

Mood without Modality: An outline of an ‘amodal’ approach to the Italian subjunctive

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Abstract: This paper aims to propose a novel approach to the Italian subjunctive that surpasses traditional modal interpretations. Rather than conveying a given type of modality (such as irrealis), this paper argues that the subjunctive is better understood as designating two semantic types: a so-called ‘State-of-Affairs’ or a ‘proposition’. By shifting the focus from modality to semantic types, this approach can account for a wider range of the subjunctive’s usages, including complements of implicatives, such as *fare* ‘make’ and *capitare* ‘happen’, that modal approaches have failed to fully account for.

1. Introduction

In the spirit of Erling’s ongoing critical examination of grammar’s foundation, I have found myself captivated by the pursuit of challenging common wisdom surrounding the meaning of the Italian subjunctive, which I believe the following quote epitomises: “The indicative is the mood of reality; the subjunctive is the mood of possibility” (Dardano & Trifone 2001: 333; own translation).

The subjunctive and the indicative are commonly thought of as conveying some modality (the modal dichotomy suggested in the quote amounts, I would argue, to the classic *realis-irrealis* one). This notion presumably stems from the belief that the group of grammatical forms – collectively referred to as mood – serves as a means of conveying modality, parallel to how tense is traditionally regarded as a means to convey time.

However, the Italian subjunctive is an ‘all-purpose’ mood not easily tied to any particular kind of modality. In fact, it is widely acknowledged that the Italian subjunctive can manifest itself in both irrealis and realis modalities despite the widespread tendency to characterising it as an irrealis mood. The example most cited to illustrate this point is the use of the subjunctive in complements of factives, such as *dispiacere* ‘regret’. Here you get the subjunctive even though this is a realis complement rather than an irrealis complement. A lesser-cited example is the use in complements of predicates that cannot straightforwardly be characterised as conveying any modality whatsoever, such as *capitare* ‘happen’. This, I believe, raises doubts about the adequacy of modal dichotomies as a means of explaining the meaning of the subjunctive and its contrast with the indicative in Italian.

In this paper, I argue that, when it comes to explaining the meaning of the subjunctive, common wisdom puts the cart before the horse. The prevalent procedure is to first uncover the modal context created by the higher predicate and then contend that the meaning of the subjunctive must conform to that specific type of modality. For instance, since *credere* ‘think’ casts an irrealis shadow upon its complement, proponents of this approach argue that the subjunctive must accordingly embody that irrealis modality. In my perspective, this procedure falls short of giving the subjunctive its due justice by merely acknowledging the potential range of modalities it can encompass. Thus, I argue that our primary emphasis should be on understanding the subjunctive itself before exploring the various types of modal shadows that may envelop it.

My approach aims to ascertain its meaning by asking which type of semantic relation the subjunctive takes part in within the given environment. Or, put differently, what semantic type(s) should the subjunctive designate in order to be semantically compatible with the environments of which it forms a part?¹

¹ Notice that I do not deny the importance of contexts in explaining the meaning of the subjunctive, but only *modal* contexts. To clarify the distinction, consider the sentence *I want a dog*. We may study the modal context created by *want* (which is *irrealis*) or the semantic compatibility between the *want* and *a dog*. I argue that the meaning of the

The central claim of this paper is that the subjunctive clause participates in two types of relations, and that it is polysemic in having a sense for each type of relation. The two types of relations can be classified as ‘epistemic relations’ and ‘effective relations’, where “epistemic relations are those which hold at the level of knowledge, and thus involve conceptions of reality,” while “effective relations hold at the level of reality itself” (Langacker 2009: 291). Epistemic relations are argued to involve ‘propositions’ – a semantic type that can be said to have truth-value – while effective relations are argued to involve States-of-Affairs (SoA henceforth) – a semantic type that can be said to occur or obtain. I thus argue that in epistemic relations (e.g. in complements of *parere* ‘seem’) the subjunctive designates a proposition, whereas in effective relations (e.g. in complements of *fare* ‘make’), the subjunctive designates an SoA. The subjunctive is further argued to share its proposition-designating function with the indicative. It will be argued that the subjunctive designates a hypothetical proposition (e.g. in complements of *parere* ‘seem’) and the indicative a “neutral” proposition (e.g. in complements of *sapere* ‘know’).²

The theory sketched above will be examined in relation to complement clauses where the use of the subjunctive is most extensive. While it is important to acknowledge its usage in main, adverbial, and relative clauses, maintaining a narrower focus is necessary here for a clearer and more in-depth discussion of the theory (see Andersen 2022; Andersen & Strudsholm 2023 for discussions on the subjunctive in main, adverbial, and relative clauses).

