JT* form a contrastive pair when they are used as subjective markers. The two first sections of this chapter focus in turn on each contrastive pair: section 5.1 first develops the distinguishing features between *JP* and *JC*, while section 5.2, these of *JP* and *JT*. To examine the individual meaning of each construction, I adopt a bottom-up approach and inspect the context where they occur, which reveals the constraints under which *JP*, *JC* and *JT* are typically used. Finally, section 5.3 concludes the chapter.

5.1 *Je pense* vs *je crois* as epistemic markers

As developed in the previous section, *JP* and *JC* are similar to each other in that, unlike *JT*, they are both composed of a subjective and an epistemic element of meaning. However, even though *JC* may, in principle, foreground the subjective meaning, this is never the case with my database, where it invariably occurs as an epistemic marker in association with objective facts (see Table 4.3 in section 4.3).

This section examines the contrastive pair formed by *JP* and *JC*, when they both foreground the epistemic component of meaning. In chapter 4, epistemicity was defined as a category of modality whose linguistic forms convey the speaker's commitment to the proposition expressed by their utterance. I will show that regular

associations between the constructions and the state of affairs referred to in the host utterance provide important clues as to their respective semantic/pragmatic specificities. On the one hand, *JC* shows a tendency to be used when the speaker has anterior knowledge of a state of affairs, that they may be recalling incorrectly (see also Martin, 1988). On the other hand, *JP* seems to be preferred when the state of affairs is not one where the speaker enjoys privileged epistemic access. Here, there is no indication that the speaker relies on memory, and *JP* instead indicates an assumption or a supposition, typically given spontaneously. For this reason, section 5.1.3 describes *JP* as an evidential marker, that is, a linguistic item specifying the information source on which the proposition is based.

These observations are suggested by the context where each construction occurs, whose role is therefore crucial in defining their individual meaning. Para- and non-linguistic elements present in the surrounding context support this analysis, and will be detailed where appropriate. In what follows, I present firstly the contexts of occurrence of *JC* (section 5.1.1), and secondly those of *JP* (section 5.1.2).

5.1.1 Contexts of occurrence of *je crois* as an epistemic marker

The contexts where *JC* occurs in the database will be categorised according to the probability of the speaker having anterior knowledge of the information presented in the utterance hosting *JC*, as this seems to favour the use of this construction. This classification results in three broad categories: (1) the context explicitly suggests anterior knowledge, which constitutes a form of direct experience; (2) the context does not explicitly suggest anterior knowledge; in that case, the context is ambiguous as the information may be based either on anterior knowledge or on inference; (3) the context suggests that anterior knowledge is very unlikely and that the speaker, lacking information, expresses conjecture. As mentioned earlier, most instances of *JC* fall within the first category, while very few appear in the third. Figures are given in Table 5.1 and will be developed below.

5.1.1.1 Context 1: Anterior knowledge

The main type of context where *JC* occurs offers straightforward evidence that the speaker, at an earlier point in time, used to know the information toward which they are reducing their epistemic commitment. Indeed, in such contexts, *JC* occurs with states of affairs that relate to the speaker's past. From this, we may argue that if someone personally experienced or witnessed something in their past, toward which they cannot fully commit at the moment of speech, there are good reasons to assume that they believe that their memory may be unreliable. As an epistemic marker, *JC*

Table 5.1 – Contexts of occurrence of *je crois*

#	Contexts of occurrence	Total
	Anterior knowledge	
(1)	– Direct experience of the speaker	41 (52%)
	– Exact figures	13 (16%)
(2)	Ambiguous contexts	15 (19%)
(3)	No anterior knowledge (conjecture)	5 (6%)
	Other	5 (6%)
	Total	79 (100%)

therefore signals the speaker’s inability to remember anterior information accurately. Specifically, *JC* occurs in two different types of context, which are developed below: first, contexts where the role of the speaker as experiencing or witnessing the state of affairs referred to fairly explicitly indicates anterior knowledge; second, contexts where the precision of the information given is very likely to have been acquired previously.

Direct experience of the speaker 41 instances of *JC* occur in contexts displaying the speaker’s recollections of direct experience of a past event. They represent 52% of the 79 instances of *JC*. In such contexts, the fact that the speaker is retrieving some information from their memory is relatively straightforward, either because it is transparent, explicitly referred to (e.g. through the use of lexical items such as *l’année dernière* ‘last year’), or topicalised as illustrated in the excerpts from (55) to (57) below. In (55), the direct participation of the speaker is clear from the context in that it is the element of focus in the discussion: participants are sharing their best holiday memories, a topic prompting recollection. It is lexicalised throughout the excerpt, from the very beginning in line 1 (arrowed): the recollected event is introduced by *moi je me souviens* ‘I remember’, which directly orients the upcoming speech towards the telling of an event in Adeline’s past – namely a sunset in Guadeloupe where she was with Quentin, her partner, who is also taking part to this interaction. This excerpt displays two parenthetical uses of *JC* (lines 15 and 32).

(55) Interaction 2.7 - Adeline / Céline / Quentin

1 ADE → moi j' me souviens d'un: coucher d' soleil
I remember a sunset

- 2 qu' on avai t fai t en guad' loupe.
when we were in Guadeloupe.
- 3 QUE oh: : ma: gni fi que.
oh wonderful.
- 4 ADE tu t' souvi ens
do you remember
- 5 [quand on étai t su- sur la j' tée. on a: - ça ça m' a]=
when we were o- on the pier. we ha- it it
- 6 QUE [i l étai t superbe. ouai s sur la j' tée là ouai s.]
it was superb. yeah on the pier yeah.
- 7 ADE =[marquée]=
marked me
- 8 PAU [. h]=
- 9 ADE =[par contre.]
however.
- 10 PAU =[c' étai t où?]
where was it?
- 11 QUE [excel lent.]
excellent.
- 12 ADE pa' ce que- en: : . h c' étai t à: : : : =
because- in it was at
- 13 QUE =c' étai t sur basse-[terre.]
it was on Basse-Terre.
- 14 ADE [c' étai t] au n- ouai s c' étai t sur
it was n- yeah it was on
- 15 → basse-terre, c' étai t au ni veau d' sai nte-anne **j' crois**,
Basse-Terre, it was near Sainte-Anne I believe,
- 16 CEL ouai s,
yeah,
- 17 QUE °ouai s. °
yeah.
- 18 ADE → ou pas très l oi n,
or not very far away,
- 19 (0.6 - ADE turns towards QUE)
- 20 ADE → ((to QUE)) [i' m' semb' .]=
it seems to me.
- 21 QUE → [j' sai s p' us.]=
I don' t know anymore.
- 22 CEL =nan sai nte-[anne]=

- no Sai nte-Anne*
- 23 ADE [s-]
- 24 CEL =c' est grande-terre,
i t' s Grande-Terre,
- 25 (1. 3)
- 26 ADE euh: [: l à l à où y- (d-)]
um where where there' s- (d-)
- 27 CEL [basse-terre c' est trois-ri]vi è: res=euh: tout ça,
Basse-Terre i t' s Trois-Ri vi ères=um and all,
- 28 ADE euh l à où y a les chutes de carbet c' est quoi .
um where where there are Carbet Falls what' s i t.
- 29 CEL euh c' est gr- basse-terre.
mh i t' s Gr- Basse-Terre.
- 30 ADE basse-terre. du coup c' étai t sur grande-terre. . hh (.)
Basse-Terre. so i t was on Grande-Terre.
- 31 → et c' étai t au ni veau de: ouai s pas très lo in d'
and i t was nea: r yeah not very far away from
- 32 → sainte-anne **j' crois**. ' fi n c' étai t au pi ed
Sainte-Anne I believe. well i t was at the bottom
- 33 d' l' hôtel en fai t [l a chute]=
of the hotel actual ly the fall
- 34 CEL [ouai s.]
yeah.
- 35 ADE → =t' as le- le: et j' me souvi ens plus du nom
you' ve got the- the and I don' t remember the name
- 36 du bled de l' hôtel .
of the town of the hotel .

Adeline's trouble remembering precisely the exact location of the sunset is reflected in the use of various constructions that convey a reduced claim to knowledge: the approximate constructions *au niveau de* 'near' (literally 'at the level of') (lines 15 and 31, arrowed) and *pas très loin* 'not very far away' (lines 18 and 31, arrowed), the mitigating device *il me semble* 'it seems to me' (line 20, arrowed) conveying uncertainty (Mullan, 2010: 126, 192), and the epistemic construction *je me souviens plus* 'I don't remember anymore' (line 35) making explicit her inability to remember. Adeline's description of her personal experience, as well as the construction *je me souviens plus* (line 35), suggest that she used to know the piece of information she is trying to recall. The two additional parenthetical uses of *JC* (lines 15 and 32) occur in this precise context, and point to a possibly faulty memory by toning down

the commitment of the speaker.

Similarly, the speaker's direct experience is topicalised in (56) and suggests that the speaker used to know the information presented, but cannot recall it. Before the beginning of the excerpt, Aurore was speaking about a fast-food restaurant in the city both participants live in. From line 1, Nicolas goes on to introduce and describe a nearby brasserie (a type of French restaurant) which serves similar food (part of this description has been cut off; cf. line 5); however, he struggles to remember its name and searches his memory in order to provide as much information as he can recollect about this brasserie.

(56) Interaction 1.6 - Aurore / Nicolas

- 1 NIC beh tu vois juste en face? au- 'fi n au: (.)
well you see just across the street? at- well at
- 2 quand tu sors. sur la gauche **j' crois** un truc comme
when you go out. on the left I believe something like
- 3 → ça, .h t' as le: =mh: : comment i' s'appelle t' as une
that, there's the=mh what's it called there's a
- 4 brasserie qui s'appelle le- monsieur machin, **j' crois** .hh
brasserie that's called the- Monsieur Machin, I believe
- 5 → (22")
- 6 NIC j' te l' conseille si éhh [.h .h .h .h .h hÉ]
I recommend it to you if
- 7 AUR [ouai s beh merci je: : (al ors)]
yeah well thanks I (so)
- 8 quand tu sors du dubrown à gauche?
when you get out of Dubrown on the left?
- 9 NIC ouai s c' ça c'est le ton- euh monsieur machin **j' crois**
yeah that's it it's the un- um Monsieur Machin I believe
- 10 → un truc comme [ça]
something like that
- 11 AUR [y a] pas un étage?
there's a floor isn't it?
- 12 (0.6)
- 13 AUR nan.
no.
- 14 NIC → je sais [p' us]
I don't know anymore
- 15 AUR [c']est pas là qu' y a un étage avec euh:

- isn't it there that there's a floor with um*
- 16 *ambiance un peu rétro?*
a bit of a vintage vibe?
- 17 NIC → *j' suis en train d' réfléchir (oui) j' crois- nan nan*
I'm thinking about it (yes) I believe- no no
- 18 → *j' crois pas nan [c' tait]=*
I don't believe so no it was
- 19 AUR [°ouais°]
yeah
- 20 NIC =euh une p' tite brasserie monsieur machin
um a small brasserie Monsieur Machin
- 21 <((stumbling)) qu' c' -> **j' crois que** c'est ça l' nom
that- I believe that it's the name
- 22 → *i' m' semble, j' suis pas sûr à cent pour cent à côté-*
it seems to me, I'm not a hundred percent sure next to-
- 23 **j' crois qu'** c'est à côté (d'; du) truc de café
I believe that it's next (to) something like a café
- 24 → *y a un: truc café pas loin...*
there's like a café nearby...

In addition to the three uses of *JC*, various linguistic features indicate that Nicolas' memory is faulty, namely: the self-directed question *comment il s'appelle* 'what's it called' (line 3), the general extender (Overstreet, 1999) *un truc comme ça* 'something like that' (line 10), the epistemic disclaimer *je sais plus* 'I don't know anymore' (line 14), the direct reference to the unfolding thinking *je suis en train de réfléchir* 'I am thinking' (line 17), the mitigating constructions *il me semble* 'it seems to me' and *je suis pas sûr à cent pour cent* 'I'm not a hundred percent sure' (line 22) conveying uncertainty (about *il me semble*, cf. Mullan, 2010: 126, 192), and finally, the vague information *y a un truc café pas loin* 'there's like a café nearby' (line 24). To these linguistic features can be added the numerous cut-offs and reformulation markers throughout the excerpt, as well as the negative form *je crois pas* (line 18).

Finally, further evidence of the use of *JC* when the speaker has anterior knowledge is found in the excerpt in (57), which occurs approximately halfway through the conversation between Bruno and Quentin. The three-second pause in line 1 follows an extended turn by Quentin, after which the two participants enter the floor in overlap, both self-selecting for a turn (lines 2 and 3).

(57) Interaction 2.4 - Bruno / Quentin

- 1 → (3.0)
 2 BRU → [on a commencé à quelle heure déjà]
what time did we begin again?
 3 QUE → [j' vois ade- j' vois adeline] déj à euh: ...
I see Ade- I see Adeline yet um
 4 → (...)
 5 QUE → j' crois qu' on a commencé à la d' mie un truc comme ça
I believe that we began at half past something like that
 6 BRU → .h ouais à vingt-neuf ouais=
yeah at twenty-nine yeah
 7 QUE =mh

Bruno's question (line 2) is first ignored by Quentin, who continues delivering his turn (of which part has been cut off, cf. line 4), but a delayed answer is provided subsequently in line 5. *JC* is accompanied by the approximate figure *la demie* 'half past' as well as, once again (cf. example (56) above), the general extender (Overstreet, 1999) *un truc comme ça* 'something like that'. It is worth noting that Bruno's query (line 2) contains the adverb *déjà* 'again' (literally 'already'), suggesting that the information (i.e. the time when they began talking) was previously known to him (on this interactional use of *déjà*, cf. Hansen, 2002: 46). Indeed, just before broaching the first topic of discussion, the video recording shows Bruno giving the time *dix-sept heures vingt-neuf* 'twenty-nine past five' out loud, time which is partially repeated in line 6 of the excerpt above after Quentin's delayed response. Since this information was previously given, and therefore shared by both participants, this example supports the fact that *JC* is used when the speaker has anterior knowledge.

Exact figures A second type of context suggests that the speaker incorrectly remembers some information, but without explicitly involving a direct experience of the speaker: 13 instances of *JC* (16%) thus occur with fairly precise information, suggesting that the speaker relies on information they used to know. Indeed, even though the speaker's direct experience is not made explicit in the surrounding context, the assertion of such precise information points to the speaker relying on something they learned previously. This is illustrated in the examples in (58) and (59).

(58) Interaction 2.5 - Adeline / Bruno

- 1 BRU → j' crois qu' c' était euh: cent soixante-dix <millions>

- I think that it was um a hundred and seventy million
 2 → (0.3) millions, (0.3) d'abonnés, c' qu' est:
 million subscribers, which is
 3 vraiment peu,
 really few,

In (58), it seems clear that Bruno is relying on something he learned at an earlier point in time to be able to assert the fairly exact figure of 170 million subscribers. In his turn, a range of interactional features reflect discontinuous speech and contribute to signaling that Bruno is searching his memory: the slightly stretched hesitation marker *eah*, the prolongation of the sound in *soixante-dix* 'seventy', the slower pace of *millions* (line 1) and the following repetition of this word, which is prefaced and followed by a 0.3 second pause (line 2). Furthermore, the use of the past tense of the copula *être* (*c'était* 'it was', line 1) marks a prior moment when Bruno acquired, or used to know, the information.

(59) Interaction 2.5 - Adeline / Bruno

- 1 ADE ɛ. hɛ (.) .hh j' pense qu' on est bon,
 I think that's it's enough,
 2 BRU .hh tu penses?=
 tu penses?
 3 ADE mouai s,
 m=yeah,
 4 BRU ouai s j' pen[se]
 yeah I think so
 5 ADE → [j -] j' croi s qu' c' étai t
 I - I believe that it was
 6 → dix-huit heures deux. (0.2) quand euh:
 two past six. when um:
 7 BRU okay
 okay

In lines 5-6 of the example in (59), Adeline provides the exact time when she and Bruno began their conversation: *dix-huit heures deux* 'two past six'. Although the data display instances with the present tense, the past tense is used here (*c'était* 'it was', line 5) as in (58) above, and is associated with the time when the speaker acquired, or used to know, the information. This excerpt differs from the last two in that there is no construction or feature signalling unfolding memory search (e.g.

hesitation, prolonged sounds, epistemic constructions).

These two types of contexts (direct experience and exact figures) amount to 54 instances of *JC* indicating, in a straightforward way, that the speaker is relying on information they acquired previously, and which may therefore be subject to faulty recall. This represents the vast majority of instances of *JC* (68%), which I see as an argument in favour of *JC* being preferred when the information presented is based on anterior knowledge.

5.1.1.2 Context 2: Ambiguous contexts

The second type of contexts where *JC* occurs does not suggest anterior knowledge from the speaker about the information given. Consequently, the information may be, but is not necessarily, based on the speaker's memory. In such cases, the speaker may either be recalling, more or less clearly, information they used to know (as is the case with instances of *JC* falling into the first category), or they may infer something on the basis of observable evidence or mental reasoning, similarly to *JP*. This is the case with 15 instances of *JC* (19%), among which the three examples given below. In (60), Aurore and Paul are talking about cooking shows.

(60) Interaction 1.5 - Aurore / Paul

- | | | |
|---|-----|--|
| 1 | AUR | mai s j' crois qu' en plus y en a d' moi ns en moi ns des
<i>but then I believe that there's fewer and fewer</i> |
| 2 | | émi ssi ons cul i nai res pa' ce que c' est passé d' mode
<i>cooking shows 'cause it isn't trendy anymore</i> |
| 3 | | donc euh. (.) .h p' tit à p' tit euh.
<i>so um little by little um.</i> |

The information toned down by *JC* (namely that there are fewer and fewer programmes of this kind on television) may be based on anterior knowledge: for instance, Aurore may have noticed herself a decrease of the number of those programmes over time, or she may have heard of it from someone else, or read it somewhere. But, she could also be inferring this from prior observations: for instance, she may hear less and less about this type of programme, see fewer advertisements, etc.

In (61) (given in (45) above), Bruno and Céline are trying to recall information about someone (referred to in line 1), and more specifically how they know about him and how he relates to their group of friends.

(61) Interaction 2.2 - Bruno / Céline

- 1 CEL ah oui chez l' pote de thi baud là ou j' sais pas quoi?
ah yes at Thi baud's friend's or I don't know what?
- 2 (0.8)
- 3 BRU → euh: j' sais pas qui c'est.
um I don't know who he is.
- 4 CEL c'est pas [un mec de la fnac.]
doesn't he work at the Fnac?
- 5 BRU [j' **crois que** c' (est/était) un pote] de
I believe that he (is/was) a mate of
- 6 la famille (.) de Luc.
the family. of Luc.

In lines 5-6, Bruno's tentative suggestion, in overlap with Céline's alternative suggestion (line 4), could either be based on memory (he used to know and does not remember rightly) or inference (he remembers seeing him at Luc's, etc.). Note that in line 3 (arrowed), Bruno uses the epistemic disclaimer *je sais pas (qui c'est)* 'I don't know (who he is)', explicitly signaling his lack of knowledge.

Before the beginning of the excerpt in (62), Patricia was telling Judith that she has forgotten how to divide manually (i.e. without a calculator), and was referring to an evening where she and a friend of hers, Jenny, tried without success.

(62) Interaction 3.2 - Judith / Patricia

- 1 PAT donc du coup euh après euh on y a repassé du temps et
so then um after um we spent time again and
- 2 euh: finalement euh (0.5) on a arrêté. **j' crois qu'**
um eventually um we stopped. I believe that
- 3 elle a continué après chez elle jenny Eh h hÉ
she continued after at home Jenny

Here, there is an ambiguity as to whether the information introduced by *JC* (namely *elle a continué après chez elle Jenny* 'she continued after at home Jenny') is based on memory (she was at Jenny's and saw her trying again or Jenny told her she tried again afterwards), which is potentially faulty, or Patricia's understanding of a subsequent situation (she has a valid reason to infer this).

In the three examples above, the context does not suggest in a straightforward manner that the speaker has anterior knowledge of the information given. Thus, the weakening of the speaker's commitment conveyed by *JC* either indicates the speaker's potentially faulty memory (since it is possible that the information given

is acquired previously), or that they are making an inference. The fairly low number of instances in this second category (namely 15) in comparison to the first can be interpreted as further evidence that there is a preference for *JC* to be based on anterior knowledge, and therefore, memory.

5.1.1.3 Context 3: No anterior knowledge (conjecture)

Finally, it is in some cases very unlikely that the speaker ever had knowledge of the information presented, and that *JC* tones down the speaker's commitment by signalling that their claim may be subject to memory limitations. Rather, this third type of context suggests that the speaker expresses a guess. This last category represents only a small number of instances of *JC*, namely five (6%). The example in (63) is a first example.

(63) Interaction 1.5 - Aurore / Paul

- | | | |
|----|-------|---|
| 1 | PAU | après euh on bah on: s' posai t des questi ons- l a questi on
<i>after um we well we wondering about- about</i> |
| 2 | | d' l a défi ni ti on tradi ti onnel et gastronomi que, .h
<i>the defi ni ti on of tradi ti onal and gastronomi c food,</i> |
| 3 | | [donc euh]
<i>so um</i> |
| 4 | AUR → | [ouai s au-] au départ moi ' fi n pour moi c' étai t un peu
<i>yeah at- at first for me well for me it was quite</i> |
| 5 | → | El a même ch: osef mais euh .h en fai t pas du tout
<i>the same thing but um in fact not at all</i> |
| 6 | | gastronomi que j' croi s qu' c' est beau- beaucoup plus
<i>gastronomi c I believe that it's mu- much more</i> |
| 7 | | é l aboré.
<i>elaborate.</i> |
| 8 | | (0.5) |
| 9 | PAU | ouai s.
<i>yeah.</i> |
| 10 | AUR | y a l' côté <u>vi</u> suel qui rentre en compte,
<i>there's the visual side to take into account,</i> |

In lines 1-2, Paul is referring to his prior conversation with Nicolas. In the following turn, Aurore goes on to do the same, but in a more implicit way (lines 4 to 7): the previous discussion between Aurore and Charlotte is evidence for thinking

that the contrast established between *au départ* ‘at first’ (line 4, arrowed) and *en fait* ‘in fact’ (line 5, arrowed), linked by the contrastive marker *mais* ‘but’ (line 5), highlights Aurore’s stance before and after that conversation (which was chronologically recorded before this conversation between Aurore and Paul). This means that the information presented and toned down by *JC* (namely the fact that gastronomic food is more elaborate than traditional food) is something that Aurore gathered as a result of her discussion with Charlotte about the matter in question. Moreover, the use of *pour moi* ‘for me’ (line 4) may be seen as being in contrast with the elaboration of a joint definition with her prior interlocutor, Charlotte.

Similarly, in (64), nothing in the context surrounding *JC* signals that Paul’s memory is potentially faulty. Rather, he merely guesses that the two other participants have a diverging opinion (lines 7-8).

(64) Interaction 3.1 - Charlotte / Paul

- 1 CHA ... mais si non ouai s c’ est vraiment cui si ner
but otherwise yeah i t’ s really cooking
- 2 pour cui si ner et: (0.4)
for the sake of cooking and
- 3 ‘ fi n pas pour le pl ai si r de: bi en bouffer (euh; ou)
well not for the pleasure to eat properly (um; or)
- 4 (0.5)
- 5 PAU mh (.) ouai s j’ te r’ joi ns assez l à- d’ ssus.
mh yeah I qui te agree wi th you about thi s.
- 6 (1.0 – LAU nods, smi l i ng)
- 7 PAU → j’ croi s qu’ ni col as et euh: : (.) (XX) EhÉ
I believe that Ni col as and um
- 8 ont une vi si on di fférente quoi mai s euh: ...
have a di fferent vi ew then but um

In lines 1/3, Charlotte’s turn summarises her stance toward everyday cooking, as a practical and essential rather than enjoyable activity. Paul’s subsequent turn (line 5) displays agreement with Charlotte. In line 7, he refers to Nicolas’ opinion, and presumably Aurore’s. The presence of the coordinating conjunction *and* ‘et’ (line 7, arrowed), as well as the following hesitation markers, indeed suggest that he is looking for Aurore’s name, which he may not recall (In Corpus 1, Aurore and Charlotte are good friends and so are Nicolas and Paul, but the two pairs were meeting for the first time). At that point, Paul had only engaged in interaction with Nicolas (interaction 1.2) and can therefore report his friend’s opinion. However, he

can only refer to Aurore’s opinion on the basis of what Charlotte mentioned about her previous interaction between her and Aurore (interaction 1.1). The use of *JC* therefore presents information based on what the speaker gathered from prior talk, and could translate as “as far as I understand”.

Although in such cases it is unlikely that the speaker ever had knowledge of the information presented, these instances all occur in contexts where the speaker presents information they have gathered from prior observation or impression, with the exception of the example in (65) (see below). Thus, memory is involved to some extent. For instance, Aurore’s utterance of *c’est beaucoup plus élaboré* ‘it’s much more elaborate’ in (63) is the result, but also her recollection, of an earlier discussion between her and Charlotte.

The excerpt in (65) is, as mentioned, the only one in this third category which is not based on prior observation. Rather, Judith is projecting what she would do (namely apply to become an au pair in Australia) if she fails some exams she had taken prior to the recording of the conversation. However, there is a tendency for hypothetical situations to be associated with *JP*, rather than *JC*.

(65) Interaction 3.2 - Judith / Patricia

- | | | |
|---|-----|---|
| 1 | JUD | mais franchement j’ crois que si je: .h (.) si j’ suis
<i>but frankly I believe that if I: if I’m</i> |
| 2 | | prise nulle part euh (0.6) j’ le fai s quoi.
<i>not successful anywhere um I do it then.</i> |

To sum up, the contexts of occurrence of *JC* presented above suggest a preference for using the construction when the speaker already has some knowledge of the information presented. Indeed, this is the case with the majority of instances of *JC* (cf. Context 1), namely 41 out of a total of 79 instances (52%). However, the fact that the construction allows for potential ambiguities as to whether the information is highly likely based on anterior knowledge or inference (cf. Context 2) and, especially, that the construction may be used when the information is not based on anterior knowledge (cf. Context 3) suggest that this feature is not encoded in the construction’s semantics. Rather, *JC* gives rise to the implicature that the proposition is based on anterior knowledge.

5.1.2 Contexts of occurrence of *je pense* as an epistemic marker

In comparison to *JC*, contexts displaying epistemic uses of *JP* do not indicate any anterior knowledge of the information presented. Rather, they seem to be preferred when the matter at hand is not one where the speaker enjoys privileged epistemic access. In such cases, *JP* invites the inference that the state of affairs is obtained through inference, based on a mental construct or observed evidence. I therefore concur with Dendale and Van Bogaert's (2007) analysis of *JP* as an evidential.

Similarly to *JC*, the context plays a crucial role in determining the meaning of *JP*, and often suggests that the information is given spontaneously. Epistemic uses of *JP* are exemplified from (66) to (68). Before the beginning of the first excerpt in (66), Nicolas has asked Charlotte whether or not she thinks that Asian restaurants in France actually serve traditional cuisine reflecting the food they would cook in their home country. Charlotte's answer to Nicolas' question, displayed in this excerpt, contains two uses of *JP* (lines 4 and 18, arrowed).

(66) Interaction 1.3 - Charlotte / Nicolas

- | | | |
|----|-----|--|
| 1 | CHA | nan. (.) j' pense [pas qu' i']=
<i>no. I don't think they</i> |
| 2 | NIC | [(nan)]
<i>no</i> |
| 3 | CHA | =peuvent- qui puissent pa' ce que: =mh: (0.5) ((hawks))
<i>could- they can 'cau: se u: m</i> |
| 4 | → | 'fi n: j' pense qu' i' adaptent=euh toujours aux: aux
<i>I mean I think that they always um adapt to to</i> |
| 5 | | goûts euh: (.) o[ccidentaux.]=
<i>tastes um Western tastes.</i> |
| 6 | NIC | [ouai s,]
<i>yeah,</i> |
| 7 | CHA | =. hh= |
| 8 | NIC | j' suis d'accord avec ça.
<i>I agree with that.</i> |
| 9 | CHA | 'fi n: (.) du coup j'ai j'ai des amis indiens et on
<i>I mean so I've I've got Indian friends and we</i> |
| 10 | | avai t f- un- organisé une soirée où i's avaient vraiment
<i>h- organised a dinner party and they'd done actual</i> |
| 11 | | fai t un: des plats euh comme ils les cuisineraient |

- di shes um as they' d cook*
- 12 chez eux, et le truc mais c' était euh ' fin fallait du riz
back home, and the thing was um well you had to eat rice
- 13 en con- en .h en continu pa' ce que sinon tu: tu
con- continuously 'cause otherwise it it
- 14 [t' arrachais la gueule quoi .h]
would blow your head off then
- 15 NIC [*fouais .hε c' est ça (.)*] quand t' es pas
yeah that's it when you're not
- 16 habi tué ouais °(xx)°
used to it yeah
- 17 (0.8)
- 18 CHA → donc **j' pense qu'**i' doivent adapter un peu et p' is
so I think that they might adapt a bit and then
- 19 p' t-êt' f- composer aussi avec c' qu' on trouve...
maybe d- compose too with what they find

Here, there is no indication that Charlotte is relying on memory when asserting that the type of restaurants in question adapt their food. Rather, she mentions her experience to a dinner with Indian friends (extending the scope of “exotic restaurants” to home cooking) in support of her presumably inferred statement.

In (67), Nicolas and Charlotte are discussing whether they agree with the fact that food and its preparation can be referred to as culinary arts (one of the topics that were suggested to them). In what precedes the excerpt, Charlotte takes a strong stance against this. Nicolas, on the contrary, shows openness. Facing her interlocutor's reaction, Charlotte offers an alternative viewpoint, stressing the fact that her position might not be shared by everybody (lines 1 and 5). In line 7 (arrowed), Nicolas agrees with Charlotte (*c'est ça* ‘that's it’) and provides a supporting statement (*c'est en fonction de ton intérêt* ‘it depends on your interest’) followed by a parenthetical use of *JP* (line 8). Here, it is likely that Nicolas gives a spontaneous supposition that is not based on anterior knowledge.

(67) Interaction 1.3 – Charlotte / Nicolas

- 1 CHA après c' est: une questi on d' sensi bilité aussi
but it's also a matter of sensi ti vi ty too
- 2 c' est c' que: :
this is what
- 3 (0.6)

- 4 NIC mh
- 5 CHA ' fin y a des gens qui peuvent vraiment considérer que:
well some people can really consider that
- 6 (1.1)
- 7 NIC → . tsk oui beh c' est ça. c' est en fonction de ton intérêt
yeah that's it. it depends on your interest
- 8 j' [pense]=
I think
- 9 CHA [ouai s,]
yeah,
- 10 NIC =' fin euh . h (.) c' est comme tous- comme tous les arts
well um it's like every- every forms of arts
- 11 quoi ...
then

Finally, the example in (68) is further evidence in support of the assumption that *JP* tends to be based on inference, and *JC* on anterior knowledge. In this excerpt, Céline and Bruno are talking about the refurbishment of an old swimming pool at some mutual friend's house (see example (39) above, which chronologically occurs slightly before).

(68) Interaction 2.2 - Bruno / Céline

- 1 BRU c' est pas l' bricolage que j' aime j' pense.
it's not the job I like I think.

At first glance, the association of an epistemic marker with the speaker's personal preference could be seen as misleading, as we would expect Bruno to know whether he likes or dislikes this activity. However, the context suggests that *JP* describes a state of affairs to which the speaker cannot fully commit because he has never experienced this kind of work before, and about which he can merely formulate a guess, on the basis of his own personal preferences in other related areas. Drawing on the assumption that *JC* implicates anterior knowledge from the speaker, the utterance of *c' est pas le bricolage que j' aime je crois* would generate the inference that Bruno is uncertain about the way he felt when doing a similar, previous type of activity.

Describing *JP* as an evidential supports Dendale and Van Bogaert's (2007) view of the expression of evidentiality via lexical means, and not only grammatical markers (among many others, Willett, 1988; Aikhenvald, 2004). The authors show that

the meaning of *JP*, among other French lexical markers, can be grasped in terms of information source (see my discussion of Dendale & Van Bogaert (2007) in chapter 3). They conclude that *JP* may be an evidential marker of indirect evidence, similarly to inferential evidentials.¹ According to Willett (1988: 57, 96), inferential evidentials (or what he refers to as “inferring evidence”) is a type of indirect evidence, which contrasts with direct, attested evidence. Inferential evidence is based either on observable evidence, that is “from perception of the results of the causing event or action” (1988: 96), or mental reasoning, for instance the speaker’s intuition, logic or previous experience.

Although French does not have a grammaticalised system of evidential marking, some scholars highlighted the evidential value of certain items. Barbet and Saussure (2012: 3-4) point out that studies on evidentiality in French (or “*médiation*” as it is also called) have largely explored its connections with modality. Thus, modal and evidential values are seen as being jointly present. These studies have focused, for instance, on epistemic uses of *devoir* ‘should’ and *pouvoir* ‘can’ (e.g. Dendale, 1994; Tasmowski & Dendale, 1994; Dendale, 1999; Kronning, 1996; Rossari et al., 2007), and on the so-called “journalistic” conditional (e.g. Dendale, 1993; Kronning, 2002).

5.1.3 Retrospective vs prospective perspective

Frequent interactions can be observed between the time associated with the states of affairs presented and each epistemic construction, as was already suggested with *JC* being associated with events that happened in the speaker’s past. This could be summarised by giving *JP* a prospective dimension, and *JC* a retrospective dimension. This is reflected in the tenses used in the utterances scoped over by each construction (see Table 5.2 below): while *JP* often occurs with future states of affairs, *JC* is mainly associated with past states of affairs. To some extent, this supports the assumption that *JP* is based on inference, while *JC* is based on anterior knowledge. Indeed, on the one hand, the speaker signals their belief about what is going to happen in a future situation, on the basis of available, inferential evidence. On the other hand, experiences that occurred in the speaker’s past may be directly marked by the use of the past tense, as was the case with most of contexts displaying uses of *JC* in section 5.1.1. This typical association between the constructions and particular tenses, and particular types of contexts more generally, is amenable to a constructional approach to *JP* and *JC*. Indeed, their individual meaning may be

¹Dendale and Van Bogaert (2007) also conclude that *JC* may be an evidential marker of indirect evidence. However, I showed in section 5.1.1 that *JC* may either be based on direct and indirect evidence, and therefore cannot be analysed in terms of information source.

seen as shaped by such frequent associations and their repetitions (on the relationship between contexts and constructionalisation, see Traugott & Trousdale, 2013: chapter 5).

Thus, of a total of 79 instances, 22 utterances (28%) scoped over by *JC* are in the past tense (13 in the *passé composé*, seven in the imperfect and two in the pluperfect), 43 (54%) are in the present tense, and 14 (18%) do not display any tense (they are either interrupted or elliptical sentences). With respect to the 67 epistemic uses of *JP*, most of the utterances are also in the present tense, amounting to 33 (49%); 17 utterances (25%) are in the future tense, with a clear preference for the periphrastic future (14 instances) rather than the simple future (three instances) (see discussion below); four utterances (6%) are in the past tense; finally, 11 utterances (16%) do not display any tense. These numbers are summarised in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 – Tenses used in utterances hosting *je pense* and *je crois* as epistemic markers

	Present	Past	Future	Other	Total
<i>Je crois</i>	43 (54%)	22 (28%)	0	14 (18%)	79
<i>Je pense</i>	33 (49%)	6 (9%)	17 (25%)	11 (16%)	67

Associated with future actions, the epistemic marker *JP* weakens the commitment of the speaker in that such future states of affairs are not (immediately) verifiable facts. Thus, *JP* stresses the impossibility for the speaker to exactly predict what will potentially happen in the referred-to situations, which could turn out differently. Furthermore, regarding its semantics, inferences are made about future events, on the basis of mental reasoning. As was mentioned earlier, the construction mainly occurs with the periphrastic future (‘to be going to’ + infinitive), which is formed with the indicative present form of the verb *aller* ‘to go’ followed by an infinitive verb. Unlike the future tense, it “describes future occurrences that are anchored in, or motivated by, present states, activities or events” (M.-B. M. Hansen, 2016: 110) and is thus related to the moment of speech (see also Riegel et al., 1996: 34). The periphrastic future has been described to refer to imminent future events, although this is not necessarily the case (M.-B. M. Hansen, 2016: 110). *JP* is similarly related to the moment of speech in that the speaker displays their current commitment toward a future situation, which could play a role in its association with the periphrastic future. Out of the 67 instances of *JP* used as an epistemic marker, 14 of these (21%) are associated with the periphrastic future. This association is especially strongly represented in Corpus 3, which accounts for ten of these

14 uses. This could be explained by the higher number of instances of *JP* as an epistemic marker in this corpus (68%, against 52% and 58% in Corpus 1 and 2, respectively), and the conversational style used in this corpus, which is not based on elicitation using topics pre-defined with the intention to instigate debates.

The excerpt in (69) displays a first example of *JP* whose host utterance exhibits a periphrastic future. Bruno's turn follows an approximately two-minute story by Quentin, told in reaction to an issue Bruno encountered with his estate agency. In line 1, Bruno takes the turn to resume this issue, assuming that it will take him time to resolve it. Here, the future event which is referred to (taking time to resolve the issue at hand) is anchored in Bruno's current stance, hence the use of the periphrastic future.

(69) Interaction 2.4 - Bruno / Quentin

- 1 BRU → . tsk donc voi là **j' pense** ça va m' prendre un peu
so that's it I think that's gonna take me a bit of
 2 d' temps ça,
time this,

A second example is given in (70). Here again, the future event of spending some days away in Sweden is motivated by Julie's current plan.

(70) Interaction 3.3 - Anne / Julie / Romain

- 1 JUL ... et cette année **j' pense que** <après: s Noël
and this year I think that after Christmas
 2 en all' magne> j' vais >probablement< aussi partir
in Germany I'm probably too gonna leave
 3 en suède . h juste pour quel ques j ours.
to Sweden, just for a few days.

As an epistemic marker, *JP* therefore weakens the speaker's commitment toward the realisation of the future event, and recognises the possibility of a different outcome. Furthermore, in association with the periphrastic future, *JP* may fulfil further mitigating functions that will be developed in chapter 6. Indeed, *JP* often acts as a mitigation strategy in case, in the future course of action, speakers are proven wrong, or the situation was not the best choice, etc.

While *JC* is never combined with the future tense in the database, there are,

by contrast, several instances of *JP* occurring with the past tense. However, these states of affairs are not based on anterior knowledge and memory, as is the case with *JC*. On three occasions, *JP* downgrades the speaker's commitment toward a matter where they clearly do not have epistemic superiority, as illustrated in (71). Quentin's question in lines 1-2/4 (arrowed) refers to the two topics that participants were asked to discuss. In line 5, Adeline's response rejects Quentin's indirect request to avoid the second topic. This could account for the interactional use of *JP* to protect Quentin's face. Semantically, the construction also displays her downgraded commitment to the assertion *elle a fait les sujets pour qu'on en parle* 'she made the subjects so we talk about them', due to her lack of, or lower, knowledge in comparison to *elle* 'she' (line 5), subject of the subordinate clause.

(71) Interaction 2.6 - Adeline / Céline / Quentin

- 1 QUE → est-ce qu- est-ce qu'on a l' droit passer un des deux
can we- can we not mention one of the two
- 2 → points sous silence ou i' [faut vraiment qu'on]=
points or do we really have to
- 3 CEL [ɛah ah ahɛ]
- 4 QUE → =[parle des deux?]
speak about them both?
- 5 ADE [ɛah ah ah] ah ah .hɛ nan **je pense qu'**elle a fait
no I think that she made
- 6 les sujets pour euh: (0.2) pour qu'on en parle.
the subjects so um so we talk about them.

The excerpt in (72) follows a disagreement between Céline and Quentin about the way Pinterest, an image-based social network, works. Quentin's turns (lines 1-2/4, arrowed) may be seen as a strategy of withdrawal from the disagreement, by acknowledging that his knowledge of the social network is inferior to Céline's. The utterance in the scope of *JP* (*j'ai pas farfouillé des masses* 'I haven't browsed through it a lot') is associated with an anterior action of the speaker, reflected in the use of the *passé composé*. But here, Quentin is not so much signalling a potentially faulty recall, as displaying uncertainty about the necessary amount of time one needs to understand the social network in question. By saying that he has not navigated the website in-depth, he may not have reached this implicit benchmark. In line 5, Quentin's knowledge inferiority is referred to and acknowledged by Céline.

