

The mood of Modal Existential Constructions in Spanish

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TOPIC:

the mood in Spanish MECs

THE ARTICLE

Guajardo, Gustavo (2013). *The mood of Modal Existential Constructions in Spanish*. Tromsø, UiT The Arctic University of Norway.

REASON OF CHOICE:

- it is about Spanish :)
- relatively few Spanish examples during the classes
- these examples not explained in detail
- new discoveries in the study
- all statements explained in a detailed but still concise manner

STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER AND MY PRESENTATION:

1. Introduction
2. MECs in general and in Spanish
3. MECs and Mood
 - 3.1. Mood in Spanish MEC
 - 3.2. Mood and Negation in Spanish
 - 3.3. the Definiteness Effect and its role in Spanish
 - 3.4. Subjunctive mode in SP
4. Discussion and conclusion

1. INTRODUCTION

- What are MECs?

A type of non-interrogative wh-construction that occurs as the complement of existential predicates and is interpreted as a narrow-scope indefinite.

- The aim of the article

The presentation of novel data that call into question 3 previous generalisations about these constructions, proving that:

- (a) Not only subjunctive (Subj) and Infinitival (Inf) forms can occur in MECs
- (b) Mood alternation in MECs can be derived from independent factors of grammar
- (c) The typology of MECs needs to be revised to include a language like Spanish, which allows Indicative (Ind) in MECs

- Structure

- an overview of MECs including Spanish data
- mood in MECs from a cross-linguistic point of view
- mood in Spanish Mecs in relation to different factors that determine the choice of mood both in MECs and in general
Subjunctive in Spanish – a relevant aspect that gives us the clue :)
- conclusions

2. MECs IN GENERAL AND IN SPANISH

- MECs: non-interrogative wh-construction that occurs as the complement of an existential predicate

(1) No tengo [qué decir]¹.
Not have.1S what say.INF
"I don't have anything to say" (lit: "I don't have what to say")

- MECs are present in a lot of languages
 - a) most European languages: Romance, Baltic, Slavic, Albanian, Greek, Finno-Ugric, Basque
exception: the Germanic family (with the exception of Yiddish and New York English)
 - b) Semitic language
- cross-linguistic aspect: a great deal of variation regarding which wh-words can be used: 5 groups
 - a) no restrictions whatsoever e.g. Catalan, Greek, Hungarian, Spanish
 - b) no „why” e.g. Hebrew, Slovenian
 - c) no „how” and „why” e.g. Russian
 - d) disallow „when” and „why” e.g. Portuguese
 - e) disallow: „when”, „how”, „why” e.g. French, Italian
- Spanish in the first group
- Spanish: rich language regarding the variety of MECs
who, what, where, how, why, when

(2) En Bahía tengo [con **quién** salir]. (who)
In Bahía I have with **who** go.out.INF
"In Bahía I have somebody/people to go out with"

(3) Para mi primer trabajo ya tengo (what)
For my first paper already have.1S
sobre **qué** escribir].
about **what** write.INF
"I already have something to write about for my first paper".

(4) Compré muchas cosas, y no tengo **dónde** (where)
I bought many things and not I have **where**
ponerlas].
put.INF.them
"I bought many things and now I don't have anywhere to put them"

(5) Compró un auto nuevo y ahora no tiene (how)
bought.3S a car new and now not have.3S
cómo pagarlo].
how pay.INF.it
"He bought a new car and now he doesn't have a way to pay for it".

(6) Yo no dije que lo iba a hacer, (why)
I not said.1S that it went.1S to do.INF

así que no tengo [por qué hacerlo].
so that not have.1S why do.INF.it

"I didn't say I was going to do it so there's no reason why I should do it"

(7) Quería viajar pero no tengo [cuándo (when)]
wanted.1S travel.INF but not have.1S when

hacerlo].
do.INF.it

"I wanted to start yoga but I don't have any time to do it"

- Grosu (2014)ⁱ: 2 type of predicates in MECs

i) assertion of existence (e.g. *be, have*)

ii) coming into being, view or availability and/or its causation (e.g. *choose, look for, find, send, obtain, arrive*)

(8) Está buscando [con quién dejar a los chicos]
is seeking with who leave.INF to the.PL kids
"He's looking for someone to leave the children with".

