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On Deconstructing Mood: A Construction Grammar Approach to the Spanish Subjunctive

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Abstract

The Spanish subjunctive has traditionally been described by some linguists as an inflection expressing mood and by others as a marker of subordination. In this contribution I will argue that both functions can be observed, but that Spanish (and Romance) subjunctives increasingly become associated with subordination and lose their modal semantics in the process. I will therefore claim that taking the subjunctive paradigm as a monolithic category with one central semantic value is inadequate for representing all the various constructions in which subjunctive forms appear. As an alternative, I will suggest to model the various Spanish subjunctive constructions within a construction grammar framework informed by Traugott & Trousdale's work on constructionalisation. An abstract subjunctive schema is posited from which a non-assertion, a modal agreement and a modal trigger subschema are derived. Of these three, two are essentially procedural with little to no semantic content, while only the non-assertion schema partly corresponds semantically to the traditional assertion vs. non-assertion analysis.

Keywords: Romance subjunctive constructions; constructionalisation; demodalisation; modal agreement; subordination; marker.

1. Introduction¹

An important part of the research undertaken on modality in the romance languages² seems to take for granted that the subjunctive-inflection itself is intrinsically, and always, a marker for mood and therefore a means for expressing modality. This strand of investigation proceeds in an

¹ I'm indebted to two anonymous reviewers whose detailed comments have greatly helped me to realise (and hopefully correct) the many shortcomings of the Berlin talk and to further two anonymous reviewers who helped to improve on that version in the second round of reviews. I'd also like to thank my colleagues Benno Berschin, Katrin Betz, Martin Haase, Josep Martines and Tanja Prohl for reading various versions of this text and providing many constructive ideas and improvements. For years they have been inspiring and inspired debating partners on the matters treated in this paper and I owe them more than would fit into a tiny footnote for the atmosphere of intellectual exchange they have helped create at the Bamberg Institute of Romance Philology. All remaining errors are, of course, mine.

² For research reports cf. Bosque (2012), Knauer (1998), Borrego Nieto, Gómez Asencio & Prieto de los Mozos (1995), Bosque (1990), Navas Ruiz (1990), Manteca Alonso-Cortés (1981), and Bergen (1978).

onomasiological fashion, taking various forms of ‘modality’ as its starting point; it looks at a wide variety of uses where the subjunctive-inflection is said to carry semantic content. Another research tradition takes a more semasiological stance in not presupposing any semantic content for the subjunctive but rather using the actual forms in their syntactic context as the starting point of their investigations. In this contribution I will, *cum grano salis*, embrace the second of the two. I will be only marginally concerned with the semantic intricacies of the modal subjunctives but will rather concentrate on the synchronic distribution of the various types of subjunctives and the diachronic processes by which the modern situation came about; I will try to give a comprehensive and principled description of all uses of the subjunctive. It will be argued that the demodalised type is on the rise in Spanish (and all the other Romance languages) as the result of a long-standing constructionalisation process which increasingly turns this erstwhile meaning-carrying inflection into a formal marker of modal agreement and subordination. It will be argued that the traditional approach of trying to explain the meaning or function of the subjunctive forms themselves may not be the most efficient way of describing the various phenomena associated with all the different constructions in which subjunctive forms occur. I propose an alternative approach based on construction grammar and constructionalisation theory as proposed in Traugott & Trousdale (2013), in which the subjunctive-inflection itself is not taken to be the *explanandum*, but rather the various subschemas in which its forms participate. Thus, instead of giving a morpheme-based description of the meaning or function of “the subjunctive” I will be striving to establish a subjunctive schema as a detailed and structured linguistic network of all subjunctive-related subschemas and micro-constructions.

We will first give a succinct survey of the research tradition on the Spanish subjunctive and concentrate on a discussion of the currently dominant unitarian structuralist theory which posits a central semantic value as the unifying element between all uses of the subjunctive. I will then try to describe the constructionalisation processes which have led to a proliferation of demodalised subjunctive uses.

2. Two Theories and a Logical Conundrum

Romance and hispanic linguists have taken two vastly different approaches on the subjunctive. One important group of researchers (Schifko, 1967; Cressey, 1971; Bolinger, 1974, 1976; Hummel, 2001, 2004; De Jonge, 2001, Ruiz Campillo, 2008) sees in the subjunctive mainly a form that the speaker may use independently of the syntactic context to convey modality, i.e. a means of expression rather than a grammatical rule to be observed. Among these authors, some follow a ‘unitarian’ approach in trying to unite the various semantic nuances in the meaning of the subjunctive under one (abstract)

central value. Others follow a ‘dualist’ approach and distinguish between two or even more different subjunctives. Whether unitarian or dualist, both see the subjunctive as an essentially semantic issue, i.e. subjunctive inflections expressing some form of modality.

The other group of linguists³ contradicts this view and points out that the subjunctive cannot be comprehensively explained as a means of expression because it is in many cases obligatorily triggered by elements of the syntactic context:

All varieties of Spanish preserve a vigorous subjunctive mood [...]. Opinion is divided, however, on whether the subjunctive should be viewed as an independently meaningful category or as a 'mere' marker of subordination. Its use in many contexts is undoubtedly determined by grammatical factors (Green, 1988, p. 113).

This second tradition, which is particularly well established in French linguistics (cf. Bally, 1932, p. 46⁴; Rothe, 1967, p. 217), does not usually deny the existence of a modal subjunctive. It does, however, point out the countless uses of the subjunctive, where its motivation cannot be considered to be modal because it is either mechanically triggered or at least strongly encouraged by the syntactic context. The argument is that a form can only be a meaning-carrying sign as long as the speaker is free to choose between it and at least one alternative. A conventional sign implies freedom of choice, and what *must* be done anyway cannot at the same time be interpreted as a voluntary signing act. The semasiological subjunctive theories start from analysing all subjunctive forms found in texts, modal or not, and do therefore differentiate between two substantially different uses of the subjunctive, one modal and one syntactic. Where the form stands in a paradigmatic relationship with other modal options (generally the indicative), it is considered to be meaning-bearing (‘modal subjunctive’). Where such a paradigmatic relationship is excluded by the rules of grammar and the use of the subjunctive is obligatory, it is said to be ‘demodalised’, ‘amodal’, ‘triggered’, ‘syntactic’ etc. While proponents of an essentially syntactic explanation tend to accept a modal subjunctive at least as a residual phenomenon, there is a strong tradition on the part of semantic theories (the “unitarian” or “central value theories”) to explain *all* the uses of the subjunctive semantically.

³ E.g. Fernández-Serrano (2016), Chiquito (2014, p. 184), Blaikner-Hohenwart (2006), Thieroff (2004), Lepetit (2001, pp. 1176–1177), Wandruszka (2000), Ridruejo (1999, p. 3220), Haase (1994, p. 103), Green (1988, pp. 113–114), Wanner (1990, pp. 259–261), Gsell & Wandruszka (1986), Takagaki (1984), Harris (1974, p. 171), Lakoff, R. (1968, p. 161), Meier (1967), Bally (1932, p. 46), and Salvá (1835, p. 172).

⁴ “le subjonctif n’a pas de valeur modale autonome” (Bally, 1932, p. 46) [‘the subjunctive has no independent modal value’].

Romance linguistics as a whole is therefore split on the question whether subjunctives are a means of expressing modal nuances or whether they are simple agreement markers devoid of semantic content. In the latter case, it would be considered a grammatical automatism and a simple concomitant of some modality which is expressed elsewhere – typically in the matrix sentence.⁵ The hypothesis of a predominantly syntactic Romance subjunctive has been proposed by various scholars, among which Takagaki (1984) is probably the most radical: “In the final analysis, I may safely conclude that it is some semantic factor in the main clause that governs the occurrence of the subjunctive in the complement” (Takagaki, 1984, p. 250). Others, like Wandruszka (2000), contend that the syntactic subjunctive is nowadays by far the most frequent and important type but concede the persistence of the modal subjunctive in certain constructions. Thieroff (2004), working on a typological comparison of TAM-systems in various European languages, resumes this observation as follows:

In French, the subjunctive has practically become a pure agreement marker, i.e. the *subjunctif* does not stand in opposition to the indicative, but must be used with certain verbs and certain conjunctions, after which the indicative can then accordingly not stand. [...] As far as the subjunctive present and perfect are concerned, the same applies to the other Romance languages as well, i.e. here too, the subjunctive in the present and perfect tenses is predominantly a category of congruence, which is required with certain verbs (or for certain verb constructions) and certain conjunctions, but is ungrammatical with other verbs and conjunctions. Only in very specific types of relative clauses can the subjunctive still have the semantic function of determining a non-specific reading (as opposed to a specific indicative), as in the well-known example *Je cherche une secrétaire qui sache le russe* in contrast to *Je cherche une secrétaire qui sait le russe*. Exactly the same conditions are also present in Italian, Spanish and Portuguese (Thieroff, 2004, pp. 78–79).

This clashes with the traditional view which holds that the subjunctive has always been considered a marker of ‘mood’, i.e. as modality expressed by means of verbal inflection and, therefore, a means of expression for a semantic concept, albeit abstract. The problem now is that these two characterisations of the subjunctive are logically incompatible.

⁵ This idea harks back at least to the days of Generative Semantics, when Robin Lakoff wrote about Latin and Greek (but also explicitly about Spanish) subjunctives: “We are suggesting that no indicators of mood per se can be present in deep structure. The markers of mood – subjunctive in Latin, subjunctive and optative in Greek – are all complementizers and, as such, are always devoid of meaning of their own and are always transformationally introduced” (Lakoff, 1968, p. 161).