(72) Interaction 2.3 - Céline / Quentin

- 1 QUE → j' t'avoue qu' j'ai pas passé beaucoup d' temps d' ssus
I must say that I haven't spent a lot of time on it
- 2 → et [j' **pense que** j'ai pas farfouillé]=
and I think that I haven't browsed through it
- 3 CEL [t' as les tuto:s et tout ça]
there are tutorials and stuff
- 4 QUE → =des masses [quoi]
a lot then
- 5 CEL [ouai s] c'est ça...
yeah that's it

In addition to these instances of *JP*, two occur in counterfactual contexts. Unlike hypothetical situations, counterfactual conditionals indicate that the speaker knows or believes a situation did not happen. Instances of *JP* occurring in such contexts weaken the speaker's commitment in that counterfactual situations are not (immediately) verifiable facts. The knowledge of the speaker cannot be fully claimed and defended, and the epistemic function is therefore foregrounded. In (73), Quentin knows that the hypothetical situation *j'aurais fait une semaine de marché de plus* 'I'd worked one week more at the market' (lines 2-3) did not actually happen, and neither did the potential consequence *j'aurais péte les plombs* 'I'd have gone nuts' (lines 3-4). In line 2 (arrowed), *JP* reduces the speaker's commitment to the hypothetical situation (he does not actually know what would have happened had he worked one more week), while signalling that his utterance is based on a guess.

(73) Interaction 2.3 - Céline / Quentin

- 1 QUE ... et j'en pouvais p'us, la: - la- la
and I couldn't take it anymore, the- the- the
- 2 → tempête ça m'a rincé la gueule je: - **j' pense que** j' aurai s
storm worn me out I- I think that if I'd
- 3 → fait une semaine de marché de plus j' aurai s péte
worked one week more at the market I'd have gone
- 4 → les °plombs°. *nuts.*

The excerpt in (74) follows an approximately one-minute narrative by Quentin, in which he describes the content of a video he watched on the social network Facebook, showing a man forging a knife from a hand tool. From lines 1-2 (arrowed) can be inferred that Quentin actually subscribed to the group "Knife Lovers", and that

he watched the video described earlier. In line 1, *JP* weakens his commitment to the hypothetical situation: perhaps he would have discovered the video via another means. Thus, *JP* stresses the uncertainty present with counterfactual conditionals.

(74) Interaction 2.4 - Bruno / Quentin

- 1 QUE → ... et euh du coup bah j' **pense que** .h si j' m'étais pas
and um and so well I think that if I hadn't
- 2 → euh inscrit euh::=au groupe de:: passion couteau sur
um signed up um to the group Knife Lovers on
- 3 facebook eh beh j' aurais jamais vu cette vidéo alors que
facebook well I wouldn't have seen this video though
- 4 je l'ai trouvée géniale quoi
I found it awesome

In sum, as epistemic markers, *JP* and *JC* mainly differ from each other with respect to the context where they occur: while *JC* tends to be used when the speaker has anterior knowledge of the matter at hand, *JP* is the preferred marker to formulate assumptions, especially when the speaker relies on inference.

5.2 *Je pense vs je trouve* as subjective markers

The main difference between *JT* and *JP/JC* is that, as developed in chapter 4 (particularly in section 4.4), the former has only a subjective component of meaning and is pragmatically felicitous with subjective judgements only. Thus, it forms a contrastive pair with *JP* and *JC* when these foreground the subjective component of meaning. As defined in chapter 4, subjectivity describes the speaker's presence in their speech, which is reflected both in the deictic subject *je* and any of the three finite opinion verbs. With any of the three constructions, the speaker presents their judgement as a matter on which no-one has epistemic primacy, therefore acknowledging that others, including the addressee, might disagree with them. As subjective uses of *JC* are absent from the database, this section only focuses on the contrasts between *JT* and *JP*.

Ducrot (1980: 73) and Dendale and Van Bogaert (2007: 72-75; see chapter 3) aimed to show that the semantic meaning of *JC* and *JT* differs in terms of information source, in that *JT* is an evidential marker of direct evidence, and *JP* and *JC* of non-direct evidence. However, I argued against the evidential status of *JT*, since it does not mark the utterance in its scope as being based on direct experience. Indeed, this interpretation would already be implied without *JT*. Semantically, *JT*

does make the information source unequivocally based on direct experience. Another argument is the fact that *JT* is not only associated with propositions involving a “direct/indirect experience” distinction (recall from chapter 3 the example *Pierre a eu raison de démissionner* ‘Pierre was right to quit his job’). With such propositions, the distinction between *JP/JC* and *JT* in evidential terms does not hold.

These two different types of propositions will be discussed in turn. First, section 5.2.1 focuses on personal judgements which are based on direct experience. Without context, those propositions are ambivalent in that they may either be based on direct or indirect experience of the speaker. However, associated with *JT*, they are unequivocally based on direct experience. Of a total of 23 instances in my database, this is the case with seven of these (30%). In such contexts, the five uses of *JP* are comparatively lower (16%). Second, section 5.2.2 focuses on the second type of propositions, namely those which are based on inference. These subjective opinions do not rely on the “direct/indirect experience” distinction. They represent 13 instances (57%) of *JT*, and 27 (84%) of *JP*. In addition, three instances (13%) of *JT* occur in self-interrupted sentences.

I argue that in both contexts, *JT* operates a subjective strengthening of the subjective claim it occurs with, while *JP*, by contrast, has an attenuative effect due to its epistemic component of meaning. Moreover, there is a preference for *JT* to be used in the first context, while *JP* is preferred in the second. A breakdown of the occurrences of *JT* according to the type of context within which they occur is given in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 – Contexts of occurrence of *je pense* (subjective) and *je trouve*

#	Contexts of occurrence	<i>je trouve</i>	<i>je pense</i>	Total
1	Direct experience	7 (30%)	5 (16%)	12
2	No direct experience	13 (57%)	27 (84%)	40
	Other	3 (13%)	0	3
	Total	23 (100%)	32 (100%)	55

5.2.1 Context 1: Direct experience

The states of affairs I focus on here are subjective judgements based on direct evidence. Both *JP* and *JT* are mainly combined with adjectives of subjective evaluation, which may prompt the use of *JT* over *JP*. In what follows, I firstly detail uses of *JT*, and secondly these of *JP*.

I argued so far that direct evidence is not marked by *JT*. Rather, the contexts where *JT* occurs suggest the wish of the speaker to strengthen the subjectivity

of the evaluation given, which in turn serves interactional functions that will be developed in further details in chapter 7. The speaker's personal experience is always topicalised in the discourse context surrounding the seven instances of *JT*, and therefore explicit.

A first example illustrating this first context is given in (75). Before the excerpt begins, Charlotte told Nicolas that she disliked the cooking show *MasterChef*, after which, Nicolas asks her for further information in line 1.

(75) Interaction 1.3 - Charlotte / Nicolas

- 1 NIC → y a une différence entre masterchef et top chef?
is there a difference between MasterChef and Top Chef?
- 2 (0.4) 'fi n euh pour moi c'est [pareil tout ça 'fi n:]
well um for me they're all the same well
- 3 CHA [ouai s nan top chef]
yeah no Top Chef
- 4 c' étai t un peu plus- beh c' étai t- bah après c' est la
it was a bit more- well it was- well then it's the
- 5 chaî ne aussi - euh 'fi n:: pa' ce que y en a un c' est
channel also um well 'cause there's one it's
- 6 t f un l' aut' c' est m six. [c' est]=
TF1 and the other's M6. it's
- 7 NIC [mh]
- 8 CHA =pas vraiment les mêmes euh::
not really the same um
- 9 (0.6)
- 10 CHA → et [euh **j' trouve que** les émi ssi ons]=
and um I find that shows
- 11 NIC [ah ouai s j' sai s pas ()]
ah yeah I don't know
- 12 CHA → =sur m six e' sont plu: s marrantes dans l' sens où
on M6 are more fun in the sense that
- 13 → i' sont plus déconne quoi. .hh donc [pour l' coup]=
they're joking more then so in this case
- 14 NIC [mh mh]
- 15 CHA → =c' est plus agréabl e à r' garder.
it's more enjoyable to watch.

The context explicitly indicates that Charlotte has seen both shows and therefore

compares them on the basis of direct evidence. Indeed, she mentioned earlier in the conversation that she watched *MasterChef*, and the TCUs *dans le sens où ils sont plus déconne* ‘in the sense that they’re joking more’ (lines 12-13) and *c’est plus agréable à regarder* ‘it’s more enjoyable to watch’ (line 15) indicate direct evidence. Here, Charlotte’s use of *JT* (line 10) may be motivated by the wish to reinforce the subjectivity of her evaluation. In other words, the addition of *JT* makes it clear that Charlotte’s opinion is limited to herself, thus avoiding any imposition on her interlocutor. Furthermore, at the level of discourse organisation, *JT* introduces a new step, marking what follows as a subjective evaluation, as opposed to what precedes.

A second example is given in (76). Nicolas is discussing the meaning of traditional cuisine.

(76) Interaction 1.2 – Nicolas / Paul

- | | | |
|---|-----|--|
| 1 | NIC | ouai s cui si ne tradi ti onnelle ()- c’ est un peu un nom
<i>yeah tradi tional cui si ne it’s a bit a name</i> |
| 2 | | qui veut un peu tout et rien dire quoi c’ est comme
<i>that means a bit everything and nothing then it’s like</i> |
| 3 | → | euh un peu tout genre– ‘ fin (0.4)
<i>um a bit like everything like– I mean</i> |
| 4 | → | dès qu’ on parle de tradi ti on j’ trouve qu’ pour moi
<i>as soon as we speak about tradi ti on I find that for me</i> |
| 5 | | ça veut un peu rien dire...
<i>it means a bit nothing...</i> |

After the 0.4 second pause in line (3 arrowed), *dès que* (‘as soon as’, line 4) followed by the aspectually non-perfective present tense signals a repetitive action, namely every time Nicolas has heard of or discussed the notion of tradition, i.e. a form of direct, previous experience. The proposition marked by *JT* (*pour moi ça veut un peu rien dire* ‘for me it means a bit nothing’, lines 4-5) restates – and may thus be seen as underlining – what he has said earlier in the same turn in slightly different words. Nicolas’ subjective stance is further reinforced by the use of *pour moi* ‘for me’ (line 4).

In similar contexts, *JP* is by comparison more tentative, a feature that can be attributed to its epistemic component of meaning. Although backgrounded, it conveys a reduced commitment from the speaker, which is perceptible when *JP* is used as a subjective marker. Of a total of 33 instances of subjective uses of *JP* (cf. Table 4.2), only five (16%) were found in contexts where the direct experience of the

speaker was explicit. The excerpts in (77) and (78) illustrate this second context.

In (77), Adeline's opinion about a television show, *Young Sheldon*, is characterised by two uses of *JP*. Both of them occur in clause-initial position, with and without the complementiser *que* (lines 16 and 22, respectively).

(77) Interaction 2.5 - Adeline / Bruno

- 1 BRU ah ouai s c' est bi en ça?
oh yeah is it good?
- 2 ADE .h
- 3 (1.1)
- 4 → ça aurai t pu êt' vachement pi re.
it could've been far worse
- 5 BRU ouai s un spi n off quoi .
yeah a spin off then.
- 6 (0.8)
- 7 ADE → ça aurai t pu ouai s. [ça aurai t pu êt']=
it could have yeah. it could've been
- 8 BRU [beh ouai s]
well yeah
- 9 ADE → =vachement pi re. j' m' attendai s à pi re que ça.
far worse. I expected something worse.
- 10 franchement le: le: .h les: acteurs sont plutô t
to be honest the the the actors have been
- 11 bi en choi si s.
chosen pretty well.
- 12 BRU mouai s
yeah
- 13 (1.0)
- 14 ADE c: ' est p↑as euh: :: phénomé n↑al mai s genre en séri e du
it's not um phenomenal but like during
- 15 mi ↑di euh: :: t' sai s pour manger
lunch time um you know while you're eating
- 16 [c' est ri gol o. (.) j' pense]=
it's funny. I think
- 17 BRU [ça passe (ouai s) (.) ouai s]
it's alright (yeah) yeah
- 18 ADE =c' est euh aussi ri gol o qu' un how I met your ' fi n (.)
it's um as funny as a how I met your well

- 19 nan c' est plus ri golo qu' un how I met your mother,
 no it's funnier than a how I met your mother,
- 20 [c' est plus ri -]=
 it's fun-
- 21 BRU → [ah ouai s quand même]
 oh yeah really
- 22 ADE =. hhh **j' pense que** c' est l' équivalent de euh modern
 I think that it's the equivalent of um modern
- 23 fami ↑ly ou des trucs comme ça
 family or stuff like that

Throughout the excerpt, various features show that Adeline is hesitant when describing the show. First, her answer (line 4, arrowed) does not immediately follow Bruno's question (line 1): it is prefaced by a short inbreath (line 2), acknowledging the first pair-part of an adjacency pair to which she has to provide the second pair-part, as well as a 1.1 second silence (line 3) which allows for her to gain time before answering. In the first part of her answer, rather than giving her opinion of the show in a straightforward and concise way, Adeline refers to how it could have been (*ça aurait pu être vachement pire* 'it could have been far worse', line 4). She then expresses reservation by repeating and paraphrasing herself (lines 7 and 9, arrowed), referring to her prior expectations (*je m'attendais à pire que ça* 'I expected something worse'). These features reflect Adeline's unfolding thought process, as she appears to be working out what she thinks about the show on the fly. This is evidenced further on by the introduction of two shows - *How I Met Your Mother* and *Modern Family* - as two elements of comparison she has just thought of. At the beginning of line 16, she describes *Young Sheldon* as being reasonably funny and immediately produces another TCU where she compares it to *How I Met Your Mother* (lines 16/18). However, she self-interrupts before the end of her TCU and initiates self-repair, upgrading the show from *aussi rigolo* 'as funny' to *plus rigolo* 'funnier' (line 19), before finding a similarly funny show (*Modern Family*, lines 22-23). The self-repair carried out in lines 18/19 is prefaced by a short version of the marker *enfin* 'well, I mean' (literally 'finally') (*fin*, line 18), which has been described as a reformulative (Rossari, 1994, 2000a,b; Hansen, 2005) or a correction marker (Beeching, 2001, 2002). The repaired utterance is also characterised by a speed-up in the pace of her talk in comparison to her surrounding talk, which may be interpreted as being given more thought. Her next TCU (line 20) is produced in overlap with Bruno's challenging comment (line 21, arrowed), which causes her to self-interrupt in the middle of her TCU. In line 22, the relatively long inbreath introducing Adeline's new turn once again allows her to gain time before pursuing

her talk. Finally, the general extender *ou des trucs comme ça* ‘or stuff like that’ (line 23) ending her turn further signals a tentative assessment. Throughout her description of the show, the two instances of *JP* participate in conveying hesitancy, allowing Adeline not to appear too assertive and conclusive, leaving the door open for revisions. Furthermore, *JP* may also assume discourse-organisational functions, introducing new steps in the speaker’s turn and punctuating her process of reflection.

Another example is given in (78), where Quentin is recounting a family picnic.

(78) Interaction 2.6 - Adeline / Céline / Quentin

- 1 QUE ... au bout d' dix minutes un quart d'heure, beh y a
after ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, well
- 2 plein d' lézards qui sont v'nus nous taxer nos chips.
a lot of lizards came to steal our crisps.
- 3 (...)
- 4 → bon dans mon souvenir euh j' les ai: imaginés très très
well from what I recall um I've pictured them very very
- 5 [gros les lézards mais euh]
big the lizards but um
- 6 CEL [ouais genre c'était des varans] quoi [ɛahɛ]=
yeah like they were comodo dragons then
- 7 ADE [ɛehɛ]=
- 8 CEL =[ɛah ah ahɛ]=
- 9 ADE =[ɛeh eh eh ouaisɛ]
yeah
- 10 QUE → [nan mais grave,]=
yeah totes
- 11 CEL ((joking)) =[.h i' ont mangé ma maman. .h]
they ate my mum.
- 12 QUE =[et euh j' pen- j' **pense que** déjà ouais
and um I th- I think well yeah they were
- 13 → c'était- c'était] du bon lézard déjà [quoi euh]=
they were- they were quite big lizards then um
- 14 CEL [ouais.]
yeah.
- 15 QUE → =pour euh- pour se barrer avec les chips et [tout]=
to um- run away with the crisps and all
- 16 CEL [ɛmhɛ]
- 17 QUE =euh .h voilà
mh that's it

This event happened some time before Quentin’s narrative, and is subject to memory limits, as indicated by *dans mon souvenir* ‘from what I recall’ and the use of the verb *imaginer* ‘to imagine’ (line 4, arrowed). However, *JP* here does not point to a faulty memory, as does *JC* in most of its uses in my database: here, the context does suggest that the speaker’s memory is faulty, but *JP* is not in opposition with *je sais* ‘I know’ and is not primarily used as an epistemic marker. Rather, as developed below, *JP* qualifies Quentin’s statement about the size of the lizards.

Adeline and Céline’s reactions cast doubt about the size of the lizards Quentin is describing, more particularly Céline’s comments (*ouais genre c’était des varans quoi* ‘yeah like they were comodo dragons then’, line 6; the joke *ils ont mangé ma maman* ‘they ate my mum’, line 11), and Adeline’s entertainment following Céline’s joke (lines 7/9). Quentin’s response first displays a defensive attempt to preserve his memories, first in line 10 (*nan mais grave* ‘yeah totes’, arrowed) where he endorses Céline’s comparison with comodo dragons, and then in lines 13/15 (arrowed), where *pour se barrer avec les chips* ‘to run away with the crisps’ is used as an argument to support his memory that the lizards were big. In line 13, *c’était du bon lézard déjà ouais* ‘they were quite big lizards then’ (especially *du bon lézard*, i.e. a lizard of a pretty good size) suggests that the lizards in question, according to Quentin, were bigger than what he thinks the standard norm is for a lizard. His statement is subjective in nature, and *JP* is therefore used as a subjective marker. Moreover, the particle *déjà* (line 12) after *JP que* has a “scalar” and “interactional” (*vs* a temporal) use (Hansen, 2008: 172) to reinforce Quentin’s subjective evaluation. According to Hansen, modal uses of that particle “implicitly invite comparison with alternative states-of-affairs”, that is, lizards of a “standard” size in this particular case. Contrary to *JT* (see excerpts (75) and (76), for instance), *JP* does not enhance subjectivity, reinforcing the fact that people may have other opinions (he is, indeed, the only one who saw the lizards among the participants). Here, *JP* mitigates the speaker’s claim, possibly downgrading a claim that was initially too strong. This downgrading may be the consequence of Adeline and Céline’s teasing behaviour. Thus, *JP* emerges as an interactional phenomenon.

5.2.2 Context 2: No direct experience (inference)

This section focuses on uses of *JP* and *JT* with subjective judgements inferred by the speaker on the basis of reasoning. This is the case with 13 instances of *JT* (57%), and 27 instances of *JP* (84%). Similarly to the first context presented above, *JT* and *JP* differ from each other in their way of presenting the state of affairs: while *JT* enhances a personal evaluation, stressing the speaker’s acknowledgement of divergent opinions, *JP* shows openness and arguably reflects a spontaneous stance, which may

be revised later on. Furthermore, both markers quasi-systematically fulfil further interactional functions, which will be developed in the two following chapters.

A clear illustration of the use of *JT* in this second type of context is provided in one of the two three-party interactions of Corpus 2, when the participants are discussing the importance of artistic and cultural education at school. This topic was presented to encourage debate and provides a favourable context for examining expressions of opinion from participants. This is indeed what is observed, and several uses of *JT* cluster in this sequence. Interestingly, the six instances of *JT que* (i.e. in matrix position) in this corpus all occur in this sequence. (In addition, three parenthetical uses of *JT* occur in Corpus 2.) By contrast, the same sequence displays three instances of *JP que* (in matrix position), two of which occurring at the very beginning of the sequence (cf. lines 8 and 14 of the excerpt in (79) below). In the other three-party interaction of Corpus 2, which chronologically follows, the same topic was given to the participants. It likewise leads to a debate; however, no instance of *JT* was found, while six instances of *JP que* (i.e. in matrix position) were used.

An excerpt from the first three-party interaction is given in (79). It displays the introduction of the topic leading to a debate between Adeline, Céline and Quentin.

(79) Interaction 2.6 - Adeline / Céline / Quentin

- 1 QUE est-ce qu- est-ce qu' on a l' droi t passer un des deux
can we- can we not mention one of the two
- 2 points sous silence ou i' [faut vraiment qu' on]=
points or do you really have to
- 3 CEL [Éah ah ahÉ]
- 4 QUE =[parl e des deux?]
Speak about them both?
- 5 ADE [Éah ah ah] [ah ah .hÉ nan je pense qu' elle a fai t
no I think that she made
- 6 les sujets pour euh: (0.2) pour qu' on en parl e.]
the subjects so um so we talk about them.
- 7 CEL [. hhh ben: :: =mh: . tsk .h moi j' suis] d' accord. et
well um I do agree. and
- 8 j' pense qu' i' faut consacrer plus de temps à
I think that we shoul d devote more space to
- 9 l' éducati on arti sti que à l' écol e, (.) pa' ce que
artistic education at school, 'cause
- 10 [c' est-]

- i t' s-*
- 11 QUE → [d' accord.] euh est-ce tu consi dères que l' jardi nage
al right. um do you consider that gardeni ng
- 12 c' est plutô t [arti sti que, ou cul tur]el. =
i t' s more arti sti c, or cul tural .
- 13 ADE [ɛh eh eh (mh mh)ɛ]
- 14 CEL =. tsk j' pense que c' est cul turel. et j' trouv' rai s ça
I thi nk that i t' s cul tural . and I wou ld fi nd i t
- 15 trop bi en que: [dans toutes]=
great that i n every
- 16 QUE → [. hh]
- 17 CEL =les écoles y ai t un p' ti t potager: ,
school s there' s a li ttle garden,
- 18 [qu' i' faut apprendre euh]=
that pupi ls must l earn um
- 19 QUE → [mai s y en a plei n,]=
but there' s a lot,
- 20 CEL =[: :]=
- 21 QUE =[y en a]=
there' s
- 22 ADE [ouai s.]
yeah
- 23 CEL =[: . h]
- 24 QUE =[plei n mai s] **j' trouve que** ça devrai t êt' vrai ment
a lot but I fi nd that i t shou ld be be real ly
- 25 en[couragé]=
encouraged
- 26 CEL [obl i ga]=
manda
- 27 QUE =[. h]=
- 28 CEL =[toi re.]
tory.
- 29 ADE =[ouai s.]
yeah.
- 30 QUE =et euh: [du coup en: al - en all i ant l' esthéti sme
and um then by combi ni ng aestheti ci sm
- 31 franch]ement=
honestl y

- 32 ADE [() plus avec la biologie, avec les sciences
more with biology, with natural
- 33 naturelles dans mon souvenir.]
sciences if I remember rightly.
- 34 QUE =(0.2) Les jardins à la française c'est très joli, (.)
French gardens are very nice,
- 35 c'est dommage qu'on puisse juste pas bouffer c' qui
it's just a bummer that we can't eat what
- 36 pousse dedans...
grows in it

Quentin's question in lines 1-2/4 functions to close the first topic of discussion. At this point, his seeming reluctance to discuss the second topic (one of the "two points" referred to in lines 1/2, i.e. *More space has to be devoted to artistic and cultural education at school*) is not topicalised, and thereby unclear. For instance, he could have no interest whatsoever in discussing any sides of the topic. However, his subsequent active commitment to the discussion suggests that he does take an interest. Indeed, he often takes the turn to give his opinion, sometimes interrupting his co-participants, and this as early as line 11 (arrowed): shortly after Céline introduces the second topic of discussion, while she is about to develop her viewpoint with *parce que* 'because' (lines 9-10), Quentin interrupts the progression of her turn and asks her opinion about gardening. At this point, it is not clear why Quentin introduces this concept, which is completely new to the discussion. It may be that working as a greengrocer, he wants to direct the conversation to a subject where he has epistemic privilege. Whatever his motives, his question (lines 11-12) seems to work as a means of preparing for the next turn, exhibited in the ensuing inbreath (line 16, arrowed) overlapping Céline's answer (line 15) and projecting a next turn (beginning in line 19, arrowed) (on inbreath as a self-selection strategy, cf. Schegloff, 2000). Quentin once again interrupts Céline and holds on to the turn despite several overlaps, expressing his personal opinion. In line 24, the use of *JT* reinforces the subjective aspect of his opinion, restricting it to himself. From this turn onward, the sequence lasts approximately seven minutes during which Quentin's participation is active and reflects an opinionated stance. Even after Céline signals the end of the conversation, Quentin continues talking for about 45 seconds, expanding on the importance of the topic beyond the boundaries of the work they were asked to do. Finally, Adeline closes the topic by indicating how she interpreted it: *c'était une discussion hein c'était pas un débat* 'it was a discussion huh, it wasn't a debate', to which Quentin expresses his disagreement (*mais si* 'it was').

Thus, Quentin's seeming lack of enthusiasm for the topic at the beginning of

the excerpt could be a sign that he anticipates a potentially uncooperative interaction. Even though debates tend to be encouraged in French (Mullan, 2010: 40), he may wish to avoid potentially contentious behaviour with his friends (see work on (dis)affiliation, e.g. Heritage, 1984; Lindström & Sorjonen, 2013; and work on the principle of cooperation, Clayman, 2002; Enfield & Levinson, 2006; Enfield & Stivers, 2007). Alternatively, he may wish to avoid displaying dominant behaviour, since the remainder of the sequence displays high involvement in this particular topic. Specifically, through this topic, Quentin conveys his opinions about the limits of ecological awareness at school, which appears to be a matter of importance to him. This is also true for the second third-party interaction involving the same topic, in which Quentin is also a participant. Yet, in the two interactions, his interlocutors' (Adeline and Céline firstly, and Adeline and Bruno secondly) opinions seem to be more moderate. Thus, the two sequences including discussion of this topic in general find Quentin on one side and his two interlocutors on the other side, even though the latter are not always against Quentin's opinion: they sometimes defend counter-arguments, while at other times they support his ideas.

While the beginning of the sequence overall features agreement between the three participants, disagreement and contention, although weak, appear gradually. The excerpt in (80) displays two disagreements by Adeline with the prior speaker's turn.

(80) Interaction 2.6 - Adeline / Céline / Quentin

- 1 CEL . tsk bah c' est bien d' emm' ner les gamins au mu↑sée: euh:
well it's good to bring kids to the museum um
- 2 leur faire pratiquer d' la musique [mais]=
to make them practise music but
- 3 ADE [mh]
- 4 CEL =pas forcément d' la flûte. 'fin vraiment leur ouvrir
not necessarily the flute. I mean really open up
- 5 leur univers quoi . =
their mind then.
- 6 ADE → =.h moi j' avais déjà l' impression qu' c' était là
I already had the impression that it was there
- 7 → en fait. 'fin pendant: : [:]=
in fact. I mean during
- 8 CEL [bah au]=
well in
- 9 ADE =[:]
- 10 CEL =[co]=

- secondary*
- 11 QUE [beh]=
well
- 12 CEL =[l l ège ouai s t' as des cours de musi que.]
school yeah there are music classes.
- 13 QUE → =[moi – moi j' trouve que cette] partie là est
for me- for me I find that that part is
- 14 déjà bi en dével oppée par contre i' s ont– i' s ont l: oupé
already well developed however they- they screwed up
- 15 (.) toute une parti e qui devrai t être pri mordi ale, (0. 5)
a whole part whi ch shoul d be pri mordi al,
- 16 qu' est juste=euh: l' écol ogie quoi. [. hh]
whi ch is just um ecology then.
- 17 CEL [ouai s.]
yeah.
- 18 ADE → ça on est d' accord mai s [c' est]=
we agree on that but it's
- 19 CEL [mh]
- 20 ADE → =aussi à tes ↑parents d' te l' apprendre ça.
also up to your parents to teach you that.
- 21 → pas que à l' écol e.
not only to school.

First, in lines 6-7 (arrowed), Adeline displays a different viewpoint from Pauline's, introduced by the strong pronoun *moi* 'me', underscoring a subjective opinion. In lines 18/20-21 (arrowed), she explicitly agrees (*ça on est d'accord* 'we agree on that') with the overall idea expressed in Quentin's prior turn (lines 13-16), but disagrees with one aspect of it (*c'est aussi à tes parents de te l'apprendre ça* 'it's also up to your parents to teach you that'). In line 13 (arrowed), the beginning of Quentin's turn (lines 11/13) overlaps Adeline's and Céline's ongoing talk. Firstly, he reacts to his interlocutors' prior turns (*cette partie là est déjà bien développée* 'that part is already well developed'), introducing his agreement with *JT*; secondly, the topic of ecology is introduced, prefaced by *par contre* 'however' (line 14). Occurring in the middle of differing stances, Quentin's use of *JT* may enhance a subjective opinion.

In similar contexts, *JP* shows in comparison tentativeness, openness and spontaneity. A first example is given in (81).

(81) Interaction 2.7 - Adeline / Bruno / Quentin

- 1 ADE quel est ton opi ni on euh bruno.
what's your opi ni on um Bruno.
- 2 BRU → bah euh: =f: (0.5) j' **pense qu'**i' faut do- l'ai sser
well um I think that one should have
- 3 l' choix, j' sais pas en même temps est-ce que faut
the choi ce, I don't know at the same time should we
- 4 l'ai sser plus de place à l' éducati on arti sti que (0.2)
I leave more space to artisti c
- 5 et cul turelle à l' école...
and cul tural educati on at school

Bruno's opinion is asked explicitly by Adeline in line 1. Throughout his turn (from line 2, arrowed, to 5), various features point to a difficulty in constructing a response. First, it is not provided immediately but it is delayed by hesitation markers and a 0.5 second pause (line 2). Second, in his first TCU (*je pense qu'il faut do- laisser le choix*, lines 2-3), Bruno self-initiates repair, replacing what could be heard as the first syllable of the verb *donner* 'give' by the verb *laisser* 'leave'. This is then followed by the epistemic disclaimer *je sais pas* 'I don't know' (line 3), introducing a second TCU where Bruno reformulates the suggested topic in the form of a question, buying him time to construct subsequent elements of response. Thus, Bruno's turn is designed in a way that signals tentativeness. This is encoded in the epistemic component of meaning of *JP*, which is still perceptible while the subjective meaning is foregrounded. Here, *JP* contrasts with *JT* in that its epistemic meaning, which is always present to some extent, signals tentativeness and leaves the discussion open.

A second example is provided in Excerpt (79) above, partially repeated in (82) below.

(82) Interaction 2.6 - Adeline / Céline / Quentin

- 1 QUE ... est-ce tu consi dères que l' jardi nage
um do you consider that gardeni ng
- 2 c' est plutôt [arti sti que, ou cul tur]el. =
it's more artisti c, or cul tural.
- 3 ADE [ɛh eh eh (mh mh)ɛ]
- 4 CEL → =. tsk j' **pense que** c' est cul turel. et j' trouv' rai s ça
I think that it's cul tural. and I would find it
- 5 trop bien que: [dans toutes]=
great that in every

- 6 QUE [.hh]
 7 CEL =les écoles y ai t un p' tit potager: , ...
schools there's a little garden,

In lines 1-2, Quentin selects Céline as the next speaker by asking her opinion about a particular matter. The request for a personal opinion, as well as the verb chosen by Quentin (*considérer* 'consider', line 1), may both be seen as triggering the use of *JP* in Céline's response (line 4, arrowed). In chapter 6, I argue that *JP* may perform a bridging role between the two parts of such an adjacency pair, suggesting that the second speaker has interpreted the preceding turn as the request of a personal opinion. Semantically, *JP* may be seen as signalling an open mind.

The subjective-strengthening emphasis carried out by *JT* is further supported by interactional features in the surrounding context. Indeed, *JT* is reinforced by a subjective marker in 39% of cases (45% if we remove the three instances of the category "Other"). For instance, in (79) above, the speaker's stance is strengthened by the adjective *vraiment* 'really' (line 24). Moreover, in (83) below, the first instance of *JT* (line 5) co-occurs with the adjective *énormément* 'enormously, tremendously' (line 6, arrowed), which bears prosodic prominence. Note that the verb form *trouve* also bears prominence, a prosodic characteristic which could also participate in reinforcing subjectivity.

(83) Interaction 2.6 - Adeline / Céline / Quentin

- 1 QUE beh l' ouverture d' esprit par (0.5) pour moi passe (.)
well open-mindedness through to me goes
 2 par (.) quel que chose de plus général , que:
through something more general, than
 3 l' : ' arti sti que. ou le cul turel . . h
arts. or cul ture.
 4 (0.7)
 5 et par contre le truc c' est qu' j' **trouve** qu' on- on- on
and however the thing is that I find that we- we- we
 6 → recentre énormément les études. ' fin on est obligé d' se
refocus enormously studies. I mean we have to
 7 focal iser sur certains points . h pa' ce qu' on peut pas
focus on certain points. 'cause we can't
 8 tout apprendre . h (.) mais (.) **je trouve** qu' une=euh
I learn everything but I find that a um
 9 base écol ogi que pour les enfants s' rai ent (.) plus

10 *ecological basis for children would be more*
 importante (0.2) qu' une base artistique
important than an artistic basis

Furthermore, *JT* is twice (9%) framed by the subjective expression *pour moi* 'for me'. By way of illustration, see above (76), where it directly follows *JT* in line 4. Finally, *JT* is reinforced by the strong pronoun *moi* 'me' ('as far as I'm concerned') on five occasions (22%), among which a left-dislocated *moi* 'me' directly prefaces *JT* on three occasions (13%). By contrast, three subjective uses of *JP* (9%) are prefaced by *moi*. Note that, as an epistemic marker, *JP* is followed by *moi* in only one instance (1%).²

This is in line with Detges (2013) and Detges and Waltereit (2014), who point out the high frequency of *moi* with stance-verb constructions, especially *JT* (see also Detges (2018) on the prosodic weakening of *moi* in the context *moi JT que*; on the collocation of *moi* and *JP*, *JC* and especially *JT* to mark the speaker's commitment, see also Blanche-Benveniste & Willems, 2007: 238-239). In such contexts, Detges (2013: 34) explains that a strong pronoun expresses a weak contrast, "i.e. a kind of contrast where one of the contrasted (set of) elements is left uncertain", and which "allows speakers to freely construe implicatures." Thus, (84) invites the inference that the speaker's personal opinion is potentially controversial, i.e. that there may be people who think otherwise (2013: 35).

(84) *Moi je trouve que c'est pas normal.*
 '(Me) I think this is not normal.'

By contrast, *JP* is accompanied by subjective items in a smaller number of cases. In addition to the three instances of *moi JP* 'me I think' discussed above, *JP* is reinforced by *vraiment* 'really' on three occasions.

However, the context surrounding subjective uses of *JP* shows that they are more likely to be framed by mitigation or hesitancy markers than *JT*, such as modal verbs marking an epistemic stance or hesitation and reformulation markers. This was also characteristic of epistemic uses of *JP* (see section 5.1.2). Such resources participate in the displaying of a weak commitment of the speaker towards their utterance. For instance, utterances hosting *JP* are associated three times with the modal verb *pouvoir* expressing possibility. This is illustrated in (85).³

²By comparison, as an epistemic marker, *JC* is never prefaced by *moi* in my database.

³See also a discussion of the mitigation work of *JP* in this excerpt in chapter 6 (excerpt (97)).

(85) Interaction 1.3 - Charlotte / Nicolas

- 1 NIC boh °j' pense° les deux- les deux peuvent
well I think both- both of them can
- 2 se conc' voir hein, .h 'fi n j' sai s pas.
be appreciated huh, well I don't know.

In line 1, Nicolas is referring to two different concepts (*les deux* 'both', line 1). His personal opinion is framed by a subjective use of *JP*, and downgraded by the epistemic modal verb *pouvoir* (whose epistemic interpretation seems in turn to be influenced by the epistemic component of meaning, although backgrounded, encoded in *JP*).

5.3 Concluding remarks

This chapter focused on the individual meaning of each construction, and showed how the context where they occur plays a crucial role in determining their individual meaning. I explained how *JP* forms a contrastive pair with either *JC* or *JT*, according to its primary role in a specific context.

As epistemic markers, *JP* and *JC* chiefly downgrade the speaker's commitment to their utterance by inviting different types of inference: *JP* implicates that the speaker is making an assumption based on observable evidence or mental reasoning, while *JC* implicates that the memory of the speaker may be faulty. On the one hand, *JP* may be paraphrased by 'I don't vouch for it, because I merely inferred it' (or more shortly 'I'm guessing'). *JP* was therefore described as an evidential marking indirect experience. On the other hand, *JC* could be glossed in most contexts (cf. Context 1, when anterior knowledge is straightforward) as 'I don't vouch for it, because I may not remember correctly' (or more shortly 'as far as I remember'). It was also shown that *JC* occurs with states of affairs that may be based on inference (cf. Context 2) or conjecture (cf. Context 3). There are therefore possible overlaps between the contexts where *JP* and *JC* occur, which suggest that knowledge is not semantically encoded in *JC* but established pragmatically. This inference can therefore be defeated. Furthermore, each construction showed individual preferences to be used in particular contexts. These particular contexts, in turn, seem to favour one of the two components of meaning encoded in the constructions. For instance, it is possible that the use of the past tense in the host utterance favours the interpretation that *JC* is used as an epistemic marker suggesting that the speaker's memory may be faulty.

As subjective markers, *JP* and *JT* present personal judgements in distinct ways:

while *JT* strengthens the subjectivity already present in the state of affairs introduced, *JP* conveys a spontaneous and open opinion, which can be explained by the epistemic component of meaning still present in the background. This is especially visible in contexts where speakers are in the process of working out what their opinion is: since *JP* encodes an epistemic element, it is fair to say that the construction is more appropriate than *JT*, which only encodes a subjective element. Both constructions can occur in different contexts, that I divided into two: when the speaker has direct experience of the state of affairs presented (Context 1), and when the state of affairs does not involve (non-)experience (Context 2).

As for the opposition between subjective *JC* and the two other subjective markers, it seems difficult to formulate a strong hypothesis. Since the substitution of *JP* by *JC* in (78) would lead to infer that the speaker's memory is faulty, it could be argued that the association of *JC* with memory and knowledge persists in its subjective uses. Other accounts (e.g Mullan, 2010) identify in the semantics of *JC* an element of conviction.

In addition to examining the semantic and pragmatic properties of *JP*, *JC* and *JT*, it is crucial to include their interactional functions in order to fully grasp their roles in conversation. This is the object of chapters 6 and 7.

Chapter 6

Interactional functions of *je pense*

This chapter closely scrutinises *JP* in its sequential environment in order to show the multiple functions that emerge in interaction. The conversational excerpts presented in this chapter provide evidence that among the three constructions under examination, *JP* is interactionally the most versatile. These functions can be divided into two. On the one hand, *JP* may be used to demarcate units of speech, thus contributing to the elaboration of a coherent discourse. This discourse-organisational function is an over-arching function for clause-initial instances of *JP*, which quasi-systematically have an organisational role. On the other hand, *JP* may be used to soften a potential or actual face threat (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Depending on the context, the construction may be oriented towards saving either the speaker's or the hearer's face. The use of *JP* as a polyfunctional marker provides evidence for its status as a full-fledged discourse marker.

As these organisational and face-saving functions frequently overlap, this chapter is not organised in such a way as to present them in turn, although one section focuses particularly on some politeness-driven uses of *JP*. Rather, this chapter presents the various sequential environments where *JP* occurs, on the basis of the observation of regularities. Firstly, section 6.1 gives an overview of the position of *JP* within turns and turn-constructional units (TCUs), and provides a brief summary of the main functions it performs in each position. The three following sections focus each on a specific environment where *JP* occurs. Section 6.2 focuses on occurrences of *JP* in turn-medial position, where *JP* is preferred in TCU-initial position. Arguably, this preference results from discourse-organisational motives. Section 6.3 then addresses instances of *JP* in responsive turns, i.e. turns which are uttered in reaction to a prior turn. By contrast, section 6.4 discusses those instances that occur in initiating turns, i.e. uttered independently of prior talk. Finally, section 6.5 examines instances of *JP* which have to do with politeness, whether or not they occur in the sequential environments presented in the other sections.

This chapter shows that there is no direct relation between the semantic com-

ponent of meaning in the foreground (cf. chapter 4) and particular interactional functions. Rather, the interactional work performed by *JP* is associated with both meanings in any use of the construction, supporting its status as a construction composed of two different components of meaning. Moreover, it is important to note that the interactional functions discussed in this chapter are present *in addition to* the semantic meaning of the construction. In other words, any given use foregrounds either of the two components of meaning, and may in addition perform further interactional functions.

