The Spanish subjunctive:

Procedural semantics and pragmatic inference [1]

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1. Introduction

Among the many and varied observations that have been brought to light in studies on the contrast between the *indicative* and *subjunctive* in Spanish, those that make an attempt at clarifying the nature of the pragmatic inferences associated with these grammatical moods are particularly noteworthy. In Bustos (1986) and Bustos and Aliaga (1996), for example, a pragmatic approach to the distribution and interpretation of mood is presented using the Gricean notion of *conversational implicature* to describe its contribution to utterance interpretation. [2] In Rouchota (1994), on the other hand, the subjunctive in Modern Greek is investigated from a Relevance Theoretic (RT) viewpoint and the pragmatic inferences that are derived from it are shown to be mechanisms that enrich the basic semantics of mood and contribute to the explicatures of the utterance. Nevertheless, whatever theoretical perspective one adopts, an explanation of the appearance of pragmatic inferences brought about by the use of each mood is a fundamental step towards understanding indicative/subjunctive alternation as a particular case of the interaction between semantics and pragmatics that simultaneously creates syntactic effects.

In this paper, our objectives are twofold: firstly, to show that mood is *procedural*, in the sense of Wilson and Sperber (1993), basing our argumentation on the type of inferences that it leads to, and secondly, to offer an explanation, following from the first point, for certain problems related to the distribution of the subjunctive in Spanish. We also hope to illustrate the role of pragmatic theory in offering solutions to problems that are difficult to resolve in purely grammatical terms. Once we have presented some basic notions of RT in Section 2, we will take a look at the problem of the use of the subjunctive in subordinate relative clauses in extensional contexts (Section 3), and that of mood alternation in subordinate argument clauses (Section 4), to finish up with some general conclusions (Section 5).

2. Theoretical background

The pragmatic theory expounded by Sperber and Wilson (1986/95) is based on the idea that *relevance* is an organising factor in linguistic communication. They propose that a central characteristic of linguistic communication is that, being an instance of ostensive behaviour, the production of an utterance causes the hearer to expect that the speaker, by demanding his (the hearer's) attention, in some way guarantees that processing her utterance is going to positively affect his cognitive environment.[3] This idea is summed up in the *Communicative Principle of relevance*: Every act of ostensive communication (e.g. an utterance) communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance. This presumption is what makes the hearer assume that the utterance which was directed at him was meant to offer him at least a satisfactory range of cognitive effects in relation to the effort made to recover them.

Utterance interpretation, according to RT, crucially involves the use of this principle by the hearer in order to carry out inferential tasks such as reference assignment, disambiguation, recovery of ellipsed material, and resolution of vagueness; the combination of which enable him to construct the truth evaluable representation that he may reasonably assume the speaker intended to convey. One of the most noteworthy characteristics of this theory is, thus, the fundamental role attributed to inferential processes in the construction of both the propositional representation being explicitly communicated – the *explicature* – and the implicit content – *implicatures* – that may be derived.

Among the postulates developed from the theoretical basis provided by RT in relation to the cognitive processes involved in utterance interpretation is the distinction between two ways that linguistic meaning contributes to pragmatic inference: linguistic expressions can encode either conceptual representations, or procedural information on how to carry out inferential interpretation processes.[4] In other words, some expressions encode concepts, whereas others encode instructions on how to arrive at an appropriate interpretation. According to this perspective, procedural expressions encode cognitive content that does not correspond to any concept, but rather informs the hearer on how to manipulate the conceptual representations and how to access the adequate contextual assumptions in order to construct the intended interpretation. Functional categories such as Tense, mood, Focus, and Definite Determiners, as well as discourse markers, are examples of procedural expressions.

In accordance with the communicative principle of relevance, interpretive processes are guided by the expectations of the hearer, as mentioned above, of deriving positive cognitive effects from the communicated content. Procedural expressions help the hearer to identify the intended effects by restricting the construction of either the explicatures or the implicatures of the utterance. In the case of verbal mood, its semantic content contributes to the specification of explicatures, mainly those known as *higher-level explicatures*, in which the speaker's propositional attitude and communicative intention are represented.[5] As is typically the case with procedural expressions, the semantic content of the grammatical moods is minimal compared to the range of interpretive effects that the use of one or the other can convey: their stable, unitary semantic content leads to a variety of diverse interpretive effects depending on the context they are used in (i.e. their semantic content underdetermines the range of possible interpretations that they may obtain). What enables the hearer to identify the intended interpretation for each utterance is the communicative

principle of relevance: the expectation that an utterance will lead to positive cognitive effects without any unjustified processing efforts.

Among the reasons why mood is best classified as a procedural expression, we might mention the following: on one hand, the indicative and subjunctive morphemes make up a closed group of units, and on the other, the content that they express is not easily describable in conceptual terms, nor accessible to introspection (for similar arguments see Rouchota 1994). As we shall see, there are also other facts that are in favour of this point of view.

