

Insubordination and lectal variation: Geographic and discursive variation of subjunctive complement constructions in Spanish

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to document the variation of a minor imperative construction in five varieties of Spanish and four discursive genres, and to represent this variation by proposing a constructional network that recognizes different degrees of abstraction in the form of schemas and subschemas. Our data comes from five varieties of Spanish (Argentinian, Caribbean, Chilean, Mexican and Peninsular) and four different genres: two spoken (conversations and interviews) and two written (novels and news reports). The results show that this minor imperative construction is tightly associated with spontaneous conversation and particularly with the Peninsular variety. In addition, not all specific usage types/subschemas are evenly distributed across varieties, as some of them seem to be almost exclusively found in Spain. We argue that some of these differences may be motivated by the opposition between *distancing* cultures and *rapprochement* cultures.

1. Introduction

Insubordination describes the phenomenon by which clauses with subordinate marking work as independent clauses (Evans, 2007). Most studies agree that insubordination is a typical phenomenon of spontaneous conversation (Evans, 2007; Dwyer, 2016), though it has not been empirically verified whether it also occurs in other spoken or written genres. Besides, as a phenomenon typical of spoken conversation, one might assume that it is subject to geographic variation, since informal registers are likely to vary across language varieties. However, the geographical dimension of insubordinate constructions remains largely unexplored. Moreover, most insubordinate constructions are highly polyfunctional, i.e. the same surface form can serve multiple functions. Thus, it is not easy to decide whether all these uses constitute a single construction or different constructions. The polyfunctional nature of these constructions adds a level of complexity to the study of variation of these structures, since differences between language varieties or discursive genres can, in principle, affect the construction as a whole or only some of its uses.

In order to explore the relationship of insubordination with

discursive and geographical variation, we will use the subjunctive complement constructions in Spanish as a case study. These constructions, which consist of an initial complementizer *que* 'that' followed by a clause with a subjunctive verb form, can express a wide range of functions, such as suggestions (1), curses (2), polite wishes (3), third-person requests (4), and requests that are obvious to the speaker¹ (5), amongst others.²

- (1) Suggestions²
[Conversation between two adult friends]

B: ¿ella vive cerca de tu casa?
'does she live near your house?'

A: al lado↓
'next door'

B: **entonces/ que** **vaya** **ella** **a verte**
then COMP go-3SG.PRS.SBJV she to see-INF.you
'then/ that she should come see you'

A: ah/ pero ella no va
'ah, but she is not going'

(Ameresco-La Habana)

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¹ In English, the construction < imperative + *already* > expresses a similar meaning, e.g. *Shut up already!*.

² The source is indicated at the end of the example. Examples without references come from introspection and are given to illustrate grammatical properties of the construction. For reasons of readability, only the clauses headed by *que* 'that' have been glossed following the Leipzig Glossing Rules. The clause with *que* is highlighted in bold. In Section 4, the corpus material is described in more detail.

- (2) Curses
[Conversation between teenagers]

J01: la llamamos al móvil
'let's call her on the phone'
G01: yo es que no me apetece ponerme a llamarla por teléfono ahora mismo a que no/
'it's just that I don't really feel like calling her on the phone right now, no'
J01: **que la den tronco**
COMP her-DAT.SG give-3SG.PRS.SBJV dude
'fuck her dude'
G01: no tía joder. ya que quedo con ella tronca no mola
'no girl, fuck. I'm going to meet up with her, it's not cool'

(COLA, Madrid)

- (3) Polite wishes
[Family conversation]

A: pues a lo mejor/ bueno, mami voy para arriba
'yes maybe/ well mum, I'm going upstairs'
B: andale hija
'go for it daughter'
que te vaya bien,
COMP you.DAT.SG go-3SG.PRS.SBJV good
'may everything go well with you'
órale, ya también me voy yo a hacer mis cosas.
'alright, I'm gonna do my things as well'
A: okay
'okay'
B: bye
'bye'
(Ameresco, Ciudad de México)

- (5) Requests that are obvious to the speaker
[Two friends are paying together at the canteen and J01 tries to calculate how much each of them has to pay but G01 tells her not to worry about it]

V01: nada más/
'nothing else/'
G01: naaaada más.. cuánto es/
'nothing else... how much is it/'
G01: verás
'you will see/'
V01: dos sesentaaa cinco
'two sixty five/'
G01: hala te pierdes
'omg you are getting lost/'
G01: @nombre cógelo
'@name take it/'
J01: a ver
'let's see/'
G01: y ponlo ahí arriba anda
'and put it up there go/'
ay @nombre
oh @name
que no te rayes
COMP no RFL overthink-3SG.PRS.SB
@name don't overthink it
esto es mío
'this is mine/'
V01: gracias
'thank you/'
(COLA, Madrid)

- (4) Third-person requests

[...] Era una casa de los años cincuenta, prácticamente cubierta por una gigantesca buganvilla. Marisa corroboró el número y tocó el timbre. Alguien accionó la puerta desde adentro y Marisa entró al patio.
—**¡Que suba!** —se escuchó gritar desde el segundo piso, y ella reconoció la voz.
Marisa subió los tres escalones al final del pasillo y entró en una amplia habitación con tres ventanas.

[...] It was a house from the fifties, practically covered by a gigantic bougainvillea. Marisa checked the number and rang the bell. Someone opened the door from inside and Marisa entered the patio.
—**She should come up!** — a scream was heard from the second floor, and she recognized the voice.
Marisa climbed the three steps at the end of the hall and entered a large room with three windows.

¡Que suba!
COMP come.up-3SG.PRS.SBJV
She should come up

(Elizabeth Subercaseaux, *La última noche que soñé con Julia*)

Table 1
The three semantic subschemas of the minor imperative construction.

| SUBSCHEMA | EXAMPLE | DEFINITION |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| Strong directive | <i>Que lo haga Diana</i> 'Diana should do it' | The speaker attempts to make an agent carry out an action. |
| Weak directive | <i>¡Que arreglen la carretera!</i> 'They should fix the road!' | The speaker desires that someone should do something, but does not impose an obligation. |
| Wish | <i>Que llegue ya el domingo</i> 'I hope Sunday comes soon' | The speaker wishes for the realization of the event in question, but does/can not influence its realization; and typically, there is no agent involved in the event. |

This study aims to document the variation of a minor imperative construction in five varieties of Spanish and four discursive genres, and to represent this variation by proposing a constructional network that recognizes different degrees of abstraction in the form of schemas and subschemas. Our data comes from five varieties of Spanish (Argentinian, Caribbean, Chilean, Mexican and Peninsular) and four different genres: two spoken (conversations and interviews) and two written (novels and news reports).

