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The Subjunctive Selecting Habits of Spaniards and Spanish Language Learners in Jaén, Spain

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The University of Southern Mississippi

The Subjunctive Selecting Habits of Spaniards and
Spanish Language Learners in Jaén, Spain

by

Ashleigh Marie Ladner

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Abstract

Because the Spanish subjunctive mood is so variable and does not adhere to a straightforward set of rules, research about its everyday uses by native speakers is very useful and enlightening for learners of the Spanish language. This particular study focuses on several matrices that have exhibited variation in other studies on the topic such as *no pensar que*, *no creer que*, *dudar que*, *no dudar que*, *creer en la posibilidad de que*, *alegrarse de que*, and *dar pena de que*. This study found that the second language learners (SLLs) demonstrated more variability regarding subjunctive/indicative mood selection than the native speakers and differed with the native speakers mainly regarding the matrices *no dudar que*, *dudar que*, *es seguro que*, and *alegrarse de que*. Furthermore, no particular characteristic, gender, age, nationality, L1, length of time spent in Spain, length of time studying Spanish, nor interaction with native speakers proved to cause a closer approximation to the mood selection of the native speakers. Even so, this thesis explores the daily uses of the subjunctive/indicative moods in Spanish by native speakers, and offers a clearer understanding of the SLL mood selecting process and justifications, shedding light on the uncertainty of the subjunctive mood in Spanish.

Key words: subjunctive, indicative, mood selection, matrix, second language learner (SLL), native speaker, L1

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1. Introduction

The Spanish subjunctive is one of the most difficult structures for second language learners to master since the conditions of its usage cannot be bound by a series of clear-cut rules. Even for native speakers, research has indicated that it still proves to be a quite complicated and variable linguistic structure. Although this past research (Blake, 1983, 1985; Gonzalez, 1970; Studerus, 1995) has examined the differences of subjunctive and indicative selection in subordinate clauses between a variety of participant groups, this study focuses on the mood selection of native Spaniards as well as Spanish language learners (SLLs) in the province of Jaén, Spain to order to determine and compare their use of the subjunctive mood. It is important to note that this study is not designed to measure neither the participants' linguistic competence nor the correctness of their subjunctive/indicative usage, but rather to inquire how and when it is utilized by native speakers and second language learners (SLLs). The results of this study allow for a better understanding of the implementation of the highly variable subjunctive mood in Spanish. Research on the subjunctive is quite relevant to the foreign language classroom because the subjunctive is one of the more complex aspects of Spanish grammar that takes a significant time for especially English-speaking students to master (Gudmestad 2006). A more thorough understanding of the subjunctive is especially beneficial for English-speaking learners because "the subjunctive is not highly productive in English, and so students have almost no L1 [language 1] models with which to formulate hypotheses about its use in Spanish" (Collentine, 1995). This study will contribute to the already existing knowledge of the subjunctive to help Spanish teachers explain this complicated

verbal mood in Spanish to their students by exploring its current usage in Spain (Blake, 1985).

2. Literature Review

Before analyzing the use of the subjunctive, it is important to review the conditions of its usage as well as the research that has been completed on this subject concerning both native speakers and language learners.

2.1 Indicative versus subjunctive

Concerning the grammatical structure of the Spanish language, there are two options to consider when using verbs: tense and mood. “Verb tenses tell when something happens” and whether the event occurred in the present, past, or future. On the other hand, “Moods tell how true” an action is and express the certainty or uncertainty of an event (Morano, 2007, p. 25). There are only two moods in the Spanish verbal system: the indicative and the subjunctive. Woodford and Schmitt (2008) explain that the indicative mood describes real, concrete situations that are occurring, have occurred, or will occur in the future, and that involve a high degree of certainty and affirmation. However, the subjunctive expresses situations that involve a great deal of uncertainty as well as situations that are hoped for or wanted. The subjunctive is also used to express doubt, uncertainty in the future, commands, emotions, the reasoning behind events, nonexistence, etc. (Jehle, 2007). This mood is an essential and quite frequent mood used in Spanish which is needed “to finish a question, or an answer, or a thought you couldn’t have had without it” (Morano, 2007, p. 25). Furthermore, the subjunctive mood is found primarily in the dependent clause of a sentence, although the indicative mood can be used in a dependent clause as well. The selection of the subjunctive frequently depends on the idea expressed in the main clause by certain verbs, phrases, etc., often

called matrices (Jehle, 2007). The subjunctive mood “depende de otro verbo que expresa algún matiz de irrealidad” (Gili Gaya, 1972, p. 132). In other words, the indicative is used when main clauses deal with facts and known circumstances, whereas main clauses that imply the unknown trigger the subjunctive (Lipski, 1978).

Spanish textbooks provide a seemingly clear-cut set of rules for the subjunctive; however, because the selection of the subjunctive is highly influenced by circumstances such as the speaker’s emotions, point of view, and certainty, restraining the subjunctive mood to a simple set of rules proves to be an almost impossible task. This also accounts for why subjunctive selection by native speakers is so unpredictable (Lipski, 1978). For example, in the sentence “Carlos no cree que José ganara el concurso” (“Carlos does not think that José won the contest”), only Carlos’ doubt is expressed, so the subjunctive is used. However, in the sentence, which has the same overall meaning as the first but this time using the preterite indicative instead of the imperfect subjunctive, “Carlos no cree que José ganó el concurso”, although Carlos doubts it, José did in fact win (Lipski, 1978, p. 931). This shows how the independent clause *no creer que*, although most of the time implies doubt, can be used with either the indicative or the subjunctive depending on the context of the situation, which defies this seemingly clear-cut set of rules provided in Spanish textbooks. In this way, “The student is then led through the tortuous labyrinth of possibilities demanding the use of the subjunctive forms, with the necessary caveat that reality is as perceived by the speaker, and must not necessarily conform to externally verifiable information” (Lipski, 1978, p. 931).

2.2 Varying subjunctive selection among Spanish native speakers

Due to the fact that the subjunctive can be so subjective and inconsistent, a considerable number of studies have aimed to compare subjunctive selection habits of two different participant groups based on differing characteristics such as location and age (Blake, 1983, 1985; Gonzalez, 1970; Studerus, 1995), regarding differences in location (Studerus, 1995; Blake, 1982), and varying factors between students such as their level in Spanish as well as their study abroad experience (Gudmestad, 2006; Gili Gaya, 1972; Isabelli & Nishida, 2005). In his study, Studerus (1995) explored the “pattern of rule variability” found outside of subjunctive rules of the foreign language classroom based on “habituality, general truths and shared knowledge as well as mood use in certain linguistic contexts entailing quasi-dubitatives and dubitatives with double embedding” (95). The study involved 83 Mexican participants and 56 Mexican-American sister-city counterparts, its main focus being on matrices of doubt such as *probablemente* and *tal vez*.

Similarly, in a study conducted by Blake (1982), questionnaires were administered to 56 university students ranging from 18 to 20 years of age at the Politécnico de San Luis Potosi, Mexico as well as to 26 middle class Spaniards of varied backgrounds and ages to determine the differences between their subjunctive mood selection. The study led to the conclusion that the matrices *dudar*, *ser triste*, *ser seguro*, *ser obvio* do not show consistent choices by the participants whereas *es posible*, *no es posible*, *es imposible*, *tener miedo*, *no tener miedo*, *no gustar* do (Blake, 1982). These findings are interesting because they compare the subjunctive selection of two participant groups both composed of native speakers but in differing geographical locations (Mexico

and Spain), showing that regional dialects may also be a factor in causing variability in Spanish mood selection (Blake, 1982). Nonetheless, the lack of similarity in the population of the Spanish participants could jeopardize the validity of the study's results due to the possibility of significant variations in age, educational background, and region of the participants, and could account for skewed results.

