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# **The Place of Intersubjective Strategies in Tai Verdes' Songs: A Linguistic Analysis**

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# Introduction

## Presentation of the corpus

With up to 4 million monthly listeners on Spotify, a hit song of 436 million streams, and a total of over 235 million views on YouTube, the American singer Tai Verdes became a music industry phenomenon. Ever since he went viral on TikTok in 2019, his popularity dramatically increased, breaking records within the span of six years. His pop songs use simple lyrics – dealing with everyday life, his own experience as a twenty-nine-year-old man or problems affecting the younger generations<sup>1</sup> – earworms, and lively, dance-inducing rhythms. This combination is central to the appeal of his music. That is why he reaches such numbers, reaching mostly young people – his TikTok account gathering 2.8 million followers. In his songs, he sometimes addresses his audience with interjections, imperatives, interrogatives or terms of address. Tai Verdes also seems to be creating contact with them through the use of modality, in particular through modal auxiliaries with a root value. These linguistic devices allow him to establish a form of direct address to the listener, as if he were directly communicating with them. The audience feels as if Tai Verdes were speaking to them personally, which can elicit various types of reactions in them. In other words, a form of interaction is established between the singer and the listener – although not one that takes place face-to-face – that relies on the linguistic tools mentioned above. Whether it be an interrogative, an imperative or a modal auxiliary, such devices generally trigger a response, which is typically discursive or physical in a face-to-face conversation. Yet, since I am studying a different communicative context – which I will define next – these responses are likely to be emotional or cognitive.

I therefore chose 20 of Tai Verdes' most famous songs<sup>2</sup> to form my corpus. I will study them from an enunciative and pragmatic perspective, wondering how much the linguistic dimension in Tai Verdes' lyrics could justify the establishment of a form of exchange between him and the listener and consequently offer a possible explanation for his successful lyrics. The objective will be to understand and explain the phenomenon of intersubjectivity and other related concepts – each of which will be defined in due course – through the analysis of three specific types of markers, namely, interrogative structures, imperatives and utterances containing root modality. I will attempt to observe what the values of these markers are and how they function and operate in this specific context of oral discourse. I decided to select these three categories of devices because they

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1 The singer explores more or less significant topics. The latter include friendship, love, mental health or consumption of drugs. However, in the context of this linguistic study, I will not focus on the content but rather on the formal dimension of Tai Verdes' lyrics. These themes will nevertheless be mentioned where relevant, as form and content are inextricably linked.

2 This corresponds to a total of 7,476 words.

contribute to the phenomena of intersubjectivity discussed in this study, and are particularly numerous in this corpus. Indeed, the frequency of these structures is particularly striking given the relatively short and, as I will explain below, non-interactive nature of the corpus. Among the 20 songs analyzed, 16 (or 18 if backing vocals are included) contain interrogative structures; 17 (18 with backing vocals) feature imperative forms; and 18 include root modal auxiliaries<sup>3</sup>. In total, the corpus contains 85 occurrences of all types of interrogative structures, representing 9.31% of the total word count, 114 imperative structures (7.49%), and 88 occurrences of root modal auxiliaries<sup>4</sup> (9.44%) (see Table 1).

Before developing the theoretical framework, I would first like to list the specific features of my corpus. The latter is an artistic production, which can be described as literary, and even poetic. It takes the form of a monologue, which means that there is never any visual contact or direct interaction with the addressee<sup>5</sup>. Indeed, the lyrics are written and prepared in advance, and then recited orally for the broadcast of the songs. Listeners can then access them deferred from the moment of enunciation, either in an “imposed” manner on the radio, on certain television channels or on social media, or on demand on any music or video streaming platform. Unlike a conversation, which is considered a more conventional form of interaction, this corpus is a non-spontaneous and non-improvised form of speech. It means that there are no successive delayed modifications, rephrasing, pauses, hesitations or interjections, all of which are characteristic of face-to-face interaction. If there are any, they have been chosen carefully and written on purpose by the singer with the aim of imitating the form of oral dialogue. A phenomenon of progressive discourse elaboration is therefore at stake in his songs, but there is no spontaneous re-elaboration. Thus, due to this particular context, I will not be able to observe the spontaneous phenomena of discourse construction, such as failures, misinterpretations, misunderstandings, reformulations, etc. Nevertheless, this will not prevent me from studying the form of interactivity the corpus contains.

As occurrences of monologues, his songs place Tai Verdes as the only speaker who addresses a co-speaker but the latter is never present in front of him at the moment of enunciation. Sometimes, he addresses his audience explicitly, but not only, and this is what I will attempt to identify throughout this analysis. When it comes to exploring the reception of his songs, it is difficult to have access to the listeners’ spontaneous reactions – the only accessible indicator being figures: number of views, subscribers on social networks, monthly listeners on streaming platforms

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3 It is worth noting that various types of modality can be found across all 20 songs. Additionally, the set of 18 songs referred to differs for each of the three types of devices.

4 Due to the fact that these calculations were made by hand and rounded up, these results have a slight margin of error, which does not undermine their representative character.

5 It means that the non-verbal dimension, including gestures or facial expressions for instance, which is characteristic of face-to-face interaction, cannot be observed. These usual features of discourse analysis will therefore not be part of this study; I will focus instead on the enunciative and pragmatic dimensions.

or views on video platforms – and this is why I will only be raising hypotheses about these potential reactions. However, as raised earlier, this will not prevent me from observing the extent to which the phenomena of interactivity and verbal exchange are present in these lyrics despite the direct absence of an addressee.

Moreover, this corpus constitutes in a way a hybrid form of discourse, as it is based on written texts, but its form is designed to be shared orally. It is therefore a kind of oralized writing. This is revealed by Tai Verdes' attempt to imitate the form of face-to-face verbal exchange in his lyrics. To this end, the singer employs an informal register, a common or even vulgar lexicon, abbreviations, interjections, a disorganized syntax, as well as omissions of words and subjects. By using these oral turns of phrase, he gives the impression of writing as he speaks<sup>6</sup>.

What is more, the use of certain linguistic features even suggests that Tai Verdes, more or less consciously, tried to mimic the structure of dialogue. Indeed, this can be seen in his choice of tenses and aspects. The artist speaks mostly in the present tense, and sometimes uses the imperfective aspect, characteristic of the present moment and the action in progress. This choice may therefore be surprising in view of the context of actualization of his discourse, which – it should be remembered – is always listened to deferred and without direct contact between the singer and his listeners. Tai Verdes also employs different deictics. He employs the first-person pronoun *I* to talk about himself, but also *you* on numerous occasions, that is to say the most representative marker of the “other” in discourse. This demonstrates that the singer refers to others, and even appeals to them in some cases. He additionally utters terms of address such as *baby* (“Let’s go to Hell,” “we would have some cute kids.,” “Something To Cry About”) or *Hey little lady* (“AOK”) – *Hey* even indicates the phatic function normally used to establish contact with others in more classic forms of interaction. He also explicitly calls on his addressee, notably through the use of a question tag (e.g., *You’re a player, aren’t you?* from the song “Stuck In The Middle”) or negative interrogatives (e.g., *Doesn’t this guitar sound so good?* from “AOK”) – elements that I will return to later in this analysis. All these markers of enunciation, even though the corpus is not a spontaneous production – or what Erving Goffman (1987: 171), a specialist in face-to-face interactions, would call “fresh talk” – suggest an attempt to mimic dialogue in a context of monologue. This is why the corpus can be described as a hybrid form of discourse.

In short, even if the interlocutor is never physically present, they are strongly inscribed in Tai Verdes' discourse – not only through the elements mentioned above, but also via interrogative and imperative structures, as well as utterances containing root modality, which will be examined in

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6 These choices were not all made in the objective of imitating dialogue; they also serve stylistic, rhythmic and prosodic purposes. However, these aspects will not be addressed in the present analysis, which will instead adopt a pragmatic and enunciative perspective.

detail throughout this analysis. Therefore, in this non-interactive corpus, I will study these intersubjective strategies<sup>7</sup> and their potential role in appealing to the listener, holding their attention, and, in some way, accounting for the success of Tai Verdes' songs.

### Theoretical framework

This work is based on a discourse analysis framework that brings together enunciative and pragmatic tools – theories that will be central to the analysis of my corpus and will be defined below. I will additionally make references to syntax, that is, the study of structures, and to semantics, the study of meaning, as they are linked to enunciative theories and will be useful to the analysis of imperatives, interrogative structures and utterances with root modality.

Discourse constitutes the object of my analysis as I will study oral speech, whose specific features have been defined previously. In this theoretical framework, discourse can be understood as “coextensive with language activity on the evidence provided in spoken or written texts” (Ranger, 2018: 36). Dominique Maingueneau (2021: 12) even evokes a “communicative dimension.” Within the field of linguistics, a widely accepted view of discourse is that it corresponds to “language beyond the word, clause, phrase and sentence” arranged in such a way that it ends in “successful communication” (Paltridge, 2006: 2).

However, the term can be defined in a much broader way, bringing together different research fields, such as philosophy, psychology or sociology (Maingueneau, 2021: 13). These other perspectives shed light on a series of interesting characteristics to focus on. Indeed, discourse can be considered as a form of action with specific rules governing it (ibid.: 14). Maingueneau (ibid.) states that speaking is regarded as a form of action upon others, and not merely as a representation of the world<sup>8</sup>; he also refers to the power of speech. In fact, discourse is an “inter-activity” involving two or more participants<sup>9</sup> (ibid.: 15). Maingueneau (ibid.) points out that every utterance, even when produced in the absence of an addressee or in the presence of a seemingly passive addressee, is embedded in a constitutive interactivity; every utterance presupposes the presence of another enunciative instance in relation to which speakers construct their own discourse<sup>10</sup>. This is reminiscent of a common way to define discourse in linguistics, and which emphasizes its interactional function at the same time: “language in use” (Maingueneau, 2021: 12; Ranger, 2018:

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7 Any terms that may still appear abstract will be defined in the following subsections.

8 Original quotation: “Parler est considéré comme une forme d’action sur autrui, et pas seulement une représentation du monde” (Maingueneau, 2021: 14).

9 Original quotation: “Cette activité verbale est en fait une inter-activité qui engage deux ou plusieurs partenaires” (Maingueneau, 2021: 15).

10 Original quotation: “Toute énonciation, même produite sans la présence d’un destinataire ou en présence d’un destinataire qui semble passif, est prise dans une interactivité constitutive. Toute énonciation suppose la présence d’une autre instance d’énonciation par rapport à laquelle on construit son propre discours” (Maingueneau, 2021: 15).

36). Thus, discourse analysis studies the social inscription of discourse and its linguistic functions; the emphasis is placed on the link between social ties and the structure and form of discourse (Maingueneau, 2021: 38).

In this context, language is precisely understood as subjects' activity<sup>11</sup>, that is, a dynamic conception of language, as defined by Catherine Filippi-Deswelle (2012: 10-11). Language is thus not viewed as a mere vehicle for meaning or a simple tool for communication, but as an activity in its own right: for the speaker, it consists in producing and constructing "linguistic" forms, and for the listener, in recognizing and interpreting those forms<sup>12</sup> (Cotte et al., 1993: 64). Language thus appears as an activity between speakers that requires effort on the part of both the speaker, who must produce a sufficiently clear and comprehensible message, and the hearer, who must correctly interpret the message and the speaker's intention. The exchange between interlocutors is therefore not innate but rather constructed. As Cotte et al. (ibid.) emphasize, the meaning shared between speakers is not ready-made nor simply transmitted as such to the other. Depending on the degree of involvement of each participant, this discursive construction can be more or less balanced; in cases of imbalance, it may lead to misinterpretations and misunderstandings (Cotte et al., ibid.). This vision of language is precisely the one Antoine Culioli adopts in his Theory of Enunciative Operations (TEO)<sup>13</sup>.

Antoine Culioli (1990: 155) explains that this language activity is apprehended through the underlying operations involved in enunciation<sup>14</sup>. These operations take place at the first level of speech production, a level to which we have no access, but which has visible traces in the higher level, that of languages<sup>15</sup> (Culioli, 1990: 129). These traces are, in fact, markers of the mental operations that are specific to each individual but tend to manifest themselves in similar ways through language, forming identifiable patterns. Their diversity is important and they truly "found and regulate language activity," making them inherent to language (ibid.: 179). In this analysis, I will attempt to identify the markers underlying these operations. I will also examine other linguistic phenomena that establish relationships between speakers within language and prompt interaction involving varying degrees of mutual understanding – phenomena that will be progressively defined throughout the course of this analysis. Through his study of mental operations and their

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11 Original term: "activité des sujets" (Filippi-Deswelle, 2012: 11).

12 Original quotation: "Le langage n'est donc pas vu comme un simple vecteur de sens, un simple outil de communication, mais comme activité à part entière qui consiste, pour celui qui parle, à produire, à construire, des formes 'linguistiques' et, pour celui qui écoute, à reconnaître, à interpréter, ces formes" (Cotte et al., 1993: 64).

13 Original term: "Théorie des Opérations Énonciatives." For ease of reference, I will henceforth use the acronym TEO to refer to Antoine Culioli's theory. I would also like to point out that my work is part of a broader enunciative framework than Culioli's, although I will be using many of its principles and tools.

14 Original terms: "les opérations enfouies du travail énonciatif" (Culioli, 1990: 155).

15 In French, "langage" and "langue" are differentiated. Here, this level corresponds to the level of "langues." As this difference does not exist in English, I will keep using the term "languages" to deal with "langues."

manifestation in language, Culioli's TEO provides the conceptual foundation for these phenomena, which is why I will primarily rely on his theoretical framework.

Enunciative theories, contrary to generative grammar which focuses on language as a part of human beings' genetic inheritance and its cognitive and learning-related aspects, place the emphasis on the enunciator, i.e. the speaker, also called utterer, and the enunciative situation. Along with the co-speaker, or co-utterer, the speaker and the enunciative situation constitute the heart of what is called an interpretative loop<sup>16</sup> in the TEO (Culioli, 2009: 32). Culioli attempts to demonstrate the complexity of verbal communication, that is, the production of an occurrence of speech on the one side and the possible triggering of a mental interpretation or a reaction on the other. According to the linguist, the enunciator and the enunciative situation are essential to the establishment of communication. Indeed, he defines an interpretative loop as the speaker's production of forms in order that they might be recognized by a co-speaker as having been produced to be recognized as interpretable<sup>17</sup> (Culioli, 2009: 32). This relationship of interdependence, based on a circular process, as its name indicates, involves constant reciprocal and dynamic modulations – a quality reminiscent of the conception of language defined before – which happen at either the syntactic, semantic or pragmatic levels.

These modulations appear essential for establishing communication between speakers, especially given that each individual possesses their own mental representations, which constitute their reality. This implies that there is no single set of representations shared by all individuals. As a result, it seems that each speaker must make an effort to convey their personal representations to others – representations that are part of what makes each individual unique, and thus constitute their subjectivity. The speaker's objective, then, is to find ways of making their subjectivity accessible to their interlocutors, or at least bringing it within their reach (Culioli, 1999: 91). It therefore seems that sharing the same language, culture, and society is not sufficient to eliminate all potential for misunderstanding or nuanced understanding in intercomprehension<sup>18</sup> (Filippi-Deswelle, 2012: 13). This raises the importance of a reciprocal adaptation between speakers; it is because they implement these enunciative strategies that fluent communication is possible. That is why Culioli (1990: 26) explains that, with the exception of certain specific communication situations that are identifiable as such and from which modulations and deformations are excluded, the language activity cannot be reduced to a transport of fully constituted and stable information. In other words, it cannot be

16 Original term: "boucle sémiotique" (Culioli, 2009: 32).

17 Original quotation: "vous produisez un texte, de manière à ce qu'il soit reconnu par autrui comme ayant été produit en vue d'être reconnu comme interprétable" (Culioli 2002: 32). Translated by Graham Ranger (2012: 40) in "Adjustments and Readjustments: Operations and Markers."

18 Original quotation: "Il apparaît qu'il ne suffit pas de partager les mêmes langue, culture et société pour supprimer toute marge d'incompréhension ou de compréhension modulée dans l'intercompréhension" (Filippi-Deswelle, 2012: 13). "Intercomprehension" should be understood as referring to the mutual understanding that takes place between speakers.

considered as an informative activity conveying immutable information, without intersubjective adjustment, without stylistic leeway<sup>19</sup> (ibid.). The notion of “adjustment” then comes into play. From an enunciative point of view, adjustment<sup>20</sup> “corresponds to operations by which the enunciator regulates their activity<sup>21</sup>” (Pennec, 2023: 10). Adjustment can be of several types. One of this type is called “intersubjective adjustment.”

Intersubjective adjustment operates at the enunciative level to bridge the gap between the speakers’ representations – symbolizing a point of contact of interaction. It helps the speaker make their representations more accessible and reduces the range of possible interpretations for the co-speaker, as if it were a space to be filled (Culioli, 1990: 181). As many authors have proved, its primary function is to facilitate understanding between enunciators (Filippi-Deswelle, 2012; Pennec, TPB). However, it is not always successful as it is a more or less unconscious process. Additionally, speakers may simply not be cooperative.

What is more, intersubjective adjustment is not the only process facilitating the construction of discourse and this is what I aim to explore in my corpus. The notion of adjustment in general is a central element of the TEO. However, as explained above, Culioli examines a wide range of elements and processes inherent to language. The linguist is interested in all the mental operations that take place at the first level of speech production. He also studies certain enunciative phenomena that manifest themselves at the second level of speech production, that of languages. Some of these linguistic phenomena which enable speakers to communicate will be the focus of this analysis, rather than the notion of adjustment itself.

Returning to the interactional characteristic of discourse, interaction is central in Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni’s theory of “talk-in-interaction<sup>22</sup>,” which is itself based on Culioli’s TEO. From an enunciative point of view, interaction can be defined as a system of mutual influences<sup>23</sup> where the speaker cooperates with their interlocutor to construct discourse (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2005: 15). It can also be characterized as a “joint action that emerges when speakers and listeners – or writers and readers – perform their individual actions in coordination, as ensembles” (Clark, 1996: 3). In this study, I will argue that this definition could even be extended to encompass the interaction

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19 Original quotation: “L’activité de langage des sujets ne saurait être ramenée à ‘un transport d’information toute constituée et stable’, c’est-à-dire à ‘une activité informative véhiculant une information immuable, sans jeu intersubjectif, sans marge stylistique’” (Culioli, 1990: 26). Translated by Blandine Pennec (2023: 10) in *Let’s say and say: markers of intersubjective adjustment favouring message transmission*.

20 According to *Le Grand Robert*, its common sense corresponds to a process of adaptation or putting elements into contact. This attempt at establishing a link between things originally connotes a tendency toward conformity, accuracy or, in some cases, embellishment, as if the idea were to make things right or better.

21 Pennec (2023: 10) reminds that this term was used and defined by several authors such as Albrespit, Bourdier or Mélis in Filippi-Deswelle (eds.), *L’ajustement dans la théorie d’Antoine Culioli*, 2012.

22 Original term: “discours-en-interaction” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2005: 15). In her book, she refers to the English term herself.

23 Original term: “un système d’influences mutuelles” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2005: 15).

between singers and listeners. Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2005) insists on this cooperative property between speakers as she explains that discourse is co-constructed. It is because speakers collaborate and coordinate their language activity that they are able to communicate and interact (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2005: 20).

In addition, there is not always symmetry of roles and distribution within this co-construction of discourse (ibid.: 21). As mentioned earlier, one of the participants in the interaction may choose to make less effort to collaborate, which can create an imbalance in the ongoing exchange. This may result in a rupture of the conversational fluency or even lead to a complete failure in communication. The successful establishment of interaction therefore depends on the speakers' willingness to cooperate with one another, both during the production of speech and the reception of the message conveyed.

Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2005: 16) also reveals that several types of interactions or exchanges exist; interactions are not just reduced to conversations, they are much broader. As the linguist points out, the speech activity always implies taking into account a real or potential addressee<sup>24</sup> (ibid.: 16). Nevertheless, the corpus under study, even though it may not seem representative of interactions, can be studied according to Kerbrat-Orecchioni's theory. The linguist herself explains that, although her theory primarily focuses on forms of discourse with a high degree of interactivity, it may also be applied to speech that is less interactive, or even entirely non-interactive (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, ibid.: 19-20). Following the researcher's typology, Tai Verdes' song lyrics are consequently a monologue that includes some occurrences of dialogic operations.

The term "dialogic" refers to the concept of dialogism developed by Mikhaïl Bakhtin. This concept resonates throughout my corpus. In fact, Bakhtin considers that every occurrence of speech is to some extent part of a dialogue (Todorov, 1981: 71) as it can always be considered to be oriented toward the other and their speech (Brès et al., 2005: 50). According to Brès et al. (2005: 52), dialogism corresponds to a constitutive phenomenon of discourse, which can be defined as the orientation of any utterance (i) toward utterances previously made on the same discourse object, and (ii) toward the response it prompts<sup>25</sup>. Thus, dialogism emerges as a framework for understanding the inherent interactivity of discourse, even in the absence of a face-to-face interlocutor, as is the case in the corpus under study. Discourse productions appear to be constantly shaped and influenced by other discourses, whether generated by the speaker themselves, their co-speaker(s), or even by third parties who are not directly involved in the current exchange. Consequently, dialogism can serve as

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24 Original quotation: "L'activité de parole implique toujours la prise en compte d'un destinataire réel ou potentiel" (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2005: 16).

25 Original quotation: "Il me semble que, à la lecture des textes de Bakhtin, on puisse définir le dialogique comme l'orientation de tout énoncé [...] (i) vers des énoncés réalisés antérieurement sur le même objet de discours, et (ii) vers la réponse qu'il sollicite" (Brès et al., 2005: 52).

a first theoretical justification for studying this non-interactive corpus and for applying enunciative and interactional tools to it.

In the context of my corpus, I am exclusively interested in the second type of dialogism, which concerns the relationship established between the speaker and their co-speaker(s). This type is referred to as interlocutionary dialogism, also known as direct or active dialogism. By inscribing these interlocutionary relations in the speaker's discourse, active dialogism anticipates the comprehension-response utterances of real or virtual addressees (Charaudeau and Maingueneau 2002: 176). More precisely, active dialogism manifests itself through different markers that indicate the enunciator's anticipation of potential responses from others at the level of the syntax, semantics or intonation (Brès et al., 2005: 10). Active dialogism takes two forms: it may involve the integration of the other's representations, or the integration of terms used by the other<sup>26</sup> (Pennec, 2016: 122). In short, when it comes to dialogism, Brès et al. (2005: 64) state that it is not simply a question of the voices that the speaker orchestrates by making that of the other (or others) resonate in their discourse; it refers to the fact that the utterer is necessarily and constantly permeated by the discourse of the other, and cannot exist independently of it<sup>27</sup>.

In other words, every discourse is shaped by these interactions, which are more or less implicit, but above all inherent to the production of speech (Brès et al., *ibid.*). In short, it appears that certain markers within discourse signal the (real or imagined) presence of the other(s) within the speaker's own utterance. Through the concept of active dialogism, the speaker seems to anticipate, incorporate, or even refute the voice of others, often through a virtual co-construction of discourse. These manifestations of the other may take the form, for instance, of rhetorical questions that consider a potential perspective external to that of the speaker (e.g., "Who dares to spray graffiti on the walls like that?" or "What's the point of continuing the race when everyone else has already finished?"<sup>28</sup>), or of concessive structures that anticipate and accommodate a possible objection (e.g., "Well, it's not the best tiramisu recipe, but at least it's made with love"). In any case, even when the interlocutor is not physically present, such discursive markers establish interlocutory links between the speaker's speech and these potential external voices.

As a result, Tai Verdes' speech may be influenced by the presence of external voices, and this is what I aim to identify throughout my analysis. These voices may belong to real individuals

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26 Original quotation: "Ce dialogisme actif se traduit selon deux axes : il peut s'agir de l'intégration des représentations de l'autre, ou de l'intégration de termes employés par cet autre" (Pennec, 2016: 122).

27 Original quotation: "Il ne s'agit donc pas simplement des voix qu'orchestre le locuteur en faisant résonner dans son discours celle de l'autre, ou des autres ; il s'agit du fait que le sujet parlant est nécessairement et constamment traversé par le discours de l'autre, et n'existe pas indépendamment de lui" (Brès et al., 2005: 64).

28 In each theoretical section, I will provide additional invented examples to illustrate the linguistic devices under discussion and to clarify the analysis. These examples will appear in parentheses and are consistently written in roman type. Key features of the device being examined will often be highlighted in bold. In contrast, examples taken directly from the corpus and integrated into the main text are systematically presented in italics.

whom he seeks to address, either directly or indirectly, to fictional characters created for the narrative of his songs, to each listener, or to his audience as a whole. The physical absence of a co-speaker thus prevents the typical co-construction of discourse. However, the concept of active dialogism offers a way to understand how, even in their absence, others shape the singer's lyrics. In the typical co-construction of discourse, Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2005: 17) explains that there is normally a phenomenon of immediate "feedback"<sup>29</sup>. Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2005: 17) highlights that the notion of interaction implies that the addressee is able to influence and inflect the speaker's behavior in unpredictable ways even as the speaker is in the process of constructing their discourse<sup>30</sup> – hence the concept of immediate feedback. This means that, within an interactive exchange, the co-construction of discourse is directly shaped by the real-time reactions of the interlocutor. The speaker may adapt – or adjust – their discourse accordingly in order to maintain a fluid and cooperative communicative process. This reflects the dynamic conception of language explored in this study, as well as the inherently reciprocal nature of interaction.

However, in the case of a non-interactive corpus influenced by external voices, such as the corpus under discussion, this process may instead be described as a phenomenon of "retro-interpretation." In this context, discourse is no longer shaped by ongoing feedback and adaptation but rather by a delayed interpretative response from either real (i.e., listeners) or imagined addressees (i.e., constructed figures within the song). The speaker (i.e., the singer) may anticipate such responses and adjust their discourse accordingly. Although the addressees construct meaning after the utterance has been produced and cannot influence the speaker at the moment of enunciation, the principle of dialogism demonstrates that their influence on the speaker's discourse remains significant. This influence is simply less immediate and less visible, yet still inherently present, as it is implied in all speech production. Thus, the corpus under study contrasts with the more classical forms of interaction usually examined. Its non-conformity actually appears to be an interesting subject for exploration. This is even confirmed by Kerbrat-Orecchioni herself through her definition of a monologue.

According to her, the term "monologue" is polysemic. In its strict sense, it corresponds to any unaddressed speech, except to oneself, as in "self-talk"<sup>31</sup> (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2010: 15-16). In its extended (yet widely attested) sense, it can be understood as any speech addressed to an "audience," but which does not allow for turn-taking<sup>32</sup> (ibid.). This second meaning enables a

29 Original term: "un phénomène immédiat de 'rétro-action'" (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2005: 17).

30 Original quotation: "En effet, la notion d'interaction implique que le destinataire soit en mesure d'influencer et d'infléchir le comportement du locuteur de manière imprévisible alors même qu'il est engagé dans la construction de son discours" (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2005: 17).

31 Original quotation: "'monologue1' (sens strict) : discours non adressé, si ce n'est à soi-même ('self-talk') (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2010: 15-16).

32 Original quotation: "'monologue2' (sens étendu, mais bien attesté dans la langue commune) : discours adressé à une 'audience', mais qui ne permet pas d'alternance" (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2010: 15-16).

monologue – like the corpus under study – to be dialogic as it somehow incorporates the voice of the audience, and possibly other voices<sup>33</sup> (ibid.: 16). In the case of song lyrics, the audience in question refers to the listeners. These other voices might correspond to people whom the singer never addresses directly but to whom his words are nonetheless intended, such as his family or friends, real or fictional figures he explicitly addresses, or the listeners, as mentioned earlier. According to Kerbrat-Orecchioni’s definition of a monologue and the concept of active dialogism, their presence in the singer’s speech therefore influences it to some extent. Thus, this illustrates how a monologue may be relevant to the analysis of discourse (-in-interaction) – a definition I will return to later, as it is closely linked to pragmatics.

Furthermore, pragmatics, the second major approach involved in this analysis, can be considered as an extension of enunciative theories. In the definition of discourse, I referred to discourse as a form of action and underlined the power of speech. This directly echoes pragmatics as the pragmatic approach is based on the statement that speech itself is a form of action<sup>34</sup> (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008: 1). Speech can even be considered a form of “inter-action” as Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2008: 53)<sup>35</sup> or Jacques (1979: 203)<sup>36</sup> suggest, with a view to combining the pragmatic and enunciative approaches. Based on these principles, pragmatics can be defined as the study of “language in act<sup>37</sup>” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008: 1). This expression can be understood as language in context, actualized in the course of a particular act of enunciation, which reveals the link with the enunciation theory<sup>38</sup> (ibid.). Both the pragmatic and enunciative approaches examine what Émile Benveniste (1966: 258) refers to “subjectivity in language<sup>39</sup>.” This notion refers to the idea that language is not merely a neutral tool for conveying information, but a medium through which speakers assert their individuality, share their representations, and position themselves in relation to others. For Benveniste (1966), subjectivity manifests itself in the act of enunciation, particularly through the use of personal pronouns, deixis, and modal expressions that anchor discourse in the speaker’s perspective. Enunciative theories therefore focus on the speaker’s role in producing

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33 Original quotation: “il [monologue2] incorpore d’une certaine manière la voix de l’audience (et éventuellement bien sûr, d’autres voix)” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2010: 16). This remark brings into play the notion of polyphony, but the latter will not be discussed in this analysis. Read Bakhtin (1978), Brès et al. (2005), Ducrot (1983) or Anscombre and Ducrot (1983) for further information about this concept.

34 Original quotation: “la parole elle-même est une forme d’action” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008: 1).

35 See quotation: “la perspective interactionniste confirme et même renforce l’idée selon laquelle parler c’est agir – ou plutôt interagir, en ce sens que tout au long du déroulement d’un échange communicatif quelconque, les différents participants exercent les uns sur les autres des influences de nature diverse” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008: 53).

36 See quotation: “L’occurrence des actes de langage en situation interlocutive en fait des interactes de langage, comme elle fait des locuteurs des interlocuteurs, c’est-à-dire des interactants dans le discours” (Jacques, 1979: 203).

37 Original quotation: “La pragmatique peut être définie comme l’étude du langage en acte” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008: 1).

38 Original quotation: “Par ‘langage en acte’ on peut en effet entendre : le langage en situation, actualisé au cours d’un acte d’énonciation particulier” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008: 1). The original page layout of the book has been adapted for this footnote.

39 Original term: “subjectivité dans le langage” (Benveniste, 1966: 258).

meaning and situating utterances within a specific context. Pragmatics, as an extension of these theories, further explores how people interact and how the context influences what they say. It focuses on the speaker's communicative intention embedded in their discourse, the way in which the interlocutor(s) interpret the speaker's message, and how meaning is constructed through the speakers' collaboration. The convergence of these fields emphasizes that language is always connected to the people who use it – hence the notion of “inter-action.” Language always seems to reflect the speakers' intentions, how their subjectivity is manifested in speech, and how they interact with others.

In the field of pragmatics, “language in act” can also be understood as a means of acting upon the interlocutive context, allowing for the performance of a number of specific acts, known as “speech acts,” corresponding to any act performed through the use of language<sup>40</sup> (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008: 1-2). This echoes the theory of “speech acts<sup>41</sup>,” developed by John L. Austin (1975) and John R. Searle (1969). This theory establishes the idea that every production of speech, therefore called a “speech act<sup>42</sup>,” possesses an internal property – an illocutionary value<sup>43</sup> – inscribed by the speaker and that has the objective to act upon the addressee and influence reality through speech (Austin, 1975; Searle, 1969). In other words, it is this illocutionary value, combined with the propositional content of the sentence that provides the utterance with its overall value as a speech act (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008: 16-17). As this combination gives an utterance a particular speech function, its aim is to produce a certain effect and bring about a certain modification in the interlocutionary situation<sup>44</sup> (ibid.). For instance, in the song “LAst dAy oN EaRTh” from the corpus under study, Tai Verdes says: *If it was my last day on Earth, I wouldn't be in church. I'm sorry God but it's my last day in this universe.* In this extract, Tai Verdes uses the idiomatic expression *I'm sorry* to apologize to God, as the singer seems to be aware that his behavior would not reflect that of a faithful believer, in case this is his last day on Earth. In context, *I'm sorry* thus carries an apologetic value. This apologetic value may correspond to the illocutionary value of the utterance. Since the function of the expression in context aligns with its form and propositional content, *I'm sorry* can be interpreted as a speech act whose aim is to convey and actualize the apology it

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40 Original quotation: “Par ‘langage en acte’ on peut en effet entendre : le langage envisagé comme un moyen d’agir sur le contexte interlocutif, et permettant l’accomplissement d’un certain nombre d’actes spécifiques, dits en anglais *speech acts* [...] elle [cette expression] désigne en tout état de cause tout acte réalisé au moyen du langage” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008: 1-2). The original page layout of the book has been adapted for this footnote.

41 Note that this theory is not universal and is mostly attributed to English, as Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2010: 10-11) points out.

42 Austin (1975: 109) also describes them as “the use of a sentence” or “the use of language.”

43 Also called illocutionary force but the term “value” will be retained in this analysis because, as Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2008: 17) points out, “force” can be considered as an ambiguous notion and consequently lead to confusion.

44 Original quotation: “Comme Austin, Searle considère que tout énoncé linguistique fonctionne comme un acte particulier (ordre, question, promesse, etc.), c’est-à-dire qu’il vise à produire un certain effet et à entraîner une certaine modification de la situation interlocutive” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008: 16).

expresses.

Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2008: 58) adds that considering utterances as acts amounts to acknowledging that they are meant to act upon others, but also to prompt a reaction: when saying is doing, but also making others do; in other words, the production of a given act subsequently creates a set of constraints, and a system of expectations<sup>45</sup>. Indeed, there are conditions for the realization of any act, and these must be met for the act to take place and to be recognized as such (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008: 18). They depend on various contextual factors. The latter may be linguistic, social, institutional, cultural, situational (time, place, purpose of the interaction), or linked to the relationship between the participants in the interaction.

In the case of this non-interactive corpus, Tai Verdes addresses members of his audience whom he does not personally know. While interpersonal constraints typically coming from a direct relationship are not present here, the lack of information about his listeners' identities may itself be considered a constraint. Another important limitation lies in the absence of a direct co-speaker during the enunciation, which leads to the absence of immediate feedback. Regarding conditions of realization, the artist's social and professional status grants him the legitimacy to perform certain types of speech acts directed at his audience – acts which the audience is likely to recognize as such. For example, he may give commands or express wishes, but cannot issue legal rulings. However, if a listener does not willingly engage with the music, or does not acknowledge the singer's status, the recognition of these acts may be compromised. On the listener's side – whose responses remain inaccessible – the fulfillment of these conditions depends for example on their physical or mental ability to carry out the act, their willingness to do so, or the relevance of the content to them. In any case, this does not prevent them from recognizing the intended act – even though, in certain cases, they might simply fail to interpret the speech act as such, having missed the singer's intended meaning. For instance, if Tai Verdes commands them to stand up and dance, they may understand it as a command while choosing not to comply, which may lead to the act's failure. Yet, this does not pose a methodological issue in this study, as the focus is not on the audience's reaction but on the moment of enunciation and the production of speech itself – specifically how utterances can be interpreted as speech acts and what effects they might have if all conditions were met.

Moreover, Austin (1975) recognizes three major types of speech acts: the acts of “locution,” “illocution” and “perlocution.” Speakers perform the first type when they say something (Austin, 1975: 109). In the corpus, Tai Verdes says *Talk is cheap, talk is rich, talk is poor* (“Sunset”) or *I'm*

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45 Original quotation: “considérer les énoncés comme des actes, c'est admettre qu'ils sont faits pour agir sur autrui, mais aussi l'amener à réagir : quand dire, c'est faire, mais aussi faire faire ; c'est-à-dire que la production d'un acte donnée crée par la suite un certain nombre de contraintes, et un système d'attentes” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008: 58).

*feelin' so sentimental* ("All White"), which can be categorized as simple assertions. In this way, they can be interpreted as locutionary acts. The "illocutionary act" expresses itself through the "performance of an act in saying something as opposed to performance of an act of saying something" (Austin, 1975: 98) – hence the term illocutionary value. It includes performing such acts as "asking or answering a question, giving some information or an assurance or a warning, announcing a verdict or an intention, pronouncing sentence," etc. (ibid.: 98-100). In his songs, Tai Verdes asks several questions such as *How was your day?* ("how deep?") or *Have you ever hated someone on a billboard in the city?* ("fake prophet"). In formulating these questions, the singer seems to expect an answer from his addressee. In other words, a form of action – in the shape of an expectation or a call for the other to respond – appears to be enacted through speech in these utterances, which is why they can be interpreted as illocutionary acts. Tai Verdes also says *I wish I could just walk on the sunset* ("Sunset"), which can be interpreted as another illocutionary act according to Austin. Indeed, by uttering these words, the singer formulates a desire or a wish, thereby turning speech into a form of action. Finally, the "perlocutionary act" corresponds to what speakers "bring about or achieve by saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading" (Austin, 1975: 109). This list could also include provocation, as speaking can provoke a reaction in the interlocutor. Tai Verdes uses utterances that may be interpreted as provocative on several occasions in his songs, such as *You got my hoodie but you can use it, I got six more and they keep me warm just fine*. This utterance is intended to elicit a reaction from his interlocutor, i.e. his former romantic partner in the song ("FEELING THIS BAD NEVER FELT SO GREAT"). This is why this utterance may be interpreted as a perlocutionary act.

For his part, Searle (1979: viii) establishes five main categories of speech acts: "assertives" when "we tell people how things are," "directives" when "we try to get them to do things," "commissives" when "we commit ourselves to doing things," "expressives" when "we express our feelings and attitudes," and finally "declarations" when "we bring about changes in the world through our utterances." Searle's classification thus demonstrates that speech acts can take a wide variety of forms. For instance, they may involve giving an order, offering advice, making a promise, issuing a warning, asking a question, expressing thanks, or granting permission – in addition to those listed by Austin (1975) above.

Tai Verdes' lyrics can be considered as containing several types of speech acts of Searle's typology. When the singer says, *When I see trouble come my way, I'll be makin' lemonade* ("AOK"), he is simply sharing a piece of information, which makes it possible to classify this utterance as an assertive according to Searle. The singer also exclaims, *Yeah baby, let's pack the minivan, see the Hoover Dam* ("we would have some cute kids."), thereby inviting his interlocutor

to travel with him. In other words, he tries to get his interlocutor to do something, which corresponds to the definition of a directive. Furthermore, Tai Verdes appears to utter statements expressing commissives, such as *I'll try my very best [but we'll have to wait and see]*, which serve to demonstrate his commitment. Due to the lyrical nature of his songs, the artist also shares many of his feelings and states of mind, as in *I love her and she love me* (“sheluvme”) or *Feeling this bad never felt so great. Never thought that I'd be happy today* (“FEELING THIS BAD NEVER FELT SO GREAT”). Finally, no declaration speech act seems present in the corpus. Indeed, none of the utterances appears to alter an institutional or social reality simply by being spoken. This is consistent with the nature of this speech production, since Tai Verdes' songs primarily aim to entertain the audience. A declaration would thus resemble a situation in which a superior, sincerely believing in the authority of their words and holding a sufficiently high position within the organization, says to an employee, “You're fired,” or when a mayor or an officiant, vested with official power, declares to a married couple, “By the power vested in me, I now pronounce you married.” In my analyses, I will attempt to examine in greater detail the types of speech acts, as classified by Searle (1979)<sup>46</sup>, that interrogative structures, imperatives, and utterances containing root modality may express. I will try to identify their illocutionary value in context and how it corresponds (or not) to the form of the utterance.

