Adverbial Insubordination in Interaction: a pilot study on hypothetical-comparative constructions in French and Spanish

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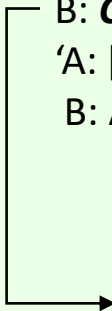CBL Linguists' Day – Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Insubordination

(1) Conversation among two girls:

    A: [reported speech] *"Sexualidad, chicos… Conoce sus puntos débiles"*

    B: ***Como si no lo supiéramos, de verdad.***

    'A: [reported speech] "Sexuality, boys… Know their weaknesses"

    B: As if we didn't know that, to be honest.' (Val.Es.Co)

1. Formally: stand-alone (no main clause) but introduced by subordinating conjunction

2. Pragmatically: own illocutionary force (here: exclamative)

3. Semantically: interpersonal meaning (here: denial of an assumption)

Adverbial Insubordination

→ <u>Complement insubordination</u>: the independent clause is introduced by a complementizer.

- Spanish: studies on *que* ('that') (**Gras & Sansiñena 2017**)

> ***Que*** *tenga que vernir Tejerina a explicaros las cosas…*
> '[It's outrageous] that Tejerina should have come and explain to you how things work…'

- Dutch: studies on *dat* ('that') (**Verstraete et al. 2012**)

> ***Dat*** *hij misschien eens in zijn achterzak kijkt.*
> 'He could try and check his back pocket.'

- Swedish/Danish: studies on *at(t)* ('that') for both languages (**D'Hertefelt & Verstraete 2014**)

> ***At*** *noget sså katastrofalt kan ende så godt…*
> '[I can't believe] that something so catastrophic can end so well.'

→ <u>Adverbial insubordination</u>: the independent clause is introduced by a subordinating conjunction (e.g. *if, as if*).

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Adverbial Insubordination

Japanese: studies on *kara* ('because') and *ba/tara* ('if') clauses (Horie 2018)

Brazilian Portuguese: studies on *porque* ('because'), *quando* ('when') and *se* ('if') clauses (Bossaglia, Mello & Raso 2017)

French: studies on *si* ('if), *quand* ('when') (Debaissieux et al. 2019) and *parce que* (because) (Debaissieux & Martin 2012)

English: studies on *if* (Lastres-López 2020) and *as if* (Brinton 2014) clauses

Spanish: studies on *si* ('if') clauses (Schwenter 2016)

Dutch: studies on *alsof* ('as if') clauses (Looij & Minnaert 2019)

Outline

→ Hypothetical-comparative constructions

→ Methodology

- o Data
- o Research question and main goals
- o Subordinate vs. Insubordinate
- o Parameters of the analysis

→ Analysis of insubordinate clauses

- o Grammar
- o Functional typology

→ Conclusion

Hypothetical-comparative constructions

(Olguín Martínez 2021: 18-19)

"Qualitative comparative constructions […] "**bring together the two terms** of the comparison **on the basis of similarity or likeness**" (Fuchs 2014: 133). Qualitative comparative constructions are divided into similarity (e.g. *she swims like a fish*) and hypothetical manner (e.g. *She treats me as if I were a stranger*)."

Qualitative comparative constructions

(Dixon 2009: 35)

REAL MANNER:

"The action described by the Focal clause is done in the manner described by the Supporting clause. […] The Supporting clause here refers to an actual activity […]."

    (2) He shaped the boomerang, [in the way/like his father had taught him]. (Dixon 2009: 35)

HYPOTHETICAL MANNER:

"If the Focal clause portrays an activity, the Supporting clause may describe what it pretends to be, or what it might be (but isn't). […] with the Supporting clause then describing some imaginary event […]."