Variation in age also seems to influence subjunctive selection. Gili Gaya (1972) found that Spanish-speaking children do not master verbal mood selection until adolescence, and in the process employ various strategies for selecting the subjunctive (for example, lexical cues), which shows that this mood takes time to acquire and fully grasp, even for native speakers. In a similar study, Blake (1985) administered an oral sentence completion exam to 134 upper middle class Mexico City children ranging in ages from 4-12 as well as to 39 university students from La Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México ranging from 18 to 20 years of age, which compared their subjunctive and indicative selection. They completed sentences with a variety of typical independent clauses that either trigger the subjunctive or indicative. The study yielded some surprising results: the adults selected the subjunctive to be used in dependent clauses where it would not have been expected at all. For example, 10 percent of adults used the subjunctive with *está claro que*, 31 percent with *es obvio que*, a surprising 62 percent with *es seguro que*, and 36 percent with *creer que*, all expressions that imply certainty (p. 176). These results are so surprising because the subjunctive is theoretically caused by matrices of doubt, whereas these expressions imply certainty; therefore, in theory the subjunctive should not be used, but the fact that this mood was not implemented by a significant amount of native speakers anyway is quite curious.

Similarly, in the same survey, 78 percent of adults used the subjunctive with *no creo que*, 33 percent with *no dudo que*, and 60 percent with *se alegra de que* (p. 167). These outcomes are also in disagreement with the theoretical conditions of the subjunctive mood, as 22 percent did not use the subjunctive with *no creo que*, which implies doubt, 67 percent did not use it with *no dudo que*, which mostly implies certainty, and 40 percent did not use it with *se alegra de que*, which expresses emotion. This study additionally suggested that children did not come close to adult levels until around age ten, showing that the subjunctive mood takes time for even native speakers to master (Blake, 1985). In this study, *pensar que* and *no pensar que* have been implemented in the text in lieu of *creer que* and *no creer que* as in Blake's study. Also, instead of *es triste* used in Blake's study (after which only 4 percent of Spaniards used the subjunctive), in this questionnaire the researcher will use an equivalent, *me da pena de que*, which is more commonly used in Spain.

2.3 Varying subjunctive selection among Spanish language learners

Just as there are variations between Spanish subjunctive mood selection for native Spanish speakers, variability exists between second language learners (SLLs) as well. In the same way that children approximate adult level selection of the subjunctive gradually, (Blake 1985. Gili Gaya, 1972), SLLs seem to undergo a similar gradual learning process: the more experience they have with the Spanish language, the higher their mastery of the subjunctive (Gudmestad, 2006). This Gudmestad's study (2006) sought to determine the success of English speaking adult learners at the intermediate and advanced level in selecting the subjunctive in a written task. The researcher also sought to determine why

they did or did not choose the subjunctive based on matrices such as expressions of uncertainty involving the future, expressions of desire, and expressions of emotion. Native English-speaking students in both an intermediate and an advanced class first completed a background questionnaire, a proficiency test, and then the actual questionnaire. It was found that not only did the advanced Spanish students select the subjunctive more often than the intermediate students (77.8 percent versus 59.4 percent respectively), but the advanced students also scored significantly higher on the test on average than the intermediate students, a 10.15 and 6.25 out of 11 possible points. Moreover, only the presence of irregular subjunctive verbs triggered the usage of the subjunctive in intermediate learners, while the presence of irregular subjunctive verbs (expressions of futurity and expressions of desire, and the absence of expressions of emotion) played a role in choosing the subjunctive for the advanced learners. According to Gudmestad (2006), “As L2 learners progress from an intermediate language course to a fourth year content course, their ability to select the subjunctive in possible subjunctive contexts improves.” Gudmestad’s study is significant because it shows that matrices predicting subjunctive mood selection in a written preference task differed between intermediate and advanced level L2 learners of Spanish, showing that there is variation in Spanish verbal mood selection among SLLs based on their experience and knowledge of the language.

In another study encompassing the subjunctive usage of SLLs, Terrell, Baycroft and Perrone (1987) explored the subjunctive selection of students completing a yearlong Spanish course at the university level. They implemented Krashen's (1982) Monitor Model: five hypotheses concerning a “natural approach” to language acquisition. The

students learned the subjunctive through a “cognitive approach”, where they completed guided drills and practices as well as guided conversation for practice. It was found that the students showed a 92 percent mastery of the subjunctive. However, the students did not perform as well producing the subjunctive orally, with only a 12.3 percent accuracy, and were not producing the necessary subordinate clauses needed to trigger the subjunctive. Therefore, this led to the conclusion that their subjects had only learned the subjunctive, but did not *acquire* it (Terrell et al., 1987, p. 22-48).

Research has also been conducted on how study abroad affects subjunctive and indicative selection by SLLs. Isabelli & Nishida (2005) conducted a study comparing the subjunctive selection of students studying abroad in Granada, Spain to those who remained at their home university in the United States. They found that the study abroad experience does actually improve the acquisition of the subjunctive, more so during the first four months than the period between the fourth month to the ninth month abroad (Isabelli & Nishida, 2005). Although the study demonstrated that students did improve their usage of the subjunctive, the 38 percent proficiency during the fourth month of the study compared to the 49 percent proficiency during the ninth month seems to point out that, “Studying abroad might not guarantee learners to know how to select the correct mood in subordinate clauses in the whole nine-month period” (Isabelli & Nishida, 2005).

Although research has been done to compare subjunctive/indicative selection of intermediate vs. advanced native English speaking students (Gudmestad, 2006; Gili Gaya, 1972), SLLs who remain in their home country versus SLLs who study abroad (Isabelli & Nishida, 2005), subjunctive usage of first year university students (Terrell, et al., 1987), native Spanish speakers of varying locations and backgrounds (Studerus,

1995; Blake, 1992), and native Spanish speakers of varying ages (Blake, 1985; Gonzalez, 1970), this study contributes to the field by researching the differences of Spanish verbal mood selection by native Spanish speakers in Jaén, Spain compared to the verbal mood selection of SLLs studying in the same region.

3. Research Methodology

Because the subjunctive mood cannot be constrained to a distinct, clear-cut set of rules, research has aimed to pinpoint the reason behind this variability. Additionally, because variability does in fact exist between both native speakers on subjunctive mood selection (Studerus, 1995; Blake, 1993; Blake, 1985; Gonzalez, 1970) as well as SLLs (Gudmestad, 2006; Gili Gaya, 1972; Isabelli & Nishida, 2005; Terrell, Baycroft and Perrone, 1987), the variability between the subjunctive/indicative selection by native speakers and language learners has yielded interesting results, especially concerning the participants' reasoning behind their selection. With even native speaking children not mastering the subjunctive until a later age, it is not surprising that this may be the case for Spanish language learners as well, since they have not been exposed to the language all their lives. Research on the subjunctive mood selection of native Spanish speakers compared to SLLs is extremely lacking, and this study would contribute to this area of research.

3.1 Research questions

The central focus of this study is to explore the differences in subjunctive mood selection of Spaniards native to Jaén, Spain, compared to that of exchange students who are still learning the Spanish language and who have journeyed to Spain to improve their language skills. For this purpose the researcher has developed the following research questions:

1. What are the subjunctive selection habits of native speaking Spaniards compared to those of SLLs in Jaén, Spain?

2. What variability exists between the indicative and subjunctive selection of the native speaker population and the SLL population?
3. Within the exchange student population, what characteristics (L1, depth and length of study of Spanish, time spent in Jaén) play a role in more native speaker-level subjunctive selection?
4. Do the native speaker's responses reflect the justifications provided by the SLLs?

