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This study investigates how commentators at different levels of involvement construe counterfactual scenarios in a discourse-specific corpus, chess commentaries. Differences in the linguistic formation of these scenes are discussed in terms of the notion of subjectivity. Findings show that while the involved commentators use more markers of epistemic attitude, neutral commentators construe time and the players more subjectively. Nonetheless, a systematic difference between the two groups is that involved commentators seem to strive for bigger precision through the use of more linguistic form. The analysis implies that the different understandings of subjectivity are hardly compatible. Moreover, the concept of “involvement” profits from being treated as a variable that needs to be clearly defined.

Keywords: subjectivity, involvement, counterfactual, chess

1. Introduction

Chess is a game played all over the world at all levels for pleasure, competition, and money. One of most enthralling, and also the most educational practices of those who play the game is to engage in post-mortem analyses of reasonable moves that were not, but could have been, made in a game. Emotions can especially run high when one is analyzing one’s own game. It is not rare for (self)-abusive remarks to escape mouths, expressing regret over lost opportunities or relief upon an opponent’s weaker play. At official tournaments, players keep track of their moves on a scoresheet, which can later be entered into databases and thus become accessible to the wider community of chess players. This makes it possible for games to be analyzed later in time by anyone who wishes to do so. Naturally, when the game analyses take the form of a written commentary in an internationally read magazine, the linguistic escapades become subdued. The aim is to provide a well-thought over, “objective” discussion of the possible alternative moves. Commentators, whether analyzing their own game or somebody else’s, play back the game move-by-move and insert their thoughts on the possible alternatives, pointing out why a move would have been a better, a worse, or simply an interesting alternative to the one made in the game. The following three sentences come from written post-mortem chess commentaries,

discussing moves that were not made in the game under analysisⁱ:

- (a) 19. Be3 is a good alternative.
- (b) An immediate 17. ...g7-g6 was better.
- (c) 16. ..e4!? would have been an interesting way to shake things up.

While all these sentences are possible, and have in fact been used, the likelihood of them being employed in terms of the verb form is very different as the overwhelming majority of comments in a written chess game analysis appears in the present tense. Thus, one would be much more likely to find sentence (a) than either (b) or (c). If so rare, are there any circumstances that prompt the use of the non-present tense? The observation that analyses by one of the players of the game, rather than by a third, neutral party, contain significantly more non-present tense comments on moves not made led to the current project. The aim of the present study is to investigate other linguistic differences between the two groups of commentators, the involved and the neutral, when discussing moves not made in the game, and to provide possible speculative links between the differences and the level of involvement.

In psychology, the level of involvement has been shown to influence counterfactual thinking and reasoning. These experiments usually compare the sentences/utterances produced by outsiders-people who just read about a situation- versus a group of more involved people, who experience the situation happening to them in reality. Thus, forecasters predicted feelings of more regret than actual experiencers reported in near-miss event scenarios and there was also a difference in the allocation of self-blame between these two groups (Gilbert et al. 2004). Also, actors change different elements of a scenario when trying to describe how the negative outcome might have been avoided than readers of the scenario do, because the two groups have access to different types of information (Giroto et al. 2007). Naturally, these experiments investigate the content of the utterances, while linguistic form is controlled for.

In linguistics, involvement is most commonly related to the notion of subjectivity, even though the two are sometimes treated separately (Pander Maat and Degand 2001). As Finegan (1995: 1) puts it, "Subjectivity concerns the involvement of a locutionary agent in a discourse, and the effect of that involvement on the formal shape of discourse- in other words, on the linguistic expression of self". As a rule, this involvement is a more abstract one than its direct physical counterpart which is the concern of psychological studies, and conclusions about it are mainly based on linguistic cues. Nevertheless, the speaker's physical involvement, i.e., his/her physically having been in the situation, has been found to influence conditional constructions (Nikiforidou and Katis 2000).