The results show that this minor imperative construction is tightly associated with spontaneous conversation and particularly with the Peninsular variety. In addition, not all specific usage types/subschemas are evenly distributed across varieties, as some of them seem to be almost exclusively found in Spain. We argue that some of these differences may be motivated by the opposition between *distancing* cultures and *rapprochement* cultures.

In Section 2, we present the formal features of what we will call the minor imperative construction, review previous analyses, and summarize the constructional approach proposed in (Pérez Fernández et al., 2021). Section 3 provides an overview of existing constructional research on geographical and discourse variation and discusses the opposition between *distancing* cultures and *rapprochement* cultures, which will be useful for motivating (some of) the geographical variation involved. Section 4 introduces the data and methodology used for the analysis. Section 5 reports on the empirical analysis of the data, presenting the normalized frequencies of the minor imperative construction and its subschemas across varieties and genres. In Section 6, we represent the lectal variation in a constructional network. The paper ends with a conclusion which links the findings with some general questions in the study of insubordination.

2. Subjunctive complement constructions

2.1. Formal properties

From a formal point of view, subjunctive complement constructions are always headed by the initial complementizer *que* 'that'. As the contrast between (6a) and (6b) shows, the omission of the initial complementizer leads to ungrammaticality. Moreover, the construction requires a subjunctive verb form, ruling out all indicative verb forms.³

- (6)
- a. **¡Que hable** Juan!
COMP talk-3SG.PRS.SBJV Juan
'Juan should talk'
- b. ***¡Hable** Juan!
talk-3SG.PRS.SBJV Juan

³ The complementizer *que* can also be followed by a clause taking the indicative mood, but then the imperative meaning is lost.

In general, the construction selects the present tense, as in (6a), but it occasionally also selects the pluperfect subjunctive, in particular when speakers complain about something that should have been done (or not) in the past, as in (7).

- (7) A: Díaz Ferrán defraudador, moroso con sus trabajadores,
'Díaz Ferrán: fraudster, defaulter with his employees,'
[...] saldrá de prisión cumpliendo un tercio de la condena por buen
'he will leave prison, having served one third of the sentence, for good'
comportamiento.
'behavior.'
- B: Por buen comportamiento?
'For good behavior?'
- Que lo hubiera tenido antes de**
COMP 3SG.OBJ.N have-3.SG.PLUPRF.SBJV before of
'He should have had it before'
- delinquir, no en la cárcel.**
commit.a.crime-INF not in the jail
'committing a crime, not in jail.'
- (Twitter, Spain)

Another possible verb tense is the present-perfect subjunctive, as in (8). Speakers use it to express "to express a wish about the realization of a past state of affairs whose outcome the speaker ignores at the time of the utterance" (Sansiñena, 2015: 65–66).

- (8) [A student is talking about one of their teachers at school]
- J02: qué bueno chicas que esté tardando mucho (...)
'it's great girls that she is taking so long (...)'
- J02: chicas hace quince minutos que deberíamos estar en clase
'girls the class should have started fifteen minutes ago'
- que haya faltado por favor**
COMP have.3SG.PRS.SBJV be.absent-PTCP please
'[I hope] she hasn't come (.). please'
- (BABS2-03, COLA BA) (Sansiñena 2015: 65–66)

Regarding the lectal variation of the construction, so far, most accounts of the minor imperative are based either on introspection or on spontaneous conversational data from the Peninsular variety. The only exception is found in the studies by Sansiñena (2015, 2017), which are based on data from Argentina and Chile. She finds no marked differences in these two varieties of Latin-American Spanish. However, no systematic study has been made comparing the Peninsular variety with the Latin-American counterparts and examining discourse genres other than colloquial conversation. The present study is meant to fill this gap.

2.2. Previous proposals

Subjunctive complement constructions meet the criteria to be considered a case of insubordination. First, they share formal features with regular subordinate clauses: they are headed by the complementizer *que* 'that', and select the subjunctive mood, which is typical of subordinate contexts (Bosque, 2012). They also meet the second criterion to be considered insubordinate: they are syntactically, pragmatically and prosodically independent. In examples (1–8), the *que* clauses are not a constituent of a previous syntactic unit (syntactic independence), they have their own illocutionary force (pragmatic independence), and they constitute an independent intonational unit (prosodic independence).

The meaning expressed by subjunctive complement constructions is in line with the functional typology of insubordination proposed by Evans (2007). In his crosslinguistic study, three macro-functions are identified (Evans, 2007: 368): (i) indirection and interpersonal control, including requests, commands, hints, warnings, and admonitions; (ii) modal functions of various types such as epistemic and evidential, but also deontic, exclamation and evaluation; and (iii) signaling presupposed material. The minor imperative construction can express the first two functions. From an illocutionary perspective, it expresses

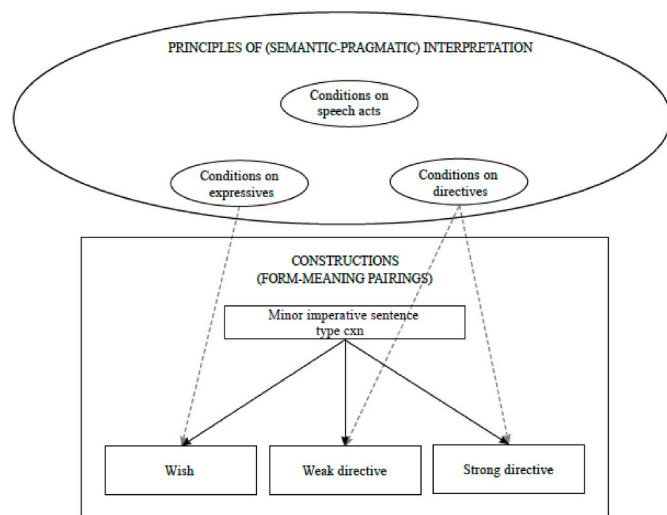


Fig. 1. Constructional network for the minor imperative construction, including the interaction with the felicity conditions on directive and expressive speech acts.

interpersonal control, and at the same time, it expresses the modal position of the speaker, which is that the speaker wishes the realization of a state of affairs (modal insubordination).

