

Prescriptively or descriptively speaking?

How ‘information-quality’ influences mood variation in Spanish emotive-factive clauses

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It is generally put forth that Spanish has the subjunctive as the required mood in the complements of emotive-factives (*alegrarse de que* ‘to be happy that’), desire verbs (*querer* ‘to want’), verbs of uncertainty (*dudar* ‘to doubt’), modals (*ser posible que* ‘to be possible that’), causatives (*hacer que* ‘to make that’), and directives (*recomendar que* ‘to recommend that’) (e.g., Real Academia Española 2011). However, in spite of these traditional rules, it has been observed that some of these environments allow for the indicative (Blake 1981; Crespo del Río 2014; Deshors and Waltermire 2019; Gallego and Alonso-Marks 2014; García and Terrell 1977; Gregory and Lunn 2012; Kowal 2007; Lipski 1978; Silva-Corvalán 1994; Waltermire 2019). The current study explored one such environment; emotive-factive clauses. Results showed that the presuppositions that speakers hold regarding the knowledge that their addressees possess influence the mood that they select. This, thus, demonstrates the important role that pragmatics plays in the occurrence of mood variation.

Keywords: mood variation, verbal mood, subjunctive, indicative, Spanish, emotive-factives

1. Introduction

1.1 Emotive-factive predicates

Emotive-factive¹ predicates convey a speaker’s evaluation of a particular event (Becker 2010; Portner 2018). They include expressions such as *be happy (that)*, *be sad (that)*, and *regret*. They are an intriguing class of predicates since they

1. Emotive-factive predicates are also referred to as evaluative predicates.

exhibit extensive cross-linguistic variation in their selection of mood (Quer 1998; Portner 2018). For instance, whereas Romanian and Greek require the indicative, French, Catalan, and Spanish call for the subjunctive (Farkas 1992b; Giannakidou 2015; Quer 1998, 2009). Spanish, however, has proven itself to be much less well-behaved than is traditionally portrayed. Alternations between subjunctive and indicative occur in Peruvian Spanish (Crespo del Río 2014), Mexican Spanish (Blake 1981; García and Terrell 1977; Quer 1998, 2010b; Silva-Corvalán 1994), and Iberian Spanish (Lope Blanch 1990). It is, therefore, not uncommon to come across variation such as that seen below:

- (1) *Es triste que se vaya tan pronto.*
 Be.3SG sad that REFL go.SUBJ.3SG so soon.
 ‘It is sad that s/he is leaving so soon.’ Subjunctive
- (2) *Es bueno que tenemos tiempo para visitar a Juan también.*
 Be.3SG good that have.INDIC.1PL time for visit.INF to Juan also.
 ‘It is good that we have time to visit Juan as well.’ Indicative
 (García and Terrell 1977, 222–223)

1.2 Why does this variability occur?: *semantic approaches to mood*

Two main intuitions have been used to understand the semantics of mood choice: the comparison-based approach (Giorgi and Pianesi 1997) and the truth-based account (Farkas 1985, 1992b; Giannakidou 2015; Quer 2001). Both theories describe the meanings of each mood in contexts with and without a selecting predicate. However, it is important to note that the contexts on which they focus are prescriptive. Thus, the non-prescriptive variation exhibited by emotive-factives is difficult to explain using these approaches. In order to counteract this shortcoming, both theories suggest that emotive-factives are inherently ‘hybrid’ in their nature; i.e., they have a factive side as well as an emotive side. It is, consequently, the competition between these two components that is explained as triggering their inconsistent selection of mood.

1.3 Why does this variability occur?: *a pragmatic approach to mood*

Another means of approaching mood is through an examination of its pragmatic distribution. Crystal (2008) defines pragmatics as the “[...] study of language from the point of view of the users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on the other participants in the act of communication” (379). Encompassing the entire range of this definition is the theory of ‘information-

quality.² The hypothesis puts forth that mood choice is contextually constrained by either of two factors: a) what the speaker views as (ir)relevant or (un)reliable, or b) what s/he believes the other interlocutors know or do not know (Gregory and Lunn 2012). The theory states that a speaker may choose the indicative to assert information that is either reliable or new to the listener, while the subjunctive may be used to de-emphasize what is unreliable, or what the hearer already knows (Gregory and Lunn 2012; Lunn 1989; Quer 2001; Sessarego 2016). As such, it is the proposition's quality of being either (un)reliable or (un)familiar, which affects a speaker's choice of form. More on this theory is discussed in Section 3.

2. Pragmatic presupposition and mood choice

2.1 Pragmatic presupposition

According to Stalnaker (2002), speakers presuppose certain things when they speak. He states that it is these presuppositions that guide what they say and how they decide to say it (701). However, in order to presuppose something, the speaker needs to take it for granted as background information (701). In other words, the speaker has to be of the belief that the knowledge that s/he is sharing is common ground to all of the conversational participants (Stalnaker 1973, 2002). Such presuppositions (or background assumptions) are, thus, pragmatic in nature since they concern the relationship between speaker, addressee/hearer, and context (Keenan 1971).

2.2 Pragmatic presupposition and old information

Emotive-factives have been widely recognized to be 'presupposition-triggers' (Levinson 1983). This is to say that said predicates are "presupposition-generating linguistic items" (Levinson 1983, 179); i.e., they are sources of presuppositions (Levinson 1983; Keenan 1971; Kiparsky and Kiparsky 1971; Zeevat 1992). The predicate 'regret' is frequently used to exemplify this quality. For instance, Zeevat (1992) puts forth that 'regret':

[...] is usually taken to express the relation of being saddened by some event or state, the one given in the complement of the verb. For this, the event or state is presupposed to exist (like the subject) and to be apperceived by the subject. This causes lexical presuppositions to the effect that the event exists and that the subject believes that the event exists (21).