Even though linguistic subjectivity has its roots in the European research tradition (e.g. Benveniste 1971; Lyons 1982), in present-day linguistics, the two well-known formulations of subjectivity guiding the discussion can be attributed to linguists in North America: one endorsed by Langacker (e.g., 1985, 1990, 1991, 2006), which concerns itself with the subjective/objective construal of certain entities within a situation; the other championed by

Traugott (1982, 1989, 1995), which is more concerned with the historical development of certain expressions, accounted for by subjectification, and resulting in their becoming more representative of the speaker's attitude/point of view. Opinions on the extent to which the two understandings of subjectivity are compatible run the gamut. Attributing unequivocal superiority to one notion over the other (Brisard 2006) is rare, and in fact, empirical studies mostly point to the compatibility of the two or of some variant of them (Carey 1995; Kemmer 1995), even though exceptions exist (Nuyts 2001). Langacker and Traugott themselves mostly stress the difference of their notions (Traugott 1995: 32; Langacker 2006: 18); nevertheless, reconciliatory remarks, especially by Langacker, are not difficult to find (Langacker 2006, p.20). A similarly important, and less discussed, issue is whether the two accounts would trigger the investigation of the same phenomena at all in the first place.

Most synchronic empirical studies consider the notion of subjectivity as an explanatory force which sheds light on the usage of a certain form over another in the same category. In these studies, the notion of subjectivity has been linked to the usage of causal connectives in Dutch, German, and French (Pit 2003), to the variants of *if* in Greek conditionals (Nikiforidou and Katis 2000), to adjectives (Athanasidou 2006), and evidentiality markers (Nuyts 2001). A group of studies that stands out as more powerful are those which, while still having target items to be explained in terms of subjectivity, allocate this dimension not only based on extralinguistic reasoning arrived at via linguistic cues, but also investigate several linguistic parameters as its possible markers (Pander Maat and Degand 2001; Pit 2003; Mortelmans 2006). This evokes a resemblance to the present study, even though the latter's uniqueness inherently lies in its inception: namely, that its starting point is an observation in the world, i.e. the existence of the two different groups of chess commentators having been involved in the event to be described to differing degrees. That is, involvement is an independent variable here, which is quite different from its usual treatment where linguistic form and involvement mutually explain and feed into each other. The question under investigation is whether a certain level of involvement leads participants to systematically construe different elements of an event at the same level on the dimension of subjectivity. The scalar nature of the notion of subjectivity further brings up the issue of something being more/less subjective than something else. The present study aims to show that, when investigating synchronic naturally occurring language use, these kinds of comparisons may involve participants other than those that instinctively occur to people and are thus traditionally considered. Analyzing a specialized, technical discourse, where the available variants on a theme can be identified with relative ease, further underlines this advantage. To sum up, the study will seek to answer the following questions:

- What linguistic differences does an investigation motivated by the notion of subjectivity reveal between a neutral and an involved group in the linguistic construal of counterfactual scenarios in chess commentaries?
- To what extent can the notion of subjectivity explain these differences?

2. Method

Description of data source: Data for this study come from *Chess Life*, the monthly magazine of the United States Chess Federation. This publication is a staple for every serious chess player in the United States and beyond. Each issue includes several sections, among them tournament reports, opening theory and endgame studies, lessons on strategy and tactics, book reviews and information on upcoming tournaments. Analyses are done by regular columnists as well as occasional contributors who report on a tournament. The authors of the columns are clearly indicated, as is the fact when a chess player agrees to analyze his/her own game for the magazine.