(9) Finalmente encontró [de qué hablar.]
finally found.3S. of what talk.INF
Finally, he found something to talk about.

(10) Hay [en dónde refugiarse si se
there's in where shelter.INF if reflex.3S
larga a llover].
start.3S to rain.INF
"There's a place where we can shelter should it rain".

(11) Consiguieron [dónde mandar a los chicos]
obtained.3PL where send.INF to the.PL kids

en el verano]
in the summer

"They managed to find a place where to send the children in the summer"

- cross-linguistic aspect: only a subset of languages allow predicates of type (ii), including Spanish

- relevant question: how to prove that these constructions are not merely embedded interrogatives of the form “I don’t understand [what to do]”?
~ similarity to MECs in the surface
- difference: complex wh-phrases in embedded interrogatives, impossible

(12) *No tengo [con qué personas vivir]
not have.1S with what people live.INF
("I don't have with which people to live")

(13) Me pregunto [con qué personas vive Juan]
me ask.1S with what people live.3S.IND Juan
"I wonder which people Juan lives with"

2. MECs AND MOOD

- mood: another defining characteristic of MECs is the verb forms they allow to occur in them
- many researchers: MECs are characterised by containing INF or SUBJ or functionally equivalent verb forms: Grosu (2006)ⁱⁱ, Pesetzky (1982)ⁱⁱⁱ, Suñer (1984)^{iv}, Rappaport (1986)^v, Izvorski (1998)^{vi}, etc.
- review: 3 most influential works

(a) Izvorski (1998)

- impossibility of indicative forms: indicative clauses block environments for some syntactic processes such as Subject Raising, Obligatory Control and Clitic Climbing. She assumes that the same blocking prevent quantificational binding from the matrix into the subordinate clause, which would prevent existential binding into MECs by the matrix predicate.
- BUT: correlation between transparency of mood and Raising Control and Clitic Climbing varies from language to language. Spanish – not transparent.

(14) Alejandra no (*la) tiene [quien la ayude].
Alejandra not her have.3S who her help.3S.SUBJ
"Alejandra has no one to help her"

(15) a. Alejandra no tiene [que escribirlo].
Alejandra not have.3S that write.INF.CL.3S.MASC
"Alejandra doesn't have to write it"

b. Alejandra no lo tiene [que escribir].
Alejandra not CL.3S.MASC have.3S that write.INF
"Alejandra doesn't have to write it"

- (14): bracketed clause – Subj & clitic *la* (her). The clitic cannot climb out of the embedded clause → Subj clauses are not transparent to clitic climbing in Spanish
- (15a), (15b): clitic climbing is possible out of an embedded infinitival clause with the clitic in situ, but the clitic can precede the finite verb too, out of the embedded clause

(b) Grosu (2004)

- statement: MECS are internally marked for non-indicative mood
- explanation?
the stipulation of a feature per se is not explanatory

(c) Šimík (2011)^{vii}, dissertation

- in-depth survey and analysis of MECs cross-linguistically
- no explanation why MECs exclude indicatives
- his implicational proposal:

‘If a language has the infinitive mood, it uses it in its MECs. Otherwise, it uses the subjunctive (or its functional equivalent).’
(Šimík 2011: 62).

- a sample of 16 languages (!), no exceptions, Spanish included
- typology of MEC-languages
 - a. use of Infinitive e.g. Russian
 - b. use of Subjunctive e.g. Greek
 - c. use of both Inf and Subj e.g. Hungarian
- All the examples so far: Infinitive
- BUT: if the subject of the MEC is different from the subject of the main clause → Subjunctive

(16) Gustavo no tiene [quien le **cocine**].
Gustavo not have.3S who him **cook.3S.SUBJ**
“Gustavo has no one who can cook for him.”