Research question one enables the researcher to determine in which situations Spaniards from Jaén, Spain, are more or less likely to use the subjunctive, therefore providing an idea of their subjunctive usage on a day-to-day basis, a selection that occurs naturally for them. This is compared to the Spanish language learners, whose subjunctive usage is less natural, but rather relies heavily on their instruction of Spanish as a second language.

Research question two involves the researcher determining variability within the native Speaker population as well as the Spanish language learner population as well as the two populations compared to one another. Considering the information given on the background questionnaires, the researcher makes connections with the responses provided on the subjunctive selection questionnaire. Factors that could contribute to variations in subjunctive selection that are included in the background questionnaire include age, gender, experience with the Spanish language, experience with other languages, place of origin, educational background, and socioeconomic level.

Research question three allows the researcher to find out if the subjunctive selection of the SLLs will vary due to characteristics like L1 (for example, the French language involves the use of the subjunctive significantly more than English, where the subjunctive

is hardly ever used at all) as well as, of course, their experience with the Spanish language. Additionally, the researcher compared the influence of the native language in the selection of the subjunctive to uncover if native English speakers are at a disadvantage due to their weak foundation in English from which they cannot compare the usage of the subjunctive to Spanish (Collentine, 1995). The researcher analyzed the connections between the background questionnaire completed by the nonnative speakers and their selection of the subjunctive or indicative to determine which factors contribute to their selection.

Research question four seeks to determine the justification behind the subjunctive and indicative selection of both participant groups. The researcher does not only seek to investigate *how* the selection differs, but *why*. In other words, pinpointing the reasoning behind participants using the indicative or the subjunctive based on their responses to the questions in the questionnaire would provide a better understanding of both participant groups' usage of these two verbal moods. The researcher originally planned to solicit justifications from both the native speaker group and the SLL group; however, because native speakers only acquired the subjunctive mood naturally as opposed to explicitly learning the mechanics of the subjunctive mood like SLLs, the researcher wanted to ensure that native speakers would not shy away from completing the questionnaire due to not being able to identify why they used or did not use the subjunctive. Therefore, only the SLL participant group was instructed to provide justifications.

3.2 Research design

For both groups of participants, the background questionnaire (Appendices A and B) asks for age, gender, place of birth, actual place of residence, amount of time residing in Jaén, previous places of residence, experience with languages other than Spanish, educational background, occupation, and occupation of parents. For the nonnative speaking exchange students, the questionnaire (Appendix B) asks about the participant's age, gender, country of origin, native language, amount of time studying Spanish, amount of time studying in Spain, frequency of contact with native Spanish speakers, educational background, occupation, and occupation of parents.

The actual subjunctive/indicative questionnaire (Appendix C) elicits subjunctive or indicative selection and implements matrices from previous research that have yielded the most atypical variability of results. The questionnaire only includes expressions from previous studies, not the same sentences. The structure of the questionnaire is a story, developed by the researcher, which involves nine blanks in which the participants were asked to conjugate the verb in whichever form of the verb they deemed most adequate, so as to not reveal that the researcher specifically is aiming to analyze their subjunctive versus indicative mood selection. While the SLL participants were instructed to provide the justification for their responses after conjugating the verbs in the text, the native speaker participant group was simply asked to conjugate the verbs.

Taking into consideration the surprising results generated by Blake's 1982 study concerning the following subjunctive triggers, the questionnaire will focus on these aspects of the subjunctive: doubt (*dudar, no dudar, pensar que, and no pensar que*), truth

statements (*es seguro que, es obvio que*), and emotion (*dar pena de que [es triste], and alegrarse de que*).

3.3 Participant selection

A questionnaire was given to 34 students of the University of Jaén in the province of Jaén, Spain. All participants are native speakers of the Spanish language, originally from Jaén province, and between the ages of 18 and 30. Considering a similar study by Collentine in 1995 in which 17 participants composed one group and 20 participants composed the other, the researcher recruited even more native speaker participants (N=34) similar to Blake's 1982 study in which 59 Mexicans and 26 Spaniards were surveyed. Also approximating the number of participants as these similar studies, the survey was given to 33 exchange students studying at the University of Jaén who are nonnative speakers of Spanish and who come from a wide variety of countries and backgrounds ranging in age from 18-30. The researcher encouraged several classmates and acquaintances to complete the questionnaires, but the questionnaires were also shared by means of social media and taken by a variety of participants. Participation in the study was completely voluntary.

3.4 Data collection

The questionnaires were completed online by the participants using the program, Qualtrics, between February and March of 2014. Additionally, several SLL participants completed the questionnaire in person at the University of Jaén in Jaén, Spain in June of 2013. Although a slight time gap exists between the completion of the questionnaire of

several participants, regarding the evolution of a language's syntax, this is certainly not a significant period of time. Additionally, before completing the subjunctive versus indicative selection questionnaire, the participants were asked to read and acknowledge their agreement to a consent form as required by the IRB (Appendix D).

3.5 Data analysis

The first research question, “What are the subjunctive selection habits of native speaking Spaniards compared to those of SLLs in Jaén, Spain?”, has been addressed by the responses provided by the participants in the questionnaire, analyzing which participants use the indicative or the subjunctive for each of the nine matrices. The fact that several participants conjugated verbs in a variety of tenses is not relevant to the research questions of this study; the only aspect of their answers that has been analyzed is whether the subjunctive or the indicative was utilized. Responses with irrelevant answers such as past participles of verbs have been placed in a separate category. For each of the two groups, figures of participants who selected the indicative as well as figures of those participants who selected the subjunctive for each of the 9 matrices were determined. Comparing and analyzing these participant groups' responses has yielded the answers for the second research question, which seeks to discover the variability that might exist between the indicative and subjunctive selection of the native speaker population and the SLL population. Several of the nine matrices caused a significant variability between the native Spanish speakers and SLLs studying in Jaén, manifested in various figures and graphs. The justification given by the SLL participants behind their subjunctive usage sheds light as to why inconsistencies emerged among participants.

Regarding the third research question, which inquires which characteristics (L1, depth and length of study of Spanish, time spent in Jaén) play a role in more native speaker-level subjunctive selection within the exchange student population, the responses given on the background questionnaire were analyzed to determine connections or patterns in the subjunctive selection of the Spanish language learners and the factors that have an impact on them. For example, factors such as the participant's knowledge of Spanish as well as additional studied languages, especially those with a prominence of the subjunctive mood, education, length of time studying in Spain, and socioeconomic level. As for the native Spanish speakers, factors that have produced variation include socioeconomic level, length of time residing in Jaén, and lastly residence in other countries or provinces of Spain. Further discussion is included with the study results.

Lastly, research question four, whether the native speaker's responses reflect the justifications provided by the SLLs, was addressed by analyzing the justifications that SLL participants provide in the section after they complete the text. Having them explain in their own words why they conjugated the verb in the subjunctive or indicative reflects their understanding and usage of these verbal moods and has shed much light on their reasoning behind the implementation of the subjunctive mood.

3.6 Limitations of the study

Limitations of this study include the lack of Spanish native speaker justifications for implementing the subjunctive mood. Future studies could focus on this to illuminate the thought process of native speakers behind the use of the subjunctive, not just SLLs as included in this study. An additional limitation is the lack of participants; comparable

numbers to other similar studies were achieved, but even more participants would have generated even more reliable findings.