2. See: Gregory and Lunn (2012).

As such, “*x* regrets that *S*” presupposes *S* (Zeevat 1992, 2). This means that, in Example (3) below, the complement of *Lamento que* (‘I am sorry that’) is presupposed since it would make little sense for the speaker/subject to *be sorry that S* (or *not sorry that S*), if *S* were not presupposed to have taken place (Levinson 1983). Thus, through the speaker sharing that *s/he is sorry that Peter lost his job*, it is logically implied that *Peter lost his job* (Keenan 1971). Keenan (1971) refers to these types of assumptions as ‘logical presuppositions.’ However, in addition to the speaker’s belief state aligning with *S* actually happening (Zeevat 1992), *s/* he must also presuppose that the hearer *knows* that *S* (Mejías-Bikandi 1998); i.e., *pragmatic* presupposition. Therefore, the hearer in (3) has to already know that Peter lost his job for the sentence to be appropriate (Mejías-Bikandi 1998).

- (3) *Lamento que Pedro haya perdido el trabajo.*
 To-be-sorry.1SG that Peter have.SUBJ.3SG lost the job.
 ‘I am sorry that Peter lost his job.’ (Mejías-Bikandi 1998, 942)

Mejías-Bikandi (1998) suggests that this indicates that “there is an intuitively obvious relation between the notion of pragmatic presupposition and the notion of old information” (943). He states that:

An utterance *A* pragmatically presupposes a proposition *P* iff (if and only if) in order for *A* to be appropriate, *P* must belong to the mutual knowledge of speaker and hearer. A proposition *P* belongs to the mutual knowledge of speaker and hearer iff (if and only if) the speaker knows that *P*, and the speaker knows that the hearer knows that *P*, and the speaker knows that the hearer knows that the speaker knows that *P* (and so on) (943).

He subsequently proposes the use of two diagnostics to validate the claim that this relates to emotive-factives (i.e., that speakers use emotive-factives to introduce information presupposed to be hearer-old). The first demonstrates that an indefinite phrase within the complement of an emotive-factive, *cannot* introduce a discourse referent that is new (Mejías-Bikandi 1998).

- (4) ??*Lamento que conozcas a un amigo mío. (Él) se llama José.*
 To-be-sorry.1SG that know.SUBJ.2SG to a friend mine. (He) SUBJ name.3SG José.
 ??‘I am sorry that you know a friend of mine. His name is José.’

- (5) ??*Me alegre* *de que conozcas* *a un amigo mío.* (Él) *se llama* *José.*
 Me to-make-happy.1SG of that know.SUBJ.2SG to a friend mine. (He) REFL
 name.3SG José.
 ??'I'm happy that you know a **friend** of mine. **His** name is José.'
 (Mejías-Bikandi 1998, 942)

This is not conventional since "an indefinite phrase generally establishes a discourse referent (in the sense of Karttunen 1971). That is, it introduces a new entity in the discourse that may be referred to later by a pronoun or a definite phrase" (942). An example of how this would normally function is provided in Example (6) below:

- (6) *Una mujer* *entró* *en la tienda.* (Ella) *se acercó*
 A woman enter.INDIC.3SG in the store. She SUBJ approach.INDIC.3SG
al mostrador.
 to-the counter.
 'A **woman** entered the store. **She** (then) approached the counter.'
 (Mejías-Bikandi 1998, 942)

Thus, in order to explain the awkwardness of sentences (4) and (5), Mejías-Bikandi suggests that there is "a principle that states that an indefinite cannot introduce a new discourse referent if it appears in a complement that represents old information" (944). This is supported by Prince's (1992) claim that "hearer-old entities are typically definite [...], [while] hearer-new entities are typically indefinite [...]" (302). That is, an indefinite can only introduce a new referent if it appears in a clause representing new information. The second diagnostic used to show that emotive- factives introduce old information relates to their use with the intensifiers *tan* 'so' and *tanto* 'so much' (Mejías-Bikandi 1998).

- (7) *Lamento* *que Pedro sepa* *tan poco.*
 To-be-sorry.1SG that Peter know.SUBJ.3SG so little.
 'I am sorry that Peter knows **so** little.'
- (8) *Me alegre* *de que José sepa* *tanto.*
 Me to-make-happy.SUBJ.1SG of that Jose know.SUBJ.3SG so-much.
 'I am happy that José knows **so much**.'
 (Adapted from Mejías-Bikandi 1998, 943)

Felicitous use of each form has to do with the hearer already being familiar with the information tied to the complement (Mejías-Bikandi 1998). As follows, the addressees in (7) and (8) would have to already be aware that Peter knows very

little and that José knows very much for the sentences to be appropriate (Mejías-Bikandi 1998).

2.3 Old information and the subjunctive

The points discussed in Section 2.2 show that emotive-factive matrices are sources of presuppositions, and, consequently, present information that is old. However, these qualities also correlate with the frequent use of the subjunctive with these predicates: “complements that represent old information [usually] appear in the subjunctive” (Mejías-Bikandi 1998, 944). But, what does this mean for the mood variation discussed in Section 1?, an example of which is provided below:

- (9) *Me alegra* *que estudias* *tanto.*
 Me to-make-happy.3SG that study.INDIC.2SG so-much.
 ‘I am happy that you study so much.’
- Indicative**
 (Mejías-Bikandi 1998, 946)

The answer to this question lies with the difference between presupposition and assertion (Mejías-Bikandi 1998). While the subjunctive is linked to presupposition (–assertion),³ the indicative is tied to assertion (+assertion) (Mejías-Bikandi 1998; Terrell and Hooper 1974). Moreover, since we “pragmatically assert what is presented as new information” (Mejías-Bikandi 1998, 947), it can be said that the indicative in an emotive complement is used to foreground what the hearer does not already know.