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 presents a short survey of the modal approach. I will argue that the prevalent types of modal dichotomies suggested to subtend the indicative-subjunctive distinction fail to adequately capture the full usage range of the subjunctive. Namely, they fail to capture the use of the subjunctive in complements of implicative predicates. Section 3 introduces the theoretical framework of the present approach. It first discusses the SoA/proposition distinction as underlying the meaning of mood in Italian and then turns the attention to the effective/epistemic distinction as a way of categorising the meanings of complement-taking predicates. The two senses of the subjunctive (SoA and hypothetical proposition) are characterised in Section 4, while their respective environments (effective and epistemic) are outlined in Section 5. Section 6 concludes the paper with some perspectives for future research.

2. The modal approach

The research history on the Italian subjunctive is too vast for a comprehensive account here (but see, e.g., Sgroi 2013). The focus will thus only be on the theoretical embodiments of common wisdom, which I believe constitute the most prominent approaches. These approaches may collectively be referred to as *modal approaches*, following Portner (2011: 1267). By this term, I mean those approaches that infer the meaning (or modality) of the subjunctive from the modal context created by the complement-taking predicate. Further, the focus will be on complement relations (where most research has been done) while noting, as above, that the subjunctive can also appear in main, adverbial, and relative clauses.

Broadly speaking, modal approaches differ in what type of modal dichotomy they employ as a means of analysis. In the Italian literature, the most prevalent are the ‘irrealis/realis’ and the ‘non-

subjunctive must be sought in studying how it combines with specific types of meanings rather than how it appears in specific types of modal shadows.

² There are two things to stress here. Firstly, “neutral” is only used to pinpoint its opposition to “hypothetical”. The distinction is in fact that between a proposition and a proposition with a hypothetical nuance. Secondly, the notion “hypothetical” has affinities with irrealis and it may therefore be objected that I am in fact not entirely disregarding modality. However, I maintain that irrealis is a modal context created by the governing meaning, while a hypothetical proposition is a semantic type compatible with the complement-taking predicate. The “neutral” proposition and hypothetical proposition may be likened (with caution) to the nouns *fact* and *hypothesis*, which are semantically compatible with *state* (as in *state the fact*) and *propose* (as in *propose the hypothesis*), respectively.

assertive/assertive' ones.

The irrealis/realis bifurcation is the classic dichotomy *par excellence*. In general, expressions that are classified as irrealis are associated with unreal or unactualised events, while expressions classified as realis are associated with real or actualised events. A notable example of this dichotomy is in the work of Giorgi & Pianesi (1997). Their framework introduces the distinction between 'non-realistic' and 'realistic' modal bases associated with the subjunctive and indicative, respectively.

The non-assertive/assertive dichotomy is by now also a well-established candidate for what underlies the subjunctive/indicative contrast. The proponents of this dichotomy (e.g. Wandruszka 1991) suggest that the subjunctive clause is non-assertive in marking low-value information, while the indicative is assertive in marking high-value information. In the former, the subjunctive complement represents the non-news-worthy information of the construction, while in the latter, the indicative complement represents the news-worthy information.

There are several problematic aspects associated with these two dichotomies. Here, I will concentrate on a specific group of complement-taking predicates known as 'implicative' to highlight how these dichotomies fail to adequately explain the subjunctive/indicative contrast.

Implicative predicates (e.g. *fare* 'make', *ottenere* 'obtain', and *lasciare* 'let') have the unique character of implying the realisation of the complement event if the event in the matrix clause is realised (cf. Karttunen 1971). Consider the implicative predicate *fare* 'make'.

