

Development of the Spanish Subjunctive in a Nine-month Study-abroad Setting

Casilde A. Isabelli and Chiyo Nishida

University of Nevada, Reno and University of Texas, Austin

1. Introduction

During the past three decades, study-abroad research has slowly grown and expanded to all areas of second language (L2) learning. With this growing interest in examining the role played by context-of-learning, second language acquisition (SLA) research has shown that study-abroad programs do promise significant gains in language proficiency and cultural understanding and accelerated rates of acquisition when compared to stay-at-home (SH) students (DeKeyser 1991, Freed 1995). However, SLA studies specifically measuring L2 grammatical development have provided conflicting evidence as to the superior benefits of a study-abroad setting on the L2 learner.

In the present study, longitudinal data on the development of the Spanish subjunctive use in a study-abroad (SA) setting is presented and compared with similar data gathered in a SH setting. The goal of the study is two-fold: 1) to present an empirical and qualitative analysis of the development of the Spanish subjunctive use among language learners over a nine-month period in a study-abroad setting, and 2) to attempt to answer the question whether the input received in the study-abroad influences the acquisition of the Spanish subjunctive.

2. Background Literature

2.1 L2 Acquisition of Grammatical Structures in a Study-abroad Context

Research on the development and acquisition of L2 grammatical structures in a SA context has provided contradictory evidence on the benefits of a SA setting on SLA. On one hand, various studies have shown that the SA setting is beneficial in aiding the development of grammatical structures (Ryan & Lafford 1992, Guntermann 1995, Regan 1995, Isabelli 2003, 2004). On the other hand, various studies have shown no evidence of a positive effect for the SA setting on aiding the development of grammatical structures when compared to stay-at-home (SH) students (DeKeyser 1991, Collentine in press).

Guntermann (1995) studied the development of three grammatical contrasts in the forms and functions of Spanish after one year of immersion by first language (L1) English novice/high and intermediate/low L2 learners of Spanish. Data were gathered from oral interviews on the use of copulas *ser* and *estar* 'to be', *por* and *para* 'for', and preterit versus imperfect from nine Peace Corps volunteers after an initial ten-week intensive language program (260-300 hours of formal instruction) in a Central American country and then again at the end of the year in service. Data showed that after one year immersed in the target language environment, the participants improved on the use of the copulas and the past tense. Guntermann compared these past tense results to the accuracy score of SH language learners with 15 months of instruction (Lafford & Collentine 1989), concluding that the SA participants in achieved higher proficiency ratings on past tense than the SH participants.

Ryan and Lafford (1992) investigated the impact of the target language environment on the morpheme acquisition order of the Spanish copula *ser* and *estar* 'to be'. Their data consisted of three oral interviews (pre-program, during-program, and post-program) collected from 16 beginning-level American students during a one-semester program to Granada, Spain. The data showed that the participants passed through five stages of development in their acquisition of *ser* and *estar* and that they acquired the copulas similar to SH language learners (VanPatten 1987). Ryan and Lafford concluded that after a semester abroad, the SA participants acquired the differences of *ser* and *estar*.

Regan (1995) analyzed the acquisition process of the linguistic aspect of negation in French by six advanced Irish L2 learners of French during an academic year in France or Brussels. The data for the study consisted of pre- and post-program oral interviews that covered topics thought to elicit spontaneous speech. From these oral interviews, Regan analyzed pro-clitic negative particle *ne* deletion that is found in native French speech. The results showed a dramatic rise in the rate of deletion from before and afterward the period abroad suggesting acquisition of the French negation.

Isabelli (2004) measured Spanish syntactic development and acquisition of three syntactic properties proposed to be related to the null subject parameter (Universal Grammar) by L2 learners of Spanish in a SA context. Data from 29 advanced learners during a one-year SA stay in Barcelona were collected before and after the stay from judgment tests and oral narratives. Statistical results showed significant improvement on all properties. The results also showed that the participants were performing as native-speakers on subject pronoun omission and subject-verb inversion but did not perform as native-speakers on the third property (*that*-trace effect). Isabelli (2003) showed that abstract features that are infrequent in the input appeared to be acquired within the second semester abroad.

One noted weakness with the above-mentioned studies (especially those of Regan and Isabelli) is the lack of a SH control group and therefore the comparative benefits are not known. Another weakness is that the studies (except Isabelli) concentrated on readily observable surface features of language (*ser/estar*, *por/para*, past tense, *ne* deletion, etc.), which develop logically since they are readily available in the input and obey some type of distributional frequency. These grammatical features are observable morphosyntactic features that simply have to be learned and are not considered advanced structures. DeKeyser (1991) and Collentine (in press) somewhat address these weaknesses. Both studies had control groups, and the results showed no difference in the effects of context (SA vs. SH) on grammatical development especially more advanced structures (Collentine).

DeKeyser (1991) measured the effects of a one-semester (six month) SA program to Spain on the L2 grammatical development of seven American L2 learners of Spanish and then compared their results to five comparable Americans who studied Spanish in the SH setting. The participants in both groups had at least two university years of Spanish instruction prior to the study. DeKeyser analyzed how the L2 learners used their L2 knowledge in L2 communication and how the language learners compensated for gaps in their knowledge. His data showed that the SA group made gains in oral fluency and vocabulary but that there were no significant differences in grammar and oral proficiency between the SA group and the SH group.

Collentine (in press), among other things, compared the grammatical abilities in oral conversational discourse between 26 SA students approximately in their third semester of Spanish study and 20 SH students approximately in the middle of their second semester of Spanish study. The oral interviews were carried out before and after the semester abroad or the semester at home. The results showed that the SH group performed better on the accuracy of discrete grammatical features (copula, present-tense-verb, indicative, subordinate-conjunction, and subordinate-clause) whereas the SA group developed better narrative abilities.

