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Politeness and Subjunctive in Spanish and Japanese

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1. The objective of this paper is to investigate the uses of the subjunctive and its illocutionary effect in Spanish and Japanese. The syntactic representations of the notion of subjunctive is quite different in these totally unrelated languages, yet when their distributional patterns are compared with respect to the accompanying communicative situations a certain similarity seems to surface. The notion of subjunctive is possibly tied to the socio-cultural background of the speakers and its linguistic realization is constrained by socio-linguistic factors rather than purely linguistic rules. One of such factors is assumed to be the speaker's politeness for communicative effect and, subsequently the interactions of the politeness consideration and the system of subjunctive will be observed through the data from these languages. The selection of Mexican Spanish and Japanese for our comparative study of subjunctive is neither arbitrary nor accidental, since the patterns of interpersonal relationships in the speech communities of these languages have some resemblance and for this reason any common characteristics in the uses of the subjunctive should be accountable systematically on the similar semantic and socio-cultural bases.

2. A language speaker can talk about things in the real world as well as in the non-real, hypothetical world. Traditionally, the illocutionary force of these utterance types are grammatically abstracted and designated by the three moods of indicative, subjunctive, and imperative. The indicative mood refers to statements in declarative or interrogative forms which assert or question about a fact or near-fact. In contrast, the subjunctive mood represents non-fact or counter-fact or fact of varying degrees of possibility. Of the two subcategories of the subjunctive, optative and potential, we are interested in optative subjunctive (Curme 1966: 235-37) which is primarily concerned with the desideratives such as a speaker's desire, wish, hope, will and thought about the yet unrealized world. The imperative mood refers to the directive actions such as command, demand, request, entreaty, prohibition, but the independent status of this modality is questionable, since it is hard to draw a clear boundary between the notions of desideratives and directives in that both manifest in essence a speaker's mood to have the non-factual world to come true. As a matter of fact, when they are reduced to abstract formulae such as in 'I want x to bring about p' and 'Let x bring about that p' (Lyons 1978: 826), they are strikingly similar. In fact, in many languages the functions of subjunctive and imperative seem to merge and the notions of possibility and obligations are associated with the same non-factive, or subjunctive mood, and this is commonly also the mood of prediction, supposition, intention, and desire' (Lyons 1978: 817).

In fact after a speaker conceives of the non-factual world, through the process of his merely desiring it, intending to have it become fact, and commanding the hearers to cooperate with him to realize his desire, there may be a point at which the modality of 'will' in the form of 'I want it to come true' in disguise of the likelihood mood of 'May it come true'. Of all the dimensions of these desiderative and directive speech acts, this transitional stage where the optative subjunctive and imperative beginning to converge seems to be the most exploited linguistically, since the effective linguistic means for directives guarantee the successful interpersonal execution of desideratives. As we see later, the communicative interactions become very complex and the degrees of complexity increases proportionate to the intricacy of interpersonal relationships generated by the particular social structure. In this respect, we may generalize that the subjunctive and imperative share the same semantic domain in common and the imperative can be treated by a single semantic notion of 'subjunctive'. Accordingly, throughout the present study, the term 'subjunctive' is used in this sense and it refers to the notions ranging from desideratives at one end to directives at the other end.

