Indicative and subjunctive mood in complement clauses: from formal semantics to grammar writing

Danièle Godard[*]
CNRS, Université Paris Diderot

1. Introduction
1.1. The approach

The approach adopted in this paper is that of a 'big grammar', in the manner of Bosque & Demonte 1999, Renzi-Salvi-Cardinaletti 2001, Solà et al. 2002, and Huddleston & Pullum 2002, for Spanish, Italian, Catalan, and English, respectively. Such grammars, while relying on the findings of formal studies, contain no or very little formalization, in order to enhance readability. Instead, they search for maximum generalization, aiming at a level of description where linguists can understand each other, independently of their choice of a particular theory or grammatical framework. Moreover, given that they claim responsibility towards the data, which are not homogeneous (see for instance, regional variation, presence of the remains of an older stage of the language), they allow for multi-factorial analyses, that is, the analysis of a part of the grammar can appeal to different factors, not only an interaction of syntax, semantics and pragmatics, but also (incomplete) historical changes, grammaticalization, and preferences among competing forms. The use of the subjunctive mood in French is a case in point. Although it is the locus of much variation across speakers, we will concentrate here on its use in standard French (leaving aside regional and social variation, which requires a specific investigation), more precisely on its use in complement clauses, where the alternation with the indicative is made clear. Even within these limits, we find that the distribution of the indicative and the subjunctive moods cannot be explained by one general principle.

1.2. The problem

Finite complement clauses in French allow for two personal moods: indicative and subjunctive.[1]

(1)   Paul **sait** que nous {**sommes**IND / *s**oyons**SUBJ } là.
        Paul knows that we are here

---

[1]The mood (IND for indicative, SUBJ for subjunctive) is indicated as indices; CPAST is for compound past, PRES for present, IMP for imperfect past, and FUT for future.

(2)   Paul **veut** que nous {**soyons**SUBJ /**sommes**IND } là.
        Paul wants that we be here

The distribution appears to be semantically motivated: each mood is associated with a stable set of verbs across languages (such as Romance and Germanic languages) which have both moods (Farkas 1992), while other classes of predicates show variation. Moreover, it is largely accepted that the use of the indicative can roughly be described as follows:

(3)   The indicative mood is appropriate when the clause expresses a proposition corresponding to an agent's belief.

The use of the subjunctive is less clear, given that, besides verbs of desire (2), there are contexts such as those in (4) and (5), which seem to fulfill condition (3), and which are in the subjunctive. So, at best, (3) is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the occurrence of the indicative. So, what is the condition licensing the subjunctive?

(4)   Les interventions gouvernementales ont évité que les banques **fassent**SUBJ faillite.
        Government interventions have avoided that the banks go brankrupt

(5)   Il est normal que les gouvernements **aient**SUBJ aidé les banques.
        It is normal that the governments rescued the banks

Moreover, there are contexts (polarity contexts) where both moods occur without a meaning difference: how do we reconcile such a fact with the idea that the distribution of the moods is semantically motivated? There are different proposals in the literature:
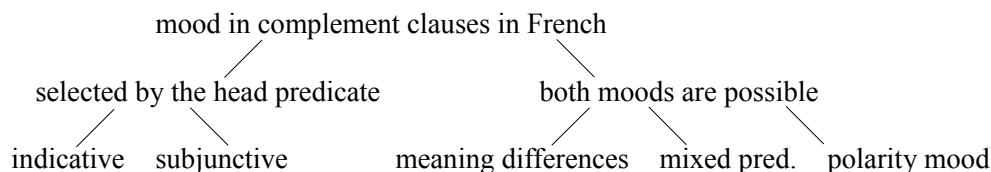
- The mood distribution is, in fact, not semantically motivated (e.g. Gross 1978).
- The subjunctive is semantically heterogeneous (e.g. Soutet 2000); in particular, it has been proposed that while the indicative is motivated, the subjunctive occurs when the indicative is not possible (e.g. Korzen 2003, Schlenker 2005).
- The distribution is semantically motivated, but each mood is not associated with its own constraint; rather, it is a shift from a context allowing for one mood to a context allowing for the other one, which motivates the alternation (e.g. Quer 2001).
- Each mood is associated with its own condition, but there are other constraints at work (e.g. Farkas 1992, 2003, Giorgi & Pianesi 1997).

Our proposal is closest to Farkas'. Its components are as follows:

(a) Each mood is associated with its own motivation condition. Their definition is more pragmatically oriented than is usually proposed.
(b) The two conditions do not exclude each other: there are contexts where they are both met.
(c) Other factors come into play, which can blur the effect of the conditions (a principle for the distribution of the two moods in a given language, grammaticalization of a mood, preferences).

2. Classification of the data

The distribution of the moods in complement clauses is summarized in the figure below.

```
                    mood in complement clauses in French
              /                                              \
  selected by the head predicate                 both moods are possible
        /           \                          /              |            \
   indicative    subjunctive       meaning differences   mixed pred.   polarity mood
```

We start with the predicates which clearly select for a complement clause in a given mood in standard French. The data are known. We summarize them, basing our classification on semantic domains, which are neutral with respect to the problem at hand. The predicates selecting an indicative complement belong to three semantic classes. Although they belong to the same classes, we mention apart a few verbs (class (iv)), because they raise a difficulty when one aims at an exact definition of the condition allowing for the indicative. They have a futurate orientation (see Laca 2011): that is, their infinitival complement describes a situation posterior to that described by the head verb (9); their finite complement is usually in the future or conditional (= future of the past) tense (10); when it is in the past it denotes a result state (11a), and when in the present tense, it indicates epistemic uncertainty about the reality of the situation denoted by the complement (11b).

(i) communication: *affirmer* 'claim', *annoncer* 'announce', *dire* 'say', *écrire* 'write', *informer* 'inform', *prétendre* 'pretend', *faire l'annonce* 'make the announcement'. The complement denotes the content of the communication; there is no constraint on the respective time of the complement and the head situations.

(6)   Paul affirme {qu'il est$_{PRES}$ là / qu'il était$_{IMP}$ là / qu'il sera$_{FUT}$ là}.
        Paul claims that he is / was / will be there

(ii) belief, knowledge, and reasoning: *croire* 'believe', *juger* 'judge', *savoir* 'know', *persuader* 'persuade', *montrer* 'show', *être d'accord* 'agree', *se souvenir* 'remember'; *il échappe à* 'it escapes', *il s'ensuit* 'it follows', *il se trouve* 'it happens/turns out'; *clair* 'clear', *exact* 'exact', *évident* 'evident', *vrai* 'true'; *avoir l'intuition, l'idée, l'impression* 'to have the intuition/idea/impression'. These predicates are usually considered to describe propositional attitudes. They do not constrain the relative time of the two situations.

(7)   {Le professeur pense / Il est clair} que les élèves {sont / étaient / seront} sérieux.
        The teacher thinks / It is clear that the students are / were / will be serious-minded

(iii) perception: *entendre* 'hear', *percevoir* 'perceive', *sentir* 'feel/smell', *subodorer* 'scent', *voir* 'see'. Besides a finite complement, these verbs can also take an infinitival. With the infinitive, they denote physical perception (although sometimes indirect), while the operation is more abstract with a finite complement (Miller & Lowrey 2003). Nevertheless, at least in some cases, these verbs remain verbs of perception in that perception remains the source of the knowledge. They also do not constrain the relative time of the two situations.

