A semantic features analysis for the Subjunctive mood

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Abstract

It is often argued that semantic contrastive pairs (such as e.g. realis/irrealis) are too coarse to capture the distinction between the indicative and the subjunctive cross-linguistically. In this paper, it is suggested that the traditional terms *realis* and *assertion* can account for the semantic differentiation between the present indicative, the future indicative and the subjunctive on the condition that these traditional and intuitively "strong" designations are jointly employed in order to give a more articulated description of the semantic properties of distinct temporal and mood verbal forms[1].

1. Foreword

The grammatical term *subjunctive* (the sub-jugated < syntactically sub-ordinated mood) implies that the subjunctive is the mood of subordinated clauses (an idea deriving from the antiquity that has been maintained in the modern relevant literature[2]), despite the fact that the mood can (under certain semantic conditions) occur in main clauses as well. In what follows, I will be discussing the

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[1] The paper is a modified version of the Chapter 2 of my thesis which bears the title "a diachronic and typological approach to the Modern Greek subjunctive complementation". In accordance with the main topic of my thesis, I focus on the Modern Greek language in this paper as well.

[2] Cf. Palmer (2001: 108): "Jespersen (1924:314) noted that one of the functions of the subjunctive is simply that of being subordinate, in that it is typically the mood used in subordinate clauses. It is, in fact, no coincidence that the term 'subjunctive' is a translation of the Classical Greek *hypotaktiké* which literally means subordinate. Indeed, in Latin, the subjunctive was increasingly used in subordinate sentences even where there seemed to be no notion of irrealis…". Palmer (ibidem) points out that "however, the subjunctive is also used in main clauses, and its uses there are rather better more simply explained than its uses in subordinate clauses…". In accordance with Palmer's statement, I deal not only with the dependent but also with the non-dependent usages of the subjunctive.

semantic content of the subjunctive mood in an attempt to set down distinctive semantic features for the subjunctive mood.

2. The subjunctive as non-declarative: a cross-linguistic characteristic.

The occurrence of the subjunctive mood in main clauses, when these express a special illocutionary force, is a phenomenon which is cross-linguistically attested; For instance, the non-dependent subjunctive can be adhortative:

(1)[3]
a. *(Che) Dio ci aiuti!* (Italian)
   *(That) God us help.*Subj.
b. *(Que) Dieu nous aide!* (French)
   *(That) God us help.*Subj.
c. *Gott helfe uns!* (German)
   God help.Subj. *us!*
d. *God help us!* (English)
   God help.Subj. *us!*

(2)[4]
gn-ank'   tun! (Armenian)
*go.*1Pl.Subj.Fut. *house.*Nom.
"Let's go home!"

(3)
να του το πεις! (Modern Greek)
na   tu   to   pis!
M.Prt*. him*.Gen. *it*.Acc. *tell.*2Sg.
"You can/should tell it to him"

or prohibitive (after a negator):

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[3] Examples taken from Giorgi & Pianesi (1997:195) with a slight modification of the glosses. In their German example, I substituted the form "hilfe" (sic) with the form "helfe" of the so called "Konjunktiv I".
[4] Dum-Tragut 2009: 239 with a slight modification of the glosses.

(4)

Que personne ne parte!   (French)

*that nobody   not leave.*3Sg.Subj.Pres.

"Nobody should leave!"

(5)[5]

Să   nu   pleci!   (Romanian)

M.Prt. *not leave.*2Sg.Pres.

"Don't leave!"

(6)

no me   hagas   enfadar!   (Spanish)

*not me make.*2Sg.Subj.Pres. *anger.*Inf.

"Don't make me angry!"

Following the few examples above, we can come to the conclusion that cross-linguistically the subjunctive has similar "function" in non-dependent environments, i.e. similar illocutionary force. In the same way, one can observe that the subjunctive does not occur in *declarative* clauses, i.e. in clauses in which indicative mood surfaces[6]:

(7)[7]

a. Gianni è/*sia arrivato.   (Italian)

 Gianni be.3Sg.Ind./*Subj. *arrived*

b. Jean est/*soit arrivé   (French)

Gianni be.3Sg.Ind./*Subj. *arrived*

c. Hans ist/*sei angekommen   (German)

Hans be.3Sg.Ind./*Subj. *arrived*

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[5] Tomić 2006: 537, with slightly modified glosses.

[6] I will (try to) provide a definition of *declarative* with regard to the notion of *assertion* in the next sections. For the time being, let us accept (for methodological reasons) that a declarative clause is every non-dependent clause the predicate of which is in the indicative mood. Circular as this definition may be, it posits a concrete criterion at this point.

[7] Cf. Giorgi & Pianesi 1997:194, with modified glosses. I have also corrected their French example: "Jean a/*ait arrivé" (sic).

     d. John has/*have arrived   (English)

     Hans be.3Sg.Ind./*Subj. *arrived*

     "John has arrived"

This is an interesting piece of evidence; the subjunctive is not allowed in declarative clauses, where the only mood which can occur is the indicative mood. It goes then without saying, that the indicative and the subjunctive have different functions because they have a different "meaning", i.e. semantic content. Our goal is then to seek out wherein this difference lies.

3. Defining mood and modality

We routinely say that the subjunctive is a mood. But what does the term *mood* exactly designate? Before we proceed to the semantic analysis of the subjunctive mood, it is important to provide a concrete definition of the terms *mood* and *modality*, given the highly controversial topics in this field of research and the plethora of terms which have been used in a different way by various scholars.