    (3) He extended his finger within his pocket, [as if pointing a gun at her]. (Dixon 2009: 35)

Spanish | French

| *como* | | *comme* |

| *como si* | | *comme si* |

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Methodology: data

French

comme si

Exhaustive sample (129 hits)

Spoken-conversation sample (53 hits)
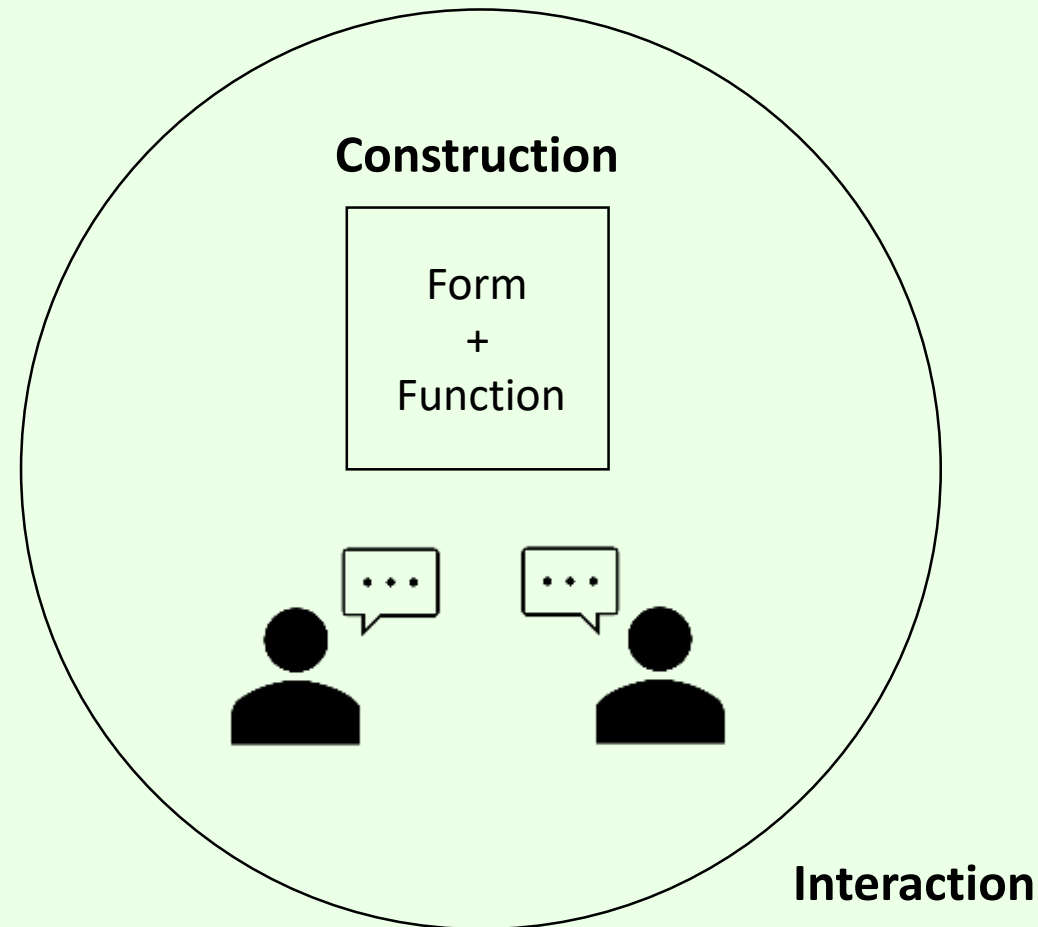
Random 20-hit sample

Spanish

como si

Exhaustive sample (16 hits)

Random 20-hit sample

Methodology: research question and main goals

Which linguistic and interactional features characterise the insubordinate hypothetical-comparative clauses in both French and Spanish?

Construction

Form
+
Function

Interaction

Methodology: subordinate vs. insubordinate

Presence of a main clause

→ **Yes** : main clause – full subordinate structure

(4) A: *Grosso modo, oui. Vous ne voyez pas de differences?*

B: *Ben... oui. On écoute la TV, c'est **comme si on parlait le français, oui**.*

'A: Generally, yes. Don't you see any differences?