4. Results and discussion

In this chapter, matrices causing both the indicative and the subjunctive are organized into four sections. The first section focuses on matrices of denial: *no pensar que* and *no creer que*, the second involves matrices of doubt and certainty: *dudar que* and *no dudar que*, the third encompasses matrices of certainty and possibility: *es (bastante) obvio que*, *es seguro que*, and *creer en la posibilidad de que*, and the last focuses on matrices of emotion: *dar pena de que* and *alegrarse de que*. The subjunctive/indicative selection of the native speakers as well as the SLLs is addressed, at first, on an individual basis, and is then compared to one another. Lastly, the SLL responses and justifications are analyzed according to the responses provided by the native speakers in order to determine which characteristics prove to be most influential in the mood approximation of SLLs to the native speaker participants.

4.1 Research Questions 1 & 2: Subjunctive Selection Habits and Variability of Spanish Native Speakers and SLLs

In response to the first research question, the subjunctive/indicative mood selection of native speakers as well as SLLs was interpreted and has yielded some interesting results, especially in comparison to one another, which addresses the second research question. To begin, the matrix *no pensar que* (to not think that) presented no variation whatsoever among the native speaker participant group; all 34 native speakers implemented the subjunctive mood. Almost the same response was observed with the matrix *no creo que*, a matrix with essentially the same meaning: “to not think that”, with 30 of the 34 native speakers selecting the subjunctive. However, the SLL response was

not so straightforward, with only 21 of the 32 participants selecting the indicative after both *no pensar que* and *no creer que*, suggesting that the participants approached these two matrices with the same thought process of either requiring the subjunctive or the indicative. In Blake's 1985 study, 22 percent of Mexican university students did not use the subjunctive with *no creer que* even though the subjunctive mood theoretically should be used because doubt is implied; on the other hand, in this study, the variation originated from the SLL participant group as opposed to the native speaker group. All in all, this demonstrates a higher conviction of doubt among the native speakers than the Spanish language learners for the expressions *no pensar que* and *no creer que*.

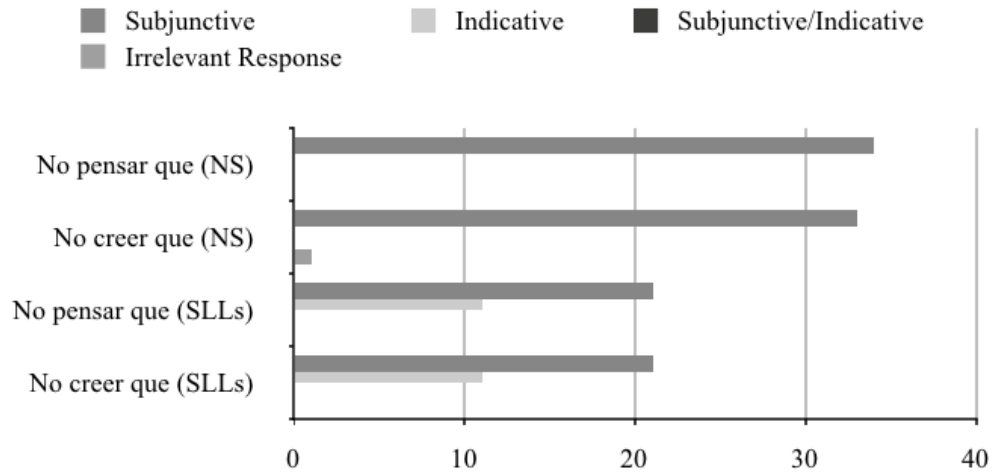
Figure 1.1 Mood Selection of Native Spanish Speakers (Matrices of Denial)

Matrix	Subjunctive	Indicative	Subjunctive/Indicative	Irrelevant Response
No pensar que	34	0	0	0
No creer que	33	0	0	1

Figure 1.2 Mood Selection of Spanish Language Learners (Matrices of Denial)

Matrix	Subjunctive	Indicative	Subjunctive/Indicative	Irrelevant Response
No pensar que	21	11	0	0
No creer que	21	11	0	0

Figure 1.3 Mood Selection of Both Native Speakers and SLLs (Matrices of Denial)



Additionally, the matrix, *no dudar que* (to not doubt that), in particular is of interest due to the degree of variability of the participants' responses. Whereas 30 of the 34 native speaker participants implemented the subjunctive, only 12 of the 32 SLL participants did. This matrix alone saw a difference of 50 percent in the selection of the native speakers and SLLs, by far the most substantial gap between the two participant groups. Furthermore, the matrix *no dudo que* constitutes one of the three matrices in the study that even native speakers admitted the possibility of the subjunctive or indicative (in the case of this matrix, only one), and the remaining three selected the indicative. Spanish native speakers exhibited a higher degree of certainty regarding this matrix as opposed to Spanish language learners, where the indicative was chosen by the majority, 19 participants (59 percent), 12 (38 percent) used the subjunctive, and one participant provided an irrelevant response (neither the indicative nor subjunctive mood, but rather the past participle of the verb). Although *no dudar que* is essentially a negation of doubt, the native Spanish speaking group seemed to perceive more uncertainty than certainty

with this particular matrix, whereas the SLLs demonstrated more heterogeneity, seeming to be less aware of this subtlety in the implementation of the subjunctive mood than most native speakers. The fact that native speakers utilized the subjunctive mood, which implies doubt, denial, uncertainty, et cetera with a matrix that implicitly states “to not doubt” is deviant of the conditional “rules” of this mood, although it has exhibited a mainstream usage among Spanish native speakers. Therefore, one could conclude that although *no dudo que* in itself expresses a negation of doubt, a degree of uncertainty does in fact remain. Compared to the responses given by 56 university students ranging from 18 to 20 years of age at the Politécnico de San Luis Potosi, Mexico, as well as to 26 middle class Spaniards of varied backgrounds and ages involved in Blake’s 1982 study, while only 50 percent of Spaniards used the subjunctive with *no dudo que*, the vast majority (87 percent) of the Mexican participant group did. Consequently, this study demonstrates the topographical variation in the Spanish language between Latin America and Spain regarding mood usage.

Table 2.1 Mood Selection of Native Spanish Speakers (Matrix Involving Doubt)

Matrix	Subjunctive	Indicative	Subjunctive/ Indicative	Irrelevant Response
No dudar que	30	3	0	1

Table 2.2 Mood Selection of SLLs (Matrix Involving Doubt)

Matrix	Subjunctive	Indicative	Subjunctive/ Indicative	Irrelevant Response
No dudar que	12	19	0	1

Similarly, *dudar que* provoked more dissimilarity among the SLL participants than among the native speakers with the majority (18 out of 30) using the indicative, 18 using the subjunctive, and one participant recognizing the possibility of both the indicative and the subjunctive moods. *Dudar que* was one of the matrices that Blake (1985) discovered to have produced significant inconsistencies among native speakers; nevertheless, this was not found to be true in this particular study as a more consistent selection of the subjunctive was observed.

