Mandative subjunctives in present-day British English

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds

School of Languages, Cultures and Societies

August 2022

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Acknowledgements

I would also like to thank my supervisors, Dr Diane Nelson and Dr Julia Snell, for the guidance and support provided throughout these four years and especially during the pandemic. Their feedback was always incredibly helpful and led to improvements in both my research design and my writing. Most importantly, we connected on a human level. From day one, our conversations were open and frank and, as we went through Covid, I always felt comfortable talking to them about the challenges experienced.

I am forever grateful to my family for their love and continuous support, both financial and psychological. Lastly, I want to say thank you to Lewis, my partner and best friend: thank you for giving me strength at a time of great vulnerability; thank you for your unwavering light through many cloudy days.

Abstract

'Mandative subjunctives' are verbal forms found in constructions such as 'The law requires that a vote *be* held'. They are usually associated with legal or institutional contexts and have often been considered 'archaic' (Fowler, 1926, p.574, cited in Waller, 2017, p.64). Unlike previous research, this thesis takes an integrated approach to the study of these forms, combining syntax-semantics, history and indexicality to capture the multiple factors behind their social meanings. My research questions are: 1) What are the syntactic and semantic properties of mandative subjunctives, and what model best captures them? 2) How and why has the use of the subjunctive changed over time? 3) How is the subjunctive used in contemporary British English? What are the social meanings associated with it? The data is drawn from two corpora of British English (i.e., the Spoken BNC2014 and the BE06), fifteen interviews with language practitioners and three British style guides. With regard to the syntax-semantics of these constructions, I put forward a comprehensive account based on a modal semantics framework (Gueron, 2008). My historical and ideological analysis, inspired by a 'Critical Interpretive Synthesis' approach (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006), sheds light on the long-standing association between the subjunctive mood and the prestige sociolect of the political elite. This is reflected in my analysis of interviews and style guides, which highlights a continuing link with class privilege. Finally, with regard to the functions of mandative subjunctives in present-day British English, my discourse analysis shows their ability to convey specific meanings depending on the context and genre in which they are used. While, at their core, they evoke authority and power, their indexical properties can be exploited in numerous and creative ways both in writing and in speech, across different levels of formality. This is significant because it demonstrates how a linguistic form typically considered 'archaic' can acquire new social meanings and thus remain relevant. Overall, my thesis shows that combining syntactic, historical and sociolinguistic analyses is key to advancing our understanding of linguistic features.

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Chapter 1

Literature review

1.1 Introduction

In linguistics, 'mood' is a grammatical category of the verb (Tallerman, 2011, pp.43-44), similar to tense or aspect. Different moods can be conceived of as different options available to speakers to express a range of meanings. In many languages, the 'indicative mood' is used to discuss facts or beliefs, whereas the 'subjunctive mood' conveys a subjective interpretation of reality and is normally found in wishes, hypotheses, or recommendations (Tallerman, 2011, p.43-44). Although world languages have mood systems of varying degrees of complexity, the distinction between indicative and subjunctive seems to be one of the most significant from a cross-linguistic point of view (Laskova, 2017, pp.19-20). For example, in English this difference is captured by the following pair of sentences:

(1) I insist that *he is* well informed on the subject;
(2) I insist that *he be* well informed on the subject.

Arguably, in the first sentence, the speaker is stating something based on either their beliefs or factual knowledge. In the second sentence, which contains a subjunctive, the speaker does not know whether 'he' is well informed on the subject, but they want him to be: they are therefore expressing a strong wish. One way to capture this distinction is by referring to different 'modalities'; cross-linguistically, the indicative is seen as an expression of 'epistemic modality', in that it helps represent a state of knowledge and/or truth (e.g., Zhang, 2019, pp.880-881), whereas the subjunctive mood usually conveys 'deontic modality', namely 'constraints grounded in society: duty, morality, laws, rules' (Griffiths, 2006, p.113). However, unlike other modern languages, the history of English has blurred the line between the two, as I will explain in this and later chapters.

In particular, in Old English, the subjunctive mood was a conjugation with discrete and recognisable forms and with a wide range of uses, similar to present-day Romance languages like French, Italian or Spanish (Kovacs, 2010, pp.59-62). Commonly divided into past and present subjunctive, it was used to express hypotheses, desires, as well as uncertainty and doubt; it could also be found in reported speech. However, from the Middle English period, at a time when many linguistic shifts started to occur, the subjunctive underwent a steady process of decline (Kovacs, 2010, pp.62-67). This is thought to be the result of the levelling of unstressed final syllables in verbs, which caused the indicative and the subjunctive conjugations to become 'phonologically non-distinctive' (James, 1986, pp.91-92). The resulting verb forms were interpreted as indicative almost by default, because of that mood's more frequent use.

In present-day English, remnants of the 'past subjunctive' can be found in the hypothetical use of 'were' in the first and third-person singular:

(3) If I/he/she/it *were* rich (as opposed to *was*).

On the other hand, what was once the 'present subjunctive' is now found in set expressions ('Heaven <u>forbid</u>' or '<u>Suffice</u> it to say') and in subordinate clauses following verbs like *require, suggest,* or *insist*:

(4) The law requires that a vote *be* held.

The limited range of uses, the low frequency of these forms and the small number of contexts in which they are clearly recognisable have led to a 'subjunctive conundrum' (Aarts, 2012), in which modern British grammarians have questioned the existence of the English subjunctive as an inflectional mood (e.g., Fowler, 1965, pp.595-598; Palmer, 1988, p.46). However, this view partly changed in the 1990s (Aarts, 2012,

p.3), following a 'revival' of subjunctive constructions that had already taken place in the United States and was gradually spreading to other varieties, including British English (e.g., Overgaard, 1995; Buchfield, 1998). The revived form was the one I presented in examples (2) and (4), which typically follows verbs such as *require* or *suggest* and is often referred to as 'mandative subjunctive', due to its denoting something mandatory, 'a necessity, plan, or intention for the future' (Quirk et al., 1985, pp.1012-1013).

Since then, the renewed scholarly interest in the subjunctive has focused on two main areas: on the one hand, corpus studies, in which a number of corpora have been interrogated in order to identify frequency counts and patterns of language change, comparing, in most cases, British and American English (e.g., Overgaard, 1995; Serpollet, 2001; Waller, 2005; Hundt, 2009; Kjellmer, 2009; Waller, 2017); on the other hand, syntactic and semantic studies, aimed at describing the underlying structure and meaning of mandative subjunctives (e.g., James, 1986; Aarts, 2012; Inui, 2016). Most notably, it has recently been suggested that the subjunctive could be conceived of as a clause type (Aarts, 2012, pp.12-17), that is to say, a set of syntactic features, rather than an inflected conjugation. This view will be adopted in this thesis, as well, and further elaborated on.

However, one crucial gap in the literature concerns the 'social meaning' of mandative subjunctives in British English, namely the type of meaning that is negotiated by language users in daily exchanges, either within written texts or in spoken interactions; in other words, that which goes beyond semantics proper and is instead concerned with the 'interpersonal' domain of language (McGregor, 2013, p.1156). Furthermore, there has not been, to my knowledge, a thorough investigation of the uses of the mandative subjunctive that takes into account its history and the language ideologies woven into it.

For this reason, the aim of my research is to explore the use of mandative subjunctives in British English by taking into account their historical and ideological background, their social meanings in the present day, as well as their syntactic-semantic properties. It is the first study to take an integrated approach to the analysis of these constructions, showing the importance of reconciling their structural properties with a sociolinguistic perspective. In particular, my research questions are: 1) What are the syntactic and semantic properties of mandative subjunctives, and what model best captures them? 2) How and why has the use of the subjunctive changed over time? 3) How is the subjunctive used in contemporary British English? What are the social meanings associated with it? These questions will be addressed through a mixed-method approach consisting of a syntactic-semantic analysis, a historical analysis and a sociolinguistic analysis of data drawn from interviews with language practitioners, style guides and two British English corpora.

In what follows, I offer an overview of the key concepts guiding these analyses, starting with the syntactic and semantic properties of mandative subjunctive constructions and proceeding with their modern history. I will then review a number of approaches that have focused on the relationship between linguistic forms, ideologies and social meaning, laying the foundations for an analytical framework based on the notion of 'indexicality' (e.g., Silverstein, 2003; Eckert, 2008). I will conclude by looking at the first (and only) attempt by Vaughan and Mulder (2014) to study the English subjunctive within this framework.

1.2 Syntax-semantics

Writing about mandative subjunctive structures in present-day English, Aarts suggests that the grammar of English should 'recognise a *subjunctive clause type*, along with declaratives, interrogatives, imperatives and exclamatives' (2012, p.12, italics in original). He defines clause types as 'analytic reflexes of the synthetic moods' (p.12). This is coherent with what we know about other European languages; while Romance languages usually rely on morphology to mark mood, via specific suffixes attached to the verbal stem (synthetic mood), other language families, such as Balkan languages,

tend to use syntactic combinations (analytic mood) (e.g., Giannakidou, 2009, p.1884; 2011, pp.2-4). Aarts's proposal, then, opens the possibility to see English moods as analytic realisations as well and, more specifically, the result of a set of morphosyntactic features. Based on both his proposal (Aarts, 2012, p.14) and Waller's insights (2017, p.30-36), we can identify five key characteristics of mandative subjunctive clauses:

1. exclusive occurrence in subordinate clauses, typically introduced by 'mandative' verbs or expressions (e.g., *demand, suggest, insist, it is essential that…*, etc.);

2. lack of the *-s* suffix for the third-person singular (e.g., 'I suggest that Lewis *speak* carefully);

3. use of the form 'be' for all persons (e.g., 'I suggest that they *be* careful');

4. absence of the typical sequence of tenses following a past tense matrix verb (e.g., 'I suggested that Lewis *speak* carefully/*be* careful');

5. negation achieved with 'not' followed by a bare form, without do-support (e.g., 'I insist that Lewis *not speak* during the meeting').

Points 2-5 provide information on core morphosyntactic features, while the first point sheds light on the syntactic-semantic environment in which mandative subjunctives are likely to occur; expanding on this, Aarts (2012, p.15) highlights that they are predominantly used to issue a directive. However, as I hinted at above, we should note that their use in these contexts is not a grammatical requirement; instead, especially in British English, two main alternatives are available to construct mandative clauses, namely indicative forms (e.g., I suggest that Lewis *speaks* carefully or I insist that he *does not speak* during the meeting) and constructions with *should* (e.g., I insist that he *should not speak*).

The juxtaposition of predominant use and structural properties that we find in Aarts'
(2012, pp.12-15) definition of 'clause type' points to the importance of considering
both semantic and syntactic aspects in the study of mandative subjunctives. Yet, most
analyses have typically focused on either one or the other, as my review will presently
show.

1.2.1 Semantic analyses of the mandative subjunctive

The semantic properties of mandative subjunctives have mostly been investigated
through elicitation studies, where informants are presented with a series of sentences
and asked to choose, for each of them, the mandative variant that they deem to be the
best fit. The aim is, in most cases, to establish whether the subjunctive conveys a
different and specific meaning that may cause speakers to choose it over other options.

Greenbaum (1977), for instance, proposes that the choice of variant correlates with the
deontic strength of the trigger[1] and that, in particular, the subjunctive is more likely to
occur after 'stronger' verbs such as *demand* and *insist* and less likely to appear after
'weaker' verbs like *recommend*. To test this hypothesis, he carries out an elicitation
study with American informants at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee; in the
study, the use of the subjunctive is compared to that of the indicative and the modal
should. The findings show that the majority of his informants preferred the subjunctive
regardless of the deontic force of the trigger, while the indicative was seen as the least
acceptable option. Although Greenbaum's research does not provide any empirical
confirmation for his initial hypothesis, the results are significant in terms of
highlighting the general preference for the subjunctive mood in American English.

Another hypothesis that has been put forward in the literature is the so-called
'willingness-reluctance hypothesis' (Quirk and Rusiecki, 1982; Quirk et al., 1985;

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[1] In this context, the term denotes any word or expression introducing a subjunctive clause. I will return
to this concept when discussing my methodology in Chapter 2.

Quirk, 1995), according to which the choice of variant in mandative clauses is affected by the willingness or reluctance of the subject to perform the action described. This is captured, for example, by the following pair of sentences (Quirk and Rusiecki, 1982, p.389), where informants were prompted to choose between *go*, *should go* and *went*:

(5) He wanted to see the play, so I suggested that he _____ .
(6) He was very reluctant to leave, but I suggested that he _____ .

However, it is not always clear what the rationale is behind this hypothesis, and in particular the exact ways in which the willingness/reluctance of the subject would affect the choice of variant. In two consecutive elicitation studies, the hypothesis was tested on British informants (Quirk and Rusiecki, 1982; Quirk, 1995); once again, the mandative subjunctive was investigated alongside the indicative and *should*. Overall, the emerging pattern was unclear: while there seemed to be a preference for the indicative in 'reluctant' sentences (as in example 6), the relationship between the subjunctive and the willingness-reluctance of the subject appeared less convincing. Later commentators such as Waller (2017, p.80) have questioned the relevance of this hypothesis for present-day English, suggesting that it might have been based on the usage of more than 30 years ago.

A different approach can be found in James (1986), who combines a semantic study and a historical analysis of the subjunctive to produce an interesting discussion of different mandative variants and their uses. The author starts by defining 'modality' (pp.11-16), which is the way we represent the world: we can do so either through our intellect (in which case we will have 'theoretical modality') or through our passions and volitions (corresponding to 'practical modality')[2]. The indicative mood is an expression of the former, whereas the subjunctive conveys practical modality (James, 1986, p.15).

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[2] These correspond to what I defined above as 'epistemic' and 'deontic' modality.

James tracks the history of this distinction, which, as I mentioned in the introduction, was initially quite marked in Old English before a number of historical shifts occurred. First, from a morphological point of view, the two main moods, indicative and subjunctive, started to converge into one non-distinctive conjugation, which was interpreted as indicative almost by default, because of its more frequent use (James, 1986, pp.91-92). As a result, speakers had to find alternative means to mark different modalities; the use of modal auxiliaries such as *should* was one way to do so (pp.92-93); at the same time, James (pp.34-35) points to a semantic shift affecting lexical verbs, whose modal components were enhanced. To illustrate the latter point, James provides the following examples (p.35):

(7) They require that it be so;
(8) They require it to be so.

The author compares these two sentences to show that they essentially convey the same meaning, or, more specifically, the same 'practical' modality. He makes the point that the matrix verb *require* carries crucial semantic information, 'sufficient to make the choice of mood [in the embedded clause] largely irrelevant' (p.34). This crucial information is, in particular, a sense of urgency associated with the bringing about of a desired situation. It follows that, in the first sentence, the subjunctive simply mirrors the modality of the lexical verb; in the second example, the use of the infinitive, which does not signify any modality per se, does not affect the overall interpretation of the sentence, because *require* is the primary locus of modality (pp.29, 35).

Next, James compares the use of the subjunctive with the indicative mood (p.35):

(9) They require that it be so;
(10) They require that it is so.

Two interesting points are raised here (pp.30, 35). The first one is that, in these contexts, the alternation between subjunctive and indicative is attested in Old English as well and 'throughout the history of the language' (p.30), which suggests that the use of the subjunctive, although more frequent in the past, was always a matter of choice, rather than a grammatical requirement. The second point concerns the meaning of the two variants; whereas, according to James, the subjunctive helps convey the urgency of the requirement, thus reflecting the matrix subject's point of view, the indicative shifts the attention to the factual content of the requirement and may reflect the speaker's point of view (pp.35, 125).

In summary, James offers a complex and historically informed account of the use of different forms in mandative contexts, by comparing the subjunctive with both a non-finite (i.e., the infinitive) and a finite (i.e., the indicative) option. Particularly interesting is the suggestion that the subjunctive-indicative contrast might reflect a different focus on either the deontic or the epistemic component of the sentence, as a result of different points of view (the matrix subject's vs. the speaker's). This idea will be further developed in Chapter 3, where I present my own model of the syntax-semantics of mandative subjunctives.

1.2.2 Syntactic accounts: the structural properties of the mandative subjunctive

The typical starting point for syntactic investigations into the mandative subjunctive is the set of morphosyntactic features that we have seen above (Aarts, 2012, p.14; Waller, 2017, p.32): the lack of the -*s* suffix for third-person verb forms, the use of uninflected *be* across all persons, the lack of the typical sequence of tenses and a negation pattern without the *do* auxiliary. Generally, the presence of a 'plain', uninflected form of the verb (as in the above examples 'I suggest that Lewis *speak* carefully' and 'I suggest that they *be* careful') is explained by either postulating the presence of a covert, phonologically null modal (e.g., Inui, 2016), or by regarding it as a defective, tenseless form (Giannakidou, 2009; 2011).

The two main models I am about to present, namely Inui's (2016) and Giannakidou's (2009; 2011) rely on a set of basic assumptions about clause structure that have been developed within formal syntax, across several frameworks. Therefore, before proceeding any further, I will introduce these assumptions, as well as the resulting terminology and notation conventions.

At the most basic level, words can be classified into different syntactic categories, also known as parts of speech (Carnie, 2013, p.44), with the most common being verbs (V), nouns (N), adjectives (Adj) and adverbs (Adv). Apart from these lexical parts of speech, which provide the content of the sentence (Carnie, 2013, pp.52-54), there are also functional (i.e., grammatical) categories, which include determiners (e.g., articles, quantifiers, possessive pronouns), prepositions and the all-important category of tense (T). T is the locus of the semantic features related to tense, aspect and mood; therefore, it contains crucial elements of the clause, that is to say, aspectual auxiliaries (*have* and *be* when used as auxiliaries, as in 'I *have* done' and 'he *is* running'), modal auxiliaries (e.g., *shall*, *should*, *will* and *would*), the non-finite marker *to*, and tense suffixes such as *-s* and *-ed*. At the syntactic level, the whole sentence is analysed as a 'tense phrase' (TP) and T is considered its 'head' or, in other words, its central element. The other two main units of the sentence are the subject, which is often part of a determiner phrase (DP), and the predicate or verb phrase (VP).

Within each sentence, all these categories combine into bigger units and give rise to a hierarchical structure, as shown in the figure below, which is a tree representation of the sentence 'He walked' (Carnie, 2013, p.220):
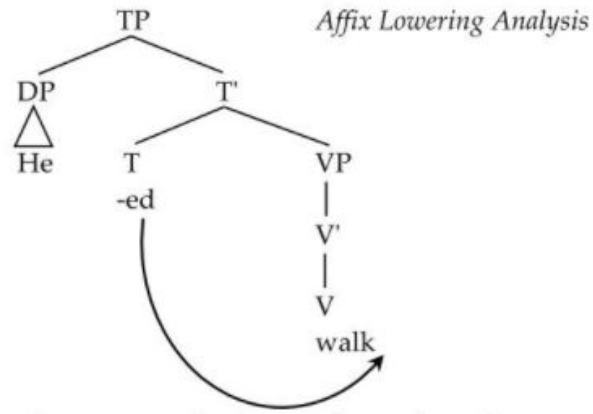
Figure 1.1 Syntax tree for the sentence 'He walked'.

This is, in particular, an example of 'affix-lowering analysis', in that the past tense suffix *-ed* is considered to originate under T and later attach to the lexical verb *walk*.

It goes without saying that sentences can be much more complex than 'he walked'; in particular, they can be composed of two or more clauses, such as '[I told him] [that I was going out]' or, circling back to the subjunctive mood, '[I suggested] [that he go out]'. In both cases, the element joining the main (or 'matrix') clause and the subordinate (or 'embedded') clause, namely *that*, is a 'complementiser' (or 'subordinator') and heads a 'complementiser phrase' (CP).

With these key concepts and terms in mind, let us now have a look at Inui's (2016) account. Inui sets out to investigate the same morphosyntactic properties of the mandative subjunctive that we have seen above (lack of the *-s* suffix, use of uninflected *be*, lack of the typical sequence of tenses and negation without *do*), but, in addition to those, he also focuses on the complementary distribution of subjunctives and modal auxiliaries, as captured in the following example (Inui, 2016, p.3, my italics):

(11) #He demanded that the successful candidate *can speak* German.

Inui's central argument is that the T head of the embedded subjunctive clause is occupied by a covert element (p.9). In this respect, he refers to two previous analyses: Culicover (1971, p.42, cited in Inui, 2016, p.9) has proposed that the auxiliary *will* is present at Deep Structure and then deleted at Surface Structure via a Deletion Rule[3]; somewhat similarly, but perhaps more simply, Roberts (1985, pp.40-41, cited in Inui, 2016, p.9) has posited the presence of an 'empty' or phonologically null modal under the T head. In both cases, the implication is that the embedded T is occupied by a covert element; according to Inui, this would help explain the core morphosyntactic features of mandative subjunctives, such as the lack of inflection on the verb form, which would result from a phonologically null auxiliary selecting a bare form, just like overt modals. Equally, the pattern of negation without *do* and the complementary distribution with other modals could also be explained by postulating the presence of an auxiliary under T (Inui, 2016, pp.9-10). However, one potential counter-analysis for why a modal like *can* does not usually appear after verbs of the *demand* type, as in example (11), is that this is conditioned by the semantics of the matrix verb, rather than syntactic factors.

Inui also goes on to suggest that the null modal causes mandative subjunctive clauses to be finite and tenseless at the same time (2016, pp.11-16). That is because, like any other modal, the covert element is a finite auxiliary which does not encode tense. The author considers, for example, the two following sentences (p.12, italics in original):

   (12) I *said* that Mary *could* go out;
   (13) I *might* come to the party *tomorrow*.

In example (12), the past tense morphology of 'could' is the result of the sequence of tenses holding between the matrix and the embedded clause; in example (13), the same

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[3] In the Chomskyan tradition of transformational generative grammar (Chomsky, 1957; 1964; 1965), Deep Structure is an abstract representation of the sentence, whereas Surface Structure is the sentence as it is uttered or written. Between these two levels, 'transformational rules' (such as deletion rules) intervene to produce the final output.

morphology is used to express future possibility. The most frequent explanation for examples of this kind is that English modals are 'perfecto-present' forms whose past tense morphology 'is compatible with a present tense construal' (Gueron, 2008, p.144). In other words, their temporality does not seem to tap into the typical present-past distinctions which apply to lexical verbs.

In addition to that, Inui (p.15) calls attention to the fact that the lack of inflectional morphology on the 'bare' subjunctive form further precludes its positioning on the time continuum. In his view, the presence of inflection, such as the -*s* suffix for the third-person singular of the present tense and the -*ed* past tense suffix, is usually associated with '+Tense features'. We will see that this position is similar to the argument put forward by Giannakidou (2009; 2011).

Formalising all these ideas, Inui (2016, p.15) proposes that T heads contain binary values for Tense and Finiteness features, and that different combinations of these values correspond to different clause types, as shown below:

a. +Finite/ +Tense → aspectual auxiliaries and *do* support (indicative);

b. +Finite/ -Tense → 0/ *should* and other modals (subjunctive and modals);

c. -Finite/-Tense → *to* (infinitive).

With regard to Giannakidou (2009; 2011), her analysis focuses on the 'tenselessness' of subjunctive clauses in Modern Greek and the resulting temporal dependency between the matrix clause and the embedded clause, but I would argue that her insights are also applicable to mandative subjunctive structures of present-day English.

Drawing on Partee (1973, 1984), Heim (1994) and Kratzer (1998), the author's starting point is a 'pronominal theory of tense' (Giannakidou, 2009, p.1896), namely a model in which 'pronouns and tenses are analogous creatures' (2009, p.1884). According to this, tenses introduce temporal variables in the syntax; a past tense, for example, introduces anteriority with respect to the utterance time and is therefore a 'real, independent tense' (Giannakidou, 2009, p.1987); similarly, a present tense expresses simultaneity to the utterance time. However, similarly to pronouns, when tenses lack a specific reference, they will need to be bound.