To describe the semantics of the subjunctive mood in Spanish, we refer to an idea that has often been considered in the Hispanic tradition, at least since Bybee and Terrell (1974): that the subjunctive marks the proposition as a *non-assertion*. In procedural terms, this implies that the subjunctive contains the instruction that can be paraphrased as *Construct the propositional representation as non-asserted information*. This semantic content underlies all the uses of the subjunctive, and is a valid analysis for both non-factual, or *irrealis*, and factual, or *thematic subjunctive* contexts, i.e. contexts in which the use of the subjunctive has the effect of backgrounding factual information.[6]

Although this kind of approach presents the advantage of bringing together such apparently diverse uses under a single, abstract semantics, which can be easily adapted for comparative purposes, it does come up against an important difficulty: that of precisely defining the sense in which *assertion* or *non-assertion* should be understood. In the present study, the approach we would like to put forth is based on a notion of *assertion* compatible with the ideas presented in Mejías-Bikandi (1994). Rather than linking assertion exclusively with the truth of a proposition according to the speaker, or the speaker's attitude of belief, this author points out that speakers mark as assertions those propositions which they intend to express as information regarding some individual's view of reality.[7] Thus, the use of the indicative corresponds to assertion in the sense that it can either be related to the foregrounding of the information expressed in a proposition, that is, with the intention of the speaker to inform the hearer of the propositional content, or with the truth of the proposition according to some individual. In any case, our objective is not so much to argue in favour of treating the subjunctive as an indicator of non-asserted information (which we attempt to do only in an indirect way), as to show that its content is procedural, and this is in principle independent of the particular characterisation of the subjunctive chosen.[8] Our interest, therefore, is centred on the pragmatic inferences that the use of the subjunctive activates in the interpretative process of constructing the explicatures of utterances.

3. The subjunctive in relative clauses in extensional contexts

The examples reproduced in (1), taken from Quer (1998), pose a problem for grammatical explanations of the distribution of the subjunctive in Spanish, since the relative clauses they contain appear in extensional, or referentially transparent, contexts,[9] which normally only allow the indicative, as is shown by the contrast in (2), taken from Pérez Saldanya (1999: 3259):

(1) a. *Le regalamos un libro que lo*
To-her/him we-gave a book that her/him
{entretuvo / entretuviera}
entertained (IND) / entertained (SUB)
'We gave him a book that entertained (IND) him / to entertain (SUB) him'.

   b. *Se aprobó una ley que {corregía /*
CL approved a law that corrected (IND) /
corrigiera} el agravio comparativo.
corrected (SUB) the injustice comparative.
'A law was passed that corrected (IND) / to correct (SUB) the injustice by comparison'.

(2) *Leo un libro en el que se {analiza /*
I-read a book in the which CL analyse (IND) /
*analice} el modo en las oraciones de relativo.
analyse (SUB) the mood in the clauses of relative.
'I am reading a book that analyses mood in relative clauses'.

If sentence (2) is an extensional context that guarantees the existential interpretation of the indefinite NP, both the subjunctive mood of the relative clause and the corresponding nonspecific interpretation of the NP are excluded. But precisely for this reason, the acceptability of the subjunctive in (1) is surprising, and another version of (2) can unexpectedly become grammatical just by adding a simple modifier, as in (3):

(3) *{Por fin / Finalmente} leo un libro en el que se*
Finally I-read a book in the which CL
analice el modo…
analyse (SUB) the mood…
'I am finally reading a book that analyses mood in…'

In order to understand why (1) and (3) are well-formed sentences we must start by admitting that the subjunctive is not merely a formal reflection of the sentential contexts in which it appears, and not only because in relative clauses it is not required by a hierarchically superior predicate, but also because its presence can actively condition the context of interpretation – understood as the set of assumptions used to interpret an utterance. This ability, as we shall see, is a typical characteristic of procedural expressions.

Let us begin with the case illustrated by (3). Intuitively, the difference in the acceptability of the subjunctive between sentences (2) and (3) is due to the fact that in the latter, by inserting the modifier we create a sentential context that is compatible with the semantic content of the mood in the relative clause. We might say that *por fin* and *finalmente* are intensionality-creating expressions, since they force the addressee to understand the situation described in (3) as the culmination of a long wait, search, or desire for a book with certain characteristics; in other words, these expressions create an opaque

context, just as verbs like *necesitar*, *buscar*, and *desear* (need, look for, and desire). Opacity often licences, as is well known, the appearance of the subjunctive, and facilitates the satisfaction of the requisite that this mood encodes (i.e. the interpretation of the relative clause as non-asserted information).

Having established this, it is not hard to see that the subjunctive in examples (1) also activates a purpose component, or one of pursuing a goal, in the relation between two situations: giving a book, and entertaining the receiver with it in (1a), and in (1b), passing a law and that the law should undo the injustice (Quer 1998; Pérez Saldanya 1999). On the one hand, it is significant that this feature of purposefulness and goal-directedness of the action is not necessarily present in the indicative version, in which the connection between the two events may be casual or unintended, and on the other, that when this feature is incompatible with the sentential context, the subjunctive turns out to be unacceptable, as is shown in (4) and (5):

(4)   *Por casualidad le regalamos un libro que lo*
        By chance to-him we-gave a book that him
        *{entretuvo / *entretuviera}*
        entertained (IND) / *entertained (SUB)
        'We gave him a book that happened to entertain him'.