Data collection: For this study, only those games were considered that came from a recent tournament and were analyzed in full (as opposed to those analyses that start from a diagram which shows the game at a specific point and follows it from there). Comments offering an alternative move as opposed to the one made in the game were collected and grouped into two, depending on whether the game was analyzed by one of its players, or by a third party, labeled as the “involved” and the “neutral” group, respectively. (Oftentimes, there are comments that do not consider an alternative, just make a general remark about the game- these are of no use for the present purpose). The collection of comments started with the January 2008 issue and continued until 100 comments for each group was reached. For the neutral group, two issues (January-February 2008) sufficed, whereas for the involved group, issues from January 2008 through April 2008 were used. The 100 comments come from nine different commentators in the neutral group and from nineteen in the involved group. Only those comments were included that were placed right after the move to be replaced (some comments offering an alternative move precede the actual one, and some come a move or two later than the actual move- these comments were omitted). Comments referring to established theory were also not considered. E.g., *3...d6 may be some sort of playable Pirc, but the text allows White too much space; 10. 0-0-0 is the usual move here.*

Data analysis: The comments on hypothetical moves varied substantially as to their length. Some were only one-sentence: *19. Be3 is a good alternative.* Others started with a description of the move just made, and then shifted to discussing the alternative: *This is an important intermediate move. It would be a blunder to grab the pawn with 18...dxc4 since that would allow 19. Nc6.* Still others included a lengthy musing: *I was quite surprised when my opponent played this move. Of course, the idea behind it is to control the e4-square but I believe it weakens Black’s position, especially the light squares. I think better is the more solid 11.c6 12. a4 a6 13. Nxc4 b5 14. Nd2 Nd7 15. c4.* To achieve a wieldy dataset, it was decided that from each comment, the unit of analysis would only be the sentence that included the alternative move. Clearly, this ignores the effects a previous sentence may have on the formation of the next. However, I judged this to be a less biasing factor than the one that could have arisen from the involved party’s more characteristic verbosity, had I included more than one sentence. (Needless to say, it would be a worthy venture to explore tense and other variation in multi-sentence comments in the future). Accidentally, the number of comments that included the

alternative move in the first sentence and those that included it later and were thus “truncated” was very similar in the two groups: 73/27 vs. 69/31 in the neutral and the involved group, respectively (although the truncated comments tended to be longer for the involved group). In cases when the target sentence contained two verbs both describing the alternative move, it was the first verb that was part of the analysis. For example, from the sentence, *If White stubbornly tries to defend the c4-pawn with 16 Bf1, Black answers with 16...Bc5... with a clear advantage- and the c4 pawn falls anyway!*, only the verb “tries” was considered in the analysis that focused on verb tense. Another rare occasion was when a computer program was referred to: *In this position Fritz finds a surprising idea: 31.Qxd5. This offers good drawing chances, but I think White has all the winning chances, which didn't suit me* (Fritz is a computer program to analyze chess games). From this comment, “offers” was included in the verb tense analysis.

A couple of further measures were necessary in order to filter out unwanted bias in the data as a result of the involved group's having access to their own thoughts during the game. Thus, verbs describing the player's thought process and thus accessible only by the involved player were disregarded. So, from the sentence *Here I was considering 14. Bf3 Rc8...and White has the initiative*, “was considering” was disregarded, and “has” was part of the verb tense analysis. Similarly, for the analysis of the construal of the players, expressions describing the mental processes were not taken into consideration. Thus, when the involved commentator says “*here I should have played the simple 35. Fxe4 Rxe4*”, “I” was considered as a reference to player; however, from the comment “*More accurate is 20...dxc5..., when I can't see a way to take advantage of the awkward positioning of Black's pieces*”, only “Black”, but not “I”, was included in the analysis. This is because this latter is not a reference to the player, but to the commentator (even if, in the case of the involved group, the commentator *was* the player). On the other hand, mental verbs expressing assessment of available evidence were included in the section on epistemicity. Thus, from the comment, *I suppose that by this point White has nothing better than to give up the a4-pawn and try to find compensation with 22. Rfc1 on which I was intending 22.Qxa4*, “has” was included in the verb tense analysis, and “I suppose” in the discussion on expressions of speaker stance. This latter segment could come from either the involved or the neutral group. (And, as should be clear by now, “I was intending” was not included in any analysis). The following section presents and discusses the findings. Target items in the example sentences are italicized.