B: Well... yes. We listen to the TV, it's as if we spoke French, yes.' (Valibel)

→ **Yes (interruption)** : main clause – full subordinate structure – interlocutor interruption

(5) A: *Ah, tu lis le chapitre* [B: *Oui*] **comme si tu le disais à la radio, c'est ça?**

'A: Oh, you read the chapter [B: Yes] as if you said it on the radio, don't you?' (Valibel)

→ **Trace** : main clause – non-verbal element as a trace in the subordinate clause

<u>Methodology</u>: subordinate vs. insubordinate

Presence of a main clause

→ **No (main clause recycled)** : no main clause – previous utterance's main clause

(6) [...] *il sait prendre la parole de tout, de rien, et dire quelque chose comme s'il l'avait prepare.* ***Comme si c'était un fond bien préparé depuis peut-être la veille et que lui le fait sur le 'minute on the spot' comme on dit****.*
'[...] he can talk about everything, about nothing, and say something as if he had prepared it. As if it was a well-prepared background since the day before and he does that on the 'minute on the spot' as we say.' (Valibel)   ❌

→ **No** : no main clause – <u>full insubordinate clause</u>

(7) A: [reported speech] *"Sexualidad, chicos... Conoce sus puntos débiles"*
B: ***Como si no lo supiéramos, de verdad.***
'A: [reported speech] "Sexuality, boys... Know their weaknesses"
B: As if we didn't know that, to be honest.' (Val.Es.Co)   ✅

Clefting test

(6)' *C'est **comme si c'était un fond bien préparé depuis peut-être la veille et que lui le fait sur le 'minute on the spot' comme on dit** qu'il sait dire quelque chose.*
'It is as if it was a well-prepared background since the day before and he does that on the 'minute on the spot' as we say that he can say anything.'
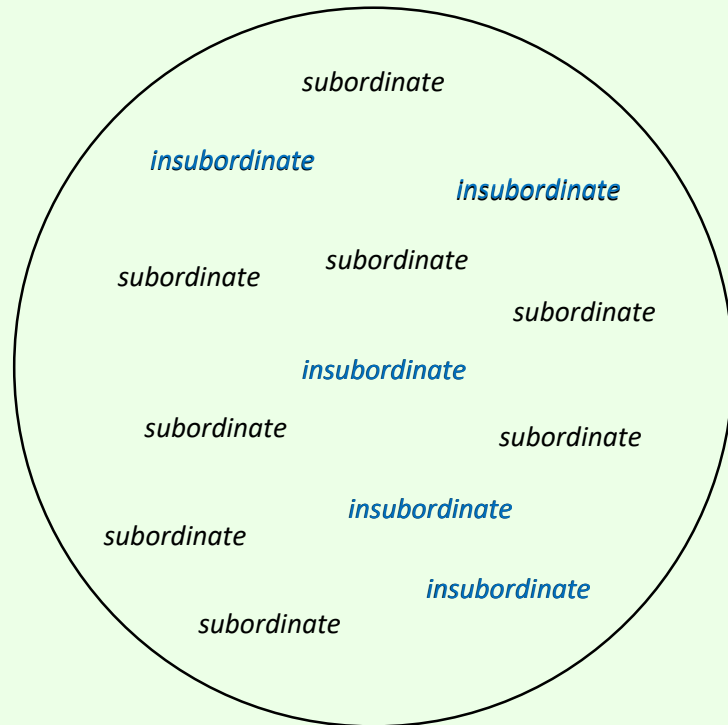
Methodology: subordinate vs. insubordinate

Distribution of the data in the corpora:

Language	Corpus	Sample	Hits	Insub. cases (abs)	Insub. cases (rel)
French	Valibel	Exhaustive	110	2	1.81%
	Orféo	Exhaustive	79	11	13.92%
	Twitter	Random	20	9	45%
	Subtotal French		*209*	*22*	*10.53%*
Spanish	Val.Es.Co	Exhaustive	16	7	43.75%
	Twitter	Random	20	11	55%
	Subtotal Spanish		*36*	*18*	*50%*
TOTAL			**238**	**39**	**16.39%**

Methodology: parameters of the analysis

Stage 1:

○ Grammar

○ Syntax

○ Semantics

○ Conversation

○ Clause integration tests

subordinate

insubordinate

insubordinate

subordinate

subordinate

subordinate

insubordinate

subordinate

subordinate

subordinate

insubordinate

subordinate

insubordinate

subordinate

Stage 2:

