Interlanguage variability of the Spanish subjunctive

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El presente es un estudio de la variabilidad interlengual en la adquisición y en la producción del modo subjuntivo del español por parte de un grupo de jóvenes anglohablantes, quienes estudian el español como una segunda lengua en México. Se encontró que existe una enorme variabilidad en la producción del subjuntivo de estos sujetos; no obstante esta variabilidad es sistemática cuando se toman en cuenta múltiples factores lingüísticos, como son la sintaxis, la morfología, la semántica y la pragmática; y procesos universales de aprendizaje, como son la transferencia de la Ll, sobre generalización y la formación de hipótesis.

This article reports on a study of the interlanguage variability of the acquisition and use of the Spanish subjunctive mood by a group of young English-speaking adults learning Spanish as a second language in Mexico. It was found that there is considerable variability in the use of the subjunctive by these subjects; nevertheless, this variability is systematic when taking into account multiple linguistic factors, such a syntactic, morphological, semantic and pragmatic ones, and universal learning processes, such as Ll transfer, overgeneralization and hypothesis formation.

1. Introduction

This is a study of the interlanguage variability in the acquisition and use of the present subjunctive by a group of young English-speaking adults studying Spanish as a second language in Mexico. It was found that there is considerable variability in these learners' marking for present subjunctive mood, but that this variability is systematic. The analysis of this variability shows that the choices learners make to either morphologically mark or not for the present subjunctive mood is constrained by an interaction among multiple linguistic features of the target language structure, including syntax, morphology and semantics, and universal learning processes such as LI transfer, over-generalization and hypothesis formation.

2. Background

Early studies in interlanguage variability analyzed mostly phonological structures and maintained that variability was due to such external social contextual factors as setting, topic, interlocutor. The present research is the study of a structure which is complex syntactically, morphologically, semantically and pragmatically. It is maintained that second language learners, especially in the beginning stages, do not have sufficient competence in the second language to be sensitive to external social contextual factors and that it is the linguistic system itself which constrains acquisition and use, especially for complex structures like the Spanish subjunctive mood.

   The data analyzed were taken from thirty-two recorded oral interviews of sixteen adult native English speakers studying Spanish in an intensive ten-week language, culture, and arts program in Mexico. The data were analyzed utilizing a function-form framework, assumed in studies of the second language acquisition of English (Huebner 1983, 1985; Tarone 1985a, 1985b, 1989; Schachter 1986; Bardovi-Harlig 1992; and Young 1988, 1993). This framework provides a way for describing how morphological and syntactic forms interact with semantic and pragmatic features to constrain acquisition. Huebner claims that it is important to decipher in what ways semantic and discourse-pragmatic functions are encoded and to what extent these relationships are systematic (1985:155). In addition, it has been revealing to see not only when the learners do not use the target language form but to understand when and why they use the forms which they do use.

   This study draws upon work in synchronic theoretical descriptions of the Spanish subjunctive which claim that syntactic, semantic and pragmatic factors interact to constrain native speakers' use of the subjunctive (Terrell & Hooper 1974; Terrell 1976; Lavandera 1982, 1983; Lunn 1989a, 1989b; and Mejias-Bikandi 1994).

3. Hyphoteses

In the study, the following hypotheses were set up for confirmation:

HI: Young English-speaking adults use the subjunctive in the intermediate stage of language learning; this use, although limited to few linguistic environments, is systematically variable.

H2: There will be variability in the use of alternative forms used when the subjunctive is not marked.

H3: Variability is a signal that acquisition of a form is developing or is about to develop. Therefore, in these data, there will be a positive correlation between variable use of morphological verb forms in complement clauses following subjunctive-requiring syntactic frames and correct subjunctive marking.