(8)   Le professeur subodore que les élèves {ne comprennent$_{PRES}$ pas / n'ont pas fait$_{CPAST}$ leur travail / ne feront$_{FUT}$ pas leur travail}.
The teacher feels that the students do not understand / have not done their homework / will not do their homework

(iv) verbs with a futurate orientation: *prédire* 'predict', *prévoir* 'foresee', *anticiper* 'anticipate', *promettre* 'promise', *décider* 'decide'.

(9)   a.   Nous avons {promis / décidé / prévu} d'aller vous voir.
We promised / decided / planned to go and see you
       b.   Nous anticipons d'aller vous voir.
We anticipate going to see you

(10)   Nous avons décidé que nous arrêterons$_{FUT}$ ce travail en début d'année.
We have decided that we will stop this work at the beginning of the year

(11)   a.   Nous décidons que nous en avons assez fait$_{CPAST}$ pour aujourd'hui.
We decide that we have done enough for today
       b.   Nous {prédisons / prévoyons / ?anticipons} que nous sommes visés$_{PRES}$ par cette mesure.
We predict / foresee / anticipate that this measure applies to us

While the classification of the predicates taking an indicative complement is well accepted, there is no such consensus regarding those taking a subjunctive complement. They are varied (and more numerous than those selecting for an indicative; Gross 1978). Using distinctions based on semantic domains, we find modals (whatever their interpretation) (but see below §4.2), predicates denoting different attitudes of an agent (generally corresponding to the subject), or an action. Moreover, there are some predicates which are not easily grouped with others in terms of semantic domains; we mention them together here as class (viii).

(v) Modals: *il se peut* 'it may be the case', *possible* 'possible', *impossible* 'impossible'; *il faut* 'must', *nécessaire* 'obligatory'.

(12)   a.   Il faut que tu aies lu$_{CPAST}$ ce texte avant mardi.
You must have read this text before Tuesday
       b.   Il est possible que vous rendiez$_{PRES}$ votre devoir demain.
It is possible that you hand in your homework tomorrow

(13)   Il se peut qu'il soit venu$_{CPAST}$ et que nous n'en ayons rien su.
It is possible that he came without us knowing

(vi) Attitudes: (vi-a) Will and desire: *vouloir* 'want', *désirer* 'want, desire', *souhaiter* 'wish', *avoir envie* 'would like', *permettre* 'allow', *consentir à ce que* 'consent', *se résoudre à ce que* 'resign oneself', *condescendre à ce que* 'condescend', *tenir à ce que* 'be attached', *être prêt à ce que* 'be ready'.

(14)   a.   Le patron {voulait / souhaitait} que le travail soit fini$_{CPAST}$ le lendemain.
The boss wanted / wished that the job be finished for the following day

b. Paul souhaite que Marc ait été reçu_{CPAST} (mais il n'en sait rien).
Paul would like it that Marc passed his exam (but he does not know the result)

(vi-b) Evaluatives:

- factives: *regretter* 'regret', *se réjouir* 'be happy', *normal* 'normal', *bizarre* 'bizarre', *ému* 'moved', *étonné* 'surprised'
- non-factives: *craindre* 'be afraid', *redouter* 'dread', *préférer* 'prefer', *avoir intérêt à ce que* 'it had better be', *aimer (à ce) que* 'to like', *détester* 'hate'

(15) C'est drôle par ici, c'est tout plus grand que vers chez nous, c'est un quartier plus riche, c'est même bizarre que ça ne soit pas payant, tellement c'est joli … (P. Cauvin, *Monsieur Papa*, 1976, p. 170, Frantext)
It is funny around here, everything is bigger than around our place, it's a richer part of town, it's even bizarre that we don't have to pay, it's so pretty …

(16) Paul {regrette / craint} {que tu ne viennes pas / que tu ne sois pas allé au rendez-vous}.
Paul regrets / is afraid that you won't come / that you did not go to the meeting

(vi-c) Negative attitudes (communication, reasoning): *nier* 'deny', *douter* 'doubt', *contester* 'question', *douteux* 'doubtful', *exclu* 'excluded', *faux* 'false'.

(17) a. Je doute que je puisse_{SUBJ-PRES} venir / que cela ait été dit_{SUBJ-CPAST}.
b. *Je doute que je peux_{IND-PRES} venir / que cela a été_{IND-CPAST} dit.
I doubt that I will be able to come / that this has been said

(vii) Action verbs: (vii-a) Mandatives: *demander* 'ask', *demander à ce que* 'ask', *exiger* 'demand', *ordonner* 'order', *suggérer* 'suggest', *permettre* 'allow', *proposer* 'propose', *obtenir* 'obtain, manage'.

(18) On demande que le rapport soit terminé mardi.
We require that the report be finished by Tuesday

(vii-b) Causatives:

- implicative: *faire* 'make it so that', *empêcher* 'prevent', *éviter* 'avoid', *s'arranger pour que* 'manage', *réussir à ce que* 'succeed', *veiller à ce que* 'ensure'
- non-implicative: *essayer que* 'try', *s'employer à ce que* 'to apply oneself', *s'opposer à ce que* 'to be opposed', *viser à ce que* 'aim', *chercher à ce que* 'act so that'

(19) a. On s'est arrangés pour que Paul soit là à la reunion.
We managed to have Paul there for the meeting
b. On s'arrangera pour que Paul soit arrivé au moment où on en a besoin.
We will manage so that Paul will have arrived when we need him

(viii) Miscellaneous:

- certain verbs of belief and reasoning: *s'attendre à ce que* 'expect', *envisager* 'consider'

- verbs describing a course of action: *s'engager à ce que* 'commit oneself to', *s'exposer à ce que* 'expose oneself', *en arriver à ce que* 'to come to', *attendre que* 'wait'
- habituals: *il arrive que* 'it may be the case', *être habitué à ce que* 'be used to', *s'habituer à ce que* 'get used to'

There is a certain amount of arbitrariness in the classification, because predicates usually correspond to bundles of semantic features. For example, predicates of will and desire are related to mandatives (if people ask for something, it is usually because they want it); yet they differ from them in describing mental attitudes rather than actions (hence, they are stative). It is worth noting that these predicates are not homogeneous syntactically either. They usually take a complement clause introduced by *que*, but, in some cases, the complement may also be introduced by *à/de ce que* (*demander que / à ce que* 'ask', *s'attendre que / à ce que* 'expect', *se réjouir que / de ce que* 'be happy'), or must be so introduced (the complex complementizer is mentioned in the lists).

Many are stative, but not all of them. Modals and predicates of will and desire are stative (#*Il est en train d'être possible que Paul vienne,* 'It is being possible that Paul come', #*Paul est en train de vouloir que la commission prenne une décision,* 'Paul is wanting that the committee make a décision'), as well as most psychological verbs (#*Paul est en train de craindre que tu ne puisses pas venir* 'Paul is being afraid that you will not be able to come'). The others are not, except for adjectives (*Paul est en train de proposer que nous arrêtions le projet* 'Paul is proposing that we stop the project'; *Paul est en train de s'arranger pour que nous puissions venir* 'Paul is seeing to it that we may come').

Most of them are not factive, but some are: some evaluatives (such as *regretter,* see class (vi-b)). Moreover, some are implicative (the positive sentence implies the complement, the negative sentence implies the negation of the complement – or the reverse with negative verbs *empêcher, éviter*), see class (vii-b).