As Gras (2011: 355) notes, there is a notable overlap in these macro-functions: whereas the modal function describes the type of semantic representation involved (as unreal), the function of indirection and interpersonal control refers to the illocutionary values that the construction acquires in certain contexts. Accordingly, in the literature on insubordination, different authors have analyzed the construction in terms of modality (Verstraete et al., 2012; D’Hertefelt, 2018), sentence type (Gras, 2011, 2016) or illocutionary force (Sansiñena et al., 2015; Sansiñena, 2015, 2017). It needs to be stressed that there is no agreement on what specific meanings this construction expresses and to what extent these meanings depend on grammatical or pragmatic factors.

D’Hertefelt (2018) studies a similar construction in six Germanic languages (Danish, Dutch, English, German, Icelandic, and Swedish) and refers to it as *deontic*, as it “evaluates a potential state of affairs in terms of desirability” (2018: 63). She provides one of the most extensive taxonomies. The deontic construction consists of *controlled* and *uncontrolled deontic* sub-constructions. The former category is then further subdivided in *strong controlled deontics* (involving orders or prohibitions) and *weak controlled deontics* (comprising permissions, advice and challenges). *Uncontrolled deontics* are subdivided in *potential short-range wishes*, *potential long-range wishes*, *irrealis wishes* and *counterfactual wishes*.

Gras (2011) examines this clause type in Peninsular Spanish and distinguishes two homonymous constructions: the peripheral desiderative construction and the peripheral imperative construction. He points to two syntactic differences between them (Gras, 2011: 463): i) the agency of the subject and ii) the grammatical subject. While the peripheral imperative only admits agentive subjects, the peripheral desiderative can select non-agentive ones. In Gras (2016), this proposal is modified in favor of postulating a single construction which serves two main functions. The first function is described as a directive addressed to a third person, and the second function involves wishes, which can be addressed either to a second person or to a third person. The different interpretations depend on pragmatic conditions, specifically on the satisfaction of some relevant preparatory conditions for the given speech act.

Sansiñena (Sansiñena et al., 2015; Sansiñena, 2015, 2017) examines the minor imperative in data from Buenos Aires (Argentina) and Santiago de Chile (Chile), combining a corpus analysis and an online questionnaire. She is primarily interested in the differentiation between

subjunctive *que* clauses and the morphological imperative. Thus, taking an illocutionary-force perspective, she proposes a unified analysis for all the different uses of the minor imperative, positing a single construction. She refers to the construction as a *displaced directive* and argues that all uses violate at least one of the felicity conditions for directive speech acts. According to Searle (1969: 66), the felicity conditions for prototypical directives such as orders and commands are the following:

1. Propositional content condition: the speaker predicates a future act (A) of the interlocutor.
2. Preparatory condition:
 - a) The interlocutor is able to do A and the speaker believes that the interlocutor is able to do A.
 - b) It is not obvious to both speaker and interlocutor that the interlocutor will do A in the normal course of events of their own accord.
 - c) The speaker must be “in a position of authority over the interlocutor”.
3. Sincerity condition: the speaker wants the interlocutor to do A.
4. Essential condition: the utterance counts as an attempt to get the interlocutor to do A.

Finally, generative approaches focus on the syntactic properties of the different functions of *que* clauses (Demonte and Fernández Soriano, 2007, 2009). Even though there is no agreement regarding how many instances of *que* should be distinguished or what their functional value is, they provide arguments to distinguish between third-person imperatives and other uses of the complementizer. Nevertheless, as their scope is syntactic, the wide range of functions expressed by insubordinate subjunctive complement clauses are not accounted for.

3. A constructional approach

3.1. Subjunctive insubordinate complement constructions in a constructional network

In this section, we argue that a constructional approach can adequately integrate the insights from previous approaches into a unified analysis by (i) recognizing different levels of abstraction and (ii) combining constructions with general mechanisms of interpretation. As for the first aspect, our network model distinguishes two levels of abstraction. The first level is the schema, which captures the common formal features of every function (the initial complementizer *que* followed by a clause in the subjunctive mood) and their functional similarity (the desire of the speaker for the realization of the action/event described by the verb). This schema is consistent with the concept of a minor imperative type (Siemund, 2018). In particular, it can be seen as a minor imperative construction, which can convey both a directive and an expressive speech act (Pérez Fernández et al., 2021). At a lower level of abstraction, we recognize three subschemas (strong directives, weak directives and wishes), which correspond to three semantic types. In Table 1 the three semantic subschemas of the minor imperative construction are illustrated; in the subsequent subsections, they will be discussed more extensively.

We propose that the three subschemas are the result of the interaction between the general desiderative meaning of the construction and the felicity conditions on directive and expressive speech acts. Fig. 1 shows the constructional network for the minor imperative construction, including the contributions of the different types of felicity conditions. The three deontic semantic types are considered subschemas of one single parent schema, and through multidimensional links (represented in dotted lines) speakers arrive at each specific meaning. The use of ovals instead of rectangles in the representation of the principles of semantic-pragmatic interpretation highlights the fact that they do not pertain to the grammatical knowledge of the speaker, but to independently motivated general cognitive mechanisms.

3.2. Semantic types

3.2.1. Strong directives

Strong directives constitute an attempt by the speaker to make an agent carry out an action. Therefore, they require an agent present in the communicative situation that can carry out the action described in the propositional content. This category consists of commands, orders, entreaties, etc. The agent of the action can be either the addressee (9)⁴ or a third person present at the moment of speaking (10).

- (9) [A group of friends is singing and G01 tells J01 not put the music so loud]

G01: <C> nunca existió </C>
 ‘<C> never existed </C>’
 G01: <C> dime la verdad </C>
 ‘<C> tell me the truth </C>’
 J01: que no es lo mismoooo
 ‘that is not the same’
 G01: **que no lo subas tanto**
 COMP no it turn.up-2SG.PRS.SBJV so.much
 ‘don't turn it up so much’
que hay gente durmiendo
 ‘because there are people sleeping’
 J01: da igual tío
 ‘It does not matter dude’
 (COLA, Madrid)

- (10) [G03 is asking her classmates to explain to her what is the purpose of recording the conversations]

[...] Porque los van a agarrar. Se produjo otro silencio, que cortó Juan el peluquero:
 —**Que siga el veterinario**, pero contando más de cómo cogen.
 —No le hagas caso, Alberto —dijo la petisa Alicia, cebándose un mate—. ¿La parición también se produce en el agua?
 —Puede tener lugar en el agua o en tierra. En el primer caso, la madre enseguida lo empuja hacia la superficie para que aspire aire por primera vez. Sin embargo, la mayoría de las veces las hembras presienten el alumbramiento y se alejan de la manada y buscan un lugar retirado y tranquilo donde parir. Pueden venir mellizos, pero es más común que nazcan de a uno. Los terneros pesan al nacer entre 18 y 27 kilos.

