Chapter 14

Present subjunctive mood
and the category of modality

Tatiana Schwochow PIMPÃO[1]
Universidade do Rio Grande – Rio Grande
Edair Maria GÖRSKI[2]
Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina - Florianópolis

INTRODUCTION

Portuguese normative grammar (BECHARA 2003; BUENO 1963; CEGALLA 2002; CUNHA 1992; among others) considers the verbal mood as a category morphologically marked in the verb, expressing a certain fact (indicative mood) or an uncertain fact (subjunctive mood), in the modality plane. This normative postulate, however, does not support the empirical analysis from Brazilian Portuguese (henceforth BP) oral data in which we observe an alternative use between the verbal forms of subjunctive and indicative in: (i) South Region (COSTA 1990; PIMPÃO 1999; FAGUNDES 2007), (ii) Southeast Region (BOTELHO PEREIRA 1974; WHERRITT 1977; ROCHA 1997; ALVES NETA 2000; GONÇALVES 2003; GUIRALDELLI 2004; SANTOS 2005; ALMEIDA 2010; BARBOSA 2011) and (iii) Northeast Region (MEIRA 2006; CARVALHO 2007; VIEIRA 2007; OLIVEIRA 2007; ALVES 2009).

Articulating theoretical assumptions of both Linguistic Functionalism (GIVÓN 1984; 1993; 1995; 2001) and the Theory of Language Variation and Change (WEINREICH, LABOV, HERZOG 1968; LABOV

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1. Professor of Portuguese at the Instituto de Letras e Artes of the Universidade do Rio Grande (FURG).
2. Professor of the Post-Graduate Program in Linguistics of the Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC).

1972a; 1972b), we assume (i) the non-autonomy of the linguistic system, linking the language structure with the communicative process; (ii) the variation and change as inherent processes of the natural languages, restricted by linguistic and extralinguistic factors; and (iii) the important role of frequency of use in the explanation of linguistic phenomena in variation. As we are constantly updating the language under communicative pressures, among other motivations, it is natural that language varies and one or another variant will occur at greater or lesser rates, depending on the strength of context.

Taking into account these two theoretical approaches, we bring to discussion results from Pimpão's study (1999) about the variation between present subjunctive and present indicative mood in a corpus of Portuguese spoken in Brazil. This research has made use of the quantitative methodology of the Variation Theory, whose multivariate analysis selects the statistically significant factors for the variable linguistic phenomenon under study. The independent variable with the most statistical significance in this particular research was *time-modality*.

Our main goal is to present and discuss the results of the linguistic variable *time-modality* in the use of present subjunctive. Therefore, the hypothesis we consider here is that the choice for present subjunctive or present indicative is not due to the value of (un)certainty assigned to fact by speaker, but is primarily motivated by the presence or absence of the feature of future projection in the context. Although the nature of constraints is semantic-pragmatic and falls within the scope of modality, it does not deal with degrees of certainty, but with future projection. This hypothesis puts in evidence a new factor in the field of modality – future projection –, besides uncertainty, supposition, probability, contexts anticipated by normative grammarians as necessitating the use of present subjunctive.

In the following, we outline the theoretical framework, especially with regard to modality and to the subjunctive mood. Afterwards, we describe the contexts of subjunctive mood use. Next, we present the methodology and, closing this chapter, we proceed to discuss the statistical results.

1. THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Theory of Language Variation and Change and Linguistic Functionalism provide the theoretical foundation, based on language use, for investigating the variable use of present subjunctive mood.

Weinreich, Labov and Herzog (1968) were concerned about defending the separation between structure and homogeneity, postulating that structure heterogeneity is not dysfunctional. Other dichotomies are separated by Labov (1972a; 1972b), as *langue/parole* and synchrony/diachrony. In addition, according to Givón (1984; 1995; 2001), language (and grammar) cannot be interpreted without centering around communicative reference: the purpose of the speaking event, the participants and the discursive context. Under this functionalist conception, the researcher's objective is to try to verify how the participants are able to communicate efficiently through speaking.

Both approaches recognize that the same linguistic meaning or function may at times be realized in different forms (variants), for example: the alternation between subjunctive and indicative in subjunctive-selecting contexts, as we will see below. The analytical tools of the Variation Theory shed light on the role of frequency in discourse, and allow us to ascertain which independent variables being tested are statistically significant, and interpret the effect of each factor on variant choice.