6.1 Position of *je pense* within turns and TCUs

Table (6.1) details the position within turns and turn-constructive units (TCUs) of 103 occurrences of *JP* in the database. Among a total of 111 occurrences, eight are not included: seven standalone constructions and one instance occurring in a turn interrupted by another speaker.

Table 6.1 – Position of *je pense* within turns and TCUs

Turn-initial	Turn-medial			Turn-final
	TCU-initial	TCU-medial	TCU-final	
32 (31.1%)	58 (56.3%)			13 (12.6%)
	38 (36.9%)	15 (14.6%)	5 (4.9%)	
70 (68%)			18 (17.5%)	

Total 103

The table reads as follows. As for its position within the turn, *JP* occurs predominantly in turn-medial position, representing 58 occurrences (56.3%). This is followed by the turn-initial (and therefore also TCU-initial) position (32 occurrences, 31.1%), while the turn-final (and therefore also TCU-final) position is the less frequent (13 occurrences, 12.6%). Next, the 58 turn-medial instances of *JP* are distributed as follows: 38 (36.9%) occur in TCU-initial, 15 (14.6%) in TCU-medial, and 5 (4.9%) in TCU-final position. There is thus an overwhelming tendency for *JP* to occur in initial position (70 instances, 68%), i.e. at the beginning of a turn or of a TCU within a turn. In comparison, a total of 18 instances (17.5%) occur in final position, i.e. at the end of a turn or of a TCU within a turn.

The preference of *JP* for the initial position (both in turn-initial and turn-medial position) may be accounted for by discourse-organisational functions as well as functions related to the management of turn-taking. The next sections of this chapter

will show that the organisational work accomplished by *JP* is manifold whether it appears at the juncture of two turns that are not uttered by the same party or at the juncture of two TCUs in the middle of a speaker's turn.

Schegloff (1987: 72) observed how turn beginnings are “sequence-structurally important places in conversation”, in that they do not only project what follows, but they also signal the relationship between the previous turn and the next one. As such, turn beginnings are a prime location for discourse markers with connective functions (Schiffrin, 1987: 328), linking different parts of the discourse, and for projecting the stance taken by the current speaker towards the previous speaker's turn (Heritage, 2002; Smith, 2013). In this location, *JP* conveys the speaker's stance and it simultaneously functions retrospectively, showing how the previous turn has been interpreted, and prospectively, signaling the direction in which the conversation is going.

Moreover, turn beginnings are a strategic location, where *JP* may occur when a speaker attempts to take the floor. Out of the 32 instances occurring in turn-initial position, five are used in overlap with the turn of another participant who already had the floor. In addition, three instances occur in overlap with one or several participants, when there is competition for the floor. These three instances all occur in interactions involving at least three participants, the competition for the turn-space being potentially higher. Furthermore, turn beginnings are crucial locations where “most of the planning takes place” (Aijmer, 1997: 27), and where *JP* may occur to fill a pause during speech processing (see excerpts (91) and (92) below).

When introducing a new TCU in turn-medial position, *JP* contributes to discourse organisation by enhancing the coordination of transitions, insofar as it marks a transition between different units within the speaker's turn-in-progress. This will be developed further in section 6.2 below.

However, as will be exemplified throughout this chapter, *JP* is the very first item of the turn or TCU in 31 cases, representing only 45.6% of the instances in this position. In the remaining cases, the construction is prefaced by some other linguistic item or, more frequently, a collocation of different items. In such contexts, the prefatory item is a discourse marker such as *donc* ‘so’, *mais* ‘but’, *et* ‘and’, *enfin* ‘well, I mean’, *bah/beh/boh* ‘well’ or *je sais pas* ‘I don't know’ (e.g. Hansen, 1998b: chapters 10 and 13; 2005; Beeching, 2002: chapter 6; Pekarek Doehler, 2016; Crible, 2018), a positive or negative response particle, namely *nan* (“no”) or *ouais* ‘yeah’ (e.g. Hansen, 2020), or the strong pronoun *moi* ‘me’ (e.g. Detges, 2013; Detges & Waltereit, 2014). These linguistic forms foreshadow the type of action that will be subsequently performed, but *JP* may also be seen as being part of a collocation of items which all perform organisational functions (on modal clustering, see Aijmer,

1997: 26-28; on clustering of discourse markers and its contribution to discourse fluency, see Crible et al., 2017 and Crible, 2018).

By contrast, when occurring in final position, *JP* is frequently the very last token of the turn or TCU: of a total of 18 instances in final position, this concerns 14 instances (77.8%). *JP* is followed by the polyfunctional particle *hein* (e.g. Beeching, 2002: chapter 7) on two occasions, and by a cluster of discourse marker and hesitation (*enfin euh* ‘I mean um’ and *et mh* ‘and mh’) on two other.

With respect to its syntactic position, Table 6.1 also shows an overwhelming preference for the matrix position (where it may or may not be followed by a complementiser). In addition to the instances in initial position, seven instances of *JP* in TCU-medial position are in matrix position. Among them, four are not followed by the complementiser *que* but have been classified as matrix clauses as a result of context and prosody: *JP* and what follows are uttered under a single intonation contour. Of the 15 instances of *JP* in TCU-medial position, the remaining instances are four clause-final and four clause-medial parentheticals. As will be shown in the next chapter, this is not the case with *JC*, whose distribution across the initial and final positions is relatively balanced. As a matter of fact, the present chapter and the next one will show that the two markers exhibit different functions: while *JP* is preferred in initial position where it fulfils discourse-structuring functions, *JC* does not always exhibit similar functions in the same position, and is also frequently used in parenthetical position for mitigation purposes (Schneider, 2007).

6.2 *Je pense* in turn-medial position: marking a transition in the speaker’s turn

For the most part, instances of *JP* in my data occur in matrix position¹ and in the middle of a speaker’s turn (see Table 6.1 above): of a total of 103 instances of *JP*, 58 (56.3%) occur in turn-medial position. Of the 72 instances of *JP* occurring in matrix position, 42 (58.3%) occur in turn-medial position; conversely, of the 58 instances of *JP* occurring in turn-medial position, 42 (71.2%) occur in matrix position. The majority of these 42 instances occur in TCU-initial position, although seven of them are inserted in the middle of a TCU, due to a left-dislocation or the insertion of an adverbial phrase at the beginning of the TCU.

Within turns, the beginning of TCUs is a strategic location. This section shows how *JP* contributes to discourse organisation in this position, by marking a tran-

¹See Table 2.8 in chapter 2: of a total of 111 instances of *JP*, 72 (64.9%) occur in matrix position, irrespective of whether they are followed by *que*.

sition between different units within the speaker's turn-in-progress. As such, *JP* is a resource for addressees to project how the rest of a current speaker's turn will progress. Of the 38 instances occurring in TCU-initial (and turn-medial) position, 36 fulfil discourse-organisational functions. In addition, organisational functions have also been attributed to one of the seven instances occurring in TCU-medial position. Most uses connect the *JP*-prefaced TCU with the immediately preceding TCU, thus working very locally. However, in a few exceptional cases, *JP* works at a more global level, in that it does not only link to the immediately preceding TCU, but to a prior action which extends over several TCUs or even several turns. This can be taken as evidence for the status of *JP* as a discourse marker, whose scope has been described as variable (Schiffrin, 1987: 328; Hansen, 1998b: 73-74; Crible, 2019). The TCU introduced by *JP* in the speaker's turn-in-progress connects to the preceding TCU or to a prior action in a range of ways: to name a few, the *JP*-prefaced TCU may introduce concluding remarks; summarise prior talk; establish a contrast with prior talk or shift the perspective; reorganise, reformulate or correct (in the sense of *conversational repair*, see Schegloff et al., 1977) an unstructured, pragmatically incomplete TCU; expand on the prior talk by developing, supporting or adding an argument. Furthermore, four instances follow a withdrawal from a prior, self-interrupted turn, therefore performing a discourse-organisational function in that they initiate a new sequence.

As noted in section 6.1, *JP* does not frequently occur in isolation, but is prefaced by hesitation, in-breaths, a single linguistic item or a collocation of different items. Together with these linguistic forms, *JP* may be seen as being part of a collocation of items which all perform organisational functions. On eight occasions only, there is no perceptible break between the TCU introduced by *JP* and the preceding one, and on five other occasions, the two TCUs are separated by a pause.

In the two first excerpts, *JP* has local scope insofar as it points to the preceding TCU.

(86) Interaction 2.3 - Céline / Quentin

- | | | |
|---|-----|--|
| 1 | QUE | (ah) j' t'avoue qu' j'ai pas passé <u>beaucoup</u> d' temps
(ah) I admit that I haven't spent a lot of time |
| 2 | → | d' ssus et j' pense que [j'ai pas <u>farfouillé</u>]=
on it and I haven't rummaged through it |
| 3 | CEL | [t' as les tuto:s et tout ça]
there are tutorials and stuff |
| 4 | QUE | =des masses quoi
much then |

This excerpt is preceded by an exchange of disagreements about the way the social media Pinterest works. Quentin's turn in lines 1-2/4 displays his withdrawal from this sequence, by granting epistemic superiority to Céline. Indeed, he gives two reasons justifying his knowledge inferiority about the matter at hand, which are connected by *et* 'and', one of the most frequent discourse markers (Crible, 2018: 86), and *JP* (line 2, arrowed). The two markers work together to develop and therefore to mark a continuation with Quentin's preceding TCU, by providing additional information. The presence of *JP* may also be used for structural purposes, due to the parallelism between the two TCUs composing Quentin's turn: the first TCU is introduced by *j'avoue que* 'I admit that' and the second by *JP que*, establishing a relation of paraphrase with what precedes.

Similarly in (87), *JP* indicates a new step in Charlotte's turn, by developing the prior TCU.

(87) Interaction 1.1 - Aurore / Charlotte

- | | | |
|---|-----|---|
| 1 | CHA | ah moi je suis une des rares personnes qui est- qui
<i>ah me I'm one of the few people who is- who</i> |
| 2 | → | est capable de rater une purée mousseline .h (.)
<i>is capable of failing an instant mash</i> |
| 3 | → | [j' pense qu' il faut l' signa[lérÉ]
<i>I think that I must highlight that</i> |
| 4 | AUR | [c'est] vrai?
<i>really?</i> |
| 5 | | [bi en j oué.]
<i>well done.</i> |
| 6 | CHA | [Éeh eh eh ehÉ] |

In her first TCU (lines 1-2), bracketed by a brief in-breath and a micro-pause (line 2, arrowed), Charlotte produces what could be heard as a self-deprecating comment (she is unable to cook a meal which is intended to be simple), but whose ironic nature invites a humorous tone. In the absence of any response from her interlocutor, she then pursues her turn by adding a second TCU introduced by *JP* (line 3, arrowed), whose design provides indications on how Aurore should react to her utterance: her laughter underscores in fact that her first TCU (lines 1-2) was intended to be funny, and that she is expecting an affiliative response (among others, Heritage, 1984; Pomerantz, 1984; Stivers, 2008; Lindström & Sorjonen, 2013). As the first token of the TCU, *JP* works on its own to connect two segments, where the second develops the first.

In the three following excerpts, *JP* prefaces talk which links to a prior action rather than the immediately preceding TCU. It is therefore used strategically to get back to prior talk. In (88), *JP* serves, alongside other discourse markers, to indicate a transition in a narrative. Before the beginning of the excerpt, Bruno and Quentin were talking about social media, and more specifically Facebook.

(88) Interaction 2.4 - Bruno / Quentin

- 1 QUE j' ai maté une vidéo hier qui durai t dix minutes
I watched a video yesterday that lasted ten minutes
- 2 un truc comme ça, .h et euh: c'est un type qui prend une
something like that, and um it's a guy who takes a
- 3 euh: : =mh: : . tsk une vieille clé à pipe...
um an old socketwrench ...
- 4 → (29")
- 5 QUE et i' t'en sors une espèce de: : de katana qui fait genre
and he manages to make a kind of of katana that's like
- 6 euh soixante centimètres de long, (0.2) mais qu' est
um sixty centimeters long but that's
- 7 ultra propre qu' est mais qu' est nickel quoi qu' est
really neat that's but that's great then that's
- 8 tranchant rasoir et tout euh .h qu' est superbe (0.4)
sharp-edged and all um that's superb
- 9 euh i' t' fait- i' fait une trempe
um he does- he does a selective
- 10 [sélective euh : :]
quenching um
- 11 BRU [beh en même temps i' suf]fi t de: :
well at the same time you just have to
- 12 QUE i' t' fait une trempe sélecti: ve et tout euh ' fin: voi là
he does a selective quenching and all um well yeah
- 13 quoi [et euh : :]
then and um
- 14 BRU [i' suffi t d' for]ger hein
you just have to forge huh
- 15 QUE et [c' est]=
and it's
- 16 BRU [fmhÉ]
- 17 QUE =c' est super propre, c' est- c' est impeccable
it's super neat, it's- it's impeccable

- 18 → et euh du coup bah j' pense que .h si j' m'étais pas euh
and um so well I think that if I hadn't um
- 19 inscrit euh: : =au groupe de: : passion couteau sur facebook
signed up um to the group "knife lovers" on Facebook
- 20 eh beh j' aurais jamais vu cette vidéo alors que
well I wouldn't have seen this video though
- 21 je l'ai trouvée géniale quoi
I found it awesome then

Quentin's first TCU in lines 1-2 projects a narrative, which lasts approximately one minute.² He describes the content of a video showing a man forging a knife from a hand tool. Up until lines 18-21, which can be interpreted as the upshot of the story (Mandelbaum, 2013: 495), there is no apparent connection between Quentin's story and the previous conversational topic – social media and Facebook, yet no explicit topical change has been effected. The telling of the story was designed to establish a basis for further talk: Quentin aimed to highlight the usefulness of Facebook, without which he might not have discovered the video. The topical coherence of Quentin's story can only be understood in the upshot, introduced in line 18 (arrowed) by the collocation of markers *et euh du coup bah* 'and um and so well' prefacing *JP*, which all signal a new step in Quentin's turn. The collocation of markers *et euh du coup bah j' pense que* is clearly set apart by a break in the progressivity of the turn: they are immediately followed by an audible in-breath. The interactional work achieved by *JP* is both to mark the speaker's evaluation of the narrative (Labov & Waletzky, 1967) and to convey its end, allowing the resumption of the previous conversational topic. Furthermore, because the turn-taking system is suspended during extended storytellings (see Jefferson, 1978: 228; Mandelbaum, 2013: 493), the use of *JP* to mark the final evaluation segment can also be interpreted as contributing to the signposting of a return to normal turn-taking.

In (89), *JP* similarly displays a connection with prior talk, rather than the prior TCU. In an extended turn similar to a narrative, Nicolas references a time when he ate in a gastronomic restaurant for a birthday event, and more specifically his state of mind throughout the meal.

(89) Interaction 1.2 - Nicolas / Paul

²For reasons of space, about thirty seconds of Quentin's story have been omitted (cf. line 4, arrowed). During this time, he is trying to recover the name of a hand tool, helped by Bruno who offers several suggestions.

- 1 NIC .h ouais c'est l' genre de truc euh 'fin c'est vrai
yeah it's the kind of thing um well it's true
- 2 qu' c'est euh: une fois oui si pour euh: pour un
that it's um one time yes for um for a
- 3 anniversaire on était allé et (0.5) l' genre de truc
birthday we went and the kind of thing
- 4 tu vois t' as: =mh dans tes plats t' as quasiment rien
you see you've um in your dishes you've almost nothing
- 5 dans l' assiette, tu t' dis mais euh j' vais avoir trop
in the plate, you're like but um I'll be
- 6 faim après puis en fait euh: .h en fait euh finalement
starving after and in fact um in fact um in the end
- 7 'fin c'est con- j' sais pas c- comment c'ment i' font
well it's thou- I don't know h- how how they do
- 8 mais c'est conçu de te(h)lle sorte qu'à la fin t' as
but it's thought of so th(h)at at the end you're
- 9 quand même p'us faim pa'ce que j' sais pas t' as
anyhow not hungry anymore 'cause I don't know you've
- 10 plusieurs <p'tits plats> quoi donc c'est .h mais c'est
several small dishes then so it's but it's
- 11 marrant. 'fin c'est: (0.3) t' as l'impression qu' t' as
funny. well it's you feel like you've
- 12 du euh: .h (.) qu' tu dois pas trop toucher au truc
some um that you mustn't touch the thing
- 13 pa'ce que t' as l'impression d' casser que' que chose quoi
'cause you feel like you're breaking something then
- 14 → et **j' pense que** ça (ça) viendra à l' art culinaire...
and I think that it (it)'ll lead us to culinary art...

In line 14 (arrowed), the last TCU in Nicolas' turn is introduced by the collocation of markers *et* 'and' and *JP*, which simultaneously mark the end of his narrative and the return to normal turn-taking (see Jefferson, 1978: 228; Mandelbaum, 2013: 493). By referencing one of the suggested topics about culinary art, which has not yet been covered, Nicolas flags up the relevance of the current topic, namely gastronomic food.

A last example is given in (90). At the time of recording, Patricia and her classmates were preparing a presentation and needed to collect data and testimonies from police officers. In what follows, Patricia mentions the first time they went to the police station, where a police officer (*un mec* 'a guy', line 4, arrowed) offered his

help but asked them to return later.

(90) Interaction 3.2 - Judith / Patricia

- 1 PAT . tsk et donc du cou: p bah aujourd' hui on est allés
and so then well today we went
- 2 dans un (con)- dans un commissariat,
in a (pon)- in a police station,
- 3 (0.9)
- 4 PAT → et euh: l à y a un mec i' nous a dit
and um there a guy told us
- 5 → <((hi gh-pi tch voi ce)) oui: > euh **j' pense qu'** ça pourrai t
yes um I think that i t' d
- 6 f- euh: ça pourrai t s' ↑fai: re revenez euh plus euh tard
p- um i t' d be possible come back um later um
- 7 pour un (XX) (.) ben moi j' avai s cours c' est florence
for a (XX) well me I had class i t' s Florence
- 8 qu' y est allée,
who went there,

Here, the first-person subject in *JP* (line 5, arrowed) does not deictically refer to the speaker, but to the police officer they encountered. Arguably, *JP* is part of a cluster of markers signalling a transition in Patricia's turn, specifically between her own speech and the officer's direct reported speech. Prefacing *JP*, the particle *oui* 'yes', performed with an increased pitch range whose final sound is stretched, and the hesitation marker *euh* 'um' participate in constructing the action performed.

6.3 *Je pense* in responding turns

When looking at sequences of action which are constructed by different speakers, two recurring actions seem to prompt the use of *JP* in the next speaker's turn: requests for opinion in first-pair parts of question-answer adjacency pairs, and expressions of opinion (Angot & Hansen, 2021). There is a strong tendency for *JP* to occur in matrix position and at the beginning of turns, where the target construction frames the subsequent turn as a subjective opinion. In the context of question-answer adjacency pairs, *JP* systematically occurs in TCU-initial position, simultaneously framing the subsequent turn as an opinion and as the expected next action (section 6.3.1). In the context of expressions of opinion, *JP* mainly occurs – but not systematically – TCU-initially and in matrix position. The marker helps to shift the perspective

from the prior to the current speaker, to endorse the previous speaker's opinion, to introduce a different perspective, or to convey disagreement with the prior turn. The dispreferred or disaffiliative action could motivate the presence of *JP* on account of its mitigating function (section 6.3.2). In both contexts, the presence of *JP* in the responding turn may be triggered by the use of particular linguistic items in the prior turn (e.g. *opinion*, *penser*) or by the turn design chosen by the prior speaker (e.g. a question designed in such a way as to ask for opinion).

6.3.1 Question-answer sequences: projecting a preferred action

In the context of question-answer adjacency pairs, the speaker of the first-pair part selects the next speaker by requesting their opinion. My own database (Corpus 1 and Corpus 2) displays eight instances of *JP* in this environment. However, no instance occurs in Corpus 3, a difference that may be explained by the data collection method for Corpus 1 and Corpus 2, which at times led participants to follow the structure of an interview, questioning their interlocutors. By contrast, Corpus 3 does not involve such sequences similar to an interview to the same extent.

With respect to its position, *JP* always occurs in matrix position (followed by *que*) and in TCU-initial position, including four times in turn-initial position. The remaining four instances occurring in the middle of a turn simultaneously mark transitions (see section 6.2 above). In this sequential environment and on the basis of its initial position, I argue that the role of *JP* (and any prefatory items present) is to connect the two parts of the adjacency pair: on the one hand, it signals that the first-pair part has been retrospectively interpreted as a request for opinion; on the other hand, it prospectively frames the subsequent turn as the expected, relevant next action. In this way, *JP*-prefaces play a bridging role between the two parts of the adjacency pair, and convey the speaker's cooperative stance. Although this discourse-organisational function is closely tied to subjectivity, *JP* may foreground either one its two components of meaning – that is, either subjective or epistemic. The capacity of *JP* to foreground the epistemic component in this particular context supports its status as a construction anchoring both components in any given use.

In this context, *JP* is prefaced four times by one or several discourse markers, such as *enfin* 'well' and *donc* 'so'. This entails that *JP* appears as the first token on four occasions.

To illustrate the interactional work discussed here, three examples are given. Consider first the excerpt in (91).

(91) Interaction 2.7 - Adeline / Bruno / Quentin

- 1 ADE quell e est ton opi ni on euh bruno.
 what's your opi ni on um Bruno.
- 2 BRU → bah euh: =f: (0.5) j' **pense qu'**i' faut do- l'ai sser
 wel l um I thi nk that peopl e shoul d have
- 3 l' choi x, j' sai s pas en même temps est-ce que faut
 the choi ce, I don't know at the same time shoul d we
- 4 l'ai sser plus de pl ace à l' éducati on arti sti que (0.2)
 l et more space to arti sti c
- 5 et cul turelle à l' école (.) .hh=
 and cul ture to school
- 6 ADE =on est d' accord c' est [l' école pri mai re hei n]
 we're on the same page i t's pri mary school ri ght
- 7 BRU [al ors oui mai s f]aut ouai s,
 then yes but i t shoul d yeah,
- 8 (.) mai s euh::: i' faut qu' ce soi t euh: .hh
 but um i t shoul d be um
- 9 faut qu' ce soi t voul u,
 i t shoul d be a choi ce,

In line 1, Adeline, the current speaker, selects Bruno as the next speaker by asking his opinion about one of the suggested topics, which has been introduced a few turns earlier: *More space has to be devoted to artistic and cultural education at school*. In the design of her question, both the request for a personal opinion and the word *opinion* chosen may trigger the use of *JP* in the subsequent response. From line 2 (arrowed), Bruno exhibits some difficulty in constructing his response and providing an immediate answer. First, his response is delayed by hesitation markers and a 0.5 second pause. The first TCU (*je pense qu'il faut do- laisser le choix* 'I think that people should have') displays a self-initiated self-repair (Schegloff et al., 1977), replacing what could be heard as the first syllable of the verb *donner* 'give' by the verb *laisser* 'leave'. This is then followed by the epistemic disclaimer *je sais pas* 'I don't know' (Pekarek Doehler, 2016), introducing a second TCU where Bruno reformulates the suggested topic in the form of a question (lines 3-5). Bruno's turn is thus designed in a way that signals tentativeness. However, the *JP*-preface (line 2) may be interpreted as a clue to the cooperative nature of Bruno's response, in that it serves to flag coherence in the interaction sequence, by signalling an upcoming response. Moreover, the use of *JP* can be seen as buying him time to construct a conforming action while pre-empting potential misinterpretation. With respect to its semantics, *JP* is used here as a subjective marker: the claim that follows the construction is not objectively verifiable, but displays a personal belief or preference.

The excerpt in (92) shares similarities with the excerpt in (91). Before the beginning of the excerpt, Quentin and Céline were speaking about Quentin's knife collection, which led to Céline's question in line 1 below.

(92) Interaction 2.3 - Céline / Quentin

- 1 CEL et t' as un cou=r: - (.) couteau d' rêve ou pas?
and do you have a kn- an ideal knife at all?
- 2 → (1.4)
- 3 QUE si j' en avai s qu' un j' aurai s pas une collecti on
if I had only one I woul dn' t have a collecti on
- 4 d' si x cents couteaux. =
of si x hundred kni fes.
- 5 CEL =nan mai s que (.) TOI genre LE couteau i_déal (0.2)
no but that yoursel f like the ideal knife
- 6 y a que toi qui peut l' faire,
you' re the only one who can do it,
- 7 → (2.5)
- 8 QUE pf: :::: (0.5) (oh là là là) <j' **pense que**: =euh: pour euh
pf (oh boy) I think that um to um
- 9 trouver: un CONcept=euh de couteau i dé↑al =euh déj à>
find a concept um of ideal knife um for a start
- 10 → euh: : =f: : (0.3) s: i c' étai t l' couteau idéal
um f if it was the ideal knife
- 11 c' est pas moi qui s' rai s capab' de l' faire
I woul dn' t be the one who woul d be able to make it
- 12 en fai t, j' m' adresserai s à des gens qui ont beaucoup
in fact, I' d ask peopl e who have a lot
- 13 plus de connai ssances,
more knowl edge,

This excerpt displays two question-answer adjacency pairs, initiated by Céline in lines 1 and 5-6. Both questions are initially responded to by silences attributable to Quentin (lines 2 and 7, arrowed), reflecting his difficulty in providing an answer. Facing Quentin's dispreferred answer in lines 3-4, Céline subsequently reformulates her question (lines 5-6). Note how the design of her question invites a subjective answer: the strong pronoun *toi* 'you, yourself' is repeated twice, among which the first occurrence (line 5) is prosodically amplified. The significant pause that ensues in line 7 is firstly followed by the out-breath *pf* delaying the answer, breaking the

contiguity between the first and the second pair-part of the adjacency pair (Sacks, 1987). Quentin's answer (lines 8-13) may be divided into two parts. First, from the beginning of his turn up to the 0.3 second pause in line 10 (arrowed), a range of different features indicate that Quentin is involved in a moment of reflection. The prefatory turn-initial out-breath mentioned above, the 0.5 second pause and the following cluster of items (which can be heard as the interjection *oh là là là*) all participate in delaying his answer. Moreover, these first TCUs are characterised by hesitation (*euh* 'um'), prosodic prolongation, and a pace of talk which is relatively slow compared to the upcoming TCUs, as indicated by the angle brackets in lines 8 and 9. These aspects of speech delivery indicate unplanned speech and suggest that Quentin has difficulty providing an immediate and spontaneous answer. Second, from the 0.3 second pause (line 10) onwards, Quentin shows more confidence: the pace of his talk is speeded up, and no hesitation marker occurs. *JP* occurs in the first, disjointed part of Quentin's response (line 8), marking the subsequent talk as a display of his subjective opinion, even though his turn is abandoned halfway through its production, in the middle of line 10, to be redesigned later on. Here, in addition to framing the subsequent talk as the preferred next action, *JP* (together with the following hesitation marker *euh* 'um') also serves to delay this action, and simultaneously allows the speaker to prepare his answer.

A last example is given in (93), which displays two instances of *JP*. The two of them occur at the beginning of a new TCU (lines 11 and 26, arrowed), namely each time that the speaker, Charlotte, introduces her personal perspective on the matter at hand.

(93) Interaction 1.3 - Charlotte / Nicolas

- | | | |
|---|-------|--|
| 1 | NIC | est-ce que tu <u>penses</u> que l es euh: .h que justement
<i>do you think that the um that actually</i> |
| 2 | | l es restos asi ati ques ou i ndi ens euh qui - qui sont en
<i>asian restaurants or indian um that- that are in</i> |
| 3 | | france est-ce que du coup c' est (euh) pour toi c' est
<i>France do they then it's (um) for you is it</i> |
| 4 | | d' l a euh tradi ti onnel euh É' fi nÉ j' sai s pas (xx)
<i>some um tradi tional um I mean I don't know</i> |
| 5 | | cui si [ne tradi ti o]nnel l e=
<i>tradi tional food</i> |
| 6 | CHA → | [j' p-]
<i>I th-</i> |
| 7 | NIC | =de de chez eux .h[hh]
<i>as as they would do back home</i> |

- 8 CHA → [nan. (.)] j' pense [pas qu' i']=
no. I don't think they
- 9 NIC [(nan)]
(no)
- 10 CHA =peuvent- qu' i puissent pa' ce que: =mh: (0.5) ((hawks))
could- they can 'cau: se u: m
- 11 → 'fi n: **j' pense qu' i'** adaptent=euh toujours aux: aux
I mea: n I think that they always um adapt to to
- 12 goûts euh: (.) o[cci dentaux.]=
tastes um from the West.
- 13 NIC [ouai s,]
yeah,
- 14 CHA =. hh=
- 15 NIC =j' suis d' accord avec ça.
I agree with that.
- 16 CHA 'fi n: (.) du coup j' ai j' ai des ami s indi ens et on
I mean so I' ve I' ve got Indi an fri ends and we
- 17 avai t f- un- organi sé une soi rée où i' s avai ent
h- organi sed a di nner party and they' d
- 19 vrai ment fai t un: des plats euh comme ils les
cooked actual di shes um as they' d
- 20 cui si neraient chez eux, et le truc mai s c' étai t euh
do back home and the whol e thi ng was um
- 21 'fi n fall ai t du riz en con- en .h en conti nu pa' ce que
well you had to eat rice con- conti nuously 'cause
- 22 si non tu: tu [t' arrachai s la gueul e quoi .h]
otherwi se i: t i t woul d bl ow your head off then
- 23 NIC [fouai s .hÉ c' est ça (.)] quand
yeah that' s i t when
- 24 t' es pas habi tué ouai s °(xx)°
you' re not used to i t yeah
- 25 (0.8)
- 26 CHA → donc **j' pense qu' i'** doi vent adapter un peu et p' is
so I think that they must adapt a bi t and then
- 27 p' t-ê t' f- composer aussi avec c' qu' on trouve...
maybe d- compose too wi th what they fi nd

As in the previous excerpt in (91), the design of Nicolas' question (lines 1-5/7), containing itself the prosodically stressed finite form *penses* 'think' (second-person

subject) (*est-ce que tu penses que...* ‘do you think that...’, line 1), could trigger the use of the target construction subsequently. However, this excerpt differs slightly from the one presented in (91). Here, *JP* similarly projects a preferred next action, but its position in the sequence differs: it does not immediately follow the question. In line 8 (arrowed), Charlotte’s turn is initiated by the negative response particle *nan* ‘no’, followed by a micro-pause and a use of *JP* in the negative form, which may have been initiated already when she first attempted to take the floor in line 6 (arrowed). Although the present study does not focus on uses of *je (ne) pense pas* ‘I don’t think’, its work here appears to be similar to the work accomplished by *JP* in the same interactional sequence. That is, it serves as a transition between the two parts of the question-answer adjacency pair.

In line 10, Charlotte abandons her TCU before it is brought to completion, to begin a new one (line 11) after a brief pause. Together with the reformulative marker *enfin* ‘well, I mean’ (e.g. Rossari, 1994, 2000a; Hansen, 2005), *JP* marks a transition between two discourse units in her own turn, helping her to reformulate her thoughts (see section 6.2). In addition, *JP* operates a backward orientation, through which it marks the subsequent talk as a relevant next action with respect to her interlocutor’s question in prior talk. Finally, *JP* occurs a second time in line 26 to introduce another TCU in which she sums up her response. Note that the turn-initial marker *donc* ‘so’, which has been described as marking the resumption of a topic mentioned earlier in a conversation (Zénone, 1981; Hansen, 1998b: 325), already foreshadows this action. Here again, *JP* serves to orient the turn to Nicolas’ question (lines 1-5/7), marking what follows as another unit of her response. This second use of *JP* (together with *donc* ‘so’) illustrates the variable scope of the construction as a discourse marker. With respect to its semantics, *JP* foregrounds the epistemic component of meaning, unlike in the excerpt in (91): Charlotte flags an uncertainty that foreign cooking practices are adhered to in Europe.

6.3.2 Second-opinions: shifting the perspective

In the type of context described in this section, *JP* occurs in responding turns following an initial expression of opinion from a prior speaker. I will refer to these turns as second-opinions, and conversely, initial expressions of opinion will be referred to as first-opinions. Second-opinions reflect the active participation of a speaker in the conversation (see Pomerantz, 1984: 57): they may be proffered to agree or disagree with the prior turn, or to introduce an additional viewpoint that is neutral, in the sense that it neither agrees nor disagrees with the prior turn. Within second-opinions, *JP*, by conveying stance, helps to shift the perspective from the prior to the current speaker, thus marking a transition between the two actions con-

stituted by first- and second-opinions: first, it signals that the preceding turn has been understood as an opinion, and second, that what follows is the speaker's own opinion.

Second-opinions will be analysed in terms of affiliation and disaffiliation (among others, Heritage, 1984; Pomerantz, 1984; Stivers, 2008; Lindström & Sorjonen, 2013), since they relate to the stance taken: second-opinions are seen as affiliative actions when the speaker supports or endorses the stance expressed by their interlocutor; in the same way, second-opinions displaying a diverging stance from the prior speaker constitute disaffiliative actions. In terms of preference structure, actions that affiliate and those that disaffiliate with the prior turn are structured differently (e.g. Heritage, 1984). In the case of second-opinions, the data show, for instance, that affiliative second-opinions are performed with a minimal gap after the prior turn's completion, while disaffiliative second-opinions tend to be prefaced and delayed. As such, the former constitute *preferred next actions*, while the latter constitute *dispreferred next actions* (Pomerantz, 1984: 63; Pomerantz & Heritage, 2013). I will argue that as part of preferred and dispreferred actions, one of the roles of *JP* is to mitigate affiliative and disaffiliative actions. As part of affiliative actions, *JP* acts as a weak agreement marker through which the speaker distances themselves from the action; as part of disaffiliative actions, the marker minimises the threatening component of the action.

In the database, 20 instances of *JP* occur in second-opinions: nine instances of *JP* occur in affiliative second-opinions (section 6.3.2.1), while eight instances occur in disaffiliative second-opinions (section 6.3.2.2). Of the three remaining instances, two occur in turns that clearly display a perspective shift, but where it is not possible to determine the speaker's viewpoint since their turns are abandoned halfway through their production. Finally, the last instance appears in a second-opinion which neither affiliates or disaffiliates with the prior turn, but rather presents a supplementary viewpoint.

With respect to its position, there is a clear preference for *JP* to occur in matrix and turn-initial position, where the construction foreshadows the speaker's stance from the very beginning of the turn. However, of the twenty instances in this environment, five are parenthetical clauses occurring turn-medially or -finally, and three are standalone constructions.

6.3.2.1 Second-opinions as affiliative actions

The excerpt in (94) instantiates a second-opinion, prefaced by *JP*, that affiliates with a first-opinion. It begins with Nicolas comparing the meaning of traditional food to gastronomic food.

(94) Interaction 1.2 - Nicolas / Paul

- 1 NIC est-ce que c'est: est-ce que la cuisine traditionnelle
is it is traditional cuisine
- 2 c'est genre euh quand euh:
it's like um when um
- 3 (0.6)
- 4 NIC Les bons plats qu' te f' sait ta maman euh quand tu é-
good meals that your mum um used to cook when you y-
- 5 quand tu étais enfant ou les: Les plats qui ont une
when you were young or the meals that have an
- 6 histoire qui date et qu' ont été: cuisinés par euh
old history and that were cooked by um
- 7 (0.3) ((sniffs)) j' sais pas par des tre: - par les -
I don't know by some tri- by
- 8 par les tribus [qui habitaient no- not' pays avant]=
tribes that used to live in ou- our country
- 9 PAU → [ouais **j:' pense que** (ouais)]
yeah I think that (yeah)
- 10 NIC =éhé=
- 11 PAU → =**j' pense que** ça doit êt' ↑ça alors. une espèce de
I think that it might be that then. a sort of
- 12 culture d' la cuisine, qui se: (0.5) perpétue.
culture of cuisine, that's been perpetuated.
- 13 est-ce que tu vas souvent du coup dans les:
do you often go then in
- 14 restaurants,
restaurants,

Arguably, this instance of *JP* could be classified in question-answer sequences, as Nicolas' turn is designed as a question introduced by *est-ce que c'est...* 'is it...' (line 1). This may trigger the use of *JP* in what would be the second pair-part of an adjacency pair (lines 9/11-12) (see section 6.3.1). However, Nicolas' extended turn (from line 1 to 8) suggests the intention to display his own opinion about traditional food, rather than the expectation of an answer from his interlocutor. In line 9, Paul's turn is initiated by the particle of agreement *ouais* 'yeah' which displays an affiliation, followed by *JP*, repeated in line 11 – possibly due to the overlap with the end of Nicolas' turn (line 8). The turn-initial position of *JP*, although not absolute since prefaced by *ouais* 'yeah', connects Nicolas' first-opinion with Paul's second-

opinion, by introducing an affiliation with the first-opinion – namely, what could be understood as traditional food.

Paul's turn consists of two parts: the first part ends with *perpétue* 'perpetuated' (line 12), which marks a possible point of completion, and displays his opinion in reaction to Nicolas' prior turn; the second part is in the form of a question introduced by *est-ce que* 'is it...' (line 13), and does not have any direct topical link with what precedes. Thus, the first part of Paul's turn arguably acts as a smooth transition before shifting topic. With respect to its semantics, *JP* here foregrounds an epistemic meaning: Paul is expressing his non-knowledge about what falls within the definition of traditional food.

On three occasions, instances of *JP* marking an affiliative action with the prior turn form a separate unit, insofar as they are not followed by any complement, which has to be recovered from the prior turn. However, *JP* never occurs completely on its own, but is systematically preceded or followed by *ouais* 'yeah', an informal version of the positive response particle *oui* 'yes', which also marks affiliation (see also the example in (94) above). In such cases, the first-opinion already displays a first use of the construction, which seems to prompt the use of *JP* in the next speaker's turn. Thus, the use of the same construction in second-opinions is likely produced by mimicry based on affiliative motives, to participate in the elaboration of a coherent discourse (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Tannen, 1989: chapter 3). Overall, the role of *JP* is to ratify the prior turn in an unassertive fashion, as exemplified in (95) and (96) below. The participants are tacitly negotiating a topic shift and the closing of the conversation, respectively, based on the time that has gone by since the beginning of the recording, a reliable indicator with respect to the management of the interaction.

(95) Interaction 2.5 - Adeline / Bruno

- | | | |
|---|-------|--|
| 1 | BRU | je sais pas à quelle heure on a commencé.
<i>I don't know at what time we begun.</i> |
| 2 | | (...) |
| 3 | ADE | je sais pas du tout du coup.
<i>I don't know at all then.</i> |
| 4 | | (1.1) |
| 5 | BRU | eh ouais
<i>eh yeah</i> |
| 6 | ADE → | oh ça doit bien faire cinq minutes, °enfin j' pense°
<i>oh it must be a good five minutes, I mean I think</i> |
| 7 | | £(h) [(h) (h) (h) .hhh£] |

- 8 BRU → [j' pense ouai s (0.5) .hh (0.7) okay] bah euh
I think so yeah okay well um
- 9 ouai s (.) et tu lis quoi du coup?
yeah and what are you reading then?
- 10 ADE .tsk al ors j' ai :: fini l a b d...
so I've finished the graphic novel

In chapter 5, Adeline's turn-final use of *JP* (line 6, arrowed) was described as an epistemic marker seemingly toning down an over-assertive utterance.³ The subjective component of meaning, backgrounded, invites the inference that Bruno's opinion may be different. But Bruno agrees with Adeline in the subsequent turn (line 8, arrowed). Similarly to the excerpt in (94) above, Bruno's last TCU in line 9 introduces the new topic of conversation (*et tu lis quoi du coup?* 'and what are you reading then?'): the affiliative action may therefore be seen as potentially facilitating the transition between Adeline's pre-initiation of a new topic, and Bruno's introduction of this topic.

In (96), the affiliative action performed through the use of *JP* (line 4, arrowed), in reaction to Adeline's first-opinion (line 1), is delayed by a question-answer adjacency pair (lines 2-3).

(96) Interaction 2.5 - Adeline / Bruno

- 1 ADE E. hE (.) .hh j' pense qu' on est bon,
I think that's it's enough,
- 2 BRU .hh tu penses?=
do you think so?
- 3 ADE mouai s,
m=yeah,
- 4 BRU → ouai s j' pen[se]
yeah I think so
- 5 ADE [j -] j' crois qu' c' étai t di x-hui t heures
I - I believe that it was two past
- 6 deux. (0.2) quand euh:
six when um:
- 7 BRU okay
okay

³See example (49).

