

Instructors' Views towards  
the Second Language Acquisition  
of the Spanish Subjunctive

by

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## ABSTRACT

The study of Spanish instructors' beliefs is a recent development and the body of work is small with little research conducted on their insights on the acquisition of any grammar form. Still, Spanish grammar includes the notoriously difficult subjunctive, a grammatical irrealis mood that is affixed to verbs. A national survey was conducted on Spanish professors and instructors (N=73) who teach at institutions randomly selected from a representative sample of American institutions of higher education. The survey was conducted to inquire on their beliefs regarding the most complex forms in Spanish, the causes of the subjunctive difficulty, and their preferred methods of teaching the form. The results first indicate that participants rated the subjunctive the most difficult grammar form. They attributed the cause of difficulty to be primarily interference from the first language and its abstractness. For instructing the subjunctive, participants generally supported form-oriented instruction with a metalanguage approach that focuses on forms. However, the participants disagreed greatly on whether meaning-focused instruction was valuable and dismissed drilling instruction of the subjunctive. Data from the participants provides a distribution of overextended tense, moods, and aspects in lieu of the Spanish subjunctive. However, instructors indicated that their students' competence of the subjunctive was higher than their performance and that comprehension was not necessarily reliant on correct usage of the subjunctive as it was for proficiency. Moreover, they provided qualitative data of effective methods and pedagogical challenges of the subjunctive. This study illuminates some of the contributing factors of subjunctive difficulty and preferred pedagogical approaches for teaching it. It also has implications that meaning may not be obstructed if students do not use subjunctive.

## DEDICATION

Para o meu filho, Cardon, porque o conhecimento é tudo que poderei te dar de verdade na vida.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Research on instructors' cognitions is a relatively newer line of investigation, particularly as it applies to grammar (Kissau, Rodgers, & Haudeck, 2014; Graus & Copen, 2017) with much of the research being on English. As it applies to Spanish instructors' beliefs in general, there are far fewer studies. Regarding Spanish instructors' beliefs towards the area of grammar acquisition, there is an enormous gap in the literature. The subjunctive, a grammar form in Spanish, has been documented as notoriously difficult (Kornuc, 2003; Lubbers Quesada, 1998; Collentine, 1995; Terrell, Baycroft, & Perrone, 1987). Oftentimes, this structure is acquired later in language learning, typically with intermediate to advanced learners, and many times not at all (Geeslin & Gudmestad, 2008; Gudmestad, 2012; Collentine, 1995). There are various approaches to teaching the subjunctive with the benefits of each being debated and little understood (Correa, 2011; Collentine, 1998). Particularly for the subjunctive, but for Spanish instructors as a whole, little research relates to their beliefs (Andrews, 2003). Research is necessary in order to document their beliefs toward grammar instruction. This study will examine the subjunctive, the causes of its difficulty, and the favored methods of teaching it.

This research includes a national survey of Spanish instructors at colleges and universities and includes several objectives.<sup>1</sup> First, it seeks to confirm whether instructors truly view the subjunctive as the most difficult grammar form. Second, it sets out to reveal the sources of difficulty for learners acquiring the subjunctive. Third, it documents their preferred pedagogical approaches to teaching the structure.

## Description of the Subjunctive

Before exploring the literature on the acquisition, a brief overview of the form and function of the subjunctive within Spanish syntax is provided in this section.

The subjunctive is a grammatical mood, realized as an inflectional morpheme affixed to the end of verbs. It is used to express wants, desires, wishes, doubts, possibilities, and negated thoughts; situations that are not certain and may exist outside of the speaker's reality (outside of the actual world in semantics). Semantically, they are triggered by volition, comment, uncertainty, temporality, and assertion, according to Geeslin (2011). The subjunctive can be situated in the future, present, or past, with the latter two being associated with the present and imperfect subjunctive, respectively. The subjunctive is also often used to express concepts of hypotheticality, which can include non-hypotheticals, non-past hypotheticals, and past hypotheticals (475).

Syntactically, the subjunctive agrees with the nominative both in person and number. The subjunctive is most frequently employed in imbedded clauses (nominal, adjectival, and adverbial), often within certain grammatical boundaries. The morphology is quite complex. While there is a regular form, there are a host of irregular verbs and exceptions, some of which are the most salient uses of the subjunctive. The present subjunctive is seen in example 1:

(1) *Queiro que vengas conmigo*  
want.1s.IND that come.2s.SUBJ 1s.ASC

I want you to come with me.

An example of the imperfect subjunctive is seen in the example 2:

(2) *Esperaba que vinieras conmigo*  
hope.1s.IMPF that come.2s.IMPF.SUBJ 1s.ASC

I hoped that you would have come with me.

One further note of complication includes the fact that, for the imperfect subjunctive, there is a dialectal difference between Castilian (-se ending) and Latin American (-ra ending), with both having completely different morphology.

As previously mentioned, there are a number of semantic triggers that prompt the use of the subjunctive (Butt & Benjamin, 2004). These triggers require the use of the subjunctive in order to render the utterance grammatical. The subjunctive often contrasts with the indicative tense. Gudmestad (2012) describes that while assertion, definiteness, and habituals will prompt the indicative, the subjunctive is triggered by volition, uncertainty, and indefiniteness (376). For the imperfect form, the conditional *si* typically coordinates with the imperfect subjunctive in hypotheticals, nonexistent scenarios, or hedges. While these triggers are fairly robust in some contexts, in others, there is some optional variation. This variation allows a speaker to switch from indicative to subjunctive, which is grammatical, in order to produce nuanced semantic differences, providing competing and conflicting evidence for learners trying to acquire it (Gudmestad, 2012).

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

For this research, a considerable literature review was conducted. Literature is divided into four main areas: (1) Spanish learners' acquisition of the subjunctive, (2) the assessment of the causes of grammar difficulty, (3) the instructors' beliefs towards grammar and (4) the pedagogical approaches in second language acquisition theory. Nevertheless, the main research that this paper references is Graus and Coppen (2015, 2016), which proposes models that were adapted for this study.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Spanish Learners' Acquisition of the Subjunctive**

Literature on the second language acquisition of the subjunctive can be divided into three main areas: (1) performance and level of acquisition, (2) the sources of difficulty, and (3) overextension of tense, mood, and aspect.

##### **Performance and Level of Acquisition**

One of the first major studies to look at the performance with the subjunctive was Terrell, Baycroft, and Perrone (1987). They find that first year Spanish learners employ the subjunctive very little in their speech (around 10 percent) despite their written accuracy of the subjunctive being much higher (92 percent). The authors argue that students tend to learn the subjunctive rather than acquire it. In other words, the learners understand the form but the subjunctive is not yet part of their interlanguage and they have trouble accessing the form in spontaneous speech. They postulate that there is a lack of incentive for these learners to acquire the subjunctive, because learners regard the form as redundant, adding little meaning.

Many of the authors of other studies of the subjunctive find that while additional years of instruction do lead to greater acquisition of the subjunctive, many learners may never completely acquire it. Collentine (1995; 1998; 2003), who examines beginning and intermediate learners, finds that increased years of classroom instruction improves the learners' performance of the subjunctive. This is consistent with Leow (1995), who finds an increase of proficiency between first and fourth semester students with the form, which further snowballed and accelerated their learning. Other research has produced similar findings, establishing links between proficiency and performance with the subjunctive (Koruc, 2003; Gudmestad, 2012). If native-like use of the subjunctive is the target, Gudmestad (2012) shows by the fifth level, learners' use of the subjunctive greatly reflects that of native speakers. The significance of this, according to Gudmestad, is that once a learner acquires the subjunctive for a given semantic domain and incorporates it into their interlanguage, it will remain there, promoting further scaffolding. The participants in their study went through an order of acquisition that typically coincided with their level. First, the learners acquire the form in the semantic domain at the sentence level. Then, they acquire more discourse level features, such as time and hypotheticals.

Regardless of the study, the consensus of the research indicates that the subjunctive is typically acquired much later than other inflectional morphology, and many times the form is not acquired at all (Geeslin & Gudmestad, 2008; Gudmestad, 2012; Koruc, 2003).



### **Sources of Difficulty**

The subjunctive is not only difficult for second language learners, it is also a challenge for children learning Spanish as a first language, though for other reasons. Complete acquisition of the subjunctive does not occur until individuals are late into their childhood, after acquiring other inflectional morphology, though some forms of the subjunctive are acquired quite early (Blake, 1982; 1983; Floyd Pérez-Leroux, 1998). Besides all of the other challenges associated with the acquisition of the subjunctive, Children confront certain cognitive obstacles including presupposition or comprehension of concepts that may not be real or even possible. These are obstacles that are surmounted after around six years of age (Pérez-Leroux, 1998). However, for adults learning the Spanish subjunctive for the first time, this cognition facet poses no challenge, the challenge instead lies in a myriad of other factors.

One challenge lies in the other linguistic dimensions necessary for using the subjunctive. Montrul and Perpiñán (2011), when examining acquisition of the Spanish subjunctive in the context of minimalism, argue that the meaning of the subjunctive cannot be extracted simply from the utterance and context. Because presupposition triggers subjunctive use, according to them, the learner requires an acquisition of complex pragmatic dimensions of the subjunctive (94). For these authors, thorough acquisition of the subjunctive requires more than just an understanding of the distinction between realis and irrealis. The learners must also comprehend the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic dimensions mentioned, and these all combine to complicate the use of the subjunctive (Quer, 1998). Learners must master all of these as well as master the complex

morphological system of the subjunctive, some of which is totally idiosyncratic (Gudmestad, 2012).

Montrul and Perpiñán (2011) also remark on one of the sources of difficulty; they claim that English mood is not grammaticalized and therefore some linguists believe MoodP does not exist in English (Giorgi & Pianesi, 1997). However, this is highly debatable. The English subjunctive is grammaticalized (i.e. “I wish I *were*”), though it is highly impoverished and has almost completely disappeared. From this view, MoodP does exist, and therefore that layer of the syntax may not be foreign to English speakers. The difficulty, instead, may be in the fact that mood is typically conveyed by other means, such as modals and adverbials, with very little morphology in the English MoodP. The transfer or mapping of the English MoodP, which is realized by these other parts of speech, to a complex morphology system on the verb stem is indicative of the complexity of acquiring the form from a syntactic level.

On the lower ends of proficiency, Collentine (1995) agrees with the other literature that learners have difficulties in distinguishing between the semantics and pragmatics of the subjunctive use required for complex natural speech. Moreover, he postulates that learners may be allocating so much of their language processing into parsing the syntax that they do not have enough resources left for accessing and selecting the appropriate subjunctive morphology. Part of the problem, at least for Collentine (1995), is that the typical instructional timeframe allocated for acquiring the subjunctive may be unrealistic, a notion that harkens to VanPatten’s (1987) differentiation between instructors’ expectations and realities. Instructors’ may have issues justifying more time in class to the instruction as the subjunctive is just not as salient or frequent in the input,

causes that Terrell, Baycroft, and Perrone (1987) argue that make the subjunctive difficult for second language learners.

As mentioned, the subjunctive typically contrasts with the indicative. Some triggers that often prompt a required use of the subjunctive can instead elicit the indicative to yield nuanced meaning differences. The complexity of this cannot be understated, yet for Lubbers Quesada (1998), the learner may not even perceive the differences between the present subjunctive and the indicative. She argues that the slight allomorphic differences between some indicative forms and its present subjunctive complement, if it is regular, are often not enough to perceive, at least at first, especially since stress placement does not fall on the subjunctive morpheme. However, irregular subjunctive forms undergo more audible morphophonological changes. For her participants, a benefit to the highly salient irregular forms is that they were more obvious, leading to more use in their own speech, a finding contradicted by Geeslin and Gudmestad (2008). The downside is that the majority of Spanish verbs employ a regular version, though the relative salience of each of these verbs may be less than the irregular versions. An interesting finding in her study was that her participants did not consider subordination an obstacle for the subjunctive and appeared to have less trouble with constructing complex sentences than the participants in Collentine (1995). She determines that learners do have knowledge of subordinate clauses, yet indicative is still primarily employed in these structures in place of the subjunctive. However, similar to Collentine (1995) advanced learners use the subjunctive in semantic domains expressing the future and volition more than other domains, and especially so in *querer que* (to want to).

To summarize, research shows that syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic dimensions of the use of the subjunctive complicate the process of acquisition for learners. Mood, while part of the English language, is accomplished by other means which may not be totally transferable to Spanish. Instead, the Spanish subjunctive requires a massive amount of memorization of the subjunctive morphology. Lastly, the lack of salience and perceptible differences between some indicative and subjunctive forms all contribute to the sources of difficulty in learning the subjunctive.

### **Overextension of Tense, Mood, and Aspect**

Generally, when a learner has not fully acquired the subjunctive, they tend to use another Spanish tense, mood, or aspect in its place. This is a process that is referred to in this paper as overextension, though it is known in other literature as simplification or variability. Previous literature provides distribution of some of these overextended forms (Lubbers Quesada, 1998; Montrul & Perpiñán, 2011; and Silva-Corvalán, 1994), typically finding the use of the indicative in place of the present subjunctive. However, the picture is more complicated than just simply overextending realis forms for the subjunctive. Silva-Corvalán (1994) provides some context that demonstrate that Subjunctive grammatical rules are not universal nor timeless. Dialectal variation of the subjunctive complicates the notion of universal subjunctive rules, as Argentinean, Mexican, Paraguayan, Uruguayan, and Venezuelan dialects of Spanish all exhibit slightly different usage of the form, including what is classified as overextension (Blake, 1982; García & Terrell, 1977; Lope Blanch, 1979). Moreover, in the historical evolution of the Spanish subjunctive, the phenomenon of overextension is not new nor limited to second language learners. Semantic and syntactic domains which were once exclusively

subjunctive are now domains of the indicative, a pattern incidentally mirrored in other Romance languages (Camús Bergareche, 1990; Harris, 1974; Poplack, 1990).<sup>3</sup>

The actual linguistic process of this overextension phenomenon is explored by some researchers. Within the theory of presyntactic and syntactic stages (Givón, 1979; 1990), Collentine (1995) suggests that these stages are not entirely rigid, and that intermediate learners are somewhere in the middle of what he promotes is a continuum. His participants did not perform well with the subjunctive, particularly in complex phrases, in what he identified as an attempt to make their Spanish speech fit a syntax closer to English. Terrell, Baycroft, and Perrone put it another way, describing the participants' process of the "copying of English syntax and [...] developmental errors resulting from the simplification of the system of Spanish complementation" (27). This has some interesting parallels to the concept of interlanguage (Selinker, 1972). Simply put, it is the interim language, somewhere between the first and target languages, where a speaker processes communication. In short, a target-like subjunctive does not reside in the interlanguage of many Spanish learners, at least at these levels, and they may be accessing English syntax within their interlanguage when it comes to irrealis.

To conclude, learners tend to over extend other tenses, moods, and aspects in place of the subjunctive. However, there are dialectal and diachronic variants of the subjunctive. Much of the research finds that some semantic triggers elicit the subjunctive more than others do. In the end, learners may be copying their English syntax for mood when learning the Spanish, until they acquire the subjunctive.

## **Assessment of Causes of Grammar Difficulty**

Defining grammar difficulty is complex and debated. In synthesizing the literature, Graus & Coppen (2015) identify form, use, meaning and salience as components of grammar structure complexity. Additionally, they examine the pedagogical rules required for teaching a form. Furthermore, they examine the learner themselves and their characteristics as either facilitating or impeding the acquisition of the grammatical structure.

As theoretical considerations of grammatical difficulty in general are not the primary objective of this research, the present author will refer the reader to the extensive and methodologically robust literature review that Graus and Coppen (2015, 103-107) conduct. However, some of the broad strokes of the findings in their review are presented in the following sentences. Salience is divided in terms of perpetual salience, semantic complexity, morphophonological regularity, syntactic category, and frequency (Graus & Coppen, 2015, 103; DeKeyser, 2005). Grammatical complexity is defined in terms of form, function, and meaning (Graus & Coppen, 2015, 104; Spada & Tomita, 2010; Hulstijn & De Graaff, 1994; DeKeyser, 2005). According to Graus and Coppen (2015, 104-105), pedagogical rule difficulty is analyzed in terms of quantitative aspects (Housen, Pierrard, & Van Daele, 2005; Dietz, 2002), conceptual clarity and metalanguage (R. Ellis, 2009; Krashen, 1982), and scope and reliability (Hulstijn & De Graaff, 1994). Finally, they consider the aspects related to the learner including their L1 (White, 1991) and characteristics (R. Ellis, 2008; Graus & Coppen, 2015, 105-106). The present paper is adapting this model developed by Graus and Coppen (2015) to the causes of difficulty in acquiring the subjunctive.

## **Instructors' Beliefs towards Grammar**

Research on instructors' beliefs towards grammar can offer important insights as teachers experience personally the challenges to acquiring a grammatical structure and the best practices to teach it (Borg, 2006; Graus & Coppen, 2015; 2016; 2017). Outside of a growing interest in English instructors' beliefs (Andrews, 2003), their views have been largely ignored (Borg, 1999a; 2006; 2011; Graus & Coppen, 2015; 2016).

Following Graus and Coppen (2016), beliefs are defined “as evaluative propositions that individuals regard as true and that have a strong affective component” (573), a definition largely consistent with Borg (2011). These beliefs, as Schulz (2001) notes, are incredibly diverse and complex. In theory, these beliefs lead to behavior, motivate actions, and contribute to decisions (Andrews, 2003; Graus & Coppen, 2016). In a continuation of their larger research, Graus and Coppen (2017) argue beliefs are instrumental to instructors' pedagogical approaches (Andrews, 2003). Instructors' beliefs, according to Graus and Coppen (2017), relate to the teaching process, the learners themselves, and the content presented. Examining these beliefs can and should lead to reevaluation, including challenges to such beliefs when they are not effective (Borg, 2011).

Investigating beliefs naturally leads to the question of whether or not they are affecting pedagogical practice, or vice versa, and research has attempted to investigate the connection between these two concepts (Breen et al., 2001). Graus and Coppen (2016) argue that beliefs are not always reflective in reality, a finding consistent with other research (Bigelow & Ranney, 2005; Burns & Knox, 2005; Borg & Burns, 2008; Basturkmen, 2012). However, experience and education (Graus and Coppen, 2016), in addition to instructors' own language learning history (Schulz, 2001), are all often

reflected in their beliefs at least, especially so for experienced instructors (Basturkmen, 2012). Importantly, this relationship may not be bidirectional, in that instructors' background and practice affects their beliefs, but that beliefs may not always affect practice (Andrews, 2003; Breen et al., 2001; Sato & Kleinsasser, 2004; Phipps & Borg, 2007; Borg, 1998; 1999a; Graus & Coppen, 2017; Schulz, 2001). Even as instructors' beliefs do not always influence their practice, these are still illuminating in analyzing their decisions and actions (Borg, 2011) and the pedagogical approaches they take (Borg, 1998; 1999a; 1999b), especially as it relates to the potential long term impact that teaching has on learners (Graus & Coppen, 2016; Borg, 2011) and program design (Swan, 2007).

Another question that arises is to what extent instructors are accurate in their judgments on grammatical difficulty, and it turns out these intuitions can be fairly accurate. In measuring grammar complexity, Scheffler (2011) inquired on instructors' intuition regarding twelve structures on a Likert scale, followed by a performance evaluation of fifty foreign language learners of English. Correlations between the learners' output and the instructors' predictions were quite robust ( $r = -.9, p < .01$ ). Scheffler's findings demonstrate that the forms that instructors indicated were difficult indeed were the ones on which students scored lower (which incidentally tended to be unrealistic forms). Instructors' intuitions were correct in assessing their students' abilities, a finding also consistent with Graus and Coppen (2015).