Following these theoretical-methodological backgrounds, we analyze the variable use between present subjunctive and present indicative mood, related to modality. The distribution of subjunctive mood is better understood in relation to the epistemic and deontic sub-modes of irrealis modality (GIVÓN 1995, p. 115), as seen in the following section.

2. MODALITY

One of the most complex sub-systems in grammar, TAM category – tense, aspect, modality – appears in all sentences. It refers to an "obligatory category without which simple sentences cannot be produced" (GIVÓN 1984, p. 269). The sentences discussed in this study basically refer to the notion of modality, whose definition Givón takes from Lyons (1977): "attitude of the speaker toward the proposition" (2001, p. 300). By attitude, Givón considers two points: epistemic - "truth, belief, probability, certainty, evidence", and evaluative/deontic - "desirability, preference, intent, ability, obligation, manipulation" (GIVÓN 1995, p. 112).

Embedded in the communicative conception of language, epistemic and deontic modalities emerge in the interaction. In this way, they do not deal with real or unreal events, or with assertions with or without truth value, which can be verified in the outside world. It is important to consider the 'discursive world' built on interaction between speakers,

in which the events can be presented as a fact or as a possibility. For this reason, Givón (1995; 2001) conceives realis and irrealis modality: for the first, a proposition is strongly asserted as true, for the second, the proposition is weakly asserted (because it is possible, uncertain or desired).

In this study, we focus on irrealis modality, both in the epistemic and deontic sub-modes. However, given this restriction, not all attitudes of the epistemic modality described earlier will be relevant to the investigation about the variable use of the present subjunctive. As 'truth', 'certainty' and 'evidence' correspond to realis modality, according to which a proposition is strongly asserted, these will not be part of this study. Within the epistemic modality, we just treat the notions of 'belief' and 'probability', as illustrated in (1). The deontic sub-mode, by expressing notions as uncertainty and desire, as in (2) inherently carries a future projection idea, and, for Givón, the future is irrealis.

(1) É, a minha diversão eram os bailes. Adorava baile. Ainda hoje adoro. Infelizmente, **talvez**, **esteja** (**S**) mais acomodado, porque, realmente, a gente vai perdendo o hábito. (FLP 04, L305)

My pleasure was going to dances. I loved dances. I still love them today. Unfortunately, **maybe**, I don't **go** (**S**) anymore, because, actually, we get out of the habit.

(2) Existe um sinal vermelho **pra que** você não **avance** (**S**). (FLP 13, L783)

There is a red light **so** you don't **GO** (**S**)[3].

In (1), the fact that the informant 'does not go to dances anymore because people get out of the habit' corresponds to his belief in his assumption, and this information is under the scope of the adverb *maybe* that inherently carries this notion and imposes it on the content. In (2), the deontic modality is signaled by the obligation for the driver to stop if the traffic light is red. This obligation is not encoded in linguistic elements, such as the adverb *maybe* in (1), which signals a belief, but is part of shared knowledge. In each occurrence, there is a specific type of modality – epistemic and deontic, respectively –, but both have one thing in common: uncertainty. In (1), uncertainty is in the nature of the adverb *maybe*, and in (2), it has to do with respecting or not respecting the traffic law.

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3. The letter **S** means subjunctive; and the letter **I**, indicative.

This common denominator is highlighted by Givón when he predicts the one-way conditional between the two types of modality: "if evaluative, then *epistemic* (but not vice versa) or if *preference*, then *uncertainty* (but not vice versa)" (1993, p. 172). Thus, the common point is the feature of epistemic uncertainty. However, taking into account the consideration of the occurrences (1) and (2), a question arises: if the subjunctive mood appears in an epistemic uncertainty context, which can be identified in both types of modality, what could explain the variable use of this verbal mood?

It is the Functionalism Theory itself that provides elements to formulate a hypothesis for this question. The deontic modality inherently carries a notion of future projection, ie, desire, intent, manipulation, obligation are attitudes that involve a possible realization of an event. In this sense, epistemic uncertainty is closely associated with this projection, according to the previous statement: "if evaluative, then epistemic". The epistemic modality, in contrast, does not carry inherently deontic values, as Givón states ("*but* not vice versa"). But that does not mean that the future projection cannot be present in other linguistic elements under the scope of epistemic modality. Consider the occurrences (3) and (4) below.