In terms of morphology, *mood* is associated with the verbal paradigms[8]. In many cases, e.g. in ancient and many modern Indo-European languages, mood is understood as a verbal category marked by inflectional affixes added to the stem of a verb. In other languages, e.g. in agglutinating languages, suffixes may denote what modal verbs or mood endings denote in other languages and therefore mood can be understood as a separate suffix[9]. In terms of semantic

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[8] Cf. Booij [2]2007: 137.

[9] Cf. Göksel & Kerslake (2005: 305, with their glosses):

    Ankara-ya   git-*meli*-yim.
    Ankara-DAT go-OBLG-1SG
    'I *must* go to Ankara.'

The Turkish verbal form semantically corresponds to an English *modal verb+ bare infinitive* construction or to a Mod. Greek *impersonal verb + na-subjunctive* construction (πρέπει να πάω...: (*prépi na páo*) "I have to go"). Even if it dubious whether this category should be called *mood* or not, it is self-evident that the Turkish suffix, like mood or modal verbs, is an instantiation of modality, which we will examine in this chapter. However, since these forms are part of the verbal paradigm of Turkish, it does not seem inappropriate to call them moods as well. Cf. also Lewis (1967: 132ff) on the so called subjunctive (-optative) in Turkish.

function, mood is considered to be a grammatical instantiation of modality[10].

Modality is not an easy-to-explain term[11]; In general, modality can be defined as the linguistic facet that "is concerned with the status of the proposition that describes the event"[12] or (in a more precise way) as the category "covering indications either of a kind of speech act or of the degree of certainty with which something is said"[13]. As a matter of fact, modality is better reflected on its subsets[14]:

a. *epistemic modality* is associated with the speaker's degree of certainty or "attitude to the truth value or factual status of the proposition"[15], e.g. "John may be in his office"[16] or "Mary must have a good reason for being late"[17]; Coates (1983: 18) puts forward that the epistemic modality "is concerned with the speaker's assumptions or assessment of possibilities and, in most cases, it

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[10] Cf. Giorgi & Pianesi (1997:205): "Following many authors (see, among others Farkas 1985, 1992a, 1992b; Portner 1994) we consider mood to be a manifestation of modality". Cf. also Bybee et al. (1994: 181): "modality is the conceptual domain, and mood is its inflectional expression".

[11] Interestingly, even authors who deal with this issue often hesitate to formulate a strict definition of the term; for example cf. Bybee et al. (1994: 176): "it may be impossible to come up with a succinct characterization of the notional domain of modality. Cf. also Portner (2009: 1): "This is a book about semantic theories of modality. I am not too comfortable trying to define modality, but a definition provides a useful place to start: modality is the linguistic phenomenon whereby grammar allows one to say things about, or on the basis of, situations which need not be real."

[12] Palmer 2001: 1.

[13] Matthews 2005 (= 1997): 228.

[14] Since I am not aiming at a detailed treatment of the notion of *modality* and since there is no unanimity among the scholars when it comes to this term, I make a tripartite classification of modality, employing the traditional (and more familiar) terms *epistemic*, *deontic* and *dynamic* for the sub-categorization of modality. There are of course many different classifications in accordance with the main interests of each scholar (if he/she focuses on syntax, semantics or philosophy etc.); Cf. Palmer 2001: 24-85, Bybee et al. 1994: 176 -181 and Portner 2009: 135-137.

[15] Palmer 2001: 24. However this particular definition is employed for describing the "*propositional modality*", an umbrella term for both "*epistemic*" and "*evidential*" modality: "The basic difference between epistemic modality and evidential modality is that with epistemic modality speakers make judgments about the factual status of the proposition, whereas with evidential modality they indicate what is the evidence that they have for it.". Since such a detailed analysis is not decisive to my examination, I will employ the term "*epistemic modality*" for what Palmer describes as "*propositional modality*", as it is actually the case in the relevant literature.

[16] Palmer 2001: 25.

[17] Portner 2009: 135.

indicates the speaker's confidence (or lack of confidence) in the truth of the proposition expressed.".

b. *deontic modality* "is traditionally defined in terms of permission and obligation (Kratzer 1978: 111; Palmer 1986: 96 – 97). In more general terms, however, it may be defined as an indication of the degree of the moral desirability of the state of affairs expressed in the utterance, typically, but not necessarily, on behalf of the speaker."[18], e.g. "The rich must give money to the poor"[19] or "you cannot enter this room" (it is not permitted).

c. *dynamic modality* denotes an ability or willingness ascribed to the speaker/subject of the clause (the subject *can*/*is able to* do sth. or *wants* to do sth.) e.g. "That kid *can* sing like Frank Sinatra" or "Peter is perfectly *able* to solve this problem if he wants to"[20]. I employ the term in a rather restricted way, including only ability and willingness (e.g. volitional predicates) therein. I consider every manifestation of necessity or potentiality as deontic modality[21].

Deontic and dynamic modality compile the group of *root* modality. In the same vein, another definition for *root modality* is that it comprises the modality instantiations which do not pertain to epistemic modality[22]. This is a useful distinction with regard to the analysis of complementation, given that the +/- epistemic feature is considered to be crucial for the mood value of the verb of a complement clause.