3. The Theory of a Central Value: Diachronically Conclusive, Synchronically Inadequate

The proponents of a semantically based theory of the subjunctive seem to represent the *communis opinio*, and among them, the central value theory (CVT) appears to have the most adherents. Its advocates see each morphological subjunctive form associated with a modal semantics and therefore reject the concept of a syntactic triggering of the subjunctive by contextual elements. Thus, the seemingly insoluble contradiction between the two theoretical currents arises. The central value analysis claims that in examples such as the following, the subjunctive expresses deontic modality (data from ValEsCo, p. 67):

(1)	<i>Te</i>	<i>pido</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>lo</i>	<i>demuestres.</i>
	you-ACC.SG	request- PRES.IND.1SG	COMP	me- DAT	it-ACC	prove-PRES. SBJV.1SG

‘I ask you to prove it to me!’

Now it is obvious that this is a context strongly tinged with modality. The question, however, is whether this modality is actually *expressed* by the subjunctive in and of itself, or whether the subjunctive just mirrors the modal semantics of the matrix verb. Rather than from the subjunctive itself, it would seem that the deontic meaning of the whole sentence results from the explicit deontic modality of the matrix sentence which, in turn, confers on it an imperative illocution. It is this modality of the matrix sentence that bleeds over into the subordinate phrase under its scope and requires the subordinate verb to inflect for the subjunctive. It is obvious that the illocution/modality of the main clause in such constructions must once have been the reason why, in earlier stages of the language, speakers coherently chose subjunctive-inflection for the verb of the subordinate clause, even if in some earlier historical state of Proto-Latin there must still have been a choice not to do so. Eventually, however, (and already in Classical Latin!) the possibility of such a choice was forgotten, and even lost completely, over time in a process of entrenchment of the subjunctive in subordinate clauses that must be seen within a broader process of its contructionalisation and demodalisation (cf. Wandruszka, 2000; Wanner, 1990, p. 260).⁶ Harris (1974) undertakes it to

⁶ The standard literature on Old Castilian (Menéndez-Pidal, 1999 [1940]; Lleal, 1990; Penny, 2002) has little or nothing to say about the historical uses of the subjunctive. Lapesa (2005), however, remarks that it was still much more flexible in the Old Castilian period: “Los modos y tiempos verbales tenían ya, en su mayoría, los significados fundamentales que hoy subsisten, pero con límites muy desdibujados. [...] En oraciones subordinadas que hoy exigen subjuntivo aparece a veces el futuro de indicativo: ‘cuando los gallos *cantarán*’, junto a

trace the distribution of the modal and the demodalised subjunctive uses from Classical Latin to the modern Romance languages:

[A]lready in Latin, it is necessary to postulate two quite separate uses of the subjunctive, the distinction being not between two different ranges of meaning but precisely between those cases where the subjunctive was already an empty formal marker of subordination (one of a number of alternatives, of course), and those cases where the subjunctive was meaningful, that is to say, where there was a real and distinctive opposition, normally with the indicative, in the relevant context (Harris, 1974, p. 171).

Whatever the underlying processes of entrenchment may have been: It's a fact that, in modern Spanish, speakers can no longer use the indicative in these constructions (data from ValEsCo, p. 67):

(2)	<i>Te</i>	<i>pido</i>	<i>que</i>	<i>me</i>
	you-ACC.SG	request-PRES.IND.1SG	COMP	me-DAT

<i>lo</i>	<i>[demuestras</i>	<i>/*demuestras].</i>
it-ACC	prove-PRES.SBJV.1SG	prove-PRES.IND.1SG

'I ask you to prove it to me!'

In this context, Harris warns: "One very important factor in this situation is certainly the failure always to distinguish clearly between 'mood' as a purely formal category and 'mood' or 'modality' as a semantic category" (Harris, 1974, p. 171; cf. also Thieroff, 2004, pp. 64ff. in the same vein). That is, no claims are made that *demuestras* in (1) is or was no longer marked for the morphological category of mood. It is, however, claimed that mood in this

'quando *fuere* la lid'" (Lapesa, 2005, p. 2016) ['The moods and tenses already had, for the most part, the fundamental meanings that still exist today, but with very blurred boundaries. [...] In subordinate clauses which today require the subjunctive, the future indicative sometimes appears: 'when the roosters will crow', together with 'when the fight will take place'].

context is no longer an expression of modality. Rather, mood must be seen as an obligatory inflectional category on the Spanish verb with a range of functions, which still may include the expression of modality in some cases but is by no means limited to it. The difference lies between noting that the subjunctive tends to appear in modal contexts, which is obviously the case, and claiming that it *expresses* this modality in all these contexts, which Harris (1974) would explicitly reject. Harris' admonition quoted above arises mainly with researchers who approach the Romance subjunctives from an onomasiological angle. If we ask "What is the semantics of the Spanish subjunctive?" we will always come up with uses for which a semantics can be found; this is the approach of the defenders of the central value theory. If, on the other hand, we take a semasiological approach, we will immediately be confronted with all the cases in which a choice between indicative and subjunctive is no longer possible and the question of semantics therefore no longer arises.

The central value theory (CVT) thus provides a good explanation for the circumstances, which must have induced speakers in earlier stages of the historical development to *choose* the subjunctive time and again in these constructions, and it furnishes an entirely appropriate structuralist explanation here. CVT fails to explain, though, why in many cases this choice has now disappeared for modern Spanish, giving way to a morphosyntactic automatism. The problem arises because advocates of the CVT fail to distinguish between the underlying diachronic process and the synchronic facts. CVT can be said to be a fair description of the diachronic processes that lead up to the synchronic state of affairs but runs the risk of representing semantic and pragmatic motivations of the past as synchronically relevant. It thereby risks confusing diachrony with synchrony. There *may* once have been a choice (in Latin or even in Proto-Latin) which was semantically motivated; synchronically, however, this has frequently fossilised into constructions where the subjunctive is now obligatory. The fossilisation process originally arose from the speakers' desire to extend the modality of the matrix clause to the subordinate clause via mood, i.e. through the choice of the subjunctive inflection. In modern Spanish, however, this choice has become increasingly automatic, and the subjunctive is going from being a means of expression to an obligatory morphosyntactic marker with a merely concordant function. This modal concord works analogously to other morphosyntactic agreement markers. In a felicitous formulation, Blaikner-Hohenwart (2006) speaks of the subjunctive as "frozen morphosyntax", while Fernández-Serrano (2016, p. 12) writes: "la morfología subjuntiva de la subordinada no sería más que un rasgo concordante con la modalidad del predicado principal" ['the subjunctive morphology of the subordinate clause would be nothing more than a feature consistent with the modality of the main predicate'].

Grammaticalisation and constructionalisation theories can provide a good explanation why and how this new state of affairs might have come about historically. From the perspective of text linguistics, many subjunctives

no longer play an expressive role but merely contribute to the morphosyntactic cohesion of the text by morphologically differentiating subordinate from matrix predicates. These subjunctives then appear under the proposition of a subordinate clause, which, in turn, is within the scope of a modally marked matrix clause. The subjunctive, therefore, no longer has its own semantics here. Its function is best described in this construction as a form of agreement in which the verb of the subordinate clause is morphologically subjected to the modal conditions of the matrix clause without being able to express any modality itself (cf. e.g. Thieroff, 2004).

It is normal for agreement that its markers in themselves do not carry any semantic content but only copy it from their heads. For instance, in the nominal range, the gender of adjectives depends on the gender of their reference nouns. Although it is indisputable that adjectives are inflected for gender, it is also obvious that adjectives themselves do not possess an inherent gender, but always copy it from their noun (author's example⁷):

(3)	<i>El libro</i>		<i>es</i>		<i>bueno.</i>
	the book		be-PRES.IND.1SG		good.M.SG

	<i>La película</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>es</i>		<i>buena.</i>
	the movie	not	be-PRES.IND.1SG		good.F.SG

'The book is good. The movie isn't good'.

Analogous to this we might say about the Spanish subjunctive that the verbs in subordinate clauses copy their mood from the modality of the matrix clause – either from its verb or from conjunctions or modal adverbs contained therein.

4. The Subjunctive in Independent Clauses?

An obvious objection to this interpretation of the subjunctive as a marker of subordination derives almost automatically from a widely held assumption of traditional grammar according to which the Spanish subjunctive is not at all limited to subordinate clauses but can also be found in independent main clauses. Examples for this are given as follows (data from ValEsCo, p. 91 and Genesis 1:3):

(4)	<i>¡Viva</i>		<i>la</i>		<i>Virgen!</i>
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⁷ I'd like to thank my colleague Josep Martines (University of Alacant, Spain) for having checked all otherwise undocumented or constructed Spanish examples for idiomaticity and coherence.

live-PRES.SBJV.3SG the virgin
'Long live the Virgin [Mary]!'

(5) *¡Vengan* *todos!*
come- PRES.SBJV.3PL all
'Let them all come!'

(6) *¡Hága=se* *la* *luz!*
make-PRES.SBJV.3SG=REFL the light
'Let there be light!'

In these cases, the modal agreement hypothesis would not be applicable as the sentences appear to be independent main clauses and under no external modal influence. There are, however, good arguments, not to consider these (and other) examples as true main clauses, but rather as subordinate clauses whose matrix clauses have been elided because of their low informational content (cf. Harris, 1974, p. 173; Green, 1988, pp. 113–114; Posner, 1996, pp. 142–143; etc.).⁸ Because of their nature as subordinate clauses bereft of their maternal matrix clause, Ruiz Campillo (2008) has fittingly called them “subjuntivos huérfanos”, i.e. ‘orphaned subjunctives’.