[...] There was another silence, which was broken by Juan the hairdresser:
 —**Let the veterinary continue**, but telling more about how they copulate.
 —Don't pay any attention to him, Alberto, said little Alicia sipping some mate. Does the birth also take place in water?
 “It can take place in the water or on land. In the first case, the mother immediately pushes him to the surface so that he takes in air for the first time. However, most of the time the females sense the birth and move away from the herd and look for a secluded and quiet place to give birth. Twins can come, but it is more common for them to be born one by one. Calves weigh between 18 and 27 kilos at birth.

Que siga el veterinario
 COMP continue-3SG.PRS.SBJV the veterinary
 ‘let the veterinary continue’
 (Mempo Giardinelli, *Imposible equilibrio*)

Table 2

Parameters taken into account for each genre.

| | Spontaneous conversation | Interview | Novels | News |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|--------|------|
| Oral channel | + | + | - | - |
| Dialogue | + | + | +/- | - |
| Non predetermined turn taking | + | - | +/- | - |
| Subjective | + | + | + | - |
| Informal register | + | - | +/- | - |

3.2.2. Weak directives

With weak directives, the speaker wants somebody to perform an action, but in contrast with strong directives, no direct exertion of force is involved. The lack of force exertion can be due either to the speaker not being in a position of authority (11) and/or to the agent not being present in the communicative situation (12). This category includes permissions, suggestions, pieces of advice, etc.

⁴ Some strong directives express an additional meaning of intensification, as if the speaker takes it for granted that the directive force should have been clear from a previous event of ordering/commanding/etc.

- (11) [A group of women are discussing what to do with some leftovers]
- B: Pero ((lo)) tienes que meter en el congelador
‘but you have to put it in the freezer’
y en el congelador no cabe. </s><s>
‘and it does not fit in the freezer’
- A: **Que Diana lo haga**
COMP Diana it do-3SG.PRS.SBJV
‘Diana can do it’
- B: Mm Okey/ sí es cierto pero es que lo tiene que traer a su trabajo. </s><s>
‘mm okay/ yes it is true, but she needs to take it to her work’
(Ameresco, Ciudad de México)

- (12) [Two women are talking about the experience of a kid in the kindergarten]
- C: él va pa el corral/ él no está acostumbrado a verse en un corral con más niños/
‘he goes to the corral/ he is not used to seeing himself in a corral with more children’
él llora [el primer tiempo
‘he cries [straight away
- B: **que lllore]**
COMP cry-3SG.PRS.SBJV
‘let him cry’
- C: y los que están ya habituados cuando él llega nuevo lo ven como un juguete
‘and those who are already used to it when he arrives new, they see him as a toy’
(Ameresco, La Habana)

3.2.3. Wishes

With wishes, speakers evaluate a state of affairs as desirable, but they cannot influence its realization. Typically, the state of affairs concerns an event rather than an action involving an agent. Consider example (13), from a conversation between a taxi driver and a client. The taxi driver uses the minor imperative to express a good wish upon saying goodbye and close the exchange.

- (13) Taxi driver: ya
‘alright,’
que le vaya bien
COMP you.DAT.SG go-3SG.PRS.SBJV good
‘I hope everything goes well with you’
- Client: muchas gracias
‘thank you very much’
- Taxi driver: ya a usted
‘and to you’
(Ameresco, Iquique)

In case there is an agent, it is presented as not being in control over the realization of the event. This is exemplified in (14), where two women are talking about a young boy that should change his attitude. Speaker A wishes that the boy has joined God.

- (14) A misericordia de Dios ese muchacho Dios mío
‘mercy of God that boy my God’
que se vuelva a Dios
COMP RFL go.back-3SG.PRS.SBJV to God
‘that he returns to God’
ese muchacho por Dios
that boy for God
‘that boy by God’
(Ameresco, Barranquilla)

3.3. Variation and Construction Grammar

Studies dealing with lectal variation that take a constructional approach can be classified into two main groups: i) studies that focus on

the comparison of ‘alternating’ pairs of constructions, and ii) studies that focus on the use of one single construction. The strategy of the first group generally consists in integrating the lectal information as a feature of the constructions by describing the different contexts of use. One example is [Hoffmann \(2010\)](#) study of the variation between preposition stranding (*Who did you talk to?*) and pied piping (*To whom did you talk?*) in L1 British and L2 Kenyan English. Whereas in British English preposition stranding in relative clauses is more frequent in informal contexts, in Kenyan English pied piping is always used in relative clauses, regardless of the formality of the context. The second group of studies aims to determine the lectal variation in the way speakers make use of one single construction. For instance, [Levshina \(2012\)](#) compares the

Netherlandic and the Belgian variation in the use of the causative construction with *doen* ‘do’, as in *deze film doet me denken aan Fellini* ‘this film reminds me (lit. does me think) of Fellini’. Based on a hierarchical cluster analysis, first she models a hierarchical network for each language variety. Taking into account semantic, morphological, syntactic and other features, she distinguishes between a schema (with the shared features of all the observations) and several subschemas (which add specific features to the common ones). She concludes that the Netherlandic causative *doen* is much more frequent than its Belgian counterpart and is more semantically diverse than in the Belgian variety. In addition, it has a different structure with a distinctive cluster of preferred affective verbs and only sporadic clusters with other senses. Levshina hypothesizes that these and other differences can be explained by referring to varying degrees of entrenchment of the semantic frames and [Bybee’s \(2010\)](#) correlation of high token frequency with autonomy and pragmatic shifts, i.e. a unit can develop semantic and pragmatic extensions if it is frequent enough.

The approach proposed for the present case study follows the second line of research as it attempts to capture the variation of one single construction in five language varieties of Spanish and four discursive genres. This will enable us to identify at which level of the hierarchical network variation occurs.