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[18] Nyuts 2006: 4.
[19] Portner 2009: 135.
[20] Both ex. in Nyuts 2006: 3.
[21] Cf. Nyuts (2006: 3) also treats cases of necessity or potentiality/probability as dynamic modality, when the subject of the clause is the cause and the source of the necessity or probability etc. e.g. "I must find a solution for this problem soon now". This distinction is not useful in my analysis because it semantically splits predicates which otherwise have similar meaning, e.g. there is no decisive argument for dividing the modal verb *must* (when it is not epistemic) in a deontic "he must go to his job" and to a dynamic like in the first example above. Palmer 2001:9 regards deontic and dynamic modality as the two main types of what he calls *event* modality. In his schema, deontic modality is conditioned by factors external to the relevant individual, while dynamic modality is bound with factors internal to him. However, he does not make any reference to the notion of *necessity* when he deals with dynamic modality (ibidem: 76ff.)
[22] Cf. Matthews 2005 (= 1997): 324 and Portner 2009: 138f. cf also Coates 1983: 20f.

Modality is expressed in many ways: Modality meanings may derive from the meaning of a proposition, e.g. from conditionals or habitual and generic sentences[23]. It can be lexicalized in predicates such as the verbs *think, believe* (epistemic), in adjectives after copula verbs e.g. *it is obligatory that…* (deontic), *he is able to…*(dynamic) or in (modal) adverbs such as *perhaps*, *maybe*, *possibly*. Modal auxiliaries (e.g. in English) are verbal forms which serve as modality markers. When combined with a lexical verb, the proposition conveys a modality meaning.

Mood could be equally described as the counterpart of the modal verbs in the domain of inflectional morphology. According to Palmer (2001: 104) languages tend to exhibit either modal verbs or the typical mood indicative/subjunctive distinction; when they co-occur, it seems that these systems function at the expense of the other, e.g. the rise of the modal verbs in English was fostered by the simultaneous demise of the inflectional mood system. On these grounds, he suggests that "in general, the two are not likely to co-exist, or that, if they do, one will, in time, replace the other."

The connection between modality and mood is not direct. First of all, the modality is a notional term, which can be analyzed in various ways while mood is an observable grammatical phenomenon. Secondly, modality is encoded in lexemes and it can be lexicalized in predicates while mood is either inflectional or (as it is the case in Modern Greek (MG) and other Balkan languages) it is marked by a mood particle preceding the verbal form. Third, the mood categories, such as the rudimentary *indicative* and *subjunctive* moods, cannot perfectly match with the modality categories[24]. By way of example, a non-dependent subjunctive[25] may manifest root modality but a dependent subjunctive may also appear, as we will see, after epistemic predicates in some languages, e.g. in Italian:

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[23] Portner 2009: 4f. Modality can also be *covert* e.g.: *Tim knows how to solve a problem* (ibidem: 5).

[24] Indicative is often regarded as the mood of epistemic modality while the subjunctive is the mood of root-modality, cf. Philippaki-Warburton & Spyropoulos 2004: 807, where they assume that the Modern Greek indicative/subjunctive distinction grammaticalizes the distinction between epistemic and deontic modality.

[25] Cf. ex. (1) – (6).

(8)[26]

*Credo che lei sia/*e` stanca.* (Italian)

I think she is-SUB/*IND tired.

"I think that she is tired"

One should however bear in mind that in the most Romance and Germanic languages (as well as in MG) the epistemic predicate THINK selects a declarative clause the verb of which is in the indicative mood. Even within Italian, the verb *credere* selects a dependent clause with its verb in indicative, if both the matrix and the embedded verbs are in the first person:

(9)[27]

*Credo che io sono/*sia stanco.* (Italian)

'I believe I am-IND/*SUB tired.'

"I believe (that) I'm tired"

In both cases (8-9), the label of the modality category of the predicate remains the same, namely *epistemic*, this is however not especially informative with regard to the mood of the dependent clause; It rather implies that there is a subtle nuance in the mood selection, which is definitely associated with the degree of certainty ("more" or "less" epistemic) of the speaker but it is not conditioned solely by the modality category itself.

Similarly, the indicative is often considered "to be the mood of main assertions and non-modalized (or less modalized) embedded clauses"[28]; however, the indicative does emerge in epistemic constructions, e.g. in sentences like "It is possible that he is in London" whereas a French equivalent employs the subjunctive in the dependent clause: *Il est possible qu'il le fasse* (*fasse* 3Sg.Subj.Pres < *faire* "to do") "It is possible that he'll do it". Obviously, this suggests, once again, that the use either of indicative or of subjunctive should be explored not (only) in the type of modality but in the degree of modality. Modality is a kind of continuum[29] and therefore, any effort to align every

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[26] Quer 2009: 1783 with his glosses.
[27] Quer 2009: 1783, Fn.1. with his glosses.
[28] Quer 2009: 1781.
[29] Cf. Willmott 2007: 13.

modality phenomenon with a precise modality category is erroneous. Thus, mood analysis demands a more fine-grained terminology, based on semantic features. Nevertheless, I think that, since mood is defined as an aspect of modality, one should not overlook this topic, as it is the case in many (syntactic and historical) treatments of mood distribution. What is more, we now have a common ground concerning the terms that I have defined up to now.

4. The semantic features *assertion* and *realis*

Let us now return to our initial discussion about the subjunctive. We saw in examples (1) – (7) that the subjunctive does not occur in declarative clauses. I called *declarative* any clause the verb of which is in indicative. Declarative clauses are assertions: By this term I treat any utterance presenting a fact which can find its place in the real or in any possible world, what we normally[30] call *statement* (and what is not an order, a wish or an utterance performing a similar illocutionary act). Additionally, *assertion* can be defined as the commitment of the speaker to the truth of his utterance in a communication performance[31]. That

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[30] I think that Seuren (2009: 57) has a point, when he criticizes some very baffling theories: "In the hands of the philosophers, the concept of truth varies with the kind of ontology they embrace. But ordinary speakers of natural languages are, on the whole, unaffected by philosophical analyses. They have their own intuitive, perhaps even naive, 'theory' of what is and what is not the case, what kinds of objects populate the world and hence what is and is not true when they make assertions in their language. The philosophers may think they know better, but as long as they are unable to brainwash every speaking individual in this world, from the Amazonian Indians to the members of the Concertgebouw Orchestra, there is an *empirical reality* to be discovered by the scientist and constituted by how humans, as a species, construe sense data and construct a world theory".