In some cases, the form of the utterance no longer aligns with its contextual value or with the speaker's communicative intention. In such instances, the utterance still performs a speech act, but it is referred to as an indirect speech act. This term is used as elliptical expression for a speech act formulated indirectly, under the guise of another speech act<sup>47</sup> (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008: 35). This type of act seems to occur when the form of an utterance no longer matches with its meaning in context (ibid.: 33-34). In this case, the same speech act (the same illocutionary value) can have a wide range of different realizations and, conversely, a single structure can express a variety of illocutionary values<sup>48</sup> (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008: 34). In short, this type of act can be described as follows: When saying is doing several things at once. It can also be described in the following way: When saying is doing one thing under the appearance of another<sup>49</sup> (ibid.: 33).

This type of speech act can be observed on several occasions in the corpus. For instance, in

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46 Searle's typology is preferred here for its greater precision and broader coverage of speech act types compared to Austin's. Nonetheless, it remains subject to criticism, particularly concerning category boundaries. See Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2008) for a more detailed analysis of the limitations of the speech act theory.

47 Original quotation: “expression elliptique pour acte de langage formulé indirectement, sous le couvert d'un autre acte de langage” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008: 35).

48 Original quotation: “un même acte de langage (une même valeur illocutoire) peut recevoir un grand nombre de réalisations différentes [...] inversement, une même structure peut exprimer des valeurs illocutoires diverses” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008: 34).

49 Original quotation: “Quand dire, c'est faire plusieurs choses à la fois [...] ; Quand dire, c'est faire une chose sous les apparences d'une autre” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008: 33).

the song “TWO SUGARS,” Tai Verdes poses the question *Why can't we just go back to last night?*. Due to its interrogative form and function, this utterance can be classified as a direct speech act, more specifically as a directive with interrogative value. This utterance thus fulfills an initial pragmatic function, but it can also be interpreted as expressing something beyond the literal question. Indeed, the form of the utterance, combined with the adverb *just*, seems to suggest that in asking this question, the singer is in fact asserting a desire to return to the previous night. In this sense, the utterance appears to carry a second illocutionary value, that of expressing the artist's opinion. Within the question itself, then, a form of assertion can be observed, which may be interpreted as an indirect dimension of the speech act. Thus, this utterance can be interpreted both as a direct speech act (a directive functioning as a question) and as an indirect speech act (an assertive functioning as the expression of an opinion). *Why can't we just go back to last night?* (“TWO SUGARS”) therefore illustrates the idea expressed by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2008: 33): “When saying is doing several things at once.” The founder of the speech acts theory states that “[i]n indirect speech acts the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information, both linguistic and nonlinguistic, together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer” (Searle, 1979: 31-32). In indirect speech acts, there is an initial intention on the part of the enunciator that is conveyed in the form, but in reality they may wish to conceal one or more others that will be understood by their co-enunciator because of the relationship between them and the context of enunciation. Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2008: 35) refers to the apparent value as “literal” and the actual value that reveals the speaker's intentions as “derived<sup>50</sup>.” The notion of indirect speech act will therefore be particularly useful for analyzing my examples.

To return to the definition of a monologue, which is part of the pragmatic perspective, Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2010: 14) states that verbal language is therefore by its very nature designed to be addressed to someone<sup>51</sup>, even if it is a monologue, as explained earlier. For the researcher, this implies that right from the encoding phase – even before any response or simple reaction from the addressee – the latter is already inscribed in the speaker's discourse (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2010: 14). The addressee can be explicitly embedded in the speaker's speech (through address markers), but they are always implicitly inscribed therein, insofar as the speaker constantly takes into account the image they have formed of their addressee, and the skills they attribute to them (for example, in choosing a particular term, employing a specific argumentative strategy, or opting for a

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50 This analysis adopts an interpretative perspective rather than Searle's production-based approach, which focuses on the speaker's intention. While Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2008: 35) refers to the apparent value as “literal” and the contextual value as “derived,” Searle (1979: 33-34) defines them respectively as “secondary” and “primary.”

51 Original quotation: “Le langage verbal est donc par essence fait pour être adressé” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2010: 14).

presupposition rather than an assertion...)<sup>52</sup> (ibid.). This also implies that, even when it is absent, the *you* exerts constant control over the discourse of the *I*<sup>53</sup> (ibid.). It therefore appears that the other, contained in the pronoun *you*, even when entirely absent from the enunciation situation, influences the speaker's discourse who expresses themselves through the pronoun *I* – which recalls the principle of dialogism. This means that, in the context of this corpus, Tai Verdes' listeners, along with other potential addressees, may shape his lyrics. That is why Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2010: 14) concludes that any utterance, even one that seems to function as a monologue, is in fact virtually dialogical, i.e. in the form of a dialogue<sup>54</sup>. Even when someone appears to speak alone or without directly addressing someone else, their utterance still assumes the presence of a listener – someone who is expected to react, understand, or respond in some way. This means that dialogue is essentially embedded in monologue – and in all forms of speech in general – and essentially has an influence over the latter. As a result, this dialogical and dialogic dimensions can be applied to this corpus and helps justify the application of this theoretical framework to song lyrics.

Moreover, all speech acts are intrinsically expected to elicit a response, or at least a reaction: this is clearly the case for questions and commands, but also for seemingly less solicitous acts such as assertives, which risk perlocutionary failure in the absence of any form of acknowledgment<sup>55</sup> (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2010: 14-15). To put it more simply, every speech act is supposed to elicit some form of response. This is evident in the case of questions, which call for answers, or commands, which expect obedience or refusal, but it is also true for less interactive acts such as assertions. For example, if someone says, “I think this song is amazing,” they are not just stating an opinion, they are also expecting a reaction: agreement, disagreement, a nod, or at least some “acknowledgment.” If the interlocutor stays completely silent and offers no sign of reception, the utterance may feel like it has failed to reach its communicative purpose. In such a case, the perlocutionary effect – the effect the speaker hoped to produce – can be considered as having failed. This helps clarify how even instances of monologue are shaped by an underlying dialogic structure and presuppose a form of participation or engagement from the other. In the case of the corpus

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52 Original quotation: “Ce qui implique que dès la phase d’encodage, antérieurement à toute réponse ou simple réaction émanant du destinataire, celui-ci se trouve déjà inscrit dans le discours de l’émetteur, explicitement parfois (au moyen des marques d’allocation), implicitement toujours, dans la mesure où l’émetteur tient compte en permanence de l’image qu’il s’est construite de son destinataire, et des compétences qu’il lui prête (ainsi pour choisir tel terme, telle stratégie argumentative, telle formulation en posé plutôt qu’en présupposé...)” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2010: 14).

53 Original quotation: “Ce qui implique encore qu’en son absence même, le ‘tu’ exerce un contrôle permanent sur le discours du ‘je’” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2010: 14).

54 Original quotation: “Tout énoncé, même monologal, est ainsi virtuellement dialogal” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2010: 14).

55 Original quotation: “La preuve en est que tous les actes de langage sont intrinsèquement censés solliciter une réponse, ou du moins une réaction : cela vaut de façon patente pour les questions et les ordres, mais aussi pour des actes moins sollicités en apparence, comme l’assertion, que l’absence de tout ‘accusé de réception’ condamne à l’échec perlocutoire” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2010: 14-15).

under study, even though song lyrics are not addressed to a specific, present interlocutor, they still implicitly invite a reaction from the listener – be it emotional or cognitive. This supports the idea that dialogue is always present, even when not explicit.

This can be observed in the corpus through an assertion such as *I've seen your face and we would have some cute kids* (“we would have some cute kids.”), which, despite the absence of a face-to-face interlocutor, appears to implicitly call for a reaction from Tai Verdes’ (real or imagined) addressee – here, a woman he directly addresses using the second-person possessive pronoun *your* and repeated terms of address throughout the song, such as *girl* and *baby*. Indeed, the singer seems to be seeking agreement from this fictional interlocutor, hoping for reassurance about the validity of his feelings and the potential of their relationship. This injunction to respond lies at the heart of the utterance while there is no explicit marker of appeal to the other and request for a response in its form – as would have been the case with a question, for example. As a reminder of the enunciative approach, the very essence of speech is interlocution<sup>56</sup> (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2010: 15), which makes dialogue the preferred form of discourse, but, as the previous definition and examples indicate, this does not prevent monologues from containing a form of interaction.

This is exactly what Bakhtin points out in his works. He explains that dialogue, in the narrow sense of the term, is of course only one form – admittedly the most important one – of verbal interaction. However, dialogue can be understood in a broader sense, referring not only to direct, spoken verbal communication between one person and another, but also to any form of verbal communication, whatever its form<sup>57</sup> (Bakhtin, 1977: 136). In the same spirit, Voloshinov states that dialogue – the exchange of words – is the most natural form of language. Moreover, utterances that are extensively developed and produced by a single speaker, such as an orator’s speech, a teacher’s lecture, an actor’s monologue, a lonely man’s thoughts aloud – and, I would even add to this list, a singer’s lyrics – they are monologic in their external form alone, but in their semantic and stylistic structure, they are in fact essentially dialogic<sup>58</sup> (Todorov, 1981: 292). This is reminiscent of the fact that all forms of discourse are dialogic by nature, and therefore contain a form of interaction even in the absence of an interlocutor. This confirms that this corpus in the form of a monologue can be studied using this pragmatic and interactional approach.

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56 Original quotation: “La parole est dans son essence même de nature interlocutive” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2010: 15).

57 Original quotation: “Le dialogue, au sens étroit du mot, n’est bien sûr qu’une des formes, il est vrai la plus importante, de l’interaction verbale. Mais on peut comprendre le dialogue au sens large, en entendant par là non seulement la communication verbale directe et à haute voix entre une personne et une autre, mais aussi toute communication verbale, quelle qu’en soit la forme” (Bakhtin, 1977: 136).

58 Original quotation: “Le dialogue – l’échange de mots – est la forme la plus naturelle du langage. Davantage : les énoncés, longuement développés et bien qu’ils émanent d’un interlocuteur unique – par exemple : le discours d’un orateur, le cours d’un professeur, le monologue d’un acteur, les réflexions à haute voix d’un homme seul –, sont monologiques par leur seule forme extérieure, mais, par leur structure sémantique et stylistique, ils sont en fait essentiellement dialogiques” (Todorov, 1981: 292).

In short, the object of pragmatics is utterances actualized in specific communicative situations<sup>59</sup>, each expressing speech acts whose purpose is to influence the interlocutor to a greater or lesser extent depending on the type of act (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2010: 75). This also reveals the importance of observing the context, which corresponds to the extralinguistic environment of the utterance, as opposed to the linguistic “co-text”<sup>60</sup>, i.e. the immediate environment of the utterance (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2010: 76). In this analysis, I will therefore apply several pragmatic and enunciative tools to my corpus, which will be defined in the corresponding sections.

### Definition of intersubjectivity and associated linguistic devices

In the theoretical framework, I defined the notions of intersubjective adjustment and dialogism. What they have in common is that they both relate to the central linguistic phenomenon of this study: intersubjectivity. Intersubjective adjustment is a manifestation in language of intersubjectivity. Similarly, dialogism more generally echoes intersubjectivity. Blandine Penneç (2016: 32) specifies the link between dialogism and intersubjectivity, revealing that Bakhtin (1978: 157-158) himself explains that a language enables speakers to communicate with interlocutors, in other words to create provisional points of junction between the speakers’ subjectivities. This point directly echoes the definition of intersubjectivity as it can be characterized as a connection – or at least an attempt at one – between subjectivities, in other words between the representations of interlocutors<sup>61</sup> (Penneç, TBP: 1). Penneç (TBP: 1) goes further by saying that intersubjectivity appears more as a horizon that speakers seek to approach through successive adjustments; during an exchange, the interlocutor also positions themselves in a more or less cooperative way, which may further push back the horizon of this intersection of representations and the words to express them<sup>62</sup>. Intersubjectivity appears as an attempt to bring subjectivities closer together or into relation with each other – a point illustrated by the prefix -inter at the beginning of the word itself. To put it differently, it may be characterized as a sort of creation of a common virtual place in which the representations of each individual mingle to produce a common meaning.

Furthermore, Penneç (TBP: 1) rightly indicates the close connection intersubjectivity shares with the field of philosophy. Indeed, in *Truth and Method (Vérité et Méthode* in the bibliography),

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59 Original quotation: “[Dans] l’approche interactionniste, dont l’une des idées forces est que l’objet de l’investigation, ce ne sont pas des phrases abstraites, mais des énoncés actualisés dans des situations communicatives particulières” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2010: 75).

60 Original quotation: “nous entendons par ‘contexte’ l’environnement extralinguistique de l’énoncé, par opposition au ‘cotexte’ linguistique” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2010: 76).

61 Original quotation: “une rencontre – ou du moins une tentative de rencontre – entre les subjectivités, autrement dit entre les représentations des interlocuteurs” (Penneç, TBP: 1).

62 Original quotation: “l’intersubjectivité se présente davantage comme un horizon que l’on cherche à approcher par ajustements successifs. [...] Lors d’un échange, l’interlocuteur se positionne en outre de façon plus ou moins coopérative, ce qui peut encore faire reculer l’horizon de cette intersection des représentations, et des mots pour les dire” (Penneç, TBP: 1).

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1996) tackles language and intersubjectivity from a philosophical perspective. According to him, communication fundamentally relies on the fusion of horizons, that is, the merging of the interlocutors' subjectivities. This fusion enables a form of mutual understanding between participants in a conversation and lies at the very core of language itself (Gadamer, 1996: 401). The linguist further explains that every genuine conversation therefore implies that one responds to what the other says, that one truly acknowledges their points of view, and that one puts oneself in their place – not in the sense of understanding the other as an individual, but rather understanding what they say<sup>63</sup> (Gadamer, 1996: 407). This means that intersubjectivity goes beyond mere adaptation or adjustment. True communication requires the establishment of a common linguistic ground, a shared language that allows individuals not only to react to each other's words and opinions but also to interpret and strive to genuinely understand them (Gadamer, 1966). In this context, language functions as a tool for mediation, bridging differing perspectives and facilitating meaningful exchange between interlocutors (ibid.). To summarize his point, Pennec (TBP: 1) states that intersubjectivity, being the creation of a provisionally common language, is the condition of all true communication<sup>64</sup>, even though in many cases, it manifests itself unconsciously.

Intersubjectivity therefore expresses itself through a large variety of devices, including intersubjective adjustment, but the latter is in fact a very discreet example of the manifestations of this global phenomenon. These devices include the ones under study in this analysis, namely, the use of interrogatives, imperative structures and utterances containing modality, which are much more visible and marked in discourse than intersubjective adjustment. Intersubjectivity can also manifest itself through different phenomena taking place partly at the enunciative or discursive level such as the use of speech acts, reformulations, readjustments, discourse or argumentative markers, or presupposition. In short, intersubjectivity encompasses a wide field of phenomena and linguistic devices that are more or less perceptible in language and cannot be reduced to intersubjective adjustment. It is a complex process involving people's subjectivities, which establishes it at the heart of interactions. Its role within communication reveals its essential nature; without it, creating a link through language would correspond to a constantly vague action of deciphering for all participants in the conversation. Its manifestations enable individuals to be on the same wavelength for long enough to establish a clear and fluid communication. Intersubjectivity also allows speakers to avoid complete misalignment of their representations, which could lead to

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63 Original quotation: "Toute véritable conversation implique donc que l'on réagisse à ce que dit l'autre, que l'on fasse vraiment droit à ses points de vue et que l'on se mette à sa place au sens où l'on veut comprendre non pas l'autre même comme individualité, mais ce qu'il dit" (Gadamer, 1996: 407).

64 Original quotation: "Selon Gadamer (dans *Vérité et Méthode*), l'intersubjectivité, se traduisant par la confection d'un langage provisoirement commun, est la condition de toute communication véritable" (Pennec, TBP: 1).

misunderstandings, or worse, to an inability to interact with one another.

When intersubjectivity is at play, it means that the participants in the interaction typically have the same objective, that is to understand each other by sharing a part of their reality with the other. The process of co-construction of communication that Kerbrat-Orecchioni explains in her theory of “talk-in-interaction” is thus revealed by the definition of intersubjectivity. As a reminder, Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2005: 20) describes this process as a collaborative action between speakers in which they combine their efforts to produce an interaction. People adapt their efforts to the context in order to produce the statement best suited to the present moment of the conversation, so that this collaboration and the interaction may progress simultaneously. Speakers exchange according to a series of constraints which also evolve with the context of the present moment, and which are therefore unpredictable and specific. Thus, speakers are required to continue their efforts step by step, while keeping in mind the accessibility of their discourse to the other, in order to ensure fluid communication (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2005: 20-21). In short, intersubjectivity can manifest itself through a series of adaptations that bring subjectivities into relation. As a consequence, it enables individuals to interact, making it an essential phenomenon in communication.

Nevertheless, the processes at stake with intersubjectivity are not always entirely harmonious. As said previously, the addressee can lack cooperation, affecting the co-generation of discourse. This leads intersubjectivity to take instead the form of a series of mismatches and disagreements, which can also shape the relation between the speakers; this lack of cooperation and understanding forces the speakers to negotiate meaning in a more or less explicit way through different discursive strategies<sup>65</sup> (Penec, TBP: 1). Penec (2023: 11) defines the negotiation of meaning as “a set of operations aimed at transmitting, or persuading the addressee to accept a certain content – be it lexical, clausal or discursive.” She states that there is a scale of negotiation of meaning; said scale has four stages. In it, the speaker’s more or less conscious regulation of their own production of speech represents the first stage (ibid.). The second stage corresponds to argumentative operations such as justification, explanation, illustration or generalization (ibid.). The third stage corresponds to everything that is implied (ibid.). As for the fourth and final stage, it represents any meaning that is metaphorical (Penec, TBP: 1-2). Ultimately, these stages reveal that intersubjectivity does not stem from innate mutual understanding, but rather from an ongoing process of meaning negotiation, in which speakers actively adapt both the form and content of their message to their addressee and to the interpretation they anticipate, in order to maintain

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65 Original quotation: “L’intersubjectivité peut ainsi se présenter, non pas sur un mode congruent, mais sous l’angle d’aspérités et de dissonances configurant elles aussi la relation interlocutive. Par voie de conséquence, toute une série de stratégies énonciatives et discursives peuvent être mises en œuvre par le locuteur, afin de négocier le sens de façon plus ou moins explicite” (Penec, TBP: 1).

communicative alignment. Thus, the means through which meaning is negotiated will be of particular interest in this analysis, as they constitute a manifestation of intersubjectivity in speech. I will additionally attempt to decipher what level the linguistic devices examined belong to.

### Existing studies about intersubjectivity and related phenomena

The notion of intersubjectivity appears to be widely explored outside the field of linguistics, notably in philosophy, as in Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method*, or in phenomenology, through the works of Edmund Husserl and, more recently, Emmanuel Levinas. In the field of linguistics, and more specifically that of enunciative theories, Antoine Culioli was one of the first to introduce the notion of intersubjective adjustment in his Theory of Enunciative Operations, which served as a basis for more contemporary authors. On the one hand, Kerbrat-Orecchioni delves further into her theory of "talk-in-interaction," offering a definition of interaction. She builds on Culioli's enunciative approach, which laid the groundwork for subsequent studies on intersubjectivity and related phenomena.

On the other hand, Catherine Douay and Daniel Roulland (2014) formulate a theory that appears in contradiction to Culioli's approach. It is called the "Theory of Interlocutive Relationships<sup>66</sup>," in which they see interaction – or "interlocution" in French – as an active and equal co-participation of the participants in the exchange<sup>67</sup> and refuse the distinction between speaker and interlocutor or enunciator and co-enunciator from the pragmatic and enunciative approaches. They do not truly discuss the phenomena of intersubjectivity, but they develop a process which shares certain characteristics with intersubjective adjustment. They describe this process as a "replication" that would enable each individual to access the other and their reality by replicating their own, creating common images that would allow them to understand and communicate with each other (Douay and Roulland, 2014: 13). This reveals a common objective that replication and intersubjective phenomena share: that of creating something in common between participants in the interaction in order to establish communication. The nature of this something corresponds to a virtual common space with intersubjectivity, whereas with Douay and Roulland's theory, it is more a question of replicated common images. Thus, although they function differently, both of these processes enable speakers to share their representations with one another and understand one another.

In any case, the notion of intersubjectivity in the field of linguistics is still rather recent, but has been growing over the past few decades through the studies of numerous researchers. These linguists, mainly based on Culioli's theory of enunciation, have studied phenomena of

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66 Original term: "Théorie de la Relation Interlocutive" (Douay and Roulland, 2014).

67 Original term: "une co-participation active et égale des protagonistes de la parole" (Douay and Roulland, 2014: 39).

intersubjectivity, attempting to define it and exploring its different means of expression.

Among them, one of the best-known is Pierre Cotte (1993, 1996), who studies interrogation, modality and especially, the imperative from the enunciative point of view. He borrows concepts and classifications introduced by Culioli, but presents a new notion when speaking of the imperative: that of “mimetic prefiguration” (Cotte, 1996: 126) – a term that will be defined later. Michael Alvarez-Pereyre (2010) then followed in Cotte’s footsteps, taking up this concept and adding a new dimension to it, which he calls a “linguistic potentiality effect” (121).

Janine Bouscaren (1993, 1996) is another leading researcher in this enunciative perspective, focusing on intersubjective relationships. Through this approach and the classification introduced by Culioli, she looks in particular at modality, which will be relevant to this study.

Catherine Filippi-Deswelle (2012) has brought together the texts of several authors in her work to offer a wide-ranging exploration of the notion of intersubjective adjustment according to Culioli through the study of the English and French languages. Through these various writings, the researchers introduce the TEO before defining intersubjective adjustment, identifying some of its forms of manifestation, and examining the contexts in which it arises, in order to establish a typology that encompasses a wide range of characteristics. Other linguists contributing to the book include Graham Ranger (2012) with his article entitled “Adjustments and Readjustments: Operations and Markers.” Through the analysis of specific linguistic markers, he returns to the concept of adjustment before introducing that of readjustment, which corresponds to an operation that occurs after the utterance has already been formulated – a notion that complements that of adjustment and contributes to discourse modalization.

For her part, Pauline Poincheval-Levillain (2016) focuses on negative interrogatives in an oral English context. She establishes their precise definition and lists the possible values expressed by them through her examples drawn from the Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English (SBCSAE). She adopts Kerbrat-Orecchioni’s point of view, but contrasts it with the “Theory of Interlocutionary Relationships” established by Douay and Roulland (2014). She thus articulates interrogative structures, in particular negative interrogatives and question tags, through semantic, pragmatic, and enunciative frameworks.

As for Bénédicte Guillaume (TBP), she uses a slightly different corpus and looks at the interrogatives in the Wikipedia “Talk Pages,” which allow website users to exchange and collaborate. She therefore addresses the issue of interrogative structures in relation to the negotiation of meaning and intersubjectivity, and even describes them as an intersubjective phenomenon. She begins by defining her specific corpus, before establishing the definition of interrogatives within the framework of enunciative operations, and then proposes a typology of the

different intersubjective interrogative strategies employed in her corpus.

Lastly, Blandine Pennec has greatly contributed to the study of intersubjectivity by focusing on discourse (re)adjustment and the mechanisms speakers use to negotiate meaning. Drawing on Culioli's TEO, she develops a typology of intersubjective readjustments in her monograph *Les phénomènes de réajustement du discours en anglais contemporain* (2016), highlighting how linguistic forms like reformulations or metalinguistic markers help co-construct meaning. Additionally, Pennec's work on metalinguistic expressions (e.g. "so to speak," "let's say" or "in fact") emphasizes how speakers guide listeners' interpretation through salient markers, thereby actively constructing mutual spaces of understanding. Drawing a connection with philosophy, the researcher also revisits the definition of intersubjectivity and proposes a linguistic definition, which serves as the foundation for this study.

It seems that the means of expression of intersubjectivity have not been explored through the analysis of song lyrics. Researchers mainly use the British National Corpus (BNC), the Corpus Of Contemporary American English (COCA) or the SBCSAE, i.e. corpora which collect extensive spoken data, primarily drawn from face-to-face conversations, namely, the most common type of interaction. Such corpora enable linguists to observe recurrent patterns of the phenomena under investigation across a large number of occurrences, and thus to draw more general and objective conclusions; however, they do not allow for more targeted approaches, such as the analysis of a single artist's lyrics. These corpora include any type of oral interaction, which can be sorted according to certain criteria but do not allow for an in-depth analysis – which was required for the purpose of the present analysis – of each of them, due to the extensive number of samples.

Generally, song lyrics are not widespread in linguistic studies but a few do exist. They either focus on a single artist's entire repertoire or deal with a large corpus representing an entire musical genre. However, these studies (Ariska et al., 2019; Goyak et al., 2022; Hughes, 1991; Moreno, 2004) generally approach these corpora by adopting a syntactic or semantic perspective. Thanks to different analysis tools, they examine certain lexical items or linguistic markers to identify the specificity of the lyrics under study. Studying a corpus of pop song lyrics or a single artist's repertoire does not seem to be particularly uncommon but no existing study appears to address a topic similar to mine.

Therefore, this corpus proved to be a relevant choice for multiple reasons. Indeed, it differs from other corpora usually examined for other studies on intersubjectivity. Selecting Tai Verdes' twenty most famous songs therefore seemed consistent, as I will try to investigate the linguistic parameters involved in his lyrics, which potentially contribute to the overall success of his songs. It further allowed me to study a different type of interaction that differs from the face-to-face

conversations mostly studied. Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2005: 20) has argued that there is a clear preference for analyzing discourse where interaction has a strong degree of presence. Thus, delving into occurrences in which this degree is largely weaker – even non-existent – stood in contrast to many other existing studies. In short, my corpus appeared relevant for understanding to what extent the linguistic dimension participates in the success of his lyrics. Working on Tai Verdes was a choice motivated by my taste for his songs and his sudden great popularity; I was interested in exploring whether his success, achieved in just six years, could be partly explained through linguistics.

### Thesis statement

The introduction has proved that all discourse production is at some point dialogic, even when it is a monologue. It is therefore in this context of a corpus of monologues – namely, song lyrics, a literary production intended for entertainment purposes – that I will study the interactive dimension (even if, as explained earlier, it is never direct) and some consequences associated with it. Intersubjectivity is often studied in a context of dialogue, in which it is by definition an integral part. This is why this research has led me to question its presence in such a corpus. The notion of intersubjectivity will bring other concepts into play, especially how it relates to strategies of meaning negotiation and imposition. I will attempt to understand whether these notions can truly be applied to a corpus lacking face-to-face interlocutors. I will also observe the constraints that this condition brings.

Thus, from an enunciative point of view, the main question guiding this work concerns the role of intersubjectivity in Tai Verdes' lyrics, despite the fact that this corpus exclusively consists of monologues. This study seeks to discover whether intersubjectivity can contribute to a better understanding of his songs as well as their success through the solicitation of the listener. I will therefore examine the extent to which Tai Verdes appeals to his audience's attention, as well as the nature of this solicitation. I expect the latter to be primarily cognitive and emotional rather than verbal, as would be typical in a classic interaction; however, it is only through the analysis of examples from the corpus that I will be able to confirm or refute this. Hence, the following pragmatic tools will be essential for the analyses. The phenomena under study include interrogative structures, imperatives, and modal auxiliaries with a root value, each typically – or potentially – expressing an illocutionary value, in order to observe their function and place in discourse. The theory of speech acts will enable me to analyze in detail each occurrence of the above structures and connect them to the enunciative framework. I will focus on these three types of devices, their pragmatic values, and enunciative functions in relation to the phenomena at stake. I will also delve into the question of word order and the effect it produces in the case of interrogatives and

imperatives. This analysis could have been carried out using other discourse markers or a wider variety of them, but for reasons of practicality, I had to select these three categories. They are particularly interesting to study within this corpus because a relatively large number of instances were identified compared to the overall size of the corpus (see Table 1), and because they are typically analyzed in interactive corpora. Interrogatives, imperatives, and modal auxiliaries with a root value are connected through the theory of speech acts, as they all aim to influence the interlocutor to some extent – despite the absence of an actual co-speaker – which further underlines their relevance for the present analysis.

To this end, I will first look at interrogative structures, which will be defined according to the theoretical framework of this study. By analyzing examples from my corpus, I will establish a typology of all the interrogatives present in it, in order to observe how they function, their illocutionary values and enunciative functions. This will enable me to highlight their potential participation in strategies of meaning negotiation and in the phenomena of intersubjectivity within this non-interactive context. Then, I will apply the same method to imperative structures before addressing modal auxiliaries with a root value in the final section. The latter will be contrasted with the other two devices selected, as their formal characteristics differ, yet modals with a root value can convey similar values and serve comparable pragmatic and enunciative functions. These three sections will show that interrogatives, imperatives, and modal auxiliaries with a root value can be an effective means of expressing intersubjectivity but that they can also play a role in other discursive phenomena – which will be discussed in the corresponding parts. This in-depth analysis will therefore offer a better understanding of the means of expression of intersubjectivity in Tai Verdes' songs and a possible explanation for the role of linguistic parameters in the success of his lyrics.

## Methodology

The in-depth analysis of the corpus will enable me to establish a typology for each of the major categories of linguistic tools selected for this study, namely, interrogative structures, imperatives, and modal auxiliaries with a root value. This typology will be illustrated by examples drawn directly from my corpus, as well as a few invented examples, and will thus allow me to define each of these devices and the features they display. These occurrences will be examined through the micro- and macro-discursive levels in order to explain their enunciative and pragmatic functions and to situate them within the specific context of song lyrics. The micro-discursive level concerns the internal structure of the utterance itself, that is, its morphological, syntactic and lexical features, as well as enunciative markers such as pronouns, modal auxiliaries, or vocatives. The macro-discursive level, by contrast, corresponds to the utterance's role within the broader discursive

context, including its interactional and dialogic implications. This includes considerations such as the co-text of each utterance, namely, the preceding or following utterances, instances of imagined interaction, and the communicative goals that shape the discourse. This level considers how an utterance contributes to the manifestations of intersubjectivity or dialogism across the discourse as a whole, even in the absence of a physically present co-speaker.

As previously discussed, considering the context remains essential. For this reason, I will examine both the examples' immediate context and co-text in order to better understand the function and value of each example. While the corpus is relatively limited in size from a quantitative point of view, this constraint enabled me to conduct an in-depth qualitative analysis of the selected occurrences. It further allowed me to examine in detail the use of interrogatives, imperatives, and utterances containing modal auxiliaries with root modality in speech, notably through a solid theoretical framework. The latter is based on various sources, namely research papers, academic works, online journal articles, handbooks, dictionaries, and a transcribed interview with Antoine Culioli, conducted by Frédéric Fau. The aim of this work is not to redefine the notion of intersubjectivity or to create a new classification of the linguistic devices examined. Rather, it is intended to explore how existing theories can be applied to the analysis of Tai Verdes' lyrics in order to bring to light the means by which intersubjectivity is expressed.

Finally, I would like to mention another limitation of my corpus: the inability to study the responses triggered by the use of these devices. Such responses are normally essential to the construction of speech – hence the term co-construction introduced above. As a reminder, in this particular context, there is no direct access to the addressees' reactions. Consequently, I will only be able to make assumptions based on my personal experience of listening to the songs, the linguistic analysis conducted throughout this work, and primarily the deep theoretical framework established before. Indeed, it is mainly through the use of scientific sources that I will be able to explain the types of responses typically expected, and to argue that these occurrences of interrogatives, imperatives, or modal auxiliaries function as means of expression of intersubjectivity.

# I. Interrogatives as a first intersubjective strategy

## 1. General definition of interrogatives and questions

Questions – and I specifically choose the term “question” rather than interrogative – form a complex linguistic tool that possesses different values and can be defined according to different approaches. Indeed, questions lie at the crossroads of syntax, semantics, prosody and pragmatics<sup>68</sup> (Gardelle and Vincent-Durroux, 2019: 3). These approaches converge on one key point: the distinction between question and interrogation.

According to Rodney Huddleston (1994: 411), interrogatives constitute “a category of grammatical form” whereas questions form “a category of meaning.” In other words, interrogation is a language structure (Dayal, 2016: 1; Gardelle and Vincent-Durroux, 2019: 17), corresponding to the syntactic level while questions correspond to the semantic level (Huddleston, 1994: 411). Ginzburg and Sag (2000) go further by saying that “interrogative constructions are the linguistic forms by which questions are expressed” but it is important to note that it is not always the case. In this way, an interrogative structure without an auxiliary (e.g., “You went to the haunted house alone?” or see (11) below) or a question tag (e.g., “You like this song, **don’t you?**” or see (7) below) may be characterized as questions. Functioning as a semantic category, questions are identifiable by the fact that they define the existence of a set of possible answers (Huddleston, 1994: 413) and would include any form verbally expressing the speech act of questioning<sup>69</sup> (Gardelle and Vincent-Durroux, 2019: 2).

This remark establishes a link between interrogatives and pragmatics, in particular with the speech act theory introduced by Searle (1969) and Austin (1975). Indeed, a question can be considered as a direct speech act when it takes the form of an interrogative structure. In this case, there is a match between the construction and the illocutionary value expected from it. As a reminder, the illocutionary value of a speech act is the internal property that is assigned by the speaker and gives the act its capacity to influence and act upon their co-speaker. In the case of an effective speech act of questioning, an answer or a confirmation is genuinely expected.

Adopting the classification established by Searle (1969), Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1991: 6) explains that the speech act of questioning falls into a broader category called requests. In this global category, questions then correspond to a request for the co-speaker to say something, generally triggering a verbal response (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, *ibid.*). On the other hand, there are

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68 Original quotation: “elles se trouvent au carrefour de la syntaxe, de la sémantique, de la prosodie, de la pragmatique” (Gardelle and Vincent-Durroux, 2019: 3).

69 Original quotation: “Par le terme de ‘question,’ nous désignons non pas une structure, mais toute forme qui exprime verbalement l’acte de langage (au sens d’Austin 1962) d’interrogation – acte que l’anglais nomme question” (Gardelle and Vincent-Durroux, 2019: 2).

requests to do something, which typically trigger a non-verbal reaction (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1991: 6) – speech acts which will be discussed in the next part.

According to the pragmatic approach in connection with dialogism, a question is not only a means of self-expression but also a means of acting on others, and making them react (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1991: 8). Gardelle and Vincent-Durroux (2019: 2) highlight the fact that the notion of question is inseparable from that of answer<sup>70</sup>. More specifically, a prototypical question assumes the following three conditions: the speaker does not know the truth about the propositional content, they want to know that truth, and they think the addressee knows that truth (Dayal 2016: 1-2). The indivisibility between question and answer then allows Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1991: 10) to assert that the speech act of questioning is undoubtedly the most intrinsically interactive, or at least embedded in dialogue, in the sense that its realization strongly involves the other, i.e. the addressee of the speech act<sup>71</sup>. She adds that every question is therefore a call to the other, who is invited to immediately fill in the gap left by the utterance submitted to them<sup>72</sup> (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1991: 10). Consequently, the question-answer exchange is fundamentally in the form of a dialogue and dialogic in nature: a dialogue because the question implies the existence of several speakers, and dialogic because it involves several enunciators<sup>73</sup> (ibid.: 10-11). Thus, the inherent interactivity discussed in my corpus can be identified in the speech act of questioning. This illustrates its relevance in this non-interactive context and partly reveals its participation in intersubjective phenomena.

As a speech act, the question by definition possesses its own illocutionary value. The latter constitutes a request arising from uncertainty regarding the value of the predicative relation, its constituent elements, or its adjuncts<sup>74</sup> (Gardelle and Vincent-Durroux, 2019: 2). Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1991: 14) explains that it rests on the solicitation of a sequence that is particularly strong<sup>75</sup>. Oswald Ducrot (1991: 79) refers to a legal obligation for the addressee to respond – he even describes the question as a legal act. This allows Esther N. Goody (1978: 23) to establish the following definition,

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70 Original quotation: “Comme le montre la définition sémantico-pragmatique retenue, la notion de ‘question’ est indissociable de celle de ‘réponse’” (Gardelle et Vincent-Durroux, 2019: 2).

71 Original quotation: “l’acte de question est à coup sûr le plus intrinsèquement interactif, ou du moins ‘dialogal,’ en ce sens que sa réalisation implique très fortement l’autre (destinataire de l’acte de langage)” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1991: 10).

72 Original quotation: “Toute question est donc un appel à l’autre, convié à compléter sur-le-champ le vide que comporte l’énoncé qui lui est soumis” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1991: 10).

73 Original quotation: “Corrélativement, l’échange question-réponse apparaît comme [...] un énoncé de nature foncièrement dialogale et dialogique.” In a footnote, “‘Dialogale,’ parce que la question implique l’existence de plusieurs locuteurs ; ‘dialogique,’ parce qu’elle implique plusieurs énonciateurs” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1991: 10-11).

74 Original quotation: “L’interrogation a pour force illocutoire (Searle 1969 ; Berrendonner 1981 ; Huddleston 2002) une requête liée à une incertitude quant à la valeur de la relation prédicative, de ses éléments constitutifs ou encore de ses circonstants” (Gardelle et Vincent-Durroux, 2019: 2).

75 Original quotation: “la sollicitation d’un enchaînement est particulièrement forte dans le cas de la question” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1991: 14).

“The most general thing we can say about a question is that it compels, requires, may even command, a response.” This definition reveals the notion of obligation – or the restrictive nature, as Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1991: 14) defines it – which lies at the heart of the speech act of questioning. This illocutionary value is prototypically common to every question, but it is important to point out that each occurrence also has a more specific purpose, called the perlocutionary effect in Austin’s theory (Austin, 1975: 109; Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1991: 22).

A question may in fact combine several illocutionary values, along with the literal value of questioning just mentioned which establishes it as a direct speech act. These additional values are considered secondary. Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2008: 35) refers to them as derived. They introduce other speech acts that all connect with the direct speech act of questioning. Therefore, they are called indirect speech acts, as they add an indirect dimension to the apparent value.

