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Surely not! Between certainty and disbelief

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Surely not! **Between certainty and disbelief**

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Surely not!

Between certainty and disbelief ¹

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The marker *surely* possesses at least three different functions: as an intrapredicative adverb of manner, an extrapredicative epistemic adverb and a discourse adverb. In this paper I will propose a single characterisation of *surely* within the framework of the Theory of Enunciative Operations (cf. Culioli, 1990, 1999a and 1999b). We will see that, depending on variable contextual parameters, *surely* assumes one of its three possible values. More precisely, *surely* marks a correspondence between, on the one hand, a preconstructed trajectory leading from a start point to an end point (from *(p, non-p)* to *p*), and on the other, the same trajectory constructed in the speech situation by the speaker. When the trajectory bears upon the mode of realisation of a process, *surely* assumes its intrapredicative value, when it bears upon the passage from a source situation to a projected situation, *surely* functions extrapredicatively, as an epistemic adverb. The discourse adverb function of *surely* poses some problems for analysis. When epistemic, *surely* appears to mark certainty, but when discursive, it appears rather to mark doubt, disbelief or incomprehension, according to context. I propose that when *surely* is used in this way, it marks the speaker's endorsement of a preconstructed trajectory while also acknowledging the presence of a preconstructed, counteroriented trajectory, endorsed by another speaker. The shift from certainty to doubt might be explained as the consequence of the speaker's recognition of a wider discursive context. The various contextual values of the discourse adverb *surely* (cf. Downing, 2001, for example) depend, among other factors, on how the speaker positions his or her discourse relative to other enunciative instances.

Keywords: adverb, discourse, discourse marker, enunciation, interaction, grammaticalization

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Le marqueur anglais surely possède au moins trois fonctions différentes : adverbe de manière intraprédicatif, adverbe épistémique extraprédicatif et adverbe de discours. Dans cet article je proposerai une caractérisation unique de surely dans le cadre de la « Théorie des opérations énonciatives » (cf. Culioli, 1990, 1999a et 1999b). Nous verrons que, selon des paramètres contextuels variables, surely prend l'une de ses trois valeurs possibles. Plus précisément, surely marque une correspondance entre, d'un côté, une trajectoire préconstruite menant d'un point de départ vers un point d'arrivée (de (p, non-p) vers p), et, de l'autre, la même trajectoire construite dans la situation d'énonciation par l'énonciateur. Lorsque la trajectoire porte sur le mode de réalisation d'un procès, surely prend sa valeur intraprédicative ; lorsque la trajectoire porte sur le passage entre une situation repère et une situation projetée, surely prend sa valeur extraprédicative, comme adverbe épistémique. Le fonctionnement en tant qu'adverbe de discours de surely pose quelques problèmes pour l'analyse. Lorsqu'il est épistémique, le marqueur surely semble signaler une certitude, mais lorsqu'il est adverbe de discours, il semble plutôt signaler le doute, l'incrédulité ou l'incompréhension, selon le contexte. Je propose que lorsque surely s'emploie discursivement, il marque la prise en charge d'une trajectoire préconstruite par l'énonciateur, tout en reconnaissant l'existence d'une trajectoire préconstruite contre-orientée, prise en charge par un autre énonciateur

1. My thanks for their encouragements and suggestions to the two reviewers of *Discours*.

(éventuellement le coénonciateur). Les glissements entre certitude et doute peuvent s'expliquer comme la conséquence d'une prise en compte d'un contexte discursif élargi. Les différentes valeurs contextuelles de l'adverbe de discours *surely* (cf. Downing, 2001) découlent, entre autres, de la façon dont l'énonciateur situe son discours par rapport à d'autres instances énonciatives.

Mots clés : adverbe, discours, marqueurs de discours, énonciation, interaction, grammaticalisation

1. Introduction: what makes *surely* problematic

- 1 The marker² *surely* poses a number of interesting problems for the linguist, touching on questions of transcategoriality, grammaticalization theory, aspect, modality and argumentation. In Present Day English *surely* possesses at least three distinct and clearly differentiable values, illustrated below.

[1] Gazza is slowly but *surely* learning the Italian language, making it work for him.
(BNC CH3)

- 2 Here, *surely* functions as an intrapredicative adverb, contributing to determine the manner in which the process *learn the Italian language* is realised.

[2] Unless the Soviet military intervenes, self-determination must *surely* lead to reunification.
(BNC A87)

- 3 In example [2] above, *surely* is an epistemic adverb, working extrapredicatively to qualify the chances of realisation of the predication in question, i.e. *self-determination/lead to reunification*. We will later see that in such cases it can be hard to distinguish between epistemic values and purely intensifying values.