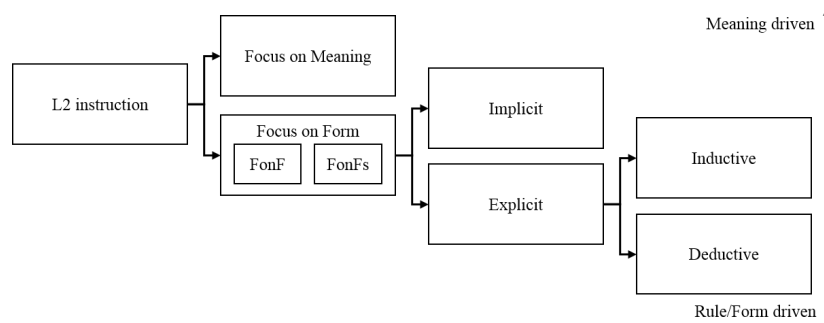
As such, inquiring judgements from language instructors on the difficulty of a grammatical rule (Scheffler, 2011) is worthwhile. While they may not always affect instructors' practice, their beliefs are indicative of their education and experience and are



often accurate in their evaluation of the students, particularly as it applies to difficult areas of grammar acquisition.

### **Pedagogical Approaches of Second Language Acquisition Theory**

Graus and Coppen (2016) propose a model for pedagogical approaches of second language acquisition and theory. The model consists of four construct pairs based on existing theory (Long, 1991; Williams, 2005; Krashen, 1981; DeKeyser, 1995). These construct pairs include Focus on Meaning, Focus on Form (which differentiates Focus on Form [FonF] and Focus on Forms [FonFs]), Implicit and Explicit instruction, Inductive and Deductive instruction, and Metalanguage and Drilling, all of which are described in more detail in the preceding sections. The construct pairs are illustrative of the polarity of these pedagogical approaches. Graus and Coppen (2016) term this the taxonomy of second language instruction, see Figure 1.



*Figure 1. Taxonomy of Second Language Instruction (Graus & Coppen, 2016).*

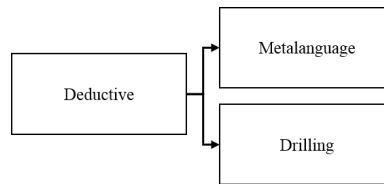
There are three important dimensions to this taxonomy. First, there is the horizontal dimension of pedagogical approaches, which illustrates the interrelatedness and derivational relationships, seen from the branching arrows. Second, the construct pairs at each step illustrate more or less the polarity and dichotomous nature of these pedagogical variables. Third, more *meaning-driven* approaches are on the top of each

construct pair and more *form-driven* approaches are on the bottom, providing a vertical dimension to this model. Meaning-driven approaches are used to denote those that favor communication and student-oriented pedagogy, in the effort to improve fluency (Graus & Coppen, 2017). Likewise, form-driven approaches refer to those which are more rule-oriented or contain overt instruction, in the effort to improve proficiency (Graus & Coppen, 2017).

While the construct pairs may appear segmented to illustrate the polarity, Graus and Coppen (2016) ultimately find that these approaches approximate more of a continuum at times and are not necessarily linear. Similarly, Andrews (2003) demonstrates there is often complex blending and intersections among many of these approaches. Many instructors end up utilizing multiple approaches, including both within a single construct pair. Thus, the approaches cannot be examined totally separately. The present study attempts to capture both the segmentation, continuity, and multiplicity of these construct pairs by inquiring on each approach individually on an Likert scale in order to tease apart the instructors' beliefs and then aggregating the results to indicate the degree of the instructors' blending of the approaches.<sup>4</sup> As such, these are not analyzed as mutually exclusive, but as construct pairs that are indicative of the complex nature of pedagogy.

In addition to this taxonomy, the present author proposes an expansion, which is inspired by Andrews (2003). In researching instructors' beliefs (specifically meaning, form, inductive, deductive, metalanguage, and drilling) and the relationships among these different approaches, he finds some interesting correlations. Particularly, he shows positive correlations with statistical significance among deductive, metalanguage, and

drilling, indicating a possible relationship. From a conceptual point of view, it also appears to be an intuitive addition to the taxonomy. To clarify, deductive instruction is the preference of teaching a rule rather than letting the students discover it for themselves (Graus & Coppen, 2016). This can be accomplished in at least two ways. One, the rule can be taught metalinguistically; in addition to verbalizing the rule and its placement, the rationale for the rule can be conveyed to the learner so that the learner can understand the rule from a conceptual level. Two, the rule can simply be drilled until the student thoroughly acquires the form. Since metalanguage is by definition more meaning-driven, it is placed on top, and drilling, which is quintessentially rule-driven, is below. Neither metalanguage nor drilling in Andrews (2003) had sufficient correlation with induction, providing further evidence for it branching out of the deductive approach, see Figure 2.



*Figure 2. Expanded Taxonomy of Second Language Acquisition.*

A quick note on the terminology is in order. Meaning-driven and form-driven approaches denote those on the top and bottom of each construct pair. This is not to be confused with the first construct pair, Focus on Meaning and Focus on Form. The following sections will provide more description of each of these pedagogical approaches.

### **Form vs. Meaning**

Instruction that focuses on meaning considers communication the main objective. Cordero Badilla and Pizarro Chacón (2013) quote Richards (2006) in defining

communicative grammar, “It describes a set of general principles grounded in the notion of communicative competence as the goal of second and foreign language teaching” (23). This approach is based on some assumptions by Richards (2006), that holistic learning is advanced through communication that is interactive, mutual, meaningful, and discoverable. These researchers promote a second language education that approximates more natural language acquisition. Regarding pedagogy, Shrum and Glisan (1994) put forth the idea of contextualized, participatory instruction for grammar. Kissau, Algozzine, and Yon (2012) add that instruction should include extensive exposure to the second language and be customized to students’ interests, ages, and learning styles. In a classroom that focuses on meaning, communication is the central goal and other components of language acquisition are auxiliary to communicative competence, including grammatical accuracy (Graus & Coppen, 2016; Kissau, Algozzine, & Yon, 2012). Kissau, Algozzine, and Yon (2012) argue that communicative competence is the primary objective and that while the instruction of grammar is important, it should be a “supportive role” (235) and not be at the cost of fluency. Cordero Badilla and Pizarro Chacón (2013) explain that when grammar is taught it should be taught implicitly. This often means a relegation of form-driven instruction and even the place of grammar in the classroom. (Graus & Coppen, 2016; Loewan, 2011).

Contrast this with traditional instruction approach that focuses on form, which situates the learning experience within the classroom (Cordero Badilla & Pizarro Chacón, 2013), is a pedagogical approach that focuses on meaning and prioritizes practical communication and performance in the real world. When this is not the case, this creates difficulties, they argue, for the learner to implement the instruction precisely because it is

not grounded in communication. Despite this theory, when researching students' beliefs, their participants did in fact believe that grammar rules are required for communicating effectively with native speakers, in addition to building up their own linguistic confidence.

This disconnection between students and instructors on the value of grammar instruction is explored more by Schulz (1996). Indeed, Schulz (1996) finds that while students had more positive views toward grammar instruction, their instructors did not, a finding supported by Schulz (2001). The students tended to believe more that their “communicative ability improves most quickly if they study and practice the grammar of a language” (345). Nevertheless, both groups did believe that at least some grammar instruction is helpful for learning another language, though students were more inclined towards this sentiment than their teachers. In addition to the students preferring grammar instruction, they were also slightly less inclined to value the objective of conversational Spanish than their teachers, indicating an interest in accuracy on the part of the students. Though the instructors generally preferred communication-oriented approaches more than students, Schulz finds that there was even some considerable disagreement of the participants as to the role of instruction in the classroom, stating that “these fundamental differences of beliefs indicate that [foreign language] teaching is far from a united profession” (348). Such differences seem to be indicative of the divergent theories and research as it relates to instruction and the place of communication and grammar in it.

Form-focused instruction relates to the central compositional nature of grammar in a course, which can be defined as “any planned or incidental instructional activity that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form” (R. Ellis,

2001, 1). The rationale for this approach is to produce grammatical and accurate speech (N. Ellis, 2007). This approach is typically synonymous with traditional grammar instruction, though it can refer to many other aspects of language learning, such as phonology and lexicon, which are outside of the scope of this paper. Tangible evidence of form-focused instruction include grammar as a central component in the lesson plans and syllabi, that is grammar instruction is neither incidental nor ad hoc. Form-focused instruction identifies the instructor as the expert in the classroom, whose role is to explain concepts and provide feedback (Schulz, 2001).

The prevalence of the traditional instruction of grammar has been explored. Borg (2006) finds that these approaches are still common in teaching grammar and are more influential than their theoretical alignments or even the current research on second language acquisition. The rationale for this is offered; instruction which focuses on form, according to Borg (1998; 2003), inspires more confidence in the teachers and students that authentic instruction is transpiring, whether or not that is reflected in the students' actual performance.

### **Focus on Form vs. Focus on Forms**

Within the paradigm of form-focused instruction lies the distinction between Focus on Form (FonF) and Focus on Forms (FonFs) (Graus & Coppen, 2016). Conceptualized by Long (1991) and Long and Robinson (1998), this distinction serves to separate an instruction that focuses on forms that considers meaning, in effect bridging the two approaches, and that which does not. FonF places and integrates grammar instruction in between form and meaning, allowing grammar to become a product of communication and meaning-driven pedagogy. To achieve this, an instructor has but to

draw the learners' attention to the form during natural speech such that through the use of a form, a learner can capture its meaning (Toth, 2004). FonFs, on the other hand, is the view that more strongly aligns to traditional grammar. For FonFs, language learning is based on a series of structural building blocks that must be acquired. This includes making grammar a central component of the course, regardless of the student's performance with it, such that communication is not the sole purpose of language learning.

### **Implicit vs. Explicit Instruction**

Implicit instruction is the concept that acquiring new grammatical forms can occur without direct consciousness of structures or overt discussion of its rule (R. Ellis, 2008). The main mechanism of implicit instruction is language exposure, particularly the kind of input that the instructor thoughtfully contextualizes, organizes, and delivers (Graus and Coppen, 2016). Importantly, implicit instruction encourages the learner making connections from the input to the grammar structure without the direct aid on the part of the instructor (N. Ellis, 2002). The rationale behind this is that implicit instruction more closely mirrors first language acquisition, notwithstanding that adults learn a language very differently than a child, who requires little to no instruction.

Conversely, explicit instruction includes directing the learner, in a planned manner, to the specific structure within the classroom. Moreover, DeKeyser (1995) notes that explicit instruction involves the guided contemplation of a rule during the language learning process. In this approach, students receive explicit instruction of a rule and then subsequent practice, with the goal of producing the form correctly both in practice and conversation. Explicit instruction allows communication to be interrupted in order to

discuss the grammatical structure. According to the model developed by Graus and Coppen (2016), this process can occur inductively or deductively.

Some research has attempted to settle this debate. Norris and Ortega (2000), in their landmark meta-analysis, demonstrate quantitatively that explicit instruction is more effective than mere exposure to a language via implicit instruction, at least with the literature up until that point. The consequence of this, they argue, is that explicit approaches lead to deeper learning of the language. Interestingly, the authors show that when form and meaning are integrated (FonF), it is just as effective as when grammar is taught outside of the context of meaning (FonFs). Nevertheless, they also indicate that implicit instruction, without the utilization of any other approaches, can result in delays in language learning. This finding is consistent with qualitative research by Graus and Coppen (2017), in which the instructors largely dismiss the efficacy of implicit learning by itself. Other researchers have come to similar conclusions regarding explicit instruction and its correlation to greater performance (Spada & Tomita, 2010; Correa, 2011; Ellis & Laporte, 1997), with the additional finding by Han and Ellis (1998) that explicit instruction may also lead to higher proficiency.

More so than perhaps any of the other construct pairs, researchers have examined the connection between implicit and explicit learning. The relatedness of these approaches, what is often called interface, has been debated extensively. The genesis of this debate lies in the question of whether explicitly learned knowledge could become automated into implicit knowledge (Krashen, 1981; Han & Finneran, 2014). In short, the present view, based on the literature regarding interface, is that explicit knowledge can benefit implicit learning even if indirectly (Scheffler, 2011). The mechanism behind this



requires the learner's recognition of the differences between the input from the target language and their own output. Making that connection may require that the instructor assists students in acknowledging the forms which may be missing in the students' own grammar, so that they can in turn snowball that into making future connections themselves as they gain more knowledge of a language. When students can make these connections themselves, the students' language learning practice becomes automated and the rules proceduralized, providing information for implicit processing (DeKeyser, 2007). While the instructors in Graus and Coppen (2017) were consistent in that rule explanation was critical to the acquisition of a grammar form and communication, these instructors also indicated that the connection between implicit and explicit knowledge was assumed.

### **Inductive vs. Deductive Instruction**

Simply put, inductive instruction refers to the emphasis of students' inference of a rule, where the student comes to the generalization based on the context of examples (Graus & Coppen, 2016). Cordero Badilla and Pizarro Chacón (2013), citing Thornbury (1999), list some of the theoretical advantages of inductive approaches. First, because learners discover the rule themselves, the authors argue that learners are more likely to remember those rules. Second, the students become more active in the language learning process, actively looking to find patterns within speech. The interaction elicited from inductive instruction, in turn, fosters collaborations, which lead to more linguistic practice. These authors also list some theoretical disadvantages of the inductive approach, which may include budgeting some additional time in order for learners to independently discover the rules. If students do not find such connections quickly, the added emphasis may inadvertently make a lesson appear to be more about grammar than what was

originally intended. The other possibility also exists too; students may also infer the wrong rule altogether.

On the other hand, deductive instruction prescribes the presentation of a rule and exposure to relevant examples where the rule applies (R. Ellis, 2006a). Cordero Badilla and Pizarro Chacón (2013), again citing Thornbury (1999) describe some of the theoretical advantages of deductive instruction. One obvious advantage for the instructor includes the time saved by arriving at the rule earlier rather than waiting and hoping that the student comes to it. The authors also argue that it seems to work better with adult learners who have more mature cognitions for rule instruction or at least an expectation for such instruction. Lastly, deductive instruction provides the instructor with opportunities to troubleshoot difficult areas as opposed to attempting to divine them in lesson preparation. However, the authors also provide some disadvantages. According to them, the tediousness of a grammar lesson may cause a loss of attention on the part of the student, particularly those who are younger students and may not have developed metalinguistic knowledge. Importantly, traditional grammar instruction typically shifts the focus of the class from the student to the teacher at the cost of learner interaction. Lastly, when students do not arrive at the rule themselves, the rule may not become as permanent in the memory of the student as it would through discovery.

### **Metalinguage vs. Drilling**

In defining metalinguistic knowledge, Correa (2011) states that it is “the ability demonstrated by participants to identify grammar terminology and ungrammatical sentences, as well as to provide grammar rules” (41). The scope of this definition may be slightly narrow, and this paper would propose expanding of metalinguage instruction to

include the instructors' ability to describe the rationale of a rule and a metalinguistic knowledge as the students' ability to verbalize it. Indirectly, this relates to rule difficulty, as R. Ellis (2009) considers a rule easy if it is formally and functionally simple to explain, and it can be verbalized in a straightforward manner (Krashen, 1982). The connection between metalinguistic knowledge and the acquisition of a form has often been demonstrated to be solid. While studying the relationship between metalinguistic knowledge and accuracy of the Spanish subjunctive, Correa (2011) finds strong correlations ( $r = .657, p < .01$ ), a finding supported by other research as well (Hudson & Walmsley, 2005; Ellis & Laport, 1997). That is not to say there is unanimity among researchers, indeed, Han and Ellis (1998) find no influence of metalanguage on proficiency. An interesting finding in Correa (2011), one that will not be explored in the present study, is that the students with high metalinguistic knowledge in Spanish tended to have a high level of this type of knowledge in their native English language as well ( $r = .608$  and  $r = .669, p < .01$ ). These findings also made connections between that metalanguage knowledge and the automatic transfer of explicit knowledge into implicit knowledge as proficiency grows (Correa, 2011, 51), which follows the theory proposed by DeKeyser (2007).

On the other hand, drilling is a rather simple concept. It is the idea of repeating a form until it is more or less permanently committed to memory. There are a number of manifestations of drilling, including conjugation recitation, fill-in-the-blank practices, read and repeat lessons, among others. The rationale for drilling a form, especially difficult structures like the subjunctive, is based on the sheer amount of morphological information that simply requires a dedication to rote memorization, especially for the

irregular forms that cannot be explained by a rule. Drilling is not the only method to accomplish this, but it has been used in traditional grammar instruction. Despite the characteristic brute force nature of drilling, the participants in Graus and Coppen (2017) favored form-driven instruction and practice drills, even outside of the context of communication. However, drilling is not well understood and oddly, Rogers (1987) finds that instructors had difficulty in differentiating between oral drills and communicative-based tasks.

### **Development**

These approaches have not been developed concurrently. Indeed, grammar-oriented pedagogy has dominated much of the history of American language education, originally focusing primarily on language translation (Salomone, 1998; Toth, 2004). Eventually replacing translation focused approaches, audiolingual language education would favor conversational dialogues and repetition drills, but it nevertheless remained canonically rooted in grammar instruction. As rule-driven language became more influential, cognitive approaches would go on to replace audiolingual education, yet again, grammar would remain as a center stone of language education. Nevertheless, rules would become hypothesized and tested in the classroom, prompting further examination of efficacy of language classroom instruction (Salomone, 1998; Toth, 2004).

Beginning in the early seventies but especially towards the mid-eighties and nineties, language education theory would abandon behaviorist frameworks (Schulz, 1996; Cordero Badilla & Pizarro Chacón, 2013). Trends would include retooling language pedagogy to become much more communicative, interactive, and practical, with an increased focus on the semantic and pragmatic functions of language (Salomone,

1998, 554). This materialized into a realignment of language education objectives for many classrooms, where grammar became a means to the communicative ends, and not a primary goal in and of itself. Not everyone embraced this approach and much debate still surrounded meaning- and form-driven language education. Many researchers emphasized that at least some instruction that focuses on form is required in order to obtain accuracy in learners' fluency (Long, 1983).

Current theory and approaches tend to promote a synthesis of both meaning- and form-driven approaches. Nevertheless, in practice, grammar-oriented pedagogy often dominates. Even for instructors, Salamone (1998) claims many are conflicted between these two approaches to pedagogy. This sentiment is echoed by Karavas-Doukas (1996) who finds that even in the midst of growing popularity of communicative classrooms and the increased theoretical inclinations of instructors towards that approach, the reality is that many of the classrooms are more traditional and focused on grammar. Borg and Burns (2008) find that instructors still preferred education rooted in grammar, even while they regard that their primary objective does not include focusing on rules and giving error feedback. Graus and Coppen (2017) concur, finding that instruction remains traditional and grammar oriented, and practice emphasizes form accuracy, rule explanation, and mechanical drills (Jean & Simard, 2011; Larsen-Freeman, 2015).

In summary, the evolution of second language instruction have included different approaches to language learning. While the pendulum has swung between form- and meaning-driven approaches at least in the theory, the practice has largely favored grammar pedagogy.

## **Research Gap and Questions**

Related to this research, there is a fairly wide gap in the literature. Since teachers' beliefs are a newer area of inquiry, there is little depth to this research, especially on Spanish instructors' views. Even less research exists on their views towards Spanish grammar, with precious little on their views of the second language acquisition of the subjunctive. Furthermore, some of the basic assumptions need to be established. While many assume the subjunctive is the most difficult form to acquire in Spanish, there is little empirical evidence on instructors that show this is indeed the case. Lastly, while there has been research on the distribution of semantic domains in learners' use of the subjunctive, there has been little research to describe the overextension of different Spanish verb tenses, moods, and aspects in lieu of the subjunctive.

Instructors' beliefs are necessary for understanding why the subjunctive is so difficult, and what methods they employ in teaching the form, as they witness and facilitate the acquisition of the subjunctive. This is not to say that their methods are the most effective, indeed, critical analysis will help determine the efficacy of their approach, though such analysis is beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, it is important to evaluate where instructors are at in the current time, so such analyses can be meaningful and, in turn, effect instruction.

The following are the research questions that guide this investigation:

1. What do instructors believe are the most challenging grammatical forms for Spanish learners to acquire?
2. Is the subjunctive ranked among the most challenging?

3. What do instructors identify as the main causes of the difficulty in acquiring the subjunctive?
4. What are the approaches that instructors take in teaching the subjunctive?

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

This study is a nationwide survey of Spanish instructors at colleges and universities, that inquires their views of the second language acquisition of the Spanish subjunctive. In general, they were asked questions relating to the causes of difficulty (Graus & Coppen, 2015) and their approaches to teaching it (Graus & Coppen, 2016).