4. Methods of data collection and analyses

In order to address these hypotheses data were elicited for analysis by means of oral interviews with the subjects (sec Appendix for Interviews used). The interviews were designed to elicit as much of the subjunctive verb form as possible. The subjects were sixteen intermediate-level northamerican university students studying Spanish at the Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro. The subjects were interviewed twice, (1) upon arrival in Mexico and (2) at the end of the program. The taped interviews were transcribed and the following methods of analysis carried out. An error analysis was done to ascertain the use and non-use of the subjunctive form. This type of analysis, discussed by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982), counts the number of occasions in which the structure under study would normally occur in native speaker speech, and compares it with the number of times the structure is actually used. The occasions analyzed were of four types: (1) verbs in complement clauses of matrix verbs of desire or hope, *querer que*, *esperar que*, etc.; oí doubt, *no creer*, *no pensar*, etc.; of comment, *alegrarse que*; and of impersonal expressions, *es posible/necesario que*, etc.; (2) verbs in adverbial clauses such as *cuando*, *antes/después de que/hasta que*, (3) verbs in noun clauses such as *lo que*, and (4) main verbs following *ojalá*. In the discussion of the results, these occasions will be referred to as 'syntactic frames'.

In order to ascertain if the occasions selected for analysis did, indeed, require or allow the subjunctive, these were presented to native Spanish speakers who judged whether the occasions selected required or allowed the present subjunctive in Spanish and whether the forms produced by the subjects were acceptable or not.

Next, the occasions were listed according to the syntactic frame. Then, for each frame the verb form which was used was tabulated. A great deal of variability of verb forms was found. In order to eliminate the possibility that this variability occurred

according to chance, a chi-square lest was performed on the data, specifically on the syntactic frames and the forms produced for each frame. The results of this test were significant: x^2 = 41.527; dfl2; and p <.001. This strongly suggests that the choice of verb forms in complement clauses is not random or due to chance, ie. there is a statistically significant amount of variability in the way these subjects choose verb forms according to syntactic frame.

Results

Introduction

The error analysis revealed that there was a total of 223 obligatory occasions in which the present subjunctive should be marked across the two interview sets. For Interview One there were 108 obligatory occasions and for Interview Two there were 115. For the first interview, subjunctive marking is very low, only 7%, and only occurs in complement clauses following the syntactic frames *cuando* and *querer que*. The syntactic frames *es posible/necesario/importante) que*, *esperar que*, *antes/después de que/para que*, *gustarse que* and *lo que/a donde* also occur but there is no subjunctive marking in their complement clauses (see Table 1 below).

Tabic 1. Subjunctive (S) and Other (O) Marking According to Syntactic Frame - Interview One.

Syntactic Frame	Number of Occasions	O-Marking	S-Marking	% (O-Marking)	% (S-Marking)
1	9	9	0	100%	0%
2	15	13	2	87%	13%
3	30	24	6	80%	20%
4	2	2	0	100%	0%
5	5	5	0	100%	0%
6	33	33	0	100%	0%
7	4	4	0	100%	0%
8	2	2	0	100%	0%
9	8	8	0	100%	0%
Total	108	100	8	92.5%	7.5%

Syntactic Frames
Type 1: es posible/necesario/lógico/etc.) que___
Type 2: cuando___
Type 3: querer que___
Type 4: no pensar que___
Type 5: recomendar que___
Type 6: esperar que___
Type 7: antes/después de/ para que___
Type 8: gustarse que___
Type 9: lo que/a donde___

In Interview Two subjunctive marking increases to 43% and now occurs for a greater range of syntactic frames, including *es posible/necesario/importante que*, *cuando*, *querer que*, *esperar que*, *alegrarse que*, cỳa/d and six assorted syntactic frames where there is only one obligatory occasion for each frame. The complement clauses following syntactic frames *no creer que* and *hasta/sin/para que* are never marked for the subjunctive (see Table 2).

Table 2. Subjunctive (S) and Other (O) Marking According to Syntactic Frame - Interview Two.

Syntactic Frame	Number of Occasions	O-Marking	S-Marking	% (O-Marking)	% (S-Marking)
1	13	10	3	77%	23%
2	24	12	12	50%	50%
3	20	6	14	30%	70%
4	9	9	0	100%	0%
5	21	13	8	62%	38%
6	8	8	0	100%	0%
7	7	4	3	57%	43%
8	7	0	7	0%	100%
9	6	3	3	50%	50%
Total	115	65	50	57%	43%

Syntactic Frames
Type 1: es posíble/necesario que___   Type 4: no creer que___   Type 7: alegrarse que___
Type 2: cuando___   Type 5: esperar que___   Type 8: ojalá (que)___
Type 3: querer que___   Type 6: hasta/sin/para/etc. que___   Type 9: Others

Variability in Verb Forms

Interview One. For Interview One there were eight different verb forms used in the nine syntactic frames. Not surprisingly, the preferred alternative form was present indicative. Other forms included: infinitive, future indicative, past preterit indicative, present participle, present indicative, but the wrong person or number used, and invented forms (ie., forms created by the subjects which don't exist in the language). Table 3 summarizes the results.

