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SPANISH *DEQUEÍSMO*: A CASE STUDY IN SUBJECTIFICATION

Abstract: In this paper I focus on *subjectification*, the process whereby speakers come over time to develop meanings for words that codify their perspectives and attitudes, which has been defined as "the most pervasive mechanism in semantic change" (Traugott & Dasher 2001:30). A well-known case of dialectal variation in Spanish grammar called *dequeísmo* can be explained in terms of this process. Evidence for this claim is provided by contrastive analysis of data taken from a diachronic computerized corpus. In this paper, I firstly sketch the evolution of *dequeísmo* from Middle to Modern Spanish, which shows an increasing degree of subjectification, with a concomitant shift from a high to low degree of the speaker's commitment towards the truth of the proposition. Secondly, I examine the categorial reanalysis of Spanish preposition "de" as having extended its concrete prepositional use of spatial marker to an abstract modal marker in *dequeísta* clauses. The results allow us to provide an insight not only into the evolution of *dequeísta* clauses but also into the relationship between semantic change and grammaticalization.

Key words: Grammaticalization – subjectification – *dequeísmo* – clause – semantic change

Resumen: El objeto de estudio de este trabajo es la subjetivización, es decir el proceso por el cual los hablantes pasan con el paso del

tiempo a atribuir significados a expresiones que codifican sus perspectivas y actitudes. Dicho proceso ha sido definido como “el mecanismo más penetrante en el cambio semántico” (Traugott y Dasher 2001:30). Un caso muy conocido de variación dialectal en la gramática del español es el dequeísmo, el cual puede explicarse en términos de la subjetivización. El trabajo respalda dicha hipótesis a través de un análisis contrastivo de datos reunidos a través de un corpus computarizado. En primer lugar se bosqueja la evolución del dequeísmo desde el español medieval hasta el español contemporáneo, lo que prueba un creciente grado de subjetivización dado por un cambio concomitante que muestra una evolución desde un alto a un bajo grado de compromiso del hablante respecto al grado de veracidad de la proposición. En segundo lugar, se analiza la posibilidad de hacer un reanálisis categorial de la preposición “de”, la que ha pasado de ser utilizada como marcador espacial a un marcador modal abstracto en subordinadas dequeístas. Los resultados nos permiten reflexionar no sólo sobre la evolución de las proposiciones dequeístas sino también sobre la relación entre cambio semántico y gramaticalización.

Palabras clave: Gramaticalización – subjetivización – dequeísmo – proposición – cambio semántico

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Definition of *dequeísmo*

A well-known case of dialectal variation in Spanish grammar is the use of canonical *que* “that” and non-canonical *de que* “of that” in the head position of embedded tensed clauses. This alternation gives rise to what prescriptive grammarians have called *dequeísmo*, as illustrated in (1a), and opposed to (1b):

(1) *Dequeísmo* vs. Standard

a. *Dequeísmo*

*Hemos comentado **de que** el Estado conservará la concesión de la vía ferrocarrilera.*

Have commented-we of that the state keep-FUT the concession of the way rail.

“We have commented [of] that the government will keep the concession of the railway.”

[CREA, Oral, *Sesión pública ordinaria de la Honorable Cámara de Senadores*, México, 10-06-1998].

b. Standard

*Hemos comentado **que** el Estado conservará la concesión de la vía ferrocarrilera.*

“Have commented-we that the state keep-FUT the concession of the railway.”

A consequence of *dequeísmo* is the related phenomenon of *queísmo*, which consists of dropping the preposition *de* in contexts required in the standard variety, as illustrated in (2):

(2) **Queísmo vs. Standard**

a. **Queísmo**

*El año pasado, las estimaciones **hablaban Ø que** se deforestaban 80.000 hectáreas de bosques por año.*

“Last year, the estimates referred to the fact that they deforested 80,000 hectares of woods per year.” [CREA, Prensa, *ABC Color: Total descontrol en el sector forestal*, Paraguay 19/12/1996]

b. **Standard**

*El año pasado, las estimaciones **hablaban de que** se deforestaban 80.000 hectáreas de bosques por año.*

“Last year, the estimates referred to the fact that they deforested 80,000 hectares of woods per year.”

Although these phenomena are usually studied together under the label (*de*)*queísmo* because they are considered variants of the same variable (García 1986; Schwenter 1999), in this paper we will focus solely on *dequeísmo*.

Both *dequeísmo* and *queísmo* are condemned by prescriptive grammars on both sides of the Atlantic and especially by the *Real Academia Española* (1973: 522). However, there is some evidence that its use is extending to the speech of educated speakers who are considered to use standard varieties of Spanish (cf. Rabanales' pioneering 1974 study of *dequeísmo* in Chile; Martínez Sequeira's 2000 study on *dequeísmo* in Costa Rica; Martorell de Laconi's 2001 study of *dequeísmo* in Salta, Argentina).