3. The theory of ‘information-quality’

The Spanish mood contrast has been said to incorporate the difference between assertion (indicative) and non-assertion (subjunctive) (Borrego, Asencio, and Prieto 1986; Bosque 1990; Collentine 2010; Gregory and Lunn 2012; Lavandera 1983; Lunn 1989; Mejías-Bikandi 1994; Portner 2018; Quer 2009; Sessarego 2016; Terrell and Hooper 1974). It is said that the indicative’s pragmatic function is to assert or foreground content of high informational value, while that of the subjunctive is to background or de-focalize information whose value is low (Borrego, Asencio, and Prieto 1986; Bosque 1990; Collentine 2010; Gregory and Lunn 2012; Haverkate 2002; Lavandera 1983; Lunn 1989; Mejías-Bikandi 1994; Quer 2001, 2009; Sessarego 2016; Terrell and Hooper 1974). According to the theory of information-quality, information deemed not worthy of assertion may be unreli-

3. i.e., a lack of assertion or non-assertion.

able or uninformative (already known), while that considered fitting of assertion is reliable or newsworthy (Gregory and Lunn 2012). As related to emotive-factives, it is the (un)informativeness of the proposition that is said to condition a speaker's choice of mood (Gregory and Lunn 2012). Thus, whereas the indicative may be used to highlight an emotive clause that is new to the listener, the subjunctive is used to background information that the listener already knows (Gregory and Lunn 2012; Lunn 1989; Quer 2001; Sessarego 2016). As such, when evaluative complements contain the indicative, they yield an assertive reading that is not usually present with the subjunctive (Quer 2001).

3.1 Information-quality and mood variation with emotive-factives

The idea that emotive-factives are inherently tied to old information (Gregory and Lunn 2012; Mejías-Bikandi 1998; Quer 2001) is plausible since they are most often used to evaluate situations already known to the conversational participants. It would be unusual, for example, for John to tell Tim that he's happy that Mary got married, if Tim did not share in the knowledge that Mary had ever been engaged, or that she had ever been in a relationship (or even worse, if Tim did not know who Mary was). This idea is elaborated on in (10) and (11) below:

- (10) *No estoy sorprendido de que hayan roto.*
 Not be.1SG surprised of that have.SUBJ.3PL broken.
 'I am not surprised that they have broken up.' Subjunctive
- (11) *Me da igual que a José no le guste.*
 Me give.3SG equal that to José not him please.SUBJ.1SG.
 'It doesn't matter to me that José doesn't like me.' Subjunctive
- (Gregory and Lunn 2012, 336)

Examples (10) and (11) "only make sense if the hearer already knows that a couple has broken up, or that José doesn't like something. A hearer unaware of these facts would surely demand a clarification. [(10) and (11)] refer to information that is assumed to be known to the speaker and hearer alike, and it is this lack of need for assertion that produces the use of the subjunctive" (Gregory and Lunn 2012, 336). It is, therefore, on the rarer occasion that the evaluative complement is *not* presupposed to be known to the hearer, that assertion and the indicative are considered appropriate. The following naturally-occurring examples from Davies' *Corpus del Español* (2016) 'The Corpus of Spanish', do not appear to contradict this hypothesis:

Table 1. Examples of Spanish emotive-factive clauses with an embedded *indicative* verb

- (12) ¡Chiquillas! ¡Estoy demasiado contenta de poder presentarles por primera vez en el blog a la marca COE! ¡Me encanta que todos los productos de la marca **viene**n con un sticker que indica el olor y el estado de ánimo que genera!”
(Davies’ Corpus del Español 2016)
‘Girls! I’m too happy to be able to introduce the brand COE for the first time in this blog. I love that all of the brand’s products **come-INDIC** with a sticker that indicates the smell and emotion that it generates!’
- (13) *Hola, mi bebe tiene siete meses, está bien en el peso y el tamaño para su edad, pero me preocupa que no le **agrada** mucho la comida. Todavía toma leche materna.*
(Davies’ Corpus del Español 2016)
‘Hello, my baby is seven months old and is a good weight and size for his age, but it worries me that food does not **please-INDIC** him a lot. He still drinks breast milk.’
- (14) *Me gustaría agradecer al director de la empresa quien me ha ayudado desde que tenía catorce años, ya que sin él no estaría donde estoy. He trabajado muy duro para llegar a este punto de mi carrera. Es fantástico que todos los sacrificios que he hecho ahora **están** siendo recompensados”.*
(Davies’ Corpus del Español 2016)
‘I would like to thank the director of the Company who has helped me since I was fourteen years old, since without him I wouldn’t be where I am. I have worked very hard to reach to this point in my career. It is fantastic that all the sacrifices that I have made now **are-INDIC** being compensated.’

In (12) a blogger introduces a new brand of cosmetics to readers who are pre-supposed to have had no knowledge of its recent launching; i.e., use of the indicative to highlight or assert information that is new. In (13), a mother reveals to the readers of a maternal blog, that she is worried that her baby doesn’t like food other than breastmilk. This information had not been mentioned in previous discourse and was, thus, assumed to be new to the blog participants who had read it. The informativeness of this comment appears to be what allows for felicitous usage of the indicative. (14) is an excerpt from a speech that was given to an audience that is presumed to have had no knowledge or little knowledge of the biography being presented. The speaker, therefore, opts for the indicative to call the audience’s attention to information that they did not already know.

The preceding discussion, thus, demonstrates that the theory of information-quality aptly brings together the claim that there exists a tripartite relationship between the notions of pragmatic presupposition/assertion, old/new information, and mood choice. The result of this integration of concepts is that one general pragmatic theory of mood is established.