- (1) *Un tic faceva che volgesse.SBJV o alzasse.SBJV a ogni attimo il capo.* (Bach & Schmitt Jensen 1990: 500)
'A tic made him turn or raise his head at every moment.'

In this example, if the *tic* occurs (the matrix clause event), then the agent in the complement necessarily turns or raises his head (the complement event). Now, the problem for the modal dichotomies mentioned above lies precisely in this implicative feature. Specifically, the implicative predicates impose a realis/assertive reading on their complement, yet they select the subjunctive.

Consider further the following example of *capitare* 'happen' – a predicate that arguably belongs to the group of implicative predicates as well.

- (2) *Una volta usciti dal locale è capitato che un gruppo di persone lo riconoscesse.SBJV chiedendogli un selfie.* (<https://www.instagram.com/p/CpIVn2WsYAW/> [Retrieved on 23-09 23])
'Once out of the club it happened that a group of people recognised him asking him for a selfie.'

The complement describes an actual event that has occurred (it is realis), and it cannot be considered in any sensible way as conveying low-value information (it is assertive). Despite this realis/assertive-inducing feature, this predicate routinely selects the subjunctive.

In a sense, on the accounts under consideration here, we would have expected that the difference between implicative predicates (e.g. *fare* 'make' and *capitare* 'happen') and non-implicative predicates (e.g. *ordinare* 'order', *pregare* 'beg', and *volere* 'want') would involve a contrast in mood. We would have expected that implicative predicates select the indicative and the non-implicative predicates the subjunctive, given that implicative predicates impose a realis/assertive reading on their complement, whereas the non-implicative predicates impose an irrealis/non-assertive reading. However, as the following examples of an implicative predicate (3a) and a non-implicative predicate (3b) illustrate, both groups of predicates select the subjunctive.

- (3) a. *Il meccanismo di riscaldamento fa sì che l'aria venga scaldata automaticamente.* (Della Valle & Patota 2009: 105)
 ‘The heating mechanism ensures that the air is heated automatically.’
- b. *Il prefetto ha ordinato che nei locali del centro non vengano serviti alcolici dopo una certa ora.* (Della valle & Patota 2009: 104)
 ‘The prefect has ordered that alcohol not be served in the centre’s premises after a certain time.’

This fact raises serious doubts about the extent to which modal dichotomies can account for mood selection.

As I aim to demonstrate in this paper, both groups of predicates are related in designating an effective relation, which involves an SoA in its complement (see Section 3.2). As we will see, the subjunctive clause thus naturally combines with these predicates on the assumption that the subjunctive clause can designate an SoA.

In the following, we will consider both the distinction between SoAs and propositions, as well as the distinction between effective and epistemic relations.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1. SoA vs. proposition

Traditionally, the contrast between SoAs (States-of-Affairs) and propositions are understood in relation to the difference between “occurrence” and “truth”: SoAs may be said to occur, while propositions may be said to have a truth-value.³ Dik (1997) provides a more detailed description of the distinction:

An SoA is something that can be said to occur, take place, or obtain, in some world; it can be located in time and space; it can be said to take a certain time (have a certain duration); and it can be seen, heard, or otherwise perceived. (Dik 1997: 51)

Propositions are things that people can be said to believe, know or think about; they can be reason for surprise or doubt; they can be mentioned, denied, rejected, and remembered; and they can be said to be true or false. (Dik 1997: 52)

To take a well-known example of the contrast, directives (or commands) are argued to involve SoAs (4a), while assertions are argued to involve propositions (4b) (e.g. Boye 2023):

- (4) a. Don’t leave me, Janet!
 b. After all, Janet didn’t leave me.

The content of the directive in (4a) cannot be said to be true of any situation in the world but presents rather a course of action that the speaker wants the addressee to carry out. In contrast, the content of the assertion in (4b) can be evaluated for its truth-value since it presents a piece of information about the world.

