

**INSUBORDINATE *COMO SI* CLAUSES:
A FORMAL-FUNCTIONAL TYPOLOGY OF INDEPENDENT
HYPOTHETICAL MANNER CONSTRUCTIONS IN SPANISH**

SLE

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- **INTRODUCTION**
 - > *COMO SI* CLAUSES – INSUBORDINATION – RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND GOALS
- **METHODOLOGY**
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- **ANALYSIS**
 - > PARAMETERS – RESULTS
- **CONCLUSIONS**

COMO SI CLAUSES - HYPOTHETICAL MANNER (DIXON 2009; OLGUÍN-MARTÍNEZ 2021)

(1) *Te abrí las puertas de mi vida como si fueras a quedarte* (Twitter)

'I opened my life's doors for you **as if you were to stay**'

Qualitative **comparative** constructions...

“bring together the two terms of a comparison on the basis of similarity or likeness” (Fuchs 2014:133)

...with **hypothetical** value...

“portrays an imagined [...] or counterfactual [...] situation” (Olguín-Martínez 2021:9)

...providing an expression of **manner**.

“the supporting clause may describe what it [i.e. the situation] pretends to be or what it might be (but isn't)”

(Dixon 2009:35)

INSUBORDINATION “conventionalized main clause use of what, in prima facie grounds, appear Subordinate to be formally subordinate clauses” (Evans 2007:369)

Dependent

- syntax: serving in a main clause structure
- pragmatics: lacking an illocutionary force of their own
- discourse: can't be understood in isolation – only make sense in relation to main clause (element)

Insubordinate

Independent

- syntax: no accompanying main clause (formally introduced by a subordinating conjunction)
- pragmatics: own illocutionary force
- discourse: meaningful in isolation – not dependent on preceding discourse for correct interpretation

(2) *“Sexualidad, chicos... Conoce sus debilidades” Como si no lo supiéramos, de verdad. (Val.Es.Co)*
“Sexuality, boys... Know their weaknesses” As if we didn't know that, to be honest'

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Disagreement in the literature

- > Discursive dependence accepted (Kaltenböck 2016, Gras & Sansiñena 2017, Sansiñena 2019)
- > Discursive independence needed (D'Hertefelt & Verstraete 2014, Debaisieux et al. 2019, Mithun 2008)

INCLUSIVE
APPROACH

INSUBORDINATION

Complement

The independent clause is introduced by a complementizer (Verstraete et al. 2012; D’Hertefelt & Verstraete 2014; Sansiñena 2015, Gras & Sansiñena 2017)

(2) *Claro, entonces es como si no estuviera asegurada.*
‘Of course, it is then as if she didn’t have an insurance.

VS.

Adverbial

The independent clause is introduced by a subordinating conjunction (Hetterle 2015; Schwenter 2016; Bossaglia et al. 2017; Horie 2018; Debaisieux et al. 2019; Lastres-López 2020)

(3) *Te abrí las puertas de mi vida como si fueras a quedarte.*
‘I opened my life’s doors for you as if you were to stay’

“[i]n addition to the basic adverbial use of *as if* [...], these subordinators can occasionally be found in complementation structures introducing finite declarative clauses” (López-Couso & Méndez-Naya 2012:174)

The borderline between these categories is blurred because of the ambivalent status of the conjunction

Research question and goals

How are insubordinate *como si* clauses constructed and used in discourse?

- Establish the different meanings these *como si* clauses can express
 - > Not only manner, but also speaker attitude
- Identify the discourse functions they can serve
 - > Denial of an assumption, nuanced agreement, discursive reformulation/elaboration
- Examine how these are reflected by formal marking
 - > Mainly past tense + subjunctive mood, but not always

DATA



- > Dataset is not balanced in terms of mode (written, spoken), but it remains informative
- > Samples were manually sorted:
 - i) *como si* clauses vs. *si* clauses
 - ii) syntactic dependence

DATA – SORTING TASKS

Proportionality test – internal proportionality (Debaisieux 2016; Smessaert et al. 2005)

como si clauses VS. *si* clauses

(4) *Lo que pasa es que [...] tienes que tener unos conocimientos de lo que sea, como si quieres de informática [...].*
'What happens is [...] you need to have some items of knowledge of any kind, informatics if you want' (Val.Es.Co)

→ Since the *si* clause can be replaced by a demonstrative pronoun...