4. The current study

The theory of information-quality suggests that “speakers of Spanish can use grammatical mood to rank the information value of clauses” (Gregory and Lunn 2012, 334). The objective of the present study is, thus, to probe if the mood variation occurring with emotive-factives is in fact influenced by the ‘newness’ or ‘oldness’ of the evaluated proposition at hand: i.e., speakers’ presuppositions regarding the common ground of the conversation. If this is found to be the case, findings will not only contribute to the study of pragmatics, but also to research on language acquisition and instructed language learning (ILL). A case in point is that instruction on mood tends to be diminished to prescriptive lists of rules and mnemonic devices (e.g., *WEIRDO* – *wish-will/emotion/impersonal expressions/request/doubt-denial/ojalá* ‘perhaps’) (Gregory and Lunn 2012; Sessarego 2016). Through these tactics, the appearance of an emotive-factive is explained as co-occurring with that of the subjunctive. As such, learners are taught that mood selection is mechanical and, thus, devoid of meaning. However, if the theory of information-quality holds true, instead of memorizing lists of rules, students can learn “how mood choice is used to convey [specific] information” (Gregory and Lunn 2012, 337). Additionally, if these constraints affect emotive-factives, the non-prescriptive variation occurring in other ‘subjunctive’ environments, may also be explained.⁴ The research questions guiding the present study are, therefore, the following:

- RQ1. Does the hypothesis that new information tends to be asserted with the indicative, while old information is “un-asserted” with the subjunctive, explain the mood variation that occurs in Spanish emotive-factive clauses?
- RQ2. If this is so, is the acceptability of the non-prescriptive indicative mood constrained to contexts of information that is new?

4. Emotive-factives are not the only environment in which non-prescriptive mood variation occurs.

5. Method

5.1 Participants

All participants forming part of the present study were recruited for through the principal investigator's extended network of connections. No participant had a background in linguistics. They included nineteen native speakers (NSs) of Spanish from Argentina ($n=1$), Bolivia ($n=4$), Chile ($n=1$), Colombia ($n=1$), Mexico, ($n=5$), Venezuela ($n=6$), and Spain ($n=1$). Ten participants were female and nine were male. The average age of the group was thirty-four years. NSs from a variety of countries were chosen in order to "cancel out potential dialectal effects" (Borgonovo, Bruhn de Garavito, and Prévost 2015, 48).

5.2 Instrument creation

5.2.1 *Corpus search*

A search of Davies' *Corpus del Español* (2016) 'The Corpus of Spanish' was conducted in order to obtain naturally-occurring examples of mood use in emotive-factive clauses. The thirty-two items that were obtained were adapted to an appropriate length in order to facilitate ease of reading. They were then attached to invented scenarios which indicated if the information being evaluated would have been 'new' or 'old' to the original reader. It followed that all *corpus item* – *scenario* pairs were used in the creation of a contextualized Acceptability Judgment Task (AJT). Additional details regarding the composition of this task are provided in Section 5.2.2 to follow.

5.2.2 *Acceptability judgment tasks*

I. *Contextualized acceptability judgment task*

The first AJT contained the authentic emotive-factive expressions that were extracted from Davies' *Corpus del Español* (2016) 'The Corpus of Spanish'. Various evaluative phrases (e.g., *me encanta que* 'it pleases me that', *es increíble que* 'it is incredible that', etc.) were searched for with the purpose of finding items containing both the indicative and subjunctive. At the end of the search, thirty-two items were selected. Each of these items was then adapted to an appropriate length and subsequently attached to an invented context that signaled if the information being evaluated was 'new' or 'old' to the original reader. The invented scenarios preceded each sentence so as to explicitly indicate to the participants, the contexts with which they should associate the specific form. Eight originally indicative clauses were preceded by contexts describing them as containing information

that was *unfamiliar* to the initial readers (new information), while eight originally subjunctive sentences had scenarios that described them as containing information that the readers would have already known (old information). The remaining sixteen sentences were also divided equally between the two moods. Eight had indicative emotive complements as associated with old information, while the other eight involved the subjunctive as connected to information that was new; i.e., a reversal of the informational contexts said to be most suitable with each mood. The final version of the contextualized AJT, therefore, contained sixteen indicative sentences equally preceded by contexts of new and old information, and sixteen subjunctive sentences anteceded by contexts of the same nature.

II. *Context-free acceptability judgment task*

Context-free evaluative sentences, similar to what would be seen in a Spanish grammar textbook, constituted the second AJT. This second AJT contained ten items; five in the indicative and five in the subjunctive.

5.3 Data collection

Before commencing any language activities, participants were required to read and sign informed consent forms (five minutes).

5.3.1 *Language background questionnaire*

All participants then completed an adapted LEAP-Q language background questionnaire (five minutes) that contributed the participant information in Section 5.1. The questionnaires were provided to the participants in Spanish.

5.3.2 *Acceptability judgment tasks*

After completion of the language background questionnaire, participants were required to perform two Acceptability Judgment Tasks (approximately fifty-five minutes). One AJT was contextualized, while the other was composed of stand-alone (context-free) evaluative sentences. The purpose of using two AJTs was to test if information-quality (new/old information) would affect the participants' judgments.

Participants were instructed to rate how the items in both tasks sounded using a 4-point scale. The rating options were: *muy bien* 'very good' (4), *aceptable* 'acceptable' (3), *rara* 'odd' (2), and *inaceptable* 'unacceptable' (1). Participants were told that their ratings should correspond with how they personally spoke or with speech that they were familiar with. This was done in an attempt to diminish the role of grammaticality in their rankings.