[3] O'REILLY: Now Ms. McLean, as a Democrat, I mean obviously all the Democratic presidential candidates are against this, but *surely* you understand the point that if American lives are endangered, most Americans I believe would say you got to waterboard them. You got to protect American lives.
(COCA Fox O'Reilly Spoken)

- 4 Lastly, in example [3] clause-initial *surely* is employed as a discourse marker by which the speaker both indicates commitment to a given proposition while at the same time situating this relative to opposing opinions that a co-speaker – real or potential – might hold. Insofar as this function goes beyond the boundaries of the clause, often implying a confrontational or argumentative context, *surely* here corresponds to Schifffrin's classic definition of a discourse marker as "sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk" (1987: 31) or, more precisely, to the definition proposed by Fraser (1988: 21-22) for whom: "discourse markers [...]"

2. The term "marker" is a theoretical choice, based on the idea that linguistic items are the traces (or markers) of cognitive operations to which the linguist has no direct access.

signal a comment specifying the type of sequential discourse relationship that holds between the current utterance – the utterance of which the discourse marker is a part – and the prior discourse”.

5 Each of these uses of *surely* has affinities with positions within the clause. Intrapredicative *surely* is invariably found in collocations with other manner adverbs in expressions of the *slowly but surely* kind. Epistemic *surely* typically occurs in medial position. The discourse marker *surely* is – in common with many discourse adverbs of its type – often placed clause-initially.

6 Interestingly, while the epistemic adverb *surely* tends to reinforce the degree of speaker commitment to a given proposition, as a discourse marker, *surely* can often give the impression that, although the speaker would very much *like* to believe something, the evidence to the contrary rather undermines his or her confidence. This is particularly noticeable when *surely* is in negative contexts, of the *surely not* type illustrated in [4]³:

[4] She stared at him in silence, chilled by the frozen wastes reflected in his eyes, and he said raspingly, “The fires of the damned, wasn’t that how you put it? Is this what you wanted? Does this satisfy your thirst for revenge?” Lissa swallowed hard, remembering her words. *Surely* he did not blame her for this?
(BNC HA6)

7 In a thorough and insightful study of the discourse marker function of *surely*, Downing (2001) cites Biber and Finegan (1988) or Halliday (1985) who, in common with the practice of many dictionaries⁴, relate *surely* to adverbs like *certainly*. As Downing remarks, however, among the category Biber and Finegan unhappily term “the *surely* adverbials”, “*surely* is in a sense the odd one out” (2001: 253). Indeed, if the epistemic *surely* of [2] might admit reformulation with *certainly*, the same is not true of the discourse marker *surely* of [3], or [4]:

[2a] → [...] self-determination must certainly lead to reunification⁵.

[3a] → ≠ [...] but certainly you understand the point that if American lives are endangered, most Americans I believe would say you got to waterboard them.

[4a] → ≠ Certainly he did not blame her for this?

8 Unlike *certainly*, *surely* cannot be used, in standard British English in any case, in short answers:

3. The *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* includes a category apart for *surely* “used with a negative to show that something surprises you and you do not want to believe it” (Hornby, 2005: 1544).

4. The *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* or the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, for example.

5. The conventions used in manipulations are as follows: → indicates a manipulation; ≠ represents a change in meaning; ?? an utterance which poses problems of acceptability; * an unacceptable utterance.

[5] “Do you want to tell us all about the stall for the energy conservation bill?” / “Certainly. Yeah the stall was extremely successful.”
(BNC JP7 Spoken⁶)

[5a] → ?? “Surely. Yeah the stall was extremely successful.”

- 9 Even more surprisingly, perhaps, for an adverb which on the face of it appears to reinforce the speaker’s commitment to a proposition, *surely* – unlike *certainly* – very frequently occurs in interrogative contexts:

[6] They leave the skin on? You don’t have to eat the skin, surely?
[The speakers are talking about an orange.]
(BNC KBW Spoken)

[6a] → ?? You don’t have to eat the skin, certainly?

[7] “Would you like to come down to Carinish Court for a few days?” “You wouldn’t want me there.” Peter was aware of his heart thudding in his chest. “Not at Christmas, surely?”
(BNC CKB)

[7a] → ?? Not at Christmas, certainly?

- 10 Again in the words of Downing: “*Surely* is not what it seems; it dresses up speaker’s opinion in the form of a query or an exclamation, for despite the fact that it occurs in statements, it elicits a reply, as do tags” (2001: 253)⁷.

- 11 To sum up the ground covered so far:

- 12 Firstly we noted the potential polyvalence of *surely*, which can function as an intrapredicative adverb, as an extrapredicative, epistemic adverb and as a discourse marker.

- 13 Secondly, we saw that, despite its classification together with *certainly* and other, related expressions of certainty, *surely* possesses a number of semantic and syntactic features which clearly set it apart from would-be synonyms.