Geographical dimension (Sociolinguistic studies)

Since Rabanales' groundbreaking study (1974: 413-444) on *dequeísmo* in Chile, other studies have followed in Spanish America and Spain (see Tables 1 (a) and (b)). These sociolinguistic studies

cited in Tables 1(a) and (b) describe *dequeísmo* as much more frequent in Latin American Spanish than in Spain. However, there is certain disagreement among linguists as to the diffusion of these phenomena across dialects (cf. Hildebrant 1969: 143; Nañez 1984: 245; Cortés 1992: 67, DeMello 1995).

Latin America	Reference
Santiago, Chile Mexico City, Mexico Caracas, Venezuela La Habana, Cuba Lima, Perú Rosario, Argentina	Rabanales (1974) Prieto (1995) Arjona (1978); (1979) Bentivoglio(1976);(1980-1981) Bentivoglio D'Introno (1977) Mesa Perdomo (1979) Mc Lauchlan (1982) Boretti de Macchia (1989a); (1991a) (1991b); (1992).
San Juan, Puerto Rico San José, Costa Rica Salta, Argentina	Dietrick Smithbauer (1992) Martinez Sequeira (2000) Martorell de Laconi (2001)

Table 1(a): Studies of *dequeísmo* in Latin America

Spain	Reference:
Seville, Spain Valencia, Spain Canary Islands, Spain Madrid, Spain	Carbonero(1992) Carnicero Guerra (1992) Gómez Molina and Gómez Devís (1995) Serrano (1998) Gutierrez Araus (1985) Quilis Sanz (1986)

Table 1(b): Studies of *dequeísmo* in Spain

2. LINGUISTIC STUDIES ON *DEQUEÍSMO*

2.1. Diachronic studies: Old Spanish Influence Hypothesis (OSI)

From the diachronic perspective, Vidal de Battini (1949) and Kany (1951) have postulated the Old Spanish Influence Hypothesis (OSI) to explain that *dequeísta* clauses are the result of the variation and confusion that occurred in 16th century Spanish with the prepositional complement of some verbs. In the same vein, Bentivoglio (1980-81) proposed the “hypercorrection hypothesis” with data from Caracas from the late 20th century. An example of the so-called confusion in some verbs in 16th century Spanish between *de* and no preposition \emptyset to embed finite clauses, is illustrated in (3) (cf. Tarr 1922; Bogard and Company 1989).

(3) Alternation of *de que*-clauses and \emptyset -*que* clauses

a. *No puedo creer **de que** tú lo dices, ni basta que diga que yo lo he visto.*

“I cannot believe of that you say it, nor is it enough that I say that I have seen it.”

[Santa Casilda, Lope de Vega: 1597, in Davies]

b. *Moro, muchas veces se determinaba a **creer \emptyset que** lo era.*

“Moor, many times he was determined to believe that he was so.”

[El peregrino en su patria, Lope de Vega: 1598, in Davies’ Corpus]

As an alternative to the “confusion” or “hypercorrection” hypotheses (Arjona 1978; Bentivoglio 1981-82; Gómez Molina and Gómez Devís 1995), these examples in (3) could be understood to suggest that the rise of *dequeísta* clauses, and their diffusion across time, have occurred because they seem to convey different meanings, as García proposed in 1986.

2.2. Synchronic studies: The Functionalist Perspective (García 1986; Schwenter 1999)

García argues that the variation between *dequeísta* and *queísta* clauses is related to the speaker's communicative intention. She focuses on the correlation between the presence of *de* "of" and the referent of the main clause subject, and proposes the Relative Distance Hypothesis (RED), whereby the relationship between the speaker and its proposition is considered one of iconic distance. According to the author, the insertion of *de* between the verb and the complementizer "*que*" has the syntagmatic and the pragmatic effect of separating the main clause subject from the sentential complement in the subordinate clause. García (1986: 50) (and later Schwenter 1999: 73) finds that there is more use of *de* when the referent of the verbal subject in the matrix is other than the first person, which creates added physical distance between the matrix and the complement clause. This distance correlates with the psychological distance of the speaker with the assertion of the proposition. Thus, to García, *de*-insertion would be an iconic device, which explains why *dequeísta* clauses are more likely to occur when the subject of the matrix verbs is third person as in (4a) or a generic/impersonal sentence, as illustrated in (4b).

(4) *Dequeísmo* and grammatical person

a. *Aunque ella diga **de que** va a pasar plata a ella no creo*

"Although she says [of] that she is going to distribute money, I don't believe her."

b. *Se cree **de que** la próxima cosecha va a ser récord.*

"It is believed [of] that the next harvest is going to be a record."
[Abadía de Quant 2000: 112]

According to García (1986: 52-54), this correlation of *de* with main subject grammatical person occurs because speakers are more

committed to the truth of the proposition when they are also the referent of the verbal subject, i.e. first person, different from non-first person. In the same vein, Bentivoglio and D'Introno (1977: 73-4) were the first to insinuate that *dequeísta* clauses were used when speakers were less committed to the truth of the proposition.