4. Research questions, data and methodology

4.1. Research questions and data

We will ask three questions with regard to the geographical and discursive variation of the minor imperative construction that is the subject of this study:

- Does the minor imperative construction show any lectal variation, geographically and/or discursively?
- If it is available in every language variety, are the three subschemas distinguished in Section 3.2 homogeneously distributed across language varieties and genres? Should we account for cultural motivations in the different use of the construction?
- How can the variation observed be represented in a constructional network?

In order to answer these questions, the analysis relies on a large set of corpora that covers five varieties of Spanish (Argentinean, Caribbean, Chilean, Mexican and Peninsular) and four discourse genres (spontaneous conversation, interviews, novels and news reports). The selection of the corpora was made considering the model of oral vs written language proposed by Koch and Österreicher (1985). The distinction between oral and written language is not only restricted to how it is transmitted (orally or in writing), but it also involves considerations about its degree of planification. The organizing axis in this is the opposition between communicative immediacy and distance. This allows us to identify which parameters of spontaneous conversation are associated with the construction. Table 2 shows the parameters under investigation with each of the discursive genres chosen:

As a prototypical oral type of discourse with maximum immediacy we selected spontaneous conversation (oral, dialogic, with no predetermined turns, subjective and informal, shared context between speakers). At the other extreme, we selected news reports as representing a maximal communicative distance (written, monologic, objective and formal). In between these two poles, we selected two more genres, interviews and novels. On the one hand, interviews constitute a more formal type of oral language, as they consist of a structured conversation with predetermined turns (i.e. answers and questions). Novels, on the other hand, involve narrative events produced for aesthetic and recreational purposes but may also include the conversational dialogue of fictional characters.

The oral data were taken from already existing transcribed corpora and the written corpora were self-compiled with the help of the R package *stringi* (Gagolewski and Tartanus, 2016). Table 3 shows the sets of corpora used and their respective sizes:

The data for spontaneous conversation were extracted from the *Corpus Oral del Lenguaje Adolescente* (COLA, Jørgensen, 2016), which contains colloquial conversations among teenagers —between 13 and 19 years old— from Buenos Aires (Argentina), Santiago de Chile (Chile) and Madrid (Spain), and the *Corpus Ameresco* (Albelda & Estellés online), whose compilation is still in progress and which contains informal conversations in various dialects of Latin-American Spanish. The data available at the time of this study come from Tucumán (Argentina), Barranquilla (Colombia), La Habana (Cuba), Iquique (Chile), Ciudad de México, Monterrey (México) and Panamá.

The interview data were compiled from different corpora. We used the semi-directed interviews of the *Project for the Sociolinguistic Study of Spanish from Spain and America* (PRESEEA, 2014-) for the varieties from Chile (PRESEEA-Santiago de Chile), the Caribbean (PRESEEA-Puerto Rico), Mexico (PRESEEA-Ciudad de México) and Spain (PRESEEA-Alcalá de Henares). The Caribbean variety was expanded with sociolinguistic interviews from *Caribe: A Sociolinguistic Corpus of Caribbean Spanish* (Claes, 2012). For the Argentinean variety we selected the Argentinean sub-corpus of the *Macrocorpus de la norma lingüística culta de las principales ciudades del mundo hispánico* [Macrocorpus of the Linguistic Educated Norm in Major Cities of the Hispanic World] (Samper et al., 1998), as PRESEEA-Buenos Aires was not transcribed at the time the data were collected.

The narrative corpus is a self-compiled collection of novels written by contemporary Spanish-speaking authors and published in the last 30 years. The corpus is divided into five sub-corpora covering the varieties of Spanish selected for the study. Finally, the news corpus consists of news reports published in 2018 in national newspapers and tabloids from various countries representing the varieties included in the study.

4.2. Data extraction and methodology

Instances were extracted using regular expressions and the R package *stringi* (Gagolewski and Tartanus, 2016). Through regular expressions we were able to retrieve the *que* clauses that were located at the beginning of a paragraph or were preceded by punctuation. With the help of the Part-of-Speech tagger *TreeTagger* (Schmid, 2016) and the

Table 3
Corpora used for the analysis.

| Register | Variety | Existing corpora | Word count ^a | Total word count per variety in each genre | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|------------|------------|
| Spontaneous conversation | Argentinean | COLA- Buenos Aires | 168 231 | 282 397 | | |
| | | Ameresco-Tucumán | 114 166 | | | |
| | | Caribbean | Ameresco-Barranquilla | | 522 102 | 619 465 |
| | | | Ameresco-La Habana | | 79 316 | |
| | | | Ameresco-Panamá | | 18 047 | |
| | | Chilean | COLA-Santiago de Chile | | 188 369 | 528 394 |
| | Ameresco-Iquique | | 340 025 | | | |
| | Mexican | Ameresco-Ciudad de México | 84 515 | 333 751 | | |
| | | Ameresco-Monterrey | 249 236 | | | |
| | | Peninsular | COLA-Madrid | | 453 200 | 453 200 |
| | Interview | Argentinean | MC-NLCH | 144 618 | 144 618 | |
| | | | Caribbean | PRESEEA - Puerto Rico | | 362 402 |
| Caribe | | 1 235 889 | | | | |
| Chilean | | PRESEEA - Santiago de Chile | | 1 241 688 | 1241 688 | |
| Mexican | | PRESEEA - Ciudad de Mexico | | 3 120 200 | | |
| | | Peninsular | PRESEEA - Alcalá de Henares | | 1 103 157 | |
| Novels | Argentinean | | 2 132 485 | | | |
| | Caribbean | | 2 619 922 | | | |
| | Chilean | | 1 700 838 | | | |
| | Mexican | | 2 128 601 | | | |
| | Peninsular | | 1 727 905 | | | |
| News | Argentinean | | 2 420 579 | | | |
| | Caribbean | | 2 731 256 | | | |
| | Chilean | | 1 559 382 | | | |
| | Mexican | | 497 085 | | | |
| | Peninsular | | 3 697 089 | | | |

^a The word count for each corpus has been done using the R package *stringi* (Gagolewski and Tartanus, 2016). In this package words are defined as elements separated by spaces, punctuation marks, line starts or line endings.

language model Spanish-Ancora, we automatically annotated the mood of the verb forms in the clauses (indicative/subjunctive). Afterwards, a randomly selected sample was manually inspected. More specifically, we took a sample of 200 clauses taking the subjunctive mood and coded the instances of the minor imperative construction according to semantic type.