Overall, standalone constructions appear to be used as strategic responding actions, affiliating with the prior speaker in a non-assertive manner.

6.3.2.2 Second-opinions as disaffiliative actions

A total of eight instances of *JP* occur in second-opinions that disaffiliate with the prior turn: five of these are matrix clauses occurring in turn-initial position, and three are clause-final parentheticals occurring in turn-medial (two instances) or turn-final (one instance) position.

In certain second pair-parts of adjacency pairs, such as responses to yes/no questions, assessments or invitations, Pomerantz and Heritage (2013: 214) describe a preference principle along the lines of “If possible, avoid or minimize a stated disagreement, disconfirmation, or rejection and, if possible, include an agreement, confirmation, acceptance or other supportive action.” As such, dispreferred seconds are frequently accompanied by actions that indicate a reluctance from the speaker to perform them, such as delay, hesitation, mitigation or accounts (among others, Levinson, 1983: 307; Davidson, 1990; Lerner, 1996: 311; Pomerantz & Heritage, 2013: 214). The actions in question here illustrate a dispreferred type of action since they are disaffiliative in nature. They are thereby frequently performed with features marking a deviation from the preferred action. In addition to enhancing discourse coherence by shifting the speaker’s perspective, *JP* can be seen as a hedging device downplaying the threatening component of the dispreferred action it accompanies.

In turn-initial position, with the exception of one instance, *JP* is always prefaced by one or several discourse markers (see section 6.1): *boh* ‘well’, *puis* ‘then’, *mais* ‘but’ and *nan mais* ‘no but’. At least three of these markers can be accounted for in terms of preference, as they introduce a contrast with what precedes and delay the dispreferred next action. Below, the excerpts from (97) to (99) illustrate the use of *JP* in second-opinions as disaffiliative actions.

(97) Interaction 1.3 - Charlotte / Nicolas

- | | | |
|---|-----|---|
| 1 | NIC | est-ce que tu penses plus que c'est un art culinaire
<i>do you think more that it's a culinary art</i> |
| 2 | | (ou; qu')une science culinaire fhf=
<i>(or; that) a culinary science</i> |
| 3 | CHA | =moi je suis plus pour la science
<i>me I'm more for culinary</i> |
| 4 | | cu[linaire que pour l'art culinaire. ouais]
<i>science than culinary art. yeah</i> |

- 5 NIC [ah ouai s (xx) t' es comme ça. Èh] .hhÉ (.)
ah yeah you're like this.
- 6 °(xx)° =
- 7 CHA =di rect.
directly.
- 8 NIC → okay.
okay.
- 9 (1.0)
- 10 NIC boh °j' pense° les deux- les deux peuvent
well I think both- both of them can
- 11 se conc' voir hein, .h 'fin j' sais pas.
be appreciated huh, well I don't know.

This excerpt follows a discussion about culinary arts, toward which Charlotte's stance is clear-cut: she is reluctant to refer to food design as an art. This discussion leads Nicolas to formulate his question in line 1. Here again, Charlotte's response in lines 3-4 displays a strong conviction. In lines 10-11, Nicolas offers a different viewpoint: he is in favor of the two concepts. Several features suggest that his turn is designed in a way to tone down an overt disagreement: first, his turn is prefaced by *okay* (line 8, arrowed) which initially acknowledges Charlotte's response. This is followed by a full one-second silence (line 9), the prefacing marker *boh* 'well' (see Hansen, 1995, 1998: chapter 10) and a prosodically softened use of *JP* (line 10), all delaying the disaffiliative action. In line 10, the stumbling repetition of *les deux* 'both' might also participate in Nicolas' reluctance in formulating a dispreferred action. Finally, the addition of the second TCU '*fin je sais pas* 'well I don't know', built as an increment (Schegloff, 1996; Ford et al., 2002; Horlacher, 2015: chapter 4; Pekarek Doehler et al., 2015: chapter 4) after a short in-breath to opt out of his turn, may be seen as softening his prior action (on turn-final English *I don't know* downgrading the speaker's commitment, see Potter, 1996; on turn-final French *je sais pas* as a turn-exit device, see Pekarek Doehler, 2016).

The excerpt in (98) similarly illustrates a disaffiliative action by Patricia (lines 6-8). The two participants are talking about Patricia's flatmate, who she had previously described as a possessive person.

(98) Interaction 3.2 - Judith / Patricia

- 1 PAT il est jaloux mais euh: genre pire que moi j' crois hein,
he's jealous but um like worse than me I believe huh,
- 2 (1.1)

- 3 PAT 'c' que là déjà [euh 'fi n-]
'cause now yet um well -
- 4 JUD [il est amou]reux de toi.
he's in love with you.
- 5 (0.6)
- 6 PAT → nan mais **j' pense qu'**il est vraiment jaloux comme moi
no but I think that he's really jealous like me
- 7 >tu vois< genre euh même avec ses ami:s
you see like um even with his friends
- 8 avec tout quoi
with everything then

In line 4, Judith offers a reason for the possessive character of Patricia's flatmate, which is followed by a rejection by Patricia (lines 6-8). Judith's turn (line 4) is first met by silence (line 5), a delaying device referred to by Pomerantz (1984: 70) as "no immediately forthcoming talk". In line 6 (arrowed), the turn-initial cluster *nan mais* 'no but', composed of the negative particle *nan* and the contrastive marker *mais*, foreshadows a disaffiliative action. Patricia's candidate explanation (*il est vraiment jaloux comme moi...* 'he's really jealous like me...', line 6) is introduced by *JP*, which serves both a hedging and a discourse-organisational function, connecting the two speakers' turns by announcing a shift of perspective. In addition to *JP*, several features mitigate Patricia's disaffiliative turn: the interpersonal discourse marker *tu vois* (line 7) appeals to the interlocutor's understanding while involving her in the discourse (Bolly, 2010; Secova, 2010; Crible, 2019), while the expansion *même avec ses amis avec tout quoi* 'even with his friends with everything then' (lines 7-8) supports her account.

The excerpt in (99) displays another example, where *JP* is used in parenthetical position. At the beginning of the excerpt, Nicolas' extended turn (lines 1-7, 9-10 and 12-13) recounts that he is in the habit of eating fast to the point that he would forget soon after the taste of what he just ate.

(99) Interaction 1.3 - Charlotte / Nicolas

- 1 NIC .h moi j' me re- j' remarque des fois j' sais pas Es' tu
I my- I notice sometimes I don't know if you
- 2 fais ça mais .hÉ fait je j'ai tendance à manger trop vite
do it but fact I- I tend to eat too fast
- 3 et du coup sans euh fait j' suis pas euh (0.3) en fait
and so without um in fact I'm not um in fact

- 4 j' suis pas du tout dans l' truc besoin biologique
I'm not at all in the thing biological need
- 5 mais des fois (t' sais; t' es) genre tu manges (0.4) là
but sometimes (you know; you're) like you eat then
- 6 là t' as fini ton plat °(et tu t' dis euh)° en fait
you're finished your plate (and you're like um) in fact
- 7 j' (m'en) rappelle p'us du goût [Équ' ça avait .hÉ du]=
I don't remember what it tasted like so
- 8 CHA [Éhh ah ahÉ]
- 9 NIC =coup ça fait un peu genre le mec qu' a bouffé vraiment
then it's like the guy really stuffed himself with food
- 10 [pour euh: .h sa]tisfaire=
himself with food to um satisfy
- 11 CHA [((coughs)) ouais]
yeah
- 12 NIC =un besoin qui qu' a même pas fait attention quoi. (0.4)
a need who who didn't even paid attention then.
- 13 mais euh j' sais pas É'finÉ
but um I don't know well
- 14 CHA beh ça c'est quand on mange seul souvent ça fait ça.
well it happens when we eat alone it often happens.
- 15 NIC oui, [(bah ouais) ()]
yes, well yeah
- 16 CHA [pa'ce que- du coup quand t' es] avec des amis tu-
'cause- so when you're with friends you-
- 17 → comme tu parles tu prends un peu plus le temps de: =mh:
'cause you speak you take a bit more time to um
- 18 (0.6)
- 19 NIC mouai:s, beh j' sais pas Émoi j- justement j' s'rai:s (.)
yeah, well I don't know for me a- actually I'd be
- 20 plus concentrée sur la conversation et .h b- pas faire
more focused on the conversation and b- not be
- 21 gaffe à trop c' que j' mange si j' fais pas 'fin si j' me
too careful about what I'm eating if I don't well if I
- 22 pa- concentre pas d'ssus à un moment [donné quoi]=
fo- don't focus on it at some point then
- 23 CHA [ouai:s]
yeah
- 24 NIC =.h ['fin c'est:]=

- well i t' s*
- 25 CHA [c' est vrai .]
that' s right.
- 26 NIC → =c' est plus une étourderie **j' pense** plus qu(h)oi
i t' s more an absent-mindedness I think more than
- 27 (après) que: =
(after) than
- 28 CHA =et t' as remarqué qu' quand on est à table avec des
and have you noticed that when eating with friends
- 29 potes on fini t toujours par parler d' bouffe?
we always end up talking about food?

In lines 9-10 and 12, Nicolas is being critical of himself because in the situation he is describing, he feels like he eats without paying the least attention to the food, just to satisfy a biological need. In the next turn (lines 14 and 16-17), Charlotte offers a candidate explanation, suggesting that this is more likely to happen when people eat alone. In line 17 (arrowed), she stops talking before producing a syntactically complete sentence, stretching the sound of the last word of her turn (*de* 'of') to which is added the marker *mh*. This, as well as 0.6 second pause that ensues (line 18), suggest that she is potentially expecting confirmation from her interlocutor. However, Nicolas' ensuing turn from line 19 does not display the expected next action. His turn is initiated by *mouais* 'yeah', in which the final sound is partially elongated, directly followed by *beh je sais pas* 'well I don't know'. Pekarek Doehler (2016: 156) shows how in responses to questions, the epistemic disclaimer *je sais pas* 'I don't know' can be used to foreshadow a dispreferred action. Although *je sais pas* does not follow a prior question in this specific context, its role is similar since Nicolas' turn displays a different stance from Charlotte's. This is further supported by the use of the strong pronoun *moi* 'as far as I am concerned' (literally 'me') as well as the adverb *justement* 'actually' (literally 'precisely') (line 19), both of them stressing a deviation from the viewpoint of Nicolas' interlocutor: on the contrary, in Nicolas' view, it is easier to pay attention to food when he eats alone, whereas he would be distracted while eating with friends. In line 26 (arrowed), Nicolas adds a self-deprecating assessment (*c'est plus une étourderie* 'it's more an absent-mindedness') that can be interpreted as an alternative, delayed account of his own habit. The addition of *JP* in clause-final position weakens the disaffiliative action, and this also seems to be the role of the post-posed use of *quoi* (line 26). Here, *quoi* can be interpreted as a hedge downplaying the appropriacy of the word *étourderie*, which might not be the right word to describe Nicolas' experience (Beeching, 2002: 186). Finally, through the use of the comparative form *plus* 'more', Nicolas implicitly

distances himself from Charlotte's viewpoint.

In addition to fulfilling a mitigating function, *je pense* has an organisational role which is distinct from its role in clause-initial position. Due to its parenthetical position, this instance of *JP* (alongside the markers that follow) marks the end of a sequence.

6.4 *Je pense* in initiating turns: shifting the topic of talk

By contrast with the previous section, *JP* may also occur in turns that do not respond to a prior action, and that are therefore not connected with what came before: they initiate an action which is independent from the prior turn. This represents a relatively small number, namely five instances of *JP*, but they are worth highlighting because they perform a specific type of action which is not observed with *JC* or *JT*. On such occasions, the construction always occurs in turn-initial position, in such a way as to sequentially detach what ensues from the prior turn. All four instances were found in Corpus 2 and directly refer to the conversational activity the participants are engaged in: two of them occur in turns bringing the conversation to a close, while the two others occur in turns changing the topic under discussion. These specific actions are obviously the result of the data collection method which, as described in chapter 2, affected certain aspects of the recordings, among which the presence of explicit topic shifts and closings.

As was observed in section 6.1, *JP* may not occupy the absolute turn-beginning position. Of the four instances described in this section, two are prefaced by items that have been described as discourse markers, namely *donc voilà* 'so that's it' (on *donc*, see Zénone, 1981; Hansen, 1998b, 1997) and another by *mais* 'but' (e.g. Carel, 2002). As such, *JP* forms a cluster together with these prefatory markers, and, although each item has a specific role, the organisational role is performed by these clusters. Furthermore, the discontinuity with the prior turn is marked by pauses, in-breaths and/or sound stretches, as exemplified in the excerpts below.

Overall, the role of *JP* in this environment is to contribute, together with the prefatory items present, to the smooth running of the interactional activity. Within turns switching the topic of discussion, *JP* thus contributes to avoiding an abrupt topic shift by facilitating the transition from one topic to another; within turns bringing the conversation to a close, it helps to exit from talk in a conversational context where a typical closing sequence is not expected, due to the data collection method. The three excerpts below exemplify two instances of *JP* in a topic-shift sequence, and one in conversation-closing.

The first excerpt in (100) occurs approximately seven minutes into the conversation, which corresponds to approximately half of the time participants were asked to speak for.

(100) Interaction 2.8 - Adeline / Bruno / Céline / Quentin

- 1 ((CEL looks at the topics sheet))
 2 CEL . tsk mais euh: : =m:
 but um
 (1.4)
 4 ADE → ((to CEL)) on y est ou pas?=
 are we there or not?
 5 CEL =. tsk mai: s **j' pense que**: : c'est quand même mi eux de:
 but I think that still it's better to
 6 réduire sa consommation de viande.
 reduce our meat consumption.

At this point, the participants have been discussing the first topic of conversation that was suggested to them. Céline's glance at the topics (line 1) and her subsequent talk (line 2) suggest that she is getting ready to move on to the second topic, possibly considering in addition the time that has gone by so far as a benchmark. This is noticed by Adeline, who then asks Céline about the progression of the conversation (line 4, arrowed), and interprets Céline's turn in line 2 as closing-implicative (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973). Adeline's turn in line 4 is ignored by Céline, who displays her opinion about the second topic suggested: *It is necessary to stop eating meat in order to adopt a sustainable mode of living*. Her preceding talk in line 2, as well as the beginning of her turn in line 5, avoid a sudden change of topic while buying her time to formulate what to say and/or how to design her turn: this is indicated by hesitation and sound stretches punctuating her turn. Two instances of the contrastive marker *mais* 'but' (in line 2 and in line 5), prefacing *JP*, signal a discontinuity with the prior talk. At the beginning of her turn (line 5), *JP* enhances discourse coherence by contributing to a change of topic, while acting as a floor-holder securing the co-participants' attention. It additionally suggests that her turn has not reached a point of completion yet, and that she has something relevant to say with respect to the topic she is about to introduce.

The excerpt in (101) follows a storytelling by Quentin.

(101) Interaction 2.4 - Bruno / Quentin

- 1 (1.3)
- 2 BRU → .tsk donc voilà **j' pense** ça va m' prendre
so yeah I think it will take me
- 3 un peu d' temps ça,
a bit of time this,
- 4 QUE ((sympathetic tone)) mh=beh ouai s.
mh well yeah.
- 5 BRU .h (0.3) c:' que: si faut que: euh::
'cause if I've got to um
- 6 (0.9)
- 7 BRU que euh:: j' envoi e déjà un recommandé
to um send a registered letter yet
- 8 j' vais l' payer six balles, ...
I'm gonna pay it six quids, ...

After a 1.3 second pause (line 1), Bruno reintroduces in line 2 (arrowed) an earlier topic that was discussed before Quentin's storytelling, and to which *ça* 'this, it' deictically refers. His turn is prefaced by the cluster of discourse markers *donc voilà* 'so that's it', to which *JP* arguably belongs, and which contribute to resume the previous topic (on *donc* 'so', see Hansen, 1998b: chapter 13). Simultaneously, the cluster of markers signals that the speaker heads off in a different direction, and changes the topic of conversation.

The excerpt in (102) displays the end of the conversation between Céline and Bruno.

(102) Interaction 2 - Céline / Bruno

- 1 CEL bah déjà linkedin j' comprends rien du [tout]
well for one thing LinkedIn I don't understand anything
- 2 BRU [link]edin
LinkedIn
- 3 j' comprends rien aussi hein
I don't understand anything either huh
- 4 CEL roh la la c'est un .hhh c'est trop nul
oh boy it's a it's really lame
- 5 → (0.5)
- 6 BRU bah=f si tu sais t'en
well=f if you know how
- 7 ser[vir ça ça peut être assez bien quand même mais euh]

- to use it it it may be quite nice still but um
- 8 CEL [ouai s (j' avoue) . h beh après ça dépend vraiment des
yeah (I agree) well then it really depends of
- 9 fi]li ères (0.2) j' pense qu' y en a qui recrute via ça,
the sector I think that some people recruit via it,
- 10 BRU → mh (0.2) bah ouai s (0.2) c' est ça
mh well yeah that's it
- 11 (0.5)
- 12 BRU . h i' r' crutent via ça et p' is euh :
they recruit via it and then um
- 13 (0.6)
- 14 BRU et p' is euh du coup t' as euh vraiment euh tout ton c v
and then um so you' ve um really um everything your cv
- 15 tout ça directement euh toutes les
and that directly um all the
- 16 expériences professionnelles euh les compétences
professional experiences um the competences
- 17 que t' as [acqui s euh]
that you' ve acquired um
- 18 CEL → [ouai s c' est ça]
yeah that's it
- 19 (1.0)
- 20 BRU ça c' est quand même vachement bien et puis
this is yet really nice and then
- 21 dès qu' quel qu' un entend parler d' un poste euh
as soon as somebody hears from a job um
- 22 hop tiens j' te mets ça sur linkedin et hop,
there you go I put it on your LinkedIn and there you go,
- 23 (0.3)
- 24 CEL → ouai s mais ça dépend vraiment du secteur.
yeah but it depends on the sector really.
- 25 BRU bah ouai s c' est ça.
well yeah that's it.
- 26 CEL genre le mien, c' est même pas la peine.
like mine, it's not even worth it.
- 27 BRU Émh mh mh mhÉ
- 28 CEL → . hh j' pense que c' est bon.
I think that it's enough.

In line 1, Céline introduces into the discussion the online professional network LinkedIn, of which she gives a negative assessment. This is responded to by an affiliative action on the part of Bruno (lines 2-3), encouraging Céline to add a second negative assessment in line 4. However, the 0.5 second pause in line 5 (arrowed) foreshadows a dispreferred turn from Bruno: from line 6, he begins to enumerate a range of practical aspects of the service. Throughout the excerpt, the moderate participation of Céline and the function of her turns are evidence that she is progressively disengaging from the conversation. In lines 8-9, she challenges Bruno's previous judgement (lines 6-7) by restricting the number of users that LinkedIn may be helpful for. Following her turn, there are several potential TRPs in the middle of line 10 (arrowed) where Céline could self-select, but does not. She then takes the floor in line 18 (arrowed), displaying affiliation with Bruno. Her affiliative turn overlaps with Bruno's turn (line 17), and the ensuing one second pause in line 19 suggests that at this point, Bruno yields the floor to her. However, as Céline does not continue speaking, Bruno takes the floor back (line 20), pursuing his prior turn. In line 24 (arrowed), Céline reiterates the point she made earlier (lines 8-9), before acknowledging that the social network is not directly relevant to her (line 26).

Due to the fixed time limit on the interactions, Céline's turn in line 28 (arrowed) strategically functions to close the conversation. It is not performed immediately after her turn in line 26: rather, she pauses and her turn is responded to with laughter by Bruno (line 27). The video recording shows that during her turn in line 28, Céline leans over the table from her seat, very likely in order to see the time on the recorder. The conversational closing is thus performed both by the utterance of *je pense que c'est bon* 'I think that it's enough' (line 28) and her non-verbal behavior. Occurring in turn-initial position, *JP* is used as a device to introduce the conversation closing as a coherent action. In addition, and this will be developed further in section 6.5, *JP* may be interpreted as a mitigating device signaling that Céline is merely suggesting the conversational closing rather than imposing it.

6.5 *Je pense* as a face-saving device

This last section focuses on occurrences of *JP* which are politeness-driven. Chapter 3 presented an overview of politeness-related studies on *JP* (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1992; Mullan, 2010) and English *I think*, which has largely been considered a hedging/face-saving device within Speech Act theory (Lakoff, 1972; Coates, 1987; Holmes, 1990; Aijmer, 1997). Within Brown and Levinson's (1978; 1987) framework, English *I think* is a Quality hedge (in the sense of Grice, 1975) on the illocutionary force, satisfying the speaker's want insofar as it "may suggest that the speaker is not taking full responsibility for the truth of his utterance." (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 146) Its

face-saving function is due to the speaker's desire not to coerce the hearer by assuming that they are willing to cooperate and comply with the speaker's utterance. It is therefore in their model a negative-politeness strategy, in that it provides redressive action to the hearer's negative face, i.e. their desire for freedom of action not to be imposed on. French *JP* fulfils a similar face-saving function to its English equivalent, and I argue that this function is related to its subjective component of meaning: by conveying a subjective stance, the speaker recognises that other opinions are possible and does not assume the addressee's adherence to their own opinion. On the other hand, I argue that the epistemic component of meaning encoded in *JP* is a way to protect the speaker's own negative face: by weakening their commitment to their utterance, speakers mitigate any possible loss of face in case they are proven wrong, or if their opinion is subsequently challenged. Chapter 7 will provide further evidence of the correlation between each component of meaning and the type of face protected: indeed, *JC*, which is systematically used as an epistemic marker in the database, only performs redress to the speaker's face; by contrast, *JT*, which only encodes a subjective component of meaning, only performs redressive action to the hearer's face.

Thus, *JP* may be oriented towards saving either the speaker's or the hearer's face, by softening a potential or actual threat. This politeness-related function may be seen as a by-product of its coded meaning (cf. chapter 4). The two sections below exemplify instances of *JP* as a redressive action for the hearer's face (section 6.5.2) and the speaker's face (section 6.5.1) (see also Angot & Hansen, 2021).

6.5.1 Redressive actions to the hearer's face

Following Brown and Levinson (1987), I consider that *JP* conveys redressive action to the hearer's negative face, insofar as the speaker does not assume that hearers want to cooperate, and avoids imposing their opinion. This could explain the frequency of *JP* in argumentative sequences, where speakers support their position while simultaneously showing openness, or its use to mitigate a disaffiliative action (see section 6.3.2.2). Another environment where *JP* recurs has to do with actions, and more particularly actions linked with the management of the conversation (see section 6.4). As mentioned earlier, the data collection method resulted at times in explicit topic shifts and conversation closings. Performing such actions can potentially threaten the addressee's face, insofar as the interlocutor(s) may want to be involved in making this decision. The use of *JP* in such contexts seems to be a way for speakers to soften their actions, by seeking approval from their interlocutor(s) and not imposing themselves as leading the conversation. Above, the excerpts in (96) and (102), partially repeated below in (103) and (104), illustrate the use of

JP to mitigate the closing of the conversation. Moreover, in (105) and (106), the speaker invites their interlocutor(s) to change the subject under discussion.

(103) Interaction 2.5 - Adeline / Bruno

1 ADE É. hÉ (.) .hh **j' pense qu'** on est bon,
I think that's it's enough,

(104) Interaction 2 - Céline / Bruno

1 CEL .hh **j' pense que** c' est bon.
I think that it's enough.

(105) Interaction 2.5 - Adeline / Bruno

1 ADE on peut p' t-êt' swi tcher là **j' pense**,
we can perhaps swi tch now I think,

(106) Interaction 2.7 - Adeline / Bruno / Quentin

1 BRU **j' pense** on peut- beh on peut changer d' sujet (hei n)
I think we can- well we can change the topic (huh)

In the four excerpts, these uses of *JP* signal that the speakers are merely suggesting the conversational closing or the topic shift, rather than imposing it. Arguably, *JP* could also be a face-saving device toward the speaker's own face, as a way to avoid being accountable in case the interactions do not meet the criteria expected.

As a strategy of non-imposition (i.e. negative politeness), *JP* occurs with deontic modality on several occasions in my database, in line with the idea that “mitigation affecting deontic modality reduces addressee's obligations” (Caffi, 1999: 882). This is the case with (105) above, which involves the deontic modal verb *pouvoir* ‘can’. Moreover, *JP* is used in collocation with the epistemic modal adverb *peut-être* ‘perhaps’. Three times, *JP* co-occurs with the deontic modal verb *falloir* ‘to be necessary/must’, as exemplified in (87) above (see also line 8 of excerpt in (79) in chapter 5).

Finally, the excerpts in (107) and (108) below display instances of *JP* used as a

no I think that she made

6 les sujets pour euh: (0.2) pour qu' on en parle.
 the subjects so um so we talk about them.

Quentin's question in lines 1-2/4 refers to the two topics that participants were asked to discuss. In line 5 (arrowed), Adeline's rejection of Quentin's question is mitigated by *JP*, as a redressive action to Quentin's negative face.

With respect to their meaning, both instances of *JP* in (107) and (108) foreground the epistemic component of meaning: Charlotte probably does not know whether someone would be poisoned were they to eat acrylic, and Adeline does not know how their ignoring one of the two topics suggested might be perceived.

Interestingly, the first-person subject *je* is in both excerpts phonologically realised in its full form [Z@pãs], whereas it predominantly appears in its reduced form [Spãs] in the database. Furthermore, the verb form *pense* in (107) displays prosodic prominence and bears the highest rising intonation among all similar tokens. Politeness may account for this, although these characteristics are associated with other properties in chapter 9.

6.5.2 Redressive actions to the speaker's face

The speaker's commitment may also be weakened to protect the speaker's own face. When *JP* functions as an epistemic marker, the speaker avoids presenting a statement as fact in case they are proven wrong, or to acknowledge that they may be mistaking, thereby mitigating any loss of face effected by a potential subsequent correction. When *JP* is used as a subjective marker, the speaker shows openness in case their argument is subsequently challenged.

The excerpt in (93) above (section 6.3.1) provided an example: the epistemic marker *JP* is used to weaken the speaker's stance towards the matter at hand, namely whether foreign cooking practices are adhered to in Europe.

Another example is provided in (109).

(109) Interaction 3.3 - Judith / Patricia

1 PAT ... tu dois l' rendre quand ton mémoire?
 when do you have to hand your master's thesis?

2 JUD → oh ce s' ra en juillet j' pense.
 oh it will be in July I think.

3 (1.0)

4 JUD euh: : : .

- um.
- 5 (1. 7)
- 6 JUD → **j' pense que** non ce sera en juin: , et la soutenance
I think that no it will be in June, and the defense
- 7 en juillet, j' sais pas.
in July, I don't know.

The semantic contribution of *JP* (line 2, arrowed), which foregrounds the epistemic component of meaning, displays Judith's uncertainty about the exact moment when she must submit her master's thesis. *JP* also denies Judith's status of "knowing recipient" attributed by Patricia through her question in line 1 (Heritage, 2013: 378). Added at the very end of her turn, the construction helps her to adjust her contribution, and more particularly her (lack of) knowledge towards the information delivered. Here, *JP* appears as a resource signalling a potentially incorrect information, thus mildly protecting her own face to avoid subsequent self-repair or were she to initiate self-repair, which she eventually does: in line 6 (arrowed), *juin* 'June' replaces *juillet* 'July'. This new information is once again downgraded by *JP*, occurring in turn-initial, matrix position, as well as hesitation (line 4) and the epistemic disclaimer *je sais pas* 'I don't know' (line 7) (Pekarek Doehler, 2016).

In chapter 5 (section 5.1.3), I highlighted frequent interactions between *JP* and future states of affairs, where the speaker indicates their belief about what is going to happen in a future situation. Thus, 25% of the epistemic uses of *JP* (15.3% of the total instances) are in the future tense, with a clear preference for the periphrastic future. Associated with future states of affairs, the epistemic marker weakens the commitment of the speaker about the actual realisation of the proposition. In section 6.2 above, the example in (89) illustrated a turn-medial use of *JP* in association with a future tense. Moreover, two examples were given in section 5.1.3 to illustrate the collocation between *JP* and the periphrastic future. In this chapter, one of them was repeated in (101) above as a discourse-organisation device to initiate a turn (see section 6.4). Three additional examples are given below.

(110) Interaction 2.5 - Adeline / Bruno

- 1 ADE oh bah là tu vas avoir vachement plus de trucs
oh well there you're gonna have way more things
- 2 → à dire que moi **j' pense**
to say than I j' pense,

(111) Interaction 2.7 - Adeline / Bruno / Quentin

- 1 QUE où est-ce que j' ai été en voyage, .hh (0.6) euh:
where have I travelled, um
- 2 → on va faire du plus récent au plus vieux °j' pense°
we're going to do from the latest to the oldest I think.

(112) Interaction 3.3 - Anne / Julie / Romain

- 1 JUL al ors moi en fait j' vais pren: dre un p' ti t coca
so me in fact I'm going to take a little glass of coke
- 2 → <(whi speri ng) j' pense.>
I think.

The excerpts in (110) and (111) occur when a change of conversational topic is being effected. In (110), Adeline anticipates her interlocutor, Bruno, to have more to say about one of the suggested topic, as it directly relates to his occupation. In (111), Bruno was selected by Adeline as the next speaker. In line 1, the repetition of Adeline's question as well as the presence of hesitation (marked by the in-breath, the 0.6 second pause and the elongated hesitation marker *euh* 'um') shows Bruno's difficulty in providing a response on the spot. In line 2, he eventually suggests the 'organised' and joint elaboration (signalled by the generic subject *on*⁴) of the conversational topic: from the latest to the oldest memories.

Both Adeline's and Bruno's turns are mitigated by the clause-final parenthetical use of *JP* occurring in turn-final position (line 2 of each excerpt, arrowed), as the situation could turn out differently. For Bruno, this suggestion might seem like the best option so far, as he faces difficulty in providing a response, but the conversation could happen differently.

Finally, in (112), it is interesting to note that Julie closes her turn with *JP* (line 2, arrowed) whereas she begins to open a bottle of coke before the end of her turn. This could suggest that the periphrastic future represents a favourable environment

⁴The third-person singular pronoun *on* does not have a literal equivalent in English, as it may have different referents (Riegel et al., 1996: 197). Here, it is used in place of *nous* 'we' and refers to the participants of the conversations, including the speaker.

for *JP* to occur, regardless of its correlation with future action.⁵

Interestingly, *que* is deleted twice in this environment when *JP* occurs in matrix position (see the example (101) above, for instance), and *JP* occurs four times in parenthetical position. This will be further developed in chapter 8.

To sum up, *JP* can be a means to mitigate potential or actual face-threatening acts, thus reducing the risk of conflict between participants. Put another way, as a mitigation device it marks the content of the utterance as potentially threatening, while simultaneously reducing the risk of this threat. It can act as a strategy of non-imposition on either the speaker's or the addressee's face.

6.6 Concluding remarks

This chapter described the interactional functions fulfilled by *JP*, with a focus on its use in matrix position. It was shown that *JP* is a polyfunctional marker, whose interactional functions result from several context-specific factors in any given case: the construction works at the level of discourse organisation as well as at a more interpersonal level. It was also shown that its scope is variable. These characteristics support the role of *JP* as a discourse marker. Nevertheless, the interactional functions performed by *JP* (as well as *JC* and *JT*, cf. chapter 7) are concomitant to its semantic meaning, although discourse markers are usually described as non-propositional items (e.g. Hansen, 1998b: 73). For this reason, *JP* can more appropriately be viewed as a peripheral member rather than a prototypical member of the category of discourse markers. Moreover, every use of the construction can be described as “context-level” uses (see Angot & Hansen, 2021: 136). According to Hansen (2008: 15-16), context-level uses of an item pertain to relations between a described state of affairs and the discourse itself or the wider speech situation. By contrast, “content-level” uses of an item bear either on the described (real or

⁵A similar use of *JP* caught my attention while watching the French television game show *Questions pour un champion*, in which contestants have to answer general knowledge questions. In one of three rounds, they are asked to answer questions on a category they choose, out of a choice of four. Among these four categories is a “mystery category”. Observing a hundred utterances performed by contestants while picking a category, I found that three of them were framed by *JP* (with two instances of *Je pense que je vais prendre le thème mystère* ‘I think that I’m going to choose the mystery theme’, and one instance of *Ce sera le thème mystère je pense* ‘It will be the mystery theme I think’), while two of them were framed by *JC* (*Je crois que je vais prendre le thème mystère* ‘I believe that I’m going to choose the mystery theme’).

It is interesting to note that: (1) *JP* (and *JC*) is used when choosing the mystery category only, that is, a theme which contestants are not in a position to know whether they have knowledge about when choosing it; (2) *JP* displays the contestants’ lack of confidence about whether this category is the right one to choose, more than the actual realisation of the action itself. In this context, *JP* is therefore used as a face-saving device, such that they will not lose face were they to answer the questions incorrectly.

imagined) state of affairs, or on the relation between that state of affairs and other (real or imagined) states of affairs. A type of linguistic item which typically expresses context-level meaning is represented by discourse markers, which supports regarding the micro-construction *JP* as belonging to this category. Furthermore, the fact that *JP* inherently expresses a context-level meaning may explain the ease with which the micro-construction (as well as *JC* and *JT*) acquires parenthetical uses and the subsequent mobility within the host utterance. Finally, it is at the level of context that the meaning of the three constructions can really be distinguished. Indeed, a thorough observation of the contexts in which they occur helps to reveal their differences (see chapter 5).

Among the three constructions under study, *JP* is the most versatile: it has the capacity to foreground either component of meaning, it fulfils a wider range of interactional functions, and it occurs in more various sequential environments. In fact, the fact that it foregrounds either component of meaning may explain its interactional versatility. By contrast, *JC* only foregrounds the epistemic component of meaning in my database, while *JT* only encodes a subjective component of meaning. The following chapter will show that the two constructions are widely used for organisational and interpersonal purposes in conversation, but to a lower degree than *JP*.

Chapter 7

Interactional functions of *je crois* and *je trouve*

This chapter shifts to the interactional role of *JC* and *JT*, by closely investigating the sequential environments each construction occurs in. It will show that the interactional work performed by *JC* and *JT* is evidence for their status as discourse markers; however, their interactional work is less frequent, varied and complex than *JP*, which is the most versatile among the three constructions. Similarly to *JP*, *JC* and *JT* perform two major types of functions. Firstly, as discourse-organisational devices, the constructions enhance discourse coherence by delimiting units of speech. Secondly, as face-saving devices related to politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987), they perform redressive actions which are closely linked to their individual meaning: while *JC* mainly performs redress to the speaker's face, *JT* is mainly a strategical device to avoid imposing on the addressee.

In what follows, sections 7.1 and 7.2 focus on the interactional work performed by *JC* and *JT*, respectively. Both sections open with a breakdown of the position of each construction within turns and turn-constructional units (TCUs), outlining the main similarities and differences between the three constructions. Both sections document the role of each construction as marking a transition within turns, a function characteristic of the three constructions, especially in TCU-initial position. Additionally, section 7.2 describes the role of *JT* in turn-initial position, a position which is not frequently occupied by *JC*. Furthermore, each section focuses on a specific type of turn where *JC* and *JT*, respectively, typically occur: section 7.1 focuses on turns providing information developing prior talk; section 7.2 focuses on turns summing up prior talk. Finally, both sections end with a section describing the face-saving role of each construction.

7.1 Interactional functions of *je crois*

7.1.1 Position of *je crois* within turns and TCUs

Table 7.1 details the position within turns and turn-constructional units (TCUs) of 73 occurrences of *JC* in the database. Of a total of 79 occurrences, six have been excluded from the table: two standalone constructions, one instance occurring in a self-interrupted turn and three ambiguous cases (which could either be clause-medial parentheticals, or used in matrix position without *que*).

Table 7.1 – Position of *je crois* within turns and TCUs

Turn-initial	Turn-medial			Turn-final
	TCU-initial	TCU-medial	TCU-final	
13 (17.8%)	45 (61.6%)			15 (20.5%)
	19 (26%)	14 (19.2%)	12 (16.4%)	
32 (43.8%)			27 (37%)	

Total 73

Regarding its position within the turn, *JC* overwhelmingly occurs in turn-medial position (45 occurrences amounting to 61.6%). The turn-final (and therefore also TCU-final) position (15 occurrences, 20.5%) and the turn-initial (and therefore also TCU-initial) position (13 occurrences, 17.8%) do not show any significant differences, with only two more occurrences of *JC* in the turn-final position. The 45 instances of *JC* in turn-medial position are distributed as follows: 19 (26%) occur in TCU-initial, 14 (19.2%) in TCU-medial, and 12 (16.4%) in TCU-final position. Thus, a total of 32 instances (43.8%) of *JC* occur in initial position, i.e. at the beginning of a turn, or a TCU within a turn; while a total of 27 instances (37%) occur in final position, i.e. at the end of a turn, or a TCU within a turn.

In comparison to *JP* (cf. Table 6.1 in chapter 6), significant differences can be observed. First, with respect to the position of the constructions within the turn, both of them mainly occur in turn-medial position: 61.6% of instances of *JC* and 56.3% of instances of *JP* occur in the middle of a speaker's turn. But while *JC* shows an almost even distribution between the turn-initial (17.8%) and the turn-final (20.5%) position, *JP* shows a clear preference for the former position (31.1% of instances) rather than the latter (12.6%). This preference, as was developed in chapter 6, may be accounted for by the organisational functions of *JP*: for instance, *JP* may be used to take the floor to establish a smooth transition with the prior turn, or to display a shift of perspective. However, in my database, only a few of

the 13 turn-initial instances of *JC* arguably perform such interactional functions. In this position, no recurring functions or sequential environments were found.

Let us turn now to the use of *JC* in turn-medial position, where the construction shows a slight preference for the TCU-initial position (26%) over the TCU-medial position (19.2%) and the TCU-final position (16.4%). By contrast, in the same position, the distribution of instances of *JP* displays a clear gap across the three positions within TCUs: 36.9% of instances occur in TCU-initial position, while only 14.6% of them occurs in TCU-medial position, and 4.9% in TCU-final position. This difference mainly stems from the fact that compared to *JP*, *JC* is used more frequently as a parenthetical. Among the 14 instances of *JC* occurring in TCU-medial position, eight are in matrix position, and six instances are parentheticals (including two clause-final and four clause-medial parentheticals). In turn-medial position, it was shown how TCU-initial *JP* was used to contribute to discourse organisation by marking a transition between different units within the speaker's turn-in-progress (see section 6.2). This interactional role is also exhibited by *JC* (see section 7.1.2), although this position and role is only slightly preferred.

Finally, the distribution of *JP* and *JC* differs with respect to their position in initial position (i.e. TCU-initial position including turn-beginnings) and final position (i.e. TCU-final position including turn-ends). Unlike *JP*, for which there is a clear preference for the initial rather than final position (68% vs 17.5% of instances, respectively), these two positions show an almost even distribution as far as *JC* is concerned, with a gap of five instances in favour of the initial position. The two positions therefore compete with each other. This is due to the higher number, in comparison with *JP*, of *JC* as a clause-final parenthetical. With respect to its syntactic position, indeed, Table 2.9 in chapter 2 shows that 38 instances (48.1%) of *JC* occur in matrix position, while 33 (41.8%) occur in parenthetical position (among which, 36.7% are clause-final parentheticals). By comparison, 64.9% of instances of *JP* occur in matrix position, while 23.4% of instances are parentheticals (among which, 19.8% are clause-final parentheticals).

The data presented in Tables 6.1 and 7.1 suggest that the two markers exhibit different functions: while *JP* is preferred in initial position, where it fulfils discourse-structuring functions, this position and function is not preferred as far as *JC* is concerned. *JC* is almost as frequent in parenthetical position, which will be the focus of the next chapter.

With respect to its initial position, *JC* is most of the time the very first item of the turn or TCU, representing 62.5% (20 instances) of the instances in this position. By contrast, this concerns 45.6% of instances of *JP* in the same position. In the database, prefatory items include an interjection (*ah*), discourse markers (e.g. *mais* 'but', *and* 'et'), positive response particles (*ouais* 'yeah' or *si* 'yes') or a collocation

of different items (e.g. *et du coup* ‘and so then’).

7.1.2 *Je crois* in turn-medial position: marking a transition in the speaker’s turn

In chapter 6, TCU-beginnings within turns were described as a strategic location in that they play a bridging role between the current TCU and the previous one. Similarly to *JP*, instances of *JC* occurring in this position enhance discourse organisation by marking boundaries between different units of the current speaker’s turn. All of the 19 instances occurring in this position have been attributed organisational functions, as well as three TCU-medial instances in matrix position.