This phenomenon exemplifies what is now known in the literature as a subjectification process, following Traugott and Dasher (2002:31). This pragmatic distance reflects the psychological distance of the speaker from the asserted proposition; thus *de* attenuates the propositional content, making it diffuse and in accord with the speaker's lessened commitment to it.

Building on the suggestive findings of García (1986), Schwenter (199: 77) maintains that in these contexts *de* has the grammatical function of an evidential marker. Schwenter explains that *de*'s source meaning makes it a very suitable candidate for marking propositions whose source is something other than first person subject. Consequently, he argues that it is then necessary to examine the combination of the **main verb + *de***. Prior studies of *dequeísmo* reveal that the two types of verbs with which these non-canonical clauses co-occur are: (1) verbs of cognitive process (*creer* "believe", *pensar* "think"), and (2) verbs of speaking/reporting (*decir* "say", *contar* "tell") (García 1986: 57; Gómez Torrego 1991: 24; Carbonero Cano 1992: 49; DeMello 1995: 120; Schwenter 1999: 76). Following Willett's (1988) work on evidentials, Schwenter explains that when combined with non-first person subjects, these types of verbs that co-occur with *de* mark indirect evidence. However, it is clear that a more thorough analysis of verbs that can appear in this type of constructions is necessary. Moreover, a thorough analysis of types of verbs requires concomitantly a historical perspective to study this phenomenon.

3. HYPOTHESIS

This study attempts to explain the semantic nuances in the use of *dequeísmo* in modern Spanish from a sociohistorical

perspective and includes a functional analysis of *de* using grammaticalization theory as the theoretical framework. The central hypothesis of this paper can be stated as follows: the variation between the use of non-canonical *de que* “of that” in the head position of embedded tensed clauses (*dequeísmo*), as illustrated in (1a) and the canonical use of *de que* (2b) in these constructions can be explained in terms of the subjectification process, i.e. the process whereby speakers/writers come over time to develop meanings for expressions that encode or externalize their perspectives and attitudes, which has been defined as “the most pervasive mechanism in semantic change” (Traugott and Dasher 2002: 30).

4. METHODOLOGY

Evidence for this claim is provided by contrastive analysis of data taken from Davies’ diachronic *Corpus del Español*, which contains Spanish data of approximately 100 million words of text from both sides of the Atlantic (which includes 20 million from the 1200s-1400s, 40 million from the 1500s-1700s, and 40 million from the 1800-1900s). The collected data show that in the evolution of *dequeísta* clauses from Middle to Modern Spanish, they occur increasingly with verbs of cognition, and particularly when the subject of the main clause is the first person.

Differences between oral and written varieties in the frequency of *(de)queísmo* constructions may originate in functional differences between genres. Schwenter (1999:71) finds that mode is a significant factor in *(de)queísmo* usage and carries out a quantitative analysis in order to verify whether it is indeed true that *dequeísmo* usage occurs exclusively in the speech mode, and he finds that *(de)queísmo* is far more likely to occur in the spoken as opposed to the written corpora. Considering Schwenter’s (1999) findings, we decided to corroborate whether the gathered sample of *dequeísmo* from Davies’ *Corpus del Español* presents similar results since this corpus allows us to differentiate between tokens found in the oral or written mode in the 20th century.

Mode	Sample size	%
Written	23/294	8%
Spoken	271/294	92%
Total	294/294	100%

Table 2: Results of *dequeísmo* in the 1900s samples in Davies' Corpus del Español

The findings in Table 2 corroborate and are in line with what Schwenter (1999) has claimed, viz., that *dequeísmo* is primarily a morphosyntactic phenomenon characteristic of the spoken language in contemporary Spanish. Let us now discuss each of the variables considered in the study.

5. STUDY DESIGN AND RESULTS

The procedure used for finding cases of *dequeísmo* in this corpus consisted of a search of all instances of verbs co-occurring with *de que*. A quantitative analysis of the data was carried out using GOLDVARB 2001: A multivariate analysis application for Windows (J.S. Robinson, H.R. Lawrence & S.A. Tagliamonte 2001) which is based on the previously circulated program GoldVarb 2.0_ (Rand & Sankoff 1990). We have found 3,077 instances of verbs with *de que*. Of these, 70% are instances of canonical clauses (2,181) and 30% are *dequeísta* clauses (896) between the 13th and the 20th centuries, as shown in Table 3 and Figure 1.

