Zero in syntax, ten in pragmatics: Subjectification as syntactic cancellation

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1. Introduction

Standard approaches to subjectification, both in cognitive theories and in grammaticalization frameworks, have been essentially of a semantic-pragmatic nature. This kind of process has been traditionally defined as a semantic-pragmatic change, as manifested in the well-known quotations in (1).

(1) a. Subjectification represents a common type of semantic change (Langacker 1991: 324)
   b. Subjectification is a shift from a relatively objective construal of some entity to a more subjective one (Langacker 2000: 297)
   c. Subjectification refers to a semantic-pragmatic process whereby meanings become increasingly based in the speaker’s subjective belief, state, attitude toward the proposition (Traugott 1995a: 31)
   d. Meanings tend to shift toward greater subjectivity, that is, they become increasingly associated with speaker attitude, especially metatextual attitude toward discourse flow (Traugott 1995b)

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1. I wish to thank Álvaro Octavio de Toledo, Salvador Pons Bordería, Rena Torres Cacoullos and Elizabeth Traugott for a detailed critical reading and valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper.

2. Definitions use two labels ‘subjectification’ and ‘subjectivity’. At first sight they seem to be synonymous terms; however, subjectification seems to refer to the diachronic process whereby an expression over time acquires subjective meanings, whereas subjectivity seems to be a synchronic term, referring to the resultant subjective expression. The same semantic-pragmatic perspective of (1) may be found in many other works (Langacker 1985, 1999; Nuyts 2001; Traugott 1989; Traugott and Dasher 2002: 20–21, 30, 96, and references cited therein; most works mentioned in Stein and Wright 1995, etc.).
e. Subjectification is the semasiological process whereby SP/Ws come over time to develop meanings for Ls that encode or externalize their perspectives and attitudes as constrained by the communicative world of the speech event, rather than by the so-called ‘real-world’ (Traugott and Dasher 2002: 30)

f. Subjectivity involves the expression of self and the representation of a speaker’s... perspective or point of view in discourse (Finegan 1995: 1)

g. Subjectivity refers to the way in which natural languages, in their structure and their normal manner of operation provide for the locutionary agent’s expression of himself and of his own attitudes and beliefs (Lyons 1982: 102)

The aim of this paper is to look closely at the syntactic side of subjectification, a concept that has up to now been mainly seen from a semantic-pragmatic side. I will try to show that subjectification, besides being a semantic-pragmatic change displaying a regular pattern, constitutes a specific syntactic change of its own as well.

I will begin with the traditional definition of subjectification: the dynamic process by which the speaker’s appraisals, points of view and attitudes about the event (subjective meaning) and his/her interaction, social or affective distance-proximity with regard to the hearer (intersubjective meaning) may find explicit codification in grammar, becoming a coded symbolic and highly-conventionalized meaning in the grammar of a language (Langacker 1985, 1991, 1999; 2001; Traugott 1995, 1999a, 1999b; Traugott and Dasher 2002: 20–21, 30, 96). At the same time, I will assume that the difference between an objective reading and a subjective one is a graded matter; the gradualness is based on the degree of conceptualizer or hearer involvement in the utterance.

The organization of this paper is as follows: section 2 is devoted to a brief account of how the literature has treated the general changes involved in a subjectification process. In section 3, I will present the hypothesis and the theoretical basis underlying it. In section 4, the longest one, I will analyze four changes in Spanish supporting the hypothesis. Section 5 constitutes a summary of the relationship between subjectification and syntax.
2. Background

The scholarly literature on subjectification has usually focused on two semantic-pragmatic changes, both studied in depth.

i) Lessening of the referential meaning. Most scholars consider that pre-emption of referential meaning is a prerequisite for forms to acquire a valorative meaning, both an evaluative function/subjective meaning, and an interpersonal function/intersubjective meaning (Bybee and Pagliuca 1985: 74; Campbell 2001: 118–121; Company 2001; Sweetser 1988: 392; Traugott 1982: 258, 1995: 39; Traugott and Dasher 2002: 31, 149; Verhagen 1995).

ii) Metaphoric-metonymic changes. The second semantic aspect in subjectification is the metaphoric-metonymic, inferential, discourse-based process by which individual implicatures become conventionalized implicatures in a speech community. The change is as follows: the speaker charges the message, in a veiled way, with a personal valuation which invites the hearer to interpret more than what is really said. The hearer correctly infers the perspective or point of view that the speaker wished to convey and assumes that the subjective shading inferred is an established value for the form or construction used by the speaker. This individual inference becomes, with the passage of time, a conventional inference shared by the speakers of the linguistic community and thus the new, inferred value comes to have a standard, conventional meaning crystallized in the grammar, most of the time added to the conservative etymological value. The diachronic path for the generalization of individual implicatures is the following: individual inference, invited by context > generalized invited inference > conventionalized meaning (Barcelona 2000; Pinto de Lima 2002; Schwenter and Traugott 2000; Traugott 1999a, 1999b; Traugott and Dasher 2002: ch.1).