Several contrasts in the form of complements have been analysed in terms of the SoA/proposition distinction: for instance, contrasts between complements of perception predicates (5) (e.g. Boye 2010), complements of knowledge predicates (6), and complements of utterance

³ The contrast associated with this difference also goes under other names, such as ‘events’ and ‘facts’ (Vendler 1967) and ‘second-order entities’ and ‘third-order entities’ (Lyons 1977: 443-445).

predicates (7) (Sørensen & Boye 2015). In these cases, infinitival complements are argued to designate an SoA and indicative complements a proposition.

- (5) a. *I saw him leave*.INF.
 b. *I saw that he had*.IND *left*.
- (6) a. *She knows how to exploit*.INF *her position*.
 b. *She knows that she is*.IND *exploiting her position*.
- (7) a. *She asked him to go*.INF *home*.
 b. *She asked him if he had*.IND *gone home*.

Whether predicates can relate to propositions, SoAs, or both depends on the kind of semantic relation they designate. As we will consider below, predicates may be divided into effective-designating and epistemic-designating ones.

3.2. Effective vs. epistemic relations

It is reasonable to think that we humans deal with events (or SoAs; both are used interchangeably below) in two different ways. They may serve as objects of (intended) manipulation or as objects for our knowledge or epistemic assessment. For instance, the event expressed in *do my homework* is an object of manipulation in *my dad made me do my homework* and an object of knowledge or epistemic assessment in *my dad thought I had done my homework*. The event is the same but it relates to two different levels. According to Langacker (e.g. 2008, 2010), in the former case the event relates to the ‘effective level’ and in the latter it relates to the ‘epistemic level’. The effective level pertains to the (potential) occurrences of events or SoAs, and the epistemic level pertains to the knowledge or epistemic assessment of occurrences of events or SoAs. Notice that, at the effective level, the events may simply *occur* (they need not in effect be the object of manipulation as implied in the beginning of this section). For instance, in *it started to rain*, the event expressed in *rain* simply occurs without any human intervention.

Langacker (2008: 442) provides the following examples of groups of predicates that designate an effective relation: those that involve

- a) the perception of the complement SoA (*see, hear, fell, watch, view*);
- b) the causation of the complement SoA (*cause, force, order, make, compel*);
- c) the desire, intention, or outcome of the complement SoA (*want, try, attempt, aim, intend, persuade, induce, manage, able, fail, wind up*);
- d) the experience of the complement SoA (*like, enjoy, fun, painful*);
- e) the start, beginning, or end of the SoA complement (*start, begin, stop, quit*).

As Langacker (2008: 442) notes, “[w]ith all these predicates, what is directly at issue is occurrence of the complement process [referred to simply as an event or SoA above] rather than knowledge of its occurrence”.

Predicates that designate an epistemic relation, on the other hand, may be exemplified by predicates such as *wonder, ask, possible, think, doubt, improbable, realise, discover, convinced, know, sure*, etc. In each of these instances, the predicates involve the epistemic assessment or apprehension of the proposition expressed by the complement.

Some predicates can relate to the complement event at both the effective and the epistemic level. Predicates like *know* and *ask* exemplify this type, where *knowing how* and *asking that* relate to the complement event at the effective level, while *knowing that* and *asking if* relate to the event at the

epistemic level (see examples 5 and 6 for illustration).

This basic dualism (as expressed also by the distinction between mental activity and physical activity) is argued to exert a significant influence on shaping various aspects of language structure. Crucially, for the current purpose, there is a close relationship between the kind of relation holding between the complement-taking predicate and the complement (effective or epistemic) and the semantic type of the complement (SoA or proposition). Effective relations involve SoAs and epistemic relations involve propositions. On the assumption that specific clause structures typically are associated with specific semantic types (cf., i.a., Cristofaro 2003; Langacker 2010), we should expect a systematic correlation between the semantic type associated with the structure of the clausal complement and the relation associated with the complement-taking predicate. To anticipate what will be explored in the following sections, the subjunctive clause structure is linked to both effective and epistemic relations, representing a distinct sense for each relation: it designates an SoA in effective relations and a proposition in epistemic relations. In contrast, the indicative is exclusively associated with a proposition in an epistemic relation, thus sharing the epistemic domain with the subjunctive.

In what follows, we will delve into the general characteristics of the polysemic subjunctive and its contrast with the indicative. Subsequently, in Sections 5 and 6, we will examine each sense of the subjunctive in isolation.