In summary, the above studies of DeKeyser and Collentine suggested that grammatical development after one-semester in the SA setting is not different than the development in a SH setting. However, Isabelli (2003) showed that development of more abstract syntactic competence not readily observable in the input was seen during the second semester abroad. What effects would be seen if the data were collected after two semesters abroad? Would the L2 SA learners perform differently (better) on advanced morphosyntactic grammatical features than those L2 learners who study at home?

2.2 External Factors Affecting SLA

Another important variable to consider in SA research are the various external factors affecting SLA, which are of a different quality than those present in the SH context. Examples of external factors are contextualized input, interaction, and social variables.

The language learners' Interlanguage development (grammar construction) is based on the input they receive. In first language and L2 acquisition, 'grammar building', as referred to Schwartz (1993), is based on three fundamental components: (a) access to Universal Grammar (which is proposed to bridge the gap between available experience and attained competence); (b) learning procedure; and, (c)

(contextualized) input. What difference is there between learning an L2 in the SH classroom setting and in the SA setting? One notable difference is the higher quality and greater quantity of contextualized input normally found in the SA setting. The quality of the input available to the L2 learner within the target language environment is much richer than that available to the L2 learner in the foreign language classroom. The L2 learner is exposed to the language spoken by native L2 speakers and that “the kind and quantity of opportunities for real language use are considerably greater for the L2 learner” (VanPatten et al. 1987, p. 3). In the SH setting, students are partially exposed to this formula for successful grammar development since their L2 input is limited to four hours a week and shared amongst 24 or so other language learners.

Related to contextualized input, is the notion of interaction or, negotiation for meaning in communicative contexts. VanPatten (1998) argued that “the interpretation, expression and negotiation of meaning may precede and actually cause language acquisition” (p. 928). In the communicative context, the L2 learners use the language as means of exchanging information, where focus on meaning is more important than focus on form. In the SA context, L2 learners are exposed to more opportunities to interact in real situations using the target language.

Another external factor to consider in SLA is the social variables that influence a language learner’s choice of discourse. Does the language learner have the desire to be expressive with the L2 or is the language learner content with using the L2 simply as an instrument? Perdue and Klein (1992) showed that the more expressive L2 learner in their study showed more of a need to narrate coherently and therefore used complex morphosyntactic strategies in his output. On the other hand, the more instrumental L2 learner used the language as a basic tool and his morphosyntactic abilities did not develop as much. Do SA students hold different discourse choices than SH students?

2.3 Research Questions

In the present study, we investigate the effects of the SA setting on the development of the Spanish subjunctive. The research questions that we will attempt to answer are the following: 1) Is there empirical and qualitative evidence showing the development of the Spanish subjunctive among L2 learners over a nine-month period in a SA setting?; 2) Is there a difference in the oral production of the subjunctive between L2 learners of Spanish in the SA setting and L2 learners in the SH setting at the same learning stage?

3. The Study

3.1 Participants

For the purposes of the present study, the participants consisted of two groups: an Experimental Group and a Control Group. The Experimental Group consisted of the SA group, which consisted of 29 American advanced (third year) learners of Spanish during a one-year stay abroad in Barcelona, Spain. The Control Group consisted of two SH groups. The first SH group consisted of 16 American intermediate learners in their fifth semester of Spanish study. The second SH group consisted of 16 American intermediate learners in their sixth semester of Spanish study.

3.1.1 SA Participants

The SA participants in this study came from a group of 64 native English speakers who were Spanish language learners participating in the 1997-1998 year-long exchange program to Barcelona, Spain. They were sophomore, junior, and senior undergraduate students from the University of Illinois and University of California schools. All participants took two years of beginning and intermediate Spanish before studying abroad. Because of the high degree of independence that was required of students going on the Barcelona program, a committee of university faculty interviewed all potential students.

Potential SA participants in the study were eliminated from the pool if: their L1 was not English; Spanish was spoken in their home; and they had prior experience of living abroad in a Spanish-speaking country. The final SA group consisted of 29 participants.

During the first month of the program, all students were enrolled in an Intensive Language Program, where they attended classes (equivalent to four semester units) on Catalan language and culture and Spanish language and culture, and conversation and composition. During the academic year, the students enrolled in CORE courses (Art, Advanced Spanish Grammar/Syntax, Business Spanish, Composition, Phonetics, Catalan, Golden Age, Quixote, Literature, and Translation) that were offered only to the American students. The advanced grammar courses presented an in-depth study of aspects of Spanish grammar. In addition, the students also had the option to enroll in University of Barcelona courses with other Spaniards, of which 23 participants did.

Outside the classroom, the participants reported communicating in Spanish when dealing with Spaniards and socializing with non-Americans. Through the *Centro de California/Illinois* program, six held internships with Spanish businesses, schools, law firms, or hospitals. Two were members of the University of Barcelona's Women's Track and Field team, of which they were the only non-Spaniards. One was a member of a religious organization, which consisted of all Spaniards. Two played musical instruments with Spanish groups, another painted in a studio with Spanish artists, and another was the assistant to a Spanish independent film producer. In addition to immersing themselves in the Spanish community, the participants reported that reading Spanish newspapers, magazines, and novels improved their reading skills. Furthermore, listening to Spanish music, attending religious ceremonies, and watching Spanish television and movies improve listening skills.