The interpretation of these examples as elision cases (rather than as fully fledged main clauses) has several theoretical advantages. For one, it is in better agreement with the known facts of Latin, where the subjunctive was decisively associated with subordination: Väänänen, in his *Introduction to Vulgar Latin*, calls it “above all the mood of subordination” (transl. from Väänänen, 1985, pp. 232–233). Its limited use in independent clauses was further reduced by the advent of the new Romance conditional forms, which came to supplant the ‘potential’ subjunctive (ID FACERE VELIM > *lo querría hacer*; cf. Harris, 1974, pp. 173ff.). In addition to being more compatible with the historical development of Latin, this interpretation has the theoretical advantage of allowing us to describe all subjunctives uniformly as a phenomenon of subordination (plus some modal content, where applicable). By this, we achieve a simpler and more coherent way of accounting for all of its uses, under the common denominator of being markers of subordination (“complementizers”, as Lakoff, 1968, p. 161 calls them), whether modal or purely syntactic. Empirical facts speak in favor of the elision analysis:

- The supposed ‘subjunctive of the independent clause’ as described in the grammars (cf. De Bruyne, 2002, §§ 1055-9) is much rarer than that

⁸ This interpretation has a long tradition and was already defended by Salvá (1885, p. 172).

of the subordinate clause, which is an indication that the subordinate is its prototypical domain.⁹

- The examples in question either already have an opening complementiser or it can be added to them without changing anything in their semantics or grammar.

- A putatively elided main clause with imperative, hortative or optative illocution can always be made explicit in a natural way on the basis of the pragmatic information available.

- The elided main clause is always of the type that lends itself to an elision because of its conventionality and lack of information, since its contribution to the sentence would consist essentially of the modality that it triggers in the subordinate (data based on ValEsCo, p. 91 and Genesis 1:3).

- (7) [[*iDeseamos*] [*que*] *viva* *la Virgen!*
 desire-PRES.IND.1PL COMP live-PRES.SBJV.3SG the virgin
 ‘We wish that the Virgin [Mary] shall live long!’

- (8) [[*iLes* *ruego*] [*que*]]
 they-DAT pray-PRES.IND.1SG COMP

vengan *todos!*
 come-PRES.SBJV.3PL all
 ‘I’m asking you all to come!’

- (9) [[*iMando*] [*que*]] *se=haga*
 order-PRES.IND.1SG COMP REFL=make-PRES.SBJV.3SG

la *luz!*
 the light
 ‘I order there to be light!’

⁹ “In many languages there are inflectional means, usually called ‘subordinate moods’, that are only or mainly used in subordinate clauses. These forms generally cover a wider range of modal values than inflectional moods in main clauses. The best-known case of a subordinate mood is the subjunctive or conjunctive mood, which is generally used in opposition with the indicative mood, the latter also being used in main clauses” (Hengeveld, 2000, p. 1200).

The elision of the main clause goes hand in hand with a restriction of semantics: while open matrix clauses may activate either the deontic or the epistemic modality in the subordinate, the elided matrix clause can only be construed with an illocution associated with deontic modality (cf. (10)).

- | | | | |
|------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| (10) | [[<i>¡Deseamos</i>] | /*[<i>dudamos</i>] | [<i>que</i>]] |
| | desire-PRES.IND.1PL | doubt-PRES.IND.1PL | COMP |
| | <i>viva</i> | <i>la Virgen!</i> | |
| | live-PRES.SBJV.3SG | the virgin | |
| | ‘We wish/*doubt the Virgin to live!’ | | |

The development of such elision strategies can easily be explained pragmatically as cases of *invited inference* (cf. e.g. Traugott, 2012). The unusual use of a subjunctive form in a seemingly independent sentence may at one moment have functioned as the invitation to infer what might have induced the speaker to use such a strange structure. The inference is that a speaker has elided a main clause of low informational load while leaving no doubt that what is being said is to be seen as a subordinate clause. The communicative intention is that of giving a naked subordinate clause with the understanding that the elided matrix clause can be easily reconstructed on the basis of situational and encyclopedic knowledge shared between speaker and listener: Thus in “*¡Que vengan todos!*” (literally ‘that they may all come!’), the hearer is expected to reconstruct an unspoken matrix sentence expressing something like “I wish ...” or “I demand ...”. This pragmatic inference may be signalled by an initial complementiser plus the characteristic morphology of subordination on the verb (= subjunctive). Once this strategy of elision had been sufficiently established, the complementiser could also be elided in a next step, since the verbal morphology still refers to subordination: “*¡Vengan todos!*”. These orphaned subjunctives have come to be constructionalised in the Imperative-Subjunctive Schema.

The so-called “subjunctive in main clauses” all but disappears with our interpretation and thus gives way to a more homogeneous characterisation of the subjunctive as the normal and unmarked verbal inflection of most subordinate clauses; at the same time, it also disappears as an argument against the hypothesis of modal agreement. In examples such as *¡Viva la virgen!* it only looks as if the modality was expressed through the subjunctive; in reality, it derives from the illocution of an elided matrix clause and thereby from the construction as a whole. To return for a moment to the analogy of adjectives, here, too, there are examples in which adjectives are (apparently) used without a reference noun; cf. (11).

- (11) - ¿Y qué te parece? [i.e. la película]
 and what you-DAT seem-PRES.IND.3SG the movie
- Es buena.
 is good-F.SG
- ‘And what do you think of it? – It’s good.’

In (11), the feminine inflection on the adjective only hints to the feminine word *película* which is not overtly present. In these cases, however, it is not argued that the adjective suddenly has an inherent gender, but that a feminine gender reference noun was contextually elided. Something analogous happens in our cases in the context of the subjunctive debate, where subjunctives seem to appear in structures without an antecedent to concord with: this antecedent may be absent but will be spontaneously understood by any native speaker of the language.

To continue, the two most important general observations about Spanish subjunctives are:

- They appear prototypically in subordinate clauses;¹⁰ when this does not seem to be the case, an elided main clause can always be recovered pragmatically, whose semantics is presupposed by the context.
- Prototypically, the subjunctive no longer expresses modality; rather, it typically occurs in modal contexts, the modality of which is determined by some other factor.

We shall argue in the following chapters that the loss of a paradigmatic choice between indicative and subjunctive has already progressed to a point in modern Spanish, where it constitutes the majority of cases. Various authors consider the automatically triggered subjunctive as the normal case in Spanish.¹¹ Whether it already is numerically dominant or not can be treated as moot while relevant empirical studies are unavailable. The percentages of modal vs. amodal subjunctive uses will vary strongly with the text type; in formal registers, the modal subjunctive will probably still survive for a long time, while its subtleties may be all but lost in spontaneous speech already. The decisive observation in this context is, however, that the ongoing constructionalisation process is working in this direction. Therefore, an appropriate theory should first and foremost account for subjunctive uses in

¹⁰ Cf. the verdict of the *Nueva Gramática de la Lengua Española* on this point; “El subjuntivo independiente o no subordinado está muy restringido en español” (RAE, 2009, p. 1871) [‘The independent or not-subordinated subjunctive is very restricted in Spanish.’].

¹¹ E.g. Fernández-Serrano (2016), Chiquito (2014, p. 184), Green (1988, pp. 113–114), Takagaki (1984), and Salvá (1835, p. 172).

the numerically more relevant and therefore presumably prototypical usages, while all deviations from the prototype should be treated as secondary and recalcitrant cases of older stages in the ongoing constructionalisation processes. A good theory should account for these different usages and provide a clear and principled hierarchy between ‘normal’ and ‘special’ cases as an integral part of its explanatory power.

5. A Grammaticalisation Account of the Romance Subjunctive

The central value theory of the Spanish subjunctive (CVT) corresponds to the general aim of all scientific enterprise – to unite the various aspects of one phenomenon under investigation in a uniform description – in this case by deriving all uses of the subjunctive from one common, albeit abstract, central semantic value expressed by it. It does this, however, from a still profoundly structuralist conception of language as a monolithic system of signs in which the description of the use of rigid taxonomic categories is perceived as an element of scientific rigour rather than an excessive idealisation. As a structuralist theory, CVT associates the subjunctive with a universal binary semantic feature [+ central value] and maintains a strict separation of synchrony and diachrony making it well-nigh impossible to apply well-established theoretical concepts such as grammaticalisation with its typical effects of diachrony within synchrony. This is inconvenient, because modern linguistics knows that such fundamental and ubiquitous categories of inflection as the subjunctive *must* be subject to change over the centuries, and linguistics has developed adequate theoretical tools to describe these phenomena of change shaped by grammaticalisation. It is surprising, therefore, that although grammaticalisation theory has been mentioned from time to time in debates on the Spanish subjunctive, it still does not occupy the same central position as has been assigned to it in the bibliography on the French subjunctive from which we draw our inspiration here. The theory is far from absent in the debates about the Spanish subjunctive, however:

En el caso de las oraciones subordinadas que siempre exigen un tiempo del subjuntivo, no hay en ellas mayor margen de elección para la expresión de diferentes grados de modalidad, ya que no usar el subjuntivo es agramatical [...] En estos casos se podría argumentar que la modalidad está gramaticalizada [...] (Chiquito, 2014, p. 184).
[‘In the case of subordinate clauses which always require a subjunctive tense, there is no greater margin of choice for the expression of different degrees of modality, since not using the subjunctive is ungrammatical [...] In these cases it could be argued that the modality is grammaticalised.’]

The theoretical advantages of a grammaticalisation approach as opposed to CVT are manifold – not in the least because we have almost 2500 years of documentation on the use of Latin and Romance subjunctives which gives us privileged insight into the relevant processes of change. The changes that the subjunctive has undergone throughout the history of Spanish are a prototypical field of application for grammaticalisation theory, since it allows the representation of individual stages of linguistic change in a structured way as steps on a ‘grammaticalisation path’. This concept provides an explanation for the development from a mostly semantic phenomenon to an increasingly formal and syntactic marker.

As for a first and tentative analysis of Spanish subjunctives within a still essentially structuralist conception of grammaticalisation, I shall for now follow the terminology proposed in Lehmann (2002, pp. 108ff.). This discussion will then serve as a basis from which we will proceed to a modern construction grammar-approach such as that by Traugott & Trousdale (2013), where traditional “grammaticalisation” is recast as “constructionalisation”.