3. Now that the concept of 'subjunctive' is defined as related to desiderative and directive acts, the actual linguistic manifestation of the subjunctive is to be identified. Traditional grammar has explained that the subjunctive mood is mostly the features of verbs marked by verbal inflections. In English, for example, the past tense is typically connected to modest desire such as in 'I would like to do that', 'Could we only do this?', 'I wanted to make an appointment for tomorrow', whereas the future tense is associated with likelihood such as in 'We may do so' or 'It may rain'. This may be the case in many Indo-European languages, but the subjunctive mood is not always indicated by the verb forms. Japanese, for example, has no regular syntactic correlates of the subjunctive except in the area of direct command. We are therefore neither expecting nor looking for similar linguistic forms of subjunctive in Spanish and Japanese. In fact it is futile to find any direct correspondence between the Spanish sentence, *Mando que encuentras al asesino* and its Japanese equivalent, *Ansatusha o sagase* 'Look for an assassin'. The performative verb is not customarily used in issuing a command in Japanese, nor does the complement verb inflect for subjunctive mood. Yet we need some specific linguistic reference according to which the relevant data can be assembled in which we look for similar linguistic patterns. We therefore consider the phenomenon of lexical government of the complement verb inflections in Spanish as the prototype of subjunctive for the present comparison. In Spanish the subjunctive is lexically marked with the class of 'subjunctive optative' verbs (Lozano 1972, 1975) which regularly determine the complement verb forms. The corresponding Japanese verbs are identified and examined as to the government relationship with their complement. In this manner we may be able to assess their similarity to or discrepancy from the linguistic norm of subjunctive.

4. Spanish 'subjunctive-optative' verbs which obligate the subjunctive mood with complement verbs fall into four subclasses (Lozano 1975). The first three of them, which refer to the semantic notions that we are interested in are (1) optative-imperative, roughly the verbs of command, (2) optative-impersonal, verbs of entreaty or persuasion, and (3) optative-emotional, verbs of desire. As the first step of our investigation, some verbs of Spanish and Japanese for each of these categories are listed. Then these verbs are compared and analyzed in their typical uses.

4.1 Optative-imperative verbs

Spanish	Japanese	
<i>exigir</i>	<i>yookyuu-suru</i>	'to demand'
<i>mandar/ordenar</i>	<i>meirei-suru</i>	'to order'
<i>impedir</i>	<i>boogai-suru</i>	'to impede'
<i>prohibir</i>	<i>kinjiru</i>	'to prohibit'
<i>pedir/solicitar</i>	<i>tanomu</i>	'to request'
<i>rogar/suplicar</i>	<i>tanomikomou</i>	'to beg/to request'

Observation: the complement verbs of the verbs of command in Japanese are uniformly marked by the imperative endings. Furthermore, depending on the types of command such as direct order or mild request, the imperative endings have different forms. In the following the plain and the polite variants are indicated by the archimorphemes, *e* and *kure*, respectively.

Sample sentences:

Spanish	Japanese	
<i>mando que vayas</i>	<i>ike to meirei-sur</i>	'I order you to go.' (direct command)
<i>exigio que decir</i>	<i>ie to yookyuu-suru</i>	'I demand you to speak.' (strong request)
<i>prohibo que veas</i>	<i>miruna to tanomu</i>	'I prohibit you to see.' (direct command)
<i>pido que vayas</i>	<i>ike to tanomu</i>	'I request you to go.' (mild request)

4.2 Optative-impersonal

Spanish	Japanese	
<i>conviene/es conviene</i>	<i>hituyoo-da</i>	'it is necessary'
<i>importa</i>	<i>taisetu-da</i>	'it is important'
<i>es mejor</i>	<i>hituyoo-da</i>	'it is necessary'
<i>vale la pena</i>	<i>kati-ga-aruu</i>	'it is worthwhile'

Observation: The verbs of entreaty or persuasion in Japanese occur with either factive or nominalized clauses.

Sample sentences:

Spanish	Japanese	
<i>es conveniente que los sepas</i>	<i>siru koto ga juuyoo-da</i>	'it's necessary to know'
<i>importa que lo tengas</i>	<i>motu koto ga taisei-da</i>	'it's important to have it'
<i>vale la pena que lo veas</i>	<i>miru kati ga aru</i>	'it's worthwhile seeing it'

4.3 Optative-emotional

Spanish	Japanese	
<i>desaprobar</i>	<i>hantai-suru</i>	'to disapprove'
<i>decir</i>	<i>iu</i>	'to order'
<i>escribir</i>	<i>meirei-suru</i>	'to order'
<i>rechazar</i>	<i>kyohi-suru</i>	'to reject'
<i>aprobar</i>	<i>kyoka-suru</i>	'to approve'
<i>decidir</i>	<i>susumeru</i>	'to persuade'