3.1.2 SH Participants

The SH participants consisted of sophomore, junior, and senior undergraduate Spanish language majors and minors from two American universities. Potential participants were eliminated from the pool if: their L1 was not English; Spanish was spoken in their home; and/or they had prior experience of living abroad in a Spanish-speaking country. The final SH groups consisted of 32 participants: 16 students at the end of their fifth semester and 16 at the end of their sixth semester of Spanish study.¹

3.2 Materials

The methodology for the SA group allowed for data to be collected at three times (zero, four, and nine months) from oral interviews that contained specific questions. The oral interview design was based on the Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview whose format is flexible because it can be tailored for a desired level of proficiency and for specific needs (Stansfield & Kenyon 1996). The interview questions did not specifically elicit the subjunctive mood except one; however, they were broad enough to increase the probability that the participants produce sentences with the subjunctive.

At all three collection times, the SA participants were asked to: (1) discuss personal activities; (2) explain a process; (3) state advantages and disadvantages; (4) support an opinion; and (5) hypothesize on an impersonal topic. In addition, the participants were asked to do the following with different pictures: (7) ask questions; (8) describe a place or activities; (9) give directions from one place to another place using a map; (4) narrate a sequence of scenes in the present tense; and (10) narrate a sequence of scenes in the past tense. The interviews helped measure the L2 learners' performance.

The methodology for the control groups allowed for data to be collected at the end of their fifth semester of Spanish study for first SH group and at the end of their sixth semester of Spanish study for the second SH group from oral interviews that contained Question #9 given above, which prompted the use of the subjunctive.

3.3 Procedures

Data from the SA group was collected longitudinally at zero (the second week of their first month in Spain), four, and nine months. The SA participants were instructed to sign-up to be interviewed individually with the researcher. Data from the SH groups were collected cross-sectionally at the end of their fifth semester and sixth semester of Spanish study. The SH participants were instructed to sign-up to be interviewed individually with the researchers. The interviews were tape-recorded with the participants' knowledge.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion: Study-Abroad Group

The first research question will be addressed in two ways. The first analysis will compare the overall effects of the SA context on grammatical competency by examining the use of the subjunctive in three types of clauses at the three measuring points. The second analysis will measure how many of the participants produced subjunctive-related structures at each measuring point, and how many of them actually used the subjunctive at least once in the structures they produced.

For the compilation of the statistics, only the subjunctive use in subordinate clauses (nominal, adverbial, and adjective) was taken into consideration. We excluded commands altogether because the data collected was not adequate to measure the participants' ability to use the subjunctive in this environment. The participants used commands exclusively in response to the direction-giving request; however, they were not specifically instructed to use *Ud.*, the formal 'you', which would have allowed them to produce the subjunctive in their responses. Instead, most participants opted for addressing the interviewer with *tú*, the informal 'you', using the imperative or other means for giving directions. Also, there were no tokens of negative commands requiring the subjunctive. Some participants used a subjunctive form mixed with imperative forms, as in (1), but we considered such a use as a simple conjugational error.

(1) Vas...sigue directo hacia Plaza Tetuhuán por San Juan, hasta, no sé, hasta Plaza Catalán. Gira a la derecha por Gran Vía hasta la primera calle, DOBLE a la der...a la izquierda ...

'You (informal.sg) go... continue_{IMP} straight toward Tetuhuán Plaza through San Juan, till, I don't know, till Catalan Plaza. Turn_{IMP} to the right through Gran Vía till the first street, TURN_{SUBJ} to the right...to the left...'

We also excluded independent clauses with *ojalá* and *quizás*, as in (2), because there were only 6 tokens (2 with *ojalá* and 4 with *quizás*) uttered by three speakers, and we judged that the data was not robust enough to be included in the study.

(2) a. Ojalá lo TENGA Juan. 'Hopefully John HAS_{SUBJ} it'
b. Quizás lo TENGA Juan. 'Perhaps John HAS_{SUBJ} it'

In the statistical descriptions below, we call 'subjunctive-related structures' the subordinate clauses where the use of the subjunctive is required according to the traditional 'textbook' grammar. Such structures also include certain nominal clauses which are known to admit both the subjunctive and the indicative in many dialects of Spanish. One such case involves clauses embedded under an expression of a subjective reaction and presupposed to be true, as in (3), and another those embedded under *no creer (que)* 'not believing (that)', as in (4).

(3) Es bueno que Juan sepa/sabe hablar catalán.
'It's great that John knows_{SUBJ/IND} how to speak Catalan'

(4) No creo que Juan sepa/sabe hablar catalán.
'I don't believe John knows_{SUBJ/IND} how to speak Catalan.'

We consulted five bilingual speakers of Spanish and Catalan to see if they would accept both moods in the two contexts at issue.² For (3), all speakers said they would use both moods with one speaker strongly preferring the subjunctive; for (4), on the other hand, all but one speaker said that they would only use the subjunctive or strongly prefer the subjunctive.³ Since it is likely that participants were hearing the subjunctive used in the two contexts at issue most of the time, we counted sentences like (3) and (4) as 'subjunctive-related structures' and included how participants selected mood in them in the overall statistics presented in 4.1 below. However, we showed how participants fared with mood selection in the obligatory and the optional context separately (cf. Table 1 below).

Finally, we judged that the learner used the subjunctive even when he selected the incorrect tense. Thus, the use of the present in lieu of the imperfect, as in (5) was counted as an instance of subjunctive use for the purpose of the statistics. Agreement or conjugation errors, as in (6) and (7), were also included as instances of subjunctive use.

- (5) Si Charles *SEA (FUERA) culpable de la muerte de Diana, ...
‘If Charles were to be blamed for Diana’s death, ...’
- (6) Tienes que ir derecho hasta que *VEA (VEAS) el Teatro Colón.
‘You have to go straight until you see the Columbus Theatre.’
- (7) Te llamaremos cuando *PUEDAMOS (PODAMOS).
‘We’ll call you when we can.’