For instance, when a speaker says, “Are you coming or not?”, they explicitly request a piece of information (whether the interlocutor is coming or not). The interrogative form aligns with its function as a request for information, which enables this utterance to be interpreted as a direct speech act with a value of questioning. In other words, it can be considered a question. According to Searle’s typology, it may be classified as a directive, as its aim is to “get the addressee to do something” – in the case of a question, to provide an answer. However, depending on the context, this question may be interpreted as putting pressure on the co-speaker to respond and even urging them to hurry. Indeed, the utterance could be reformulated as “Hurry up and come!” or “Make a decision quickly,” which seems to reveal additional dimensions within the direct speech act. These reformulations make the injunction to hurry explicit. Beyond merely requesting a response, the speaker also seems to expect a physical reaction by posing this question. This pressure to act, imposed on the interlocutor, can be interpreted as an indirect dimension since the form of the utterance no longer corresponds to its pragmatic value in context. Thus, it can be considered a derived value, which makes it possible to interpret “Are you coming or not?” as expressing an indirect speech act – namely, another directive. The two reformulations may also reveal a third dimension, as they both express a form of impatience on the part of the speaker. Thus, “Are you coming or not?” carries another derived value expressing the speaker’s state of mind at the moment of enunciation. Consequently, the question may be interpreted as expressing an additional indirect speech act – this time, an expressive. In short, “Are you coming or not?”, which is seemingly a simple question, may in fact be interpreted as expressing two derived illocutionary values and combining one direct speech act (the question) with two indirect speech acts (a directive and an expressive).

On the basis of these properties, Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1991: 14) ends up with the following definition of the speech act of questioning<sup>76</sup>: according to her, a question is an utterance whose main purpose is to obtain information from the co-enunciator<sup>77</sup>. This definition can be contrasted with that of an assertion, which corresponds to an utterance whose main function is to provide information to others<sup>78</sup> (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1991: 14). The definition of a question recalls its property to be a request for the co-speaker to say something.

More generally, questions can be characterized as a “request for information” (Dayal 2016: 1; Guillaume, TBP: 3). Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 866) explain that the purpose of the question is traditionally “to obtain the answer from the addressee.” In this way, they are typically “information-seeking” (Poincheval-Levillain, 2016: 2). As a result, they serve an informational purpose and enable speakers to obtain information (Poincheval-Levillain, *ibid.*), whatever the reasons for this request (Guillaume, 2006: 6). In general, questions are used when the utterer does not know the answer to the question asked but believes that the addressee will be able to provide them with the requested information (Dayal 2016: 1; Guillaume, TBP: 3). This implies that when the enunciator asks a question, they cannot assert the predicative relation in question; more precisely, they cannot endorse it, which is why they call on their co-enunciator. This property is at the heart of the definition of a question since it justifies the appeal to the interlocutor. This also corresponds to the enunciative point of view.

Indeed, in the TEO, Culioli (1990: 171) explains that when the speaker asks a question, they mentally go through the various possible options of answers to their question without finding a valid one. This leads them to call on the addressee, either real or fictive, to obtain the answer, as it appears to be the only way to identify the right option among the set of possible answers (Culioli, 1990: 171). This choice is made “between the positive or the negative value of the predicative relation in the case of *yes/no* interrogatives” or among “the selection of a specific value in the case of *wh-* interrogatives” (Guillaume, TBP: 3-4). In this view, questions emerge as a discursive strategy in which the speaker delegates part of the resolution process to the addressee. They enable the enunciator to involve the addressee (real or imagined) in their own speech, which illustrates the collaborative dimension of discourse construction.

However, questions are not exclusively useful for the co-construction of discourse. Due to the variety of illocutionary values they can encompass, they are capable of fulfilling numerous pragmatic functions, such as attenuating an utterance – particularly in requests – in order to conform

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76 This definition is not original, but similar to those proposed by Ducrot (1983; 1991) or Goffman (1987).

77 Original quotation: “Question = énoncé qui se présente comme ayant pour finalité principale d’obtenir de L2 un apport d’information” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1991: 14).

78 Original quotation: “Assertion = énoncé qui se présente comme ayant pour fonction principale d’apporter une information à autrui” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1991: 14).

to standards of politeness and good manners. Questions may also serve enunciative functions, such as initiating contact with the addressee or contributing to argumentative strategies. They can, for instance, fulfill a phatic function by establishing contact with the interlocutor (e.g., “What’s up?” or “How are you?”) or by maintaining the listener’s attention through fixed expressions (e.g., “Are you listening?” or “Do you understand?”). In the case of argumentative purposes, Guillaume (TBP: 4) notes that interrogatives are often “resorted to in order to put pressure on the addressee and persuade them to change their minds rather than heed their opinions.” This highlights the directive potential of interrogatives and their capacity to combine several illocutionary values. The informational use of questions is therefore not exclusive; their actual function in context reflects considerable complexity.

Huddleston (1994: 414) formulates it this way: “Inquiry force [the illocutionary value of the question in our terms] is thus not a necessary condition for a question, let alone an interrogative.” This means that an interrogative structure can be used to express something other than a request for information – that is, a question. For instance, when a doctor says to a patient, “Can you show me the arm that hurts?”, the utterance seems to function more as a command or directive to show the arm in question. It could even be argued that this directive value replaces the apparent – or literal as Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2008: 35) puts it – value of questioning in context. This becomes clearer when the interrogative is reformulated as a pragmatically equivalent imperative: “Show me the arm that hurts.” In such cases, the interrogative expresses an indirect speech act, as its grammatical form no longer aligns with its illocutionary value in context – illustrating Huddleston’s argument. This also demonstrates that interrogative structures are not limited to expressing simple questions, but can, depending on the context, serve to perform a wide range of speech acts. Thus, the motivations for using a question are highly diverse – the most conventional being, of course, the speaker’s desire to obtain information they do not yet possess. In any case, questions remain a remarkably useful discursive tool.

I would now like to address the formal characteristics of interrogatives, since I will refer to them in the next subsections. In the case where a question – the speech act – is expressed through an interrogative construction, it classically takes the form of: (*wh*- interrogative adverb / pronoun) + auxiliary + subject + verb + (complements) + ?<sup>79</sup>. For instance, an interrogative structure may take the form of “Are you sleeping?” (AUX + S + V + ?) or “Why did you decide not to come to Mandy’s party?” (*wh*- interrogative adverb + AUX + S + V + infinitive complement + adjunct of direction + ?). There is a subject-verb inversion in relation to the canonical order of the positive declarative statement. By occurring, this inversion alters the sentence’s structure and syntax, which is significant at the enunciative level (Albrespit, 2011: 123). Through this process, the enunciator

79 The presence of a question mark is optional but often indicates the interrogative nature of the occurrence.

signals that they are not asserting or endorsing the utterance, as they expect the co-enunciator to endorse this task instead<sup>80</sup> (ibid.). Theoretically, interrogatives follow this structure but in some cases this inversion is not performed. In these cases, there is only a rising intonation which signals that they are interrogatives<sup>81</sup>. This illustrates the importance of the context in which they are employed, as their structure alone is not always enough to confirm their nature. Additionally, they can take the form of a question tag or tag question whose construction is slightly different as it only involves an auxiliary verb and a subject (e.g., “She didn’t call me yesterday, **did she?**” or “It’s a lovely song, **isn’t it?**”) – a structure I will analyze in more detail later.

The lexical verb *be* when functioning as an auxiliary, the perfect *have*, modal auxiliaries or *do*, which is used when no other auxiliary is present, can all serve as auxiliaries. With verbs other than *be*, *have*, *do*, and modal auxiliaries, the subject-verb inversion cannot occur directly; instead, the auxiliary *do* is introduced to occupy the initial position of the predicative relation in interrogative constructions<sup>82</sup> (Albrespit, 2011: 123). In all cases – with the exception of structures omitting the auxiliary, which will be discussed later – the interrogative construction requires an auxiliary. This is even one of the characteristics that defines the category of auxiliaries in English through the “NICE properties”: negation, inversion, code, and emphasis. These properties are applicable to all auxiliaries and correspond to the syntactic properties of the latter. The letter “I” corresponding to inversion, auxiliaries therefore bear the mark of interrogation, hence their importance in the construction of interrogatives. They can even be applied to the lexical verb *be* when it behaves as an auxiliary, in that it enables the formation of the question, and would also allow the construction of negation, code and emphasis. Moreover, auxiliaries always carry the tense mark in place of the verb. Auxiliaries *be* and *do* carry the person mark in addition. This appears in clear contrast to positive declarative statements in which the verb is responsible for these two properties.

Finally, there are several types of questions. They can be polar, seeking to determine the value of the predicative link (“closed-ended questions”), or open, aiming to identify the referent of the subject or predicate (questions with *who*, *what*, or with a proform verb such as lexical *do*), or it can aim to specify a circumstance of the realization of the process (questions with *when*, *where*, *why*, etc.)<sup>83</sup> (Gardelle and Vincent-Durroux, 2019: 3). For instance, a closed-ended question such as

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80 Original quotation: “Lorsqu’il y a inversion, il a modification des éléments de la phrase, donc de la syntaxe. Par ce procédé, l’énonciateur signifie qu’il n’asserte pas, qu’il ne prend pas en charge l’énoncé puisqu’il attend du co-enunciateur que ce soit lui qui assume cette tâche” (Albrespit, 2011: 123).

81 Some works study the prosodic dimension, but, here, I am only interested in the illocutionary and enunciative dimension of those devices.

82 Original quotation: “Avec un verbe autre que *be*, *have*, *do* et des auxiliaires modaux, l’inversion sujet-verbe ne peut pas se faire directement ; l’opérateur *do* vient instancier la place de premier élément de la relation prédicative à l’interrogative” (Albrespit, 2011: 123).

83 Original quotation: “La ‘question’ peut être polaire pour tenter de fixer la valeur du lien prédicatif (‘questions

“Did you call her back?” aims at determining whether the action “call her back” took place or not. In contrast, an open-ended question like “Why did you leave so early?” invites the addressee to provide an explanation for the process “you left so early.” Lapaire and Rotgé (1998: 598) explain that interrogative pronouns always indicate an informational deficit that the enunciator seeks to fill.

In short, interrogatives are a common tool for interaction as they always require the interlocutor’s response. In general, their objective is to genuinely seek information as the speaker assumes that their interlocutor knows the requested information. Questions mainly participate in the co-construction of discourse but can also be involved in a wide variety of other enunciative phenomena. Because of this, they can trigger verbal, physical or emotional responses. As I do not have access in my corpus to direct responses from the singer’s addressees, listeners and potential other addressees, I will mainly focus on potential emotional and cognitive responses. I will now examine the different types of interrogative structures and questions present in the corpus, studying their pragmatic dimension and their role in the establishment of intersubjective strategies.

## 2. Typology of interrogative structures in Tai Verdes’ lyrics and analysis of their use in context

### 2.1. Closed-ended interrogatives

Closed-ended interrogatives, more commonly known as *yes/no* questions, are designed to elicit a response in the form of a positive or negative declarative statement, or a short answer that partially repeats the original process (e.g., “Yes, I do” / “No, I don’t”). In this type of question, subject-auxiliary inversion, which is characteristic of interrogative constructions, is typically operated. Like all interrogatives, *yes/no* questions require a response from the addressee. Their primary function is to validate or not the relation between the subject and the predicate. The following examples illustrate this structure:

(1) Tai Verdes<sup>84</sup> “how deep?”

**You ain’t really see us together?** I think so,  
**Are you going to love me forever?** I don’t know,  
Girl if it was up to me, I’d take a time machine  
Come back and tell you exactly where this goes<sup>85</sup>

(2) TV “Stuck In The Middle”

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fermées’), ou bien ouverte, pour tenter de fixer le référent du sujet ou du prédicat (questions en *who*, en *what*, avec un verbe proforme tel que DOLEX), ou encore pour tenter de fixer un circonstant (questions en *when*, *where*, *why...*)” (Gardelle and Vincent-Durroux, 2019: 3).

84 As the numbered examples are taken exclusively from Tai Verdes’ songs, I will refer to him from now on using the abbreviation TV in the name of each example.

85 For greater clarity, the forms that are the object of specific commentaries are in bold in the examples. Specific elements might be additionally underlined.

She said, “**Are we exclusive or not?**”

I said, “What do you wanna do?”

Seems like you love me a lot”

In (1) *Are you going to love me forever?*, it is the lexical verb *be* that functions as the auxiliary (*Are*). The inversion of the canonical order of the declarative statement is respected: auxiliary (*are*) + subject (*you*) + predicate (*going to love me forever*), contrary to the first occurrence of this example, *You ain't really see us together*.

(1) *Are you going to love me forever?* is therefore a closed-ended interrogative in the sense that it is non-presuppositional and seeks the validation of the predicative relation, as opposed to the open-ended or *wh-* interrogatives that will be explored in the next subsection. In the case under study, the only possible answers are *yes* or *no* and all their respective pragmatically equivalent forms such as “exactly,” “of course (not)” or “certainly (not)” – examples that will not be found in the corpus as it does not display the addressees’ potential responses.

As stated earlier, the request for the validation of the predicative relation must be sincere to constitute a question. In this case, the illocutionary value expected of the utterance – here, that of a question – matches with its form, which means that this is a direct speech act of questioning. The fact that this request is sincere is even confirmed by the direct co-text that follows: *I don't know*, i.e. a clear sign of Tai Verdes’ doubt and ignorance. (1) *Are you going to love me forever?* reveals Tai Verdes’ expectation from his co-enunciator to provide him with the answer. This expectation stems from the sentimental implications of their relationship – a relationship that is mentioned throughout the whole song. The context of this song (how deep?) suggests that his co-enunciator is the woman in the relationship in question; the reference is implied by the pronoun *you* and also by the term of address *girl* that he employs after asking these two questions. Thus, Tai Verdes’ addressee is therefore in charge of providing him the answer, namely, either to validate the predicative relation (*Yes, I am going to love you forever*) or not (*No, I am not going to love you forever*) and consequently remove the ambiguity of their relationship. Therefore, the context of the song and the immediate co-text of this specific utterance make the singer’s addressee explicit, as well as highlighting what is at stake in this interrogative.

Tai Verdes’ desire to know the answer appears so strong that it almost seems that the singer is asking the woman to commit to the relationship directly; it is as if he were actually ordering her to tell him that she loves him back and will love him forever, in order to be reassured and make his doubts about their romantic relationship disappear. Behind this sincere request lies a directive aspect designed to request the woman’s emotional commitment. This value is added to the literal value of question of this example; it constitutes one of its potential derived value. Therefore, (1) *Are*

*you going to love me forever?* can be characterized as a first indirect speech act, as defined in the introduction.

Interestingly, in the case of closed-ended interrogatives, this sincere appeal to the co-enunciator in combination with the inherent impossibility of endorsing the predicative relation by the enunciator grants interrogatives the status of a suspension and hesitation between a positive pole (*you are going to love me forever*) and a negative pole (*you are not going to love me forever*). This enables the enunciator to interrupt the discursive linearity and stop on the process, as in a close-up; this is a major feature of interrogative structures. The natural linearity of speech is then broken. It is the inversion of the canonical order of the assertion that indicates this pause in linearity, which eventually allows this focus on the process to happen. In (1) *Are you going to love me forever?*, this phenomenon is signaled by syntax, as explained earlier, but in the first utterance of this example (*You ain't really see us together*), it is indicated by the discursive environment and the presence of the interrogation mark.

Indeed, one of the classic characteristics of interrogatives, that is the non-respect of the canonical order of the assertion, reflected by an inversion of the subject and the verb, is not operated in (1) *You ain't really see us together?*. However, it seems that Tai Verdes expects again the predicative relationship to be validated or not. He has doubts about the latter and cannot assert it, which is why he calls on his co-enunciator to remove his doubts and make her endorse this predicative relation. Again, there is a focus on the process through the suspension between the two poles (*You are really seeing us together / You ain't really see us together*<sup>86</sup>), characteristic of interrogation. The representation of a polarity, or in other words, the fact that the actualization and non-actualization of the process are simultaneously represented, suggests that this seemingly declarative construction can be interpreted as a question.

However, in (1) *You ain't really see us together?*, there is in fact a preconstruction of the negative polarity as the negative pole is clearly favored. On the surface, the response of the interlocutor could consist in choosing between the two poles made explicit above, but the negative form of the occurrence clearly directs the interlocutor toward the path of non-validation of the predicative relation. This reveals the bias the occurrence contains, as well as the singer's expectations about their relationship. Indeed, this example implicitly asserts Tai Verdes' opinion and can even be interpreted as a form of reproach. The singer appears to believe that the woman he is addressing does not envision a relationship between them, although he asserts that she should, based on his own convictions. The interrogative form marks a refusal to believe in this representation and asks for confirmation to clarify their relationship. The negative form of the

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86 Note that the form of the negative assertion is the same as the interrogative under study. This is due to the non-respect of the typical inversion of the canonical order of the assertion.

question underlines the singer's doubt and disappointment because he seemed to have expectations about their relationship. The choice of the adverb of degree *really* even emphasizes the singer's doubt and need for confirmation. Thus, the value of reproach combined with that of question, or request to say something – referred to as derived – makes this occurrence a second indirect speech act. This indirect speech act expressing a reproach can be classified as a directive, as a reproach aims to influence the interlocutor's opinion or behavior, which aligns with the definition established by Searle (1979). As a reminder, directive speech acts are used when speakers wish to obtain something from their addressee, whether it be a verbal response or a physical action (ibid.).

The polarity contained in interrogatives is even more visible in (2) *Are we exclusive or not?* as it is an example of alternative question. Alternative questions make the two possibilities of answer explicit or, in other words, the two poles of the question (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1991: 19).

Therefore, the three utterances contained in example (1) and (2) constitute a speech act of questioning in the form of a closed-ended interrogative<sup>87</sup>. Their form can be explained by the fact that both poles of the question are presented in the form itself and are the only possible answers expected. In the case of (2) *Are we exclusive or not?*, as in (1) *You ain't really see us together?*, the path toward one of these poles is favored. Indeed, in this reconstructed dialogue – signaled by the introductory phrase *She said* and the quotation marks – Tai Verdes fictitiously speaks with a woman with whom he is involved in an ambiguous relationship. The song from which both of these examples are drawn (“Stuck In The Middle”) tackles in fact the ambiguity between friendship and romantic involvement. (2) *Are we exclusive or not?* is therefore an instance of reported speech initially uttered by the woman in their relationship. By asking this question, she genuinely wishes to put an end to the ambiguity of their relationship but she seems to be expecting a specific answer, namely a positive response. This can be perceived in the interrogative form, where the positive pole comes first, as well as in the context of this reproduced dialogue. It means that example (2) implicitly orients the speaker toward the path leading to the validation of the process (*We are exclusive*). Once again, this reveals the bias that interrogatives may contain. In this example, it highlights the woman's desire to begin a serious relationship with Tai Verdes. The question serves as a way of exerting pressure on the singer so that he is prompted to make a clear decision and commit seriously to the relationship. This implicit request for commitment can be considered as another layer within the seemingly simple question in (2) *Are we exclusive or not?*. More precisely, it can be interpreted as a derived illocutionary value that combines with the literal value of questioning. Example (2) therefore expresses both a direct speech act of questioning and an indirect

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87 *Are you not really seeing us together?* is even a negative interrogative but, having specific properties, the latter will be discussed later.

speech act requesting romantic commitment, which, despite its slightly different form, resembles the pragmatic function of (1) *Are you going to love me forever?*.

In example (2) *Are we exclusive or not?*, the presentation of the two possible answer choices, due to its form of alternative question, seems to incite the co-enunciator to answer even more. The explicit articulation of both poles of the question is not necessary to convey the request for confirmation; the speaker could have simply asked *Are we exclusive?*. However, the choice to present both options appears to exert even more pressure than a standard polar question, urging the addressee to choose between the two explicitly stated responses. It seems to signal a form of impatience, and reveal a form of pressure to make a choice on the part of the enunciator, which is consistent with its derived illocutionary value. This pressure is part of the intersubjective pressure phenomenon that exists in questions and prompts interlocutors to respond. This is even reinforced by the use of the simple present tense (*are*), which refers to the state of their relationship at the moment, and thus the woman's need to have the answer now.

In addition, in (1) *You ain't really see us together?*, note the contraction *ain't*. The latter is characteristic of spoken English and of the informal register, while, as a reminder, this is a context of poetic production<sup>88</sup>. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of English*, this informal and non-standard contraction has a large scope and is used for: *am not, are not, is not, has not or have not*. Here, it stands for *are not*, as is made explicit through the use of the second-person singular pronoun *You* and the implied presence of the *be-ing* aspect<sup>89</sup>. Generally speaking, the choice of this contraction has the effect of compacting the negation and thus indicating a more detached position from the enunciator than in a non-contracted negation. Therefore, the negation, being already embedded in *ain't* at the beginning of the question, is presupposed and not questioned; as raised earlier, it is rather the predicative relation which is emphasized here and in particular the path to its non-validation.

Furthermore, the two interrogative structures from example (1) contain the *be-ing* aspect. The second sentence even contains *be going to*, a periphrastic form of *will*, indicating aim or reference to the future<sup>90</sup>. Whereas the imperfective or progressive aspect indicates a continuous process or unfinished action, the periphrastic form of the second occurrence adds an inchoative

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88 *Ain't* can also be considered as a marker of identity as it can indicate membership of a particular social group. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of English*, it originally represents London dialect but is now widespread in many varieties of English in both the United Kingdom and North America. Here, it can be interpreted as a characteristic of African American Vernacular English (AAVE), the singer being African American. Due to its informal aspect, *ain't* can additionally signal a certain age category, namely, adolescents and young people. Lastly, Albrespit (2011: 68) raises that it may suggest membership of the working-class or lower social classes.

89 When reformulated, this occurrence corresponds to *Are you not really seeing us together?*. It could also be observed with its reformulation in positive pole *You are really seeing us together* suggested earlier.

90 These values correspond to an epistemic modality. Unlike *will*, which sometimes expresses the willingness of the subject, indicating root modality, *be going to* cannot express such values.

aspect to the action, as there is no definite temporal boundary. Indeed, the action is indicated as indefinite in the future, and this is even reinforced by the presence of the adverb of time *forever*. In both examples, the *be-ing* aspect creates a focus on the present situation, emphasizing the subject's commitment to carrying out the process. Its combination with the periphrastic form *be going to* adds a projection into the future. There is therefore a request for confirmation of intention (whether the co-enunciator *is going to love*<sup>91</sup> *him forever or not*) and that is what the singer does, projecting an expectation on the future.

By definition, these interrogatives constitute a call to the other, establishing an intersubjective relationship, even if the context may be polemical, as (1) *You ain't really see us together?* and example (2) have proven. These occurrences illustrate the directive aspect of questions with the pressure to answer, which establishes them as speech acts of questioning. They can also express a variety of illocutionary values – namely a request for commitment or a reproach – in addition to the literal value of the speech act of questioning. These derived values enable all of the occurrences from (1) and (2) to be considered as indirect speech acts. In summary, these speech acts, which express several illocutionary values and involve the co-speaker in order to compensate for an information deficit, participate in the phenomenon of intersubjectivity. This is primarily achieved through the appeal to the other and the meaning that Tai Verdes seeks, to a greater or lesser extent, to impose on his addressees.

## 2.2. *Open-ended interrogatives*

Like closed interrogatives, open-ended interrogatives retain the subject-verb inversion. Their construction is based on the same auxiliaries, which also carry identical characteristics. However, they are always introduced by an interrogative word in *wh-* (see (3) and (4) below), be it an adverb, a determiner, or a pronoun. This is why they are sometimes referred to as *wh-* questions. Because of the presence of the interrogative word, the typical subject-verb inversion of the interrogative is mandatory (Albrespit, 2011: 124). Moreover, open interrogatives are based on a preconstruction. Unlike closed interrogatives which question the validation of predicative relation itself, *wh-* interrogatives presuppose the validation of the predicative relation. As the predicative relation is considered validated even before the question is constructed, open-ended interrogatives focus only on elements of a peripheral nature regarding the predicative relation: place, time, motive, agent, cause, etc.<sup>92</sup> (Gardelle and Vincent-Durroux, 2019: 14). In fact, it is the *wh-* interrogative word in

91 *Love*, as well as *see*, are normally stative verbs – *see* is even a verb of perception – which symbolize a punctual action or present state. Here, they are both presented as being able to last over time. It is the progressive aspect that enables this lexical change. In the second occurrence, it is even reinforced by the use of the adverb *forever*.

92 Original quotation: “Plusieurs contributions montrent que questions ouvertes et exclamations ont en commun de s'appuyer sur un préconstruit ; en effet, dans les questions ouvertes, le préconstruit est la relation prédicative validée ; ces questions ne portent que sur des éléments de nature périphérique vis-à-vis de la relation prédicative : le

the construction that indicates that there is an informational gap to be filled, and justifies the appeal to the co-enunciator. For example, when a speaker asks “**Why** did you arrive late?”, they presuppose that the co-speaker arrived late and question the reasons why this occurred.

More precisely, open-ended interrogatives ask about the circumstances of the process in question and thus offer an infinite number of possible answers, unlike the previous category of interrogatives, which expect only a limited number of them. This relation is based on shared knowledge between the enunciator and their co-enunciator, since the preconstruction is based on a predicative relation previously established between the two<sup>93</sup> (Albrespit, 2011: 124). By asking about a circumstance of the process, the use of open interrogatives therefore enables the enunciator to represent the predicative relation as preconstructed. This enables them to be characterized as presuppositional questions, unlike closed questions, which ask about the validation of the process. This can be observed in the following examples:

(3) TV “how deep?”

How I’m ‘posed to know how deep?

How I’m ‘posed to know how deep I’d fall?

**How’d you make my heart skip beats?**

Didn’t mean to take that leap, my fault

(4) TV “Happy til it hurts”

**What you’re gonna do about me now?**

I’m doin’ everything that I used to talk about

Got off the couch of my motherfuckin’ momma’s house

[...]

Now I’m that dude, that got up, came back

Broke down, made tracks

Gave up ten times but not enough to go back home again

Example (3) *How’d you make my heart skip beats?* follows the structure of open interrogatives: *wh*-interrogative pronoun + auxiliary + subject + verb + (complements) + ?. On the other hand, example (4) *What you’re gonna do about me now?* seems to indicate that Albrespit’s comment may be more flexible in the context of oral speech and informal register, as the inversion of the canonical order of the assertion is not operated.

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lieu, le moment, le motif, l’acteur, la cause, etc.” (Gardelle and Vincent-Durroux, 2019: 14).

93 Original quotation: “Lorsque l’énonciateur pose une question en WH-, il s’appuie sur une prédication précédente, ou en tout cas sur un préconstruit. *Where did they come from ?* implique *they came from* somewhere ; *What did they do ?* → *they did* something. Cette relation repose sur des connaissances partagées entre énonciateur et co-énonciateur” (Albrespit, 2011: 124).

Since every open interrogative is based on a preconstruction, example (3) *How'd you make my heart skip beats?* presupposes that Tai Verdes' addressee makes his *heart skip beats*. The singer wonders how this is possible, as *how* implies *in what way* and generally seeks information about manner. Moreover, the occurrence contains a causative structure with *make* in the form of "make someone do something." It is the reasons why this causative structure takes place that are being questioned. In example (3), Tai Verdes is directly speaking to the woman he has feelings for according to the song's story. Thus, he sincerely asks her how such a situation occurred, as the song reflects on the development of his profound feelings for her. This occurrence therefore has the literal illocutionary value of a question, making it a speech act of questioning.

However, given the intensity of Tai Verdes' feelings through the semantics of the expression *make my heart skip beats*, an expressive dimension can be identified in example (3). Indeed, it clearly conveys the singer's feelings. This is in line with the definition of expressives. As a reminder, they have the objective of expressing the psychological state of the enunciator following a condition of sincerity. Here, the singer's intention seems more to express his feelings than to sincerely ask for a rational explanation. Despite its literal value of questioning, (3) *How'd you make my heart skip beats?* is more a form of assertion of the intensity of the artist's feelings, almost in the form of praise for the woman he is addressing. Thus, this value, which is added to the literal value of questioning, can be considered derived according to Kerbrat-Orrechioni. It makes it possible to interpret this direct speech act of questioning as an indirect expressive act, which strongly asserts the singer's feelings.

In example (4) *What you're gonna do about me now?*, the fact that the canonical order of the assertion has not been reversed does not seem to affect its illocutionary value of questioning. Indeed, the utterance also includes a presupposition, *you're gonna do something about me now*. Through this utterance, Tai Verdes asks for a clarification of the nature of this *something*. This is made explicit by the interrogative pronoun *what*, whose value is generally to seek identification, specification, or explanation. Again, this construction allows example (4) *What you're gonna do about me now?* to be characterized as a direct speech act of questioning, but in context, it also seems to illustrate a form of personal revenge.

Indeed, with this question, Tai Verdes does not really seem to expect an informative answer, but rather aims to provoke a reaction from his addressees. In this song ("Happy til it hurts"), the singer simultaneously addresses his parents, who are directly mentioned in the song, people who would not have believed in him, and his audience in general – all contained in the generic pronoun *you*. Example (4) *What you're gonna do about me now?* therefore seems to have the value of asserting Tai Verdes' worth as a person, and above all as an artist (see the mention of *made tracks*)

after having worked hard to succeed. This can even be interpreted as a form of provocation. This effect of provocation is reinforced by the use of the periphrastic form *be going to*. The latter conveys a projection into the immediate future, but more importantly, an expectation of a reaction from the addressees following a change in Tai Verdes' status and situation. The adverb of time *now* also emphasizes the provocative nature, as it actualizes the enunciation and marks a difference between the situation in the past, that is when people did not believe in him, and now, when Tai Verdes has been able to prove his worth and succeed as an artist. Lastly, example (4) corresponds to the first words of the song, emphasizing again this sense of provocation. By staging a form of personal revenge, the singer seems to be challenging his interlocutors and building a new image of himself to highlight the undergone personal change. The provocative dimension can therefore be interpreted as a derived illocutionary value of the speech act of questioning contained in (4) *What you're gonna do about me now?*, enabling this example to additionally express an indirect speech act, namely, another "directive" according to Searle's typology.

Thus, due to their construction and preconstruction, open-ended interrogatives can offer an infinite number of possible answers from the co-enunciator but their use may not necessarily be limited to pure information-seeking. Their derived values can be used to express a variety of acts that involve the interlocutors – either expressive or directive in the previous occurrences. Through these values, Tai Verdes establishes a strongly emotional connection with his addressee in example (3), uniting their subjectivities through this romantic bond and also through the appeal to the other that is inherent in questions. The singer also establishes a relationship with his addressees through provocation and the assertion of his self-confidence (see (4) above). These relationships, although formed differently, aim to bring together the subjectivities of Tai Verdes and his addressees. The appeal to the other inherent in questions – which, by definition, include the addressee within the speaker's discourse – highlights the intersubjective relationship that is being established between the singer and his addressees in examples (3) and (4). The expressive and directive dimensions support the creation of this point of junction between subjectivities. This process aims to facilitate mutual understanding between the singer and his co-enunciators, which echoes the definition of intersubjectivity. In these examples, open-ended interrogatives allow Tai Verdes to establish an intersubjective relationship with his addressees, which appears to demonstrate the contribution of this type of interrogative to the phenomenon of intersubjectivity.

### 2.3. *Negative interrogatives*

Negative interrogatives form a complex linguistic tool. Their construction is based on the structure of interrogation and negation. A negative interrogative therefore includes the inversion of the canonical order of the assertion and the negative adverb applied to the auxiliary, marking the

negation. Two types of negative interrogatives can be identified: the total and the partial ones (Poincheval-Levillain, 2016: 2). The first type of negative interrogatives corresponds to interrogatives through which the speaker only expects a *yes* or a *no* as answers (e.g., “**Don’t** you like Italian food?” or see example (5) below) and include tag questions (see the next subsection I.2.4). On the other hand, the second type allows the interlocutor to respond in a broader manner and is introduced by *wh-* interrogative words (e.g., “**How** can you not see the problem?” or see example (6) below). Therefore, the combination of both interrogative and negative structures leads to the creation of a new linguistic tool (Poincheval-Levillain, 2016: 2).

Being a specific type of interrogatives, it would be expected that negative interrogatives have the same main function as “classic” interrogatives, that is to obtain a piece of information from the addressee but, in fact, it seems that they are not aimed at this informational purpose. As a result of their complex construction, they contain a form of implicit assertion that expresses the enunciator’s point of view (Poincheval-Levillain, 2016: 2). Indeed, John Heritage (2002: 1428) states that negative interrogatives can be “treated as accomplishing assertions of opinion, rather than questioning.” Poincheval-Levillain (2016: 4) explains that they seem to allow the speaker to express not only an assertion (paradoxically attributable to the negative feature of the form) but also a solicitation of the interlocutor (due to their interrogative form)<sup>94</sup>. It is in this request for attention that the illocutionary value of the question can be found in negative interrogatives. More precisely, there is a gap between the literal value of the utterance (interrogative form) and its illocutionary value in context<sup>95</sup> (Poincheval-Levillain, 2016: 6). In other words, there is a first intention on the part of the enunciator that corresponds to the utterance’s illocutionary value as a question but, behind this literal value, may lie one or more other values. When the literal value is associated with these secondary values, called derived, the utterance can be considered as expressing indirect speech acts.

Poincheval-Levillain (2016: 6) demonstrates that negative interrogatives are particularly useful and important when it comes to exchanging points of view, especially in a polemical context with argumentative stakes. Negative interrogatives then contribute to the fluidity of expression in a context of exchanging points of view, which may diverge<sup>96</sup> (Poincheval-Levillain, 2016: 6). That is why Guillaume (TBP: 6) defines them as “typical conducive interrogatives.” They intend to “avoid conflict” and appear as an “attempt at compromise” in a polemical context (ibid.). The expression

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94 Original quotation: “L’interro-négative semble donc permettre d’exprimer non seulement une assertion (paradoxalement attribuable au trait négatif de la forme) mais aussi une sollicitation de l’interlocuteur (forme interrogative)” (Poincheval-Levillain, 2016: 4).

95 Original quotation: “Ainsi, le décalage entre la valeur littérale de l’énoncé (forme interrogative) et sa valeur illocutoire, en contexte, évoque la théorie des actes de langage de John R. Searle” (Poincheval-Levillain, 2016: 6).

96 Original quotation: “L’interro-négative contribue alors à la fluidité de l’expression dans un contexte d’échange de points de vue, qui peuvent être divergents” (Poincheval-Levillain, 2016: 6).

of a point of view, through this implied assertion, is even reinforced by its negative form (Poincheval-Levillain, 2016: 6). Fontanier (1977: 368) states that a striking singularity is that, with negation, a negative interrogative structure enables the speaker to affirm what it denies when phrased without negation<sup>97</sup>. Tai Verdes employs several of these complex structures in his lyrics:

(5) TV “AOK”

**Doesn't this guitar sound so good?**

...<sup>98</sup>

Mm, mm, mm

So sweet

(5') Reformulation: I think this guitar sounds so good, what do you think?<sup>99</sup>

(6) TV “Stuck In The Middle”

She said, “You can't fool me like that,

You're gonna leave me on read”

I said, “**Why don't you try me on out?**

I know you wanna be friends”

(6') Reformulation: You should try me on out.

In example (5) *Doesn't this guitar sound so good?*, the auxiliary under its negative form *Doesn't* is followed by the subject *this guitar* and the verb base *sound*, which makes it a total negative interrogative. Consequently, the possible answers are either an affirmative or a negative statement. However, in this context (“AOK”), it is clear that the expected answer must be positive, because the guitar Tai Verdes is referring to is part of his song's instrumental track. Through this interrogative, the singer is asking his audience to validate it. In other words, the construction of example (5) favors the path toward the validation of the predicative relation. In fact, this is the first sentence of the song; its function is to introduce the song to the listener, which is performed here by directly addressing this question to his audience. Example (5) aims at conditioning the way the audience listens to the song. In this way, it might orient and perhaps shape the hearers' interpretation of the song. It seems that it leads the listener to be directly in the mood of the song, in order to fully appreciate it. As the addressee is virtual, the response provoked is likely to be more cognitive or emotional, which is consistent with the idea of conditioning the mood of the listener. This strategy seems particularly effective, as Tai Verdes directly appeals to his audience, making them feel directly concerned by the song and therefore more involved in listening to it – a strategy that can

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97 Original quotation: “Une singularité frappante, c'est qu'avec la négation, elle affirme ce que sans négation elle nie” (Fontanier, 1977: 368).

98 The ellipsis signals an instrumental section between two verses that is significant enough to be indicated.

99 This reformulation follows the structure proposed by Poincheval-Levillain (2016: 5): “I think + Subject + Predicate in its positive form. What do you think?”.

contribute to the song's success.

Example (5) *Doesn't this guitar sound so good?* also reveals the fact that the enunciator, Tai Verdes, is taking a stance on the enunciative situation, as a negative interrogative does not correspond to a neutral request for information (Albrespit, 2011: 134). Indeed, when he says *Doesn't this guitar sound so good?*, the structure is based on a preconstruction (*You don't think that this guitar sounds so good (but you should) / You think this guitar sounds so good*<sup>100</sup>). This preconstruction makes evident the non-neutrality of the negative interrogative. Example (5) then appears more like a request for confirmation rather than a genuine informational request or a call for the co-speaker's opinion, as it would have been the case with its positive equivalent *Does this guitar sound so good?* (Albrespit, 2011: 134). More precisely, the reformulation (5') *I think this guitar sounds so good, what do you think?* highlights the bias contained in this negative interrogative. In its interrogative form, example (5) asserts Tai Verdes' opinion. The interrogative form only triggers the confirmation of the opinion the singer is asserting, rather than the possibility to choose between the two poles of the question (*This guitar sounds so good / This guitar doesn't sound so good*). This echoes the bias referred to in example (1) *You ain't really see us together?*, and directly recalls Poincheval-Levillain's definition of negative interrogatives.

Thus, in example (5) *Doesn't this guitar sound so good?*, the interrogative form enables Tai Verdes to appeal to his audience. The request for confirmation of his opinion constitutes the literal illocutionary value of this interrogative, making it a direct speech act of questioning – that is, a directive. However, the interrogative form contrasts with the assertion implicitly conveyed by the question. Example (5) can therefore be interpreted as having an indirect dimension, namely that of an assertion. It is thus a case of an indirect speech act of assertion, or an indirect assertive, which perfectly illustrates the conducive nature of negative interrogatives.

Example (6) *Why don't you try me on out?* is a case of a partial negative interrogative. It follows the same structure as in (5) *Doesn't this guitar sound so good?*, but is preceded by the interrogative adverb *why*. As a result, the range of possible responses is much wider. As a reminder, in the context of the song (“Stuck In The Middle”), Tai Verdes deals with the ambiguity between friends and lovers in a relationship. By asking this question, he is possibly addressing the second person in the relationship referred to in the song. However, it is not specified in the song whether the singer is thinking of a specific person from his personal life, or whether he is using a generic *you*, meaning anyone, to represent a situation that could happen to anyone – while acknowledging that it could be both simultaneously.

Furthermore, the reformulation of example (6') *You should try me on out* makes the phenomenon of assertion and its combination with that of solicitation of the interlocutor explicit. As

100 The structure introduced by *you think* is borrowed from Poincheval-Levillain (2016: 5).

the co-speaker is genuinely called upon, example (6) can be interpreted as a sincere question. Utterance (6) therefore expresses a direct speech act of questioning but the reformulation (6') *You should try me on out* highlights again the fact that a negative interrogative can express several illocutionary values. Here, it seems that Tai Verdes' implicit opinion is even in the form of a suggestion to his co-enunciator, constituting the derived value of the negative interrogative. Example (6) *Why don't you try me on out?* can therefore be interpreted as an indirect speech act expressing a suggestion, as the discrepancy between literal and discourse value is evident in this occurrence (Poincheval-Levillain, 2016: 6). It can be considered another case of directive, as a suggestion aims at influencing the interlocutor's opinion or behavior, which aligns with the definition raised by Searle (1975).