<i>anhelar</i>	<i>netuboo-suru</i>	'to long for'
<i>esperar</i>	<i>kitai-suru</i>	'to hope/to expect'
<i>querer</i>	<i>omou/nozomu</i>	'to wish/to want'

Observation: Unlike Spanish verbs, the Japanese equivalents of the optative-emotional verbs cannot be grouped together, but need to be subdivided according to their semantic contents. It appears that what type of speech acts is indicated by the verbs is crucial to determine the complement forms. At least three subclasses are identified: 4.3.1 the verbs of command which govern the imperative endings of the complement verbs, 4.3.2 suasive verbs which require factive clauses (underlined) or imperative complement verbs idiosyncratically, and 4.3.3 the desiderative verbs which occur with what might be called to be subjunctive clauses (underlined). In the following some occurrences of these verbs are given with the corresponding Spanish forms.

Sample sentences:

	Spanish	Japanese	
4.3.1	<i>digo que vayas</i>	<i>ike to iu</i>	'I order you to go'
4.3.2	<i>decido que vayas</i>	<i>ike to susumeru</i> <u><i>iku koto o susumeru</i></u>	'I persuade you to go' 'I persuade you that you should go'
4.3.3	<i>deseo que venga</i> <i>quiero que salga</i>	<u><i>kureba ii to nozomu</i></u> <u><i>ikeba ii to omou</i></u>	'I wish he'd come' 'I wish he'd go away'

The second step of our study is to elicit from our informants their own desiderative and directive expressions. The data were gathered based on the very spontaneous utterances of these people which occur during the informal conversations. These utterances are classified as roughly corresponding to the four communicative situations in which (4.4.1) command is issued in a very strong manner, (4.4.2) command is issued in a mild manner, (4.4.3) mild request is made, and (4.4.4) the speaker wishes for something (implying persuasion to do something for the speaker). Each of these situations are matched with the typical expressions used by our informants, and the main linguistic features are briefly described.

4.4.1 Imperative forms without performative verbs

Spanish	Japanese	
<i>ven</i>	<i>koi</i>	'come'

4.4.2 Imperative forms with polite modifiers which are indicated by the underlines

Spanish	Japanese
<i>ven, <u>por favor</u></i>	<u><i>kite kudasai</i></u>
'please come'	'do me a favor by coming'

4.4.3 Either imperative forms with polite modifiers or desiderative expressions which consist of desiderative verbs and the complement. In addition, Japanese also uses rhetorical negative questions.

Spanish	Japanese
<i>ven, por favor</i>	<i>kite kudasai</i>
'please come'	'give me a favor by coming'
	<i>kite kudasai masen ka</i>
	'wouldn't you do me a favor by coming'
<i>quiero que vengas, por favor</i>	<i>kite hosii desu</i>
'I would like you to come'	'I want you to come'
	<i>kite itadakitai desu</i>
	'I would like you to come'

4.4.4 Desiderative expressions consisting of a desiderative verb and its complement. In Spanish, the desiderative verbs tend to take the conditional form, and in Japanese the desiderative expressions are rendered by the idiomatic subjunctive clauses.

Spanish	Japanese
<i>quiero que este sea mio</i>	<i>kore ga watasi no nara ii ga</i>
'I wish that this is mine'	'I wish this is mine'
<i>quisiera que este fuera mio</i>	<i>kore ga watasi no deatte hosii</i>
'I wish that this were mine'	'I wish this were mine'
<i>me gustaria que viniera a mi casa</i>	<i>uri e kite kudasareba ii desu ga</i>
'I would like that you would come to our house'	'I wish that you do me a favor by coming to our house'

Incidentally, our informants reported that if desire is not strongly present in the desiderative actions, they are expressed in declarative mood rather than subjunctive. Instead of direct command, *ven* 'come', for example, the following are given as possible alternatives:

Spanish	Japanese
<i>haber, cuando nos vemos</i>	<i>izure sono uiti</i>
'well, when we meet'	'well, one of these days'
<i>cuando vienes</i>	<i>oide no toki ni</i>
'when you come'	'when you come'
<i>un dia, nos vemos</i>	<i>mata ituka</i>
'one day let's meet'	'sometime, again'

Although these are by no means a full range of what we might call 'courtesy directives' which lack the speaker's sincere intention or desire to have the non-factual world come true, they are in striking contrast with the previous data for their arbitrary variations and lack of patterns.