When subjunctives become obligatory in constructions like *No importa que [vengas]/*[vienes]*, they lose part of their paradigmatic variability, because indicative forms can no longer be used in their stead. By this, they become more grammaticalised. As the paradigmatic opposition to indicatives is lost in these cases, the subjunctives can no longer be semantically identified with modal semantics in themselves. The typical distinction between assertion (indicative) and non-assertion (subjunctive) of the proposition expressed in the subordinate clause is no longer possible here, resulting in the demodalisation of the subjunctive – another parameter of increased grammaticalisation (cf. Lehmann, 2002, p. 114). From a means of expression, the subjunctives grammaticalise into obligatory elements, the semantic content of which is reduced to a mere marker of subordination or a complementiser expressed as inflection on the subordinate clause-verb. Its integrity (Lehmann, 2002, p. 110) is thus being reduced from two features (non-assertion + syntactical subordination) to only one and its use becomes fossilised:

At the right end of a grammaticalization scale, paradigms are not formed, but reduced. The most grammaticalized categories of a language system usually consist of a two-member paradigm, i.e. a binary opposition. Typical examples are number (singular/plural), gender (masculine/feminine), noun class (animate/inanimate, or human/non-human), tense (nonpast/past, or real/future), mood (indicative/subjunctive), etc. All of these can be privative oppositions; i.e. the opposition may consist only in the presence of a sign vs. its absence. This constitutes the highest degree of paradigmaticity. One more step of grammaticalization, and the paradigm ceases to exist. Its further fate may be called fossilization (Lehmann, 2002, pp. 121–122).

Lehmann (2002) actually invokes the development of the Romance subjunctive as an example for a loss in paradigmatic variability:

In languages such as Latin, the subjunctive is optional at the clause level. If one takes the introductory conjunction into account, many of them govern the subjunctive. Some conjunctions still admit either mood. However, once the context is enlarged to include the matrix verb, there is usually no longer a choice between indicative and subjunctive. An increase in the obligatoriness of a sign is therefore a decrease in the level of grammatical structure on which it is obligatory. This might be one possibility to operationalize the criterion of obligatoriness (Lehmann, 2002, p. 125).

Grammaticalisation theory almost always encounters phenomena (= exceptions) in such integral processes which are based on a still incomplete synchronic change from one stage of the grammaticalisation path to the next. It thereby provides us with a theoretical framework to model the two types of subjunctive use mentioned above (modal and syntactic) as different stages within one process, rather than having to bind them together via a single taxonomic feature [+ central value]. In our conception, the use of the modal subjunctive is seen as a remnant of the time in which the subjunctive as a whole functioned mainly as an expression of epistemic or deontic modality, that is, a case of 'diachrony in synchrony'. The long-term change, on the other hand, which moves the subjunctive from a semantically motivated phenomenon to a marker of grammatical subordination and verbal agreement, could be described as the innovative part of the same process. In most cases it has already reached the demodalisation phase, but there are still numerous cases in Spanish in which it continues to function as a freely selectable means of expression.

While CVT has always had to struggle with all those examples in which the subjunctive is clearly obligatory and therefore can not logically express anything, a grammaticalisation explanation even *predicts* a situation where there would be semantically used subjunctives alongside those which only fulfil the role of modal agreement as explained above. Grammaticalisation usually takes centuries to run its course and it is only to be expected that we will find different stages of the process coexisting synchronically. If we take the semantic subjunctive as cases of an as yet unfinished grammaticalisation process, the description will naturally allow for both types of subjunctive motivation to be placed in a systematic context rather than having to treat them – as has often happened so far – as capricious and unpredictable exceptions. The question of whether the subjunctive is a marker of mood or a marker of subordination can thus be resolved by describing it as an old mood that is increasingly demodalised or desemanticised, and that moves along a grammaticalisation path toward a

syntactic affix of modal agreement, without having already arrived completely there in all cases.

The phenomenon of demodalised subjunctives cannot only be analysed as a grammaticalisation of certain uses of the inflectional category of subjunctive. It also interacts heavily with another cline as described by Lehmann (1984, pp. 168ff.) for relative clauses, but which is easily transferrable to other types of subordinate clauses: a development from less to increasingly more nominal clause types, i.e. the nominalisation of subordinate clauses. According to Lehmann (1984, p. 169), the first step towards nominalisation consists in a loss of illocutionary force – a step which has already been reached in Spanish. The next step is the loss of differentiation between sentence types (interrogative, imperative) which is also already the case in Spanish subordinate clauses with obligatory subjunctives. Further restrictions may involve tense and aspect; these can be observed in Spanish subordinate clauses in which the fine aspectual nuances of indicative sentences are heavily curtailed. While in the indicative a threefold aspectual differentiation is possible (*Lo dije/he dicho/decía.*), these become neutralised in the subjunctive, where only one solution is possible (*[Lisa no cree] que lo haya dicho*). The same is true for the tense distinctions, where at least the difference between present and future tense is lost with the use of the subjunctive.

Another element towards a higher degree of nominalisation is the loss of modal distinctions. Thus, the observed tendency of subjunctive forms becoming obligatory in detriment of indicatives can be analysed as an expectable next step on the hierarchy of nominalisation as proposed in Lehmann (1984, p. 171). These arguments are taken up and refined by Haase (1997) who introduces a continuum of finiteness which can be seen as a sub-hierarchy within the scale of nominalisation, concentrating especially on the morphology of the verb in these constructions. Thus, while Lehmann (1984) focuses on the sententiality of subordinate clauses, Haase (1997) is interested in the various degrees of finiteness of their verbs as one of the definitorial traits of sentencehood. Haase characterises these different degrees of finiteness via the paradigmatic relations into which a given form may or may not enter. While indicatives allow for the full range of temporal and aspectual differentiations, these are drastically reduced in subjunctives and revert to zero in infinitival constructions. Haase (1994) argues likewise that the use of the subjunctive implies a loss of distinctions which results in a loss of finiteness and consequently an increase of nominalisation in subordinate clauses:

Tense, mood and respect systems are therefore limited in the subordinate clause. The tense marking in the subordinate clause (secondary tense) is often limited to indicating the posteriority, anteriority or simultaneity of the subordinate clause event with respect to the event of the main clause. There are often restrictions on the use

of moods in subordinate clauses. In many cases, a *modus subjunctivus* (subjunctive or conjunctive), which is typical for subordinate clauses, is used to indicate the subordination as such (translated from Haase, 1994, p. 103).

Without referring to Haase (1994), Wandruszka (2000) also sketches the diachronic processes involved in terms of the clauses involved and links the desemanticisation of Romance subjunctives to the finiteness/sententiality of the correspondent subordinate clauses:

Since a subordinate clause never completely reaches the status of an independent main clause [...], a linguistic state at one end of the scale is conceivable in which the finite subordinate clause verb appears in principle in the subjunctive. In such a case, this would be nothing more than a (further) formal feature of the subordinate clause, comparable to the final position of the finite verb in German. Incidentally, Latin has already come very close to such a state in various classical and post-classical phases. This type of development is necessarily accompanied by an increasing de-modalisation of the subjunctive in the subordinate clause, since mood is now no longer triggered only by volitional or dubitative predicates and thus can no longer be an exclusive expression of the corresponding modalities (translated from Wandruszka, 2000, p. 57).

We are thus confronted with two interrelated grammaticalisation processes, one of which happens at the morphological level (the subjunctive forms) and the other one on the phrasal level (the increasing nominalisation of subordinate clauses).

A description of the various uses of the Spanish (and Romance) subjunctives as representing various stages in a larger process of grammaticalisation has important advantages as compared to CVT. While CVT strives for a unified explanation of all uses of the subjunctive, a grammaticalisation-based description allows for various synchronically coexisting stages of one and the same process of linguistic change and can thus account for variation in a systematic and principled way. It allows one to make falsifiable (and therefore scientifically sound) predictions about the further direction of the ongoing change by representing the modal subjunctive as an older state and the syntactic one as an innovation. We might therefore conjecture that the syntactic uses of the subjunctive will not revert to their semantic function once grammaticalisation has run its course; from the remaining modal uses, on the other hand, we would expect them to be used less and less as means of expression in the medium and long-term. As a result, they will ultimately lose their modal semantics in the spoken language first, where the modal subjunctive (or rather, in most cases, the increasingly marked 'modal indicative of subordinate clauses') would more and more

become a purely literary phenomenon. In a second step, when the grammaticalisation approaches the end of its cycle, the modal uses of the subjunctive would eventually disappear there as well. NB: We're not talking about the subjunctive paradigm as such but only about the possibility of a modal interpretation in contrast with an indicative form.¹²

The modeling as a grammaticalisation process also has the advantage that it allows the subjunctive use of individual Romance languages to be represented as different stages of development within an essentially uniform mega-process of linguistic change affecting an entire subgrouping of Indo-European languages. As a working hypothesis, it could be said that, of the main written Romance languages, Italian is possibly the one that most clings to a modal subjunctive; Spanish is in an intermediate position, while French – as always – occupies the opposite extreme. Almost all reports about spontaneously spoken French coincide in that the subtle possibilities of differentiation through a decision between subjunctive or indicative are practically no longer used there. In spoken French, then, the grammaticalisation of the subjunctive is already practically complete: “It is obvious that native speakers [...] proceed by analogy, both in oral and written use [...] This phenomenon is [...] called ‘the decline of the subjunctive’” (translated from Blaikner-Hohenwart, 2006, p. 615). The findings on written French indicate that in this case, too, the semantics-bearing subjunctive is increasingly becoming an exceptional phenomenon. It is therefore not surprising that the reference to a grammaticalisation process appears more frequently in the French bibliography (cf. Blanche-Benveniste, 2003, pp. 28–29).

