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Crosslinguistic Facets of the Subjunctive

No other grammatical phenomenon causes as many problems in teaching and learning as the subjunctive. Most grammars devote as many pages to the presentation of the rules as to the exceptions. This becomes even more frustrating when one deals with the differences, not only between different language families, but even within the Romance language family alone, since it seems that each language shapes the functional area of the subjunctive individually.

The aim of this volume is therefore to reconsider the representation of the subjunctive in Romance languages in a crosslinguistic and contrastive way. An overview of research in this area from its beginnings to the latest neurolinguistic findings will illustrate the complexity of this topic (Part 1). In addition, specific phenomena of the subjunctive at the interface of its functional domain with the indicative will be made visible by means of appropriate case studies (Part 2). On this basis, an attempt is made to trace the polyfunctionality and the different utilization in the Romance languages and beyond to a common pattern with language-specific margins, which allows us to explain, not only contrastive differences, but also the decline of the subjunctive in some domains and languages, as well as to illustrate the range of substitution possibilities (Part 3). Finally, the view is extended to other language families and new impulses for foreign language teaching are presented (Part 4).

Dealing with the subjunctive is important because, despite thorough and intensive research, it still leaves fundamental questions unanswered, namely,

a)   is the subjunctive more of a semantic or syntactic phenomenon?
b)   is it inherently heterogeneous or has it only evolved into a heterogeneous entity through the adoption of functional domains from other modes?
c)   why do the Romance languages display divergencies in the frequency and use of the subjunctive?
d)   Why does the use of the subjunctive in certain languages seem to be declining and by what elements can it be replaced?

The book begins with a very detailed look at the theories of the subjunctive with the contribution "The Unanswered Question – The Romanic Subjunctive" by Tobias Gretenkort, Sebastian Buchczyk, and Ingo Feldhausen. Based on four categories of argumentation, the research of more than 125 years is assembled and discussed. The four perspectives presented are, a) the philological position with a focus on the etymology, b) the formal approach, which primarily considers syntax, c) the pragmatic level of consideration, which foregrounds the speaker-listener relationship, and d) the cognitive deep structure, which is based on neuroscientific findings. With many excerpts and examples, it is illustrated that the question of the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the subjunctive becomes less important over time due to a shift in focus toward the communicative value of the subjunctive. As a consequence, the complexity of the subjunctive is usually described as a hierarchically ordered construct of interconnected networks or presented as a result of divers semiotic processes of abstraction (Regula 1929; Lerch 1931; Ruwet 1972; Wilson & Sperber 1993; Mejías-Bikandi 1998; Hummel 2001; Ahern & Leonetti 2004; Dam-Jensen 2011; Farkas 2003; Costantini 2006; Vesterinen 2012, 2014, 2016, 2017). In other words, networks as well as abstraction processes point to the fact that the speaker's motivation, together with the listener's interaction, might provide important insights into the nature and use of the subjunctive (Kulakova & Nieuwland 2016a, b; Gerstenberg 2017).

The critical overview of more of a century of different theories (Part 1), which serves as an extended introduction to this book and to the following case analyses (Part 2), as well as to the cognitive and contrastive considerations (Part 3), vividly illustrates the complexity of the subjunctive. It furthermore underlines that the subjunctive is a crosslinguistic phenomenon and that new directions need to be taken, especially in didactics (Part 4).

The questions that will consequently continue to accompany us are: What additional information does the speaker want to convey to the listener? Why can this additional information be relegated in certain contexts? How can the different utilization of the functional areas be vividly represented and explained?

In the second part, Michel Favre and Helene Rader go in search of answers to these questions, synchronically and diachronically, at the

intersection of the subjunctive with the indicative, namely in the realm of the probable and the possible.

In his article "Les adjectifs *probable* et *possible* eu égard à l'emploi du mode dans la complétive", Michel Favre examines the two French adjectives *probable* and *possible* in the main clause. Both stand semantically at an interface where the choice of mode is not always clear, as the contextual interpretations of the two French adjectives *probable* and *possible* can be fluid.

Using nine anchor points, validation instance, adaptation dimension, strength, level, scope, speaker engagement, temporality, relativity, and metaparameters, an attempt is made to illustrate the context-dependency at this interface, as well as to discuss schematized conventions. In addition, the question of whether the subjunctive is a semantic or syntactic phenomenon is indirectly addressed. This, in turn, has implications for the teaching of the subjunctive in foreign language classes (see Part 4).