[31] One of the most influential approaches, concerning the philosophical notion of *assertion* is the work of Stalnaker (1978), who suggested that assertion is any new proposition added by the participants of a conversation in the common ground, i.e. to the set of propositions that the participants regard as being true. The premise is that "the agent of the assertive speech act, represents himself as taking the proposition he asserts as being true." (cf. Farkas 1992:81). Cf. also Seuren (2009: 149): "Stalnaker, for example, concentrates on the context-changing effect of assertions…and takes that to be 'its essential effect' (1978: 323), saying that 'the essential effect of an assertion is to change the presuppositions of the participants in the conversation by adding the content of what is asserted to what is presupposed'. On the next page, he wonders (1978: 324): 'Would it not be more plausible to characterize assertion as trying to get the audience to accept that the speaker accepts the content of the assertion?' and proceeds to show that 'this Gricean twist is not required'. But there appears to be no awareness of the fact that the 'essential effect' of an assertion is the speaker's guarantee that the proposition

a speaker's intention is to present a statement as factual or true does not pledge to the truth of the utterance. An utterance such as "I love you" says nothing more (at least within linguistic semantics) than that the person who utters this statement wants to be believed and he presents it as a fact. It is definitely not a matter of linguistics to find out if the predicate LOVE corresponds to reality and it is not a matter of clausal semantics to confirm whether this statement is contextually adequate; what is more, in a phrase such as "I want to go", the assertion lies in the volitional verb: by the predicate WANT the speaker asserts his will, not the act of going, since this is in infinitive and therefore not assertive. The corollary in this case is obvious: if + *indicative* = + *declarative* = + *assertion* then - *indicative* = - *declarative* = - *assertion.* Apparently, the direct consequence is that the subjunctive, along with the other non-indicative moods (e.g. the infinitive) bears the semantic feature *–assertion*.

It is self-evident that the semantic feature of *assertion* is not adequate enough in order to delimit the subjunctive usage. The second feature to bring in is the distinction between *realis* and *irrealis.* Like other semantic designations, these terms are equally notorious for being too opaque or being used in numerous ways in the relevant literature. Due to their etymological affinity to the adjectives *real* and *unreal*, the terms may be coarsely implemented to denote the degree of truth expressed in a statement. Once again, an association with the truth value of a statement is a rather philosophical issue which, in my view, does not directly fall into the field of linguistics at least not in its entirety, given that philosophical approaches should be equally consulted. What we shall examine is how the language (in particular the predicate) expresses what is presented as real and what as possible or unreal etc. I employ the term in a pragmatic way, namely in

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expressed is in fact true." I employ the term in a wider and less philosophical way which is similar to Palmer 2001:3 (to some extent), who has adopted earlier theories which correlate the *assertion*/*non-assertion* distinction with the *indicative*/*subjunctive* distribution in dependent clauses. For methodological and semantic reasons, I treat interrogative clauses as assertions as long as their verb is in indicative (and as non-assertions if their verb is in subjunctive of course). Lyons (1977: 753) outlines some views according to which *yes-no* questions are disjunction of two assertions, e.g. the question "is he married?" is a disjunction of the proposition "he is married or he is not married". Cases of *wh*-questions can be explained as commands. Since I focus on the semantic features of the mood, one could divide the questions in *assertive questions* (whose verb is in the indicative) and *non-assertive questions* (the verb of which is in the subjunctive). In any case, this is not a central topic in my analysis.

the sense of *factuality.* A verbal form is factual when the state of affairs described by the proposition has already taken place (it is then already a "real" fact which has taken place in the past, at least according to the speaker) or it is actual now, it is taking place now ('now' means when a proposition is uttered = t_0[32]) or it has a generic meaning, i.e. it can be actual (and thus factual) in any possible moment (e.g. "Austria is an European country" or "Jesus loves you"). On the other hand, non-factual verbal forms denote an event which has not taken place yet (i.e. future) or cannot take place at all (counterfactual clauses, e.g. "If I were President, I would cancel third world debt"[33] or could probably take place but they are still not actual/factual, e.g. in the proposition "I would like to write a poem" the infinitive (and complement of 'like') 'to write' does not have a reference to the actual state of affairs but to a wish which may take place or may remain solely a wish but still belongs to the sphere of non-reality. Along general lines, the past and present indicative denotes factuality, while everything else (e.g. future[34], moods and - in most cases- infinitives) does not[35]. Mithun (1999:73) points out in the same way that "the *realis* portrays situations as actualized, as having occurred or actually occurring, knowable through immediate perception. The *irrealis* portrays situations as purely within the realm of thought, knowable only through imagination"[36].

Palmer (2001: passim) treats the binary distinction between *realis/irrealis* as a universal characteristic which is to be found in all languages of the world, in spite of some deviating phenomena, which can also been explained as belonging to

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[32] Cf. Declerck (2006: 97): t_0 = The Temporal Zero Point, i.e. usually the speech time.

[33] Declerck 2006: 128.