(5)   *Me desperté con una fiebre que me {hacía /*
        I woke with a fever that me made (IND) /
        hiciera} temblar
        *made (SUB) tremble
        'I awoke with a fever that made me tremble'.

In (4), again found in Quer (1998), the modifier *por casualidad* is the element that blocks out the intentional or purpose reading, and therefore the presence of the subjunctive; in (5), the semantics of *despertarse con fiebre*, as well as the difficulty of imagining a situation in which someone intentionally manages to wake with a high fever, prevents replacing the indicative with the subjunctive. Likewise, the subjunctive is incompatible with contexts where the relative clause refers to a time span that occurred before that of the matrix, since this prevents the purpose interpretation, as in *Le regalamos un libro que lo hubiera distraído esos días* 'We gave him a book that would have (SUB) entertained him then'.

What is surprising is that the subjunctive should behave the same way in (3), where it seems to be licensed by the presence of the modifier, and in (1), where there is no operator or intensionality-creating element to supply an appropriate sentential context. The relevant generalisation seems to be the following: the subjunctive is acceptable in relative clauses to the extent that it is possible to create an interpretation with intensional content. But why, then, is it possible in (1)? Intuitively, the presence of the subjunctive is the crucial factor. This implies sustaining that mood itself is the element that creates an appropriate context to legitimate its own appearance. The idea may seem paradoxical, but it is exactly what we want to propose. In sentences like (1), the subjunctive, far from being incompatible with the sentential context, is capable of imposing a reinterpretation of the

sentence in an intentional / purpose sense. This is due to the procedural nature of mood, and in particular, to the fact that procedural content functions by activating assumptions which are integrated into the interpretation process. When the sentential context does not in itself satisfy the conditions that normally bring about the presence of the subjunctive in the embedded clause, the choice of this mood can activate the assumptions needed. The semantics encoded by the subjunctive, when applied, as in (1a), to a clause that is not within the scope of any intensional operator, leads us to infer that the relation that the matrix holds with the embedded proposition is one of purpose: i.e. that the book was given to someone with the intention that it should entertain them. Likewise, in example (1b), we infer that the law was passed in order to correct the injustice. In other words, the assumptions in (6) are integrated into the interpretation process as a necessary consequence of the presence of the subjunctive:

(6)   a.   The purpose of giving him the book was to entertain
             him.
       b.   The purpose of passing the law was to correct the injustice by
             comparison.

So the procedural semantics of mood is what activates the inferential process in every case, and the only feature that differentiates the data in (1) from the canonical uses of the subjunctive in relative clauses (typically, in intensional contexts) is that in the latter, the linguistic information of the sentence is in itself sufficient to make the subjunctive compatible and to lead to a natural interpretation of it, whereas in the former, the hearer makes an adjustment to the set of assumptions that form the context. As long as this operation can be carried out without leading to any incoherence in the interpretation, the string will be acceptable. The requisite of contextual coherency is, in fact, the only restriction that the interpretation of mood in relative clauses must obey, in accordance with this point of view, and with what Bustos (1986: 227) also claimed:

> El carácter obligatorio que en ocasiones tiene la opción entre uno de los dos modos se explica apelando a la necesidad de la consistencia contextual. Tal «obligación» está determinada en última instancia por la exigencia de racionalidad en la conducta lingüística que se concreta en el requisito de no manifestar creencias inconsistentes mediante tal conducta. Por otro lado, cuando en determinadas construcciones subsiste la optatividad, tal subsistencia se explica por la ausencia de inconsistencias en la elección de uno u otro modo.[10]

The perspective adopted by Bustos (1986) is a clearly pragmatic approach to the *indicative / subjunctive* contrast, and is applicable both in contexts of mood alternation and in those where only one mood can appear. It is important to appeal to the need to maintain contextual coherence to explain why mood's capability to activate inferences is not enough to make either mood acceptable in all contexts. Therefore, it is the decisive factor for restricting mood distribution, and is absolutely necessary if such powerful mechanisms as those shown to be at work in examples such as (1) are to be proposed – that is, if a

procedural element like subjunctive mood can force the necessary assumptions to be added to the context in order to facilitate its own interpretation.

What is actually the case is that we have before us a well known and studied phenomenon, especially in relation to presuppositional expressions such as the definite article: accommodation is what makes it possible for a hearer to easily accept (7) even if he has never known that the speaker has a dog, simply because hearers accommodate this assumption in order to interpret such an utterance, or in other words, they add it to the common ground of the conversation (Kadmon 2001: 17):

(7) My dog is at the door.

Just as in (7) we have to suppose that the speaker owns a dog in order to carry out the semantic instruction encoded by the article (i.e. the requisite of a unique referent), in (1), one must suppose that the actions described included an intentional component in order to carry out the semantic instruction encoded by the subjunctive (i.e. the requisite of taking the proposition to be non-asserted information). The interpretative mechanism is systematic, and characteristic of procedural expressions. As Kadmon (2001: 18) puts it:

> Our wish to see our fellow speakers as saying something interpretable and felicitous will generally drive us to assume (ceteris paribus and within certain limits) that the presupposition of their utterances hold. Very often, this will involve adding information to our common ground.