3. Findings

This section presents the findings on the linguistic construal of time, the players, and epistemic markers of speaker attitude. Time was chosen as an area of investigation because of the observed rarity of non-present tense verbs. The two players, as the protagonists of the past event, are outstanding entities and thus their construal is of importance. References to the time and participants of an event are also some of the most basic expressions of deixis, and thus contribute to the speaker's efforts to help the hearer decode the former's perspective. Finally, markers of speaker attitude, chief among them

expressions of epistemicity, give an overall indication about the strength of the certainty of the assessment of the alternative move. This is a prominent question in every situation that involves counterfactual thinking: to what extent are we sure that the alternative course of action would have been better/worse?

3.1 Time

As was noted in the introduction, the overwhelming majority of the verbs in the comments evaluating the hypothetical move are in the present tense. This trend is especially strong with the neutral commentators. On the other hand, the involved commentators, while still mostly using the present tense, are more likely to put their comments in the past or the subjunctive counterfactual form than the neutral group. Logically, it is not surprising that this would be the case, since the involved commentators lived through the game, so for them the information that these moves were actually not made is more salient. Table 1 shows the distribution of verb forms, followed by a handful of examples.

	Present	Past	Subjunctive counterfactual
Neutral	93	4	3
Involved	64	25	11

Table 1. The distribution of verb tense forms of the 100 comments analyzed in the two groups

- (1) If the king *runs* in the other direction with 26 Kf4, then 26... Nd3+ 27. Kf5 Bc8+ 28. Re6 Rxe6 and an unstoppable checkmate with ...Re6-e5.
- (2) Black *should try* 11. ..e4 12. fxe4 fxe4 13. Nxe4 Ne5 with counterplay for the pawn.
- (3) Another try *was* with 36. Rb8+ Kh7, locking out the black king.
- (4) More difficult for White *was* 32. ..d3 33. Rd1 Bf8.
- (5) White *should have sat* tight with 23. b3.
- (6) 38. ..c4 *would have eased* the pressure.

The commentaries under investigation report on games that took place prior to the writing of the commentary. Thus, we have two time planes;- the time when the game was played (in the past) and the time when the analysis is written (present; the ground). Furthermore, this latter is a more complicated situation than what may be the case with other sports, since with chess the whole game is in fact re-lived by going through it move by move and inserting the comments while doing so. This is very different from, say, a football game where the commentator might write up the report from his notes taken while watching the game. Also, for the exact same position to re-occur in a next chess game is theoretically more plausible than for the exact same position to re-occur in a football game, with all the players having the exact same velocity,

for example. Finally, because of the nature of the game, an alternative move and subsequent most likely continuations can be predicated and analyzed with a relatively high precision. This unique nature of chess commentaries may trigger a detachment between the two time planes, with the actual event in the past fading into obscurity, which then gets reflected in verb tense choice.

A relevant but also distinctively different situation in live sport commentaries, namely the tendency for live sport- casters to use the present tense instead of the past counterfactual has caught the attention of linguists (Langacker 1991; Gorrell 1995). Gorell's example, coming from a baseball commentary, is "“If the catcher makes a good throw, Butler is out at second”" after Butler had already stolen second base (p. 25). Gorrell attributes this usage to a quest on the reporter's part to make the commentary vivid. Langacker (1991) discusses this usage as a special case of the present tense and explains it as a deictic center shift on the part of the speaker from the here-and-now to the mental space representing the would-have-been scenario.

In spite of this attention, how tense may be related to the dimension of subjectivity is sparsely discussed, and the problems with subjectivity, most notably "the absence of a definition and a set of criteria that can unambiguously distinguish between expressions that classify as subjective and those that classify as non-subjective" (De Smet and Verstraete 2006: 370) appear to cause the most difficulties in the discussion of the subjectivity of verb tense forms in the present study. Pit (2003) considers tense as a peripheral textual variable reflecting, rather than contributing to, the subjectivity (a.k.a. self-expression) of a participant, while interplaying with other features. Her understanding of the degree of subjectivity expressed inherently in tense is mainly based on Fleischman (1990), who discusses tense choice and subjectivity/objectivity in narratives as well as causal speech. Langacker (2003) talks about the extreme subjectivity of some special uses of the present tense, juxtaposing them with its canonical use. The common thread in these three works is that they consider the present tense as the most subjective, or, stated more abstractly, the tense that does not reflect the actual occurrence of the events is viewed as the most subjective.