4.1 Statistical Description: Overall Development of SA Group

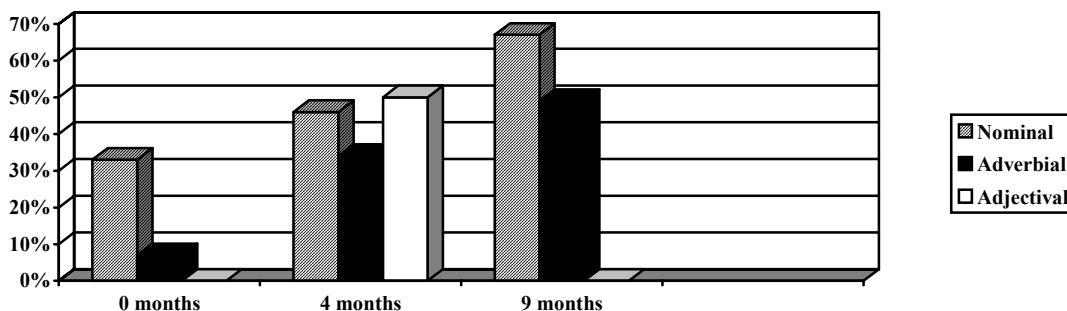
The overall development of the subjunctive in the three clauses (nominal, adverbial, and adjectival) by the SA group during the nine-month period will now be presented. Table 1 summarizes the findings, showing how many subjunctive-related structures were found in the three types of clauses, how many of these structures contained the correct form of the subjunctive, and what the subjunctive usage rate was.⁴

Table 1. Statistical Summary: Months 0, 4, and 9

	# Subj-rel Strs			# Subj Forms			Subj. Usage Rate		
	Month 0	4	9	Month 0	4	9	Month 0	4	9
Nominal Clauses	12	13	12	4	6	8	33%	46%	67%
Adverbial Clauses	15	41	53	1	14	26	7%	34%	49%
Adjectival Clauses	1	2	4	0	1	0	0%	50%	0%
Total	28	56	69	5	21	34	19%	38%	49%

Overall, great progress was made between Months 0 and 4. The number of subjunctive-related structures increased from 28 to 56, yielding the growth rate of 100%; the number of subjunctive forms increased from 5 to 21 yielding the growth rate of 320%. The subjunctive usage rate rose by 19%. Between Month 4 and 9, a more moderate progress was made. The number of subjunctive-related structures increased from 56 to 69, yielding the growth rate of 23%; the number of subjunctive forms increased from 21 to 34 yielding the growth rate of 62%. The subjunctive usage rate rose by 11%. A summary of the subjunctive usage rate in the three types of clauses is shown in Graph 1 below.

Graph 1. Overall Subjunctive Development (% used) of SA Group



Different development patterns can be seen in the three types of clauses as we compare the data in Table 1. In nominal clauses, while the subjunctive usage rate rose steadily (by 13% from Month 0 to 4 and by 21% from Month 4 to 9) the number of subjunctive-related structures produced remained almost the same at the three measuring points, and the number of subjunctive forms grew only by two tokens during each interval. In adverbial clauses, in contrast, dramatic progress was made between Month 0 and 4. During this period, not only the subjunctive usage rate rose by 27%, but also the number of subjunctive-related structures grew by 173% and the number of subjunctive forms by 1300%. Between Month 4 to 9, there was significant development made but at a more moderate growth rate. With respect to adjectival clauses, there were so few subjunctive-related structures found; thus, it is hard to establish any definitive patterns of development. However, the fact that none of the four subjunctive-related adjectival clauses found at Month 9 contained the subjunctive suggests that the acquisition of the subjunctive in adjectival clauses with this group might also come much slower than in nominal or adverbial clauses.⁵ This prediction corroborates with previous studies of L2 acquisition of the subjunctive (Stokes 1988, among others).

What follows is a description of the nominal and adverbial clauses produced. Tables 2, 3, and 4 show the breakdown of the “triggers” for nominal clauses used in Months 0, 4, and 9, respectively, along with the number of instances in which the subjunctive was used with them. The triggers are divided into two groups, obligatory and optional ones. Note that, in accordance with our native speakers’ judgement discussed in note 5, *no creo (que)* ‘I don’t believe (that)’ is listed as an obligatory trigger whereas the expressions of subjective reactions as optional ones. The subtotal on the tables represents the statistics pertaining to the obligatory group whereas the grand total covering both groups. Observe that there is no or very little difference between the subtotal and the grand total.

Table 2. “Triggers” for Nominal Clauses: Month 0

	#Tokens	#Subjunctive forms
<u>Obligatory</u>		
<i>Quiero (que)</i> ‘I want (X to)’	2	1
<i>Es posible (que)</i> ‘It’s possible (that)’	2	0
<i>Espero (que)</i> ‘I hope (that)’	2	0
<i>Recomiendo (que)</i> ‘I recommend (that)’	1	1
<i>No creo que</i> ‘I don’t believe (that)’	1	1
<i>Requiere (que)</i> ‘He requires (that)’	1	0
<i>Es difícil (que)</i> ‘It’s difficult (that)’	1	0
<i>El mejor es (que)</i> ‘The best (way) is (that)’	1	0
Subtotal	11	3 (27%)
<u>Optional</u>		
<i>Es bueno (que)</i> ‘It’s good (that)’	1	1
Grand Total	12	4 (33%)

Table 3. “Triggers” for Nominal Clauses: Month 4

	#Tokens	#Subjunctive forms
<u>Obligatory</u>		
<i>No creo (que)</i> ‘I don’t believe (that)’	5	3
<i>Quiero (que)</i> ‘I want (X to)’	4	1
<i>Es posible (que)</i> ‘It’s possible (that)’	3	1
<i>diciendo que</i> ‘telling (X to)’	1	1
Grand Total	13	6 (46%)

Although the sample size is relatively small, some general remarks can be made. By comparing Tables 2, 3, and 4, the most frequently used “trigger” throughout the nine-month period is *quiero (que)* followed by *no creo (que)* and *es posible*. It is interesting that, although the overall subjunctive usage rate rose from Month 0 (33%) to Month 4 (46%), the subjunctive usage rate for *quiero (que)* or *es posible (que)* showed almost no improvement during this period; it rose significantly during the

following period. It is also curious that *no creo que* scored the highest usage rate throughout the nine-month period (71%) among the three most frequently used triggers.