As can be seen, for complement verbs following *cuando*, there is 13% use of the subjunctive and 87% non-use of the subjunctive. The other verb forms are present indicative (27%), infinitive (20%), future indicative (27%), preterit indicative (7%) and present indicative-wrong form (WF). The use of the subjunctive is very low but

Table 3. Forms Used for Present Subjunctive by Syntactic Frame - Interview One.

Syntactic Frame	# of Occas.	Subj. Mark	Pres. Ind.	Inf.	Fut. Ind.	Pret. Ind.	Pres. Part.	Pres. Ind./WF	Invent. Form
es posible/ necesario que	9	-	7	-	2	-	-	-	-
cuando	15	2 13%	4 27%	3 20%	4 27%	1 7%	-	1 7%	-
querer que	30	6 20%	6 20%	10 33%	-	1 3%	1 3%	4 13%	2 7%
no pensar que	2	-	2 100%	-	-	-	-	-	-
recomendar que	5	-	2 40%	2 40%	-	1 20%	-	-	-
esperar que	33	-	11 33%	18 55%	~	1 3%	-	2 6%	1 **3%**
antes/después de que/para que	4	-	3 75%	1 25%	-	-	-	-	-
gustarse	2	-	-	2 100%	-	-	-	-	-
lo que/a donde	8	-	8 100%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	108	8	43	36	6	4	1	7	3
Percentage	100%	7%	40%	**33%**	6%	4%	1%	7%	3%

the fact that these learners use a variety of forms is important. The combination of some subjunctive marking and variability in the use of alternant forms is a pattern seen throughout the data. It is also significant that for complement verbs following *cuando* the preferred other form is not only the present indicative, but also the future indicative which were both chosen 27% of the time. These learners have chosen to logically mark the meaning of possible futurity of the complement clause with future indicative.

The syntactic frame *querer que* shows a similar pattern. There is some subjunctive marking, 20%, and a great deal of variability in the use of other forms: for present indicative 20%, for the infinitive 33%, preterit indicative 3%, present participle 3%, present indicative/WF 13%, and 7% for invented forms. In fact, subjunctive marking is even higher for verbs following *querer que* than for *cuando* and the number of other forms chosen is also higher, seven following *querer que* and six after *cuando*. The pre-

ferred other form chosen to mark the complement verb following the frame *querer que* is the infinitive and not the present indicative, which is chosen as often as the subjunctive (20% of the time).

The frame, *esperar que*, oddly enough, patterns like *cuando* and *querer* que in the variety of other verb forms chosen but is never marked for the subjunctive. Here, as for *querer que*, the infinitive is the preferred choice for the verb form with 55%, followed by present indicative being chosen 33% of the time, preterit indicative and invented forms appearing just 3% each and present indicative/WF chosen 6% of the time. The syntactic frame, *recomendar que*, also displays some variability in the choice of other forms; present indicative and infinitive forms were again the favored alternative forms, seen 40% of the time, with preterit indicative being used 20% of the time.

The remaining syntactic frames studied all showed either little or no variability in the choice of other verb forms in the complement clause. For *antes/despues de que/para que*, there was no marking for subjunctive but a slight amount of variability in the choice of verb forms, 25% use of the infinitive and 75% for present indicative. For the frames *es posible/necesario/logico* que, the present indicative was used 78% of the time and the future, 22% of the time. The frames, *no pensar que,* and *lo que/a donde* both showed 0% marking of the subjunctive and substituted the present indicative 100% of the time. For the frame, *gustarse que,* the infinitive was used 100% of the time in substitution for the present subjunctive.