The limitations on the process of accommodation, as we have mentioned, are related to the coherence of the assumptions that make up the context and to the inferential processing effort made to carry out the contextual readjustment. In our opinion, the origin of this process is to be found both in the communicative principle of relevance, responsible for the search for cognitive effects the hearer of the utterance carries out in order to interpret it, and in the nature of procedural semantics, which gives priority to the assumptions activated even when this leads to modifying or adjusting the lexical and contextual information used in the interpretation of the utterance. This last aspect is what particularly interests us as proof that mood is procedural.

Since accommodation is a general phenomenon, it is not surprising that we should encounter other instances in which the subjunctive seems to induce it, specifically in constructions that allow mood alternation. Two obvious examples are (8) and (9):

(8) *El que fuera presidente en el exilio…*
     'He that was (SUB) president in exile…'

(9) *Habló de forma que todos {pudieron /*
     S/he-spoke in way that everyone could (IND) /
     pudieran} entender su explicación.
     could (SUB) understand his/her explanation.
     'She spoke in such a way that everyone could understand her explanation'.

In (8) we find a use of the subjunctive imperfect tense which has been noted on many occasions and is subject to very specific restrictions: the use in which this form behaves as if it were an indicative preterit. If we accept the assumption that *fuera* is actually a subjunctive (Lunn 1989; Pérez Saldanya 1999: 3283), we are again confronted with the same problem encountered in (1), that is, the presence of a subjunctive in a relative clause within an extensional context, this time with a meaning similar to that of a mark of evidentiality; in fact, what the subjunctive adds to the interpretation of the definite NP of (8) is the assumption that the information expressed by the relative clause is already known, or should be understood as a quotation, in a loose sense, of discourse that is already present in the context.[11] This case differs from those like (1) in that it shows a different way of satisfying the requirement made by the semantics of the subjunctive: here, the relative clause is unasserted information because it reproduces old or backgrounded information, as occurs in thematic or presupposed subjunctive contexts; whereas in (1) the information is not asserted because it 'survives' thanks to the possibility of inferring an intensional element.[12]   Obviously, grammatical conditions such as the obligatory definiteness of the NP, as correctly noted by Quer (1998), are what determine that the instruction indicated by mood must be resolved in a reading of given information, rather than an interpretation which characterises the situation represented in any other way, such as those we have been discussing in relation to the previous examples. Although we are unable to develop this point further, we do consider that from what has been said so far, sufficient arguments have been mustered to support the idea that (8) is yet another example of how the procedural semantics of the subjunctive can bring about an accommodation process, or in other words, cause an adjustment of the assumptions included in the context used to interpret the utterance, as long as this adjustment does not lead to any kind of incoherence.

As for example (9), taken from Pérez Saldanya (1999: 3296), it shows how the subjunctive can alternate with the indicative and introduce a purpose reading, so that the subordinate consecutive clause expresses the objective to be achieved. Although this data is not related to relative clauses, it can be seen to involve the same type of effect as those shown in example (1), i.e. the subjunctive mood activates an inference, through which a purpose component is accommodated in the relationship between the main and the subordinate clauses. If we are on the right track, this seems to be an argument in favour of the procedural nature of mood, and at the same time, a tool for explaining a number of grammatical problems. In the next section we study some additional data on mood alternation, this time related to argument clauses.

4. Double mood selection

It has often been observed that a number of verbs in Spanish take sentential complements in both indicative and subjunctive moods, although the mood of the complement has certain effects on the way these verbs are interpreted (Porto Dapena 1991: 130).

> (10)   a.   *Dice que {pones / pongas} mucha sal.*
>   S/he-says that you-put (IND) / put (SUB) much salt.
>   'He says you put in lots of salt (IND)'

'He tells you to put in lots of salt (SUB)'

b.　　*He pensado que{pones / pongas} mucha*
I-have thought that you-put (IND) / put (SUB) much *sal.*
salt.
'I thought that you put in lots of salt (IND)'
'I've decided that you should put in lots of salt (SUB)'

In examples like these, the subordinating verbs are interpreted as reporting directive utterances when they appear with subjunctive subordinate clauses as their complements.

One explanation for this fact that has been put forward is that we are dealing here with verbs that have more than one lexical entry, each having different selection properties; or in other words, that this is a case of lexical ambiguity. In principle this might seem to be a reasonable idea, but it runs into difficulties when the data are examined in detail (cf. Manteca Alonso-Cortés 1981: 54-60):

(11)　　　*Avisa que viene el tren a su hora y que*
He-warns that comes the train at its time and that
vaya el taxi a recogerle.
go (SUB) the taxi to collect-him
'He says the train is coming on time and for the taxi to go and collect him'.