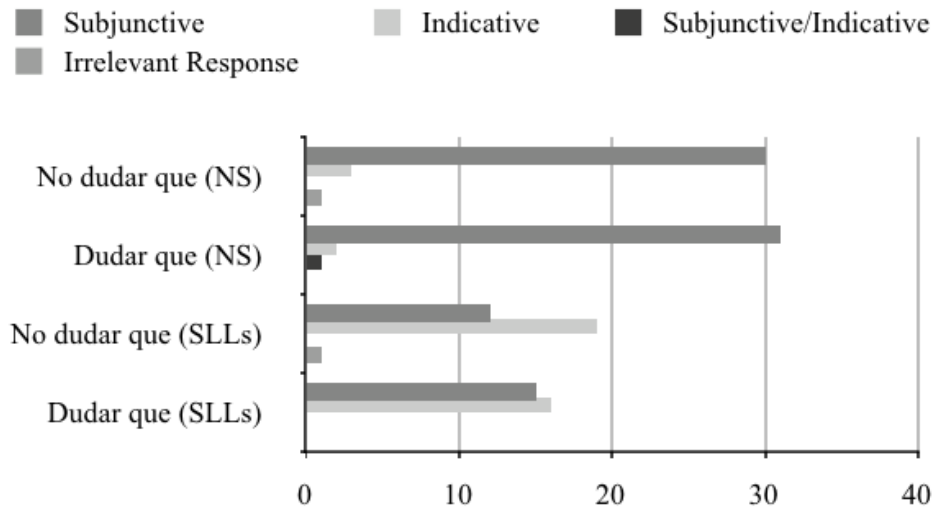
Figure 2.3 Mood Selection of Native Spanish Speakers (Matrix of Doubt)

Matrix	Subjunctive	Indicative	Subjunctive/ Indicative	Irrelevant Response
Dudar que	31	2	1	0

Figure 2.4 Mood Selection of Spanish Language Learners (Matrix of Doubt)

Matrix	Subjunctive	Indicative	Subjunctive/In dicative	Irrelevant Response
Dudar que	15	16	0	0

Figure 2.5 Mood Selection of Native Speakers and SLLs (Matrices of Doubt)



Similar to Blake’s 1982 study involving 56 18 to 20 year old university students at the Politécnico de San Luis Potosi, Mexico, as well as to 26 middle class Spaniards of varied backgrounds and ages, this present study also indicates that the matrices *es seguro que* (it is sure that) and *es obvio que* (it is obvious that) do not exhibit consistency despite the fact that both imply that an event is certain and obvious. 62 percent of native speakers from Jaén actually used the subjunctive with *es bastante obvio que*, whereas the majority of SLLs (56 percent) used the indicative. On the other hand, SLL participants who utilized the subjunctive stated that the matrix expresses a valuation of an idea, hence the subjunctive. Furthermore, 26 percent of native speakers used the subjunctive with *es seguro que*, which means that even though the sentence itself is saying an event is sure, a certain degree of doubt was still present.

Figure 3.1 Mood Selection of Native Spanish Speakers (Matrices of Certainty)

Matrix	Subjunctive	Indicative	Subjunctive/Indicative	Irrelevant Response
Es (bastante) obvio que	13	21	0	0
Es seguro que	8	25	0	0

Figure 3.2 Mood Selection of Spanish Language Learners (Matrices of Certainty)

Matrix	Subjunctive	Indicative	Subjunctive/Indicative	Irrelevant Response
Es (bastante) obvio que	14	18	0	0
Es seguro que	2	30	0	0

Additionally, while 82 percent of the native Spanish speakers utilized the subjunctive with *creer en la posibilidad de que* (to believe in the possibility that), only 22 percent of SLLs utilized it. Furthermore, three percent of each participant group even recognized that the subjunctive could be used, stating, “It depends on the possibility of the possibility.” This particular matrix was one of the only three where native speakers acknowledged the duality of both moods. In both Mexican and Spanish participant groups in Blake’s 1982 study, *es posible*, which carries the same meaning as *creer en la posibilidad de que*, was observed to produce more of a consistent selection compared to other matrices, which is true for the native speakers in this study, but not for the SLLs. This matrix depends on the degree of possibility in the speaker’s mind, so naturally this matrix is quite dependent on the accompanying circumstances of an event.

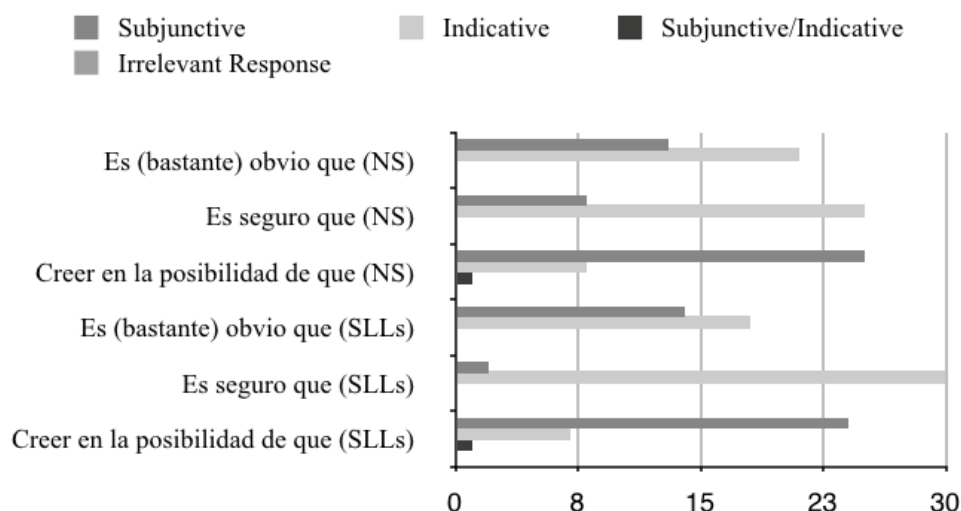
Figure 3.3 Mood Selection of Native Spanish Speakers (Matrices of Possibility)

Matrix	Subjunctive	Indicative	Subjunctive/Indicative	Irrelevant Response
Creer en la posibilidad de que (es posible que)	25	8	1	0

Figure 3.4 Mood Selection of Spanish Language Learners (Matrices of Possibility)

Matrix	Subjunctive	Indicative	Subjunctive/Indicative	Irrelevant Response
Creer en la posibilidad de que (es posible que)	24	7	1	0

Figure 3.5 Mood Selection of Spanish Language Learners (Matrices of Certainty and Possibility)



Using the subjunctive with *dar pena de que* (it is sad that) proved to be a quite obvious choice for the native speakers with a 100 percent subjunctive selection rate. However, this matrix produced a higher degree of variation among the SLL participants, although a majority of 75 percent implementing the subjunctive mood was still established. *Ser triste*, an expression with the same meaning of *dar pena de que*, was found in Blake's 1982 study to be one of the few matrices to not show consistent choices among the Mexican participants. These findings do not mirror the native speakers' preference in this study, but rather the SLL's group, which is to be expected due to the inexperience of most with the Spanish language.

Figure 4.1 Mood Selection of Native Spanish Speakers (Matrix of Emotion)

Matrix	Subjunctive	Indicative	Subjunctive/Indicative	Irrelevant Response
Dar pena de que	34	0	0	0

Figure 4.2 Mood Selection of SLLs (Matrix of Emotion)

Matrix	Subjunctive	Indicative	Subjunctive/Indicative	Irrelevant Response
Dar pena de que	24	8	0	0

The matrix, *alegrarse de que* (to be happy that), triggered the subjunctive usage for the majority of native Spanish speakers (94 percent). The Spanish participant group in this study responded in a more consistent manner compared to the 40 percent of Mexican university students in Blake’s 1985 study who did not use it with *se alegra de que*, a matrix that expresses emotion and, as a result, theoretically should trigger the subjunctive mood. A similar response was observed with the SLLs of this study, where only 28 percent expressed a verb with the subjunctive mood and three percent provided an irrelevant response. Of the few participants who provided reasonings behind their verbal mood selection, four claimed that with the expression *se alegra de que* the subjunctive is required, three explained further that *alegrarse* expresses a feeling and therefore should cause the subjunctive, and one claimed the verb to be a valuation, hence the subjunctive.