Token s	1300s	1400s	1500s	1600s	1700s	1800s	1900s	Total
Canon %	27 87%	86 86%	301 61%	430 73%	226 71%	551 79%	410 58%	2181 70%
Deque. %	4 13%	14 14%	189 39%	153 27%	89 29%	138 21%	294 42%	896 30%
Total N= %	31 1%	100 3%	490 16%	583 19%	315 11%	689 22%	704 23%	3077 100%

Table 3: Diachronic frequency of use of *de que*-clauses ($p < 0.05$)

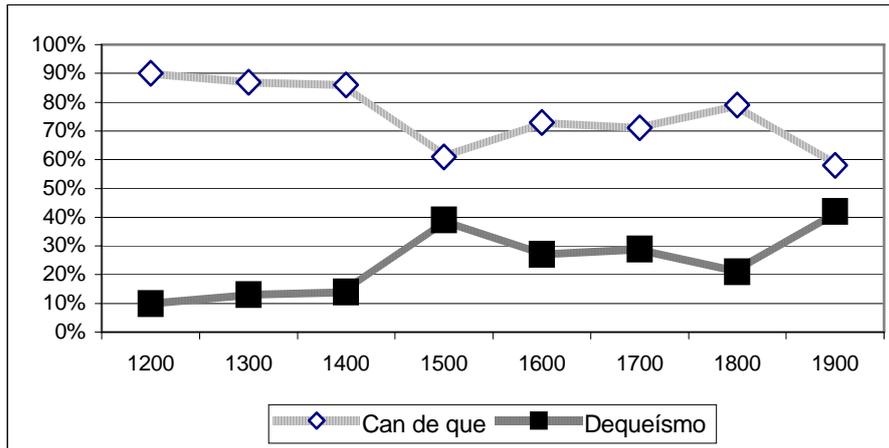


Figure 1: Diachronic frequency of use of *de que* clauses

Although the number of canonical *de que* clauses surpasses the number of non-canonical or *dequeísta* clauses across centuries, we note that there is a slight increase of these latter clauses overall. The proximity of percentages between canonical (61%) and non-canonical (31%) *dequeísta* clauses in the 16th and in the 20th centuries (58% of canonical vs. 42% of *dequeísta* clauses) suggests that the verbs and the syntactic constructions in which they occur might be different. This is evidenced by the fact that the comparison of the examples in which *de que* constructions appear as well as the verb types with which they co-occur in 16th century Spanish are

different from the ones analyzed in 20th century Spanish. Let us elaborate on these claims.

5.1. Semantics of the matrix verb

The classification of verbs types that we will use follows Serradilla Castaño (1997), who studies the government of communication and cognitive verbs in Medieval Spanish. As illustrated in Table 4, the verb types we will use differentiate verbs of cognitive process (5a) (such as verbs of thinking, verbs of remembrance, verbs of knowledge, etc); verbs of communication (5b) (such as verbs of speaking, statement, advice, denial, question/answer, etc); verbs of emotion (5c) (such as verbs of desire, fear, joy, pity, trust, repentance); linking verbs (5d); and a category called other verb types, such as verbs of achievement, impersonal verbs, verbs of command, which have been classified as a single category because of their low frequency of co-occurrence with *dequeísta* clauses.

Verb Types	Examples
(5a) Verbs of cognitive process (5b) Verbs communication	<i>pensar, creer, recordar, saber, aprender, juzgar, sospechar</i> <i>decir, contar, explicar, afirmar, asegurar, negar, murmurar,</i>
(5c) Verbs of emotion (5d) Linking verbs (5f) Other types	<i>desear, esperar, temer, alegrarse, sentir, pesar, confiar, etc.</i> <i>ser, estar, parecer</i> <i>procurar, pedir, dejar, intentar, ocurrir, resultar, etc.</i>

Table 4: Verb types vis-à-vis semantics of the matrix verb (adapted from Serradilla Castaño 1997: 15-17)

If we compare these verbs in Table 5 and Figure 2 below and focus our attention in the 16th and 20th centuries, we find that whereas

in the 1900s *dequeísta* clauses appear more frequently with communication and cognitive verbs, in the 1600s, emotion verbs are the most frequent. Moreover, they show a decline in the percentage of tokens across the subsequent centuries.

According to Keniston (1937: 515), the rise of *dequeísta* clauses embedded by verbs of emotion in the 1500s may be explained by the fact that by the 16th century, the meaning of the preposition *de* had extended from the concept of “origin and separation” to that of “source or theme of interest”, a more abstract meaning, as illustrated in (6), where *de* introduces the source of *pesar* (sorrow).

(6) 16th century *dequeísta* clause with a verb of emotion

*Pedrarias mostró **pesarle de que** tantos españoles se hubiesen muerto.*

“Pedrarias showed he was sorry [of] that some many Spaniards had died.”

[Cieza de León, Pedro. *Guerras Civiles Peruanas*: 1551]

On the whole, the decline of *dequeísta* clauses with emotion verbs across centuries, and the increase with communication and cognitive verbs suggests that the meaning or function of **de que + S** construction has changed. In order to support such a change throughout the centuries, it is imperative to consider the kind of syntactic structures as another variable in the study.