According to Giannakidou (2009, pp.1902-1903), this is what happens with the Greek 'perfective non-past', a form that merely indicates a 'forward-moving interval' (2009, p.1898) with no specific temporal reference at its left boundary; in other words, we have no indication as to when the event starts. The missing referent will need to be derived from the matrix event, creating a grammatical dependency where the matrix T acts as an antecedent and binds the subjunctive T. The semantic counterpart of this is that the forward-moving interval of the embedded clause is understood as starting at the same time as the matrix event and progressing indefinitely into the future. The following is one of the examples that we can find in Giannakidou (2009, pp.1902-1903):

(14) Ithela   na   kerdisi   o Janis

    Want.PP.1sg SUBJ   win.PNP.3sg   the John

   'I wanted John to win'

In this case, the perfective non-past (PNP) is not, in itself, capable of temporally locating John's winning. Only a grammatical dependency will enable to use the reference time of the matrix clause. In Giannakidou's analysis, the subjunctive particle *na* mediates this dependency by linking the two clauses and the two events together. The result is that 'John's winning' is placed at any time after the wanting of the matrix

subject, giving rise to a 'futurate' reading (2009, p.1888). Giannakidou goes on to suggest that, usually, this futurate meaning also characterises English to-infinitival constructions introduced by verbs such as *want* or *ask*, as in 'I asked Bill to bring me flowers' (2009, p.1888). Arguably, the same grammatical dependency applies to mandative subjunctives; let us consider, for instance, the following sentence, adapted from Giannakidou's (2009, p.1888) example:

(15) I asked that Bill *bring* me flowers.

Like the Greek example above, the only way we can temporally interpret the event of 'bringing flowers' is with reference to the time of the insisting introduced in the matrix clause. The main difference is that the complementiser *that* does not have the same 'linking' properties as *na* (and as such, it can be omitted without any significant changes in meaning); in this case, then, we could simply postulate that there is a direct dependency between the embedded T and the matrix T head, holding under c-command[4]. This analysis will be further developed in Chapter 3, where I adopt a modal semantics framework based on Gueron's (2008) account of intentional and metaphysical causality.

1.2.3 Conclusion: syntax-semantics, 'optionality' and social meaning

It is interesting to notice that Giannakidou's (2009; 2011) approach is wholly compatible with the notion of a null modal hosted under the subjunctive T head, as suggested by Inui (2016). Whereas the latter sets the scene to understand the appearance of a bare form, which is, as we have seen, intrinsically atemporal, Giannakidou goes on to explain how the resulting tenseless clause may derive its temporality.

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[4] C-command is a specific type of structural relation within a syntax tree which is particularly important for binding. Carnie (2013, p.122) defines it as follows: 'Node A c-commands node B if every node dominating A also dominates B, and neither A nor B dominates the other, and A≠B'.

As the above review has shown, the semantic and syntactic aspects of English mandative subjunctives have, for the most part, been the object of separate analyses. Yet, we have seen how Aarts's (2012) account hints at the possibility of considering both the syntax and the semantics of these structures within the same analytical framework. Chapter 3 will be devoted to developing this insight into a unified model of mandative subjunctives.

It is important to acknowledge that a key word, so far, has been 'choice'. In particular, we have established that, in present-day English, using the subjunctive in mandative contexts is not a grammatical requirement, and indeed subjunctive forms exist alongside other variants, such as the indicative mood and the modal *should*. This makes the subjunctive, fundamentally, a choice.

From a syntactic point of view, the idea that speakers may, at times, be presented with choices in the grammar has been explored through the notion of 'optionality' (e.g., Ney, 1981). However, as McGregor (2013, p.1149) points out, there exists some degree of confusion around this concept in the literature, with the result that 'it is not always clear in what sense of the term a particular item is optional' (2013, p.1149). In response to that, McGregor suggests the following definition (p.1152):

> An element is optional in a given construction iff, in a specifiable set of linguistic circumstances:
>
> (a) it may be present or absent; and
>
> (b) its presence or absence does not affect the grammatical structure: the construction remains unchanged as a linguistic sign regardless of whether or not the element is present.

The author explains that condition (a) means that speakers must be able to choose (p.1151); in other words, there cannot be a specific requirement or restriction on the use of the element under consideration. Additionally, (b) 'is a requirement of structure invariance' (p.1152), whereby the general grammatical construction must not change as a result of the presence or absence of the optional element. What counts as the relevant structural level will depend on the specific element in question. For example, in a sentence like 'I saw the pen on the desk' (p.1152), dropping 'on the desk' cannot be considered an example of optionality, because the resulting structure is different; in particular, 'the clause (…) no longer has a dependent PP specifying a spatial location, but is a bare transitive clause with just its core grammatical roles represented' (McGregor, 2013, p.1153). Conversely, the presence/absence of the complementiser *that* after certain verbs (as in, 'I believe (that) the pen is on the desk'), is regarded as a good example of optionality (p.1151), because it 'does not affect the structure at the level of the *sentential construction*' (p.1153, my italics), which is the level involved in the use of the complementiser.

If we go back to the three main mandative constructions mentioned above, namely the subjunctive, the indicative and the modal *should*, we see how both condition (a) and (b) apply. As I explained, there is no grammatical requirement on the use of a specific variant in mandative contexts; in particular, speakers can choose between indicative morphology (e.g., 'I suggest that Lewis *speaks* carefully'), an overt modal like *should* (e.g., 'I suggest that Lewis *should* speak carefully') or no overt morphology at all (i.e., the subjunctive, as in 'I suggest that Lewis *speak* carefully'). Furthermore, using any of these variants will not change the fundamental structure at the sentential level, with the embedding, in all three cases, of a clause whose T head contains a finite element. And while it is true that the temporal positioning of the event will change depending on the variant of choice (Giannakidou, 2009; 2011), this is, as McGregor (2013, pp.1153, 1156) would say, a difference in 'the shape of the complement clause' rather than 'the more abstract feature of form'.

At this point, one fundamental question might arise: if we settle on considering mandative constructions an example of optionality in the English grammar, at least in the sense specified by McGregor (2013, p.1152), where does that leave us? One option would be to simply conclude that these forms alternate in free variation (McGregor, 2013, p.1151); however, I agree with McGregor that this position is untenable, because 'there will always be some difference in meaning, if not in the representational meaning, then in another component (…), such as the "social" meaning' (p.1151). McGregor's proposal, then, is to see optionality itself as a reflection of meaning, which is 'invariably of the interpersonal type' (p.1156). In the author's own words:

> It concerns the domain of doing things with words, with how language is used to achieve speaker's goals and purposes, and the construal of relations among speech interactants (McGregor, 2013, pp.1156-1157).

The understanding that there is no real free variation in language, and that, instead, variation patterns according to sociolinguistic constraints, goes back to Labov's (1972) early work and it has since become one of the key tenets of variationist sociolinguistic research. However, historically there have been difficulties in delimiting the 'linguistic variable' when it comes to syntactic variation (Tagliamonte, 2012, pp.206-207, cited in Moore, 2021, p.54), due to the traditional view that, similarly to phonology, establishing the 'semantic equivalence' of variants was an important first step before studying their social distribution (Cheshire, 1987; Moore, 2021, p.54). This is typically more difficult in syntax, where pragmatic and interactional considerations come into play in a way that does not usually affect phonological variables. More recently, as part of the so-called 'third-wave' of sociolinguistic research (Eckert, 2018), with which my work is aligned, there has been a move away from the traditional concept of linguistic variable, thanks to a new focus on the 'socio-pragmatics of syntax' (Moore, 2020, pp.73-74). In other words, the study of alternating options whose equivalence needs to be established beforehand is considered less central than focusing on how each variant is actually used in interaction in order to make meaning. This shift has been articulated by Moore (2012, p.71) in the following terms:

> (…) from a substitution class approach to variation (where variants compete to fill a linguistic "slot") to a stylistic approach (where the manner and nature of a feature's occurrence may be just as important as its relative frequency).

In light of all of the above, this thesis starts from the premise that, in present-day British English, the mandative subjunctive is a matter of choice, as proven by the fact that alternative options are available to speakers. Crucially, the fact that it is not a grammatical requirement opens up the possibility of an investigation that goes beyond syntax proper and looks into the realm of social meaning, where language users engage in 'taking stances, making social moves, and constructing identity' (Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.1). In turn, as I will discuss in the rest of the chapter (and throughout this thesis), studying the social meaning of subjunctives entails retracing their history and the language ideologies woven into it, in order to then analyse their present-day uses in written texts and spoken interactions.

1.3 History and ideology

My aim in this section is to provide a brief overview of the modern history of subjunctive constructions, which will be the object of an in-depth analysis in Chapter 4. As I mentioned above, the Old English subjunctive mood was a recognisable conjugation with a wide range of uses (Kovacs, 2010, pp.59-62). It allowed speakers to express a 'practical modality', whereas the indicative was used to mark a 'theoretical modality' (James, 1986, pp.11-16). However, during the Middle English period, a steady process of morphological simplification took place; one of its consequences was that the subjunctive inflection started to resemble the indicative, thus losing what had previously been its specificity.

Subjunctive usage continued to decline through the following centuries, in both British and American English, until a relatively short revival took place in England in the second half of the 18th century, encouraged by the prescriptive attitudes of

grammarians of the time (Auer, 2009). The revival affected subjunctive clauses introduced by subordinators such as *if* and *though* (as in 'Sir Hargrave may be very glad, *if* he *hear* no more of this affair'; Auer, 2009, p.67, italics in original), but this usage waned by the end of the 19th century. A much more significant resurgence, whose effects are still visible today, occurred in the US at the beginning of the 20th century (e.g., Overgaard, 1995, Hundt, 2009, p.31); this time, the affected structure was the mandative subjunctive, which, as we know, tends to occur 'after verbs expressing a wish, a command or exhortation' (Kovacs, 2010, p.66) (e.g., 'I suggest that Lewis *speak* carefully'). From that moment on, numerous corpus-based studies have been carried out to better understand this linguistic change (e.g., Overgaard, 1995; Serpollet, 2001; Waller, 2005; Kjellmer, 2009; Waller, 2017), counting frequencies of the mandative subjunctive in American English and comparing varieties, such as, in most cases, American and British English.

Overall, this body of research has shown that, in the US, the mandative revival started between 1900 and 1920 and initially affected literary works by authors from the South and the Midwest. It then spread to the rest of the country and to most genres, including the spoken language, gradually losing its formal connotations. By the second half of the century, the subjunctive had become the preferred mandative option for American speakers in virtually all contexts, as confirmed by some of the semantic analyses reviewed above (i.e., Greenbaum, 1977). Moreover, starting from the 1960s, a significant increase in the frequency of mandative subjunctives was also noticed in British English, although not on the same scale as its American counterpart. The explanation most commonly found in the literature is American influence and, more specifically, the role of mass media in bridging varieties of English (Overgaard, 1995, p.51). This increase continued in Britain until the early 1990s but seems to have levelled off in the 15 years from 1991 to 2006 (Waller, 2017, p.231).

A more detailed account of the modern history of subjunctive constructions will be provided in Chapter 4, where changes in frequency of use will be considered in the light of commentary from language authorities and the socio-political context in

Britain and the United States. Such complex historical analysis, whose end point will be the introduction of the subjunctive in the National Curriculum for England in 2013 (Department for Education, 2013), will rely on the construct of language ideology. It is important, then, to introduce this concept at this stage and understand its implications, which is what the remainder of this section is dedicated to.

A key definition of language ideologies is provided by Silverstein (1979, p.193), who sees them as 'sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalisation or justification of perceived language structure and use'. The publication of Silverstein's essay in 1979 opened up a new field of inquiry within the North American tradition of linguistic anthropology, with the recognition of how central language ideologies were to understand the relationship between language use and social structures. Since then, this field has continued to gain momentum.

Another key definition is offered by Piller (2015, p.920), according to whom 'language ideologies are (…) best understood as beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language that are socially shared'. On a small scale, they consist of perceptions and judgements that we make every day, whenever we pay attention to somebody's accent or decide what is most appropriate to write in a certain context (see also Cameron, 1995, pp.2-3); on a larger scale, they are often efforts by dominant groups within society to consolidate power, by constructing and promoting, for example, a 'standard' use of the language, a point to which I will return shortly.

Such value judgements are as ubiquitous as language itself. To understand their pervasiveness, we first need to consider that, as human beings, we are endowed with a metalinguistic ability that allows us to think and talk about language (Cameron, 1995, p.2); secondly, linguistic signs are inextricably 'part of organised social intercourse' (Voloshinov, 1986, p.21, cited in Piller, 2015, p.920) and are therefore, fundamentally, a 'public act' (Cameron, 1995, p.2), which opens them up to the influence of social, extralinguistic factors. Language ideologies are, then, the

mechanism that makes this connection possible: they act as 'a bridge between linguistic and social theory' (Woolard, 1994, p.72, cited in Piller, 2015, p.920) and, in most cases, they help rationalise and 'justify social inequality' (Piller, 2015, p.923). The intimate connection between these three elements, namely formal linguistic structure, social acts and activities where language is used, and ideology, is captured by the notion of 'total linguistic fact', first defined by Silverstein (1985, p.220) and more recently emphasised in other studies as well (e.g., Rampton and Holmes, 2019, pp.4-5).

With regard to specific examples of language ideology, one of the most pervasive is the so-called 'standard language ideology', defined by Piller as follows:

> The standard language ideology refers to the belief that a particular variety – usually the variety that has its roots in the speech of the most powerful group in society, that is often based on the written language, that is highly homogeneous and that is acquired through long years of formal education – is aesthetically, morally, and intellectually superior to other ways of speaking the language (2015, p.920).

Three main points need to be made here. The first one is that, from this definition, it is clear what the social domain is for the creation of the 'standard': as Lippi-Green (2012, p.59) puts it, 'it is the language of the educated, in particular those who have achieved a high level of skill with the written language'. The second point, also highlighted by Lippi-Green (2012, p.58), is that 'there is nothing objective about this practice'; instead, what we see is simply an abstraction and idealisation of reality, which results in the myth of an 'overarching, homogeneous (…) language' (2012, p.68). Finally, we also notice that, in the above definition, language becomes a 'proxy' for other aspects (see also Cushing, 2019) and, in particular, the embodiment of intelligence and desirable moral qualities.

Another type of language ideology, in which language becomes a symbol of tradition, social order and political unity, is the 'one-language-one-nation ideology'. Again, a useful definition is provided by Piller (2015, p.922): 'the "one nation, one language" ideology is the belief that monolingualism or the use of one single common language is important for social harmony and national unity'. Piller goes on to explain that, historically, this ideology can be found, for example, in the US, where the use of English has often been perceived as a powerful way to bring together an immigrant nation; speaking English, in this case, is seen by linguistically (and often politically) conservative groups as a patriotic act and a 'civic duty' (Piller, 2015, p.923), often at the expense of minority languages, such as Spanish, Chinese and numerous indigenous languages.

These two language ideologies can often operate together, as the 'common language' of the nation often coincides with the idealised 'standard' variety of the upper classes. In so doing, they both help perpetuate and rationalise socio-political inequality, favouring some groups while denying access to others. While the one-nation-one-language ideology makes language a requirement for citizenship of a particular community, the standard language ideology dictates what a 'successful' citizen will write or sound like. The former creates an opposition between national identities (e.g., American versus non-American), while the latter rationalises and reinforces social hierarchies (e.g., upper versus lower classes, or educated versus uneducated).

Elaborating on exactly how a standard language ideology helps justify social inequality, Lippi-Green (2012, p.70) puts forward a 'language subordination model', consisting of eight steps. First, we have *mystification*, in which language is constructed as a complex phenomenon that cannot be mastered without expert guidance. Second, *authority* is claimed, i.e. some groups present themselves as the experts and the linguistic 'models' that people should aspire to. Then, *misinformation* is generated, so that a certain type of usage is depicted as inferior or inaccurate, and the targeted varieties are *trivialised*. At this stage, the 'standard' language starts to be presented as a symbol of extra-linguistic qualities, and a metaphor of success: as a result,

conformity is socially rewarded and held up as a positive example, while *non-conformity* is vilified and given negative attributes. Correspondingly, *promises* of success and future employment are made to those who conform, and, on the other hand, *threats* are made to non-conformers (e.g., 'No one important will take you seriously; doors will close', Lippi-Green, 2012, p.70).

Before concluding this section, it is important to clarify that, as stated initially, ideologies and value judgements about language are ubiquitous, which means that no one is really immune to them, not even linguists. In fact, at times, in reaction to the more prescriptive ideologies mentioned so far, linguists have developed their own set of ideologies, albeit with different intentions and very different underlying values. Cameron (1995, p.3), in this respect, points out that the most common among such ideologies can be summarised in the mantra 'Leave your language alone', which derives from the title of a book by linguist Robert Hall (1950, cited in Cameron, 1995, p.3). The main idea, in this case, is that language is a natural phenomenon, somewhat separate from its users, with the implicit suggestion being that 'language would be better off without the constant unwelcome attentions of [some of] its speakers' (Cameron, p.3). The fact that this view, like other types of ideology, is not 'neutral with respect to what is "good" linguistically speaking' (Cameron, p.4) is confirmed by Lakoff's assertion:

> For change that comes spontaneously from below, or within, our policy should be, Let your language alone, and leave its speakers alone! But other forms of language manipulation have other origins, other motives, other effects, and are far more dangerous (1990, p.298, cited in Cameron, 1995, p.4).

Here, we may notice an invitation to use the leave-your-language-alone principle 'selectively' (Cameron, p.20). The key opposition, in particular, is between 'spontaneous' language change, which is considered acceptable, and other, 'more

dangerous' types of manipulation, attributed, one can assume, to the actions of powerful groups.

The use of the adjective 'spontaneous' can be attributed, for Cameron, to the general view that language is a natural phenomenon, which goes back to 19th-century comparative philology and is also at the heart of modern linguistics (1995, p.5). In fact, this view is behind the crucial opposition between 'prescription' and 'description', with the latter being the stated mission of linguistics as a discipline (e.g., Milroy and Milroy, 1985, cited in Cameron, p.5). The role of the linguist is, in other words, to notice, study and describe linguistic patterns as they naturally emerge.

However, I agree with Cameron (1995, p.21) that this seemingly 'apolitical' approach to language change often has an ideological basis, as well, which is important to recognise. This is not to say that linguists' ideologies are comparable to those perpetuated by dominant groups within society. Rather, as stated above, linguists are not 'neutral with respect to what is "good" linguistically speaking' (Cameron, p.4); they, too, have 'beliefs, feelings, and conceptions about language' (Piller, 2015, p.920), as a result of their work (e.g., that languages should be 'left alone'). For instance, in the quoted passage above, Lakoff's criticism is not, as Cameron (p.21) would suggest, really about the degree of 'spontaneity' of language change; it is about the agents behind that change and the potential abuse of power by some of them (e.g., politicians). Recognising this ideological aspect in linguists' views is crucial to combatting language mystification and proposing an alternative set of values.

1.4 The social meaning of the subjunctive

Earlier in the chapter, I argued that, in order to capture the complexity of mandative subjunctives and, in particular, the choices that speakers are presented with in mandative contexts, it is necessary to look beyond syntactic-semantic accounts and explore the social meanings of these forms. To that aim, in the previous section, I

briefly outlined the modern history of English subjunctive constructions and introduced the notion of language ideology. In doing so, I hinted at the intimate, three-way relationship between linguistic forms, social structures and ideology, as captured by the concept of 'total linguistic fact' (Silverstein, 1985, p.220).

The initial definition of 'total linguistic fact' by Silverstein emphasises the dynamic and complex nature of this relationship: 'It is an unstable mutual interaction of meaningful sign forms, contextualised to situations of interested human use and mediated by the fact of cultural ideology' (1985, p.220). Having already defined language ideology, in this section I will focus more specifically on its role in establishing associations between linguistic forms and social meaning. For that, I turn to the notion of 'indexicality'.

Hall-Lew, Moore and Podesva (2021, p.5) define indexicality as a process that generates 'a link between the [linguistic] form and a type of social meaning', clarifying that 'the social meaning(s) that listeners arrive at, however vaguely, can only be determined in the moment of use, dependent on the particular ideologies made relevant in context'. Indexicality is, therefore, the attribution of social interpretation(s) to linguistic forms, a process which is always rooted in an underlying ideological system.

Initially, an association is created between a linguistic form and 'some dimension of its conventional context of use' (Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.5), such as its typical users (e.g., a particular population or social group) and their perceived social characteristics (Silverstein, 2003, cited in Eckert, 2008, p.463). Once that association is established, the same form can then be used in different contexts to index the same social values; in other words, it becomes 'available for segmentation and (re)interpretation' (Eckert, 2008, p.458) and can be used in response to new interactional demands, in a constant and creative 'process of bricolage' (Hebdige, 1984, cited in Eckert, 2008, p.456). An example of this can be found in the research conducted by Zhang (2005; 2008, cited in Eckert, 2008, pp.460-462) on the speech differences between Beijing managers in

state-owned financial businesses and those in foreign-owned businesses. One of the most interesting differences reported by Zhang is the use of full tone for unstressed syllables in the speech of foreign-owned business managers, which contrasts with the tendency, in Beijing Mandarin, to assimilate those syllables to the preceding tone. The author's main argument is that this class of managers is engaged in the construction of a 'yuppie' identity, associated with a transnational lifestyle and defined in opposition to more local, urban identities. Because the full tone variable is generally associated with non-mainland accents spoken in Hong Kong and Taiwan and, by extension, their global markets, it can be used to support the identity work that underlies the cosmopolitan 'yuppie' culture.

However, social identity is only one of several levels of social meaning that linguistic variables can invoke (Hall-Lew et al., 2021, pp.4-5). At a slightly more complex level, linguistic features can point to a 'persona', which is a set of 'characterological traits' (Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.4) emerging from the '[manipulation of] the conventionalized social meanings of dialect varieties' (Coupland, 2001, p.198) in response to different situations. In this case, an example is provided by Heath, a gay American medical student, studied by Podesva (2004; 2007) as he moves from clinical settings to more informal contexts, such as a barbecue with friends. Whereas in a clinical setting the self-representation that Heath wants to project is that of a serious and articulate professional, at social events with friends his tendency is to enact a flamboyant, 'diva' persona. For Podesva, this is linguistically achieved through not only the use of falsetto, but also with strong bursts of intervocalic /t/ release (in contrast with the typical American flap), which is ideologically associated with Britishness, refinement and elegance. The emphatic, caricatural use of /t/ release contributes to the construction of a meticulous and hypercritical 'diva' persona.

Another level of social meaning that can be indexed by linguistic variables, and which I would like to focus on, is stance. The conceptualisation of stance has accompanied the development of indexicality since its inception and can be found, most importantly, in Ochs's work (1992, 1993, 1996, cited in Snell, 2010, p.631), where stance is seen

as a more local type of social meaning which mediates the relationship between language and macrosocial categories. More recently, the notion of stance has been taken up and further refined by Du Bois (2007), who provides the following definition:

> Stance is a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field (p.163).