4. The polysemic subjunctive: General characteristics

When it comes to the Italian subjunctive, the theoretical landscape continues, as I see it, to be predominantly shaped by the structuralist principle of “one meaning – one form”. By this, I mean that many approaches propose a *Gesamtbedeutung* (such as irrealis or non-assertiveness) in terms of which all its usages may be accounted for.

The proposal presented here challenges this perspective by suggesting that the subjunctive is polysemic in having two distinct but historically related senses. This idea of the subjunctive having two senses appears, in fact, to be quite intuitive given the long tradition in the literature on the Spanish subjunctive to perceive the subjunctive as having two senses (see Faulkner 2022). However, the most notable accounts rely too heavily on the classic distinction between ‘deontic modality’ (signalling judgements towards social or moral factors of obligation, permission, and responsibility) and ‘epistemic modality’ (signalling degrees of certainty) for it to account for the Italian subjunctive. For instance, the implicative predicates *fare* ‘make’ and *capitare* ‘happen’, discussed above, cannot be sensibly characterised as conveying any deontic or epistemic modality (see examples 1 and 2 for illustration). These specific usages of the subjunctive, therefore, remain unexplained by the deontic-epistemic dichotomy.

The bifurcation proposed here does not rely on modality and, thus, can account for the subjunctive’s usage with predicates that cannot straightforwardly be associated with the well-known modal distinctions. The bifurcation hinges on the SoA/proposition distinction presented in Section 3.1. By employing this distinction, I argue that it is more appropriate to analyse subjunctive and indicative clauses as designating distinct semantic types (SoAs or propositions) rather than types of modality. In this picture, the subjunctive and the indicative are associated with specific groups of complement-taking predicates by virtue of being semantically compatible with them – the same way as liquids, such as *coffee*, are semantically compatible with the predicate *drink*.

As mentioned above, I argue that the subjunctive can take on two distinct meanings: it can designate an SoA, as when it occurs in the complement of the effective predicate *ordinare* ‘order’, or it can designate a hypothetical proposition, as when it occurs in the complement of the epistemic predicate *dubitare* ‘doubt’. I label the former ‘the SoA subjunctive’ and the latter ‘the HP subjunctive’. The indicative, on the other hand, can only designate a proposition. Consequently, the subjunctive and the indicative create two types of contrasts: the SoA/proposition contrast and the hypothetical

proposition/“neutral” proposition contrast.⁴

The SoA/proposition distinction entails a distinct set of semantic characteristics for each variant of the subjunctive. Here, I discuss three important characteristics following from the distinction.

Firstly, the two variants of the subjunctive differ in terms of modal constraints. According to Boye (2023), SoAs cannot be readily subjected to epistemic qualification, while propositions can. For instance, the SoA complement in (8a) does not readily allow for an epistemic adverb as *probabilmente* ‘probably’, while the propositional complement in (8b) does (notice that *probabilmente* is part of the attested example in (8b), while it is not in (8a)).

- (8) a. *Cecilia disse al padre che [*probabilmente] sedesse.* (Modified from Bach & Schmitt Jensen 1990: 504)
 ‘Cecilia told her father to [probably] sit down.’
 b. *Guardandomi indietro, credo che probabilmente scrivere fosse l'unica cosa in cui ero davvero brava.* (<https://editriceilcastoro.it/10-domande-susin-nielsen/> [Retrieved on 12-09-23])
 ‘Looking back, I think writing was probably the only thing I was really good at.’

Secondly, the two variants differ in terms of temporal dependency, on the assumption that SoAs have dependent time reference, while propositions have independent time reference (cf. Holvoet 2020). Thus, the time reference of an SoA subjunctive clause is dependent on the time reference of the complement-taking predicate, while the time reference of an HP subjunctive clause does not depend on the time reference of the complement-taking predicate. This is illustrated in (9) and (10) where the time reference of the SoA complement must follow that of the complement-taking predicate in (9), while the propositional complement is free to be both present and past, as illustrated in (10).