Verb Type	1200s	1300s	1400s	1500s	1600s	1700s	1800s	1900s	Total
Com N= %=	1 0%	0 0%	4 1%	49 18%	42 16%	26 10%	40 15%	106 40%	268 30%
Cog N= %=	4 2%	3 2%	2 1%	34 18%	18 10%	13 7%	21 11%	92 49%	187 21%
Link N= %=	9 5%	1 1%	2 1%	29 16%	33 18%	25 14%	45 24%	41 22%	185 21%
Emo N= %=	0 0%	0 0%	2 2%	41 34%	45 37%	8 7%	15 12%	10 8%	121 13%
Other N= %=	1 0%	0 0%	4 3%	36 27%	15 11%	17 13%	17 13%	45 42%	135 15%
Total %	15 2%	4 1%	14 1%	189 21%	153 17%	89 10%	138 15%	294 33%	896 100%

Table 5: Diachronic frequency of use of non-canonical *dequeísta* clauses (Weights: Cognitive Verbs 0.98; Communication Verbs 0.97, and Emotion Verbs 0.98; $p < 0.05$)

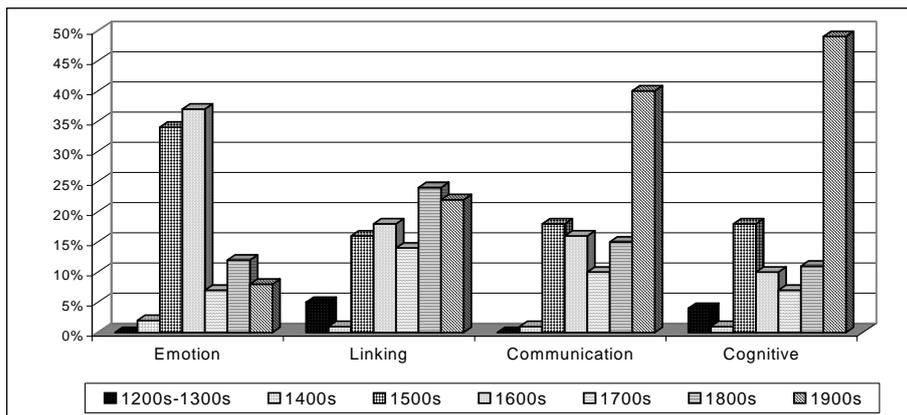


Figure 2: Diachronic frequency of use of *dequeísta* clauses by verb types

5.2. Syntactic Structure

The distinction of syntactic structures used in this study is based on Demonte and Fernández Soriano's (2001) study of *dequeísmo* in contemporary Spanish. They find that *dequeísta* clauses occur mainly in the following syntactic contexts, as illustrated below, where *dequeísta* clauses occur in direct object complement sentences (7), in subject nominal subordinate sentence used preverbally and postverbally (8a and 8b), in predicate position of copulative or linking verbs (9), in appositive sentences (10), in adverbial consecutive clauses (11), in independent sentences (12), and even in relative clauses (13).

(7) Direct object complement sentence

Notaron de que los profesores se los habían leído todos.

"They realized of that the professors had read them all."

[Spont, Barcelona, 18-4-2000]

(8) Subject nominal subordinate sentence

a. Postverbally

Entonces resulta de que ...el ejecutivo que viene...

"Then, it turns out [of] that...the businessman that comes..."

[MC-NLCH, LP-5, man, 41, business manager]

b. Preverbally

Y en este momento hay muchas niñas así. De que todas esas niñas se vayan a enfermar es mucho más difícil.

"And now there are many girls like that. [Of] that all those girls are going to get sick is much more difficult."

[CREA, Oral, Informe Semanal, TV1, Spain, 02-11-96]

(9) Predicate position of copulative verb

La idea es de que entraran los alumnos a la facultad.

"The idea is [of] that the undergraduate students would get in."

[MC-NLCH, ME-6, man, 40, psychiatrist]

(10) **Appositive sentences**

Esto es lo que un poco moral (...): de que no tiene suficiente voluntad.

“This is what is little moral..., [of] that he does not have enough will.”

[Gomez Torrego 1999: 2112]

(11) **Adverbial consecutive clauses**

*Plantamos de forma **de que** sea bueno para el ganado.*

“We plant in a way that that is good for the cattle.”

[TV2, 10-5-00, contryman, Extremadura]

(12) **Independent sentence**

Speaker A: ¿Qué es lo que yo le había dicho?

“What is it I had told you?”

Speaker B: De que ustedes, ...no les conviene...

“[Of] that you, it’s not convenient for you...”

(13) **Relative clause**

El sistema de que yo encuentro es viable es el de darle responsabilidad a la gente.

“The system [of] that I find that is viable is to give responsibility to people.”

In Table 6 and Figure 3 below, we find that in the 1500s and 1600s, *dequeísta* clauses appear more frequently in apposition (14), and subject constructions (15), while in predicate and object position constructions, as illustrated in (16) and (17) respectively, they show a lower frequency of *dequeísta* clauses. In modern Spanish, on the other hand, *dequeísta* clauses occur more frequently in direct object constructions, which entails not only a closer semantic relationship between the verb and the structure (as suggested by Givón 1990; Van Valin and Wilkins 1993), i.e., a closer syntactic linkage between the main and the subordinate clause, but also entails that the grammatical function of *de* in these clauses has changed.