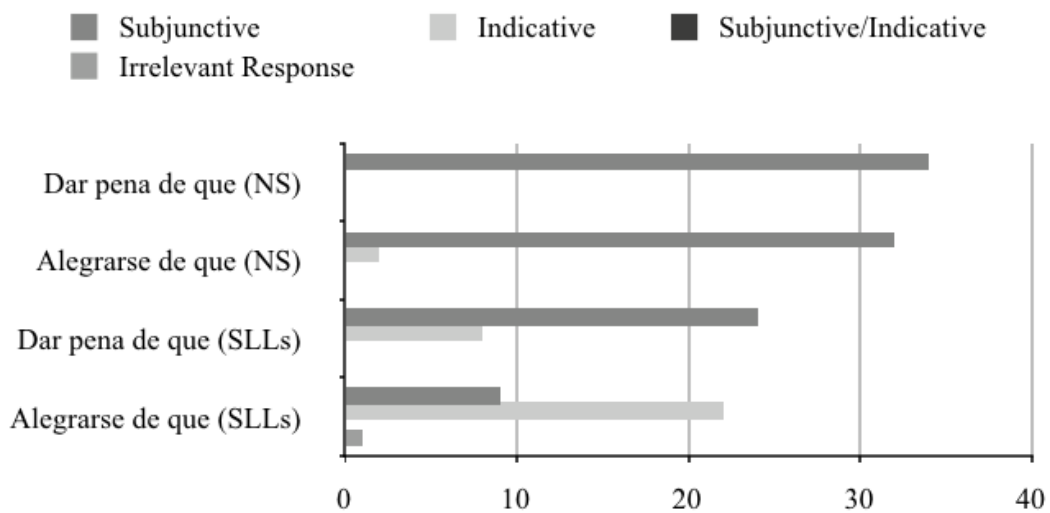
Figure 4.3 Mood Selection of Native Spanish Speakers (Matrix of Emotion)

Matrix	Subjunctive	Indicative	Subjunctive/Indicative	Irrelevant Response
Alegrarse de que	32	2	0	0

Figure 4.4 Mood Selection of SLLs (Matrix of Emotion)

Matrix	Subjunctive	Indicative	Subjunctive/Indicative	Irrelevant Response
Alegrarse de que	9	22	0	1

Figure 4.3 Mood Selection of Native Speakers and SLLs (Matrices of Emotion)



4.2 Research Questions 3 & 4: Variability Among SLL Responses and Approximation to Native Speakers

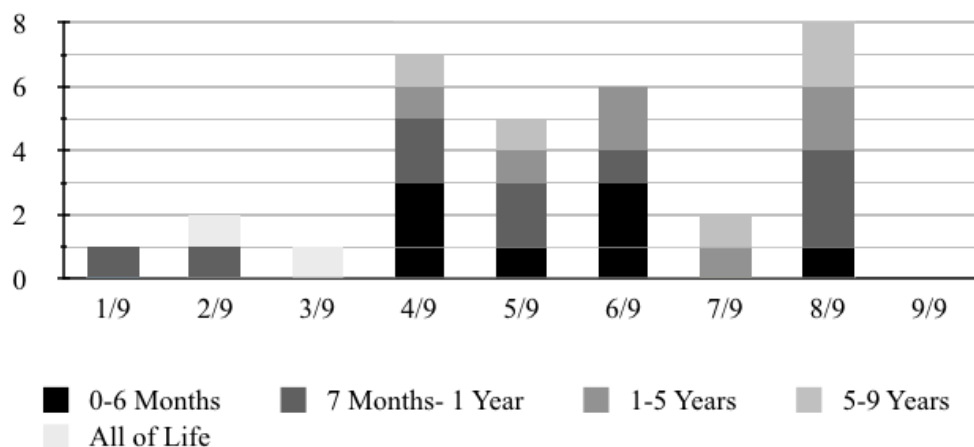
Specifically regarding the SLL participant group, there was not one participant whose every response coincided with the majority mood selection of the native speakers

for each matrix. Nonetheless, one-fourth of the participants came close, with eight out of nine responses corresponding to the mood that most native speaking participants implemented. More than half, five of the eight, participants stated they interact with native speakers of Spanish “very often,” as opposed to the remaining three who claimed to interact with native speakers “sometimes.” Besides this, no other specific characteristic among this group could be attributed to their native speaker mood approximation, as the background information of these participants is quite diverse. For example, the participants in the group with the closest approximation to the native speakers’ mood selection were comprised of four males, three females, and one not specified; they did not constitute one specific age group (although none were from the 27-30 range); their average time studying Spanish was 3.7 years; the group consisted of three native Polish speakers, two native speakers of Italian, one native speaker of German, one native speaker of Chinese, and one native speaker of French; their average amount of time spent in Spain is 1.3 years, and 88 percent of this group has studied at least one other language, apart from their own native language and Spanish, for at least five years.

Gudmestad’s 2006 study found that matrices predicting subjunctive mood selection in a written preference task differed between intermediate and advanced level learners of Spanish, concluding that there was variation in Spanish verbal mood selection among SLLs based on their experience and knowledge of the language. However, the results in the present study do not show a strong direct relation between time studying Spanish and time studying in Spain and approximation to the subjunctive usage of native speakers.

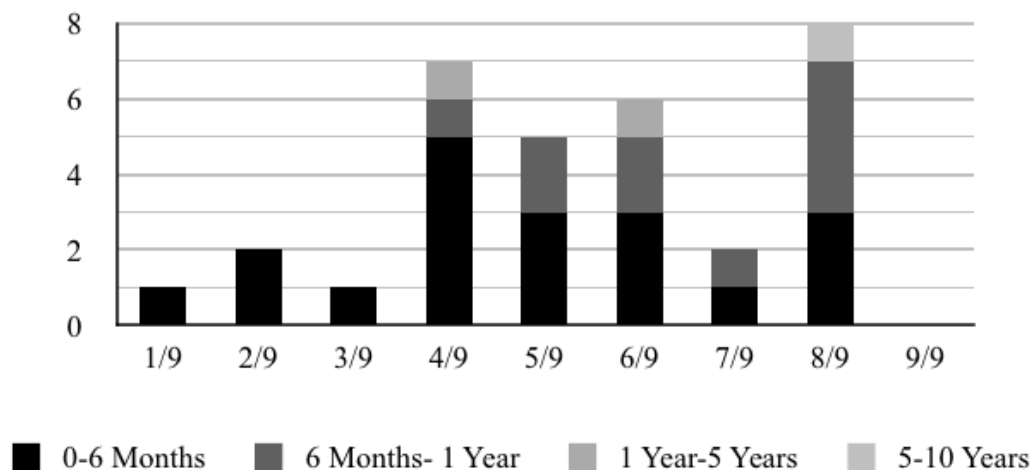
Concerning the relationship of length of time studying Spanish with approximation of subjunctive/indicative selection of native speakers, the participants studying Spanish from five to nine years varied in their approximation of the native speakers. One participant emerged in the 4/9 group (approximating four of the nine mood selections given by most native speakers), one in the 5/9 group, one in the 7/9 group, and two in the 8/9 group. Curiously, the two participants who grew up learning Spanish did not come close to the native speaker subjunctive/indicative selection with only two of the nine answers like most of the native speakers. Because this questionnaire was in a written format, it is possible that these participants would have approximated native speaker mood selection if the questionnaire were administered in an oral format. The participants with 0-6 months of Spanish scored in the middle, most having from four to six answers most similar to native speakers and one with eight.