In other words, stance refers to the use of language 'to position [oneself] and others, draw social boundaries, and lay claim to particular statuses' (Snell, 2010, p.631). In Du Bois's model (2007), stance is necessarily dialogic, as it occurs as part of an 'ongoing exchange' (p.149) between at least two people, who position themselves with respect to an object. In fact, these three crucial entities (first subject, second subject and shared object) and the actions by which they relate to each other give rise to a 'stance triangle' (Du Bois, 2007, pp.162-169). The triangle, which is at the same time a theoretical construct and an analytical tool, highlights that every instance of stance-taking involves two subjects evaluating and thus positioning themselves with respect to an object, while at the same time defining the type of alignment with each other, which can be convergent or divergent. All of that can be achieved, in Du Bois's words (p.163), 'through overt communicative means', that is to say, through the use of linguistic variables that are able to index social evaluations and/or alignments. An illustration of these processes is the ethnographic analysis of the possessive 'me' conducted by Snell (2010). Snell (2010, p.633) describes 'me' [mi] as 'a well-established feature of northeast [English] dialects', which 'sits outside the mainstream "standard"' and is often stigmatised. Yet, she shows how primary school children from Teesside make strategic use of this feature to negotiate local interactional meanings, including stances, based on the indexical history of the form. We can see it in the following interaction, which is an excerpt of the exchange analysed by Snell (2010, p.644, emphasis in original), involving Mrs Moon (the teaching assistant) and two pupils, Nathan and Helen:

1 Mrs Moon: Nathan

2   sit on your bottom please and get on

3 Nathan: I'll just get my [ma] pencil

4   it's up my [ma] jumper

5 Helen: *((laughing))* **my [mi] pencil's up my [mi] jumper**

Here, in response to his being reprimanded by Mrs Moon, Nathan jokingly claims that his pencil is 'up his jumper'. Helen is aware that this is an unusual and cheeky comment on Nathan's part, which she signals by repeating what Nathan just said, with one crucial difference: the use of the non-standard [mi], which differs from the reduced form [ma] uttered by Nathan. According to Snell, the use of [mi] amounts to a stylistic performance in which Helen distances herself from Nathan's comment and highlights its transgressive nature. This is achieved through the use of a form which is ideologically linked to 'non-standardness' and, therefore, to some extent, transgression. Exploiting this indexical link, Helen (the first subject) produces an evaluation of Nathan's behaviour (the object) and positions herself with respect to it, while signalling her divergence from Nathan himself (the second subject). Furthermore, Snell (p.645) argues that Helen's performance also 'builds affiliations with Mrs Moon' and the rest of the class, which points to Helen's simultaneous participating in multiple stance triangles.

Common to the examples mentioned so far involving group identities, personae and stances, is the idea that linguistic features can be ideologically linked to social meanings and values. Furthermore, we have seen that, wherever the indexical link first originates, language users are able to segment and reinterpret that link (Eckert, 2008, p.458), 'exporting' it to new contexts and across social situations, in a potentially endless 'process of bricolage' (Hebdige, 1984, cited in Eckert, 2008, p.456). To capture this ideological complexity, Eckert (2008) has proposed the notion of 'indexical field', which she defines as a 'constellation of ideologically related

meanings, any one of which can be activated in the situated use of the variable' (p.454). The social meanings of linguistic forms are, therefore, not fixed or static, but fluid and always changing; they create a field of ideological connections that can be constantly built upon in creative ways.

One final point that I would like to draw attention to is that indexical relationships between linguistic variables and social values can sometimes coexist with and be enriched by other types of relationship (Hall-Lew et al., 2021, pp.6-8). One of these is 'iconisation' (Irvine and Gal, 2000), an ideologically-driven process in which the physical structure of a particular form is seen as reflecting 'a social group's inherent nature or essence' (Irvine, 2001, p.35). This is illustrated in the aforementioned research carried out by Zhang (2005, 2008, cited in Eckert, 2008, pp.460-462), where it emerges that a typical Beijing Mandarin feature, the rhotacisation of syllable finals, produces a 'smooth' sound quality which is then associated with the 'oily' Beijing persona, a 'smooth operator' often referred to in Chinese literature as well.

Aside from iconisation, semantic relationships can sometimes also '[bleed] into social interpretations of the speakers' (Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.7), as exemplified by Beltrama and Staum Casasanto's research (2021) on the use of the intensifiers 'totally' in English and '-issimo' in Italian. Through social perception studies, the authors show how, in certain contexts, intensifiers are associated with an interpretation of the speaker as particularly 'excitable' or 'outgoing', which they see as the result, at least in part, of the semantics of these expressions indicating 'reaching the top' and 'an element of extremeness' (Beltrama and Staum Casasanto, 2021, p.97).

Finally, social meaning can also arise from 'systems of distinctiveness' (Irvine, 2001, cited in Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.7), that is to say, from the 'contrast between alternatives' (Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.7). In other words, sometimes, the simple fact that a specific variant has been chosen in a context where other variants could also have been used triggers a process of comparison, from which social interpretations

emerge. This is particularly evident when the variant of choice is linguistically marked (where 'markedness' refers to 'a variable's less frequent, natural, simple or predictable instantiations'; Beltrama and Staum Casasanto, 2021, p.84). Going back to Beltrama and Staum Casasanto's research on Italian intensifiers, the authors note that adding the suffix '-issimo' to a noun is an unexpected way to indicate the quintessential properties of an item and, as such, it is a marked variant. Let us consider one of the examples they provide (2021, p.88):

(16) Abbiamo appena preso questa lampugh-issima.

We.have just caught this mahi.mahi.fish-ISSIMO.

'We just caught this quintessential mahi mahi fish'.

Rather than using a separate adjective, as in the English translation, the speaker in this case has attached the suffix '-issimo', normally reserved to adjectives (as in 'bravissimo', meaning 'very good'), to the noun 'lampuga' to indicate that the exemplar under consideration represents the quintessence of that biological category. According to Beltrama and Staum Casasanto (p.88), variants such as 'lampughissima' in the above example, 'by virtue of being particularly surprising or unexpected to the listener, tend to emerge as especially suitable carriers of social meanings'. In this particular case, that contributes to an interpretation of the speaker as 'excitable' or 'outgoing'.

'Lampughissima' is, then, an example of how different types of relationships between forms and social meanings can occur at the same time, as in this case, both the semantics and the distinctiveness of the intensifier contribute to its social interpretation (Beltrama and Staum Casasanto, 2021, pp.96-99; Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.7). As an Italian speaker, I would also add that 'lampughissima' sounds slightly ungrammatical, because, as I already mentioned, '-issimo' intensification is normally reserved to adjectives. In that case, then, we could also be looking at an indexical

relationship in which the use of a non-standard form is linked to social characteristics such as 'fun' and 'outgoing' via, perhaps, meanings of transgression and rebelliousness. This further confirms that the ideological connections between language and social values are complex, and that attention should be given to multiple sources of meaning.

1.4.1 Indexicality of the English mandative subjunctive

To my knowledge, the only study that has looked into English mandative subjunctives through the notion of indexicality is the one carried out by Vaughan and Mulder (2014) on Australian English. Based on their analysis of corpus extracts, the authors highlight that these forms can index a formal/prestigious style, while helping to construct a stance of power and epistemic authority. These social meanings would result from mandative subjunctives being typical of legal or official documents; for this reason, they are reminiscent of institutional hierarchies and authority.

In particular, Vaughan and Mulder (pp.502-503) show a number of examples where they argue that mandative subjunctives appear in 'unequal dyads' (Peters, 2009, p.134, cited in Vaughan and Mulder, 2014, p.502), that is to say, interactional contexts where one of the interlocutors positions themselves as an 'expert' or 'professional' within an asymmetrical relationship. For instance, the following is a complaint letter to a company that specialises in photography development (Vaughan and Mulder, 2014, p.502, my italics):

> You suggested the film and packaging are not matched using these numbers but rather other identifiers. This may be the case but could I suggest that the identifiers on the film and package *be checked* to see if they were used on or about the date of processing.

Here, the authors do not comment on the specific rhetorical function of the subjunctive, but based on their main argument, my sense is that the use of a prestige and 'legalistic' form helps to highlight the complainer's linguistic competence, thus creating an implicit contrast with a disappointing service and the 'incompetence' of its providers.

A clearer example of asymmetrical relationship is the following extract, where a doctor is advising somebody on the basis of their knowledge and expertise (p.503, my italics):

> I would think that she's probably going to be on it more or less for the rest of her life however what I would *suggest she do* is ask her GP if she could get a referral to an endocrinologist who specializes in osteoporosis.

Vaughan and Mulder (2014, p.503) conclude that the English subjunctive no longer reflects grammatical requirements, and that behind its survival could be the ability to index a range of social meanings, which can be exploited for stylistic purposes. However, due to the preliminary nature of their investigation, the authors do not make explicit the historical and ideological basis underpinning these indexical properties, which we know is an intrinsic component of the 'total linguistic fact' (Silverstein, 1985, p.220). Yet, this analytical depth is necessary to study structures as multifaceted as mandative subjunctives. For these reasons, while retaining Vaughan and Mulder's insights as a crucial starting point, the discourse analysis I present in Chapters 5 will take into account the history and the ideologies surrounding these constructions; I will also attempt to consider multiple dimensions of social meaning.

1.5 Conclusion

I started this review by considering the syntactic-semantic properties of mandative subjunctives and the main studies that have focused on them (e.g., James, 1986;

Giannakidou, 2009; Inui, 2016). However, due to the fact that, in present-day English, using the subjunctive in mandative contexts is not a grammatical requirement, I defined the use of these structures as, fundamentally, a choice; adopting McGregor's (2013, p.1152) definition, I acknowledged that it might be, in fact, a case of 'optionality' in the grammar of English. Crucially, recognising that there are options does not amount to saying that these alternate in 'free variation' (Labov, 1972; McGregor, 2013, p.1151); rather, the meaning driving their alternation needs to be found beyond the realm of syntax-semantics proper, in the 'interpersonal' domain, and, I would add, at the intersection between the former and the latter. Furthermore, within the 'third wave' of variationist sociolinguistics (Eckert, 2018), with which my work is aligned, the study of syntactic phenomena has recently become less concerned with the distribution of alternating options and more interested in how each variant carries and helps to make social meaning (Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.1; Moore, 2021, pp.54-55).

In particular, to uncover the social meaning(s) of mandative subjunctives, which is one of the main goals of my research, I suggested that we first need to look at the history of these forms and the language ideologies woven into it; ultimately, this process entails exploring their present-day uses, both in writing and in speech. With this in mind, and in preparation for the analyses that I present later in the thesis, I offered examples and definitions of language ideologies, indexicality and stance, as well as other types of meaningful connections between language and social values, i.e., iconisation, semantics and distinctiveness. Then, I reviewed Vaughan and Mulder's (2014) study on the indexicality of the mandative subjunctive in Australian English, highlighting that, while their investigation lacks analytical depth, their conclusion contains a crucial insight (p.503), namely that English subjunctives are no longer within the scope of syntax proper and instead have become a marker of style and stance.

The rest of the thesis is structured as follows: Chapter 2 will provide an overview of my methodology; in Chapter 3, I will put forward a unified syntactic-semantic model

of mandative subjunctives; Chapter 4 will look at the modern history of these structures and the changing metalinguistic commentary on the part of language authorities; Chapter 5 will be dedicated to the analysis of present-day uses in written and spoken British English, while in Chapter 6 I will present my interviews with language practitioners and my analysis of British style guides; finally, in Chapter 7 I will offer an overview of my research and point to new directions for future investigations.

Chapter 2

Methodology

2.1 Introduction

As stated in the previous chapter, the general aim of this research is to explore the use of mandative subjunctives in British English by taking into account their historical and ideological background, their social meanings in the present day, as well as their syntactic-semantic properties. It was clear from the beginning that capturing the complexity of mandative subjunctives required using multiple sources of data and different research methods. These will be presented below.

In particular, this chapter is organised around my three research questions; for each of them, I will present the types of data employed and the research methods that were implemented; a brief summary will then be provided in the conclusion. All methodological aspects described in this chapter went through the University's ethical review procedures and were approved by the University's ethics committee.

2.2 What are the syntactic and semantic properties of mandative subjunctives, and what model best captures them?

This question reflects an attempt to find a comprehensive syntactic-semantic model of mandative subjunctives that best captures their properties. In this case, building on the literature reviewed in the previous chapter (i.e., Giannakidou, 2009; 2011; Inui, 2016), I will put forward a new model in Chapter 3 based on Gueron's (2008) account of metaphysical and intentional causality. This type of analysis typically relies on introspection as the main source of data (e.g., Mithun, 2012; Gibson and Fedorenko, 2013) and culminates in a syntactic representation of the construction under investigation (i.e., a syntax tree).

Throughout this thesis, we will see how different aspects of my research communicate with each other. My syntactic-semantic model is a good case in point: as we will see in the next chapter, two key insights originating from it appear to be corroborated by corpus and interview data; furthermore, in Chapter 6 I will discuss how properties at the syntactic-semantic level may contribute to social interpretations of the mandative subjunctive.

2.3 How and why has the use of the subjunctive changed over time?

With this question, my goal is to investigate the history of subjunctive constructions in terms of frequency, contexts of use and language-expert discourse over the last three centuries, as well as any underlying language ideologies. The guiding principle here is that the attribution of social meaning to language (i.e. 'indexicality') is ultimately 'a process of association, where a linguistic form points to some dimension of its conventional context of use' (Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.5); we also know that this process is always 'ideologically mediated' (Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.5), as highlighted by the notion of 'total linguistic fact' (Silverstein, 1985, p.220). Therefore, by tracking down the historical links between subjunctives, ideologies and social contexts, we can ultimately understand their 'indexical field' (Eckert, 2008) in the present day, which is the focus of the next research question.

For my historical and ideological analysis, I will draw upon a number of studies documenting changes in frequency and attitude towards subjunctives from the 18th century (e.g., Overgaard, 1995; Auer, 2009; Waller, 2017). The choice of the 18th century as a starting point stems from the fact that at that time, after a long period of decline, England saw a revival of the subjunctive mood, encouraged by the prescriptive attitudes of grammarians (Auer, 2009). Although this revival affected non-mandative constructions, it offers precious insights into the wider ideological context surrounding the subjunctive mood, with ramifications still visible today; it is therefore a crucial moment in 'subjunctive history'.

In addition to previous studies, I will also use archival sources illuminating the socio-political situation in the US in the aftermath of the American Revolution (Franklin, 1779; Jefferson, 1790; Webster, 1828; Jefferson, 1851). This will be crucial to understanding the revival of mandative structures that started at the beginning of the 20th century in American English and subsequently spread to British English. My ideological analysis will end with a look at the text of the National Curriculum for England (Department for Education, 2013), where the subjunctive mood was formally introduced in 2013 in the programmes of study for Year 6.

In this case, my analytical framework is based on a 'critical interpretive synthesis' (CIS) approach (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006). CIS is 'an ongoing inductive and interpretive [strategy]' (Ruggiano and Perry, 2017, p.84) that is especially suitable when two conditions are present: firstly, different forms of evidence (i.e., both qualitative and quantitative) need to be synthesised and, secondly, the purpose of the synthesis is to be 'critical', which entails a 'questioning of the ways in which the literature [has] constructed the problematics (…) [and] the nature of the assumptions on which it drew' (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006, no pagination[5]). This translates into a more reflexive account than what is normally produced by traditional review techniques.

Following Dixon-Woods et al.'s (2006) indications, I will start by examining all my sources in great detail and then proceed to identify patterns and themes across the literature. The reflexive nature of this process, which is captured in Chapter 4, will often entail revisiting those themes multiple times in light of new aspects of the literature taken into consideration. This recursive approach is, in fact, central to CIS (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006).

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[5] The journal from which the article is taken does not provide page numbers but simply identifies the article number (i.e., 35). The full text is available online at:
https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/1471-2288-6-35

2.4 How is the subjunctive used in contemporary British English? What are the social meanings associated with it?

As mentioned above, after tracking down the historical links between mandative subjunctives, social contexts and language ideologies, my aim is to come back to the present day to investigate the 'indexical field' (Eckert, 2008, p.454) of these forms; as we know, this has been defined by Eckert as a 'constellation of ideologically related meanings, any one of which can be activated in the situated use of the variable' (2008, p.454). It is therefore important to establish whether the historical association between the mandative subjunctive and 'some dimension of its conventional context of use' (Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.5), be its typical user or a particular genre, has created indexical ties that can be exploited in contemporary British English.

To do so, I will initially study examples of 'situated use' by looking at a written and a spoken corpus; I will then focus on the current discourse around mandative subjunctives by analysing 15 semi-structured interviews with language practitioners and three British style guides. This will allow me to compare the social meanings indexed in interaction and in written texts with metalinguistic comments about these constructions.

In what follows, I describe the main characteristics of the corpora, interviews and style guides, focusing on the data collection process and the analytical approach selected in each case.

2.4.1 The corpora

The two corpora chosen for my analyses are the spoken BNC2014 (British National Corpus 2014; Love et al., 2017) and the BE06 (British English 2006; Baker, 2009). The spoken BNC2014 is an 11.5-million-word corpus made up of transcripts of informal conversations, collected between 2012 and 2016. It is based on a PPSR (public participation in scientific research) approach to data collection, whereby

members of the public were invited to register as contributors and then instructed to use their smartphones to record conversations with family and friends. The BE06 is made up of approximately 1,100,000 words from texts published between 2005 and 2007; they were collected from the internet, although Baker (2009, pp.312, 315) clarifies that they had initially been published in paper form and later archived online. The texts belong to different genres and subgenres, a point to which I will return below, when I present the corpus 'metadata'.

The BE06 was chosen after it became clear that the written component of the BNC2014, initially due to be released by the end of 2019, was not going to be available in time for my analyses. While not directly comparable to the spoken BNC2014[6], it nonetheless gave me access to contemporary British texts, thus enabling me to carry out qualitative analyses that were crucial to my research design.

To interrogate both corpora, I initially used a list of 'mandative triggers', that is to say, verbs, nouns and adjectives that tend to be followed by mandative subjunctive constructions (e.g., *insist, request, (it is) crucial (that)*). My list was based on the 30 triggers first identified by Johansson and Norheim (1988, pp.28-29) and which have since become a reference point for subsequent studies (e.g., Waller, 2017, p.85); to these, I added seven new items based on my own experience and/or intuition, in order to maximise the occurrences of the construction under investigation and have more data available for qualitative analysis. The resulting set of triggers will be presented in Chapter 5. All triggers were entered into the corpus query processor via a simple lemma search, using the * function, which allows to focus on the root and 'disregard the end of the word' (as in *insist**) (McEnery and Hardie, 2012). As expected, this returned a very high number of matches, which were then manually checked in order to identify instances of the mandative subjunctive. For words with particularly high frequency, namely *ask* and *important*, I decided to include the complementiser *that* in

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[6] We should note, however, that in corpus research a significant gap between corpora is usually of about 30 years, roughly corresponding to the 'span of a generation' (Leech et al., 2009, p.27, cited in Waller, 2017, p.201). Therefore, in this case some level of comparability was still present.

the search as well (i.e., *ask* that, it is important that*), in order to limit the number of matches to constructions that were more likely to contain a subjunctive.

Following Aarts' (2012, p.14) and Waller's (2017, p.30-36) indications, I considered mandative subjunctives all subordinate clauses that met at least one of the following criteria:

1. lack of the third-person singular -*s* suffix (e.g., 'I suggest that Lewis *speak* carefully');

2. use of the form *be* for all persons (e.g., 'I suggest that they *be* careful');

3. absence of the typical sequence of tenses following a past tense matrix verb (e.g., 'I suggested that Lewis *speak* carefully/*be* careful');

4. negation achieved with *not* followed by a bare form, without do-support (e.g., 'I insist that Lewis *not speak* during the meeting').

Establishing these criteria beforehand enabled me to discard all instances in which a trigger was followed by a different mandative variant, such as an indicative or a modal clause. By way of illustration, the following examples show what these other variants may look like with respect to the four aforementioned criteria:

1. I suggest that Lewis *speaks/should speak* carefully;

2. I suggest that they *are/should be* careful;

3. I suggested that Lewis *spoke*[7]/*should speak* carefully;

4. I insist that Lewis *does/should not speak* during the meeting.

Furthermore, following Waller's (2017, p.35) approach, I considered 'non-distinct forms', and therefore also excluded from the count, all those sentences where a certain form '[could not] be positively identified as subjunctive or indicative' (Waller, 2017, p.35), as in, for example, 'I recommend that you go'. In this case, the four identifying criteria are not applicable: a subject pronoun like *you* (or any other non-third-person subject) does not normally require the verbal *-s* suffix; the verb in the subordinate clause is not *be*; the subordinate verb is not negated; finally, the matrix verb is not a past tense, which means that we cannot even rely on the presence or absence of sequence of tenses. In other words, although the above example may look like a typical subjunctive-triggering context, the form *go* is morphologically ambiguous, due to the specific environment in which it appears; I therefore agree with Waller (2017, p.35) that discounting such non-distinct instances is the most methodologically robust solution.

In keeping with some suggestions in the literature (Vaughan and Mulder, 2014, pp.492-494; Rutten, 2015), I also decided to test a different type of corpus search, namely a 'bottom-up' approach, which is considered useful to identify new triggers. It entails moving away from pre-compiled lists, by attempting to identify subjunctive forms first and then retracing the word or expression that they are triggered by. Following previous studies (e.g., Vaughan and Mulder, 2014, p.498), I chose to focus on plain forms of *be*, which have been shown to be a good diagnostic for new mandative triggers due to the verb's generally high frequency. In this case, to keep the search relevant to the type of construction under investigation and thus avoid an

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[7] Some speakers may find the mandative use of the past tense (as in 'I suggested/asked/demanded that Lewis *spoke* carefully') less acceptable than others. The literature about mandative subjunctives, however, treats the use of the indicative in such contexts as one of the main variants in British English; this is true of both corpus studies (e.g., Waller, 2017) and elicitation studies reviewed in Chapter 1 (e.g., Greenbaum, 1977; Quirk and Rusiecki, 1982; Quirk et al., 1985; Quirk, 1995). I also personally found several examples of this usage in my own analysis of the corpora.

excessively high number of matches, I used the query 'that (I|you|he|she|it|we|they) be'[8]; this allowed me to focus on subordinate clauses containing a pronominal subject followed by the bare *be*. In the spoken BNC2014, this bottom-up approach yielded a new trigger (namely, the noun *prerequisite*) and two more instances of the mandative subjunctive, which will be presented and analysed in Chapter 5; conversely, no further examples were found in the BE06. *Prerequisite* was then used to further interrogate both corpora, but no additional subjunctive clauses were found.

It is important to note that, in addition to extracts of written texts and spoken interactions, both corpora come with 'metadata'. In the case of the spoken BNC2014, this is additional information about both the recordings themselves (e.g., number of speakers, nature of their relationship and topics of conversation) and the speakers involved (e.g., age, gender, place of birth and nationality). Crucially, having access to such information as speakers' place of birth was key to ensuring that all of them were in fact native speakers of British English. There was only one instance in which an extract containing a subjunctive construction had to be discarded, as the triangulation of different data points referring to the speaker's place of birth, nationality and number of years spent in England, revealed that they had been born in Australia and had lived there for their first ten years. The early and prolonged exposure to a different variety of English was deemed to be a potential confounding variable, which ultimately led to the decision to exclude this extract from further analyses.

With regard to the BE06, the metadata consists of author and title of texts as well as the broad genre and the text category (or subgenre) to which they belong. Overall, texts are divided into four broad genres (Press, General Prose, Learned Writing and Fiction) and 15 text categories (Baker, 2009, p.317). In this case, I did not have access to metadata on speaker origin; in presenting the corpus, Baker (2009, p.318) explains that a text was considered 'British' if its author '(had) mainly lived in the UK', although no further detail is provided in terms of a specific quantitative threshold (e.g.,

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[8] The function | corresponds to 'or' and therefore instructs the corpus query processor to search for any one of the items indicated in brackets.

number of years spent in the country). In this case, no examples were excluded from further analyses.