(14) 17th c. **dequeísta clause in apposition**

*Pues para que veáis... cuánta verdad tenga lo que os iba **diciendo de que** hombres embusteros sobrados, que andan en esta Corte con nombre de que solicitan negocios, median y tercián, tienen favor con personas poderosas.*

“so that you see how much truth there is in what I was telling you “of” that wealthy deceitful men who go around in this court with a name with which they do business, they mediate and join in, and they favored by powerful people.”

[Liñán and Verdugo, Antonio, *Guía y avisos de forasteros que vienen a la corte*: 1620]

(15) 16th c. **dequeísta clause in subject position**

*Acuérdese de mí en sus oraciones; y mucho me **pesó de que** no me hallé en el convite de Navidad, ni me cupo un bocadico de aquel blanquísimo pan.*

“Remember me in your prayers; and it afflicted me that I was not at the Christmas feast, nor could I eat a sandwich made of that very white bread.”

[Puente, Luis de la, *Epistolario*: 1589]

(16) 17th c. **dequeísta clause in predicate position of a copulative verb**

*La intención **fue de que** allá le matasen, según una carta que le dio escrita en árábigo, en que le rogaba a aquel rey...que le quitase la vida.*

“The plan was of that they should kill him there, according to a letter that he gave the king written in Arabic, in which he begged that king...to take his life.”

[Lozano y Sánchez, Cristóbal, *Historias y Leyendas*: 1638]

(17) 16th c. **dequeísta clause in direct object complement position**

*...no tenía más que **decirles de que** él esperaba en Dios de volver presto y muy contento*

“...he just had to tell them of that he hoped, God willing, to come back ready and happy...”

[Cervantes de Salazar, Francisco, *Crónica de la Nueva España*: 1544]

Similar to what Schwenter and Demonte and Fernandez Soriano suggest for modern Spanish, *de que* seems to have become a special complementizer. For these authors, *que* is the head of COMP (complementizer) in any tensed IP (inflectional phrase). However, in *dequeísta* constructions the CP (complementizer phrase) with *que* is the complement of the prepositional complementizer *de* where this *de* becomes the head of another constituent carrying the evidentiality feature related to the illocutionary content of the sentence.

Syntac. Struct.	1200 s	1300 s	1400 s	1500 s	1600 s	1700 s	1800 s	1900 s	Total
Object N= %=	5 1%	3 1%	6 1%	84 19%	60 13%	35 8%	53 12%	203 45%	449 50%
Predic. N= %=	6 4%	1 1%	1 1%	25 17%	28 18%	16 11%	40 26%	34 22%	151 17%
Subject: N= %=	0 0%	0 0%	2 2%	39 29%	35 26%	11 8%	20 15%	26 20%	133 15%
Apossit. N= %=	1 1%	0 0%	2 1%	22 27%	12 15%	17 21%	13 16%	14 17%	81 9%
Prep. V. N= %=	1 2%	0 0%	0 0%	13 26%	13 26%	6 12%	8 16%	9 18%	50 6%
Other N= %=	2 6%	0 0%	3 9%	6 19%	5 16%	4 12.5%	4 12.5%	8 25%	32 4%
Total %	15 2%	4 0%	14 2%	189 21%	153 17%	89 10%	138 15%	294 33%	896 100%

Table 6: Diachronic frequency of use of *dequeísta* clauses by syntactic structure (Weight: Direct Object 0.60; $p < 0.05$)

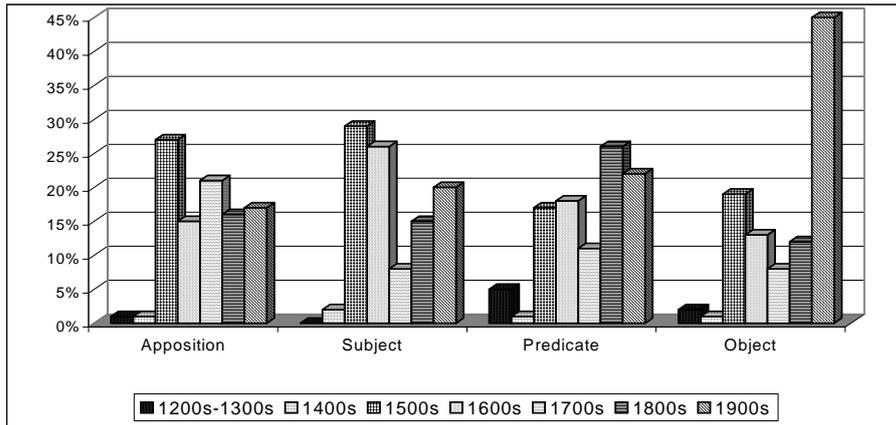


Figure 3: Diachronic frequency of use of *dequeísta* clauses vis-à-vis syntactic structure

However, different from Demonte and Fernández Soriano's generative analysis of *de* and *que* as separate entities, the data seem to indicate that the change in verbs and syntactic structures has given rise to a reanalysis of this sequence *de + que* as a single processing chunk. This is evidenced by the fact that nothing can intervene between *de* and *que*. In line with Schwenter (1999: 81), *de* in this structure, for instance, can take neither an NP complement, nor can it blend with an article like other prepositions with NP objects (e.g. *de + el niño* "of + the boy" > *del niño*).