[34] This is definitely not an innovative view at all; it is a well established argument in the literature that the future has no reference to the reality, it is not an actual event but it expresses probability rather than factuality. It is reported, that in languages which have realis/irrealis markers in their repertoire, the future is often marked as irrealis, cf. Palmer 2001: 168ff. However, the future indicative is still an assertion in expressing the certainty of the speaker.

[35] Cf. also Declerck (2006: 42): "It is worth noting that a clause does not always have a referent in the actual (real) world: it can also refer to (i.e. assert, deny, question or hypothesize) actualization in a nonfactual world, such as a future or counterfactual world. Thus, the conditional clause *If John had written a poem last night …* makes a supposition about the actualization of a situation (viz. the situation of John writing a poem) in a counterfactual world."

[36] In Palmer 2001:1, with italics set by me.

the fundamental dichotomy[37]. He draws a distinction between the notional categories *Realis* and *Irrealis* (written with initial capitals), whereas *realis* and *irrealis* refer to grammatical categories in his system. Subsequently, he correlates *realis* and *irrealis* with indicative and subjunctive respectively, saying for example that the difference between the terms *subjunctive* and *irrealis* is (to some extent) their employment by different research traditions, with *irrealis* being employed in the description of less-known aboriginal or Indic languages[38]. Additionally, he suggests that the indicative and the subjunctive "can be accounted for in terms of 'assertion' and 'non-assertion'…"[39].

There are a number of problems that emerge from Palmer's analysis. The first one is that he uses the terms +/- *realis* in an over-generalized fashion, which cannot account for the subtle distinctions expressed by moods or tenses; e.g. Future is indicative in many languages (being, for example, a morphological ending in the Romance languages or a separate particle prefixed to the verb in MG) and therefore an assertion, however it also bears a *–realis* semantic feature, since it refers to an event which is not actual. Palmer (2001: 104) argues that English does not have a future tense, because futurity is expressed by modal verbs combined with infinitives and modal verbs are not assertions according to his schema but rather verbal forms marked for modality, thus the English modal verbs "do not often indicate pure futurity, but are usually associated with conditional futures…It is not surprising that modal verbs should have future time reference. The futurity is not fully known and it is always no more than a reasonable assumption that a future event will ensue."[40] Even if this analysis is valid for English[41], it cannot be applied to other languages, the future tense of

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[37] Cf. also Palmer 2001: 187.

[38] Cf. Palmer 2001: 185. I avoid presenting examples from "exotic" languages, not because these should be treated as less important but due to my total incompetence to handle them. I think, one can already find numerous mistakes in the examples which derive from better-known languages so there is no need to proliferate erroneous examples and conclusions. For this reason, I almost exclusively refer to the terminological tradition of the European or Indo-European languages, to which I am more familiar.

[39] Cf. Palmer 2001: 3.

[40] Cf. Palmer 2001: 104f.

[41] For a different perspective cf. Declerck (2006: 102f): "The claim that the future "is not a tense at all, but a mode" (Cygan 1972: 9) is unwarranted, because it is an overstatement. The future tense is often used for no other apparent purpose than to locate the time of a situation in the future. We will argue that in *The train will arrive at*

which is formed, for example, by means of inflection (e.g. French: aimer-*ai* "I will love") or by means of verb-preceding particles (e.g. MG: *θα* γράψω *tha* ghrapso "I will write").

The second problem is that Palmer's schema does not account for the fact that sometimes infinitives also occur in parallel with subjunctives in dependent clauses. Palmer (2001: 192ff) points out that in Italian for example certain verbs may select both constructions:

> (10)[42]
> a. *Gli   hanno   ordinato di tacere*   (Italian)
>   *him have.*3Pl.Ind.Pres. *ordered of be-quiet*.Inf.
> b. *Gli   hanno   ordinato che   tacesse*   (Italian)
>   *him have.*3Pl.Ind.Pres. *ordered that be-quiet*.3Sg.Subj.Impf.
>   "They ordered him to be quiet"

Palmer comments that it is not clear whether there is a notional distinction between these constructions. Palmer presents the analysis of Givón (1994: 281 - 283) concerning Spanish. Givón claims that after deontic "verbs of manipulation"[43] the infinitive signals stronger manipulation than the subjunctive:

> (11)[44]
> a. *te   prohibo   cantar*   (Spanish)
>   *you*.Acc. *forbid.*1Sg.Ind.Pres. *sing*.Inf.
> b. *te   prohibo   que   cantes*   (Spanish)
>   *you*.Acc. *forbid.*1Sg.Ind.Pres. *that sing.*2Sg.Subj.Pres.

7.32 the form *will arrive* serves primarily to locate the train's arrival in time… This is not to say that we do not recognize the fact that the future tense has modal aspects of meaning, more specifically 'not-yet-factuality-at-t_0', e.g. and subjectivity. Whatever is still to actualize is not yet a fact at t_0. 'Not-yet-factual at a given time' is a modal notion. An utterance about a situation that has not yet held is also of necessity "a subjectively modalized utterance: a prediction rather than a statement" (Lyons 1977: 815). True as this may be, the presence of elements of epistemic modality in *will* do not alter the fact that, in the above example *The train will arrive at 7.32*, the primary aspect of meaning of *will*, and the basic reason for its use, is that it locates the situation referred to in the future…".

[42] Cf. Palmer 2001: 193, with my glosses.

[43] Verbs of ordering or prohibition and verba dicendi showing order.

[44] Cf. Palmer 2001: 193, with my glosses.