The examples in (2) exemplify these two semantic-pragmatic changes. In (2a) the Spanish verb andar ‘to walk’ shows its referential, etymological meaning of movement along a path and, in consequence, it takes a locative argument, al escuela ‘to the school’, which is the goal of the movement. By contrast, the same verb in (2b) has a subjective meaning of exhorting somebody to do something (Company 2004), it has been deprived of its etymological meaning, and because of that it co-occurs with another movement verb vete ‘go’, the verb andar metaphorically means intensive movement.
Specialized literature also points to some syntactic effects or correlations between semantic subjectification and formal grammaticalization. Four syntactic changes or formal consequences may be identified in the literature:

(i) *Weakening or loss of agent control.* Subjectivity attenuates the subject of the sentence. Typically, a subjective expression does not take a human volitive agent capable of controlling the patient or of acting in the event, but rather inanimate nominals usually stand as the subject of a subjective expression (Langacker 1999, 2000), and frequently a subjective expression lacks a subject. The weakening or loss of control by an agent causes a weakening of the participants’ relations in the sentence in such a way that the sentence as a whole, and not any particular constituent, supports the subjective reading, and not any of its constituents (Kemenade 1999: 1007; Traugott and Dasher 2002: 22–23; Verhagen 1995: 113). The examples in (2) above also exemplify this change: in (2a) the verb *andar* ‘to walk’ takes a human subject, *Blasillo*, which moves toward a place; in (2b) there is no subject, the verb cannot take any subject nominal.

(ii) *Fronting and widening of predicational scope.* Subjective expressions typically have extrapositional scope, and for that reason they are flexible as to the place they can occupy in the discourse, although they usually appear at the beginning of the utterance, in the leftmost position – a fronting effect – or in some languages like Spanish, at the rightmost position. Subjectification, in consequence, entails broadening the scope of predication. By contrast, non-subjective expressions have intrapositional scope (Adamson 2000: 40; Campbell 2001: 137; Tabor and Traugott 1998; Wischer 2000: 357).

The examples in (3) exemplify the broadening of scope in a modal adverb. In (3a) the adverb *finalmente* ‘finally’ preserves its etymological
meaning of introducing the last event in a series of actions. It is placed in
the middle of the complex sentence, prior to the last verb. By contrast in
(3b) the same adverb conveys a subjective meaning and it is placed at the
beginning of the utterance, where it has wider scope.

(3) a. Primero se pelan las papas, después se remoja
first rflx peel the potatoes afterwards rflx soak
la cebolla en sal, luego se calienta bien el aceite,
the onion in salt, later rflx heats well the oil
y finalmente se echa todo junto a freir
and finally rflx put all together to fry
‘First the potatoes are peeled, then the onions are soaked in salt,
next the oil is heated and finally it is all fried together.’

b. Finalmente me dieron la beca, no estuvo tan difícil
Finally me-dat gave-they the grant, not it-was so difficult
‘I was finally given the grant. It wasn’t so difficult.’

(iii) Fixation of form and autonomy of predication. Subjectification may
evolve into fixed expressions, especially when it concerns the evolution of
valorative discourse markers. For example, Traugott speaks of “pauses”
and “fixed” forms referring to some discourse markers in English (1995,
1999). The scholarly literature on pragmatic particles consistently points
out that discourse-pragmatic particles – many of them resulting from a
subjectification process – are prosodically independent, separated from the
surrounding context by pauses and/or intonation breaks, and syntactically
isolated from the rest of the sentence in which they occur (Fraser 1996,
1999; Schourup 1999; Schwenter 1996; Zicky 1985). The form ándale in
(2b) exemplifies this change, in that it is a fixed expression constituting an
autonomous predication.

(iv) Loss of syntactic capacities. In passing, scholarly literature signals
that subjectification may give rise to a rigidizing of the usual syntactic
distribution of the forms undergoing this change, in such a way that sub-
jective expressions frequently display very restricted syntax, both in distri-
bution and in complementation.³ Again, the example in (2b) shows this

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³. For example, Langacker (1985, 1991) distinguishes between the overt subject
of the sentence and the covert subject of an utterance, and characterizes the
construal of strongly subjective predications as “zero expression”, because “the
conceptualizer is on stage” and the expression is formally reduced to a mini-
effect: the movement verb of andale has lost all its syntactic capacity to subcategorize locative complements or to take a subject.