- 14 The aim of the following paper is to show that the different values of *surely* can be explained if we postulate that *surely* marks a single, constitutively underdetermined operation which can be parametered in different ways, enabling us to calculate and predict the various values it assumes in discourse.

6. In spoken examples from the BNC involving more than one locutor, I have added quotation marks for clarity.

7. Aijmer (2002), in a comparative study, makes a similar point: “*Surely* as a discourse marker is associated with uncertainty and questioning while *certainly* as a discourse marker indicates emphasis” (Aijmer, 2002: 109).

- 15 In section 2 I will lay down one or two theoretical preliminaries before proposing the complex enunciative operation of which *surely* is the marker. In section 3 I apply this to a selection of authentic examples, by way of illustration. Our examples will be drawn essentially from the British National Corpus and the Corpus of Contemporary American English.

2. A schematic form for *surely*

- 16 The explanations that follow are formulated within the framework of the Theory of Enunciative Operations elaborated by Antoine Culioli and his collaborators over the past forty years or so. Initial work with the theory focused on single-speaker, clause-internal issues, to simplify, but recently the theory has been applied with some success to questions of discourse and discourse markers. It is, in any case, in the nature of the theory not to remain limited to one predetermined area of language activity but to seek out diverse aspects of linguistic communication in an integrative approach.

- 17 In the Theory of Enunciative Operations the term *marker* is used, not just for *discourse markers*, but as a general term for linguistic forms (morphemes, constructions, prosodic features...) seen as *markers of operations*. The point is that a linguistic form is not conceived of as mapping directly onto a meaning or series of meanings, but as marking a more abstract, invariable operation, which is shaped by contextual parameters to provide a specific value. The goal of the linguist is to endeavour to reconstruct the invariance postulated behind the diversity of values, as well as to be able to account for the process by which an invariant operation – known as a schematic form – allows us to construct a range of values – or shapes – in context. As Culioli (1990: 178) writes:

My contention is that utterances display *shapes* that derive from complex forms which the linguist reconstructs through modelling. The goal is to lay bare the formal workings that underlie the production and the recognition of interpretable *shapes*, namely, utterances. We have no access to the processes that originate the forms on which the shapes are based, but we have, at our disposal the textual traces which point to such processes.

- 18 In the case in point, our goal is to reconstruct for the marker *surely* the abstract schematic *form* associated with the various *shapes* in which *surely* appears. We will consider these *shapes* to be those of the intrapredicative manner adverb *surely*, the extrapredicative epistemic-intensive adverb *surely* and the discourse marker *surely*. Within each subtype, there will be room for further variation, but this threefold division provides an expedient way of organising our demonstration.
- 19 Two key concepts of the Theory of Enunciative Operations will prove particularly useful to us in the course of the presentation: the concept of the branching path, and of the enunciative source.

2.1. The branching path

20 Central to linguistic activity is the operation of categorisation, as speakers seek to match prelinguistic, cognitive representations (or, *what a subject means*) and linguistic representations (*how to say it*). This is presented within the Theory of Enunciative Operations as an operation whereby occurrences are situated relative to a complex topological space called a *notional domain*.

21 A notional domain comprises, at the very least, an Interior (I), corresponding to an operation of identification with the notion, p , and an Exterior (E), which we may note $non-p$, corresponding to an operation of differentiation relative to the notion⁸. It is also possible to construct a Boundary area, where occurrences may possess properties of p and of $non-p$, and a Centre, which provides a regulating occurrence for p , either in terms of a typical occurrence (the organizing centre) or in terms of an ideal, maximal occurrence (the attracting centre). This may be represented graphically as follows⁹:

22 The positions so far described all allow us to situate occurrences somewhere on a notional domain. We can also construct an off-line position noted IE or (p , $non-p$), on a different plane altogether, from which both the Interior and the Exterior are potentially accessible via opposing trajectories. This is useful when dealing with, for example, interrogatives, or questions of modality, including *surely*, in the present case. The branching path model is represented graphically below:

8. The notation $non-p$ is linguistic, not logical and so can mean p is not the case, *other-than-p* is the case etc.

9. The source for this type of representation are the seminars of Culioli, translated into English in Culioli (1995).

2.2. The enunciative source

23 The Theory of Enunciative Operations differentiates between the enunciative source (the instance of endorsement of the utterance, which we will call the *speaker*), the locutor (which we might, for the sake of argument, call the *talker*) and the grammatical subject. By default, the speaker and the locutor are the same, i.e. the person talking – the locutor – also assumes responsibility for what is said, but the two may be different, when reading out loud, in reported speech, for ironic purposes, in gnomic utterances and so on. A *speech situation* implies a speaker, a co-speaker (whether present or absent) and a time (and place) of utterance. Conventionally these concepts are noted S_o (speaker), S_o' (co-speaker), Sit_o (speech situation) and T_o (time of utterance). Additionally, we will be referring to a fictive speaker S_o^i , constructed independently of S_o and S_o' , which can be an absent speaker or a generalised enunciative instance – *any speaker*, or the *speech community*.