As we will see in Chapter 5, I initially conducted a quantitative corpus analysis focused on the frequency of the target forms in both corpora, and more specifically their distribution across mandative triggers, written genres and speakers' characteristics. I then analysed the extracts in which each subjunctive appeared using qualitative interpretive methods. The overarching methodological framework inspiring my discourse analysis was linguistic ethnography, which highlights 'the embedding of language and language-use in a wider sociocultural context' (Cameron, 2001, p.47) and thus invites us to consider the interaction between linguistic artefacts and multiple levels of social organisation (Rampton, Maybin and Roberts, 2015, p.17). I was then guided by the notions of 'total linguistic fact' (Silverstein, 1985, p.220) and 'indexical field' (Eckert, 2008, p.454), which shed light on the ideological associations between language and social processes and the ways in which these become relevant 'in the situated use of the variable' (Eckert, 2008, p.454). In other words, understanding the function of mandative subjunctives in any given context required paying attention to their interaction with other social and semiotic resources locally available (see also Ochs, 1996, p.418), and therefore their being part of a 'style' (e.g., Campbell-Kibler et al., 2006, cited in Moore and Podesva, 2009, p.448).

In practical terms, this entailed going beyond the concordance line shown in the corpus query results and analysing each example in context, exploring the surrounding semiotic landscape, the social roles involved and the main communicative goals. In this process, some of the 'metadata' discussed above played a crucial role; for example, in the spoken corpus, starting from an inter-speaker relationship labelled as 'close family/partners/very close friends', it was possible to triangulate this information with each speaker's age, gender, place of birth and residence, and thus identify 'husband' and 'wife' or 'grandmother' and 'grandson', and so forth.

While moving within this general framework, my approach to the analysis of spoken and written discourse differed somewhat, reflecting an awareness of the specific characteristics of each medium (e.g., Cameron and Panovic, 2014, pp.21-24). With respect to the written extracts, I conducted a textual analysis focused on the rhetorical and stylistic effects of mandative subjunctives, using the pre-existing classification into genres and subgenres as an aid to my interpretation. In this case, I drew upon the work of researchers such as Hunston (1994) and Hyland (2012), who have looked into academic and scientific writing and how authors take stances of epistemic authority to convey credibility and persuade readers. I also drew upon Biber's (1988) and Biber and Conrad's (2001) analyses of register in order to identify specific linguistic features associated with different levels of formality. After analysing each extract in detail, five themes started to emerge (*Epistemic and moral authority, Sexuality and power, Persuasion, On and off the record* and *Dramatic build-up*), capturing similarities in terms of functions and meanings of the mandative subjunctive across a number of texts; these categories will be presented in Chapter 5, using the most interesting and compelling examples for each one.

As for the spoken corpus, my analysis drew upon several approaches, namely conversational analysis (e.g., Gumperz and Hymes, 1972), interactional sociolinguistics (e.g., Gumperz, 1982a; 1982b), as well as Goffman's (1964; 1981; 1983) work. This enabled me to apply a microanalytic lens to each exchange (Rampton, 2006, cited in Snell and Lefstein, 2011, p.45) and understand the role of mandative subjunctives in specific instances of turn- and stance-taking among participants. A particularly useful analytical tool was the concept of 'stance triangle' (Du Bois, 2007, pp.162-169), which I introduced in Chapter 1. Starting from Du Bois's definition, I coded each extract for the different elements of the triangle, namely first subject, second subject and object. This was an important starting point to identify the participant structure of each example and the mutual positioning of the interactants.

While the spoken BNC2014 does not provide a classification of extracts based on genre, this remained an important 'sensitising concept' (Blumer, 1954, p.7) in my

discourse analysis. In particular, I was inspired by recent explorations within linguistic anthropology (e.g., Briggs and Bauman, 1992; Hanks, 1987, 1996) and linguistic ethnography (e.g., Maybin, 2006; Rampton, 2006); while still focusing on the presence of habitual communicative patterns, these approaches have moved away from a mere typological approach and instead characterise genres as more 'flexible, contingent, and emergent, a discursive accomplishment rather the realisation of a norm' (Bauman, 2006, pp. 749-750). Crucially, this new emphasis on the openness of genres to the immediacy of the local interactional context allows to identify instances of 'genre mixing' and 'hybridity' (Biber and Conrad, 2009, pp.72-73; Lefstein and Snell, 2011, p.42); these are situations in which interlocutors may be 'simultaneously participating in different generic events' (Lefstein and Snell, 2011, p.59).

Applied to my own analysis, this allowed me to identify the temporary importation of written genres into speech and understand the role that mandative subjunctives play in this process. To examine such cases of hybridity, I used a number of social and discursive dimensions that have been put forward by Lefstein and Snell (2011, p.51) to describe genre mixing, namely *participants and roles*, *communicative purposes*, *topics/themes*, *interactional norms*, *social relationships* and *language use*[9].

Overall, three main categories emerged from my analysis of spoken discourse: *Mixing genres, Divergent stance triangles* and *Polite requests.* As in the case of the BE06, these will be presented in Chapter 5, along with illustrative examples.

To conclude this section, it is important to reflect on my use of the Spoken BNC2014, which, as I mentioned earlier in the chapter, is composed of transcripts of conversation. In other words, I did not have access to actual spoken data but to written representations, over which I had no control. However, the corpus's transcription

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[9] Interestingly, this analytical framework also allowed me to identify the importation of a spoken genre (i.e., 'gossip talk') into a tabloid news report found in the written corpus. As I will discuss in Chapter 5, this was the only instance in which my discourse analysis of the BE06 problematised the corpus's pre-existing classification.

process, which is described in detail in the manual (Love et al., 2017, pp.34-45), provided some reassurance, due to its multiple procedures aimed at ensuring accuracy and consistency, while also limiting the extent to which transcribers might 'imbue meaning into the transcription' (Love et al., 2017, p.35). For instance, one of the main features of the transcription scheme was the 'minimal use of punctuation' (p.37), whereby transcribers were not allowed to use common punctuation marks and were instead directed to represent pauses using one of two codes: '(.)' for short pauses of five seconds or less, and '(…)' for longer pauses of more than five seconds. This allowed for a more faithful representation of natural conversation than what would have been possible if using written punctuation conventions; it also prevented potential inconsistencies arising from their use[10]. Overlaps between speakers were also transcribed, as were any non-linguistic vocalisations, such as laughing, yawning and gasping. Additionally, another important feature of the transcription scheme were 'filled pauses', that is to say, 'filler sounds', also known informally as 'ums' and 'ahs' (Love et al., 2017, pp.35, 39-40); in this case, to ensure consistency and reduce the possibility of subjective interpretations, transcribers were provided with eight sounds to choose from, along with a set of criteria for selecting each of them. Finally, rigorous procedures for quality control were implemented throughout the process (pp.41-42); all audio files were initially assessed to ensure their quality was high enough for accurate orthographic transcription; furthermore, once completed, each transcript was checked against a random 5% sample of the original recording. If any errors or inaccuracies were found, the entire transcript would be checked.

Notwithstanding the different measures in place to maximise accuracy and represent in writing certain paralinguistic features, a transcript cannot be seen, in the words of the corpus compilers, as 'a definitive representation of the original speech event' (Love et al., 2017, p.42). In other words, transcribing speech is inherently the 'textual rendering of an event [that] is multi-modal in nature' (O'Keeffe, Clancy and Adolphs, 2011, p.33). While these limitations were taken into account in my analyses, it is also

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[10] The only punctuation mark that transcribers were allowed to use was the question mark. In the words of the authors: 'In pilot testing, the transcribers reported that they were confident in identifying fully grammatically formed questions' (Love et al., 2017, p.38).

important to highlight that by combining the transcript itself with the information provided in the corpus metadata, I was able to access the social and linguistic dimensions that I considered crucial to my analysis (e.g., word choice, syntactic structure, social roles and communicative purpose).

2.4.2 Interviews and style guides

Another crucial part of my data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews with 15 language practitioners, which were conducted between November 2019 and November 2020. These included six practising Year 6 teachers, one retired grammar school teacher, six writers/editors, one trainee journalist and a language education policy advisor[11]. In particular, the decision to involve Year 6 teachers stemmed from the fact that, in 2013, the subjunctive mood was formally introduced in the programmes of study for that year (Department for Education, 2013).

Informants were recruited by word of mouth, i.e. by asking friends in my network if they knew anybody who might be interested to take part, and via a call for participants posted on my Twitter account. All of them identified as native speakers of British English and all of them were from England, albeit from different areas of the nation, ranging from London to West Yorkshire.

The first interviews were conducted face-to-face; following the Covid-19 outbreak, and in accordance with the updated university policy on data collection, I proceeded with remote interviews on either Zoom or Skype. All informants were emailed an Information Sheet describing the nature and aims of my research and were given the possibility to ask me any questions beforehand. For in-person interviews, consent forms were provided on the day of the interview, whereas for online interviews, a verbal consent protocol was implemented, with each informant providing their consent

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[11] This advisor was also a professional linguist.

orally at the beginning of the video interview. My Information Sheet and consent forms can be found in Appendix A.

All interviews lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. Initially, my informants were presented with three sets of sentences, each containing respectively a subjunctive, an indicative and an option with the modal *should*; this was aimed at facilitating our discussion of the mandative subjunctive by looking at a few examples of the construction along with its main alternatives in British English. The rest of my questions focused on informants' perceptions of and experiences with the subjunctive mood in their professions. Appendix B contains my complete interview schedule. Although the main focus was the mandative subjunctive, the discussion also tapped into the subjunctive mood as a whole; this was useful to access broader language ideologies and to contextualise attitudes towards mandative constructions. Interviews were recorded and later transcribed, and all names were replaced by unidentifiable codes.

To gain further insight into the language-expert discourse around subjunctives, I also consulted three British English style guides, namely *New Hart's Rules: The Oxford style guide* (Oxford University Press, 2014), *The Economist style guide* (The Economist Newspaper Ltd, 2015) and *The Guardian and Observer style guide* (Guardian News & Media Ltd, 2020). These were selected because they could be accessed remotely during the pandemic and without having to buy a subscription. Similarly to my interviews, I focused on specific remarks about mandative constructions as well as more general comments about the subjunctive as a whole.

My analysis of the interview transcripts and the style guides was inspired by Gillham's (2000, pp.59-72) approach to content analysis. This is a stepwise, inductive method whereby 'substantive statements' (in this case, descriptions of the subjunctive) are first identified and then used to construct meaningful categories. Following this approach, I initially identified lower-level codes, which I then gradually grouped into broader,

'parent' codes. Once the overall hierarchy of parent and child codes became clear, all categories were checked again against all the transcripts to ensure their adequacy, and later entered in an analysis grid built with Microsoft Excel. In particular, four main themes were identified: (1) *Contexts, registers and genres*, (2) *Profile of the subjunctive user*, (3) *The meaning(s) of the mandative subjunctive: semantics and pragmatics* and, finally, (4) *Teaching grammar and the subjunctive*. In the Excel analysis grid, these were placed along the top, whereas the codes for the respondents were annotated on the vertical axis. In each cell, I then entered the comments provided by my respondents for each category, whenever possible. This way, the grid provided a powerful visual summary of my analysis, '[bringing each] category to life' (Gillham, 2000, p.66). The four themes will be presented in Chapter 6, along with illustrative quotations.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the methodology used in this research. Starting from my three research questions, I described the multiple sources making up my dataset, namely two corpora of contemporary British English, semi-structured interviews with 15 language practitioners and three British style guides. For each of them, I discussed the data collection process and the rationale behind the type of analysis carried out, showing how each method addresses the specific question being asked. Over the next three chapters, I will present my analyses, starting from my syntactic-semantic model of mandative subjunctives.

Chapter 3

A syntactic-semantic model of mandative subjunctives

3.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses my first research question, namely 'What are the syntactic and semantic properties of mandative subjunctives, and what model best captures them?'. To answer this question, I will build upon the theoretical framework introduced in section 1.2.2. In particular, after summarising the main studies reviewed in my first chapter, I will move on to present Gueron's (2008) account of 'metaphysical' and 'intentional' causality; I will then build on that to put forward my own model of the syntax and semantics of mandative subjunctives. Finally, I will consider an extract from the spoken BNC2014 and an interview with a British writer which appear to confirm two key aspects of my analysis.

3.2 A summary of previous studies

In Chapter 1, I presented the main studies that have focused on the structure and meaning of the mandative subjunctive. A useful starting point is Aarts's proposal that the English subjunctive is a 'clause type' (2012, p.12), in other words, it consists of a set of morphosyntactic features rather than an inflected conjugation. In particular, Aarts (2012, p.14) and Waller (2017, p.30-36) identify five key characteristics of mandative subjunctives:

1. exclusive occurrence in subordinate clauses, typically introduced by 'mandative' verbs or expressions (e.g., *demand, suggest, insist, it is essential that…*, etc.);

2. lack of the third-person singular *-s* ending (e.g., 'I suggest that Lewis *speak* carefully);

3. use of the form *be* for all persons (e.g., 'I suggest that they *be* careful');

4. absence of the typical sequence of tenses following a past tense matrix verb (e.g., 'I suggested that Lewis *speak* carefully/*be* careful');

5. negation achieved with *not* followed by a bare form, without *do*-support (e.g., 'I insist that Lewis *not speak* during the meeting').

Inui's (2016) and Giannakidou's (2009; 2011) models account for these core characteristics. In particular, Inui (2016) argues that a null modal is hosted under the T head of the embedded subjunctive clause; this explains the selection of a bare form, whether it is *be* or any other verb without the typical -*s* ending, as well as the lack of *do*-support. On the other hand, Giannakidou (2009; 2011) points to the fact that this intrinsically atemporal clause derives its temporality from the matrix clause, through a dependency similar to anaphoric binding. This view is based, in particular, on a 'pronominal theory of tense' (Partee, 1973; 1984; Heim, 1994; Kratzer, 1998, cited in Giannakidou, 2009, p.1884), according to which 'pronouns and tenses are analogous creatures' (Giannakidou, 2009, p.1884). It follows that the event described in the subjunctive clause will be interpreted as starting at the same time as the matrix event and progressing indefinitely into the future. Although Giannakidou's model is formulated to account for the structure of *na* subjunctives in Modern Greek, the author sees a parallel with English to-infinitival constructions, as in 'I asked Bill to bring me flowers' (2009, p.1888). In Chapter 1, I argued that this parallel can be extended to mandative subjunctives as well (as in the sentence 'I asked that Bill *bring* me flowers').

The literature reviewed so far contains three crucial insights that will be adopted in my own model: first, the general idea that the English subjunctive is a 'clause type' (Aarts, 2012, p.12) rather than an inflected conjugation; second, the suggestion that the subjunctive T head hosts a phonologically null modal, which is responsible for both the 'bare' morphology of the clause and its tenselessness; finally, the fact that the subjunctive clause derives its temporality from the matrix clause.

In Chapter 1, I also reviewed a number of semantic studies (i.e., Greenbaum, 1977; Quirk and Rusiecki, 1982; Quirk, 1995) and in particular James's (1986) monograph, which is a historically informed account of the use of different constructions in mandative contexts. As we saw then, James (1986, pp.29-35) compares the use of the subjunctive with both non-finite and finite options, but his central suggestion regards the difference between the subjunctive and the indicative; specifically, the author argues that while the subjunctive helps convey the urgency of the requirement, thus reflecting the matrix subject's point of view, the indicative shifts the attention to the factual content of the requirement, lessening the deontic strength of the matrix subject (pp.35, 125). This idea will be further developed in the next section.

3.3 'Metaphysical' and 'intentional' causality: from Gueron's (2008) account to a unified syntactic-semantic model of English mandative subjunctives

Although Gueron's (2008) study explores the syntax-semantics interface of modal clauses without specifically referring to mandative subjunctives, I consider it a crucial starting point to put forward my own model of these constructions. Building on a Minimalist framework (Chomsky, 1995, cited in Gueron, 2008, p.146), Gueron (pp.144-146) points out that subject DPs carry a [+ interpretable] person feature (henceforth 'person F'), which they can check against the corresponding [-interpretable] feature of T when they raise to Spec TP. Typically, this happens via agreement: when there is agreement between subject and verb, the DP will be able to check its person F and will be assigned 'psychological properties of consciousness, perception, and will' (Gueron, 2008, p.147). Furthermore, if the semantics of the verb has an 'instrument content' that implies the manipulation of reality, the subject DP will be construed as an intentional entity and we will obtain 'intentional causality' (pp.150-153). The example below (Gueron, 2008, p.151) provides an illustration:

    (1) John pinched Mary's hand.

Pinch implies the targeting of an object (in this case, Mary's hand) in order to introduce some change and therefore 'manipulate' reality. Implicit in the verb's semantics is an instrument feature (in this case, John's hand) that makes the change possible in the physical world. For this type of sentence, the author proposes the following structural representation (p.152):

```
                        TP
                 _____/  _____
               Spec             T'
                |          _____/  \_____
          John (Intender)  T             vP
                           |        ____/  \____
                        [past]    Spec          v'
                                   |          _/  \_
                              John (hand)    v     VP
                              (Manipulator)      __/  \__
                                               V        DP
                                               |      __/\__
                                             pinch   Mary's hand
                                                    (targeted object)
```
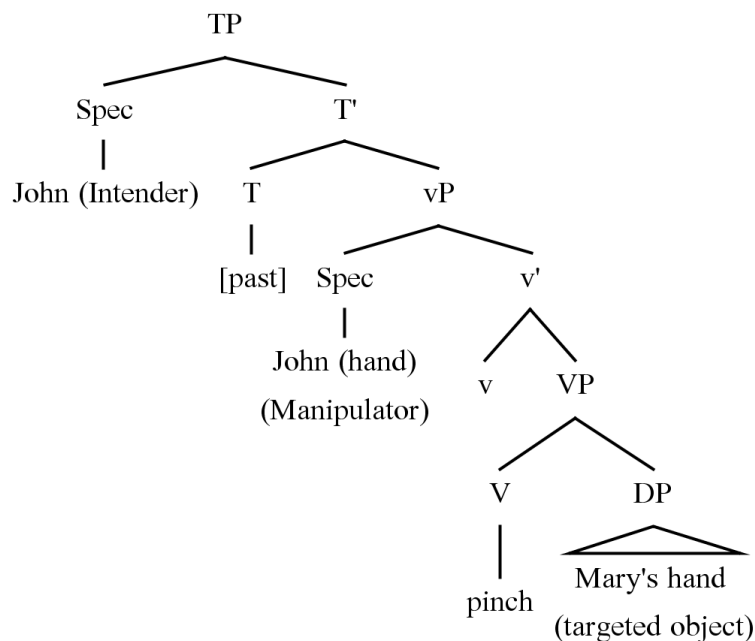
The lexical V Phrase contains the verb and its selected target; the little vP above is defined as 'Instrument Phrase' (Gueron, 2008, p.151), since it hosts an Instrument feature under the v head. Here, specifically in the Spec vP, the Instrument feature selects its manipulator ('John'). 'John', however, will only be construed as a sentient, intentional subject when it raises to Spec TP and checks its person F via agreement; in the above example, this is made possible by the presence of the past tense suffix -*ed* ('pinched'). When all these conditions are present, according to Gueron, the subject 'John' is construed as the cause of the change of state described and the sentence will be 'located in the scope of [its] sentient point of view' (p.150).

Conversely, 'metaphysical causality' (Gueron, 2008, pp.153-155) occurs when the subject DP is not a sentient entity; in this case, the sentence will be construed from the point of view of the speaker, 'whose consciousness is implied by the speech act' (p.150). There are two main reasons why this can happen; first, the semantics of the verb may lack an instrument feature in v capable of causing change and selecting a manipulator (as in 'John became ill', Gueron, 2008, p.153); another reason could be the lack of agreement morphology on the verb, which prevents the DP from checking its person F and from acquiring psychological properties (pp.147-148, 167-169). This is what happens with modals, as in the following sentence (Gueron, 2008, p.148):

(2) John must leave.

Gueron describes modals as 'impersonal' (p.147), in that they select no subject; they simply have a 'surface subject' (p.147), which is syntactically derived from raising. 'John must leave' can thus be reanalysed as follows (Gueron, 2008, p.148):

a. Must [John leave] (d-structure)
b. John must [t leave] (spell-out)

The lack of agreement on the modal, which is the morphological counterpart to its lack of referentiality, stops 'John' from checking its person F and from acquiring intention and will. As a result of these syntactic-semantic constraints, John's point of view will not emerge; instead, the event will be filtered through the speaker's perspective and the deontic semantics associated with them. In this sense, then, 'metaphysical causality' refers to the absence of a subject DP who is able to bring about change in the physical world.

Gueron's insights about metaphysical versus intentional causality, and the properties of modal auxiliaries, are important if we remember that, following Inui's (2016) approach, we have postulated the presence of a covert modal within mandative subjunctive clauses, as exemplified by the sentence below:

(3) I suggested that Lewis [Ø] be careful.

As Inui (2016, pp.9-10) points out, we can assume that the null modal behaves like other modal auxiliaries (including 'must' in the above example); it is, in other words, an impersonal verb that does not carry any agreement morphology due to its lack of referentiality[12]. Therefore, building on Gueron's account, my proposal is that such constructions convey intentional causality in the matrix clause and metaphysical causality in the embedded subjunctive clause. In other words, the matrix subject ('I', in my example) will be construed as an intentional being and the entire sentence (i.e., matrix clause + embedded clause) will be filtered through their point of view. The embedded subject, which corresponds to the person receiving the mandative request (i.e., 'Lewis'), will lack any psychological properties, exactly like 'John' in the example above.

Support for this argument comes from Gueron's analysis of control structures (2008, p.161), where the author provides useful indications for interpreting mandative subjunctives. Let us consider the following example (based on Gueron, 2008, p.161):

(4) Mary convinced/forced/asked John to leave.

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[12] Cross-linguistically, in Tense-Aspect-Mood (TAM) systems, modal verbs tend to disallow agreement morphology (e.g., Gueron, 2008, pp.144-148).

Analysing this sentence, Gueron highlights that the instrument content of the main verb (whether it is *convince, force* or *ask*) is Mary's speech act. This instrument feature targets an entire event as its object (i.e., John leaving) and therefore the verb takes an entire clause as its complement. John, however, does not have any psychological autonomy and his point of view does not emerge. If we wanted to apply a similar argument to mandative subjunctives, we could consider a sentence such as the following, which I have modelled after Gueron's (2008, p.161) example:

(5) Mary asks that John do it.