Table 4. “Triggers” for Nominal Clauses: Month 9

	#Tokens	#Subjunctive forms
<u>Obligatory</u>		
<i>Quiero (que)</i> ‘I want (X to)’	4	3
<i>Es posible (que)</i> ‘It’s possible (that)’	1	1
<i>No creo (que)</i> ‘I don’t believe (that)’	1	1
<i>Para decirles (que)</i> ‘in order to tell (them to)’	1	1
<i>Lo importante es (que)</i> ‘What’s important is (that)’	1	0
<i>No estoy segura (que)</i> ‘I’m not sure (that)’	1	0
Subtotal	9	6 (67%)
<u>Optional</u>		
<i>No importa (que)</i> ‘It doesn’t matter (that)’	2	1
<i>Siento (que)</i> ‘I am sorry (that)’	1	1
Grand Total	12	8 (67%)

Turning to adverbial clauses, Tables 5, 6, and 7 show the breakdown of the adverbial conjunctions used to introduce subjunctive-related structures in Months 0, 4, and 9, respectively, along with the number of subjunctive forms found in them. The subjunctive usage rate is also given for the three most frequently used conjunctions.

Table 5. Adverbial conjunctions: Month 0

	# Subj-rel Strs	# Subj Forms	Subj. Usage Rate
<i>hasta (que)</i> ‘until’ ^{6,7}	7	1	14%
<i>cuando</i> ‘when’	6	0	0%
<i>si</i> ‘if’	1	0	0%
<i>antes de (que)</i> ‘before’	1	0	-----
Total	15	1	7%

Table 6. Adverbial Conjunctions: Month 4

	# Subj-rel Strs	# Subj Forms	Subj. Usage Rate
<i>hasta que</i> ‘until’	18	5	28%
<i>cuando</i> ‘when’	15	4	27%
<i>si</i> ‘if’	7	5	71%
<i>para que</i> ‘in order that’	1	0	-----
Total	41	14	34%

Table 7. Adverbial Conjunctions: Month 9

	# Subj-rel Strs	# Subj Forms	Subj. Usage Rate
<i>hasta que</i> ‘until’	21	10	48%
<i>cuando</i> ‘when’	20	7	35%
<i>si</i> ‘if’	8	7	88%
<i>para que</i> ‘in order (that)’	1	1	-----
<i>aunque</i> ‘even if’	1	1	-----
<i>antes de que</i> ‘before’	1	0	-----
Total	53	26	49%

The three most frequently used adverbial conjunctions at each month were consistently *hasta que*, *cuando*, and *si*, in this order. This is primarily because there were a couple of questions that prompted

or elicited their use. Each of the three conjunctions shows a steady growth in the subjunctive usage rate from Month 0 to 4 to 9; *si* shows the highest growth rate through Month 9. The two temporal conjunctions, *hasta que* and *cuando*, show a similar development pattern.

4.2 Statistical Description: SA Participants' Overall Performance

We now present our findings from a different angle by examining the development over the nine months on the SA participants' overall performance. Table 8 provides a summary of how many of the 29 participants produced subjunctive-related structures at each measuring point, how many of them actually used the subjunctive at least once in the structures they produced, and what the subjunctive users' rate was.⁸

Table 8. Statistical Summary: Participants' Overall Performance

	# of participants who produced subj-rel structures	# of participants who used the subj	Subj Users' Rate
Month 0	14	3	21%
Month 4	22	11	50%
Month 9	21	16	76%

The number of participants who produced subjunctive-related structures as well as of those who used the subjunctive in the structures they produced rose significantly from Month 0 to 4, increasing the subjunctive users' rate by 29%. From Month 4 to 9, the subjunctive users' rate continued to rise, but more moderately. The findings here correlate with those presented in Section 4.1 above. The number of subjunctive-related structures the participants produced ranges from one to seven. Table 9 shows how many participants – represented the numbers in parentheses – produced how many subjunctive-related structures – represented by numbers on the left-hand side column – at each month.

Table 9. SA Participants' Production of Subj-rel Strs: Distribution

# of sub-rel Strs	Month 0	Month 4	Month 9
7		(1)	(2)
6			
5			(2)
4			(4)
3	(2)	(9)	(5)
2	(5)	(6)	(5)
1	(7)	(6)	(4)

Table 10. SA Participants' Development in Subj. Usage Rate: Distribution

Subjunctive Usage Rate	Month 0	Month 4	Month 9
100%	1	7	5
Below 100%; above 75%	0	0	3
Below 75%; above 50%	1	0	2
Below 50%; above 25%	0	2	2
0%	6	7	6
Total	8	16	18

As time progressed from Month 0 to 4 to 9, the distribution goes upward, indicating that more participants started producing higher numbers of subjunctive-related structures. However, not every one of these participants used the subjunctive 100% of the time. Table 10 summarizes how many participants used the subjunctive at each of the five usage rates, ranging from 0% to 100%, at each month. For this statistic, the participants who produced only one structure were excluded.