The transcription of spontaneous conversation did not include punctuation (only symbols for transcription purposes). Therefore, attempting to extract the in subordinate clauses automatically proved largely unfeasible. Thus, we automatically extracted all cases of *que* and then we manually inspected all instances to identify instances of the minor imperative construction. The resulting distributions of tokens obtained across varieties and genres are presented in Table 4 and Table 5:

In order to calculate the normalized frequencies, we had two methods. For the data extracted manually, we used a simple calculation:

Table 4
Distribution of functions across genres.

| | Strong directive | Weak directive | Wish | Total |
|--------------------------|------------------|----------------|------------|-------------|
| Spontaneous conversation | 283 | 223 | 146 | 652 |
| Interview | 23 | 65 | 41 | 129 |
| Novel | 60 | 128 | 91 | 279 |
| News | 15 | 107 | 33 | 155 |
| Total | 381 | 523 | 311 | 1215 |

Table 5
Distribution of functions across varieties.

| | Strong directive | Weak directive | Wish | Total |
|--------------|------------------|----------------|------------|-------------|
| Argentinean | 41 | 70 | 61 | 172 |
| Caribbean | 41 | 114 | 52 | 207 |
| Chilean | 23 | 62 | 54 | 139 |
| Mexican | 35 | 113 | 44 | 192 |
| Peninsular | 241 | 164 | 100 | 505 |
| Total | 381 | 523 | 311 | 1215 |

(number of instances/total number of words in the corpus) * 100 000 words. As the data extracted through samples did not allow us to calculate normalized frequencies the standard way, we obtained them through estimations at different levels: the sample, the number of sentences with the subjunctive mood and the corpus. Afterwards we normalized them to 100 000 words. With the two ways of calculation we obtained comparable results. By summing the frequencies obtained in each subcorpus and then dividing the result by the number of language varieties or the number of discursive genres, we were able to analyze the variation.

5. Variation across discursive genres and language varieties

The figures given below represent the normalized frequencies of the minor imperative construction across discursive genres and language varieties:

As Fig. 2 shows, the minor imperative construction is clearly associated with spontaneous conversation. Even though it is also possible to find it in the other genres, the frequency there is very low. Looking at the variation across varieties, in Fig. 3, the Peninsular variety has by far the highest frequencies. The other four varieties show very low frequencies with no remarkable differences between them. In this sense, it can be argued that the minor imperative construction is typical of Peninsular Spanish.

Looking now at the distribution of the different subschemas across genres in Fig. 4, we can see that the three subschemas are mostly found

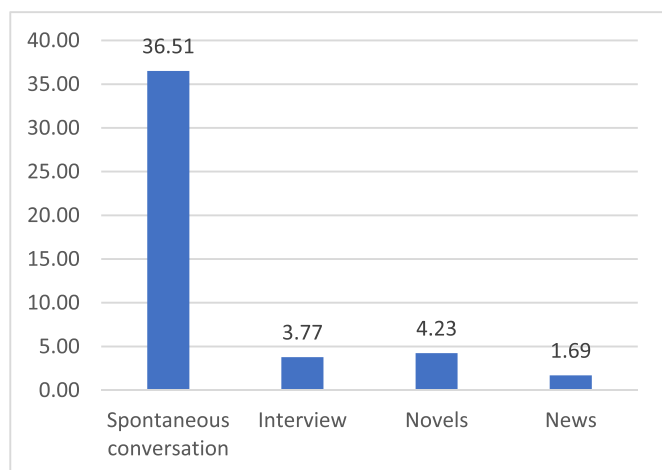


Fig. 2. General frequency across discursive genres.

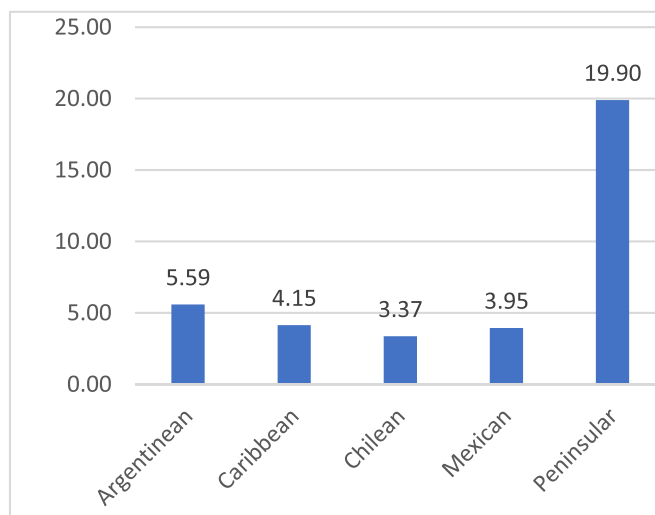


Fig. 3. General frequency across language varieties.

in spontaneous conversation:

Strong directives seem to be the subschema most restricted to spontaneous conversation. The relative absence of strong directives in other genres can be explained by the high degree of obligation associated with this subschema, and thus its strong connection with contexts of direct interaction. Consider example (15), from a conversation in which two friends fighting to tell a story.

(15) [J02 is telling a story and G01 tells her to shut up because she wants to tell the story herself and tells J02 to shut up]

G01: [ja ja ja ja ja]
 '[ha ha ha ha ha]'
 J01: espera ja ja ja ja ja
 'wait ha ha ha ha ha'
 J02: [cuando me enganchó la cabeza]
 '[when he hooked my head]'
 G01: [se que%]
 '[I know what%]'
 J02: [lo voy a contar yo]
 '2 [I'm going to tell it]'
 G01: [se quedó con media cabeza cortada]
 '[she was left with half a severed head]'
 G01: se quedó con media cabeza fuera del autobús sabes/
 'she was left with half a head out of the bus you know /
 J02: lo voy a contar yo
 'I'm going to tell it'
 G01: **que te calles puta**
 COMP RFL shut.up-2SG.PRS.SBJV bitch
 'shut up bitch'
 cerda asquerosaa ja ja ja ja
 'disgusting sow ha ha ha ha'
 J02: igual que yo coño
 'just like me damn'
 (COLA Madrid)

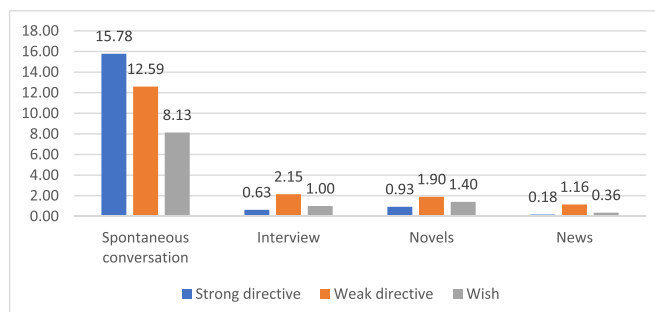


Fig. 4. The three semantic types across genres.