Despite the identification of these syntactic effects, the structural syntactic consequences effected by a subjunctification change have not been studied to the same degree as the semantic-pragmatic consequences listed earlier. In particular, the syntactic consequences in (iii) and (iv) have been very scantly studied, much less than the formal changes in (i) and (ii), and, in general, the theoretical reasons underlying this syntactic fixation and cancellation have not been studied at all.

The specific aim of this paper is twofold. On the one hand, I will look more closely at the syntactic correlates of subjunctification. That is, I will try to make explicit why subjective expressions are usually fixed and deprived of syntax. I will attempt to shed some light on the cognitive reasons for the syntactic impoverishment that many subjective expressions display. On the other hand, I will analyze the syntactic consequences that subjunctification changes have on Spanish syntax, analyzing the syntactic evolution of four discourse markers, and focusing on the least-studied changes in (iii), fixation and autonomy of predication, and iv), loss of syntactic capacities.

3. The hypothesis

My idea is that syntactic considerations constitute a major part in the analysis of subjunctification, and that subjunctification is a specific syntactic change in and of itself. Differences in the degree of the speaker’s involve-

mum as compared to a non-subjective predication. Cornillie (2004: ch. 3) has shown that certain verbs have restricted distribution and tense restrictions when they enter into quasi-modal epistemic predications, whereas in performative readings the same verbs do not face so many restrictions. Adamson (2000: 57), focusing on the adjective string in English, says in passing that valorative, subjective adjectives can be distinguished from the central descriptive adjectives by “a reduction or loss of syntactic properties”. Verhagen (1995, 2000: 204) focusing on modal verbs, considers that epistemic meaning is not an increase in subjectivity, but rather a “loss of descriptive aspects of meaning”. Recently, Company (2004, forthcoming) has studied the syntactic rigidization and the syntactic-cancellation effect conveyed by a subjunctification change, emphasizing that subjective forms are usually unable to enter into full syntactic relations, as compared to the normal syntactic capacities of those non-subjective expressions.
ment in the utterance always leave syntactic or formal evidence, or what may be called structural traces, which indicates the degree of subjectivity the expression conveys. This statement captures the hypothesis of "parallel reduction" formulated by Bybee, Perkins and Pagliuca (1994: ch. 4), or the concept of "co-evolution" in Bybee and Pagliuca (1985); see also Brinton (1996: 250 ff.).

The proposal of this paper is that there exists a quite transparent inverse correlation between the quantity of syntax a form needs and the subjective meaning that form conveys: more syntax = more objectivity, or less subjectivity, and, on the contrary, less, or even zero syntax = more subjectivity; thus it is possible to say that structural weight is inversely proportional to pragmatic subjective weight. The expression 'quantity of syntax' must be understood as the relational syntactic capacity the form has, i.e. the capacity to subcategorize, to take modification and complementation, to be expanded or replaced by other forms, etc.

The specific hypothesis may be stated as follows:

There exists a dynamics by which, as forms are enriched with pragmatic-subjective meanings, they frequently become rigid and weaken their usual syntactic capacity, to the extent that subjective expressions usually cancel the normal syntax of the forms undergoing subjectification. Subjectification motivates syntactic isolation.4

4. The term frequently deserves an explanation. Recent research in progress about subjectification changes in the history of Spanish (Company Ms.) shows that there seem to be two kinds of subjectification as regards the syntactic effects and as regards the directionality of linguistic change. i) One type initiates in the textual-syntactic level and continues functioning in syntax, with a different distribution and different syntactic-semantic properties as regards its etymon. For example, deontic-external modality > epistemic-internal modality: *puede que esté enfermo ‘he/she might be sick’, puede escribir ‘you can write’ (with the meaning of permission), or temporal subordination > subjective concessive subordination: *mientras no te tomes la sopa, no sales a jugar ‘while you don’t eat the soup, you don’t go outside’, fall in this first type. Subjective forms in this first type seem to modify rather than weaken or cancel their syntactic capacities; that is, objective complementation pattern correlates with a subjective complementation pattern of a different nature. ii) The other type begins in syntax, cancels its syntactic and morphological capacities, produces syntactic isolation and ends in discourse as autonomous forms. Verb > deverbal discourse marker: y *dale que dale!, ándale!, venga!, ‘come on’, noun > nominal discourse marker, *lástima! ‘what a pity!’, temporal adverb > stance adverb, por
Two mutually complementary causes are at work in achieving this syntactic cancellation: one of them of grammatical diachronic nature, the other one of cognitive nature.