Between Month 0 and 4, the number of participants who used the subjunctive at the highest rate (100%) jumps from 1 to 7. Very little change, however, is observed at other rates. Between Month 4

and 9, improvement was made at the upper-middle rates (below 100%; above 50%), whereas in the lower rates (below 50% including 0%) practically no change is observed.

4.3 Recapitulation

The data indicate that the participants clearly improved their oral production of the subjunctive over the nine-month period. Overall, they made significant progress as a group between Month 0 and Month 4 and more moderate progress between Months 4 and 9. Among the three types of subordinate clauses, the greatest improvement was made in adverbial clauses, in particular, in temporal clauses introduced by *hasta que* and *cuando* as well as in *si*-clauses. Moderate and steady progress was observed in nominal clauses with respect to the number of the subjunctive forms used although the number of related structures produced remained constant throughout the nine-month period. A small number of subjunctive-related adjectival clauses were found in the oral data; the subjunctive usage rate in this case was almost 0%. Looking at the statistics from a different angle, the data showed that the number of participants who used the subjunctive at a higher rate (above 75%) significantly increased from Month 0 to 4 and slightly from Month 4 to 9.

4.4 Qualitative Description and Discussion

In this section, a qualitative analysis of the data as well as issues for future research are presented. The statistical findings clearly indicate that the participants made progress during the nine-month period abroad. In what specific areas did they show improvement? As has been observed above, the SA group made significant and steady progress in adverbial clauses. This is seen particularly in temporal clauses, as summarized in Table 11, where the first number in parentheses corresponds to *hasta que* and the second one to *cuando*.

Table 11. Subj-related Temporal Clauses with *hasta que* and *cuando*

	# of Tokens	# of Subj. Forms	Subj. Usage Rate
Month 0	13 (7/6)	1 (1/0)	11%
Month 4	33 (18/15)	9 (5/4)	28%
Month 9	41 (21/20)	17 (10/7)	41%

Most of these temporal clauses come directly from the participants' answers to a particular question. Thus, the increase in the number of these temporal clauses indicates that the participants are relying more and more, as time progress, on syntactically and semantically more complex circumstantial expressions. Note that both *hasta que* and *cuando* do not exclusively require the use of the subjunctive, but rather select for either the indicative or the subjunctive depending on the prepositional content of the subsequent clause. Thus, the rise in the subjunctive usage rate in these structures clearly indicates that the participants are increasingly becoming aware of the meaning-form association involving temporal clauses and attempting to select the correct mood to express their intended meaning.

The data contained a much smaller sample size of subjunctive-related nominal clauses primarily because there were no questions encouraging or directly eliciting the use of such structures. Considering this fact, this particular SA group produced a relatively good number of structures. Also, it is noteworthy that the participants used a wide-range of "triggers" covering all three categories usually taught in the classroom: Indirect commands, expressions of doubt/disbelief/uncertainty, and subjective reactions. There is an indication, as the subjunctive usage rate rose to 67% at Month 9, that the participants producing subjunctive-related nominal clauses were beginning to grasp the meaning-form association at issue toward the end of their stay.

Collentine (1995, 2003) investigated whether there is a positive, linear relationship between the syntactic and morphological abilities of foreign language learners of Spanish (Complex Syntax Hypothesis). Looking at Table 1, the number of subjunctive forms increased as the number of subjunctive-related structures increased. However, the highest subjunctive usage rate in our study was only 49% (Month 9), indicating that the acquisition of the subjunctive does not take place

automatically for learners as soon as they become proficient in managing syntactically complex structures, particularly subjunctive-related subordinate structures. The acquisition process of the subjunctive seems to be much more complex.

Returning to research question one, there seems to be empirical and qualitative evidence showing the development of the Spanish subjunctive ability among L2 learners over a nine-month period in a SA setting.

5. A Comparison of SA and SH Groups: A Pilot Study

In this section, we will attempt to answer research question two by comparing the performance in certain adverbial clauses of the SA group and the two SH groups. In order to make this comparison, we compiled statistics only on the responses to the question asking for directions (cf. Question #9 in 3.2 above). The data was gathered from the first SH group towards the end of the fifth semester so as to compare it with the SA group during their fourth month abroad. Similarly, data gathered from the end of the SH group's sixth semester is comparable to the SA group's ninth month abroad.

One of the most important issues regarding research in L2 acquisition is if a particular learning context, say, a SA setting, prompts the acquisition of linguistic competency more than others, say, a SH classroom setting (Ryan & Lafford 1992, Guntermann 1995). In order to attempt to answer this question, a pilot study was conducted to compare our SA group with two SH groups in regards to how they answered the above stated question. The subjunctive-related structures found in the entire corpus were restricted to clauses introduced by *hasta que* or *cuando*. Table 12 provides a statistical summary of the comparison between the SA and SH groups.

Table 12. Summary Comparison between SH Groups and SA Group

	SH Group End of 5 th semester	SA Group Month 4
A. <i>n</i>	16	29
B. # of subj-rel. str. produced	8	28
C. # of subj. forms (Subj. Usage Rate)	0 (0%)	9 (32%)
D. # of participants who produced subj-rel. str. (Str. Users' Rate)	4 (20%)	17(59%)
E. # of participants who used the subjunctive in the str. they produced (Subj. Users' Rate)	0 (0%)	6 (35%)
	SH Group End of 6 th semester	SA Group Month 9
A. <i>n</i>	16	29
B. # of subj-rel. str. produced	4	36
C. # of subj. forms (Subj. Usage Rate)	1 (25%)	12 (33%)
D. # of participants who produced subj-rel. str. (Str Users' Rate)	3 (19%)	16 (55%)
E. # of participants who used the subjunctive in the str. they produced (Subj. Users' Rate)	1 (33%)	8 (50%) ⁹

Although the number of participants for the SH groups ($n=16$ each) and the SA group ($n=29$) is not equal, a valid comparison can still be made. Overall, almost no difference is observed between the fifth and sixth semester for the SH groups, whereas for the SA group, there is a slight improvement from Month 4 to Month 9. The SH groups and the SA group dramatically differ in the production of subjunctive-related temporal clauses (Category D). While the production rate of the subjunctive-related structures for the SH groups only ranges over 19-20%, that for the SA group ranges over 55-59%. This suggests that a much higher percentage of the SA participants than the SH participants was resorting to syntactically and semantically more complex expressions for adverbial adjunct phrases.