"I forbid you to sing"

He also adds that while the verbs of ordering select both constructions, the verbs of saying cannot precede infinitives because they show weaker manipulation:

(12)[45]
a. *le dijeron   que les-siguiera*   (Spanish)
   him told.3Pl. *that them follow*.3Sg.Subj.Pres.[46]
b. **le dijeron   seguir-les*   (Spanish)
    *him told.*3Pl. *follow*.Inf. *them*
"They told him that he should follow them"

Example (11) is quite interesting for our analysis; similar cases of parallel constructions also emerge in other Romance languages, e.g. in adverbial dependent clauses in French:

(13)
a.
Je m'entraîne   afin de gagner   la   médaille.   (French)
*I me work-out.*1Sg. *for of win*.Inf. *the - medal.*Acc.Fem.
b.
Je m'entraîne   afin que je gagne   la médaille.   (French)
*I me work-out.*1Sg. *for that*   I win.3Sg.Subj.Pres. the-*medal.*Acc.Fem.
"I am working out in order to win the medal/ in order that I win the medal"

These structures indicate that infinitives and subjunctives have similar functions in certain syntactic environments. In Romance languages, the infinitive is used after control verbs and the subjunctive is employed in case of obviation as well as in some dependent clauses. In any case, it is quite obvious that the subjunctive and the infinitive have many similar semantic features at their disposal, a fact that enables their partial interchangeability. Palmer (2001: 196) comes to the conclusion (after having taken some English and Italian cases into

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[45] Cf. Palmer 2001: 194, with my glosses.
[46] In Palmer 2001: 193 erroneously as Present instead of Imperfect.

account) that generally "the choice between the two constructions is not…clearly motivated by notional features, though there is a tendency for the subjunctive to signal a greater degree of irrealis". In any case, Palmer does not really underline the similarity of these structures, namely the fact that both infinitives and subjunctives are *–realis*, probably because this does not perfectly fit to his binary distinction. In my opinion, - *realis* is a semantic feature which can be attributed to more than one mood, e.g. in both infinitive and subjunctive and their distribution may be explained also in terms of syntax; consider, for example the following constructions in English, French and MG:

(14)

a. *I want to read*   (English)

b. *je   veux   lire*   (French)
   *I want.*1Sg. *read.*Inf.

c. θέλω   να   διαβάσω   MG
   thélo   na   dhiaváso
   *want.*1Sg. M.Prt. *read.*1Sg.Subj.+Perf.

(15)

a. *I want you to read*   (English)

b. *Je veux que tu lise*   (French)
   *I want.*1Sg. *that you*.Nom.Sg. *read.*2Sg.Subj.Pres.

c. θέλω   να   διαβάσεις   MG
   thélo   na   dhiavásis
   *want.*1Sg. M.Prt. *read.*2Sg.Subj.+Perf.

In (14), the volitional predicate WANT selects the infinitive in English and in French but the subjunctive in MG, since the language lacks non-finite complementation.. In (15), subject obviation is realized with the so-called Exceptional Case Marking construction[47] in English, i.e. the dependent predicate is an infinitive, in French it is manifested with a dependent clause the verb of

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[47] Cf. Radford (2009: 456): Accusative subjects of infinitive clauses (e.g. him in 'I believe him to be innocent') are said to carry exceptional accusative case (in that the case of the accusative subject is assigned by the main-clause verb believe, and it is exceptional for the case of the subject of one clause to be assigned by the verb in a higher clause). Verbs (like believe) which take an infinitive complement with an accusative subject are said to be ECM verbs.

which is in subjunctive and in MG the verbal form is again an analytical subjunctive. In all cases the predicate READ shows a non-actual event, which implies that the verbal forms carries a *–realis* feature[48].

Hence, we come to the conclusion that the subjunctive bears a *–realis* semantic feature, which is an elementary characteristic of this mood but should not be identified exclusively with it. Some scholars raise an objection to the irrealis character of the subjunctive by bringing forward cases such as the Italian subjunctive[49] which occur after predicates which select indicatives in other Romance and European languages. However, it is clear that this variation takes place on the borders of a continuum, the predicates of which select the subjunctive on the one side (e.g. volitional verbs) while on the other extremity of the continuum predicates select only the indicative (e.g. verbs of knowledge). The cross-linguistic differences show up then in the middle of this continuum, affecting predicates such as verba dicendi or verbs of belief in some contexts. Another argument against the irrealis feature of the subjunctive is the fact that this occurs after factive verbs, which presuppose the truth of the complement:

(16)[50]
Gianni dispiace che Paolo sia/?*è *partito*   (Italian)
*Gianni regrets that Paolo be.*3Sg.Subj./Indic.Pres. left
 Jean regrette que Paul soit/est parti.   (French)
*Jean regrets that Paul be.*3Sg.Subj./Indic.Pres. left
"Gianni regrets that Paolo has left"

Farkas (1992a: 100) admits that the factive-emotives "present a major difficulty to analyses that take the truth of the complement in the actual world to be the crucial factor in determining mood distribution. Recall that these predicates are factive, i.e. their complement propositions are true of the actual world, and yet

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[48] It is possible of course, that other languages which have a different verbal system may also exhibit other constructions, e.g. in German the obviation is mainly manifested with a dependent clause, introduced by *dass* 'that': *Ich will dass du liest* "I want you to read". In the German sentence the verb is in indicative (because the subjunctive in German does not obligatorily occur in dependent clauses) but the meaning of the dependent predicate is still *–realis*; thus we can assume, that the semantic feature is encoded in the subordinator/complementiser *dass*, which follows a volitional verb.
[49] Cf. ex. (8).
[50] Cf. Giorgi & Pianesi 1997: 218.