> (3) Entrevistador: O que o senhor está achando do Brasil, da situação do país agora?
> Eu não sei. [Eu]- é uma coisa que eu fico calado. **Pode ser que** ele **endireite** (**S**), pode ser que não. (FLP 06, L416)
>
> Interviewer: What do you think of Brazil, Sir? About the country's current situation?
> I don't know. [I]- it's something that I just keep quiet about. **It could be that** it **will straighten up** (**S**), or not.
>
> (4) [Eu]- se eu chegar a me aposentar, **talvez seja** (**S**) pela idade, né? (FLP 04, L559)
>
> [I]- if I ever get to retire, **maybe** it **will be** (**S**) because of age, huh?

In (3), beyond the notion of epistemic uncertainty, encoded by the construction *it could be that*, the future projection is present, identified in the discursive context: the informant has no opinion about the situation in Brazil; according to him, the situation may or may not be *straightened up*, but changes can only be confirmed some time in the future. In (4), the conditional clause with a future subjunctive verb carries the notion of future projection, while the adverb *maybe* just encodes the notion of epistemic uncertainty. The two cases above illustrate, therefore, situations in which the epistemic uncertainty

comes from the notion of future projection, as in (3) or from linguistic marks, as in (4).

3. SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD

Considering the two types of modality presented and discussed in the previous section – epistemic and deontic modalities –, subjunctive mood is more likely to be grammaticalized in two points: in low epistemic certainty and in weak manipulation (GIVÓN 1995, p. 124; 2001, p. 313). Although subjunctive is an irrealis sub-category, it cannot be expected that every language that has the two functional domains, low certainty and weak manipulation, necessarily has a grammaticalized subjunctive. In predictive terms, the following can be affirmed:

♦ "if a language has a grammaticalized subjunctive at all, then it will appear at two distinct foci – lower certainty and/or weaker manipulation – along the scale of the two irrealis sub-modes;
♦ "if a language uses a subjunctive form at a higher point on the certainty or manipulation scale, it will also use it on the lower point; but not vice versa". (GIVÓN 2001, p. 313)

Unlike Givón's approach, according to which subjunctive mood tends to appear at two points, normative grammar of BP assumes a restricted point of view for the use of verbal mood: subjunctive mood corresponds to notions such as "uncertainty, possibility, probability, supposition, hypothesis"; on the contrary, indicative mood expresses notions such as "certainty, reality, factuality" (BECHARA 2003; BUENO 1963; CEGALLA 2002; CUNHA 1992). For these grammarians, replacing a verbal mood by another one always implies a different attitude of the speaker. It means that the attitude is morphologically marked on the verbal inflection of mood. Following this normative view, uncertainty in, for example, 'talvez eu vá' (**S**), would be replaced by certainty in 'talvez eu vou' (**I**).

On the other hand, Brazilian linguists believe that different linguistic resources can be used to express the speaker's attitude, not the verbal inflection of the subjunctive mood as defended by normative grammar. In this way, subjunctive and indicative can be variants that are dependent on the resources to be identified in the discursive context. According to Camara Jr. (1986, p. 145, 169), for example, subjunctive, in BP, is considered a 'servidão gramatical' ('grammatical servitude'),

used in certain types of sentences[4]. This does not imply the omission of the speaker's attitude; in fact, the attitude remains, though outside the morphological inflection (CAMARA JR. 1974, p. 123).

Mattos and Silva (2006) also admit the use of the subjunctive according to some characteristics of the sentences in which it fits, and, thus, this verbal mood does not express semantic values. Among these characteristics, we can quote the adverbs of doubt and some verbs of mental state, namely, *think*, *believe*, etc. In this way, the displacement of the speaker's attitude from the subjunctive morphology to other linguistic resources can initiate the elimination of the subjunctive itself, as Perini (1996, p. 257) points out.