Also, it is observed that at each of the comparable measuring points, the SA group performed better in the subjunctive usage rate (Category C) and in the subjunctive users' rate (Category E).

Returning to research question 2, there is a difference in the oral production of the subjunctive between L2 learners of Spanish in the SA setting and L2 learners in the SH setting in the third year study of Spanish. The SA group performed better than both SH groups. However, it is interesting to point out that Collentine's (in press) findings comparing SH and SA students found that the SH group performed better than the SA group on accuracy rates for discrete grammar points (copula, present-tense-verb, indicative, subordinate-conjunction, and subordinate-clause), which did not include subjunctive accuracy. However, the results on the comparative development of the Spanish subjunctive in the present study showed that the SA group performed better than the SH groups. The results in the present study compliment Collentine's study because an additional grammatical feature (subjunctive) was compared. It may be that different grammar features give different results when the language learning setting is different. More empirical data is needed for a more definite conclusion.

6. Conclusions

The present study cannot present any definite conclusions, but it demonstrates that SA group performed far superior than the SH groups with respect to the Spanish subjunctive ability in oral productions. Our pilot study shows a critical difference in the nature of utterances. The SH group hardly produced complex sentences where they needed to select an appropriate mood. In sum, our data provides clear evidence that foreign residency does improve production of the subjunctive-related structure and use of the subjunctive. However, having been abroad for four months or nine months does not allow learners to fully grasp what the subjunctive morphology semantically represents since the subjunctive usage rate was far from 100% (month four - 38%, month nine - 49%). In fact, studying abroad might not guarantee learners to know *how* to select the correct mood in subordinate clauses in the whole nine-month period.

From a pedagogical point of view, what can be done once they come back? Stokes (1988) argued that upon returning, the SA students will have a kind of intellectual and linguistic maturity that is needed to understand how the Spanish language is structured in an abstract level. According to researchers, positive evidence (which are contextualized utterances in the language surrounding the learner in a non-tutored environment) alone is not enough and that explicit positive evidence (which is descriptive information about the language in a tutored environment) and negative evidence (which is information about the impossibility of a form or utterance in a tutored environment) is needed (White 1991, Trahey & White 1993, Trahey 1996, VanPatten & Cadierno 1993). Therefore, upon returning, SA students may benefit from explicit instruction on complex morphosyntactic structures because they are more linguistically mature. Only future research will be able to clarify this.

Notes

* We would like to thank Joaquim Camps, Noelia Cooke, Jabier Elorrieta, Gloria Grande, Antonio Grau-Sempere, Enrique Ibarra, Manel Lacorte, and Lucía Osa-Melero for their help with the judgement on the data and an anonymous reviewer for his/her helpful comments. Also, we are deeply indebted to all our students and the students who studied abroad in Barcelona who participated in this study so willingly.

1. No correlation was found between the different proficiency levels of the SA participants and their subjunctive abilities. Therefore, if there were any differences in the proficiency levels between the SA and SH groups, it would not be a factor affecting oral production of subjunctive.

2. Unfortunately we could not address this question to the control group of native speakers we had in Barcelona at the time we gathered the data. Three of the five bilingual speakers consulted for the current study came from Barcelona, one from Valencia, and another from Santa Poll, Alicante. They all commented that, with respect to mood selection, they had not noticed any significant difference between the Spanish spoken by Spanish/Catalan bilingual speakers and other dialects of Spanish spoken in the Peninsula.

3. One speaker who rejected (4) commented that he would accept both moods here if the subject of the matrix sentence is in the third person as in *María no cree que Juan sabe/sepa hablar catalán* 'Mary does not believe that John knows_{SUBJ/IND} how to speak Catalan.'

4. The subjunctive usage rate is obtained by dividing the number of the subjunctive forms by the number of subjunctive-related structures. We do not use the term 'accuracy rate' since we include instances where the indicative may also be used along the subjunctive.
5. The extreme low number of subjunctive-related adjectival clauses does not correlate proportionally with the overall number of adjectival clauses produced. The data contains about the same number of nominal and adverbial clauses, whereas it contains only 15-16% less of adjectival clauses.
6. At every measuring point there were instances in which *hasta* was used without the complementizer *que* to introduce a clause. We included such instances equally as *hasta que*.
7. With *hasta que* and *cuando*, both the subjunctive and the indicative can be used depending on whether the clause introduced by them is intended to denote a future/retrospective future situation or not, respectively. We only counted instances that called for the subjunctive, that is, when a future event is intended. With *si*, we only counted cases where the clause introduced by it presented the situation contrary to the fact and the subjunctive was required.
8. The subjunctive users' rate is obtained by dividing the number of the participants using the subjunctive by the number of participants producing the subjunctive-related structures.
9. There were two (of 8) who used both moods in opposition to six who used solely the subjunctive.