(i) The first cause is that forms need time, i.e. historical depth, to acquire a subjective meaning, and that time implies erosion and lessening, even loss, of the syntactic distribution of the forms. It is accepted that forms with subjective meaning are of late documentation; they are generally attested later than the corresponding forms with a non-subjective meaning (Bybee and Pagliuca 1985).

(ii) The second cause is that the focus of a subjective expression is to project the speaker’s valorations, judgements or perspectives, and, as a result, the descriptive and referential aspects of the expression are defocused. In other words, when using a subjective form or construction, the speaker is not interested in talking about the forms or in describing the world around him/her, but (s)he is only interested in projecting his/her own attitude and perspective on the event, and, accordingly, the speaker does not need syntax. That is, syntax – adjectives, modifiers, complements, arguments, subject, etc. – becomes dispensable, superfluous or unnecessary in subjectification. A subjective expression undergoes syntactic isolation and syntactic rigidizing, because the referential descriptive syntactic aspects of the expression are unnecessary and, in consequence, forms usually restrict, or even cancel, their distributional and relational capacities in subjectification.

It is accepted that subjectification conveys a loss of the descriptive and referential aspects of meaning, and consequently, from a syntactic point of

fin, al fin, finalmente me dieron la beca ‘at least’ ‘finally’, fall in this second type. This second type of subjectification seems to be more common than the preceding one in the history of Spanish. The process in both cases is the same: the speaker’s appraisals, points of view and attitudes about the event and his/her interaction with regard to the hearer find explicit codification in grammar, the change in both cases produces an effect of layering, but the directionality of the change is very different in each case. One kind of subjectification moves down in the cline of grammaticalization, and the other kind moves up in the cline. The directionality syntax > pragmatics that the second type shows obviously posits serious problems for the traditional definition of grammaticalization, which establishes the inverse directionality: discourse > syntax. For a discussion about the kind of theoretical change they constitute, cf. Traugott (1995b), Norde (2003), Company (2003), among others.
view, the change also implies loss and cancellation of the syntax required by those descriptive referential meanings.

4. The data. Subjectification and syntactic cancellation in Spanish

The same pattern of syntactic impoverishment runs through most categories in Spanish when they undergo subjectification: anaphors, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions and prepositions. The expendability of syntax, with the consequent syntactic isolation of forms, is the constant trait of many subjectification changes in the diachrony of Spanish.

I will devote the rest of this paper to exemplifying such syntactic behavior. I will examine four changes in which subjectification occurs, in four different grammatical categories. In all of them, syntactic cancellation, and, in many cases, syntactic isolation, is manifested in two complementary ways:

a) The subjective expression is isolated between pauses, constituting a whole predication in and of itself, unable to establish syntactic relations with other predicates, and appearing at the leftmost or – as frequently happens in Spanish – the rightmost, position (broadening of scope). By contrast, the corresponding non-subjective construction takes the usual modification and complementation, it is neither isolated nor does it constitute an autonomous predication.

b) The subjective construction cannot be paraphrased, nor can it be replaced by a synonymous form. It is deprived of its usual modification and complementation; that is, it cannot take the complementation and subcategorization that would be required in the non-subjective reading. For example, if it is an anaphora, it loses anaphoric and linkage capacity and cannot be replaced by another anaphor paradigmatically associated with it (change 3.2). If it is an adjective, it takes scant or no adjectival modification nor may it be expanded (change 3.3). If it is a verb, it loses part, or even all, of its usual argument structure (changes 3.1 and 3.2). If it is a prepositional phrase, the range of nouns capable of being selected by a preposition is drastically reduced, etc. (change 3.4).

All changes show that, as forms gain valorative pragmatic meanings, they progressively cancel their relational syntactic capacity. The changes also show the well-known fact that semantic and syntactic changes are accumulative, causing a layering effect (Hopper 1991), in that the new meaning and the new distribution are accumulated into the pre-existing
ones, and both meanings, the referential one and the subjective one, as well as constructions with intermediate semantic nuances, may co-exist for centuries in the language.

The expressions that will be analyzed in this paper changed in meaning from less to more personal; the change started out in the non-subjective propositional content as expressions of time-space, transference, objective quantification and locative goal and, in the process of subjectification, acquired more valorative meanings, in such a way that the last stage of each change lacks propositional content. In sum, the original lexical element firstly operates in the propositional non-subjective domain, and moves, via some specific and favorable contexts, into the subjective domain. The constructions analyzed here generally ended up falling outside the propositional component, but they derive diachronically from it, as the continuum of examples in each and every change shows.