More precisely, Tai Verdes invites the woman he is addressing to *try him on out*, making this suggestion a form of invitation to act. As explained above, example (6) is introduced by *why*, which makes it a partial negative interrogative. However, unlike the positive form of this interrogative (*Why do you try me on out?*<sup>101</sup>), which would trigger a response introduced by *because* – *why* questioning the causes of a process – the negative interrogative in (6) seems to trigger a wider range of responses (Poincheval-Levillain, 2016: 7). The latter might include responses such as “OK,” “I’ll give you a chance” or “I don’t want to.” This echoes the point made by Guillaume (TBP: 6) who emphasizes the role of negative interrogatives in polemical contexts. Indeed, example (6) *Why don't you try me on out?* appears as an attempt at compromise between Tai Verdes and the woman he addresses. The singer's proposal enables them to avoid a potential conflict; it seems instead to offer a solution to remove the ambiguity in their current relationship. This strategy seems to echo a phenomenon that belongs to intersubjectivity, namely meaning negotiation. Here, Tai Verdes seems willing to find a common ground through the negotiation of the status of their relationship. Through the use of the negative interrogative (6) *Why don't you try me on out?*, the artist negotiates meaning with his addressee with the objective of reaching a mutual understanding.

In short, these two examples perfectly illustrate the properties of negative interrogatives. They demonstrate their ability to express indirect speech acts, particularly assertives and directives, and their usefulness in polemical contexts. As interrogatives, they participate in the co-construction of discourse, establishing a relationship between Tai Verdes and his specific co-enunciator or the audience. Example (6) demonstrates that negative interrogatives can contribute to the phenomenon of meaning negotiation, orienting the co-speaker toward a certain meaning. Meaning negotiation is by definition intersubjective, which allows negative interrogatives to be considered as an effective intersubjective strategy.

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101 Note that the suggestive value is entirely lost in the positive version of the question, although its literal value of questioning is preserved. Interestingly, the positive interrogative sounds unnatural in English.

## 2.4. *Tag questions*

As mentioned before, tag questions, or question tags, have a different structure from other interrogatives but present similarities with negative interrogatives. They are formed with the operator *be* or *have*, taken from the preceding verb form when one of these auxiliaries is used, as in “It’s a beautiful day, **isn’t** it?” or “You’ve never been to Ireland, **have** you?”. When none of these operators is present, *do* is used to represent the lexical verb of the process. The auxiliary is then followed by the subject, also taken from the main part of the utterance. This occurs in utterances such as “You like cooking, **don’t** you?” or “You don’t have a car, **do** you?”. Due to this structure, they resemble short interrogatives – in particular closed-ended interrogatives as they only offer the possibility to choose between two answers. Tag questions can be affirmative or negative, as demonstrated by the previous examples. Their abbreviated and more abstract form, in which the predicate is truncated, is possible because all the elements that constitute the question tag are established and known thanks to the first part of the utterance (Lapaire and Rotgé, 1998: 534).

The first part of the utterance with a question tag corresponds to the speaker’s assertion, that is the explicit formulation of their point of view in the form of a positive predicate (Guillaume, 2006: 5). It is called the stem<sup>102</sup> (ibid.). It is followed by a second part, called the question tag, which more or less sincerely solicits the interlocutor (Lapaire and Rotgé, 1998: 534; Poincheval-Levillain, 2016: 5). The interlocutor may in fact respond by either confirming or denying the speaker’s proposition (ibid.). This is made explicit in examples such as “You don’t believe in Mr. Sandman, **do** you?” or “We’ve already met, **haven’t** we?” which could respectively be answered by “No, of course, I don’t” / “Well, yes, actually, I do” and “Yes, we have. Two years ago I think” / “No, we haven’t. You must be confusing me with someone else.” The purpose of the second part of an utterance with a question tag is more to “underline the fact that the content of the stem cannot be challenged,” as Guillaume (TBP: 9) puts it.

Thanks to their construction, question tags can express a variety of values and, above all, solicit the interlocutor. Unlike “classic” interrogatives, with tag questions, the speaker does not really seek information. This is why they can be included in what Veneeta Dayal (2016: 4) categorizes as “secondary indirect speech act[s].” The linguist points out that “such interrogatives do not meet the conditions for the primary speech act of questioning” (Dayal, 2016: 4). Dayal (ibid.) explains that it is the nature of indirect acts that is “ascribed” to them that makes it possible “to make sense of their discourse contribution.” In fact, question tags allow speakers to appeal to the interlocutor, calling for their attention, which makes them an inherent part of interaction.

More precisely, they call on the interlocutor but generally do not request their answer.

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102 Original term: “la base” (Guillaume, 2006: 5).

Guillaume (2006: 6) states that tag questions are “pseudo-questions” in that they are not asked with the aim of filling a knowledge gap, but rather to highlight the speaker’s arguments<sup>103</sup>. They represent more a way of making contact with the interlocutor – reminiscent of the phatic function – so that they react or respond to the process in question and not directly to the question tag. These characteristics position tag questions primarily as interactional tools that engage the co-speaker and their opinion rather than genuinely seek information.

There are several types of question tags that are categorized according to their intonation and their polarity. According to Quirk et al. (1985: 811), every utterance with a tag question includes an “assumption” and an “expectation.” The linguists establish four types of tag questions. The first type corresponds to an utterance with a positive stem with falling tone followed by a negative question tag with rising tone (e.g., “HE LIKES HIS JOB, DOESN’T HE?”<sup>104</sup>:  $\dot{S} - \acute{T}$ <sup>105</sup>) (Quirk et al., 1985: 811). In this construction, the stem constitutes a positive assumption while the tag implies a neutral expectation regarding the co-speaker’s answer (ibid.). The second type is composed of a negative stem with falling tone and a positive tag with rising tone, which suggests a negative assumption in this case followed by a neutral expectation again (e.g., “HE DOESN’T LIKE HIS JOB, DOES HE?”:  $\dot{S} - \acute{T}$ ) (ibid.). The third type includes a positive stem with falling tone and a negative tag with falling tone as well (e.g., “HE LIKES HIS JOB, DOESN’T HE?”:  $\dot{S} - \grave{T}$ ) (Quirk et al., 1985: 811). The fact that both intonations are falling seems to imply that the speaker’s expectation is biased: as the asserted assumption is positive, the expectation is positive as well (ibid.). Lastly, the fourth type of tag questions consists of a negative stem with falling tone followed by a positive tag with falling tone, which suggests again a biased expectation (e.g., “HE DOESN’T LIKE HIS JOB, DOES HE?”:  $\dot{S} - \grave{T}$ ) (ibid.). In this type of construction, the speaker expects a negative answer that confirms the negative assumption established by the stem (ibid.).

In any case, when a speaker uses an utterance with a tag question, they expect an answer but, depending on the type of tag, the required response may be different – which, as a reminder, does not represent new information. Indeed, in the first and second types, when the tag has a rising tone, it “invites verification, expecting the hearer to decide the truth of the proposition in the statement” while, in the third and last types, the tag with falling tone “invites confirmation of the statement, and has the force of an exclamation rather than a genuine question” (Quirk et al., 1985: 811). Therefore, when an utterer uses a question tag, they include by definition the co-utterer within

103 Original quotation: “Ces dernières sont pour leur part de ‘fausses questions’ dans la mesure où elles ne sont pas posées dans le but de combler un déficit de connaissance, mais dans celui de mettre en valeur les arguments de la personne qui parle” (Guillaume, 2006: 6).

104 All examples borrowed from researchers will appear in small capitals to distinguish them from corpus examples (in italics or numbered) and from invented examples (set in parentheses, quotation marks, and roman type).

105 This example is taken from Quirk et al. (1985: 811). The letter “S” stands for the stem, and “T” represents the tag. The accents indicate the intonation pattern of each part of the utterance containing a question tag, which can be either rising or falling.

their own discourse. This demonstrates the participation of this type of interrogative in the co-construction of discourse.

Moreover, when the tag constitutes a request for confirmation, it inherently orients the co-speaker toward either the path to the validation of the predicative relation or to the non-validation, as revealed by the non-neutral expectations contained in the third and fourth type of tag questions. This echoes the bias contained in negative interrogatives discussed in the previous subsection. Poincheval-Levillain (2016: 6) states that, unexpectedly, although the point of view is explicitly expressed in the first part of the utterance with a tag (in the case of a positive stem) the orientation toward this positive statement is no stronger – quite the opposite<sup>106</sup>. For instance, “You enjoyed the concert, **didn’t you?**” seems to convey a strong positive stance (“You enjoyed the concert”) but, as Poincheval-Levillain observes, the addition of the tag “didn’t you?” actually introduces a degree of uncertainty or openness to correction. Rather than reinforcing the positive claim, the question tag seems to soften it and invite the addressee’s response. This demonstrates that the speaker’s orientation toward the positive assertion is not necessarily stronger than in a simple *yes-no* interrogative; in fact, the tag may reveal a weaker commitment or an implicit request for reassurance. This illustrates the back-and-forth between positive and negative polarity that utterances with a question tag contain – reminiscent of the inherent polarity contained in closed interrogatives. Lapaire and Rotgé (1998: 534) formulate it this way: when the polarity is inverted between the stem and the tag, the speaker considers the possibility that their interlocutor might hold the opposite opinion, i.e. that their partner’s stance on the existence or non-existence of the predicative relation may differ from their own<sup>107</sup>.

As raised previously, utterances with a tag question resemble negative interrogatives. Indeed, both of these devices simultaneously assert a point of view and request the addressee’s confirmation. Example (5) *Doesn’t this guitar sound so good?*, which was used in the preceding subsection, can be compared to a pragmatically equivalent form containing a question tag: *This guitar sounds so good, doesn’t it?*. They both express an assertion (*this guitar sounds so good*) and a request for confirmation through their respective interrogative structure.

Guillaume (2006: 6) explains that this request for confirmation implies that the enunciator is unable to decide on their own, even if they believe that one value is more likely to be validated than the other (hence the idea that the speaker is simply looking for confirmation)<sup>108</sup>. This request, unlike

106 Original quotation: “Donc, contre toute attente, bien que le point de vue soit exprimé de manière explicite dans le premier membre du tag, l’orientation vers cet énoncé positif n’en est pas plus forte, au contraire” (Poincheval-Levillain, 2016: 6).

107 Original quotation: “L’énonciateur envisage que son partenaire puisse être de l’opinion inverse, c’est-à-dire que sa prise de position sur l’existence ou la non-existence du lien S / P soit contraire à la sienne” (Lapaire and Rotgé, 1998: 534).

108 Original quotation: “une ‘demande de confirmation’ implique que l’énonciateur est dans l’incapacité de trancher seul, même s’il pense par ailleurs qu’une valeur a plus de chances d’être validée que l’autre (d’où l’idée que l’on

in the case of certain negative interrogatives, presents no ambiguity of interpretation (Albrespit, 2011: 134-135). This can be observed in the following pragmatically equivalent utterances: “Didn’t you receive my text?” in contrast to “You received my text, didn’t you?” / “You didn’t receive my text, did you?”. The negative interrogative (“Didn’t you receive my text?”) can be interpreted in two ways: either the speaker assumes that their interlocutor did receive the text and is surprised by the lack of response, or the speaker suspects that the interlocutor did not receive the text and wishes to confirm whether they did. In the first case, there is no genuine request for confirmation, as the speaker presumes to already possess the relevant information. Rather, it is likely that the utterance conveys a reproach for not replying and calls on the interlocutor to clarify the situation. In the second case, a request for confirmation is indeed made, as is also the case in the two utterances with a question tag. In these utterances (“You received my text, didn’t you?” / “You didn’t receive my text, did you?”), the first clause clearly conveys the speaker’s position, leaving no doubt as to the function of the tag in expressing a request for confirmation. With negative interrogatives, it is the intonation and the context that disambiguate the speaker’s intention but when these two elements cannot be observed, there is nothing in the structure alone that signals a request for confirmation.

In his lyrics, Tai Verdes uses a question tag just once but it exemplifies how an assertion is established and how the addressee’s attention is sought:

(7) TV “Stuck In The Middle”

You know what she said to me?

She said, “**You’re a player, aren’t you?**

And I bet you got hoes”

I said, “You don’t know me like that

I just go with the flow”

(7’) Reformulation: I assume you’re a player, am I right?<sup>109</sup>

In example (7) *You’re a player, aren’t you?*, the question tag *aren’t you* consists of the auxiliary *be* followed by the subject *you*. The tag echoes the assertion of the first part of the sentence (*You’re a player*) and emphasizes it. This statement corresponds to the explicit formulation of the enunciator’s point of view in the form of a positive predicate (Poincheval-Levillain, 2016: 5). Due to the negative form of the tag, the polarity between the two parts of this occurrence is inverted. Here, it seems that Tai Verdes stages a fictitious exchange, or possibly one that has already taken place, with the woman referred to in the song. As a reminder, the song (“Stuck In The Middle”) is aimed at conveying the ambiguity between friendship and romantic involvement. In example (7), the singer quotes the words of the woman he addresses in the song, as indicated by the introductory

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recherche simplement une ‘confirmation’)” (Guillaume, 2006: 6).

109 This reformulation is based on the typology of tag questions established by Quirk et al. (1985: 811).

phrase, *She said*, in the left co-text and the use of quotation marks. Her words are addressed to the singer, which is indicated by the second-person pronoun *you*. The purpose of the question tag is to solicit the interlocutor, who will respond by either confirming or denying the speaker's assertion.

Example (7) *You're a player, aren't you?* may be interpreted as an instance of the third type of the classification introduced by Quirk et al. (1985) as it is formed with a positive stem with falling tone followed by a negative tag with falling tone as well<sup>110</sup>.

Although it is probably fictitious, the answer triggered by (7) *You're a player, aren't you?* is provided in this song (*You don't know me like that / I just go with the flow*). The polarity contained in utterance (7) allows the enunciator to anticipate the potential response of his interlocutor. This polarity also reveals the implicit preconstruction contained in utterances with a question tag. It makes it possible to posit an implicit belief, in this case *You're a player*, and presupposes or assumes that this is true. The process is then presented as more probable than its negative equivalent, the question tag being a way of asking for confirmation. The reformulation (7') *I assume you're a player, am I right?* makes the assertion of the woman's point of view and the request for confirmation explicit. Through the use of this utterance with a tag question, she aims to come to an agreement about the subject of the relationship she has with the singer, or at least to attenuate the assertion that could have been perceived as an attack or provocation.

From a pragmatic point of view, example (7) *You're a player, aren't you?* can be interpreted as a reproach, almost an accusation, on the part of the woman Tai Verdes is romantically interested in. It is reinforced by the expression in the right co-text *I bet* and the vulgar term *hoes* (*And I bet you got hoes*). The singer's response (*You don't know me like that / I just go with the flow*) then becomes a defense and justification in the face of this accusation. Rather than replying directly to the question tag, by saying "Yes, I am" or "No, I'm not" – namely, the expected answers given the form of the question tag, which suggests a closed interrogative – Tai Verdes expresses disagreement with the underlying assertion contained in the first part of the utterance (*You're a player*).

This dialogue, whether reconstructed or entirely invented, illustrates how the question tag works, with its solicitation of the interlocutor. Since it can implicitly assert and soften a reproach, this question tag appears to be an effective strategy for imposing meaning. By sharing part of the enunciator's opinion and making it accessible to the co-speaker through an attenuated form, it participates in the establishment of an intersubjective relationship. The appeal to the co-speaker is also an important element in the question tag that enables the speaker to establish an intersubjective

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110 This observation should be qualified, as Tai Verdes' intonation is subject to musical constraints. In this particular song ("Stuck in the Middle"), the singer slightly mimics spoken language by adopting intonation patterns that could be interpreted as those of natural speech. As a result, the utterance seems to be made of two parts with falling tone. However, this is not sufficient to conclusively identify it as an instance of the third type of tag question established by Quirk et al. (1985).

relationship. Despite this question tag's participation in a polemical context, its contribution to the establishment of an intersubjective relationship is no less strong; on the contrary, the polemical context pushes the interlocutor to respond in order to share their opinion, often divergent, in turn.

The notion of attenuation referred to in the case of utterance (7) may even be linked to the concept of “hedging” (Kaltenböck et al., 2010). Hedging can be regarded as a discursive strategy aimed at modulating a speaker's discourse when they perceive its content, form, or the overall effect to be too direct – or, at least, not acceptable as such by the hearer. This modulation consequently reveals part of the speaker's communicative intentions (ibid.). Kaltenböck et al. (2010: 1) explain that hedging “reduces the force of truth of an utterance and thus reduces the risk a speaker runs when uttering a strong or firm assertion or other speech act.” It thus appears that this strategy involves the relationship with the interlocutor and engages intersubjective dynamics. This definition also suggests that hedging can apply to a word, a group of words, an entire utterance or sentence, and even to a speech act (ibid.: 24). In the same volume, Bruce Fraser offers a definition that clarifies what he sees as the two main types of hedging<sup>111</sup>. He states that hedging may be considered “a rhetorical strategy, by which a speaker, using a linguistic device, can signal a lack of commitment to either the full semantic membership of an expression (propositional hedging) [...] or the full commitment to the force of the speech act being conveyed (speech act hedging)” (Kaltenböck et al., 2010: 22). Fraser (ibid.) provides examples to illustrate these two main categories. He highlights the use of the quantifier “sort of” and the adverb of degree “almost” in the following utterances: “THE POOL HAS **SORT OF** AN L-SHAPED DESIGN” and “PETER'S HOUSE IS **ALMOST** 100 FEET WIDE” to exemplify “propositional hedging,” and the use of modality and tag questions in examples such as “COME OVER HERE, **CAN YOU?**” and “**I GUESS I SHOULD LEAVE NOW**” to illustrate “speech act hedging” (ibid.).

In short, from a pragmatic perspective, hedging appears to be an effective discursive strategy for modulating the degree of the speaker's commitment to a proposition (ibid.). As a consequence, hedging may enable the speaker to attenuate the illocutionary value of a speech act – what Fraser (ibid.) refers to as “speech act hedging.” However, hedging may also give rise to other effects such as vagueness, evasion, equivocation, or politeness, as Fraser notes (Kaltenböck et al., 2010: 21–34). In her article on the expression of uncertainty, Vigneron-Bosbach (2024) even draws a connection between the hedge “IF YOU LIKE” and the phenomenon of intersubjectivity, explaining that it calls upon the co-speaker's perspective – an aspect that will be particularly relevant to explore in this analysis.

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111 There are several theoretical approaches to hedging (Caffi, 1999, 2007; Prince et al., 1982, among others), but I have chosen to adopt Fraser's perspective as presented in Kaltenböck et al. (2010), which has gained broad acceptance among linguists and offers a synthesis of earlier research in the field.

In example (7), *You're a player, aren't you?*, hedging – more specifically, speech act hedging – appears to apply to the speech act conveyed. This aligns with Fraser's definition, as among the possible hedging devices he identifies are indirect speech acts as well as tag questions (Kaltenböck et al., 2010: 22). As previously observed, the use of a tag question, combined with the indirect nature of the utterance, seems to attenuate the illocutionary value of reproach conveyed in (7). Thus, it appears that through this strategy, the woman involved in the relationship with the singer seeks to avoid formulating a reproach that could be interpreted as overly direct or potentially hurtful by Tai Verdes. In doing so, she seems to be mitigating the risk of conflict – demonstrating that tag questions may contribute to multiple discursive strategies.

To summarize, example (7) *You're a player, aren't you?* exemplifies how utterances with a tag question may participate in the phenomenon of meaning negotiation. By prompting the co-speaker to respond or react, question tags function as a discursive strategy that fosters intersubjective engagement. They not only serve as a means of soliciting confirmation or verification, but also contribute more broadly to the co-construction of discourse, much like other interrogative structures. Tag questions may additionally contribute to a strategy of hedging, attenuating the illocutionary value of a whole speech act. As a result, they emerge as an effective linguistic tool for establishing intersubjective relationships, both through the call on the addressee and the consideration of the latter's feelings. Example (7) therefore highlights how utterances with a tag question can operate as a bridge toward mutual understanding.

## 2.5. *Indirect interrogatives*

An indirect interrogative constitutes a subordinate clause within a broader sentence. It is always introduced by a speech verb such as *know*, *wonder* or *ask* and an interrogative determiner or adverb (e.g., “He wonders **what they are doing tonight**”) (Larreya and Rivière, 2019: 360). Indirect interrogatives can also be introduced by the interrogative subordinating conjunctions *if* and *whether* (e.g., “I asked him **if he was hungry**” or “They don't know **whether they'll be watching a movie tonight**”). However, they do not constitute cases of reported speech, as the presence of quotation marks would indicate. Rather, it is a *mise en abyme* of the question. The verb of the main clause indicates the interrogation by explicitly expressing it. In other words, it makes explicit what would have remained implicit in the direct question: when a speaker asks a question, they wonder about something or they do not know something and would like to find out.

There is no longer an inversion between the subject and the auxiliary; the structure of the subordinate clause takes instead the form of an assertion (Larreya and Rivière, 2019: 360). Like direct questions, they may trigger a choice between two possible answers (e.g., “I wonder **if she can eat meat**” / Answer: “Yes, she can. She loves meat!” or “No, absolutely not. She is a vegetarian”)

or a wider choice of answers (e.g., “My parents asked the teacher **what grade I got on the exam**” / Answer: “Your daughter got 6 out of 10,” “Your daughter did very well, she scored 10 out of 10,” “Your daughter didn’t even submit her exam,” etc.). It is the interrogative determiner or adverb that determines whether the indirect interrogative prompts a closed or open response. This becomes clear when the previous examples are reformulated as direct questions: “Can she eat meat?” and “My parents asked the teacher: ‘What grade did she get on the exam?’.” These structures respectively correspond to a closed interrogative and an open interrogative, as defined in I.2.1 and I.2.2.

Indirect interrogatives primarily function as assertions as their form of declarative construction matches with their value, granting them the status of direct speech act conveying an assertion, or “assertive.” However, this is not the only illocutionary value contained in this type of structure. Indeed, when considering the illocutionary value of the utterance as a whole, it becomes clear that it functions as a question (Huddleston, 1994: 415). The combination of the main clause with the subordinate clause grants the whole utterance the status of a speech act of questioning. However, it is always indirect as there is no longer a match between the form – a declarative structure – and its illocutionary value. This can be explained by the fact that when the enunciator is asserting that they are wondering about something and seeking information, they simultaneously invite their interlocutor to answer the question contained in the subordinate clause. The enunciator is therefore asking a question, which constitutes the pragmatic function of the construction. As the speaker is asking the co-speaker to provide them with the answer, this consequently adds a directive dimension to indirect interrogatives that seemingly constitute mere assertions. That is why indirect interrogatives can be considered as expressing an indirect speech act of questioning.

Moreover, these two illocutionary values do not preclude the possibility of expressing additional ones. Indeed, indirect interrogatives can be used to attenuate the assertion or question they constitute, either out of politeness, to avoid asking an overly straightforward question, or to express an opinion in the case of an implicit argumentative strategy – which echoes the discursive strategy of hedging defined previously in I.2.4. They can also be used to stage uncertainty or to distance the enunciator from the question posed, as a way of avoiding full endorsement of the utterance. In the corpus, Tai Verdes employs this type of structure several times. This section examines the reasons why the singer employs such structures in the absence of a direct interlocutor:

(8) TV “fake prophet”

I wanna be on an LCD in NYC,

**I wonder if my dreams are really what they seem**

’Cause every step I take forwards the public eye,

I see a little piece of my little baby die

(8') Reformulation: Are my dreams really what they seem?

(9) TV "i deserve 2 b alone"

My heart's got a dead leg

**Don't know if my blood cells blue or my blood cells red**<sup>112</sup>

Suggest a better way to save a memory that's halfway out of my head

I think the spark is dead

(9') Reformulation: Are my blood cells blue or are my blood cells red?

The forms that are reformulated as direct interrogatives (8') *Are my dreams really what they seem?* and (9') *Are my blood cells blue or are my blood cells red?* indicate that the interrogative verb is no longer necessary. In examples (8) *I wonder if my dreams are really what they seem* and (9) *Don't know if my blood cells blue or my blood cells red*, the indirect interrogative begins with the conjunction *if*, introducing a conditional clause. The condition in question precisely corresponds to the subordinate clauses written above. Indeed, in both of these occurrences, Tai Verdes is questioning the validation of these processes, which can only be answered with a *yes* or *no*, as they are closed interrogatives when reformulated as direct (see (8') and (9') above). In other words, even in indirect form, indirect interrogatives seem to retain the property of closed interrogatives. The presence of *if* seems to confirm this; Larreya and Rivière (2019: 360) explain that *if* introduces indirect interrogatives corresponding to *yes/no* interrogatives.

Furthermore, the structure of (8) and (9) seems to indicate that there is no direct address to a potential interlocutor. It means that these examples can either be regarded as a more indirect form of address, where the interlocutor may decide not to answer, or as a more personal form of questioning. Here, it seems to be the singer who engages in this internal reflection. The verbs *know* under its negative form and *wonder* indicate an underlying doubt.

Tai Verdes more or less deliberately decides to employ these indirect forms ((8) *I wonder if my dreams are really what they seem* / (9) *Don't know if my blood cells blue or my blood cells red*) while he could have simply used them in their direct form (see (8') and (9') above). Direct interrogatives would have triggered a request for the interlocutor's answer but, given the context of these songs, it seems that the purpose of examples (8) and (9) is to question himself. His questions seem to expect an answer from him for himself, rather than from an external addressee, even though it is secondarily addressed to his audience as well. In fact, there is a doubling of the subject which makes the speaker become his own interlocutor (Guillemin-Flescher, 2003: 186). The subject seeks answers within himself, while at the same time looking for echoes in the other, hence the implied

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112 Note that the subject *I* is likely omitted here for musical and pronunciation reasons, but it does not alter the interrogative structure of the utterance.

appeal to the co-speaker through the interrogative form chosen. This self-address can be seen as a form of introspection but, in linguistic terms, it corresponds to two occurrences of self-questioning<sup>113</sup>. Examples (8) and (9) then highlight the dialogism inherent in the corpus, by involving multiple voices in a single question, even though these voices come primarily from a doubling of the same subject – the singer.

Example (9) *Don't know if my blood cells blue or my blood cells red* is additionally an alternative question. Indeed, it has “as answers a set of alternatives given in the question itself” (Huddleston, 1994: 416). Here, the choice is between *my blood cells are blue* or *my blood cells are red*, which are both derived directly from the question (ibid.). It could have been in the form of *Are my blood cells blue or red?* but here, *blood cells* is repeated, making the choice between the two answers even more explicit. It emphasizes a choice that is obvious, displaying Tai Verdes' confusion. Indeed, the singer looks so heartbroken and disoriented that he seemingly loses awareness of an elementary biological fact – the color of *blood cells*. Thus, the structure of example (9) itself also seems to confirm its introspective dimension.

In example (8) *I wonder if my dreams are really what they seem*, Tai Verdes questions his dreams. By confronting his dreams, something unconscious or imagined, with what they seem, i.e. an observation of reality, the utterance again reveals his mental state of confusion and doubt. This is again reminiscent of a self-interrogation.

Despite their declarative form, the two utterances from (8) and (9) therefore represent speech acts of questioning – in both of these cases, indirect – as their derived illocutionary value constitutes a process of self-reflection. They are primarily assertions that express a feeling of doubt and confusion but this expressive nature can be interpreted as a fully-fledged illocutionary value. Indeed, examples (8) and (9) both express the speaker's psychological state, which aligns with the definition of “expressives.” Examples (8) and (9) can therefore be interpreted as two expressive speech acts. This illustrates the possibility for indirect interrogatives to combine illocutionary values beyond the literal assertion and the derived question.

Furthermore, as explained earlier, the two self-interrogations (8) *I wonder if my dreams are really what they seem* and (9) *Don't know if my blood cells blue or my blood cells red* reflect a form of introspection in the discourse. By seeking an echo of response in others, in this case his audience, Tai Verdes attempts to establish a link with them. These expressives also give access to a part of the singer's subjectivity. From an enunciative perspective, examples (8) and (9) create a shared space of understanding between the singer's personal experience and what the listener might feel or recognize as their own, possibly by identifying with the singer and the experiences he shares here. Even if indirect interrogatives do not directly participate in the co-construction of discourse, these  
113 Original term: “auto-interrogation” (Guillemin-Flescher, 2003: 185).

examples reveal the phenomenon of dialogism and interaction that are inherent in every discourse. Although these two occurrences do not appeal directly to the listeners, they implicitly involve them, establishing a temporary connection with them. They thus highlight a form of intersubjective relationship that has not yet been observed, and which is more subtle than that found in direct questions. Nevertheless, this supports the claim that indirect questions can also contribute to the phenomenon of intersubjectivity.

## 2.6. *Embedded interrogatives*

Embedded interrogatives are generally introduced by an interrogative verb, just like indirect questions. Indirect interrogatives are, by definition, embedded interrogatives, as they too contain the same structure with a main clause and an interrogative subordinate clause that make them up. Indirect interrogatives constitute in fact a more specific subcategory of embedded interrogatives, their distinctive feature being the declarative form of the main clause that introduces them. In the case of embedded interrogatives, the main clause is also in the form of an interrogative. For instance, “Do you know **what time it is?**” or “Have you asked her yet **if she has her driving license?**” both constitute structures with embedded interrogatives. Embedded interrogatives therefore share similar characteristics with indirect questions defined previously but, in contrast to the latter, they generally have a question mark and an auxiliary-subject inversion in the main clause.

Furthermore, embedded interrogatives have the directive aspect of indirect questions, with the question’s *mise en abyme* indicating the speaker’s request for an answer. This illustrates Huddleston’s claim that the subordinate clause alone cannot be considered as a question. The linguist explains that, once embedded, the subordinate loses its illocutionary value as a question – which would be direct questions if they stood alone (Huddleston, 1994: 415). It is therefore the overall structure that can be characterized as a question, in particular thanks to the interrogative verb that makes the speech act explicit. I will now focus on the analysis of the following occurrence:

(10) TV “how deep?”

I, found a thing when I wasn’t even looking for a thing

I, keep thinking about it in my brain

How I’m ’posed to know how deep?

**How I’m ’posed to know how deep I’d fall?**<sup>114</sup>

In example (10), *how deep I’d fall* is included in the broader sentence *How I’m [sup]posed to know*, and functions as the complement of *know*. Note that the verb introducing the embedded interrogative *know* is one of the interrogative verbs mentioned in the definition of indirect

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<sup>114</sup> The song is about falling in love, hence the *how deep I’d fall* ending, which can be ambiguous out of context.

interrogatives (see I.2.5 above). The occurrence from (10) therefore includes an embedded interrogative (*how deep I'd fall*) within a direct interrogative (*How I'm [sup]posed to know*).

The adverb *how* indicates that example (10) is an open-ended interrogative, offering the interlocutor the possibility of a broader response. It thus directly solicits the interlocutor – or rather, in this context of song lyrics (“how deep?”), the listener.

Moreover, in example (10) *How I'm 'posed to know how deep I'd fall?*, the subject-verb inversion is not performed in either part of the global interrogative. In the main clause, this is simply due to informal register<sup>115</sup>, whereas in the embedded question it is essential not to operate the inversion. It is a major feature of embedded interrogatives. In fact, their nature as interrogative subordinate clause gives them the properties of typical subordinate clauses – in this case, the classic order of an assertion. Reformulated as a direct interrogative with the typical inversion, the embedded interrogative alone becomes *how deep would I fall?*. Huddleston (1994: 415) suggests that “[n]ormally, sentences containing embedded questions have meanings involving ‘the answer to the question.’” Applied to example (10), it turns into *He doesn't know the answer to the question 'how deep would I fall?,'* making explicit the interrogation and the requested information. When this question is associated with the main clause under its interrogative form, the whole utterance has therefore an illocutionary value of request for information. Consequently, example (10) may be interpreted as a direct speech act of questioning.

In example (10) *How I'm 'posed to know how deep I'd fall?*, the embedding of clauses introduces a new layer to the interrogative. It conveys Tai Verdes' uncertainty or inquiry in a more nuanced form, in addition to emphasizing the embedded question (*how deep would I fall?*). This structure appears more complex than that of non-embedded interrogatives, but its pragmatic function is the same.

Furthermore, it seems that this interrogative reflects an internal reflection on the part of the singer, as a sort of open call to whoever might have the answer to his questioning on the highly personal and complex subject of feelings. He addresses both himself and a group of external addressees – the listeners. By doing so, the singer doubles up to ask the question to himself, and also to seek echoes in others. This is another example of self-questioning which evokes a process of introspection, as in examples (8) *I wonder if my dreams are really what they seem* and (9) *Don't know if my blood cells blue or my blood cells red* discussed in the previous subsection. This property appears consistent in the context of this dialogic corpus and more generally in artistic productions, as songs often contain a lyrical dimension. Therefore, this dimension of personal and emotional reflection constitutes a derived value of (10) *How I'm 'posed to know how deep I'd fall?*.

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<sup>115</sup> The corresponding form in formal register would be *How am I supposed to know how deep I would fall?* in which the subject-verb inversion is performed in the main clause.

The latter can be interpreted as an expressive indirect speech act. In the expression of Tai Verdes' feelings, there is even a dimension of fatality as the expression *be supposed to* marks a designation of external norms or expectations, coming from society in general but also from the singer's partner.

Thus, example (10) can be classified as an expressive, as the singer expresses a strong emotion, revealing his psychological state. This structure also enables the speaker to share part of his representations by showing a form of vulnerability. Tai Verdes might seek to elicit empathy or identification in the listener, creating a mutual ground of understanding between him and the audience. This is reminiscent of the properties of intersubjectivity.

## 2.7. *Elliptical interrogatives*

In this type of interrogative, the auxiliary is omitted, while, in Standard English, it is normally necessary for the construction of an interrogative, as Albrespit (2011: 123) explains<sup>116</sup>. Interrogatives in which the auxiliary is omitted thus possess the canonical structure of an assertion, as in “You ate all the cake?”. In the preceding example, is it the auxiliary *do* in its preterit form which is omitted. Note that the past tense marker has been transferred to the lexical verb of the sentence, as the auxiliary, which is originally responsible for carrying it, is no longer present. Because of their declarative structure, Quirk et al. (1985: 392) and Dayal (2016: 277) call these interrogatives in which the auxiliary is omitted “declarative questions,” as this type of question “is identical in form to a statement<sup>117</sup>” (Quirk et al., 1985: 392). Quirk et al. (1985: 392) specify that auxiliary omission is only possible with closed-ended questions<sup>118</sup>.

In fact, this type of question seems to be a hybrid form of interrogatives since, along with their declarative structure, they also display a question mark. Since auxiliary-subject inversion is one of the markers of interrogation, the structure of such interrogatives is no longer sufficient on its own to indicate interrogation. Therefore, the enunciative context seems to be the key to understanding which auxiliary is omitted and how the speech act of questioning is expressed. Tai Verdes employs such a structure once:

(11) TV “Stuck In The Middle”

**You know what she said to me?**

She said, “You’re a player, aren’t you?”

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116 This is also reminiscent of the NICE properties which auxiliaries obey and enable speakers to form interrogatives.

117 The original quotation mentions the prosodic dimension, which contributes to the identification of this type of question but, as said earlier, this aspect will not be studied in the present analysis.

118 This statement needs to be qualified, as some non-standard varieties of English also contain open questions that can omit the auxiliary. For example, in AAVE, questions such as “What you do?” or “When you free?” may be used to mean respectively “What do you do?”, “What did you do?”, or “What are you doing?” and “When are you free?”. Although these forms restore the subject-verb inversion of interrogation, they illustrate that auxiliary omission in questions is not strictly limited to closed questions, as suggested by Quirk et al. (1985).

And I bet you got hoes”

(11') Reformulation: **Do** you know what she said to me?

\*Are you know what she said to me?

\*Have you know what she said to me?

The first reformulated form (11') *Do you know what she said to me?* demonstrates that the auxiliary which is originally omitted in this utterance is *do*. It could not be *have* or *be* because there is already the presence of a verb in the sentence and there is no progressive or perfect aspect, as evidenced by the two reformulated ungrammatical forms above. It could not be a modal auxiliary either, as there would have been an indicator of a specific form of modality in the process. Consequently, the auxiliary *do* is the only appropriate choice, which was highlighted in the general definition of interrogatives (see I.1). The reformulation (11') also reveals that (11) is a closed question – which aligns with the point made by Quirk et al. (1985: 392).

In example (11) *You know what she said to me?*, the omission of the auxiliary seems to make the elliptical question more direct, as it places the emphasis directly on the process, in this case, *you know what she said to me*. The utterance's effect therefore seems more striking. The provocative aspect of this example seems to confirm this idea, as the utterance aims to capture the interlocutor's attention and even, in this case, to create a form of expectation or suspense. The omission of the auxiliary might also reveal Tai Verdes' own, apparently intense surprise, as if he had not even had time to formulate the question according to standard syntactic rules, or as if he were so shocked by the situation that he could only express the process itself.

Moreover, example (11) is another case of embedded interrogative structure, as the interrogative clause *what she said to me* is introduced by the interrogative verb *know* and functions as a complement to the main clause. This creates a focus on the embedded question, intensifying the suspense regarding the content of what was said.

Although example (11) *You know what she said to me?* is in the form of a closed-ended interrogative, Tai Verdes seems to be expecting a precise response from his addressees – in this case his audience. Closed interrogatives usually offer the possibility to choose without any bias between validating the predicative relation or invalidating it. However, example (11) seems to guide the addressees toward a particular interpretation. It is the declarative structure of (11) that enables this orientation. Quirk et al. (1985: 392) explain that “declarative questions have ‘positive orientation’ (or ‘negative orientation’).” According to them, this orientation “suggests that the speaker takes the answer *yes* (or *no*) as a foregone conclusion” (Quirk et al.: 393). This is evident in example (11) as Tai Verdes expects his listeners to answer a response equivalent to “No, we don't. Please, tell us!”. By doing so, the singer establishes an intimate environment with his audience in

which he intends to confide, following this attention-grabbing utterance. It seems that the aim of example (11) is to create suspense and a feeling of compassion in the hearers, so that they go along with the singer and stay to listen to the rest of the song. Tai Verdes probably expects them to be as surprised as he is, out of empathy, again in this context intended to be intimate. He asks this question when he knows the answer, which is revealed by the next verse, in which he introduces what the woman in the song has told him (*She said, "You're a player, aren't you? ..."*).