The fact that two subordinate clauses, one in indicative and the other in subjunctive, can be coordinated as complements of the same verb shows that the meaning of *avisar* is not ambiguous, or in other words, that this verb does not represent two separate concepts, each having its own lexical entry. On the other hand, a purely lexical solution does not explain why the same contrast between a directive reading with the subjunctive and a non-directive one with the indicative occurs systematically across an entire group of verbs such as *gritar* (shout), *escribir* (write), *repetir* (repeat), *indicar* (indicate), and *advertir* (notify).

The alternative solution (as already proposed by Alarcos (1978) and Manteca Alonso-Cortés (1981)) is to attribute the interpretative effects observed in the subordinating verb to the mood of the subordinate clause. This is exactly the idea that we would like to take up again. However, it is admittedly problematic because it brings up a number of questions that are difficult to answer from a grammatical point of view: How can it be possible that an element in the subordinate clause should be able to determine the interpretation of the matrix verb, when the opposite would ordinarily have to be the case? What mechanism links the mood of the subordinate clause to the semantics of the governing clause? Can this proposal be considered compatible with the commonly accepted assumption that predicates select the mood of their complements? And why is the final interpretation of verbs with subordinate subjunctive complements always directive?

As is apparent, these questions are not easy to answer if we are to maintain a strictly grammatical approach. Nonetheless, by working with a pragmatic theory, a plausible solution does seem to be within reach. Bosque (1990: 45) clearly sums up the essence of the problem:

> No debemos dejar de preguntarnos, sin embargo, por qué los verbos de comunicación se reinterpretan como verbos de influencia, y no en cambio como verbos de cualquier otro tipo. La respuesta puede estar en una «implicatura conversatoria» (en el sentido de Grice), probablemente la misma que lleva a interpretar las declaraciones como sugerencias o las preguntas como peticiones. (...) Pero aunque el origen del fenómeno esté en un principio pragmático, debe insistirse en que el problema afecta a la semántica léxica, en cuanto que es una dase léxica la que se ve involucrada, con efectos patentes en la sintaxis. (...) tenemos, pues, no tanto un caso de homonimia como un tipo de polisemia que tiene su origen en un efecto discursivo.[13]

The double selection problem, from this point of view, can be seen to be tied to some of the issues discussed in the previous section. As we pointed out, the use of the subjunctive in grammatical contexts where the indicative is the mood that would ordinarily be expected can be described as inducing the hearer to carry out a process of accommodation, a process that requires an adjustment of the contextual assumptions used to interpret the utterance. Bosque describes this effect as the production of a Gricean implicature which is related to the lexical semantics of the subordinating verb; we propose a similar idea, but based on the analytical tools provided by Relevance Theory. In the cases we mentioned earlier of relative clauses in extensional contexts, a relationship of purpose is inferred as holding between the situation described in the main clause and the content represented by the subordinate relative clause. In the examples we are looking at here, on the other hand, it can be said that the same sort of process is at work: the semantic content expressed by the subjunctive, showing that the clause is not asserted, encourages the addressee to infer that the communication predicate is to be interpreted as introducing an imperative utterance, that is, an utterance marked as a description of a state of affairs regarded as potential and desirable.[14]

In relation to the point made by Bosque, the hearer takes it that he must appeal to contextual assumptions in order to interpret correctly the sense of marking the situation represented by a subjunctive clause as non-assertion, as otherwise, insufficient cognitive effects would be obtained: the mere fact that the situation represented by the subordinate clause is not being asserted. Instead, the hearer's expectations of relevance lead him to assume that the communication of the state of affairs described, though not asserted, must obey some reasonable motivation; namely, in order to show that it is desirable from the speaker's or the hearer's point of view (when interpreted as a command or suggestion, respectively), just as a question is interpreted as a request when the contextual assumptions involved in its interpretation imply that it would not lead to any positive effect if interpreted as an attempt to obtain information.[15]

This kind of reinterpretation of subordinating verbs is a typical instance of the interaction between procedural expressions (i.e. mood) and conceptual meaning (the subordinating verbs). As we have seen, this process of interaction is characterised by a number of particular traits, such as the fact that the processing instructions communicated by procedural expressions are carried out, even when carrying them out leads the hearer to elaborate and adjust lexical and contextual information in the interpretation process. Many authors (cf. Carston 1996) have pointed out that utterance interpretation frequently requires

hearers to adapt lexical meaning by processes of enrichment, or loosening, of conceptual representations depending on the context. The limits of the communicated concepts are inferentially adapted by restriction, loosening or other modifications; and this is the type of process that leads to a directive reading of a predicate of communication. But these processes affect conceptual semantics, not procedural content. So another general characteristic of the interaction between these two types of meaning is that the priority of including the assumptions activated by procedural content in the interpretative process, together with the plasticity of conceptual meaning, lead to phenomena such as *coercion* and, as noted above, accommodation.[16]

As mentioned earlier, however, the powerful mechanism we are claiming mood can put into action must have some sort of limitation. In the case of argument clauses, the limitation could be said to be the need for coherence; a clause marked as a non-assertion cannot be used as a complement of a verb whose lexical semantics include the concept of assertion itself, such as *afirmar* (*María ha afirmado que tengas* (SUB) *razón.*[17] *María has affirmed that you are (SUB) right). Likewise, it is not possible to interpret a clause marked as an assertion by the use of the indicative functioning as the complement of a verb that presupposes that its complement refers to a necessarily unrealised or prospective situation, and which therefore requires non-assertion in Spanish, such as *pedir* (*Pide que sales a la pizarra. *S/he asks that you come (IND) to the blackboard). In these cases, the meaning of the subordinating predicate includes an element – namely, it imposes a restriction on the types of complement it can appear with – which is simply incompatible with the instruction conveyed by the use of the indicative mood, and thus renders the string uninterpretable.