4.1. Intransitive verbs

Examples (4) and (5) show the syntactic contrast between a non-subjective reading and a subjective one with the verb *ir* a ‘to go’ + infinitive. In (4a) the verb *ir* ‘to go’ preserves its etymological meaning of movement. It takes a locative complement and a human subject with the semantic role of agent, which moves volitionally to a specific location to do something at that location. The subject has control and is able to accomplish the movement and the action denoted by the infinitive. The examples in (4b–4d) show that the constituents of the sentence in a non-subjective proposition behave as syntactically full entities: the verb allows complementation with an adverb (4b), and in turn the subject may be modified by another noun phrase or by adjectives (4b). The verb has no tense restrictions: it may appear in different tenses (4c), and can be paraphrased or replaced by a cognate verb of movement without a drastic change in meaning, as in (4d).

(4)  

a. Los sábados María va al mercado a comprar  
the saturdays Mary-subj goes to the market to buy

su mandado
her groceries

‘On Saturdays Mary goes to the market to buy her groceries’

b. Los sábados la buena María, la esposa de Juan, va
the saturdays the good Mary-subj, the wife of John, goes
muy temprano al mercado a comprar su mandado
very early to the market to buy her groceries
‘On Saturdays the good Mary, John’s wife, goes to the market very early to buy her groceries’
c. El sábado María fue/irá al mercado a comprar
The Saturday Mary went/will go to the market to buy
su mandado
her groceries
‘On Saturday Mary went/will go to the market to buy her groceries’
d. Los sábados María camina hasta el mercado
The Saturdays Mary walks to the market
para comprar su mandado
to buy her groceries
‘On Saturdays Mary walks to the market to buy her groceries’

By contrast, (5a) below has a subjective meaning and also has multiple distributional restrictions. The verb ir ‘to go’ does not mean movement toward a location. It is degraded to an auxiliary function. The subject, the inanimate entity café ‘coffee’, is incapable of displacement, and the human participant, which was the subject in the non-subjective proposition, is now degraded, encoded as the oblique dative experiencer te ‘you’. It is the entire sentence that expresses the subjective meaning, and with it the speaker warns the listener that the coffee might spill. The verb may take no adverb and the subject may not have any modifier, as shown in (5b) and (5c). The construction may not be paraphrased. It functions as a whole, forming a quasi-fixed expression.

(5) a. Se te va a caer el café
   rflx you-dat goes to spill the coffee-subj
   ‘Your coffee is going to spill’
b. * Se te va a caer ahora/pronto el café
   * rflx you-dat goes to spill now/soon the coffee-subj
   * ‘Your coffee is going to spill now’
c. * Se te va a caer el café colombiano
   * rflx you-dat goes to spill the coffee Colombian-subj
   * ‘The Columbian coffee is going to spill’
4.2. Transitive verbs

A similar situation of loss of syntactic properties is found in the subjective reading of the ditransitive transfer verb *dar* 'to give'. Examples in (6) show a gradient from non-subjective to subjective meaning. In the source stage, a full verb co-occurs with or subcategorizes a dative participant, which may optionally be doubled by an anaphor in the form of a dative clitic attached to the verb. In the last stage both the verb and the dative clitic lose syntactic and semantic capacities and undergo univerbation. A discourse-pragmatic marker of strongly subjective meaning is recruited from the verb + dative clitic construction.

(6)  

a. *porque le dieron a su padre*  
because him-dat gave-they to his father-dat  
siete ocho mantillas (LHEM, s.v. *le*, 1525.1)  
seven or eight little blankets-acc  
'Because they gave his father seven or eight little blankets'

b. *porque le daban a su padre...*  
because him-dat gave-imperfect-they to his father-dat  
*porque le entregaron a su padre...*  
because him-dat turned over to his father-dat  
'Because they gave/turned over to his father seven or eight little blankets'

c. *¿Qué haces? — Pues aquí dándole, qué remedio*  
what do-you? well here giving-it-dat what remedy  
'What are you doing? Working my head off. What else is one to do?'

d. *¡Y dale! ¿Pero no ves tú lo que cuesta*  
and dale! but don't see-you it-what costs  
mantener una familia? (CORDE, s.v. *dale*, Coloma 1928)  
to support a family?  
'And dale!. Don’t you see how expensive it is to maintain a family?'