Similarly to (4), Mary's speech act targets an entire event ('John doing it'). In this process, Mary is construed as an intentional psychological being, as also confirmed by the presence of subject-verb agreement (in the form of the suffix -*s* in 'asks'). However, in the embedded subjunctive clause, the presence of a non-referential (covert) modal stops 'John' from acquiring psychological properties when it raises to Spec TP, even after it is initially selected as the manipulator of 'do' in the embedded Spec vP; as a result, John will be a mere instrument within the matrix subject's temporal and psychological domain. The following is the structural representation I propose in this case:

```
                              TP
                    ┌──────────┴──────────┐
                  Spec                    T'
                    │             ┌───────┴───────┐
          Mary (+ Intender)       T               vP
                                  │        ┌───────┴───────┐
                               [Past]    Spec              v'
                                           │              ╱╲
                                  Mary (speech act)      v   VP
                                     (Manipulator)         ┌──┴──┐
                                                           V     CP
                                                           │   ┌──┴──┐
                                                          ask  C     TP
                                                               │   ┌──┴──┐
                                                             that Spec   T'
                                                                   │   ┌──┴──┐
                                                                 John   T    vP
                                                               (- Intender) ┌┴──┐
                                                                     [null modal] Spec   v'
                                                                                   │    ╱╲
                                                                                 John   v  VP
                                                                             (Manipulator)  ╱╲
                                                                                          V   DP
                                                                                          │   △
                                                                                         do   it
```
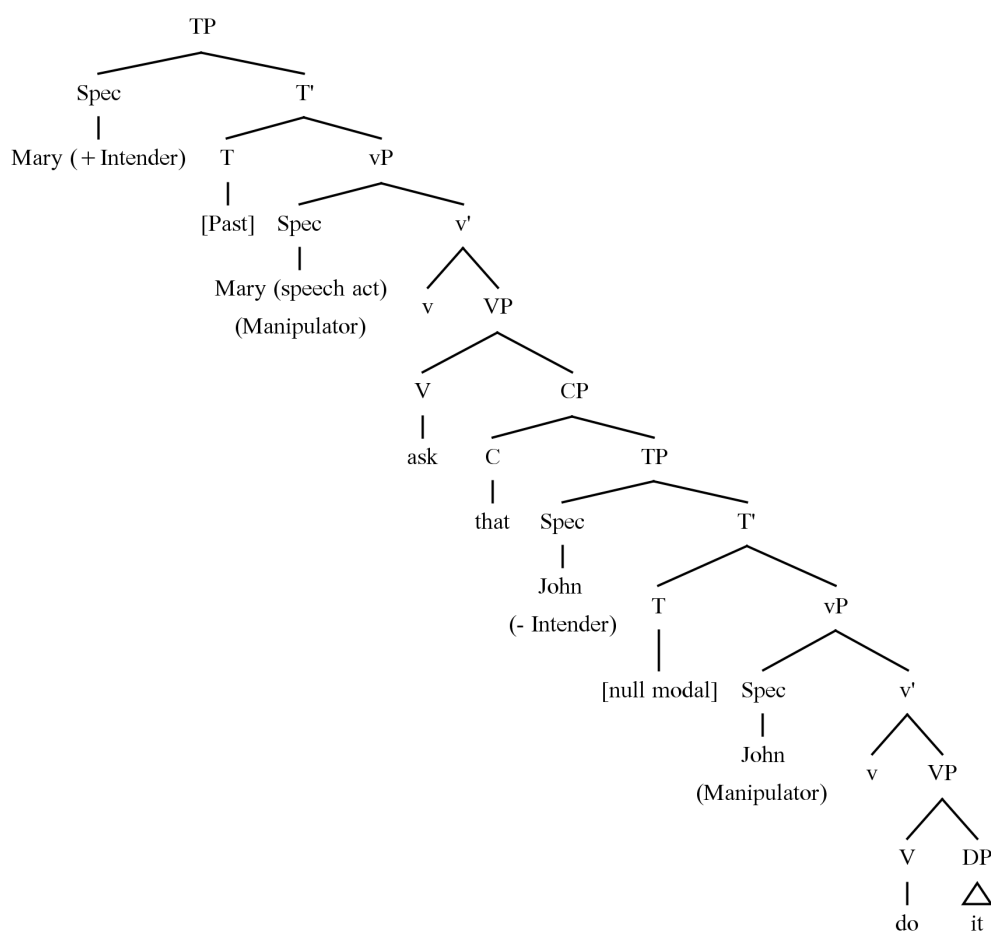
In the tree above, I have introduced a differentiation between '+Intender' and '-Intender' for the matrix and the embedded subject (i.e., 'Mary' and 'John') in order to highlight the presence or absence of psychological properties.

The model just presented not only applies Gueron's (2008) insights to the study of the English mandative subjunctive, but it also integrates them with the analyses reviewed above by Inui (2016) and Giannakidou (2009; 2011). As we can see in the above tree, the embedded T head hosts a null modal; furthermore, the subordinate clause is in a structural dependency with the matrix clause, from which it derives its temporality under C-command.

From a semantic point of view, this model can also shed light on the difference between mandative variants, in keeping with James's approach (1986, pp.35, 125). As we have seen, James compares the use of the subjunctive and the use of the indicative in mandative contexts, arguing that the former highlights the urgency of the request, thus reflecting the matrix subject's point of view, whereas the indicative takes the focus away from the deontic component of the sentence and foregrounds its factual content. James (1986, p.35) contrasts the sentences 'They require that it be so' and 'They require that it is so', but for illustrative purposes I will continue using 'Mary' and 'John' in the examples below:

(6) Mary asks that John do it.

(7) Mary asks that John does it.

James's argument that a sentence like (6) may reflect the matrix subject's point of view is compatible with the analysis presented above, where John has been described as a mere instrument within the matrix subject's psychological domain. With regard to the second sentence, the suggestion that the indicative in (7) prompts a more epistemic, matter-of-fact interpretation (James, 1986, pp.35, 125) could be explained as the result of verbal agreement (specifically, the -*s* suffix), which reintroduces John's psychological properties of consciousness and will; in turn, this might lessen the deontic force of the matrix subject.

3.4 Corroboration from corpus and interview data

In the previous section, building on Gueron's (2008) account of metaphysical and intentional causality, and, in particular, her analysis of modals and control structures (pp.147-148, 161), I have put forward a comprehensive model of the syntax-semantics of mandative subjunctives. This has enabled me to integrate key insights from previous work (James, 1986; Giannakidou, 2009; 2011; Inui, 2016).

As anticipated in Chapter 2, two important aspects of this analysis appear to be confirmed by my corpus and interview data. First, from a syntactic point of view, the suggestion that the subjunctive clause contains a phonologically null modal (Inui, 2016) is borne out by the structure of the following extract, taken from the Spoken BNC2014 (my emphasis):

> Because I think one of the reasons that they had stopped using course books was that they are so dry and they are so boring (.) but I think it gives the kids also a focus (.) that they should be colourful that they should be somewhat you know well designed so that it attracts the eye (.) <u>that they be clear</u> (.) that they have you know the vocabulary written down.

In this example, the speaker is a language teacher talking about the importance of course books to engage students. The clause of interest is 'that they be clear', which is part of a coordinate structure, namely a sequence of clauses containing the modal *should* where the speaker is listing a series of qualities that textbooks should have. Coordination is, by definition, a mechanism to conjoin structures with 'equal syntactic status' (Tallerman, 2011, p.84); the fact that the uninflected form *be* appears alongside clauses containing *should* reinforces the idea that mandative subjunctives are a subtype of modal clauses whose modal is not overtly realised (Inui, 2016, p.15).

Another key proposal mentioned in the previous section regards the semantic difference between mandative variants, specifically between the subjunctive and the indicative mood. We have seen how the presence of a null modal places syntactic constraints on the embedded subject ('John', in the example above), which does not acquire psychological properties (Gueron, 2008, pp.153-155, 167-169); from a semantic point of view, only the matrix subject's perspective will emerge and, with it, the urgency of their request (James, 1986, pp.35, 125). Conversely, I have posited that the indicative mood may reassign intentionality to the embedded subject as a result of verbal agreement; this would lead to an epistemic reading of the sentence. During one

of my interviews, this difference became particularly salient; in this case, my informant, a British writer, was commenting on a set of examples I had provided at the beginning of our conversation. These are shown below:

(a) Last week, my friend Elisa insisted that I *go* to the cinema with her.

(b) Last week, my friend Elisa insisted that I *should go* to the cinema with her.

(c) Last week, my friend Elisa insisted that I *went* to the cinema with her.

The main difference he described was between (a) and (c), or in other words, between the subjunctive and the indicative:

> The word 'went' feels more collaborative; I thought about it and then I decided to go with her. In the first one, she just told me I had to go (…) She sort of half-bullied me into it.

Here, my informant appears to acknowledge the different psychological properties of the embedded subject ('I') under different structures. While the indicative is perceived as 'more collaborative', a recognition of the subject's free will ('I thought about it and then I decided to go with her'), the subjunctive seems to leave no other choice ('she just told me I had to go'); there is also a certain degree of forcefulness associated with it ('she sort of half-bullied me into it). This is compatible with both James's (1986, pp.35, 125) account and the model I presented above, where the presence/absence of agreement morphology is linked to different psychological properties of the embedded subject and, therefore, different semantic readings of the sentence[13].

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[13] My interviewee's interpretation of (c) could also indicate the presence of entailment. In other words, the use of *went* could signify that the event of going to the cinema has taken place ('I thought about it and then I decided to go with her'), whereas that is not necessarily entailed by either the subjunctive or

In Chapter 6, I will show how the rest of my interviewee's answer points to a potential overlap between the semantics of mandative subjunctives and their social interpretations.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I set out to answer my first research question, i.e., 'What are the syntactic and semantic properties of mandative subjunctives, and what model best captures them?'. After reviewing key suggestions that have been put forward in the literature with regard to the structure and meaning of mandative subjunctives (James, 1986; Giannakidou, 2009; 2011; Inui, 2016), I proposed my own model building on Gueron's (2008) approach to intentional and metaphysical causality.

I then turned to my corpus and interview data, where I argued that two key aspects of my syntactic-semantic analysis receive confirmation. In particular, an extract from the spoken BNC2014 seems to confirm the basic assumption that the embedded subjunctive clause contains a covert modal (Inui, 2016). Additionally, the remarks of one of my interviewees align with the idea that the use of the subjunctive and the indicative in mandative contexts is associated with different semantic readings of the sentence (e.g., James, 1986, pp.35, 125).

An important takeaway from this chapter is that the syntax of mandative subjunctives appears to encode a 'psychological asymmetry' between who issues the directive and the recipient of that directive. In the answer provided by my informant, this was expressed as a contrast between a 'collaborative' perception of the indicative, allowing the embedded subject to have a say ('I thought about it and then I decided to go with

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should. This difference is not mentioned in the literature on mandative clauses, and indeed examples can be found in British English of past-tense constructions that are clearly not entailments. Therefore, it would be an interesting area to explore in future research.

her'), and the uncompromising nature of the subjunctive, which seemed to deny any free will ('she just told me I had to go'). Over the next three chapters, as I analyse the influence of ideological processes on the social interpretations of mandative subjunctives, we will encounter other types of 'asymmetries' associated with these constructions; we will therefore see a synergy between their syntactic-semantic make-up, their historical representations and their social meanings in the present day.

Chapter 4

The modern history of English subjunctives

4.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 1, the Old English subjunctive mood was a recognisable conjugation with a wide range of uses (Kovacs, 2010, pp.59-62). It allowed speakers to express a 'practical modality', whereas the indicative was used to mark a 'theoretical modality' (James, 1986, pp.11-16). However, during the Middle English period, a steady process of morphological simplification took place; one of its consequences was that the subjunctive inflection started to resemble the indicative, thus losing what had previously been its specificity. In most cases, speakers started to mark different modalities either with auxiliary verbs or by enhancing the modal component of the semantics of lexical verbs (James, 1986, pp.29-35, 91-93).

Subjunctive usage continued to decline through the following centuries, in both British and American English, until an initial revival took place in England in the second half of the 18th century, encouraged by the prescriptive attitudes of grammarians of the time (Auer, 2009). This was followed by a much more significant resurgence in the US at the beginning of the 20th century; among its several ramifications, perhaps the most important was its influence on British English (e.g., Overgaard, 1995).

The purpose of this chapter is to address my second research question: 'How and why has the use of the subjunctive changed over time?'. I will therefore retrace the modern history of subjunctives and the language ideologies that characterise it. In this process, I will consider different subcategories of the subjunctive, as they reflect broader historical changes in usage and language-expert discourse. By the end of the chapter, it will become clear that exploring the construct of 'subjunctive mood' as a whole is crucial to understanding the historical trajectory of mandative constructions.

As previously discussed, for this analysis I will draw upon previous investigations and, in particular, three main studies (i.e., Overgaard, 1995; Auer, 2009; Waller, 2017), but I will also use archival sources (i.e., Franklin, 1779; Jefferson, 1790; Webster, 1828; Jefferson, 1851) to understand key socio-cultural factors behind the American revival of mandative subjunctives. I will then conclude by looking at the text of the National Curriculum for England (Department for Education, 2013) to understand what the recent introduction of the subjunctive can tell us about current language ideologies.

As I explained in Chapter 2, my methodological approach consists of a 'critical interpretive synthesis' (CIS; Dixon-Woods et al., 2006), which is especially suitable for the review and analysis of a complex body of literature. One of the strengths of this method is that it produces a reflexive account that stands out from traditional review techniques. In this process, I will pay special attention to specific types of language ideology (e.g., the 'standard language ideology') that were introduced in Chapter 1 and consider whether they are applicable to the present analysis.

4.2 Subjunctive usage and commentary in 18th-century England

Auer (2009) provides an exhaustive account of the status of the subjunctive mood in the 18th century. She offers evidence that, before the much-studied 20th-century resurgence of mandative forms in the US, a relatively brief revival of a different category of subjunctives took place in England between 1750 and 1849, as a result of the prescriptivism of English grammarians. The constructions in question are, in particular, 'were' and plain-form subjunctives introduced by subordinators such as *if*, *though*, *whether*, *unless* and *lest*; according to Auer, 'eighteenth-century grammarians agreed that the subjunctive was primarily used in [these contexts]' (2009, p.66). The following is one of the examples provided (ARCHER corpus, Biber et al., 1994, cited in Auer, 2009, p.67, italics in original):

(1) That I say, Sir Hargrave may be very glad, *if* he *hear* no more of this affair from the lady's natural friends.

Auer's approach consists of searching grammar books for both implicit and explicit comments about subjunctive constructions; she then studies their impact on actual usage by looking at corpus data from the same period. With regard to implicit comments, Auer considers the type of examples that 18th-century grammarians provide most often. One of the first things she notices is that exemplification does not tend to reflect current usage (pp.53-54). In fact, the majority of examples of the subjunctive are taken from literary writers of the 16th and 17th centuries. This leads her to suggest that, in the 18th century, the perception of the subjunctive among language experts was a 'nostalgic' one: these forms were seen as a linguistic feature of the past and the writers using them were considered 'exemplary, worth imitating' (p.54).

This argument appears to be confirmed by the author's analysis of more explicit remarks; in this case, Auer reports on a number of authors (pp.54-58). We find the mention of Samuel Johnson (1755; 1773, cited in Auer, 2009, pp.54-55), lamenting the fact that modern writers often neglect the subjunctive mood, which is now confined to poetry. He regards writers of the past as models of 'genuine diction' and provides a list of conjunctions that used to be followed by the subjunctive mood in these 'purer' forms of writing (e.g., *if, though, lest, until*). Brittain (1788, cited in Auer, 2009, p.55) also comments on the decline of the subjunctive mood and, in a similar way, highlights that its strongholds are now poetry and oratory. Interestingly, he suggests that, in such contexts, subjunctive forms 'avoid the too frequent and hissing sound of "s"' in the third-person singular, which could be taken as an example of iconisation (Irvine and Gal, 2000): the physical characteristics of the linguistic form are ideologically associated with extra-linguistic qualities. In this case, the fricative sound of the indicative suffix is associated with a certain degree of unpleasantness; arguably, the subjunctive emerges by contrast as a 'smoother' alternative, perhaps more suitable for elegant styles such as poetry and oratory.

White (1761, cited in Auer, 2009, p.56) presents a clear association between the subjunctive and social class; he introduces the notion that these forms are part of a sociolect and, in particular, the language of 'the politest speakers and writers', thus creating an implicit opposition to more vulgar language users. As Auer (2009, p.56) explains, this idea was part of a broader narrative circulating in 18th-century England, namely that the 'language of gentlemen' was a model to aspire to in order to elevate one's social status; it was, in fact, a 'social shibboleth' (Percy, 2003, p.69, cited in Auer, 2009, p.56) able to grant access to the most prestigious London circles. This is confirmed by the fact that subjunctive use is also encouraged by Devis (1777, cited in Auer, 2009, p.56), a female grammarian who writes for a female audience with the purpose of teaching 'polite' language and helping to access high society. Finally, Auer cites Lowth, who, in a similar fashion, looks back on the language authorities of the past and their use of the subjunctive as a model of politeness and propriety (1762, cited in Auer, 2009, p.57).

Considering all these contributions, Auer (p.58) suggests that there are two main themes emerging from 18th-century accounts of the subjunctive mood: first, an association with more formal styles, such as poetry and oratory; second, an association with the language of politeness and high society. The latter, I argue, is crucial to understanding the type of language ideology at play, as I will now illustrate.

As Klein (2002, p.877) points out, in 18th-century Britain, the term *politeness* was 'extensive in reach' and had a wide-ranging impact on social and cultural life. At its core, it signified 'consciousness of form, a concern with the manner in which actions were performed' (Klein, 2002, p.874). When applied to the domain of human interactions, it indicated a general sense of 'agreeableness' and required 'a dextrous management of (…) Words and Actions [sic]' (p.874). The embodiment of this was the 'gentleman', a skilful social agent able to operate effectively in the world through engaging conversations, well-rounded knowledge and 'an understanding of the principles of taste' (Klein, 2002, p.876).

While gentility had historically been associated with lineage and land ownership, Klein (p.876) explains that, in the 18th century, the term 'gentleman' had started to be used in a slightly looser way. Although land and ancestry were still important, 'gentility', in a broader sense, could be achieved, or at least laid claim to, through one's politeness. Being polite, then, became for many synonymous with personal improvement and social aspirations. As Klein (2002, p.875) puts it:

> Politeness was sometimes viewed as the necessary means for bringing out the best in oneself and in others (…) [It] was associated with improvement in the sense not just of refinements of style but of moral and other reform.

As the commentary reported by Auer shows, language played an important role in this. The sociolect of the 'politest speakers and writers' (White, 1761, cited in Auer, 2009, p.56), identified by Auer (p.56) as the 'gentlemen' of the metropolitan elite, was held up as a canon of propriety and a means of social elevation (Lowth, 1762; Devis, 1777, both cited in Auer, 2009, pp.56-57). In this context, the use of the subjunctive, regarded as a feature of that sociolect, was encouraged. This view is consistent with a 'standard language ideology', especially as it relates to the definition provided by Piller (2015, p.920), which I present again here:

> The standard language ideology refers to the belief that a particular variety – usually the variety that has its roots in the speech of the most powerful group in society, that is often based on the written language, that is highly homogeneous and that is acquired through long years of formal education – is aesthetically, morally, and intellectually superior to other ways of speaking the language.

In the 18th-century commentary, the use of the term 'polite' to describe the language of the elite and, by extension, some of its features (i.e., the subjunctive), had a powerful effect, due to the semantic resonances of 'politeness'. It created, in particular, what Cameron (1995, p.11) would call a 'double discourse', in which mastery of the

language became, more or less subtly, a symbol of extra-linguistic qualities and, ultimately, a measure of success. We also see how this was achieved through some of the steps envisaged by Lippi-Green (2012, p.70) in her 'language subordination model'. Specifically, through *mystification*, the 'politest speakers and writers' (White, 1761, cited in Auer, 2009, p.56) were presented as a linguistic ideal to aspire to and *authority* was therefore assigned to them; furthermore, *conformity* to the linguistic standard was encouraged through implicit *promises* of success and social recognition.

It is also important to mention that the 'language of gentlemen' was inspired by neo-classical ideals and, in particular, a view of Latin as a canon of elegance. This was the result of a process of 'Latinisation' (Adamson, 1989, pp.204-213, cited in Auer, 2009, pp.162-163) that had occurred between the 17th and the 18th century, when Latin had been used for lexical borrowings and as a model for English grammar. According to Adamson (1989, pp.204-213, cited in Auer, 2009, pp.162-163), one of the main consequences of that was 'diglossia': Latin helped to form a prestige variety, only acquired through formal education (the 'H' variety); on the other hand, the 'L' variety continued to be the language of ordinary people and informal conversation. Thus, when 18th-century grammarians lamented the decline of the subjunctive and recommended its use as 'politest' (White, 1761, cited in Auer, 2009, p.56), they strengthened its association with the 'H', Latin-based language.

As I mentioned initially, in addition to analysing the discourse around the subjunctive mood, Auer also assesses the impact of the 18th-century commentary on actual usage (2009, pp.66-86). To do so, she examines texts from 1650 to 1900 available in the ARCHER corpus (Biber et al., 1994), focusing on non-mandative constructions introduced by the aforementioned subordinators (e.g., *if*, *though*, *whether*, *unless* and *lest*); these adverbial clauses were, as we have seen, the syntactic environments mostly mentioned in the grammars of the time (Auer, 2009, p.66).

First, her diachronic examination shows that the subjunctive had been declining between the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century; this fact might explain the 'nostalgic' remarks of 18th-century grammarians noted above. Second, Auer's findings clearly indicate a reversal of that trajectory of decline between 1750 and 1849, which coincides with the time when those prescriptive comments were circulating, and the years following that.

It is also noteworthy that the characterisation of the subjunctive as formal and as typical of 'polite' language might have influenced its distribution across text types; although Auer reports an increase in most genres, she notes that the highest frequencies can be found in poetry as well as medical and scientific handbooks (p.86). With regard to the latter, I would argue that there are three possible explanations. First, the common depiction of these constructions as formal might have made them suitable for the language of scholarship and erudition; at the same time, the association with politeness and prestige might have been exploited to construct an 'authoritative' tone in academic texts. Finally, we also know that knowledge and education were part of the broad semantic scope of 'politeness' in the 18th century (Klein, 2002); thus, grammarians' use of the term 'polite' to describe the subjunctive might have prompted writers to include the form in scientific and academic works.

Commenting on her corpus analysis, and on how much of the emerging quantitative trends can be attributed to the metalinguistic discourse of the time, Auer explains (p.86):

> As we are not aware of any other intralinguistic and/or extralinguistic factors that could be responsible for the development of the subjunctive form in the eighteenth century, the conclusion that prescriptivists did exert a short-term influence (at least on the subjunctive form in adverbial clauses) would appear to be justified.

In saying that, the author also acknowledges that the prescriptive comments were powerful because they acted in combination with other social forces, namely a shared aspiration to access the 'polite' British society (p.86). It is, in fact, the latter that arguably made grammarians' prescriptivism all the more effective.

Auer's remarks are justified if we consider that, from a historical point of view, there were not significant developments that could otherwise explain the changing trends in subjunctive use. It is interesting to note that the period of time in question predates the growth of mass media on a global scale, and therefore any type of external influence associated with that. As we will see shortly, this differs from the revival of mandative constructions, which took place in Britain just over a century later; in that case, most scholars (e.g., Gowers, 1965, pp.595-596; Quirk et al., 1985, p.157; Overgaard, 1995, p.51) point to the crucial role of 20th-century mass media in connecting American and British English.

4.3 Subjunctive usage and commentary in 19th-century England

Auer only dedicates a brief section to grammarians' comments about the subjunctive after the 18th century (2009, pp.58-60), but the information she provides points to a gradual waning of their prescriptive attitudes. More specifically, in 19th-century grammars, the subjunctive is still associated with 'politeness' and a more formal, literary style. What is new, however, is that grammarians no longer see it as a requirement after a fixed set of conjunctions, as indeed had been the case in previous accounts; rather, the choice of mood is now seen as a function of more subtle nuances of meaning and, therefore, much more subjective than it had been before. The subjunctive, in particular, is said to indicate 'contingency or uncertainty' (Latham, 1843, p.157, cited in Auer, 2009, p.59). According to Auer, these remarks suggest that, at the beginning of the 19th century, a new generation of grammarians is increasingly distancing itself from the prescriptivism of the previous decades.