#### **Database**

In order to conduct a national survey of Spanish instructors who teach the subjunctive, a database of colleges and universities with Spanish programs was constructed. The following sections discuss the criteria for selection, the institutions that were selected, the distribution, and representativeness of the sample of selection.

#### **Criteria**

Only instructors at post-secondary institutions were surveyed, as the form may be too advanced for typical instruction in secondary institutions. Moreover, only colleges and universities with a Spanish program that offered at least three years of Spanish were eligible. There are several reasons for this. Through preliminary interviews, examinations of course descriptions, syllabi, and personal experience, the subjunctive, while introduced typically earlier, may not be thoroughly explored until the third year. The efficacy of this practice is explored through some of the participants' responses yet is not discussed more in this section.<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, only baccalaureate institutions or higher which featured at least a minor in Spanish, or some kind of equivalent, were examined. Colleges which only offered Associates degrees were excluded as were four-plus year institutions that did not



offer Spanish beyond the beginning or intermediate level. Some kind of commitment to the instruction of Spanish must have been demonstrated at the institution under examination, beyond merely offering first- and second-year introductory courses.

In order to construct this database, the *Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education* (CCIHE) was utilized (Center for Postsecondary Research, 2015). The CCIHE is a comprehensive list of virtually all post-secondary educational institutions throughout the US and its territories. A custom CCIHE list was generated, excluding institutions that provide only Associate degrees or other specialty colleges. Table 1 details the categories of institutions that were included and excluded from the CCIHE:

Table 1. List of Included and Excluded Categories from the Carnegie List.

Included Categories	Excluded Categories
<p><b>Doctoral Universities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highest Research Activity (R1) (115)</li> <li>• Higher Research Activity (R2) (107)</li> <li>• Moderate Research Activity (R3) (112)</li> </ul> <p><b>Master's Colleges and Universities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Larger programs (M1) (402)</li> <li>• Medium programs (M2) (215)</li> <li>• Smaller programs (M3) (146)</li> </ul> <p><b>Baccalaureate Colleges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arts &amp; Sciences (246)</li> <li>• Diverse Fields (326)</li> <li>• Mixed Baccalaureate/Associate's (254)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Associates Dominant (149)</li> </ul> <p><b>Associate's Colleges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High Transfer - High Traditional (166)</li> <li>• High Transfer - Mixed T/N (127)</li> <li>• High Transfer - High Nontraditional (84)</li> <li>• Mixed Transfer/Career - High Trad. (110)</li> <li>• Mixed Transfer/Career - Mixed T/N (102)</li> <li>• Mixed Transfer/Career - High N (130)</li> <li>• High Career - High Traditional (87)</li> <li>• High Career - Mixed T/N (123)</li> <li>• High Career - High Nontraditional (184)</li> </ul> <p><b>Special Focus Two-Year</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health Professions (267)</li> <li>• Technical Professions (62)</li> <li>• Arts and Design (41)</li> <li>• Other Fields (74)</li> </ul> <p><b>Special Focus Four-Year</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faith-Related Institutions (310)</li> <li>• Medical Schools and Centers (54)</li> <li>• Other Health Professions Schools (261)</li> <li>• Engineering Schools (7)</li> <li>• Other Technology-Related Schools (70)</li> <li>• Business and Management Schools (94)</li> <li>• Arts, Music, and Design Schools (137)</li> <li>• Law Schools (36)</li> <li>• Other Special Focus Institutions (36)</li> </ul> <p>Tribal colleges and universities<sup>6</sup> Not classified</p>

As a result, a total of colleges and universities which were predominately four-plus year

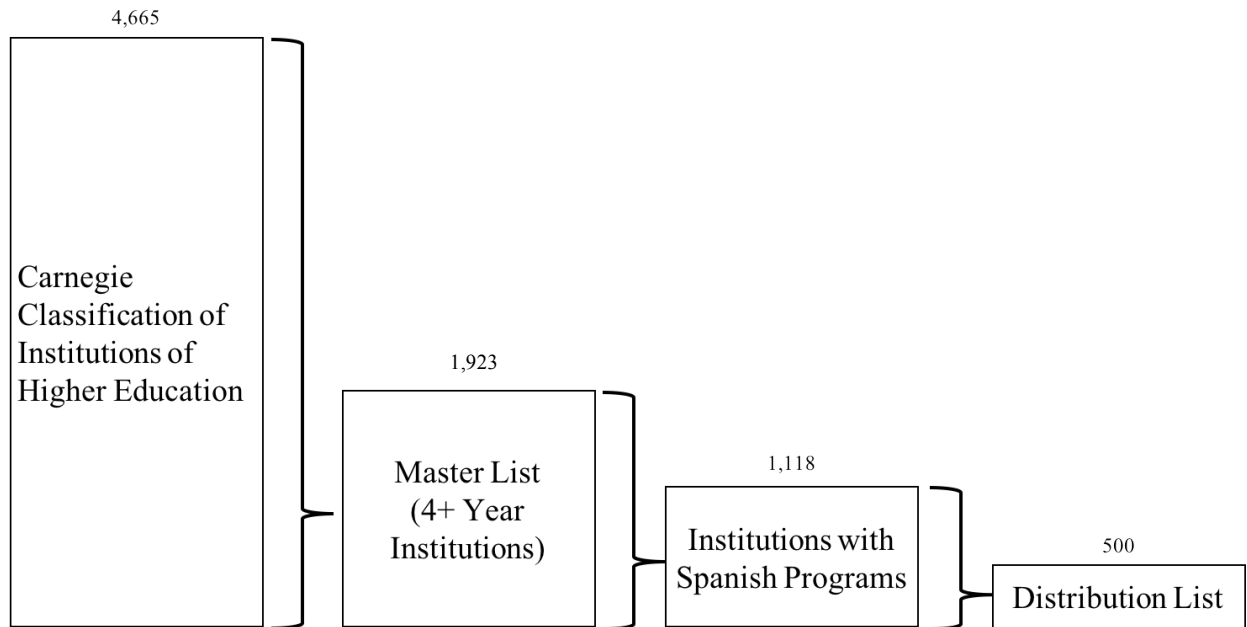
institutions made this first list, which is termed the master list. From there, it was

necessary to determine which of these institutions featured a Spanish program that met the criteria mentioned previously.

Each institution was individually researched on its website in order to determine if it indeed had a Spanish program and, if so, whether the program fit this criterion. This process included research via search engines to find if the institution had some Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino/Latina studies program. From there, it would be determined if they provided at least a minor, or some equivalent, if not a full major or graduate program. This process yielded 1,118 Institutions with Spanish Programs (ISP) that fit this category, or roughly 58.14% of the master list.<sup>7</sup>

### **Selection**

With an ISP list of 1,118 colleges and university, a random sample of 500 institutions was selected.<sup>8</sup> Figure 3 illustrates the process of constructing the database.



*Figure 3. Diagram of Database Construction.*

The overwhelming majority of these Spanish programs provide faculty and instructor profiles on their websites, which includes a contact email, title, position, and highest degrees obtained. Using the email information, a single instructor was contacted at each one of these 500 institutions, a method similar to Graus and Coppen (2016). The instructors were selected at random.<sup>9</sup>

The reason for selecting just one instructor is due to the fact that many foreign language programs may have a set curriculum and pedagogical philosophy established at the department level. In the effort of achieving a national sample, curriculum bias was avoided by surveying only a single instructor at each institution. The objective was to inquire on their beliefs and avoid influence from the department to the extent possible. Previous research has shown the influence students and departments have on instructors, in addition to their own work and experience (Borg, 1998, 1999a; Graus & Coppen 2017). Theoretically speaking, this meant that Spanish departments with dozens of instructors would have the same representation as an institution with only a single instructor. The controversy of this decision is not lost to the author of this paper, but a clear and simple method of achieving a more proportional sampling per institution was not evident.

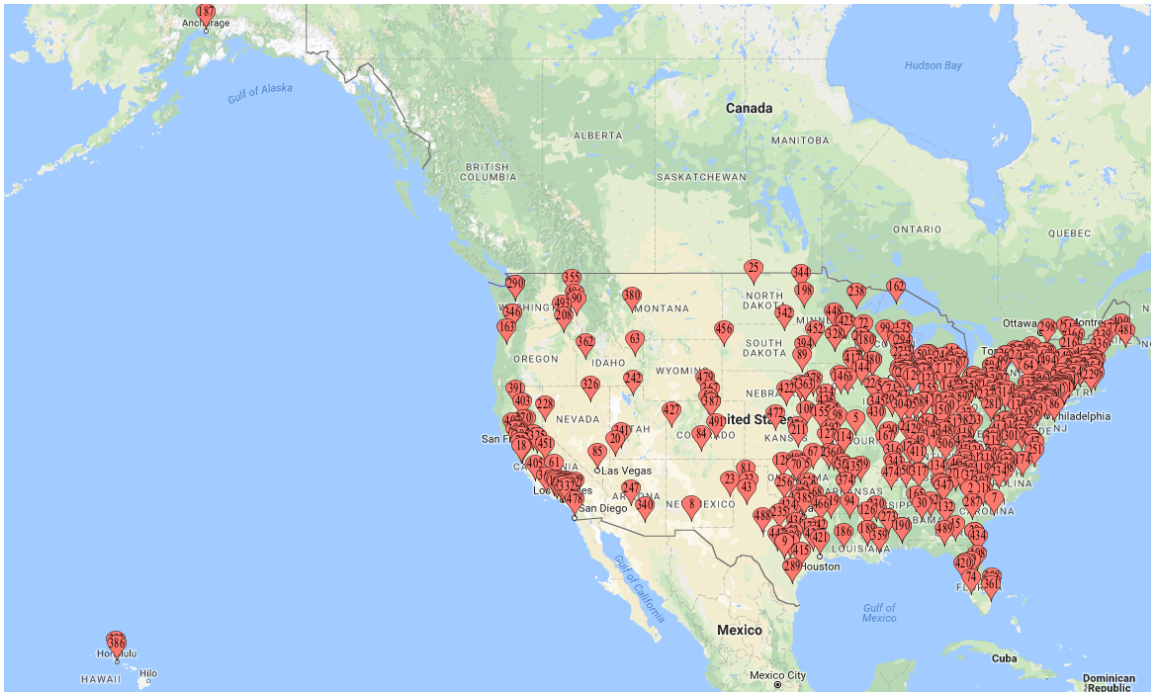
In this survey, the term “instructors” has a broad meaning. This includes: professors, including assistant, associate, and full professors as well as clinical professors; lecturers of any level; affiliate faculty from other departments; visiting professors; instructors including full time and adjunct positions; post-doctoral researchers and fellows; and teaching assistants, along with any equivalent positions. Professors emeriti or retired faculty were excluded from this list as were any graduate students

without teaching roles, including research assistants. As a result, their highest obtained education varies from Doctoral to Master to Bachelor's. A number of people that were contacted had specific titles within their department including associate deans, chairs, leaders of faculty, program heads, or had specific distinguished titles. The main requirement is that they must teach in one way or another. Typically, their research genre was in literature, composition, history, linguistics, culture, or a few others. No attempts were made to classify which specific subfield they were in, but generally there appeared to be no overrepresentation of one specific subfield.

### **Distribution**

The survey was sent to instructors at 500 colleges and universities throughout the United States, which represented 44.72% of all of the ISP list. Figure 4 illustrates the geographical distribution of the survey recruitment emails. This does not indicate the participants who enrolled in the study, which would represent only a fraction of those in Figure 4, but this map does provide an indication of the distribution of those contacted and invited to participate. Institutions from all fifty states were contacted. These institutions included large R1 universities and small liberal arts colleges; highly selective universities like ones in the American Association of Universities (25) and the Ivy League (1) to more inclusive colleges; public institutions, such as land-grant universities (31) and private non-profit colleges (secular and religious); campuses in urban, suburban, and rural areas; main, satellite, and online campuses; colleges that have either baccalaureate, master's, or doctoral degrees, or all three. Moreover, the list includes women's colleges (14), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (19), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) (40), and Minority Serving Institutions (MSI) (76);

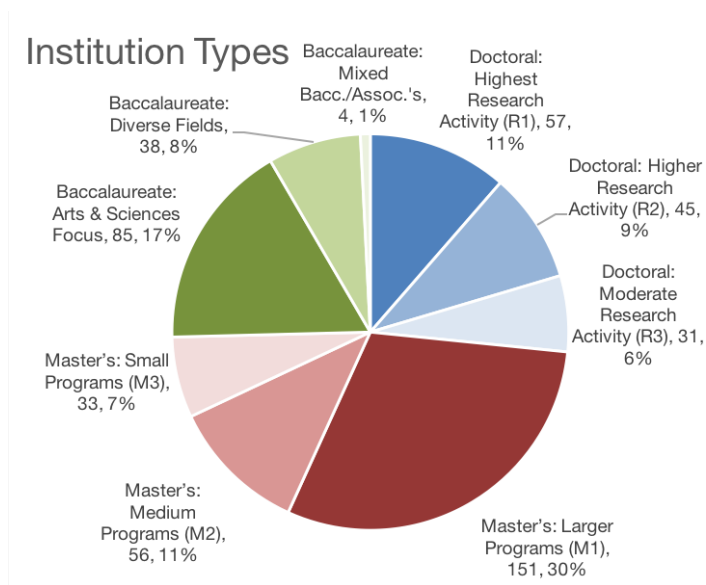
religious schools from a variety of faiths comprising Catholicism (including Jesuit, Dominican, and Franciscan orders), Protestantism (Baptists, Methodists, Wesleyan, etc.), Mormonism, and Judaism; military colleges and academies, technical and STEM dominant colleges, education focused institutions, and business schools.<sup>10</sup>



*Figure 4. Map of Institutions within the Distribution List.*

Because CCIHE includes a considerable amount of metadata on the different institutions, more distributional information is provided. A slight majority of the institutions in the distribution list were private (non-profit), totaling 55%. The remaining 45% were all public colleges and universities. No for-profit university was represented in the distribution list. Moreover, nearly half (48%) of the institutions were master’s universities, meaning that their terminal degrees were master’s or lower. Doctoral universities amounted to 26% of those in the distribution list and the remaining 26% were

Baccalaureate universities. Figure 5 provides information of the different types of institutions in the distribution list.



*Figure 5. Distribution of Institution Types in the Distributional List.*

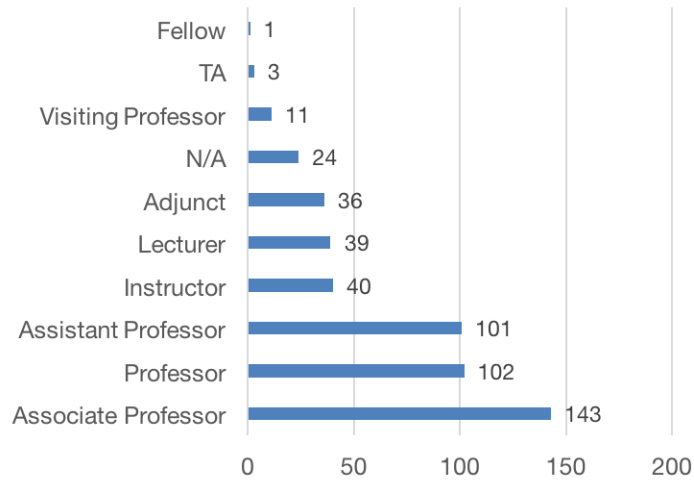
### **Representativeness**

As a random sample of institutions was obtained from a known database of universities, the representativeness of the sample is not critical. Nevertheless, some measures were taken to evaluate just how representative the random sample was to the larger group. Appendices A and B include statistical data relating to this representativeness of the distribution list based on several key factors. Generally, the list was highly representative, though that is expected when considering that nearly half of the institutions in the ISP were in the distribution list.

### **Participants**

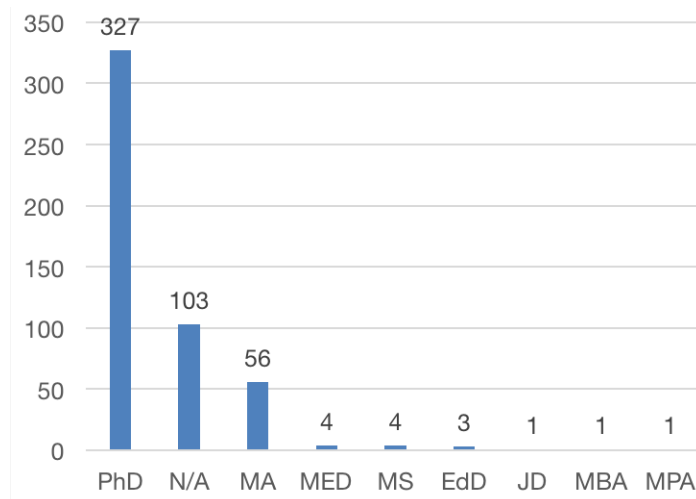
Because the distributional list included profile data from those contacted, distributional information on titles and degrees were available. Of the 500 instructors contacted, see Figure 6, there was a fairly balanced amount of assistant, associate, and

full professors. Non-tenured instructors included lecturers, instructors, adjunct faculty, and teaching assistants, which also had an even balance within that tier.



*Figure 6. Distribution of Titles in Distributional List.*

A strong majority of those contacted from the distributional list had a PhD. However, over a fifth of the contacts did not include information on the individual's highest degree earned. Information of the known educational backgrounds of those within the distributional list is seen in Figure 7.



*Figure 7. Distributional Information on Education of Those in the Distribution List.*



## **Materials**

The primary material sent to the participants was an electronic survey questionnaire. This questionnaire included background questions, a ranking of grammar complexity, an open-ended question on the sources of difficulty, approaches to second language instruction, overextension of tenses, moods, and aspects, as well as qualitative data and additional questions, all discussed further in the following sections.

### **Background Questions**

Immediately following the consent page, the survey included questions on gender, age, how they would characterize themselves as a speaker of Spanish (native, non-native, early bilingual, or heritage Spanish speaker), the number of years teaching Spanish, and other languages they have taught. The last question on this page asked, “in your experience, what Spanish grammar structure is the most difficult for second language learners to acquire?” Importantly, participants did not know about the subjunctive nature of the survey; the survey had the title of “Spanish Grammar Complexity” and all of the recruitment materials included that title.

### **Grammar Complexity**

The next page of the survey asked the participants to judge on a five-point Likert scale (from very easy to very difficult) fifteen different grammar forms, a scale similar to DeKeyser (2003). These grammar forms were selected based on the examination of two textbooks (Butt & Benjamin, 2004; Gordon & Stillman, 1999) and discussions with Spanish instructors. These grammar forms included simple items like gender and negation, tenses (present, preterit, and future), aspects (imperfect and progressive), and moods (subjunctive, conditional, and imperative). In addition to inquiring about the

preterit/imperfect contrast, it asked about the prepositional *por/para* contrast and the *ser/estar* contrast. It also inquired on direct and indirect object pronouns (ex. *lo/la/los/las* and *le/les*), relative pronouns (ex. *que, quien, el que, el cual, cuyo, donde*), and reflexive verbs.

### **Sources of Difficulty**

The next page contained a single question: “please explain what you believe causes the difficulty for American English students acquiring the Spanish subjunctive.” Graus and Coppen (2015) employ two methods in their study when operationalizing grammatical difficulty of different English grammar forms. The first was an open-ended question in their pilot study. In this pilot study, they coded the qualitative responses using thirty-one codes produced from survey results on the causes of grammatical difficulty. This derived a smaller group of macro-categories for their second method, a Likert scale evaluation based on five contributing factors: “(1) complexity of form; (2) complexity of use; (3) complexity of pedagogical rule; (4) influence of L1; and (5) frequency of input” (110). Because their test instrument for the second method was not provided in the study, it was unclear how they asked these specific questions. To avoid confusion in the survey, the latter was avoided for a preference of the former. A detailed description of the code and the themes in which they were grouped can be found in Graus & Coppen (2015, 111-112).