Utterance (11) *You know what she said to me?* thus loses one of the central properties of questions, that of being genuinely information-seeking. Nonetheless, it can still be interpreted as a question. In fact, Kerbrat-Orecchioni points out that there are indeed a variety of reasons why a speaker might ask another speaker for a particular piece of information<sup>119</sup> (1991: 15). This may be, as it is usually the case with questions, because the speaker does not know a piece of information and wants to have it, but it may also be because the speaker wants to know whether their interlocutor possesses a piece of information that they already know themselves. Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1991: 16) refers to this type of question as “didactic,” but in the case of example (11), I would like to introduce a nuance. As the context is not pedagogical but purely for entertainment and artistic purposes, this question seems to be more confessional than didactic. It seems to focus on sharing secrets and a specific piece of information. As explained above, due to its construction, it is largely biased and expects only one type of response. It therefore appears to be an introduction to the piece of information already held by the singer, designed to make the listeners want to know. Through this interrogative, the information in question is presented as worth knowing. These features are typical of gossip contexts. Example (11) does not have the most common characteristic of questions, but by appealing to the interlocutor and their attention, it still requires a response – however strongly oriented. This creates a strong intersubjective relationship between Tai Verdes and his audience, thanks to the establishment of a common ground of understanding. This can be interpreted as another intersubjective strategy.

Thus, from a pragmatic point of view, even though (11) *You know what she said to me?* is in the form of a positive declarative construction, it has an illocutionary value of questioning. It is through the context and intonation – which I am not studying here – that it can be interpreted as such. It primarily constitutes a speech act of questioning but it seems that it expresses a derived illocutionary value, namely, the expression of a surprise, which created suspense and is aimed at introducing a piece of gossip. That is why an indirect speech act can be identified in this occurrence.

This type of question is more common in spoken English, where omissions and shortening

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119 Original quotation: “Les raisons sont en effet diverses qui peuvent inciter un locuteur à demander à un autre locuteur de lui fournir telle ou telle information” (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1991: 15).

are commonplace. The use of ellipsis is considered ungrammatical in standard written English but it is acceptable in this context because, as explained in the introduction, this corpus is based on oral data. The “ellipsis in general plays a major part in the organization of conversation and narrative for reasons of economy, cohesion, and style” (Nariyama, 2004: 239). This is consistent with this context of oral speech production, but as indicated by Nariyama’s definition, the use of ellipsis may reflect stylistic choices. Due to the artistic nature of the corpus, this could also be a possible motivation for employing an elliptical question.

### **3. Conclusion on their role in the expression of intersubjectivity**

It has been observed that, in context, these forms of interrogative structures can express different illocutionary values and thus constitute different speech acts. They can represent a simple question without any secondary illocutionary value<sup>120</sup>, or a request for confirmation or validation (see (5) above), but they can also express more complex acts such as a reproach as in (1) and (7), a provocation as in (4), or a suggestion as in (6). In these cases, their pragmatic function is directive and requires a response or action from the co-speaker, but in the case of this corpus, in which the co-enunciator is always absent, this is impossible at the moment of enunciation<sup>121</sup>. The directive speech act is nevertheless perceived as such and does not lose its properties. It is not performed but the listener can still understand its directive nature.

However, it is not primarily through this strategy of meaning imposition on the co-speaker that intersubjectivity is most clearly manifested, since, as a reminder, these acts are not performed. In fact, it is through the numerous direct appeals Tai Verdes makes to his audience, as well as in the explicit sharing of certain parts of his subjectivity and the discursive strategy of hedging (see example (7) above). Indeed, through his questions, which are by definition an injunction to answer, the singer repeatedly calls on his listeners in order to establish an intersubjective link with them. This makes them feel included in the utterance, and therefore more likely to listen to the song in its entirety, with their attention fully captured. Since they are not in a position to provide the answer requested by the questions posed, this may trigger a cognitive mechanism prompting them to listen, as a form of compensation. This potential cognitive response would appear as a non-verbal response to Tai Verdes’ questions. This also seems to be in line with his original attention-grabbing strategy.

When the singer’s objective – whether conscious or not – is to make a part of his subjectivity explicit by asserting a specific psychological state, the questions convey expressive speech acts (see (3; 8; 9; 10)). A case of self-interrogation expressing a process of introspection as

120 Such examples have not been analyzed here but such instances are present in the corpus. For instance, in the song “how deep?”, Tai Verdes says *How was your day? or How did you sleep?*.

121 In a classic enunciative situation with the co-enunciator facing and able to respond, this type of act enables speakers to “prompt cooperation,” as “a direct address is indeed an efficient way to encourage others to cooperate” (Guillaume, TBP: 6).

in (8; 9; 10), doubt as in (8) and (9), or surprise as in (11), may then be at stake. Although direct appeal to the listener is not systematic in these cases, such acts significantly facilitate mutual understanding between Tai Verdes and his audience. They temporarily establish a shared ground of understanding – like a junction of subjectivities in which the singer shares his own while that of each listener may merge when listening to his songs. This can involve, among others, a process of identification, i.e. another cognitive response, when the artist mentions experiences to which the audience can relate.

Finally, interrogative structures can express assertive speech acts in which the singer's opinion is implicitly expressed. This argumentative strategy is highly effective in polemical contexts. In any case, questions, whether sincere or mere appeals to the co-speaker, are particularly useful in the phenomenon of meaning negotiation as a means of engaging the audience and specific addressees<sup>122</sup>. As a reminder, negotiation of meaning is defined as “a set of operations aimed at transmitting, or persuading the addressee to accept a certain content – be it lexical, clausal or discursive” (Pennec, 2023: 11). Some of the examples studied earlier are therefore representative of this process, in the sense that they represent discursive strategies for transmitting a certain message to the addressees or even imposing a certain meaning on them with varying degrees of intensity. For instance, negative interrogatives (5) and (6) and the occurrence with a tag question (4) belong to the second level of the meaning negotiation scale, which corresponds to all argumentative operations. Examples (1) *Are you going to love me forever?* and (2) can be considered as part of this level of the scale, as their value of request for emotional commitment seems to involve an operation of clarification. These examples enable Tai Verdes to rearrange his interlocutor's representations, while having previously integrated them into his own discourse, so as to better modulate them – evoking the processes of active dialogism<sup>123</sup> (Pennec, TBP: 2).

However, these occurrences are not only involved in the second level of the meaning negotiation scale but they can alternatively be interpreted as belonging to the third level, along with other interrogatives of the corpus. This level corresponds to what is implicit in discourse. As a result of their construction containing presuppositions or implied meaning, some of these examples (see (1; 2; 4; 5; 6; 7) above) make it possible to say without saying, or to say something in the background, in order to leave the interlocutor responsible for their interpretation, while having oriented toward an interpretative path. They are intended to convey messages or injunctions while

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122 Self-interrogations are excluded, as they reflect intrasubjectivity rather than intersubjectivity. While it could be argued that meaning is negotiated with the self, their primary function appears rather as sharing the singer's emotional stance and providing clearer access to his subjectivity.

123 Original quotation: “À titre d'exemple, des interro-négatives [...] peuvent être employées afin de ré-agencer les représentations de l'interlocuteur, tout en les ayant préalablement intégrées à son propre discours, de façon à mieux les moduler” (Pennec, TBP: 2).

communicating them in a supposedly discreet manner<sup>124</sup> (Pennec, TBP: 2). Lastly, utterances (3; 9; 10) rely on metaphorical imagery, as their expressive dimension facilitates the verbalization of Tai Verdes' subjectivity within his discourse. This makes it possible to interpret these examples as belonging to the final level of the scale of meaning negotiation – that of metaphor.

Thus, through these manifestations at different levels, intersubjectivity takes the form of an attempt to compensate or fill the gaps that exist between the singer's subjectivity and that of each listener. This shapes the relationship between Tai Verdes and each member of the audience. Questions therefore appear to be particularly effective intersubjective strategies, even in a context where the co-enunciator is not physically present. Gardelle and Vincent-Durroux (2019: 15) already noted that, in essence, questions are part of an intersubjective dimension.

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124 Original quotation: "Les vecteurs d'implicite [...] permett[en]t de dire sans dire, ou de dire en arrière-plan, afin de laisser l'interlocuteur responsable de son interprétation [...], tout en ayant frayé une voie interprétative. Ils sont destinés à 'faire passer' des messages ou injonctions, tout en les communiquant de façon supposément discrète." (Pennec, TBP: 2).

## II. Imperatives as a second intersubjective strategy

### 1. General definition of imperatives

The imperative is distinguished from any other sentence type. It is considered as a “syntactic class” on its own with a set of properties that define it (Davies, 1986: 1). Eirlys Davies (ibid.: 5-7) establishes the list of these characteristics. First, the subject is almost always absent, although there are sometimes examples of more explicit forms, such as “**You** be careful” or “**Everybody** stay calm” (ibid.: 6). Such examples highlight the restricted choice of subjects, as *I, he, she, it, we, they* cannot be employed with an imperative. Collective indefinite pronouns and *you* are the only pronouns that can be used before an imperative (e.g., “**Somebody** help me,” “**Nobody** move!” or “**You** stay focused!”). However, they are rather characterized as agents and constituents of the utterance and remain optional in any case (Cotte, 1996: 127). Then, the base form of the verb is used on its own and cannot be inflected by any tense (Davies, 1986: 6). Davies (ibid.: 7) finally states that when emphasis or negation is needed, *do* is used before the verb (e.g., “**Do** forgive me” or “**Don’t** forget your keys”), even for the auxiliary *have* and the verb *be* (e.g., “**Don’t** have lunch now, it’s time for dinner!” and “**Don’t** be late”). According to the researcher, these three main characteristics are inherent to the class of imperatives, but she also mentions more complex forms than the ones reduced to the verb base alone (ibid.) – examples of which I will present in this typology. Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 857) add another feature to this list, explaining that imperatives “are normally restricted to main clauses.” Quirk et al. (1985: 827) further note that imperatives “are restricted to predications that allow a dynamic interpretation,” which may include stative verbs, as in “**Be** quiet” or “**Know** your times table!”.

Moreover, the imperative is not a tense and has no temporal markers or person references (Benveniste, 1966: 274). It is rather a mood, which contrasts with the indicative or subjunctive mood for instance. Alvarez-Pereyre (2010: 117) summarizes this, stating that the criteria established by Davies isolate a class whose definition cannot be limited to that of the verbal form (in contemporary English, the imperative verb is not morphologically distinct from the infinitive or the present subjunctive) but in fact corresponds to a type of utterance, that is, a way of using this form<sup>125</sup> (Alvarez-Pereyre, 2010: 117; Jespersen, 1961: 151).

In short, the imperative is a verb base presented without any marker of tense, of mood or person, including personal pronouns, which can be completed by an object or an adverbial<sup>126</sup>, and

125 Original quotation: “Ces critères isolent une classe dont la définition ne se réduit pas à celle de la forme verbale (en anglais contemporain, le verbe à l’impératif n’est morphologiquement pas distinct de l’infinitif ou du subjonctif présent) mais correspond en fait à un type d’énoncé, c’est-à-dire à une manière d’employer cette forme” (Alvarez-Pereyre, 2010: 117; Jespersen, 1961: 151).

126 Quirk et al. (1985: 828) specify that if adverbials are temporal, they cannot refer to past time or express habitual actions. The authors also note that imperatives are incompatible with comment disjuncts (ibid.).

which appears as such in the linearity of discourse production (Alvarez-Pereyre, 2010: 119). This is why Alvarez-Pereyre (ibid.) explains that this absence of markers is at the heart of the definition of the imperative. It is the verb base alone that refers only to a process viewed from the perspective of its most indeterminate “potentiality<sup>127</sup>” (Alvarez-Pereyre, ibid.). The imperative appears in the linear structure of speech as it is, without any modification; Alvarez-Pereyre (ibid.) explains that it is simply “presented” in discourse. The functioning of the imperative thus rests on the presentation, by the enunciator to the co-enunciator, of a potentiality of process<sup>128</sup> (Alvarez-Pereyre, 2010: 119; Davies, 1986: 48-49). In other words, it is the very structure of the imperative that makes the process possible and gives meaning to the imperative in discourse. Cotte (1996: 126) even sees in this absence of marks the effectiveness of the imperative. Indeed, by studying the relationship between the meaning and form of the imperative, the researcher has observed that the more concise an imperative is, the more effective it is (Cotte, ibid.). For him, this effectiveness is reflected in the implicit way in which the imperative communicates modality (ibid.). This creates a link with root modality, since the enunciator expresses a process whose aim is to influence the co-enunciator, or more precisely, to invite them to act (ibid.). Intersubjective relationships, which constitute an inherent property of this type of modality, can be found at the very heart of imperative utterances. Cotte (1996: 126) adds that, unlike the explicit form of modality expressed by modal auxiliaries, the imperative is an implicit mood, the only difference between the two being the way they communicate meaning. Indeed, the imperative never makes modality explicit; not being expressed by a marker such as *should* or *want*, modality is conveyed through the locutionary act and the concrete enunciation of the enunciator<sup>129</sup> (Cotte, ibid.).

Cotte (1996: 126) also points out that every discourse contains an implicit injunction to listen. Due to its conciseness, the imperative would contain this injunction directly in the concrete act of enunciation, the two thus becoming indissociable (ibid.). Cotte (ibid.) shows that by not formulating this injunction through explicit markers, the enunciator does not dissociate themselves from it, but rather plays it out<sup>130</sup>. We will assume that by becoming an actor, the enunciator intends to show the addressee the path to the act. In this way, the imperative utterance becomes a “mimetic prefiguration” of the expected response. The implicit part of its meaning is played out; as for the explicit part, it only refers to the targeted process, as if the enunciator wanted to divert the co-speaker from any deliberation so that they immediately relay the expressed intention and leave the

127 Original quotation: “Par contraste, la base nue du verbe renvoie seulement à un procès vu sous l’angle de sa ‘potentialité’ la plus indéterminée” (Alvarez-Pereyre, 2010: 119).

128 Original quotation: “Le fonctionnement de l’impératif anglais repose ainsi, dit Davies, sur la présentation, par l’énonciateur au co-énonciateur, d’une potentialité de procès” (Alvarez-Pereyre, 2010: 119; Davies, 1986: 48-49).

129 Original quotation: “Il n’explicite jamais la modalité. [...] N’étant pas dite par un signe comme *should* ou *want*, la modalité est véhiculée par l’acte locutoire et l’énonciation concrète de l’énonciateur” (Cotte, 1996: 126).

130 Original quotation: “Ne la disant pas par des signes explicites, l’énonciateur ne s’en dissocie pas, mais au contraire il la joue” (Cotte, 1996: 126).

world of words for that of deeds<sup>131</sup> (Cotte, 1996: 126-127). It is therefore the exclusive reference to the process that makes it possible to operate what Cotte (ibid.) names “mimetic prefiguration<sup>132</sup>.” It is the minimalism of the utterance, in which both person and modality are omitted, (which magnifies the “permanent injunction” of all discourse, that of listening) that brings enunciation itself to the fore (Alvarez-Pereyre, 2010: 120). The lack of precision in the enunciator’s speech thus allows them to be seen in their act of enunciation, i.e. as an actor (ibid.). By manifesting themselves in this role, the enunciator shows the way, whose enunciated content gives the direction, toward the world of action<sup>133</sup> (ibid.). This conciseness, which is both semantic and formal, allows the interlocutor to pay greater attention and listen. This makes the imperative a particularly effective tool for interaction, where intersubjective pressure is particularly strong. This property is again reminiscent of root modality and suggests a link with modal auxiliaries (e.g., “**Don’t** play video games after 8 p.m.” may be compared to “You **must not** play video games 8 p.m.”) – which I will try to draw in greater detail in the last part.

Alvarez-Pereyre (2010: 121) attempts to justify the process of mimetic prefiguration by explaining that, with the use of an imperative, everything happens as if the enunciator seizes the bare verb and places it in the syntagmatic dimension, avoiding the linearization process that usually marks the entry into the world of speech<sup>134</sup>. Unlike previous developments in the evolution of English, the morphological reduction of the imperative is not compensated for by syntactic development (Alvarez-Pereyre, 2010: 124). This absence of linearization or markers indicating syntagmatic relationships can be explained by the fact that the imperative would be able to “prefigure” a way to leave the world of speech, by avoiding key features of speech – namely, explicit markers of mood, tense, and person (Alvarez-Pereyre, 2010: 121). For him, this resistance to conventional syntactic linearization may represent the way out of the world of words and the point of access to the world of acts (ibid.: 122). He thus extends Cotte’s argument: not only does the imperative’s concise form catch the attention of the co-speaker, but it also produces an effect of rupture – comparable to that triggered by interrogative constructions – within the structure of verbal exchange (Alvarez-Pereyre, 2010: 122). The imperative, despite its minimalist form, thus appears as

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131 Original quotation: “On fera l’hypothèse qu’en se faisant ainsi acteur, il veut montrer à l’allocutaire le chemin de l’acte. De ce fait l’énoncé à l’impératif devient une préfiguration mimétique de la réponse attendue. La partie implicite de son sens est jouée; quant à la partie explicite, elle réfère seulement au procès visé, comme si elle aussi voulait détourner l’allocutaire de toute délibération pour qu’il relaie sans tarder la visée exprimée et qu’il quitte le monde des mots pour celui des actes” (Cotte, 1996: 126-127).

132 Original term: “préfiguration mimétique” (Cotte, 1996: 126).

133 Original quotation: “le minimalisme de l’énoncé (qui magnifie l’‘injonction permanente’ de tout discours, celle d’écouter) met en avant l’énonciation elle-même. Le défaut de parole laisse ainsi transparaître l’énonciateur dans son acte d’énonciation, c’est-à-dire comme acteur. En se manifestant dans ce rôle, l’énonciateur montre le chemin, dont le contenu énoncé donne la direction” (Alvarez-Pereyre, 2010: 120).

134 Original quotation: “tout se passe comme si l’énonciateur saisissait le verbe brut et le plaçait dans le syntagmatique, en faisant l’économie des processus de linéarisation qui scellent habituellement l’entrée dans le monde de la parole” (Alvarez-Pereyre, 2010: 121).

another complex tool for interaction. As described previously, it is set in a particular context of enunciation but also has a link with pragmatics.

For Benveniste (1966: 274), when we talk about the imperative, we are dealing with a specific modality of discourse; the imperative is not denotative and does not aim to communicate content, but is characterized as pragmatic and aims to act on the listener, to guide their behavior<sup>135</sup>. Returning to Searle's theory of speech acts, imperative structures can be seen as another form of direct speech acts belonging to the category of directives. Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 929) state that "imperatives are prototypically concerned with carrying out some future action." In this way, imperatives possess an illocutionary value that gives them the properties and the status of speech acts. Like questions, they can combine several of these values and thus combine a direct speech act with one or more indirect speech acts. In the classification of speech acts proposed by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2008: 84) after Searle, imperatives correspond to the broad category of requests, exactly like the speech acts of questioning. The boundary between questions and imperatives is sometimes ambiguous, but imperatives can be associated with requests to do something<sup>136</sup> (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, *ibid.*). For instance, both the question "Can you turn the music down?" and the imperative form "Turn the music down" carry the same illocutionary value, that is, a request to do something. Although a question usually constitutes a request to say something, "Can you turn the music down?" seems to incite the co-speaker to act, aligning with the illocutionary value and function of its imperative equivalent.

Orders are therefore part of requests to do something, but they only constitute a particular type among them (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008: 84). Requests to do something ("requêtes" in French) therefore include not only orders, but also acts of commands or instructions for instance. All these acts can correspond to imperatives, but the correspondence is not strict: other constructions can express directives, just as imperatives are not reduced to simple orders (Larreya and Rivière, 2019: 149). Larreya and Rivière (*ibid.*) point out that imperatives can express a whole range of directive values such as an order (e.g., "Turn the volume down!"), an offer (e.g., "Have some more chocolate cake"), a wish ("Enjoy your stay in London!"), or a permission (e.g., "Go ahead, take a seat").

When imperative structures express a speech act, they can be perceived as attempts to influence the co-enunciator (Alvarez-Pereyre, 2010: 117-118). As raised earlier, imperative structures express an explicit request to the interlocutor, inviting them to act, which highlights their participation in intersubjective relations. This invitation to act suggests the presence of

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135 Original quotation: "Nous avons ici affaire à une modalité spécifique du discours ; l'impératif n'est pas dénotatif et ne vise pas à communiquer un contenu, mais se caractérise comme pragmatique et vise à agir sur l'auditeur, à lui intimier un comportement" (Benveniste, 1966: 274). Translated by Blandine Pennec (2023: 11) in *Let's say and say: markers of intersubjective adjustment favouring message transmission.*

136 In English, there are no different terms to define these two different categories of speech act. In French, the broader category of directives is called "demandes" and requests to act "requêtes."

intersubjectivity. Imperative structures may participate in a strategy of meaning imposition – orders are particularly good examples of this phenomenon. Meaning imposition is part of the strategy of meaning negotiation that was defined in the introduction. It represents a more forceful strategy, where the meaning is no longer genuinely negotiated but instead imposed on the addressee – always with the intention of more effectively transmitting a certain content. Lastly, as was the case with interrogatives, imperatives can participate in other phenomena such as discourse organization where they act as discourse markers, as in “let’s say,” “say,” or “let’s move on,” or maintaining contact with structures such as “listen” or “look” that express a phatic function, among many others.

Although the construction of meaning in the imperative seems to suggest a limited application in discourse, in reality it possesses a wide illocutionary diversity (Alvarez-Pereyre, 2010: 125; Cotte, 1996: 125). Thus, despite the strict definition raised here, the examples from the corpus will show that there is a wide diversity of uses of imperative structures in language. Therefore, the way the various uses of the imperative may contribute to expressing intersubjectivity will be explored.

## **2. Typology of imperative structures in Tai Verdes’ lyrics and analysis of their use in context**

### *2.1. Action verb imperatives*

Different forms of simple imperatives can be found in Tai Verdes’ lyrics. Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 924) call such imperatives “ordinary imperatives,” which, according to them, represent the default subclass of the main syntactic category of imperatives. Like all other imperatives, simple imperatives are based on the typical construction described above. As a reminder, their construction involves the omission of the subject and the base form of the lexical verb without any marker of tense, modality or person. They are also typically restricted to main clauses. Simple imperatives may be used with an action verb to invite a physical response or prompt an action, as illustrated in the following examples:

(12) TV “how deep”

It always starts with a “Hey”

Turns into “How was your day?”

Turns into “**meet at my place**”

Turns into you and me drinking rosé

(13) TV “sheluvme”

Ayy, it’s a good day to be

Anybody if your name is me

**Shout it from the rooftops shamelessly**

I love her and she love me

(14) TV “Sandman”

Call me Mr. Sandman, you know my name

I can make your dreams come true in a day

**Tell me what you’re feelin’, show me the way**

Tell me your deepest secrets and we can escape

These three examples highlight the construction of imperatives based on the verb base alone. They illustrate the fact that imperatives can have one or several modifiers or complements: a prepositional complement ((12) *at my place* or (13) *from the rooftops*), an adjunct of manner ((13) *shamelessly*), a direct object ((13) *it*, referring to the act of saying *I love you*, (14) *what you’re feelin’*, or (14) *the way*) or an indirect object ((14) *me*). In all three examples, the implicit subject is *you*. In each of these cases, the singer is addressing his romantic partner, but does not seem to be calling out to the audience. These three examples additionally demonstrate that the act Tai Verdes invites his co-speaker to perform can be both concrete, with the verbs (12) *meet*, (13) *shout*, and (14) *tell*, and figurative with the verb (14) *show*.

In example (12) *meet at my place*, the implied subject *you* is specific. It represents the person Tai Verdes is referring to in the lyrics of his love song (“how deep?”), namely, his real or fictitious partner. The artist reproduces excerpts from conversations he might have had with this person, in which *meet at my place* comes into play as reported speech – made evident by the use of quotation marks. Thus, the audience has the impression of having access to a part of the singer’s private life, and feels emotionally closer to him. They may perceive Tai Verdes’ song as a sort of diary in which he shares his personal experiences. However, *meet at my place* is not addressed to the audience but to Tai Verdes’ specific addressee. The singer invites his co-enunciator to act through the use of the imperative; it is even an invitation in the literal sense, since it could be reformulated into *We should meet at my place* or *We could meet at my place*<sup>137</sup>. Both reformulations indicate that example (12) is aimed at strengthening the relationship Tai Verdes has with his addressee. The modal auxiliaries in these reformulations make it possible to interpret utterance (12) as an invitation or even a subtle injunction to act, especially with *should*. This example can therefore be interpreted as a form of offer if the reformulation with the modal auxiliary *could* is taken into account. This version suggests a possibility, allowing the addressee to choose whether or not to come. However, if the reformulation with *should* is considered, example (12) may instead be

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<sup>137</sup> The subject implied by this form remains a specific *you*. The use of the pronoun *we* was chosen for ease of reformulation, as the collocation between *we* and *meet* is more idiomatic. With *you*, a suitable alternative would be *You could come to my place*, ensuring a natural fit between the subject and the verb.

interpreted as a suggestion. It is more plausible to interpret it as an invitation or a suggestion, given that the imperative is inherently directive, whereas an offer entails a lower degree of imposition. Example (12) *meet at my place* is therefore primarily a request to act, following the imperative's definition, which makes it a directive speech act and simultaneously conveys an indirect speech act expressing an invitation or suggestion. In context, the value of invitation almost replaces the literal value of order.

Example (13) *Shout it from the rooftops shamelessly* is relatively ambiguous as the implicit subject (*you*) can be interpreted both as specific and generic. Since the song ("sheluvme") deals with romantic themes, it is plausible that the imperative is once again directed at the singer's romantic partner. However, this imperative structure may also be interpreted as advice directed at his audience. As explained earlier, imperatives are closely linked to modals. Here, *Shout it* could be understood as implying *You should shout it*, where the modal auxiliary *should* again indicates the expression of a suggestion. This derived property makes it possible to interpret (13) as an indirect speech act expressing a suggestion or a piece of advice – the primary act of this utterance being an order due to its imperative nature.

As said previously, the implicit subject may represent various groups of individuals. In example (13) *Shout it from the rooftops shamelessly*, Tai Verdes uses an indirect directive speech act expressing a piece of advice to address both his specific interlocutor and his audience. From an enunciative perspective, it allows the singer to establish a virtual and emotional connection with the woman and the audience. This connection may be characterized as an intersubjective relationship as the imperative involves an intention to influence the interlocutor, and even a form of pressure that prompts them to act.

Despite the figurative meaning of *show* in example (14) *Tell me what you're feelin', show me the way*, it retains its directive property, just like the imperative *tell*, which is a concrete action verb. These verbs both express requests to do something – in other words, orders – to Tai Verdes' fictional (or real) partner. However, these action verbs do not trigger the same type of response. In (14) *Tell me what you're feelin'*, *tell* is an action verb, more precisely a speech verb. The utterance containing *tell* therefore expects a verbal response from the co-speaker. The singer invites his co-enunciator, namely, his romantic partner, to confide in him as part of their relationship. This invitation to confess her feelings constitutes a secondary value that combines with the literal value of order expressed by example (14). It can therefore be interpreted as an indirect speech act expressing an invitation to confess in addition to its value of order.

In example (14), *Show me the way* is more metaphorical – which is reminiscent of the last stage of the scale of negotiation of meaning, established by Penec (TBP: 1-2). Indeed, it does not

literally constitute an invitation to perform the action mentioned. It acts as a request for advice and emotional guidance, rather than a physical request for direction, still in the context of their relationship. *Show me the way* can be interpreted as another case of indirect speech act but this time the derived value is a request for guidance – its literal value being again an order due to its form as a simple imperative structure.

In short, like all imperatives, these three examples are essentially directive in nature, which enables Tai Verdes to impose a certain content on his addressee. By definition, their form makes them directives expressing an order. However, examples (12) *Meet at my place*, (13) *Shout it from the rooftops shamelessly* and (14) *Tell what you're feelin', show me the way* reveal that imperative structures can also combine several illocutionary values, enabling them to express indirect speech acts – as was the case with interrogatives. In the context of these examples, Tai Verdes uses these imperatives to convey an invitation (see (12) above), a piece of advice (see (13) above), an invitation to confess or a request for guidance, as in (14). Conveying such values, these three examples can be interpreted as expressing indirect speech acts. In any case, since imperatives essentially express directives, there always seems to be a desire on the part of the speaker to impose a certain content on their addressee, with varying degrees of intensity. This process of meaning imposition allows Tai Verdes to establish an intersubjective relationship with his specific addressee and with the listeners in (13). In examples (12) and (14), the audience is not directly included in the artist's speech. It is only through the staging of intimate exchanges that the audience may feel involved. It gives the listeners the impression of having access to Tai Verdes' private life, making them feel closer to him. More precisely, it gives them temporary access to the singer's subjectivity and helps create this virtual space of mutual understanding.

Thus, despite the absence of a direct response to Tai Verdes' invitations to act, all of these imperatives can still be considered as speech acts. Indeed, at the moment of enunciation, the conditions – that is, his status as a popular artist – make it legitimate for the singer to utter such acts to his audience. As a reminder, according to Searle's classification, imperative structures are generally directive speech acts, intended to influence the co-enunciator, or requests to do something as defined by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2008: 84). Even though the co-speaker is not physically present at the moment of utterance in the previous examples, their pragmatic function is still effective and they still function as speech acts. They may produce a distinct pragmatic effect compared to directives occurring in standard conversational contexts. The audience's responses may be emotional or cognitive, when listening to these songs. All the examples discussed above illustrate the defining features of imperatives, particularly their tendency to prompt a shift from verbal production to intended action – even when the perlocutionary effects cannot be concretely verified.

From an enunciative point of view, all these forms participate in a strategy of meaning imposition on the hearers. Rather than asking questions or using modal auxiliaries that would have softened the demands in question, Tai Verdes decides to use these imperative forms directly, which convey a particularly directive value. Rather than negotiating meaning in a balanced way with the co-enunciator, meaning is imposed on the latter without mediation or elements that would attenuate it. These imperative forms thus emphasize intersubjective pressure. It reveals their involvement in intersubjective relationships.

## 2.2. *Stative verb imperatives*

Stative verbs are also compatible with the imperative. They represent another type of “ordinary imperative” (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002: 924) and follow the general characteristics of their syntactic category. These imperatives may elicit different responses from those triggered by imperatives involving action verbs. Such responses are often more emotional or cognitive in nature, as the interpretation of these imperatives depends on properties inherent to the implicit subject. The following section examines Tai Verdes’ use of such constructions and analyzes their pragmatic and enunciative functions.

(15) TV “rEaL WorLD”

Nobody sees my dreams but me

But I’m cookin’ a fantasy

All the ingredients are here

**Just be a little patient with me**

...

I will never, ever, fucking ever give up

(16) TV “Let’s go to Hell”

It will never drop one degree colder

**Feel the flames, the heat burning your shoulders**

You’ll be fine when the thing’s all over

In example (15) *Just be a little patient with me*, the implied subject *you* can refer to several addressees. In this song (“rEaL WorLD”), Tai Verdes seems to speak primarily to his former friends, who have all succeeded in life and let him down since, while he was undergoing a period of personal instability. He also addresses his listeners. He asks both groups to wait for him to succeed in turn, hence the use of the imperative to make this request.

In (16) *Feel the flames, the heat burning your shoulders*, Tai Verdes addresses his romantic partner in the song’s story (“Let’s go to Hell”) but, unlike action verb imperatives, the expected response is no longer physical but cognitive. Indeed, the singer calls on an image, that of the *flames*

which likely functions as a metaphor for love. This is again reminiscent of the last stage of the scale of meaning negotiation. Thus, this metaphor creates a common image for the singer and his addressee, as well as an image accessible to his audience. The same process operating in example (14) *Tell me what you're feelin', show me the way* in II.2.1 seems to be at play here. It seems that Tai Verdes wishes to give the listener the impression of having access to his private life, which would allow for the establishment of a virtual relationship with them.

Moreover, example (15) *Just be a little patient with me* is an explicit example of a request to do something; the adverb *please* could even be added at the end of the request. This occurrence can also be considered as establishing a form of suspense and almost teasing. It is as if the singer were saying "you will see what I'm capable of." This dimension of suspense is reinforced by the song's musical structure, since after this verse, there is a marked pause with the next one. It is also the penultimate sentence in the song, which, by its position, reveals the power of the speech act. This dimension of provocation constitutes a derived value, which combines with the literal value of order. This makes it possible to interpret example (15) as an indirect speech act expressing a provocation. Once again, a phenomenon of meaning imposition is at work; the teasing dimension relies on the singer's self-confidence and professional status, through which he seeks to impose this content on his audience, thereby establishing an intersubjective relationship with them.

Example (16) *Feel the flames, the heat burning your shoulders* appears more as an invitation. This imperative is less directive than example (15) *Just be a little patient with me*, as emotional states cannot be imposed upon the addressee. Tai Verdes cannot force his romantic partner to *feel* something, since her personal sensations lie beyond his control. Instead, he prompts her to become aware of a specific sensation (*feel the flames*), which also functions as a metaphor for the singer's intense romantic feelings toward the addressee. This highlights a guiding dimension in the singer's speech, as he appears to lead her toward emotional awareness. Thus, due to its form, example (16) *Feel the flames, the heat burning your shoulders* is another directive expressing an order. Its value of guidance makes it possible to interpret it as another indirect speech act, as this derived value combines with the literal value of order. Like the previous example, utterance (16) contributes to imposing meaning on the co-speaker, but this time in a more attenuated way, as it is an invitation or orientation toward a certain sensory state. The intersubjective pressure is therefore less strong, but still present through the chosen form, i.e. the imperative.

Thus, Tai Verdes' use of imperative forms with stative verbs may enable him to create metaphorical images, which allows for the expression of different illocutionary values. These images enable the listeners to better perceive the singer's subjectivity, which can make them feel more connected to what he is saying. Through this sharing of a part of his subjectivity, the singer

seems to establish a meeting point between his representations and those of the audience, thereby placing the singer and his audience in an intersubjective relationship.

### 2.3. *Imperatives in fixed phrases*

Ordinary imperatives may also be found in the form of idiomatic fixed phrases as in the following examples:

(17) TV “LAst dAy oN EaRTh”

**Wait**, wait, wait

You’re telling me I got 24 of these 60 minutes things left?

Damn, I ain’t get to be a billionaire yet

Fly around first class, private jet flex

(18) TV “Let’s go to Hell”

**Move it**, move it now to the music

This fever dreaming so lucid

Your life is super confusing

Baby, it’s hard to be human

(19) TV “Let’s go to Hell”

Smoke it up ‘til I can’t hear sounds

Flip the Earth and turn it upside down

**Come on**, baby, go southbound

There’s a secret place in Arizona

In the first example (17) *Wait, wait, wait*, the implicit subject *you* can be interpreted as generic. The utterance appears to be directed at the audience, aiming to capture their attention. The use of the imperative in this context creates a pause in the continuity of the lyrics, recalling the rupture of discourse linearity commonly associated with imperative constructions. This effect is reinforced by the repetition of *wait*, whose semantics inherently suggest suspension. Moreover, the fact that *wait* is both idiomatic in its imperative form and positioned at a strategically significant point in the song amplifies its function as a discursive rupture. Indeed, *wait* is located at the beginning of the third verse, after the second chorus, i.e. right in the middle of the song. This choice therefore appears to be a strategy to maintain the hearer’s attention and create a form of suspense in order to maintain interest and ensure the whole song is heard. Thus, through the use of the imperative, Tai Verdes invites his audience to perform an action, that of *waiting* for the rest of the song. This attempt at influencing his audience makes this utterance appear as a directive speech act according to Searle’s typology, and more particularly a directive expressing an order. The value of order can even be

made explicit through the reformulation *I order you to – to wait* in the case of (17) – as it explicitly conveys the influence or exercise of power (Austin, 1975).

In example (18) *Move it, move it now to the music*, the implicit subject *you* is both generic and specific, as in example (13) in II.2.1. With utterance (18), Tai Verdes invites the person he is addressing – namely, his romantic partner in the song (“Let’s go to Hell”) – as well as the audience, to perform an action, that is, dancing to the rhythm of his song. The direct object of the verb, *it*, refers to the addressees’ body, which can be understood from the context and the idiomatic nature of the expression. Despite its construction as a fixed phrase, example (18) can be interpreted as a speech act which expresses an order because of the inherent injunction to act contained in its imperative form. Additionally, the invitation to dance can even be understood as an incitement to dance. This is reinforced by the repetition of *Move it*, which creates a rhythm. This dimension of incitement constitutes a derived illocutionary value of (18) *Move it*. This makes it possible to interpret it as an indirect speech act. Through the directive nature of the structure and its value of incitement, the imposition of meaning is rather strong and allows the singer to establish a relationship with his specific addressee and the listeners. This relationship can be characterized as intersubjective as the strategy of meaning imposition is one of the manifestations of intersubjectivity in speech.

In (19) *Come on, baby, go southbound*, the implied subject (*you*) is specific, which is made explicit with the vocative term *baby*. It directly addresses the singer’s romantic partner, as the song (“Let’s go to Hell”) is about love. Due to its imperative form, example (19) also has a directive function. From a literal perspective, *Come on* represents a simple direct speech act that expresses an order. In the context of (19), *Come on* may be interpreted as representing an encouragement to travel, again as a form of incitement or exhortation. This can be perceived thanks to the right co-text (*go southbound*), which contains another case of simple imperative. The latter can be reformulated as *you should go southbound*. The use of the modal auxiliary reveals the presence of a suggestion, which follows *Come on*. Tai Verdes therefore employs *Come on* to encourage his addressee to follow his suggestion in the form of another imperative. The directive value of the fixed phrase as encouragement are reinforced by its definition. Indeed, according to the *Oxford Dictionary of English*, “come on” is accepted as an expression in the imperative “said when encouraging someone to do something or to hurry up.” It is the particle *on* that modifies the verb. Their combination conveys this meaning of exhortation as the adverbial particle introduces the idea of starting and pushing to action. This value of encouragement is therefore combined with the literal value of order in example (19), constituting its derived value. Example (19) *Come on* can thus be interpreted as an indirect speech act, which expresses an encouragement or exhortation.

When the imperative occurs within a fixed phrase, as in examples (17; 18; 19), its syntactic structure remains unchanged and it still disrupts the linear progression of speech. The only difference from simple imperative constructions is that an element may be added after the verb base to form a fixed phrase (the neutral pronoun *it* in (18) and the adverbial particle *on* in (19)). Such fixed expressions are common in spoken English and often serve pragmatic functions. The imperative may thus contribute to the formation of fixed phrases designed to capture the listener's attention. Example (17) *Wait* demonstrates on the one hand that there can be simple imperatives without derived illocutionary values, expressing a simple order and thus breaking the linearity of discourse, as is typical of imperative forms. On the other hand, examples (18) *Move it* and (19) *Come on* illustrate that imperatives in fixed phrases may additionally express indirect speech acts such as an incitement (18) or an encouragement (19). Even when expressed through fixed phrases, these imperatives appear to contribute to the phenomenon of meaning imposition on the addressee(s) – with varying degrees of intensity depending on Tai Verdes' intention and the context. Once again, this allows the singer to establish an intersubjective relationship with his addressees.