They are not homogeneous with respect to temporal orientation. Mandatives (class (vii-a)) and causatives (class (vii-b)) are futurate. Thus, the complement can contain an adverb denoting a time posterior to the situation of the head verb; if the subjunctive is past, it denotes a result, anterior to the time denoted by the adverb, but still posterior to that of the head verb as in (18) and (19). Modals and predicates of will and desire have two possibilities (Laca 2011). Modals are futurate if they have a deontic interpretation ((12) is parallel to (18) and (19)), while there is no temporal orientation if they are epistemic, and they indicate epistemic uncertainty if the subjunctive is in the past (13), like predicates of class (iv). Predicates of will and desire are generally futurate (see (14a)), but some (such as *souhaiter*) admit the two interpretations (deontic and epistemic uncertainty) with the past, as in (14a,b). On the other hand, evaluative and negative predicates (the latter belong to semantic classes which select the indicative) are not temporally oriented (see (15)–(17)).

3. Semantico-pragmatic conditions on mood selection
3.1. Condition on the indicative

On the basis of the classification in the preceding section, we formulate the condition on the motivation of the indicative mood as in (20).

(20) **Condition on the motivation of the indicative mood**
      The indicative mood is motivated in a complement clause if the combination of the head and complement clauses is such that, when the tenses allow for an overlap of the two

situations (described by the head and the embedded clauses), the embedded clause expresses a proposition to the truth of which an agent is committed.

Although in line with (3), the definition in (20) is a bit more complicated. Note first that we do not relativize the condition to predicate classes, which are taken into account indirectly, by the effect they have on the interpretation of the complement clause: verbs of communication, of perception and propositional attitudes have in common that the complement clause expresses a proposition with an independent truth value; in addition, at least when the head clause is positive and declarative, they imply that an agent is committed to the truth value of this proposition. In general, this agent is denoted by the subject of the head verb: it is the (entity denoted by the) subject of *affirmer, penser, subodorer* in (6)–(8), *décider, prédire, prévoir, anticiper* in (10) and (11), who is committed to the truth of the proposition. In such cases, the speaker is not involved in the commitment. In other cases, the speaker himself is the agent rather than the subject, as for instance, with verbs such as *ignorer* 'ignore', *oublier* 'forget'; in still other cases, the predicate implies that the subject is committed but is not to be believed, as with *s'imaginer* 'imagine', *prétendre* 'claim' (see Soutet 2000:60). With an impersonal construction, the agent is either realized by an argument of the impersonal verb (21a), or contextually specified. It may be identified with the subject of a higher clause whose verb belongs to the same classes (21b), or it corresponds to the speaker (21c), or it can be enlarged to discourse participants, or people in general (21d).

(21) a. Il lui / nous semble évident que le niveau de vie a augmenté.
          It seems to him/us that the standard of living has improved
      b. Paul pense qu'il est évident que le niveau de vie a augmenté.
          Paul thinks that it is evident that the standard of living has improved
      c. Il est évident que le niveau de vie a augmenté. Tu es bien d'accord ?
          It is evident that the standard of living has improved. You agree, I suppose
      d. Il est évident que le niveau de vie a augmenté. Personne ne dira le contraire.
          It is evident that the standard of living has improved. Nobody will disagree

The reason why the condition cannot simply refer to the head predicates is that the mood may change if the predicate is negated or occurs in an interrogative clause (see (22) and below §4.3). On the other hand, it is not possible either to simply refer to the interpretation of the embedded clause. The reason is that there are cases where the interpretation of the whole sentence does not imply the existence of an agent committed to the truth of the embedded clause, as when the head predicate is in a modal environment (23). Hence, we must take into account the interpretation induced by the properties of the head clause (where the infinitival VP in (23a) counts as a clause). However, the influence of the context remains local, and does not go further than the clause containing the head predicate.

(22) Je ne crois pas que nous en {sommes$_{IND}$ / soyons$_{SUBJ}$} capables.
      I don't think that we are capable of this

(23) a. Paul {peut / doit} penser que le niveau de vie {a$_{IND}$ / *ait$_{SUBJ}$} augmenté.
          Paul may / must think that the standard of living has improved
      b. Il est possible que Paul dise que le niveau de vie {a$_{IND}$ / *ait$_{SUBJ}$} augmenté.
          It is possible that Paul says that the standard of living has improved

The semantico-pragmatic condition holds in a certain tense configuration, when the situation described by the complement and that described by the head clause overlap in time. This is aimed at integrating the futurate predicates (class (iv)) in the system: it is difficult to be committed to the truth of a proposition when it can only be realized in future time. Fortunately, these predicates are compatible with environments where the two situations overlap, so that the condition can be met. For instance, in (24), the predicates evaluate a property of a situation which is concomitant with the judgment although it can only be verified in the future.

(24)   Nous avions {décidé / anticipé / promis} que le travail pouvait$_{IND}$ être fait en deux jours. Et nous nous étions trompés !
       We had decided / anticipated / promised that the job could be done in two days. And we were mistaken

3.2. Condition on the subjunctive

Broadly speaking, the subjunctive mood is appropriate when the interpretation requires taking into account the possibility of *non-p* along with that of *p*. To interpret a sentence such as *Il est possible que Paul vienne* 'It is possible that Paul come', with a subjunctive, one must take into account situations in which Paul comes as well as situations in which Paul does not come. This is part of what the modal *il est possible* tells you. On the other hand, the interpretation of a sentence such as *Jean pense que Paul va venir* 'Jean thinks that Paul will come', with an indicative, does not require that one take into account situations in which Paul does not come. This is in essence the proposal in Farkas 1992, 2003 and Giorgi & Pianesi 1997. We return below to the definition of the condition. That such a condition is at work is evident with most of the predicates mentioned above as taking a subjunctive complement. It is inherent in the definition of modals (in a general way) (class (v)). With predicates of will and desire (class (vi-a)) and mandatives (class (vii-a)), the condition is met, since the situation described in the complement does not obtain, and nothing guarantees that the reality will conform to will or order. Negative predicates (class (vi-c)) differ from their positive counterparts in classes (i) and (ii) precisely in that the inherent negation requires comparing *p* and *non-p* (favoring *non-p*) (class (vi-c)).

Evaluatives (class (vi-b)) and causatives (class (vii-b)) deserve some comment. They have been a topic of interest in the study of mood in complement clauses in Romance languages in general (see in particular Farkas 1992, Quer 2001): they are evidence that the distribution of the moods cannot be assimilated to a broad distinction between realis (which would lead to indicative) and irrealis (which would lead to subjunctive) environments. Some evaluatives are factives (*regretter* 'to regret', *normal* 'normal'), and some causatives (*réussir* 'succeed', *empêcher* 'prevent') are implicatives; hence their complement describes a realis situation, yet they require the subjunctive. Similarly, they show that there is no simple solution in terms of the content types for complement clauses (Ginzburg & Sag 2000). Predicates whose complement denotes an outcome certainly require the subjunctive (will and desire, mandatives and causatives), and the complement of predicates taking the indicative denotes a proposition. However, the complement of evaluatives (*normal*), as well as negative attitudes (*douteux*), and modals (*possible*), which also take a subjunctive complement, denotes a proposition, just like that of predicates taking an indicative complement.

The analysis for evaluatives is as follows: the evaluation itself supposes a comparison between *p* and *non-p*. Simply put, one cannot regret or be happy that some situation is the case, or judge that a situation is normal, without thinking that things could have been different. Similarly with the non-factive predicates 'dread', 'prefer', 'like' etc. It is precisely the fact that

their interpretation requires a comparison between situations which differentiates this class from the predicates of judgment with an indicative complement (class (ii)). This is essentially the proposal in Villalta 2008 (see also Leeman 1994). We differ from Villalta in simplifying the process of comparison. Instead of having sets of alternative situations (or possible worlds) that are ranked according to their conformity to the description in the complement clause, we propose that it is sufficient to contrast *p versus non-p*.