Summarizing, from the normative grammarians' perspective, there is no possibility of variation, and the cases which allow subjunctive and indicative imply a change of the attitude of the speaker, encoding different meanings. From the linguists' point of view, the variable use of verbal mood is admitted, without change of meaning, and in its turn, maintaining the same representational meaning. It is this second perspective that we adopt, considering that (i) subjunctive and indicative are variant forms, and (ii) an analysis of the conditions of use allows the identification of factors that support the occurrence of one or another verbal mood. We follow Givón's predictions that the subjunctive maintains a narrow relation to irrealis modality.

In this way, to understand the use of the subjunctive, it is necessary to understand, first, irrealis, even in its communicative-cognitive aspect (functional) and in its typological-grammatical aspect (formal) (GIVÓN 1995, p. 112). In cognitive terms, the notions of truth from modal logic are replaced by the notion of subjective certainty; in communicative terms, modality is located in the speaker-hearer interaction. About typological-grammatical aspects, Givón (1984; 1995) mentions the subjunctive distribution in irrealis subordinate clauses (noun, relative and adverbial clauses), and in other clauses, among which we point to those with the adverb 'maybe'.

The conditions for using the subjunctive mood presented by Givón are similar to those presented in normative grammar. To the grammarians, the subjunctive is also used after adverbs of doubt, like *maybe*, *probably*, *possibly*[5], and in certain nouns, adjectives and

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4. These are some types of phrases mentioned by Câmara Jr. (1986, p. 225-226): independent clause after the doubtful adverb *maybe*; noun clause subordinated to volitive verbs; purpose and concessive clauses.
5. As seen in section 4, in the data analyzed, the variable use of present subjunctive only occurs in sentences with the adverb *maybe*.

adverbial clauses. Even a fifth type of clause is highlighted by Bechara (2003), called *peculiar cases*, simply because they do not fit any of the four types of clauses already mentioned. Nevertheless, this approach should be carefully applied for two main reasons: (i) Givón does not presuppose the categorical use of the subjunctive in each context; and (ii) according to Givón, other linguistic resources can encode modality, not strictly associated with morphological verbal inflection, contrary to the grammarians' grammatical constraint. These two reasons contribute to consider the present subjunctive and the present indicative as variant forms. Following, we present the contexts in which the use of the subjunctive is expected.

4. Subjunctive-selecting Contexts

4.1. Portuguese equivalent adverbs to English *maybe*

For Givón (2001, p. 305), adverbs such as *maybe* project an irrealis scope on a particular event. In this sense, this type of adverb shows the position of the speaker about the possibility, probability of an event, with no requirement for the use of the subjunctive.

(5) [Eu]- se eu chegar a me aposentar, **talvez seja** (**S**) pela idade, né? (FLP 04, L559)

[I]- if I ever get to retire, **maybe** it **will be** (**S**) because of age, huh?

(6) Pois é, **talvez** eu não **gosto** (**I**), porque eu não aprendi a dançar. (FLP 10, L413)

, **maybe** I don't **like** (**I**) to, because I haven't learned how to dance.

In (5), the possibility of retirement is still a future projection; and, if it happens, the informant will do that because of age. In this sense, the informant still works and he is just thinking about the future. On the other hand, in (6), the informant reflects about the reason why he does not like to go to dances. Maybe the reason is the fact that he has not learned how to dance yet. These cases fall under the scope of epistemic modality, because of the notions of belief, encoded by the adverb *maybe*, though occurrence (5) presents an additional feature: the future projection. Unlike Portuguese normative grammar, we consider that modality is encoded by the adverb, allowing the variation between present subjunctive and present indicative.

4.2. Noun clauses

According to Givón (2001), certain verbs carry an inherent irrealis notion, among which he points out: *to want*, *to hope*, *to believe*. We can see some examples in the following occurrences:

> (7) ...por eles, eles **querem que** o pai **volte** (**S**)... (FLP 03, L459)
>
> ...for them, they **want** their father **back** (**S**).

> (8) Se for mulher eu escolho, se for homem ele escolhe. **Espero que** ele **escolhe** (**I**) um nome bonito. (FLP 06, L1635)
>
> If it's a girl, I choose; if it's a boy, he chooses. I **hope** he **chooses** (**I**) a nice name.

> (9) Eu acredito em uma força espiritual, eu não **acredito que** Deus **seja** (**S**) uma pessoa que nem eles querem forçar as pessoas a crerem, né? Mas eu **acredito que há** (**I**) uma força superior, né? (FLP 17, L1078-1080
>
> I believe in a spiritual power, I don't **believe** God **is** (**S**) a person as they want people to believe, right? But I **believe there is** (**I**) a higher power, right?