But there are, on the other hand, a number of verbs that do not encode any restriction as to whether or not their complements must be assertions, such as verbs of communication in general. The inferences that are derived from the use of these verbs with subjunctive complements lead to directive readings. This is a mechanism that has been extended to other verbs that would not normally be described as communication predicates, but can also be accommodated to a directive reading: such is the case of *mirar* in examples like *Fue a mirar que los niños estuvieran dormidos* (S/he went to see that the children were (SUB) asleep). The directive reading obtained here is taken to be the one intended by the speaker both as a result of the hearer's search for any positive cognitive effects derivable from understanding the proposition expressed by the subordinate clause as a non-assertion, and due to the fact that the lexical properties of the verb *mirar* do not include any specification that would enter into contradiction with a directive use.

The question that immediately comes to mind at this point is: why does the subjunctive lead to a directive reading, in which the subordinate clause is understood to be a command, suggestion, request, or advice, rather than an interpretation of, for example, hypothesis, possibility, or doubt, all of which could also be considered compatible with the semantics we are proposing? In fact, it seems significant that when in principle the subordinating clause should not be able to obtain a directive reading, the hearer tends to force or coerce this reading, even if it means enriching the interpretation with contextual assumptions not normally required, rather than opting for a non-directive reading. For instance, (12) would not be interpreted as meaning "The director says that the actress is perhaps blond", or "The director says that the actress might be blond", but rather, "The

director says that a blond actress is needed", once a reading such as "The director requests/demands the actress should be blond" is excluded (as the subordinate clause describes what is normally an inherent property, it is incompatible with being the object of a demand):[18]

> (12) *El director dice que la actriz sea rubia.*
> The director says that the actress is (SUB) blond
> 'The director says that the actress should be blond'.

Note that he reinterpretation of *decir* generated by the subjunctive even affects the definite NP *la actriz*, forcing a non-specific reading such as "the actress that plays in the scene, whoever she may be", as a result of the fact that an intensional context is created by inference in the interpretation process.

The reasons why a directive interpretation should be the preferred one extend far beyond the cases of *double mood selection* we have been considering. The same kind of interpretation is also produced systematically in utterances with independent uses of the subjunctive, that is, when no grammatical element is available to impose or facilitate other readings, as can be seen in examples such as:

> (13) a. *¡Maldita sea!*
> Damned it-is (SUB)
> 'Damn!'
>
> b. *!Que venga!*
> That s/he-come (SUB)
> 'Let him come!'
>
> c. *Que te mejores.*
> That you improve (SUB)
> 'Get well soon'.
>
> d. *Que te sea leve.*
> That to-you it-is (SUB) light
> 'Hope it is easy for you'.

The utterances in (13) are taken to be expressions of requests, wishes or commands, and in general are interpreted as expressing directive illocutionary force; they are used to represent situations that are understood to be desirable from the point of view of either the speaker or the hearer.[19] Data related to independent uses of the subjunctive are relevant to the point we are making because they can be said to represent the default interpretation of this mood.[20] And as we have seen, the interpretations obtained both from the subjunctive in relative clauses and from its appearance in argument clauses with verbs of communication share the general pattern of describing a situation that is desirable in terms of the fact that its realisation would lead to the achievement of some aim – or in other words, an action that is intentionally directed at achieving a particular purpose. Therefore, the readings obtained by the use of one or another mood in so-called *double selection verbs* turn out to be just one particular instance of a much more general problem, which we are unable to study in greater depth in this paper: the question of how the search for relevance leads to developing

the basic semantics of the subjunctive into a directive interpretation, in the absence of other factors of influence.[21]

If this is true, then we have at least a partial answer to another far-reaching question: How can it be explained that some of the verbs that allow the indicative in their sentential complements are also acceptable with subjunctive, while others are not? We have mentioned that the lexical semantics of the subordinating verb may either specify properties related to the assertive status of its complement, thus being incompatible with complements in one mood or another, or alternatively, be general enough to accept complements of either kind. Based on this premise, we are prepared to explain why contrasts such as the one in (14) occur:

(14)   a.   *Dice que pongas mucha sal.*
                  S/he-says that you-put (SUB) lots of salt.
        b.   **Cree que pongas mucha sal.*
                  *S/he-thinks that you-put (SUB) lots of salt.

One of the factors involved in the different behaviour of *decir* and *creer* must be the fact that the first verb (as well as the other similar ones) denotes an intentional action, whereas the second denotes a mental state. This implies that *decir* is naturally reinterpretable as a verb of influence when it is made to satisfy the requisites of the subordinate subjunctive clause, whereas *creer* is not, due to the difficulty of readjusting the lexical content of a stative verb to a directive sense (leaving aside the fact that the verbs corresponding to *creer* seem to have different properties in other Romance languages).