### **Pedagogical Approaches to Second Language Instruction**

Following the model from Graus and Coppen (2016), a series of scaled construct pairs of questions were asked relating to the polarity of meaning- and form-driven approaches toward subjunctive instruction. These questions were asked on a four-point

Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.<sup>11</sup> Table 2 details the meaning-driven questions (M-driven) on the left and the form-driven questions (F-driven) on the right, with each of the polar pairs in the rows. The question number indicates the number in Appendix C, however, all these questions were randomized per individual participant. While these questions were designed to be dichotomous, the participants responses to each were independent from one another. Because these questions were randomized, they may not have seen the dichotomous nature of some of these questions until far into the task. Graus & Coppen’s (2016, 580) formulated questions that avoided technical language and were designed to be general for virtually all Spanish instructors, a notion followed in the present research. Participants were free to skip any question in this section or any other.

*Table 2. Meaning- and Form-Driven Questions.*

M-driven	Question	Q #	F-driven	Question	Q #
Meaning	In Spanish class, it is not necessary to focus on subjunctive grammar rules; the goals should be on learning to communicate.	9	Form	Lessons on the subjunctive should be part of Spanish classes.	10
FonF	Instructors should only focus on teaching the subjunctive if students	11	FonFs	A subjunctive lesson should be a central component in Spanish	12

	are exhibiting difficulty with it.			grammar instruction, regardless of the student's performance with it.	
Implicit	The best way to teach the subjunctive is to present as many examples of it without necessarily teaching the rule itself.	13	Explicit	When teaching the subjunctive, it is best for the instructor to focus on explicit rules.	14
Inductive	It is better for the students to discover the subjunctive first rather than having the instructor present it.	15	Deductive	An instructor should teach grammar rules for the subjunctive instead of relying on students to discover it for themselves.	16
Meta-language	It is more effective to teach the rationale behind the subjunctive rule so that the students can understand its use.	17	Drilling	Drilling is a more effective way of acquiring the subjunctive.	18

Graus and Coppen (2016) asked three questions per approach, though only provided one example in their published study. Since this study was examining many other variables, one item each would provide useful data without fatiguing the participants and thus posed no issue.

### **Overextension of Tenses, Moods, and Aspects**

The participants were asked which verb tenses, moods, and aspects are typically overextended in place of the subjunctive in contexts where it is required. On a five-point Likert scale (never, occasionally, sometimes, often, and always), the participants were asked which are most often used. These included the infinitive, tenses including the indicative, preterit, future, the conditional mood, and the imperfect aspect.

### **Qualitative Data**

Two open-ended questions were asked to the participants. First, they were asked to describe a subjunctive lesson with the activities they included in it. Second, they were asked what may be the problem with the way the subjunctive is taught in their program, if there was any.

### **Additional Questions**

A number of other questions were asked to the participants, which they evaluated on a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. These questions can be lumped into several categories as they relate to the subjunctive: competence vs. performance, proficiency vs. comprehensibility, pedagogical tools, characteristics of the students, and the relevance and importance of the subjunctive. For the questions on competence vs. performance, the instructors were asked whether their students understand the subjunctive and use it correctly. The same questions are asked of the

imperfect subjunctive. Next, they answered questions on proficiency and comprehensibility, such as if correct usage is important for: (1) achieving higher proficiency and (2) being clearly understood. Next, the participants answered questions on the efficacy of corrective feedback and communicative activities. After which the instructors were asked if their students tend to craft their sentences in ways to avoid using the subjunctive and if study-abroad experience leads to better performance with the form. Lastly, there was a question of whether the subjunctive was a relevant and important part of Spanish language learning.

### **Procedures**

The survey recruitment materials were sent out between September 1, 2017 and November 6, 2017. Participants responded up until November 24, 2017. The survey was left open until January 20, 2018, at which time it was closed. Participants took an average of fourteen minutes to complete the survey. Some emails were bounced, in which case those individuals were skipped and replaced with others. A few other emails received automatic replies with the notice that the instructor was on sabbatical for the semester. Those instructors were not replaced. An incentive was established in the form of a random drawing. For those participants who were interested, they registered in a separate survey to take part in the drawing. The random drawing was conducted on January 15, 2018, and four \$15 gift cards for Amazon were distributed. A total of twenty-seven participants registered for that drawing, yielding a 14.8% chance of winning.

## CHAPTER FOUR

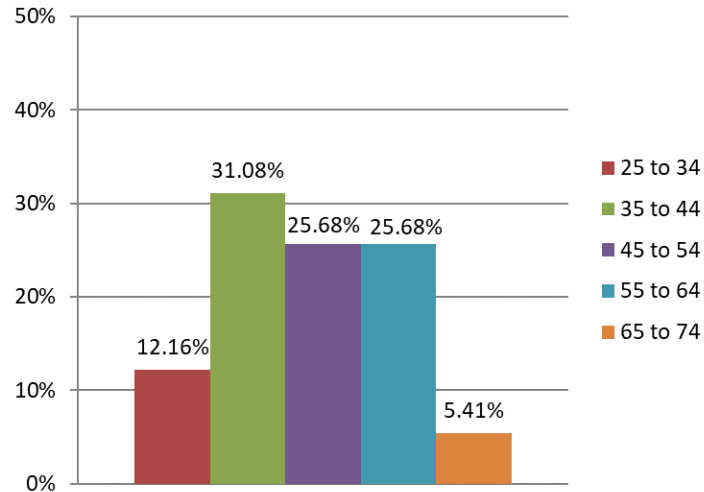
### RESULTS

From the 500 instructors that were contacted, a total of seventy-three responded, yielding a response rate of 14.6%. Of those seventy-three, sixty-six participants completed the study, yielding a completion rate of 90.4%.

The following sections detail the results for the background questions, grammar complexity, sources of difficulty, overextension of tense, mood, and aspect, problems with teaching the subjunctive, subjunctive lessons, competence vs. performance, proficiency vs. comprehensibility, and additional questions.<sup>12</sup>

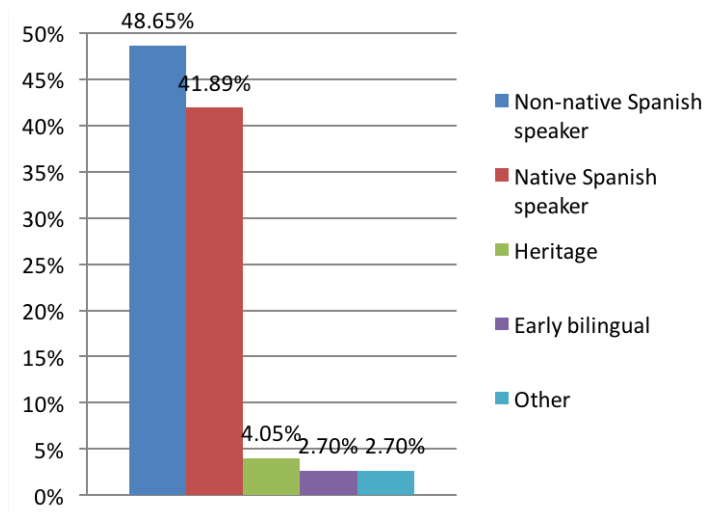
#### **Background Questions**

Of all the participants, most identified as female, 64 percent. While this may suggest a demographic skew, females accounted for 66 percent in Correa (2011), who remarked that this number is consistent with the demographical make up of foreign language classrooms. As such, the participants may actually be representative of the field which they teach, even if not representative of the general population. In addition, the ages of the participants followed a fairly normal distribution, see Figure 8.



*Figure 8. Age Distribution of Participants.*

Relating to the speaker type, there was fairly even balance of non-native (48.65%) and native (41.89%) Spanish speakers in the study. Additionally, there were a few heritage and early bilingual speakers among the participants. The distribution is shown in Figure 9.



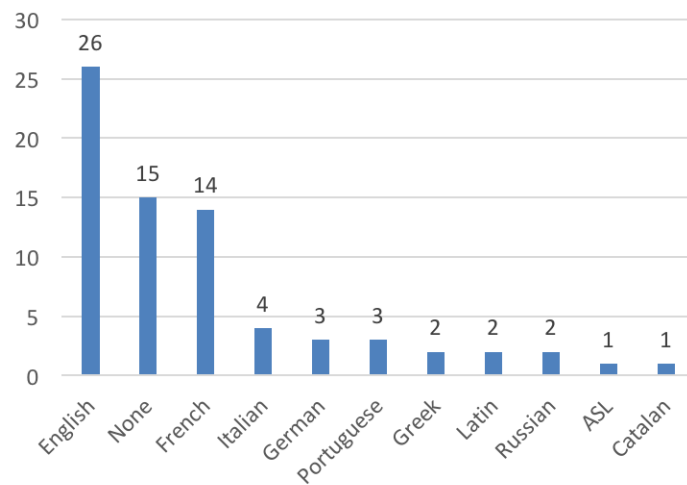
*Figure 9. Type of Spanish Speaker.*

The participants were also asked how many years that they have been teaching. On average, they had been teaching for 20.24 years with a standard deviation of 10.46



years and normal distribution. Considering the amount of time teaching, this data highlights their experience in the field.

Additionally, the participants were asked which other languages they have taught. Twenty-six participants indicated that, at some point, they have taught English, representing a plurality of the participants. Conversely, many participants responded that they have not taught any other language. As far as language families were concerned, many instructors reported teaching other romance languages, including French, Italian, Portuguese, Latin, and Catalan. Importantly, some instructors indicated teaching more than one language, and that information is reflected in the distribution in Figure 10.

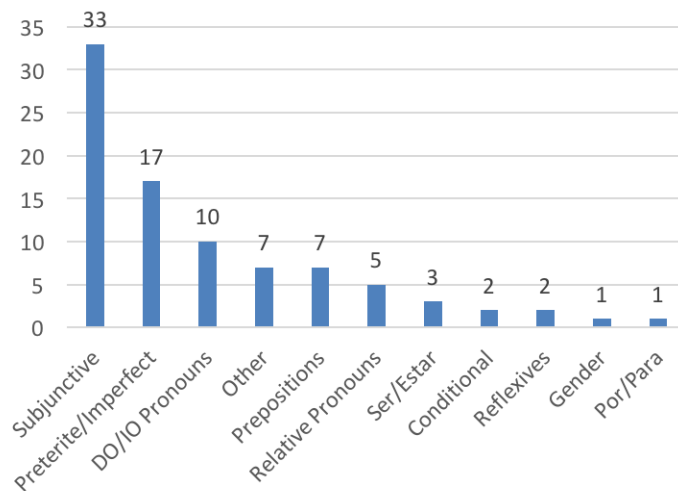


*Figure 10. Distribution of Other Languages Taught.*

### **Grammar Complexity**

The participants were asked in an open-ended question of which grammar structure is the most difficult for American English speakers to acquire. By and large, the participants responded that they considered the subjunctive the most difficult. Recall that at the time that the participants answered this question, they did not yet know that this survey was an investigation of the subjunctive. Rather, the title of the survey read

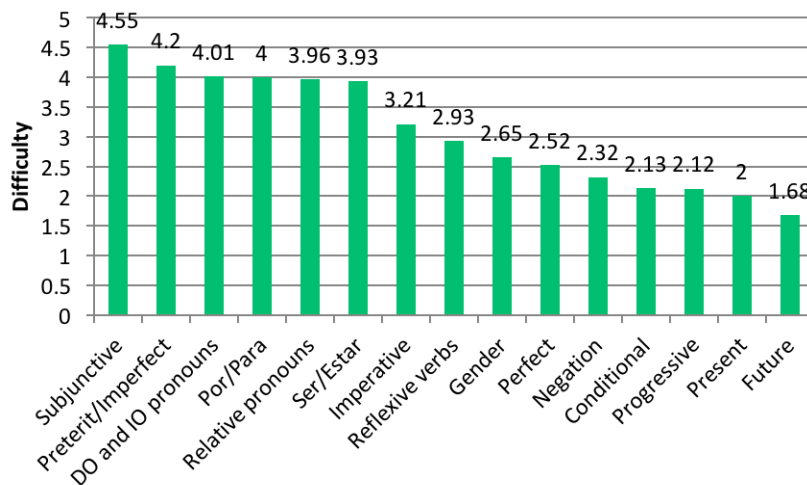
“Spanish Grammar Complexity,” so there was absolutely no prompting of the subjunctive in the minds of the participants. Moreover, since it was open-ended, there were no options that were presented to them, so no answer choice had the ability to prompt their response either. This is quite meaningful as participants felt strongly that the subjunctive is the most difficult. In fact, the number of respondents who indicated that the subjunctive is the most difficult was nearly double that of the next form, the preterit and imperfect contrast. Direct and indirect object pronouns were also indicated by a number of the participants. The second page ended with this open-ended question. The distribution of their open-ended responses is demonstrated in Figure 11.



*Figure 11. Open-Ended Question on Most Difficult Grammar Form.*

Next, the participants judged the difficulty of fifteen Spanish grammatical forms, the grammar complexity ranking. Mean values were calculated for each form, similar to Graus and Coppen (2015). Again, the respondents considered the subjunctive the most difficult. The participants gave the subjunctive form an average of 4.55 out of a maximum of 5, indicating that they ranked the subjunctive halfway between difficult and very difficult. Moreover, their responses for the subjunctive had a median of 5, a variance

of 0.369 and a standard deviation of 0.607. In short, there was a consensus among the participants that the subjunctive was quite difficult. As for the other forms, again the preterit and imperfect contrast was judged as the second most difficult, followed by the direct and indirect object pronouns. Interestingly, there was not quite the disparity between the subjunctive and the preterit/imperfect in the grammar complexity ranking as there was between these two in the open-ended question. However, due to the differing nature of these two questions, this may not be surprising. For a distribution of the grammar complexity ranking, see Figure 12.



*Figure 12. Grammar Complexity Ranking.*

This useful, yet non-critical finding validates what had been expressed repeatedly in the literature. This is the notion that not only is the subjunctive quite difficult, but that, at least for these instructors, it is considered the most difficult (Kornuc, 2003; Lubbers Quesada, 1998; Collentine, 1995; Terrell, Baycroft, & Perrone, 1987).

The data on the subjunctive from the open-ended question, as seen in Figure 11, was specifically compared to that of the grammar complexity ranking on grammar difficulty, as seen in Figure 12. Using indicator variables, there was a strong statistical

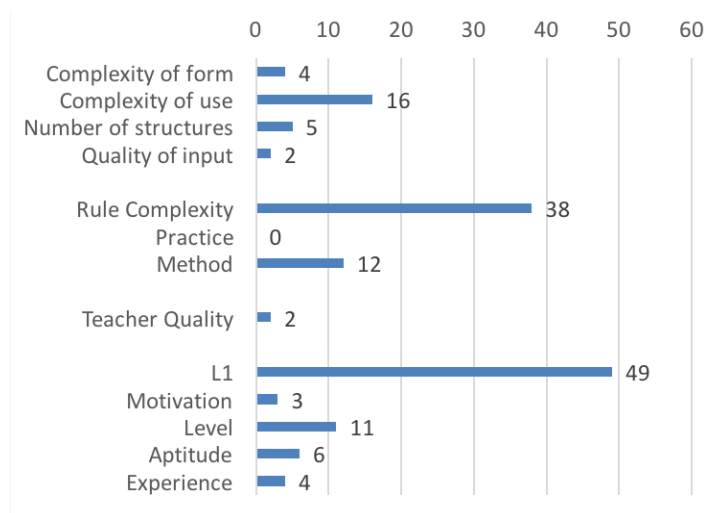
relationship:  $\chi^2 = 8.058$ ,  $p = .005$ , and  $df = 1$ . This supports the notion that the participants tested similarly when asked in both open-ended and closed-ended questions related to Spanish grammar. Next, correlations were calculated on the participants' responses on the subjunctive in these two questions. Curiously, there was only a moderate, yet statistically significant, correlation between these two:  $r = .352$  ( $p = .004$ ). This may be explained simply by the fact that these questions were asked in very different formats, and that correlations between them may prove tenuous.

For the grammar complexity ranking, a Spearman's rank order correlation matrix was produced, just as in Graus and Coppin (2015). Incidentally, there is some interesting correlations between the subjunctive and the conditional ( $r = .337$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and the future ( $r = .244$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Moreover, there is a robust correlation between the conditional and future ( $r = .643$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This indicates that there is some statistical agreement on the way in which the participants answered these questions on grammatical forms related to the irrealis.<sup>13</sup> Generally irrealis forms tend to have more statistical correlations with each other than they did with realis forms in this study. This may indicate that not only is irrealis difficult for Spanish learners, but that relationships between them possibly exist, in the context of their difficulty. Moreover, the imperfect subjunctive often coordinates with the conditional in hypothetical structures and conditionals can indicate an unrealized event in the future. Any further implications of these relationships are not yet evident. The entire correlational table of the Spearman ranking of Spanish grammar is in Appendix D.

## Sources of Difficulty

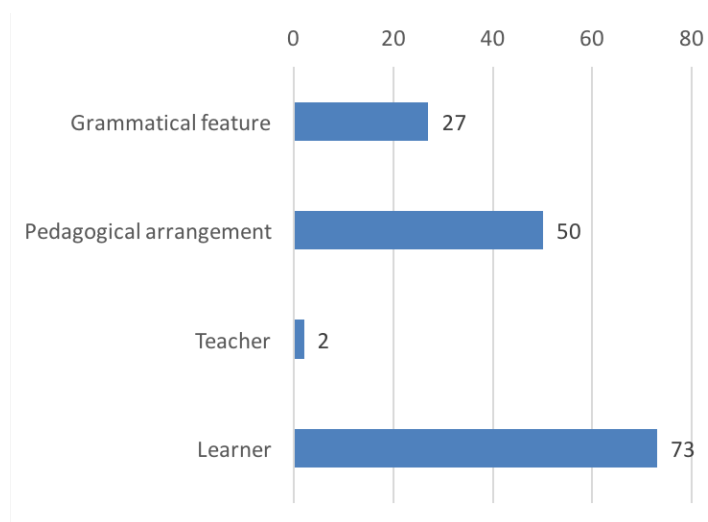
The participants provided qualitative data on the causes of difficulty of acquiring the subjunctive. Following the qualitative model in Graus and Coppen (2015), these responses were individually coded. As many participants provided more than one reason for the difficulty of the subjunctive, each was coded individually and weighted equally. Appendix E presents the entire distribution of the participants' responses. As seen in that distribution, the participants ranked the first language and its interference as the main source of difficulty by far. Far less, abstractness was considered the second largest source of difficulty. Notably, no participant responded that aptitude was a source of difficulty.

In simplifying this qualitative data, Graus and Coppen (2015) further collapse the sources of difficulty into fewer thematic categories in accordance to their extensive review of the literature. As seen in Figure 13, the participants' consideration of the first language as the single largest source of difficulty still dominates the participants responses. While the first language poses a large source of difficulty, the other categories that it is grouped with – motivation, level, aptitude, and experience – are notably fewer. Nevertheless, rule complexity, as a category, begins to emerge as a formidable source of difficulty, largely due to the consolidation of smaller categories in Appendix E. Lastly, there are few participants who considered quality of input and no participants who cited practice as sources of difficulty.



*Figure 13. Causes of Difficulty for the Subjunctive, Collapsed.*

Continuing with the qualitative model of Graus and Coppen (2015), these categories collapse even further, simply four larger categories – grammatical feature, pedagogical arrangement, teacher, and learner. Figure 14 shows the distribution of these four collapsed categories. While the category of learner does appear to emerge as the largest source of difficulty for learning the subjunctive, in reality, the interference of the first language comprise the majority of this category. This illustrates some of the limitations of this qualitative model. If the first language is the largest cause of difficulty for the learner, it may not belong with the other characteristics of the learner. The category of pedagogical arrangement is the second largest cause of difficulty, according to the participants, though the majority of that category was due to rule complexity. Grammar feature, which represents all of the inherent syntactic properties of the subjunctive, was surprisingly ranked third. Only two instructors in the survey considered that the teachers were the source of difficulty.



*Figure 14. Causes of Difficulty for the Subjunctive, Further Collapsed.*

Related to the difficulty caused by interference of the L1, one instructor remarked on the notion of transfer:

The primary cause is likely that it does not exist in current English in the same way it does in Spanish [...] but additionally because the way English syntax incorporates the dependent clauses in which Spanish subjunctive is found is radically different... so L2 Spanish learners would have to acquire new syntactic structures as well as acquire a mood distinction that does not exist in English.

This response reflects sentiments revealed in the literature, such that learners have to acquire new forms for achieving mood in a language (Montrul & Perpiñán, 2011).