#### 2.4. *Negative imperatives*

As with all the previously discussed forms, negative imperatives also fall under the category of “ordinary imperatives” (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002: 924). They conform to the general characteristics of imperatives. As explained in the general definition of imperative structures, when an imperative is negated, the auxiliary *do* is used to mark negation, in accordance with the NICE properties. The negative form *do not* or *don't*, when it is contracted, is placed before the bare verb, while the rest of the imperative structure remains unchanged. Quirk et al. (1985: 830) state that to form a negative imperative, the speaker only needs to “[add] an initial *Don't* or *Do not*” and to “replac[e] assertive by non-assertive items when necessary.” This construction is illustrated in the following examples:

(20) TV “DRUGS”

If you think I'm gone, I'm just doing drugs

Not hard ones, just ones that change my mind up

**Don't mind me if I light up**

Only need it sorta kinda

Drugs

(21) TV ‘sheluvme”

I can't even look in the face of the preachers

You creative with this shit, makin' up new positions

You got magic in them hips, **don't let 'em tell you different**

In utterances (20) *Don't mind me if I light up* and (21) *don't let 'em tell you different*, the implicit subject is once again *you*. In example (20) *Don't mind me if I light up*, the negative form makes it possible to give an order which is conditioned by the *if* clause *if I light up*. The order is attenuated through the association of the negation and the use of the verb *mind*. The value of order is consistent with the imperative form. Example (20) can thus be considered a directive speech act expressing an order.

Furthermore, *Don't mind me* is idiomatic. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English*, it means “don't bother about me” or “don't let concern for me interfere with your plans” and is “said more or less sincerely, but without criticism of the person to whom it is addressed.” In example (20) *Don't mind me if I light up*, Tai Verdes seems to sincerely request his audience, or any observer who happens to see him when the condition is met, not to judge him, leave him alone and continue their plans. The addressees are placed as potential judges who could consider his behavior deviant. Thus, this negative imperative can be interpreted as a form of anticipation of a possible judgment, as if the singer wanted to defuse the situation if it happened. It seems that the use of this expression enables Tai Verdes to preserve his self-image. By anticipating a possible judgment, *Don't mind me* truly attenuates the gravity and the deviance of the singer's behavior. It seems that the singer negotiates the meaning of this utterance with these potential judges by inviting them to be indulgent about his behavior. It is no longer the strict imposition of meaning which is characteristic of the imperative as exemplified in (18) *Move it, move it now to the music* or (19) *Come on, baby, go southbound* (see previous subsection II.2.3), but rather a form of negotiation to avoid a negative outcome for the singer. The objective is to reach an agreement between him and his audience. This request for indulgence aimed at justifying himself in advance and attenuating the transgression of his behavior can be interpreted as a secondary value that coexists with the literal value of order in (20) *Don't mind me if I light up*. Therefore, this example can be perceived as an indirect speech act, which is another directive as it requests the addressees to do something.

In addition, example (20) *Don't mind me if I light up* appears as a form of self-mockery, indicating a form of lucidity and self-awareness about his condition as a drug user. This utterance therefore illustrates the possibility for a speech act to combine several illocutionary values as this self-deprecation dimension can be perceived as another derived value of the speech act in example (20). With this layer, this utterance no longer expresses a directive but an expressive; Tai Verdes does not aim at influencing his audience but only expresses a specific psychological state.

In short, the combination of this effect with the construction *Don't mind me* allows the artist to create a direct connection between him and his hearers through humor and a form of complicity, as well as through a strategy of meaning negotiation. Again, this places Tai Verdes and his addressees in an intersubjective relationship.

Example (21) *Don't let 'em tell you different* is constructed differently as it includes *let* in its structure – a construction which will be examined in greater detail in the next subsection. Through this imperative, Tai Verdes also gives an order but this time it is addressed to his romantic partner. He seems to encourage her to refuse the influence of others, represented by the object pronoun *them*, here abbreviated in *'em*. The voices symbolized by *them* are showed as oppressive. Through the use of negation, the singer insists on the process itself and consequently on the order to refuse and oppose these voices. The dimension of order corresponds to the literal value of example (21). As a result, this example can be interpreted as a directive speech act expressing an order. However, it can also be perceived as conveying an intimate piece of advice, which would add an indirect dimension. With example (21), it seems that the singer wishes to show his support for this woman. The adjective *different* itself seems to imply that this oppression is linked to the question of identity, suggesting that this utterance is also an encouragement to assert her identity, which is apparently unique and *different* from all those voices. Thus, the value of advice makes it possible to interpret utterance (21) as an indirect speech act which expresses a piece of advice or an encouragement. Again, the listeners may have the impression of getting access to Tai Verdes' private life and may even take this piece of advice for themselves, in this spirit of self-empowerment.

Negative imperatives obey the same features as positive imperatives. They have the same enunciative function as the latter as they involve intersubjective pressure through their directive dimension and enable the singer to establish an intersubjective relationship with his addressees. However, they are useful to express illocutionary values that differ from those conveyed by positive imperatives. They may be interpreted as indirect speech acts when their literal value of order is combined with one or more derived values. Examples (20) and (21) demonstrate that negative imperatives can express a request for indulgence, self-deprecation or an encouragement to assert one's identity. In the case of the expression of self-deprecation, the act no longer belongs to the category of directives but to expressives. This reveals that negative imperatives are not restricted to the expression of directives, although it is generally their main function.

## 2.5. *Let-imperatives*

According to Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 924), all the forms discussed so far are classified as “ordinary imperatives.” The linguists contrast this subclass with another category called “let-imperatives” (Huddleston and Pullum, *ibid.*). *Let-imperatives* have a specific structure

that enables them to express a wide variety of values. They are characterized by a construction beginning with the permissive or causative verb *let*<sup>138</sup> followed by an agent, and then the base form of the main verb of the utterance. The imperative is contained in the verb *let*. Like all imperatives, it is addressed to a co-enunciator that I will attempt to identify in the examples below.

In imperative structures introduced by *let*, two main categories can be distinguished. Cotte (1996: 128) refers to the first category as imperatives with *let* expressing an explicit permission. With this type of *let*-imperative, speakers can construct first-person singular imperatives (e.g., “Let **me** do what I want!” or “Let **me** think”) and third-person imperatives (e.g., “Let **her** speak,” “Let **Brian** take his time” or “Let **the students** study”) (Cotte, 1996: 128). Here, none of the interlocutors participates in the process, but the addressee may influence the course of events, and the enunciator invites them not to interfere with the action of a third party or to bring it about<sup>139</sup> (ibid.). In the examples below (22; 23; 24), the agents are personal pronouns, but there are occurrences with noun phrases, such as *let the summer sun strip you down* (“TWO SUGARS”).

As their name indicates, imperatives with a *let* expressing permission retain the lexical meaning of *let*, which allows or authorizes someone to perform an action – hence their similarity to causative constructions. In these cases, the verb *let* implements two distinct processes that are not hierarchized and the imperative only applies to the permission, from which the second process may result<sup>140</sup> (e.g., “LET HIM COME AT ONCE”) (Cotte, 1996: 128).

The second type of *let*-imperatives, which Cotte (1996: 128) defines as metalinguistic<sup>141</sup>, is characterized by the impression that the two processes merge. The sign of this fusion is the contraction of *let us* in *let’s*, which unites the constituents on either side of the boundary between the original clauses – a contraction that is impossible with the *let* expressing permission<sup>142</sup> (Cotte, ibid.: 128-129). Such structures can be found in forms like “LET US ALL SIT DOWN,” to quote another example from Cotte (1996: 127), or “Let’s visit this monument today,” when *us* is contracted. The pronoun *us* or *’s* indicates that the speaker includes themselves in the invitation to act. *Let* in these structures signals a form of engagement in discourse shared between the speaker

138 The verb *let* in *let*-imperatives is reminiscent of the causative construction “to let someone do something.” This structure involves an agent (the grammatical subject) enabling or permitting another agent (the object) to perform an action. The subject does not directly carry out the action but causes it to happen by granting permission – in other words, the subject causes another subject to act. Within *let*-imperative structures, the verb *let* thus functions as a causative verb, similar to *make* or *have* in typical causative constructions.

139 Original quotation: “aucun des interlocuteurs ne participera au procès mais l’allocutaire peut influencer sur les événements et l’énonciateur l’invite à ne pas gêner l’action d’un tiers ou à la susciter” (Cotte, 1996: 128).

140 Original quotation: “Avec le *let* de permission explicite l’énoncé a deux procès distincts non hiérarchisés. L’impératif vaut seulement pour la permission dont découlera éventuellement le second procès” (Cotte, 1996: 128).

141 This term is to be understood as referring to what concerns language itself, metalanguage being the language that comments on itself. Here, the metalinguistic *let* functions as a discursive tool that organizes or frames – or comments on – the speaker’s own discourse.

142 Original quotation: “Avec le *let* métalinguistique [...] on a l’impression d’avoir un seul procès. Les propositions fusionnent presque [...]. Le signe de cette fusion est la contraction *let us* → *let’s*, qui unit les constituants de part et d’autre de la frontière des propositions initiales. Elle est impossible dans l’autre cas” (Cotte, 1996: 128-129).

and the addressee, functioning as a sort of proposal for joint action. More precisely, the speaker invites their interlocutor to act as they intend to do themselves, with as much assurance as in the second person<sup>143</sup> (Cotte, 1996: 127). The metalinguistic *let* is intended to relay the enunciator's intention without having the time for deliberation<sup>144</sup> (ibid.: 128). Pennec (2023: 2) states that the possibility of contraction into *let's* materializes a form of fusion of the constituents; this fusion reveals the tension toward the expected act<sup>145</sup> (Cotte, 1996: 129). Imperatives with a metalinguistic *let* thus appear as particularly conducive. Cotte (1996: 129) insists on the fact, with a metalinguistic *let*, the utterance is cataphoric and inciting; it is reduced in form in order to better lead the co-speaker beyond words and into action<sup>146</sup> (ibid.). The metalinguistic *let* therefore indicates the relationship to the co-speaker in its very structure. That is why Pennec (2023: 2) states that the use of the first-person plural pronoun in such structures “seems to reflect a movement of co-construction (real or supposed) of meaning, in the service of transmitting messages.”

However, Pennec (2023: 11) underlines the paradox that is implied in this type of construction. Indeed, a *let*-imperative with a first-person plural *us* “implies the co-enunciator” but, through their conducive nature, the speaker tends to simultaneously impose meaning on the co-enunciator. In fact, this paradox seems to reveal the presence of intersubjectivity. Both the manifestation of meaning imposition and the fact that the co-speaker is included in the speaker's own speech – something that is reminiscent of the concept of dialogism – seem to highlight the establishment of an intersubjective relationship between the speaker and their interlocutor. These markers of the relationship with the other may thus correspond to forms of intersubjectivity in discourse. Tai Verdes uses both types of *let*-imperatives in his lyrics, as exemplified by the following utterances:

(22) TV “Something To Cry About”

I'm taking two sessions a week

She's giving me all of the things I need

I try not to fall asleep

But every night you keep me from counting sheep (**baby just let me be**)

It's too late now baby

(23) TV “Sandman”

**Let it go if you know it doesn't matter**

---

143 Original quotation: “Ainsi dans un impératif de première personne du pluriel il l'invite, avec autant d'empressement qu'en deuxième personne, à agir comme il se destine à le faire lui-même” (Cotte, 1996: 127).

144 Original quotation: “Mais celui-ci est destiné à relayer la visée de l'énonciateur sans avoir le temps d'une délibération” (Cotte, 1996: 128).

145 Original quotation: “La fusion des propositions montre la tension vers l'acte attendu” (Cotte, 1996: 129).

146 Original quotation: “A nouveau l'énoncé est cataphorique et incitatif ; il se réduit pour mieux conduire hors de mots” (Cotte, 1996: 128).

Are the tears from crying or from laughter?  
Yeah, know it's just 'cause you love me too strong  
Know it's just 'cause you love me too long  
(24) TV "Let's go to Hell"

**Let's go to hell together**

We can go whenever  
Hold me down 'cause we're going fast  
I'll be your one ride or die

Example (22) *baby just let me be* is a first-person singular imperative formed with a *let*. The implicit subject *you* is differentiated from the agent *me*. According to the definition of such structures, this occurrence is a case of *let*-imperative expressing an explicit permission. Indeed, (22) is an explicit request not to be disturbed, but is attenuated through its construction involving *let*. It could have been formulated instead with a pragmatically equivalent construction in the form of a simple imperative such as "leave me alone." This seems to reveal the singer's use of a strategy of hedging as the *let*-imperative appears less direct as "leave me alone." In (22) *let me be*, the directive dimension is nonetheless strong, but the form retains a sort of politeness or softness. Tai Verdes is addressing his former romantic partner, whom he calls *baby* in the song, and whom he cannot seem to forget. This occurrence appears in a context of saturation and a certain annoyance on the part of the singer, which can be seen in this example with the adverb *just* in the left direct co-text (*baby just let me be*). This illustrates the tensions in their relationship, and therefore the need to be alone, as expressed by the singer in this imperative. Example (22) *baby just let me be* thus appears as a supplication from the singer. The previous sentence (*But every night you keep me from counting sheep*) also indicates the excessive presence of his former partner, reinforcing his desire to be alone.

It is noteworthy that this example appears in the backing vocals rather than in the main lyrics, as indicated by the use of parentheses in the transcription. This detail seems to reinforce the notion of saturation – suggesting that the singer might be too hesitant to say it aloud due to apprehension about his interlocutor's reaction. Alternatively, this hesitation could stem from fear of the potential consequences associated with the utterance, evoking principles from pragmatics, particularly the effects of language in the world of acts.

Nevertheless, given the rest of the song, it becomes clear that the singer is losing patience just thinking about this woman and feels mentally exhausted. His request to be left alone therefore seems particularly sincere. This dimension of supplication becomes apparent through the context and co-text of the occurrence. Thus, as (22) *baby just let me be* is by definition a speech act expressing order, due to its imperative structure, the dimension of supplication appears as a derived

value of this speech act, making it an indirect speech act. Through the two speech acts expressed in example (22), Tai Verdes attempts to influence his co-speaker and prompt her to act. This is why they can be characterized as directives. This attempt at influencing the other can also be understood as a manifestation of the process of meaning imposition. Therefore, this allows Tai Verdes to establish an intersubjective relationship with his interlocutor.

Example (23) *Let it go if you know it doesn't matter* is another case of *let*-imperative expressing permission but, this time, the agent *it* is external to the enunciative sphere. *Let it go* is in fact an idiom. It is commonly used to describe someone's behavior when they do "not choose, or bother, to say or do anything more about something which might be thought to require further examination, attention, action" (*Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English*). In example (23), Tai Verdes encourages his interlocutor not to react to an external situation if the condition expressed by the subordinate clause (*if you know it doesn't matter*) is met. This corresponds to the definition of the fixed phrase. Behind the order it conveys, this occurrence conceals an indirect speech act expressing a piece of advice. Indeed, the singer's aim is no longer to impose the content of this utterance on his co-speaker, but rather to direct the interlocutor's thinking. From an interpretative point of view, the value in context of (23) seems to replace its literal value – which seems to support a point made in the definition of indirect speech acts. The piece of advice becomes clear when the example is rephrased as *You should let it go if it doesn't matter*. The modal auxiliary *should* reflects the friendly and gentle invitation to act, which is typical of a speech act expressing advice. Example (23) plays a role in negotiating meaning, as the singer employs a directive speech act aimed at influencing the addressee. However, since it expresses advice, the typical strategy of meaning imposition associated with imperatives is mitigated, which may be interpreted as another strategy of hedging. In example (23), Tai Verdes' objective appears to be to gently encourage his co-enunciator to act in accordance with his opinion, which aligns with the broader phenomenon of meaning negotiation. In this way, example (23) helps to establish a relationship between the subjects by addressing the co-speaker and seeking to influence them through the directive speech act expressing advice.

Moreover, in (23) *Let it go if you know it doesn't matter*, the identity of Tai Verdes' addressee(s) is more difficult to determine, as he proposes a reinterpretation of the Chordettes' song "Mr. Sandman." In his version, entitled "Sandman," he adopts the role of a folkloric figure: a dream merchant and storyteller. Thus, in (23), the singer seems to address a specific interlocutor, yet the utterance can simultaneously be interpreted as general advice directed at his audience. The implicit subject *you* is therefore both specific and generic. The specific addressee might again be a female figure, as is the case in most of his other songs, given the lyrics' themes of seduction and love. In

this way, the artist positions himself as a creator of modern dreams or fantasies, only seeking to provide temporary emotional escape to his addressees. This interpretation is supported by the vocabulary used in the lines following this example, which contain negatively connoted terms such as *tears* and *crying*, as well as the repeated use of the adverb *too*, conveying a sense of excess. Through this imperative form, utterance (23) emerges as a seemingly comforting, yet ultimately illusory, piece of advice intended for Tai Verdes' addressees.

In example (24) *Let's go to hell together*, the agent (*us*) is different as it includes the singer himself. Indeed, he equally invites his romantic partner and himself to act, i.e. *to go to hell together*. This inclusiveness is made even stronger with the adverb *together*, which illustrates the unity of their relationship. This adverb highlights the involvement of the other and creates a common ground, which, in this case, is emotional. Example (24) therefore uses a metalinguistic *let*. It expresses a collective invitation to metaphorically go through an intense or even dangerous situation together, the danger being symbolized by the choice of the expression *go to hell*. It can also refer to the absolute commitment that comes with marriage, which indicates that the bride and groom can get through any of life's trials together. Here, the lovers would be ready to overcome the ordeal of hell thanks to the power of their love, symbolizing unflinching fidelity and solidarity. In this way, the metalinguistic *let* seems ideal to symbolize a strong union. This metaphorical interpretation might again be reminiscent of the last stage of the scale of meaning negotiation and serves to bridge the singer's subjectivity with that of his specific addressee and the listeners.

This construction may also indicate that Tai Verdes makes a suggestion. Indeed, (24) *Let's go to hell together* could be reformulated as *I think we should go to hell together* – still in the metaphorical sense discussed earlier. It is even suggested in the definition of “let us” or “let's” established by the *Oxford Dictionary of English*, which states that the construction is partly “used as a polite way of making or responding to a suggestion, giving an instruction, or introducing a remark.” Note the mention of politeness which is reminiscent of the concepts of meaning negotiation and hedging. This occurrence therefore contains an illocutionary value of suggestion and functions as an indirect directive speech act. Its directive nature is however not as strong as it can be in simple orders. As a matter of fact, when (24) is rephrased as an imperative structure without *let*, as in *Come to hell with me*, the effect of attenuation is completely lost and the injunction to act is much more direct.

Lastly, example (24) *Let's go to hell together* is particularly revealing of Tai Verdes' feelings for his addressee and of a strong union between them. This may evoke an expressive function. This would add a new layer to this utterance and establish it as another indirect speech act, which would be expressive rather than directive.

As previously observed, *let*-imperatives are typical interactional tools, as they always allow the enunciator to directly address the co-speaker, whether or not the latter is explicitly included in the structure through *us* with a metalinguistic *let*. Depending on the case, they contribute to a strong strategy meaning imposition, or a more nuanced negotiation of meaning. They can express a wide variety of values. Examples (22; 23; 24) all possess a direct illocutionary value of order but each of them expresses a different indirect value, namely, a supplication in (22), an illusory piece of advice in (23), and a suggestion in (24). Example (24) even conveys an expressive speech act. This demonstrates that *let*-imperatives may contribute to the expression of several types of speech acts. Therefore, due to their construction and their values, *let*-imperatives appear as an effective strategy for establishing an intersubjective relationship between the singer and his addressee. This relationship may involve a strategy of meaning negotiation or even imposition. The latter are by definition manifestations of the phenomenon of intersubjectivity in language. This confirms that imperative structures introduced by *let* may contribute to intersubjective strategies, in particular when they are formed with a metalinguistic *let*, as raised in their definition.

## 2.6. *Imperatives followed by a verb with broad semantics*

Ordinary imperatives can additionally possess more specific forms. Indeed, some verbs have such a wide meaning that they can be preceded by the verb *go*, following this structure:

(25) TV “Sandman”

Now you see whatever you need to see

**Go make everyone believe**

**You can take it all now**

Change out of your skeleton

Slip in another skin

(26) TV “Solamente”

Google me, bitch, my name is so searchable

**Go ask Jeeves**, big on Yelp, five-stars, please, awards on shelves

Every time I say I’m good, do I mean well?

Helpin’ every other person, except for myself

(27) TV “momma told me imma be”

“Time to go, you’re too special

To lay around my house and take up space,

You’re gonna do something for the human race,

You didn’t get my eyes but you got my face,

**Now go find some dream to chase**”

In these three cases, these imperatives resemble causative structures, such as “to make someone do something” or “to let someone do something” – reminiscent of the permission *let*-imperative seen in the previous subsection. Indeed, the three constructions under study orient the addressee toward an action by making the direction toward the action explicit through the verb *go*, similarly to causative constructions with causative verbs, even though *go* is not typically a causative verb. However, in examples (25; 26; 27), the injunction to act is not as explicit as it is in causative structures, yet their directive nature may seem even stronger. The choice to use *go* followed directly by the base form of the main verb of the process gives the impression of immediate action.

This structure is made possible by the broad semantics of the verbs *make*, *ask* and *find*. As a matter of fact, when this structure is applied to verbs with more specific meanings, such as “to audition” (“go audition today’s candidates”?) or “to circumvent” (“go circumvent the law”?), the collocation with *go* no longer appears natural. It seems that the semantics of the verbs *make*, *ask* and *find* make it possible to omit the grammatical element that would establish the grammatical connection between them and *go*. It is the coordinating conjunction *and*, that typically links the two actions and places them on an equal syntactic level, which seems to be omitted. As a consequence, there is neither a hierarchical relationship nor a cause-and-effect connection between the two actions in such structures. Thus, this construction appears as a simple sequence of two verbs: *go* in its imperative form, and the second verb in the infinitive – since it could even be argued that the infinitive marker *to* is implied and would normally precede the second verb. *Go*, namely a verb of movement, is associated with the base form of a second verb representing a second action. The two verbs work together; the second one seems to depend on *go*. Indeed, without the verb *go*, the meaning of the expression would be altered, and the effect of immediacy would be diminished. This construction thus combines the idea of movement with that of immediate action. Unlike explicit causative structures, the conciseness of the form seems to make the latter more effective, echoing the general definition of the imperative. This abbreviated form would also prevent the co-enunciator from deliberating, and consequently prompt to action more strongly. Its conciseness seems to be the explanation for its effectiveness. This structure seems to be common in spoken and informal English, which is consistent with the characteristics of the corpus.

In example (25) *Go make everyone believe [y]ou can take it all now*, Tai Verdes urges his interlocutor to *make everyone believe* that she *can take it all now*. In context, it resembles an encouraging speech, as illustrated when reformulated with the modal auxiliary *should* as *You should go (and) make everyone believe*. However, as explained above, in this song (“Sandman”), the singer presents himself as a modern-day wish-granter, offering nothing more than illusory dreams to both a specific addressee, a female figure, and the general audience. Thus, the context seems to indicate

that this suggestion or piece of advice appears rather illusory. It creates the impression that the process can be achieved, while in the context of the song it remains a mere illusion.

Nonetheless, the imperative form with *go* in (25) seems to show a strong sense of incitement, through which Tai Verdes prompts to action. The imposition of meaning also seems particularly strong as the conciseness of the structure prevents the co-speaker from deliberating. The injunction to act can thus be perceived as the literal value of utterance (25) *Go make everyone believe [y]ou can take it all now*. From a pragmatic perspective, this example thus conveys a direct speech act expressing an order, that is, a directive, as its concise form matches with its sense of injunction. By contrast, the dimension of illusory encouragement and advice can be interpreted as a secondary value. The combination of its literal and derived values enables example (25) to be understood as a directive indirect speech act. Despite the illusory dimension, example (25) *Go make everyone believe [y]ou can take it all now* can still be characterized as a speech act. The utterance still allows Tai Verdes to establish an intersubjective relationship with his addressees. The distinction between genuine or illusory encouragement in example (25) calls on the addressees' critical spirit. Indeed, it is only through a deep understanding of the lyrics that they may discern the illusory nature of the singer's promises. It is plausible that Tai Verdes intentionally seeks to engage the audience's critical spirit, thereby creating another form of relation between the singer and his hearers – a relation more characterized by intellectual complicity.

The following example (26) *Go ask Jeeves* is ironic because of the reference to the former search engine *Ask Jeeves* as it forms a pun with the lexical verb *ask*. Its construction suggests a simple request to act, which reveals its value of order. Example (26) can therefore be considered a directive speech act. The sense of injunction is again particularly strong due to the conciseness of the structure but it seems that there is an additional layer in the utterance through the use of the pun. Tai Verdes, presenting himself as remarkably famous, while challenging the interlocutor through the use of irony, leaves the latter in no doubt as to his credibility as an artist. He imposes this process on his co-enunciator, using a form that leaves no time for deliberation. Even though utterance (26) constitutes a literal invitation to do their own research for the co-speaker, the request is ironic. It is therefore insincere, which can be seen in the co-text as the singer asserts his celebrity (*my name is so searchable / big on Yelp, five-stars, please, awards on shelves*). Both this sense of boastfulness and the provocation directed at the singer's addressees appear in context as derived values of the direct speech act of order expressed in (26) *Go ask Jeeves*. This utterance can therefore be interpreted as an indirect directive through its value of challenge and as an indirect expressive through the self-satisfaction value. As was the case with negative imperatives, example (26) *Go ask Jeeves* again proves how imperative structures can serve to convey expressive speech

acts, communicating one of Tai Verdes' specific psychological state – namely, boastfulness – to his addressees.

However, this moment of self-satisfaction is only temporary in the song, as the singer immediately begins to question himself. He does so throughout the rest of the text, which is filled with doubt and, above all, an omnipresent sense of loneliness. The song (“Solamente”) aims to reveal the isolation and malaise he feels as an artist, despite the many people who support him, as well as to expose the superficiality of digital success. When he says (26) *Go ask Jeeves*, he is addressing all the people who perceive this superficiality only through the prism of the digital dimension and social validation. The previous line contains another imperative (*Google me*), but in this case, it is a simple structure with an action verb. Interestingly, this action derives from the proper noun of another search engine, *Google*. The proper noun has undergone a change of grammatical category, granting it the properties of a verb. That is why *Google* can be employed here as a verb in its imperative form. The use of this contrast between the two cultural references also enables Tai Verdes to create complicity with his audience who are familiar with the former search engine *Ask Jeeves*, i.e. Americans born in the 1980s and 1990s, like himself, and also to speak to the majority of his audience with the mention of *Google*. The singer can therefore mock the people who only see his life as superficial while simultaneously establishing complicity with his fans. Therefore, through the irony of the pun and this form of complicity, Tai Verdes attempts to establish an intersubjective connection with his listeners.

Finally, example (27) *Now go find some dream to chase* reproduces a speech that Tai Verdes' mother might have said to him. This is made clear by the song title “momma told me imma be” and the use of quotation marks to signify reported speech. The use of the imperative is legitimized by the parental authority his mother has over him.

The form with *go* creates an effect of urgency. This imperative instance can also be perceived as moralizing, yet the essence of this utterance remains deeply protective and encouraging, as it is emotionally charged. The directive dimension in example (27) is therefore not as strong as it is in previous examples, as it takes the form of an encouragement to start living independently. Two illocutionary values can therefore be identified in this utterance. On the one hand, a value of order can be interpreted as the literal value of this example because of its imperative form. This provides (27) *Now go find some dream to chase* the status of a directive expressing an order. On the other hand, the value of parental encouragement can be perceived as the utterance's derived value. This suggests the combination of the direct speech act with an indirect speech act, which conveys an encouragement to act, i.e. another directive. The strategy of meaning imposition can be perceived through both illocutionary values, enabling an intersubjective

relationship to be established between Tai Verdes and his mother. While this encouragement is not explicitly directed at the listeners, they may feel concerned by the situation and identify with the singer's experience. Having access to Tai Verdes' personal narrative, the audience has a glimpse of his representations. This enables the artist to establish another form of intersubjective relationship and facilitate understanding for the listeners.

Imperatives followed by a verb with broad semantics seem to prevent the co-speaker from deliberating. They enable the enunciator to express a wide range of values, whether they are conveyed through a strong imposition of meaning as in (25) and (26), or softened to express advice or encouragement, as in (27). These constructions consequently appear as a particularly effective means to establish an intersubjective relationship between Tai Verdes and his addressees, relying on the influence the singer attempts to impose on the latter.

## 2.7. *Specific case: a pragmaticized imperative*

Finally, imperatives are sometimes pragmaticized, which means that a verb, which is originally lexical, evolves toward a form with more pragmatic functions. Through the evolution of language and the way speakers use this verb in discourse, the verb may acquire characteristics which allow it to play a more significant role in communication and interaction, than its original grammatical and discursive functions would suggest. They can therefore become discourse markers.

Discourse markers, typical of oral discourse, “do not constitute a separate syntactic category” (Fraser, 1999: 943) but rather “have the syntactic properties associated with their class membership” (Fraser, 1999: 950). What defines them is their procedural meaning, as “they contribute to the interpretation of an utterance rather than to its propositional content” (Fraser, 1999: 946), making them part of the pragmatic field. As a subcategory of pragmatic markers, they help to “clarif[y] a speaker's communicative intention” (Fraser, 1990: 389). In that sense, they facilitate intercomprehension and contribute to discourse coherence, even though they are not obligatory. As a result of their “syntactic and prosodic detachability” (Ranger, 2018: 5) and “polyvalent” nature (ibid.: 306), discourse markers serve as flexible tools that reveal “some aspect of a speaker's communicative intention” (Fraser, 1990: 393). The following example may illustrate a case of pragmaticized imperative:

(28) TV “LAst dAy oN EaRTh”

You're telling me I got 24 of these 60 minutes things left?

**Damn, I ain't get to be a billionaire yet**

Fly around first class, private jet flex

Use a black Amex, get up out the duplexes

Originally, “to damn” is a lexical verb, which means to “be condemned by God to suffer eternal punishment in hell,” “be doomed to misfortune and failure,” “criticize strongly” or “curse (someone or something)” (*Oxford Dictionary of English*). It has a strong meaning and also carries a religious and negative connotation. *The Oxford Dictionary of English* also notes an exclamatory use in the form of an interjection<sup>147</sup>, which expresses “anger or frustration.” In this case, the religious connotation is lost, but the strong meaning and the negative connotation are retained.

In example (28) *Damn, I ain't get to be a billionaire yet*, *damn* is used as an interjection. It is particularly expressive. In this case, it is the use of the imperative form that has undergone pragmaticization. It can be understood thanks to its construction which includes only the verb in its base form, without any subject and markers of tense, modality or person. It is also syntactically optional, as exemplified by the fact that the utterance *I ain't get to be a billionaire yet* can stand independently. More precisely, it is a discourse marker that emphasizes Tai Verdes' emotional situation. It reveals “some aspect of a speaker's communicative intention” as Fraser (1990: 393) points out. Indeed, in this song (“LAsT dAY oN EaRTh”), the singer expresses his disappointment and frustration about the statement *I ain't get to be a billionaire yet* and, more broadly, about this sudden realization of the limited time he has left, made evident in the previous line (*You're telling me I got 24 of these 60 minutes things left?*). (28) *Damn* has therefore lost elements of its lexical meaning and is used as a discourse marker. Its value of disappointment or frustration corresponds to the definition given by *The Oxford Dictionary of English*.

The value of disappointment and frustration can also be considered as the illocutionary value of the utterance. Indeed, its value matches with its pragmaticized imperative form, which makes it possible to interpret example (28) *Damn, I ain't get to be a billionaire yet* as another case of speech act. However, despite what its imperative form suggests, this speech act is not directive but expressive. Indeed, according to Searle (1979), this type of utterance can even be classified as a speech act expressing a “swear word<sup>148</sup>,” as it is an exclamation for personal use and allows the enunciator to convey a personal feeling without addressing it to anyone in particular, other than oneself (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008: 148). (28) *Damn* thus functions here as a discourse marker that enables Tai Verdes to create the impression that the audience is part of a context of intimacy with him, as if he were confessing to them, making the utterance more relatable. The intensity of the marker also indicates the singer's personal involvement and reinforces this idea of confession with his audience. By sharing his emotion, the artist invites the listeners to empathize or identify with him. (28) *Damn* does not have a directive dimension but makes a part of the singer's representations

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147 According to Quirk et al. (1985: 852), “Damn (it)” is an “expletive.” Expletives “provide a common mode of amplification in extremely informal speech” (ibid.: 1418). They are usually aimed at emphasizing and intensifying the speaker's emotions (ibid.: 1414).

148 Called “juron” in French (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008: 148).

at the moment of enunciation explicit, which contributes to bringing the singer's subjectivity closer to that of the listener.

From a discourse organization point of view, this example of pragmaticized imperative marks a clear break from the rest of the text, signaling a shift in both structure and emotion on Tai Verdes' part. It consequently appears to be a powerful means of capturing the audience's attention. In line with the definition of discourse markers, (28) *Damn* facilitates intercomprehension. Even when its primary function appears to be limited to attention-grabbing rather than exerting influence, it nonetheless contributes to the establishment of a temporary common ground of understanding. This shared space supports the emergence of an intersubjective relationship between the singer and his audience.

### **3. Conclusion on their role in the expression of intersubjectivity**

The analysis of imperative structures in Tai Verdes' lyrics reveals that imperatives are not limited to the expression of direct speech acts of orders, even though they might sometimes function as simple orders, as in (17). In context, these verbal forms can convey a wide range of indirect directive speech acts. Particularly with imperative structures, it appeared that from an interpretative point of view, the indirect speech acts conveyed by the analyzed utterances tended to substitute for the direct act (most often of order). Indeed, in context, this illocutionary value of order was less perceptible than the derived values the examples under study express. These imperatives can express values such as an invitation, a suggestion, advice, an incitement, an encouragement, an exhortation, a provocation, or a supplication. In such cases, intersubjective pressure is particularly marked as these acts can be perceived as directives. The construction of imperatives may also influence the intensity of the request they constitute or the effect they produce: some formulations create a sense of urgency (27), attenuation (16; 20), irony (26), suspense (15; 17), or illusion (22; 25).

Furthermore, certain imperative structures allow for an attenuation of the typical strategy associated with the form, namely, the imposition of meaning. This process can be linked to the strategy of hedging. This can be observed in utterances that express suggestions (12; 24), advice (13; 18; 21; 23; 25), requests for guidance (14), or permissions (22; 23) – situations in which meaning is more likely to be negotiated between speakers. This strategy of meaning negotiation, already noted with interrogatives, enables intersubjectivity to manifest itself through attempts made by speakers to avoid interpretative discrepancies and misunderstandings.

In addition to directives, some imperatives in the corpus also convey expressive speech acts. Tai Verdes uses them to communicate a psychological state or an emotional reaction, such as disappointment or frustration (28), a strong romantic feeling (24), or a sense of self-satisfaction

(26). Although the audience is not directly addressed, these utterances contribute to the phenomenon of intersubjectivity by reflecting aspects of the speaker's subjectivity. Through an effect of confession or complicity, they invite identification from the hearers, who may compare their own representations with those expressed by the singer. This temporary connection may trigger potential cognitive or emotional responses in the listener. At the moment of listening, the audience may engage in a process of retro-interpretation, which could trigger such reactions.

Imperatives are also characterized by their tendency to prevent the co-enunciator from deliberating, thereby prompting action more forcefully. Even though the addressee is never physically present, intersubjective pressure remains perceptible. As with interrogatives, the lack of observable response does not invalidate the illocutionary value of the imperative. The inherent injunctive value of the imperative persists, and the addressees are always included in Tai Verdes' discourse, in line with the concept of dialogism. As a result, even in the absence of a co-enunciator, imperative structures retain their fundamental properties, although their perlocutionary effects remain hypothetical and difficult to observe.

In all cases, the imperative enables Tai Verdes to construct a virtual relationship with his audience, primarily built upon the partial sharing of his subjectivity. Listeners may feel more involved, more directly included in the discourse, and better able to relate to what is being said – strategies that also align, at least in part, with commercial purposes. This relationship, though unilateral, generally facilitates the audience's understanding of the songs.

Thus, imperative structures – like interrogatives – fully participate in intersubjective strategies. They express comparable speech acts, are used to solicit the interlocutor, enable the negotiation or imposition of meaning, and by their very nature, reveal an orientation toward the other. This same orientation lies at the heart of utterances containing root modal auxiliaries, which will be the focus of the following section. I will now examine the points of convergence and divergence among imperatives, interrogatives, and utterances containing root modality in order to better understand their roles in the co-construction of meaning and in the implementation of intersubjectivity in Tai Verdes' discourse.

### III. Contrast with modal auxiliaries with a root value

#### 1. General definition of modality and root modality

Modality is defined as a concept that belongs to the field of meaning (Larreya and Rivière, 2019: 81). It is a phenomenon that involves the speaker's judgment. Indeed, to speak is to take a stance on a content of thought in front of the co-speaker; this stance is reflected in the utterance through modality<sup>149</sup> (Bouscaren and Chuquet, 1987: 36). Bouscaren (1993: 11) explains that modality marks the enunciator's stance concerning the event's chances of occurring but also indicates the utterer's position in relation to the co-enunciator or to other subjects<sup>150</sup>. Thus, it marks the stance of the enunciator in relation to the validation of the predicative relation<sup>151</sup> (Bouscaren, *ibid.*). That is why Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 173) define it as “centrally concerned with the speaker's attitude toward the factuality or actualization of the situation expressed by the rest of the clause.” More concretely, in discourse, modality in the strict sense of the term only affects the field of the possible and the necessary (Larreya and Rivière, 2019: 81). In a broader sense, it encompasses this same field, the system of affirmation, negation and interrogation, and the opposition between the world of the real and the unreal (*ibid.*). Modality can be expressed through different markers in discourse including some adverbs, adjectives or lexical expressions, but I will only focus on modal auxiliaries and on an instance of periphrastic verb form.

Modal auxiliaries are forms of language whose semantic system falls within the field of the possible and the necessary (Larreya and Rivière, 2019: 81). This is how they constitute the primary means of expressing modality (*ibid.*). Note that modality can also be expressed by modal expressions, such as *have to* or *be going to*, but which are not synonyms of modal auxiliaries (*ibid.*). Modal auxiliaries form a syntactic class with their own set of properties. As auxiliaries, they display the NICE properties mentioned in the construction of interrogatives and negative imperatives. Modal auxiliaries enable the subject and predicate to be related; they are external to the predicative relation and rather function as tools for commenting on the latter (Lapaire and Rotgé, 1998: 477-78). The term “modal” is linked to the term “mood,” which evokes the idea of manner<sup>152</sup> (*ibid.*: 477). Modal auxiliaries thus appear as a way of apprehending content (*ibid.*). They are complex tools that enable the enunciator to manifest an attitude or a stance regarding a predicative relation.

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149 Original quotation: “Parler c'est prendre position sur un contenu de pensée devant celui auquel on s'adresse. Cette prise de position s'inscrit dans l'énoncé grâce à la modalité” (Bouscaren and Chuquet, 1987: 36).

150 Original quotation: “Elle marque la position de l'énonciateur concernant les chances qu'a l'événement de se produire. [...] Elle marque également la position du sujet énonciateur par rapport au co-énonciateur ou à d'autres sujets” (Bouscaren, 1993: 11).

151 Original quotation: “la modalité marque la position de l'énonciateur par rapport à la validation de la relation prédicative” (Bouscaren, 1993: 11).