References

- Collentine, Joseph. 1995. The development of complex syntax and mood-selection abilities by intermediate-level learners of Spanish. *Hispania* 78: 122-135.
- Collentine, Joseph. 2003. The development of subjunctive and complex-syntactic abilities among FL Spanish learners. *Studies in Spanish second language acquisition: The state of the science*, ed. by B. Lafford and R. Salaberry, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Collentine, Joseph. (in press). The effects of learning contexts on morphosyntactic and lexical development. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*.
- Collentine, Joseph and Barbara Freed. (in press). Learning context and its effects on second language acquisition. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*.
- DeKeyser, Robert. 1991. Foreign language development during a semester abroad. *Foreign language acquisition research and the classroom*, ed. by B. Freed, 104-119. Lexington, Mass.: DC Heath and Co.
- Freed, Barbara. 1995. *Language learning and study abroad. Second language acquisition in a study-abroad context*, ed. by B. Freed, 3-33. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.
- Guntermann, Gail. 1995. The Peace Corps experience. *Second language acquisition in a study-abroad context*, ed. by B. Freed, 149-169. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.
- Isabelli, Casilde A. 2003. Study abroad for advanced foreign language majors: Optimal duration for developing complex structures. *Advanced foreign language learning: A challenge to college programs* (AAUSC series), ed. by H. Byrnes and H. Maxim, 114-130. Boston: Heinle.
- Isabelli, Casilde A. 2004. The acquisition of NSP properties in SLA: Some effects of positive evidence in a natural learning setting. *Hispania*, 87: 150-162.
- Lafford, Barbara and Joseph Collentine. 1989. The telltale targets: An analysis of access errors in the speech of intermediate students of Spanish. *Lenguas Modernas* 16: 143-162.
- Perdue, Clive and Wolfgang Klein. 1992. Why does the production of some learners not grammaticalize? *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 14: 259-72.
- Regan, Vera. 1995. The acquisition of sociolinguistic native speech norms: Effects of a year abroad on second language learners of French. *Second language acquisition in a study-abroad context*, ed. by B. Freed, 245-268. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.
- Ryan, John and Barbara Lafford. 1992. Acquisition of lexical meaning in a natural environment: 'Ser' and 'estar' and the Granada experience. *Hispania* 75: 714-22.
- Schwartz, Bonnie. 1993. On explicit and negative data effecting and affecting competence and linguistic behavior. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 15: 147-163.
- Stansfield, Charles and Dorry Kenyon. 1996. Simulate oral proficiency interviews: An update. Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics.
- Stokes, Jeffery. 1988. Some factors in the acquisition of the present subjunctive in Spanish. *Hispania* 71: 705-10.

- Stokes, Jeffery and Stephen Krashen. 1990. Some factors in the acquisition of the present subjunctive in Spanish: A re-analysis. *Hispania* 73: 705-710.
- Terrill, Tracy, Bernard Baycroft and Charles Perrone. 1987. The subjunctive in Spanish interlanguage: Accuracy and comprehensibility. *Foreign language learning: a research perspective*, ed. by B. Van Patten, T. Dvorak and J. Lee, 19-32. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- Trahey, Martha. 1996. Positive evidence in second language acquisition: Some long-term effects. *Second Language Research* 12: 111-139.
- Trahey, Martha and Lydia White. 1993. Positive evidence and preemption in the second language classroom. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 15.2: 181-203.
- VanPatten, Bill. 1987. Classroom learners' acquisition of *ser* and *estar*: Accounting for developmental patterns. *Foreign language learning: A research perspective*, ed. by B. Van Patten, T. Dvorak and J. Lee, 61-75. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- VanPatten, Bill. 1998. Perception of the perspectives on the term 'communicative'. *Hispania* 81, 925-932.
- VanPatten, Bill and Teresa Cadierno. 1993. Explicit instruction and input processing. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 38: 243-260.
- VanPatten, Bill, Tracy Dvorak and James Lee. 1987. Introduction: An overview of foreign language learning. *Foreign language learning: A research perspective*, 1-16. Boston: Heinle and Heinle.
- White, Lydia. 1991. Adverb placement in second language acquisition: Some effects of positive and negative evidence in the classroom. *Second Language Research* 7.2: 133-161.

Selected Proceedings of the 6th Conference on the Acquisition of Spanish and Portuguese as First and Second Languages

edited by David Eddington

Cascadilla Proceedings Project Somerville, MA 2005

Copyright information

Selected Proceedings of the 6th Conference on the Acquisition
of Spanish and Portuguese as First and Second Languages
© 2005 Cascadilla Proceedings Project, Somerville, MA. All rights reserved

ISBN 1-57473-404-0 library binding

A copyright notice for each paper is located at the bottom of the first page of the paper.
Reprints for course packs can be authorized by Cascadilla Proceedings Project.

Ordering information

Orders for the library binding edition are handled by Cascadilla Press.
To place an order, go to www.lingref.com or contact:

Cascadilla Press, P.O. Box 440355, Somerville, MA 02144, USA
phone: 1-617-776-2370, fax: 1-617-776-2271, e-mail: sales@cascadilla.com

Web access and citation information

This entire proceedings can also be viewed on the web at www.lingref.com. Each paper has a unique document # which can be added to citations to facilitate access. The document # should not replace the full citation.

This paper can be cited as:

Isabelli, Casilde A. and Chiyo Nishida. 2005. Development of the Spanish Subjunctive in a Nine-Month Study-Abroad Setting. In *Selected Proceedings of the 6th Conference on the Acquisition of Spanish and Portuguese as First and Second Languages*, ed. David Eddington, 78-91. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.

or:

Isabelli, Casilde A. and Chiyo Nishida. 2005. Development of the Spanish Subjunctive in a Nine-Month Study-Abroad Setting. In *Selected Proceedings of the 6th Conference on the Acquisition of Spanish and Portuguese as First and Second Languages*, ed. David Eddington, 78-91. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.
www.lingref.com, document #1127.