Causatives are a different matter. One could say that negative causatives (*empêcher* 'prevent', *éviter* 'avoid', *s'opposer à ce que* 'to be opposed'), because they include a negation, are like the negative predicates of communication and judgment (class (vi-c)): they compare *p* and *non-p*. The agent acts in such a way that a possible situation (described by the *p* complement) does not get realized (this corresponds to *non-p*). This is not inaccurate, but does not cover the positive ones. In fact, causatives resemble predicates of will and desire. Certainly, they are action verbs rather than attitudes. But predicates such as *faire que* 'make it so that', *s'arranger pour que* 'manage', or *chercher à ce que* 'act so that' describe a change of state: they are transitional, that is, they describe a process whose end is a change of situations, starting with a situation described by *non-p*, and ending with a situation described by *p*. Of course, negative causatives do not describe the effectuation of a change, but their interpretation requires taking such a change in consideration.

The last difficulty is raised by modals describing circumstantial necessity, such as *il est nécessaire* 'it is necessary' in (25). Such uses of modals describe how things are, and could not be otherwise. Modals of circumstantial necessity contrast clearly with the habituals in the miscellaneous class (viii), which either indicate that a situation holds sometimes but not always (*il arrive que* 'it may be the case') or are transitional (*s'habituer à ce que* 'get used to', *être habitué à ce que* 'be used to'): getting used to or being used to a certain situation implies a period when this was not the case. One could suggest that modals of circumstantial necessity take into account both *p* and *non-p* in that they are broadly equivalent to 'not possible that *non-p*'.

(25) a. Il est nécessaire que la somme des angles d'un triangle {fasse$_{SUBJ}$ / *fait$_{IND}$} 180°.
          It is necessary that the sum of the angles of a triangle amount to 180°
      b. Il est nécessaire que le médecin soit arrivé puisque sa voiture est dans la cour.
          It is necessary that the doctor is arrived, since his car is in the yard

However, such reasoning seems rather fragile: there is no principled limit to its application. Why should an expression such as 'think that *p*' not be equivalent to 'not think that *non-p*'? The relevant question is different, and shifts the analysis from semantics to pragmatics. We must ask what brings a speaker to say *il est nécessaire que p* rather than simply say *p*. That is, the speaker could have said (26) instead of (25).

(26) a. La somme des angles d'un triangle fait 180°.
          The sum of the angles of a triangle amounts to 180°
      b. Le médecin est arrivé puisque sa voiture est dans la cour.
          The doctor is arrived, since his car is in the yard

Sentences in (25) and (26) refer to exactly the same situations. Thus, the difference does not concern reference: it is a matter of interaction. Behind the assertions in (25) there is a deduction: (25a) can be used as a step towards a conclusion, for instance to show to a child where his demonstration fails, and (25b) is not appropriate except as an argument used to convince a discourse participant of the reality of the situation; in this respect, its argumentative

force is stronger than that of the non-modalized (26b) (although the latter also contains the justification of the main clause), and the two sentences cannot be used in the same contexts. We conclude that an essential aspect of the use of the subjunctive is this interactive and deductive facet, even if, in many cases, the use of the mood can be presented in a simplified way (as a straightforward semantic matter).

Accordingly, while the condition on the subjunctive is usually written in semantic terms, we propose to formulate it as a pragmatic condition as in (27).

(27) **Condition on the motivation of the subjunctive mood**
The subjunctive is motivated when the speaker takes into account the fact that there may exist an agent who believes that *non-p* is possible.

Thus, in our analysis, it is not only the condition on the indicative which is pragmatic in that it appeals to an agent's commitment, but also the condition on the subjunctive which relies on a speaker being in an argumentative environment. In this, our proposal differs from all the existing ones.

3.3. The distribution of the two moods in French

It is not enough to state the semantico-pragmatic conditions which motivate the occurrence of the moods. One of the properties of these two conditions is precisely that they are not in complementary distribution: there are cases where both conditions are met. It is precisely what characterizes the class of evaluatives, at least the factive ones, as suggested in Farkas (1992). In (28) (= (15)) the speaker is committed to the truth of the proposition 'One does not have to pay to visit this part of town' (condition (20) is met), while at the same time s/he judges that one would expect things to be different, and by this evaluation introduces *non-p* ('one must pay to visit this part of town') (condition (27) is met).

(28) C'est drôle par ici, c'est tout plus grand que vers chez nous, c'est un quartier plus riche, c'est même bizarre que ça ne soit$_{SUBJ}$ pas payant, tellement c'est joli … (P. Cauvin, *Monsieur Papa*, 1976, p. 170, Frantext)
It is funny around here, everything is bigger than around our place, it's a richer part of town, it's even bizarre that we don't have to pay, it's so pretty …

If the complement clause of these predicates meets both conditions, we would expect that they are compatible with both moods. Indeed, this is what we find in Romanian, as shown in (29).[2] Since they require the subjunctive in the complement clause in (standard) French, it is necessary to add a rule for the distribution of the two moods. The motivation for the two moods can be the same in the two languages, but the rule which distributes them is different.

(29) Ion se bucură {**că vii**$_{IND}$ / **să vii**$_{SUBJ}$} la petrecere.
Ion is happy that you come to the party

(30) **Principle of distribution of the moods in French** (when the mood is motivated)
The complement clause is
(a) in the indicative if condition (20) is met and not condition (27);
(b) in the subjunctive if condition (27) is met (which allows for both (20) and (27) being met).

---

[2]Thanks to G. Bîlbîie and A. Mardale for pointing out this fact to me.

By distinguishing between the semantico-pragmatic conditions on moods and the way a particular language sets the divide between their actual occurrences, we follow the methodology chosen by Giorgi and Pianesi, although the general picture (they aim at accounting for mood realization in Romance and Germanic languages in general) and the modelization (they use a model theoretic approach, where the conditions on the moods are not a priori compatible) are very different.

Since in most approaches the conditions are defined so that they are incompatible, let us emphasize our motivation. Our proposal contrasts particularly with analyses where only one mood is motivated, the other one being found in all the environments where the other one is not possible, as in Hopper 1995, Korzen 2003, Schlenker 2005. Hopper draws a classification of English predicates, which he applies to the problem of mood in complement clauses in Spanish, and which Korzen applies to French. Predicates which subcategorize for an indicative complement are said to be 'assertive', while all the others subcategorize for a subjunctive one. Leaving aside the speech act flavor of the term (as is largely accepted, it is whole utterances which are taken into account by speech acts, not part of them), this amounts to saying that the indicative complements denote a non-presupposed proposition to the truth of which an agent is committed. Subjunctive complements denote a presupposed proposition, or one to which no agent is committed (the matrix predicate is negated, or is a modal), or (we can add) is an outcome. What is crucial for us is the following: an analysis which supposes that one of the moods is legitimate when the other one is not fails to account for cases where both moods can occur without meaning differences, that is, the cases which we treat as mixed predicates (see §4.2, and evaluatives, which behave differently in French and Romanian, and allow for both moods in Romanian as in (29)). One advantage of our proposal is that mood variation, both within a language and between languages (specially among Romance languages) is expected in such environments.

While the two conditions can be met at the same time, still they entertain a certain relation: if the condition on the indicative is not met, then the condition on the subjunctive automatically applies. Consequently, the two moods cover the range of finite complement clauses.