Moreover, the novelty of the syntactic structure poses problems for learning the form (DeKeyser, 2005). Nevertheless, learners may be utilizing modals or non-finite verbs, which may be perfectly communicable. This is discussed in more detail later.

Another participant provided some descriptions as to the causes of difficulty, stating:

There are several factors. a) when the dependent clauses may take an Indicative Mood or a Subjunctive Mood according to what is expressed by the main clause; b) clauses that may introduce indicative or subjunctive to express a certain message, whether the outcome has been realized or is a pending (future) action; d. not understanding that Spanish may have several corresponding verb forms depending on [...] what needs to be expressed in the dependent clause. There is also a dialectal variation among Spanish speakers.

The participant indicated that contexts which produce options of using the indicative or subjunctive for nuanced meaning is supported by Gudmestad (2012). Moreover, the existence of dissimilarities of the subjunctive in different varieties of Spanish do complicate the instruction and acquisition of the subjunctive (Silva-Corvalán, 1994).

### **Approaches to Second Language Instruction**

The participants answered ten questions, five construct pairs designed to gauge which approaches they favored for teaching the Spanish subjunctive. A distribution diagram is provided for all five polar pairs in Figure 15. Each approach is represented by a box that provides a sort of heat map on how the participants responded as a whole. Each box includes up to four colored bars, which represent the distribution of response (strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, strongly agree). Importantly, the width of these bars is proportional to the percentage of the participants' answers to these questions. The boxes on the top of each construct pair is viewable in the form of a red-purple gradient, the meaning-driven approaches. The redder the box, the more meaning-driven the participants were on that approach as it relates to teaching the subjunctive. On the other hand, the more purple those boxes are, the more they disagreed with the



approach. Conversely, the form-driven responses are the boxes on the bottom of each pair and have the similar pattern, but within a blue-purple gradient. Similarly, the bluer those boxes are, the more they agreed with the approach as it relates to teaching the subjunctive, while more purple boxes indicated that the participants disagreed more with the approach. Purple was chosen as the color representing the strongly disagree for both sides of a construct pair. This relates to the fact that both approaches of a construct pair are viewed individually yet related. In essence, this diagram presents these construct pairs as in terms of their polarity and as a continuum.

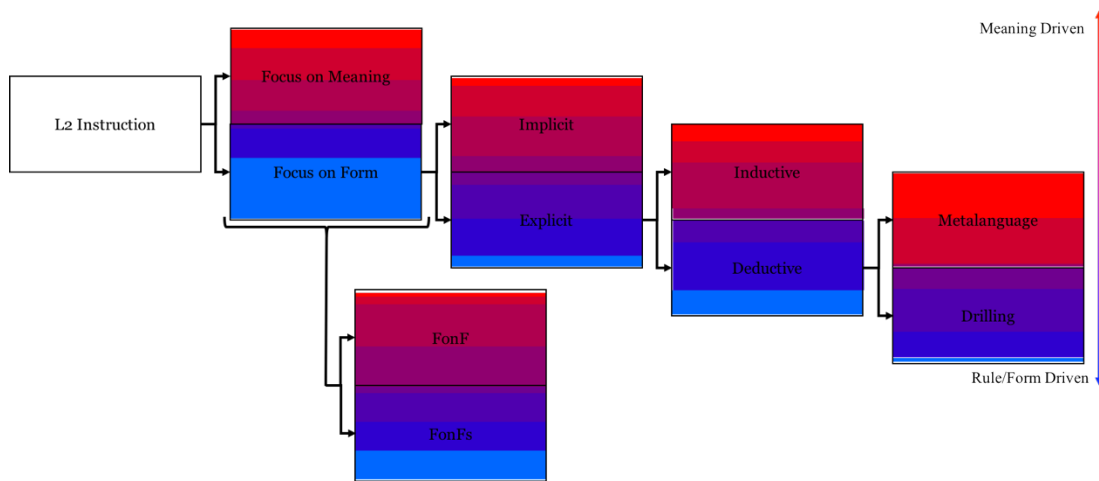


Figure 15. Form- and Meaning-Driven Orientation Heat Map.

From Figure 15, it is clear that there is considerable agreement that Focus on Form and Metalanguage are approaches with which the instructors tended to agree. However, there was considerable lesser certainty on their responses on implicit and explicit instruction, as well as inductive and deductive.

While the heat map is useful for examining the distribution of their responses, it was important to evaluate the pedagogical *orientation* of the participants. This orientation, or their inclination towards one end or another of the meaning- and form-

driven spectrum, was calculated for each construct pair. To accomplish this, aggregate average values of the participants form-driven approaches were subtracted from the aggregate average values of their meaning-driven approaches at each pair. This was used to gauge their orientation at each step of this taxonomy, see Figure 16. For each pair, a bar either extrudes into the meaning or form side, indicating the participants' aggregate preference for that approach. Again, the blue bar indicates preference for form-driven approaches and a red bar indicating meaning-driven approaches, as it relates to teaching the subjunctive. The bars are proportional to their aggregate orientation; such that the wider the bar, the more the participants' average was oriented towards that approach.

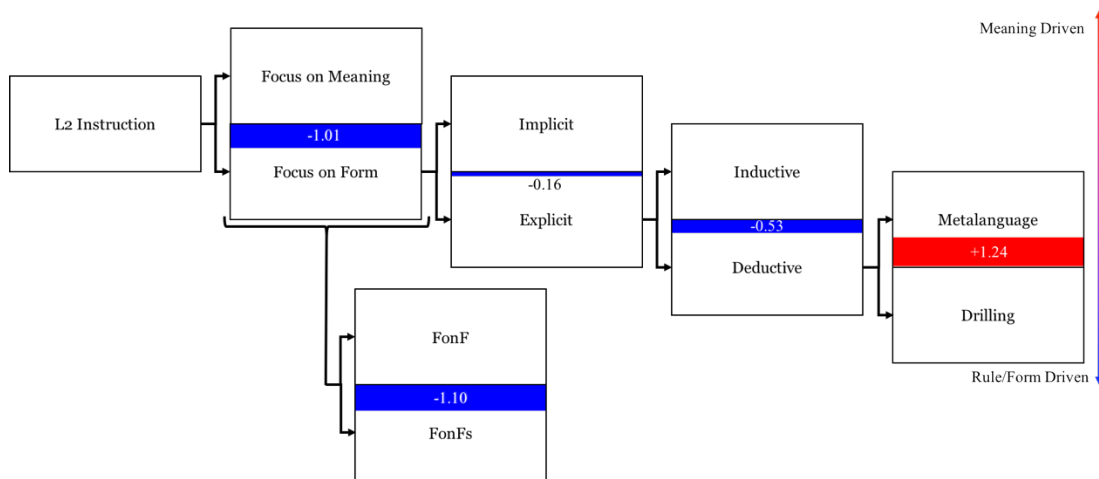


Figure 16. Form- vs. Meaning-Driven Orientation of Pedagogical Approaches.

Again, Focus on Form and Metalanguage both stand out as pedagogical approaches with which the participants strongly oriented. They also leaned heavily towards FonFs, the idea that the subjunctive should be taught regardless of the students' performance with the form. However, there was far less a consensus among the participants relating to implicit and explicit instruction. Moreover, there was also some disagreement related to inductive and deductive approaches, though those who felt that

deductive approaches were preferable slightly outweighed those who were more inclined towards inductive instruction. Notably, at every step, the participants tended to orient towards form-driven approaches, until they arrived at the construct pair of metalanguage vs. drilling. The instructors' distaste for drilling is formidable, but even more impressive is their preference for metalinguistic instruction, so much so that it featured the greatest agreement of all the questions.

An examination of the general meaning- and form-driven orientation was calculated for every participant. To achieve this, the combined average values of all of their meaning-driven responses of each construct pair was subtracted by the combined average values of all of their form-driven responses, producing a single value for each participant. The histogram in Figure 17 indicates the distribution of the participants; the further to the left (negative side), the more form-oriented the instructor was, whereas the instructors on the right (positive side) were more meaning-oriented.

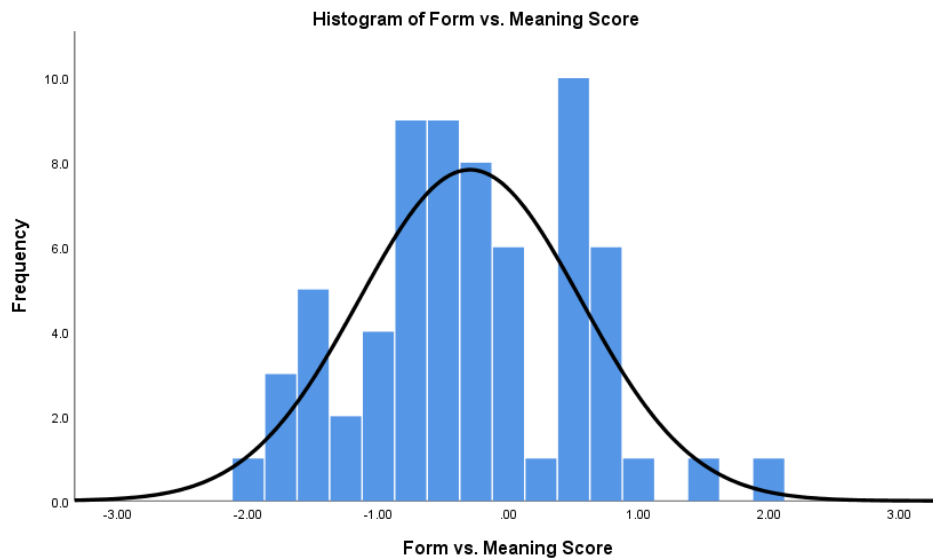


Figure 17. Histogram of Form vs. Meaning Orientation of the Instructors.

While the distribution is not terribly normal, it is possible to see some trends from the histogram. As a whole, the participants had a slightly negative average (average = -0.30, SD = 0.85) indicating a minor orientation towards form-driven pedagogical approaches as it relates to teaching the subjunctive. The histogram demonstrates a strong contingent of educators who believe in moderate form-driven instruction, as indicated with the clustering of instructors on the negative side. However, there is a smaller, yet noteworthy contingent of those who lean toward more meaning-driven instruction, as indicated by the small cluster on the positive side.

The participants responses for each of these approaches were correlated with one another, the same method employed by Andrews (2003), see Table 4. Each construct pair is compartmentalized using black lines. Moreover, each meaning-driven approach is in shaded horizontal rows while the form-driven rows are unshaded. Similarly, each meaning-driven approach is in vertical columns with a darker font and form-driven approaches are in lighter font.

There are a number of positive correlations between the form-driven approaches: FonFs and Focus on Form, FonFs and Deductive Instruction, Explicit Instruction and Drilling, Focus on Form and Deductive Instruction, Deductive Instruction and Drilling, Explicit Instruction and Deductive Instruction, and Focus on Form and Explicit Instruction. Interestingly, there is really only one strong correlation between two meaning-driven approaches: Implicit Instruction and Focus on Meaning. Some of these correlations of drilling seem to validate its placement in the expanded taxonomy. Interestingly, Metalanguage had essentially no correlation with anything on the table, positive or negative, and was the only approach that did not.

Table 3. Correlational Table for Meaning- and Form-Driven Approaches.

	Meaning	Form	FonF	FonFs	Implicit	Explicit	Inductive	Deductive	Metalang.	Drilling
Meaning	1									
Form	-.398**	1								
FonF	.053	-.290*	1							
FonFs	-.329**	.512**	-.344**	1						
Implicit	.303*	-.256*	.147	-.249*	1					
Explicit	-.327**	.295*	-.225	.306*	-.489**	1				
Inductive	.004	-.007	-.005	-.110	.123	-.102	1			
Deductive	-.134	.437**	-.258*	.504*	-.320**	.380**	-.317**	1		
Metalang.	.114	.026	.014	.019	-.196	.173	-.114	.127	1	
Drilling	-.109	.035	.034	.221	-.222	.483**	-.250*	.423**	.084	1

\*\*  $p < .01$       \*  $p < .05$

While some of these correlations are not exceedingly strong, some important patterns emerge. Most of the approaches within a single construct pair have small to moderate negative correlations with one another. Indeed, the only pair with no statistical correlation is metalanguage vs. drilling. Moreover, meaning-driven approaches tend to be positively correlated with other meaning-driven approaches and negatively correlated with form-driven approaches. A similar pattern is seen with the form-driven approaches being positively correlated with each other and negatively-correlated with meaning-driven approaches. Table 5 removes all of the numerical data and displays only the signs of the correlations with their statistical significance. Note the alternating positive and negative signs in the meaning- and form-driven columns, and likewise the meaning- and

form-driven rows. These alternating signs are seen throughout most of the table.

Moreover, any statistically significant correlation is always positively correlated with approaches from the same orientation and negatively correlated with the approaches from the opposite orientations. There is a balance between the statistically significant negative correlations (12) and positive correlations (9). As mentioned, only one meaning-driven approach has any positive statistically significant correlation with another, the remaining eight positive statistically significant correlations are all among form-driven approaches.

*Table 4. Correlational Tables for Meaning vs. Form-Driven Approaches (Signs).*

	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Form</b>	<b>FonF</b>	<b>FonFs</b>	<b>Implicit</b>	<b>Explicit</b>	<b>Inductive</b>	<b>Deductive</b>	<b>Metalang.</b>	<b>Drilling</b>
<b>Meaning</b>	+									
<b>Form</b>	-.**	+								
<b>FonF</b>	+	-.*	+							
<b>FonFs</b>	-.**	+.**	-.**	+						
<b>Implicit</b>	+.*	-.*	+	-.*	+					
<b>Explicit</b>	-.**	+.*	-	+.*	-.**	+				
<b>Inductive</b>	+	-	-	-	+	-	+			
<b>Deductive</b>	-	+.**	-.*	+.*	-.**	+.**	-.**	+		
<b>Metalang.</b>	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	
<b>Drilling</b>	-	+	+	+	-	+.**	-.*	+.**	+	+

\*\*  $p < .01$       \* $p < .05$

Because metalanguage emerged as such a unique feature, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted. Graus & Coppin (2016) performed a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA); however, they had a prebuilt statistical model before

commencing their study. From the EFA in this study, four principle factors emerged, which accounted for 67.25% of the data. The items with lower factor loadings were removed from analysis. Table 6 displays the component matrix for these four factors.

*Table 5. Exploratory Factor Analysis of Meaning- and Form-Driven Approaches.*

Approach	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Component 4
Meaning	<i>-.492</i>	.374	<b>.547</b>	.206
Form	<b>.640</b>	<i>-.471</i>	.085	.052
FonF	<i>-.406</i>	.390	<i>-.464</i>	<i>-.296</i>
FonFs	<b>.705</b>	<i>-.297</i>	.246	<i>-.105</i>
Implicit	<i>-.608</i>	<i>-.135</i>	.366	<i>-.312</i>
Explicit	<b>.717</b>	.189	<i>-.334</i>	.131
Inductive	<i>-.303</i>	<i>-.516</i>	<i>-.351</i>	.332
Deductive	<b>.742</b>	.162	.359	<i>-.146</i>
Metalanguage	.168	<b>.475</b>	.073	<b>.721</b>
Drilling	<b>.516</b>	<b>.540</b>	<i>-.134</i>	<i>-.338</i>

Note: factor loadings over .40 appear in bold, factor loadings over -.40 appear in italics

Component one is associated with the contrast between form-driven and meaning-driven approaches, characteristic of the alternating positive and negative signs.

Component two comprised some statistical refraction, a sort of inverse of relationships in component one. As a result, the values were compared and only significant changes from component one to component two were examined in this sense. Thus, some of the largest deviations between component one and two are FonFs, Explicit instruction, and Deductive instruction, as well as a negative association with Inductive instruction.

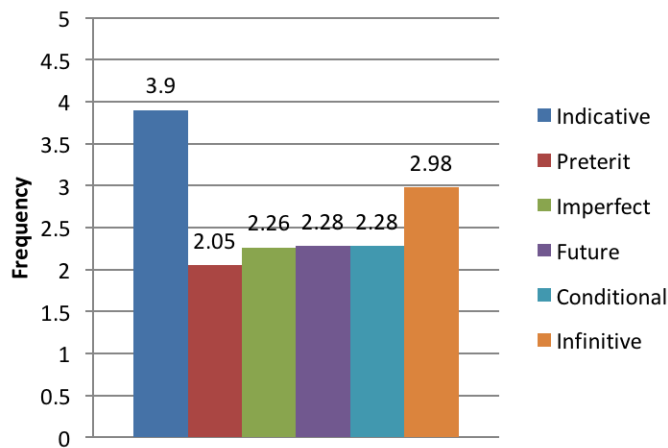
Therefore, this component largely represents the core of traditional grammar instruction. Component three represents a contrast between Focus on Meaning and FonF. Stated another way, this is the preference of a strict approach on meaning while at the same time rejecting any integration of form or grammar in that meaning. Component four is just metalanguage, a component that is in its own dimension and independent from the other approaches. This explains much of the lack of correlations with the other approaches. Metalanguage is not accounted for well until the fourth factor, which is strong with metalanguage and nothing else. While some of this EFA data aligns with that of the CFA data in Graus and Coppen (2016), their data features much stronger relationship.

### **Overextension of Tense, Moods, and Aspects**

The participants were asked which Spanish tenses, moods, and aspects are often overextended for the subjunctive. Figure 18 shows a distribution of their answers. The instructors agreed that the indicative was overextended often for the subjunctive. Interestingly, the participants agreed that the infinitive is sometimes overextended. Gudmestad (2012) also finds that learners used verb forms that were nonfinite, but because of the nature of the research question, Gudmestad grouped those cases in with the indicative. The infinite may have the appearance of an irrealis form, and thus students select it when searching for a mood that exists outside of reality. In the present study, the instructors agreed that occasionally the preterit, imperfect, future, and conditional are overextended. Most likely, learners who overextend the preterit and imperfect would likely do so in place of the imperfect subjunctive as opposed to the present subjunctive, as the time reference would be situated in the past just as the indicative might often replace the present subjunctive with the time reference being in the present. The



overextension of the future is an interesting case. Unlike Portuguese, the Spanish subjunctive does not have a future subjunctive form, so the typical grammatical time references for the subjunctive are present and past, though certainly future irrealis is communicated with the subjunctive. Nevertheless, the intricate nature of forming future irrealis may elude Spanish learners, thus, they select future tense as future often fits that unknown and uncertain concept in their minds. Lastly, the fact that conditional is overextended for the subjunctive may be entirely grammatical. Indeed, Mexican varieties of Spanish often employ conditionals in both clauses of a hypothetical. Therefore, if learners are acquiring a Mexican dialect of Spanish as a second language, they may be acquiring the double conditional hypothetical phrase structure as well. Overall, the results of this indicate that the learners often conflate tense, mood, and aspect in their interlanguage in addition to realis and irrealis.