In occurrences (7) and (8), the notion of future projection is present, mainly due to the semantic feature of deontic verbs *to want* and *to hope*. The use of verbs such as these is sufficient to create a situation in which an event is projected into the future. In (9), on the other hand, the events described – the beliefs of the informant – do not signal a future projection. This informant reflects on his belief in God and in a higher power, regardless of the verbal mood used.

4.3. Relative clauses

For Givón (2001), irrealis modality in the context of relative clauses indicates that the speaker assumes that the propositional content is unknown to the listener. Thus, the noun phrase referred to by the relative pronoun should refer only to a hypothetical universe, ie, it cannot be identified as a single entity.

> (10) Vou procurar uma outra diversão **que** não me **estrague** (**S**) a minha boa vivência, o meu corpo. (FLP 04, L330)
>
> I am going to look for another activity **that** does not **ruin** (**S**) my good way of life, my body.

(11) Não gosto de ir ao cinema, teatro. Teatro assim quando é uma peça **que** te **chama** (**I**) atenção, **que** tu **vês** (**I**) que está, né? fazendo já propaganda. (FLP 04, L465)

I do not like going to the movies, or the theatre. The theatre when it is a play **that calls** (**I**) my attention, **that** you **know** (**I**) is popular.

In both occurrences above, the referents do not refer to a single entity: *another activity*, in (10), and *a play*, in (11), are unknown to the listener. Moreover, in the first occurrence, the search for another activity is a future projection, whereas, in the second occurrence, the informant mentions a situation that happens more than one time.

4.4. Adverbial clauses

According to Givón (1995), certain adverbial clauses carry an epistemic value of low certainty as, for example, purpose clauses, as in (12), and temporal clauses, as in (13).

(12) Existe um sinal vermelho **para que** você não **avance** (**S**). (FLP 13, L783)

There is a red light **so** you don't **go** (**S**).

(13) A gente não sabe onde é que vai parar essa humanidade, né? **Até que** Deus **venha** (**S**) e **diga** (**S**): "Basta! Agora chega!" (FLP 22, L42)

We do not know where this humanity is going to stop, right? **Until** God **comes** (**S**) and **says** (**S**): "Enough! That's enough!"

As can be seen in occurrences (12) and (13), the feature of future projection is identified from the nature of the adverbial clauses. Both purpose and temporal clauses have the property of signaling an irrealis scope, in which events have not taken place yet.

4.5. Peculiar cases

Bechara (2003) identifies another type of clause as being a context of use of present subjunctive. This class, named *peculiar cases*, seems to be the same as *parenthetical expression*, an expression which is inserted in the flow of thought. It may be at the beginning, in the middle or between clauses.

(14) ...o que mais me marcou, **que** eu me **lembro** (**S**), foi isso, que foi muito engraçado. Da árvore, né? da árvore que a gente se jogava de uma pra outra... (FLP 01, L132)

> ...what impressed me most, **what** I **remember** (**I**), was this, that was really funny. About the tree, right? The tree where we would jump from one tree to another…

In situations as in (14), the informant shows a certain degree of uncertainty about he is saying. In this way, the hearer should expect that the subject might be wrong. In (14), the informant says that what impressed him most in his childhood was playing in the trees. But, when he says *what I remember*, he suggests he might be wrong and maybe it might be another situation he could not remember at that moment. Therefore, examples like this one fall under the scope of epistemic modality.

5. METHODOLOGY

The sample analyzed in this study comes from the VARSUL [6] Database Project that stores 288 sociolinguistic interviews of Labovian orientation, representative of speech data from the Southern region of Brazil. The subjects interviewed are stratified according to sex (male and female), age (25-49 and over 50), levels of education (elementary, middle and high school), ethnic group (for example: Azorean, Italian, German) and region (four cities in each of the three states [7]). Florianópolis, the capital of the state of Santa Catarina, also has available interviews with young people aged between 15 and 24, as well as interviews with graduate subjects. The data analyzed in this study (a total of 319 occurrences) comes from 36 informants from Florianópolis.