- Subjunctive: discussed later, only one example to present this phenomenon:

(17) Voy al banco para que me **vendan** una casa.
go.1S to.the bank for that me **sell.3PL.SUBJ** a house
“I’m going to the bank so that they can sell me a house”

(18) Voy al banco para **vender** una casa.
go.1S to.the bank to **sell.INF** a house
“I’m going to the bank to sell a house”

- Important to note: this is not the complete picture for Spanish MECs, which do allow indicative mood in certain circumstances based on the data never presented before

3. MOOD IN SPANISH MECs

- data organized based on the type of predicates – type (i) and type (ii)

- type (i) predicates

(19) a. Hay [quien cree en el Diablo] (ind)
 there's who believe.3S.IND in the devil
 "There are people who believe in the Devil"

b. *Hay [quien crea en el Diablo] (subj)
 there's who believe.3S.SUBJ in the devil
 ("There are people who believe in the Devil")

(20) *No hay [quien cree en el Diablo](ind)
 not there's who believe.3S.IND in the devil
 (There are no people who believe in the Devil)

b. No hay [quien crea en el Diablo](subj)
 not there's who believe.3S.SUBJ in the devil
 "There are no people who believe in the Devil"

(21) a. Siempre hay [con quién hablar]. (inf)
 always there's with who speak.INF
 "There's always someone to talk to"

b. No hay [con quién hablar] (inf)
 not there's with who speak.INF
 "There's no one to talk to".

- explanation: mood choice depends on the main clause: is it affirmative or negative?

affirmative → Indicative (Subj is ungrammatical), Infinitive

negative → Subjunctive (Ind is ungrammatical), Infinitive

- type (ii) predicates

(22) a. *Busco [quién puede actuar y cantar] (ind)
 seek.1S who can.3S.IND act.INF and sing.INF
 ("I'm looking for someone who can act and sing")

b. Busco [quién pueda actuar y cantar]. (subj)
 seek.1S who can.3S.SUBJ act.INF and sing.INF
 "I'm looking for someone who can act and sing"

(23) a. Conseguí [con quién ir a la boda] (inf)
 obtained.1S with who go.INF to the wedding
 "I got someone to go to the wedding with"

b. No conseguí [con quién ir a la boda] (inf)
 not obtained.1S with who go.INF to the wedding
 "I couldn't find anyone to go to the wedding with"

- data shows: mood alternation depends on the semantics of the head noun, frequently discussed
- what has not been discussed so far: the interaction of these factors and the mood in MECs
- proposal: mood alternation in MECs can be independently motivated from the semantic meaning of MECs and the above mentioned observations

(28) No encuentro a quién dice siempre que no.
 not find.1S to who say.3S.IND always that not
 I can't find the person who always says no.

(29) Necesitamos a quién nos ayuda con esto.
 need.1PL to who us help.3S.IND with this
 "We need the person that helps us with this".

(30) Busco a quién puede actuar y cantar.
 seek.1S to who can.3S.IND act.INF and sing.INF
 "I'm looking for the person who can act and sing"

- Examples (28-30), with marker *a*, contain ordinary free relatives with a definite interpretation "I know exactly who I'm talking about or I've heard about them so I know that they exist"
- wh-clauses not preceded by *a* are MECs, which can be predicted based on the semantic meaning of MECs as set-denoting expressions (the same way as bare plurals)

(31) Busco (*a) quién sepa de computadoras.
 seek.1S to who know.3S.SUBJ of computers
 "I'm looking for someone who knows about computers"

(32) Encontré (*a) quien me arregle el televisor.
 found.1S to who me fix.3S.SUBJ the television
 "I've found someone who can fix my TV".