Unsurprisingly, then, at the end of that century language authorities recognise that the subjunctive is falling out of fashion again and seem comfortable with the idea that it can be forgotten 'in hasty writing' (Earle, 1898, p.131, cited in Auer, 2009, p.60). It is interesting that the loosening of the prescriptivist grip appears reflected in the corpus data, where Auer notes that, after a revival lasting approximately one century, the use of the subjunctive in adverbial clauses resumes a trajectory of steady decline in the second half of the 19th century (2009, pp.66-86).

4.4 The revival of the mandative subjunctive in the 20th century

While adverbial-clause subjunctives were witnessing a relatively short resurgence in England during the 18th century, mandative subjunctive forms, namely those occurring 'after verbs expressing a wish, a command or exhortation' (Kovacs, 2010, p.66), could only be found in few formulaic phrases, typical of legal and religious texts. This state of affairs continued through the 19th century, as reported by Hundt (2009, pp.30-31).

Hundt looks at both British and American English using the ARCHER corpus and selecting, in particular, ten mandative triggers from Johansson and Norheim's (1988, p.29) influential list (which I discussed in Chapter 2 as part of my methodology): *ask*, *demand*, *insist*, *propose*, *recommend*, *request*, *require*, *suggest*, *urge* and *wish*[14]. Her analysis shows that between 1750 and 1899, the frequency of mandative subjunctives in both varieties of English was consistently low and significantly outweighed by modal clauses with *should* and *shall*. Crucially, this is consistent with Auer's (2009) account, according to which most discussions of the subjunctive in 18th-century England involved adverbial clauses (introduced by *if, though*, etc.) rather than mandative constructions. Focusing then on American English, Hundt also examines the Chadwyck-Healey Early American Fiction corpus (ProQuest and the University of Virginia Library, 2000). In this case, her study of 18th-century-born authors (2009,

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[14] In a review of the study, Waller (2017, p.161) highlights that these triggers were chosen as they were associated with the highest frequencies of subjunctives in Hundt's (1998) earlier analysis of contemporary American English.

p.31) corroborates the results from the ARCHER corpus, namely that, back then, 'the subjunctive was clearly a low-frequency variant' (p.31).

In light of all of that, the fact that mandative subjunctives saw a significant revival in 20th-century American English is worthy of scholarly attention. The revival reportedly started at the turn of the century and continued to gain momentum in the following decades, before spreading to other varieties, such as British English (e.g., Overgaard, 1995). Because of the complexity of this phenomenon and the number of social and historical factors involved, I will first focus on American English and I will then analyse its characteristics in British English.

4.4.1 The American revival

One of the most comprehensive studies documenting the initial stages of the mandative revival is Overgaard's (1995). In her monograph, she presents the results of a corpus-based investigation into both American and British English. To track the diachronic development of mandative subjunctive constructions, the Brown and LOB corpora - composed, respectively, of American and British texts from 1961 - are used; to these, the author adds four self-compiled corpora for each variety, with written texts from around 1900, 1920, 1940 and 1990. While Overgaard does not provide a list of the mandative triggers that were initially used to identify subjunctives, her Appendix 2 (pp.95-121) offers a complete list of the 'matrix verbs, nouns, adjectives and prepositional phrases' (p.95) that she actually found in the corpora. These correspond to the typical syntactic environments explored in most studies and thus include triggers such as *advise, ask, beg, demand, insist, order, propose, recommend, request, suggest* and *urge*.

Overgaard's findings (1995, pp.21-42) suggest that in the US a revival first occurred between 1900 and 1920; it was initially most visible in literary texts, before spreading to most text categories. However, the strength of Overgaard's account lies in the fact

that the corpus investigation is just the starting point to put forward a complex model, which takes into account social, historical and psycholinguistic factors. In particular, after studying the works and backgrounds of American authors who wrote between 1900 and 1930, Overgaard raises three interesting points (1995, pp.42-51).

First, the mandative subjunctive was least common in the works of authors from the Northeast of the United States, which remained a key centre of British influence. According to Overgaard, these authors were still under the influence of the 'English vogue' (Hansen, 1942, p.149, cited in Overgaard, 1995, p.43); in mandative contexts, they tended to prefer the periphrastic construction with 'should', which the author sees as 'part of a New England sociolect' (p.44). This interpretation is consistent with the aforementioned study by Hundt (2009, pp.30-31), which shows how 'should' periphrases continued to be the preferred mandative variant in British English throughout the 19th century. Second, with regard to mandative subjunctives, Overgaard points to their being common in the works of authors from the South of the United States, which she takes as suggesting the presence of an American 'vernacular' (p.50) or dialect there, to which the subjunctive might have belonged. Finally, these forms also tended to be common among authors from the Midwest, where, interestingly, there was a significant presence of European immigrants, whose native languages had the morphological subjunctive (Overgaard, 1995, pp.44-46).

In essence, the study of 1900-1930 literary texts and their authors reveals to Overgaard that mandative subjunctive forms were more common in areas that were geographically distant from the centres of British influence, especially New England. In this context, Overgaard places special emphasis on the Midwest, and the role of immigration and language contact (1995, pp.45-46). She notes how Germans, Bohemians and other immigrants who had arrived in the Midwest towards the end of the 19th century all had subjunctive mood in their respective languages, and thus might have had a tendency to use equivalent forms while learning English as a second language. Later studies, and in particular Kjellmer's (2009, p.256), have also pointed to the influence of European languages in an attempt to explain the preverbal negation

typical of mandative subjunctives, which is considered a unique feature of 20th-century constructions (Visser, 1963-73, cited in Roberts, 1985, pp.40-41; Waller, 2017, p.116). According to this hypothesis, a sentence like 'She demands that he *not come*' may be modelled after the typical German word order, as in 'Sie verlangt, dass er nicht komme' (Kjellmer, 2009, p.256). This is significant because, through Middle and Early Modern English, the typical sequence for negative subjunctives had 'not' following the verb, as in the sentence 'Beware thou that thou *bring not* my son thither again' (Roberts, 1985, p.41, my italics) [15].

In addition to the role of native languages, Overgaard (1995, p.46) also points to immigrant groups' exposure to religious texts, where subjunctives were always quite common; in particular, she reminds us that the 'English of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer was practically the only English that *all* gentile immigrants (…) came in contact with' (p.46, italics in original). Thus, it is possible that these groups' tendency to favour subjunctive forms was encouraged even further by reading texts with multiple occurrences of those forms.

The transition from the language of immigrant groups to a more widespread revival of mandative subjunctives is explained by Overgaard through a combination of psycholinguistic and sociological arguments (pp.45, 49-50). From a psycholinguistic point of view, Overgaard puts forward two main hypotheses: first, these forms were 'quiescent' in the native population (as their use in formulaic expressions would indicate), and therefore their revival amounted to an 'activation and intensification of pre-existent indigenous syntactic models' (Birnbaum, 1984, p.38, cited in Overgaard, 1995, p.45); second, due to their conciseness, which enables them to convey deontic modality in the same way as periphrases with modals, they were generally easier to process, thus offering a cognitive advantage. From a sociological point of view, the author refers to the notion of 'weak ties' (Milroy, 1992, cited in Overgaard, 1995,

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[15] Jacobson (1975, cited in Waller, 2017, p.116) suggests that British usage commentators were not familiar with the preverbal negation until the late 1960s, which is the time usually indicated as the start of the revival in Britain under American influence. This fact would confirm that the pattern originated in Germanic immigrant communities in the US.

pp.49-50), suggesting that immigration tends to cause a 'loosening' of the sociocultural fabric of a region, making communities less 'tightknit' and more open to cultural and linguistic diversity.

While Overgaard's (1995) seminal work looks at both intra- and extra-linguistic factors behind the 20th-century revival of mandative subjunctives, it does not consider another crucial aspect that often underlies linguistic change, that is to say, language ideology. Yet, as we have seen in Auer's (2009) study of 18th-century grammarians, the commentary about certain features of language, and the ideology in which it is rooted, can have a big impact on usage. Agha (2003) has provided another interesting illustration of this in his work on the rise of RP ('Received Pronunciation') in British English. The author focuses on 'accent metadiscourses' (p.245), in other words, messages where linguistic features are linked to desirable or undesirable characteristics based on 'an ideology of speaker rank' (p.242), ultimately corresponding to a standard language ideology (p.233). His analysis, in particular, shows how the metadiscourses circulating in Britain between 1760 and 1900 were crucial in promoting the spoken variety of the southeast as an ideal form of speech, thanks to its association with the London aristocracy and institutions like Oxford and Cambridge.

With regard to the study of mandative subjunctives, the point could be made that Overgaard's analysis only focuses on the outcome of what is presumably a longer underlying ideological process. In that case, we could start by considering one of her key findings, which is, as we have seen, the fact that the resurgence of mandative subjunctives seemed to originate outside the centres of British influence and, to some extent, in contrast with the 'English vogue' (Hansen, 1942, p.149, cited in Overgaard, 1995, p.43).

Elaborating on this British-American dichotomy, Murphy (2018, pp.145-151) explains that the steady increase of mandative subjunctives in literary works was

ultimately the result of New England losing its special status as 'the cultural powerhouse of America' (p.146). She describes how, during this process, a new generation of writers from the Midwest (e.g., Mark Twain) and the South, less attached to British culture and British written standards, helped American literature achieve its 'independence'. These preliminary indications suggest that to understand the role of language ideologies in the development of the mandative subjunctive, it is crucial to go back in time and examine the emergence of the United States as an independent nation.

It is no coincidence that many of the Founding Fathers had a strong interest in English language and linguistics. It was, in fact, an integral part of a wider socio-political project, namely achieving independence from Britain on as many levels as possible. Thus, for example, alongside a *Plan for Establishing Uniformity in the Coinage, Weights, and Measures of the United States* (1790), Thomas Jefferson is also remembered for stressing the importance of the 'Anglo-Saxon dialect' as the basis of American English (1851). Similarly, Benjamin Franklin, who is mostly famous for his scientific inquiries, wrote *A reformed mode of spelling* (1779), where he proposed a new alphabet, specifically designed for American English.

Apart from the Founding Fathers, a very influential figure was the lexicographer Noah Webster, the author of *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, first published in 1828. With that, he popularised many American spellings still in use today. More generally, his linguistic project reflected strong nationalistic views about the United States, including a return to the 'true principles' (Webster, 1800, p.1) of the language and a move away from 'the clamor [sic] of pedantry' of the British aristocracy (Webster, 1783, cited in Hunter, 2011), whom he saw as having corrupted the English language. This type of fervour is reminiscent of the Declaration of Independence itself, whose main goal was to ignite congregations throughout the country, promoting a sense of belonging while publicly denouncing the British as a 'false community' (Fliegelman, 1993, p.26).

It seems fair to say, then, that in the immediate aftermath of the American Revolution, the opposition between American and British identities, as well the urgency to achieve independence on as many levels as possible, were absolutely central to the socio-political discourse. From a linguistic point of view, we recognise the key elements of a one-nation-one-language ideology, predicated in this case on divergence from another nation (i.e., Britain). As we saw in Chapter 1, in defining this type of ideology, Piller (2015, p.922) specifically refers to the US, an immigrant nation where the need to bring about 'social harmony and national unity' through language has always been strong.

If we combine all these insights with Overgaard's (1995) account, we obtain a complex but more accurate reconstruction. We know that a revival of mandative subjunctive structures began in the US between 1900 and 1920. Although, due to the complexity of the phenomenon, it is not possible to provide a conclusive explanation, a very convincing hypothesis is that when immigrant groups from Europe started to settle in the Midwest towards the end of the 19th-century, the influence of their native tongues and their exposure to the Bible, as well as other religious texts, might have steered them towards subjunctive forms that were 'quiescent' among the rest of the population. In the first two decades of the 20th century, the revival of the subjunctive was indeed limited to those areas, as well as the South of the United States, where, according to Overgaard (p.50), it could have been part of an American vernacular; conversely, the periphrasis with 'should' continued to be used in areas still influenced by British culture (i.e., the Northeast). It is likely that the cultural and linguistic openness that immigration had produced eventually contributed to the spread of this linguistic change to the rest of the nation (Milroy, 1992, cited in Overgaard, 1995, pp.49-50). Most importantly, because it had originated outside the mainstream, anglophile literary circles, the mandative subjunctive could be perceived as an expression of a 'new voice' in American literature, at a time when Britain's remaining strongholds on cultural life were starting to collapse (Murphy, 2018, pp.145-146). This aligned with the one-nation-one-language ideology that had been present in the linguistic discourse since the American independence.

4.4.2 The discourse around the subjunctive in 20th-century Britain

We left Britain at a time when adverbial-clause subjunctives were witnessing a new decline; this coincided with a more relaxed attitude on the part of 19th-century grammarians, who no longer saw the subjunctive as a requirement and, in fact, accepted that it could be forgotten 'in hasty writing' (Earle, 1898, p.131, cited in Auer, 2009, p.60).

At the beginning of the 20th century, the metalinguistic commentary on the subjunctive shifted again, only, this time, to a radically different position. Waller (2017, pp.63-73) provides a review of the changing perceptions of language authorities, from which it emerges that, during the 20th century, British commentators became openly opposed to the use of the 'subjunctive mood' as a whole, including both the adverbial-clause subjunctives studied by Auer (2009) and the mandative constructions that were being revived in the US. This was a significant change from the attitudes that had prevailed in the 18th and 19th centuries, when the subjunctive had been considered part of a prestige sociolect. In what follows, I will initially present Waller's review; then, in the spirit of a 'critical interpretive synthesis' (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006), I will identify three key emerging themes and shed light on how the cultural and ideological context in 20th-century Britain differed from the socio-political situation in the United States. In section 4.4.3, I will show how and why, in spite of this negative commentary, the mandative subjunctive did eventually witness a comeback in Britain, as well.

An early example of the new type of discourse surrounding the subjunctive is the following passage from *The King's English,* an influential usage guide written by Henry Watson Fowler, a lexicographer, and his younger brother, Francis George Fowler, writer on language and grammar (1906, pp.157-158, cited in Waller, 2017, p.64):

> The use of true subjunctive forms (if he be, though it happen) in conditional
>
> sentences is for various reasons not recommended (…) As a matter of style,

they should be avoided, being certain to give a pretentious air (…) And as a matter of grammar, the instinct for using subjunctives rightly is dying with the subjunctive.

In another style guide published twenty years later and titled *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, H. W. Fowler (1926, p.574, cited in Waller, 2017, p.64) provides a fuller assessment of the subjunctive in British English:

About the subjunctive, so delimited, the important general facts are: (1) that it is moribund except in a few easily specified uses; (2) that, owing to the capricious influence of the much analysed classical upon the less studied native moods, it probably never would have been possible to draw up a satisfactory table of the English subjunctive uses; (3) that assuredly no-one will ever find it either possible or worthwhile to do so now that the subjunctive is dying; & (4) that subjunctives met with today, outside the few truly living uses, are either deliberate revivals by poets for legitimate enough archaic effect, or antiquated survivals as in pretentious journalism, infecting their context with dullness, or new arrivals possible only in an age to which the grammar of the subjunctive is not natural but artificial.

In both passages, not only do we find predictions of an imminent decline of the subjunctive (which is said to be 'moribund' and 'dying'), but there is also a certain level of candour about its current uses, seen as 'pretentious', capable of 'infecting their context with dullness' and ultimately 'artificial'. There is no place for the nostalgia of 18th-century grammarians, who saw subjunctive-abiding writers as models of 'genuine diction' (1755; 1773, cited in Auer, 2009, pp.54-55); that writing style is now 'archaic' and 'antiquated'. Finally, we notice an interesting mention of 'the capricious influence' of classical languages, a point to which I will return shortly.

As we now know, around the same time mandative subjunctives are witnessing a revival in American English. This new trend does not go unnoticed and, in fact, prompts British philologist and lexicographer Ernest Weekley (1928, p.20, cited in Waller, 2017, p.66) to comment on it:

> Few modern English writers would indulge in such a surfeit of subjunctives, though there is a tendency just now (…) to revive this almost obsolete mood, *e.g.* (…) 'It was imperative that he select some place where he could sit and think quickly'.

Later, in 1936, Weekley (cited in Waller, 2017, p.67) confirms his opposition to the revived form:

> (…) the most remarkable phenomenon in modern American syntax, viz., the pedantic revival of the subjunctive in such a sentence as "She insisted that he knock before coming in," a construction now common (…) but quite unknown in the happy pre-War days.

The use of the word 'pedantic' to describe the revival of the subjunctive appears to be somewhat in keeping with Fowler's depiction of a 'pretentious' and 'artificial' form. Ironically, the only sense of nostalgia we find is for 'the happy pre-War days', which were free of these constructions. To shed light on how different American perceptions are around the same time, I should mention that Weekley's objections elicit a response from Robertson, an American linguist (1939, pp.250-251, cited in Waller, 2017, p.68):

> Whether Professor Weekley's characterization of the development as 'pedantic' is accurate may well be doubted: the omission of *should* makes for greater brevity and detracts nothing from clarity (…) Further, the construction is certainly to be observed in quite uninhibited speech, as well as in writing.

Professor Lloyd, I may say, has called my attention to its use in the dialog of comic strips – in the mouths of such unpedantic speakers as Donald Duck and Little Orphan Annie.

Here, Robertson is referring to Charles Allen Lloyd, another American scholar, who, writing about the subjunctive revival just two years before, had said that 'the tendency seems to be to drop the somewhat cumbersome "should" and use the simple subjunctive' (Lloyd, 1937, p.371, cited in Waller, 2017, p.68). Building on that, Robertson's general argument is that not only is this construction 'unpedantic' – and, as such, suitable for 'the dialog of comic strips' – but it also makes for greater efficiency, because it allows to omit *should* while conveying the same meaning.

Notwithstanding the generally positive attitudes shown by their American counterparts, British commentators continue to express considerable resistance towards this linguistic development. This is, for example, what author Catherine Nesbitt writes in 1961 in a paper titled 'The whim of the moment' (pp.238-239, cited in Waller, p.70):

We all know that there are fashions in writing as well as in clothes, and there is much concern among English critics when the latest fad strikes them as ugly or harmful. But the complaints are nearly always about the misuse of words . . . Today I would like to draw attention to something far more serious, the unexpected revival of the Subjunctive Mood [in America], which (…) is now spreading so rapidly that, if left unchecked, it will do real damage to the structure of the language, a far more harmful thing than any craze for the latest fashionable word.

Here, all previous qualms about the subjunctive mood culminate in anxiety about the future of the language: the revival of this construction is not just 'the latest fad', it is 'a far more harmful thing'. Over the following two decades, the general rejection of

the subjunctive seems to continue. Waller mentions linguist Frank Palmer, who writes that 'the notion of a subjunctive mood is a simple transfer from Latin [which] has no place in English grammar' (1988, p.46, cited in Waller, 2017, p.30); to this, I would also add Geoffrey Leech's assertion in his *Meaning and the English Verb* (1971) that the present (i.e., mandative) subjunctive is 'little more than an archaism of legalistic style' (p.106).

In summary, the negative attitudes towards the subjunctive on the part of 20th-century British language authorities signal a significant departure from the 'nostalgia' of their predecessors. What had been a marker of 'politeness' and gentility just little more than a century earlier is now an unwelcome and 'harmful' affectation, and the prescriptive message in support of it is replaced by an equally strong recommendation to avoid it. Such discourse seems to affect all subcategories of the subjunctive: quite strikingly, in the first extract reported above, the Fowler brothers (1906) specifically target conditional clauses (with examples such as 'if he be' and 'though it happen'), that is to say, one of the adverbial constructions that had been at the heart of the 18th-century prescriptivism (Auer, 2009); using similar descriptors (i.e., 'obsolete', 'pedantic'), Weekley (1928; 1936) turns his attention to the newly revived mandative subjunctive; finally, other critiques (Fowler, 1926; Nesbitt, 1961; Palmer, 1988) mention the 'subjunctive mood' as a whole. This is important because it shows that understanding the wider discourse about subjunctives in Britain has implications for the study of mandative constructions and can shed light on how the latter have generally been perceived.

I would argue that three main themes can be seen emerging from Waller's review of the 20th-century commentary. First, the subjunctive is 'dying': it is 'moribund', 'obsolete', or even 'archaic'; second, it is pretentious and 'artificial', in contrast with 'instinct', and therefore potentially dangerous to the structure of the language; finally, there is a link between subjunctive constructions and the study of classical languages, made explicit by Palmer's reference to Latin and discussed by Fowler in terms of a 'capricious influence'.

Exploring these three themes and their interconnections can help us understand the cultural and ideological context in which such negative attitudes emerged. In particular, the prestige that the 18th century had assigned to the 'H' variety of language (Adamson, 1989, pp.204-213, cited in Auer, 2009, pp.162-163), which, as we know, included the subjunctive, was linked to neo-classical ideals and, more specifically, a view of Latin as a model for English grammar. This view started to change in the 19th century, when authors such as Sheridan, Dickens and then Orwell became the main advocates of a 'Saxon-English' campaign (Adamson, 2000, p.609). At the basis of this movement was the Romantic emphasis on the English vernacular and a rejection of the classical tradition, now seen as 'servant of euphemism and political deceit' (Adamson, 2000, p.609). The shift from a neo-classical sensibility to a Romantic worldview contributed to a new perception of Latin as the language of obsolete ceremonies, of 'faded power' and 'traditional influence' (Nunn, 2016). As a result, the Latin-based variety, which had once been a prestige sociolect, started to be seen as a 'cryptolect' or, in other words, a 'secretive language' meant to exclude rather than bring people together (Nunn, 2016).

As shown in Auer's analysis (2009, pp.162-163), the subjunctive had been part of this 'cryptolect'; it was, in fact, this association that had prompted 18th-century grammarians to encourage its use. However, when the attitudes of language authorities towards Latin, and the Latin-based sociolect, started to change, it is plausible to think that the subjunctive was subject to the same criticisms and therefore started to be rejected as archaic and antiquated. This association is made very clear by Palmer (1988, p.46, cited in Waller, 2017, p.30), who sees the subjunctive as 'a simple transfer from Latin', and Fowler (1926, p.574, cited in Waller, 2017, p.64), who attributes the continuing existence of the subjunctive to 'the capricious influence of the much analysed classical upon the less studied native moods'.

Thus, while the American revival of the mandative subjunctive fit into a narrative of independence from the British and, within that, was perceived as part of a 'new voice' in American literature, in Britain, subjunctives had become a reminder of privilege

and old hierarchies of power. For that reason, they were characterised as 'pretentious' and 'artificial', at odds with the natural structure of the language and the 'instinct' of present-day speakers. Interestingly, these comments were also directed at the construction being revived in the US - a development which Weekley (1936, cited in Waller, 2017, p.67) describes as 'pedantic' – even though that revival was likely triggered by immigration and language contact, rather than undue deference to the classical tradition, or the 'language of gentlemen'. As we have seen above, in addition to historical and sociological considerations (Overgaard, 1995, pp.42-51), a convincing piece of evidence is the novel syntactic pattern with 'not' preceding the verb (as in 'She demands that he *not come*'), which appears to be modelled after the typical German word order (Visser, 1963-73, cited in Roberts, 1985, pp.40-41; Kjellmer, 2009, p.256).

The negative commentary on the British side also seems to echo one of the ideologies I introduced in Chapter 1, namely the 'leave your language alone' ideology. As we saw then, this has accompanied the development of modern linguistics and can be seen, in particular, in the tenet that languages are natural phenomena evolving over time (Cameron, 1995, pp.3-4). It follows that only certain types of change are 'good linguistically speaking' (Cameron, 1995, p.4), as captured in Lakoff's (1990, p.298, cited in Cameron, 1995, p.4) key distinction, which I present again here:

> For change that comes spontaneously from below, or within, our policy should be, Let your language alone, and leave its speakers alone! But other forms of language manipulation have other origins, other motives, other effects, and are far more dangerous.