(4a) [...] *unos conocimientos de lo que sea, como esos (si quieres).*

'[...], some items of knowledge of any kind, like those (if you want).'

... this and similar examples do not constitute instances of *como si* constructions and **were discarded**.

DATA – SORTING TASKS

Clefting test (Smessaert et al. 2005; Verstraete 2007) → syntactic dependence

(5) *Nos han educado a conciencia y las utilizamos cada día, sin pensar en el significado o en sus consecuencias, pero como si fuésemos doctos en el lenguaje.* (esTenTen18)

‘We have been educated on purpose and we use them [i.e. words] everyday, without thinking about the meaning or their consequences, but as if we were well versed in language.’

→ Since the *como si* clause can be downranked into the nominal complement slot of an *it*-cleft, with the (main clause of the) preceding sentence in the cleft relative clause...

(5a) *Es como si fuésemos doctos en el lenguaje que utilizamos las palabras cada día.*

‘It is as if we were well versed in language that we use the words everyday.’

... this and similar examples are syntactically integrated in a main clause structure and **were discarded**.

DATA – DISTRIBUTION

CORPUS	SAMPLE	HITS	INSUBORDINATE CASES	
			n	%
Val.Es.Co	Exhaustive	16	8	50
esTenTen18	rand. <i>pero como si</i>	100	27	27
esTenTen18	rand. <i>por mí como si</i>	100	100	100
Twitter	Random	20	12	60
TOTAL		236	147	62.29

> In Spanish, insubordinate* *como si* clauses are quite frequent: ~ 60%

! The 100% ratio of the *por mí como si* sample is due to the specific query used

*Insubordination in a broad sense

PARAMETERS OF THE ANALYSIS

Formal features

- TAM marking

Functional features

- Semantics:
 - > general meanings: manner and speaker attitude
 - > polarity reversal (Brinton 2014; Verstraete & D'Hertefelt 2014) in relation to the speaker's positioning *w.r.t* the *como si* clause content
- Overall functions: four-way typology

FORMAL PROPERTIES

como si → TAM marking does not relate to temporal location but to semantic features

Most frequent combination is subjunctive mood + past tense

(6) *Entre los puros que se fuma... Bueno, no son puros, pero como si lo fueran.* (Val.Es.Co)
'Considering the cigars she smokes... Well, they are not cigars, but as if they were.'

just like in subordinate counterpart:

(7) *Siento como si llevásemos 90 días en enero.* (Twitter)
'I feel as if we had been 90 days in January.'

Only consistent variation is restricted to a single func. type that shows indicative mood + present tense

(8) *Por mí como si se mueren de hambre.* (esTenTen18)
'They can (even) starve to death for all I care.'

FUNCTIONAL TYPES

TYPE	CASES	
1. DENIAL OF AN ASSUMPTION	7	
2. NUANCED AGREEMENT	28	
3. DISCURSIVE ELABORATION OR REFORMULATION	10	Not in subordinate in a strict sense
4. SCALAR EVALUATION	102	