Indeed Bybee and Hopper (2001:1-24) contend that the substantive properties of words or phrases, their meanings and phonetic shape, are modified and sometimes even reduced with use. The structural properties of words and phrases, i.e. the morphological structure of words and the syntactic properties of constructions are preserved by repetition, which she defines as a storage effect. Frequently used words and phrases, such as ***de + que*** clauses, are highly entrenched and more likely to be accessed as whole units and less likely to be reformed on-line. Thus, for Bybee, repetition appears to be universal to the grammaticalization process. But repetition by itself, Bybee adds, cannot account for the universals of grammaticalization, i.e. the fact that the same paths of change are

followed in unrelated languages has multiple causes. It is not just the fact of repetition that is important, but in addition, what is repeated that determines the universal paths. And the explanation of what is repeated requires reference to the kinds of things human beings talk about and *the way* they choose to structure their communication.

Therefore, speakers would choose *dequeísta* clauses in contemporary Spanish with cognitive verbs in direct object clauses and particularly with first person subject, as they tend to appear in the data, to convey subjective meaning, as illustrated in (18).

(18) ***Dequeísmo* with cognitive verbs in direct object clauses**

*Creo que es un proyecto de ley que en definitiva apunta a satanizar al sujeto joven en general,...y **entiendo de que** en esto el gobierno se ha equivocado al hacer tantamiento (sic) del punto de vista de que con este proyecto de ley vamos a resolver el problema de la delincuencia.*

“I think that this bill definitely aims at demonizing the young subject in general, ...and I also understand [of] that in this the government has made a mistake in attempting in the sense that, with this bill, we are going to solve the crime problem.”

[Santiago, M1: IV: 6/2002]

In order to support the claim that the variation in the use of non-canonical *de que* “of that” in the head position of embedded tensed clauses in these constructions can be explained in terms of the subjectification process, it is imperative to study the diachronic frequency of use of these clauses vis-à-vis the grammatical person.

5.3. Grammatical Person

Similar to what Thompson and Mulac (1991) find for epistemic phrases in English as grammaticized form of first subject and verbs of belief introducing complement clauses, Table 7 and Figure 4 show

that in contemporary Spanish the number of *dequeísta* clauses embedded by verbs conjugated in the first person subject doubles the amount found in previous centuries. This seems to suggest that the speaker may use 1st person plural and *dequeísmo* as a discourse strategy, i.e. to convey less commitment and to distance him/herself from the content of the subordinate clause, as shown in (19).

(19) ***Dequeísta* clause used with 1st person plural**

Bueno como dirigente de lo que es el frente secundario pensamos de que el SIDES lo único que hace es ampliar la brecha entre los que tienen dinero para educarse y los que no.

Gram. Pers	1200s	1300s	1400s	1500s	1600s	1700s	1800s	1900s	Total
3 rd pers N= %=	15 2%	4 1%	11 2%	154 22%	120 17%	78 11%	119 17%	201 28%	702 78%
1 st pers N= %=	0 0%	0 0%	3 2%	33 20%	28 17%	8 5%	16 9%	80 47%	168 19%
2 nd pers N= %=	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	2 7%	5 19%	3 11%	3 11%	13 50%	26 3%
Total N= %	15 2%	4 0%	14 2%	189 21%	153 17%	89 10%	138 15%	294 19%	896 100%

Table 7: Diachronic frequency of use of *dequeísta* clauses vis-à-vis grammatical person (best predictor 3rd person, weight 0.97) $p < 0.05$

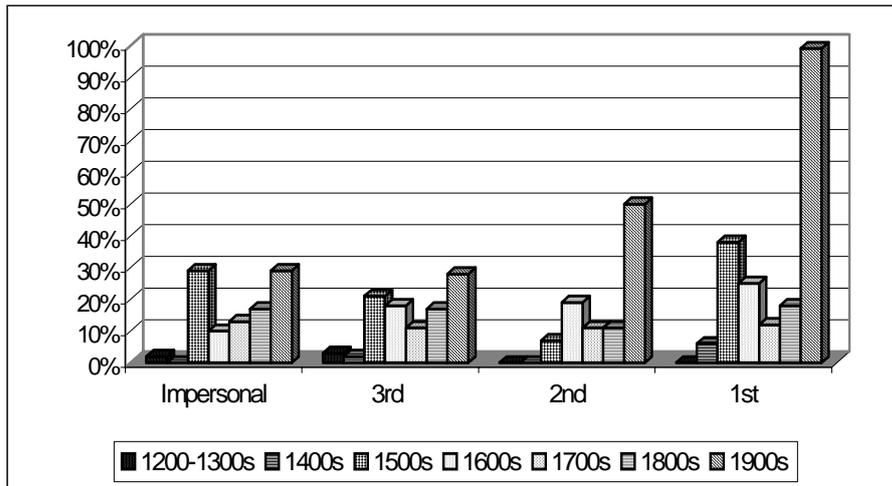


Figure 4: Diachronic frequency of use of *dequeísta* clauses vis-à-vis grammatical person

“Well as a leader of what the secondary front is, we think of that the SIDES the only thing that does is to widen the gap between the ones who have money to educate themselves and the ones who don’t.”
 [Santiago, M1: IV: 7/2002]

In his study of *dequeísmo*, Schwenter (1999) argues that the use of verbs such as *comentar* “to comment”, *informar* “to inform”, and *indicar* “to indicate”, which do not take *de* according to prescriptive grammars, are actually found to co-occur with *de* quite frequently with third person subjects. He finds examples particularly in journalistic writing, especially when reporting the speech of others, as illustrated in (20).