In Britain, the long-standing association of the subjunctive with the language of the elite made its return in America during the 20th century more likely to be perceived as an example of 'manipulation'. This position is clearly reflected in the words used by Catherine Nesbitt (1961, pp.238-239, cited in Waller, p.70), who characterises the

'unexpected revival of the Subjunctive Mood' as 'a harmful thing', warning against its potential 'damage to the structure of the language'. Yet, as we already discussed, within the American context this development had arguably 'come from below', that is to say, from immigration and language contact, before being adopted as a new literary standard.

4.4.3 The British revival

As I hinted at in previous parts of the chapter, the mandative subjunctive eventually witnessed a comeback in Britain, too; according to several studies (e.g., Overgaard, 1995; Hundt, 1998; Serpollet, 2001; Leech et al., 2009; Waller, 2017) this started from the 1960s, and it may come as a surprise, considering the negative perceptions we examined in section 4.4.2.

To better understand this development, we can start by considering the comments made by Peters (2006, p.771), who recognises the role of American influence and thus hails this development as a 'remarkable case of major dialects in contact'. He then adds: 'where regional and international usage diverge, we might expect the latter to exercise more influence than local, prescriptive advice in the longer run' (2006, p.771). In other words, Peters argues that the impact of American usage may have outweighed the negative commentary on the part of British language authorities. My analysis of the literature reveals that this assessment is accurate; in particular, a number of authors (e.g., Gowers, 1965, p.595; Quirk et al., 1985, p.157; Overgaard, 1995, p.51; Serpollet, 2001) point to American influence as a likely explanation, with Overgaard highlighting more specifically the growth of mass media after World War II, and its role in bridging American and British English (1995, p.51).

Nevertheless, interpreting quantitative trends, in other words, the changing frequencies of mandative subjunctives over time, requires a nuanced approach. Particularly, in one of the most recent and most comprehensive corpus investigations,

Waller (2017, pp.199-256) uses four matching corpora of written British English, covering the 75 years from 1931 to 2006. Three of them belong to the LOB (Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen) family (B-LOB, LOB and F-LOB, with texts from 1931, 1961 and 1991, respectively), whereas his 21st-century corpus is the BE06, containing, as we know, British English texts from around 2006. The corpora are interrogated using Johansson and Norheim's (1988, p.29) complete list of mandative triggers.

Waller's analyses (2017, p.229) show how a statistically significant increase in the use of mandative subjunctives occurred in British texts between 1961 and 1991, accompanied by a significant decrease in the frequency of the modal *should*, which, until then, had been seen as a quintessentially British variant (e.g., Overgaard, 1995, pp.43-44). The picture is slightly more complicated in the following 15 years to 2006, where Waller's figures show a plateau in the use of subjunctives, rather than a continuation of the increase; however, at the same time, it appears that the frequency of *should* continued to fall in a significant way, to the point that, in 2006, it was actually lower than that of mandative subjunctives (2017, p.231).

The simple fact that the rise of mandative subjunctives between 1961 and 1991 reached the threshold of statistical significance is noteworthy and warrants the use of the term 'revival' in British English, as well. However, when we look more closely at the data, we discover that, even at its peak, in 1991, the frequency of mandative subjunctives in British English was still much lower than the corresponding figure in American English (Waller, 2017, p.226); furthermore, as I already mentioned, the upward trajectory seems to have levelled off in recent years (Waller, 2017, p.231). The need for caution is also confirmed by the contexts and genres in which the mandative subjunctive appears to be most common in British English. In this case, corpus data shows that not only is this construction significantly more frequent in writing than in speech (Waller, 2005), but, even in writing, it tends to be more frequent in legal and administrative documents, as well as other formal styles, such as academic prose (Waller, 2017, pp.237-239).

This contrasts with the trajectory of mandative subjunctives in American English, where after their initial use in literary works, these forms continued to spread to most text types. Elicitation studies (e.g., Greenbaum, 1977) show that by the second half of the 20th century, this construction had become the preferred mandative option for American speakers across different levels of formality; similarly, corpus investigations that have focused on the ratio of subjunctives to *should* clauses in speech (Leech et al., 2009, p.60), point to its being higher than in writing.

These observations suggest two important points: first, from a quantitative point of view, although American English has had an influence in terms of the general upward trend, we should not be too quick to dismiss the role of more 'local, prescriptive advice' (Peters, 2006, p.771), and its calls for less frequent use; second, it seems that American influence has not been able to breach a long-standing characterisation of the subjunctive as somewhat old-fashioned and 'pedantic', and therefore better suited for more formal contexts. In the next two chapters, we will see how this is generally confirmed by my own frequency analysis of mandative subjunctives in writing vs. speech, as well as my interviews with language practitioners.

According to Waller (2017, pp.77-78, 239-240), an interesting exception to the overall formal usage is the Press genre, where he finds that between 1991 and 2006 the frequency of mandative subjunctives increased not only across a wide range of subcategories, including 'society' and 'sports', but also within publications like *The Sun*, normally regarded as more informal than others. Wallers explains this finding through the notion of 'densification' (p.258), namely the fact that 'the need for economy and conciseness in newspaper writing [overrides] the competing pressures of colloquialisation'. In other words, the brevity of subjunctives, which results from the omission of a modal, would help to meet editorial requirements. Though entirely plausible, this explanation is also somewhat incomplete, mostly because it does not take into account the social meanings of subjunctive constructions. Arguably, these forms will serve very specific purposes in different genres and subgenres, as a result

of complex rhetorical and stance-taking processes. This type of sociolinguistic analysis will be the focus of the next chapter.

4.5 The subjunctive in the National Curriculum

From an ideological point of view, an interesting recent change has been the formal introduction of the subjunctive mood in the National Curriculum for England (Department for Education, 2013) under a Conservative educational policy. To fully understand this, we first need to examine the role that grammar has traditionally played within the Curriculum.

The National Curriculum was first introduced in 1988, with the Education Reform Act. The main provision of this new legislation was that all state schools should adopt a curriculum, which specified the subjects to be studied, the programmes of study for each subject and compulsory testing at four 'key stages' (ages 7, 11, 14, 16). From a political point of view, the introduction of the National Curriculum marked a significant change towards centralisation; the Secretary of State for Education and a number of government-appointed bodies were now the top decision-makers in the country in relation to education, which helped strengthen a Conservative ideology (Crowley, 2003; Cameron, 1995, pp.78-115).

In this context, great importance was attributed to English language and grammar, which, for the Tory ideology, was the perfect symbol of law and order, tradition and respect. A satisfactory command of the language was seen as necessary to 'discourage indiscipline or "sloppiness"' (Cameron, 1995, p.94), thus becoming a matter of 'morality'. On the other hand, language was also seen as a powerful tool to strengthen the British identity, at a time when different forms of polarisation within the country, as well as the potential for European integration, threatened that identity. The emphasis on 'Standard English' and linguistic unity was, then, representative of a deeper endeavour to unify the nation (Cameron, 1995, pp.108-109). This is an example

of how, as I wrote in Chapter 1, a standard language ideology and a one-nation-one-language ideology can sometimes work synergistically: the 'common language' of the nation coincides with the idealised 'standard' variety of the upper classes.

It is interesting to note that using grammar as a symbol goes back a long time; there seems to be something archetypical about it that makes it a suitable space for ideological forces to coalesce. As Cameron (1995, p.97) puts it:

> The association between grammar and authority or discipline is particularly ancient. Classical and neoclassical representations of the seven liberal arts that comprised education for the ancient Greeks (grammar, dialectic, rhetoric, arithmetic, astronomy; geometry and music) typically personify Grammar as a stern figure holding a book in one hand and a birch rod or whip in the other.

While the subjunctive mood was not included in the first versions of the Curriculum, it was introduced in 2013 as part of wider changes, which, overall, signalled a shift towards an even more prescriptive stance on 'Standard English' and an emphasis on decontextualised 'clause-level grammar' (Cushing, 2019, p.427). In particular, in this newest version of the Curriculum, the subjunctive is discussed within the 'Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation' component for Year 6. First, it is mentioned as part of the statutory requirements for that year, when it is said that students should be taught to recognise 'vocabulary and structures that are appropriate for *formal speech and writing*, including subjunctive forms' (Department for Education, 2013, p.38, my italics). Some clarification as to what is meant by 'formal' is then provided in the section titled 'Detail of the content to be introduced (statutory requirement)', which is essentially a list with a series of points, including the following (p.68, italics and emphasis in original):

> The difference between structures typical of informal speech and structures appropriate for formal speech and writing [for example, the use of question tags: *He's your friend*, *isn't he?*, or the use of **subjunctive** forms such as *If I were* or *Were they to come* in some very formal writing and speech].

The final mention is within the 'Glossary for the programmes of study for English (non-statutory)', which is an aid for teachers containing definitions of key grammatical concepts. Here, the 'subjunctive' entry reads as follows (p.85, my italics):

> In some languages, the inflections of a verb include a large range of *special forms* which are used typically in subordinate clauses, and are called 'subjunctives'. English has *very few* such forms and those it has tend to be used in *rather formal styles*.

Within the same entry, the following three examples are provided (p.85, emphasis in original):

(a) The school requires that all pupils <u>be</u> honest.
(b) The school rules demand that pupils not <u>enter</u> the gym at lunchtime.
(c) If Zoë <u>were</u> the class president, things would be much better.

My first observation is that, overall, the characterisation of the subjunctive is based on the notion of formality; in all three mentions, the context or style in which subjunctive constructions are recommended is always described as 'formal'. At the same time, there is the idea that subjunctives are not part of the ordinary language; they are defined as 'special forms' and English is said to have 'very few' of them, which begs the question of why this particular feature of grammar is given such attention. Perhaps, part of the reason lies in its 'exclusivity' and is thus somewhat reminiscent of the 18th-century commentary, in which subjunctives were seen as part of a prestige sociolect

(Auer, 2009, p.162), or, even better, a 'cryptolect' (Nunn, 2016). This would be in keeping with the stated aim of the current English programmes, which promote 'high standards of language and literacy' (Department for Education, 2013, p.3) as necessary to achieve socio-economic success.

It is also noteworthy that the examples presented in the document feature both the 'were' type and the mandative subjunctive, including, for the latter, the 20th-century 'American' pattern of negation ('The school rules demand that pupils *not enter* the gym at lunchtime'). Yet, the differences between subjunctive subtypes, either in terms of morphosyntax or meaning, are not explicitly recognised; instead, the label 'subjunctive' is used to denote a seemingly monolithic category, which shows little awareness of recent historical developments.

4.6 Summary and conclusion: the 'building blocks' for a theory of indexicality

In this chapter, my goal was to address my second research question and therefore retrace the modern history of English subjunctive constructions, in terms of both their usage and the metalinguistic discourse around them, from the 18th to the 21st century. In doing so, I was particularly interested in any language ideologies that might underlie such developments.

I initially presented Auer's (2009) account of the resurgence of adverbial-clause subjunctives in 18th-century England, a development that she convincingly attributes to the prescriptive attitudes of grammarians. Here, we found an association between the subjunctive and formal/literary genres such as poetry and oratory; more importantly, these constructions were associated with the 'polite' language used by the metropolitan elites ('the gentlemen'), a linguistic and moral canon to aspire to. In turn, we have seen how the association with formality and politeness might have encouraged the use of these forms in other text types, such as medical and scientific handbooks.

I then focused on mandative subjunctives, clarifying that before the all-important American revival of the early 1900s, these constructions could only be found in formulaic phrases typical of legal and religious texts (e.g., Hundt, 2009, pp.30-31). In fact, according to Overgaard (1995, p.46), it was the exposure to such phrases within the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer, in combination with immigration and language contact, that led to a significant resurgence in the United States. From an ideological point of view, I showed how the socio-political discourse in post-revolutionary America might have paved the way for the perception of subjunctives as part of a 'new voice' in American literature, thus fitting into a long-standing narrative of independence from the British. By the second half of the 20th century, the subjunctive had become the preferred mandative option for American speakers in virtually all contexts, across different levels of formality (Greenbaum, 1977; Leech et al., 2009, p.60).

Meanwhile, in England, the perception of subjunctive constructions had shifted from a nostalgic conservatism to a more forgiving attitude in the late 19th century (Auer, 2009, pp.58-60), before morphing into an open rejection of these forms (Waller, 2017, pp.63-73). However, throughout these developments, the historical link with formality and prestige seems to have persisted. I argued that it was, in fact, the continuing association with Latin and the language of the elite that caused 20th-century commentators to describe the subjunctive as obsolete, pretentious and artificial. As the status of Latin started to be questioned, the subjunctive, too, was seen as an uncomfortable reminder of old hierarchies and traditional power. It might be, then, surprising that the mandative subjunctive eventually witnessed a revival in Britain in the 1960s, most likely under American influence (Gowers, 1965, p.595; Quirk et al., 1985, p.157; Overgaard, 1995, p.51; Peters, 2006, p.771). However, despite the overall increase in frequency, recent corpus investigations show that these forms have continued to be more common in legal and institutional documents, in addition to other formal genres such as academic prose (Waller, 2017, pp.199-256).

My historical and ideological analysis concluded with a look at the National Curriculum for England, where the formality of the subjunctive is probably what made it a suitable entry for the new programmes of study in 2013; in this regard, I have highlighted the role of a Conservative ideology in which exclusivity and 'high standards of literacy' (Department for Education, 2013, p.3) often become synonymous with economic success and moral stature.

In summary, 'formality' and 'high society' (Auer, 2009, p.58) have been a common thread in the history of the subjunctive in Britain from the 18th to the 21st century; we can see it both in terms of the contexts where subjunctives are more likely to be found (poetry, legal and religious texts, as well as scientific and academic works) and in terms of the typical 'subjunctive user'. With regard to the latter, descriptions tend to vary depending on the broader philosophical and ideological context; thus, the much-praised 'gentleman' of the 18th century becomes a 'pretentious' speaker in the 20th century, but comes back, as it were, in the latest National Curriculum as a new champion of literacy and, therefore, morality.

These observations are crucial because, as previously stated, one of the main goals of this thesis is to delineate the 'indexical field' (Eckert, 2008, p.454) of mandative subjunctives in present-day British English. As we have seen in Chapter 1, indexicality consists of ideological associations between a linguistic form and 'some dimension of its conventional context of use' (Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.5), including 'the typical user' of that form (Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.5). Therefore, by tracking down the historical links between subjunctives, language ideologies and social contexts, I have attempted to lay the foundations for the analyses presented in the next two chapters. As we will see there, an approach based on indexicality and social meaning can, in turn, shed light on new and creative uses, where the more conventional contexts of use are exploited in an endless 'process of bricolage' (Hebdige, 1984, cited in Eckert, 2008, p.456).

Chapter 5

Corpus analyses

5.1 Introduction and methodological preliminaries

In this chapter I present my analysis of mandative subjunctives in spoken and written British English using the Spoken BNC2014 (British National Corpus, 2014; Love et al., 2017) and the BE06 (British English 2006; Baker, 2009). In particular, having tracked down the historical links between mandative subjunctives, social contexts and language ideologies from the 18th century, I now turn to the meanings and functions of these forms in the present day. In doing so, my goal is to assess whether the association between the mandative subjunctive and 'some dimension of its conventional context of use' (Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.5), be its typical user or a particular genre, has created indexical ties which can be exploited by speakers (and writers) of British English.

In what follows, I will initially present a quantitative analysis focused on the frequency and distribution of the target forms across the two corpora, before moving on to a qualitative analysis of examples of the mandative subjunctive. As discussed in Chapter 2, my methodological approach to the discourse analysis falls under the umbrella of linguistic ethnography and is informed by the concepts of 'total linguistic fact' (Silverstein, 1985, p.220) and 'indexical field' (Eckert, 2008, p.454). It is therefore based on the idea that studying 'the situated use' of a linguistic variable is key to understanding what social meanings are activated in any given context, thanks to the interaction with other social and semiotic resources. This will be reflected in my attention to the larger extract in which each subjunctive appears, so as to identify its main communicative purpose and participant structure.

Though based on this general framework, my analysis is nonetheless attuned to the specific characteristics of writing and speech. For the former, I focus on the rhetorical

functions of the mandative subjunctive within the corpus's pre-existing classification into genres, taking inspiration from Hunston's (1994) and Hyland's (2012) work on academic and scientific writing, while also drawing upon Biber's (1988) and Biber and Conrad's (2001) analyses of register. With regard to spoken discourse, I use a microanalytic approach (Rampton, 2006, cited in Snell and Lefstein, 2011, p.45) resulting from several frameworks, namely conversational analysis (e.g., Gumperz and Hymes, 1972), interactional sociolinguistics (e.g., Gumperz, 1982a; 1982b) and the work carried out by Goffman (1964; 1981; 1983). While the spoken BNC2014 does not provide a classification according to genre, this remains an important sensitising concept in my analysis, specifically when examining instances of 'genre mixing' or 'hybridity' (Biber and Conrad, 2009, pp.72-73; Lefstein and Snell, 2011, p.42), in which the mandative subjunctive is used as a marker of (formal) written genres. In this case, I draw upon a number of social and discursive dimensions proposed by Lefstein and Snell (2011, p.51) to describe genres and their possible intersections, and in particular: *participants and roles*, *communicative purposes*, *topics/themes*, *interactional norms*, *social relationships* and *language use*.

5.2 Mandative subjunctives in writing: the BE06

5.2.1 Frequencies and distribution

Table 5.1 shows raw and normalised frequencies per million words (pmw) of mandative subjunctives for each mandative trigger. As mentioned in Chapter 2, due to the high frequency of the words *ask* and *important*, I decided, in those cases, to include the complementiser *that* in the search, in order to limit the number of matches to constructions that were more likely to contain a subjunctive.

Table 5.1 Frequency of mandative subjunctives in the BE06 for each mandative trigger.

Trigger	Raw frequencies	Normalised frequencies (pmw)
Ask + that	3	2.62
Advise		
Advice		
Anxious		
Beg		
Crucial		
Demand (V)	10	8.72
Demand (N)		
Desire (V)		
Desire (N)		
Desirable		
Essential	1	0.87
Important + that	1	0.87
Insist	2	1.74
Insistent		
Insistence		
Keen that	1	0.87
Necessary		
Propose	3	2.62
Proposition		
Recommend	5	4.36
Recommendation		
Request (V)	2	1.74
Request (N)		
Require	2	1.74
Requirement		
Stipulate		

Stipulation		
Suggest	11	9.59
Suggestion		
Urge	1	0.87
Total	**42**	**36.61**

As we can see, the verb *suggest* introduces the highest number of mandative subjunctives, with 11 instances found, immediately followed by *demand* with a raw frequency of 10. This finding is consistent with other studies (e.g., Peters, 2009, p.131) which point to *suggest* as the trigger most frequently followed by this construction. Over the course of this chapter, as I delve into my discourse analysis and focus on the socio-pragmatic functions of the mandative subjunctive, I will try to understand the factors behind these frequencies.

A secondary goal of my investigation was to test a novel methodology aimed at finding new triggers (Vaughan and Mulder, 2014, pp.492-494); this 'bottom-up' approach consisted of identifying subjunctive forms first and then analysing the triggers preceding them. As explained in Chapter 2, my focus was on the uninflected form *be*. Within the BE06, this type of query did not return any additional examples of the mandative subjunctive.

As I noted in Chapter 2, the BE06 provides a classification of texts into 'broad genres' and 'text categories' (i.e., subgenres). Table 5.2 shows the distribution of mandative subjunctive constructions across these different categories.

Table 5.2. Distribution of mandative subjunctives across genres and subgenres of the BE06.

Genre	Subgenre	Freq. mandative subjunctives
Press	Reportage	7
	Editorial	4
	Reviews	2
General Prose	Religion	1
	Skills, Trades and Hobbies	1
	Popular Lore	3
	Belles Lettres, Biographies, Essays	3
	Miscellaneous: Government documents, industrial reports, etc.	5
Academic Prose	Academic Prose	8
Fiction	General Fiction	
	Mystery and Detective Fiction	
	Science Fiction	
	Adventure and Western	4
	Romance and Love Story	3
	Humour	1

The text categories with the most occurrences of mandative subjunctives are 'academic prose', 'miscellaneous' (which is comprised of legal and official documents) and 'press reportage'. These general trends are consistent with the literature reviewed in previous chapters and appear to indicate, on the whole, an association between these forms and a certain level of formality. More specifically, the use of the mandative subjunctive in legal and official writing has been attested since Old English; in fact, alongside religious texts, this genre remained a stronghold of the construction during its steady decline until the 20th century (Overgaard, 1995, p.46; Kovacs, 2010, p.62). The high frequency associated with academic prose is consistent with Waller's (2017, pp.237-239) corpus analysis reviewed in the previous

chapter and is also in keeping with Auer's (2009, pp.66-86) findings on adverbial-clause subjunctives, which were commonly used in scientific and academic texts during the 18th century. Finally, with regard to press reports, in Chapter 4 we saw how Waller (2017, p.258) considers the increase of mandative subjunctives in this category the likely result of editorial demands and 'densification'. However, I believe this suggestion deserves further analysis, taking into account both the specific publication and the author's communicative purpose; in the next section, I will present my attempt to do so.

More generally, in what follows my goal is to go beyond the quantitative trends just discussed and explore the functions of mandative subjunctives across different genres. I will show, in particular, how this can be achieved through an approach based on indexicality and social meaning.

5.2.2 Discourse analysis

As discussed in Chapter 2, five themes emerged from my qualitative analysis of written discourse. These capture the main rhetorical functions of mandative subjunctives across different text types; Table 5.3 shows the frequency of mandative constructions for each theme.

Table 5.3 Distribution of mandative subjunctives across five themes

(shown in the same order as my discourse analysis below).

Category	Freq. mandative subjunctives
Epistemic and moral authority	24
Sexuality and power	2
Persuasion	5
On and off the record	7
Dramatic build-up	4

In what follows, I will present the above categories using illustrative examples. To help the reader identify the target construction in each extract, the mandative trigger will be shown in **bold**, while the subjunctive form itself will be underlined. Furthermore, the amount of context included in each case will vary based on the semiotic resources available for analysis and interpretation.

Epistemic and moral authority

As highlighted in Table 5.2, 'miscellaneous' is among the subgenres with the most occurrences of mandative subjunctives. This use of the construction could be regarded as 'canonical': as we know, mandative subjunctives have featured in legal and institutional documents since Old English (Kovacs, 2010, p.62). By way of illustration, below is an extract from a report on climate change published in 2006 by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. As we can see, it contains two mandative subjunctives.

(1) Current Government policy focuses on renewable electricity generation at the expense of the prospects for the development of renewable heat. We note that in its response to the Biomass Task Force Report the Government has undertaken to increase the use of biomass heat and electricity. We **recommend** that the Government build on this commitment by setting out clear and quantifiable targets for biomass heat in its forthcoming Biomass Strategy. We further **recommend** that the Strategy redress the balance between biofuels, renewable electricity and renewable heat, to reflect the greater potential carbon savings offered by biomass heat.

Both instances of the mandative subjunctive are introduced by *recommend*, which reflects the specific section of the document we are looking at: after conducting an analysis, the authors of this report are recommending certain actions based on their findings. We note that, in this case, the subjunctive is part of an overall formal tone,

as signalled by the presence of two linguistic features typical of 'informational discourse' (Biber and Conrad, 2001, p.191, cited in Cameron and Panovic, 2014, pp.24-26), namely the use of long and relatively uncommon words (e.g., 'renewable', 'quantifiable', 'forthcoming') and the use of complex prepositional phrases (e.g., 'at the expense of the prospects for the development of renewable heat'). We can also see that the topic is quite sensitive: the authors are reviewing current Government policies on climate change, taking into account its previous commitments ('the Government has undertaken to increase the use of biomass heat and electricity') and identifying areas of improvement. In this context, using the mandative subjunctive evokes a sense of urgency and moral responsibility; I would also argue that, combined with the aforementioned features of vocabulary and structure, it helps to highlight the epistemic authority of the authors, who position themselves as experts as a result of the research they have carried out.