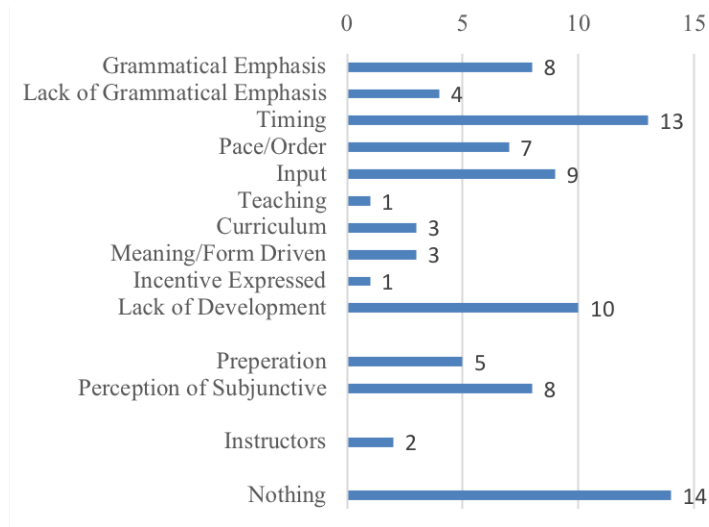
*Figure 18. Overextend Verb Tenses, Moods, and Aspects for the Subjunctive.*

### **Problems with Teaching the Subjunctive**

The participants were asked to identify the problem, if any existed, of teaching the subjunctive in their program. Similar to Graus and Coppen (2015) and their qualitative

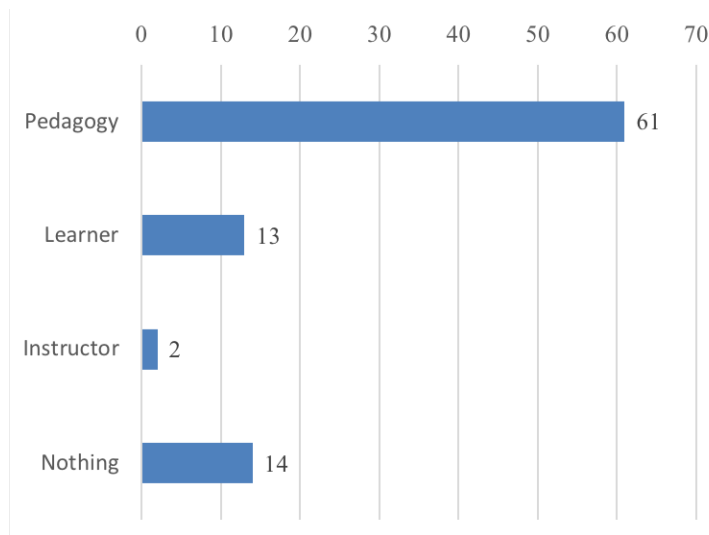
model for sources of difficulty, these responses were coded, though retooled for this different fundamental type of question. Appendix F shows the distribution of all of the responses. Curiously, a plurality of responses indicated that there was nothing wrong with the way the subjunctive was taught in their program, despite the fact that they find the form so difficult for learners to acquire. When the participants did indicate that there was a problem with the way the subjunctive is taught, a lack of development was cited as a common problem, meaning that subjunctive instruction is not developed sufficiently for the instructors' students. The participants also considered a lack of timing as another major concern.

Just like for causes of difficulty, these categories were collapsed further down in Figure 19. When these categories combine, timing emerges even more pronounced. Some interesting disagreements emerge among the participants in this regard. Some believed that the subjunctive is emphasized too much (8), whereas others feel that it is not emphasized enough (4). Returning to the uncollapsed version, Appendix F similarly shows that some felt that the subjunctive was taught too early (2) while others felt that it was taught too late (4). It is difficult to know whether that applies to subjunctive teaching in general, as they were asking specifically as it relates to the teaching within their program. Nevertheless, there appears to be some debate as to when it is most appropriate to teach the subjunctive.



*Figure 19. Problems of Teaching the Subjunctive, Collapsed.*

These items were even further collapsed down, see Figure 20. At this stage, pedagogy emerged as the largest problem of teaching the subjunctive. A noticeable disparity between problems of pedagogy and the learner is clearly visible. Interestingly enough, just two participants deemed instructors were the problem.



*Figure 20. Problems of Teaching the Subjunctive, Further Collapsed.*

## Subjunctive Lessons

The participants provided example subjunctive lessons they have taught in the past. Many of their preferred pedagogical approaches were manifested in their lessons, yet a number of instructors combined several approaches. These lessons were coded for elements from each approach, as seen in Table 7.<sup>14</sup> At the onset, it appears that lessons do not follow a similar pattern as their responses to their pedagogical approaches and orientations. However, the question asked which activities were involved, which may be more meaning-oriented by definition. Consequently, participants may have been inclined to discuss a lesson that was more interactive than a traditional grammar-driven plan.

*Table 6. Approaches in Sample Lesson Plans.*

Meaning 42	Implicit 18	Inductive 11	Metalinguage 6
Form 21	Explicit 25	Deductive 6	Drilling 9

### **Meaning and Communicative Lessons**

Meaning and communication-based lessons were the most common. One reoccurring technique was to build a lesson around a student-centered activity, such as giving and asking for advice, requests, and recommendations. One such recommendation was adapted to a scenario with which the students would be familiar: “I also have them write personal ads describing their ideal partner (for adjective clauses).” Looking for a significant other was a common lesson plan among the participants, with one participant describing “a personal ad for the perfect mate - Busco [un] hombre que...”<sup>15</sup> Certainly dating would be a common denominator shared by many of the students. It would be an appropriate way of using the subjunctive, in that the significant other may or may not be actually real (since they have not yet met them). In addition to searching for ideal

partners, they also included looking for homes, jobs, and clothes, such as the following lesson: “Pretend to be in a store: Busco una camisa que sea lave y listo. Quiero un pantalon que tenga bolsillos, etc.”<sup>16</sup> Shopping was a suitable lesson plan because what they will ultimately buy can be imagined in their mind but is not yet tangible in their reality. An ideal job follows a similar pattern; it’s ideal because they have not yet attained it, and it may not be something they ever attain.

Similarly, to recommendations, they included prompts like “explaining what our parents want us to do while away at college.” With volition a canonical subjunctive trigger, this type of prompt would be designed to involve the maximum number of students possible by incorporating aspects shared by many students. Another similar lesson had such themes:

[...] I would focus more on input activities [...] ask them to respond to personal questions presented to them, and have questions that require subjunctive, such as “Do your parents want you to study a lot?” “Do your parents let you stay up late?” “Are your parents excited that [you’re] at college?” etc... I would follow with similar types of activities, trying to keep language practice interactive... I would progress to a semi-output type activity, such as me showing a list of things I might do routinely in my life and having them say if they believe or do not believe I do those things... this could be followed by having students say they do things, some of which are true and some of which are not, and have other students say if they believe [them] or not.

Doubt, as well, is a common trigger for the subjunctive, and so eliciting contexts which the students would express doubt would serve as quality practice for this semantic

domain. It was common to see lesson plans that include quotidian experiences to which the students could relate and employ the subjunctive.

These activities, being communicative by nature, were highly interactive. Some of them included humor or what was referred to as “silly sentences.” Likewise, games were listed as ways of teaching the subjunctive, including a Spanish version of Simon Says (Simon Dice). Another instructor described an elaborate language game called “subjunctive soccer” in which students were placed on opposing teams and could only score if they used the form correctly. When they used it incorrectly, they would turn the ball over to the other side and the team who scored the most points, or in other words, those who used the subjunctive the most accurately, won.

Several instructors referred to metalinguistic approaches. They would work on explaining the rationale behind the subjunctive and how it is used more conceptually. One instructor was very forward in their description of this approach, saying “This is a university and I expect students to acquire a metalinguistic awareness and not merely ‘what sounds right’ in Spanish.”

### **Rule- and Form-Driven Lessons**

Contrarily, there were a host of instructors who preferred more rule- and form-driven lessons. Some of these lesson plans were strongly explicit and deductive in nature. One listed simply “grammar explanation, modeling, oral drills” and yet another described their lesson in just only one word: “drills.” In this thread, some instructors described lessons where they taught formula or triggers of the subjunctive:

I also focus on presenting the general formula of present indicative + que + subjunctive and explain that the subject of the first verb is requesting something

of the subject of the second verb (so a different subject and different verb tense and form).

The participants often cited this clausal environment that is found in many subjunctive contexts. A few others that included clausal structure employed some common triggers: “We paired certain verbs (*quiero que, necesito, me gusta*)<sup>17</sup> with a subordinate clause.” Another tool referenced by some of the instructors is WEIRDO, which is an acronym that references wishes, emotions, impersonal, expressions, recommendations, doubt or denial, and *ojalá*. In addition to drills, many instructors referenced practices which included open ended responses, fill-in-the-blank, and cloze tests.

A number of instructors included both form- and meaning-driven approaches in their lessons. One lesson provided was largely form-driven but would include some meaning-driven elements: “initially we just learn the conjugations, and we do mechanical activities. Then we apply the rules and do communicative activities.” Another instructor included a communicative technique within a drilling task: “As exercise I make a chain of students, one starts one sentence: *Quiero que tú...*<sup>18</sup> and the next one has to end it.” In these cases, some instructors discussed whether they taught the rules or the meaning first. An interesting side note, there was some disagreement as to whether it is better to start with the present or imperfect subjunctive, as the imperfect subjunctive had a form that was more recognizable (such as a hypothetical) but was also more complex syntactically.

### **Subject Related Lessons**

Since the instructors taught from a panorama of Spanish subjects, their lessons often reflected their areas of research. Some instructors, who were more literature-

oriented, taught the subjunctive using poems, music, and short stories. On the other hand, some composition-leaning activities included writing “Dear Abby” letters as well as correspondence to people in positions of authority: “I have the students write recommendations to the President of our College for how to improve student life.” Another instructor would have them write wish lists. Some of the activities were more culturally appropriate or authentic. One instructor discussed using telenovelas for teaching the subjunctive: “In class we then watched a comic extract from a soap opera and talked about what would have happened if [...] would have happened.” Another instructor mentioned using a specific song in Latin America “because it is an authentic text that is culturally appropriate and because there are great examples of the subjunctive.”

Five different instructors from religious institutions discussed using their faith to teach the subjunctive. The instructors cited Biblical verses such as Hebrews 11:1 and Psalm 51 as examples, as was a song with religious undertones by a famous Latin American artist. Regarding Psalm 51, the participant explained: “It’s an attempt to take something they know (the story of David from the Bible) and apply the grammar that we’re learning to that familiar story.” With commands being a domain of the subjunctive, two instructors examined the ten commandments and had the students write commandments of their own for attending college. Lastly, one participant utilized a principle that fit more readily for a concept of irrealis, that of faith:<sup>19</sup>

I teach in a Christian College, so I apply the Hebrews 11:1 principle. ‘Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen’. I use this to explain how if we have faith that something is, then it indicates (indicative) what



is, was or will be. If there is doubt, lack of faith, then the subjunctive is used. We then go over different sentence examples and decide if the speaker is showing faith (Yo creo que, Estoy seguro de que, Es cierto que, Es verdad que...)<sup>20</sup> or if they are showing doubt (Dudo que, No creo que, No es verdad que, Es posible que, Es probable que...)<sup>21</sup>

Many instructors were inclined to teach the subjunctive in a form that fit their field of research as well as the nature of their institution.

### Competence vs. Performance

The participants answered questions as it related to their students' competence and performance of both the present and imperfect subjunctive. Figure 21 displays the results. The participants agreed that their students understand the subjunctive, but when asked whether their students used it correctly, they were more neutral. The same questions were asked about the imperfect subjunctive, with participants being largely neutral about their student's understanding, but generally disagreed with the statement that their students used it correctly.

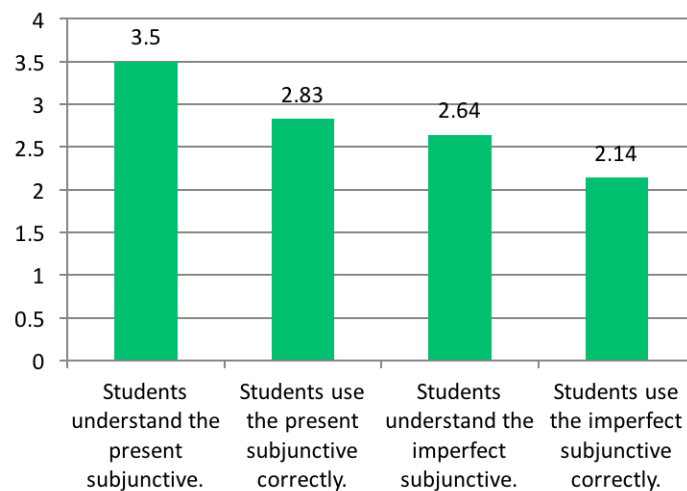


Figure 21. Competence vs. Performance of Present and Imperfect Subjunctive.

There was moderate to strong correlation with strong significance values among these relationships as seen in Table 8, except between present subjunctive competence and imperfect subjunctive performance which was somewhat curious.

*Table 7. Correlational Table between Competence and Performance.*

	Competence <sub>pres</sub>	Performance <sub>pres</sub>	Competence <sub>impf</sub>	Performance <sub>impf</sub>
Competence <sub>pres</sub>	1			
Performance <sub>pres</sub>	.583**	1		
Competence <sub>impf</sub>	.580**	.393**	1	
Performance <sub>impf</sub>	.204	.631**	.544**	1

P < .001

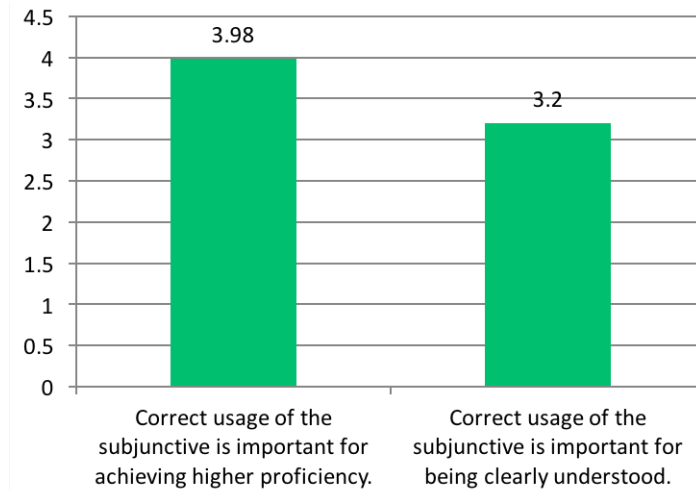
One of the participants remarked on this very disparity when they were discussing the causes of difficulty. They stated:

I have found that students know the forms of subjunctive, can recognize them and do well on the tests, but when it comes to remembering to use subjunctive correctly in essay writing and speaking, they often use indicative.

This demonstrates the disconnect between competence and performance among learners of the Spanish subjunctive.

### **Proficiency vs. Comprehensibility**

Next, the participants answered some questions on their students correct usage as it relates to proficiency and comprehensibility. First, they were asked whether correct usage was important for attaining higher proficiency, with which they tended to agree. However, when asked if it was important for being clearly understood, they were more neutral about that. The results are shown in Figure 22.



*Figure 22. Proficiency vs. Comprehensibility of Using the Subjunctive.*

There was moderate correlation between these two items ( $r = .445, p < .001$ ). This indicates that while the importance of using the subjunctive is more important for achieving a higher level of proficiency, it is not as important for being clearly understood. Achieving this higher proficiency may relate to the more prescriptive aspects of grammar, whereas the comprehensibility possibly relates to more descriptive properties of language. One of the participants remarked on this when discussing example subjunctive lessons:

I show student that while memorizing rules may work, it isn't always easy to recall WEIRDO or any other such mnemonic tricks. [...] It is in many instances dependent on the speaker. I also tell my students that **failure to use the subjunctive will not bring about the fall of civilization. If you are being understood, that is key.** (Emphasis added).

For this instructor, the subjunctive, while part of the curriculum, is not critical for communication, a sentiment echoed by other participants.

### **Additional Questions**

The participants were asked a few other questions related to the subjunctive, which will be touched on briefly, including the impact study abroad has on the subjunctive, the usefulness of corrective feedback on learning the subjunctive, the effectiveness of communicative activities, the avoidance of the subjunctive, and the relevance and importance of the subjunctive.

As to whether students with study abroad experience performed better with the subjunctive, the participants tended to agree (3.98). Gudmestad (2012) finds that the ultra-high performing learners at advanced levels who had taught and had experience abroad used subjunctive at a level that greatly mirrored that of native speakers. Similarly, Isabelli (2007), when studying the influence that study abroad has on the acquisition of the subjunctive, measured a dramatic improvement in her participants' use of the subjunctive with those who had study abroad experience over those who had only studied in the classroom, and especially so after explicit instruction. A similar number of instructors regarded corrective feedback as useful (3.91).

Regarding communicative activities, the vast majority of instructors believe that they were helpful (4.35). This indicates that even though the instructors in the present study tended to be form-oriented, they also valued communicative activities, which is consistent with Cordero Badilla and Chacón (2013) and Salomone (1998). Curiously, there was no statistically significant correlation between their answer to this question and the question on Focus on Meaning.<sup>22</sup> Related to the notion of whether students tend to craft sentences in order to avoid using the subjunctive, the participants tended to be more neutral.

Finally, the participants were asked whether the subjunctive is a relevant and important element in Spanish courses. They responded fairly strongly in the affirmative (4.36). When correlating this question with the questions on pedagogical approaches (see Table 9), there were moderate positive correlations with some of the form-driven approaches, particularly Form and FonFs. Again, the alternating of signs is indicative that this question has more of a positive relationship with form-driven instruction.

*Table 8. Relevance and Importance of the Subjunctive.*

	Meaning	Form	FonF	FonFs	Implicit	Explicit	Inductive	Deductive	Metalang.	Drilling
Rel./Import.	-.226	.432**	-.034	.423**	-.149	.156	-.003	.122	.149	.193

\*\*p < .001

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

This section will discuss the implications of the results and its relationship to the literature, specifically as it applies to the sources of difficulty, approaches to second language instruction, competence and performance, and proficiency and comprehensibility.

#### **Sources of Difficulty**

A key finding related to how the respondents overwhelmingly considered the interference of the first language, or the first language itself, as the greatest source of difficulty in acquiring the subjunctive. The results of Graus and Coppen's (2015) pilot study, which was investigating both Dutch learners and instructors of English, show that 61.2% of the participants attributed the cause of grammatical difficulty to the first language. It is quite possible that the first language would pose the greatest difficulty for learning any language, a universal source of difficulty. The frustration with that response is that it is a universal issue; everyone has a first language (or multiple first languages), an argument that feels a bit circular.

Nevertheless, this is consistent with some very influential theory in the literature. The divergence of the first and second language was a source of difficulty that Lado (1957) identifies in acquiring the latter (Lado, 1957). This leads to an interesting debate, that is English does in fact have a subjunctive. However, the English subjunctive has nowhere near the scope and complexity that it does in Spanish and is all but disappeared from the syntax. Still, there is some kind of native language context, albeit limited, for English learners of Spanish to acquire the subjunctive. The question is, how does a

learner access this structure better in their own language. Many of the participants in this study remarked on this very notion.

Instead, learners of Spanish may be overextending other parts of their English syntax in order to communicate irrealis. Within the context of generative grammar, White (1991) provides an explanation that “L2 learners use L1 settings of UG parameters as an interim theory about the L2” (137). Put another way, the first language serves as a source of interference of the second language because the former is serving as a structural framework for the latter. In a sense, the students may be utilizing the constraints and rules in their first language grammar and applying them to a Spanish lexicon, up until they learn a rule that overrides such an interim rule in their interlanguage. The fundamental problem, however, is that the modals in English that encode subjunctive-like meanings (could, would, should, might, etc.) do not have equivalent candidates in Spanish. So, learners creatively access other options, such as conditional, which is irrealis, or the infinitive, which is considered neither realis nor irrealis.

Returning to Graus and Coppin (2015), in addition to their participants citing the difficulty of the first language, also considered that a large number of exceptions and a general lack of motivation were other key sources of difficulty. These last two were not major causes of difficulty per the respondents in the present study. Perhaps this is not surprising. The subjunctive does not contain a large number of exceptions, and most of the irregular forms are the most salient uses, something that ironically makes the form less difficult (Lubbers Quesada, 1998). Additionally, in Graus and Coppin (2015), postgraduate instructors considered the thematic category of pedagogical arrangement, as

a group, the largest source of difficulty. In the present study, however, this is the second largest category, after learner.

Notwithstanding, the respondents in the present study considered abstractness of the form to be the second highest individual cause of difficulty. The unrealistic nature of the subjunctive would certainly support this claim. If it is necessary to ground a grammatical form into some concrete context in order to effectively acquire it, that will always be likely with a form like the subjunctive. Juxtaposing this finding with those of Terrell, Baycroft, and Perrone (1987), they considered difficulty of form, abstract meaning, and the lack of benefit all contributed to what they constituted as an absence of incentive on the part of the learner in acquiring the subjunctive. While the participants in the present study did consider abstractness a major cause of difficulty, only two participants cited motivation. For these participants, this link was not there, at least the way that question was asked. DeKeyser (2005), in more generally theoretical terms, also discusses the relationship between abstractness and difficulty. Moreover, DeKeyser cites the novelty of the form as a major contributor to the difficulty of acquiring the form. As an American learner of Spanish does not have an adequate framework into which they can easily fit the subjunctive, and thus the subjunctive is a novel form to them.