Even though my specific context is rather special in that we (as well as the commentators) know that they are describing events that did not happen, I would like to argue that the above-mentioned works are helpful in reasoning and lead to the conclusion that in this specific speech event, the present tense indicates a more subjective usage than the past or the subjunctive counterfactual in that it does not take into account that the move was not made in the game. This may be considered as a "timeless" use of the present tense (Fleischman 1990). Using the past or the counterfactual subjunctive distances the move either in time or both in time and reality, and thus is a more realistic, and so a more objective, description of what (did not) happen(ed). I acknowledge that a reverse explanation, where the past tense or the counterfactual signals higher subjectivity exactly because situating the depicted event brings "people" into the scene, rendering it more subjective than a "lifeless" portrayal, also has an intuitive appeal. Also, the past/counterfactual are more informative, and thus could be viewed as more subjective in the pragmatic sense. In fact, the intricate interplay of the present

tense and the subjectivity/objectivity scale, often resulting in opposite explanations and conclusions, has been discussed in relation to narrative (Fleischman 1990). Nevertheless, I maintain that the present tense denotes a subjective use that renders the axes of time/reality as unimportant in these post-mortem commentaries. This is true even if the present tense is the most conventionalized, and is thus the unmarked form in the genre of written chess commentaries. Based on the numerical findings, then, we can assert that the neutral commentators construe time more subjectively than the involved commentators.

3.2. Construal of the Players

Comments vary in the extent to which players are explicitly referred. It is possible to include zero reference (7, 8), reference to one player, (9, 10), and reference to both players (11, 12).

- (7) Much safer is 15...Re8 with at least equality.
- (8) Necessary was the intermediate move 23. Bb6, to avoid the loss of pawn on c5 in the ensuing moves.
- (9) A good alternative is 6. exd5 Nf6 7. Nc3 Nxd5 8. Bc4...with an edge *for White*.
- (10) If I play the natural move 30. f3, then 30.h3! with an equal position.
- (11) *White* put all his eggs in his “a-pawn basket” since the alternative also allows *Black* to create a passed pawn after 57. f4 f5.
- (12) *White* heads for a minor piece ending, but good middle game chances are still possible after 35. h4 h6 36. hxg5 due to the weakness of *Black’s* g-pawn and the open h-file.

With one exception, neutral commentators, when they refer to the players, they do it by the words ‘Black’ and ‘White’. Naturally, involved commentators sometimes (in 7 of the 53 comments that name at least one player) refer to themselves as ‘I’ (see example 10). Interestingly, though, these commentators never use the accusative/dative form of the personal pronoun, and thus never say “.....was better for me” but say “.....was better for White”. To get a sense of how the writer of the above sentences is making a choice between alternative construals, one could try to rephrase them, changing the number of explicit references to players. For example, “for Black” could be added to sentence 7 and “for White” could be discarded from sentence 9 and it would still be clear that it is White who has the edge since an alternative move for White is discussed. For sentence 11, it is somewhat more difficult to come up with an alternative formulation, but “This move puts all the hope in the a-pawn, but 57. f4 f5 also allowed the creation of a passed pawn” could be said with minimum ambiguity. Table 2 shows the distribution of the explicit reference to players in the two groups.

In terms of subjectivity, it appears that the neutral commentators have a tendency to construe the players more subjectively, as they refer to them explicitly to a somewhat smaller extent than the involved commentators. This leads to bigger subjectivity, because, for example, in sentence 7, the commentator takes the perspective of Black without articulating it. Sentence

11, on the other hand, has both players on-stage, in our full view. As Table 2 shows, involved commentators are more likely to construe the players in this more objective way. This dimension of subjectivity appears to be a concern only to the cognitive approach and it is not clear whether the pragmatic one would say anything about the difference in subjectivity displayed in the three sentence types.