(20) ***Dequeísta* clause with a verb of communication to report the speech of others**

El abogado M.G. comentó de que el juicio podría prolongarse varios meses.

“The lawyer M.G. commented [of] that the trial could last for several months.”

(Chile, journalistic) (Schwenter 1999: 80)

Schwenter maintains that the use of these types of verbs with *de* to mark reported speech also explains why they are most often found in the past tense. He adds that the function of *de* with these verbs of communication is thus that of a “hearsay” marker, indicating along with the subject of the main clause verb, that the source of information is someone else.

But how can we account for examples of *dequeísmo*, as illustrated in (21), where the subject of the main clause verb is first person? In (21a), the speaker *does* use a verb of communication, with first person subject, however this cannot be said to be a case of indirect speech. Rather, she seems to convey a personal perspective with respect to the proposition. Moreover, the *dequeísta* clause might also serve in certain contexts as an expression of politeness, hedges, or mitigators of statements that might sound controversial, as illustrated in (21b), where the speaker alternates between “pienso que” and resorts to the *dequeísta* clause “pienso de que” to express and to regulate his beliefs and/or attitudes towards the proposition.

(21) *Dequeísta* clauses in contemporary Spanish

a. *Dequeísta* clause with a verb of communication used subjectively

...y a partir de ahí es cuando pisé puse los pies sobre la tierra porque yo jamás en mi vida había pisado la tierra y entonces ahí conocí lo que era el planeta tierra y te digo de que me fue muy duro, no sabía que se pagaba el agua, etc.

“...and since then is when I stepped on landed on earth because I had never in my life landed on earth and then there I found out what the planet earth was and I tell you [of] that it

was very hard for me, I didn't know that one paid for the water, etc.”

[Buenos Aires, F2, III: 8/2002]

b. ***Dequeísta* clause with a verb of cognition used subjectively**

O sea los que no saben en todo caso dirigirnos son esas clases dirigentes que han fracasado en los últimos años, no somos los argentinos, que hemos sido en su gran mayoría engañados o estafados, incluso electoralmente eh... pero **pienso de que** si nosotros tenemos otros tipos de sectores dirigentes, vamos a recuperar nuestro pensamiento propio y en ese sentido **pienso que** Brasil nos da un ejemplo en alguna medida porque negociar no es humillarse...

“That is the one who don't know in any case guide us are those political leaders who have failed in the last years, it's not (all) the Argentines, that we have been cheated or swindled, even electorally uh... but I think of that if we have other types of leading sectors, we'll recover our own thought and in that sense I think that Brazil gives us an example in some way because negotiating is not being humiliated.”

[Buenos Aires, M2: V 7/ 2002]

These examples found in the data call for not only a deeper analysis of person and type of verb, but of other variables that would explain how these clauses are used in natural occurring speech in particular contexts in contemporary Spanish.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The preliminary findings and linguistic variables considered in this study of *dequeísmo* seem to suggest a grammaticalization of *de* in this construction. The findings also reveal how important and valuable information can be obtained by drawing on

grammaticalization theory, and in particular on subjectification, defined by Traugott and Dasher (2001) as the process whereby speaker/writers come over time to develop meanings for lexemes that encode or externalize their perspectives and attitudes as constrained by the communicative world of the speech. We have shown that a morphosyntactic phenomenon like *dequeísmo* can be explained in the terms of the subjectification process. Evidence for this claim has been provided by analyzing the evolution of *dequeísta* clauses from Middle to Modern Spanish, which shows an increasing degree of subjectification, with a concomitant shift from a high to a low degree of the speaker's commitment. This claim is supported by the fact that across centuries there is an increase of *dequeísta* clauses embedded by verbs of cognition or mental process. They also appear in direct object position, which entails a closer semantic relationship between the verb and the structure. Lastly, this closer syntactic linkage between the matrix verb and the complement is heightened by a concomitant increase across centuries of these non-canonical clauses with first person subject.

On a final note, this study has shown that a key factor in understanding *dequeísmo* patterns that should be considered for further studies may also be not only the frequency of *dequeísta*, but also of *queísta* clauses across time, and the principled changes in their applications to new situations or contexts. Moreover, a detailed study of the particular verbs that take *de que* canonically and their possible influence on other verbs that do not take "de" should be studied in order to find out whether there is an analogical process, and to specify when the generalization to the subjective meanings actually takes place.

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