Each response on the contextualized AJT was coded for three variables. The dependent variable was the ratings provided by the participants, while the independent variables included the type of introductory scenario (new vs. old) and the mood contained in each emotive-factive clause. For the stand-alone sentences, the dependent variable was again the participants' ratings, while the independent variable was the mood contained in the specific evaluative clause. These variables were thought to be most important for this study since its principal goal was to better understand the workings of the theory of information-quality itself.

6. Results

Mann-Whitney U tests were run in order to test for differences in the three sets of ratings that were obtained; indicative *new* vs. indicative *old*, subjunctive *new* vs. subjunctive *old*, and indicative vs. subjunctive in *context-free* emotive clauses. Ratings for the indicative in contexts of new and old information were compared first, followed by those obtained for the subjunctive. Ratings for subjunctive versus indicative, as related to the context-free environments, were compared last.

Non-parametric Mann-Whitney U tests were used since, in all three instances, two sets of ordinal data were being compared. Tests were run using SPSS Statistics version 24 and alpha levels were set to 0.05.

6.1 Contextualized acceptability judgment task

6.1.1 *The indicative with new and old information*

The indicative, in evaluative complements containing information that was both unknown (new) and known (old) to the original reader, was examined first.⁵ Table 2 below shows that in contexts of information that was new to the reader, ratings were primarily favorable (70%).

Table 2. The acceptability of the indicative mood in contexts of familiar and unfamiliar information

Indicative with <i>new</i> information					
<i>Very good</i>	<i>Acceptable</i>	<i>Positive total</i>	<i>Odd</i>	<i>Unacceptable</i>	<i>Negative total</i>
27%	43%	70%	18%	12%	30%
Indicative with <i>old</i> information					
<i>Very good</i>	<i>Acceptable</i>	<i>Positive total</i>	<i>Odd</i>	<i>Unacceptable</i>	<i>Negative total</i>
16%	24%	40%	28%	32%	60%

5. Examples of the sentences that were used in the AJTs are included in the Appendix.

However, its use with information that was already known to the addressee received mostly negative scores (60%).

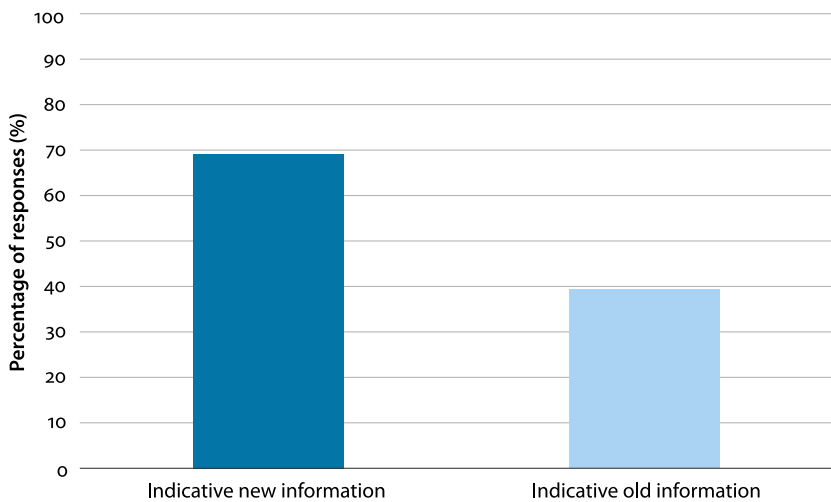


Figure 1. Positive ratings

A Mann-Whitney U test was run to further investigate these findings. Since this test is based on rankings, each value (*muy bien* 'very good', *aceptable* 'acceptable', *rara* 'odd', and *inaceptable* 'unacceptable') was assigned a numerical counterpart from 1–4. The number 4 represented the most positive ranking (*muy bien*), while 1 stood for the lowest (*inaceptable*). Results from the test corroborated the above percentages since it was revealed that the ratings attached to new information were significantly more positive ($Mdn=3$) than those associated with information that was old ($Mdn=2$), $U=7806$, $p=0.000$, $z=-5.072$, $r=-0.02$.

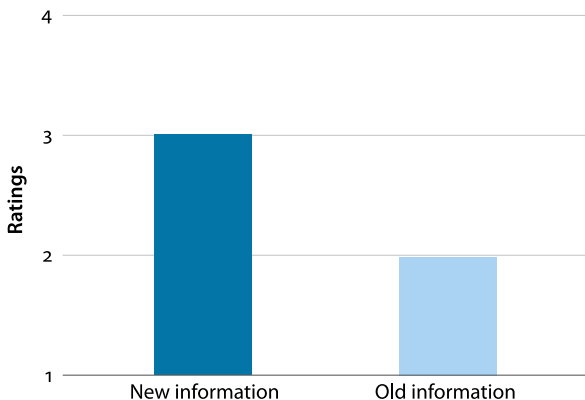


Figure 2. Medians for the indicative with new and old information

6.1.2 The subjunctive with new and old information

The prescriptively correct subjunctive was the mood looked at next. Table 3 below presents the ratings provided for both of the contexts.

Table 3. The acceptability of the subjunctive mood in contexts of familiar and unfamiliar information

Subjunctive with <i>old</i> information					
<i>Very good</i>	<i>Acceptable</i>	<i>Positive total</i>	<i>Odd</i>	<i>Unacceptable</i>	<i>Negative total</i>
61%	30%	91%	7%	2%	9%
Subjunctive with <i>new</i> information					
<i>Very good</i>	<i>Acceptable</i>	<i>Positive total</i>	<i>Odd</i>	<i>Unacceptable</i>	<i>Negative total</i>
42%	46%	88%	9%	3%	12%

In contexts of information that was shared between speaker and reader, the subjunctive received primarily positive scores (91%). However, it also received very positive ratings (88%) in contexts of information that was reader-new. This was, nonetheless, not unexpected since the subjunctive is the default in Spanish emotive-factive clauses.