6. A Constructionalisation Account of the Romance Subjunctive

The advent of cognitive linguistics and construction grammar has put an end to the semantics-syntax dualism of traditional linguistics, which had made the syntactic and modal uses of the subjunctive phenomena of two different sub-disciplines. Construction grammar replaces this dualism with a continuum of constructions, ranging from ubiquitous schemas with extremely abstract semantics via subschemas down to individual micro-constructions, thus

¹² Or, as Wanner (1990) puts it: “La prédiction pour cette situation n’est pas d’abord l’extinction rapide de la différence formelle entre les deux modes, mais une forte réduction dans l’applicabilité pertinente de cette distinction dans des zones périphériques et centrales. Alors que les désinences se maintiendront sans problème, l’intégrité de la distinction souffrira par l’apparition de plus en plus de cas nucléaires (antérieurement automatiques) sans distinction visible” (Wanner, 1990, p. 260). [‘The prediction for this situation is not primarily the rapid extinction of the formal difference between the two moods, but a sharp reduction in the relevant applicability of this distinction in peripheral and central areas. While the forms will continue to be used without a problem, whereas the integrity of the distinction will suffer through the appearance of more and more (previously automatic) nuclear cases without visible distinction’].

allowing for an integrated treatment of all phenomena associated with subjunctives. It is therefore an ideal theoretical framework for presenting and condensing the findings of over 150 years of research on the Spanish subjunctive in an explicit but carefully hierarchical manner. Such a hierarchy can make the differences between central cases and outliers visible and is usually not provided by traditional structuralist linguistics, which has dealt with TAM-phenomena such as “the imperfect”, “the future” or “the subjunctive” by assigning each form a central semantic value and treating diverging constructions as “exceptions”. The respective inflectional category is taken as a starting point and the explanandum takes the form of questions like: “What is the meaning/function of the imperfect/the future?” The resulting descriptions are fundamental characterisations of a central function, accompanied by numerous non-systematic cases. Thus, for instance, the imperfect is globally described as the means of expression of an imperfective aspect, although in examples such as “[Messi:] *Si lo sabía, no tiraba el penal*” [‘If I had known, I wouldn’t have taken the penalty’], it clearly has a modal function (cf. Thieroff, 2004, pp. 71–76; Radatz, 2021b.). The future is described as a means of expression of temporality and futurity, although in examples such as “*Serán las ocho*” [‘It will be around eight o’clock’] it clearly has an epistemic-modal function (cf. Thieroff, 2004, pp. 71–76; Radatz, 2021a.). Finally, the subjunctive is generally described as an expression of modality, although in examples like “*Te pido que me lo demuestres*” [‘I ask you to prove it to me’] the modality of the subordinate clause is obviously linked to the illocution and modality of the matrix clause, and the subjunctive here only has a morphosyntactic function. In all these cases, structuralist theories would have to posit complex exceptions on the basis of polysemy or even homonymy by e.g. differentiating between an Imperfect₁ (aspectual) and an Imperfect₂ (modal).

Thus, while a grammaticalisation analysis may be hugely superior to the static analyses offered by traditional structuralism, it still fails to account for the variety of processes that can be observed in the Spanish subjunctive, because it treats them as an item-based phenomenon rather than a network of related constructions. It is also not fully compatible with construction grammar in that it assumes some principled divide between lexical and grammatical expressions not present in constructional approaches (cf. Traugott & Trousdale, 2013, pp. 11f.), which proves problematic, where some subjunctives remain contentful while others develop strictly procedural functions. An even more problematic issue with structuralist theories arises from the fact that they don’t allow for representations of the internal structure of linguistic signs in the form of networks:

A recurrent theme in construction grammars is the metaphor of a ‘network’. [...] Crucial to the idea of a network are such concepts as nodes and the links between nodes, ‘distance’ between members of a family, clusterings of properties, degrees of entrenchment and

accessibility of a construction. [...] cognitive networks—such as the language network—are i) not limited to the lexicon as in Saussure’s work, and ii) dynamic: ‘New links and new nodes are continually being established’ (Hudson, 2007a, p. 53). Therefore values are always in flux (Traugott & Trousdale, 2013, pp. 10f.).

The concept of constructionalisation as proposed in Traugott & Trousdale (2013) saves the advances made by grammaticalisation theory and adapts them to a format compatible with construction grammar. It allows us to describe all the above-mentioned phenomena in an innovative, and at the same time more natural, way, no longer starting from the isolated forms of these inflectional paradigms, but from the diverse constructions in which they actually occur. It thus becomes possible, for example, to describe the conditional structures with the imperfect in the *protasis* and the *apodosis* as a separate construction that has now come detached from the temporal and aspectual uses of the imperfect; and the modal future will be analysed as a separate construction that synchronically no longer has anything to do with the temporal future. Analogously, I propose transferring this principle to the subjunctive.

7. The Spanish Subjunctive Schema

As a working hypothesis I will, in what follows, try to model “the Spanish subjunctive” as a complex linguistic network, ultimately inspired in George Lakoff’s concept of radial categories (cf. Lakoff, 1987, pp. 91–114). The idea is to assemble all the various uses of subjunctives and subjunctive-constructions (which have been described in minute detail in a more than 150 year-old research tradition) into one global subjunctive schema, bound together by the presence of forms from the subjunctive paradigm in subordinate clauses. The analysis will take the form of a hierarchical description of the internal radial structure of this schema in the form of interrelated subschemas and micro-constructions.

As has already been pointed out, traditional accounts have tried to associate subjunctive forms directly with a single, abstract central value called “mood”. Thus, Hummel (2012) makes this point in a recent influential handbook article in the following terms: “Moods serve to express the relationship of the designated event to reality”; “linguistic utterances [are] in principle an expression of the speaker's subjective viewpoint”; “Indicative forms [have] the function [...] of marking an event as actually occurring” (translated from Hummel, 2011, p. 325). These traditional characterisations are in part imprecise and in part difficult to reconcile with the facts. The Spanish (and generally Romance) subjunctive has nothing to do with “reality” or “irreality” in the physical world nor does it serve to express any “subjective viewpoint”

of the speaker with respect to the proposition of a subordinate clause. As for “reality”, the speaker may or may not have the relevant information about this reality; they may be under a delusion, be mistaken or may choose to lie. All this is irrelevant with respect to the subjunctive. The subjunctive, where it is grammatically possible to prefer it over the indicative, can only be used to refuse commitment to the truth of the expressed proposition. If this can be called an “expression of the speaker’s subjective viewpoint”, then it is only on the basis of an extremely limited concept of a “subjective viewpoint”, and the formulation is, at best, misleading. In the common understanding of a subjective viewpoint, this would include emphatic categories like consent, critical approvement, resigned condonement, cautious rejection or abject boredom. None of these may be expressed with a subjunctive, although generations of Spanish learners were misled into thinking they could by formulations like the ones quoted.

Our analysis will therefore avoid the concept of mood or modality wherever possible. We’ll argue that in those constructions, in which the Spanish subjunctive can still be said to carry a meaning, it simply expresses the pragmatic notion that the speaker *explicitly* withholds the assertion of the proposition in question. This analysis goes back at least to Hooper & Terrell (1974): “We can thus hypothesize that in independent and noun clauses the indicative is associated with assertion while the subjunctive is associated with non-assertion” (Hooper & Terrell, 1974, p. 487). Their theory then goes on to argue that, after refusing to assert a proposition, this proposition must be interpreted as being only ‘presupposed’. They therefore create a disjunction between asserted vs. presupposed subordinate clauses. It is true that these clauses only presuppose their propositions but it is also epiphenomenal. What is really pragmatically important is the *explicit and premeditated* act of refusing to assert something. It is this refusal which triggers the various pragmatic effects associated with the (increasingly residual) ‘modal’ subjunctive. The non-assertion may be motivated by various considerations such as a lack of information, belief to the contrary, distancing or even backgrounding/thematisation. This semantics lies at the center of the non-assertion subschema, which I will claim to be the only one in which the subjunctive itself can still be considered meaningful (albeit not necessarily in a ‘modal’ sense).

Our proposed construction grammar modeling of the Spanish subjunctive¹³ is designed to represent its various usages in modern Spanish in the form of a structured network consisting of subschemas and micro-constructions. As we’re here mainly interested in using construction grammar as a theoretical tool for describing the Spanish subjunctive (rather than using the Spanish subjunctive as a case study for refining the theory), I will not

¹³ Cf. Goldberg (1995), De Knop & Mollica (2013), Ziem & Lasch (2013), Betz (2016, pp. 27–48), Traugott & Trousdale (2018).

explicitly adhere to any of the four main schools (cf. Croft & Cruse, 2004).¹⁴ I will start off with an abstract Spanish subjunctive schema, which gives rise to three subschemas and one micro-construction (the protasis-construction, where imperfect subjunctives cooperate with conditionals in the conditional schema). The three subschemas non-assertion, modal agreement and modal trigger are direct daughters of this subjunctive schema. It will be argued, that non-assertion can be subdivided into two micro-constructions (non-committal and thematic subjunctive), while the modal agreement subschema is the locus of the most important innovations that can be subsumed as a process in which former imperatives are slowly being substituted by subjunctive forms.

7.1 *The Subjunctive Schema* [S [que V_{subj}]]

The subjunctive schema consists of a matrix sentence with an embedded clause and the formal schematic structure [S [COMP V_{subj}]]. The construction comprises a matrix sentence (which may or may not be elided), a complementiser or a subordinating conjunction, and a subordinate clause whose verb carries subjunctive inflection. On this abstract level, neither the verb slot of the matrix clause nor the conjunction of the subclause need to be specified any further. The semantics of this construction is in most cases purely grammatical or procedural in that its only value on this level of representation is to mark the subordinate clause as such with respect to its matrix clause. In the less frequent case that the subordinate clause-verb should allow for an alternative indicative, the pragmatic effect of the subjunctive/indicative alternation will always directly consist in the subjunctive being interpreted as a refusal to assert the subordinate clause proposition. This leads to inferences based on this non-assertion and thus, indirectly, to a wide spectrum of contextually bound semantic effects.