As it relates to instructors, in both Graus and Coppen (2015) and the present study, educators themselves did not consider that instructors in general were the issue. Graus and Coppen speculated as to the reason this may be, attributing it perhaps to improving confidence or avoiding self-criticism through the process of criticizing instructors as a whole. Instead, for their study, as the students and learners grew in experience, the critical view towards other instructors decreased and was replaced with a



growing critical view toward pedagogical arrangement. As the present study only examines instructors, the participants were highly critical of pedagogical arrangement and hardly critical of instructors. This is no coincidence, as Graus and Coppen posit that these items interact and are mutually influential, such that early learners tend to view the instructor as more of a source of difficulty, but over time, that becomes less the case and they begin to attribute pedagogical arrangement to the problem.

### **Approaches to Second Language Instruction**

When examining the meaning- and form-driven approach dichotomy, the correlational data seems to support the taxonomy presented in this study. The correlations and alternating of signs are largely consistent with Graus and Coppen (2016) and Andrews (2003), who experienced similar characteristics in their data. These features illustrate the polarity of these items and the positive correlations among approaches that are either meaning- or form-oriented. In general, for teaching the subjunctive, the participants in the present study favored form-driven instruction that focused on forms and valued a metalinguistic approach. They did not, however, show any particular inclination towards implicit or explicit instruction, neither inductive nor deductive approaches.

Regarding these orientations, Andrews (2003) finds that the teachers preferred deductive instruction that was form-focused, and mechanical. Important differences can account for the differences in his findings and those in the present study. Andrews was examining general grammar instruction in an EFL setting, very different than the targeted foreign language Spanish instruction of the subjunctive. More importantly, general inclinations are not indicative of the whole group. Graus and Coppen (2017) find a divide

among their participants, with the majority being more form-oriented and rejecting FonF, with an exception of a small group dedicated more to meaning-driven instruction. This minority group also appeared in the present study as well, indicating that instructors are far from united regarding the instruction of the subjunctive. In general, two schools of thought did emerge, the larger group that was form-driven and the smaller group that was meaning-driven. This latter group likely characterizes the postgraduate instructors in Graus and Coppen (2016). Those participants were more meaning-oriented, preferring implicit and inductive instruction that is consistent with FonF. Interestingly, when the learner level was factored in, a preference materialized even among these instructors for a more form-focused pedagogical approach that values FonFs. Moreover, the authors find that with easier grammatical forms, respondents favored implicit and inductive instruction whereas for difficult structures, the opposite was preferred, explicit and deductive approaches, a similar finding to Spada and Tomita (2010), De Graaff (1997), and Housen, Pierrard, and van Daele (2005). Returning back to the present study, it seems that the participants preferred more form-oriented approaches when teaching the subjunctive, an already established difficult structure. Yet for these participants, there was an ever so slight inclination towards explicit and deductive approaches, though it was largely split evenly down the middle, with the participants appearing to be conflicted on both approaches. It is possible that more so than the relative level of easiness or difficulty, different forms may require varying approaches, such that this variable proves less meaningful.

### **Form vs. Meaning**

The participants in the present study favored form-focused instruction for teaching the subjunctive. This is consistent with the results in Graus and Coppen (2017), which indicate that “explicit, systematic, and isolated grammar instruction a necessary condition for accuracy and competence in speech communication” (655). When examining the subjunctive, Correa (2011) comes to a similar conclusion on the effectiveness of form-focused instruction. Grammar instruction was important to just about all of Correa’s participants. Even still, they also believed that grammar was not the ultimate goal but merely a “means to an end” (656) in order to achieve deeper acquisition and encourage communication. This view was echoed by some of the participants’ responses in the present study as well. While the subjunctive is an important component of grammar instruction for these participants, it is unlikely that many would consider it among the most important forms to learn in Spanish. Its difficulty gives the subjunctive its notoriety, not its essential place in the second language grammar.

This segues into the emphasis that the subjunctive has in the classroom. Interestingly, an apparent disagreement over the emphasis, or lack of emphasis, of the subjunctive in instruction emerged and there were strong feelings on both sides of the issue. At least one other researcher has discussed this sentiment. Salomone (1998) reported in their study on international teaching assistants that many felt there was too much grammar in class design. Moreover, Salomone’s instructors even exhibited difficulty knowing how to incorporate it into a communication-based class. The implications of such beliefs on emphasis of the subjunctive are numerous, including

possibilities of students adopting some of these sentiments, or receiving widely varying instruction of the form.

### **Implicit vs. Explicit**

A finding that appears to challenge some of the literature is the ways in which the participants in the present study considered implicit and explicit instruction essentially a wash, employing both approaches in teaching the subjunctive. Other researchers have advocated for a mixed approach as well. Cordero Badilla and Pizarro Chacón (2013) argue that communicative and explicit teaching strategies can be combined in a way that does not impede learning the rules of the language. They further believe that this will make classroom more interactive and engaging for students that may in turn inspire longer lasting language learning. For many of the participants in the present study, they had no issue combining both approaches in teaching the subjunctive. In fact, multiple approaches seemed to aid in the instruction of the subjunctive. Yet, there were other participants that were fairly committed to their pedagogical approaches and seemingly rejected other methods.

Crucially, this may be completely dependent on student level. As the present study did not narrow the scope of the questions to the specific student level and instead asks about subjunctive instruction in general, it is possible that instructors would have responded differently. Indeed, there may be different stages of subjunctive acquisition. VanPatten (1993) proposes a structure input scheme, which transitions from the mechanical stage to the meaningful stage, and then to the communicative stage. As that relates to the subjunctive, this could mean more drilling, and then more instruction based in context, followed by communicating with the form in natural speech. The drilling may

assist with the rote memorization of the morphology while the context provides a semantic and pragmatic environment for use of the subjunctive. Lastly communication can instill the subjunctive into everyday conversation, something that was lacking among the participants' students in the present study. Related to the relationship between form and meaning, Gudmestad (2012) finds that lower levels start out with no interface, but as learners acquire some of the semantic domains associated with the subjunctive, these connections became more solid. Later, as they gain higher proficiency, they begin to make these connections at the discourse level. Thus, it is possible that over the years, increased exposure and further Spanish learning results in more profound acquisition of the subjunctive.

### **Metalanguage vs. Drilling**

The inclusion of metalanguage and drilling was a deviation from Graus and Coppen's work (2016, 2017). For drilling, the significant correlations between this approach and the other form-driven approaches at least seem to validate its placement in the taxonomy. However, metalanguage had absolutely no correlation with anything, yet was the single most preferred approach for the participants. Contrary to this finding, Andrews (2003) finds positive correlations between metalanguage and everything else, for the sole exception of inductive approaches. There are two different implications of this finding in the present study. First, because of the sheer number of instructors who favored this approach, the idea of considering metalanguage is important in the discussion of pedagogical approaches as a whole. Second, the exact placement of metalanguage in the taxonomy presented in this study is debatable. One possibility for its independence could be as simple as the language employed in the survey question, as

Graus and Coppen (2016) did not measure this variable and as such, had no tested language for the present study to adopt. Regardless of the implication, Andrews (2003) provides a possible answer in his research, suggesting that “belief in the use of grammatical terminology in the classroom is not tied to one approach to grammar pedagogy” (357). This is most likely the best explanation for the seeming isolation of metalanguage. In fact, it may be that metalanguage interfaces with every stage of second language instruction and yet no specific approach in particular. Nevertheless, due to its strong favorability among the participants, there is no doubt that more research must be conducted to explore the connection that metalanguage has with other pedagogical approaches.

This overwhelming preference for metalanguage approaches on the part of the participants is consistent with Correa (2011) and Montrul and Perpiñán (2011). Moreover, in Scheffler (2011), the instructors in their study could predict such successes or failures based on the metalinguistic information of the forms and its use, information, which Scheffler argues, has meaning for learners. Relating back to the concept of difficulty, R. Ellis (2006b) theorizes that complexity relates to how long it takes to formulate the rule. For the participants in the present study, the subjunctive may require considerable explanation, but the instructors may also feel that such explanation is worthwhile. As it relates to the interface between explicit and implicit knowledge discussed previously, Correa (2011) finds that metalanguage may act as a bridge between these two, and make transfer more automatic (DeKeyser, 2007).

Generally, metalanguage instruction may be helpful in describing all of the complicated semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic dimensions to the subjunctive. Moreover,

as there is some grammatical optional variation of the subjunctive in certain circumstances, discussing the metalinguistic characteristics and rationales may be helpful to second language learners. Indeed, some principles of the subjunctive may be learnable only through thorough explanation and verbalization of the rule and rationale.

### **Competence vs. Performance**

The participants found that while students enjoy a relatively higher level of competence, their performance in the present subjunctive is less, and far less for the imperfect subjunctive. This finding harkens to the notion that Terrell, Baycroft, and Perrone (1987) maintain in that second language learners tend to “learn” the form instead of “acquire” the subjunctive (27). This has implications that even if the students do not produce the form in their speech, they may still understand it. Indeed, they may be learning it in class and understanding its use, but when they need to produce in conversation, the form is not materializing. In other words, the students can recognize it but simply have trouble consistently utilizing it in contexts where it is required. Finding a way to bridge the gap between competence and performance may indeed improve their use of the subjunctive.

### **Proficiency vs. Comprehensibility**

While the participants generally believed that the subjunctive was necessary for higher levels of proficiency, they were less inclined to believe that it was necessary for being clearly understood. Again, returning to Terrell, Baycroft, and Perrone (1987), the authors demonstrate that native speakers do not tend to misinterpret the speech of second language learners who use the subjunctive incorrectly. Moreover, they deem their sentences as acceptable. Their native speakers misunderstood no more than 30 percent of

the learners' verb forms, even as the learners widely used the subjunctive incorrectly. This finding is also complemented by those of Lee (1987), who shows that in addition to not being required for clarity of speech, learners themselves may actually be able to intuit meaning without knowing the subjunctive. The implications to this cannot be understated. If native speakers can understand the speech of learners even if they are not using the subjunctive correctly, and the learners know that they are being understood, then perhaps there really is little benefit to acquiring the form (Terrell, Baycroft, & Perrone, 1987). Indeed, if the goal of language learning is to communicate in a comprehensible fashion, grammatical accuracy be damned, then learning the subjunctive would be auxiliary to that goal. The most efficient pathway to learning Spanish and achieving fluency may not be through the subjunctive after all.

The findings of this research have some important implications for the literature. First, it shows that the subjunctive is incredibly difficult, likely the most difficult form in Spanish to acquire. Moreover, the largest source of difficulty is the interference of the first language, a cause which by definition is difficult to surmount. For teaching the subjunctive, instructors tend to prefer rule-driven instruction that is form-focused, values FonFs, and incorporates metalanguage approaches. However, there is a sizable minority of those who tend to prefer meaning-driven instruction. Learners may have more competence in the form, but their performance may lack. Accurate usage, while perhaps being necessary for being considered proficient, is not as critical for being clearly understood.



## **Limitations, Weaknesses, and Suggestions for Future Research**

There are a number of limitations and weaknesses in this study. First, questionnaires have of course the inherent limitations of attempting to measure intangibles such as beliefs. This would not pose any unique limitations to this survey that it does not pose to others. One method of mitigating this risk is to find multiple approaches to the same question, which was a concept implemented several times in the study.

Similar to that is the ever-present limitation with a survey are the limitations of its very own language in the question and the level of precision in arriving at the concepts under investigation (Borg, 2006). These questions, nevertheless, are based on the robust instrument by Graus and Coppen (2015; 2016), which would certainly help mitigate this risk.

Moreover, instructors' views are just one measure and they may not be indicative a much more than that. Indeed, there may be a disconnect between what instructors think and their actual practices (Borg, 2006). An area of future research would include triangulating this data on the subjunctive with that of learners. This could provide meaningful insights into convergence and divergence of views between the students and their instructors. Additionally, a study on the subjunctive that would combine classroom observation with survey data would also help illuminate any potential disconnects between practice and beliefs. Importantly, further research on this area should take into account the learners' level. A possible way of doing this would be to treat some of these questions individually, asking the instructors, for example, about beginning, intermediate, and advanced students' performance with the subjunctive. Similarly, instructors from

various subfields of Spanish were potential participants in the study, including literature, culture, linguistics, composition, etc. Some of these instructors, being researchers in these fields, may not be teaching language courses. Thus, their responses may not be as indicative of current trends as those instructors who exclusively teach the language. Future research would account for these types of instructors.

Moreover, future research could utilize this information for instructor training. An interesting disparity emerged among the instructors that the first language was largely responsible for the difficulty of the subjunctive, even though there is a subjunctive in English. More importantly, English has irrealis, as does Spanish. Perhaps, instructors are exhibiting difficulties in transferring the English modal and adverbial irrealis constructions to the subjunctive semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic uses of the subjunctive as well as its morphology. Perhaps, there is a limited understanding of how the subjunctive is acquired among some instructors. Finding effective methods of transferring of English mood to Spanish mood and training instructors on this may prove helpful for their second language acquisition students.

Furthermore, the response rate of the survey was on the low side, though the overall number of participants was solid. As a result, generalizability would be tenuous in this study, but the data is highly indicative of trends. Furthermore, as one instructor per institution was inquired in the survey, this may have produced disproportionate results, unintentionally favoring smaller programs more than larger. Future research could adapt this methodology in a way that would reliably select participants in a proportionate manner respective to the faculty size of their program. Notwithstanding, the present study did provide a voice to some institutions on the smaller end of the spectrum. Indeed, the

database utilization of CCIHE turned out to be one of the more robust parts of the research as a whole.

Lastly, a theoretical analysis on the possible or impossible placement of metalanguage in this taxonomy would be important at this stage. Admittedly, this was not sufficiently established in the present study. However, this study did provide ample evidence and support that a consideration of metalanguage when examining pedagogical approaches has merit. Further research should propose theory on its exact relationship to different approaches that can be tested qualitatively.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

The subjunctive poses enormous difficulty for second language learners. The importance of this study and others that look at the second language acquisition of the Spanish subjunctive are that it helps illuminate causes of difficulty and ways in which to teach the form. For many students, the subjunctive may serve as a proficiency wall, one that may be placing limitations on learners from achieving a more target-like second language. Notwithstanding, this may relate to proficiency only. Initially, students may already know the form well, even if they cannot use it, and finding a way to connect these two elements would solve those problems. More importantly, if comprehensibility is not sacrificed by not learning the subjunctive, a major question arises, does it even matter? Likely, many learners may be arriving at this question themselves, and deciding that the benefits are not enough.

An important finding was establishing where many instructors are currently at as it relates to their pedagogical approaches to teaching the form. This is useful for two major reasons. First, the instructors may have found effective ways to teach the subjunctive, and an analysis of their approaches would help the field immensely. Second, the instructors may be recycling ineffective methods of teaching the subjunctive, and a reanalysis or challenge to their beliefs are in order. Nevertheless, more research needs to be conducted to understand the second language acquisition of the Spanish subjunctive.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> The term instructors refers to a series of professionals in higher education, including professors, lecturers, instructors, teaching assistants, adjunct faculty, etc. Importantly, these instructors may have more or less involvement with language instruction, but many are also expert researchers in their respective field. Nevertheless, instructor was used for all the participants in that they all at least are involved with classroom instruction.

<sup>2</sup> There are some important differences between the present study and those of Graus and Coppin (2015; 2016; 2017). They largely researched post-graduate instructors. Moreover, they compared those responses to that of the students, at different levels. Other differences are provided throughout this paper.

<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the participants in Collentine (1995) varied in their subjunctive accuracy based on semantic domain: with the highest being commands and volition, then doubt and denial, and finally lowest with evaluation and reaction. Collentine's findings seem to be supported by Gudmestad (2012), who finds that at every proficiency level, learners used the subjunctive volition the most, followed by comment, uncertainty, temporality, and finally assertion, though at amounts of use that correlated with their Spanish level. Geeslin and Gudmestad (2008) also find that semantic domain was an indicator of performance for second language learners: highest with volition, comment, uncertainty, and lowest with assertion.

<sup>4</sup> For more information on the dividing line between the operationalization of these construct pairs, please see Table 1 of Graus and Coppin (2016, 577).

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<sup>5</sup> Some of the participants in this study discussed when they focused on the subjunctive, ranging from the first semester all the way to the fifth. The third year often includes a specific grammar or composition course, where the subjunctive is typically reinforced. The reasons why this form is taught later are explored in Terrell, Baycroft, and Parrone (1987). They state that the requirement of a knowledge of dependent clauses and a relative lack of salience (around 5% combined with all verbs in speech) indicate that learners may have more ease acquiring the form at a later stage.

<sup>6</sup> Tribal colleges and universities were considered. However, the majority are two-year institutions and the ones which do offer four-year degrees did not offer a Spanish program that fit the criteria.

<sup>7</sup> This may seem surprising that less than six in ten colleges and universities offer serious Spanish programs, however, there are some explanations which help account for this number. First, and sadly, there are a number of institutions on the list that are now defunct. The last update to the list was as recent as 2015 and even since then, dozens have declared bankruptcy, were shuttered by courts for various reasons, or were acquired by other institutions that were also on the list. Second, there are a considerable group of for-profit institutions on the list, virtually all of which offer no Spanish program. Of the 300 for-profit institutions on that list, only two have Spanish programs that fit these criteria. Third, the list also comprises many institutions in US territories, including Puerto Rico, Northern Marianas, Guam, and the Virgin Islands. As many of these areas have English as a secondary language, the results from such institutions would possibly skewed the data, so they were excluded entirely. After all these factors were accounted for, many of the institutions that do not offer Spanish are typically trade schools,

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universities that specialize in adult education, small liberal arts colleges, religious institutions, and places which specialize in very specific fields.

<sup>8</sup> This selection process was simple. Within Excel, a random number generation formula, *RAND ()*, was applied to every one of the 1,118 institutions which yielded a value that ranged from 0.0 to 1.0 (with a precision of 16 decimal places). From there, the institutions were sorted from the smallest to highest value and the 500 institutions with the lowest values were selected for contact (called the distribution list).

<sup>9</sup> To accomplish this, a quick inventory of the total number of instructors was taken, a number which was then multiplied by *RAND ()*, yielding a value which would determine the specific instructor from that group, who would be contacted.

<sup>10</sup> The CCIHE also includes data on a few other groups. The distribution list includes the Council of Public Liberal Arts and Colleges, which had nine such institutions, and Coalition of Urban Serving & Metropolitan Universities, which had forty-five such institutions.

<sup>11</sup> This differs from Graus and Coppen (2016) who elected to use a five-point Likert scale. However, to avoid a middle point in the scale, and the biases that are associated with such, a four-point scale was ultimately chosen in the present paper.

<sup>12</sup> Statistical data was analyzed using SPSS 25.

<sup>13</sup> Curiously, there was also a moderate correlation between the subjunctive and the *ser/estar* contrast ( $r = .327, p < .01$ ). However, an explanation that can account for this correlation is not yet evident, though the temporality of *estar* and permanence of *ser* may play a role.

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<sup>14</sup> These qualitative responses were not coded for FonF and FonFs, as information on these would not typically surface in this question.

<sup>15</sup> In English, this translates into “I am looking for a man who...” This sentence would immediately trigger the subjunctive.

<sup>16</sup> In English, this translates into “I am looking for a shirt that is (subj) clean and ready. I want pants that have (subj) pockets.”

<sup>17</sup> In English, this translates into “I want to, I need to, I like to,” each canonical triggers of the subjunctive.

<sup>18</sup> In English, this translates into “I want for you to...”

<sup>19</sup> The respondent acknowledged that this lesson is not universally applicable: “For my students, this approach seems to work well. I do understand that it is an approach that requires the integration of faith and learning rather [than] the separation of faith and learning.”

<sup>20</sup> In English, this translates into “I believe that, I am sure that, It is certain that, It is true that,” each canonical triggers of the indicative.

<sup>21</sup> In English, this translates into “I doubt that, I do not believe that, It is not true that, It is possible that, It is probable that,” each canonical triggers of the subjunctive.

<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, there was a small correlation between implicit instruction and communicative activities ( $r = .252, p < .05$ ).



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APPENDIX A

DATA OF SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION

Some key statistics are presented on the distribution list and its representativeness of the larger ISP (1,118). Below are the three main databases with the numbers of institutions in each.