5. The data show that there is little syntactic correspondence between the linguistic expressions of the subjunctive in Spanish and Japanese. The Japanese data does not conform to the norm of subjunctive we have set up. While in Spanish the desiderative and directive are syntactically rendered by the subjunctive mood of the verbs, the subjunctive in Japanese may be realized by whole clauses, verbal phrases, inflectional verbal endings, and so on. The linguistic details, however, are not so much of our concern as the over-all regular patterns between what the speakers conceive in mind and how they say it. In this regard, our data from two languages has revealed significant quasi-linguistic relationships between the suasive acts and the uses of subjunctive forms. In the area of optative-imperative (4.1), Spanish and Japanese are systematically dissimilar in that the complement verbs of Spanish have subjunctive endings while those of

Japanese have imperative endings. This discrepancy, however, will diminish once the performative verbs are deleted in Spanish and the complement verbs are uniformly marked by the imperative endings. In contrast to the area of optative-imperative, optative-impersonal (4.2) and optative-emotional (4.3) exhibited the most complex linguistic patterns in the data as well as in our informants' responses. This phenomenon is expected if we take into consideration that the speech acts which occur predominantly in these areas are suggestion, entreaty, and mild requests which may represent transition from the intrapersonal to interpersonal communicative acts. The speaker's relationship to the non-factual world is personal and inward at a time when it is the object of his desire and speculation. We have no direct access to the logic by which the speaker linguisticizes his internal thought. With the development of intention to realize the non-factual world, the speaker begins to reveal his internal desire by externally executed suasive acts. Cautious maneuvering of the communicative interactions are critical for the later outcome, and therefore the language should be carefully selected for effective execution of the directives. Maintenance of the desiderative verbs in the request, for example, is a linguistic tactic to soften the effect of issuing a command by putting the speaker in disguise of a mere desirer, not a commander. Consequently the opponent is given an option to refuse or not to comply with the request, and even if he carries it out, it appears to be done so by his voluntary cooperation not under the enforcement of the speaker. Politeness is essential strategy for avoiding conflict and promoting cooperation, and it should interact constantly with the use of subjunctive in performing the suasive acts. Generally, the greater the consideration of politeness, the more complex are the linguistic patterns of the suasive acts, and vice versa. Thus, at the lowest end of the scale of directives with the least politeness, Spanish and Japanese come to share an identical syntactic pattern. When assertion of authority and intolerance of contradiction need to be indicated in the direct command by being blunt, even the regular subjunctive mood of the verbs in Spanish is suspended by the imperative endings in concurrence with the deletion of the performative verbs. In Spanish the shift from subjunctive to imperative is much more abrupt than Japanese, since the latter has richer linguistic devices for expressing direct commands with varying degrees of politeness. Spanish on the other hand is equipped with verbal stages of optative subjunctive for indicating different degrees of politeness for issuing the directives.

Our cross-language study of the subjunctive and its syntactic realizations have revealed two things. Despite the superficial divergency in the syntactic forms of Spanish and Japanese, similar distributional patterns of the subjunctive forms can be abstracted, and this similarity can be explained systematically in terms of politeness consideration. In communicative situations, effective execution of the suasive acts are influenced by various socio-linguistic factors such as politeness. As we have seen politeness corresponds to the complexities of linguistic strategy, and for this reason the linguistic patterning associated with the subjunctive changes in both languages with the degrees of politeness. Furthermore, by adding the dimension of politeness to the analysis of suasive acts, desiderative and directive acts and the corresponding subjunctive and imperative moods are aligned along the same modal continuum only with the different degrees of politeness. Thus our initial assumption that the subjunctive and imperative moods share the same semantic domain is justified.

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