

Variation in the apodosis of contrary to fact clauses Mexican Spanish

In Mexican Spanish, there exists great variation in the forms that occur in the apodosis of contrary to fact clauses, in which the prescriptive form is the conditional, but four other forms can also occur in this context: the imperfect subjunctive, the imperfect indicative, the present tense, and a tacit form (see Appendix 1), being the imperfect subjunctive the second most common form in this context. One of the most recurrent factors cited in the literature that conditions this phenomenon is the probability of the event. That is, the level of certainty that the event will occur, in which [+not real] will trigger a form in the subjunctive, [-not real] will trigger a form in the indicative (Lavandera 1983; Gutiérrez 2003). The present study documents all the forms that appear in the apodosis of contrary to fact clauses. It also gives evidence of the linguistic and extra-linguistic factors that condition their use and of the fact that this phenomenon is affected by frequency effects (Bybee, 2006, 2009, 2010). Additionally, it is made clear that this is not an innovative process, rather it is a case of persistence of an old form.

A total of 216 sociolinguistic interviews were analyzed from two corpora of Mexican Spanish: 108 from the *Corpus sociolingüístico de la Ciudad de México-PRESEEA* y 108 from *Corpus Monterrey-PRESEEA*. Participants were divided according to sex, level of education, and age. Due to the low frequency of this phenomenon, data were also extracted from *Corpus de Referencia del Español Actual* (Mexico) and *twitter* (Mexico) to end with a total of 463 tokens. All tokens were coded according to the following independent variables: probability of the event, polarity, frequency of the verb in apodosis, position of the apodosis, intervening material between the protasis and the apodosis, presence or absence of a verbal periphrasis, frequency of the verb in apodosis, frequency of the conjugated verb in the corpus and time of reference.

The data distribution indicates that the conditional is the unmarked form (52.5%), followed by the imperfect subjunctive (33.9%), and other forms constituted 13.6% of the data. With regards to the linguistic variables, the multivariate logistic regression indicates that the imperfect subjunctive is favored when the event is [+not real] (.57), when it has a negative polarity (.80), when the time of reference is past (.64), when the apodosis comes after the protasis (.55) and when the frequency of the imperfect subjunctive is greater than the frequency of the other forms in the corpora (.66). With regards to the extralinguistic variables, people with a low level of education (.63) favor the use of the imperfect subjunctive which could indicate that this variant is stigmatized. This paper gives evidence that the variation in the apodosis is a vigorous phenomenon, at least in Mexican Spanish. It also gives evidence of the semantic and frequency factors that condition the use of the imperfect subjunctive in this context.

References

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Appendix 1

- (1) No la sé, si la supiera me **encantaría** pero... (PRESEEA Monterrey, 70)
I don't know it, if I knew it i would love (conditional) it
- (2) bueno yo tengo dos dos hijas pero si tuviera hijos no yo pos **procurara** no... (PRESEEA Monterrey, 49)
well I do not have two kids but if I had kids I would try (imperfect subjunctive) not to..
- (3) ¿tú crees que si trajera dinero me **iba a venir** a pie por aquí? (PRESEEA Monterrey, 78)
Do you think that if I had money I would walk (imperfect indicative) through here?
- (4) y pues la verdad yo no sé no, porque si hubiera sido otro **le vale** gorro (PRESEEA Monterrey, 78)
and so truthfully I do not know, because if it had been another one (he) wouldn't have cared (present indicative)
- (5) pos si fuera la primera vez y me fuera los ocho meses igual y sí _____ pero porque la la vez pasada...(PRESEEA Monterrey, 78)
well if it were the first time and I were to leave eight months I _____ (tacit), but because las time...