○ Semantics

○ Argumentation
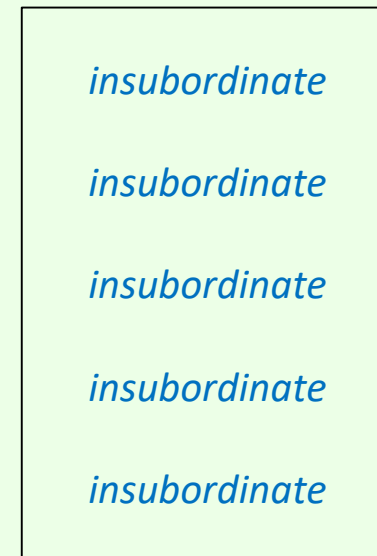
insubordinate

insubordinate

insubordinate

insubordinate

insubordinate

10

Analysis of insubordinate clauses

Grammar: TAM marking of the insubordinate clause (always finite)

→ <u>French</u>: always indicative mood + variation in tense according to temporal relation vis-à-vis the speech event

- o **Pluperfect tense = Anteriority**

   (8) A: *Mais devant tu peux pas tricher.*

   B: *Non, mais… N'importe quoi! Comme si j'**avais triché**, quoi.*

   'A: But you can't cheat in the front.

   B: Comme on… Nonsense! As if I had cheated [*quoi*]. (Corpus TUFS in Orféo)

- o **Past tense = Simultaneity**

   (9) A: […] *Bon, elle avait une histoire de ça, Charlotte. Mais enfin…*
   B: *Comme si c'**était** du favoritisme, quoi.*
   'A: Well, Charlotte, she had a business about that. But well…
   B: So, as if it was a case of favouritism.' (Valibel)

⚠ **No relation to meaning**

- o **Future periphrastic construction = Posteriority**

   (10) A: *Et toi, alors, ta bonne résolution?*

   B: […] *Ça va être pas dur: arrêter de fumer*.

   A: *Toi.*

   B: *Ben, ouais.*

   C: *Toi arrêter de fumer?*

   A: *Comme si t'**allais réussir**.*

'A: So, your resolution?
B: […] That won't be hard: quit smoking.
A: You.
B: Well, yes.
C: You quit smoking?
A: As if you would succeed.' (Corpus TCOF in Orféo)

Analysis of insubordinate clauses

Grammar: TAM marking of the insubordinate clause (always finite)

→ <u>Spanish</u>: no marking of temporal relation

- the prototypical/most frequent form is **subjunctive mood + past tense**
 *(11) Entre los puros que se fuma… Bueno, no son puros, pero como si lo **fueran**.*
  'Considering the cigars (s)he smokes… Well, those aren't cigars, but [let's act] as if they were.' (Val.Es.Co)

<u>just like in</u> subordinate counterpart:
 *(12) Claro, entonces es como si no **estuviera** asegurada.*
  'Of course, it is then as if she didn't have an insurance.' (Val.Es.Co)

- particular example of **indicative mood + present tense**
 *(13) Con esas pedazo de arañas, como si **están** 7 años sin casos.*
  'Considering the existence of such big spiders, [I wouldn't like to be there] even if they have no more Covid-19 cases in the next 7 years.' (Val.Es.Co)

Variation in TAM-marking only relates to semantic features, no temporal-relation implications

Analysis of insubordinate clauses

Functional typology

Type	Spanish cases	French cases
1. Denial of an assumtion	6	15
2. Discursive reformulation	11	7
3. Invitation to join discursive action	1	0
4. Concessive	1	0

Analysis of insubordinate clauses

Functional typology

1. <u>Denial of an assumption</u>:

"We see that *as if* monoclauses may be used where an affirmative assumption is being denied and a negative asserted […], but also in cases where a negative assumption is being denied and a positive asserted. […] That is, there is always reverse polarity." (Brinton 2014 : 101)

- o   Pragmatics: **exclamative** speech function
- o   Semantics: **epistemic** modality (truth status of the propositional content)

  polarity reversal → **assertion**: there is a discursive presupposition that is **not shared** by the different speakers

  - • Positive:

    (14) [reported speech] *"Sexualidad, chicos, conoce sus puntos débiles"; como si no lo supiéramos, de verdad.*
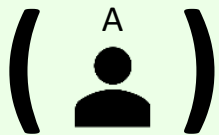   '"Sexuality, boys, know their weaknesses" – as if we didn't know that, to be honest.' (Val.Es.Co)