In her contribution "El futuro de subjuntivo en los verbos modales *poder, querer* y *deber*: un análisis comparativo de los siglos XIV y XVIII", Helene Rader analyzes from a diachronic perspective the use of the future subjunctive, which, from a synchronic point of view, has already almost disappeared in Spanish. She traces its development and decline, with the help of the CORDE corpus of the Real Academia Española, by measuring changes in frequency between the 14th century (representing the medieval state of language) and the 18th century (as the first century of linguistic standardization) of three modal verbs: *poder, querer* and *deber*. Interestingly, she already observes a decline in usage between the 14th and 18th centuries, which in turn raises two questions, a) what motivated this decline? and b) was the functional area of the future subjunctive divided or dissolved? Furthermore, the niche area or text genre to which the future subjunctive seems to be restricted in Modern Spanish, namely legal language, seems to emerge in the 14th century. The article shows that the semantic modal auxiliary disappeared in many contexts precisely in competition with the future indicative and was therefore replaced by it over time, in connection with linguistic economy processes. However, it is interesting that especially in legal language the future subjunctive is still used. This suggests that especially in legal contexts semantic micro-differences may play a role.

In the third block, we will embark on a search for traces of these micro-differences with the aim of uncovering both the speaker's motivation in interacting with the listener (cf. Part 1) and an explanation for the interfaces between the possible and the probable as well as for the decline of the subjunctive (cf. Part 2). Moreover, a crosslinguistic hypothesis will be presented, which may allow for a new didactic approach to the subjunctive (cf. Part 4). Thereby, the focus will be shifted from the purely schematic memorization of subjunctive triggers and the setting of the subjunctive (syntactic perspective) to the sensitization for the speaker's motivation to use the subjunctive (semantic perspective).

In the three articles, "Las bases conceptuales del subjuntivo - Entre la implicación, la falta de control semántico y contextual y la conexión ilógica", "Sur les traces de la base conceptuelle du subjonctif à l'aide des exemples du livre *Dans le jardin des mots* de Jacqueline de Romilly" and "Tre parole sul congiuntivo", the additional semantic information of the subjunctive but also its substitution possibilities are investigated in three different Romance languages (Spanish, French, and Italian) and on the basis of different corpora: a) stereotypical examples from grammar, b) sentences extracted from a book by Jacqueline de Romilly (member of the Académie française), c) newspaper articles and d) oral utterances. In addition, linguistic contrastive differences between the three Romance languages are also pointed out, and the different boundaries of the functional areas are explained.

In the Spanish contribution "Las bases conceptuales del subjuntivo – Entre la implicación, la falta de control semántico y contextual y la conexión ilógica", an attempt is made to trace the subjunctive in the main clause back to the semantic concept "control", and to describe its role as a connector of inherently causally illogical action statements in the subordinate clause, using prototypical sample sentences from grammar. Furthermore, the author demonstrates that the subjunctive is largely replaced in German by adverbs or the use of the conditional.

In the French article "Sur les traces de la base conceptuelle du subjonctif dans le livre *Dans le jardin des mots* de Jacqueline de Romilly", a literary corpus and newspaper articles are used to investigate whether the statements made in the Spanish contribution for the Spanish subjuntivo can also be transferred to the French subjonctif. In addition to pointing

out similarities and differences between the use in French and other languages, deviations within the proposed model are also explained.

Finally, in the Italian contribution "Tre parole sul congiuntivo", the presented theory is examined on the basis of oral utterances. For better illustration, all Italian examples are additionally given in French and Spanish. Deviations and differences in the functional range of Italian over against the two western Romance languages (French and Spanish) or even the wider inner Romance (French) or outer Romance (Spanish) are discussed.

Taken as a whole, all three contributions provide an ideal basis for further research, possibly using even larger and more diverse corpora and including further languages, with the goal of moving closer not only to a definition of the subjunctive, but also to a new didactic concept for the subjunctive.

In the final part (Part 4), this is already heralded by the contribution "A diachronic comparison of the subjunctive mood in the Scandinavian and Romance languages illustrated by Icelandic and Spanish", in which Helene Rader presents a contrastive comparison of Spanish (as the southwestern branch of the Romance languages) with Icelandic (as the northwestern branch of the Germanic languages). Here, on the one hand, the parallels in usage are striking, again highlighting the need for a crosslinguistic consideration of this phenomenon. Especially in areas where the subjunctive is used in both languages to distance oneself from statements made by others, the semantic concept of "control" or lack of control over truthfulness again resonates.

Once again it becomes clear that it is precisely its context sensitivity and its semantic micro-differences that make the treatment of the subjunctive in foreign language teaching so problematic. In her article "Le subjonctif espagnol: un nouvel apprentissage possible? *El último lector* de David Toscana: entre analyse linguistique et littéraire" Aurélie Scheffer explores this phenomenon and tries to present a new didactic approach to the subjunctive.

She is concerned with familiarizing L2 speakers with the meaning dimension of mode and the concept of intentionality at an early age. She relies more on induction and an intuitive understanding of language than on mindless memorization of the rules. Using sentences from the novel *El último lector* by David Toscana as examples, she also demonstrates the

advantages of including literary works and contrasting them in foreign language teaching to sensitize L2 speakers to language differences in the use and frequency of the subjunctive between, in this case, two related languages, rather than frustrating learners by juxtaposing grammatical rules with as many exceptions.

Overall, this book is an attempt to counter the oft-mentioned frustration vis-à-vis the complexity of this grammatical phenomenon and to give new impetus to further research in area of the subjunctive.

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