This sketched schematic construction can be interpreted as two sides of the same coin: On the one hand, its abstract schema and semantics may be seen diachronically as the result or abstraction of the grammaticalisation process sketched above, by which the subjunctive became increasingly associated with subordination as such. On the other side, synchronically, this schema bequeaths its feature to its subschemas which inherit the formal traits of the mother construction and central elements of its functional-grammatical semantics; they are differentiated from the basic schema and among each other by further formal and semantic constraints. The resulting subjunctive constructions and subschemas of Spanish are the following:

7.2 *The Non-Assertion Subschema* (= “NonAssertion”) [S [que V_{subj}] (/V_{ind})]

¹⁴ In this I am following Traugott & Trousdale (2013, p. 4): “In the remainder of this book, we draw opportunistically on a number of insights which have been proposed in the constructional accounts of language outlined below, without adhering to one particular type of construction grammar”.

Among all the schemas and constructions in which Spanish subjunctives may appear, this is the only one in which we find a semantics that still might be subsumed under the label of mood. On the formal side, the schema consists of a matrix sentence, the verb of which does *not* automatically trigger the use of the subjunctive in the embedded clause, but allows for either the indicative or the subjunctive. If the indicative is chosen, the proposition of the subordinate clause is asserted; if, however, the subjunctive is chosen, the assertion is deliberately withheld, and we get the non-assertion subschema. This subschema bifurcates into two different micro-constructions, depending on what motivates the speaker's refusal to assert the subordinate clause proposition. An important motivation for withholding this assertion may be lack of information about something that is only being reported or presupposed or the truth of which is downright rejected. In these cases we get the *non-committal construction* as in the following example (data from Gebhardt 1979, p. 170):

(12) *No sé en qué me*
 not know-PRES.IND.1SG in what myself

haya equivocado.
 have-PRES.SBJV.1SG made a mistake

'I don't know what I did wrong'. [... and I won't admit to any wrongdoing on my part unless you give me further information to convince me.]

The semantics of the non-committal construction depends on the awareness of the speaker that such an indicative-subjunctive choice is actually available and that using the subjunctive is not simply the default choice for subordinate clauses in general, but rather a deliberate decision to refuse an assertion. In (12), withholding the assertion of the subordinate clause's proposition turns the seeming apology in the following example into its exact opposite: the speaker explicitly refuses to admit any error unless proof to the contrary is given. The indicative version of this sentence is grammatically possible as well, but comes with a completely different semantics (data from Gebhardt, 1979, p. 170); cf. (13).

(13) *No sé en qué*
 not know-PRES.IND.1SG in what

<i>me</i>	<i>he</i>	<i>equivocado.</i>
myself	have-PRES.IND.1SG	made a mistake

‘I don’t know what I did wrong’. [I admit the fact, though, and would like further information to avoid similar mistakes in the future.]

In (13), the proposition of the subordinate clause *is* asserted; the speaker admits to an error and asks for information about it, implicitly to make amends. The final semantic effect created by the non-committal construction arises from the interaction between its semantics of non-assertion and the invited pragmatic inferences of the hearer, who will have to infer the reasons for this withholding of any commitment from the context. The semantics of the non-committal construction is frequently described by contrasting it with its respective indicative version and one might be tempted to assign this to another construction, e.g. a hypothetical ‘committal construction’. However, as asserting a proposition is the unmarked case in human communication and corresponds to the Gricean maxims of cooperation, no special construction is needed to account for this case (cf. Grice, 1975, p. 46).

The other micro-construction directly derived from the non-assertion subschema is the *thematic subjunctive construction*. In these cases, the verb in the matrix sentence is a psych verb expressing a reaction to the propositional content of the subordinate clause as in, “I’m happy that you’ve come!”. The assertion of the subordinate proposition is already presupposed by the matrix sentence and can therefore hardly be contentious. Nevertheless, the assertion-withholding subjunctive is generally preferred here. These are the cases that have puzzled generations of grammarians who have tried to analyse the subjunctive in terms of “reality vs. non-reality”. How is it possible that the assertion is generally refused in examples like the following?

(14)	<i>¡Me alegre</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>que</i>
	me rejoice-PRES.IND.1SG	PREP	COMP
	<i>hayas</i>	<i>venido!</i>	
	have PRES.SBJV.2SG	come	

‘I’m happy that you’ve come!’

The subjunctive is now almost obligatory in these circumstances, but examples of indicatives can still be found on the internet, e.g. by singer Tommy Portugal from Lima in his song *Me gusta, me gusta*, in which one

verse reads “Me gusta que eres perfecta” (‘I like it that you’re perfect’).¹⁵ In these cases, the strong preference for the subjunctive can be explained by the high degree of thematicity of the subordinate proposition, which makes it seem awkward to assert something that must have been taken for granted in the first place. In the thematic subjunctive construction, assertion is withheld because it is felt to be superfluous or even pragmatically misleading.

Within the non-assertion schema there appears to be a considerable degree of fluctuation; pending empirical confirmation, we’d stipulate that the choice of the indicative is increasingly felt to be marked as either literary and slightly stilted or already unacceptable. We would expect to find more indicatives in the written language, while the spoken language increasingly renounces the subtleties of the assertion vs. non-assertion casuistry and reinterprets the subjunctive as a default. In these cases, the subjunctive/indicative-choice is increasingly lost together with the associated semantics. Analogously to what has already happened in spoken French, the corresponding examples would shift further along the dimension of “type of concept” from contentful (‘lexical’) towards procedural (‘grammatical’) (cf. Traugott & Trousdale 2013, p. 12). The non-assertion subschema is therefore bleeding over into the modal agreement subschema which is clearly procedural; the last stronghold of a subjunctive as a freely chosen means of expression is slowly being eroded here.

7.3 Modal Agreement Subschemata [[V_{trigger}] [que V_{subj}]]

This subschema inherits its formal traits from the subjunctive schema; unlike in the non-assertion schema, the subjunctive form is not chosen here, but rather triggered by some non-declarative illocution of the matrix sentence. A central unifying trait of the modal agreement schema is therefore the observation that a substitution of the subjunctive by an indicative is considered ungrammatical by most native speakers. This appears to be the case in examples like (15) (data from Real Academia Española, 1973, p. 477):

- | | | | | |
|------|-----------|----------------------|------------|--------------------|
| (15) | <i>No</i> | <i>creo</i> | <i>que</i> | <i>[venga]</i> |
| | not | believe-PRES.IND.1SG | COMP | come-PRES.SBJV.3SG |

¹⁵ Further examples are: “lamento que has tenido problemas ingresando a tu cuenta.” [‘I am sorry to hear that you have had problems logging in to your account’] (<https://community.shopify.com/c/preguntas-y-respuestas-t%C3%A9nicas/no-puedo-ingresar-a-mi-aplicaci%C3%B3n-y-ninguna-de-mis-paginas-carga/td-p/609130>, [29/03/2022], or: “¡Me alegro de que eres una persona más fajona luego que te golpearon y violaron!” [‘I’m glad you’re a more fierce person after you were beaten and raped!’] (https://m.facebook.com/problematicamedia/photos/a.359412071438894/737693006944130/?type=3&_rdr [29/03/2022]).

/*viene] *Juan.*
 come-PRES.IND.3SG John
 ‘I don’t believe that John will come’.

As there is no longer any choice of mood, the use of the subjunctive in itself can no longer be associated with any semantic content; the function of this subschema is strictly procedural and amounts to a simple marker of subordination (c.f. Noonan, 2008, pp. 145–147).¹⁶ Obviously, these constructions will always show a clear modal colouring; however, the modality can always be traced to some element in the matrix sentence, while the subordinate clause-verb only repeats this modality in a form of modal agreement which contributes to the textual cohesion. Triggering contexts for this construction are typically those which confer to the matrix sentence an imperative, prohibitive, hortative or optative illocution (e.g. *ordenar, prohibir, convenir, desear* ...). Establishing the full list of trigger verbs will again be an empirical matter; as might be expected from a living and changing language, some verbs may be considered triggers by some speakers and non-triggers by others. The advantage of the constructionalisation approach suggested here would be that these individual vacillations can easily be accounted for by attributing a given micro-construction either to the non-assertion subschema (when an alternative indicative form is deemed to be acceptable) or to the modal agreement subschema (when the subjunctive is felt to be a simple modal agreement marker). Modal agreement is by far the most productive node within the subjunctive schema as it has spawned the imperative-subjunctive subschema which has been slowly substituting etymological imperative forms with subjunctives. This productivity derives from the fact that a pragmatically recuperable matrix sentence is frequently elided, leaving the remaining subordinate clause “orphaned” (cf. Ruiz Campillo, 2008, p. 13).

7.3.1 *Orphaned Subordinate Subschema* S [(que) V_{subj}]

“Orphaned subjunctives” appear in stand-alone subordinate clauses with an optional complementiser; the modal value of their verbs derives from an unexpressed matrix sentence which the hearer has to reconstruct pragmatically on the basis of situative and encyclopedic knowledge; starting

¹⁶ Noonan (2008) in his typologically oriented paper contemplates various types of complementation systems. About the type to which Spanish belongs, he writes: “Four-member systems typically include indicative and subjunctive complement types, and two non-s-like complement types. Catalan is typical of this sort of system, with an indicative used in assertive contexts, a subjunctive used in non-assertive contexts, an infinitive in DTR contexts where its notional subject has been equi-deleted under identity with the matrix subject, and a participial complement used for immediate perception complements. This sort of system is typical of the Western Romance languages.” (Noonan, 2008, p. 145–147).

from this basic situation, certain more frequent reconstructions have coalesced into new conventional schemas and constructions. These come in two forms: the desiderative construction and the imperative-subjunctive (sub-)subschema. The desiderative construction is a micro-construction based on the modal agreement schema but differing formally from it (elided matrix and optional complementiser *que*). The subjunctive is activated by a matrix clause with non-declarative illocution which is pragmatically understood and therefore dispensable:

- (16) *¡(Que) viva la Virgen!*
 COMP live-PRES.SBJV.3SG the virgin
 ‘Long live the Virgin (Mary)!’