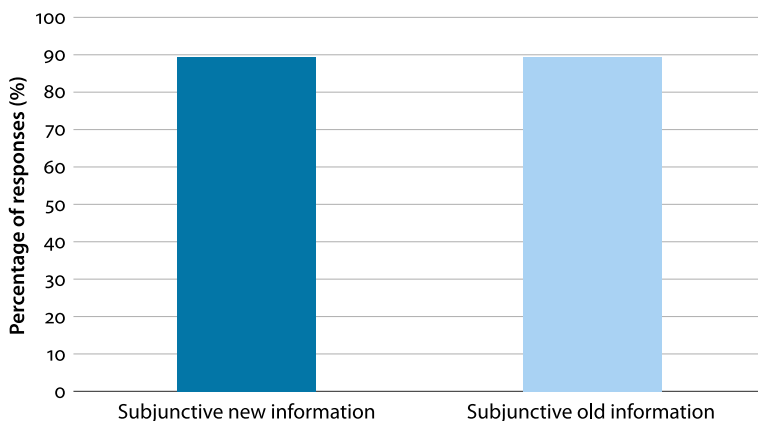


Figure 3. Positive ratings

It was, however, interesting to note that the distributions of the ratings attached to each context were significantly different. With old information, the subjunctive received a median of 4 ($Mdn = 4$), whereas with information that was new it received a median of 3 ($Mdn = 3$), $U = 9316.5$, $z = -3.251$, $p = 0.001$, $r = -0.01$. Figure 4 displays the medians for both contexts.

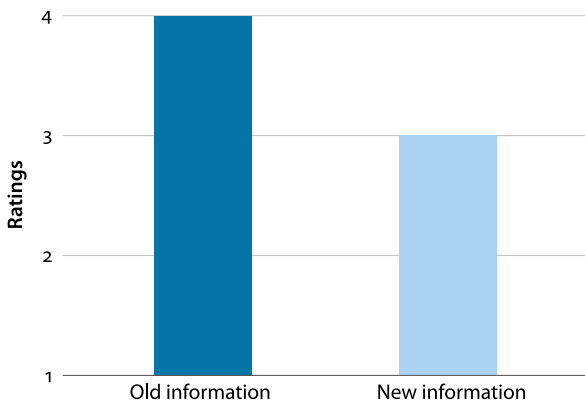


Figure 4. Medians for the subjunctive with old and new information

6.2 Context-free acceptability judgment task

The context-free AJT demonstrated a strong preference for subjunctive (95%) over indicative (31%). Disapproval ratings for the indicative were seen to be relatively high (69%). Table 4 and Figure 5 address these results:

Table 4. The acceptability of the subjunctive and indicative in context-free 'stand-alone' emotive sentences

Subjunctive					
<i>Very good</i>	<i>Acceptable</i>	<i>Positive total</i>	<i>Odd</i>	<i>Unacceptable</i>	<i>Negative total</i>
68%	27%	95%	2%	3%	5%
Indicative					
<i>Very good</i>	<i>Acceptable</i>	<i>Positive total</i>	<i>Odd</i>	<i>Unacceptable</i>	<i>Negative total</i>
7%	24%	31%	31%	38%	69%

Mann Whitney U tests backed up these percentages since rankings for the subjunctive ($Mdn=4$) were significantly more positive than those attached to the indicative ($Mdn=2$), $U=1006.5$, $z=-9.603$, $p=0.000$, $r=-0.05$.

6.3 Contextualized AJT vs. context-free AJT

Additional Mann-Whitney tests were carried out in order to see the extent to which context influenced the participants' ratings. In terms of the indicative, the ratings provided for its use with new information ($Mdn=3$) were significantly more positive than those attached to its selection without context ($Mdn=2$), $U=3952$, $z=-6.224$, $p=0.000$, $r=-0.4$. However, there was no statistical differ-

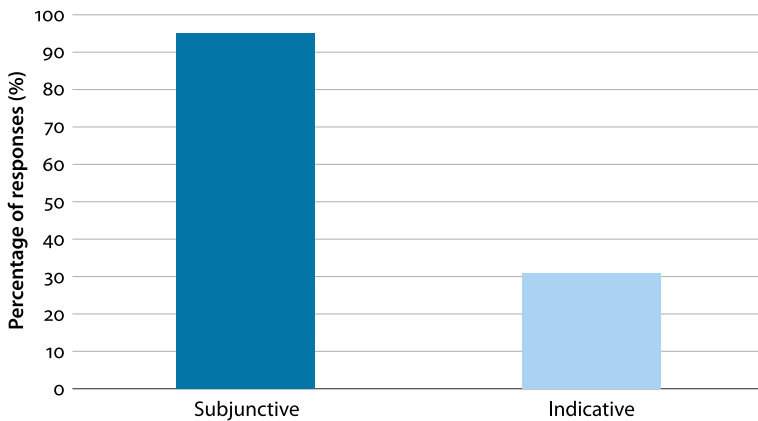


Figure 5. Acceptability ratings for the subjunctive and indicative in context-free sentences

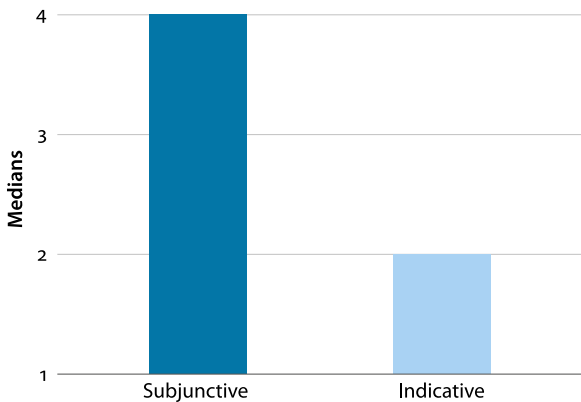


Figure 6. Medians for stand-alone emotive clauses

ence between the ratings it received with old information ($Mdn=2$) as compared to its non-contextualized selection ($Mdn=2$), $U=6410.5$, $z=-1.546$, $p=0.122$, $r=-0.1$. When it came to the subjunctive, its use in emotive clauses containing new information ($Mdn=3$) was significantly more negatively rated than its context-free selection ($Mdn=4$), $U=5252.5$, $z=-3.896$, $p=0.000$, $r=-0.25$. Contrarily, no significant difference was found between the ratings it received with old information ($Mdn=4$) and its use without context ($Mdn=4$), $U=6660.0$, $z=-1.058$, $p=0.290$, $r=-0.07$.