Although it is difficult to find independent evidence, it seems that the verbs of reasoning and action in the miscellaneous classes (viii) contrast in this respect with verbs of class (ii) and (iv) in that there is no agent committed to the truth of the embedded proposition: *envisager* ('consider') contrasts with *penser* ('think'), *s'attendre à ce que* ('expect') contrasts with *croire* ('believe'), *s'engager à ce que* ('commit oneself to') with *promettre* ('promise'). The last contrast is not evident: why should the commitment be different with the two verbs? One possibility is that *promettre* and *s'engager à ce que* do not belong to the same domain: when one 's'engage' one pledges oneself to a course of action while a promise remains a commitment to the truth of a (future) proposition (even if it implies doing things to make it true). *Attendre* is even more difficult to analyze: it may be a sort of causative.

4. Where the two moods are possible

In the preceding section, we have examined predicates which select one or the other mood. We turn to cases where the two moods are possible.

4.1. Meaning differences

Certain predicates allow for the two moods, but with a meaning difference such that it is not always clear that we are still dealing with the same predicate. Well-known instances are

dire ('say') or *suggérer* ('suggest'): with the indicative, these are verbs of communication (class (i)), while they are verbs of influence (mandatives, class (vii-a)) when the complement clause is in the subjunctive.

(31) a. Paul a {dit / suggéré} que tu étais$_\text{IND}$ venu.
Paul said / suggested that you had come.
b. Paul a {dit / suggéré} que tu viennes$_\text{SUBJ}$ immédiatement.
Paul said/ suggested that you (should) come immediately

Another example is that of *admettre* ('admit, accept'), *comprendre* ('understand'), *concevoir* ('understand') (see references in Soutet 2000), although the difference is more subtle.

(32) a. […] je crois comprendre que vous avez$_\text{IND}$ le désir d'en faire un métier, de gagner votre vie en publiant des livres. (A. Boudard, *Mourir d'enfance*, 1995, p. 227, Frantext)
I seem to understand that you want to turn it into a job, to make a living by publishing books
b. Je comprends que vous soyez$_\text{SUBJ}$ anticommunistes … Moi, à votre place je le serais aussi, c'est normal.
It's understandable that you are anti-communists … In your stead, I would be too, it's normal (E. Rochant, *Un monde sans pitié*, 1990, p. 71, Frantext)

(33) Ell' m'emmerde, ell' m'emmerd', j'admets que ce Claudel
Soit$_\text{SUBJ}$ un homm' de génie, un poète immortel,
J' reconnais son prestige,
Mais qu'on aille chercher dedans son œuvre pie
Un aphrodisiaque, non, […] (G. Brassens, *poèmes et chansons*, 1981, p. 212, Frantext)
She makes me mad, I accept that this Claudel is a man of genius, an immortal poet, I recognize his prestige, but that someone fetch in his pious work an aphrodisiac, no, […]

With the indicative, these verbs belong clearly to class (ii): they are verbs of reasoning. They remain verbs of reasoning with the subjunctive, but take on an evaluative trait: 'understandable, normal'. Moreover, with the subjunctive, it is not clear that the subject is committed to the truth of the proposition, in fact, the construction gives the opposite impression: if the agent commits himself, it is only temporarily, as a step in the argumentation. In particular, we often have the imperative *admettons que*, leading to: 'and now what follows?' *Admettre* in the combination with the subjunctive often occurs as the first gesture in a concessive structure: 'I grant you that *p*, but', which is exemplified in (33).

Whether or not one treats these usages as belonging to one lexeme or two, the behavior of such forms conforms to the above analysis.

4.2. Mixed predicates

Other predicates are compatible with both moods, without changing semantic class. Rather, they are sensitive to their environment, so that the subjunctive and the indicative tend to appear in different environments. However, this is but a tendency, both moods being possible in all environments. We give a number of cases which have been noted in the literature. A systematic search in corpora is needed, since the class has not been recognized as such, and the factors involved are not really known.

First, we have some modals: *probable* ('probable'), *vraisemblable* (likely'), *il semble* ('it seems'). While other epistemic modals such as *possible* ('possible'), and *il se peut* ('it may be') always require the subjunctive (see class ((v)), the former accept both moods (see Gaatone 2003 for *probable*).

(34)   a.   Il est **probable** que nous **essuierons**IND encore des pertes en Afghanistan.
(`lemonde.fr`, 26/08/2006, attributed to B. Kouchner)
It is probable that we will suffer more losses in Afghanistan
       b.   Il est **probable** que l'une des premières retransmissions télévisées en direct **a**IND **été** réalisée aux Etats-Unis à la fin des années 1920 par Ernst Alexanderson.
(`cahiersdujournalisme.net`, C. Jamet, no. 19, 2009)
It is probable that one of the first live TV broadcasts was realized in the US at the end of the 20s by E. Alexanderson
       c.   La ministre de la santé a expliqué qu'il était **probable** qu'au début de l'automne le virus **soit**SUBJ plus actif. (`lefigaro.fr`, 29/07/2009)
The health minister explained that it was probable that at the beginning of autumn the virus would be more active

(35)   a.   Ils prennent bien soin de placer sur le dessus des paniers de grosses pierres. Car les escargots, sinon, s'évaderaient. **Il semble** que d'un commun effort, s'arc-boutant aux parois, ils **sont**IND capables de soulever les couvercles et ainsi retrouver la liberté.
(J. Roubaud, *Nous, les moins-que-rien, Fils aînés de personne 12 (+ 1)* autobiographies, 2006, p. 179, Frantext)
They are very careful to put big stones on the top of the baskets. Otherwise, the snails would escape. It seems that, in a joint effort, and pressing up against the sides, they are able to lift up the cover and thus recover their freedom
       b.   Ils ont rendez-vous avec des notaires et ils visitent des propriétés de toutes sortes […] **Il semble** que mon père, pour une raison impérieuse, **veuille**SUBJ se mettre 'au vert'.
(P. Modiano, *Un pedigree*, 2005, p. 63, Frantext)
They make appointments with lawyers and visit all kinds of properties. It seems that my father, for a pressing reason, wants to move to the countryside
       c.   Pourtant, **il me semble** que considérer l'enfant malade comme un saint **revient**IND à le nier deux fois. (P. Forest, *Tous les enfants sauf un,* 2007, p. 61, Frantext)
Nevertheless, it seems to me that to consider a sick child as a saint amounts to treat him all the more as a non-entity

A paradigm such as (36) based on acceptability judgments (from Gaatone 2003) indicates that *probable* is sensitive to the context. In contrast with possibility, probability in itself favors *p* rather than *non-p*. As the interpretation of the main clause tends towards expressing speaker's certainty, the indicative becomes more acceptable. Similarly, while *il semble* is compatible with both moods (as regards speaker's acceptability) (see (35a,b)), *il me semble* clearly favors the indicative. Here, the explicit realization of the agent, as opposed to an implicit reference with *il semble*, gives more importance to the agent's commitment.

(36)   a.   Il est probable que le travail {est IND / ?soitSUBJ} déjà achevé.
       b.   Il est peu probable que le travail {?est IND / soitSUBJ} déjà achevé.
       c.   Il est improbable que le travail {*est IND / soitSUBJ} déjà achevé.
            It is probable / not very probable / improbable that the work is finished

However, it must be stressed that these are preferences rather than clear-cut choices. Counting apart the cases of morphological syncretism, out of 110 instances of *il est probable* in Frantext since 1950, six are with the subjunctive and 89 with the indicative; out of 37 instances of *il est peu probable*, 20 are with the subjunctive, and seven with the indicative; out of seven instances of *il est très probable*, one is with the subjunctive and five with the indicative.

