

Nonveridicality and Mood Selection in Yucatec Spanish

In Yucatec Spanish, a contact variety spoken on the Yucatán Peninsula of Mexico, speaker mood selection in the complement of doxastic (belief) predicates does not pattern with other varieties of Spanish. Specifically, the current data suggest a potential expansion of the semantic space occupied by subjunctive. In Spanish, two moods can be triggered in clauses embedded under the complementizer *que* ‘that’: the subjunctive and the indicative. Previous accounts of Spanish mood selection have focused on the key distinction between assertion and non-assertion (Terrell & Hooper 1974) and (lack of) pragmatic presupposition (Lunn 1989, 1995) to explain the distribution of subjunctive and indicative. In Spanish doxastic predicates, this has traditionally been treated as a result of polarity: affirmative doxastic matrix clauses license the indicative and a negated doxastic matrix licenses the subjunctive in the embedded clause. More recently, researches (such as Mejías-Bikandi 2016, Haverkate 2002, and Quer 2002) have examined mood choice in Spanish and propose that both indicative and subjunctive can be licensed under negated doxastic predicates according to pragmatic motivations communicated through context.

The first goal of this study is provide evidence that mood selection in Yucatec Spanish deviates from other varieties of Spanish. Most notably, there is an expansion of the semantic space that is occupied by the subjunctive, and alternation that results from this expansion is accepted in utterances that would be considered ungrammatical in other varieties. Consider the following example:

(1) *Mi amiga me contó ayer de sus problemas con su esposo. Su comportamiento es sospechoso—dice que siempre sale sin decirle adónde va por mucho tiempo.*
‘My friend told me yesterday about problems with her husband. His behavior is very suspicious—she says that he always goes out for a long time without telling her where he goes’.

- a. *Ella piensa que él tiene (IND) amante.*
‘She thinks that he has a lover’.
- b. *Ella piensa que él tenga (SUBJ) amante.*
‘She thinks that he has a lover’.

The use of the subjunctive in (1b) is not acceptable in many varieties of Spanish, but it is accepted by many Yucatec Spanish speakers, in particular bilingual speakers.

To account for this mood selection, I adopt the framework of nonveridicality (Giannakidou 1998, 2002, 2009, 2015) and argue that mood selection in Yucatec Spanish is motivated by the interpretation of the embedded proposition. Giannakidou (2015) states that a function F that takes a proposition p as its argument is subjectively veridical with respect to an epistemic state $M(i)$ of an individual anchor i iff the speaker believes the proposition to be true. In such cases, the $M(i)$ is homogeneous and only contains worlds in which p is true. On the other hand, if the epistemic model $M(i)$ contains some worlds in which the proposition is true and some in which the proposition is false, the speaker evaluates the proposition as nonveridical. With regard to mood selection, a veridical interpretation licenses the indicative while a nonveridical interpretation will license the subjunctive in an embedded proposition. Giannakidou (2015) and Mari (2016) argue that mood selection reflects this epistemic certainty (or lack thereof) that denotes a set of possible worlds that includes worlds in which p is true and worlds in which p is false. As such, the use of the subjunctive indicates epistemic weakening to the

commitment of p and reflecting an epistemic model containing both worlds in which p is true and worlds in which *not* p is true.

In Yucatec Spanish, I argue that the interpretation of the veridicality of an embedded proposition is the trigger for mood selection which therefore reflects epistemic (un)certainty (as proposed by Giannakidou 2015). The second goal of this study is to propose a formal analysis for doxastic predicates like *creer* based on Yucatec Spanish data which involves two evaluations: (1) the model of the subject of the matrix clause that introduces the belief and (2) the model of the speaker which is reflected in the mood selected in the embedded clause. I adopt the following lexical entry for the doxastic predicate *creer* ‘to believe’.

$$(2) \quad \llbracket \text{CREER} \rrbracket^{c,w,g} = \lambda p \lambda x [\text{believe}'(x,w) \wedge \forall w' (w' \in M(x) \rightarrow p(w')) \wedge \text{REFLECT}(M(i) \wedge (p(w')))]$$

This lexical entry communicates that an individual believes a proposition to be true in a given world provided that the proposition is true in the believer’s epistemic model. The definition in (2) also says that that mood selection reflects the speaker’s evaluation of the embedded proposition, which ultimately determines mood selection. This is expressed by using what I call the REFLECT operator:

$$(3) \quad \text{REFLECT}(i, p, w), \text{ where } \forall w: w \in M(i)$$

This operator reflects the opinion of the speaker. A speaker interprets a proposition as veridical if and only if his/her epistemic model ($M(i)$) contains only worlds in which the proposition is true. If the $M(i)$ is homogeneous, the indicative is licensed. I define the indicative in (4):

$$(4) \quad \llbracket \text{INDICATIVE} \rrbracket^{c,w,g}: \lambda p \lambda w' [p(w')]$$

The meaning of the indicative with respect to a context c , a world w , and assignment function g is that set of propositions that are true in all worlds w' compatible with the speaker’s beliefs. Alternatively, when the speaker communicates her epistemic uncertainty, the use of *creer* embeds a proposition that has a nonveridical interpretation in which the speaker selects the subjunctive. In (5) I present the translation and meaning of the subjunctive in Yucatec Spanish:

$$(5) \quad \llbracket \text{SUBJUNCTIVE} \rrbracket^{c,w,g} = \lambda p \lambda w' [(\exists w'' [p(w'')] \wedge \exists w''' (\neg p(w''')))]$$

(5) says that the denotation of $\llbracket [S] \rrbracket$ with regard to c , w , and g , is the set of propositions p in the $M(i)$, such the proposition is true in some worlds w' and false in other worlds w'' .

This research has two major contribution to the field of Hispanic linguistics. First, while many analyses take a pan-Hispanic approach, this study contributes to the documentation of Spanish contact varieties, presenting data for which previous theories of Spanish mood choice cannot account. Second, this paper introduces a novel semantic account that argues that *creer* involves two epistemic models: the speaker and belief holder (the referent of the matrix NP). Additionally, it follows Giannakidou’s model of veridicality (1998, 2002, 2015) to argue that mood selection in doxastic predicates in Yucatec Spanish is licensed by the evaluation of a speaker’s epistemic model.

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