7. Discussion

According to the theory of information-quality, the non-assertive subjunctive is the default in emotive clauses since the evaluation of an event usually takes place when the hearer/reader already has some knowledge of said event (Gregory and Lunn 2012). This means that *Mary is happy that S* is likely to be relayed to a hearer who is presupposed to already know about event *S*. Thus, because the hearer would share in common knowledge of the proposition (the event), the speaker would have no need to assert or highlight it. However, when the *S* being evaluated is new to the listener, the speaker may use the indicative to bring it to his or her attention. The aim of the current investigation was to probe the validity of this hypothesis. The objective was to find out the extent to which the mentioned conversational contexts, working alongside speaker intent,⁶ played a role in grammaticality being disregarded (i.e., the indicative being considered acceptable in prescriptively subjunctive-selecting clauses).

7.1 Contextualized acceptability judgment task

The contextualized AJT provided some eye-opening findings regarding the use of the indicative. Results showed that in emotive clauses containing information that was new, the indicative was associated with predominantly positive ratings (70% positivity, $Mdn=3$ 'acceptable'). However, when the same mood appeared in emotive complements with information that was old, the ratings it received were primarily negative (60% negativity, $Mdn=2$ 'odd'). Through Mann-Whitney U tests, it was observed that this difference was statistically relevant. The indicative in evaluative clauses that had information that was new to the reader, was assigned significantly more positive ratings than it received with evaluated information that was old. This gives weight to the idea that speakers use the indicative as "... an instruction to attend to a piece of information" (Lunn 1989).

When it came to the subjunctive, it was observed that participant ratings were positive regardless of the context in question. This was most likely due to the fact that subjunctive selection is normative in Spanish emotive-factive clauses. However, although it was received favorably in both environments, the difference between the ratings provided for each was of statistical significance. In contexts of old information, the subjunctive received a considerably more positive distribution of scores ($Mdn=4$) than it did with evaluated information that was new ($Mdn=3$).

6. The speaker's decision to assert or background the information.

This supports the hypothesis that the subjunctive is preferred in clauses containing information that the reader/listener already knows (Lunn 1989).

These findings suggest that the acceptability of the indicative is more context-dependent than that of the subjunctive. Whereas the subjunctive was received favorably in both environments, the indicative was ranked highly only when used with evaluated information that was new.

7.2 Context-free acceptability judgment task

Findings from the context-free AJT coincide with the aforementioned postulation. The indicative, in emotive clauses without a preceding context, received ratings that were largely unfavorable (69% unfavorability, $Mdn=2$ 'odd'). Ratings attached to the subjunctive, however, were expressly positive (95% favorability, $Mdn=4$). This did not appear to be random since "it is necessary to know quite a lot about the discourse [...] in order to understand the mood choices [that sentences] contain" (Lunn 1989). Thus, without an idea of the contexts in which the speaker and hearer/reader were found, participants found it difficult to attach positive ratings to the non-prescriptive indicative. The subjunctive, on the other hand, was not impacted by this lack of context. This is likely due to the fact that the use of an emotive-factive itself presupposes that the addressee shares common ground with the speaker; i.e., the default context in which an evaluative predicate is employed is one in which the hearer and speaker share in mutual knowledge of the proposition (Gregory and Lunn 2012; Mejías-Bikandi 1998; Quer 2001).

7.3 Contextualized AJT vs. context-free AJT

Comparisons between both AJTs were also carried out in order to determine how exactly information-quality affected the participants' ratings. It was already observed that the indicative with new information was preferred to its use with evaluated information that was old. However, it was also important to ascertain how its use in these environments differed from its context-free selection. For instance, it was observed that with *old* information, it was not rated significantly differently from its use without context (i.e., the negativity of the ratings attached to its use with old information was similar to that associated with its uncontextualized use). That being said, when its context-free selection was compared to its use with *new* information, the latter was ranked considerably more favorably. This corroborates the hypothesis (see Section 7.1) that the indicative's acceptability is context-dependent; the context on which it is dependent being that of an emotive-factive clause containing information that is new.

In terms of the subjunctive, although ratings were all-round positive, its use with old information was preferred over new. However, how did this compare to its appearance without context? An important finding was that its use with *new* information was significantly more negatively rated than its selection without context. In contrast, when its uncontextualized use was compared to its selection with *old* information, there were no substantial differences between the rankings.

These findings suggest that both moods have contexts in which their use is preferred. Since emotive-factives are inherently tied to information that is old (Gregory and Lunn 2012; Mejías-Bikandi 1998; Quer 2001), their use in contexts of *known* information and *no* contextual information is similarly interpreted. This appears to be why the subjunctive was ranked analogously in both environments. However, when used with information that was new, the participants' dispreference for its use became more obvious. Participants did not seem to favor selection of the non-assertive mood in evaluative contexts revealing information that was new. On the other hand, being the assertive mood, the indicative was deemed most appropriate when it appeared alongside evaluated information that was not already familiar to the addressee.