Verbs of fiction such as *rêver* 'dream' and *imaginer* 'imagine' are usually considered to require the indicative. They raise a difficulty, since it is debatable whether the subject denotes an agent who commits himself (Farkas 1992). It can be proposed that the dreamer or imaginer is indeed committed as long as the dream or the imagining lasts. However, these verbs are also compatible with the subjunctive in certain environments, for instance, if they are the complement of *pouvoir* ('be able'), or in a conditional clause (introduced by *si* 'if'), or if they are themselves in the imperative or gerund mood (*imaginons que* 'let's imagine that', *en imaginant que* 'imagining that'). These environments share the effect that the agent is less committed to the truth of the complement proposition. Similarly, although the verb *espérer* 'to hope' is often given as an instance of a predicate which, unlike its correspondents in the other Romance languages, takes the indicative, it can in fact take both moods: the subjunctive can appear in the same environments as with fiction verbs. It can even appear without such an environment, in perfectly standard utterances (37d).

(37) a. Paul espère qu'il {prendra$_{IND-FUT}$ / *prenne$_{SUBJ}$} la bonne décision.
          Paul hopes that he will make the right decision
      b. On peut espérer qu'il {prendra$_{IND-FUR}$ / prenne$_{SUBJ}$} la bonne décision.
          We can hope that he will make the right decision
      c. {Espérons / En espérant} {qu'il prendra$_{IND-FUT}$ / qu'il prenne$_{SUBJ}$} la bonne décision.
          Let us hope / With the hope that he will make the right décision
      d. On fait le vin pour des amateurs éclairés – on espère en tout cas qu'ils le soient.
          (J.-R. Pitte, France Culture 05/11/2011)
          We make wine for enlightened lovers – we hope in any case that they are

As a last example, we mention the verb of communication *se plaindre* 'complain'.

(38) a. […] l'homme **se plaignait** que le commerce **allait**$_{IND}$ mal, tant de villages à l'intérieur du pays ayant été pillés par les reîtres. (M. Yourcenar, *L'œuvre au noir*, 1968, p. 754, Frantext)
          The man complained that the trade was in bad shape, so many villages in the country having been looted by the ruffians
      b. On ne pouvait **se plaindre** que les théologiens chargés d'énumérer les propositions impertinentes, hérétiques, ou franchement impies tirées des écrits de l'accusé **n'eussent**$_{SUBJ}$ pas fait honnêtement leur tâche. (M. Yourcenar, *L'œuvre au noir*, 1968, p. 788, Frantext)
          One could not complain that the theologians who were in charge of enumerating the impertinent, heretical, or frankly irreligious propositions extracted from the accused's work had not done their task honestly

Again, this is not a clear-cut matter: out of the 25 instances in the data base Frantext (taking texts since 1950), 10 are with the subjunctive and five with the indicative (eight are morphologically indistinct). Schlenker (2005), who notes the alternation with this verb, suggests the following meaning difference: the indicative appears in a speech act report, while the subjunctive characterizes the description of an attitude. While this is an interesting

suggestion, the attested data are difficult to interpret, notably because it is not clear when there is a speech act report or not (the difficulty is particularly evident when one looks at its use in newspapers.)

Contrary to what we saw in the preceding section, there is no clear correlation with a meaning difference located in the predicate itself. It is the environment in which the predicate appears which may induce a difference. Moreover, the effect is a matter of preferences: the environment makes it more or less probable that one or the other mood will appear, but which one is chosen is never mandatory. Given these observations, it does not make sense to try to double the lexemes and organize them in different classes. The alternation here reveals a class of mixed predicates: their lexical semantics shares aspects with verbs taking an indicative complement (verbs of communication, reasoning and belief) on the one hand, and verbs taking a subjunctive complement (modals of possibility, reasoning without an agent's commitment) on the other. The role of the context is to favor one or the other aspect of this complex semantics.

4.3. Polarity mood

Finally, some environments inducing non-positive polarity may license an alternation between the two moods. The clearest case nowadays is negation. An inverted interrogative verb (*pense-t-il* lit. 'thinks-he') can also induce the subjunctive; for unclear reasons, an interrogative sentence introduced by the complementizer *est-ce que* favors the subjunctive much less (Huot 1986).[3] It is also possible to find a subjunctive in a conditional clause, although rarely. Thus, some verbs belonging to classes (i)–(iii) are compatible with a subjunctive complement in these environments.

(39) a. Et pourtant, **je ne crois pas** que tu **sois**$_{SUBJ}$ aussi loin de moi que tu le penses **ni** que je **sois**$_{SUB}$ aussi loin de toi que je le crains. (J. d'Ormesson, *La douane de mer*, 1993, p. 246, Frantext)
   And yet, I don't think that you are as far from me as you think or that I am as   far from you as I fear

   b. – **Crois-tu** que ta religion **était**$_{IND}$ la seule à être vraie ?
   – Je ne sais pas, lui dis-je. **Je ne croyais pas** que ma famille **était**$_{IND}$ la seule à être bonne. **Je ne croyais pas** que ma patrie **était**$_{IND}$ la seule à être juste. (J. d'Ormesson, *La douane de mer,* 1993, p. 271, Frantext)
   – Do you think that your religion was the only one that was true ?
   – I don't know, I said. I did not think that my family was the only one that was good, I did not think that my country was the only one that was just

   c. Alors, je me tuerai. Vous n'avez pas peur de la mort. Et moi, **croyez-vous** que je la **craigne**$_{SUBJ}$? (J. d'Ormesson, *Le bonheur à San Miniato*, 1987, p. 225, Frantext)
   So, I will kill myself. You are not afraid of death. Do you think that I am afraid of it?

   d. **S'il se trouve** que ces démarches nous **aient** souvent paru, à nous-mêmes, et désespérées, et souvent inauthentiques, c'est que [...] (P. Schaeffer, *Recherche musique concrète*, 1952, p. 124, Frantext)

---

[3]As suggested in Mosegaard-Hansen 2001, the two interrogative forms do not play the same role in dialogues. However, the interaction of this property with the mood of the complement clause is unclear, and the suggestion by the same author that *est-ce que* interrogatives 'highlight the doubt' about the proposition, or 'focus on [its] reality' remains somewhat vague. It may be that this is a reflex of the history of the polarity subjunctive and of *est-ce que*. Polarity subjunctive in French is on the decline, while the use of *est-ce que* to introduce a yes/no question is relatively recent (it appears in the 16th century; see Grevisse & Goosse 2011).

If it is the case that those moves have often seemed to us both hopeless and unauthentic, it's because […]

To our knowledge, there is no meaning difference between the sentence with an indicative or a subjunctive clause, which can be argued for with independent evidence (but see Huot 1986 for an attempt). This is precisely the observation which led Gross (1978) to abandon the hypothesis that the subjunctive mood was semantically motivated in contemporary French. French differs in this respect from Spanish and Catalan, where the mood difference is semantically driven in this context (see Quer 2001).

Although this is not usually pointed out (but see Soutet 2000), predicates normally taking an indicative are not the only ones to possibly shift mood in these polarity environments. Negative predicates (belonging to the same semantic domains of communication and belief), which take a subjunctive complement when they are in a positive declarative sentence, are compatible with an indicative when they are themselves negated (see above class (vi-c)). The examples in (40), which come from the same author, illustrate both possibilities. Again, no clear meaning difference has been shown to exist, even if French speakers like to feel that this might be the case.