    (15) A: *C'est ça* "Make America great Again".   B: *Comme si nous n'avions pas vécu ça en France!*
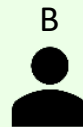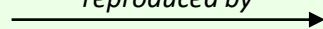   A: 'That's "Make America great Again".   B: We surely did experience that in France!' (Twitter)

A

B

reproduced by →

RESULTS IN

Negative presupposition
(14) [You **don't know** their weaknesses]
(15) [You **didn't experience** that in France]

Marked for negative polarity
(14) "As if we didn't know that"
(15) "As if we hadn't experience that"

Positive assertion
[Your assumption is wrong, we **do know** that]
[Your assumption is wrong, we **did experience** that]

Analysis of insubordinate clauses

Functional typology

1. Denial of an assumption:

> "We see that *as if* monoclauses may be used where an affirmative assumption is being denied and a negative asserted […], but also in cases where a negative assumption is being denied and a positive asserted. […] That is, there is always reverse polarity." (Brinton 2014 : 101)

- Pragmatics: **exclamative** speech function
- Semantics: **epistemic** modality (truth status of the propositional content)

  polarity reversal → **assertion**: there is a discursive presupposition that is **not shared** by the different speakers
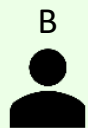
  - Positive:

    (14) [reported speech] *"Sexualidad, chicos, conoce sus puntos débiles"; como si no lo supiéramos, de verdad.*
    '"Sexuality, boys, know their weaknesses" – as if we didn't know that, to be honest.' (Val.Es.Co)

    (15) A: *C'est ça* "Make America great Again".   B: *Comme si nous n'avions pas vécu ça en France!*
    A: 'That's "Make America great Again".   B: As if we hadn't experienced that in France!' (Twitter)

  - Negative:

    (16) A: *Yo no firmo nada sin antes fingir que lo leo.*   B: *Como si tuviera otra opción.*
    'A: I don't sign anything without pretending to read it first.   B: As if I had the choice.' (Twitter)

    (17) Comme si j'avais que ça à faire de racheter une voiture.
    'As if the only thing I had to do was buying a new car.' (Twitter)
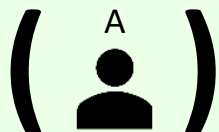
Positive presupposition
(16) [You **pretend** that you read before signing]
(17) [You **should** to buy a new car]

reproduced by →

Marked for positive polarity
(16) "As if I had the choice"
(17) "As if that was my main concern"

RESULTS IN

Negative assertion
(16) [Your assumption is wrong, I **don't have** the choice]
(17)[Your assumption is wrong, that **isn't** my main concern]

14

Analysis of insubordinate clauses

Functional typology
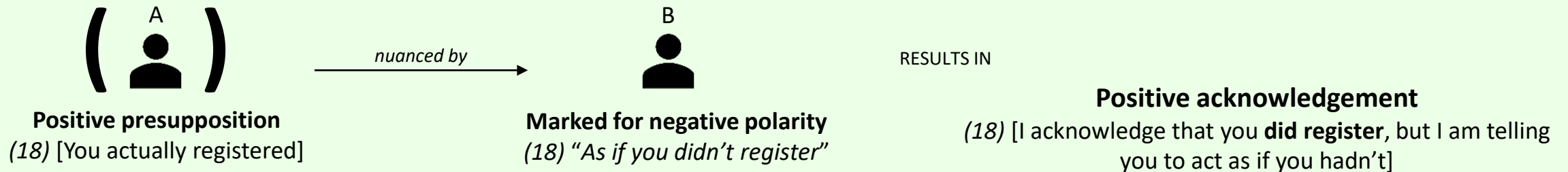
2. Discursive reformulation:

- ○ Pragmatics: **declarative** speech function
- ○ Semantics: **discursive** strategy (elaboration on some previous content)

  polarity reversal → **acknowledgment**: the discursive presupposition is **shared** by the different speakers

  - • Positive:

    (18) Anularte la asignatura, osea como si no te hubieras matriculado.
    'Cancelling the course, I mean, as if you didn't register for it.' (Val.Es.Co)