2.3. Hypothesis for an operational description of *surely*

24 We consider that *surely* marks an operation of identification between, on the one hand, a preconstructed trajectory leading from a start point to an end point, and on the other, the same trajectory constructed in the speech situation by the speaker.

25 This is, in the terms of the previous section, the schematic form which, it is hoped, will enable us to explain the various values of *surely* in context as configurations of a fundamental invariant operation depending on, in this instance, the type of trajectory involved and the way in which the speaker positions his or her discourse relative to that of the co-speaker and the speech community.

26 I will be looking, firstly, at the intrapredicative manner adverb (3.1) before moving on to the epistemic adverb (3.2) and the discourse marker (3.3). Lastly, I will consider the etymological origins of *surely* in the light of several less common uses (3.4).

3. Case studies

3.1. Intrapredicative *surely*

27 Intrapredicative *surely* was illustrated above by example [1]:

[1] Gazza is slowly but surely learning the Italian language, making it work for him.
(BNC CH3)

28 The vast majority of the examples of intrapredicative *surely* in Present Day English involve the collocation *slowly but surely*, or related expressions. We might end things there, considering this as a sort of fossilised idiom, possibly favoured by the alliterative qualities of the collocation. However, I think it is important to reflect upon how the combination *slowly but surely* contributes to determine the predication.

- 29 I posit that in such utterances *surely* marks a qualitative conformity with a preexisting representation despite a potential non-conformity, resulting from the quantitative determination with *slowly*. In [1], for example, which is fairly typical of the type, the process *learn a language* involves a start point and an end point, corresponding to the beginning and the end of the learning activity, and defining a trajectory. This can be represented in the following manner:

- 30 The first marker, *slowly*, implies reference to a model of realisation, a rate at which the process *learning a language* might typically take place and which is not met in the current circumstances. In other words, *slowly* means *more slowly than one might expect, more slowly than normal*. This quantitative non-conformity relative to a preexisting typical representation might lead us to infer that the process is in some way qualitatively imperfect, i.e. that the normal trajectory leading continuously from start point to end point is in some way not followed as it should be. The determination with *surely* identifies the effective trajectory with the anticipated trajectory, thereby reestablishing qualitative conformity with the model.
- 31 Correspondingly, *slowly but surely* type idioms generally occur with processes of a telic nature, in other words, processes which are notionally bounded, as further illustrated by the examples below:
- [8] All the time the train is carrying us *slowly but surely* up the French coast.
(BNC F9R)
- [9] *Slowly but surely* the rights of trade union reps are being eroded.
(BNC HLU)
- [10] The Italian Federation is fighting a rearguard battle against this trend, which is *slowly but surely* killing Italian rugby.
(BNC CB2)
- 32 In each case the processes *carry up the coast*, *be eroded* or *kill Italian rugby* involve a preexisting representation of a passage from start point to end point of the type illustrated above. The marker *surely* identifies the effective trajectory with the preexisting representation, despite the potential for differentiation contained in *slowly*. The next example involves the more unusual collocation *swiftly and surely*:
- [11] Still another legacy of Vietnam is the conviction that a war must be fought *swiftly and surely*. "If we go in, we have to win", said Steven Schmidt of Salt Lake City, the owner of several camera and bicycle stores, who served in the Air Force in Vietnam.
(COCA 1991 NEWS New York Times)

33 The argument presented for *slowly and surely* can nonetheless be maintained here: excessive haste, like excessive slowness, can also threaten the qualitative conformity with a preexisting model and so, as before, *surely* marks an operation whereby a trajectory, corresponding to the path from the start point of the process *fight a war* to the end point, is identified with a preconstructed trajectory. Interestingly, the collocation with *swiftly*, though widely attested in the COCA, is absent from the BNC, suggesting a separate development of intrapredicative *surely* in US and British English, which will be confirmed in the case of epistemic *surely*, too.

34 In positional terms, idioms of the *slowly but surely* type appear free to occur clause-initially [9], clause-medially [1] and [10] and clause-finally. Generally speaking, one would expect a manner adverb to occur most often clause-finally. In *slowly but surely* collocations, however, *surely* is more than a simple manner adverb. In fact the whole group functions as a quasi-concessive, within which *surely* contributes to reinforcing the predication, despite the potential opposition vehicled by the associated adverb. Even in collocation with manner adverbs, then, *surely* already assumes certain modal functions.