152 Original quotation: “Le terme modal est lié au mode (angl. Mood), qui évoque l'idée de manière” (Lapaire and Rotgé, 1998: 477).

Indeed, they express an opinion on the conditions and/or chances of realization of the predicative relation – the realization of which may be judged as possible, impossible, necessary, desirable, inevitable, logical, acceptable, etc.<sup>153</sup> (Lapaire and Rotgé, 1998: 477). Thus, modal auxiliaries are probably the most representative form of modality in English and represent important tools when it comes to analyzing discourse. They always express the subjectivity of the speaker. In short, they are modalizers of the utterance, in that they imply a point of view, a comment, or simply the presence of the speaker within the utterance<sup>154</sup> (Lenoir, 2024: 370).

In Culioli's theory, four main types of modality can be distinguished<sup>155</sup> (Bouscaren and Chuquet, 1987; Cotte et al., 1993). To put it briefly, each of them marks a different stance taken by the utterer in relation to the validation of the predicative relation<sup>156</sup> (Cotte et al., 1993: 93). The first type of modality, also called assertion modality, corresponds to the enunciator's point of view or belief, which the enunciator believes to be true. It includes all forms of assertion, whether positive (e.g., "She likes playing tennis") or negative (e.g., "They don't know his name"), interrogation (e.g., "Are you hungry?"), injunction (e.g., "Hurry up!") or hypothetical assertion (e.g., "If he passes his exam, he will get his degree"). In any case, the enunciator formulates no judgment about the validation of the predicative relation. The second type, often called epistemic modality, concerns any utterance that quantitatively evaluates the chances of validation of the relation. For instance, the relation can be estimated as probable (e.g., "They **must** have moved; I haven't seen their car in a month") or possible (e.g., "He **could** be anywhere"). Next, the third type, or appreciative modality, marks a qualitative judgment from the enunciator about the validation of the relation, be it favorable (e.g., "**It's a good thing** that the football team won") or unfavorable (e.g., "**It's a pity** we couldn't see each other before you left"). Finally, the fourth type, called root modality, concerns the subject of the utterance, either in relation to itself or to another subject. It expresses what is possible for the subject, be it a capacity (e.g., "My brother **can** speak five languages"), a permission (e.g., "I told my friend she **could** come to my place to study"), a deontic necessity (e.g., "She **must** do her homework"), a will (e.g., "I asked him to help me out but he **won't** do it"), etc.<sup>157</sup> (Bouscaren, 1993: 37). Moreover, root modality establishes a relation between the subject and the predicate, within the

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153 Original quotation: "avec un modal en anglais l'énonciateur manifeste une attitude / une prise de position vis-à-vis d'une relation prédicative. Il se prononce en effet sur les conditions et/ou les chances de réalisation de la relation Sujet / Prédicat (la réalisation est jugée possible, impossible, nécessaire, souhaitable, inévitable, logique, acceptable, etc.)" (Lapaire and Rotgé, 1998: 477).

154 Original quotation: "Ces derniers sont des modalisateurs de l'énoncé, en cela qu'ils trahissent un point de vue, un commentaire ou simplement la présence du locuteur dans l'énoncé" (Lenoir, 2024: 370).

155 Various classifications of modality exist. Cotte (1996) distinguishes epistemic and root modality, while Facchinetti et al. (2003) add a threefold division: epistemic, deontic, and dynamic. This study adopts Culioli's typology, consistent with its enunciative framework.

156 Original quotation: "chacun marquera, pour être bref, une prise de position différente du sujet énonciateur S<sub>0</sub> par rapport à la validation de la relation prédicative" (Cotte et al., 1993: 93).

157 Original quotation: "Elle exprime : le possible pour le sujet, la capacité, la permission, la déontique (il faut que), la volonté, etc." (Bouscaren, 1993: 37).

predicative relation itself<sup>158</sup> (Bouscaren, *ibid.*). As stated earlier, it also connects the subject with the other, which enables the enunciator to influence their addressee, echoing an intersubjective property. Modal auxiliaries belong only to root and epistemic modality. For the purpose of this analysis, I will focus on root modality, as it shows properties which resemble those of questions and imperatives.

As mentioned previously, there is a link between the imperative and root modality. Cotte (1996: 126) explains that it is specifically deontic modality that most closely resembles the imperative, as the enunciator expresses a favorable attitude toward a process involving the addressee, thereby constituting an invitation to act. The expected act may be linguistic, because saying something is performing an action<sup>159</sup>. Deontic modality is in fact a subcategory of the fourth type of modality defined by Culioli; root modality comprises deontic (e.g., “You **should** listen to your sister’s advice; she is often right”) and dynamic modality (e.g., “My friend works in a circus, he **can** juggle four clubs at the same time!”).

Deontic modality is generally associated with the notions of will, the representation of the other and the relationship between interlocutors while dynamic modality is related to the subject’s properties, constraints or physical possibility. More precisely, deontic modality concerns judgments that are more or less coercive; they can be of several types, such as order, obligation, permission or injunction (Lapaire and Rotgé, 1993: 279). Deontic modality is often related to actions the grammatical subject is expected to undertake and frequently involves “pressure” exerted by the enunciator<sup>160</sup> (Lapaire and Rotgé, 1993: 279) – reminiscent of intersubjective pressure. This pressure is particularly evident in examples such as “You **should** do this” or “You **must** do that,” in which these modal auxiliaries express an explicit will to influence the co-speaker – typically in the form of advice or suggestion with *should*, and in the form of injunction or command with *must*. Indeed, the realization of the predicate by the grammatical subject depends on a constraint or pressure exerted on the latter<sup>161</sup> (Lapaire and Rotgé, 1998: 482). The origin of this pressure or constraint can vary, as it does not necessarily stem from the enunciator (*ibid.*). Lapaire and Rotgé (1998: 482) specify that the realization of the predicate depends on at least two factors. The first concerns the authority or the coercive power of the entity that grants permission or imposes

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158 Original quotation: “Cette modalité établit une relation entre le sujet et le prédicat, à l’intérieur de la relation prédicative” (Bouscaren, 1993: 37).

159 Original quotation: “Comme dans les modalités radicales appelées déontiques, l’énonciateur exprime un attitude favorable envers un procès concernant ici, l’allocutaire et cela constitue une invitation à agir. L’acte attendu peut être linguistique, car dire c’est faire” (Cotte, 1996: 126).

160 Original quotation: “La modalité déontique s’intéressant souvent aux actions que doit entreprendre le sujet grammatical et impliquant fréquemment des ‘pressions’ de la part de l’énonciateur” (Lapaire and Rotgé, 1993: 279).

161 Original quotation: “La réalisation du prédicat par le sujet grammatical est tributaire d’une contrainte ou d’une pression exercée sur ce dernier” (Lapaire and Rotgé, 1998: 482).

obligation on the addressee to respond physically or verbally; it may derive from the enunciator, a third party, the circumstances in which the process occurs, mores, regulations, etc.<sup>162</sup> (Lapaire and Rotgé, *ibid.*). The second factor is related to the target of the permission or obligation, i.e. the grammatical subject, who may accept or refuse the authorization or obligation<sup>163</sup> (*ibid.*).

The other subcategory of root modality, dynamic modality, does not have the same properties. When a modal auxiliary expresses dynamic modality, the realization of the predicate depends on a property or disposition of the grammatical subject<sup>164</sup> (e.g., “Phoebe’s sister is impressive: she **can** do five things at once!” or “These pupils **are able to** solve complex equations very quickly”) (Lapaire and Rotgé, 1998: 481). In other words, the predicate always comes directly from the subject and one of its capacities (*ibid.*). This capacity may be inherent, permanent or potential (*ibid.*). The role of the enunciator is more discreet than in deontic modality, insofar as, although they still have control over the situation of enunciation, they seem to obey a property or disposition of the subject<sup>165</sup> (*ibid.*: 482).

Therefore, deontic and dynamic modalities “are concerned with enabling the subject of the sentence to act, but with deontic [modality] the ability comes from the permission given (externally), with dynamic [modality] the ability comes from the subject’s own (internal) ability” (Facchinetti et al, 2003: 7). Thus, within root modality, it can be assumed that deontic modality best expresses the relationship between subjects – or at least, that it is most salient in this type of modality. However, dynamic modality, even though it does not convey any particular pressure on the co-speaker, can also contribute to establishing a provisional common ground with the interlocutor. I will now attempt to illustrate this through examples drawn from my corpus.

## 2. Typology of modal auxiliaries with a root value in Tai Verdes’ lyrics and analysis of their use in context

### 2.1. *Can*

The modal auxiliary *can* may express an epistemic or root modality. It can thus convey a wide range of values. As an auxiliary, it has the property of participating in the formation of negation (e.g., “I **can’t** believe you went bungee jumping!”) and interrogation (e.g., “**Can** she really

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162 Original quotation: “l’ascendant, le pouvoir de coercition de l’entité qui autorise ou oblige (l’énonciateur, une tierce personne, les ‘circonstances,’ les mœurs, le règlement, etc.)” (Lapaire and Rotgé, 1998: 482).

163 Original quotation: “la cible de l’autorisation ou de l’obligation, à savoir le sujet grammatical qui peut accepter l’autorisation / l’obligation ou les refuser” (Lapaire and Rotgé, 1998: 482).

164 Original quotation: “La réalisation du prédicat dépend d’une propriété ou d’une disposition du sujet grammatical” (Lapaire and Rotgé, 1998: 481).

165 Original quotation: “C’est dans ces emplois que le rôle de l’énonciateur est le plus discret dans la mesure où, même s’il reste maître du jeu, il semble s’incliner devant une propriété ou une disposition du sujet” (Lapaire and Rotgé, 1998: 482).

cook a meal all by herself for thirty people?”). It can easily be used in the past tense as well, as will be discussed in the next subsection (e.g., “He was so shocked that he **couldn’t** breathe for a few seconds”).

*Can* belongs to the field of what is possible. Cotte (1996: 158) defines this field as the simple compatibility between the subject and the process represented by the predicate<sup>166</sup>. If what is at stake is the realization of the process by an agent, it is the root value of *can* which is involved, whereas if what is at stake is the reality of the process, then, in the simplest case, it is epistemic and bilateral<sup>167</sup> (Cotte, *ibid.*). For instance, the modal auxiliary may express epistemic modality in utterances such as “This kind of behavior **can** be dangerous” or “I heard that Jason is quitting, but that **can’t** be true!” in which *can* implies the enunciator’s judgment concerning the realization of the predicative relation.

With its root value, *can* encompasses various prerequisites for the act, such as material possibility, competence (aptitude or capacity) or permission<sup>168</sup> (Cotte, 1996: 158). These values can overlap but the modal auxiliary does not generally express epistemic and root modality simultaneously; these uses remain distinct. When it expresses a root value, *can* indicates that the subject of the predicative relation is able to validate this relation, either because they have the necessary capacities, or because nothing in the properties of the verb complement or in the circumstances prevents them from doing so<sup>169</sup> (Oriez, 2018: 339) – which corresponds to its qualitative value. More precisely, *can* signals that the predicative relation can be validated or not, but the modal says nothing about its actual validation<sup>170</sup> (*ibid.*). Moreover, this possibility of validation is always based on a preconstruction, since it may originate in the properties of the subject, the properties of the object, or the properties of the situation (*ibid.*: 340).

When *can* represents a capacity or property of the subject – which may be occasional in some cases, and not necessarily innate to the subject – it corresponds to dynamic modality, as in “She **can** play basketball for four hours straight.” Indeed, the realization of the predicative relation precisely depends on a capacity or property of the grammatical subject (in this example, the capacity in question is the subject’s physical ability to play basketball over an extended period of time). In such examples, the presence of the enunciator is less visible, and the modal auxiliary

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166 Original quotation: “Le possible est la simple compatibilité du sujet et du procès représenté par le prédicat” (Cotte, 1996: 158).

167 Original quotation: “Si son enjeu est la réalisation du procès par un agent, il est radical [...]. Si l’enjeu est la réalité du procès, il est dans le cas le plus simple, épistémique et bilatéral” (Cotte, 1996: 158).

168 Original quotation: “il recouvre divers préalables de l’acte comme le possible matériel, la compétence ou la permission” (Cotte, 1996: 158).

169 Original quotation: “*CAN* marque que le sujet de la relation prédicative peut valider cette relation prédicative, parce qu’il en a les capacités, ou bien parce que rien dans les propriétés du complément du verbe ou dans les circonstances ne l’en empêche” (Oriez, 2018: 339).

170 Original quotation: “*CAN* marque que la relation prédicative est validable, mais ne dit rien de la validation effective de cette relation prédicative” (Oriez, 2018: 339).

indicates the link between the subject and the predicate.

The possibility that is expressed by the modal *can* may be physical (see the previous example) or moral (“You **can** tell me if something is wrong”); it may express a permission or a moral legitimacy (Larreya and Rivière, 2019: 87-90). Indeed, this is how the modal auxiliary can express an order by challenging the moral legitimacy or imposing a non-permission on the co-enunciator, as in “You **can’t** do that in public” (ibid.: 90). This imposition of a certain content may be linked to the strategy of meaning imposition inherent to imperative structures (“You **can’t** do that in public” may be compared to the negative imperative “**Don’t** do that in public”). The modal auxiliary can also express directive values, just like imperatives and questions. For example, it can express a suggestion (“You **can** start with the introduction first, it’s the easiest part”), a request (“**Can** you tell me what time it is, please?”), a piece of advice (“You **can** call your mother, mothers are always able to help us”) or even a reproach (“**Can’t** you think before you speak?”) (Larreya and Rivière, 2019: 91). The relationship between the enunciator and another subject then emerges. In such cases, it is deontic modality that is manifested through the modal auxiliary.

It is generally difficult to differentiate some of these uses in practice as they remain very close, such as aptitude and physical possibility as in “She does all she **can** to help us” (Larreya and Rivière, 2019: 87). In addition, it may be difficult to separate the value of capacity or property of the subject from the value of permission that may be expressed by *can*, as the two often merge in practice and can be complementary (Bouscaren, 1993: 40). For instance, in the utterance “He **can’t** go to the cinema,” the modal auxiliary might be interpreted as both an incapacity from the subject (if he has no way of going there for example) and an external non-permission (if his parents have forbidden him to go). The first interpretation corresponds to dynamic modality while the second can be associated with deontic modality. In this example, without any information about the context and the potential intersubjective relationships at play, it is difficult to distinguish these values. It is also interesting to note that *can* tends to be used more frequently to express root modality (Oriez, 2018: 339). I will now look at how the singer uses the modal auxiliary in its root value.

(29) TV “how deep?”

I ain’t saying I ain’t into this (yeah)

**I’m thinking we can slow it down a little bit** (what?)

In your place but I’m feeling like I live in it (live in it)

Butterflies in your stomach got you giggling

(30) TV “Stuck In The Middle”

I said, “What do you wanna do?”

“Seems like you love me a lot” (seems like you love me a lot)

She said, “**Can we stop the joking**”  
“**And take me seriously?**” (Take me seriously)

I said, “I’ll try my very best”  
“But we’ll have to wait and see”

(31) TV “TWO SUGARS”

I got questions from my POV  
**Why can’t you just be in love with me?**

But instead you got me breaking down to nothing  
Talk a little somethin’

In the first example (29) *I’m thinking we can slow it down a little bit*, Tai Verdes addresses the woman he is romantically interested in. She is even included in the first-person plural pronoun *we*. In this occurrence, *can* links the subject *we* with the predicate *slow it down a little bit* and indicates that the realization of the predicative relation is possible. The modal auxiliary is at the heart of the predicative relation. It expresses a capacity that is shared under the circumstances, and in the case of this song (“how deep?”), a possibility for the future of their relationship. Example (29) can therefore be interpreted as an assertive direct speech act as it simply asserts a possibility.

Moreover, *can* appears in the relative subordinate clause that completes *I’m thinking*. The main clause is important for delimiting the extent of *can*, as it introduces another dimension: the *be-ing* aspect of the main verb indicates a subjective commentary. The latter suggests that the topic of his relationship with his addressee troubles him to the extent that he feels the need to put it into words and express it through the *be-ing* aspect. This aspect additionally places emphasis on the present situation, accentuating the sense of urgency in the singer’s proposal. As *I’m thinking* introduces the clause containing the modal auxiliary, it may even be interpreted as another strategy of hedging – which aligns with Fraser’s list of possible hedges which include the progressive form (Kaltenböck et al., 2010: 22). *I’m thinking* seems to function as an introductory commentary which defuses what Tai Verdes says next by taking into account the interlocutor’s potential negative reactions.

(29) *I’m thinking we can slow it down a little bit* may even be read as a suggestion disguised in the form of a declarative sentence that appears to express a simple possibility. This directive aspect becomes more evident when the sentence is rephrased with the modal auxiliary *should*: *I’m thinking we should slow it down a little bit*. Here, the illocutionary value of request or suggestion is made explicit by the use of *should*. An additional illocutionary layer thus emerges from this utterance containing *can*. Therefore, utterance (29) can be considered an indirect speech act because, in the form of a polite proposition, it actually expresses the singer’s desire to influence the

course of their relationship. According to Searle's classification, this utterance falls into the category of directives, as the speaker attempts to influence his interlocutor.

In example (29) *I'm thinking we can slow it down a little bit*, the turn of phrase moderates the directive nature of the utterance. This is confirmed by the intimate dimension of this exchange within the context of their relationship. By presenting his desire as a mere possibility, the singer attenuates the real demand behind it. The imposition of meaning is therefore more subtle than that of a directive expressing an order for instance (see the imperative *Wait* in example (17), in II.2.3). This reflects a desire to negotiate meaning while avoiding conflict. The *be-ing* aspect, the declarative form of (29) and the choice of modal are proof of this. Tai Verdes thus seems willing to establish an exchange without conflict with his addressee by adapting the assertion of his opinion to his interlocutor. In addition, the choice of pronoun and the value of *can* suggest that this utterance establishes a strong intersubjective relationship between Tai Verdes and his addressee.

Thus, in addition to conveying a value of suggestion, as could be the case with imperatives and questions, example (29) *I'm thinking we can slow it down a little bit* highlights the possibility for an utterance containing a modal auxiliary with a root value to express a speech act, whether direct (in this case, an assertive) or indirect (a directive). Utterances containing a root value *can* may also serve as a means to negotiate meaning between interlocutors and, consequently, to participate in the phenomenon of intersubjectivity.

In example (30) *Can we stop the joking [a]nd take me seriously?*, *can* is placed first in the sentence so that there is an inversion of the canonical order of the assertion. The modal functions as the auxiliary of an interrogative structure. In fact, example (30) is in the form of a closed-ended interrogative (auxiliary + subject + predicate + ?). This interrogative is in a reported speech context, either reconstructed or fictitious. In the context of this song ("Stuck In The Middle"), already discussed above, this sentence is presented as spoken by the woman with whom Tai Verdes has an ambiguous relationship. This is indicated by the introductory phrase *She said* and the quotation marks in the left co-text. In the interrogative in (30), *can* connects the subject *we* with the predicate *stop the joking [a]nd take me seriously*. The first-person plural subject represents the enunciator and his addressee, as the two discuss their relationship in this reconstructed dialogue. The interrogative appears to genuinely expect a real answer. This request for an answer constitutes the literal illocutionary value of example (30). This utterance containing *can* therefore expresses a directive; it is more precisely a directive in the form of an interrogative expressing a question.

*Can* seems to express an ability or property, falling by definition within a dynamic use of the modal. The enunciator appears to include herself in the invitation she makes through the use of the pronoun *we*. The interrogative structure thus conveys the impression that the enunciator is

politely inviting both herself and Tai Verdes to adopt a different course of action, but the context reveals a more directive dimension. In fact, the utterance conveys implicit meaning, notably reflecting the enunciator's opinion of the situation. Despite its literal value of questioning, utterance (30) implies and even asserts the woman's desire to *stop the joking* in their relationship and be taken more seriously by the singer. Thus, example (30) constitutes a particularly directive invitation to act, either in the form of a suggestion (*I think we should stop the joking and take me seriously*<sup>171</sup>), or as an order (*Stop the joking and take me seriously*). These reformulations make the directive nature of the speech act expressed in (30) explicit.

Example (30) *Can we stop the joking [a]nd take me seriously?* may even be interpreted as a reproach, as the speaker seems to be losing patience and increasingly frustrated with the situation. Indeed, this can be perceived through the coordinated structure of the two verbs *stop* and *take*, which indicates an accumulation, as if the woman were enumerating the aspects of their current relationship that do not suit her. This focus on her own opinion can also be seen in the change from the plural subject *we* to the singular object *me*. Indeed, by creating a shift in number between these pronouns, the woman seems to be indicating her need to be considered as an individual. In doing so, she seems to be emphasizing her opinion and the implicit request.

In any case, example (30) contains a secondary dimension that combines with its literal value of question. This is why it can be interpreted as an indirect speech act expressing a reproach. Tai Verdes' fictional reply to the woman seems to confirm this interpretation. As (30) *Can we stop the joking [a]nd take me seriously?* is a closed interrogative, the expected response is a *yes* or a *no*, but the singer fictitiously answers instead, *I'll try my very best but we'll have to wait and see*. By not considering this utterance as a simple *yes/no* question, it highlights that Tai Verdes has perceived the indirect dimension of the speech act. He responds exactly as the enunciator expects, i.e. a form of commitment, or at least an attempt at commitment, made evident by the combination of the modal *will* and the verb *try*. In short, the assertion of the woman's opinion and the dimension of reproach can both be interpreted as two derived illocutionary values of utterance (30). The first value makes this utterance in the form of an interrogative appear as an assertive while the second seems to reveal the expression of another directive conveying a reproach.

In addition, as in the previous example (29) *I'm thinking we can slow it down a little bit*, the implicit formulation of her opinion in (30) *Can we stop the joking [a]nd take me seriously?* avoids the conflict that could have been introduced by a direct speech act such as an order in the form of an imperative. In this way, the enunciator once again seems to take the co-speaker into account in

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171 The pronoun *we* could be replaced by *you*, revealing an implicit directive aimed at the co-speaker. Reformulated as an imperative form expressing a speech act of order with *you* as the subject, the utterance highlights its directive nature. The use of *we*, alongside the interrogative structure, functions as a hedging strategy to soften the speech act.

formulating their opinion – reminiscent of a strategy of hedging. A process of meaning negotiation seems to be operating here. Thus, example (30) seems to support the idea that *can* may contribute to intersubjective strategies, as mentioned in example (29).

Finally, example (31) *Why can't you just be in love with me?* is again an interrogative form. It is a partial negative interrogative, in the form of *wh-* adverb + auxiliary in its negative form + subject + predicate + ?. The song (“TWO SUGARS”) deals with the complexity of romantic realities and, in particular, the desire to establish a deep connection in the face of the reality of non-serious relationships. In example (31), *can't* relates the subject *you* to the predicate *just be in love with me*. The modal auxiliary seems to reveal the co-enunciator's inability to have feelings for Tai Verdes, who would potentially like to enter into a serious relationship with her. This seems to echo its dynamic root interpretation as *can't* establishes a relation between the subject and the predicate in terms of one of its abilities — or in this case, one of its inabilities.

Tai Verdes appears to deeply need an explanation or justification to understand why his addressee does not love him back. This desperate plea seems to reflect his genuine desire for an answer. The interrogative *can* therefore be interpreted as a sincere request, thereby carrying a literal illocutionary value of questioning. As a result, the negative interrogative in (31) may be perceived as a directive expressing a request to say something, i.e. a question.

In example (31) *Why can't you just be in love with me?*, as mentioned above, the expression of one of the subject's inabilities seems to indicate that *can* is used with its dynamic value. However, the combination of the negative interrogative form and the adverb *just* may reveal another dimension. Indeed, the adverb *just* makes the action of being in love appear as simple, minimizing it. It emphasizes the simplicity and obviousness of this action, which can be understood by replacing it with *simply*. *Just* also contributes to the modality of the utterance. Thus, it participates in establishing a tone that can be interpreted as reproachful toward the co-enunciator and filled with frustration and great emotional despair. A derived illocutionary value thus seems to emerge, as (31) *Why can't you just be in love with me?*, which seemingly appears as a request for justification, can be perceived as a strong reproach in this context. The dimension of reproach stems from Tai Verdes' melancholy and weariness at never being able to establish a deep, stable relationship. Thus, this secondary value, which combines with the literal value of question, makes example (31) appear as an indirect directive expressing a reproach. Although *can* seemingly expresses a dynamic root value, this additional layer is interesting in that it reveals the relationship between the subjects, here between Tai Verdes and his addressee. Indeed, *can't* no longer seems to merely relate the grammatical subject to one of its inabilities but also appears to establish a relation between the grammatical subject and the enunciator. This corresponds to the definition of deontic modality –

which is itself linked to intersubjective relations. Therefore, the modal auxiliary *can* in example (31) *Why can't you just be in love with me?* may be interpreted as expressing both dynamic and deontic modality. The dynamic value derives from the literal value of (31) while the deontic value is reconstructed from an interpretative point of view.

Additionally, in example (31) *Why can't you just be in love with me?*, an aspect of supplication can be perceived. The occurrence is almost pragmatically equivalent to *please be in love with me*. In this reformulation, a desperate desire to influence the addressee can be observed. It seems that Tai Verdes attempts to plead with the woman he is addressing to love him. This reveals another indirect directive dimension which is added to the literal value of questioning expressed by the direct speech act in (31). This additional directive aspect comes from this value of supplication. Example (31) can therefore be interpreted as expressing another indirect directive, in addition to the directives expressing a question and a reproach. Thus, example (31) seems to strongly contribute to a strategy of meaning imposition, as it limits the possibility for negotiating meaning between the interlocutors through the simultaneous expression of three directives.

Interestingly, from a formal perspective, the negative interrogative construction of (31) *Why can't you just be in love with me?* allows the co-enunciator to be questioned about this inability and, in particular, to understand the reasons behind it, as if the singer were implying that there must be a reason for it – which the interrogative adverb *why* highlights. As with classic negative interrogatives, this occurrence is based on a preconstruction, which is either *You can't just be in love with me (but you should)* or *You can just be in love with me*. Thus, these reformulated forms underline the biased nature of the negative interrogative. This reinforces the idea that (31) can be interpreted as an indirect speech act with an illocutionary value of reproach. It also reveals the inherent assertion that negative interrogatives contain. Indeed, example (31) implicitly asserts the speaker's opinion, made explicit by the previous reformulations. This utterance can thus be interpreted as expressing another indirect speech act: an assertive. Through the use of example (31) *Why can't you just be in love with me?*, the objective is to attenuate the directive nature of the indirect speech act expressing a clear position – as was the case with classic negative interrogatives. Once again, this strategy of attenuation is reminiscent of hedging, as the use of a negative interrogative aims to reduce the illocutionary value of assertion expressed by the speech act, corresponding more specifically to speech act hedging. The use of modality, indirectness and negative interrogatives are also included in the list of possible hedges established by Fraser (Kaltenböck et al., 2010: 22).

Therefore, examples (29; 30; 31) demonstrate that *can*, due to its auxiliary properties, can be modulated to produce different types of utterances. These examples also prove that utterances

containing an occurrence of *can* that expresses either dynamic modality, or dynamic and deontic modality simultaneously can be interpreted as direct and indirect speech acts. Through these different forms, utterances with *can* may express several illocutionary values such as a question, a reproach, an assertion, a suggestion or a supplication – some of which are similar to those interrogatives and imperatives convey. Except in the case of assertion, all these values render such utterances directive speech acts and therefore, by definition, include the co-speaker in the singer’s discourse. This primarily operates through a strategy of meaning imposition, which enables the singer to establish a relationship with his addressee. This strategy reflects the phenomenon of intersubjectivity and demonstrates that utterances containing a root modal *can* may contribute to this phenomenon in Tai Verdes’ songs.

## 2.2. *Could*

When *can* is associated with the preterit marker *-ed*, it takes the form *could*, that is, a modal expressing a form of disactualization<sup>172</sup>. *Could* possesses the same fundamental value as *can*. Like *can*, it can express both epistemic (e.g., “It **couldn’t** be possible, this story **couldn’t** be real”) and root modality (e.g., “When I went to school, I **couldn’t** play in the evenings because I had to do my homework”), which usually remain distinct (Bouscaren, 1993: 42). Still within the field of the possible, the past form allows for uses similar to the modal *can*, but which incorporate certain nuances or correspond to different uses. The latter can also overlap. Because of its past form, *could* marks a break with the situation of enunciation<sup>173</sup> (Bouscaren, 1993: 41). This break can be either temporal (e.g., “When I was young, I **could** run all day without stopping”) or modal (e.g., “**Could** you tell me the way to the town hall?”), or sometimes both (e.g., “He knew he **could** never forgive her if she betrayed him”) (Oriez, 2018: 347-351). When the *-ed* form inherent in *could* marks a temporal break, it is in fact a break between the moment of enunciation and the moment described in the utterance, which is now in the past (ibid.: 348). In this case and similarly to the modal *can*, it concerns the properties of the subject (Oriez, ibid.), pertaining to its dynamic value, as in “Two months ago, I **couldn’t** walk because my foot was broken.” Thus, *could* indicates a property or capacity at a moment in the past, but provides no information about the realization of the predicative relation (ibid.).

When the *-ed* form marks a modal break, it places the relation on the hypothetical level, as it signals that the enunciator cannot endorse the validation of the predicative relation at the moment of enunciation (Oriez, 2018: 349). It is therefore only on a hypothetical level that the enunciator can

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172 This process marks a rupture between the time described in the utterance and the situation of enunciation. The past tense marker *-ed* typically indicates this temporal break (Bouscaren and Chuquet, 1987: 25).

173 Original quotation: “à cause de sa forme passée, il marque une rupture par rapport à la situation de l’énonciation” (Bouscaren, 1993: 41).

endorse it (ibid.). This use may enable the enunciator to express a polite request, or at least more polite than with *can*. It is called “tentative use.” This is a typical marker of the discursive strategy of hedging as it aims at attenuating the propositional content and possibly the speech act expressed by an utterance containing a modal auxiliary (Kaltenböck et al., 2010: 22). “Tentative use” can be explained by the value of doubt that the hypothetical preterit expresses in this context: this implicit doubt seems to leave the interlocutor freer to decide<sup>174</sup> (Larreya and Rivière, 2019: 90) – a characteristic that *can* does not possess. Bouscaren (1993: 25) explains that “tentative use” is caused by the enunciator’s desire to be less assertive. In this case, the degree of certainty is lower as the enunciator may be more hesitant, polite, or reserved<sup>175</sup>... For instance, a form of hesitation or politeness is conveyed by the modal *could* when it is used in utterances such as “I was wondering if I **could** use your bathroom to freshen up” or “**Could** you give me your phone number?”. *Could* thus appears to express values similar to imperatives and interrogatives in such structures. In fact, the two previous utterances convey directives, which is illustrated when reformulated as “Can/Could I use your bathroom to freshen up?” (now in the form of an interrogative expressing a request to answer, i.e. a question) and “Give me your phone number” (in the form of an imperative expressing a request to act, i.e. an order). In such cases, *could* connects the subject with one or more other subjects, resulting in a deontic value.

According to NICE properties, *could* can be used to form negation. The *-ed* form of *can* in its negative form then allows for the expression of different values because, by marking a temporal break, it indicates that it was possible to validate a predicative relation at a time that is now long before the moment of enunciation (Oriez, 2018: 356). This chronological gap thus enables the enunciator to assert the impossibility of validating the predicative relation, since asserting that the validation of a predicative relation was impossible at a past moment is equivalent to stating that it did not take place<sup>176</sup> (ibid.: 357). This impossibility may be caused by an external material circumstance (e.g., “We **couldn’t** enter the building because they had locked the doors”), a physical incapacity of the subject (e.g., “She was so exhausted that she **couldn’t** keep her eyes open”) or an immaterial social or moral constraint (e.g., “I **couldn’t** break the promise I had made to her”). In short, negation marks that, qualitatively speaking, only the path toward the non-validation of the predicative relation is taken into account<sup>177</sup> (Oriez, 2018: 357).

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174 Original quotation: “Cet effet s’explique par la valeur de doute que le prétérit hypothétique prend dans ce contexte: ce doute implicite paraît laisser l’interlocuteur plus libre de sa décision” (Larreya and Rivière, 2019: 90).

175 Original quotation: “[Dans le cas du ‘tentative use’], la rupture de repérage avec la situation d’énonciation peut être causée par le désir de l’énonciateur d’être moins assertif. Il exprime du ‘moins certain’ (il est plus hésitant, plus poli, plus réservé)” (Bouscaren, 1993: 25).

176 Original quotation: “En effet, la négation, associée à *CAN*, marque l’impossibilité de valider la relation prédicative car affirmer que la validation d’une relation prédicative était impossible à un moment en rupture avec le moment d’énonciation, revient à dire qu’elle n’a pas eu lieu” (Oriez, 2018: 357).

177 Original quotation: “La négation *NOT* marque que, sur le plan qualitatif, seul le chemin vers la non-validation de la

In short, it seems that *could*, like *can*, is primarily used with a root modality and can be used in interrogation and negation according to the properties of auxiliaries. It can refer to a past possibility, without referring to a past validation, a hypothetical level or a “tentative use.” I will now look at how Tai Verdes uses the modal auxiliary in his songs.

(32) TV “rEaL WOrLD”

Feels like I was left out of the party

Thanks for the invite

**I could hear the music all night**

But when I come through

It’s only whispers

(33) TV “momma told me imma be”

She told me I need to pick up my phone

“If it doesn’t work out, you can come back home”

**Knew I couldn’t go ’cause I’m too grown**

Gotta figure this out alone

(34) TV “i deserve 2 b alone”

**Wish we could stay eighteen**

Get a little too high, stay in bed and daydream

**I wish I could fix things**

If I took it all back, would you come over?

In these three examples, the singer uses *could* with its root value. In example (32) *I could hear the music all night*, the modal auxiliary is associated with the verb of perception *hear*. It thus expresses an ability, but this ability does not really come from the subject. It is evident that the subject has the ability to hear, but it is only because the music is playing that the singer can hear it. The possibility of validation of the predicative relation therefore depends on the properties of the object and not on the subject’s ability to hear (Oriez, 2018: 341). Oriez (ibid.) mentions that there is a preconstruction of the existence of an object of perception, independently of the existence of a subject at the origin of perception<sup>178</sup>. As *could* relates the subject to the predicate within the predicative relation and since the latter concerns a subject’s capacity, it is a dynamic root modality that is at work in (32).

In example (32) *I could hear the music all night*, Tai Verdes is mainly addressing his former friends, who abandoned him when he was just beginning his artistic career. It can be seen in the ironic acknowledgments, *Thanks for the invite*, addressed to them. The singer then shares this past

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relation prédicative est envisagé” (Oriez, 2018: 357).

178 Original quotation: “Il y a préconstruction de l’existence d’un objet de perception, indépendamment de l’existence d’un sujet à l’origine de la perception” (Oriez, 2018: 341).

experience with the listeners – hence the use of *could* expressing a form of disactualization. It is interesting to note the change of tense in the following verses with the verbs *come* and *be* in the present tense. It seems that the situation has not changed, or at least that it still has an emotional impact on the singer. Through this contrast, Tai Verdes both blames his former friends for the pain he may have felt at the time, and shows his listeners how it has affected him, and potentially still affects him at the moment of enunciation.

Example (32) *I could hear the music all night* is a simple assertion containing a modal auxiliary with a dynamic root value, but it does not seem to contain any directive dimension. It is rather a direct assertive speech act according to Searle's classification. As a result of the context and especially the contrast between the utterance under study and the following verses, a slight dimension of reproach could also be identified. However, there seems to be no intersubjective pressure or appeal to the co-speaker in this example. The modality then seems to serve another goal; it no longer aims to influence the co-speaker through words, but to express a personal malaise more explicitly, in order to make it more comprehensible to the addressees. It becomes a means of making the singer's subjectivity more accessible to his hearers, even without directly appealing to them. This use of root modality thus facilitates understanding for the audience. Through sharing perceptions and emotions, a form of intersubjectivity is at play in example (32), even if this phenomenon seems less visible than in utterances containing directive speech acts.

In example (33) *Knew I couldn't go 'cause I'm too grown*, *could* is associated with the negation marker – in abbreviated form, as is typical of spoken language – giving it different characteristics. Utterance (33) is a negative assertion, making it an assertive. *Could* relates the subject *I* to the predicate *go 'cause I'm too grown* within the predicative relation. *Could* can first be interpreted as expressing a dynamic root modality as it expresses a physical capacity that is situated in the past at the moment of enunciation. Indeed, the *-ed* form inherent in *could* again marks a temporal break, but being associated with negation, it indicates the impossibility of validating this predicative relation at the time of the utterance. This impossibility is even a certainty for the singer, since the modal auxiliary is contained in a relative clause introduced by the verb *knew* and justified by a condition introduced by *because* in the right co-text. Tai Verdes again uses modality to recount a past experience to his listeners, in this case the fact that since the very beginning of his career as a singer, he had to succeed without his parents' help and succeed on his own.

In (33) *Knew I couldn't go 'cause I'm too grown*, the modal in its negative form then appears in contrast to the occurrence of *can* contained in the reported speech from the previous verse (*If it doesn't work out, you can come back home*). *Can* is apparently uttered by his mother, offering him the possibility of returning home if his project did not work out. The use of *could* thus

highlights the necessity for the singer to achieve this at the time, making his emotional situation of the time more accessible to his audience. This necessity arises from societal expectations, as returning to one's parental home past a certain age is generally viewed as shameful. This means that *could* does not only express an inability in example (33) but also an impossibility imposed by the judgment of others. In other words, there is a form of pressure at the societal level, echoing the intersubjective pressure that is inherent to deontic modality. Note that, in this case, it is not Tai Verdes who imposes a particular meaning on his audience or a specific addressee, but rather society that imposes this obligation and behavior on him. Therefore, in (33) *Knew I couldn't go 'cause I'm too grown, could* can be interpreted as expressing both dynamic and deontic modality.

As the song (“momma told me imma be”) was released in 2021, the past context is particularly coherent, since as listeners, we know that he has succeeded in his objective – almost reminiscent of dramatic irony. It offers the listener a certain informational power and satisfaction, which can be considered as another way of appreciating the song and connecting with the artist. Thus, although example (33) does not display any directive dimension or intersubjective pressure between Tai Verdes and his audience, modality serves to render the singer's representations more comprehensible and accessible to listeners.

Finally, in example (34), *could* is contained twice in a specific construction (*Wish we could stay eighteen* and *I wish I could fix things*). It is placed in the verb phrase of the complement clause of the verb *wish*. This form is characteristic of a modal break. In fact, the past form of *can* marks a modal break between the moment of enunciation and the moment described in the assertion. The moment of enunciation, being uttered by Tai Verdes, corresponds to a real moment, while the process described is situated on a hypothetical level that can exist because of the semantics of the verb *wish* (Oriez, 2018: 349). At the moment of enunciation, Tai Verdes cannot endorse the validation of these two predicative relations. It is therefore only on the hypothetical level, introduced by *wish*, that he can endorse them.