- (9) a. *Quindi io chiedo che vada.* SBJV.PRS *rivista la normativa e soprattutto la sequenza operativa.* (<https://www.orizzontescuola.it/assegnazioni-provvvisorie-una-proposta-una-scuola-di-qualita/> [Retrieved on 23-09-23])
 ‘Therefore, I ask that the legislation and above all the operational sequence be reviewed.’
 b. **Quindi io chiedo che andasse.* SBJV.IMP *rivista la normativa e soprattutto la sequenza operativa.*
 ‘Therefore, I ask that the legislation and above all the operational sequence be reviewed.’
 (10) a. *Dubito che facesse.* SBJV.IMP *una grande differenza!*
 (<https://www.tuttogenealogia.it/viewtopic.php?t=8810> [Retrieved on 23-09-23])
 ‘I doubt it made much difference!’
 b. *Dubito che faccia.* SBJV.PRS *una grande differenza!*
 ‘I doubt it makes much of a difference!’

Thirdly, the two variants differ in terms of the semantic change associated with mood alternation. Namely, going from the indicative to the SoA subjunctive involves a significant change in meaning, while going from the indicative to the HP subjunctive may be perceived as involving a more subtle change in meaning or even no change in meaning. This difference in semantic change hinges on the notion that going from a proposition to an SoA involves a more drastic change than going from a

⁴ Note again that the term “neutral” is only used as a way to distinguish it from the hypothetical proposition. It would be more correct to say that the indicative designates a proposition and the subjunctive a hypothetical proposition.

proposition to a variant of a proposition. The most effective way to illustrate this is through cases of coordinating two different clause types, as shown in the following attested examples:

- (11) a. *Gridò che la guerra era.IND dichiarata e che si avvertisse.SBJV l'arciducaCarlo.*
(Andersen 2023: 171)
'He shouted that the war was declared and that Archduke Carlo should be warned.'
- b. *Sarebbe come suggerire che lo scienziato che legge non è.IND in grado di trarre da solo le necessarie logiche conseguenze e che non sia.SBJV in grado di mettere da parte le proprie convinzioni profonde.* (Andersen 2023: 187)
'It would be like suggesting that the scientist who reads is not able to draw the necessary logical consequences on his own and that he is not able to put aside his deep convictions.'

In example (11a), the transition from the indicative in the first conjunct to the subjunctive in the second necessarily results in a change from a reported assertion – involving a proposition – to a reported directive – involving an SoA. Contrarily, in example (11b), the transition from the indicative in the first conjunct to the subjunctive in the second implies a very subtle (if any?) change in meaning. Setting aside the specific change in meaning entailed here, the crucial point to observe is that both conjuncts involve propositions, and that the distinction in meaning between them is much less pronounced than the proposition/SoA shift in (11a).

The differences resulting from the SoA/proposition distinction may be summarised in the following Table 1. I also include the indicative in this table to highlight the two types of contrasts it forms with the subjunctive.

Table 1: The differences resulting from the SoA/proposition distinction

	SoA subjunctive	HP subjunctive	Indicative
Semantic type	State-of-Affairs (SoA)	Hypothetical proposition	Proposition
Semantic compatibility	Effective relations	Epistemic relations	Epistemic relations
Modal constraints	Cannot readily be evaluated epistemically	Can be evaluated epistemically	Can be evaluated epistemically
Temporal dependency	Dependent time reference	Independent time reference	Independent time reference

Next, we will briefly consider each variant of the subjunctive and their respective environments, which I argue can be categorised into effective relations (SoA subjunctive) and epistemic relations (HP subjunctive). Note that the following discussion should not be considered a comprehensive overview of the two variants. The purpose is to highlight key aspects of their usages within the confines of this paper, providing an idea of the theory's scope.

5. The SoA subjunctive

As mentioned, the SoA subjunctive is associated with effective relations given that it designates the semantic type involved in this type of relation (namely, an SoA). Complement-taking predicates designating effective relations may be divided into two: those that involve manipulation and those that do not. These will be considered in turn below.