3.2. Epistemic *surely*

35 When *surely* constructs epistemic values, it is invariably in medial position, where it collocates with certain modals, as in [12] and [13]¹⁰:

[12] Unless the Soviet military intervenes, self-determination must *surely* lead to reunification.
(BNC A87)

[13] But those committees need to be really careful to make sure if they don't want a big storm to be stirred up here, that any of the embryos that are used clearly have been placed beyond the pale of being fertilized before their use. There are a large number of embryos that we know are never going to be fertilized, where the people who are in control of them have made that clear. The research ought to be confined to those. And I think the committees will *surely* do that.
(COCA CNN Newsroom Spoken)

36 The medial position of *surely* is predictable since this is where one expects to find adverbs which determine the realisation of the predication. Additionally, *surely* often forms a single tone-group with the accompanying modal, which it contributes to determine. In such examples *surely* often appears to reinforce the speaker's commitment to the projected predicative relation without any reference to other, potentially counter-oriented, perspectives. This is particularly clear if we try to move *surely* into clause-initial position:

[12a] *Surely* self-determination must lead to reunification.

10. The modals typically involved are *must*, *can* and *will* as one would expect.

37 If the position of *surely* within the proposition was irrelevant, then [I2] and [I2a] would be equivalent. This is not the case, since [I2a] is clearly more appropriate in a polemical context, in the presence of possible or anticipated contradiction.

38 The epistemic comment clause *I think* in [I3] associates easily with epistemic *surely* but appears to be incompatible with *surely* as a discourse marker, as the following manipulations show:

[I3a] ?? And I think *surely* the committees will do that.

[I3b] * *Surely* I think the committees will do that.

39 Whichever clause we decide to place *surely* in front of, the result is unsatisfactory.

40 If we agree, then, that epistemic *surely* constructs different values from the discourse marker *surely*, then we might compare [I2] to [I2b], in which *surely* has been deleted:

[I2b] Self-determination must lead to reunification.

41 How can we differentiate *surely must* from *must* alone? Following the branching path representation of modality we can consider that *must* indicates a necessary path from $(p, \text{non-}p)$ to p , and excludes – or bars – the path from $(p, \text{non-}p)$ to $\text{non-}p$ ¹¹.

42 The segment *must surely* indicates a supplementary operation whereby the speaker identifies the trajectory determined in the speech situation with *surely must* to the trajectory preconstructed with *must*. In doing so, much as was the case with *slowly but surely*, the speaker indicates that the passage from a start point $((p, \text{non-}p)$ in this case) to an end point (p) corresponds to a preexisting model.

11. Cf. Deschamps (1999) for this type of representation applied to the system of modal auxiliaries in English.

43 The difference with intrapredicative *surely* is that, whereas with intrapredicative *surely* we were dealing essentially with an aspectual path leading from the beginning of an event to its end, here, we are dealing with the modal trajectory from the speech situation to a projected event situation. Similar arguments apply to *will surely* [13], *can surely* for example, which also construct trajectories from $(p, \text{non-}p)$ to p .

44 It is worth noting that [12b] *self-determination must lead to reunification* can be brought closer to [12] *self-determination must surely lead to reunification* if the modal is accentuated, typically with a high-fall, i.e. *self-determination* ↓ *must lead to reunification*. This is normal if we consider that, like *surely*, stress of this type is also used to mark reidentification.

45 The value *surely* constructs here is a reinforcing value, such that the probability appears even greater with *must surely* than with *must* alone. This reinforcing value does not however apply well to the next example:

[14] “[...] Do you have any music you could play?” “I *surely* do.” Bill rooted amongst a rack of laser discs.
(BNC HTU)

46 Here *I surely do* might be reformulated as *Indeed I do* / *You bet* etc. This type of use is considerably more prevalent in American English than in British English. These remarks might lead us to wonder how a similar configuration might produce, in some utterances, a reinforcing effect (*almost certainly*, *very probably*), in others, an intensive effect (*indeed*).

47 I would suggest that the values vary according to the nature of the domain qualified by *surely*. If the trajectory from the speech situation to the projected event situation is constructed as gradable, then *surely* assumes reinforcing values (*really*) while if it is constructed as non-gradable, i.e. an all-or-nothing choice, then *surely* constructs an intensive effect. This type of variability is common enough, as, for example, in the different uses of *quite*, according to the type of adjective qualified: *quite/fairly interesting* compared with *quite/absolutely fascinating*. In our example,

the modals *must* or *will* allow for degrees of probability, i.e. gradability, while *do* constructs a bipolar choice, hence, in *surely do* utterances, epistemic *surely* typically assumes intensive values, reinforcing speaker commitment.

- 48 I mentioned the fact that such a usage appears characteristic of American English. In [15] – one of only four examples of the sequence *I surely do* in the BNC compared with 35 in the COCA – *surely* is used in this way, in a caricature of American speech (by an English author, incidentally).