In the first instance of example (34) *Wish we could stay eighteen*, the modal auxiliary relates the subject *we* to the predicate *stay eighteen, get a little too high, stay in bed and daydream*. The first-person plural pronoun refers to the singer and his former romantic partner in the context of the song (“i deserve 2 b alone”). It is addressed primarily to this woman. In the second occurrence of (34) *I wish I could fix things*, *could* functions as the link between the subject *I* and the predicate *fix things*. The woman referred to in the song is still the main addressee of this utterance, even though no person marker shows her presence. In both occurrences of (34), *could* has a dynamic root value, as it relates the subject and the predicate in relation to a capacity of the subject. Here, these abilities are immaterial. Tai Verdes is projecting himself into two unreal, inaccessible situations, since they

are hypothetical. This construction enables the singer to assert a dissatisfaction with his reality, hence the use of the modal *could* to introduce a projection into a dimension in which these actions would be achievable.

Moreover, the two assertions (*Wish we could stay eighteen / I wish I could fix things*) in (34) constitute expressive speech acts. They constitute a wish, which is made explicit with the formula *I wish*. These two wishes constitute an impossible request to go back in time. They are filled with regrets. It is suggested with the verbs *stay*, repeated twice, and *fix*, which implies that something is broken. These wishes constitute a real emotional appeal to his interlocutor, contained in the pronoun *we*, as if Tai Verdes were hoping that the woman he addresses would reconnect with him after expressing his regrets and admitting some of his wrongdoings.

Therefore, in examples (32; 33; 34), three forms of intersubjective strategies seem to be at play: the first being this more or less conscious desire to make the singer's experience accessible to the listeners by sharing some of his representations, the second being contained in the appeal to the co-speaker and the third being manifested in intersubjective pressure. In (32) and (33), Tai Verdes attempts to invite his audience to share his personal past experiences; modality conveys the artist's emotions in order to make them more accessible to the audience. In (33), society compels the singer to act in accordance with its norms, which reflects a strategy of intersubjective pressure and, in this case, involves deontic modality. In (34), the artist attempts to make his former romantic partner feel as he does, sharing his unattainable desires. Through the expression of two wishes, Tai Verdes includes his addressee in his own speech, wishing to recreate the emotional bond he once possessed with her. In short, these three strategies enable the singer to either facilitate understanding for his audience or directly include his interlocutor in his own discourse – reminiscent of the dialogic nature of the corpus. In this way, *could* expressing a root modality can serve as a vehicle for the phenomenon of intersubjectivity.

### 2.3. *Will*

Because of its epistemic and root values, *will* can express a future action (e.g., “It **will** rain tomorrow”), an order (e.g., “You **will** do as you're told”), (good) will (e.g., “My friend told me to go and report them but I **won't**”), or acceptance (e.g., “Fine, I'**ll** help you clean the house”) (Oriez, 2018: 365). The fundamental meaning of *will* is a necessary consequence, presented as independent from the enunciator's will<sup>179</sup> (Larrea and Rivière, 2019: 109). The epistemic and root modalities may then coexist, unlike *can* whose uses are more distinct. *Will* conveys a value of “aim” which, in a certain way, may fall under the second type of modality; in any case, the modal auxiliary reflects

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<sup>179</sup> Original quotation: “Sens fondamental = conséquence nécessaire, présentée comme indépendante de l'énonciateur” (Larrea and Rivière, 2019: 109).

an operation in which the enunciator takes a stance in relation to the predicative relation: the utterer neither asserts nor evaluates, but aims to validate (or to invalidate, if it is in negative form) the predicative relation<sup>180</sup> (Bouscaren and Chuquet, 1987: 52). This is why *will* is often used as epistemic. In this case, it has a value of prediction and influences the relationship between the enunciator and the whole predicative relation (Bouscaren, 1993: 57).

However, for the purpose of this analysis, I am interested in its root value, which specifically involves the predicative relation within the relation itself (ibid.). Oriez (2018: 365) explains that *will* can express a root value when it focuses predominantly on the relationship established between the subject and the predicate<sup>181</sup>. The enunciator then tackles the qualitative dimension of the relation through the properties that enable a subject to be related to a predicate<sup>182</sup> (ibid.). The enunciator adopts a detached position, considering only the path that leads to the validation of the predicate relation<sup>183</sup> (ibid.). In its root value, *will* indicates that the characteristics of the subject make it possible to consider the validation of the predicative relation<sup>184</sup> (Oriez, ibid.: 366). This is how *will* can express willingness or refusal in the negative form as in “I **won’t** sing in front of everyone. Stop insisting, I **won’t** do it!”. It may also express a value of willingness (e.g., “He **won’t** answer”), or a property or characteristic of the subject (e.g., “I **will** be twenty-five next year”) whether the auxiliary is in its positive or negative form (Bouscaren, 1993: 57). The singer employs the modal auxiliary with its root value several times in his lyrics. This can be illustrated by the following examples:

(35) TV “fake prophet”

**I will stand still**

Even though I think she’s gonna run away

**And I will fulfill**

This fake prophecy, I don’t see any other way

(36) TV “rEaL WorLD”

Just be a little patient with me

...

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180 Original quotation: “Ils ont tous [*shall, will, should, would*] une valeur de visée qui peut, d’une certaine façon, relever de la modalité II, et qui en tout cas révèle une opération qui est une prise de position de l’énonciateur par rapport à la relation prédicative : le sujet énonciateur n’asserte pas, n’évalue pas, mais vise la validation (ou la non-validation, si on a une forme négative) de la relation prédicative” (Bouscaren and Chuquet, 1987: 52).

181 Original quotation: “*WILL* a une valeur radicale lorsqu’il porte de façon prépondérante sur la relation qui s’établit entre le sujet et le prédicat” (Oriez, 2018: 365).

182 Original quotation: “L’énonciateur se situe alors sur le plan qualitatif des propriétés qui permettent la mise en relation d’un sujet avec un prédicat” (Oriez, 2018: 365).

183 Original quotation: “L’énonciateur occupe une position décrochée IE et envisage uniquement le chemin qui mène à la validation de la relation prédicative (I)” (Oriez, 2018: 365).

184 Original quotation: “Dans sa valeur radicale, *WILL* marque que les caractéristiques du sujet permettent d’envisager la validation de la relation prédicative” (Oriez, 2018: 366).

**I will never, ever, fucking ever give up**

Ever

That's it

(37) TV “rEaL WOrLD”

**All my friends got worse**

**But I'll just blame the distance**

They were too busy anyways

I would've done the same shit

The three occurrences of *will* in examples (35) *I will stand still / And I will fulfill* and (36) *I will never, ever, fucking ever give up* illustrate the root modality that the auxiliary can express. In these two examples, the modal auxiliary focuses largely on the relationship established between the subject and the predicate. It is clear that in the three instances from (35) and (36), Tai Verdes is only considering the path that leads to the validation of the predicative relation. He is completely convinced that he will be able to meet his commitments. This is why the modal *will* can be understood as expressing a value of will. The singer is deeply determined to perform these three actions: *stand still*, *fulfill* and *never give up*. It could even be called volition, since the artist commits himself to performing these actions. Despite an uncertain situation in both songs – the theme of disillusionment in “fake prophet” (35) and his difficult early career in “rEaL WorLD” (36) – Tai Verdes unhesitatingly asserts his firm determination to act. As these decisions concern the subject and the modal *will* functions as a link between the subject and the predicate within the predicative relation, the auxiliary can be interpreted as expressing dynamic root modality in examples (35) and (36). Representing the speaker's commitment, the declarative assertions in these two examples containing *will* can be characterized as commissives according to Searle's classification, but they can also be said to contain a directive dimension that can be described as self-directive.

Indeed, since only the path to the validation of the predicative relation is considered in (35) *I will stand still / And I will fulfill* and (36) *I will never, ever, fucking ever give up*, these utterances imply the speaker's obligation to keep his commitments. Tai Verdes imposes upon himself the obligation to perform these actions, which reveals a form of pressure – this time, however, of an intrasubjective nature. It is this internal constraint that accounts for the self-directive dimension of the speech act.

Furthermore, the singer specifically takes his former friends who abandoned him in “rEaL WorLD” (36), and the listeners in general as witnesses in both (35) and (36) to affirm his commitments. By placing them in this position, the singer includes them within his own discourse. *Will* thus enables Tai Verdes both to convey a part of his own representations and to establish a

form of intersubjective relationship with his addressees. The establishment of this relationship is made possible by the fact that the singer takes them to witness, even though he does not directly call on them. Thus, the modal auxiliary *will* can also participate in the phenomenon of intersubjectivity.

Example (37) *I'll just blame the distance* does not exactly illustrate the same process. Note the presence of the contraction, which is not surprising in this context reproducing orality. In (37), Tai Verdes is only expressing his opinion following an event that happened to him, i.e. *all [his] friends got worse*. There is no longer a directive or commissive dimension but instead the utterance expresses a simple speech act of assertion.

It is a choice on Tai Verdes' part to consider distance as the reason why his friends abandoned him. In example (37), *will* again indicates an intention and a determination on the part of the subject, which corresponds in this case to choosing distance among all the possible reasons for the abandonment of his friends. The modal *will* once again expresses root modality. It is truly a personal choice on the singer's part, not an external constraint or necessity. In the occurrence under study, *will* puts the subject and predicate in relation to each other.

However, as in all the occurrences of *will* from (35) *I will stand still / And I will fulfill* and (36) *I will never, ever, fucking ever give up*, example (37) *I'll just blame the distance* expresses a value of aim, associated with the epistemic modality. Therefore, despite the fact that *will* expresses root modality on the surface in all three examples, the construction of each utterance is based on this value of aim. As is often the case and as it is illustrated in the three previous examples, the epistemic and root modalities are intertwined in the use of *will*. This dominant epistemic modality does not prevent *will* from expressing the enunciator's strong will by linking him with one of his capacities. In example (37) *I'll just blame the distance*, the modal emphasizes the subjectivity of the utterance. As with *could*, the objective seems to be to facilitate intercomprehension through modality. There is no longer a direct link between the singer and his audience, but rather a choice to make his subjectivity more accessible to them through the sharing of his representations, and in particular some of his held intentions and belief-driven decisions.

#### 2.4. *Would*

*Would* has the same basic meaning as *will*. It is the preterit form of *will*, i.e. its inflected form with *-ed*. In other words, *would* corresponds to a modal that expresses a form of disactualization, which provides it with its own characteristics. Like *will*, it generally combines epistemic and root modality. As these two values may be strongly intertwined, *would* can express a value of hypothetical aim (e.g., "If I hadn't injured my knee, I **would** play football professionally") and of (good) will (e.g., "She said she **wouldn't** help us with the house move") (Bouscaren and Chuquet, 1987: 62). It can thus have a root use, but unlike *will*, the value of (good) will that is

expressed by the modal *would* is always contained in a virtual context. It can also express a comment (e.g., “YOU **WOULD** CATCH A COLD ON OUR WEDDING DAY!”) or a past habit (e.g., “When we went camping every summer, my brother **would** play the guitar around the fire”) (Bouscaren and Chuquet, *ibid.*: 60-63). As a reminder, when a modal auxiliary contributes to making utterances more attenuated and polite, it is called “tentative use” (e.g., “**Would** you lend me your scarf for the winter?”) (*ibid.*: 60). It is a common marker of hedging (Kaltenböck et al., 2010: 22). These uses are possible with *would* because, like the *-ed* form of *can*, the *-ed* form inherent in *would* marks a break with the moment of enunciation (Oriez, 2018: 376).

This break can again be temporal, as in “Every Sunday, we **would** have lunch with our grandparents,” or modal, as in “If I had time, I **would** learn Romanian” (Oriez, *ibid.*). When the break is temporal, the past form marks a temporal break between the moment of enunciation and the moment described in the utterance, which is in the past (*ibid.*: 377). In such cases, *would* can describe a past habit. This form is called “frequentative.” The value of habit comes from the fact that these properties made the subject’s behavior predictable in the past (*ibid.*: 378). When the *-ed* form marks a temporal break, *would* may also create a focus on one or more characteristics of the subject by relating the subject to the predicate within the relation. In the case of a focus on the subject’s properties, *would* mainly expresses a root modality (e.g., “She **would** always arrive early, no matter the weather”). Moreover, it is when the *-ed* form inherent in *would* marks a temporal break that the modal auxiliary can express a value of (good) will (Oriez, 2018: 378).

On the other hand, when the *-ed* form of *will* marks a modal break, it is the hypothetical level that comes into play. Indeed, in this case, the modal *would* creates a fictive dimension in which the enunciator endorses the modal *will* and the moment of enunciation associated to the modal, which is located on the level of “reality” (e.g., “She **would** love to travel more, but her studies keep her busy”) (Oriez, 2018: 378). At the fictive moment, the utterer considers only the path toward the validation of the predicative relation, due to the intrinsic properties of the subject<sup>185</sup> (*ibid.*). *Will* essentially has a root value because the utterer is interested in the properties of the subject, which is defined precisely by the fact that the predicative relation can be validated<sup>186</sup> (Oriez, *ibid.*). It is thanks to the creation of this hypothetical level that utterances with *would* can be considered more polite than those containing *will*. The “tentative use” is then at work, attenuating the predicative relation due to the chronological gap that exists between the moment of enunciation and the moment described in the utterance. Again, it is the root modality that is predominantly at

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185 Original quotation: “Au moment fictif, l’asserteur envisage seulement le chemin vers la validation de la relation prédictive, en raison des propriétés intrinsèques du sujet” (Oriez, 2018: 378).

186 Original quotation: “*WILL* a une valeur essentiellement radicale car l’asserteur s’intéresse aux propriétés du sujet, qui est défini précisément par la validabilité de la relation prédictive” (Oriez, 2018: 378).

work, as the validation of the predicative relation is presented as dependent on the subject's will<sup>187</sup> (Oriez, 2018: 379). The singer employs *would* repeatedly with its root value:

(38) TV “sheluvme”

I could never lose you, uh

**I would never want to**, uh

You the missin' piece, only thing I need, ooh

Got me prayin' to Jesus

(39) TV “LAsT dAy oN EaRTh”

**If it was my last day on Earth**

**I wouldn't be in church**

I'm sorry God, but it's my last day in this universe

I need to see birds and buzzin' bees

Green grass, evergreen trees

(40) TV “momma told me imma be”

**She would pick me up from practice**

**And she'd take me home from school**

She made me believe in magic

She knew Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy, too

These three examples illustrate how *would* can express a root modality. Interestingly, in example (38) *I would never want to*, *would* is used after *could* to refer to the same action. In fact, utterance (38), the action in question (*lose you*) is omitted to avoid repetition, since it was made explicit in the previous line. The object pronoun *you* corresponds to his romantic partner in the song “sheluvme,” which is a true ode to love. Example (38) illustrates this idea, and the use of root modality also confirms it. In these two verses, both modal auxiliaries are associated with the negative adverb of frequency *never*. *Could* is again used with its dynamic root value, as it relates the utterer, Tai Verdes, to the predicate, which corresponds to an ability of the singer. *Would* works in the same way. Its association with *never* reveals the non-possibility of losing his partner, which in the case of example (38) is emotional; the categorical and irrevocable aspect of the adverb seems to suggest that the singer considers it strictly impossible. The modal expressing a form of disactualization allows the non-validation of the predicative relation to be placed in the hypothetical field, which removes the possibility of losing her from reality and emphasizes how unthinkable it is to him.

In example (38) *I would never want to*, the assertion of impossibility expressed by *could* is then followed by the use of the *-ed* form of *will*. The non-validation of the predicative relation is

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<sup>187</sup> Original quotation: “la validation de la relation prédicative est présentée comme dépendante de la volonté du sujet” (Oriez, 2018: 379).

then also on the hypothetical level, again with the aim of detaching this possibility from the field of reality. It is as if the singer wanted to show his addressee that this is not the case in reality, but even if it were in a hypothetical world, it still would not be possible. This strongly reinforces Tai Verdes' emotional commitment. The choice of involving the field of the hypothetical also detaches the singer's current words from statements that would be more factual. This demonstrates the expressive nature of these assertions: the aim is not to factually prove that it is impossible for him to lose her, but rather to express how powerful his feelings for her are. Thus, the definition of *would* highlights that, in example (38) *I would never want to*, the modal auxiliary is partly used with its root value to express the singer's will and intention – which the semantics of the verb *want* also highlights. Through the *-ed* form of *will*, Tai Verdes seeks to prove the intensity of his feelings to his partner.

Whereas *could* is associated with a purely expressive dimension, *would* also seems to express a form of commitment on the part of the singer to his partner. This is why (38) *I would never want to* can be characterized as a commissive speech act, as Tai Verdes' intention seems constant and generalized – even in a parallel world, he would never want this to happen. This allows the singer to establish an emotional connection with his addressee. By expressing his affective attachment to her so explicitly, he seems to want her to understand him as well as possible, which is consistent with the strategy of facilitating mutual understanding. In example (38) *I would never want to*, root modality appears as a means of making Tai Verdes' subjectivity more accessible to his romantic partner, and thus improving intercomprehension. Thus, once again, this example seems to show that root modality can play a role in intersubjectivity.

In the following example (39) *If it was my last day on Earth I wouldn't be in church*, the modal *would* is in its negative form. Contained in the main clause, it is preceded by a conditional clause introduced by *if*. Oriez (2018: 378) explains that the *if* clause enables the construction of a fictive level on which the speaker places themselves to endorse the modal *will*; the suffix *-ed* marks the modal break between the fictional moment when the enunciator endorses the modal *will* and its moment of enunciation, situated in reality<sup>188</sup>. In (39), the *-ed* form inherent in *would* marks a modal break and once again introduces a hypothetical dimension. Associated with the negation, *would* indicates that only the path to the non-validation of the predicative relation is considered on the fictional level. *Would* relates the speaker to a characteristic, which seems to reflect a dynamic root value. In example (39), the value of the modal auxiliary is then partly root because, as Oriez (2018: 378) demonstrates, the speaker is interested in the properties of the subject, which is defined

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188 Original quotation: “La proposition en *IF* permet la construction d'un plan fictif sur lequel l'asserteur se place pour prendre en charge le modal *WILL*. *-ED* marque la rupture modale entre le moment fictif où l'énonciateur prend en charge le modal *WILL* et son moment d'énonciation, situé sur le plan du ‘réel’” (Oriez, 2018: 378).

precisely by the fact that the predicative relation can be validated or not<sup>189</sup>. When the singer projects himself into this fictional situation, his intention would be to *not be in church*, which reveals some of his priorities and values. *Would* thus marks a value of will in a disactualized context. Tai Verdes is expressing his personal choice in the event of this situation happening, which indicates the value of will, typical of the root value of the modal *would*. Therefore, example (39) can be interpreted as a direct commissive speech act, since the singer is committing himself to act in this way if it were his *last day on earth*.

On the other hand, utterance (39) *If it was my last day on Earth I wouldn't be in church* can be seen as ironic as it is contradictory from a religious point of view – hence the *I'm sorry God* that follows, with the singer himself acknowledging his fault. With this vocative term, Tai Verdes addresses God directly, admitting how he would feel about religion if the condition were fulfilled. Example (39) appears to be a confession of guilt to God about religion. However, the apology seems ironic because, after formulating it, the artist continues his song by listing all of the actions he would have truly done on his last day on earth – none of his actions being linked to religion. The atmosphere of confession, both emotional and religious, creates a sense of closeness with the listeners while revealing the singer's views on religion. This produces an effect of authenticity, sincerity and probably a slight provocation toward religion. Additionally, there is a sort of introspection in the way the artist's thoughts flow in response to such an existential question. Thus, this utterance combines a commissive dimension through the singer's commitment to act in the hypothetical dimension, an assertive one through the slight irony contained in his opinion about religion, and an expressive one through the form of introspection it involves. By confiding in this way in (39) *If it was my last day on Earth I wouldn't be in church*, the singer seems to establish an environment of emotional closeness with his audience, using modality as an intersubjective strategy.

It is also worth mentioning that the root and epistemic values of *would* coexist in examples (38) and (39). Indeed, with the creation of this hypothetical level, the modal auxiliary introduces a notion of probability in the sense that the utterances could respectively be reformulated as *it is impossible for me (to want) to lose you* and *if it was my last day on earth, there is no chance I would be in church*. There is therefore the idea of judgment on the part of the enunciator, also the subject of both utterances, which is characteristic of the epistemic value of a modal auxiliary. In both (38) and (39), the negation of *would* shows that the speaker aims at the non-validation of these relations, which according to Bouscaren and Chuquet (1987: 52) can be associated with epistemic modality. However, the presence of epistemic modality does not prevent *would* from expressing a

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189 Original quotation: "l'asserteur s'intéresse aux propriétés du sujet, qui est défini précisément par la validabilité de la relation prédicative" (Oriez, 2018: 378).

root modality and, in the case of (38) and (39), a value of will and intention on the part of the singer. Epistemic modality thus appears to underlie the construction of both utterances; however, on the surface – and this is where their pragmatic dimension becomes particularly relevant – it is the root value that prevails.

Finally, in example (40) *She would pick me up from practice [a]nd she'd take me home from school*, it is the “frequentative” form of *would* that seems to be at work twice, once in full form and once in contracted form (*'d*). *Would* or *'d*, as a form expressing a disactualization, marks a temporal break between the moment of enunciation and the moment described in the utterance, which is in fact a form of narrative. Indeed, *would* indicates that at a time long past the moment of enunciation, there was a relationship between the subject *she*, corresponding to the singer's mother, and the predicate *pick me up from practice* and *take me home from school*, involving the singer himself. The enunciator, Tai Verdes, is then interested in the characteristics of the subject *she* and her typical behavior when he went to school. These actions happened when he was really young, probably less than ten, since *magic*, *Santa Claus* and the *Tooth Fairy* are mentioned in the following verses. It is the root value that is mainly expressed in (40), as the enunciator focuses on the characteristics of the subject, i.e. his mother. These characteristics were usual and frequent at the time, suggesting that *would* indicates two of his mother's past habits in relation to him. Tai Verdes thus uses the root modality of *would* to recount part of his childhood and, in particular, his relationship with his mother, who is the main subject of the song “momma told me imma be.” The two occurrences in (40) are both assertive speech acts according to Searle's classification, but they still express a certain nostalgia, as they represent affective memories. This nostalgia is linked to the singer's feeling of gratitude toward his mother.

Thus, the utterances (*She would pick me up from practice / she'd take me home from school*) from (40) also contain an expressive dimension that reveals the singer's feelings toward his mother. *Would* with its root value appears to be highly effective in an expressive context. The singer seems to play on root modality, more or less consciously, to establish a form of emotional connection with his listeners. His aim is to convey his emotions, i.e. a part of his subjectivity, as best as he can in order to facilitate the interpretation of his songs for the audience. Root modality seems to be a recurrent means of doing so in his lyrics. It seems that, in examples (38; 39; 40), the singer desires to establish the most fluid understanding possible with his audience. This is reminiscent of the implementation of an intersubjective strategy. It enables the modal *would* to be considered as another means of expression of intersubjectivity in the corpus under study.

## 2.5. *Have to*

*Have to* is not a modal auxiliary but a periphrastic verb form, in particular that of the modal

auxiliary *must*. However, it shares similar characteristics with modal auxiliaries, as it can express an epistemic (e.g., “If the car doesn’t start, it **has to** be broken”) or root modality (e.g., “You **have to** tidy your room before I get home”). It operates in both fields; Bouscaren and Chuquet (1987: 48) even note that this is especially performed in American English – which aligns with the singer’s origins. *Have to* expresses both epistemic and root modality in cases like “He **has to** be the one responsible, no one else could have done it.”

The linguists define it as a “pseudo-modality” (Bouscaren and Chuquet, 1987: 67). The verb *have* functions as an operator of localization and is followed by *to*, which is an operator of predication (Bouscaren and Chuquet, 1987: 48). It is their combination that indicates an aim, i.e. a projection or intention (ibid.). In fact, *to* is the only modality contained in *have to* (ibid.). *Have to* followed by the base form of a verb establishes a predicative relation as invalidated but marks the possibility of validating it for a reference point situated at a different time than the moment of enunciation, and thus as belonging to the field of what is uncertain (Bouscaren and Chuquet, ibid.: 67). *Have to* indicates that something is to be done, and that this something is identified in relation to the subject of the utterance<sup>190</sup> (ibid.: 48). The enunciator merely notes an objective constraint, without endorsing it, unlike what happens with *must*<sup>191</sup> – the only difference between the two being the enunciator’s point of view (ibid.). That is why Bouscaren and Chuquet (1987: 48) state that *have to* belongs to the field of facts, always expressing a simple fact or observation.

The fundamental meaning of *have to*, close to that of *must*, is the necessity seen as neutral and therefore considered as independent from the enunciator (Larreya and Rivière, 2019: 133). It can convey a necessity or an obligation, in examples such as “You **have to** fasten your seat belt when you get in the car” or “The students **have to** hand in their assignment by Tuesday,” or “We **have to** go to that place. You’ll see, it’s awesome!” (ibid.: 133-134). In the first utterance, the obligation is factual, as the sentence implies the realization of the action (ibid.). In the second example, it is presented as neutral as it is independent of the opinion or personal wish of the speaker (ibid.). In the last example, the obligation can be seen as more subjective as the speaker’s opinion or wish can be perceived (ibid.). In its negative form, *have to* can represent a non-obligation (e.g., “You **don’t have to** come to the meeting, it’s optional”) (Larreya and Rivière, 2019: 134). In some of these cases, *have to* may enable the enunciator to influence their co-enunciator, establishing an intersubjective relationship with potential pressure. Finally, *have to* can express a logical necessity (e.g., “There **had to** be something wrong with the window, it just wouldn’t close anymore”) or a strong probability (e.g., “This **has to** be a mistake”) (ibid.).

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190 Original quotation: “*Have to* indique que quelque chose est à faire et que ce quelque chose est repéré par rapport au sujet de l’énoncé” (Bouscaren and Chuquet, 1987: 48).

191 Original quotation: “L’énonciateur ne fait que constater une contrainte objective, il ne l’assume pas à la différence de ce qui se passe avec *must*” (Bouscaren and Chuquet, 1987: 48).

As a result of its construction with the verb *have*, *have to* can be used in the past tense (see the preceding example) as well as in the future (see (41) below). Indeed, as it is a verb form, *have to* can be associated with another modal auxiliary. *Have* still functions as a verb and can therefore be used with the auxiliary *do* to form negative or interrogative utterances. The NICE properties therefore do not apply to *have* but to the auxiliary that can be combined with it. Tai Verdes employs an instance of *have to* combined with *will*, as exemplified below:

(41) TV “Stuck In The Middle”

She said, “Can we stop the joking”

“And take me seriously?” (Take me seriously)

I said, “I’ll try my very best”

“But we’ll **have to wait and see**”

In example (41), Tai Verdes uses the periphrastic form of *must* to note an obligation that he considers objective, that of waiting and seeing with regard to the future of his relationship with his interlocutor. This obligation has not yet been fulfilled, since *have to* is combined with the modal auxiliary *will*, which expresses a joint projection into the future that the speaker considers certain – pertaining to an epistemic value.

Moreover, Tai Verdes takes the predicate for granted, even though no external circumstance imposes this obligation on them. It is only the singer who, in view of the situation, considers this process inevitable; the obligation can be seen as purely subjective. With the combination of these two modal markers, the singer seems to be imposing his desire on his co-enunciator, i.e. the woman with whom he has an ambiguous relationship in the song (“Stuck In The Middle”). This can be seen in his choice of pronoun, as he includes both himself and his interlocutor in the plural pronoun *we*. By including his co-enunciator in the subject, the singer presents the projection that is expressed by the modal *will* as common to both of them. More precisely, he imposes the obligation on her, but presents it as if it were external; he shifts the burden of the action onto a contextual constraint. It is *have to* that really marks this desire to influence the woman he is addressing. The utterance expresses a certain pressure on the interlocutor, but this pressure is somewhat attenuated by the presence of *will*, as it is only in the future that this obligation will have to be complied with. In example (41) *I’ll try my very best [b]ut we’ll have to wait and see*, *have to* therefore enables Tai Verdes to establish an intersubjective relationship with the woman through the presence of intersubjective pressure, which reveals that deontic root modality is at play.

Furthermore, example (41) is primarily an assertive as it asserts Tai Verdes’ will on the one hand (*I’ll try my very best*) and his observation of this seemingly external obligation on the other hand (*we’ll have to wait and see*). However, the utterance in (41) may also be interpreted as a

directive speech act. Its directive nature can first be seen in the obligation that is imposed on the singer and his interlocutor through *have to*. The occurrence can also be seen as directive in the sense that it seems to express a suggestion. As mentioned earlier, by making his opinion appear as an external obligation, the singer imposes his opinion on his co-enunciator. In this way, utterance (41) may be rephrased as *I think we should wait and see*, which makes the suggestion concealed in the statement explicit. Thus, example (41) expresses an indirect speech act, masked behind a literal value of assertion. The occurrence under study is part of the answer provided by Tai Verdes, i.e. *I'll try my very best but we'll have to wait and see*. It can be said, then, that the indirect strategy he adopts serves to attenuate his point of view in this polemical context – reminiscent of a strategy of speech act hedging. It also enables him to avoid making a verbal promise that he would not keep. It suggests that the singer does not want to commit too much to the relationship at this point, as if he were delaying taking responsibility for the relationship. This attenuated language avoids hurting his interlocutor's feelings.

Thus, from an enunciative perspective, there is a desire to negotiate the meaning contained in utterance (41) with a periphrastic form expressing a deontic root modality. Thus, this example seems to demonstrate that, when the periphrastic form *have to* expresses a root value, it may contribute to the process of meaning negotiation and consequently to an intersubjective strategy.

### **3. Conclusion on their role in the expression of intersubjectivity and contrast with interrogatives and imperatives**

The analysis of the previous examples demonstrates that utterances containing root modality share several similarities with interrogative and imperative structures in terms of pragmatic and enunciative functions. Just like the two first intersubjective strategies discussed in this study, auxiliaries with a root value may contribute to the expression of speech acts, namely assertives, directives, commissives and expressives. They may convey illocutionary values that either exist on their own or combine with several other values. When several illocutionary values are intertwined, utterances containing root modality express indirect speech acts. For instance, when utterances with a root modal express directives, they may convey a question (30; 31), a suggestion (29; 30; 41), a reproach (30; 31; 32) or a supplication (31) – values also expressed by the interrogatives and imperatives of the corpus. Like negative interrogatives, utterances expressing root modality may convey indirect speech acts of assertion to implicitly assert the singer's opinion. When they express an expressive speech act, they can make the artist's romantic feelings, his regrets, frustration or a sense of nostalgia explicit – frustration and the expression of romantic feelings echoing the values of interrogatives and imperatives. Finally, something that interrogatives and imperatives do not

express in the corpus is commissive speech acts, which allow Tai Verdes to commit himself to performing an action. Although interrogatives and imperatives do not express such acts in the examples studied, a similarity with commissives expressed by utterances containing root modality can still be identified. Indeed, these utterances seem to reveal a self-directive dimension through the formulation of a commitment; thus, the artist imposes an action upon himself. This may echo the self-interrogations through which Tai Verdes sought answers within himself, and also the imperative structures with a metalinguistic *let* through which he imposes the formulated act both on himself and his addressee.

In short, these pragmatic functions are compatible with the fundamental meaning of each of the modal auxiliary discussed in this study. Indeed, this combination allows them to contribute to the expression of different values or effects in language compared to interrogatives and imperatives. For example, the expression of (good) will can be found through *will* (35; 36) or *would* (38; 39), as well as an obligation with *have to* (41), an (im)possibility with *can* (29; 30, 31), an inability with *could* (33), a subject's ability with *could* (32), a wish with *could* (34), or even a past habit with *would* (40). Forms expressing disactualization may also convey a modal or temporal break, which interrogative and imperative constructions cannot express on their own.

Due to their construction with an auxiliary, utterances expressing root modality may also share similarities with the construction of interrogatives and imperatives. Thanks to NICE properties, they might be in the form of an interrogative and might also mark negation. These three linguistic devices may additionally cause similar effects, such as an attenuated meaning (through a strategy of “hedging”), irony, or the establishment of a climate of intimacy and confession.

Despite these differences, utterances containing a root modal seem to function as another intersubjective strategy in the corpus under study. Indeed, the previous examples reveal that just like interrogatives and imperatives, they may enable Tai Verdes to establish an intersubjective relationship with his interlocutor. It seems that he does not address the audience directly as often as with interrogatives and imperatives. However, it does not mean that the audience is not included in the relationship with the singer, as modal auxiliaries with root value seem particularly effective in conveying Tai Verdes' representations in his lyrics. By relying mainly on this strategy, the singer allows listeners to access a part of his subjectivity and therefore facilitates their understanding of his songs. Auxiliaries used with root values can also contribute to expressing intersubjective pressure and to strategies of negotiation and imposition of meaning – even in a polemical context – but this does not concern the audience in the examples studied. Thus, utterances with root value, whether they display characteristics unique to them or ones shared with interrogative and imperative structures, can be considered as another form of intersubjective strategy in Tai Verdes' songs.

## Conclusion

This study aimed to examine how the phenomenon of intersubjectivity manifests itself in the lyrics of Tai Verdes, focusing specifically on three linguistic devices: interrogative structures, imperatives, and utterances containing modal auxiliaries with a root value. The objective was to explore to what extent intersubjectivity can emerge in a corpus composed of monologues, namely, non-interactive discourse. A close analysis of each of these linguistic forms demonstrated that they can indeed contribute to the expression of intersubjectivity, even in such a context. The concept of active dialogism and the definition of interaction highlighted the inherent orientation toward the other present in any form of discourse. This theoretical framework made it possible to observe how intersubjective phenomena can emerge even in artistic productions that lack face-to-face interlocutors.

Interrogative structures, in particular, revealed how discourse may be co-constructed and how the co-speaker can be called upon. Imperative structures, which are characterized by the expression of intersubjective pressure – to varying degrees – appeared as inherently oriented toward the interlocutor. As for utterances containing modals with a root value, while they have their own specific uses, they were often found to share pragmatic and enunciative functions with interrogatives and imperatives. Indeed, like both of these linguistic devices, root modality could contribute to strategies of meaning negotiation or imposition – particularly in its deontic value, which inherently conveys intersubjective pressure.

Despite their formal differences, all three constructions can be regarded as effective tools for expressing pragmatic and enunciative functions. Indeed, they revealed strategies of meaning negotiation at various levels of the scale, and in some cases, even meaning imposition. They may also contribute to hedging strategies which, by definition, take the addressee into account. Once again, this emphasizes the fundamentally intersubjective orientation of Tai Verdes' lyrics towards both specific interlocutors and the broader audience. In some cases, these three linguistic devices served an expressive function, allowing the singer to share his representations more explicitly rather than to influence the co-speaker. Thus, interrogatives, imperatives, and utterances with root modality demonstrated that, even in the absence of a physically present interlocutor, the addressee is still inscribed within the utterance. They also proved that, despite the specificity of the context, a relationship between subjects can nonetheless be established. In this way, intersubjectivity takes on different enunciative forms, all aimed at bridging the gap between the subjectivity of Tai Verdes and that of each individual listener, forming a temporary – always asymmetrical – relationship.

This process, although asymmetrical, reveals a form of retro-interpretation wherein the listener connects cognitively or emotionally with the singer's subjectivity. Indeed, while the

audience remains physically absent and perlocutionary effects inaccessible, these analyses suggest that these linguistic strategies create the potential for emotional or cognitive engagement. Such responses in the listeners may stem from a process of identification with what Tai Verdes says, a feeling of compassion, or the sharing of the singer's representations. A shared space of understanding – or, at least, interpretation – may still emerge. Within this space, Tai Verdes' subjectivity is exposed and made as explicit as possible for his addressees, allowing each of them to virtually connect their own subjectivity to it, thus constructing meaning that resonates in them. However, the effectiveness of such temporary common space cannot be confirmed without direct observation of the addressees' responses, and must therefore remain at the level of hypothesis.

Overall, the three intersubjective strategies explored in this study serve to facilitate the understanding of the lyrics for both specific addressees and a broader audience. However, the phenomenon of intersubjectivity observed in these analyses cannot be definitively identified as a factor in the songs' popularity or success. Nonetheless, this study has shown that intersubjectivity can emerge even in a non-interactive corpus, and that its manifestations may contribute to the appeal to the audience, to engage the latter with what is being said and to facilitate their understanding of the lyrics.

This corpus entailed several constraints that must be acknowledged: the impossibility of accessing perlocutionary effects, the potential lack of cooperation from the listeners – in case they decide to disregard the lyrics for instance –, the artistic and musical intentions, and the potential commercial and economic motivations. Some of these factors even fall outside the scope of purely linguistic analysis. While musical or commercial intentions may partly drive the choice of such forms, their contextual effects remain linguistically significant.

Among the limitations encountered, the narrow scope of the corpus was the most significant (only one artist, one music genre, twenty songs), alongside the inability to access the audience's responses – which prevented the paralinguistic dimension, such as gestures or facial expressions, from being studied. These limitations were, however, expected. The corpus size could be overcome by extending the study to a larger set of lyrics – thousands of pop songs by various artists – or by working with broader corpora such as the British National Corpus (BNC) or the Corpus Of Contemporary American English (COCA). As for the second limitation, it could be addressed by working with an interactive corpus, where the interlocutor's answers are accessible, or by conducting a field study involving interviews and behavioral observation of listeners as they engage with Tai Verdes' music. However, such responses remain difficult to capture with precision and this type of study would move closer to psychology and depart from strictly linguistic analysis.

Another constraint, linked to the musical nature of the data, was the inability to take prosody

into account. Prosodic features can be highly relevant for interpreting certain linguistic structures, particularly interrogatives or the indirect dimension of certain utterances. To explore this dimension, corpora that include oral productions, such as the Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English or the spoken components of the BNC or COCA would provide relevant data.

Lastly, it would have been relevant to account for the linguistic variety present in the corpus, as the artist is African American and occasionally uses markers of African American Vernacular English – which would call for a more sociolinguistic approach.

Some of these constraints could, for instance, be counterbalanced by a comparative study. Further research in the same field might examine intersubjective strategies both in Tai Verdes' lyrics and in a broader, more interactive corpus such as the COCA. This would allow for an exploration of whether these strategies function in the same way across monologues and dialogues in context, and whether their use is shaped or modified by the artistic context in which they occur.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the discussion on linguistic intersubjectivity by suggesting that the manifestations of the phenomenon are not limited to traditional dialogues, but permeate Tai Verdes' artistic non-interactive discourse through different forms. It highlights how even the least interactive forms of discourse remain inherently dialogic, oriented toward the other and embedding the interlocutor within the speaker's discourse – thus confirming that intersubjectivity is not bound by interaction, but built into the very production of language.

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# Index

*Table 1: Number of occurrences and corresponding percentage for each category of intersubjective strategy under study (including repetitions but not backing vocals)*

	Number of occurrences	Number of words	Corresponding percentage
Interrogative structures	85	696	9.31
Imperative structures	114	560	7.49
Occurrences with root modality (modal auxiliaries + <i>have to</i> )	88	706	9.44
<b>Total corpus (20 songs)</b>		<b>7,476</b>	