Strong directives expressed by the minor imperative construction are a very direct form of imposition. As opposed to other directive speech acts, they are particularly tactless and pose a high face threat, which only makes them relatively suitable in relations of extreme intimacy or extreme hierarchy between co-present interactants. In interviews, the other dialogic genre under study, they could give rise to an undesirable conflict situation and it would be a violation of the Tact Maxim (Leech, 2016).

In interviews, novels and news the numbers of the three subschemas are very low. Weak directives seem to be the most frequent subschema in these genres. In interviews, they generally appear as expressing suggestions, like in example (16).

- (16) Informante: y por lo mismo algunas cosas se ponen más incómodas pues o sea ¿cachái? onda que un viejo nos mire feo porque no hemos barrido las hojas de la vereda, y huevadas. ¡que eh mi vereda!; **Que cada uno haga lo que quiera con la suya!**

Informant: and for that reason some things get more uncomfortable, that is, fuck? like an old man giving us looks because we have not swept the leaves from the street. it is my street!
Everyone should do whatever they want with their own!

| | | | | |
|------------|--------------------------|-----------|------------|----------------------------|
| que | cada uno haga | lo | que | quiera con la suya! |
| COMP | each one do-3SG.PRS.SBJV | 3SG.OBJ.N | that | want with the theirs |

‘everyone should do whatever they want with their own’ (PRESEEA-Santiago de Chile)

The few weak directives that appear in novels and news are mostly found in contexts of direct reported speech. In novels they are found in passages that mimic colloquial conversation, as in example (17):

- (17) — Es decir: nada.
— Hablar con ella, supongo.
— Es tu casa. Ella debe aceptar tus condiciones. Si no le gusta, **que se vaya a otra parte**.
No es una indigente.

‘—That is to say: nothing.
—Talk to her, I guess.
—It is your house. She must accept your conditions. If she doesn't like it, **she should go somewhere else**. She is not a pauper.’

| | | | | | |
|------------|-----------|-----------------|----------|-------------|--------------|
| que | se | vaya | a | otra | parte |
| COMP | REFL | go-3SG.PRS.SBJV | to | other | place |

(Jorge Volpi, *El fin de la locura*)

In the genre of news, the construction is used to repeat the exact words of the speaker being quoted. For instance, in the following piece of news, the journalist is directly quoting what the president of the Senate has said.

- (18) La presidenta del Senado, Gabriela Michetti, fue captada durante el debate por la legalización del aborto por un micrófono abierto en el momento en que insultaba al jefe del interbloque Cambiemos, Luis Naidenoff, y cuando festejaba por el triunfo del ‘No’. ‘Es un pelotudo, **que no rompa las pelotas**’, se escuchó decir a la Vicepresidenta [...]

‘The president of the Senate, Gabriela Michetti, was caught during the debate over the legalization of abortion by an open microphone at the time when she insulted the head of the opposition Cambiemos, Luis Naidenoff, and when she was celebrating the triumph of the ‘No’ side. ‘He is a jerk, he should not break the balls’ the Vice President was heard to say first [...]

| | | | |
|------------|-----------|--------------------|--------------------|
| que | no | rompa | las pelotas |
| COMP | no | break-3SG.PRS.SBJV | the balls |

‘He should not break the balls.’
(News, Argentina)

Now, turning to variation of the subschemas across language varieties (Fig. 5), the most remarkable result here is that Peninsular Spanish shows the highest frequencies in every subschema overall. This is overwhelmingly so in the case of strong directives, which is the most frequent subschema in Spain and there, it is roughly ten times more frequent than in the other varieties (Argentina, the Caribbean, Chile and Mexico). In the other four language varieties, the frequencies of every subschema are by far lower, with no great differences among them. Unlike in the Peninsular variety, the most frequent subschema is weak directives.

Regarding the use of strong directives taking a second-person grammatical subject, as shown in example (19), is practically exclusive of the Peninsular variety.

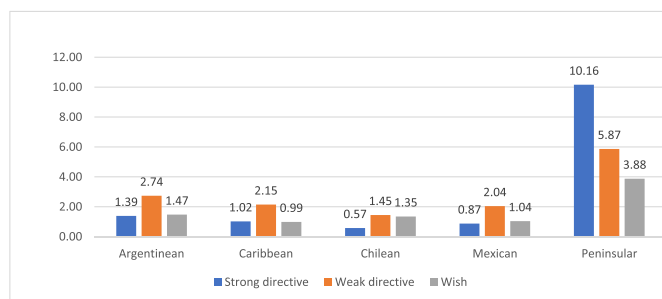


Fig. 5. The three semantic types across language varieties.

- (19) G01: no me extraña no tengo fuerza chaval
 'I'm not surprised, I don't have any strength man'
 llevo dos partidos de fútbol hoy
 'I've played two football matches today'
 J02: y eso/
 'how is that?'
 G01: pues llevo desde las cuatro hasta laas. siete chaval. jugando allí
 'well I've been from four until seven man, playing there'
 G01: luego todo el mediodía
 'that is all midday'
 J02: anda
 'come on'
que no te inventes paridas
 COMP no REFL make.up-2SG.PRS.SBJV stupid.things
 'don't make up stupid things'
 fuera
 'get out'
 (COLA, Madrid)

In the other language varieties, the very few cases of strong directives take third-person grammatical subjects. These can be direct orders addressed to a third person present in the conversation, as in (20), or indirect orders about a third party (e.g. a cat) addressed to the interlocutor, as in (21).