Unlike *JP*, which can work both at a local and larger level, *JC* only works very locally in my database. Thus, it connects the TCU it introduces with the immediately preceding TCU, rather than a larger unit such as a prior action extending over several turns. Furthermore, the *JC*-prefaced TCU connects to the preceding TCU in a more restricted way: most of the time, *JC* introduces a new TCU which expands on the previous one by bringing additional information. This role will be developed in the following section, as it does not only concern TCU-initial instances occurring turn-medially (cf. section 7.1.3). Consider the excerpt in (113), which was already partially provided in chapter 5.

(113) Interaction 2.5 - Adeline / Bruno

- 1 ADE ça sert à rien twitter.
i t's use less Twi tter.
- 2 BRU . tsk beh euh:
wel l um=
- 3 [en fait c' qu- c' qu'on- c' qu'on apprend c'est que]: =
i n fact what- what we- what we learn i s that
- 4 ADE ['fin c' sert à rien. aucun sert à quelque chose
I mean i t's use less. none of them i s useful
- 5 vraiment]
real ly
- 6 BRU =twitter, par rapport aux autres réseaux sociaux, c'est
Tw i tter, compared to the other social networks, i t's
- 7 que. euh: . h t' as quarante pour cent des gens qui ont:
that. um there's forty percent of people who have
- 8 qui l'utilisent mensuellement, [donc]=
who use i t monthl y, so

- 9 ADE [mh mh]
- 10 BRU =euh:: c' qu' est: peu euh par rapport à facebook,
um which is not much compared to Facebook,
- 11 [.h]=
- 12 ADE [ouai s,]
yeah,
- 13 BRU → =j' **crois qu'** c' était euh: cent soixante-di:x <millions>
I think that it was um a hundred and seventy million
- 14 (0.3) millions, (0.3) d'abonnés, c' qu' est:
million subscribers, which is
- 15 vraiment peu,
really few,
- 16 ADE ouai s,
yeah,
- 17 BRU → .h .tsk euh:: t' as quarante pour cent des gens, (.)
um there's forty percent of people,
- 18 qui euh::: n'interv- ragissent pas du tout. (0.2)
who um don't interv- act at all.
- 19 i' font que suivre en fait. ou retweeter des trucs,
they just follow really. or retweet some things,

In line 13 (arrowed), *JC* can be interpreted as initiating a new step in Bruno's turn, by expanding on the previous information (in what sense it is 'not much compared to Facebook', see line 10). This expansion is prefaced by a short in-breath (line 11) following Bruno's TCU in line 10 and preceding *JC*. Following this expansion which brings peripheral information, the main topic of conversation is resumed in line 17 (arrowed) after a brief pause during which Adeline displays her participation to the conversation (*ouais* 'yeah', line 16). In line 17, Bruno's turn is introduced by a brief in-breath (.h), a click articulated with the tongue (.tsk) and a prolonged hesitation marker (euh::: 'um'), all participating in marking a new step in his turn.

Similarly, in (114), two instances of *JC* (lines 3 and 4, arrowed) serve to mark boundaries in Céline's turn-in-progress.

(114) Interaction 1.6 - Aurore / Nicolas

- 1 QUE bah twitter c'est pas l' truc où: t' as genre
well Twitter it's not the thing where there's like
- 2 un: nombre de:: lettres=euh maximum?

a number of letters um maximum?

- 3 CEL → ouai s. (0.3) cent soixante. mais **j' crois qu'** ça
yes. a hundred and sixty. but I believe that it
- 4 → a changé, (0.2) **j' crois qu'**(i) peut en mett' plus,
has changed, I believe that you can put more,

In line 3, this organisational work is jointly performed by the concession marker *mais* 'but' (Ducrot, 1980: 93-130; Nyan, 1999; Carel, 2002), which indicates a contrast with prior talk (namely the fact that the number of characters may be different from the one given), and *JC* which indicates Céline's epistemic stance.

Furthermore, in a relatively significant number of cases, *JC* follows an aborted TCU to introduce a repair (Schegloff et al., 1977), thus participating in the reorganisation of the turn design. This concerns seven instances among those beginning a new TCU within a turn (36.8%). Two of them are given in (115) (for more context, see (56) in section 5.1.1).

(115) Interaction 1.6 - Aurore / Nicolas

- 1 NIC ... une p' tite brasserie monsieur machin
a small brasserie Monsieur Machin
- 2 → <((stumbling)) qu' c' -> **j' crois que** c'est ça l' nom
that- I believe that it's the name
- 3 i' m' semble, j' suis pas sûr à cent pour cent à côté-
it seems to me, I'm not a hundred percent sure next to-
- 4 → **j' crois qu'** c'est à côté (d'; du) truc de café
I believe that it's next (to) something like a café
- 5 y a un: truc café pas loin...
there's like a café nearby...

Nicolas is describing a brasserie but struggles to remember its name and its precise location. The two instances of *JC* (lines 2 and 4, arrowed) occur after two TCUs that are interrupted before they are brought to completion. These two incomplete TCUs end with a cut-off of talk, indicated by the dashes (lines 2 and 3). Here, *JC* accomplishes organisational work initiating repair. Arguably, the second instance of *JC* (line 4) constitutes the repair itself, in that it is inserted in the new TCU: (*c'est*) à côté '(it's) next to' (line 3) is replaced by *je crois que c'est à côté* 'I believe it's next to' (line 4), thereby repairing Nicolas' degree of commitment toward the information delivered.

Finally, the excerpt in (116) displays two uses of *JC* (lines 4 and 7, arrowed)

whose function is related to floor-holding, although only the second instance (line 7) occurs turn-medially.

(116) Interaction 2.4 - Bruno / Quentin

- 1 QUE ... mais euh regarde euh: au japon i's ont interditt les
but um take um Japan they've forbidden
- 2 armes à feu d'puis la s'conde guerre mondiale,
firearms since the Second World War,
- 3 BRU bah ouais
well yeah
- 4 QUE → et euh du coup euh: **j' crois que** euh:: =
and um then um I believe that um
- 5 BRU =bah du coup...
well then...
- 6 (...)
- 7 QUE → en attendant le taux d'homici de=euh: <**je crois que**:::
meanwhile the homici de rate=um: <I believe that um
- 8 il est un truc genre euh:: quatre-vingt-neuf fois>
it's something like um ninety times
- 9 inférieur aux états-uñis un truc comme ça,
lower than in the United States something like that,

The floor-holding role of *JC* in line 7 is supported by several other interactional features in Quentin's turn (lines 7-9): several hesitations and the prolongation of the final vowel in *que* 'that' act as filled pauses, and a slower pace of speech can be observed from the end of line 7 to the end of line 8. Such features were already observed in the previous chapter about the interactional functions of *JP* (see example in (92) in section 6.2), as contributions to signal discontinuous speech and the speaker's ongoing reflection. Similarly, here, *JC* is used to fill a pause, simultaneously holding the turn and allowing Quentin to search his memory for the information he is trying to recall.

In line 4, Quentin has primary rights to the floor since he has launched a turn. Yet, Bruno seizes the filled pause as an opportunity to interrupt Quentin's turn (line 5) although his TCU is not syntactically or pragmatically complete (Sacks et al., 1974). This suggests that as a turn-holding device, *JC* is not treated as bringing substantial content to the discussion.

7.1.3 *Je crois* in turns providing information

Whatever its position, *JC* mainly occurs in turns whose intent is to provide a piece of information relevant to the topic under discussion. On such occasions, the speaker adheres to Grice's (1975) maxim of Quantity by providing as much information as required, while simultaneously showing adherence to the maxim of Quality by downgrading their commitment through the use of *JC*. Interestingly, on such occasions, this adherence to both maxims is preferred over refraining from giving any answer at all or merely claiming a lack of knowledge (e.g. *je (ne) sais pas* 'I don't know', *je (ne) suis pas sûr(e)* 'I'm not sure'). An environment where *JC* frequently occurs is the second-pair part of question-answer adjacency pairs, representing 20 instances (25.3%). Above, the excerpts in (114) and (115) provided examples: (114) displays a request for information from Quentin (lines 1-2), while (115) follows a request for information from Aurore (see the excerpt in (56) in chapter 6 for more context). Two additional examples are given below.

(117) Interaction 1.6 - Aurore / Nicolas

- | | | |
|---|-------|--|
| 1 | CEL | y a combi en de sai sons?
<i>how many seasons are there?</i> |
| 2 | | (1.0) |
| 3 | ADE → | mh: pl usi eurs euh j' croi s au moi ns si x,
<i>mh several um I believe at least six,</i> |
| 4 | CEL | °d' accord°.
<i>ok.</i> |

In (117), Céline enquires about the number of seasons of the series under discussion (line 1). Adeline's answer (line 3, arrowed) has features that display dispreference (Pomerantz, 1984) and uncertainty. This is firstly noticeable by the significant silence (line 2) occurring between the two sequentially ordered units delaying the answer, as well as the prolonged hesitation (*mh*) at the beginning of Adeline's turn (line 3). She then provides a vague initial answer (*plusieurs* 'several'), while her revised answer, *six* 'six', is weakened by the vague indication *au moins* 'at least' and the parenthetical use of *JC*, to which can arguably be added the prefacing hesitation *euh* 'um'. Her revised answer is incrementally added at the end of her turn to provide as much information as required by Céline (adherence to the Quantity maxim), while avoiding providing wrong information (adherence to the Quality maxim).

In (118), Judith enquires as to when the event under discussion occurred (line 1).

(118) Interaction 2.3 - Judith / Patricia

- 1 JUD mai s c' étai t [quand ça?]
 but when was that?
- 2 PAT [et euh:]=mh
 and um
- 3 → (1.2)
- 4 PAT c' étai t avant.
 it was before.
- 5 → (1.4)
- 6 PAT euh début octobre (euh) **j' croi s**.
 um early October (um) I believe.

Similarly to the excerpt presented above, Judith's question is met by a significant 1.2 second silence (line 3, arrowed) delaying Patricia's initial response (line 4): the event in question happened before another event that was mentioned earlier in the discussion. The ensuing 1.4 second silence (line 5, arrowed) may suggest that Judith considers Patricia's response unsatisfactory, resulting in Patricia's additional TCU in line 6.

This environment is particularly favourable to parenthetical uses of *JC*, which amount to 11 instances. This use and role will be developed further in chapter 8: in parenthetical position, *JC* is mainly a marker of vagueness whose scope is local. As such, in a certain number of cases, information is given in the form of elliptic constructions such as in (118) above (*début octobre* 'early October', line 6). With respect to the matrix position, nine instances of *JC* are used in turns developing an answer. Similarly to *JP* in the same sequential environment, *JC* foreshadows the second pair-part of the question-answer adjacency pair, projecting a preferred action (see section 6.3.1). Seven instances of *JC* occur in TCU-initial in the middle of a speaker's turn, one instance begins a new turn (as exemplified below), and one last instance occurs in TCU-medial position. An example is provided in (119).

(119) Interaction 2.4 - Bruno / Quentin

- 1 (1.6)
- 2 QUE → [. tsk **j' croi s**]
 I believe
- 3 BRU [bah] à part euh: l e mec de mon agence
 well except um the guy from my letting
- 4 de locati on là euh [éh eh ehÉ]

- agency um*
- 5 QUE → [j' **crois qu'** on a commencé] à la d' mi e
I believe that we began at half past
- 6 un truc comme ça
something like that
- 7 BRU . h ouai s à vi ngt-neuf ouai s=
yeah at twenty-nine yeah
- 8 QUE =mh
- 9 (0.6)
- 10 BRU → . h (.) si l' gars d' mon agence...
yes the guy from my agency...

Earlier in the conversation, Bruno enquired about when he and Quentin started speaking (cf. (57) in chapter 5). Bruno's question was first ignored by Quentin, and this excerpt displays his delayed answer. The first instance of *JC* by Quentin (line 2, arrowed) follows a 1.6 second pause (line 1), after a turn uttered by Bruno. Quentin self-interrupts and yields the turn to Bruno, as both participants had entered the floor in overlap (lines 2 and 3). As Bruno's TCU reaches an end, Quentin enters the floor with *JC* (lines 5, arrowed), potentially reiterating his previous, interrupted turn. These two instances may be interpreted as organisational devices, simultaneously establishing a smooth transition between two different topics of discussion (or introducing a suspension of the main topic) and projecting a delayed answer. The main topic of conversation is subsequently resumed by Bruno in line 10 (arrowed) after a brief pause (line 9).

7.1.4 *Je crois* as a face-saving device

Although it encodes the same two components of meaning, *JC* does not serve similar face-saving functions to *JP* (see chapter 6: section 6.5). Indeed, in the database, there is no instance of *JC* that performs redressive actions to the addressee's face. Rather, the construction mainly redresses the speaker's negative-face want. This may be related to the fact that every instance of *JC* in my database foregrounds the epistemic component of meaning. The face-saving function fulfilled by *JC* would therefore be linked to epistemic mitigation, which allows speakers to protect their own face by weakening their commitment, for instance, to take precautions and to avoid being held accountable in case they are proven wrong. A first example is given in (120).

(120) Interaction 2.6 - Adeline / Céline / Quentin

- 1 CEL t' as pas eu trop peur à la réuni on des chi ens?
you were not too afraid in Réuni on of the dogs?
- 2 ADE → .tsk à la réuni on ça n'a: - y a s: **j' crois qu'** c'est
in Réuni on it doesn- there's I believe that it's
- 3 en guad' loupe (où) y en avai t plus=
in Guadel oupe (where) there was more
- 4 QUE =mh y en avai t plus [()]
mh there was more
- 5 [y en avai t plus en guad' lou]pe.
there was more in Guadel oupe.

In line 2 (arrowed), Adeline introduces a new TCU with *JC* to avoid presenting the following statement (*c'est en Guadeloupe (où) y en avait plus* 'it's in Guadeloupe (where) there was more', lines 2-3) as fact, as she may not recall the information exactly (about the meaning of *JC*, see chapter 5: section 5.1.1). The video recording shows that during her turn, Adeline looks at Quentin from *JC* (line 2), and that she nods while finishing her TCU. Her head nods can be understood to increase or reinforce her commitment to her utterance, in contrast with her earlier use of *JC* (encoding epistemic reduction) in TCU-initial position. Her gaze, directed at her partner and travel companion, Quentin, can be taken as an indirect request for confirmation. Indeed, Quentin's ensuing turn in line 4 is latched to the end of Adeline's turn in line 3. He confirms Adeline's uncertain statement in lines 2-3, and she subsequently repeats it in line 5 by way of confirmation. Showing openness through the use of *JC* appears in this excerpt as a way to take precautions when the speaker faces uncertainty, thereby mitigating any loss of face that could have been effected by a potential correction by Quentin.

Another example is given in (121). The excerpt occurs at the beginning of the interaction between the four participants, immediately following Claire and Jean's arrival at the home of their friends, Julie and Laurent. While Julie opened the front door to welcome her guests, her cat escaped. As a consequence, Julie follows it outside to bring it back. During this time, Laurent arrives to welcome Claire and Jean, and the following excerpt occurs, intertwining a greeting sequence and the event involving the cat:

(121) Interaction 3.1 - Claire / Jean / Julie / Laurent

- 1 CLA → <((laughing)) le ch(h)at i' s'est échappé **j' crois** .h>
the cat it slipped out I believe
- 2 (.) salut.
hi.

3	LAU	[oh ça fait long temps qu' on vous a pas vu] <i>oh long time no see</i>
4	JEA →	[(ah ton-) (.) j' - j' - j'] [croi s qu']= <i>(ah yours-) I - I - I believe that</i>
5	CLA	[ouai s,] <i>yeah,</i>
6	JEA	=le chat i' s' est un peu: un peu parti: °(hei n)° <i>the cat it has a bit a bit left (huh)</i>

Both Claire (line 1) and Jean (lines 4-6) inform Laurent that the cat went out, framing their turn with *JC* (lines 1 and 4, arrowed). It is interesting to note that as shown in the video recording, both of them saw the cat going out and thus cannot be uncertain about this fact. One possible reason why they both choose to reduce their commitment to their utterance could be related to their knowledge of the cat's rights, i.e. what it is allowed or not allowed to do, including where it is allowed or not allowed to go. If going out the front door is something that the cat is allowed to do, it follows that it has not “escaped” as such, an event which could have resulted in an unpleasant cat search. Downgrading their commitment to their utterance can therefore be understood as a way for Claire and Jean to avoid presenting a potential unpleasant event as very likely to happen, or in other words, to mitigate the likelihood that such an event may happen. At the same time, both speakers protect their own face in case they are wrong, that is, if there was no escape.

7.2 Interactional functions of *je trouve*

7.2.1 Position of *je trouve* within turns and TCUs

Table 7.2 details the position within turns and TCUs of 22 occurrences of *JT* in the database, out of a total of 23. One standalone construction does not appear in the table.

With respect to its position with turns, *JT* overwhelmingly occurs in turn-medial position, representing 77.3% of instances. Four instances (18.2%) occur at the beginning of turns and only one (4.5%) at the end. In turn-medial position, *JT* shows a preference for TCU-beginnings, where ten instances (45.5%) have been noted. The TCU-medial and TCU-final position count, respectively, five (22.7%) and two instances (9.1%). The (TCU/turn-)initial position, represented by 14 instances (63.6%), is favoured by the number of instances of *JT* beginning new TCUs within turns, rather than beginning new turns. As for the (TCU/turn-)final position, it is represented by only three instances (13.6%).

Table 7.2 – Position of *je trouve* within turns and TCUs

Turn-initial	Turn-medial			Turn-final
	TCU-initial	TCU-medial	TCU-final	
4 (18.2%)	17 (77.3%)			1 (4.5%)
	10 (45.5%)	5 (22.7%)	2 (9.1%)	
14 (63.6%)			3 (13.6%)	

Total 22

Regarding its position, *JT* shares more similarities with *JP* than with *JC*, in that both *JT* and *JP* are preferred in initial position. By contrast, *JC* shows an almost even distribution between the initial and final position. But while *JT* shows a preference for the TCU-initial position within turns (45.5% of instances) rather than turn-initial position (18.2%), the gap between these two positions is tighter as far as *JP* is concerned (36.9% and 31.1% of instances in each position, respectively). The low frequency of *JT* in turn-initial position may reflect the rarity of particular functions characteristic of this position. For instance, I argued in chapter 6 that *JP* may be used to take the floor to establish a smooth transition with the prior turn, or display a shift of perspective. However, it should be noted that the relatively low number of turn-initial instances of *JT* may also be related to the overall small number of instances of *JT* by comparison to *JP* and *JC*. The data shows, incidentally, two instances of *JT* with potential turn-taking functions, one of which will be exemplified in section 7.2.2 below. As for the final position, *JT* is less frequent than *JP*, with 13.6% of instances in this position against 17.5% for *JP*.

With respect to its syntactic position, very few parenthetical uses of *JT* were found. They amount to five clause-final parentheticals, among which three occur turn-finally and two TCU-medially.

In initial position, *JT* is four times the first token of the TCU or turn. As observed with *JP* and *JC*, *JT* similarly clusters with other prefatory items which have been described as discourse markers (e.g. *mais* ‘but’, *d’ailleurs* ‘by the way’). Moreover, *JT* is prefaced by the strong pronoun *moi* on three different occasions (28.6% of instances in initial position), a relatively high number given the low number of instances of this marker in comparison to *JP* and *JC*. In TCU-initial position, the strong pronoun *moi* and *JP* co-occur three times (including one time in turn-initial position) (4.3% of instances in initial position), while no occurrence of *moi JC* was found. As argued in section 5.2.2, *moi* strengthens subjectivity and therefore works on the same level as *JT*, both tokens (*moi* and *JT*) forming a cluster with a specific

role.

7.2.2 *Je trouve* in turn-initial position

Four instances (18.2%) of *JT* occur at turn-beginnings, among which two arguably help the speaker take the turn. Both of them occur at the beginning of turns that are overlapped with another speaker's turn, and where there is competition for the turn. Interestingly, both of them are prefaced by *moi*, which strengthens the subjective component of meaning encoded in *JT* (see section 5.2.2).

One of these two instances is exemplified in (122), which occurs when the three participants are discussing the following topic: *More space has to be devoted to artistic and cultural education at school*. As discussed in chapter 5, where it is initially presented with more context in (80) (cf. section 5.2.2), this excerpt displays an active commitment of the participants to the discussion, especially from Quentin. Indeed, this topic allows him to convey his opinions about the limits of ecological awareness at school, which appears to be a matter of importance to him.

(122) Interaction 2.6 - Adeline / Céline / Quentin

- 1 ADE . h moi j' avai s déj à l' impressi on qu' c' étai t là
I already had the impressi on that it was there
- 2 en fai t. ' fi n pendant: : [:] =
i n fact. I mean duri ng
- 3 CEL → [bah au] =
well i n
- 4 ADE = [:]
- 5 CEL = [co] =
secondary
- 6 QUE → [beh] =
well
- 7 CEL = [ll ège ouai s t' as des cours de musi que.]
school yeah there are musi c classes.
- 8 QUE → = [moi – moi j' trouve que cette] parti e là est
for me- for me I find that that part is
- 9 déj à bi en dével oppée par contre i' s ont- i' s ont l: oupé
al ready well devel oped however they- they screwed up
- 10 (.) toute une parti e qui devrai t être pri mordi ale, (0. 5)
a whol e part whi ch shoul d be pri mordi al ,
- 11 qu' est juste=euh: l' écol ogi e quoi
whi ch is just um ecol ogy then.

In lines 1-2/4, Adeline introduces a different viewpoint from the prior speaker, Pauline. Shortly after she began her second TCU (*'fin pendant* 'I mean during', line 2), her two interlocutors take her hesitation, indicated by the prolongation of the last sound in *pendant* 'during' (lines 2-4), as an opportunity to take the turn: Céline self-selects in line 3 (arrowed), delivering a complete TCU (lines 3/5/7); shortly after, Quentin self-selects too in line 6 (arrowed), prefacing his turn by *beh* 'well'. Part of his turn (line 8) overlaps with Céline's turn (line 7). Here, *JT* (line 8, arrowed) is used for turn-taking purposes, together with the prefacing instances of the strong pronoun *moi* 'me, as far as I'm concerned'.

7.2.3 *Je trouve* in turn-medial position: marking a transition in the speaker's turn

Marking transitions within turns is an organisational function shared by the three constructions (see section 6.2 for *JP*, and section 7.1.2 for *JC*). Similarly to *JP* and *JC*, *JT* contributes to discourse coherence by marking boundaries between different units within a turn. This role is achieved by every instance occurring in TCU-initial and TCU-medial position, which all occur in matrix position. They work locally by connecting the unit prefaced by *JT* with the immediately preceding TCU. Recall from chapter 5 that *JT* (similarly to *JP*) can either be based on direct experience or on inference. When it is based on direct experience, *JT* overall helps speakers to shift the perspective from a more objective description or narrative to a more subjective stance, in line with its role as a subjective-enhancing marker. This is exemplified in the excerpts (123) and (124).

(123) Interaction 1.3 - Charlotte / Nicolas

- 1 NIC → moi j' fais ça des fois j' **trouve qu'** ça fait
me I do that sometimes I find that it does
- 2 des bruits drôles, (.) j' trouve ça marrant.
funny noises, I find it funny.

Before the excerpt in (123), Nicolas has asked Charlotte whether she had ever listened to her food, to which she has given a negative answer. Nicolas admits that this is something he sometimes does on the basis that he finds it amusing (lines 1-2). These two ideas are connected through *JT* in the middle of line 1 (arrowed), operating a shift from a descriptive TCU (*je fais ça des fois* 'I do that sometimes', line 1) about his own experience, to an evaluative TCU (*ça fait des bruits drôles* 'it does funny noises', line 2) giving the reason why he does such a thing.

The excerpt in (124) occurs when the participants are giving their opinion about a movie. Similarly, Julie's use of *JT* (line 1, arrowed) introduces a subjective opinion after relating her experience with the movie in question: she has watched it and can therefore express an opinion based on direct evidence.

(124) Interaction 3.3 - Claire / Jean / Julie

- 1 JUL → ouai s. moi j' ai regardé mai s euh (.) .h ' fi n j' **trouve**
yeah. me I've watched but um well I find
- 2 en fait **que** c' étai t bien: euh c' étai t bien fai t,
in fact that it was good um it was well /ni cely done,
- 2 bien coupé et tout mai s on: voyai t quand même que lui :
ni cely/well edi ted/cut but we could see still that him
- 2 il étai t- (0.6) j' sai s pas moi . ' fi n.
he was I don't know me. I mean.

In both excerpts, the TCUs introduced by *JT* expand on the directly preceding TCU as an explanatory backdrop, working at a local level.

7.2.4 *Je trouve* summing up prior talk

One recurring function observed with *JT* is when it occurs in TCUs which recapitulate prior talk. The speaker thereby summarises a prior, or several, turn(s), and/or their stance towards the topic under discussion. This is true, in particular, of instances of *JT* occurring with subjective judgements based on direct evidence (see section 5.2.1). With respect to its position within the clause, this function is carried out by the five parenthetical uses and by the only use of *JT* uttered as an independent TCU, which is incrementally added at the end of the speaker's turn (together with a shortened version of the marker *enfin* 'well, I mean'). All these instances can also be said to participate in marking the completion of a sequence.

The excerpt in (125) displays a first example, and the only instance of *JT* in turn-final position. Bruno is describing a video game.

(125) Interaction 2.4 - Bruno / Quentin

- 1 BRU → .tsk mai s euh: : j' sai s pas y a: : =euh y a pas l e: =mh
but um: : I don't know there's um there's no mh
- 2 (0.4) y a pas d' fi l. (0.4) EehE .h l es graphi smes moi
it doesn't have a fixed plot. graphics to me

- 3 j' les trouve pas spécialement ↑beaux=euh: .h
I don't find them especially beautiful um
- 4 euh=l: a conduite, c' qu' est une bonne partie du jeu
um driving, which is most of the game
- 5 euh: comme dans g t a quo[i euh]: c'est: f:: c'est
um like in GTA then um it's it's
- 6 → euh: c'est décevant, °j' **trouve**°,
um it's disappointing, I find,

From line 1 (arrowed), Bruno enumerates different features of the video game, which he finds disappointing. In line 6, the evaluative adjective *décevant* 'disappointing' sums up the preceding description as an overall evaluation, and the TCU where it occurs (*c'est décevant* 'it's disappointing') functions to conclude the descriptive sequence. At the end of Bruno's turn, *JT*, uttered in whispered speech, is added as an increment (e.g. Schegloff, 1996; Ford et al., 2002; Horlacher, 2015: chapter 4; Pekarek Doehler et al., 2015: chapter 4) to help bring the sequence to a close. Furthermore, *JT* may be used in turn-final position to exit the turn. Here, *JT* can additionally be described as an apologetic tool, a hedge minimising a FTA for his own face.

A second example is provided in (126).

(126) Interaction 3.3 - Anne / Julie / Romain

- 1 JUL h mais c'est terrible quand même **j' trouve**
but it's terrible though I find
- 2 tu vois 'fin
you see I mean

The participants were discussing the actual possibilities of finding a job easily without a lot of professional experience. Julie was raising doubts about her level of qualification for a training course she is interested in. Anne and Jean followed up with their direct experience: Anne is working as a teacher but replied that she might develop her career with further training in the future, while Jean referred to his own change of academic subject. Rather than developing the topic of discussion further, like her interlocutors did, Julie asserts her personal stance, displayed in the above excerpt. The end of her turn displays a parenthetical use of *JT*, inserted in the midst of a cluster of discourse markers. First, *quand même* 'though, still' expresses a concession (Beeching, 2005, 2013), insofar as Julie's turn is emphasising the unfortunate nature of the situation, rather than expanding on her interlocutor's

experience of the situation under discussion. Arguably, the marker also acts as a relational hedging particle (Beeching, 2002: 82, 85; 2005) (see discussion of *JT* as a face-saving device in section 7.2.5). Following *JT*, the finite construction *tu vois* ‘you see, you know’ appeals to the interlocutor’s understanding while involving them in the discourse (Bolly, 2010; Secova, 2010; Crible & Degand, 2019). Finally, a shortened version of *enfin* ‘well, I mean’ (e.g. Rossari, 1994, 2000a; Hansen, 2005) closes her turn. In addition to contributing to the reinforcement of Julie’s subjective stance, *JT* arguably marks finality by signaling a recapitulation of the speaker’s perspective. More specifically, the evaluative adjective *terrible* ‘terrible’ wraps up her previous points and appears as the main point. The fact that *JT* occurs among several other discourse markers reinforces its discourse-marking status.

Finally, a third example is given in (127). The excerpt displays the telling of a story by Arnaud, which begins with the introduction of a new character: Arnaud’s sister (line 1).

(127) Interaction 3.4 - Albine / Arnaud / Justine

- 1 ARN ma soeur quand elle était plus jeune, (.) p’t-êt’
my sister when she was younger, maybe
- 2 toujours j’ sais pas (.) quand e’ prend un livre.
still I don’t know when she takes a book.
- 3 (1.3)
- 4 ARN elle lit l’ résumé,
she reads the plot,
- 5 (0.6)
- 6 JUS e’ lit la fin?
she reads the end?
- 7 ARN et elle lit ouais l- le dernier chapitre,
and she reads yeah th- the last chapter,
- 8 JUS [mh]
- 10 ARN [(donc] j’ ai -) > les trois dernières pages. <
(then I’ve-) the last three pages.
- 11 et après e’ commence le livre. (0.4) c’est pas-
and then she begins the book. it’s not-
- 12 → c’est encore pire j’ trouve. (0.3) ...
it’s even worse I find.

Arnaud’s story follows a previous story by Justine. She was telling her interlocutors about a bad habit of Sébastien, a friend of theirs, when he watches a movie:

he fast-forwards to take a look at what happens and to have a general feeling of the movie. The three participants react by saying that they do not like to spoil the movie. Arnaud draws a parallel with his sister's similar habit with books. In the last TCU of his turn (line 12, arrowed), Arnaud displays an evaluative stance towards his own narrative, through the use of the evaluative adjective *pire* 'worse'. This TCU provides indications to the recipients on how to interpret the story (Stivers, 2008: 27; Mandelbaum, 2013: 498), by establishing a comparison to Justine's prior story. Simultaneously, displaying stance allows the story to be understood as complete. At the end of this last TCU, *JT* frames the speaker's preceding talk and acts as an exit device (Jefferson, 1978: 237).

Arguably, this recapitulating function is not restricted to parenthetical uses. In the excerpt below, the second instance of *JT* (line 8) in matrix position is uttered with similar motives.

(128) Interaction 2.6 - Adeline / Céline / Quentin

- 1 QUE beh l'ouverture d'esprit par (0.5) pour moi passe (.)
well open-mindedness through to me goes
- 2 par (.) quel que chose de plus général , que:
through something more general , than
- 3 l : ' arti sti que. ou le cul turel . . h
arts. or cul ture.
- 4 (0.7)
- 5 → et par contre le truc c'est qu' **j' trouve** qu'on- on- on
and however the thing is that I find that we- we- we
- 6 recentre énormément les études. ' fin on est obligé d' se
refocus enormously studies. I mean we have to
- 7 focaliser sur certains points .h pa' ce qu' on peut pas
focus on certain points. ' cause we can't
- 8 → tout apprendre .h (.) mais (.) **je trouve** qu'une=euh
I learn everything but I find that a um
- 9 base écol ogi que pour les enfants s' rai ent (.) plus
ecol ogi cal basi s for chil dren woul d be more
- 10 importante (0.2) qu' u: n: e base arti sti que
important than an arti sti c basi s

This excerpt was already given in (83) in chapter 5 (cf. section 5.2.2). It occurs shortly after the excerpt in (122). Quentin's turn is constructed out of three main ideas. The first, displayed from line 1 to 3, expresses a different viewpoint from

Céline and Adeline, who defended the importance of artistic and cultural education at school to open the mind of children. The second point is displayed from line 5 to 8 (arrowed) and highlights the importance of focusing on specific issues at school. It is also uttered in reaction to Céline's previous turn, where she pointed out the importance of focusing on "basic subjects" (*matières de base*). This second idea occurs after a 0.7 second pause (line 4) and is introduced by several elements (line 5): *et par contre* 'and however', which prefaces an opposition with prior talk (and more particularly Céline's opinion), therefore underscoring an opposing opinion and framing the subsequent utterance as an argument (Frank-Job, 2005); the construction *le truc c'est que* 'the thing is (that)', which acts as a "projector phrase" framing the subsequent message as being significant (Günthner, 2011); and *JT*, which enhances subjectivity (note the prosodic prominence on the verb form *trouve*, which could also take part in enhancing subjectivity). This first use of *JT* (line 5) does not fulfil any summarising function at this point, contrary to the second instance (line 8). The third idea in Quentin's turn is given from line 8, and clearly marks ecological awareness as one important issue to focus on, before artistic education. This excerpt occurs approximately two minutes after the excerpt in (79) (see chapter 5.2.2), and Quentin has therefore already expressed his personal opinion about the importance of teaching that subject in school. From line 8 to 10, he repeats the opinion he already expressed earlier, simultaneously summarising his whole turn.

7.2.5 *Je trouve* as a face-saving device

I argued in chapters 4 and 5 that unlike *JP* and *JC*, *JT* is exempt from an epistemic meaning, and that it encodes a subjective component of meaning only. This has consequences for its interactional use, notably its role as a face-saving device. Indeed, the data does not contain any instance of *JT* performing redressive action to the speaker's negative face. As the construction is not combined with objective facts, this entails that the speaker need not take precautions, for instance, to avoid being held accountable in case the information they give is proven wrong. Rather, the speaker avoids imposing their opinion on the addressee. This is not managed through refraining from taking full responsibility for the truth of their utterance, as Brown and Levinson suggest with English *I think* (1987: 146), but through the expression of the speaker's subjective stance, recognising that the addressee may hold a different opinion.

In section 5.2, I argued that *JT* strengthens the subjectivity of the proposition it occurs with, and usually reflects a high involvement of the speaker to this proposition. The speaker may therefore be less likely to change their opinion, and therefore prepared to face potential disagreement and non-cooperation. Three examples are

given below to illustrate the use of *JT* as a face-saving device.

First, consider the excerpt given in (124) in section 7.2.3, repeated in (129) below with wider context.

(129) Interaction 3.3 - Anne / Jean / Julie

- 1 JUL ouai s. moi j' ai regardé mai s euh (.) .h 'fi n j' **trouve**
yeah. me I've watched but um well I find
- 2 en fait **que** c' étai t bien: euh c' étai t bien fai t,
in fact that it was good um it was well done,
- 3 bien coupé et tout mai s on: voyai t quand même que lui :
edited well but we could see still that he
- 4 il étai t- (0.6) j' sai s pas moi . 'fi n.
he was I don't know me. I mean.
- 5 (0.9)
- 6 ANN → pas en forme? tu tr[ouves?]=
not in good shape? do you find?
- 7 JUL [ouai s,]
yeah,
- 8 ANN =.h eh beh en fai t...
eh well in fact...

Before the beginning of the excerpt, Claire and Jean expressed their enthusiasm about a documentary-concert film starring a famous singer. They face Julie's different viewpoint about the film, displayed from lines 1 to 4. After a short silence (line 5), Anne takes the turn (line 6, arrowed). First, she infers Julie's opinion about the singer's performance (*pas en forme?* 'not in good shape?'), as Julie's last TCU was aborted before being pragmatically complete (line 4). Anne then self-selects immediately for another TCU, once again in the form of a question (*tu trouves?* 'do you find?') asking for her opinion. However, Anne's turn functions more to challenge Julie's opinion than to ask for her opinion. The question *tu trouves ?*, particularly, invites the inference that Anne does not share Julie's opinion. The fact that she self-selects immediately for a third TCU (line 8) is further evidence: it shows that she herself does not treat her question as the first-pair part of an adjacency pair, and therefore does not necessarily expect any answer. Her TCU in line 8 introduces a sequence which will last approximately one minute, and during which she and Jean praise the performance of the singer in the film. During this sequence, Julie's contributions only consist in backchannels such as *mh* and *ah ouais?* 'ah yeah?', pointing to a reluctance to change her mind.

What this example shows is the apparent strong commitment of Julie to her utterance. Although potentially prepared for her opinion to be challenged, she appears to be unwilling and not ready to change it. *JT*, which occurs in this context (lines 1-2), can be understood as a means not to impose on her interlocutors, who just displayed a different opinion. As different opinions started to emerge just before this excerpt begins, *JT* is arguably used when a sequence is potentially leading to disagreements.

The excerpt in (130) displays a similar context, which may potentially lead to disagreement.

(130) Interaction 1.6 - Aurore / Nicolas

- 1 NIC ... j' suis plus salé que sucré de base [et:] =
I prefer savory to sweet food to begin with and
- 2 AUR [ouai s]
yeah
- 3 NIC et du coup euh: gâteau j' sais pas j' trouve ça .h
and so then um cakes I don't know I find they
- 4 prend plus de temps que: que l' reste quoi . =
take more time than than the rest then.
- 5 AUR → =.h j' **trouve** c'est un truc de [mec]=
I find it's a guy thing
- 6 NIC [mh]
- 7 AUR =les mecs i's aiment épas trop faire des gâteaux: é [et] =
guys they don't like so much to do cakes and
- 8 NIC [tsk]
- 9 AUR =faire des tru[cs euh:]
to do things um
- 10 NIC → [ouai s c'est vrai] °ça c'est° c'est
yeah that's true that it's it's
- 11 vraiment un truc de gonzesses ça
really a girl thing that
- 12 [Éah ah ah .hÉ]
- 13 AUR [c'est vrai hein? ouai s.]
it's true huh? yeah.
- 14 NIC → Énan j' déconne.
no I'm joking.
- 15 [.hh h hÉ]
- 16 AUR → [c'est un peu l'anti déresseur en fait.] ...

it's a bit like an antidepressant in fact.

Before the beginning of the excerpt, Aurore was telling Nicolas that she does not enjoy cooking, whether that be preparing daily meals or occasionally baking. Nicolas agrees with Aurore on the topic of baking, which he considers to be difficult, not his preference (line 1), and time-consuming (lines 3-4). In lines 5/7, Aurore follows up with the idea that men do not like to bake cakes. Her utterance relies on stereotyped judgements based on gender preferences, which may constitute a bias against a particular group of people. The fact that it is introduced by *JT* (line 5, arrowed) may suggest some conscious awareness of the contestable nature of her utterance and a readiness to defend her viewpoint. At the same time, it acts as a strategy of non-imposition on Nicolas, who may have diverging views. From line 10 (arrowed), Nicolas sarcastically goes one step further, reversing the stereotype (from men to women) and choosing a very colloquial, potentially offensive word to describe women (*gonzesses* 'chicks', line 11). Arguably, his joke is performed in reaction to a sensitive topic, to overcome an uncomfortable situation. It is followed by laughter (line 12), which further indicates to the addressee that what precedes is to be understood as a joke. Sacks (1974: 345) pointed out that laughter is a general way to appropriately respond to (and therefore to convey understanding of) a joke. However, on its completion, Nicolas' joke gets no laughter from Aurore. Rather, she orients to the literal content rather than the act of joking itself: she agrees with Nicolas (*c'est vrai hein? ouais*, line 13), reaffirming her commitment to her own prior utterance (lines 5/7). In line 14 (arrowed), Nicolas then explicitly indicates his joking stance, but this is not reacted to by Aurore, who changes the topic of the conversation in a stepwise fashion from line 16.

In summary, this excerpt therefore displays a second example of *JT* where the topic of conversation is commonly seen as sensitive and debatable. In this context, *JT* may be seen as enhancing subjectivity to avoid coercing the addressee to cooperate.

A last example is given in (131), which occurs shortly after the excerpts given in (122) and (128). The participants are discussing the topic related to artistic and cultural education at school, which has brought conflict between the participants (see also section 5.2). Before the beginning of the excerpt below, Adeline displayed her understanding of the topic to apply to primary school only, and pointed out that Quentin's ideas to introduce specific subjects (e.g. electricity and sewing) were in her opinion inappropriate for young children.