	Neither player named	1 player named	Both players named
Neutral	56	40	4
Involved	47	46	7

Table 2. Distribution of the references to players in the two groups of commentators

3.3 Markers of Epistemic Speaker Attitude

Epistemic markers express the speaker's evaluation of the likelihood of the state of affairs under discussion. A host of linguistic means, including modal auxiliary verbs, stance adverbs, mental state verbs, and perception verbs can express this dimension. They are clear markers of subjectivity according to both understandings of the notion. A point of confusion, pointed out specifically in relation to mental state verbs, may be that since these expressions bring in the speaker explicitly, Langacker may consider them more objective (as entertained by Nuyts 2001). However, as both Langacker (2006) and Mortelmans (2006) point out, even though these expressions construe the speaker itself objectively, they do express the speaker's judgment and thus make the conceptualization of the epistemic content more subjective. The same line of thinking holds for modal auxiliaries, perception verbs, and stance adverbs, which, while staying short of naming the speaker explicitly also make his/her presence more apparent than would be the case were these markers omitted.

Another two important theoretical considerations relate to the issue of epistemicity: (i) the relationship between evidential and epistemic qualifications (ii) the extent to which epistemic markers involve subjectivity judgments on the speaker's part. While they will not be treated in detail here, I would like to point out how they come into play in our specific setting. On the first issue, Cornillie (2009) reviews the sources of confusion between the two notions and argues for a clear differentiation between them, stating that evidential qualification has to do with the assessment of the reliability of the source of knowledge, whereas epistemicity is concerned with the evaluation of likelihood. On the second issue, by analyzing the broader discourse context of sentences including mental state predicates, epistemic modal adjectives, modal auxiliaries and modal adverbs in Dutch and German corpora, Nuyts (2001) finds that the use of the latter two does not involve the dimension of subjectivity at all and is rather neutral (And while Nuyts asserts that his

notion of subjectivity is different from both of those entertained in the present paper –although closer to that of Traugott’s- his claim that the subjectivity of an epistemic expression can be assessed only if we consider the broader discourse setting is an argument shared by the present author). While agreeing with both linguists’ analyses and claims, I suggest that the discourse setting under investigation provides a context where these concerns are less foregrounded. Since all commentators have access to evidence of the same nature (computer programs, as well as their and their team’s analyses), every epistemic expression involves subjectivity and necessarily contains an element of an evidentiality judgment. So, for example, in the present context, the sentence

23. *g3 might have offered* better chances to hold the position

is more subjective than its counterpart

23. *g3 offered* better chances to hold the position

to the extent that the former conveys the commentator’s hesitation to make a blanket statement based on available evidence, whereas the latter accepts the same evidence (e.g., the assessment provided by a computer program) at face value, and this acceptance is the only subjective judgment he/she is making. In the first sentence (which is an actual sentence from the data) the evidentiality judgment interplays with the epistemic expression of likelihood. Most likely, it is not the case that the commentator who produces the first sentence trusts computer programs or his/her own analysis less than the producer of the second sentence; still, s/he makes the decision that an element of hesitation is in order for whatever reason. It is interesting to note that, apparently, the two sentences do not mean the same thing, and in fact, trying to paraphrase the first sentence without subjectivity markers appears impossible.

3.3.1 Epistemic Modal Auxiliaries

Epistemic modal auxiliaries are rare in the data and are employed to mostly the same extent by the two groups;- three instances by the involved group and two by the neutral.

(13) Passive moves such as 50. ..Nc6 *may* be no better.

(14) Black is in a similar pickle after 22....Bxe5 23 Ne7 + ...and Black *must* lose material.

Omitting the modal auxiliaries from these sentences and saying “is no better” and “Black loses material”, respectively, would indicate a lack of need to indicate the skepticism/lesser conviction of the commentator no matter what the analysis has shown.