The statistical program VARBRUL (PINTZUK 1988) for variable rule analysis was used in this study. This program identifies, by means of multivariate tools, those "factors that contribute statistically significant effects to variant choice when all are considered simultaneously, as well as their relative magnitude with respect to each other" (POPLACK 2001, p. 410). In Pimpão (1999), some linguistic and social independent variables were controlled. In this chapter, just one linguistic variable will be presented, the one that had statistical significance in the most rounds: *time-modality*. It is better discussed in the next section, related to some data.

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6. VARSUL means Linguistic Variation of the Southern Region of Brazil. For further information, you can access this website: www.varsul.org.br. You can also find many dissertations and theses in which researchers analyze data from VARSUL.
7. The three states are: Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina and Paraná.

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Initially, all 319 occurrences were run together, and the first independent variable selected by the statistical program VARBRUL was *time-modality*. In each round of the specific contexts, this same variable was first selected in the following types of clauses: noun, adjective and adverbial clauses[8]. The results for the four rounds are shown in Table 1.

Time-modality	Subj./Total	Percentage	Probability
All contexts			
[+ future projection]	106/128	83	0,76
[- future projection]	81/191	42	0,31
TOTAL	187/319	59	
Context of noun clauses			
[+ future projection]	71/84	85	0,67
[- future projection]	10/31	32	0,12
TOTAL	81/115	70	
Context of relative clauses			
[+ future projection]	09/11	82	0,91
[- future projection]	23/63	37	0,40
TOTAL	32/74	43	
Context of adverbial clauses			
[+ future projection]	25/30	83	0,76
[- future projection]	19/45	42	0,32
TOTAL	44/75	59	

Table 1. – The variable use of *subjunctive present* in *all contexts*, and in context of *noun clauses*, *relative clauses* and *adverbial clauses* (adapted from Pɪᴍᴘ̃ᴀᴏ 1999, p. 73, 94, 99, 89)

According to Table 1, events that indicate future projection show a preference for the present subjunctive, whereas this verbal mood is inhibited when the future projection is less evident, which in turn promotes the use of the present indicative (Gᴜɪʀᴀʟᴅᴇʟʟɪ 2004; Mᴇɪʀᴀ 2006; Cᴀʀᴠᴀʟʜᴏ 2007; Aʟᴍᴇɪᴅᴀ 2010). This analysis comes from the results of the data together and the results of each type of clause as well. Table 1 shows similar results both for the greater use of present subjunctive related to the feature of projection and the lesser use if this

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8. The independent variable *levels of education* was the first one selected in the statistical round with the adverb *maybe*, and, because of little data in the 'peculiar cases' context, no statistical rounds were possible.

feature is less evident. Therefore, regardless of the type of clause, whether noun, relative or adverbial, the present subjunctive is most likely to appear in occurrences in which an event is projected into the future.

Thus, our hypothesis for the use of the present subjunctive mood was confirmed. It was based on the presence of features of future projection in the context of occurrence, not only on the uncertainty conveyed in the statement. In other words, the one responsible for the choice of the subjunctive is not the epistemic modality, not even the deontic modality: the motivation for the subjunctive would be the feature of future projection - which is typical of deontic modality - but which may also appear in epistemic statements.

CONCLUSIONS

The most important conclusion we draw from our research is that the use of present subjunctive is not just a matter of uncertainty, as mentioned in Portuguese normative grammar; rather, the results show how important it is to consider the relation between uncertainty and future projection. With this important finding, we can answer the question asked earlier, reproduced again: if the subjunctive mood appears in an epistemic uncertainty context, which can be identified in both types of modality, what could explain the variable use of this verbal mood?

The results exhibited in Table 1 provide evidence for considering the use of present subjunctive as a variable phenomenon and for identifying reasons for the variation. Data taken together show a high probability for the correlation between the feature of future projection and the use of present subjunctive (0,76). The same variable was selected in the rounds with these three types of clauses: noun, relative and adverbial. The results for each type of clause confirm those shown for all 319 occurrences.

Therefore, the most important finding refers to the factor *feature of future projection*: the use of present subjunctive is conditioned by its presence; and, when this feature is less evident, it is most likely to appear in the present indicative. In addition, the results indicate the variable *time-modality* as having high relevance, regardless of the type of clause, whether noun, adjective or adverbial.

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