(131) Interaction 2.6 - Adeline / Céline / Quentin

- 1 QUE ... c'est sur un cursus complet, tu peux pas séparer .h
it's on a complete curriculum, you can't separate
- 2 école collège lycée c'est- c'est- c'est: -
primary secondary school college it's- it's- it's-
- 3 [c'est- c'est un truc]=
it's- it's a thing
- 4 ADE → [t' as pas l' même âge,]
you don't have the same age,
- 5 QUE = [. h c'est- c'est]=
it's- it's
- 6 CEL → [bah t' as pas les mêmes âges, t' as]=
well you don't have the same ages, you don't
- 7 QUE =[pas les mêmes âges, mais]=
have the same ages, but
- 8 CEL =[() tu comprends]=
you don't understand
- 9 ADE [t' as pas les mêmes âges] ouais
you don't have the same ages yeah
- 10 QUE =[(.) mais sauf]=
but except
- 11 CEL =[pas les mêmes choses,]
the same things,
- 12 QUE =[sauf]=
except
- 13 ADE [ouais]
yeah
- 14 QUE → =sauf que tu dois avoir un (.) temps pour chaque
except that all must be in good
- 15 chose, .h et moi **j' trouve que**: excuse-moi mais quand
time and me I find that excuse-me but when
- 16 j' suis en terminale et qu'on me fait apprendre
I'm in Year 13 and that I'm taught
- 17 les dérivés et les primitives, .h en mathématiques, ça
derived and primitive types in mathematics, it
- 18 me servira jamais à rien, ...
will never be useful,

In line 4 (arrowed), Adeline seizes Quentin's numerous repairs (see the three cut-offs and repetition of *c'est* in line 2) as an opportunity to interrupt his turn. She

is followed by Céline, who also takes the turn in line 6 (arrowed). What follows is a segment of overlapping talk between the participants, which resolves only in line 14 (arrowed): Adeline and Céline drop out of overlap and Quentin takes the turn after numerous attempted self-selections (see the repetitions of *sauf* ‘except’ in lines 10, 12 and 14). In line 15, *JT* is prefaced by *moi* which, similarly to *JT*, enhances subjectivity (see section 5.2.2). In the following utterance, he expresses his failure to understand the purpose of particular concepts being taught at school which, in his opinion, will never be useful to him (and by extension, to no-one else). This is in opposition with Adeline and Céline’s opinion stated earlier in the discussion, as they both pointed out that the curriculum should focus on basic subjects such as French and mathematics.

It is interesting to mention Quentin’s use of *excuse-moi* ‘excuse-me’, added directly after *JT*. According to Brown and Levinson (1987: 187), apology is a straightforward negative-face redress: the speaker indicates that they recognise the addressee’s negative-face demands, and that any potential face-threats are not carried out lightly. By apologising, what Quentin indirectly conveys is that a potential face-threat is present, which exists in the form of an imposition on the addressees following noncooperation. Indeed, Quentin may expect disagreements from his interlocutors, on the basis of prior talk. Furthermore, the concession marker *mais* ‘but’ which follows the apology foreshadows a diverging opinion (Ducrot, 1980: 93-130; Nyan, 1999; Carel, 2002). Similarly to the politeness marker *excuse-moi*, displaying subjectivity through *JT*, and more particularly through *moi JT*, is a way not to impose on addressees. As (130), this conversational excerpt occurs when disagreements may be expected from the speaker. In this context, the collocation *moi je trouve que excuse-moi* fulfils politeness functions, redressing the speaker’s negative-face want.

7.2.6 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I detailed the interactional functions of *JC* and *JT*, and more particularly functions linked to discourse organisation and politeness. The functions fulfilled by *JC* and *JT* are less frequent and less complex than *JP*, highlighting the position of *JP* as the most versatile construction. This may be related to its semantics: since *JP* is used both as an epistemic and a subjective marker, it is not only more likely to occur in different positions, but also to fulfil more interactional functions than *JC*, exclusively epistemic in my database, and *JT*, a subjective marker.

Although instances of *JT* are less frequent than *JP* and *JC* in the database, recurring patterns and functions have been observed. With respect to its position within turns and TCUs, precautions should nevertheless be taken. For instance, the

infrequency of *JT* may be specific to my database, and not representative of the use of the construction in daily interaction.

As politeness markers, I showed that *JC* orients to the speaker's own face, while *JT* orients to the addressee's face. These observations can be extended to their respective meaning in interaction: because *JC* only foregrounds the epistemic component of meaning in my database, and *JT* only encodes a subjective component of meaning, epistemicity is arguably oriented towards the speaker's face, while subjectivity can be seen as oriented towards the addressee's face. This is consistent with the fact that *JP*, which largely foregrounds both components of meaning, is used as a politeness marker to perform redressive actions both to the addressee's and to the speaker's negative face (cf. chapter 6).

Chapter 8

Correlations between the position and the function of *je pense*, *je crois* and *je trouve*

Throughout the preceding chapters, examples showed that the position of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* is highly variable (see Table 8.1 below). This chapter investigates whether there are any significant correlations between the syntactic position of the constructions, their meaning and their interactional functions. Section 8.1 gives an overview of each occurrence by sentence structure. Occurrences of the constructions in matrix position and in clause-final position will be described as the right and the left periphery (henceforth, RP and LP), respectively, as explained in section 8.2 (Beeching & Detges, 2014; Haselow, 2015). As the two previous chapters focused on the LP, this chapter focuses on the RP, where the constructions mostly function as mitigators. Section 8.3 will describe their role as mitigating strategies, while section 8.4 will develop other types of functions they can have in the RP.

8.1 Overview of the data

Table 8.1 shows the distribution of occurrences of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* in the database by sentence structure.¹

As discussed in chapter 2, *JC* is the only construction that does not display any significant preference for the matrix position (followed or not by *que*). Indeed, occurrences of *JP* in matrix position represent 64.9% of all occurrences of the construction, while occurrences of *JT* in the same position represent 65.2%. By

¹For a detailed breakdown of occurrences of each construction by corpus, see Tables 2.8, 2.9 and 2.10 in chapter 2.

Table 8.1 – Occurrences of *je pense*, *je crois* and *je trouve* by sentence structure

	<i>je pense</i>	<i>je crois</i>	<i>je trouve</i>
Matrix clause	58 (52.3%)	38 (48.1%)	15 (65.2%)
Matrix position without <i>que</i>	14 (12.6%)	1 (1.3%)	0 (0%)
Clause-medial parentheticals	5 (4.5%)	4 (5.1%)	0 (0%)
Clause-final parentheticals	22 (19.8%)	29 (36.7%)	5 (21.7%)
Standalone constructions	7 (6.3%)	2 (2.5%)	1 (4.3%)
Other	5 (4.5%)	5 (6.3%)	2 (8.7%)
Total	111 (100%)	79 (100%)	23 (100%)

comparison, slightly less than half of occurrences of *JC* occur in matrix position, representing 49.4%. The percentage difference between the matrix and the parenthetical position is 40.6 for *JP*, 43.5 for *JT*, and only 7.6 for *JC*, suggesting that *JC* has more syntactic freedom. This will be addressed further in the following sections.

When used as parenthetical expressions, all of the three constructions are preferred in clause-final, rather than in clause-medial, position. This may arguably be explained by the fact that clause-final parentheticals, compared to clause-medial ones, do not interrupt the syntax of the utterance. Furthermore, this may be explained by interactional and organisational motivations that will be developed later on in this chapter: for instance, clause-final parentheticals can be used to close an interactional sequence or to exit from the turn (see section 8.4.1). Firstly, of a total of 111 occurrences of *JP*, 27 (24.3%) are reduced parentheticals. Among them, 22 are used in clause-final position while five are used in clause-medial position. Secondly, of a total of 79 occurrences of *JC*, 33 (41.8%) occur as reduced parentheticals, predominantly in clause-final position (29 *vs* 4 occurrences in clause-medial position). Finally, five occurrences (21.7%) of *JT* are parentheticals, of a total of 23 occurrences. All five occurrences are clause-final parentheticals.

In clause-final position, *JP* and *JC* are not accompanied by other linguistic items (e.g. a discourse marker or a collocation of discourse markers, a response particle) as frequently as in matrix position: 25.9% of occurrences of *JP* and 21.2% of occurrences of *JC* are accompanied by one or several other items. When this is the

case, these linguistic items usually follow rather than precede *JP* and *JC*. In addition, items accompanying *JP* and *JC* in parenthetical position are also less diverse. The particle *hein*, which has been described as a discourse marker (e.g. Beeching, 2002: 153-177), follows two occurrences of *JP* and two of *JC*, and similarly acts in these cases as a mitigating device (on the use of *hein* as a hedge, see Beeching, 2002: 167). Other particles include, sometimes in collocation, *fin*, a shortened version of *enfin* ‘well, I mean’, *quoi* ‘then’ (literally ‘what’), *après* ‘then, after’, *tu vois* ‘you see’ and *quand même* ‘still’. The insertion of *JC* in the midst of a cluster of particles which have been described as discourse markers support its status as such.

8.2 Main functions of *je pense*, *je crois* and *je trouve* at the left and right periphery

To describe occurrences of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* in relation to their position, I will refer to the notion of ‘periphery’. In Beeching and Detges (2014), it is observed that the left and right margins of discourse units do not behave in a symmetrical fashion (see also Haselow, 2015). Rather, left and right peripheries fulfil different functions, although the expressions and functions analysed are not constrained to either periphery: what is observed is a tendency, and not a categorical division. At the level of discourse, one of the main functions of items in the LP is connective and related to discourse coherence (Beeching & Detges, 2014: 3). By contrast, items in the RP have a more intersubjective function (see also Brinton, 1996; Traugott, 2010, cited in Beeching & Detges, 2014: 3-4). Furthermore, items at the RP of sentence or discourse units share a modalising role, insofar as they “reflect or invite attitudes towards the message or the situation rather than contributing to the message itself.” (Beeching & Detges, 2014: 4)

At the level of the clause, *JP*, *JC* and *JT* occur at the LP when they are used in matrix position, followed or not by the complementiser *que* ‘that’. By contrast, they occur at the RP when they are used as clause-final parentheticals. At the level of the turn and TCU, most occurrences of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* at the LP can be found in initial position, where they predominantly fulfil a discourse-organisational function (see chapters 6 and 7): they connect the prior and subsequent units of discourse, therefore participating in discourse coherence. At the RP, *JP*, *JC* and *JT* occur in most cases in TCU/turn-final position. Although the data shows examples of *JP* and *JC* fulfilling discourse-structuring functions (see section 8.4.1 below), right-peripheral usages of the constructions tend to fulfil more addressee-oriented, interpersonal functions. These include a mitigating function and seeking confirmation (see section 8.3 and 8.4.2 below). In the RP, we may a priori assume that

the three constructions generally work more locally insofar as they do not have a connective role between two units of talk. Their mitigating function, consequently, becomes more salient.

The tendencies observed for *JP*, *JC* and *JT* in each periphery are in line with those observed in Beeching and Detges (2014): the constructions have discourse-structuring functions when they occur in the LP, while they mainly function as mitigating devices in the RP. Chapters 6 and 7 focused on occurrences of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* in the left margin of discourse units, as the emphasis was placed on recurring interactional environments. In the following sections, the main interest is in the right margin of discourse units, where the overall functions of *JP* and *JC* are linked to mitigation. This is also a tendency observed for *JT* in this position, although the low number of occurrences of this construction does not allow for meaningful generalisations.

The ability of the constructions to fulfil interactional functions in either periphery, as argued in Angot & Hansen (2021), goes counter to what is commonly assumed of parenthetical expressions; namely that they are more pragmatic in function and further along in their development as discourse markers, compared to their counterparts in matrix position. Indeed, the data shows that the three constructions similarly behave as discourse markers in the LP, where they fulfil discourse-organisational functions. In addition, they may fulfil functions related to politeness.

With respect to their meaning, an important aspect of epistemic *JP* and *JC* is that they contribute to the propositional content of their host utterances, regardless of their position within the utterance. As argued in chapter 4, their removal from the utterance would lead to substantial changes in meaning as the speaker would fully commit to their utterance. As a subjective marker, *JT* was described as forcing the subjective interpretation of its host utterance. It may therefore prevent potential ambiguities as to whether speakers rely on objective facts or whether they express their own opinion. In that sense, *JT* appears to be an essential component of its host utterance. Finally, when used as a subjective marker, *JP* fulfils a more interpersonal role in that it principally marks openness and non-imposition on the addressee. Nonetheless, any instance of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* can be construed as discourse markers, and the interactional functions that they fulfil are orthogonal to their semantic meaning. This goes against what is usually said about discourse markers, namely that they are non-propositional linguistic items (e.g. Hansen, 1998b: 73; Hansen, 1998a; Fraser, 2009). Since *JP* and *JC* (and to a lesser extent, *JT*) may semantically continue to contribute to the proposition, they can be seen as peripheral members of a prototypical category of discourse markers, that are principally pragmatic in function.

Finally, with regards to *JP*, i.e. the only construction to foreground the epistemic

or subjective component of meaning in the database, the construction is able to foreground each component of meaning in any position.

8.3 Parentheticals as mitigation strategies

As observed in previous studies (e.g. Schneider, 2007), reduced parentheticals perform mitigating functions by downgrading the speaker’s commitment to their utterance. This section shows that mitigation can also be expressed through subjectivity. In the database, the three constructions typically occur in clause-final position to moderate an initial claim to avoid possible subsequent disagreements or challenges. This section explores the individual role effected by each construction as a mitigating device. In the RP, I argue that *JC* predominantly acts as a marker of vagueness, *JT* as a marker of subjectivity and non-imposition, and *JP* as a marker of openness and non-assertiveness. Compared to *JC*, I will show that *JT* and *JP* fulfil more interpersonal functions (see also section 8.4.2). To account for the attenuating role of the constructions, I draw on Caffi’s (2007) framework of mitigation.

8.3.1 Mitigation (Caffi, 2007)

Caffi (2007: 2-3) defines mitigation as “the weakening direction of modulation” of utterances, used by speakers to avoid “unnecessary risks, responsibilities and conflicts.” The opposite, strengthening, direction is reinforcement, which gives prominence to a linguistic choice. The author acknowledges that the distinction between mitigation and reinforcement is often impossible to make, and that mitigation is an ambivalent process. For instance, an inherently mitigating device can be used for reinforcing purposes. By way of illustration, Caffi gives the example of the litote “John is not bright”, a type of mitigation. However, she points out that it is the interlocutor’s choice to decide whether “John is not bright” is an assertion, a piece of criticism, etc. (i.e. to interpret the illocutionary force of the utterance), but also whether it is weakened or reinforced (i.e. to interpret the propositional content of the utterance). This ambivalence will be discussed later when analysing *JT* and *JP* as subjective markers.

To describe parenthetical uses of *JP*, *JC* and *JT*, I draw upon Caffi’s (2007) three basic mitigating strategies: ‘bushes’, ‘hedges’ and ‘shields’, which she investigates in a corpus of spoken Italian.²

²The notion of “hedge” was developed by Lakoff (1972), and Caffi (2007) later on expanded his botanical metaphor. Note that the terminology (and the notion of *hedge* specifically) may change from one author to another.

With bushes, mitigation focuses on the propositional content of the utterance (or Austin's locutionary act), whose precision is reduced (Caffi, 2007: 98). Italian examples comprise diminutive suffixes or adjacent reformulations as well as devices such as *circa* 'about' and *una specie di* 'a kind of' (Caffi, 2007: 265-266), by means of which utterances are made less precise. English examples are, for instance, *something like that*, *a kind of*, *basically* or *roughly speaking* (see also Aijmer, 2002).³

In the case of hedges, mitigation centers on the illocution (Caffi, 2007: 102). Caffi (2007: 267-269) gives as examples in Italian *per così dire* 'so to speak', *forse* 'maybe', or the disclaimer *mi sembra di capire* 'it seems to me that'. According to the author, parentheticals such as *immagino* 'so I suppose' are hedges, and more specifically "epistemic commitment modulating devices" (Caffi, 2007: 268).

Finally, with shields, mitigation operates on deictic origin (cf. Bühler, 1934), i.e. the 'I-here-now' of the utterance, the three basic components of deixis (Caffi, 2007: 106). With shields, mitigation works on a more abstract level, insofar as the act is not represented by any explicit mitigation devices. Examples include impersonal constructions (affecting the first component of deixis, i.e. the 'I') and displacement involving narratives (affecting the 'here and now' component in that the speaker is projected to another space and time).

Caffi (2007) points out that bushes, which highlight a contrast between precision and imprecision, are situated at a semantic level, while "hedges reflect the progressive shift from sentence meaning to utterance meaning and from utterance meaning to utterer's meaning" (2007: 59).

As parenthetical expressions, the three constructions *JP*, *JC* and *JT* can be seen as mitigators with individual characteristics. First, the database shows that *JC* is mainly used to introduce vagueness in the propositional content of an utterance, i.e. as a bush. By contrast, *JP* and *JT* are mainly used as hedges focusing on the illocutionary force. *JC* on the one hand, and *JP* and *JT* on the other hand, therefore differ from each other with regard to what they have in their scope: with *JC* the scope of mitigation is the propositional content of the utterance, while *JP* and *JT* have as their scope the whole illocution. Following Caffi's terminology, *JC* can therefore be classified as a propositional mitigating device, while *JP* and *JT* are illocutionary mitigating devices (Caffi, 2007: 176).

³In Lakoff's (1972) terminology, bushes correspond to hedges, which "make things fuzzier or less fuzzy" (Lakoff, 1972: 195).

8.3.2 *Je crois*: a propositional mitigating device

In the database, parenthetical uses of *JC* are mainly used to generate vagueness in the utterance in which they occur. Following Caffi (2007), this marker can therefore be described as a bush since it has as its scope the propositional content, towards which the speaker reduces their commitment. Overall, *JC* works as an approximation marker, and its role is to mark the element scoped over as vague. This is especially visible when *JC* occurs with states of affairs that represent more or less exact, precise information (cf. chapter 4) which consists of short discourse segments. This is the case with 17 instances of parenthetical uses of *JC*, representing 51.5% of instances in this position. The role of *JC* is to open a paradigm of different options, within which the information conveyed is what the speaker commits to. Simultaneously, the speaker's commitment is, however, reduced due to the epistemic component of meaning encoded in the construction. Recall from chapter 5 that *JC* can also be glossed as ‘as far as I remember’ when information is based on prior knowledge (cf. chapter 5).

By way of illustration, consider (132).

(132) Interaction 3.3 - Anne / Julie / Romain

1 ANN al ors atten: ds. nous on a pri s deux kil os j' croi s,
hang on then. we took two kilos I believe,

The addition of *JC* at the end of her turn allows Anne to downgrade her commitment towards the propositional content of her utterance, and more precisely towards the constituent *deux kilos* ‘two kilos’. Here, *JC* opens a paradigm of options within which *deux kilos*, by contrast with three, four, etc. kilos, is the most probable option for the speaker, i.e. the option she commits to. The work of *JC* is therefore very local as the construction scopes over a precise constituent of the host utterance: indeed, Anne's uncertainty does not apply to the whole utterance, i.e. the fact she and her friend (indexed by *nous on* ‘we’) bought something in a farmers' market, but to the exact weight of the fruit they bought.

The vagueness-marking role of *JC* is further illustrated in (133). Nicolas is struggling to remember the exact location and the name of a brasserie in the city he lives in (see also excerpt (56) in chapter 5).

(133) Interaction 1.6 - Aurore / Nicolas

1 NIC quand tu sors. >sur la gauche j' croi s un truc comme

- when you go out. on the left I believe something like
- 2 ça, < .h t' as le: =mh:: comment i' s' appelle t' as une
 that, there's the=mh how's it called there's a
- 3 → brasserie qui s' appelle le- monsieur machin, j' crois .hh
 brasserie that's called the- monsieur machin, I believe

In line 3, Nicolas suggests the name “Monsieur Machin”, followed by an epistemic downgrading through the use of *JC*. Within a paradigm of different names, this is the one the speaker commits to. Here again, *JC* (line 3, arrowed) does not scope over the entire host utterance, namely *t'as une brasserie qui s'appelle le monsieur machin* ‘there’s a brasserie that’s called the monsieur machin’ (lines 2-3), insofar as Nicolas’ epistemic stance does not concern the existence of this brasserie or the fact that it has a name. Rather, *JC* only scopes over its name (“monsieur machin”), which represents the element Nicolas does not recall.

In the database, *JC* co-occurs with other markers of vagueness on several occasions, namely with *au niveau de* ‘at the level of’ and *pas très loin de* ‘not too far away from’ (see example (55) in chapter 5), *pas trop de* ‘not too many’, *vers* ‘around’, *genre* ‘like’, and *un truc comme ça* ‘something like that’ or the variant *des trucs comme ça* ‘things like that’. The most frequent co-occurrence is between *JC* and *un truc comme ça* and its plural variant *des trucs comme ça* (Secova, 2010, 2017; Mihatsch, 2009: 65): *un truc comme ça* follows three clause-final parenthetical uses of *JC*, while *des trucs comme ça* ‘things like that’ precedes one parenthetical use of *JC*. As will be illustrated in (134) below, both constructions form a cluster where the effect of each of the components complements that of the other. On the one hand, *un truc comme ça* is a general extender (Overstreet, 1999): it indicates that the item presented is part of a set of similar items, without all the members of this set being specified. As a propositional mitigating device in Caffi’s (2007) classification, *un truc comme ça* introduces vagueness in the propositional content of the utterance. On the other hand, *JC* similarly marks the given item as one possible option within a set of similar options, but additionally signals the speaker’s degree of commitment to this option.

The two examples above showed that *JC* works locally in that its scope is a short discourse segment. Further evidence is displayed in (133) above, where the first instance of *JC* (line 1) co-occurs with an elliptical structure: it has in its scope the adverbial clause *sur la gauche* ‘on the left’. In the database, six instances of *JC* occur with elliptical constructions, taking the form of a single word or an adjunct. Another example is provided in (134): the host unit of *JC* represents one word only (namely *teriyaki*, line 4, arrowed).

(134) Interaction 1.3 - Charlotte / Nicolas

- 1 NIC ... je sais plus les noms: mais euh .hh
I don't know the names anymore but um
- 2 euh[:]=
um
- 3 CHA [une brochette?]
a brochette?
- 4 NIC → =mh m: ouais [euh te]riyaki =
mh yeah um teriyaki
- 5 CHA [sashi mi ?]
sashi mi ?
- 6 NIC → =j' **crois** un truc comme ça...
I believe something like that...

Nicolas is trying to recall the name of a Japanese dish, making explicit in line 1 that he does not recall their names (*je sais plus les noms* 'I don't know the names anymore'). In lines 3 and 5, Charlotte helps him to recall the type of food that he has forgotten (*une brochette?* 'a brochette?', line 3; *sashimi?*, line 5). In line 4, Nicolas suggests *teriyaki* as the possible dish he is trying to recall, retrospectively weakening his commitment by adding *JC* and *un truc comme ça* 'something like that' at the end of his TCU (line 6, arrowed). As mentioned before, both constructions form a cluster where the effect of each of the components complements that of the other. Firstly, *JC* introduces vagueness whilst making available a paradigm of other possibilities (sushi, tempura, etc.). Additionally, it indicates the commitment of Nicolas to the given item (*teriyaki*) within this paradigm. Secondly, the status of *un truc comme ça* as a general extender (Secova, 2010) reinforces the possibility of other options in addition to the one which has just been suggested.

However, this vagueness-marking role is not restricted to *JC*: certain parenthetical uses of *JP* similarly marks vagueness, thereby mitigating the propositional content of the utterance. This is exemplified in (135) and (136).

(135) Interaction 3.3 - Judith / Patricia

- 1 PAT ... tu dois l' rendre quand ton mémoire?
when do you have to hand your master's thesis?
- 2 JUD → oh ce s'ra en juillet j' pense.
oh it will be in July I think.

(136) Interaction 2.4 - Bruno / Quentin

- 1 BRU → il arrive à: il arrive j' **pense** bientôt à la quarantaine,
he's soon he's soon I think going to turn forty,
- 2 i' doit avoir entre trente-cinq et quarante
he might be between thirty-five and forty

JP occurs clause-finally in (135), and retrospectively mitigates the proposition in the preceding utterance, and more specifically the short discourse segment *juillet* 'July' (line 2, arrowed). What *JP* has in its scope is more ambiguous in (136), where it occurs in clause-medial position: it could have in its scope *il arrive* 'he's going to turn' which precedes (in opposition to *il a* 'he is'), or *bientôt à la quarantaine* 'soon forty', or even merely *bientôt* 'soon', which follows *JP* (line 1, arrowed). In both excerpts, *JP* acts as a propositional mitigating device introducing vagueness regarding precise information: the month in question in (135), and the exact age of Bruno's colleague in (136).

In chapter 5, I argued that *JP* suggests that the state of affairs is obtained through inference, while *JC* indicates that the speaker's memory may be faulty. In (135) and (136), instances of *JP* therefore invite the inference that Judith and Bruno are not relying on information they used to know, but are hazarding a guess based on external evidence. This is evidence that *JP* and *JC* still contribute to the propositional content of the utterance (a criterion which is usually not characteristic of discourse markers). In other words, both constructions may be used as markers of vagueness, depending on the speaker relying on inference (through *JP*) or prior information (through *JC*). However, the data shows that this vagueness-generating role is more frequent for and specific of *JC*. This role may be seen as a by-product of both the semantic status of *JC* and what it has in its scope. On the one hand, its predominant use as an epistemic marker weakens the speaker's commitment to their utterance; on the other hand, *JC* scopes over short discourse segments that represent prior information, and which are in opposition to other pieces of information within a similar set.

Finally, it is worth noting that the prosodic behaviour of *JC* in the RP slightly differs from that of *JP* and *JT*. There is no perceptible prosodic break between any occurrences of *JT* and what precedes, and this is the case for only one occurrence of *JP*. By contrast, three occurrences of *JC* follow a short prosodic break (see example in (133) above, line 3), while two occurrences are separated from their host utterances by hesitation markers. On such occasions, *JC* can arguably be seen as forming a separate prosodic domain, incrementally added to a prior TCU. This reflects the syntactic flexibility of *JC*, which presents more variation than *JP* and

JC in terms of mobility. This flexibility can additionally be seen in (137) below, where the marker is used as a turn-constructural *pivot* (Schegloff, 1979: 275-276; Sacks, 1992: 146; Walker, 2007). Thus, *JC* can be heard as both a clause-final parenthetical in the RP of the preceding utterance (*tu regardes pendant une heure et d'mie je crois* 'you watch for an hour and an half I believe') and the matrix clause of the utterance *une heure et d'mie je crois que c'est* 'an hour and an half I believe it is', in which 'an hour and an half' is left-dislocated. In other words, *JC* can be heard as both the end and the beginning of two different discourse units, thereby connecting them.

(137) Interaction 3.3 - Anne / Julie / Romain

- | | | |
|---|-----|---|
| 1 | ANN | tu r'gardes pendant une heure et d'mie j' crois ,
<i>you watch for an hour and an half I believe,</i> |
| 2 | | qu' c'est,
<i>that it is,</i> |
| 2 | ROM | ouai s. =
<i>yeah.</i> |
| 3 | ANN | =tu t' dis nan mai : s c'est pas possible...
<i>you're like no but it's not possible</i> |

In sum, as a parenthetical, *JC* mainly works as a bush, and more specifically an approximation marker whose role is to generate vagueness. On a syntactic level, it shows more flexibility than *JP* and *JT*.

8.3.3 *Je trouve* and *je pense*: illocutionary mitigating devices

8.3.3.1 *Je trouve*

According to Caffi (2007: 268), devices that make a proposition a subjective opinion are hedges that focus on illocutionary force. They belong to the category "subjectivizers"⁴ and comprise Italian examples such as *secondo me* and *a mio parere* 'in my opinion' (Caffi, 2007: 268). Such examples are considered mitigating devices in that they "function as cautious premises making the statements that follow them subjective and thus undermining their authority (cf. Bazzanella et al., 1991: 68)." (Caffi,

⁴Ca (2007) also refers to this category as "epistemic certainty restricting devices". I do not use this terminology here, as the three markers are not viewed on a continuum between '*epistemic uncertainty*' and '*epistemic certainty*' (but see Kärkkäinen (2003: 111) on English *I think*).

2007: 252) I classify *JT* as a subjectiviser, nuanced in that the marker reinforces rather than marks a proposition as subjective (see chapter 4). Now, subjectivity and mitigation may be seen as contradictory: indeed, the former strengthens the speaker's endorsement of their utterance, while the latter weakens utterances, and more specifically illocutionary force. This ambivalent role of *JT* shows, according to Caffi, the paradoxical nature of mitigation (2007: 252):

The addition of restrictive prepositional or adverbial phrases of this kind [e.g. *secondo me, a mio parere, a mio giudizio*] in tempering mitigation confirms (...) the paradoxical nature of mitigation: on the one hand, it enables a speaker to reduce truth claims to personal opinions thereby deleting the potential extension of the truth claim and its absolutization. On the other hand, this reduction is achieved by foregrounding the speaker's responsibility for what s/he is saying. Paradoxically, phrases like *a mio parere* ('in my opinion'), while reducing the validity of a statement or verdict, also underscore the speaker's endorsement of her/his utterance.

Given the low number of instances of *JT* in the database, observations of its role and position have to be taken with precaution. Among the five parenthetical uses of *JT*, four retrospectively strengthen the speaker's subjective stance with the probable intention of avoid imposing on the addressee, as illustrated in (138) below. The fifth instance is used as a marker of agreement with the prior speaker's turn, and will be discussed in section 8.4 (see example (148)).

(138) Interaction 2.1 - Adeline / Céline

- | | | |
|---|-------|---|
| 1 | ADE | ... m: ai s c' est pas mal c' est l' seul que j' ai gardé
<i>but it's okay it's the only one that I've kept.</i> |
| 2 | | honnêtement.
<i>to be honest.</i> |
| 3 | | (1.2) |
| 4 | CEL | de[: réseaux soci aux?]
<i>of social networks?</i> |
| 5 | ADE → | [en contact ouais] en::: en truc qui - c' est l' seul
<i>in contact yeah in stuff that- it's the only one</i> |
| 6 | → | que- sur lequel j' me suis di t bah- d' toute façon
<i>that- about which I told myself well - anyway</i> |
| 7 | → | t' as pas besoin d' en avoir quarante-cinq mille
<i>you don't need forty-five thousand of them</i> |

8 → *j' trouve*. à part pour l' boulot p't-êt',
 I find. *except for work maybe,*

Adeline and Céline are discussing a social network. In lines 1-2, Adeline concludes her turn by saying that this social network is the only one she has continued using. Her next turn (lines 5-8, arrowed) can be broken down into three different parts. The first part of Adeline's turn confirms Céline's clarification request in line 4 (*en contact ouais* 'in contact yeah', line 5), and therefore constitutes the second pair-part of a question-answer adjacency pair. Then, Adeline tries to provide an explanation for using the social network in question only, producing several interrupted TCUs (lines 5-6). Finally, she expresses her opinion about the uselessness of using different social networks. This is introduced in line 6 by the reformulative discourse marker *de toute façon* 'anyway' (Rossari, 1994: 66-67; Nemo, 1998), which introduces a conclusion and indicates that the preceding talk is not worth discussing. In addition, the overstatement of *quarante-cinq mille* 'forty-five thousand' social networks and the directive *t'as pas besoin* 'you don't need' (i.e. what people should or should not do) emphasise Adeline's opinionated stance. As a mitigator on the illocution, the addition of *JT* at the end of her TCU (line 8) mitigates what could be heard as an over-exaggerated claim which may potentially coerce Céline's opinion, while leaving room for debate. Furthermore, her last TCU may similarly be seen as weakening her preceding utterance, by suggesting another (valid) option accounting for the use of several social networks.

8.3.3.2 *Je pense*

As a right-peripheral element, the main function of *JP* is to show openness and non-assertiveness, thus operating on the whole illocution. Following Caffi's (2007) terminology *JP* is a hedge.⁵ The non-assertive role of *JP* may be explained by the association of the epistemic and the subjective component of meaning.

JP is used mainly in final position, where it retrospectively operates a decrease of assertiveness towards the illocution of the host utterance. Staying open-minded allows speakers to present their opinion in a non-definitive way for various reasons, from avoiding conflict to creating a collusive conversation and making room for subsequent changes. All these strategies may be related to face wants (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 61-64), either towards the speaker's or the hearer's face (cf. chapter

⁵In French, *JP* has been referred to as an *atténuateur* 'attenuator' (Roulet, 1980: 93, referring to G. Lako, 1972, and R. Lako, 1977b) or an *adoucesseur* 'softener' (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1992: 196-223; 1994: 43-44, 129). More specifically, *JP*, *JC* and *JT* are *modalisateurs* 'modalisators' according to Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1992: 221) (see chapter 3).

6). As a face-saving device, *JP* mitigates an initial assertion which may be heard afterwards by the speaker as potentially damaging (to their face or their interlocutor's face). Thus, it plays a crucial role in maintaining cooperation. Examples were provided in section 6.5 (chapter 6). For instance, I argued in section 6.5.1 that *JP* performs redress towards the hearer's face when it co-occurs with actions linked with the management of the conversation, i.e. topic-shifts and conversation closings. In these interactional environments, such actions may threaten the hearer's face insofar as they may want to take part in these activities. Thus, the use of *JP* is a resource for speakers to soften their actions, to avoid imposing themselves as leading the conversation. Consider (139), which displays a topic-shift sequence (see also (105) in section 6.5.1).

(139) Interaction 2.5 - Adeline / Bruno

1 ADE on peut p' t-êt' swi tcher là j' pense,
we can perhaps swi tch now I thi nk,

Since they have been asked to discuss two topics during approximately fifteen minutes, the three participants involved in the interaction may not see themselves in a position in which they can without any doubt assert the exhaustion of topics. This uncertainty is reflected in the use of the epistemic marker *JP*, which retrospectively tones down Adeline's commitment to her utterance. Furthermore, *JP* arguably weakens the whole illocution: its overall effect is to weaken a directive (in the form of an imposition of the topic-shift) into a suggestion. *JP* therefore leaves open a different version of the subsequent event.

The excerpt in (140) displays another example of clause-final *JP* with face-saving function to the addressee. Before the beginning of the excerpt, Paul has asked for Nicolas' opinion about ready meals, which he (Paul) enjoys and regularly eats. Nicolas' answer is displayed from line 7 to 13.

(140) Interaction 1.2 - Nicolas / Paul

1 PAU donc toi tu trouves les pi cards pas intéressants?
so you find Pi card products not interesting?

2 (0.4)

3 NIC les quoi ?
what's that?

4 PAU les pi (h)cards pas intéressants?
Pi card products not interesting?

- 5 NIC c'est quoi les picards?
what are Picard products?
- 6 <((smiling .h ah c'est les plats, cuisinés.)>
ah they're meals, ready.
- 7 NIC → ah euh: tipi - (.) ah picard ah 'i pi card euh exact .h
ah um tipi - ah Picard ah yes Picard um exact
- 8 euh: bah mh: j' sais pas j' en mange pas moi: l' peu
um well mh I don't know I don't eat that myself the few
- 9 d' truc que j'ai mangé comme ça j - j - j' trouve pas ç(h)a
stuff I ate like that I - I - I don't find that
- 10 Éc- pas ça très bon quoi mais euh .hhÉ 'fin voilà
it- not very good then but um well that's it
- 11 quoi. (0.5) p'is j' sais pas euh .hh je - j - ça me ça
then and I don't know um I - I - it me it
- 12 m' f'rait mal au cœur de fde prendre des trucs comme ça
would make me sick to to take stuffs like that
- 13 <((whispering)) °moi j' pense°> [.hhÉ]
me I think
- 14 PAU → [mal] au cœur?
make you sick?
- 15 NIC ouais: j' sais pas tu t' dis tu peux faire ta cuisine
yeah I don't know you think you can cook your meals
- 16 toi-même quoi c'est plus drôle.
yoursel f then it's more fun.
- 17 (1.3 – JUL slightly pouts)
- 18 NIC j' sais pas.
I don't know.
- 19 (0.8)
- 20 PAU (mh=)ouais,
m=yeah,
- 21 (0.9)
- 22 NIC .tsk (.) au premier d' l'an justement tu vas pas
for New Year's Eve actually you're not
- 23 faire d' la cuisine avec tes potes?
gonna cook with your friends?

This excerpt occurs approximately nine minutes and thirty seconds into the conversation. With respect to their cooking habits, a gap has appeared between the two participants: while Nicolas enjoys cooking, it is clearly not one of Paul's

interests. Earlier in the conversation, Paul has told Nicolas that he usually buys ready meals, and that he has not cooked a meal by himself for a very long time.

In line 1, Paul reintroduces into the discussion the topic of ready meals, and specifically those prepared by the brand Picard, in the form of a question. The latter is designed in such a way as to display a certain expectation of Nicolas' response, namely that his interlocutor has no interest in ready meals. First, Paul's question is initiated by means of the adverb *donc* 'so', marking the resumption of a topic with a conclusive tone (Hansen, 1998b: 325). Second, the design of the question (*pas intéressants* 'not interesting') orients to a negative response. Furthermore, the use of the strong pronoun *toi* 'you' reinforces a contrast between the two participants, emphasising Paul's interest in ready meals. However, Nicolas' response, displayed from line 7 (arrowed), is somewhat mitigated. It is delayed by several hesitation markers (*euh bah mh*) as well as the epistemic disclaimer *je sais pas* 'I don't know'. Pekarek Doehler (2016) shows how in responses to questions, syntactically free-standing uses of *je sais pas* serve to project a non-fitted answer when they occur in turn-initial position. According to her, *je sais pas* does not primarily function as an epistemic disclaimer to claim insufficient knowledge, but as a hedge downgrading the speaker's commitment as well as a discourse marker foreshadowing a dispreferred action, "indicating that the upcoming response departs from what is projected by the question as a relevant next" (2016: 156). In such cases, *je sais pas* is prosodically not delivered as a TCU in itself but is part of a larger TCU. In line 8, the construction is delivered prosodically as part of the larger TCU *j'en mange pas moi* 'I don't eat that myself', foreshadowing a non-conforming response to Paul's question: by claiming a lack of knowledge regarding the object in question, Nicolas cannot express an opinion.

This may be understood as a strategy to avoid giving a negative evaluation of one of Paul's eating habits (and by extension, of Paul's interests). Indeed, such an action (criticism) would be a threat for the addressee's positive face (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 66). In this scenario, Nicolas may estimate the risk of face loss as high so that he chooses the least risky strategy: do not perform the face-threatening act (1987: 60). However, the negative evaluation is gradually provided in the remainder of Nicolas' turn. This gradual progression, delaying the face-threat, may be seen as a strategy triggered by face wants. In lines 9-10, Nicolas gives a negative account of the few ready meals he ate, through the use of the negative construction *je trouve pas ça* 'I don't find that'. The adverb *très* 'very' is used as a softening device. In line 11, *puis je sais pas* 'and I don't know' introduces a last step in Nicolas' turn after a 0.5 second pause. The partial repetition of Nicolas' prior turn (*mal au cœur?* 'make you sick?', line 14, arrowed) indicates that it is met with surprise by Paul, presumably because Nicolas' utterance contains a relatively radical viewpoint towards the object

discussed.

Throughout Nicolas' turn, various linguistic features are used to reduce the imposition of the threat: hesitation markers, brief in-breaths, repetitions, reformulations and stuttering work together to delay the answer and potentially reflect a reluctance to express a negative evaluation, just as the suppressed laughter (enclosed by the British pound signs) accompanying Nicolas' turn (line 10). Even after the production of the face-threatening act in lines 12-13, Nicolas' subsequent turns display softening strategies: two uses of *je sais pas* (lines 15 and 18) are used, and an account is provided (*c'est plus drôle* 'it's more fun', line 16).

Used at the end of the turn as a turn-exit device, *JP* can be seen as a face-saving device toward Paul's face, mitigating the preceding illocution. It alleviates the negative evaluation of one of Paul's interests, therefore performing redressive action to his negative face. On a prosodic level, *JP* is whispered, which could suggest that its use is primarily driven by interpersonal (here, politeness) reasons. However, even as a politeness device, the semantics of *JP* remains present. Here, *JP* therefore foregrounds epistemicity: Nicolas is referring to a hypothetical situation, encoded in the conditional *ferait* 'would make', and he does not entirely commit to his utterance. In this way, *JP* is also a way of showing openness, by acknowledging the possibility that the speaker is mistaking: if he tried ready meals, perhaps he would like them.

As was observed with *JC*, *JP* also occurs with elliptical structures: this is the case with three instances in the whole database (11.1% of *JP* in parenthetical position). This is exemplified in (141).