3.3.2 Epistemic Stance Adverbs

Stance adverbs expressing epistemicity can be divided into different categories (Biber and Finegan, 1988). The most obvious examples are those that express an element of doubt. In the present data, we find *probably* and *possibly*, used

only by involved commentators, yielding five instances altogether. See examples below:

- (15) 28. ...Rxc2 was *probably* winning too, in a much easier fashion.
 (16) *Possibly* quicker is 65. Nb4.

In these examples, subjectivity kicks in in a similar way as with the modal auxiliaries: the commentator judges it important to express an element of doubt despite the most likely very careful analysis. Were *probably/possibly* omitted from these sentences, it would suggest a lesser role of the commentator due to a negligence towards a more nuanced assessment of the proposed move.

Another category of epistemic stance adverbs express certainty. In the dataset at hand, we find that involved commentators use *clearly* (1 instance) and *obviously* (1 instance). Neutral commentators use *clearly* (2 instances). Moreover, both groups use *of course* twice:

- (17) *Obviously* 41.Qe3 is winning for Black, but I was happy to avoid it.
 (18) After the natural 15. ..Nd7 White is *clearly* better after 16. Qd2.
 (19) *Of course* not 38. Qxd6? Qxf2!! 39. Kxf2 Nxe4+.

It is worth noting here that *clearly* in this context conveys a meaning that is a mix of certainty and degree, as if the words *undoubtedly* and *much* were combined. This is quite logical, though, as it is much easier to unequivocally evaluate a position which is unequivocally better for one side.

3.3.3 Mental State Verbs

Another means to express epistemicity are mental state verbs like *think*, *know*, *believe*, *prefer*, or *suppose*. In the present data set, involved commentators use the following mental state expressions: *I think* (3 instances), *I can't see* (1), *I suppose* (1). Neutral commentators use *I would prefer* (1) and *I cannot see* (1). See examples below:

- (20) *I think* better is the more solid 11.c6 12. a4 a6 13. Nxc4 b5 14. Nd2 Nd7 c4.
 (21) After 53. ...Kg5! *I cannot see* how White could win.

3.3.4 Perception Verbs

The subjectivity of perception verbs (in the present data, *seem*, *look*, and *appear*) stands somewhere between that of mental state verbs and stance adverbs expressing doubt. Expressions including these verbs are depersonalized (i.e., the subject is not "I"), which makes them less overtly subjective than mental state verbs. At the same time, the identity of the perceiver is quite obvious (compare *Bob appears healthy* and *Bob appears healthy to me*), although the latter form more naturally invites doubt and the possibility to add a *but*-clause to it (but see example 25). Neutral commentators use *look* (3 times). Involved commentators use *look* (3 times), *seem* (3 times) and *appear* (1):

- (22) Pressure on the d-file with 41. ..Bxc3..*looks* promising for Black.
 (23) A tempting move, although 32. Nxe5 ..also *looks* good.
 (24) This structure *seemed* acceptable for Black: 14. Nc5 Bxc5 15. bxc5, i.e. 15.Rfd8 keeping an eye over the center.
 (25) Originally, I was thinking of 18. Bg3 because it *appears* that Black's pieces are unable to move, but then I saw the idea of 18.Qc8 with the idea of 19. ...Ne5.

The table below summarizes the quantitative data discussed in this section and displays the number of occurrences of the epistemic markers in the two groups.

Marker	Involved	Neutral
Modal auxiliaries	3	2
Stance adverbs	9	4
Mental state verbs	5	2
Perception verbs	7	3

Table 3. The distribution of epistemic markers in the two groups

As the numbers indicate, involved commentators make use of this way of expressing the somewhat subjective nature of their evaluation of the alternative move to a greater extent than neutral commentators.