This construction is clearly non-compositional because its semantics always implies a deontic and excludes the epistemic reading, more precisely: an “optative”, i.e. a wish without any explicit or implicit addressee. Thus, the elision of the matrix clause comes with a semantic restriction not logically deducible from other linguistic facts and must therefore constitute an independent construction in the technical sense. I have placed this micro-construction under the modal agreement schema which in turn has been characterised as “procedural” rather than “contentful”. It might therefore seem like a contradiction to file the desiderative construction under ‘not contentful’, while it clearly expresses a desiderative or optative semantics. I would however argue that this meaning does not directly derive from the mood of the verb but rather from a contextual pragmatic inference, by which the listener has to reconstruct the deontic nature of the elided matrix sentence; these inferences have eventually become conventionalised as an optative.

7.3.2 Imperative-Subjunctive Subschema

While the desiderative construction is not particularly frequent, the imperative-subjunctive subschema certainly is, and a considerable portion of subjunctive forms in Spanish texts tends to be used in constructions from this node in the subjunctive network. The imperative-subjunctive schema is analogous to the desiderative construction in that it is ultimately based on an elided matrix sentence with an imperative illocutionary force, i.e. ‘I order/ask/command you to ...’. Its semantics is therefore desiderative, but directed at third person singular or plural addressees, rather than impersonal. By this, it becomes indistinguishable from the semantics of etymological imperative forms which it has been cannibalising for quite some time. All constructions under the orphaned-subordinate schema share the feature that they can no longer appear in the whole range of epistemic modalities that were open to their structural “grandmother”, modal agreement. However, while the

desiderative construction can still express a number of distinguishable nuances within the deontic branch of modality, including *commissive*, *volitive*, *optative* and *hortative* interpretations, the imperative-subjunctive is limited even further to a clearly *imperative* meaning (and syntactic behaviour). The imperative-subjunctive schema feeds subjunctive forms into the Spanish imperative paradigm, in which the etymological imperative forms have actually already become a minority. This massive restructuring of the imperative paradigm is the result of the imperative-subjunctive schema subdividing further into four individual micro-constructions (one of which is limited to Latin American varieties of Spanish): The first of these, the *negative imperative construction*, is used obligatorily when an imperative is negated:

- (17) *¡Ven!* → *¡No vengas!*
 come-IMP.SG not come-PRES.SUBJ.2SG
 ‘Come!’ → ‘Dont come!’

This is the first case in which the still extant imperative forms can no longer be used and must be substituted by the corresponding subjunctives. The second micro-construction in this schema is the *honorific imperative construction*. Spanish imperatives may only be used with the informal 2nd person pronouns and verbal inflection, while the formal address system requires the honorific imperative construction. The formal address system in Spanish uses 3rd person verbal morphology together with the pronoun *usted* (abbreviated *Vd.*) which developed out of the honorific *vuestra merced* (‘your Grace’). We therefore find 3rd person morphology with a 2nd person semantics. As there are no 3rd person imperatives, the honorific imperative construction has come to be used here in order to close this morphological gap:

- (18a) *¡Ven* *aquí,* *Pepa!*
 come-IMP.SG here Pepa
 ‘Come here, Pepa!’ [informal].
- (18b) *¡Venga* *aquí* [*Vd./sra. Gómez!*]
 come-PRES.SUBJ.3SG here PRON/Ms Gómez
 ‘Come her, Ms Gómez!’ [formal]

The fact that the constructionalisation of these erstwhile subjunctives into full imperatives has now come to a conclusion can be seen from their behaviour

with respect to cliticisation: Modern Spanish pronominal clitics are obligatorily proclitic with finite verbs (including subjunctives!) and always enclitic with non-finite verbs and imperatives. We would thus expect these ‘subjunctives’ to take proclitic personal pronouns, but this is not the case: In the honorific imperative construction, clitics always go to the end of the verb, thereby treating these subjunctives as if they were imperatives:

- (19) *¡Dígame* (usted) *qué*
 tell-PRES.SBJV.3SG-me-DAT you-PRON.HON.2SG what
- le* *parece!*
 you-PRON.HON.3SG-DAT seem-PRES.IND.3SG
- ‘Tell [formal] me what you think of it!’

All other non-imperative finite verbs would take the proclitic *me* as in *Me dices* (‘You’re telling me ...’) instead of the enclitic *me* in *Dígame*. We could, of course, treat these ‘subjunctives’ as normal imperative forms which happen to be homonymous with the corresponding subjunctives. But then we’d miss the relevant insight that these ‘new imperatives’ are ultimately derivable from the modal agreement via the orphaned-subordinate schema.

The third of the four imperative micro-constructions is the *reported imperative construction* which is used for indirect and reported commands. Etymological imperatives cannot appear in this function:

- (20) *¡Ven!* → *Dicen* *que*
 come-IMP.SG say-PRES. IND.3PL COMP
- vengas.*
 come-PRES.SUBJ.2SG
- ‘Come!’ → They’re saying that you must come.

The last of the imperative-subjunctives is the *plural imperative construction*; it is limited to Latin American varieties and has made the plural forms of the etymological imperative obsolete. It can be seen as an extension of the honorific imperative construction to informally addressed plural referents: (*¡Venid aquí, los niños!* [Spain] →) *¡Vengan acá, los niños!* [Latin America] ‘Come here, children!’.

In their semantics and syntactical behaviour, subjunctives in these four constructions are completely identical to etymological imperatives; the only factor that still associates them with the subjunctive as such is the morphology. Apart from that, the imperative-subjunctive schema belongs firmly in the domain of imperatives and should no longer be associated with mood in any sense.

7.4 Modal Trigger Subschema [S [Conj_{trigger} V_{subj}]]

This is the last subschema within the larger subjunctive schema; it binds together a set of micro-constructions in which the dependent clause is not introduced by a complementiser but by a subordinating conjunction; there is a set of conjunctions in Spanish which (to different degrees) trigger the subjunctive inflection in the subordinate clause. Like the modal agreement schema, it may leave no or little room for a modal choice: if a conjunction like *para que* is used, the correspondent micro-construction will impose a subjunctive inflection on the verb. The modal trigger schema – although on the formal side more constrained than the general subjunctive schema – inherits from it the abstract functional meaning as a simple marker of subordination:

- (21) *Te* *lo* *digo* *para que*
 you-DAT.SG it-ACC say-PRES.IND.1SG for that
- lo* [*sepas* /**sabes*]
 it-ACC know-PRES.SBJV.2SG know-PRES.IND.2SG
- ‘I’m telling you, so you know’.

Which conjunctions belong to the set of triggers is an empirical question open for debate and is in a constant flux as intuitions change. A construction grammar analysis would have to posit individual micro-constructions for all subjunctive-triggering conjunctions. As is to be expected in a living natural language, each of these micro-constructions will leave room for debate about the degree of modal choice that any given construction may still offer to the speaker. As a general tendency, older written registers will still allow for some indicatives after these conjunctions, while spontaneous spoken registers may already have moved towards a situation in which subjunctive inflection will be perceived as the default or even the only acceptable option.

7.5 Protasis Construction

This construction is an outlier. It is heavily contextually restricted and presupposes a “hypothetical conditional schema” in which the verb of the protasis is in the past tense subjunctive, while the verb in the apodosis takes a conditional inflection:

- (22) *Si lo hubiese sabido, no*
 if it-ACC have-PAST.SUBJ.1SG known not
- habría tirado el penal.*
 have-COND.1SG shot the penalty
- ‘Had I known it, I wouldn’t have shot the penalty’.

While all other micro-constructions under the subjunctive schema may appear either in the present or past tense, the protasis construction is strictly limited to imperfect tense subjunctives. The systematic place for describing it is within the context of the conditional construction. It might be (and has been) argued that the subjunctive here confers a modal meaning of irrealis to the subordinate protasis phrase. This may well be the case, either historically or even synchronically; however, the whole construction is so integrated that it seems a questionable analytical strategy to separate its constituting elements, trying to ascribe to each one its individual contribution to this construction, which is clearly non-compositional and therefore more than the sum of its component parts. An empirical argument against a modal contribution of the protasis-subjunctive to the whole construction can be found in the fact that informal versions of the construction may well use an indicative in the protasis (interview quote by Messi):

- (23) *Si lo sabía, no*
 if it know-IMP.IND.1SG not
- tiraba el penal.*
 shoot-IMP.IND.1SG the penalty
- ‘Had I known it, I wouldn’t have shot the penalty’. [informal]

Figure 1 provides a synoptic overview of the complete subjunctive-network as outlined in this chapter.

The subjunctive schema

[S[CONJ V_{subj}]]

Non-Assertion Subschema

Subjunctive contrasts with indicative.
Choice of subjunctive withholds assertion of the proposition in the subordinate.

Non-Comittal Construction

Assertion refused because speaker doesn't want to commit to the truth of the assertion (lack of knowledge or open rejection)

No sé en que me haya equivocado.

¡Me alegro de que hayas venido!

es importante que + subjunctive, quiero que + subjunctive, etc.

Thematic Subjunctive

Withholds assertion because the proposition is already thematic. Renewed assertion would be pragmatically misleading.

Micro-Constructions

Modal Agreement Subschema

Dependent clause verb agrees with deontic or epistemic modality of the matrix verb subjunctive in the subordinate

Orphaned-Subordinate subschema

[S [[CONJ] V_{subj}]]

Derives from the Modal-Agreement schema by eliding a pragmatically recuperable matrix sentence. An overt lexical complementiser is optional.

Desiderative Construction

Optative reading (i.e. no addressee).

Imperative-Subjunctive Subschema

Imperative reading (i.e. singular or plural addressee)

Honorific Imperative Construction

Imperatives directed to 3rd person honorific addressees require the subjunctive.