they are compatible with both moods. Recall also that mood choice with these verbs varies historically (in earlier stages of French they governed the indicative only; now they are compatible with both moods) and cross-linguistically (in Romanian factive-emotives govern the indicative only). It was suggested…that the evaluative/emotive character of these predicates makes them compatible with the subjunctive, while their factivity puts them in the class of indicative governors." Farkas argues that this set of verbs expresses a personal evaluation of an event, classifying a situation with respect to the criteria and the opinion of the speaker and therefore they can be regarded not only as factive ones which presuppose the reality of a proposition but also as desiderative predicates "in that the attitude they denote does not anchor the complement proposition to any particular world". In other words, the indicative in a complement/dependent phrase asserts the fact that one experiences certain feelings because of an actual event while the subjunctive denotes the feelings that such an event (in general and not only the particular event) may bring about. In any case, the Italian case does not point to a persuasive counterexample in order to refute the +/- realis analysis.

Farkas (1992: 84) also discusses the case of what she calls *fiction* verbs, i.e. verbs such as *dream*, *imagine*, *lie* etc., which, according to her, constitute a paradox because they pattern with positive categorical epistemics in selecting declarative complement clauses the verb of which is in indicative. She argues that "crucial for mood distribution is the fact that fiction verbs share with positive categorical epistemics the property that the proposition expressed by their complement is true in a particular world anchored to their subjects. The difference, which appears not to be crucial to mood distribution, is that in the case of fiction verbs this world happens not to be a model of what the subject takes reality to be, but rather the world of a dream/fantasy/lie. Fiction verbs then, just like categorical epistemics, introduce a particular world with respect to which their complement is interpreted." In order to account for the fact that the fiction verbs select declarative complements, Farkas suggests that the fiction verbs are *extensional* predicates, i.e. there are predicates which along with epistemic and declarative matrix predicates introduce a single world, to which the complement verb anchors, whereas the so-called *intentional* verbs, such as desideratives or modals, introduce a set of worlds in which the meaning of the

whole proposition may be true and thus are not subject to the truth conditions of a certain world. Subsequently, extensional verbs select indicative complements, while intentional select the subjunctive or the infinitive as a complement. Farkas' model differs from the approach presented in my thesis since her starting point is the mood distribution with respect to the meaning of the matrix predicate, whilst my analysis focuses on the semantic features of the mood, partially independently (at least at this point of my argumentation) from the matrix predicate[51]. It is, of course, self-evident that there is a semantic affinity which links a certain predicate with a dependent subjunctive clause; however I think that the semantic features of, let's say, non-actuality or non-reality are encoded in the subjunctive mood and not in the matrix verb.

I believe that the explanation can be more straightforward: Consider the sentence: "Last night I dreamt that somebody loved me"; the predicate *dream* asserts the fact that the speaker had a certain experience, he asserts the act of having been in the state of dreaming. The subordinated predicate *love* is also an assertion, it has been actual in the sphere of the dream and the speaker makes an assertion thereof. From my point of view, any further discussion concerning the truth status of the proposition is more a philosophical than a linguistic issue.

Veloudis (2010: 123ff) also endorses the opinion that the distribution of the subjunctive is semantically conditioned. The subjunctive denotes, according to Veloudis' analysis, a *non-event* (corresponding to non-actuality)[52]. Veloudis points out that some cases in MG, which seem to constitute counterexamples to his approach can be explained if we take into account the fact that these usages of the subjunctive are quite aberrant[53], having an extraordinary stylistic effect on an utterance, for example:

> (17)[54]
>
> Κι αυτός να νομίζει πως τον αγαπάει...   MG
>
> *ki aftós na   nomízi   pos   ton   aghapái*

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[51] Giorgi & Pianesi (1997: 202) also question the realis/irrealis distinction, citing, among others, the examples of Farkas.

[52] Veloudis (2010: 125): «αυτός ο τύπος συμπληρώματος εκφράζει μη-γεγονότα» ("this complement type expresses non-events")

[53] Veloudis (2010: 129) calls them "unorthodox" («ανορθόδοξες»).

[54] Similar example in Veloudis (2010: 130).

and he M.Prt. *believe.*3Sg.   *that him*.Acc.Sg. *loves*

The subjunctive form *na nomízi* is employed here instead of the Imperfect *nómize* (3Sg. '((s)he) believed' , however its distribution within a context is not independent: it usually illustrates a kind of contrast to what one has said before; thus the sentence could be translated as "But he believed that (she) loves him". Concerning the stylistic content, Veloudis claims that the subjunctive is a grammaticalisation of the emotional state of the speaker, who thereby shows a high level of empathy. Whatever the exact connotational content of these sentences may be, we should in this case consider that the deviating stylistic effect that the subjunctive can cause may be attributed to its *–realis* features.

5. The subjunctive mood features: *-assertion*, *-realis*.

As we see, the two semantic features *assertion* and *realis* marked by the plus/minus parameters draw a first semantic distinction of the forms of a verb and enable us to describe the differences between the various verbal types in a quite succinct way. If we also add some features concerning the temporal or morphological characteristics of a verbal form, such as +/- *past* or +/- *finite*, it is then possible to give a quite precise description of what is what within the verbal system of a given language. In this paper however it suffices to see how the two semantic features *assertion* and *realis* can be applied as differentiation criteria within the verbal mood system of a language.

In accordance with what we have postulated up to now, the present indicative bears the features +*assertion*, +*realis*; the indicative future has a +*assertion* value but on the other hand it is valued with -*realis*, for not expressing factuality but expectation; the subjunctive mood bears the features *–assertion, -realis*.