e. *Dale que dale!, pero qué pesada eres,*  
dale what dale, but what terribly dull are-you,  
siempre con lo mismo  
always with the same thing  
'Dale, dale over and over again. Don’t you ever get tired?*
In (6a) *dieron* ‘they gave’ functions as a full ditransitive verb occurring with three participants. In this sentence an object, *siete u ocho mantillas* ‘seven or eight blankets’, is transferred to a new possessor, the indirect object *a su padre* ‘to his father’. The subject, *dieron* ‘they’, volitionally transfers the object, and hence the subject has control of the event. The presence of the indirect object – the endpoint of the predicative relation – enhances the agentic role of the subject. In turn the indirect object is syntactically flexible in that it appears twice, in lexical form and as an anaphor, the form *le* ‘him’, which precedes the verb; the dative clitic is coreferential with the lexical indirect object. The dative clitic functions as a full anaphor, linking a nominal, and it might be omitted, as in (6a): *dieron a su padre*. The verb in (6a) displays full syntactic capacities. For example, it could be substituted with other tenses and could be paraphrased by other verbs of its same lexical field, as (6b) shows. The resultant expression is a non-subjective one. The example in (6c) constitutes an intermediate stage in the subjectification process. The verb has no time limits and no explicit agentic subject, although the context lets one infer that the subject is the speaker, ‘ego’; there is neither a direct object nor a lexical indirect object, and that is why the transfer meaning has been completely weakened, the verb now receives a general meaning close to ‘doing something’. As regards the dative clitic *le* attached to the verb, it would be possible to infer an abstract locus goal, of the kind *dándole al trabajo* ‘giving-it to the work’, or a neuter goal *dándole a eso* ‘giving-it to that’, but actually the dative clitic lacks a specific or discourse referent. It may not be doubled by a lexical indirect object, and, in consequence, it is not an anaphor. The proposition of (6c) is no longer an objective utterance, but neither is it a strong, subjective one.

Finally, the examples in (6d) are hard to analyze as verb + anaphor; the verb may only be inflected in imperative and has also lost its typical ditransitive valence features. It no longer means transference of an entity to a recipient, and the verb plus the dative clitic *le* form a fixed expression that usually appears at the beginning of the utterance, isolated from other constituents. Since the dative may be characterized in general terms as a locus-goal, the goal in *dale* is maintained, but it now encodes a pragmatic goal,
the event itself – an English translation might be ‘not again!’’. The innovative form dale shows broadening of scope, in that it necessarily appears at the leftmost position. It also displays syntactic isolation, in that it necessarily stands alone or may occur only with certain specific restricted forms, in fixed distribution, as for example, with an intensive y ‘and’ in the fixed order y dale!; or in a reduplicated structure, as in (6e) dale que dale!, or in co-occurrence with the preposition con ‘with’, as in y dale con eso ‘enough of that’. Any other syntactic relation is cancelled. The impossibility of adding anything to that subjective utterance may be seen in (6f).

The verb + dative expression dale has been reanalyzed as a formula-like expression which works as an autonomous predication, close to a subjective discourse-pragmatic marker, a kind of unitary discourse particle, by means of which the speaker manifests his/her annoyance with regard to another person’s discourse, or even another person’s behavior, because that person is being too insistent about the same old thing.

4.3. Quantifier adjectives

A similar syntactic impoverishment is displayed by some quantifier adjectives when they enter into a subjectification process, such as the indefinite adjective poco ‘few/little’, which moved from a quantifier adjective meaning to an exclamative, valorative marker; both meanings are active in present-day Spanish. Examples in (7) show five diachronic steps in the evolution of poco, an adjective whose etymological, referential meaning was ‘less than the normal’. The last example has a more subjective meaning than the preceding one, and the first example has no subjective meaning at all. In (7a) poco functions as a full adjective, inflected for gender and number. It is flexible enough to co-occur in coordination with other indefinite adjectives, as the third example in (7a) shows, and it is also flexible enough to be constructed in noun phrases or in prepositional phrases, with diverse prepositions, con ‘with’, de ‘of’, a ‘to’, etc. In turn, the adjective may be modified by an adverb, as the second example in (7a) shows. Example (7b) constitutes an intermediate stage between the non-subjective propositional meaning of (7a) and the subjective meaning of (7c,d). In (7b) poco has weakened its referential quantifier meaning, functioning as an adverb which metaphorically constructs a temporal mental path, the adverb modifies the verb, having scope over the verb which follows it only, and therefore it could also be placed after the verb: me voy acercando a ti poco
a poco ‘I am getting closer to you little by little’; however, the expression is somewhat fixed because the preposition a is already obligatory in these sentences, it may not be substituted by other prepositions. As far as subjective poco is concerned, the examples in (7c) and (7d) show the subjectification process of this quantifier. The expression a poco is fixed, it cannot be modified by a nominal or adverb. With it, the speaker expresses admiration, skepticism or surprise about the hearer’s utterance. A poco in (7c) is still integrated in the sentence, but the initial leftmost position means that the adverb has wider scope than in (7b): it now has scope over the whole sentence. Example (7d) constitutes a further step in the subjectification of poco: it forms an autonomous predication; it occurs alone, completely deprived of syntax, and is unable to be modified or to enter into syntactic relations with other forms.