5.1. Manipulation

The SoA subjunctive is particularly used in contexts of effective relations involving manipulation. In these, an agent (be it animate or inanimate) seeks to influence or actually does influence the intentional pathway of a patient (be it animate or inanimate), potentially causing the patient to act differently than its natural tendency. The effect may be either implicative or non-implicative (see also Section 2). In the former case, the agent is successful in influencing the intentional pathway of a patient, whereas in the latter case, the agent only attempts to influence the intentional pathway of a patient. Complement-taking predicates involving implicative manipulation include *fare* ‘make’, *ottenere* ‘obtain’, and *lasciare* ‘let’. Complement-taking predicates involving non-implicative manipulation include *chiedere* ‘ask’, *volere* ‘want’, and *desiderare* ‘desire’. Consider the following example of an implicative predicate (12a) and a non-implicative predicate (12b).

- (12) a. *Ho ottenuto che i bus tornino.* SBJV *ad Avellino.*
 (https://www.avellinotoday.it/politica/marcia-indietro-air-ciampi-m5s-9_settembre-2021.html [Retrieved on 23-09-23])
 ‘I got the buses to return to Avellino.’
- b. *Ho chiesto che a Torino si aumenti.* SBJV *la capienza.*
 (https://www.eurosport.it/tennis/atp-finals/2021/atp-finals-vezzali-ho-chiesto-che-a-torino-si-aumenti-la-capienza_vid1568408/video.shtml [Retrieved on 23-09-23])
 ‘I asked that the capacity be increased in Turin.’

In (12a), the agent of the matrix clause successfully exerts an influence on the outcome of the complement SoA, thus obtaining that the buses return to Avellino. In (12b), the agent of the matrix clause intends to exert an influence on the outcome of the complement SoA, but whether the SoA actually obtains or not, is uncertain.

5.2. Non-manipulation

Some effective relations do not involve manipulation in any straightforward way. With these, we are dealing, in a sense, with the mere occurrence of an SoA without any influence on the outcome from an agent. Like complement-taking predicates involving manipulation, effective complement-taking predicates involving non-manipulation may be divided into an implicative group and a non-implicative group. The former group include *capitare* (and the synonyms *succedere*, *accadere*, *avvenire*) ‘happen’, while the latter group include *aspettare* ‘wait’. We have already encountered an example of *capitare* in example (2), repeated for convenience as (13a). For an example of *aspettare*, see example (13b).

- (13) a. *Una volta usciti dal locale è capitato che un gruppo di persone lo riconoscesse.* SBJV *chiedendogli un selfie.* (<https://www.instagram.com/p/CpIVn2WsYAW/> [Retrieved on 23-09-23])
 ‘Once out of the club it happened that a group of people recognised him asking him for a selfie.’
- b. *Una mattina mentre aspettavo che il caffè fosse.* SBJV *pronto ho attaccato il telefono al caricatore.* (Andersen 2023: 174)

‘One morning while I was waiting for the coffee to be ready I plugged the phone into the charger.’

In these examples, it does not make sense to claim that any agent intended to influence the outcome of the SoA complement.

To emphasise the point of the above discussion: all of the above complement-taking predicates designate effective relations and, as such, they have SoAs in their semantic scope, thus selecting the SoA subjunctive. This analysis offers an advantage in that it encompasses both implicative and non-implicative contexts for the subjunctive. In the prevalent modal approaches, implicative contexts are not adequately captured because they inherently entail a realis/assertive reading of the complement.

Next, we shift our focus to the environments of the hypothetical proposition subjunctive (or, in short, the HP subjunctive).

6. HP subjunctive

In terms of environments, the HP subjunctive differs from the SoA subjunctive in sharing the epistemic domain with the indicative. That is, both the subjunctive and the indicative can designate a proposition, but only the subjunctive can designate an SoA.⁵ Therefore, when examining the HP subjunctive, the primary objective is to determine in what kinds of epistemic relations the subjunctive is found as compared to the indicative. As a cursory categorisation, I would argue that the HP subjunctive is semantically compatible with complement-taking predicates involving ‘subjectivity’, while the indicative naturally combines with complement-taking predicates involving ‘objectivity’.