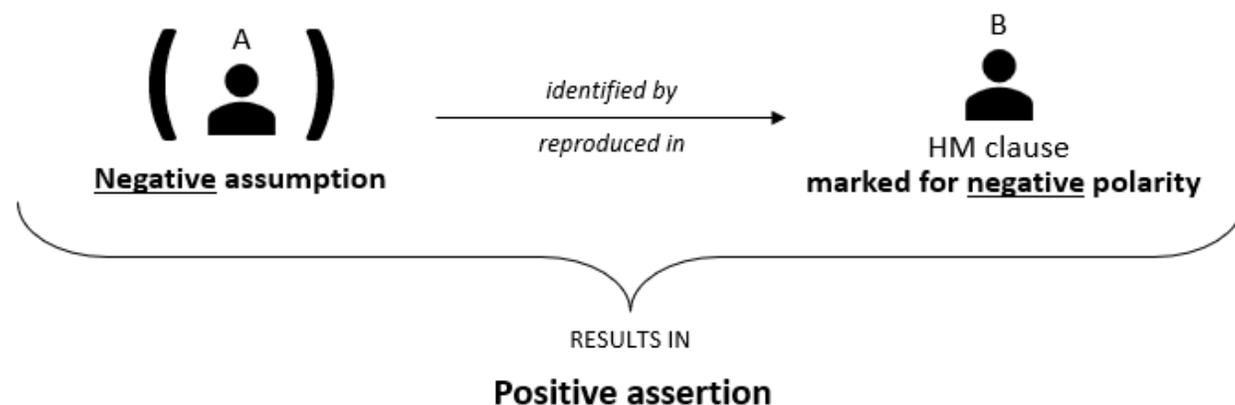
FUNCTIONAL TYPES

1. Denial of an assumption – conveying *speaker attitude* (*manner* at speech act level)

“cases where an affirmative assumption is being denied and a negative asserted [and vice versa]” (Brinton 2014:101)

(9) “*Sexualidad, chicos... Conoce sus debilidades*” *Como si no lo supiéramos, de verdad.* (Val.Es.Co)

“Sexuality, boys... Know their weaknesses” As if we didn’t know that, to be honest’

Polarity reversal

B identifies a negative assumption in A's discourse ('You don't know about boys' weaknesses')

B reproduces this negative value in their HM clause ('As if we didn't know about that')

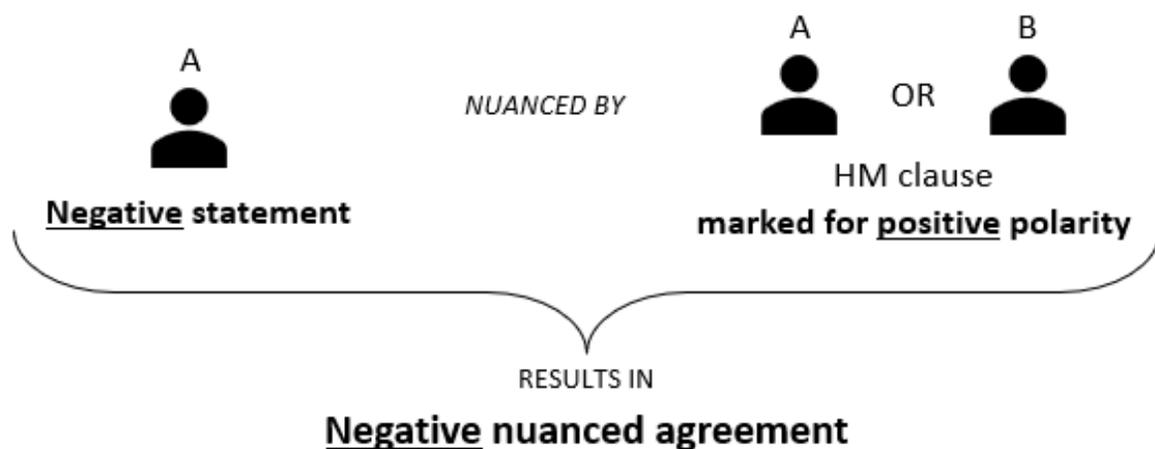
The content of B's clause is positively asserted ('We do know about that')

Discursively, the speaker uses the *como si* clause to judge the preceding discourse infelicitous and assert the reason why ('Since we already know that, your assumption is wrong and your imperative statement inappropriate')

FUNCTIONAL TYPES

2. Nuanced agreement – conveying *speaker attitude* (*manner* at attitudinal level: interpretation of reality)

(10) B: *No quiero asistir a una ruptura matrimonial.* ... A: *No estamos casados.* B: *Como si lo estuvierais.* (Val.Es.Co)
 B: 'I don't want to witness a marital breakdown.' ... A: 'We are not married.' B: 'As if you were.'