(7)  

a. Vinieron **pocos** visitantes (DEM, s.v. poco)  
came few-pl-masc visitors  
‘Few visitors came’  
Y él está ya tan viejo y con tan poca salud  
And he is already so old and with so little-sg-fem health  
(LHEM, s.v. poco, 1578.73)  
‘And he is already so old and in such poor health’  
Parece hombre violento y de poca o ninguna  
Seems-he man violent and of little-sg-fem or no prudencia (LHEM, s.v. poco, 1740.202)  
prudence/wisdom  
‘He seems like such a violent man and so careless’  

b. Poco a poco me voy acercando a ti,  
little by little me-rflx go-1st-sg approaching to you,  
poco a poco la distancia se va haciendo menos  
little by little the distance rflx-3rd goes doing less  
‘Little by little I am drawing closer to you, little by little the distance is becoming less’  

c. ¡A poco no vas a venir? (DEM, s.v. poco)  
a poco not you-go to come?  
‘You really mean you’re not going to come?’  

d. —Me saqué la lotería — ¿A poco?  
me-rflx won-1st sg the lottery a poco?!  
‘I won the lottery. — Really?/You don’t say!’
4.4. Prepositional phrases

This last section deals with a progressive weakening of a goal, via a metonymic change from a locative goal to a mental valorative goal. The Spanish preposition *para* 'for, to' originally entailed a goal, the final locus of transitivity or of movement of the verb, as the examples in (8a) show. Both a geographic locus and a personal beneficiary locus were allowed. When it has a referential locative-goal meaning, forming a non-subjective expression, the preposition is syntactically flexible, being related to different transitive or intransitive verbs, and it subcategorizes different kinds of nouns. Its meaning is close to other directional prepositions, it is well integrated paradigmatically and, in consequence, it may be replaced, with a minimal meaning change, by another directional preposition: *va a Madrid* '(s)he goes to Madrid', *le dio un papel cerrado a la madre abadesa* '(s)he gave a closed paper to the abbess'. In (8b) the source meaning of the locative goal of *para* is weakened, in that it codes a temporal goal, via the well-known metaphorical process of coding time with spatial grammatical tools. The example in (8c) shows a further step in the weakening of the goal; it now being a valorative goal, the preposition *para* has added a new valorative meaning to its source meaning, the nominal related to the preposition still being a full noun phrase. The examples in (8d) exhibit the final step in the subjectification process. The goal is now a mental, valorative one; the construction preposition + pronoun encodes the speaker's point of view toward the ongoing discourse; it functions as a topic-focuser, and after it the speaker says what (s)he thinks about a certain point. In this stage the preposition only subcategorizes pronouns or, more rarely, proper nouns. In turn, the pronoun does not admit any modification or expansion, and pronouns and proper nouns cannot easily co-occur, as (8e) shows: the preposition has lost syntactic relationality. The entire prepositional phrase must stand alone, followed by a pause. It cannot be replaced by another preposition.

The change of *para* is a clear example of the well-known diachronic tendency by which deixis goes from being locative-external to being discourse-internal: spatial deixis > temporal deixis > discourse deixis (Heine, Claudi and Hünnefeyer 1991: 182), and it also clearly confirms Traugott's proposal about diachronic semantic shift (1989: 34–35) under which meanings formerly based on the external, described situation become increasingly based on the speaker's subjective beliefs.
(8) a. Va para Madrid muy seguido (Espinosa 1999)  
goes-(s)he for/to Madrid very often  
‘(S)he goes to Madrid quite often’

Le dio dicho cavallero un papel serrado  
him-dat gave-3rd aforementioned knight a paper closed/

para la madre abadesa (Espinosa 1999)  
sealed-acus for the mother abbess  
‘Said knight gave the mother-abbess a sealed paper’

b. Para el viernes, ya habré acabado  
for the Friday, already will-have-1st-sg finished  
‘I will already have finished by Friday’

c. Y es que yo para la escuela era, de plano,  
And it-is that I for the school was, really,  
muy mala (Espinosa 1999)  
very lousy  
‘And the fact is I was really lousy at school’

d. Para mí, nunca hubo guerrillas en el estado (Espinosa 1999)  
for/to me, never there-was guerrillas in the state  
‘As far as I am concerned/In my opinion, there never were guerrilla fighters in the state’