Thus, the HP subjunctive appears in complements of predicates that involve subjective judgements towards a proposition, be it non-factive or factive:

- a. Non-factive propositions (e.g. *credere* ‘think’, *chiedersi* ‘wonder’, *dubitare* ‘doubt’, *temere* ‘fear’)
- b. Factive propositions (e.g. *essere contento* ‘be happy’, *essere giusto* ‘be right’)

Contrarily, the indicative appears in complements of predicates that involve no subjective judgment. Informally, these predicates involving objectivity may be characterised as indicating how knowledge is:

- a. Reported (e.g. *dire* ‘say’)
- b. Acquired (e.g. *capire* ‘understand’)
- c. Possessed (e.g. *sapere* ‘know’)
- d. Recalled (e.g. *ricordare* ‘remember’)
- e. Accepted or admitted (e.g. *accettare* ‘accept’)
- f. Neglected (e.g. *dimenticare* ‘forget’)

In addition to this cursory classification, there are other factors involving a subjective judgement that may induce the subjunctive in otherwise indicative-governing environments. These include the presence of a negation in the matrix clause (14a), a complement-taking predicate in conditional mood (14b), and an impersonal construction (14c).⁶

⁵ In fact, the infinitive can also designate an SoA. Often the subjunctive and the infinitive can alternate, such as in complements of *fare* ‘make’ and *chiedere* ‘ask’. Given the space constraints, however, a detailed analysis of this type of alternation must be deferred to another publication.

⁶ Notice that these factors may influence mood choice in epistemic relations but not in effective relations.

- (14) a. *Non dico che abbia*. SBJV *ragione, ma...*
 (<https://www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/personaggi/31137122/toni-capuozzo-giuseppe-cruciani-dritto-rovescio-non-dico-ragione-coltivare-dubbio.html>)
 [Retrieved on 23-09-23]
 ‘I’m not saying he’s right, but...’
- b. *Direi che sia*. SBJV *il gelato più buono di piacenza* [sic!].
 (<https://boutiquedelgelato.it/recensioni/>) [Retrieved on 23-09-23]
 ‘I would say it is the best ice cream in Piacenza.’
- c. *Si dice che abbia*. SBJV *grandi problemi finanziari*.
 (<https://www.fanpage.it/sport/calcio/rummenigge-spiega-linter-in-superlega-si-dice-che-abbia-grandi-problemi-finanziari/>) [Retrieved on 23-09-23]
 ‘It is said that he has major financial problems.’

These complements are readily analysed as designating hypothetical propositions as well. In each example, the complement proposition is only advanced hypothetically, allowing the writers to refrain from asserting a definitive opinion.

Before concluding this discussion, I want to gather briefly the threads in the preceding discussion. I have aimed to illustrate above how the two senses of the subjunctive naturally combine with the meanings involved in effective and epistemic relations. The SoA subjunctive naturally combines with complement-taking predicates designating effective relations, while the HP subjunctive naturally combines with complement-taking predicates designating epistemic relations that have as part of their meaning a subjective value. Though the discussion has by no means been sufficient to account for all the environments of the subjunctive, I hope that I have succeeded in giving an idea of how the two variants are employed in each type of relation.

7. Conclusion

In this paper, I have sought to honour Erling’s legacy by presenting a novel approach to the Italian subjunctive that challenges common wisdom, where the subjunctive is typically associated with a type of modality (such as irrealis). Instead, I have argued that the subjunctive can designate two semantic types: a State-of-Affairs or a hypothetical proposition. The former semantic type is semantically compatible with complement-taking predicates that designate effective relations (such as *fare* ‘make’), whereas the latter type is compatible with complement-taking predicates that designate epistemic relations involving a subjective value (such as *credere* ‘think’). By focusing on semantic types rather than types of modalities, I have argued that we can comprehensively capture the full range of the subjunctive’s usages, which modal approaches presently cannot achieve.

The focus of the article has been on the subjunctive of complements. Further studies are required to demonstrate that the proposition/SoA distinction can effectively account for the subjunctive in main, adverbial, and relative clauses as well. In addition, it would be interesting to apply the tools developed in this paper to analyse the subjunctive in a cross-Romance study. I would expect to find a parallel usage of the SoA subjunctive and a varying usage of the propositional subjunctive across the Romance languages.

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