¡Ven aquí, Papa!
→ *¡Veniga aquí, [Vd. / sra. Giménez!]*

Negative Imperative Construction

In negated imperatives the subjunctive is obligatory.

¡Ven!
→ *¡No vengas!*

Reported Imperative Construction

Reported imperatives require the subjunctive.

¡Ven!
→ *Dicen que vengas.*

Plural Imperative Construction

Latin American innovation: All plural imperatives substituted by subjunctive forms.

¡Venid aquí, los niños!
→ *¡Vengan acá, los niños!*

Micro-Constructions

Modal Trigger Subschema

Modal conjunctions trigger the subordinate in the subordinate

Protasis Construction

Limited to the Imperfect tense. Marks the protasis-phrase in the Conditional-Schema.

Si tuviera dinero me lo compraría.

aunque + subjunctive, sin que + subjunctive, para que + subjunctive, etc.

8. Deconstructing the Modal Analysis for the Spanish Subjunctive

The Romance subjunctive, and the Spanish subjunctive with it, has been a focus of linguistic research for more than 150 years now. It would therefore be quite unrealistic to imagine that any of the above given interpretations or descriptions were completely new and had never been published elsewhere. However, most traditional accounts appear to be plagued by one of two problems. Many tried to reduce the complexity of the phenomenon by concentrating on only one of the constructions that was perceived to be most salient or central (while the rest was overlooked or treated only in passing as “special cases”). In this context it was usually taken for granted that the subjunctive corresponds to the category of mood and that its function consists in expressing modality. The other type of accounts, on the other hand, would give a comprehensive overview over all the relevant constructions – whether meaningful or procedural, facultative or obligatory, imperative or optative; but these full descriptions tended to come as unstructured collections of ultimately unrelated observations (and De Bruyne, 1993, pp. 426–454 = §§ 1053–1108 is a good example of that). In this paper I have suggested a theory which purports to avoid both shortcomings by applying central concepts of cognitive linguistics like the radial network and, more specifically, the concept of a linguistic network within the constructionalisation framework proposed by Traugott & Trousdale (2013). The constructionalisation framework was used to elaborate a comprehensive and detailed subjunctive schema in which the logical (and putatively also genetical) relationships between the various subjunctive constructions of Spanish can be made explicit as a structured whole. As one of the benefits of this new analysis, many of the traditionally contentious points about the subjunctive can now be reformulated in a more meaningful way.

The arguably most central, contentious point was raised in the introduction to this paper: “Is the subjunctive an expression of modality or just a marker of subordination?” Based on our construction grammar analysis, we can now answer this question: Only in the non-assertion schema is there still a choice between subjunctive and indicative and therefore an abstract meaning based on withholding the assertion. In the protasis construction, it is the whole construction that conveys the modal meaning and in the modal trigger and modal agreement schemas, the subjunctive is obligatory and therefore expresses nothing. The orphaned-subordinate schema and its subschemas are contentful in that they convey optative and imperative meanings. Because these represent a statistically very important part of subjunctive tokens in any given text, they may well have contributed to the widespread notion of a still “modal” subjunctive. However, this “mood” will then almost exclusively be an imperative reading, the modal character of which is at best disputed.¹⁷ I have therefore argued that the imperative-

¹⁷ Thus e.g. Hengeveld (2000) characterises the imperative as an illocution, but not as mood.

subjunctive Schema should not be seen as modality proper but rather as a restructuring of the Spanish imperative paradigm. Finally, the semantics of the orphaned-subordinate constructions does not emanate from a modal meaning of the subjunctive forms but from a pragmatic reconstruction of the elided modal matrix sentences. Thus imperative-subjunctive constructions are hardly modal and their semantics does not reside in the subjunctive inflections.

So it is only in the non-assertion schema that we find a semantics of the sort that CVT claims for the subjunctive in general. But even here, the actual modal effects don't seem to be an immediate part of the constructional meaning which is strictly pragmatic and not modal at all. The modal effects only unfold in conjunction with pragmatic inferencing by the hearer. In the famous example *Busco una chica que [sabe/sepa] inglés* ('I'm looking for [the/a] girl who knows English'), the indicative version implies that the speaker has a concrete person in mind and that they are looking for this person. The subjunctive version explicitly withholds this assertion and the hearer is left with the task of *inferring* why this might have seemed so important to the speaker. The obvious inference is that the speaker's focus is not on finding a concrete person by asserting his or her existence but rather any person with the respective skills. Thus, the construction only expresses non-assertion directly, while the final communicative sense arises through pragmatic inference. Thus, even in the non-assertion schema, the modal interpretation appears somewhat indirect and we now seem to have deconstructed most of the generally assumed modality of the Spanish subjunctive.

With all this I am not claiming to have resolved all analytical problems surrounding the Romance and, in particular, the Spanish subjunctive. A short glance into the traditional descriptions of the ever-changing details and intricacies of subjunctive use¹⁸ leaves no doubt that a comprehensive description of all individual cases is a huge, if not downright impossible task. While the subjunctive may be structured in the form of schemas and micro-constructions as proposed here, it can certainly not be completely reduced to this structure. Rather, it has been our aim to provide a Construction Grammar framework into which old and new analyses might be cast – always on the assumption that the basic units of description will not necessarily be just the verbs inflected for subjunctive, but the wider syntactic constructions into which these are integrated. The proposed schemas and constructions leave ample space for debate over details as e.g. the lexical items which may or may not qualify as triggers. Thus, the status of *aunque* or *hasta que* can be discussed in connection with the modal trigger schema by asking whether or to which degree they belong to the set of triggers envisaged by this schema;

¹⁸ Cf. e.g. De Bruyne's grammar which dedicates 35 pages to the problem (De Bruyne, 1993, p. 420–455), or the *Nueva gramática* de la RAE, where it occupies 95 pages (RAE, 2009, pp. 1865–1960).

the same holds true for the verbal elements in the matrix clauses of the modal agreement schema; and the non-assertion schema leaves room for many nuanced pragmatic interpretations. What I claim to have achieved is not a complete description of the Spanish subjunctive, but a structured linguistic network in which any given subjunctive use may find its systematic place.

9. Conclusion and Outlook

We have tried to give a structured overview of the subjunctive-related constructions in the Spanish language. As a result, tendencies have become visible which may be able to shed new light on debates within, but also outside of construction grammar. As for the question of a semantic vs. a syntactic subjunctive, we've argued that the subjunctive as a whole can no longer be said to be primarily a marker of modality. It has developed into a number of specialised schemas of which the non-assertion schema is probably the last residue of mood in the sense of "modality expressed via verbal inflection". In the non-assertion schema, speakers may still deliberately choose the indicative to assert the subordinate proposition: "No puedo dejar de existir mientras todas las otras cosas y las personas se quedan aquí [...]" (Marías, 1994, pp. 42–43). Also, in concessive clauses with the conjunction *aunque* there may still be two options of either asserting or not asserting the condition, including the indicative ("Ruiberriz recibe muchos encargos y aunque no publica escribe continuamente [...]" Marías, 1994, p. 109).¹⁹ However, these examples are taken from a written literary text and must therefore be considered conservative in the context of the ongoing demodalisation process, in which many constructions are moving from the non-assertion towards the modal agreement schema. We'd hypothesise that spontaneous speech has already reached a much more advanced stage. A statistical comparative analysis of corpora of spoken vs. written Spanish texts would have to be undertaken to prove this conjecture.²⁰ The working hypotheses might be the following:

- The semantic subjunctive (= non-assertion schema) is in decline.
- The process is more advanced in the spoken than in the written language.
- The subtle differentiation between an asserting indicative and a non-asserting subjunctive may have been more wide-spread in earlier stages of the language.
- Not only the subjunctive forms as such are being lost; rather, the whole non-assertion schema is falling out of use.

¹⁹ Marías, J. (1994). *Mañana en la batalla piensa en mí*. Barcelona: Delbolsillo.

²⁰ Some statistical research in this direction has already been undertaken by my colleague Tanja Prohl as a first pilot study towards a large-scale empirical project in which the neuralgic zones of Spanish subjunctive constructionalisation are to be analysed.

We conjecture that there will be a phase in which speakers might, on introspection, still recognise a non-assertion construction which in principle allows a choice between subjunctive and indicative. In spontaneous speech, however, they would normally no longer make use of this possibility and use the subjunctive as the default setting which is more and more felt to be associated with subordination as such. The subtle casuistry of the non-assertion constructions and the respective indicative-version will increasingly be perceived as a stylistic effect limited to written language (which is conservative *par excellence* and where the non-assertion constructions will possibly still survive many centuries). The same tendency is also reported in the literature on French subjunctive use, for which a far-reaching loss of the modal subjunctive is reported in the oral registers:

these theses [claiming a general semantic value for all subjunctives] partly contradict the quoted automatism in French, where its use does not regularly express or imply any modal distinction; above all, however, they contradict criteria of frequency, both in oral corpora, where the *subjunctif* within the use of verbal forms – at least quantitatively – represents only a marginal phenomenon (translated from Blaikner-Hohenwart, 2006, p. 615).

The freedom of choice between the indicative or subjunctive may still be part of the language as a whole, but remains now largely unused in spoken French. It is not improbable that here, just as in many other areas, French indicates the direction in which Spanish and the other Romance languages will eventually evolve.

As an afterthought, it might be interesting to note that Spanish on a whole is probably not losing verbal means of expressing modality. While the subjunctive may now be in an advanced state of demodalisation, new modal constructions are arising from former tenses, which will partly make up for that loss. Thus, imperfect indicative forms are increasingly encroaching upon the traditional imperfect subjunctives and conditionals in conditional constructions and are now frequently associated with irrealis mood; an analogous process has long been completed in spoken French. More importantly, the synthetic or simple future tense is slowly being pushed out of most of its temporal functions by the new analytic or periphrastic GO-future and may in the future only survive in its modal functions (like e.g. in epistemic *Serán las ocho*) (c.f. Radatz, to appear).

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