Pa’mí… que no es cierto, se lo está inventando  
to me, … that not is true, reflx it-acus is inventing-3rd  
‘In my opinion, it’s not true, he’s making it up’

e. *? Para mí, Juan, que no es cierto  
*? to me, John, it is not true

5. Conclusion. A syntactic shift: normal syntax > loss of syntax

The four changes dealt with here share a common pattern: when forms take over a function on the discourse-pragmatic level, a formerly free syntactic construction loses some of its syntactic properties. The same syntactic pattern of impoverishment happens in all categories examined (for further empirical evidence, cf. Company 2004, forthcoming). The mechanism of change in every case has been a reanalysis by means of which the referential etymological forms undergo decategorization and then recategorization as pragmatic markers.

The four changes display the typical semantic drift of subjectification: external propositional meaning > internal non-propositional meaning; ref-
erential meaning > abstract meaning; descriptive meaning > valorative meaning. But at the same time they also exhibit a specific shift towards syntactic rigidization and isolation. In every set of examples, forms progressively enter into syntactic isolation as they gain in valorative meaning. In fact, the last examples in all series are deprived of their usual syntactic properties, whereas the first examples behave as full referential forms, displaying the argument relationships they usually have. The four categories examined behave in the same way: when the form acquires subjective values, the syntax of that form is drastically impoverished. That is, subjectification, besides being a semantic-pragmatic change, is also a specific syntactic change. The following scheme summarizes the syntactic shift analyzed in this paper.

**Syntactic shift of subjectification**

Non-subjective construction or form = strong necessity of syntax = normal syntax and full syntactic relational capacity, replaceable forms, all participants in the event structure are expressed > strongly subjective construction or form = little or no necessity of syntax and non syntactic relational capacity, non-replaceable forms, few or no participants in the event structure = isolation and cancellation of syntax

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5. The same syntactic impoverishment and/or syntactic cancellation takes place in other grammatical areas when the categories acquire valorative meanings. For example, Thompson (2002) shows that certain verbs that usually take subordinate complements clauses appear alone, without their usual complements, when they are used with an epistemic meaning. The verb usually appears isolated at the end of the utterance, *she left and..... I guess*, like a formula or a stance adverb instead of behaving as a proper main verb subcategorizing the subordinate complement. Also determiners, a kind of individualizer quantifier, can also undergo syntactic impoverishment when they enter into a subjectification change. For instance, the article *el-los-la-las* ‘the’ moved in the history of Spanish from an external deictic use to an internal valorative one, through a textual meaning: 1: external deictic > 2: textual anaphoric > 3: valorative subjective (1: *gire a la derecha* ‘turn to the right’; 2: *había una vez un rey, el rey tenía tres hijas* ‘Once there was a king, [and] the king had three daughters’; 3: *la Tere te manda saludos* ‘Tere sends you her greetings’, literally: ‘the Tere’). In the subjective use, the article can only take proper names and hypocoristic nominals, and it cannot take any other modifier, whereas in the anaphoric use the Spanish article can cooccur with many other modifiers of the noun phrase.
The subjective expressions analyzed in this paper lack propositional content; they have lost objective referential properties and syntactic capacity, becoming simply a marker of the speaker’s perspective.

One reason adduced in this paper for such a loss of syntactic properties was that subjective meanings require time to emerge. These forms are usually newer than their non-subjective counterparts, and time often translates into syntactic erosion. A second reason for syntactic cancellation was that, in a subjective expression, the descriptive and referential aspects of the expression are either defocused or unnecessary, in that the speaker only wants to project his/her attitude and interaction as regards the hearer’s discourse; and, in that sense, the speaker does not need the descriptive aspects of meaning associated with them, neither does s/he need the syntactic tools for effecting them. Syntactic isolation and cancellation of syntax must be better understood as expendability of syntax, because full descriptive syntax becomes unnecessary when forms or constructions express subjectivity. In other words, subjectivity does not need descriptive syntax, because the speaker is apparently not interested in it. Subjectivity may be characterized by the motto ‘zero in syntax, ten in pragmatics’.

Finally, the analysis presented in this paper showed that there is a strong parallelism between the semantic and the syntactic side of a subjectification change. There is a strict co-evolution in this kind of change, in that the internal, abstract, subjective semantic phase of the process goes hand in hand with the phase of the lessening of the need for syntax.

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