(33) No tengo (*a) quién me planche la ropa.
 not have.1S to who me iron.3S.SUBJ the clothing
 "I don't have anyone who can iron my clothes"

- bare plurals are not referential expressions, thus they cannot be preceded by marker *a* – the same as MECs
- bare plurals in relative clauses: always with Subjunctive
- Caponigro (2004) proposes an analysis of MECs as set-denoting entities, which is the meaning of bare plurals

→ the Subj in MECs can be traced back to the same explanation as with bare plurals: it's the semantics of the complement that requires Subjunctive and not the construction itself (semantics of MECs explained later)

- in other words: the absence of referentiality in MECs is expressed through the lack of the referential marker preceding them and the appearance of the Subjunctive inside them
- the rise of a relevant question:
in type (ii) predicates, the presence of indicative means that the construction is no longer a MEC... what about the indicative in type (i)?
- reasonable question, answered in the following: why wh-construction of type (i) with indicative are certainly MECs
- the clue: Definiteness Effect

iii) Definiteness Effect & Subjunctive

- Definiteness Effect: some existential predicate cannot take definite NPs as complements (many languages)
- DE: robust in Spanish (~haber) – very “spectacular” – 3 verbs for *be*!
 - a) definite NPs *estar*
 - b) indefinite NPs *haber*
 - c) (definite NPs of events *ser*)
- DE in English:
* There is a/*the cat on the sofa.
- Szabolcsi (1986)^{viii}: “definite effect predicates” – sensitive to the DE, 4 categories
 - i) exist *be*
 - ii) become available *arrive, happen, be born*
 - iii) cause to become available *get, find, obtain*
 - iv) cause to become existent *draw, cook, sew*
- Grosu (2004): (ii), (iii) and (iv) in the same category regarding MEC predicates
- importance of DE: it serves as a test for whether the complement of an existential predicate is definite or not
- MECs: indefinites
- a language sensitive to DE should be able to apply this test
- Spanish and DE: no definite NP in complement position of existential constructions – *haber* (“there is...”), *tener* (have) – predicates of type (i)

(34) *No hay los autos en la vereda.
 not there's the car in the sidewalk
 (“There aren't the cars on the sidewalk)”)

(35) *Tengo los amigos.
 have1S the friends
 “I have the friends”

- free relatives: semantics of definite DPs, they can be always paraphrased with definite DPs
 “I like [what you wrote]
 “I like [the things you wrote]
- consequence: the bracketed clauses are indefinites, thus MECs

(36) No hay [qué comer].
 not there's what eat.INF
 “There is nothing to eat”

(19) Hay [quien cree en el Diablo] (ind)
 there's who believe.3S.IND in the devil
 “There are people who believe in the Devil”

- shown: these wh-constructions with indicatives are MECs
- one remaining question:
 why are type (i) predicates the only ones that require the use of indicative in MECs
- clue: Subjunctive

iv) the essential feature of Subjunctive

- extensively discussed research field
- generally accepted: meaning of subjunctive is tightly connected to the speaker's attitude
- so far: different subjects in the two clauses, negation, specificity
- + uncertainty: presupposition that the mentioned individual may or may not exist
Busco una persona hable ruso.
 “I'm looking for someone who speaks Russian.” (but I'm not sure if there is any)
- type (i) MECs: expression of the existence of an individual
- Subjunctive: the individual may or may not exist

(37) #Hay manzanas, pero no sé si existan.
 there's apples but not know.1S whether exist.3PL.SUBJ
 #“There are apples, but I don't know whether they exist”

- negation: non-existence → compatible with Subjunctive

4) DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- Šimík's universal: not true for Spanish
- other languages with indicative in MECs: further research
- indicative in MECs closely related to the behaviour of Subjunctive
- the 3-way typology should be revised and changed to 4-way typology
 - i) only Infinitive Russian
 - ii) only Subjunctive Greek
 - iii) both Infinitive and Subjunctive Hungarian
 - iv) Infinitive, Subjunctive and Indicative Spanish
- reason: language internal
- Greek infinitives excluded from MECs because the languages does not possess Inf
- Spanish forced to use Indicative in affirmative existential predicates due to the meaning of Subjunctive in Spanish
- as far as the mood is concerned: nothing special or surprising about MECs
- Subjunctive: “uniformity” across languages?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

Feel free to ask your questions. :)

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- ^{iv} Suñer, M. (1984). Free relative and the matching parameter. In: *The Linguistics Review*, 3 (4). 363-387.
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