(40) a. […] sa double obsession : les femmes et l'argent. Il **ne doutait pas** que les deux choses **fussent**$_{SUBJ}$ liées […] (M. Tournier, *Le Roi des aulnes*, 1970, p. 258, Frantext) his two obsessions: women and money. He did not doubt that they were linked

      b. Il ne saurait le dire, mais **il ne doute pas** que chaque étape du voyage […] **aura**$_{IND}$ sa contribution dans la formule de la cellule gémellaire […] (M. Tournier, *Les Météores*, 1975, p. 601)
      He would not be able to explain, but he has no doubt that each stage of the journey will make a contribution to the formula of the twin cell […]

In fact, if the semantico-pragmatic generalizations (20) and (27) were really conditions on the appropriateness of the two moods applying in all contexts (as we have mostly presented them, following usual practice), predicates of communication and belief should not be able to take an indicative complement when the predicate is negated or the clause is interrogative, since the subject fails to commit himself to the truth of the proposition: in (39b), there is no commitment of the entity denoted by the subject of *croire*, and no intervention of a different agent (since we are looking at dialogues in novels), no more than in (39a,c). We would expect that only the subjunctive be acceptable, but we find both. The case is even worse when the predicate is in a conditional structure: while the subjunctive is expected, sentences such as (39d) with a subjunctive are not impossible, but they are rare and belong to a high register; usually, one finds an indicative.

On the other hand, when negative predicates are themselves negated, the clause is roughly equivalent to a positive one with the corresponding positive predicate. Thus, *ne pas douter* is equivalent to 'believe', *ne pas contester* and *ne pas nier* to 'recognize', and *il n'est pas douteux* to 'it is true'. So, we expect that they take an indicative complement (the semantico-pragmatic conditions for the two moods are reversed), but we find both.

The question is: how come some predicates of belief and communication may alternate, accepting the same mood as in a positive declarative clause, when this mood is not (semantically and/or pragmatically) motivated? We propose an analysis in the next section in terms of (incomplete) grammaticalization.

144

4.4. The role of grammaticalization

In the preceding sections, we have presented two potential difficulties for the analysis of the moods in complement clauses. With the mixed predicates, both moods may appear because their semantics is complex, and both moods may be motivated. The role of the context is to allow one or the other aspect to come to the fore, thus favoring one or the other mood. With the polarity environments, only one mood is motivated, but both can be used.

The group of mixed predicates includes the evaluatives (class (vi-b)). At least with the factives (*regretter* 'regret'), the entity denoted by the subject (alternatively, the speaker, see §3.1) commits himself/herself to the proposition denoted by the complement, at the same time as s/he acknowledges that things might have been different. Unlike the predicates mentioned in §4.2, though, evaluatives always take the subjunctive in standard French (as opposed to Romanian, for instance, where they allow for both moods, see above (29)). To explain this different behavior, we appeal to grammaticalization: French has grammaticalized the subjunctive with this set of predicates. That is, the fact that they take a subjunctive complement clause is part of their subcategorization. The French lexicon includes for instance the specification that *regretter* takes a subjunctive complement. In other words, the association of predicates of a certain class with the choice of a mood has been frozen: the subjunctive is motivated, but the absence of the indicative with most predicates of this class cannot be explained on semantico-pragmatic grounds.

Appealing to grammaticalization in this case requires a more liberal use of the term than is usually done: grammaticalization studies are nearly uniquely concerned with the evolution of lexemes. Some authors (see Traugott 2003) do mention the relevance of constructions, but mostly in order to talk about constructions which evolve into lexemes. However, there does not seem to be any principled objection to applying the concept to the evolution of constructions which get frozen without giving rise to a lexeme. In fact, we find in Marchello-Nizia 2006 an account of the fixation of the relative order of the verb and the object NP complement since the 13th century in French, which appeals to grammaticalization. Certainly, instances of syntactic grammaticalization do not exhibit the properties usually associated with well-known instances of this process, but this results from the fact that most instances which have been studied concern the lexicon rather than syntax.

One might wonder why evaluatives have been specialized for a subjunctive complement. Becker (2010) shows that the gradual change from indicative selection in Old French to the dominance of subjunctive selection in the 17th century is correlated with emphasis on the comparative semantics underlying the subjunctive. However, this is insufficient to explain the disappearance of the indicative complement, while predicates such as *comprendre* retain both combinations (see §4.1). A possibility is that French uses the contrast in complement moods in order to organize lexical classes and contrasts. Such predicates cover the same semantic domains as those in the classes taking the indicative mood. However, they systematically differ from those precisely by their evaluative aspect. Hence, a systematic difference in mood may be a way to ground in the lexicon the existence of a systematic semantico-pragmatic difference.

The case is similar for the less massive cases mentioned in §4.2. Probability is distinct from possibility specifically in that probability is closer to indicating an agent's commitment, and similarly for the epistemic *il semble* ('it seems'), as opposed to possibility or necessity. These lexical contrasts probably favor keeping the indicative, although these predicates are modals, and modal structures strongly tend towards the use of the subjunctive. Finally, the fact that *espérer* ('hope') tends to be followed by the indicative is often presented as a mystery of the French subjunctive (specially as grammars often say that this is a rule). But it is less of a mystery when one recognizes that it is a mixed predicate, which may take the subjunctive in

certain environments. Again, the reason why the indicative is favored may come from a lexical contrast with *souhaiter* ('wish'). The two lexemes are very close, since they describe a positive attitude towards a situation whose existence is not certain. However, they are not synonymous. *Espérer* is closer to belief predicates, and *souhaiter* to desires. Thus, like belief predicates, one can hope for something and be wrong, which is not the case with *souhaiter*: no wish can be wrong, as is evident from the fact that wishes can go against what one knows to be the case, as shown by the contrast between (41a) and (41b) (Portner 1997). Moreover, like predicates of will and desire, *souhaiter* allows the conditional to license itself (it is not dependent), while this is not true of *espérer*, which requires a licensing context (Laca 2011). Thus, (41c) is not acceptable out of context, while (41d) is not problematic.

(41) a. Paul espérait que l'élection pourrait se dérouler correctement, mais il s'était trompé.
Paul hoped that the elections would take place in a correct way, but he was wrong

b. #Paul souhaitait que l'élection puise se dérouler correctement, mais il s'était trompé.
Paul wished that the elections would take place in a correct way, but he was wrong

c. #Paul espérerait que l'election se déroule correctement.
Paul would hope that the elections take place in a correct way

d. Paul souhaiterait que l'election se déroule correctement.
Paul would hope (= like) that the elections take place in a correct way.

The alternation of the moods in polarity environments can be understood as a case of partial grammaticalization (grammaticalization in progress). That is, one of the moods is motivated while the other has become a property of the subcategorization of the lexeme. We suppose, then, that, when a predicate allows for both moods in polarity contexts and is specialized in positive declarative clauses, there are in fact two different lexemes. One is described as taking a sentential complement, the other as taking a complement whose verb is in a certain mood. The first is able to combine with a complement in the indicative or the subjunctive, depending on which condition ((20) or (27)) applies. The second is an instance of a grammaticalized construction, a verb such as *dire* or *croire* taking an indicative complement clause, and a verb such as *douter* taking a subjunctive complement, whatever the environment in which they occur. The two systems co-exist: this is a case of true variation. But this variation has to be studied for itself. We have to look at corpora and also make psycho-linguistic experiences relying on acceptability judgments of a great many speakers, in controlled conditions, in order to elucidate the conditions which favor one or the other possibilities (see Börjeson 1966 for an examination of texts, which is already 50 years old).