To sum up, our proposal for explaining the phenomena related to *double mood selection* as an effect of the procedural semantics of the subordinate mood on the conceptual semantics of the matrix verb, and therefore as a result of the pragmatic inferences generated in the construction of the explicatures of utterances, has a number of advantages with respect to alternative, purely lexical or syntactic approaches:

a. In contrast to an approach based on lexical homonymy, this solution cannot be seen as unmotivated, nor does it complicate the description of verbal lexical entries.
b. It explains data that a lexical solution cannot give an answer for: for example, the fact mentioned above that subordinate complements in different moods can be coordinated under a single verb.
c. It is compatible with what is known about the effects of procedural semantic content on interpretation, and with the requirements of compositionality.
d. It can be extended to several other problems related to the distribution of the subjunctive.

We have attempted to show that the appearance of the subjunctive in subordinate adjunct clauses in extensional contexts depends on the same mechanism, and that the notions we have appealed to (accommodation, coercion, enrichment, and loosening) are independently necessary in order to explain many phenomena that are apparently unrelated to those we have analysed here.

Naturally, we must admit that this proposal is not risk-free. The foremost danger is that of the unlimited power to condition utterance interpretation that procedural elements seem to possess. It is well known that unrestricted mechanisms should be avoided in grammatical argumentation. But in fact, we have addressed this issue and claimed that

procedural semantics are restricted: their limitation lies in the necessity to avoid producing contradictions or incoherence among the assumptions used in the interpretation process, and to avoid causing unjustified processing effort.

Other risks that ought to be minimised include the use of unrefined procedures for predicting possible readings for an utterance and the substitution of strictly grammatical notions with pragmatic ones that can be considered too vague. To avoid this, a careful examination would be needed of the particular cases in which the inferential processes described can affect lexical meaning in order to determine the available interpretations, and to what extent they affect it; this task is left for future research. As for the choice of pragmatic explanations over grammatical ones, we feel it is justified at least in some cases: for example, the idea of grammatical *selection* or *government* of mood by a predicate, which is habitually used in grammatical descriptions, should be substituted, as suggested in Bustos (1986) and Bustos and Aliaga (1996), by a simple relationship of semantic compatibility between a predicate and a subordinate mood, subject to the accommodation processes we have been discussing. This seems to be the only way that the fact that predicates that *select* the indicative should allow the subjunctive when they are negated can be explained: true government or subcategorisation phenomena are not affected by the presence of negation nor by the insertion of contextual assumptions into the interpretation process.[22]

5. Conclusions

By revising the cases where the subjunctive appears when the indicative would be expected, we have been able to show how pragmatic inference plays an important role in grammatical explanation, and simultaneously reaffirm that the procedural, and hence, solid and undeformable nature of the semantics of verbal mood is what leads to the inferences considered, whilst avoiding unacceptable results.

Our starting points were the distinction between conceptual and procedural semantics as defined within RT, the semantic content of the subjunctive as *non-assertion*, and the notions of *accommodation* and the *enrichment* and *loosening* of lexical meaning recently developed within pragmatic theory. By adopting these theoretical tools, we have been led to propose a single solution for two apparently different phenomena: that of the use of the subjunctive in relative clauses in extensional contexts, and so-called *double mood selection* in subordinate argument clauses. In both cases, we propose the following interpretive mechanism:

a. the sentential context does not seem to favour the appearance of the subjunctive, nor the interpretation of the subordinate clause as non-asserted information;

b. however, the subjunctive itself forces us to interpret this context in a sense that can satisfy the semantics it contributes, and to infer the assumptions needed to reconstruct a directive interpretation in the majority of cases (although this is not necessarily the only possibility);

c. this operation of inferential adjustment is possible to the extent that no incoherence is produced in the search for relevance in the overall interpretation; and

d. the trigger of the process is the priority given to carrying out instructions conveyed by procedural content.

The theoretical consequences of our analysis are diverse. In the first place, the relationship between procedural semantics and accommodation allows us to recognise in the use of the subjunctive mood phenomena comparable to those that have traditionally been associated with definite determiners and in general with presuppositional expressions (although this does not imply that mood should also have to be considered a presuppositional element).

In the second place, the predominant role we have attributed to procedural content facilitates seeing the processes known as *accommodation*, *coercion*, and *enrichment* (which do not necessarily depend on procedural semantics in every case) as different effects, both on context and on conceptual content, produced by a single cause.[23]

And finally, the perspective from which we have analysed the distribution of the subjunctive in Spanish turns out to be applicable to a variety of data, such as for instance the relationship between the subjunctive and negation. If we wonder about the difference in meaning between *Juan no vio que Pedro saliera* (Juan did not see that Pedro went (SUB) out) and *Juan no vio que Pedro salía* (Juan did not see that Pedro went (IND) out), an important point to take note of is that with the subjunctive *saliera,* what attracts the focus of negation (i.e. what is being denied) is the subordinate clause; whereas with the indicative, *salía*, the negation is associated with the matrix verb. The explanation for the fact that only the subjunctive should attract negation is that it is the most immediate way to satisfy the requisite that the subordinate clause should be interpreted as non-asserted information. The relationship between the subjunctive and negation should therefore be no more than a result of the kind of content introduced by mood. A global explanation of the functioning of verbal mood could, therefore, be based on the approach we have proposed, if elaborated in greater detail.