*Table 9. List of Databases with Numbers of Institutions.*

Databases	Number of Institutions
Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education	4,665
Master List (R1, R2, R3, M1, M2, and M3)	1,878 (42.060%)
Institutions with Spanish Programs (ISP)	1,118 (59.531%)
Distribution List (Randomized)	500 (44.723%)

The distribution of institution category types, per Carnegie's own classification system of size and scope of research activity, is listed below.

*Table 10. Institution Category Types of Distribution List.*

University Type	Category	# of Institutions	Percentage
Doctoral	Highest Research Activity (R1)	57	11.4%
	Higher Research Activity (R2)	45	9.0%
	Moderate Research Activity (R3)	31	6.2%
Master's Colleges and Universities	Larger Programs (M1)	151	30.2%
	Medium Programs (M2)	56	11.2%
	Small Programs (M3)	33	6.6%
Baccalaureate Colleges	Arts & Sciences Focus	85	17.0%
	Diverse Fields	38	7.6%
	Mixed Baccalaureate/Associate's	4	0.8%

The Carnegie list includes distribution data for private and public universities.

The distribution is in the following table.

*Table 11. Distribution Data for Institutional Control of Distribution List.*

Control	# of institutions	Percentage
Public	227	45.4%
Private (non-profit)	273	54.6%
Private (for-profit)	0	0%

The Carnegie list also includes data on enrollment profile, ranging from exclusively undergraduate to exclusively graduate, seen in the following table.

*Table 12. Enrollment Profile of Distribution List.*

Enrollment Profile	# of institutions	Percentage
Exclusively undergraduate four-year	54	10.8%
Very high undergraduate	174	34.8%
High undergraduate	188	37.6%
Majority undergraduate	68	13.8%
Majority graduate	16	3.2%
Exclusively graduate	0	0%

The Carnegie list further details the undergraduate profile, by size, inclusivity and selectivity, and the volume of transfer students, as seen in the table below.

*Table 13. Undergraduate Enrollment Profile of Distribution List.*

Degree	Enrollment	Inclusivity	Transfer-in	# of institutions	Percentage
Four-year	higher part-time			9	1.8%
	medium full-time	Inclusive	Lower	2	0.4%
			Higher	26	5.2%
		Selective	Lower	1	0.2%
			Higher	47	9.4%
	Full-time	Inclusive	Lower	17	3.4%
			Higher	51	10.2%
		Selective	Lower	50	10.0%
			Higher	116	23.2%
		More Selective	Lower	127	25.4%
			Higher	54	10.8%

The CCIHE also provides distribution data for the size and setting classification, including size and the concentration of residential students.

Table 14. Size and Setting Data of Distribution List.

Type	Size	Residential	# of institutions	Percentage
Four-year	Very small	Primarily nonresidential	2	0.4%
		Primarily residential	7	1.4%
		Highly residential	15	3.0%
	Small	Primarily nonresidential	12	2.4%
		Primarily residential	39	7.8%
		Highly residential	114	22.8%
	Medium	Primarily nonresidential	41	8.2%
		Primarily residential	71	14.2%
		Highly residential	67	13.4%
	Large	Primarily nonresidential	57	11.4%
		Primarily residential	59	11.8%
		Highly residential	16	3.2%

The Carnegie list also provides information on the undergraduate instructional program classification, as seen in the table below.

Table 15. Undergraduate Instructional Program Classification of Distribution List.

Instruction	Grad. coexist.	# of institutions	Percentage
Baccalaureate/Associates Colleges		4	0.8%
Arts & sciences focus	None	31	6.2%
	Some	13	2.6%
	High	9	1.8%
Arts & sciences plus professions	None	13	2.6%
	Some	34	6.8%
	High	17	3.4%
Balanced arts & sciences/professions	None	21	4.2%
	Some	135	27.0%
	High	52	10.4%
Professions plus arts & sciences	None	9	1.8%
	Some	121	24.2%
	High	28	5.6%
Professions focus	None	1	0.2%
	Some	12	2.4%
	High	0	0%

Finally, the Carnegie list also provides information on the graduate instructional program, specifically the instructional focus.

Table 16. Graduate Instructional Program Types of Distribution List.

Type	Instruction	Detail	#	%
Postbaccalaureate	Single program	Education	17	3.4%
		Business	6	1.2%
		Other	11	2.2%
	Comprehensive programs		48	9.6%
	Arts & sciences-dominant		6	1.2%
	Education-dominant	with Arts & Sciences	43	8.6%
	Business-dominant	with Arts & Sciences	23	4.6%
	Other-dominant	with Arts & Sciences	25	5.0%
	Education-dominant	w/ other pro. programs	31	6.2%
	Business-dominant	w/ other pro. programs	17	3.4%
	Other-dominant	w/ other pro. programs	18	3.6%
Research Doctoral	Single program	Education	35	7.0%
		Other	19	3.8%
	Comprehensive programs	w/ medical/vet. school	44	8.8%
	Comprehensive programs	no medical/vet. school	34	6.8%
	Humanities/social sciences-dominant		4	0.8%
	STEM-dominant		21	4.2%
	Professional-dominant		42	8.4%
(Not classified)			56	11.2%

## APPENDIX B

### REPRESENTATIVENESS OF RANDOM SAMPLE



The representativeness of the random assignment sample of the distribution list was calculated. Below is a table that details to which extent each category was over sampled or under sampled (represented by the positive or negative sign, respectively).

*Table 17. Representativeness of the Random Sample of the Distribution List.*

Type	Category	Subcategory	Over/under Sampling	
Doctoral Universities	Highest Research Activity (R1)	All	+4.84%	
		Public	+8.36%	
		Private, non-profit	-3.55%	
	Higher Research Activity (R2)	All	+2.65%	
		Public	+0.35%	
		Private, non-profit	+9.44%	
	Moderate Research Activity (R3)	All	-2.26%	
		Public	-0.61%	
		Private, non-profit	-2.62%	
		Private, for-profit	-100.00%	
	Master's Colleges & Universities	Larger Programs (M1)	All	+5.44%
			Public	+11.94%
Private, non-profit			-1.01%	
Medium Programs (M2)		All	-5.29%	
		Public	-1.62%	
		Private, non-profit	-7.37%	

		Private, for-profit	-100.00%
	Small Programs (M3)	All	+3.10%
		Public	+1.71%
		Private, non-profit	+4.06%
Baccalaureate Colleges	Arts & Sciences Focus	Public	-3.46%
		Private, non-profit	-16.9%
		Private, for-profit	-2.17%
	Diverse Fields	Public	-9.21%
		Private, non-profit	-19.72%
		Private, for-profit	-5.48%
	Mixed Baccalaureate/Associate's	Public	-4.72%
		Private, non-profit	+5.28%
		Private, for-profit	-11.39%

APPENDIX C  
RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Appendix C contains the research instrument that was used for the survey.

1. What is your gender?
  - a. Female
  - b. Male
  - c. Or Specify
2. What is your age?
  - a. 18 to 24
  - b. 25 to 34
  - c. 35 to 44
  - d. 45 to 54
3. How would you characterize yourself as a speaker of Spanish?
  - a. Native Spanish speaker
  - b. Non-native Spanish speaker
  - c. Early bilingual
  - d. Heritage
  - e. Or specify
4. How many years have you been teaching Spanish?
5. What other languages have you taught?
6. In your experience, what Spanish grammar structure is the most difficult for second language learners to acquire?
7. How would you characterize the complexity of acquiring the following grammatical forms for second language learners of Spanish? (very easy, somewhat easy, neutral, somewhat difficult, very difficult)

- a. Direct and indirect object pronouns (ex. lo/la/los/las and le/les)
  - b. Conditional verbs
  - c. Future tense
  - d. Gender
  - e. Imperative tense
  - f. Negation
  - g. Perfect tense
  - h. Por/Para contrast
  - i. Present tense
  - j. Preterit/Imperfect contrast
  - k. Progressive (continuous) verbs
  - l. Reflexive verbs
  - m. Relative pronouns (ex. que, quien, el que, el cual, cuyo, donde)
  - n. Ser/Estar contrast
  - o. Subjunctive
8. Please explain what you believe causes the difficulty for American English students acquiring the Spanish subjunctive.
9. In Spanish class, it is not necessary to focus on subjunctive grammar rules; the goals should be on learning to communicate.
- a. Strongly Disagree
  - b. Somewhat Disagree
  - c. Somewhat Agree
  - d. Strongly Agree

10. Lessons on the subjunctive should be part of Spanish classes.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
11. Instructors should only focus on teaching the subjunctive if students are exhibiting difficulty with it.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
12. A subjunctive lesson should be a central component in Spanish grammar instruction, regardless of the student's performance with it.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
13. The best way to teach the subjunctive is to present as many examples of it without necessarily teaching the rule itself.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree

14. When teaching the subjunctive, it is best for the instructor to focus on explicit rules.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
15. It is better for the students to discover the subjunctive first rather than having the instructor present it.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
16. An instructor should teach grammar rules for the subjunctive instead of relying on students to discover it for themselves.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree
  - Strongly Agree
17. It is more effective to teach the rationale behind the subjunctive rule so that the students can understand its use.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Somewhat Disagree
  - Somewhat Agree

- d. Strongly Agree
18. Drilling is a more effective way of acquiring the subjunctive.
- a. Strongly Disagree
  - b. Somewhat Disagree
  - c. Somewhat Agree
  - d. Strongly Agree
19. Typically, second language learners that use the subjunctive incorrectly often use other verb tenses or aspects in place of the subjunctive. When this happens, which of the following are often most used by your students instead of the subjunctive?  
(Never, Occasionally, Sometimes, Often, Always)
- a. Indicative
  - b. Preterit
  - c. Imperfect
  - d. Future
  - e. Conditional
  - f. Infinitive
20. Please briefly describe a lesson in which you taught the subjunctive. For example, what kind of activities did you and the students do?
21. What do you think is the main problem, if any, with the way the subjunctive is typically taught in your program?
22. Indicate your degree of agreement or disagreement: (strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neutral, somewhat agree, strongly agree)
- a. Students **understand** the **present subjunctive**.



- b. Students **use** the **present subjunctive** correctly.
- c. Students **understand** the **imperfect (past) subjunctive**.
- d. Students **use** the **imperfect (past) subjunctive** correctly.
- e. Students with **study abroad experience** perform better with the subjunctive than students with only instruction.
- f. **Correct usage** of the subjunctive is important for **achieving higher proficiency**.
- g. **Correct usage** of the subjunctive is important for **being clearly understood**.
- h. **Corrective feedback** is a useful technique for reinforcing the subjunctive.
- i. **Communicative activities** are effective when teaching the subjunctive.
- j. Students will **craft** their sentences in ways to **avoid** using the subjunctive.
- k. The subjunctive is a **relevant** and **important** part of Spanish language learning.

APPENDIX D

SPEARMAN'S RANKING OF SPANISH GRAMMAR FORMS

Appendix D includes the Spearman's ranking of Spanish grammar forms and the Spearman's correlation to one another.

*Table 18. Spearman's Ranking of Spanish Grammar Forms.*

	Future	Pret/Impf	Gender	Present	Subj	Reflexive	Perfect	DO/IO	Por/Para	Imperative	Ser/Estar	Conditione	Progressiv	Negation	Rel. Pro.
Future	1														
Pret/Impf	-.215	1													
Gender	.228	.214	1												
Present	.164	.078	.085	1											
Subj	.244*	.159	.206	-.039	1										
Reflexive	.164	.189	.206	.275*	-.048	1									
Perfect	.350**	.019	.047	.082	.030	.268*	1								
DO/IO	.034	.029	-.216	.048	-.174	.080	.084	1							
Por/Para	-.247*	.346**	.121	.146	.073	.063	-.017	-.001	1						
Imperative	.235	.288*	.222	-.181	.005	.158	.162	.187	.051	1					
Ser/Estar	.198	.298*	.410**	.083	.327**	.356**	.015	.078	.177	.254*	1				
Cond.	.643**	-.262*	.080	.167	.337**	.196	.253*	.047	-.267*	.068	.095	1			
Progressive	.252*	.043	.073	.369**	-.068	.310*	.408**	.092	-.142	-.011	-.141	.248	1		
Negation	.178	.003	.292*	.135	-.064	.373**	.133	-.022	.146	.210	.101	.205	.112	1	
Rel. Pro.	-.180	.274*	.058	-.056	-.025	.045	.055	.034	.199	.085	-.063	-.111	.020	.186	1

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

APPENDIX E

CAUSES OF THE SUBJUNCTIVE DIFFICULTY

Figure 23 below shows the distribution from the responses, coded using Graus and Coppen (2015).

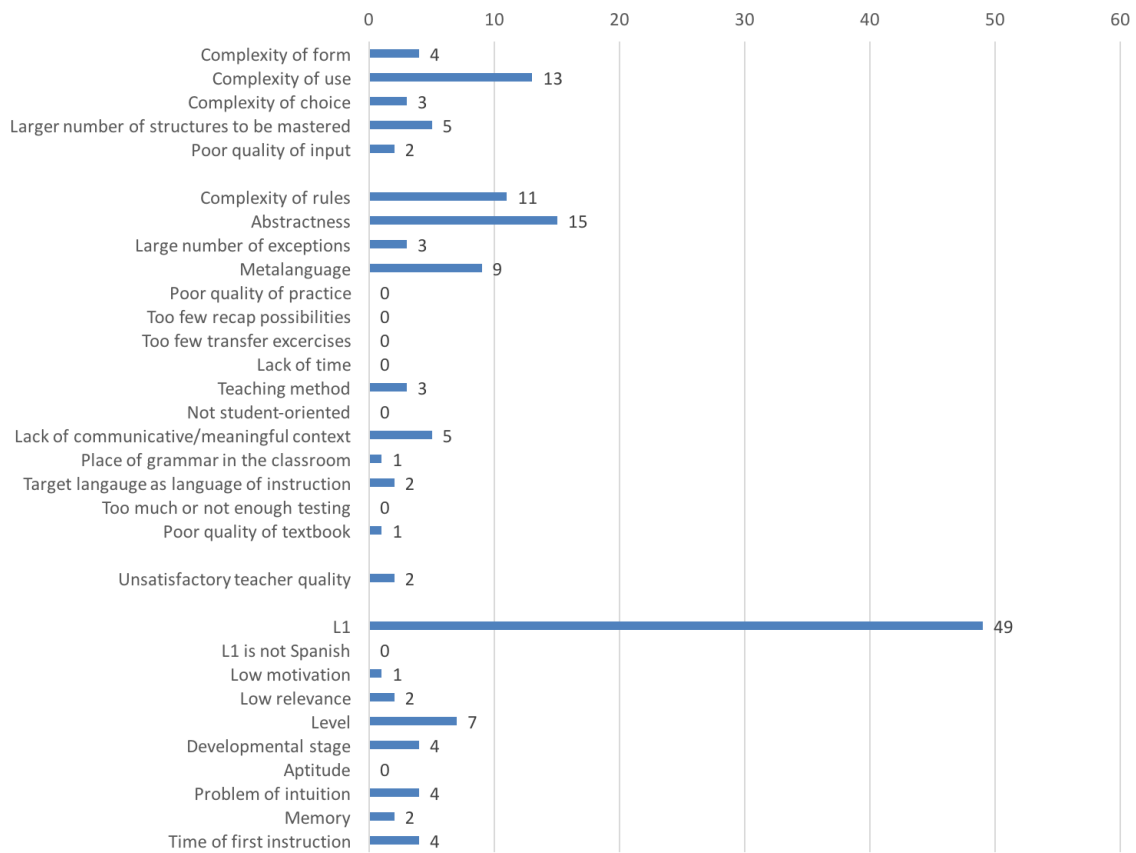


Figure 23. Causes of Difficulty for the Subjunctive.

APPENDIX F

PROBLEMS WITH TEACHING THE SUBJUNCTIVE

Figure 24 shows the distribution of the problems cited by the participants with teaching the subjunctive.

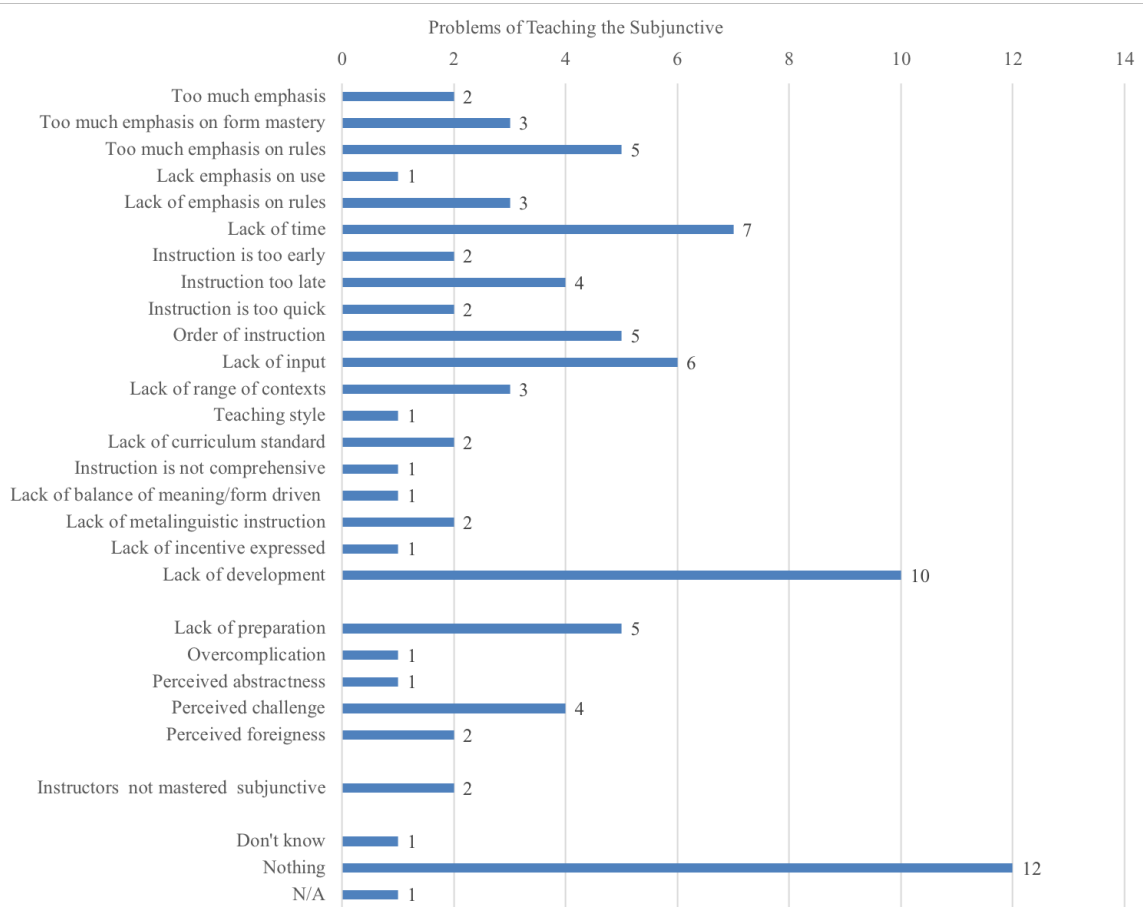


Figure 24. Problems with Teaching the Subjunctive.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

John Warren William Powell was born in Pocatello, Idaho on March 19, 1986. He graduated from Desert Ridge High School in Mesa, Arizona in 2004 and subsequently enrolled at Mesa Community College. He graduated with his Associate's in Arts in 2006. He participated in service work in São Paulo, Manaus, and Boa Vista, Brazil from 2006 to 2008. Upon return to the US, he attended Brigham Young University from 2008 to 2009, and then transferred to Arizona State University, where he obtained his Bachelor's in Arts of English (Literature) with a French minor in 2010. He worked as a technical writer from 2010 to 2016. In 2016, he entered the master's program of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics at Arizona State University. He plans to begin his PhD in Linguistics at the University of Arizona in Fall of 2018, where he received the University Fellows Award. John, his wife, and his child live in Arlington, Arizona.

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#### EDUCATION

MA, Linguistics and Applied Linguistics, Arizona State University	May 2016
BA, English (Literature), French minor, Arizona State University	December 2010
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#### FELLOWSHIPS

University Fellows Award, University of Arizona	2018
Graduate Tuition Scholarship, University of Arizona	2018
Lattie and Elva Coor Building Great Communities Graduate Fellowship	2016
Arizona Graduate Award	2016