4. Conclusions

The findings show that all the investigated linguistic tools exhibit tangibly different degrees of manifestation on the subjectivity scale between the two groups. While the nature of the data makes it hard to speak in terms of which variable shows the biggest/smallest overlap, we can firmly say that the involved group showed a remarkably denser use of epistemic markers to convey the strength of their certainty as to the assessment of the alternative move. At the same time, the neutral group exhibited more subjectivity in terms of construing the event participants and the time of the event. Thus, both groups appear to use a mix of more and less subjective language, so in terms of language use, neither can be labeled as the “less subjective” or the “more subjective” group. Rather than treating this as an unsatisfactory result, though, I would suggest that the findings do point to a characteristic feature in the involved commentators' texts, namely, bigger precision, achieved through more informativeness. They are more straightforward about the time/reality of the discussed move, more explicit about the identity of the event participants, and they express more nuanced opinions. These phenomena all involve more form (except for the simple past, which is one word, just like the simple present) and thus can be viewed as a most basic form of iconicity;-more form leads to more meaning, the attainment of which seems to be a

fundamental aim of this group. We may speculate that it is the higher stakes that involved commentators had in these games that makes them more vested in being more accurate.

The study has provided insights into some broader theoretical issues on the topic of subjectivity. First of all, it has been argued that the primary concerns of the two notions of subjectivity- cognitive and pragmatic – are considerably different so that an analysis of naturally occurring language would most likely focus on different linguistic phenomena depending on the notion being adhered to. Also, and more importantly, the same phenomenon might be analyzed differently. This suggests that the two understandings are hardly compatible. At the same time, conducting an analysis not driven by the primary concerns of only one understanding has proven profitable in that it revealed a tendency that would otherwise have gone unnoticed, namely, the quest for greater precision on the part of the involved commentators. This way, the analysis also points to the benefits of investigating multiple factors when discussing subjectivity.

Related to the above issue is the question of the relationship between involvement and subjectivity. The analysis has shown that circular reasoning between subjectivity and speaker involvement is problematic. To make conclusions to bigger speaker involvement based on linguistic data, and then explain the subjectivity of other linguistic forms with this bigger involvement runs the risk of selecting those forms only that support the hypothesis. In the present data, the physical involvement of the speaker- which, in the specific discourse context, means bigger mental involvement also,- led to a more subjective use of language only in terms of epistemic markers. This suggests that, at the minimum, when referring to “involvement”, the term must be clearly defined with illustrative examples, as is done by Pander Maat and Degand (2001), who distinguish five levels of it based on an analysis of the semantics of a number of utterances coming from large corpora.

I hope to have also shown how the study of subjectivity can gain from investigating discourse-specific corpus. Since subjectivity is a gradient notion, decisions about it inherently involve comparison. In this context, discourse-specific texts provide a helpful guide as to what those comparisons should be because the available variants on a theme and their likelihood of occurrence are relatively easy to identify. Thus, the three possible tense variations, and the three ways to refer to the players have foregrounded comparisons not traditionally considered. At the same time, the investigation of naturally occurring language has also highlighted a certain lack of and need for more specific criteria for subjectivity, as discussed in the section on time, and in agreement with De Smet and Verstraete (2006).

I believe that the insights gained from the study offer enough motivation for expansion in different directions. Other dimensions of subjectivity, such as negation or the usage of adjectives, can be added to the analysis. A further controlling element could be introduced by examining commentaries written on the same game by representatives of the two groups, but those are rather hard to come by. Other sports may provide a more fertile ground in this respect through after-game commentaries by players, coaches, or reporters.

An analysis of the interplay of the now separately examined variables within a sentence could be revealing. A different line of research would be to not limit the analysis to one target sentence but examine longer chunks in terms of these linguistic phenomena. Broader implications concern psychological factors governing the creation and assessment of counterfactual scenarios depending on the level of involvement and may motivate experiments that examine not only the content but also the linguistic form of those utterances.

Notes

- ⁱ To help the reader follow the examples, here is a basic guide to chess notation: K = king, Q = queen, R = rook, B = bishop, N = knight. “X” indicates taking a piece, and “+” means check. Ellipses (...), as in example b, indicate that White’s move has already been played and we are discussing an alternative move for Black. Moves are numbered in the order as they happened in the game, one number being made up of one White and one Black move.

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