A

Positive presupposition
(18) [You actually registered]

nuanced by →

B

Marked for negative polarity
(18) "As if you didn't register"

RESULTS IN

Positive acknowledgement
(18) [I acknowledge that you **did register**, but I am telling you to act as if you hadn't]

Analysis of insubordinate clauses

Functional typology

2. Discursive reformulation:

- o Pragmatics: **declarative** speech function
- o Semantics: **discursive** strategy (elaboration on some previous content)

    polarity reversal → **acknowledgment**: the discursive presupposition is **shared** by the different speakers

- • Positive:

    (18) Anularte la asignatura, osea como si no te hubieras matriculado.
    'Cancelling the course, I mean, as if you didn't register for it.' (Val.Es.Co)

- • Negative:

(19) A: *No estamos casados.*   B: *Como si lo estuvierais.*
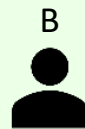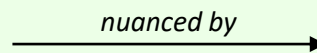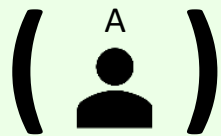'A: We are not married.   B: As if you were. (Val.Es.Co)

(20) A: […] *Bon, elle avait une histoire de ça, Charlotte. Mais enfin…*
B: *Comme si c'était du favoritisme, quoi.*
'A: Well, Charlotte, she had a business about that. But well…
B: So, as if it was a case of favouritism.' (Valibel)

Negative presupposition
(19) [We **are not** married]
(20) [It **is not** a case of favouritism]

Marked for positive polarity
(19) "As if you were"
(20) "As if it were"

Negative acknowledgement
(19) [I acknowledge that you **aren't married**, but I say that you act as if you were]
(20) [I acknowledge that it **is not** a case of favouritism, but I say that it seems as if it were]

Analysis of insubordinate clauses

Functional typology

   3. <u>Invitation to joint discursive action</u>:

       o Pragmatics: **imperative** speech function
       o Semantics: **deontic** modality (desirability)
                    polarity reversal → **explicit acknowledgement** (shared presupposition)

       (21) Entre los puros que se fuma… Bueno, no son puros, pero como si lo fueran.
             'Considering the cigars (s)he smokes… Well, those are not cigars, but [let's act] as if they were.' (Val.Es.Co)

Paraphrase of *como si* fragment:
'we agree the what (s)he smokes are not really cigars but some other kind of cigarette, but, at this precise moment and for the sake of the argument, **let's agree to call them 'cigars'** because they can be judged equivalent.'

Analysis of insubordinate clauses

Functional typology

4. <u>Concessive</u>: **indicative** mood + **present** tense
- o Pragmatics: **declarative** speech function
- o Semantics: **evaluative** modality (speaker's evaluation of an actual SoA)
     polarity reversal → **acknowledgement** (shared presupposition)

(22) *Con esas pedazo de arañas, como si están 7 años sin casos.*
     'Considering the existence of such big spiders, [I wouldn't like to be there] even if they have
     no more Covid-19 cases in the next 7 years.' (Twitter)

Paraphrase of *como si* fragment:

'my opinion about being in/going to Australia would be the same whether the Covid-19 situation were good or not, because I know there are really big spiders there and that determines my decision more than potential Covid-19 outbreaks. **I wouldn't like to be there even if they have no more Covid-19 cases in the next 7 years.**'

Conclusion

Characteristics of hypothetical-comparative insubordinate clauses:

→ Formal features are mainly language-specific:
- o <u>French</u>: TAM relates to marking of **temporal relation**: anteriority, simultaneity and posteriority
- o <u>Spanish</u>: TAM relates to **semantic features** (e.g. present indicative → concessive meaning)

→ But functional-interactional typology is mainly shared by French and Spanish:
- o **Denial of an assumption**: exclamative s. function, epistemic modality and assertion value for polarity reversal.
- o **Discursive reformulation**: declarative s. function, discursive strategy and acknowledgement value for polarity reversal.
- o **Invitation to joint discursive action** (Spanish): imperative s. function, deontic modality and acknowledgement value for polarity reversal.
- o **Concessive** (Spanish): relation to TAM marking, declarative s. function, evaluative modality and acknowledgment value for polarity reversal.

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