An indication that polarity subjunctive may be on the decline is that the possibility to spread to lower clauses, which is a characteristic of this type of occurrence in Spanish and Catalan (where the contrast is motivated), as opposed to selected subjunctive, seems very weak nowadays in French, as shown by (42b) which is not accepted by all speakers, even those who master the different registers (*contra* Huot 1986), hence the sign of variable acceptability '%'.

(42) a. Ce locuteur ne croit pas que sa famille **soit**$_{SUBJ}$ la seule à être digne de cet honneur.
This speaker does not think that his family is the only one to be worthy of this honor.

b. %Ce locuteur ne croit pas que sa famille **puisse**$_{SUBJ}$ penser qu'elle **soit**$_{SUBJ}$ la seule à être digne de cet honneur.
This speaker does not think that his family says that they are the only one to be worthy of this honor.

Thus, grammaticalization is associated with a desemanticization of the alternation between the indicative and the subjunctive in that it freezes the relation between a given lexeme and a given mood in the complement. In some cases, it results in extending the use of the subjunctive, and in favoring its disappearance in other cases, but in all cases, it is the mood which appears in the positive declarative clauses which is frozen. Hence the change is unidirectional. Thus, this situation shares two important properties with usual instances of grammaticalization (desemanticization, unidirectionality). In standard French, the use of the subjunctive is alive, but its semantico-pragmatic motivation may be blurred by other factors.

To deal with the generalization of the subjunctive with evaluatives, we have added a principle of distribution of the moods (30) to the semantico-pragmatic conditions ((20), (27)). However, this solution is insufficient when one takes into account the smaller lexical contrasts with mixed predicates and the polarity mood. Indeed, we have seen cases where the indicative occurs although condition (27) is met or not excluded (e.g. with *probable*), and where the subjunctive occurs although condition (27) is not met (as with *ne pas douter*). Does that mean that generalizations concerning the motivation of the moods should be abandoned? We do not think so. They are, we maintain, good generalizations, although they allow for cases where they do not apply. In other words, they describe preferences rather than clear-cut rules. The alternation between indicative and subjunctive in the complement clauses in contemporary French is one phenomenon which shows that the grammatical system must allow for preferences (see e.g. Bresnan 2007).

References

Becker, Martin G. 2010. Principles of mood change in evaluative contexts: the case of French. *Modality and mood in Romance*, ed. by Martin G. Becker and Eva-Maria Remberger, 209–234. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Börjeson, L. 1966. La fréquence des subjonctifs dans les subordonnées introduites par que étudiée dans des textes français contemporains. *Studia Neophilologica* 38.3–64.

Bosque, Ignacio, and Violeta Demonte. 1999. *Gramática descriptiva de la lengua española*. Madrid: Espasa Calpe S.A. – Real Academia Española.

Bresnan, Joan. 2007. Is syntactic knowledge probabilistic? Experiments with the English dative alternation. *Roots: Linguistics in search of its evidential base*, ed. by S. Featherston and W. Sternefeld, 77–96. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

De Mulder, Walter, and Danièle Godard. 2010. Le subjonctif. Ms. *Grande grammaire du français*, ed. by Anne Abeillé, Danièle Godard, and Annie Delaveau. Arles: Actes Sud, to appear 2014.

Farkas, Donka F. 1992. On the semantics of subjunctive complements. *Romance Languages and Modern Linguistic Theory: Papers from the 20th Linguistic Symposium on Romance Languages* (LSRL XX), ed. by Paul Hirschbühler and Konrad Koerner, 69–103. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Farkas, Donka F. 2003. Assertion, belief and mood choice. Handout, Workshop on Conditional and Unconditional Modality, ESSLLI, Vienna, 2003.

Gaatone, David. 2003. La nature plurielle du subjonctif français. *La syntaxe raisonnée : Mélanges de linguistique générale et française offerts à Annie Boone à l'occasion de son 60e anniversaire*, ed. by Pascale Hadermann, Ann van Slijcke, and Michel Berré, 57–78. Louvain-la-Neuve: DeBoeck Duculot.

Ginzburg, Jonathan, and Ivan A. Sag. 2000. *Interrogative investigations*. Stanford: CSLI Publications.

Giorgi, Alessandra, and Fabio Pianesi. 1997. *Tense and aspect: From semantics to morphosyntax*. Oxford: OUP.

Godard, Danièle, and Walter De Mulder. 2011. Indicatif et subjonctif dans les complétives en français. *Cahiers de lexicologie* 98.148–160.

Grevisse, Maurice, and André Goosse. 2011. *Le bon usage*. Louvain-la-Neuve: DeBoeck-Duculot.

Gross, Maurice. 1978. Correspondance entre forme et sens à propos du subjonctif, *Langue française* 39.49–65.

Hooper, Joan B. 1975. On assertive predicates. *Syntax and semantics* 4, ed. by John P. Kimball, 91–124. New York: Academic Press.

Huddleston, Rodney D., and Geoffrey K. Pullum (eds). 2002. *The Cambridge grammar of the English language*. Cambridge: CUP.

Huot, Hélène. 1986. Le subjonctif dans les complétives : subjectivité et modélisation. *La grammaire modulaire*, ed. by M. Ronat and D. Couquaux, 81–111. Paris: Ed. de Minuit.

Korzen, Hanne. 2003. Subjonctif, indicatif et assertion : ou comment expliquer le mode dans les subordonnées complétives ? *Aspects de la modalité*, ed. by Meret Birkelund, Gerhard Boysen, and Poul S. Kjaersgaard, 113–129. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

Laca, Brenda. 2011. On the temporal orientation of intensional subjunctives in Spanish. Ms., U. Paris 8. To appear in *Sentence and Discourse*, ed. by Jacqueline Guéron.

Leeman, Danielle. 1994. *Grammaire du verbe français : des formes au sens, modes, aspects, temps, auxiliaires.* Paris: Nathan.

Marchello-Nizia, Christiane. 2006. *Grammaticalisation et changement linguistique*. Bruxelles: De boek.

Miller, Philip and Brian Lowrey. 2003. La complémentation des verbes de perception en anglais et en français. *Essais sur la grammaire comparée du français et de l'anglais*, ed. by Philip Miller and Anne Zribi-Hertz, 131–188. Paris: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes.

Mosegaard-Hansen, Maj-Britt. 2001. Form and function of yes/no interrogatives in spoken standard French. *Studies in Language* 25.463–520.

Portner, Paul. 1997. The Semantics of mood, complementation, and conversational force, *Natural Language Semantics* 5.167–212.

Quer, Josep. 2001. Interpreting mood. *Probus* 13.81–111.

Renzi, Lorenzo; Gianpaolo Salvi; and Anna Cardinaletti. 2001. *Grande grammatica italiana di consultazione.* Bologna: Il Mulino.

Schlenker, Philip. 2005. The lazy Frenchman's approach to the subjunctive (Speculations on reference to worlds and semantic defaults in the analysis of mood). *Proceedings of Going Romance XVII*. Online: `https://files.nyu.edu/pds4/public/)`.

Solà, Joan et al. (eds.) 2002. *Gramàtica del català contemporan*. Barcelona: Empuries.

Soutet, Olivier. 2000. *Le subjonctif en français*. Paris: Ophrys.

Traugott, Elizabeth Closs. 2003. Constructions in grammaticalization. *The handbook of historical linguistics*, ed. by Brian D. Joseph and Richard D. Janda, 624–647. Oxford: Blackwell.

Villalta, Elisabeth. 2008. Mood and gradability: an investigation of the subjunctive mood in Spanish. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 31.467–522.