Figure 5 Time Spent Studying Spanish and Approximation to Subjunctive/Indicative Usage of Native Speakers



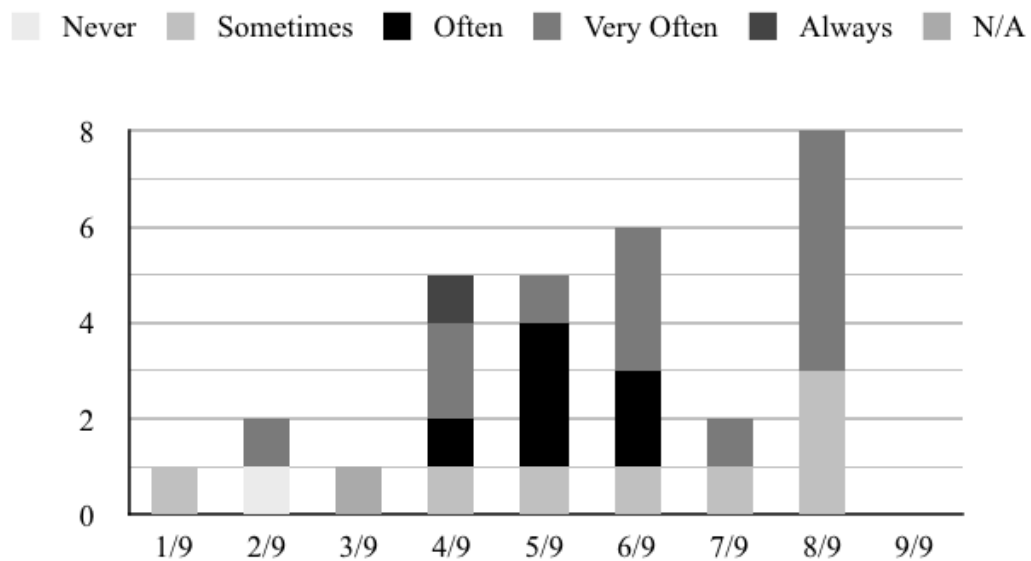
Regarding time abroad in Spain and approximation to subjunctive/indicative usage of native speakers, most participants spent from six months to one year in Jaén, not demonstrating a concrete pattern regarding length of time in Jaén and similarity with native speaker mood selection. Most SLL participants studying in Jaén from a few weeks until six months approximated four answers with the native speakers, but the rest were spread out along the spectrum from one to eight answers. Those participants who have studied Spanish from more than six months to one year approximated the mood selection of native speakers with at least four of the nine responses, those studying Spanish from one to five years had at least four answers in common with the native speakers. That being said, a strong correlation between length of time and approximation to the mood selection of the majority of native speaking participants was not observed in the results.

Figure 6 Time Abroad in Spain and Approximation to Subjunctive/Indicative Usage of Native Speakers



Concerning interaction with native speakers and approximation to subjunctive/indicative usage of native speakers, the majority of participants who interacted with native speakers tended to score higher than most other participants, the majority of whom provided eight of the nine answers most native speakers provided. Those who indicated they interacted “often” with native speakers had four to six responses that resembled those of the native speakers. Finally, the one participant who reported to always interact with native speakers shared only four answers with most native speakers.

Figure 7 Interaction with Native Speakers and Approximation to Subjunctive/Indicative Usage of Native Speakers



5. Conclusions

To conclude, SLL responses generally proved to be less consistent than those of the native speakers for obvious reasons: their lack of experience with the Spanish

language compared to the native speakers; in fact, half of the SLL participants had studied Spanish for a year or less at the time of the questionnaire. The native speakers' along with the SLL's subjunctive selection preference after the matrices, *es bastante obvio que* and *es seguro que*, defied the rules for the use of the subjunctive. Consequently, although these expressions imply certainty on the surface level, in some circumstances the subjunctive could be preferred if the speaker assumes a degree of disbelief. Furthermore, while most SLLs employed the subjunctive with *no dudo que* due to the negation of doubt implied in the expression, most native speakers did in fact use the subjunctive, suggesting that a certain degree of uncertainty was still present. The results of this study demonstrate that that the mood selection by native speakers at times defy the black and white rules given by textbooks for the use of the subjunctive.

Although there do not seem to be strong correlations between age, gender, length of time studying Spanish, length of time in Spain, native language, interaction with native speakers, and experience with other languages, and subjunctive selection, most participants who approximated subjunctive/indicative selection levels of native speakers typically had more experience with the Spanish language and had spent more time studying in Jaén, but this was not the case for all. A higher degree of variability existed among the SLLs, so it would have been more helpful to have surveyed SLLs with more experience with Spanish or at least have had a larger participant group to better identify common trends.

In conclusion, this study offers additional information and insight into the uncertainties and variation of the usage of the subjunctive mood, a topic generally not explored in Spanish language textbooks. In order for learners of the Spanish language to

fully grasp the subjunctive mood, not only a list of rules suffices, but rather a full understanding of when and with which matrices the subjunctive is implemented by native speakers, especially the specific matrices mentioned above. This would greatly prepare learners of the Spanish language for interactions with native speakers of Spanish by means of a more comprehensive understanding of how these moods are incorporated in real life situations.

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Appendix A

Background Questionnaire for Native Spanish Speakers/Antecedents

1. Sexo: Hombre Mujer
2. Edad: 18-22 23-26 27-30
3. Lugar de nacimiento: _____
4. Lugar actual de residencia: _____
5. ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas viviendo en la provincia de Jaén? _____
6. Otros lugares de residencia anteriores: _____
7. ¿Estudias otros idiomas? ¿Cuáles y cuánto tiempo cada uno?

8. Estudios realizados (marca cada uno que te aplica)

Educación primaria

Educación secundaria

Bachillerato

Grado de la universidad

Máster

Doctorado
9. Ocupación: (clase de trabajo y/o año de estudio) _____
10. ¿Cuál es la ocupación de tu madre? _____
11. ¿Cuál es la ocupación de tu padre? _____

Translation into English of Questionnaire for Native Spanish Speakers/Antecedents

1. Gender: Male Female

2. Age: 18-22 23-26 27-30

3. Place of birth: _____

4. Place of residence: _____

5. How long have you lived in the province of Jaén? _____

6. Other previous places of residence: _____

7. Do you study other languages? Which languages and how long have you studied each one?

8. Occupation: (type of work and/or year of study if student)

9. What is the occupation of your parents?

Mother: _____

Father: _____

Appendix B

Questionnaire for Spanish Language Learners/Antecedents

1. Sexo: Hombre Mujer
2. Edad: 18-22 23-26 27-30
3. ¿De qué país eres? _____
4. ¿Cuál es tu lengua materna? _____
5. ¿Estudias otros idiomas? ¿Cuáles y cuánto tiempo cada uno?

6. ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas estudiando español? _____
7. ¿Con qué frecuencia practicas español con hispanohablantes?
Nunca A veces A menudo Con mucha frecuencia Siempre
8. ¿Cuánto tiempo llevas en España? _____
9. Educación primaria

Educación secundaria

Bachillerato

Grado de la universidad

Máster

Doctorado
10. Ocupación: (clase de trabajo y/o año de estudio) _____
11. ¿Cuál es la ocupación de tu madre? _____
12. ¿Cuál es la ocupación de tu padre? _____

Translation into English of Questionnaire for Spanish Language Learners/Antecedents

1. Gender: Male Female

2. Age: 18-22 23-26 27-30

3. What country are you from? _____

4. What is your native language? _____

5. How long have you studied Spanish?

6 months 1 year 2 years 3 years 4 years 5 years other: _____

6. Do you study other languages? Which languages and for how long have you studied each one?

7. How often do you practice Spanish with native speakers?

Never Sometimes Often Very often Always

8. Occupation: (type of work and/or year of study if student)

9. What is the occupation of your parents?

Mother: _____

Father: _____

Appendix C
Subjunctive/Indicative Questionnaire

A. Rellena los espacios con la forma del verbo que te parece más adecuado.

Como Maribel está enferma, no pienso que (1) _____ (ir) a ir a la fiesta esta noche. No dudo que nos (2) _____ (decir) la verdad, pero nos ha mentido antes para no tener que quedar con nosotros, no entiendo por qué. En realidad si no está enferma, es bastante obvio que no (3) _____ (tener) ganas de salir. Pero me da pena de que no (4) _____ (quedar) con nosotros más a menudo porque siempre lo pasamos de miedo con ella. Me alegré de que el finde pasado ella (5) _____ (ir) de vacaciones con nosotros a Cádiz para aprovechar el buen tiempo en la playa, y aunque ella dudaba que la playa allí (6) _____ (ser) tan bonita como yo le había asegurado; sin embargo, le pareció estupenda. Es seguro que nosotros (7) _____ (volver) a ir allí pronto, pero no creo que Maribel nos (8) _____ (acompañar) porque como he dicho, no es una amiga muy fiable. De todas formas creemos en la posibilidad de que lo (9) _____ (considerar).

B. Explica por qué has usado esta forma del verbo.

1. ¿Por qué has usado esta forma del verbo?

2. ¿Por qué has usado esa forma del verbo?

3. ¿Por qué has usado esa forma del verbo?

4. ¿Por qué has usado esa forma del verbo?

5. ¿Por qué has usado esa forma del verbo?

6. ¿Por qué has usado esa forma del verbo?

7. ¿Por qué has usado esa forma del verbo?

8. ¿Por qué has usado esa forma del verbo?

9. ¿Por qué has usado esa forma del verbo?

Translation into English of Subjunctive/Indicative Questionnaire

A. Fill in the blanks with the form of the verb that you think is most appropriate.

Because Maribel is sick, I don't think she is (1) going to go to the party tonight. I don't doubt that she's (2) telling us the truth, but she's lied to us before so she didn't have to meet up with us; I don't understand why. If she really isn't sick, it's quite clear that she doesn't (3) feel like going out. However, it makes me sad that she doesn't (4) hang out with us more often because we always have such a great time with her. I was really happy that she (5) came on vacation with us to Cádiz last weekend to take advantage of the great weather there, although she doubted that the beach (6) was as pretty as I told her it would be; however, she thought it was awesome. We'll surely (7) return sometime soon, but I don't think that Maribel will (8) come with us because, as I've said, she isn't a very reliable friend. However, we still believe in the possibility that she'll (9) consider it.

B. Explain why you used the specific forms of the verbs for each blank.

1. Why did you use this form of the verb?

2. Why did you use this form of the verb?

3. Why did you use this form of the verb?

4. Why did you use this form of the verb?

5. Why did you use this form of the verb?

6. Why did you use this form of the verb?

7. Why did you use this form of the verb?

8. Why did you use this form of the verb?

9. Why did you use this form of the verb?

Appendix D
Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Lee el siguiente formulario de consentimiento y da tu firma electrónica si deseas continuar con el cuestionario.

Estimado participante,

Se pide que participes en el estudio “The Subjunctive Selecting Habits of Spaniards as well as Spanish Language Learners in Jaén, Spain” dirigido por Ashleigh Ladner de la Universidad del Sur de Mississippi. Como participante, todo lo que se pide de ti es rellenar los dos cuestionarios siguientes, el primero unas preguntas generales sobre ti mismo/a y tu experiencia con idiomas y el segundo una encuesta en la que hay que rellenar los espacios de un texto con la forma del verbo que te parezca más adecuada, una tarea que debería tardar al máximo veinte minutos. Los datos obtenidos de los dos cuestionarios son confidenciales.

La participación en esta investigación es completamente voluntaria. Tienes el derecho de no participar o de retirarte en cualquier momento durante la encuesta.

Si tienes preguntas o preocupaciones en cuanto a esta investigación, por ejemplo problemas individuales, instrucciones, o para reportar una mala experiencia, por favor ponte en contacto con la investigadora (Ashleigh Ladner, ashleigh.ladner@eagles.usm.edu). Esta investigación ha sido revisado por el Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, lo cual asegura que investigaciones con la participación de personas participantes siga regulaciones gubernamentales. Cualquier pregunta sobre sus derechos como participante debe ser hecha al Institutional Review Board, 118 College Dr. P.O. Box 5147, Hattiesburg, MS, 39406.

De nuevo, gracias por tu tiempo y tu participación,

Ashleigh Ladner

Firma del participante

Fecha

Translation into English of Research Participant Information and Consent Form:

Dear Participant,

You are being asked to participate in the study “The Subjunctive Selecting Habits of Spaniards as well as Spanish Language Learners in Jaén, Spain” by Ashleigh Ladner of the University of Southern Mississippi. As a participant, all you have to do is fill out the two questionnaires you are given, the first being a few general questions about yourself and your language experience, and the second being a questionnaire in which you will have to fill in the blanks with the form of the verb that seems most adequate to you, which should take a maximum of 20 minutes. Data obtained from these two questionnaires is confidential, and will be stored at the library at the University of Southern Mississippi with absolutely no names of the participants given.

Participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have the right to say no, and you may change your mind at any time and withdraw. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time without penalty or prejudice.

If you have concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, please contact the researcher (Ashleigh Ladner, ashleigh.ladner@eagles.usm.edu). All procedures, including potential benefits, risks, inconveniences, or discomforts that might be expected have been explained by Ashleigh Ladner.

This project has been reviewed by the Human Subjects Protection Review Committee, which ensures that research projects involving human subjects follow federal regulations. Any questions or concerns about rights as a research subject should be directed to the Chair of the Institutional Review Board, The University of Southern Mississippi, 118 College Drive #5147, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001, (601) 266-5997.

Thank you again for your time and participation,

Ashleigh Ladner

Signature of participant: _____ Date: _____

Appendix E: IRB Approval Letter



INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
118 College Drive #5147 | Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001
Phone: 601.266.5997 | Fax: 601.266.4377 | www.usm.edu/research/institutional-review-board

NOTICE OF COMMITTEE ACTION

The project has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part 46), and university guidelines to ensure adherence to the following criteria:

- The risks to subjects are minimized.
- The risks to subjects are reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered regarding risks to subjects must be reported immediately, but not later than 10 days following the event. This should be reported to the IRB Office via the "Adverse Effect Report Form".
- If approved, the maximum period of approval is limited to twelve months.
Projects that exceed this period must submit an application for renewal or continuation.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 14011503
PROJECT TITLE: **The Subjunctive Selection Habits of Spaniards and Spanish Language Learners in Jaen, Spain**
PROJECT TYPE: **New Project**
RESEARCHER(S): **Ashleigh Ladner**
COLLEGE/DIVISION: **College of Arts and Letters**
DEPARTMENT: **Foreign Languages and Literatures**
FUNDING AGENCY/SPONSOR: **N/A**
IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: **Expedited Review Approval**
PERIOD OF APPROVAL: **01/22/2014 to 01/21/2015**

Lawrence A. Hosman, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board