Interview Two. In the second interview the indicative remains the preferred alternative form chosen and other verb forms include the infinitive, future indicative, paraphrastic future (*ir* + infinitive), preterit indicative and present indicative/WF. There are no longer invented forms and there are no occasions of the present participle form. A summary of the results is seen in Table 4.

Clearly, the fact that there is an increase in the number of linguistic environments is due to the subjects' increased knowledge of vocabulary. In addition to the syntactic frames, *es posible/necesario/importante que, cuando, querer que,* and *esperar que* (produced in Interview One), the following frames are also produced: *no creer que, hasta/sini/para que, alegrarse que, ojald (que), no hay nadie que, no porque, el hecho de que, lo que, no se si* and *quien sabe si*.

The pattern that was observed for the data in Interview One is not quite the same for the data in Interview Two, i.e. it is not always the case that the greater the percentage of present subjunctive marking, the greater the amount of variability in the use of other forms. In fact, for some syntactic frames, it is seen that present subjunctive marking in the complement clause greatly increases, but the amount of variability in the choice of other verb forms decreases. For the syntactic frame *cuando* subjunctive marking increases (from 13% in interview one) to 50%, while the variability of other forms decreases (from six in interview one) to four. For *querer que* subjunctive marking increases from 20% to 70% in Interview Two and

Table 4. Forms Used for Present Subjunctive by Syntactic Frame - Interview Two.

Syntactic Frame	# of Occas.	Subj. Mark	Pres. Ind.	Inf.	Fut. Ind.	Para. Fut.	Pret. Ind.	Pres. Ind./WF
es posible/ necesario que	13	3 23%	4 31%	1 8%	2 15%	-	-	3 23%
cuando	24	12 50%	4 17%	-	5 21%	-	-	3 12%
querer que	20	14 70%	4 20%	-	-	-	1 5%	1 5%
no creer que	9	-	9 100%	-	-	-	-	-
esperar que	21	8 38%	5 24%	2 10%	3 14%	3 14%	-	-
hasta/sin/ para que	8	-	8 100%	-	-	-	-	-
alegrarse que	7	3 43%	3 43%	1 14%	-	-	-	-
ojalá	7	7	- 100%	-	-	-	-	-
other	6	3 50%	3 50%	-	-	-	-	-
Total	115	50	40	4	10	3	1	7
Percentage	100%	43%	35%	3%	9%	3%	1%	6%

the number of other verb forms decreases from seven in Interview One to only four in Interview Two.

The other syntactic frames, however, do present a similar pattern for use as seen in Interview One. Whereas in Interview One for the syntactic frame *es posible/necesario que* there is no subjunctive marking and the variety of forms is low (only two), in Interview Two there is now some subjunctive marking (three out of thirteen or 23%) and more variability in the choice of other forms, i.e. five. The other forms include 31% for present indicative, 8% infinitive, 15% future indicative and 23% present indicative/WF. Present indicative continues to be the preferred alternative form used for this syntactic frame.

Esperar que patterns in a similar way. Whereas in Interview One there is no subjunctive marking, in Interview Two the subjunctive is marked 38% of the time. The

number of the variety of forms remains the same at five. However, the preferred alternative form used is no longer the infinitive as in Interview One, but is now the present indicative which is used 24%, followed by future and paraphrastic indicative future, both used 14% each, and 10% for infinitive.

The use and percentage of forms used with the remaining syntactic frames cannot be compared with those from Interview One because they are not comparable. However, a similar pattern of use is seen overall. Where there is no subjunctive marking, as in *no creer que* and *hasta/sin/para que*, there is also no variability in the use of other verb forms. For the syntactic frames *alegrarse que* and "Others", there is some subjunctive marking and some variability.

For the syntactic frame, *ojalá,* subjunctive marking is 100% and there is no variability. *Ojalá*, however, is a different case from the other linguistic environments examined. *Ojalá*, shares certain features in common with the syntactic frame *querer que*. Both of these invariably require the subjunctive in their complements —there is no choice according to speaker attitude or context— and both share the semantic features of futurity and desire. These two linguistic environments both produce a high percentage of subjunctive-marking in Interview Two. The fact that there is still some variability in the choice of verb forms in complements following *querer que* could be due to the fact that *querer que* occurs in complex sentences; *ojalá* appears in independent clauses. In addition, *querer* may be followed by an infinitive when there is no *que* and the subject of *querer* and the complement is the same.