[15] “Hi, there”, he said, with his widest grin. She looked up and smiled back. Tall, stooping, tweed hat, Burberry and calfskin grip –; an all-American tourist. “Good afternoon, sir. Can I help you?” “Well, now, I hope so, miss. Yes, I *surely* do. Ya see, I just flew in from the States and I took your British Airways –; my all-time favourite airline –; and you know what they did? They lost my luggage. Yes, ma’am, sent it all the way to Frankfurt by mistake [...]”.
(BNC CAM)

- 49 And in [16], what is meant reassuringly in American English sounds rather less so in British English!

[16] She whispered in his ear, “Do you really love me, Cable?”
“I *surely* do, Mrs. Jordan”, he answered with an easy grin.
(COCA Fiction)

- 50 Downing recognises this category: “A minor use, shared by *surely* and *sure* expresses a strong affirmation, often as an affirmative response equal to ‘yes’”¹². Although I agree with the link she makes between this use of *surely* and adverbial *sure*, I do not agree that this intensive use of *surely* is particularly minor; it is just not characteristic of British English¹³.

- 51 To sum up, in this section we have seen that, as with its intrapredicative uses, the epistemic adverb *surely* still marks an identification between a trajectory constructed in the speech situation and a preconstructed trajectory. The difference is that, in intrapredicative uses, the preconstructed trajectory is essentially aspectual, leading from the beginning to the end, whereas in extrapredicative epistemic uses, the preconstructed trajectory is modal, leading from the speech situation to a projected event situation. Within this category, American English allows a further, intensive use of *surely*, which derives from the use of *surely* to quantify a non-gradable, bi-polar domain.

12. Downing, 2001: 260. More generally, one might criticise the fact that Downing excludes from her article consideration of any other uses of *surely* than as a discourse marker.

13. Interestingly, Downing’s BNC example of this use: “And you’ve come all the way from America to write about Heymouth?” “I *surely* have” is evidently a stereotypical representation of American speech.

3.3. The discourse marker *surely*

- 52 For the discourse marker *surely* we will of course retain the schematic form presented in 2. The difference, in the case of the discourse marker, is that the trajectory involved here is the one the speaker chooses when he or she endorses a propositional content for a given situation. This perhaps requires some explanation: a speaker who asserts a propositional content p , makes the choice to assert p in preference to $\text{non-}p$. This choice can be represented in a similar way to modality, with a trajectory passing from a preassertive level (where a choice is available), to an assertive level (where a choice has been made) and subjective endorsement of a propositional content.

- 53 The discourse marker *surely* indicates that the speaker maintains their preconstructed endorsement of the proposition, thereby identifying their enunciative choice in passing from $(p, \text{non-}p)$ to p to a previous choice of endorsement in a movement which Downing revealingly refers to as “speaker self-validation” (2001: 256). When used as a discourse marker, *surely* is typically in clause-initial position, but may be medial or final. Wherever it is placed, however, it forms an independent tone-group and receives prosodic focus.

- 54 Let us look at an example with this model in mind:

[17] Owen was keen to show me his new electric racing car set and let me by the arm to his room. I was taken aback by the decor –; vivid red, yellow and green geometric patterns screaming from every wall. *Surely* a most inappropriate colour scheme for the bedroom of a hyperactive child?
(BNC B06)

- 55 One might – independently of the context of [17] – imagine that an excessively vivid colour scheme is inappropriate for a hyperactive child. In saying *Surely a most inappropriate colour scheme [...]*, the speaker reaffirms his or her adhesion to this preconstructed proposition p . Now, a reaffirmation is generally made in the face of potential opposition, here the position $\text{non-}p$, presumably endorsed by Owen’s

parents. At the same time, the speaker attempts to enlist the support of an as yet undecided co-speaker, who is encouraged to take the same path from $(p, non-p)$ to p . The three speakers involved in the configuration here correspond to the speaker, the co-speaker and a third person, a potential speaker, absent from the speech situation. We might represent this graphically as follows:

56 This use of *surely* is described in Downing's paper as a case of the speaker inviting "affirmation or corroboration from an addressee regarding the state of mind, intentions or actions of a third party" (2001: 268). In fact, when it is used as a discourse marker *surely* allows the speaker to construct a wide range of argumentative values "wishful thinking", "challenge" or "self-questioning", to name but three of the categories mentioned in Downing's paper. My hypothesis is that these values depend crucially on how the speaker S_o positions his or her endorsement of p relative to the co-speaker S_o' and an absent, or fictive, speaker S_o'' . The next examples provide further illustration.

[18] "I already know you as well as I could ever want to. And besides, it would take a stronger stomach than mine to contemplate furthering our acquaintance." As he simply smiled at her reaction, she hurried on to ask a question of her own. "But *surely* you're not intending to move in here permanently? You already have a house in Edinburgh."
(BNC JXA)

57 Here, we have a construction of the *surely not* type, included among Downing's "challenge" category. These typically involve, in addition to the identification of the $(p, non-p) \rightarrow p$ trajectory, associated with S_o , a preconstructed position *non-p* attributed to the co-speaker S_o' , as represented in the figure below.