Polarity reversal

A utters a negative statement
 ('We are not married')

Speaker B (or even the same A) utters a positive clause that:

1. agrees with the explicit content of preceding discourse
 ('I agree that you are not married')
2. partially disagrees by comparing it to the opposite scenario
 ('[But it seems/you act] as if you were')

Discursively, the speaker uses the HM clause to signal that there are reasons to question some implications or expectations associated with the preceding discourse ('I agree that you are not married, but that is not the whole truth, because you act as if you were and that justifies why I used the term *marital* before')

FUNCTIONAL TYPES

3. Discursive elaboration or reformulation – expressing *manner* at representational level

- The preceding discourse is unreservedly compared to a hypothetical situation in the HM clause
- Polarity reversal: conjunction signals the hypothetical or contrary-to-fact status of the clause content
- In this type, the speaker is not taking issue with an element from the preceding discourse – no speaker attitude

(11) *Ya lo tenían todo, billete y todo. O sea, como si se fueran el fin de semana que viene.* (Val.Es.Co)

'They already had everything, their tickets and everything. As if they were leaving next weekend.'

Discursively, the speaker uses the HM clause to elaborate on what was said by adding new information to it.

(12) *Tendrías que haber renunciado a la asignatura. Anularte la asignatura, o sea como si no te hubieras matriculado.*

'You should have dropped the course. Cancelling the course, I mean, as if you had not registered.' (Val.Es.Co)

Discursively, the speaker uses the HM clause to reformulate what was said.

FUNCTIONAL TYPES

3. Discursive elaboration or reformulation – expressing *manner* at representational level

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Elaboration/reformulation

+ *manner (representational)*+ *polarity reversal*- *speaker attitude*- *discursive independence*

Dependency shift (D'Hertefelt 2018)



Nuanced agreement

- *manner (representational)*+ *polarity reversal*+ *speaker attitude*- *discursive independence*

?



Denial of an assumption

- *manner (representational)*+ *polarity reversal*+ *speaker attitude*+ *discursive independence*

Insubordinate in a strict sense

FUNCTIONAL TYPES



Consistent indicative mood
+ present tense TAM marking

4. Scalar evaluation – conveying *speaker attitude*

The *como si* clause sets up a scale and puts a hypothetical situation at its extreme to express that, even if that extreme situation were the case, the speaker wouldn't mind/care

(13) A: *¿Cuándo queréis hacer el rodaje?*

B: *Si por mí fuese, comenzaríamos mañana mismo.*

C: *Lo mismo digo, por mí como si empezamos esta tarde.*

A: *Muy bien chicos, me gusta esa determinación.*

Mañana podéis empezar a rodar. (esTenTen18)

A: 'When do you want to start shooting?'

B: 'If I had my way, we would start tomorrow.'

C: 'Same, we can start this afternoon for all I care.'

A: 'Nice, I like your determination, guys.'

You can start shooting tomorrow.'

> Scalarity (Gast and Van der Awuera 2011; Verstraete et al. 2012):

> Evaluation in terms of indifference → 'I don't mind/care'



Speaker A: establishes a 'now' by opening a time window (timeline) for the time location of the answer

Speaker B: introduces a time scale in which 'tomorrow' represent the nearest extreme ('no sooner than tomorrow')

Speaker C: moves the extreme introduced by B to an even nearer point ('this afternoon') → implied scalar-additive value (even)

1. Distribution of insubordinate cases (broad sense)

- Spanish has a medium ratio (~60%) of insubordinate *como si* clauses (in comparison with French, in which equivalent constructions are underrepresented)

(Royo-Viñuales et al. 2021; cf. Lastres-López 2021)

2. Formal-functional characterisation

- Formal features:

- > Past subjunctive is the most frequent TAM combination, both in subordinate and insubordinate clauses
- > Only consistent variation - present indicative in one functional type

- Four-way typology, moving beyond Brinton (2014):

- > Hypothetical manner (representational) – unreserved comparison, contrary-to-fact value → dependency shift
- > Attitudinal meaning:
 - nuanced agreement – question implications/expectations of preceding discourse → discursive dependence
 - denial of an assumption – assertion of the opposite value → insubordinate strict sense
 - scalar evaluation – indifference *w.r.t.* real situation and (even) extreme hypothetical one → insub. strict sense

THANK YOU!
¡MUCHAS GRACIAS!

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