Notes

[1] We would like to thank the audience at the First Symposium of Hispanic Linguistics at the University of Surrey and the participants of the UCL Linguistics Department Pragmatics Reading Group for their valuable comments and discussion of the contents of this article. We also thank Deirdre Wilson and Mark Jary for their detailed comments and insights on a previous draft, and finally, thanks to the two anonymous reviewers for their observations. The research for this work has been funded by the Spanish Department of Education, project PB98-0707 "Gramática e interpretación en la teoría de la relevancia".

[2] I.e. pragmatic inferences derived from the conversational maxims.

[3] For convenience, the Speaker will be referred to as *she*, and the Hearer, *he*.

[4] Blakemore (1987); Wilson and Sperber (1993); Escandell and Leonetti (2000); Leonetti and Escandell (2003).

[5] For instance, a simple statement such as (a) can communicate a variety of higher level explicatures, such as (b), (c), or (d), depending on the contextual assumptions that are used in its interpretation:

a. The sun rises in the East.

b. The speaker concludes that (a).

c. The speaker suggests that (a).

d. The speaker insists that (a).

[6] See also Ahern (2001); Escandell and Leonetti (2000); Lunn (1998); Mejías-Bikandi (1994); Pérez Saldanya (1999); and Ridruejo (1999).

[7] This general definition of assertion does not cover, nonetheless, many cases of non-literal use of language, such as metaphor and irony: see Wilson and Sperber (1988).

[8] For another proposal within the relevance theoretical framework, which regards the subjunctive mood as signalling that the proposition is not relevant in its own right, see Jary (2002).

[9] *Extensional* contexts are created by predicates which induce the existential interpretation of their object NPs, disallowing nonspecific readings of the NP. They also allow the substitution of co-referring terms while preserving their truth value. In contrast, in *intensional* contexts, the object NP can receive a nonspecific interpretation, no existential presupposition is activated, and finally, the sentence does not preserve its truth value if its object is substituted with a co-referential term.

[10] "The obligatory character that the choice between one or another mood occasionally takes on can be explained by appealing to the need for contextual consistency. This 'obligation' is ultimately determined by the demand for rationality in linguistic behaviour, which is spelled out in the requisite to avoid manifesting inconsistent beliefs. On the other hand, when in certain constructions optionality remains open, it can be explained by the absence of inconsistency in the choice of one mood or another".

[11] The idea that the verb form under discussion is actually subjunctive, and not a variant of the pluperfect indicative, is not uncontroversial, although for the sake of the present discussion we shall assume that it is correct.

[12] I.e. for example in subordinate clauses that function as the arguments of factive-emotive predicates like *alegrarse de*, *lamentar*, etc.: *Lamentamos que sea tan poco económico.* (We regret that it-is (SUB) so uneconomical).

[13] "We cannot but ask ourselves, however, why verbs of communication are reinterpreted as verbs of influence, but not as verbs of any other kind. The answer may lie in a 'conversational implicature' (in the sense of Grice), probably the same one that brings us to interpret declarations as suggestions, or questions as requests (…). But although the origin of the phenomenon may be in a pragmatic principle, it must be remembered that the problem affects lexical semantics, in that it is a lexical class that is involved, with clear effects in the syntax. (…), this is, therefore, not so much a case of homonymy as a kind of polysemy that has its origin in a discourse effect".

[14] See Wilson and Sperber (1988) regarding the relationship between the semantics of imperative mood and illocutionary force.

[15] E.g. in well-known examples such as *Can you pass the salt?*

[16] See also Leonetti and Escandell (2001, 2003).

[17] As pointed out by Bustos (1986) (see quotation above).

[18] This is because one of the conditions under which an utterance with directive force is felicitous is that it should be within the hearer's power to voluntarily carry out the action described. However, since being blond can also be understood as a property that is not necessarily inherent, the reading mentioned ("The director demands the actress should be blond") may be derivable if we understand 'be blond' as equivalent to 'bleach her hair blond'.

[19] For an analysis of the relation between mood and force in relevance-theoretic terms, see Wilson and Sperber (1988).

[20] The element that induces the directive reading is the subjunctive mood itself, clearly in contrast with the indicative (cf. *¡Que viene!* S/he is coming!); this proposal, as can be observed, is not compatible with analyses that postulate the presence of an underlying illocutionary verb, as suggested by an anonymous reviewer.

[21] Rouchota (1994) studies this matter in great detail.

[22] This occurs with epistemic predicates such as *creer*, *saber*, *pensar*, (believe, know, and think, respectively) and the like.

[23] This point is developed more in-depth in Leonetti and Escandell (2001).

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