58 In other words, the speaker reaffirms endorsement of p in the face of opposition from the co-speaker, to whom the speaker attributes the counter-oriented proposition *non-p*.

- [4] “We had a visitation, a welcoming note from a pyromaniac.” She stared at him in silence, chilled by the frozen wastes reflected in his eyes, and he said raspingly, “The fires of the damned, wasn’t that how you put it? Is this what you wanted? Does this satisfy your thirst for revenge?” Lissa swallowed hard, remembering her words. *Surely* he did not blame her for this?
(BNC HA6)

59 This illustrates a similar type of opposition between a co-speaker positioned in *non-p*, and a speaker, who reaffirms the choice leading from $(p, non-p)$ to p . Interestingly, if the following context makes it clear that this is free indirect speech, such that the speaker Lissa is addressing herself to the unnamed male co-speaker, then we have the same challenging configuration as before, if this is a passage of free indirect thought, however, then we are closer to the previous example, as Lissa is both speaker and co-speaker, seeking to convince herself of something. This enunciative split, as a speaker questions her own judgement, produces concomitant implications of self-doubt, another of Downing’s categories of meaning.

- [19] O’REILLY: Now Ms McLean, as a Democrat, I mean obviously all the Democratic presidential candidates are against this, but *surely* you understand the point that if American lives are endangered, most Americans I believe would say you got to waterboard them. You got to protect American lives.
(COCA Fox O’Reilly)

60 In this example, the speaker O’Reilly, in a live debate, knows that his co-locutor/co-speaker Ms McLean is opposed to the form of torture called waterboarding, but seeks nonetheless to enlist her endorsement by reenacting, as it were, his passage from $(p, non-p)$ to p . He also presupposes that the speech community (*most Americans*) think the same way, in his use of *understand*: *understand* x implies the existence of an x to be understood. It is as if Ms McLean were one of the last opponents to p and the speaker O’Reilly the voice of the speech community S_o !. We might represent this additional configuration as follows:

61 Downing (2001) pursues corpus searches, essentially using the subject pronoun criterion to classify different values, while admitting that the relationship between subject pronoun and the value of *surely* is not automatic. Although Downing's intuition is important here, I think the essential determining factor is not the subject pronoun as such¹⁴, but the way the speaker positions his or her own discourse – and the re-endorsement of *p* in particular – relative to other, potential speakers: the co-speaker, a fictive speaker or the speech community. These positionings can be seen as further variables allowing us to derive specific values for the discourse marker *surely* from the complex interplay of a schematic form with elements of context.

62 The key difference between the approach adopted here and that of Downing is that, while Downing considers *surely* to carry a number of meanings in and of itself¹⁵, I prefer to derive these from the interaction of an abstract schema with contextual determinations. Let us illustrate this with a further example. One of the core meanings of *surely*, for Downing, is “mirativity”. This “refers to the linguistic marking of an utterance as conveying information which is new or unexpected to a speaker” (2001: 256). [20] below, which forms part of the title of Downing's study, illustrates such a mirative use:

[20] “Surely you knew!”

63 Unlike Downing however I would prefer to argue that this mirative effect derives from the properties of *surely*, associated with the process *know* in the second-person. The process *know* localises a propositional content (X) relative to a subject. It is a subjective verb insofar as only the grammatical subject is qualified to say whether he or she possesses the knowledge in question. In other words, one might have the

14. Note that in the theory of enunciative operations the subject pronoun *I*, for example, does not refer directly to the speaker, but marks an operation identifying the subject of the utterance with the speaker.

15. Downing writes: “there are three meaning of *surely* which I believe to be crucial: *surely* as a marker of self-validation, *surely* expressing surprisal or mirative meaning, and *surely* as a way to foresee and so forearm oneself against foreseen denial” (2001: 257).

firm conviction that one's co-speaker knows something, but one cannot actually *know* that they know it. In utterances of the *Surely you knew!* type, the speaker appears to maintain a preconstructed endorsement of *p* (*you knew X*) even though the only speaker really qualified to affirm *p* is in fact the co-speaker *you*. This interplay between *surely* and its context leads naturally enough to a polarisation of enunciative positions and to values which can go from genuine surprise, or "mirativity", to downright disbelief.

3.4. Remarks on the etymology of *surely*

64 There exist one or two infrequently attested uses of intrapredicative *surely* without an associated and potentially counter-oriented adverb, and generally with markers of comparison, which can be linked diachronically to current uses, in the light of grammaticalization theory.