- (20) [Two teenagers try to convince a third one to say something for the recording.]
- GV1: adiós
 'bye'
 G03: gracias por gracias por su
 'thanks for thanks for your'
 G03: [partici%]
 '[particip%]'
 G05: [esperá esperá]
 '[wait wait]'
 Que hable
 COMP talk-2SG.PRS.SBJV
 'he should talk'
 G03: gracias por su participación
 <navn>alejandro brosch</navn>
 GV1: gracias a vos
 'thanks to you'
 G05: qué qué
 'what what'
 (COLA, Buenos Aires)

- (21) [Family conversation, A and B are annoying the family cat.]
- C: ¿No saben si ya se bajó el gato?
 'don't you know if the cat is already downstairs?'
 A: Ahí está
 'there it is'
 C: **Que no se salga**
 COMP no REFL go.out-3SG.PRS.SBJV
 'don't let it go'
 B: Ay/ gracias
 'oh / thanks'
 (Ameresco, Monterrey-México)

6. Representing variation in a constructional network

This section attempts to represent the geographical and discursive variation examined as part of a constructional representation of the minor imperative construction. As mentioned in Section 3.2, variation in constructional approaches either consider the lectal information an additional feature of the construction or represent it in the form of different hierarchical networks for each lect. Our results show that the minor imperative construction is available in every language variety as well as in different discursive genres. Nevertheless, when frequencies are considered, significant differences arise, particularly at the level of the subschemas. This suggests that variation may occur at different levels in a network instead of as a feature of the construction as a whole.

Across discursive genres, the first observation that needs to be made is that the minor imperative construction seems to be practically constrained to spontaneous conversation: all three subschemas are most frequent in spontaneous conversation and least in the category of news. We could argue that as interactional immediacy decreases, the probability of finding this construction drops, which can be attributed to a strong link between this construction's potentially face-threatening value (especially with strong directive uses) and a corresponding requirement of direct interaction (for this value to be effective).

Regarding geographical variation, the Peninsular variety shows the highest frequencies, with the other four varieties having comparable low frequencies of use. This suggests that the network of the Peninsular variety is different from that of the Latin-American varieties. Focusing on the subschemas across language varieties, one of the biggest differences is found in the use of strong directives, as the overwhelming majority is found in Peninsular Spanish while in the other four varieties it is almost absent. This can be taken as evidence for a deep entrenchment of this subschema in the Peninsular variety, i.e. the strong directive use seems to be the main motivation for the construction's existence in Peninsular Spanish. The different levels of entrenchment the Peninsular variety and the Latin American varieties are represented in Fig. 6. A higher level of entrenchment is represented in bold and lower frequency is represented by a dashed rectangle.

These results can be explained by referring to the distinction between *rapprochement* cultures and *distancing* cultures (cf. Barros García and Terkourafi, 2014). It has been proposed that Latin-American cultures can be described as *distancing* cultures, in contrast to the Peninsular Spanish culture, which is a culture of *rapprochement* (Haverkate, 2004; Briz Gómez, 2004; 2010). In the Peninsular Spanish culture, especially in spontaneous conversation, signs of involvement and affiliation with the interlocutor are considered something positive, whereas indirectness and moderation signal distance between interlocutors and are therefore regarded as negative. By contrast, in Latin-American cultures deference and respect are highly valued and therefore special attention needs to be paid to the interlocutors' face.

On the one hand, Latin-American speakers primarily use politeness to generate respect and maintain face. This in turn translates into the avoidance or softening of face-threatening acts, especially with requests, where mitigation and indirectness are preferred. Strong directives are very imposing ways of requesting and can constitute a corresponding threat to the interlocutor's face. This would be considered impolite in Latin-American cultures. Therefore, speakers of these varieties avoid them and prefer the use of attenuation and indirect speech acts to show respect for the interlocutor. By contrast, in Peninsular Spanish there is a preference for familiarity, spontaneity and closeness; deference is more implicitly shown than on record. As a result, speakers tend to be direct and use little or no attenuation when producing requests. Very similar results are found in other studies: for instance, Puga Larraín (1997) argues that Chileans make more use of mitigation, kindness and courtesy than speakers of Peninsular Spanish, and Curcó and De Fina (2002: 5) note that Mexicans avoid the use of the non-attenuated imperative more than speakers of Peninsular Spanish because they perceive it as impolite. Importantly, the cultural differences identified are shown mostly in

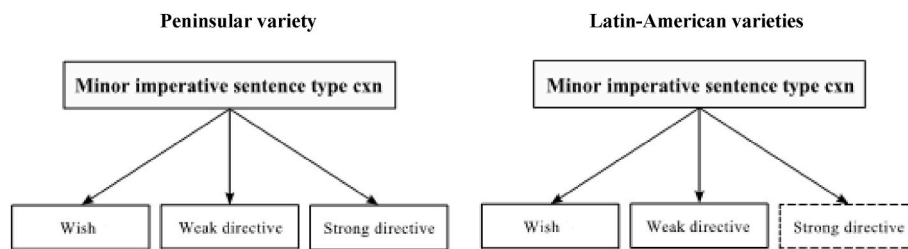


Fig. 6. Representation of the minor imperative construction and its subschemas across varieties of Spanish.

spontaneous conversation and in more formal registers differences are less obvious.

7. Conclusion

The present paper has discussed the geographical and discursive variation in the use of the minor imperative construction. Building on a constructional network that considers different semantic types as subschemas of a more abstract overarching schema, we have argued that variation occurs both at the level of the construction as a whole (in terms of overall frequency of use) as well as at the level of the subschemas (with strong directive uses being most popular in Peninsular Spanish and almost absent in Latin-American varieties). All subschemas are more frequent in spontaneous conversation and in Peninsular Spanish, but not in the same way. Strong directives seem to be a distinctive subschema for spontaneous conversation in Peninsular Spanish whereas weak directives show less restrictions.

Overall, we have seen that even though some in subordinate constructions are typical of a given language variety, the differences across usages are not evenly distributed. In this case, the subschema of strong directives is used less in the language varieties of Latin America for cultural reasons. Regarding the genre sensitivity of in subordination, the low frequency of use of the minor imperative construction in interviews indicates that its occurrence is determined by the degree of formality and the relation between interlocutors and not by the channel (oral vs. written). Thus, we could argue that there is an association between in subordination and communicative immediacy. The very few examples found in news and novels are cases of direct quotation or fictional (spontaneous) conversation.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Abbreviations

| | |
|------|------------------------|
| 1SG | first person singular |
| 2SG | second person singular |
| 3 PL | third person plural |
| 3SG | third person singular |
| COMP | complementizer |
| DAT | dative |
| IMP | imperative |
| N | neuter |

| | |
|--------|-------------|
| OBJ | object |
| PRS | present |
| PTCP | participle |
| PLUPRF | pluperfect |
| SBJV | subjunctive |
| INF | infinitive |

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