(141) Interaction 1.3 - Charlotte / Nicolas

- | | | |
|---|-------|---|
| 1 | NIC | donc nous fini rons cette di scussi on sur l a phol ono-
so we' ll put an end to thi s di scussi on on phol ono- |
| 2 | | phonol ogi e de l a (.) [()]
phonol ogy of |
| 3 | CHA | [cui si : ne]
cooki ng |
| 4 | NIC | phonol ogi e cul i nai re,
cul i nary phonol ogy |
| 5 | CHA | c' est [ça]
that' s i t |
| 6 | NIC → | [un do]mai ne à: [expl o]rer=
an area to expl ore |
| 7 | CHA | [phonol o-] |

phonol o-

8 NIC =j e pense.
 I think.

This excerpt displays the end of the conversation between Charlotte and Nicolas, explicitly introduced by Nicolas in line 1 (*donc nous finirons cette discussion...* ‘so we’ll put an end to this discussion...’). *JP* (line 8) is the last token of the conversation, occurring in clause-final and turn-final position. An area (‘culinary phonology’) is made up and suggested by Nicolas as a topic of discussion of potential interest (*un domaine à explorer* ‘an area to explore’, line 6, arrowed). In final position, *JP* retrospectively marks Nicolas’ subjective stance: here, *JP* therefore foregrounds the subjective component of meaning. Furthermore, *JP* may be seen as a strategic resource to close the turn and/or the conversation in a non-assertive way. Its scope is therefore the whole illocution.

8.4 Further functions of parentheticals

In addition to fulfilling mitigating functions in the RP, the examples below show that parenthetical uses of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* can fulfil other types of functions. This is particularly the case with *JP* and *JT*. This section describes two additional functions: firstly, a discourse-structuring function of summary (section 8.4.1); secondly, a more interpersonal function of seeking confirmation (section 8.4.2) and of marking agreement (section 8.4.3).

8.4.1 Summing up functions

In the last chapter, section 7.2.4 describes one of the roles of parenthetical uses of *JT* as that of recapitulating prior talk: the speaker summarises prior one or more turns, and/or their stance towards the topic under discussion. This function is also carried out by the only use of *JT* uttered as an independent TCU, incrementally added at the end of the speaker’s turn together with *fin*, a shortened version of the marker *enfin* ‘well, I mean’. In the RP of their host utterance, parenthetical uses of *JT* help participate in marking the completion of a sequence, and in one case (see example (125) in section 7.2.4), to relinquish the turn.

Marking the completion of a sequence is also a role performed by certain parenthetical uses of *JP* in the RP of their host utterance. As a parenthetical expression, *JP* mostly occurs in turn-final position, as the very last token of the turn: of a total of 18 instances in final position, 13 are used by speakers to relinquish their turn, representing 72.2% of instances in final position. In chapter 6, an example was

given in example (99), where *JP* occurs in a turn delivering a disaffiliative action (e.g. Pomerantz & Heritage, 2013): in addition to fulfilling a mitigating function, this parenthetical use of *JP* has an organisational role through which it marks the end of a sequence.

Another example is given in (142). Before the beginning of the excerpt, both participants told each other that they cooked only occasionally.

(142) Interaction - Charlotte / Nicolas

- 1 PAU ... p'is j' pars du principe que quand tu ((coughs))
and I work on the basis that when you
- 2 → (0.3) .tsk=.h fait quand tu manges tout l' temps d' la
do when you eat all the time some
- 3 → bonne cuisine, (0.4) tu t' lasses. et du
good food you get bored of it. and so
- 4 [coup .h m- mon ça c- (.) c'est ça.]=
then m- my it i- that's it.
- 5 CHA [Eh c'est ça après tu sais p'us apprécier
that's it after you don't know how to appreciate
- 6 c' qu' est bon h hÉ]
what's good anymore
- 7 PAU =Éça- ça m' soulage ma
it- it lessens my
- 8 con[science en disant qu' j' cuisine pas]=
burden saying that I don't cook
- 9 CHA [Éah ah ah ah .hÉ]
- 10 PAU =.hh mais euh:: c'est vrai qu' j' apprécie plus du coup
but um it's true that I appreciate it more than
- 11 euh .hh euh quand:: quand ça arrive
um um when when it happens
- 12 ponctuellement. plutôt que:: 'fin je sais
occasionally. rather than well I know
- 13 qu' y a des gens qui cuisinent euh (.) .hhh relatif-
that there are people who cook um relativ-
- 14 → mh: 'fin souvent quoi et euh: (.) 'fin j' sais pas
mh well often then and um well I don't know
- 15 j' apprécierais p- moins j' pense.
I'd appreciate it p- less I think.
- 16 CHA ouai s...
yeah...

Throughout the excerpt, Paul tries to explain why he does not cook on a daily basis: he would get bored of eating good food (lines 2-3, arrowed) and prefers when it happens occasionally (lines 10-12). At the end of this TCU (and of the turn), *JP* (line 15) is used to relinquish the turn. Moreover, it is arguably used to exit from a larger sequence, while showing openness towards the preceding utterance. As in the excerpt in (140), Paul is referring to a hypothetical situation, encoded in the conditional *apprécierais* ('would appreciate'). The assertion is therefore not fully committed to. *JP* foregrounds the epistemic component of meaning, and reflects the possibility that the speaker is mistaking: perhaps Paul would enjoy cooking if he did it more often. Introducing Paul's last TCU, the epistemic disclaimer *je sais pas* 'I don't know' (line 14, arrowed) reinforces his uncertainty. In the database, *JP* co-occurs several times with *je sais pas*, and both constructions seem to accomplish complementary work. Finally, note the self-interruption after *j'apprécierais*, where *p-* could be heard as the beginning of *peu* 'a few' or *pas* 'not', subsequently toned down to *moins* 'less'. This supports the speaker's intentions to be open.

Together with '*fin* 'well, I mean' (e.g. Rossari, 1994, 2000a; Hansen, 2005), the epistemic disclaimer *je sais pas* 'I don't know' (Pekarek Doehler, 2016) implements a new action within Paul's turn: after a micro-pause (line 14), the cluster '*fin je sais pas* introduces the last TCU within Paul's turn. This last TCU (lines 14-15) simultaneously summarises his prior talk and puts an end to his turn, and more globally, to his explanation for his cooking only occasionally. Beeching (2002) shows that in its corrective role, *enfin* flags an upcoming correction in order, for instance, to tone down an initially over-strong assertion (2002: 132), to indicate "greater precision or appropriacy" (2002: 133) or to correct an item requiring factual correction. In this case (line 14), the role of *enfin* is corrective in a wide sense, in that it fine-tunes prior talk by giving precision about why he does not cook often, and by reformulating his prior turn. Moreover, Beeching (2002: 136) points out that "[c]orrectives with *enfin* are often used with *moi, personnellement, with je pense (pas), je crois (pas), je trouve, je sais pas*" where speakers "mitigate the forcefulness or imposition which might be created by their assertion by stating that this is only their opinion (others might not agree)". In this case, the cluster '*fin je sais pas* therefore participates, together with the clause-final use of *JP*, in showing openness.

A last example is provided in (143): in clause-final position, *JP* (line 7) terminates a prior sequence.

(143) Interaction 1.6 - Aurore / Nicolas

1 NIC ... beh: en fai t bouffe gastronomi que j' s- ' fi n euh
well in fact gastronomi c food l' m- well um

- 2 non pas ben=mh 'fi n c'est: c'est pas c'est: c-
no not well um well it's it's not it's it-
- 3 [on va dire c'est c']=
let's say it'
- 4 AUR [c'est surfait?]
it's overrated?
- 5 NIC → =est un pri:x c'est euh ce- tout ça 'fi n euh faut euh .h
s pricey it's um it- all that well um you have um
- 6 faut euh faut avoir travaillé pour l' faire soi-même
you have um have to have experience to do it yourself
- 7 déjà **j' pense** et=[mh]
already I think and mh
- 8 AUR [mh]: grave. =
mh totes.
- 9 NIC =.tsk=et: 'is voilà sinon t' es obligé d'aller dans des
and then yeah otherwise you have to go in
- 10 restau p'is ça a tout d' suite un coût assez .h
restaurants and it's straightaway pricey
- 11 p'is des fois des trucs pas forcément- moi je- 'fi n
and sometimes stuff not necessarily- for me I- well
- 12 j' aime bien les: j' aime bien les tradi...
I like the I like traditional restaurants

Aurore has asked Nicolas if he has a preference between gastronomic and traditional food, and his response is displayed from line 1. Throughout his response, Nicolas mainly explains why he does not prefer gastronomic food, before concluding that he likes traditional restaurants (line 12), which represent his favourite type of food. The beginning of Nicolas' turn is characterised by hesitation (e.g. *beh* 'well' and *euh* 'um' in line 1, *euh* in line 5), repetitions (e.g. *c'est* 'it's' in line 2, *faut* '(people) must' in lines 5-6) and reformulations in the form of self-repairs, which reflect the ongoing organisation of his turn and a difficulty in providing an immediate response. From line 5 (arrowed) to 7, he gives two different arguments against the accessibility of gastronomic food: the relatively high cost of gastronomic restaurants in comparison to more traditional restaurants, and the necessity of prior experience to cook gastronomic meals. This second argument is closed by *JP* (line 7), before he continues his turn: the following items *et mh* 'and um' suggest that Nicolas has more to say, and his response continues in line 9 onward, where he develops his prior TCU.

This summing up function requires the construction to work at a more global

level of discourse, in the sense that it scopes over a prior action which extends over several TCUs or several turns. As discussed previously, this can be taken as evidence for the status of *JP* and *JT* as discourse markers, whose scope is variable (Schiffrin, 1987: 328; Hansen, 1998b: 73-74; Crible, 2019). However, with respect to parenthetical uses of *JC*, no instance was found to fulfil a similar summing up role in final position. It was mentioned in chapter 7 and developed further in section 8.3.2 of this chapter that instances of *JC* work more locally compared to *JP* and *JT*. Indeed, what *JC* has in its scope is generally a short discourse segment rather than the whole host utterance or even several TCUs/turns.

8.4.2 Seeking confirmation

This section illustrates an interpersonal function fulfilled by *JP* and *JC*, through which the constructions act as requests for confirmation. This role may be seen as a by-product of their coded epistemic component of meaning, which displays the possibility that another interlocutor (or other interlocutors) may have epistemic superiority. In the following excerpt, *JP* can be understood as a way to help the speaker request confirmation of an upcoming event.

(144) Interaction 3.3 - Anne / Julie / Romain

- 1 JULh (ben oui) >enfin d' toute façon< au: ni nkasi
(well yes) I mean anyway to the ninkasi
- 2 en fait on va y aller à pied j' pense, =
in fact we're going to go on foot I think,
- 3 ROM → =ouai s.
yeah.
- 4 ANN → ouai s
yeah

In clause-final position, *JP* fulfils an addressee-oriented function, by seeking to confirm the shared assumption that the three participants will go to a bar on foot.⁶ The slightly rising intonation at the end of line 2, which can be taken as indicating an interrogative form, might also be a means of soliciting confirmation. In the following turns, Romain's and Anne's confirmations (*ouais* 'yeah', lines 3 and 4, arrowed) suggest that they treat Julie's utterance (*on va y aller à pied je pense*

⁶Ninkasi is a franchise of bars and concert venues from Lyon, owning different locations throughout the city.

‘we’re going to go on foot I think’, line 2) as requesting confirmation.

This excerpt is also another illustration of the polyfunctionality of *JP*: here, the construction can additionally be seen as a face-saving device insofar as it gives the option to addressees to disagree with or to refute Julie’s utterance. This is the case especially since her utterance concerns a group decision: by leaving the choice to disagree with her utterance, Julie avoids compelling any collective decisions or actions.

The politeness-driven role of *JP* to seek confirmation was already exemplified in chapter 6 (cf. section 6.5.1), both in initial and final position. Performing explicit shifts and conversation closings, actions which result from the data collection method (cf. chapter 2), can potentially threaten the addressee’s face: indeed, the other participant(s) may want to be involved in making these decisions. In such contexts, *JP* appears as a way for speakers to soften their actions, by seeking approval from the other participant(s). Interestingly, none of the instances of *JP* accompanying these actions in matrix position (followed or not by the complementiser *que* ‘that’) are directly followed by agreement from the interlocutor in the next turn. However, on one occasion, an agreement is performed (line 4) but delayed by a question-answer adjacency pair (lines 2-3, arrowed) (see also (96) in chapter 6):

(145) Interaction 2.5 - Adeline / Bruno

- | | | |
|---|-------|---|
| 1 | ADE | É. hÉ (.) .hh j' pense qu'on est bon,
<i>I think that's it's enough,</i> |
| 2 | BRU → | .hh tu penses?=
<i>do you think so?</i> |
| 3 | ADE → | mouai s,
<i>m=yeah,</i> |
| 4 | BRU | ouai s j' pen[se]
<i>yeah I think so</i> |
| 5 | ADE | [j -] j' crois qu' c' étai t di x-hui t heures
<i>I - I believe that it was two past</i> |
| 6 | | deux. (0.2) quand euh:
<i>six when um:</i> |
| 7 | BRU | okay
<i>okay</i> |

On the other hand, as shown in (146), the only parenthetical expression accompanying an action related to the management of the conversation is directly followed by an agreement from the interlocutor (see also (105) in chapter 6 and (139) above),

supporting the idea that clause-final parentheticals may solicit the addressee's viewpoint:

(146) Interaction 2.5 - Adeline / Bruno

- 1 ADE on peut p' t-êt' swi tcher là [j' pense,]
we can perhaps swi tch now I thi nk,
- 2 BRU [. hh] (0.3) ouai : s
yeah

Adeline invites Bruno to change the subject under discussion (line 1), which is agreed upon by Bruno (with the response particle *ouais* 'yeah') in the directly following turn (line 2).

Reducing epistemic commitment also appears to be a way for speakers to allow and/or encourage other-repairs (Schegloff et al., 1977) should other participants to the interaction have epistemic advantage. In chapter 4, I argued that most instances of *JC* signal an inability by the speaker to recall information they used to know. If other participants know or recall the information at hand, we can expect them to contribute to deliver the correct information, by correcting or agreeing with the current speaker in the next turn.⁷ Indeed, in the database, turns displaying utterances hosting *JC* are on several occasions followed by next turns displaying knowledge or non-knowledge from another participant. This is especially the case with instances of *JC* occurring in final rather than initial position, especially in turn-final position where it is directly followed by the next speaker's reaction. This supports the role of parentheticals (i.e. expressions in the RP) fulfilling more interpersonal, rather than organisational, functions.

In most cases, next turns display agreement rather than disagreement, as exemplified in (147), already partially displayed in (132) above.

(147) Interaction 3.3 - Anne / Julie / Romain

- 1 JUL i' t' fallait combien en fait pour un p' tit verre, (.)
how many di d you need in fact for a smal l glass,
- 2 tes marrons, ' f[i n :]
your chestnuts, I mean

⁷This excludes answers in question-answer adjacency pairs where first pair-parts clearly indicate the questioner's epistemic inferiority (Heritage, 2013), as well as personal and individual experience from the speaker, which are only known to them.

- 3 ANN [alors att]en: ds. nous on a pris deux
hang on then. we took two
- 4 kilos j' crois,
kilos I believe,
- 5 (0.3)
- 6 ROM → mh=ouais,
mh=yeah,

Before the beginning of the excerpt, Anne was explaining to Julie how she and Romain cooked chestnut cream. In line 1, Julie asks how many chestnuts did they use for the quantity they cooked. Earlier in the conversation, it was made clear that Anne and Romain (indexed in the subject pronouns *nous* and *on* 'we' in line 3) bought the chestnuts together at a farmers' market: this means that he potentially remembers the information requested by Julie. In lines 3-4, Anne performs an answer, which is downgraded by *JC*, and it is confirmed by Romain in the next turn (line 6, arrowed). This suggests that Romain may have interpreted Anne's turn, and particularly her epistemic downgrading, as a request for confirmation. Moreover, during her turn (lines 3-4), Anne's gaze toward Romain may additionally solicit Romain's confirmation, selecting him as the next speaker by looking at him (e.g. Stivers & Rossano, 2010). Finally, the 0.3 second silence (line 5) following Anne's answer may also act as an additional cue that she is waiting for confirmation from Romain, who may recall the information requested by Julie.

Similarly, when Adeline struggles to recall holiday memories in Corpus 2, her turns displaying occurrences of *JC* (especially in final position) are almost systematically followed by Quentin's confirming turns, who shares the same memories (see excerpts in (55) in chapter 5 and in (120) in chapter 7).

8.4.3 Marking agreement with *je trouve*

I mentioned in section 8.3.3.1 that among the five parenthetical uses of *JT*, four of them strengthen the speaker's subjective stance to avoid imposing on the addressee. The fifth instance, displayed in (148) below, does not strengthen the speaker's subjective stance for mitigating purposes, but to mark an agreement with the prior turn. Here, *JT* therefore displays an interpersonal function.

(148) Interaction 2.1 - Adeline / Céline

- 1 CEL c'est pas trop [scienti]fique?
it's not too scientific?

- 2 ADE [(donc euh)]
(so um)
- 3 (0.7 – OMB looks upwards)
- 4 CEL ['fi n-]
I mean
- 5 ADE → [↑non] ça va. (0.4) ça va.
no it's fine. it's fine.
- 6 CEL → c'est [pour tout le monde quoi.]
it's for everybody then.
- 7 ADE [un p- un p' tit] peu mais c'est mis
a l- a little bit but it's put
- 8 de: manière euh: : à c' que euh la majorité des gens
in a way um that the majority of people
- 9 comprennent en fait,
undertand in fact,
- 10 CEL ouais. =
yeah.
- 11 ADE =donc euh même si tu euh tiques un peu t' es là
so um even if you struggle a bit you're like
- 12 bon: euh (0.3) ça [ça ça va ça passe t' arrives à]
well um it it it's okay it's fine you can
- 13 CEL [oui c'est (ça nuit pas)]
yes it's (it doesn't prevent you)
- 14 → euh: : pour comprendre l'histoire quoi =
um to understand the storyline then
- 15 ADE =m=
- 16 CEL =' fin l'histoire. (0.3) [sa vie]=
I mean the storyline his life
- 17 ADE [(ouais)]
(yeah)
- 18 CEL → =quoi.
then.
- 19 ADE ouais t' arrives à bien comprendre **j' trouve** aussi mais
yeah you can understand well I find too but
- 20 euh ouais c'était vraiment euh: c'était vraiment
um yeah it was really um it was really
- 21 intéressant...
interesting...

Before the beginning of the excerpt, Adeline was giving her opinion of a graphic novel describing the life of a French astronaut, leading Céline to enquire about any difficulty in understanding every aspect of the novel (line 1). Adeline's answer is given from line 5 (arrowed). In the course of her answer, Céline reacts several times. Each time (with the exception of the backchannel *ouais* 'yeah' in line 10), her reactions are marked by a "post-posed" or "terminating" *quoi* (e.g. Beeching, 2002: 179-205) (lines 6, 14 and 18, arrowed). The three occurrences of *quoi* at the end of Céline's turn follow reformulations and clarifications of the speaker. In line 16/18, Céline initiates repair by changing *l'histoire* 'the story' by a term she considers more adequate, *sa vie* 'his life'. Overall, *quoi* helps to signal Céline's shared understanding of what Adeline means, signalling that her question in line 1 has been responded to. The two other occurrences of *quoi* may be seen as clarifying the interlocutor's talk. First, Céline's utterance in line 6 may be seen as a reformulation of Adeline's answer, clarifying the type of audience the graphic novel is addressed to. Similarly, Céline's utterance in lines 13-14 reformulates Adeline's utterance in lines 11-12. Both utterances terminate with *quoi*, which flags the clarification.

Here, the second pair-part of the question-answer adjacency pair initiated by Céline in line 1 is thereby collaboratively constructed by both participants, even though Adeline has epistemic superiority: she is the only one who has read the graphic novel, contrary to Céline whose question (line 1) asserts Adeline's epistemic superiority (Heritage, 2013: 371). In line 19, Adeline's use of *JT* can be seen as strengthening her subjective stance in order to re-balance this knowledge. Together with *aussi*, *JT* marks agreement with Céline's opinion, confirming the content of her description of the book by using the same verb *comprendre*.

8.4.4 Remarks on the frequency of *je crois* as a parenthetical expression

While *JP* and *JT* clearly display a preference for the LP where they fulfil organisational functions, *JC* displays a relatively even distribution across both peripheries. This means that in my database, *JC* is used for organisational purposes in initial position as well as mitigating purposes in final position, without any preference. Compared to *JP* and *JT*, the higher number of parenthetical *JC* raises the question of how this frequency can be explained. A possible explanation may be linked to two related factors: firstly, to what *JC* has in its scope, and secondly, to its semantics.

As shown in section 8.3.2, parenthetical uses of *JC* are mainly used as mitigating devices to generate vagueness in the propositional content of an utterance (a "bush" in Caffi's (2007) terminology). This frequent role may account for its high frequency in parenthetical position: arguably, the discourse unit that *JC* makes imprecise is

foregrounded, and *JC* is added afterwards to retrospectively generate vagueness. *JC* therefore works locally, and this is supported by the fact that the information that is made less precise by *JC* typically consists of short discourse segments: the scope of *JC* is local insofar as it is limited to such information. By contrast, *JP* and *JT* more frequently mitigate the whole illocution. In addition, it is possible for the two constructions to scope over several turns or TCUs, when they fulfil a recapitulating function (see section 8.4.1). However, as a parenthetical expression, *JC* never extends over several units of talk in the database, whether that be utterances, turns or TCUs. In sum, the relatively high frequency of *JC* as a parenthetical expression may be related to its role as a marker of vagueness and its ability to work locally, both features being closely connected.

In turn, the role of *JC* as a marker of vagueness may be directly related to its semantics. While *JC* encodes both an epistemic and a subjective component of meaning (similarly to *JP*), it is systematically used as an epistemic marker in the database. Of the three constructions, it is therefore the only one to be used as an epistemic marker only in the database. As such, I argued in chapter 5 that *JC* predominantly mitigates the speaker's commitment to information they used to know, therefore signalling that their memory may be faulty. Mitigation therefore centres on the propositional content of the utterance. By contrast, parenthetical uses of *JP* and *JT* mitigate the whole illocution and are mainly used to avoid imposing on the addressee, and to show openness and non-assertiveness.

8.5 Deletion of *que* 'that' in matrix position

Thompson and Mulac (1991a; 1991b) argued that *that*-deletion is evidence for the grammaticisation of subject-verb combinations such as *I think* into epistemic parentheticals (see chapter 3). But whilst English *I think* regularly occurs without the complementiser *that* (Thompson & Mulac, 1991a; Kärkkäinen, 2003; Van Bogaert, 2011), the database displays a more modest number for each construction. As shown in Table 8.2, of a total of 72 occurrences of *JP* in matrix position, only 14 do not include *que* (19.4%). Secondly, of a total of 39 instances of *JC* in matrix position, only one occurrence does not include *que* (2.6%). Finally, all of the 15 occurrences of *JT* in matrix position are followed by *que*. As argued by Angot and Hansen (2021), these numbers do not permit us to confirm whether *JP/JC/JT* \emptyset in matrix position differ from *JP/JC/JT que* with respect to their meaning and function. In other words, the database does not show any evidence that French *JP/JC/JT* \emptyset in matrix position represent a stage of further grammaticalisation of the combination of main clause subjects and verbs.

Interestingly, the deletion of the complementiser *que* 'that' is more frequent in

Table 8.2 – Occurrences of *je pense/crois/trouve* \emptyset in matrix position

	Corpus 1	Corpus 2	Corpus 3	Total
<i>Je pense</i> \emptyset in matrix position	1 (1.4%)	3 (4.2%)	10 (13.9%)	14 (19.4%)
<i>Je crois</i> \emptyset in matrix position	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.3%)	1 (2.6%)
<i>Je trouve</i> \emptyset in matrix position	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Corpus 3 (CLAPI corpus). This, of course, might be due to the length of this corpus and the consequent higher number of occurrences of the three expressions. Indeed, Corpus 3 is approximately three times the length of Corpus 1, and approximately one hour longer than Corpus 2 (cf. Table 2.1 in chapter 2). However, as far as *JP* is concerned, the difference of percentages between Corpus 3 and the two other corpora, presented in Table 8.2, is fairly significant: while *JP* \emptyset accounts for 13.9% of the total of occurrences in matrix position, Corpus 2 equals to 4.2%, and Corpus 1 only 1.4%. Moreover, Corpus 3 is the only one to display a case of *JC* \emptyset . This may arguably be explained by the nature of the conversations: as Corpus 3 presents the most naturalistic conversations, this could be taken as a factor contributing to *que*-deletion.

8.6 Concluding remarks

This chapter focused on the correlations between the position of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* within the host clause, their meaning and their interactional functions. It was shown that my data supports Beeching and Detges's hypothesis that left-peripheral elements are more coherence-building whereas right-peripheral elements are more interpersonal. In this chapter, an emphasis was put on parenthetical expressions occurring in the RP (i.e. clause-final parentheticals). Overall, these expressions appear as tools helping the speaker to gradually adjust their contribution and to design their turn while providing indications about their stance. Added retrospectively, they reflect the local management and the immediate nature of talk-in-interaction, as turns are built in an incremental way, TCU by TCU (Sacks et al., 1974; Schegloff et al., 1977).

The positional mobility of the three micro-constructions can be explained, as mentioned in the previous chapters, by the fact that they inherently express meaning which is situated at the context level of discourse (Hansen, 2008: 15-16). This is a

characteristic they share with discourse markers, which similarly present a flexible position, mainly at the peripheries of discourse units.

Chapter 9

Prosodic aspects of *je pense*, *je crois* and *je trouve*

The main interest of this chapter is in how *JP*, *JC* and *JT* are phrased, and how prosodic resources accompanying them are relevant to their interpretation in talk-in-interaction. Prosodic aspects such as pitch, speech rate and voicing are taken into account, as well as phenomena occurring in the constructions' vicinity such as pauses. First, the prosodic aspects investigated and the research questions are presented in section 9.1. Next, section 9.2 describes the different phonological variants in which *JP*, *JC* and *JT* can be realised, and sketch possible correlations with their meanings and functions. Sections 9.3 and 9.4 detail, in turn, the prosodic aspects characterising the constructions in matrix position and in parenthetical position. One of the main research questions is to know whether they share some of the prosodic properties associated with discourse markers, and importantly, whether they predominantly constitute independent prosodic units, or whether they are prosodically attached to their complement or host utterance. This chapter will show that their prosodic behaviour is extremely variable (not only because of their positional mobility), and that it is hard to draw parallels between particular meanings/functions and particular prosodic aspects.

9.1 Procedure and research questions

The overall goal of this chapter is to investigate possible correlations between specific functions and prosodic properties displayed by the constructions, namely:

- The phonological variants (see section 9.2);
- The pitch profile;
- The articulation rate (or perceptible duration);

- The loudness or intensity;
- The voicing profile, i.e. whether the only vowel of the verb form is voiced or voiceless (whispered);
- Prosodic prominence, especially on the verb forms.

I have investigated these prosodic properties in comparison to the surrounding talk (with the exception of the first one). Moreover, pauses in the constructions' vicinity, as well as their duration, have also been taken into account. In this chapter, I argue that it is usually a combination of different prosodic properties that guide the interpretation of a construction. For instance, the realisation of schwa in the clitic *je* (taken as non-standard) as the only salient prosodic property will hardly reflect a particular meaning or function. However, in combination with additional prosodic properties, say a slower speech rate, it may signal hesitation and on-line planning.

The prosodic analysis follows a Conversation Analysis perspective. Therefore, it is mainly based on auditory judgements that have involved a careful listening of the audio recordings, to mirror the actual perception of the phonetic production of participants in interaction (Walker, 2013). Additionally, certain prosodic characteristics have been observed in the software Praat to supplement the auditory analysis, namely pauses in the constructions' vicinity, which were measured in milliseconds, and the pitch contours of each construction. Systematic and reliable phonetic measurements (such as voicing) would be difficult to obtain with the type of data involved. Indeed, conducting a prosodic analysis with naturally occurring data (i.e. not elicited in a laboratory) comes with inevitable disturbing factors, e.g. background noise and/or overlapping talk interfering with speech, poor sound quality. This may lead to imprecise and unreliable results. Even in the auditory analysis, certain instances were discarded because their situational context did not allow for an analysis.

First, the phonological realisations of *JP/JC/JT* (*que*) will be discussed in details in section 9.2. One major phonological variation concerns the deletion vs realisation of schwa in the clitic *je*. As the omission of schwa in the phonological environments *JP*, *JC* and *JT* is taken as standard, I will focus on the contexts where the clitic is fully realised. However, no solid conclusion can be drawn between the realisation of schwa and possible functions: a full form may be used for interactional purposes (e.g. to emphasise a following prosodic prominence on the verb form), while another may merely be uttered with a slower speech rate prompting the realisation of schwa. In addition to schwa deletion, further phonological reduction may appear: for instance, the plosive may drop. The possibility of the constructions to be phonetically fully realised or reduced is consistent with properties attributed to discourse markers

(henceforth, DMs).

Furthermore, one of the main research questions of this chapter is whether the three constructions constitute, on a prosodic level, separate segments or whether they are integrated into their complement (in matrix position) or host clause (in parenthetical position). For some authors, a crucial prosodic property of DMs is their separation from the rest of the utterance, regardless of their position (e.g. Raso, 2014). For others, DMs do not systematically constitute a separate prosodic unit (e.g. Didirková et al., 2018). In my database, the constructions show variation. In matrix position, they are most of the time uttered under the same intonation contour as what follows, although an audible prosodic break can intervene. When *que* ‘that’ is omitted, the construction is predominantly integrated into what follows. In parenthetical position (especially clause-final position), they can be uttered under the same intonation contour as what precedes and/or what follows, but they can also appear as independent prosodic units. This heterogeneity reflects the versatility and complexity of the constructions, which are not restricted to a systematic prosodic behaviour.

Finally, one of the study’s objectives was to establish whether there were any similarities or differences between the three constructions in terms of prosodic and phonological properties. No major differences were found; on the contrary, all of them are subject to the same patterns, which cannot straightforwardly be correlated to particular interactional functions. Ultimately, observations derived from the database support considering *JP*, *JC* and *JT* as peripheral elements of the category of DMs: although some (most) instances share prosodic characteristics commonly assigned to DMs, others do not but cannot be said to be less pragmaticalised, in that they usually serve interactional functions.

9.2 Morpho-phonological variants of *je pense*, *je crois* and *je trouve*

Although the phonological realisation of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* in their full form [Z@pãs], [Z@kôwa] and [Z@tôuv], respectively, are found in the database, there are predominantly found in their reduced forms [Spãs], [Skôwa] and [Stôuv]. Only four cases of *JP* (3.6%) (two matrix clauses followed by the complementiser *que* and two clause-final parentheticals), three cases of *JC* (3.8%) (one case in matrix position and two cases in clause-final position), and one case of *JT* (4.3%) (in matrix position) were found

with a full phonological realisation. Examples are displayed from (149) to (151).¹

(149) Interaction 3.2 - Judith / Patricia

- 1 JUD non avec stef je parle comme euh: 'fi n je:
no with Stef I speak like hum well I
- 2 j' ai le même <débit, > **je** ↑**pense**,
I have the same speech delivery, I think,

(150) Interaction 1.6 - Aurore / Nicolas

- 1 AUR ... et elles sont pas du tout cuites comme les nôtres,
and they are not cooked like ours at all,
- 2 (0.3) [et à la base]=
and to start with
- 3 NIC [d' accord]
al right
- 4 AUR =elles ont même pas la même consistance **je crois**.
they don't even have the same consistence I believe.

(151) Interaction 2.6 - Adeline / Céline / Quentin

- 1 QUE ... mais (.) **je trouve qu'**une=euh base écologique
but I find that a um ecological basis
- 2 pour les enfants s'raient (.) plus importante (0.2)
for children would be more important
- 3 qu' une base artistique
than an artistic basis

The reduced forms are the results of the deletion of the schwa vowel [ə], common in northern varieties of French. By a process of assimilation to the following plosive consonants [p] in the verb form *pense*, [k] in *crois*, and [t] in *trouve*, the phonetically reduced clitic [Z] (following schwa-deletion) is devoiced and pronounced [S], yielded the forms [Spãs], [Sköwa] and [Stöuv].

The deletion versus realisation of schwa in spoken Standard French (or, more

¹With respect to *JP*, see also (141) in chapter 8, (107) in chapter 6; with respect to *JC*, see also (116) in chapter 7; finally, with respect to *JT*, see also (83) in chapter 5 and (128) in chapter 7.

recently, what has been referred to in the literature as Reference French) varies according to several linguistic factors, such as its position within the word, its phonological environment, or emphasis. It also presents stylistic (levels of formality), individual (in relation to the type of syllable involved and speech tempo, cf. A. B. Hansen, 2016: 130) and geographic variation. Schwa-deletion is generally distinguished between southern and northern varieties of French, in that it is more common in northern France (Durand et al., 1987; Durand & Eychenne, 2004; Detey et al., 2016).

The phonological environments *JP*, *JC* and *JT* seem favourable for schwa-deletion, whose behaviour here is consistent with one of the patterns described in Reference French (for northern varieties); namely, with respect to the phonological environments in question here, the standard omission of schwa occurring after one single consonant. Lyche (2016: 355) nevertheless points out that in utterance-initial position, a schwa preceded by a single consonant seldom drops: she gives the example of *le deuxième homme* ‘the second man’, where schwa in the determiner *le* ‘the’ is very likely to be pronounced. However, she adds that as far as the utterance-initial position is concerned, “[p]ragmatic and phonetic factors condition its behaviour, and in particular, a preceding fricative consonant is likely to induce absence”. Lyche’s observations are consistent with my data: at the beginning of an intonation unit (which is more significant here than the utterance-initial position), *JP* is uttered in its full form [Z@pās] only one time (cf. (107) in chapter 6, and (160) below), and *JT* as well (cf. (151) above), while *JC* is only uttered in its reduced form. A description of *JP* in (160) in section 9.3.2 below will show that the full pronunciation of the construction in this context is likely to be triggered by a prominence on the verb form *pense*.

That said, because schwa, in the phonological environments *JP*, *JC* and *JT*, does not occur word-internally but in a monosyllabic word (the clitic *je*), it may be preceded by more than one single consonant. In such contexts (restricted to the utterance/TCU-medial or -final position), too, there is a strong tendency for schwa to be dropped, as exemplified through (152) to (154).² Even though these contexts are fairly few in number (compared to those contexts where it is preceded by only one consonant), the selection of examples below shows the possibility (and interestingly, the likelihood) of the absence of schwa.

(152) Interaction 2.2 - Bruno / Céline

²In the examples displayed from (152) to (154), *JP* is pronounced in its reduced form [ʃpās], even though the orthographic transcription *j’* is used for [ʃ].

1 BRU c' est pas l' bri col age que j' ai me **j' pense**.
it's not the job I like I think.

(153) Interaction 3.1 - Claire / Julie / Jean / Laurent

1 JEA ... croi x rousse **j' crois qu'** y a
Croi x Rousse I believe that there's
 2 un truc pas mal ,
something al right,

(154) Interaction 2.1 - Adeline / Céline

1 BRU ouai s t' arri ves à bien comprendre **j' trouve** aussi ...
yeah you manage to understand easily I find too

Among the instances of *JP* and *JC* uttered in their full form, three (two of *JP* and one of *JC*) are used by Judith, one of the participants from Corpus 3. In this corpus, while every other participants' speech is representative of a variety of French where deleting schwa is standard, Judith's speech is representative of a southern variety, and schwa-maintenance is frequent throughout her speech.³ This may explain the fact that she uses twice the full phonological variant [Z@pās], although it is worth noting that (i) one of these two instances bear a slight prosodic prominence on the verb form *pense*, which may also account for the maintenance of schwa in the clitic (cf. (159) below) and (ii) comparatively, she uses the reduced variant [Spās] (three times) and [SkŌwa] (five times).

Lastly, a prosodic feature that potentially correlates with the realisation of schwa in the clitic is the speech rate of utterances hosting *JP*, *JC* and *JT*. Indeed, the speech rate of the hosting utterance (as well as the construction itself) is often perceptually slower compared to the surrounding speech by the same speaker. In (149) above, this is signalled by the angle brackets. In (151), the articulation rate is fairly slow, as evidenced by the numerous pauses in the utterance and the lengthening of the two indefinite articles *une* (lines 1 and 3).

Altogether, the number of full variants available for *JP*, *JC* and *JT* is too low to

³As explained in chapter 2, the four interactions making up Corpus 3 come from the online database CLAPI, where background information about the participants are not available. The four interactions were recorded in Lyon, but this does not entail that the participants are native. This is the case with Judith, whose spoken variety of French is not representative of the one spoken in Lyon.

allow meaningful generalisations. Nonetheless, given the overwhelming proportion of the reduced variant over the full variant, the former may be said to be the unmarked variant. By contrast, the full forms are therefore marked variants, which require a more careful examination in order to highlight the different factors (e.g. prosodic prominence and speech rate) that may condition the behaviour of schwa in the clitic, and more particularly its realisation, since its deletion seems unmarked in the phonological environment under investigation.

Finally, in addition to the full form/reduced form variation, a few shortened phonemic forms were also observed in the database. Regarding *JP*, in two cases the initial fricative drops, yielding [pã̃s]. In one case, the plosive [p] is barely distinguishable, yielding a form close to [šã̃s]. In the latter case, this change seems to correlate with speech rate, as a relatively fast delivery is indeed likely to induce further reduction of *JP*. The same factor seems to induce a further reduction of *JC* and *JT*: the plosives [k] and [t] are sometimes not distinguishable, yielding the forms [šwa] and [šruv]. Moreover, in the case of *JC*, the pronunciation of the two sounds of the diphthong [wa] are not always distinguishable.

9.3 *Je crois, je pense* and *je trouve* in matrix position

9.3.1 Detached or integrated elements?

In matrix position, *JP (que)*, *JC (que)* and *JT (que)* are predominantly integrated with the complement (or host utterance) that follows, in that they are uttered under a single intonation contour. In a few cases only, the constructions are detached from what follows by means of a prosodic break, namely a lengthening of the schwa in the complementiser *que*, a (micro-)pause, an in-breath, a hesitation marker, a linguistic item, or a combination of some of these. No linguistic or para-linguistic (e.g. pause, in-breath) item is inserted between the constructions and the complementiser *que* when it is present, with only one exception where *en fait* ‘in fact’ is inserted between *JT* and *que*, creating a discontinuity. This suggests that the constructions typically form one cohesive chunk with the complementiser.⁴

JP que is followed twice by a short pause, and once by a short in-breath (see (156) below). On four occasions, schwa in the complementiser is more or less prolonged, following which is found a hesitation marker (*eah* ‘um’), the repetition of

⁴However, the fact that their morphological form may vary is further evidence for their non-prototypical status as DMs.

the complementiser *que*, or the DM *du coup* ‘so’ followed by a brief pause (see (155) below). In (156), recall from chapter 6 that the collocation of markers *et euh du coup bah j’ pense que* ‘and um and so well I think that’ are set apart by the following in-breath (line 1, arrowed), and all work together to signal a new step in the speaker’s turn.

(155) Interaction 2.8 - Adeline / Bruno / Céline / Quentin

- 1 QUE **moi j’ pense** que: du coup. =
 me I think that so.
- 2 CEL =fmhf=
 if I hadn’t um signed up um to the group
- 3 QUE =le probl ème c’ est pas qu’ on mange de la viande,
 the problem is not eating meat,
- 4 le probl ème c’ est la méthode de producti on d’ la viande.
 the problem is the method of producti on of meat.

(156) Interaction 2.4 - Bruno / Quentin

- 1 QUE → ... c’ est impeccable et euh du coup bah **j’ pense que** .h
 it’s impeccable and um and so well I think that
- 2 si j’ m’ étais pas euh inscrit euh: : =au groupe de: :
 if I hadn’t um signed up um to the group
- 3 passi on couteau sur facebook eh beh j’ aurai s j amais vu
 Knife Lovers on facebook well I woul dn’ t have seen
- 4 cette vidéo
 this video

Next, *JC* displays one case where the complementiser *que* is prolonged, and one case where *que* is followed by the prolonged hesitation marker *euh* (see excerpt (116) in chapter 7). Both cases reflect a hesitation from the speaker who is thinking of what to say or arguably searching his memory. Finally, the schwa in the complementiser in *JT que* is slightly prolonged three times, including one time when it is followed by *excuse-moi* ‘excuse-me, sorry’ (cf. (131) in chapter 7) which participates in delaying the complement.

The lengthening of schwa in the complementiser is usually associated with a slower speech rate throughout the speaker’s utterance, or part of it. As suggested by Kärkkäinen (2003: 157-159) regarding *I think*, in these cases the French construc-

tions can be seen as independent prosodic units functioning as instances of on-line or cognitive planning, as an opportunity for the speaker to think ahead.

When the complementiser is omitted, the construction is typically integrated with what follows (i.e. it is uttered under a single intonation contour), with the exception of one instance of *JP*: in (157), the construction is produced with lower pitch relative to what follows (and the preceding marker *boh* ‘well’), which creates a lack of unity in Nicolas’ discourse.