[21] The massive pin-sharp image completely fills the five-storey screen and you are there, as *surely* as if you were in an orbiting Shuttle.
(B3K)

[22] Or would it be a sign of still greater maturity for their staff to go on contributing to a national system, a system in which the collaboration of the entire academic community could raise standards higher and judge quality more *surely*?
(BNC HTK)

65 It is perhaps here that *surely* is closest to its etymological origins, Lat. *securus*, and it may indeed be paraphrased with *securely*¹⁶. In etymological terms, *surely* and *sure* both appear to date back to fourteenth-century Middle English, deriving from cognates of Modern French *sûr* and *sûrement*. Generally speaking, grammaticalization theory indicates a movement from more precise, lexical meanings to vaguer, procedural meanings¹⁷. Aijmer and Simon-Vandenberg, for example, claim without discussion: "Like other adverbs, including *certainly*, *surely* has developed diachronically from a manner adverb" (2007: 135). Although this affirmation doubtless represents a general tendency, I am not certain it can apply in this form to *surely*, which was already remarkably polyvalent in Middle English, as the examples below show:

[23] Wythouten doubte trew obedyencers folow *surely* oure lorde & his wordes where he seyth.
(From *Three Middle-English Versions of the Rule of St. Benet and Two Contemporary Rituals for the Ordination of Nuns*¹⁸)

16. The substitution of *securely* for *surely* is admittedly more convincing in [21] than in [20].

17. Cf. for example, Traugott, 1995 or 1997.

18. These examples are taken from the online corpus at the University of Michigan: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu>.

- [23a] → true followers follow our lord and the words he says *unfalteringly*¹⁹
- [24] [...] þis medicyne shalle make yow hoole *surely*, as men seyn.
(John Russells, *Boke of Nurture*, Harl. MS. 4011, Fol. 171)
- [24a] → this medicine will *definitely* make you better, as people say
- [25] “Have ye seen how the kyng durste not ete all this souper / for fere that mawgys shold werke wytchecraft vpon hym” / “Surely”, sayd rowlande, “it is true”.
(From *The Right Plesaunt and Goodly Historie of the Foure Sonnes of Aymon*. English from the French by William Caxton, and printed by him about 1489)
- [25a] → *Indeed*, said Rowland, it is true.
- [26] “Cosyn, what folke is yonder, as ye thynke / for it semeth a grete oost a fore Iherusalem / are thei sarrasyns or crysten? what saye you?” “Surely”, sayd mawgys, “I canne not telle, and I am sore merveyllled what it maye be”.
(*Ibid.*)
- [26a] → *To tell the truth*, said Mawgis, I cannot tell, and I have no idea what they might be.

66 In fact, the development of *surely* is relatively complex. When *sure/surely* entered English, French *sûrement* had already developed a number of discursive uses. Additionally, Old and Middle English possessed the cognate term *sickerly* (O.E. *sicerlice*), deriving ultimately from Lat. *securus* via West Germanic, which had developed discursive uses of its own. Finally, *securely* enters sixteenth-century English, supplanting the intrapredicative manner adverb *surely* in the majority of cases, perhaps making it easier for *surely* to function modally. Hence, in English at least, it appears that *surely* has never functioned uniquely as a manner adverb but has always, under the probable influence of Fr. *sûrement* and M.E. *sickerly*, always possessed a range of epistemic or discursive uses.

67 It is easy to conjecture on the links between the etymological senses of “Free from or not exposed to danger or risk; not liable to be injured or destroyed”²⁰ and the schematic form proposed in section 2. In each case what is involved is the elimination of potential differentiation between a preexisting representation that the speaker judges to be “right” and a given specific representation.

4. Conclusion

68 In the preceding pages I hope to have shown that *surely* functions in a variety of different ways in contemporary English, as an intrapredicative adverb (generally in

19. The translation provided is my own, and is meant simply as a gloss, to indicate the way in which *surely* is being used in the Middle English context.

20. From the *Oxford English Dictionary* entry for the adjective and adverb *sure*.

collocations of the *slowly but surely* type), as an epistemic adverb (clause-medially and in association with a modal) and as a discourse marker.

69 I propose to attribute a single, invariant operation to *surely*, a schematic form, from which we can derive specific values in context. I consider that *surely* marks an operation of identification between, on the one hand, a preconstructed trajectory leading from a start point to an end point, i.e. from (*p*, *non-p*) to *p*, and on the other, the same trajectory constructed in the speech situation by the speaker.

70 When the trajectory concerns:

- the movement from the start point to the end point of a process, then *surely* is intrapredicative;
- the movement from the speech situation to the projected event situation, then *surely* is epistemic;
- the subjective endorsement of a proposition, then *surely* is a discourse marker.

71 When *surely* functions as a discourse marker it can vehicle a wide range of speech acts, from aggressive challenge, to persuasion, to expressions of self-doubt or surprise. These, I have suggested, can be calculated as different configurations of the schematic form, depending upon how the speaker positions his reaffirmed endorsement of a proposition relative to the co-speaker, to other absent speakers or to the speech community.

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