(18)

Tense	*assertion*	*realis*
indicative present	+	+
indicative future	+	-
subjunctive	-	-

The -*realis* analysis of the subjunctive can also provide an explanation for the fact that the subjunctive bore a futurity nuance in Homeric Greek. The Indo-Europeanists assume that the Indo-European (IE) protolanguage had no prototypical future tense at its disposal and the daughter languages have introduced various strategies in order to refer to future events[55]. In Ancient Greek (as well as in Indo- Iranian)[56] the desiderative verbal formation of IE became what we call *indicative future* in AG[57]. However, the subjunctive displayed futurity as well, although synchronically there must have been some difference between the indicative future and the subjunctive. Sihler (1995: 592) points out that "the PIE subjunctive seems to have referred to future event anticipated with some slight reservation on the part of the speaker – the equivalent of 'I suppose' or 'in that case'."[58] The futurity reading of the IE

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[55] Cf. Sihler (1995: 451f): "PIE [Proto Indo-European (language)] did not have any future tense as such, but of course a variety of utterances in all languages refer to events that are neither past nor hic-et-nunc. These include commands, expectations, wishes, possibilities, and conditions. The term 'future tense' is usually reserved for such expressions as convey the unshaded conviction of the speaker that an event will take place." Cf. also Lyons 1977: 816f.

[56] Cf. Sihler 1995: 452 and 507ff. Cf. also Tichy 2006: 306ff. for Indo- Iranian.

[57] That comes as no surprise, when we bear in mind the English *will* + bare infinitive construction and its futurity meaning.

[58] Sihler (1995: 592) additionally remarks that "in Vedic the subj., whether to a pres. or aor. stem, is more often a simple future, occasionally something a little different from an imperative. More saliently conditional, doubtful, or wished-for future events are typically in the opt. mood. The distinction may be pondered in the following passage from the AV [Atharva-Veda]: *iyám agne n· rī pátīȋ vedeṣṭa;...súvānā putr· § máhiṣī bhavāti; gatv· pátīȋ subhágā ví rājatu* 'may this noble lady, o Fire, find a husband; giving birth to sons, she will become powerful; having attained a husband, let her rule in happiness'. Sihler (1995: 592, fn. I) doubts whether a distinction is to be found in this verse at all: "In truth, it is hard to tell whether we are dealing with a finely-nuanced distinction between *vedeṣṭa* opt. 'may she find', *bhavāti* subj. 'she will (presumably) become', and *rājatu* 3sg.imper. 'let her rule'; or with practically interchangeable parts." Sihler is right in observing that –*realis* mood forms bear a futurity nuance but I don't espouse his opinion that they have identical illocutionary force, given that the distribution of each mood does not completely coincide with the distribution of the others, despite certain overlapping uses (cf. MacDonell 1990=1916: 352ff); the same holds for Homeric Greek: given that the language already had a future indicative at its disposal, the subjunctive should have had a distinct role in the system of this Greek linguistic register in terms of synchrony (cf. also Lightfoot 1979: 285), despite the fact that in other cases, such as Latin, the future historically (i.e. diachronically) stems from the subjunctive. Nevertheless, the affinity between the subjunctive and the future is historically attested, yet when a language has both a future indicative and a subjunctive, then we should count on a distinct function of

subjunctive justifies the fact that the Latin future tense reflects the IE subjunctive[59]. As one can see in (18), the category *subjunctive* and the category *indicative future* share the same –*realis* feature and they differ in the *assertion* parameter. If we accept the fact that in terms of historical linguistics the subjunctive precedes the indicative future, we can postulate that it is due to a shift of the semantic feature *assertion* within the semantic system of a language that may have given birth to the indicative future. As we will see, this kind of feature shift (morphological and semantic) can be utilized in order to elucidate syntactic change. Synchronically, on the other hand, the fact that both categories have one feature in common may explain their affinity whereas the indicative present is marked with two "pluses" and thus it constitutes a more "basic" category which is immune to any shift process. In any case, the point we have to bear in mind, according to the observations above, is that semantic features could account for phenomena, such as categorical affinities (e.g. the futurity reading of the subjunctive). In terms of diachrony, the shift in the value of one feature (semantic or morphological) can provide an explanation to phenomena of syntactic change.

6. Conclusion

In this paper I tried to define the semantic content of the mood category *subjunctive* on the basis of a componential semantic features analysis. Since binary distinctions, such as the 'realis/irrealis' one, are considered to be inadequate to capture the distinction between indicative/subjunctive, I proposed that a more analytical description may better reflect the semantics of the subjunctive mood. On these grounds, I suggested that that the subjunctive mood bears the features –*realis*, -*assertion* with regard to the present indicative which is valued as +*realis*/+*assertion* and the future indicative which bears the features –*realis*/+*assertion*. By doing so, it is possible to make use of the familiar terminology of the traditional lexical semantics but in a way which is more

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them, due to the economy principle of the language (superfluous elements or structures must be deleted). Cf. also Meier – Brügger 2002: 261f.

[59] Cf. Sihler 1995: 557f. The Latin subjunctive verbal forms are a reflex of the IE Optative, cf. ibidem (449): "In Italic and Germanic the old optative becomes the all-purpose irrealis mood, familiarly known as the *subjunctive* (but unrelated to the PIE, G[reek] and In[do]Ir[anian] mood of that name, an unfortunate terminological confusion)."

sufficient for the exact description of the mood (and temporal) system of a language.

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