(157) Interaction 1.3 - Charlotte / Nicolas

- | | | |
|---|-----|---|
| 1 | NIC | boh °j' pense ° les deux- les deux peuvent se conc' voir
<i>well I think both- both of them can be considered</i> |
| 2 | | hei n, . h 'fi n j' sai s pas.
<i>huh I mean I don't know.</i> |

Therefore, in matrix position, the three constructions (followed or not by *que*) display similar prosodic patterns: they may either be integrated with or detached from what follows. In other words, they may either form independent prosodic units or be connected to the following speech, which makes them versatile resources to implement a wide range of functions. Furthermore, the fact that the constructions have the capacity to behave as independent elements supports considering them as DMs.

9.3.2 Prosodic prominence

Contrary to their more literal equivalent (when they have any), DMs are typically unstressed: as some items lose their propositional meaning and become literally “bleached” over time, they also lose prosodic prominence. However, a DM can be accented for some purpose, such as emphasising a discourse shift.

In this research, no distinction is made between what would be a more literal use of *JP*, *JC* and *JT*, as opposed to a more bleached, non-literal use. The previous chapters showed that every use of the three constructions has a propositional meaning, although certain uses fulfil more functions at the same time. In matrix position, some of the verb forms *pense*, *crois* and *trouve* have prosodic prominence:⁵ in comparison to the surrounding talk, they are audibly louder and uttered with higher

⁵However, this is never the case with the clitic *je*, as opposed to, for instance, *I think* in English (e.g. Dehé & Wichmann, 2010). This may be explained by the fact that emphasis on the subject would most likely be carried out by a preposed *moi* ‘me, as far as I’m concerned’, e.g. *moi JP*.

pitch (in comparison, the parenthetical position never generates prominence in my database). This concerns only a few cases, namely nine instances of *JP* (12.5%), nine of *JC* (12.1%) and two of *JT* (3.3%), whose meaning cannot be said to be more propositional than the remaining instances in the same position. Rather, this prominence seems to emphasise a pragmatic role, at least as far as *JP* is concerned. This is consistent with the fact that DM can be stressed when the speaker wants to convey a particular message.

Most contexts where *JP* (*que*) occurs suggest a reinforcement of the speaker's commitment towards their utterance. Recall from chapter 5 the excerpt in (158) (for more context, see (78) on page 128). Quentin is recounting a family picnic where lizards approached them. Before the beginning of the excerpt, his interlocutor's reactions cast doubt about the size of the lizards Quentin was describing (see for instance Céline's joke *ils ont mangé ma maman* 'they ate my mum' in line 1).

(158) Interaction 2.6 - Adeline / Céline / Quentin

- 1 CEL (joki ng) = [.h i' ont mangé ma maman. .h]
they ate my mum.
- 2 QUE = [et euh j' pen- **j' pense que** déjà ouai s
and um I th- I think well yeah they were
- 3 → c' étai t- c' étai t] du bon lézard déjà [quoi euh]=
they were- they were quite big lizards then um
- 4 CEL [ouai s.]
yeah.
- 5 QUE → =pour euh- pour se barrer avec les ↑chips et [tout]=
to um- run away with the crisps and all
- 6 CEL [ÉmhÉ]
- 7 QUE =euh .h voi l à
mh that's it

Facing Adeline and Céline's doubt, Quentin defends his memories: in lines 3/5 (arrowed), *pour se barrer avec les chips* 'to run away with the crisps' is used as an argument to support the large size of the lizards. As a subjective marker, *JP* is used as a mitigator to protect Quentin's face; at the same time, the prosodic prominence (signalled by the underlined segment) may be seen as participating in defending his memories, thus reinforcing his subjective commitment towards his utterance.

Before the beginning of the excerpt in (159), Judith was telling Patricia about her disappointment in her private English teacher due to a number of reasons. Here again, the prosodic prominence on the verb form *pense* (line 1, arrowed) could reflect

a high commitment towards her intentions: in the future, she is not planning to rely on her teacher to achieve a high score with her English test. Note that in the clitic *je*, schwa is fully realised, arguably to emphasise the ensuing prominence on the verb form.

(159) Interaction 3.2 - Judith / Patricia

- 1 JUD → donc **je pense que** je vais pas trop compter sur elle
so I think that I'm not going to count on her too much
- 2 euh pour avoir (un bon)- pa' ce que j' aimerais passer
um to get (a good)- 'cause I would like to take
- 3 le toefl et avoir un bon résultat, **j' pense que**
the toefl and get a good result,
- 4 je vais ↑pas compter sur elle et sur ses cours parce que.
I'm not going to count on her and on her classes 'cause.

Illustrated again in (160), *JP* was presented in chapter 6 (see (107) in section 6.5.1) as minimising Charlotte's other-initiated other-repair.

(160) Interaction 1.1 - Aurore / Charlotte

- 1 CHA ... **je pense que** l'acrylique ça s'rait- (...) toxique
I think that acrylic it would be- toxic

The verb form *pense* bears prosodic prominence characterised by an increased intensity and the highest rising pitch among all tokens of *JP*.⁶ Furthermore, similarly to the excerpt above, the full phonological realisation [Z@pās], where *je* is not reduced, can be interpreted as a strategic way to mark prosodic prominence on the verb form. Here, prominence is most likely used to highlight the ironic use of *JP*, and more generally the ironic reading of Charlotte's utterance, which implies, in a mitigated way, that acrylic is toxic.

All of the excerpts presented here have in common the fact that the seeming high degree of commitment of the speaker is already present in the context, by means of *JP* but also other items in the surrounding talk, and not created by prosodic prominence. Rather, prominence appears as an additional cue for speakers

⁶The Hertz value difference between the onset and offset of the vowel [ā], which is the only voiced token of the segment, is above 100.

to reinforce a pragmatic meaning that is arguably already inferable. In the preceding chapters, I argued that the interpretation of any instance of the constructions was, in most cases, a matter of context and the result of several factors. Prosodic prominence is one of those, insofar as it participates in constructing the meaning and function of *JP*.

Nevertheless, prosodic prominence could also be connected to the management of turns. Indeed, a few occurrences of the verb form *pense* show moderate prosodic prominence in overlap with another participant's talk, and in such cases prominence could signal the speaker's intention to take or keep the turn. This is the case with (161), where Julie takes the turn in the middle of another speaker's turn.

(161) Interaction 3.1 - Claire / Jean / Julie / Laurent

- 1 JEA ... et euh à la fin d' la fac de géo
and um at the end of my Bachelor's in history
- 2 tu vois j'ai: [(pas forcément)-]
you know I have(n't really-)
- 3 JUL [mais j' pense c'est vraiment] important
but I think it's really important
- 4 en fait le con- ['fin y: y a beau]coup=
in fact the con- I mean th= there's a lot
- 5 JEA [mais- l'hist-]
but hist-
- 6 JUL =d' contextes qu' on comprend mieux en
of contexts that we understand better in
- 7 [fait quand:]
fact when
- 8 JEA [mais: c]: : 'est clair ouais
but that's right yeah

Furthermore, this excerpt shows that even when *JP* is not followed by the complementiser *que*, *JP* can display prosodic prominence on the verb form. In addition to the capacity of *JP* \emptyset to be used as an independent prosodic unit (see section 9.3.1), this is further evidence that its prosodic behaviour is not different from *JP que*.

With *JC* and *JT*, it is difficult to argue that prosodic prominence conveys specific functions, for instance that *JC* serves to reinforce the speaker's epistemic stance, or that *JT* serves to reinforce the speaker's subjectivity towards their utterance. As only two instances of *JT* display prominence, reliable observations would be

hard to make anyway. As for *JC*, various interactional phenomena occur in the surrounding context (e.g. overlaps, repairs or hesitation), which could all account for prosodic prominence. Similarly to *JP*, in overlapping sequences the verb form may have prominence to help the speaker take or keep the turn. Moreover, in the excerpt below, *JC* is added by the speaker after a self-interruption, as a self-repair. The addition of an epistemic marker signals the speaker's wish to proactively claim uncertainty with regards to his upcoming utterance. In this case, prosodic prominence on the verb form may reinforce this uncertainty.

(162) Interaction 2.2 - Bruno / Céline

- 1 BRU oui tu- **j' crois qu'** tu peux faire de la pub
yes you- I believe that you can put adverts
- 2 vi a snapchat ouai s.
on snapchat yeah.

Finally, various phenomena in the excerpt below could correlate with prominence on the verb form: hesitation, the slower articulation rate, and the realisation of schwa in the clitic *je*.

(163) Interaction 2.4 - Bruno / Quentin

- 1 QUE → en attendant le taux d'hom[↑]icide=euh: <**je crois que**: : :
meanwhile the hom[↑]icide rate=um: <I believe that um
- 2 il est un truc genre euh: : quatre-vingt-neuf fois >
it's something like um ninety times
- 3 inférieur aux états-u[↑]ni s un truc comme ça,
lower than in the United States something like that,

Thus, reliable and convincing correlations between specific prosodic properties and specific functions are hard to defend. Altogether, prosodic aspects accompanying the constructions appear as cues guiding their interpretation, supporting the fact that the meaning and function of any given use is built in talk-in-interaction. Furthermore, the constructions show similarities with initial discourse markers: they are most of the time unstressed (and sometimes shorter and (almost) whispered), but they have the capacity to carry (moderate) prosodic prominence for interactional purposes.

9.4 *Je crois, je pense* and *je trouve* in parenthetical position

9.4.1 Clause-final parentheticals

This section addresses the question of whether clause-final parenthetical uses of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* are typically prosodically detached from or integrated into their host utterance. The data show that they are rarely detached from their host utterance by a pause: only one occurrence of *JC* is separated from its host utterance by a micro-pause (see (165) below). Moreover, three instances of *JC* follow the hesitation marker *eah* ‘um’. In addition to these prosodic breaks (pauses and hesitation), the following features were observed, suggesting on the prosodic level a discontinuity between a clause-final parenthetical and its preceding host utterance:

- The parenthetical expression is generally lower in pitch, but it is higher in a few cases;
- Its articulation rate can be quicker or slower;
- Its intensity is generally quieter, sometimes yielding a semi-whispered or whispered speech;
- Finally, less frequently, if the last sound of the host utterance is a vowel this can be prolonged, underscoring the discontinuity with the following parenthetical.

A few examples are provided below. First, in (164) *JP* is produced with lower pitch than its preceding host utterance, creating a discontinuity. This is reinforced by the audible short lengthening of the final vowel in *intonation*.

(164) Interaction 3.3 - Anne / Julie / Romain

- | | | |
|---|-----|--|
| 1 | JUL | i' comprend p' t-êt' des ge: stes ou: =
<i>perhaps they understand some gestures or</i> |
| 2 | ANN | =nan l' i ntonati on: j' pense.
<i>no i ntonati on I thi nk.</i> |

In (165), the micro-pause preceding *JC* (line 2, arrowed) reflects a prosodic disconnection of the clause-final parenthetical. It is lower in pitch, contrasting with the continuous and slightly rising intonation of the preceding utterance (marked by the comma in line 2). In addition, it is characterised by a drop-off in intensity, although it does not result in whispered speech.

(165) Interaction 3.2 - Judith / Patricia

- 1 PAT et donc j' avai s essayé d' t' app' l er. (0.4) mai s
and so I had tried to call you. but
- 2 → t' étais sur répondeur, (.) j' croi s. =
it was you voi cemail, I believe
- 3 JUD =ah ouai s,
oh yeah,

Finally, in (166), *JT* is prosodically detached from its host utterance and forms a separate intonation unit with *aussi*. Relatively to what precedes, *je trouve aussi* is produced with lower pitch, and with a faster articulation rate (indicated by the angle brackets in line 1, arrowed).

(166) Interaction 2.1 - Adeline / Céline

- 1 OMB → ouai s t' arri ves à bi en comprendre >j' trouve aussi <
yeah you manage to understand well I find too
- 2 mai s=euh ouai s c' étai t vrai ment euh: c' étai t vrai ment
but um yeah it was really um it was really
- 3 i ntéressant...
interesting

These three examples illustrate the different means by which clause-final parenthetical uses can be prosodically separated from their host utterance. For the three expressions, the most frequent sign of detachment is a variation in pitch, where the parenthetical expression has audibly lower pitch than what precedes. This is usually associated with softer intensity (and vice versa) which sometimes results in whispered speech: two instances of *JP* are uttered in whispered speech, and three *JC* in semi-whispered speech. Moreover, the preceding talk is sometimes produced with (slightly) rising intonation, thereby intensifying the discontinuity created by the low-level pitch of the parenthetical. Finally, as mentioned above when discussing (164), the lengthening of a preceding vowel in the host utterance can also emphasise a prosodic break. Altogether, the constructions are hardly ever clearly prosodically detached from or integrated into their host utterance, but more or less so depending on how many “signs” of detachment are present. As discussed with constructions in matrix position, the capacity of parenthetical uses to form independent prosodic units supports considering them DMs.

Nonetheless, the three constructions do not always appear as detached forms. In

fact, only eight instances (36.4%) of *JP* present one or several of the above prosodic properties. The number is higher with *JC*, amounting to 18 occurrences (62%). Finally, the number is even higher for *JT* (four out of five occurrences), although the number of this construction in clause-final position is too low to allow meaningful generalisations. Elsewhere, the parenthetical expressions are prosodically fully integrated into their host utterance, i.e. uttered under a single intonation contour.

Some of the prosodic properties mentioned above have elsewhere been associated with turn-completion, namely decrease of voicing and loudness as well as lower pitch of the constructions relative to the preceding talk. For example, looking at turn-transition in Tyneside English conversation, Local et al. (1986: 417-420) note that turn-endings are characterised by a slowing down in tempo to the end of the turn, an increase of duration, a sudden increase and decrease in loudness, and either a step-up or a drop in pitch. However, there are two reasons to consider that these prosodic properties occur to create a discontinuity of the parenthetical expressions from what precedes, rather than to mark turn completion. First, they occur with other features that are not necessarily associated with turn completion (such as lengthening of the preceding vowel or hesitation markers). Second, TCU-final parentheticals which occur turn-medially present the same characteristics, without marking completion of the turn.

While interactional functions were attributed to certain detached initial (i.e. in matrix position) instances of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* (such as marking progression in the speaker's turn or reflecting on-line planning), detached parentheticals do not seem to coincide with specific functions. Interestingly, *JC* is the expression which occurs the most frequently as a clause-final parenthetical, and also the one which most frequently presents signs of detachment. Arguably, there might be a correlation between the role of the construction as a marker of vagueness, its local scope and its relatively frequent detachment. However, the heterogeneous behaviour of the construction does not allow for convincing conclusions. As an example, the two excerpts below display very similar contexts, but in the first one *JC* is fully integrated into its preceding host utterance, while in the second, it is detached from it: *JC* is uttered under a single intonation contour with *un truc comme ça* 'something like that', with lower pitch compared to what precedes.

(167) Interaction 1.6 - Aurore / Nicolas

- 1 NIC ... t' as une brasserie qui s'appelle le-
there's a brasserie that's called the-
- 2 → monsieur machin, j' crois .hh
monsieur machin, I believe

(168) Interaction 1.6 - Aurore / Nicolas

- 1 NIC ouai s c' ça c' est le tont- euh monsi eur machi n
yeah that's right it's unc- um Monsi eur Machi n
- 2 j' **croi s** un truc comme ça
I believe something like that

Ultimately, the degree of detachment of the constructions reflects their flexibility, especially for *JC*, as well as their capacity to be used as independent units.

Finally, with respect to their pitch profile, clause-final parentheticals are, overall, either relatively flat or slightly falling. A few exceptions have slight rising pitch, some of which have been analysed in chapter 8 (section 8.4.2) as indications that the speaker is seeking confirmation.

9.4.2 Clause-medial parentheticals

The prosodic profile of parentheses have been described as marked out and different from the host utterance within which parentheses occur (e.g. Bolinger, 1989: 186; Wichmann, 2000: 93-98). In this section, the overarching question is whether medial parenthetical uses of *JP* and *JC* are prosodically different from the surrounding talk.

The number of parenthetical expressions occurring in the middle of a clause is significantly lower than those occurring at the end of a clause, and similarly display variation. Only *JP* and *JC* were found to syntactically interrupt their host clause in medial position, the former five times and the latter four times. First, both constructions can be prosodically integrated into their host clause, thereby being produced under a single intonation contour such as in (169).

(169) Interaction 3.2 - Judith / Patricia

- 1 PAT c' est elle qui m' avai t di t j' **pense** de v' ni r à noël ,
it was her who told I think to come at Christmas,

Second, a discontinuity may occur between the parenthetical and what precedes, similarly to clause-final parentheticals (see (164) and (165) above). In such cases, depending on the context, the parenthetical may either scope over what precedes or what follows. In (170), *JP* is produced with lower pitch relatively to the preceding segment *on y est là* 'it's enough now', over which it has its scope. The following segment *au niveau temps* 'about the time', produced under the same intonation contour as *JP*, is added as a precision. Similarly, in (171), *JC* is produced with

lower pitch compared to *ils sont fragiles* ‘they’re fragile’ over which it scopes, and *ces chiens* ‘those dogs’ is added afterwards.

(170) Interaction 2.7 - Adeline / Bruno / Quentin

1 ADE on y est là **j’ pense** au niveau éte(h)mpeÉ
it’s enough now I think about the time

(171) Interaction 3.1 - Claire / Jean / Julie / Laurent

1 ADE ils sont fragiles **j’ crois** les- ces chiens
they’re fragile I believe the- those dogs

In (172) and (173), the parentheticals are detached from what precedes: *JP* by the cut-off and a higher-pitch level, and *JC* by a lower-pitch level (note also the slightly rising intonation over what precedes). In both excerpts, they scope over what follows.

(172) Interaction 3.2 - Judith / Patricia

1 JUD ... il faut que: on amène un truc à manger chacun?
do we have to bring something to eat each of us?

2 (0.6)

3 PAT bah: comme tu veux ou à: boire. mais euh- **j’ pense**
well as you want or to drink. but um- I think

4 plutôt à manger parce qu’i’ va y avoir sûrement
something to eat rather because there must be

5 plein d’ gens qui vont apporter des trucs à boire,
plenty of people who’ll bring things to drink,

(173) Interaction 3.3 - Claire / Jean / Julie

1 ANN et euh c’est ouvert, **j’ crois** tous les: .h du lundi
and eum it’s open I believe every .h from Monday

2 au vendredi.
to Friday.

Therefore, in these last four excerpts, prosody does not guide the interpreta-

tion of the parenthetical, as either orienting to the preceding or the following talk. Rather, the fact that *JP* and *JC* are somewhat prosodically detached and mark a discontinuity with the preceding discourse arguably reflects their local role in the organisation of discourse, as punctual comments on an on-going discourse.

9.5 Concluding remarks

This chapter showed that there are no independent prosodic criteria to determine the meanings and functions *JP*, *JC* and *JT*: prosody does not seem to disambiguate one type of function or meaning, including which component of meaning is in the foreground (in other words, subjectivity or epistemicity are not prosodically coded in the constructions). Rather, prosody can be used as a resource, in combination with the discourse context, to guide the interpretation of the constructions in talk-in-interaction. In particular, prosodic prominence was described as a salient cue to interpret initial uses of *JP* in terms of the speaker's commitment.

Prosody also appears as further evidence of the discourse-marking status of the three constructions: in matrix position as well as in parenthetical position, they have the capacity to be used as independent prosodic units, in that they can be prosodically separated from their host utterance by various means (e.g. a pause or a variation in pitch). Depending on how many "signs" of prosodic detachment there are, each use is more or less detached from or integrated into the host utterance. Arguably, in parenthetical position, this prosodic independence may reflect the local role of the constructions in the discourse organisation. In matrix position, a prosodic detachment is also connected to discourse organisation and can signal interactional functions such as on-line planning. That said, prosodic detachment mostly concerns *JC* and *JT*: the most common pattern observed for *JP* in the database is a prosodic continuity. Indeed, in the majority of cases (36.4%), the construction is produced under a single intonation contour, and fully integrated into its complement or host utterance. Finally, when they are not followed by *que*, sentence-initial uses of *JP* and *JC* are predominantly integrated with what follows, suggesting that their behaviour is similar to uses followed by the complementiser.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

In this research, I explored the interplay between subjectivity and epistemic modality by examining the use of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* in French conversation. Specifically, I showed how the two meanings are profoundly intertwined to form a complex meaning.

Within the framework of Construction Grammar, the three expressions were described as interrelated micro-constructions entrenched in the mental grammar of speakers (cf. chapter 4). Initial similarities and differences between the three constructions were presented relative to the components of meaning that each of them encodes. Specifically, I showed how *JP* and *JC* differ from *JT*, in that the two former constructions encode two different meanings, i.e. subjectivity and epistemicity, while *JT* only encodes one, i.e. subjectivity. For each construction, the clitic *je* contributes a subjective component of meaning, while the verb forms *pense* and *crois* contribute an epistemic component of meaning, and *trouve* a subjective component of meaning. The functioning of *JT* as a subjective marker is therefore already highly discernible.

Theories of Generalised Conversational Implicatures (Grice, 1975; Gazdar, 1979; Horn, 2004; Levinson, 2000) were borrowed from the field of pragmatics to account for the epistemic meaning of *JP* and *JC*. Following Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1980), subjectivity was subcategorised into explicit and implicit subjectivity. Furthermore, the foreground/background distinction proposed by the Gestalt theory (Lakoff, 1977a; Talmy, 2000) allowed us to further describe the role of *JP* and *JC* in discourse: I proposed that both components of meaning (subjective and epistemic) persist in all uses of the constructions to some extent, but that they typically foreground one of the two components, at the expense of the other which recedes into the background. Thus, both constructions can be used as ‘subjective markers’ or ‘epistemic markers’, depending on the element of meaning in the foreground. Which element of meaning is in the foreground is a function of context, in that it is relative to the state of affairs the markers are associated with.

From this follows that the three constructions may be, but are not always, inter-

substitutable. *JP* is substitutable by *JC* (and vice-versa) only if both constructions are epistemic markers, or subjective markers. And because *JT* can only be used as a subjective marker, it can only be substituted by subjective uses of *JP* and *JC*. Therefore, two contrastive sets were defined: on the one hand, the epistemic markers *JP* and *JC* form a contrastive pair; on the other hand, the subjective markers *JP*, *JC* and *JT* form a contrastive set. Finally, on the basis of the characteristics of each construction, I proposed that they could be arranged along a continuum: at the more epistemic end we find *JC*, which never occurs as a subjective marker in my database; at the more subjective end we find *JT*, which can only be used as a subjective marker; in the middle of these is *JP*, whose use is more ambivalent and complex.

The use of the three constructions was then examined in interaction. First, the comparison between each construction in context was helpful in highlighting their distinct properties and fine-tuning their individual meaning (cf. chapter 5). Indeed, at the grammatical level, the difference between the constructions forming each set presented above is minimal; it is at the discourse level that the differences between them can be situated, and the types of context in which they occur is evidence for that. As epistemic markers, *JP* and *JC* downgrade the speaker's commitment to their utterance, the former by implicating that they are making an assumption based on observable evidence or mental reasoning, and the latter by implicating that their memory may be faulty. As subjective markers, *JT* operates a subjective strengthening of the proposition, while *JP* has an attenuating effect, arguably due to its backgrounded epistemic component of meaning.

Chapter 5 also underlined frequent interactions between each of the construction and specific contexts. Thus, epistemic *JP* often occurs with future states of affairs (thus assuming a prospective dimension), while epistemic *JC* is mainly associated with past states of affairs (thus assuming a retrospective dimension). Subjective *JP* is preferred with propositions based on inference, while subjective *JT* is preferred with propositions based on direct experience. These individual preferences further reflect the fact that the differences between the constructions is situated at the discourse, rather than grammatical, level.

Second, their description from a Conversation Analyst approach enabled us to recognise recurring patterns (cf. chapters 6, 7 and 8). The turn-constructional unit, the turn as well as the sequential environment in which the constructions occur have all been taken into account, so as to bring out the various functions they fulfil in interaction. These functions were divided into two, although overlaps between the two subcategories are frequent: on the one hand, the constructions may have a discourse-organisational role through which they demarcate units of speech; on the other hand, they may have a face-saving function, in that they may be used to

soften a potential or actual threat.

JP was described as the most versatile construction, both at a semantic and interactional level. Indeed, it foregrounds either component of meaning, fulfils a wider range of functions and occurs in more various sequential environments. In fact, the complexity of the construction can be explained by the interrelatedness between these three factors. In comparison, the interactional work of *JC* and *JT* is less frequent, varied and complex, which may be linked to the fact that they are more “specialised”: although it can in principle foreground a subjective meaning, *JC* is always used as an epistemic marker in my database, while *JT* can only be used as a subjective marker.

With regard to politeness, I showed that *JC* mainly performs redress to the speaker’s face, while *JT* is mainly a strategical device to avoid imposing on the addressee. The redressive actions they perform may be extended to their primary role in interaction. Thus, it can be argued that epistemicity is oriented towards the speaker’s face, while subjectivity is oriented towards the addressee’s face. This is further evidenced by the fact that *JP*, which foregrounds both components of meaning, is used as a politeness marker to perform redressive actions both towards the speaker’s and the addressee’s negative face.

Chapter 8 focused on the correlations between the syntactic position of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* and their interactional functions. The main question was whether there were significant differences between the matrix position (referred to as the left periphery) and the parenthetical position, especially the clause-final position (referred to as the right periphery). At the left periphery, I argued that the three constructions frequently fulfil a discourse-organisational function. At the right periphery, we may a priori assume that their work is more local insofar as they do not connect two units of talk. Consequently, other types of function may be more salient, and in fact, in that position, the constructions tend to fulfil more addressee-oriented functions, such as mitigating functions and a confirmation-seeking function. To describe parenthetical uses of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* as mitigation strategies, I drew on Caffi’s (2007) framework and argued that *JC* predominantly acts as a marker of vagueness (a “bush” in Caffi’s terminology), *JT* as a marker of subjectivity and non-imposition, and *JP* as a marker of openness and non-assertiveness (Caffi’s “hedges”). Nonetheless, certain right-peripheral uses were linked to discourse organisation, for instance to sum up prior talk. Overall, the correlations observed between specific functions and the two peripheries are consistent with previous studies (e.g. Beeching & Detges, 2014).

Finally, chapter 9 focused on prosodic aspects of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* such as pitch, speech rate and voicing. This chapter showed that the prosodic behaviour of the three constructions is highly variable, and that particular behaviours do not necessarily correlate with particular functions. In other words, no prosodic aspects

were found to constitute independent criteria in order to determine the meaning and functions of the constructions. However, some prosodic aspects, when combined with the discourse context, appear to guide their interpretation. For instance, prosodic prominence was described as a salient cue to interpret initial uses of *JP* in terms of the speaker's commitment. Furthermore, it was shown that in matrix position as well as in parenthetical position, the constructions have the capacity to form separate prosodic units, by being prosodically (more or less) detached from their complement or their host utterance. Previously described as a property of discourse markers, this prosodic detachment is further evidence of the status of the three constructions as members of this category.

With respect to the meaning of *JP* and *JC*, no direct link was observed between the primary meaning of the constructions (epistemic or subjective) and particular interactional functions or prosodic properties. In other words, there are no independent criteria, at the interactional and prosodic level, helping to determine the meaning in the foreground. This supports their status as micro-constructions where *je* and the stance verb are no longer processed as separate items.

Chapters 3 and 5 raised the question of whether the three constructions can be described in terms of evidentiality. I argued that only *JP* can be seen as an evidential (marking indirect experience) when it is used as an epistemic marker, since it implicates that the speaker is making an assumption based on observable evidence or mental reasoning. By contrast, *JC* implicates that the speaker has some knowledge of the situation at hand, but this cannot be described in terms of source of information. Finally, unlike Dendale and Van Bogaert (2007), I do not consider *JT* an evidential in that the source of the information in a given utterance does not depend on its addition, but is already present. *JT* can only occur with utterances that are based on direct experience, an information which is already inferrable regardless of the presence/absence of *JT*.

This study has sought to contribute to research on discourse markers, by questioning the categorisation of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* as full-fledged members of this class. I showed that the three constructions share the following similarities with discourse markers, supporting that they are in fact discourse markers themselves: they are syntactically optional; in interaction, they are polyfunctional markers working at the level of discourse organisation and at an interpersonal level; their scope is variable, i.e. either local or global (e.g. Schiffrin, 1987); in comparison with similar constructions (e.g. *je suppose* 'I suppose', *j'imagine* 'I imagine, I guess' or *je présume* 'I presume'), their frequency is fairly high and they can therefore be considered typical of spoken language. However, I argued that they are not discourse markers of a prototypical kind, in that they are never devoid of semantic content but contribute to the propositional content of the utterance. In other words, their interactional

functions are orthogonal to their semantic meaning. Yet, one defining characteristic of discourse markers is their weak contribution to the propositional meaning of the utterance (e.g. Hansen, 1998b: 73; 1998a; Fraser, 2009). Because their meaning is both conceptual and procedural (Blakemore, 1987, 2002; Wilson & Sperber, 2012), I proposed that *JP*, *JC* and *JT* can more appropriately be viewed as peripheral, rather than prototypical, members of the category of discourse markers. Furthermore, given the lower frequency of *JT* in interaction in comparison to *JP* and *JC* and given the fact that its meaning is less complex (i.e. it only encodes a subjective meaning), we may argue that its status is even more on the peripheral edge of the discourse markers category than *JP* and *JC*. These observations contribute to the definition of discourse markers as a heterogeneous category.

As argued in Angot and Hansen (2021), because they are principally pragmatic in function, the three constructions inherently express context-level rather than content-level meaning (Hansen, 2008: 15-16), similarly to discourse markers. Indeed, context-level uses of an item pertain to relations between the described state of affairs and the discourse itself or the wider speech situation. This was also presented as a possible explanation for the frequent use of the constructions in parenthetical position.

One aspect of this research which requires further exploration is the use of *JC* as a subjective marker. Because of its absence in my database, this study could benefit from the investigation of a larger database displaying subjective uses of *JC*, which would allow us to directly compare the three constructions. Rather, the present study can only formulate weak hypotheses. I showed that although the substitution of subjective *JP* and *JT* by *JC* is grammatically possible, in some contexts it is odd. This may be explained by the fact that *JC*, whatever the component of meaning it foregrounds, is strongly associated with knowledge and memory. Indeed, epistemic *JC* shows a general tendency to be used when the speaker has knowledge of a state of affairs that they may be recalling incorrectly, an association which potentially persists in its subjective uses and which could explain its counter-intuition in some contexts. Mullan (2010) offers an alternative account following which *JC* inherently encodes an element of conviction. However, I chose to depart from this idea to avoid a top-down approach on the data.

Finally, another possible direction for further research is the inclusion of other forms of talk beyond conversation, e.g. radio programs, news interviews or forms of institutional talk such as classroom lessons and debates. In these types of context, the use of *JP*, *JC* and *JT* may display differences both regarding the component of meaning that is commonly foregrounded and the type of strategy fulfilled, which could shed light on their general use.

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Appendix A

Transcription conventions

The transcription conventions used are taken from Jefferson's transcript symbols (2004) and the ICOR conventions (2003).

- [*A left bracket* indicates the point of overlap onset.
-] *A right bracket* indicates the point at which two overlapping utterances end.
- = *Equal signs* indicate no break or gap in an ongoing piece of talk. A pair of equal signs, one at the end of one line and one at the beginning of a next, indicate no break between the two lines. Alternatively, the pair is also used when a single speaker's talk is broken up in the transcript, but is actually through-produced by its speaker.
- (0.0) *Numbers in parentheses* indicate elapsed time by tenths of seconds.
- (.) *A dot in parentheses* indicates a brief interval (\pm a tenth of a second) within or between utterances.
- : *Colons* indicate prolongation of the immediately prior sound. The longer the colon row, the longer the prolongation.
- ↓ ↑ *Arrows* indicate shifts into especially high or low pitch.
- .,? *Punctuation markers* are used to indicate "the usual" intonation.
- WORD *Upper case* indicates especially loud sounds relative to the surrounding talk.
- °word° *Degree signs* bracketing an utterance or utterance-part indicates that the sounds are softer than the surrounding talk.

-
- A *dash* indicates a cut-off.
 - .hhh A *dot-prefixed row of 'h's* indicates an inbreath. Without the dot, the 'h's indicate an outbreath.
 - (h) *Parenthesised 'h'* indicates plosiveness. This can be associated with laughter, crying, breathlessness, etc.
 - £ The *pound-sterling sign* indicates a certain quality of voice which conveys 'suppressed laughter'
 - () *Parenthesised words and speaker* designations are especially dubious.
 - ' *Standard elision*
 - ' *Non standard elision*: some or several sounds are not pronounced.
 - .tsk *Click of the tongue*.
 - toi *Underscoring* indicates some form of stress, via pitch and/or amplitude. A short underscore indicates lighter stress than does a long underscore.
 - > < *Right/left carats* bracketing an utterance or utterance-part indicate that the bracketed material is speeded up, compared to the surrounding talk.
 - < > *Left/right carats* bracketing an utterance or utterance-part indicate that the bracketed material is slowed down, compared to the surrounding talk.
 - (()) *Doubled parentheses* contain transcriber's descriptions.

Appendix B

Occurrences of *je pense*, *je crois* and *je trouve* by participant and interaction

Table B.1 – Occurrences of *je pense* by interaction (Corpus 1)

<u>Interaction 1.1</u> (09 min 43 sec)	Aurore (1) Charlotte (2) Total: 3	<u>Interaction 1.2</u> (10 min 43 sec)	Nicolas (2) Paul (3) Total: 5
<u>Interaction 1.3</u> (12 min 43 sec)	Charlotte (3) Nicolas (4) Total: 7	<u>Interaction 1.4</u> (10 min 19 sec)	Charlotte (0) Paul (1) Total: 1
<u>Interaction 1.5</u> (10 min 49 sec)	Aurore (2) Paul (0) Total: 2	<u>Interaction 1.6</u> (13 min 09 sec)	Aurore (3) Nicolas (6) Total: 9

Table B.2 – Occurrences of *je pense* by interaction (Corpus 2)

<u>Interaction 2.1</u>	Adeline (1)	<u>Interaction 2.2</u>	Bruno (2)
(14 min 59 sec)	Céline (0)	(15 min 50 sec)	Céline (2)
	Total: 1		Total: 4
<u>Interaction 2.3</u>	Céline (0)	<u>Interaction 2.4</u>	Bruno (2)
(17 min 33 sec)	Quentin (3)	(17 min 40 sec)	Quentin (1)
	Total: 3		Total: 3
<u>Interaction 2.5</u>	Adeline (7)	<u>Interaction 2.6</u>	Adeline (2)
(20 min 08 sec)	Bruno (5)	(17 min 33 sec)	Céline (2)
	Total: 12		Quentin (1)
			Total: 5
<u>Interaction 2.7</u>	Adeline (3)	<u>Interaction 2.8</u>	Adeline (0)
(18 min 47 sec)	Bruno (5)	(14 min 59 sec)	Bruno (0)
	Quentin (2)		Céline (1)
	Total: 10		Quentin (1)
			Total: 2

Table B.3 – Occurrences of *je pense* by interaction (Corpus 3)

<u>Interaction 3.1</u>	Julie (8)	<u>Interaction 3.2</u>	Judith (6)
(31 min 55 sec)	Claire (1)	(1 hr 21 min 23 sec)	Patricia (9)
	Laurent (1)		Total: 15
	Jean (2)		
	Total: 12		
<u>Interaction 3.3</u>	Anne (3)	<u>Interaction 3.4</u>	Albine (1)
(37 min 32 sec)	Julie (8)	(33 min 00 sec)	Justine (1)
	Romain (0)		Arnaud (4)
	Total: 11		Total: 6

Table B.4 – Occurrences of *je crois* by interaction (Corpus 1)

<u>Interaction 1.1</u> (09 min 43 sec)	Aurore (0) Charlotte (1) Total: 1	<u>Interaction 1.2</u> (10 min 43 sec)	Nicolas (0) Paul (2) Total: 2
<u>Interaction 1.3</u> (12 min 43 sec)	Charlotte (1) Nicolas (3) Total: 4	<u>Interaction 1.4</u> (10 min 19 sec)	Charlotte (0) Paul (3) Total: 3
<u>Interaction 1.5</u> (10 min 49 sec)	Aurore (3) Paul (2) Total: 5	<u>Interaction 1.6</u> (13 min 09 sec)	Aurore (2) Nicolas (6) Total: 8

Table B.5 – Occurrences of *je crois* by interaction (Corpus 2)

<u>Interaction 2.1</u> (14 min 59 sec)	Adeline (2) Céline (0) Total: 2	<u>Interaction 2.2</u> (15 min 50 sec)	Bruno (2) Céline (1) Total: 3
<u>Interaction 2.3</u> (17 min 33 sec)	Céline (2) Quentin (0) Total: 2	<u>Interaction 2.4</u> (17 min 40 sec)	Bruno (0) Quentin (5) Total: 5
<u>Interaction 2.5</u> (20 min 08 sec)	Adeline (2) Bruno (4) Total: 6	<u>Interaction 2.6</u> (17 min 33 sec)	Adeline (4) Céline (0) Quentin (0) Total: 4
<u>Interaction 2.7</u> (18 min 47 sec)	Adeline (0) Bruno (1) Quentin (0) Total: 1	<u>Interaction 2.8</u> (14 min 59 sec)	Adeline (0) Bruno (0) Céline (0) Quentin (0) Total: 0

Table B.6 – Occurrences of *je crois* by interaction (Corpus 3)

<u>Interaction 3.1</u>	Julie (1)	<u>Interaction 3.2</u>	Judith (5)
(31 min 55 sec)	Claire (2)	(1 hr 21 min 23 sec)	Patricia (9)
	Laurent (0)		Total: 14
	Jean (2)		
	Total: 5		
<u>Interaction 3.3</u>	Anne (5)	<u>Interaction 3.4</u>	Albine (0)
(37 min 32 sec)	Julie (0)	(33 min 00 sec)	Justine (3)
	Romain (0)		Arnaud (6)
	Total: 5		Total: 9

Table B.7 – Occurrences of *je trouve* by interaction (Corpus 1)

<u>Interaction 1.1</u>	Aurore (1)	<u>Interaction 1.2</u>	Nicolas (2)
(09 min 43 sec)	Charlotte (1)	(10 min 43 sec)	Paul (0)
	Total: 2		Total: 2
<u>Interaction 1.3</u>	Charlotte (1)	<u>Interaction 1.4</u>	Charlotte (0)
(12 min 43 sec)	Nicolas (1)	(10 min 19 sec)	Paul (0)
	Total: 2		Total: 0
<u>Interaction 1.5</u>	Aurore (1)	<u>Interaction 1.6</u>	Aurore (1)
(10 min 49 sec)	Paul (1)	(13 min 09 sec)	Nicolas (1)
	Total: 2		Total: 2

Table B.8 – Occurrences of *je trouve* by interaction (Corpus 2)

<u>Interaction 2.1</u>	Adeline (2)	<u>Interaction 2.2</u>	Bruno (0)
(14 min 59 sec)	Céline (0)	(15 min 50 sec)	Céline (0)
	Total: 2		Total: 0
<u>Interaction 2.3</u>	Céline (0)	<u>Interaction 2.4</u>	Bruno (1)
(17 min 33 sec)	Quentin (0)	(17 min 40 sec)	Quentin (0)
	Total: 0		Total: 1
<u>Interaction 2.5</u>	Adeline (0)	<u>Interaction 2.6</u>	Adeline (1)
(20 min 08 sec)	Bruno (0)	(17 min 33 sec)	Céline (0)
	Total: 0		Quentin (5)
			Total: 6
<u>Interaction 2.7</u>	Adeline (0)	<u>Interaction 2.8</u>	Adeline (0)
(18 min 47 sec)	Bruno (0)	(14 min 59 sec)	Bruno (0)
	Quentin (0)		Céline (0)
	Total: 0		Quentin (0)
			Total: 0

Table B.9 – Occurrences of *je trouve* by interaction (Corpus 3)

<u>Interaction 3.1</u>	Julie (0)	<u>Interaction 3.2</u>	Judith (0)
(31 min 55 sec)	Claire (0)	(1 hr 21 min 23 sec)	Patricia (1)
	Laurent (0)		Total: 1
	Jean (0)		
	Total: 0		
<u>Interaction 3.3</u>	Anne (0)	<u>Interaction 3.4</u>	Albine (0)
(37 min 32 sec)	Julie (2)	(33 min 00 sec)	Justine (0)
	Romain (0)		Arnaud (1)
	Total: 2		Total: 1