Discussion

Hypothesis One is confirmed by the results; the young English-speaking adults in this study do use the present subjunctive in the intermediate state of acquisition. This use is limited to specific linguistic environments but is systematically variable. In addition, the results support Hypothesis Two; there is a great amount of variability in the use of alternative forms when the subjunctive is not marked. Finally, it was seen that the results of the data analyzed from Interview One support Hypothesis Three, but the data in Interview Two only partially support this hypothesis.

In Interview One the subjects use the subjunctive only 7% of the time, but in Interview Two this increases to 43%. Although this percentage is still not high enough to be able to state that the subjects have "acquired" the subjunctive, it is seen that the very limited use seen in Interview One has spread to more linguistic environments. Although these subjects continue to evidence a great deal of variability in their choice of verb forms in the complement clauses, the number of verb forms apparently available to them has diminished slightly. The preferred alternative verb form continues to be the present indicative; however, the use of the infinitive (no marking for mood, tense, person or number) has greatly diminished. Use of the future indicative has

increased to 12% of the time. This may be due to the fact that when these verb forms appear, they mark complement verbs following syntactic frames whose meaning conveys possible futurity. Finally, the invented forms, although limited in the data from Interview One (only 3% of the time), have disappeared as an alternative verb form in the subjunctive data in Interview Two. From this, in addition to increased subjunctive marking, it can be seen that the subjects are stabilizing the verb morphology for the present subjunctive.

In the first set of interviews it was seen that the use of the subjunctive, however limited, was also accompanied by a considerable amount of variability in the choices of other verb forms. Then, in the data from the second interview, for thè syntactic frames in which subjunctive marking was the greatest, 50% for cuando and 70% for *querer què*, variability decreased. What appears to be occurring is that when learners are developing competence in a structure and in its use and form, this developing competence is accompanied by a great deal of variability. As the learner becomes more competent in the structure, this variability decreases. The learner refines and limits the choices available.

In the case of *esperar que*, in Interview One, this frame exhibited a considerable amount of variability in the choice of other verb forms, but there was not one instance of subjunctive-marking. It appears that these learners are developing competence in subjunctive marking for this frame. Indeed, in Interview Two, these learners mark the complement verb in the subjunctive 38% of the time for this syntactic frame. For other syntactic frames where there is no subjunctive marking, *no creer que* and *hasta/sin/ para que* neither is there variability.

It appears that the acquisition of the Spanish subjunctive mood is accompanied by a considerable amount variability in the choice of verb forms in the complement clauses. In fact, it may be that this variability or this "trying on" of forms is a necessary learning process in order for competence in this complex structure to develop.

Another interesting phenomenon that is exhibited in the data is the change in sentence patterns from the first interview situation to the second. Whereas in the first interview there was a great deal of evidence of negative transfer from the LI in the sentence patterns and a high percentage of the infinitive being used in complement clauses, in the second interview, the sentence patterns more closely resemble Spanish. Also, there are more sentences produced by the learners containing overt syntactic frames. This may help explain why in the first set of interviews there was such a low incidence of present subjunctive marking. It is difficult for learners to focus on the morphology of the verb when they are still acquiring the sentence patterns of the L2.

The differences that are observed from the data and the analyses carried out on the data from the two interview situations clearly show a shift in language learning strategies from LI morphological and syntactic transfer in Interview One to a construction process that uses multiple linguistic features or levels to construct and use the L2 in interview two.

Conclusion

In the data it was seen that there are occasions when these learners transfer the LI sentence structure almost word-for-word. At other times, they construct the L2 sentence structure but insert LI morphology. At others, they use the L2 sentence structure and use some other verb morphology which reflects neither the LI nor the L2. On some occasions, this morphology reflects a semantic notion that the sentence expresses, as in the choice of the future indicative for a possible future action. In other instances, the morphology appears 'subjunctive-like' as in the choice of the third person singular for first person singular. Finally, when acquisition is taking place, these learners construct sentences with both L2 sentence structure and morphology. The final stage of acquisition would be the interaction of L2 syntax, morphology, semantics and pragmatics.