8. Concluding remarks

There are several benefits to having explored a pragmatic theory of mood such as this one. One of these benefits is that it can account for variation that is non-prescriptive. A second advantage is that it highlights the important roles that speaker intent and context play in speech. Additionally, if a speaker's choice of form is understood to be a consequence of his/her surroundings, deviations from the norm can be better understood. In other words, pragmatic theory can provide solutions to problems that are difficult to resolve when (un)grammaticality is the focus.

Findings from the present investigation show that there is a strong relationship between the mood that a speaker chooses and the context in which the statement is uttered. Results showed that although the subjunctive is the 'go-to' mood in Spanish emotive clauses, the indicative becomes acceptable if certain pragmatic conditions are met. When the information being evaluated is hearer-new, there is a surge in its acceptability. The same occurs with the subjunctive when used with information that is hearer-old. This demonstrates that mood use with emotive-factives is greatly affected by the presence or absence of "[...] mutually recognized shared information" (Stalnaker 2002, 204). If the speaker presupposes that there is no common ground between what s/he knows about the event to-be-evaluated and what the hearer knows about said event, the assertive and marked indica-

tive becomes appropriate. In this way, the speaker can call the addressee's attention to the newness of the information being shared. If the information to-be-evaluated is, however, identified as being common knowledge to both speaker and hearer, the non-assertive subjunctive is preferred. This demonstrates that what is hearer-new is more "assertable" than what is hearer-old. Thus, in response to RQ1, new information being asserted with the indicative and old information being unasserted with the subjunctive, does aid in explaining the mood variation occurring in Spanish emotive-factive clauses. In terms of RQ2, since the indicative was highly ranked with new information alone, its use does appear to be largely restricted to such environments.

9. Future research

The above findings are consequential for various reasons. The first is that there is substantial evidence that the mood variation occurring in Spanish evaluative clauses is not random; pragmatic factors contribute to its occurrence. A second reason is that evaluative clauses may not be the only environment in which mood variation is affected by information-quality; the same may be the case for the variation occurring in other prescriptively 'invariable' environments. Additionally, since similar intra-linguistic variation can occur in the emotive clauses of Catalan, Brazilian Portuguese, Turkish, and French (Giannakidou 2015; Quer 1998, 2009), it might be beneficial to explore if this theory is applicable beyond the context of Spanish. A fourth reason for why these findings are important is that it was seen that mood choice goes beyond the type of predicate at hand. It involves the relationship between the speaker, his/her addressee, and their shared or unshared common grounds. Finally, both learners and instructors can benefit from knowing that choice of mood carries pragmatic purpose and is, thus, meaningful.

In closing, it is also important to mention that there are other variables which may have influenced the results that were obtained. Extra-linguistic factors such as language background, gender, age, and education could have also played a part in the participants' responses. These factors were not examined in the current study, primarily because it was focused on figuring out the intricacies of the theory of information-quality itself. It is, thus, important for any future studies on the topic to take this into consideration, and perhaps extend the study in such a way that these variables are accounted for.

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Appendix. Sample items from each of the two AJTs

Contextualized AJT

1.1 Indicative new information

Respuesta extraída de la sección de comentarios de un artículo periodístico titulado: *Un nuevo gato en casa*.

Esta mujer está contando su experiencia personal con los gatos a lectores que no saben nada acerca de su experiencia con las mascotas.

"Hola, soy Meli. A mí me encantan los gatos. Son hermosos. El mío se llama Néstor. Lástima que se llevatan mal con mi perra..."

Me suena:

- a. muy bien
- b. aceptable
- c. rara
- d. inaceptable

1.2 Indicative old information

Comentario extraído de un blog sobre la religión:

Este hombre le hace una pregunta a su pastor después de haberle contado algunos detalles sobre la relación que tiene con su novia.

"Estimado Padre Rivero:

Tengo más de 3 años saliendo con mi novia y la amo muchísimo. Siempre ha existido respeto y mucha comunicación entre nosotros, mas solo le veo un pequeño problemita; ella es atea. ¿Es malo que yo salgo con ella?"

Me suena:

- a. muy bien
- b. aceptable
- c. rara
- d. inaceptable

1.3 Subjunctive new information

Noticia extraída de un blog sobre el maquillaje:

Esta bloguera está informándoles por primera vez a sus lectores de un recién creado sitio de web en el que se venden cosas de belleza. Los lectores no saben que existe esta página web ni saben nada de los productos que se ofrecen.

“¡Hola internautas! Tengo buenas noticias. ¡Hay un nuevo sitio web que vende solo productos de belleza! ¡Me encanta que todos sus productos vengan con un *sticker* que indica el olor y el estado de ánimo que genera!”

Me suena:

- a. muy bien
- b. aceptable
- c. rara
- d. inaceptable

1.4 *Subjunctive old information*

Comentario extraído de un foro de internet sobre el sobrepeso:

Este comentario está dirigido a lectores que ya sabían del aspecto físico y del peso de la mamá mencionada.

“O sea, creo que nuestras madres y abuelas no estaban bajo la presión que las mujeres de hoy tienen después de tener un bebé. ¡Mi padre dice que no hay nada mejor que un poco de carne en los huesos! Cree que es bueno que mi madre esté un poco gordita”.

Me suena:

- a. muy bien
- b. aceptable
- c. rara
- d. inaceptable

Context-free AJT

2.1 *Subjunctive*

Es fundamental que adquieren algunos conocimientos básicos antes de especializarse.

Me suena:

- a. muy bien
- b. aceptable
- c. rara
- d. inaceptable

2.2 *Indicative*

Lástima que no le conozcan porque es un tipo fenomenal.

Me suena:

- a. muy bien
- b. aceptable
- c. rara
- d. inaceptable

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