The analysis of the use of the present Spanish subjunctive by these learners suggests that perhaps in order for acquistion to take place, especially for syntactically and semantically complex structures such as the subjunctive, variability in the use of other verb forms is a necessary precondition. Onset of acquisition of a form is accompanied by variability as the learner tries out new forms. As acquisition develops and stabilizes, variability decreases.

This variability reveals that learners use different strategies in order to communicate in and process different levels of the L2. At all times and at all stages there is evidence of interaction of the learner's knowledge of the syntactic, morphological and semantic features of the target language and of his/her accessing of universal learning strategies such as LI transfer, overgeneralization and hypothesis formation.

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Appendix

Interview One (Conducted five days after arrival):

A. Opening:

> 1. Hola, ¿qué tal? (¿Cómo estás?)
> 2. ¿Cómo te llamas?
> 3. ¿De dónde eres?
> 4. ¿En dónde estudias? ¿Qué carrera estudias? (¿Qué estudias?)
> 5. ¿Te gusta México? ¿Qué te parece Querétaro? (¿Te gusta Querétaro?)
> 6. ¿Cómo fue el viaje? ¿Cómo llegaste? ¿en avión? ¿en tren? ¿o cómo?

B. Development:

> 7. ¿Si no estuvieras aquí en Querétaro, ¿en dónde estarías ahora? (Qué haces normalmente en estos meses de abril, mayo, y junio?)
> 8. Cuando regreses a los Estados Unidos, ¿qué harás? (¿Qué vas a hacer cuando regreses a los Estados Unidos?)
> 9. ¿Habías estudiado español antes? (¿Has estudiado español antes?)
> 10. ¿Cómo están las clases? ¿Te gustan hasta ahora?
> 11. En este programa, ¿qué quieres que tus maestros hagan por ti? ¿Qué quieres que te enseñen?
> 12. ¿Qué esperas que te pidan de ti?
> 13. ¿Qué piensas hacer cuando termines tu carrera? (tus estudios)
> 14. ¿Y tus padres? ¿Quieren que sigas estudiando, o quieren que trabajes? ¿Qué quieren que tu hagas?
> 15. ¿Y la familia con quien vives? ¿Como te parece? ¿Qué esperas de ellos?
> 16. Si yo fuera a ir a los E.U. para las vacaciones, ¿qué me recomendarías ver? ¿A dónde me recomendarías ir?

C. Closing:

> 17.   ¡Ah! Debes visitar_____ , es muy bonito. ¿Te gusta la comida mexicana? En_____ sirven_____ muy ricas etc.

Interview Two (Conducted three months after arrival at the end of the language program):

A. Opening:

1. Hola, ¿Qué tal? ¿Cómo te ha ido?
2. ¿Cómo te llamas? (Si la entrevistadora no conoce al entrevistado)
3. Ya, están terminando el programa. ¿Cómo te sientes? ¿Cómo te fue?
4. Explícame algo sobre tu experiencia aquí. ¿Qué has hecho? ¿Qué has visto? ¿Qué has aprendido? etc.
5. ¿Cómo ha sido la experiencia de vivir con una familia mexicana?

B. Development:

6. ¿Qué deseas de ellos? ¿Deseas que te sigan comunicando, o deseas que vayan a visitarte? ¿Qué deseas de ellos?
7. A ver, cuéntame, ¿ha pasado todo que habías esperado? ¿Realizaste todo que querías realizar aquí?
8. ¿Cumplieron tus maestros? ¿Hicieron lo que tu querías? ¿Qué mas esperabas de ellos?
9. Cuando regreses a los E.U., ¿qué harás?
10. Si tuvieras la oportunidad de hacer otra cosa, ¿qué harías?
11. Si no hubieras venido a México en esta temporada, ¿qué habrías hecho?
12. ¿Qué esperas que pase en el futuro con tu vida? ¿Qué quieren tus papás que pase con tu futuro?

C. Closing:

13. ¿Extrañas a tu familia? ¿a los E.U.?
14. ¿Ya estas listo(a) para regresar? Que tengas un buen viaje, etc.