Conveying authority and expertise is also important in academic articles, where who writes tends to present themselves as a 'professional', in other words, a member of the academic community. We can see this in the following extract, taken from a paper published in the *British Journal of Social Work*:

(2) It is the responsibility of organisations to ensure that adequately trained people deal with such difficult problems. We would **suggest**, therefore, that once cases had been categorized in terms of risk, social workers of an agreed level of experience and appropriate training <u>be allocated</u> to them.

Here, too, the authors suggest a specific course of action based on their research findings. As the first sentence clearly indicates, the matter being discussed (i.e., the role of social workers in dealing with cases of varying complexity) requires responsible organisations and adequate processes. In response to that, the mandative subjunctive conveys the necessary level of urgency and thus corresponds to a 'moral imperative'.

This example is also interesting because in it we find the 'calculated and measured expression of attitude' (Hyland, 2012, p.148) which is typical of academic writing. Specifically, a number of researchers (e.g. Hunston, 1994; Gross and Chesley, 2012; Hyland, 2012) have shown how, in this genre, authority and credibility are achieved through a combination of confidence and caution; the former is reflected in the use of 'boosters', such as *clearly* or *evidently*, whereas the latter consists of using 'hedges' such as *it seems/it is possible that* and is crucial when presenting one's findings. In the above extract, I would argue that the subjunctive is part of this careful balance: the construction evokes authority and confidence[16], but this is, to a certain degree, counterbalanced by the initial expression of caution ('we would suggest'), where, in particular, *suggest* has a weak deontic force and *would* acts as a further hedging device.

In the next three extracts, the ability of the mandative subjunctive to index moral and epistemic authority is exported to different genres. The first example comes from *Dear Deidre*, an 'agony aunt' column that used to run in *The Sun* and which consisted of responses to readers asking for help on various aspects of their lives. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Waller (2017, p.258) tends to see the use of subjunctives in the press, especially in popular publications like *The Sun*, as an example of 'densification' in response to editorial demands. Yet, I would argue that in the extract below the subjunctive has interesting socio-pragmatic functions: it matches an overall formal tone and it also supports the author in her positioning as a credible expert.

(3) Dear Deidre[17]

My girlfriend's husband died three years ago but her main bedroom is still covered with photos of him. She is 36, I'm 34. She was with her husband for 15 years and we've been together for two. From the beginning of our relationship we only ever had sex in her back bedroom. She refuses to take the photos down and insists that when she dies she will be buried with her husband.

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[16] The use of subjunctives in scientific writing to construct an authoritative voice is also consistent with the historical analysis presented in Chapter 4. As we saw there, this usage was already attested in 18th-century England (Auer, 2009, p.86).

[17] The layout of the extract reflects the original column.

She became pregnant six months ago and we were ecstatic. I had high hopes that would have given us a future. But she miscarried at 12 weeks and now we seem to have gone back to square one. I'll be so angry and hurt if she doesn't change.

DEIDRE SAYS: Being widowed young is tragic. Try to be patient a bit longer. **Suggest** she <u>talk</u> to Cruse Bereavement Care (0870 167 1677, cruse.org.uk) who can help her move her life forward .

Deidre's response combines wisdom and epistemic authority ('Being widowed young is tragic') with a sense of moral responsibility, which is reflected in the use of the mandative subjunctive to offer practical help to a woman, so that she can 'move her life forward'. There is arguably a general sense of gravitas resulting from the use of short and concise sentences, of which the subjunctive is a very good example. In particular, the construction is embedded within an imperative clause ('**suggest** she <u>talk</u>'), and the juxtaposition of these two 'bare' verbal forms conveys a sense of starkness, making Deidre's advice sound punchy and compelling.

This aura of wisdom and authority continues in the following extract, which comes from a memoir. Specifically, in this section the author takes us through the long-established rituals of her family and the central role played by her grandmother.

(4) There were actually two types of family history. There was the documented version that sat properly in my grandfather's office. But there was also the undocumented version consisting of fables, family customs and hearsay passed along by my grandmother, Bari Bauwa, and the other women of the house. This version had begun seeping into us since birth, very subtly, with the honey on our tongues. And, to start with, this was the only one I knew. Every year, at the religious festival of Dussehra in autumn, Bari Bauwa would **demand** that we <u>bring</u> all our writing implements to the prayer room . The men would be asked to bring their guns as well. She would arrange these in the altar-like temple she had set up (…) I thought then that all of India was doing what we were doing:

asking blessings for pens and pencils and guns. What I did not realize was that on that day, most Hindus were asking God to bless the implements they worked with. Farmers wanted blessings for their bulls and ploughs, and traders for their weights, measures and coins. But who were we and why was my bottle of Quink in the prayer room?

In this passage, we are given access to one of the author's earliest and most intimate memories, where her grandmother stands out as a priestess-like figure, entrusted with preserving family traditions. The religious theme is made explicit by the mention of the 'Dussehra' festival, and there are also references to a sacred setting (the 'altar-like temple'). In this context, the mandative subjunctive helps characterise Bari Bauwa as an unquestioned authority: not only is she responsible for setting up the temple, but she also directs the rest of the family, demanding everyone's participation; and even though, as a child, the author did not really know what was happening ('who were we?'), she somehow felt compelled to take part in this ancient ritual. Later in the chapter we find out that the ceremony was, in fact, connected to the subcaste the author's family belonged to, namely the 'Kayasthas', that is to say, writer-warriors.

The final excerpt I present for this category comes from a book review, and in particular a section where the reviewer is describing some of the challenges faced by the writer before publishing his work. It is an interesting example in that the mandative subjunctive seems to convey wisdom and, more specifically, the idea of higher cognitive and problem-solving skills.

(5) Legendre sent his work to an agent in America. She returned it, saying that, although she loved the book , she didn't think she could sell it. "She said the plot and pacing were something you might see in genre fiction," he says." It was too strongly plotted for literary fiction." This message was repeated by several American agents. It was Stack who **suggested** her husband <u>look</u> closer to home. She was right. Within weeks, Little Brown had snapped up the world English-

language rights, which means it can sell it on anywhere in the English-speaking world.

Following several rejections by a number of American agents, Stack (the writer's wife) steers her husband towards a more local publisher (i.e., Little Brown Book Group, based in the United Kingdom), which proves to be a winning strategy. The speed and conciseness of the subjunctive seems to reflect a sudden, powerful intuition that helps unlock the situation; in this case, the use of reported speech stands out from the previous sentences, where the direct quotes seemed to slow down the narration, conveying the sense of a prolonged struggle. I would also argue that the value and importance of Stark's insight is further highlighted by the use of a cleft structure (i.e., *it was…that*), which emphasises the character's role by placing her name in a separate clause.

Sexuality and power

This category is composed of two extracts in which the broader theme of 'authority' mentioned above takes on more specific connotations. Specifically, in this case the construction is used to portray an assertive female character, whose authority is intrinsically connected to her sexuality. This translates into an aura of confidence and power.

The first example comes from a novel categorised in the corpus as 'adventure fiction'. What I present below is a conversation between the narrator, a freelance journalist, and his editor and best friend, Bridget. They pair are covering the shooting of a movie in an exotic location, but Bridget's role goes beyond that; she seems, in fact, to have considerable influence on the production of the movie itself and is trying to recruit the narrator as a stuntman.

(6) The sun was bright, the sky was blue, it was too hot to do anything but sit here in the shade, drink pina coladas and smile at the perks of being a freelance journalist with a best friend who is also a commissioning editor. I waved my hand vaguely around.

'Bridget, you got me down here to write a movie location piece. Now you 're suggesting I could be the next Jude Law.'

'You wish' she said, leaning back and stretching, thereby attracting rapid eye-swivels from every other man in the bar (…) She leaned forward to display her breasts in a different way as I choked on my pina colada (…). 'You know how to use a sword well, after a fashion and since this is a pirate movie there's going to be lots of that. You're supple because of that stupid yoga you do.'

'Astanga vinyasa is NOT stupid.'

'Yeah , yeah. Plus because of your quote yoga breathing, you can stay underwater for a long time which is definitely a plus for a pirate movie.'

'Are you saying the movie doesn't have stuntmen?'

'Stuntman this is low budget movie-making remember.'

I raised an eyebrow.

'We did have a stuntman, big hunk called Larry, but he upped and went two evenings ago. Nobody 's seen hide nor hair of him since.'

'Why 'd he leave?'

'No one knows just disappeared. I was talking to Dwight and **suggested** on account of the fact he's desperate that he <u>use</u> you. At least until a real stuntman can be hired.'

'You know how to build someone up and put them right down again don't you? And Dwight is up for it?'

'If I suggest it, why wouldn't he be?' she said, with what could only be described as a leer.

From the moment she enters the bar, Bridget exudes confidence. Her initial 'you wish' establishes the sardonic tone which dominates the rest of the conversation, where she tries to convince the narrator while openly mocking him (e.g., 'You're supple because of that stupid yoga you do'). However, she is not just communicating through her words. Her body also plays a crucial role; it is, in a way, her 'supporting act', a powerful medium that connects her to her direct interlocutor as well as the rest of the

room ('leaning back and stretching, thereby attracting rapid eye-swivels from every other man in the bar').

In this complex semiotic landscape, a mandative subjunctive is used. The structure of the whole sentence, namely the use of a periphrastic subordinator ('<u>on account of the fact</u> he's desperate') in addition to the subjunctive itself ('that he <u>use</u> you'), signals sophistication and is yet another expression of confidence which suits Bridget's overall style. Her empowerment culminates over the next two lines, when she boasts of her influence over Dwight, the director of the movie, hinting through a very telling 'leer' that such influence does not stop at words. Furthermore, we could argue that the author here is playing with the 'politeness' of *suggest*; when Bridget suggests something, she is actually demanding it. In fact, the deontic force encoded by the mandative subjunctive is an embodiment of her persuasive powers.

The second example comes from a memoir, specifically a first-person account of a former London sex worker. Similarly to the passage above, the use of the mandative subjunctive helps to empower the female protagonist, who in this case is also the narrator.

(7) The first time we met it was his birthday, about one year ago now. He was tearing up the dance floor in a club, almost literally the bouncers had their hackles up the moment he and his equally large, drunken friends came in the door. They weren't the only ones. I couldn't take my eyes off this man who moved like water and threw his limbs around as though they were only nominally attached to his body. The otherwise crowded floor cleared a wide circle around their group. They took turns chucking each other around, laughing, like little boys. His eyes were shining, probably from alcohol. His curly hair and freckles stood out in a room of pale poseurs. I **demanded** a mutual friend <u>introduce</u> us . The club was too loud, he looked down and smiled at me, but didn't hear a word we were saying. I stayed on the fringes and waited. When he went out in the hall to join the queue for the toilets, I followed him.

'Happy birthday', I said . 'Thank you', he smiled. He didn't appear to recognise me. He did seem quite interested staring down my top, however . Hey, I thought. It's a start. I stood on tiptoe and kissed him.

In this passage, we feel a build-up of sexual tension. The narrator provides an account of the moment she first lays eyes on this man and how she feels immediately drawn to him. As her desire increases, so too does her determination to approach him and speak to him. The mandative subjunctive, coupled with a strong trigger like *demand*, embodies the confidence and assertiveness of somebody who is not going to take no for an answer. We may also notice that this construction acts as demarcation between the initial description of the setting (with the arrival of this man, his body and face 'standing out' in the crowd) and the second part of the passage, where the narration gains momentum and is characterised by shorter and punchier sentences.

Persuasion

In the previous categories, the use of the mandative subjunctive was, to different degrees, arguably associated with persuasion. For instance, if a writer is trying to invoke authority and credibility in an academic article or in an advice-giving column, persuading readers will be a desired outcome. Similarly, empowering a character with confidence and assertiveness ultimately means making that character persuasive, both to other characters in the story and to the reader.

Nevertheless, there are texts in the corpus in which persuasion appears to be the primary communicative purpose. In this context, the use of the mandative subjunctive helps the author strengthen their argument, while rejecting opposing points of view. As we will see shortly, this is usually achieved by exploiting the legalistic and at times moralistic flavour of subjunctive forms. The first example that I present in this section is from an editorial published in *The Scotsman* and titled 'Misguided response to eagle idea':

(8) THE Scotsman, in association with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, has submitted a petition to the Scottish Parliament **recommending** that the golden eagle <u>be named</u> Scotland's official national bird. The eagle was the first choice in a poll of Scotsman readers. Adopting a national bird, especially a rare species, is a costless way of reminding ourselves of the need to cherish the environment. But Patricia Ferguson, the tourism minister, has poured cold water on the idea. She claims that making the eagle Scotland's national bird would mislead tourists into thinking Holyrood was guaranteeing visitors a sight of the rare species. Are we to assume that if Ms Ferguson travels to New York for some late Christmas shopping, she will complain to President Bush that she did not see a bald eagle? And does Ms Ferguson believe that the Welsh Assembly should replace the dragon as the symbol of Wales, lest visitors complain they haven't seen one flying over Cardiff?

The author of the piece discusses a recent proposal, led by the newspaper, to have the golden eagle named Scotland's national bird and defends it against what they see as 'misguided' criticism. The mandative subjunctive appears in the first part of the extract and reflects its institutional tone, with the mention of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds as well as the Scottish Parliament, and the use of other legalistic expressions ('submitted a petition', 'official national bird'). The author is arguably trying to convince readers of the legitimacy of the proposal; in this context, the use of a mandative subjunctive helps highlight the rigour of the legal process initially followed. At the same time, it evokes a sense of moral responsibility which is soon reinforced by two central arguments: first, this proposal had been backed by readers (i.e., there was 'popular support' for it); second, it could have had a significant positive impact on the environment. In contrast, Ms Ferguson's qualms are presented as disappointing and largely incomprehensible; in this second part, the writing style changes, as the author shifts from the world of 'due process' and ethical choices to the tourism minister's unreasonable arguments. We notice, in particular, the language of subjectivity and potential error ('She claims'), which contrasts with the certainty and confidence expressed in the first part; furthermore, the author deploys sarcasm, using two rhetorical questions to mock Ms Ferguson's concerns.

Another interesting text whose primary goal is to persuade readers is the following e-newsletter, circulated by the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB). Similarly to the previous example, the author is responding to someone else's remarks, in this case in the form of a 'misleading report' published in the *Sunday Times*.

(9) In response to media queries about this year's Holocaust Memorial Day, the Muslim Council of Britain has made the following statement in order to correct any false impression that may have been created by a misleading report in the Sunday Times (23rd January 2005) entitled 'Muslims Boycott Holocaust Remembrance': 1. The Nazi Holocaust was a truly evil and abhorrent crime and we stand together with our fellow British Jews in their sense of pain and anguish. None of us must ever forget how the Holocaust began. We must remember it began with a hatred that dehumanised an entire people, that fostered state brutality, made second class citizens of honest, innocent people because of their religion and ethnic identity (…) 2. The MCB's principled position from the outset since 2001 - when the Holocaust Memorial Day was first commemorated - has been for the memorial day to be inclusive of the sufferings of all people and **urged** that it <u>be named</u> the 'Genocide Memorial Day'. The best living memorial for the victims of the Nazi Holocaust is trying to ensure that we make the cry 'Never Again' real for all people who suffer, everywhere.

Here, the use of the subjunctive is part of a more general attempt to rectify 'any false impression' generated by critics; the construction helps the author re-establish the Council's respectability and 'principled position' by indexing authority and legitimacy. Furthermore, the specific choice of trigger ('urged') foregrounds the sense of moral urgency behind the proposal for an inclusive 'Genocide Memorial Day', acting as further reminder of the MCB's core values.

On and off the record

The extracts presented in this section belong to the subcategory of the corpus labelled 'press reportage'. As I will show below, my analyses indicate the presence of two different styles of reporting, roughly mapping onto the broadsheet-tabloid divide. On the one hand, we find articles characterised by a generally neutral and matter-of-fact tone; in this case, mandative subjunctives are used to report someone else's speech in the form of official, 'on the record' statements. In other words, they help construct an institutional and quasi-legal tone, and especially when coupled with a strong trigger like *demand*, they highlight the authority of the person being quoted as well as the urgency of their statement. The following are three examples (out of five in total) showing these characteristics:

(10) Ferguson insisted the relationship between the clubs, which brought Nani and Ronaldo to Old Trafford, had always been transparent and **demanded** the allegation <u>be retracted</u> (The Independent).

(11) The Post Office triggered a rebellion among convenience store owners following the introduction of a new contract that forces those offering sub-post office services to switch from free cash machines to fee-paying alternatives. In many cases, the Post Office and its business partner, the cash machine operator Alliance & Leicester, **demanded** shops <u>charge</u> customers 1.50 a transaction (The Guardian).

(12) The UCU is holding a special conference next week to discuss the employers' **demand** that future national talks <u>be held</u> around a single negotiating table with non-academic unions and that a clear timetable <u>be set</u> for talks (The Times Higher Education Supplement).

In all three cases, the mandative subjunctive is used in reported speech and it always follows the name of the institution or organisation to which the statement is attributed

(e.g., the Post Office and its business partner Alliance & Leicester, or the UCU). Perhaps slightly different is the first example, where the speech is attributed to an individual (i.e., Ferguson), but even then, he is speaking on behalf of a bigger entity (i.e., Old Trafford). We also notice the formal style expected in news reporting, with some of the linguistic features discussed by Biber and Conrad (2001, p.191, cited in Cameron and Panovic, 2014, pp.24-26), namely relatively uncommon words and the prevalence of hypotactic constructions (as in extract 11, which features two mandative subjunctives).

The second style of reporting tends to be more sensationalistic and colourful; in this case, the writer seems to intervene in the narrative, in an attempt to 'guide' our interpretation of the events and elicit an emotive response. In this context, the mandative subjunctive helps the author signal 'scandal' while conveying a stance of indignation. Two examples were found with these characteristics; by way of illustration, below I present an excerpt from an article published in *News of the World* (emphasis in original):

(13) AFTER MUCCA'S TV MELTDOWN IN public rock legend Paul McCartney shrugs off this week's frenzy of abusive attacks by ranting estranged wife Heather Mills. But in private he is DISTRAUGHT and fears she will hound him to his GRAVE. After a tense face-to-face confrontation between the warring couple on Friday, angry Macca asked an aid: "Is Heather trying to kill me?" At the end of a week of bizarre twists in the tale we can reveal 65-year-old pop knight Sir Paul is: CONVINCED daughter Bea's mind is being poisoned against his family. STUNNED by a **demand** from Heather that he <u>hand over</u> his beloved 12million Peasmarsh estate home. ANGRY at her threats to "tell the world everything" because "I've got nothing to lose" (…) Strain Mucca's bizarre outbursts in meltdown interviews on GMTV, This Morning, Radio 5 Live and US TV show Extra have convinced Paul he must go for temporary full custody of four-year-old Beatrice while the divorce is finalised.

The topic, in this case, is the divorce between Paul McCartney and his then-wife, Heather Mills. The author sets out to address some recent criticism faced by McCartney ('a frenzy of abusive attacks') following a few media appearances in which his ex has shown signs of a 'meltdown', thus potentially casting a negative light on him. In this process, we are taken behind the scenes, as it were, where we discover the singer's innermost feelings. The transition from the world of on-the-record statements to the real, off-the-record struggles of this man occurs immediately, as the author contrasts McCartney's cavalier attitude 'in public' with the fact that 'in private he is DISTRAUGHT'.

After a brief summary of the latest developments, followed by a dramatic build-up ('At the end of a week of bizarre twists in the tale we can reveal…'), we notice a sequence of short and punchy sentences; each of them is introduced by an adjective in capital letters describing the singer's (troubled) emotional state. Here we find a mandative subjunctive, to describe a demand by which McCartney is said to be 'STUNNED'. The use of the subjunctive to report Mills's request conveys urgency and, in a way, authority, but preceded as it is by an emphatic description of the singer's psychological condition, it seems to suggest unfairness and, ultimately, indignation and outrage. Additionally, the punchiness of the subjunctive adds to the emotional climax that we perceive in this part of the article, and which culminates with the mention of Mills's 'bizarre outbursts'.

Considering all of the above, I would argue that a useful way to look at this extract is to analyse it as an instance of genre 'hybridity' (Biber and Conrad, 2009, pp.72-73; Lefstein and Snell, 2011, p.42): as I anticipated in Chapter 2, this was the only instance in which my discourse analysis led me to rethink the corpus's pre-existing classification. In particular, while the author is still presenting new information to the readers, reporting what has happened, what has been said, etc., there are arguably also elements typical of 'gossip talk'. First, we have what Franks and Attia (2011, p.171) call 'privacy of the topic': not only is the author addressing a 'celebrity divorce', with all the complex relational dynamics that come with it, but they also choose to focus on

McCartney's private feelings and struggles. It is also noteworthy that, at times, McCartney and Mills are referred to by nicknames ('Macca' and 'Mucca', respectively), which further signals a shift away from their official personas and turns them into characters of this tale 'of bizarre twists'. Another important element is the 'pejorative evaluation' (Franks and Attia, 2011, p.172) of a target, which in this case is identified in Heather Mills; as we have seen, the mandative subjunctive plays a crucial role in this process, helping the writer describe her 'shocking' request to be given McCartney's estate. Finally, the interspersion of words in capital letters helps generate momentum and drama and highlights the 'scandal' implicated in some of these events.

Dramatic build-up

In some of the extracts analysed so far, I have pointed out the contribution of mandative subjunctives to a 'dramatic' writing style, characterised by a build-up of tension. For example, in extract (7), I argued that the construction signalled a transition from the initial description of the setting to a narrative style characterised by momentum and assertiveness. Similarly, in extract (13), the *News of the World* article, we saw the mandative subjunctive being used within a sequence of short and punchy sentences that helped to build an emotional climax and conveyed the idea of 'scandal'. To conclude my analysis of written discourse, I focus on the use of the subjunctive in fantasy and crime fiction, where the ability to convey momentum and drama is key. I present, in particular, two extracts:

(14) Ken passed her the binoculars and she studied the street. She watched Kirkwood's customers coming and going and wondered what the hell they found to buy at this time of night. She tensed. Heads up. Is it Ryder? Ken said eagerly. She shook her head. It wasn't Ryder, but it was something. There were shadows running back and forth behind the windows of Kirkwood's shop. She was about to **suggest** they <u>take</u> a look, when someone staggered out the door and collapsed onto the sidewalk.

(15) He listened to the storm's anger as it threw itself upon the fragile shell of the foundry . The wind's sighs seemed to vibrate to the rhythm of the deep, smoky gasps of the hulking primitive furnace in front of him. Half loved, half hated, the leviathan stood at the heart of the solitary room, roaring as the wind's blasts fought their way down its crumbling brick chimney and raked their scorching breath across its embers. He didn't need to look at the temperature gauge to see the fire was too intense. The hemisphere of the interior was approaching a white, incandescent heat too painfully bright to look at (…) An hour before, nothing was out of the ordinary. Then, when he'd gone back to the empty office for a while, sunk a couple of glasses of grappa, trying to make the night go more quickly, Bella had called, **demanding** he <u>examine</u> the fiery beast before his time. She had given no reason, only vague forebodings.

As we can see, in both cases the mandative subjunctive is part of an intense and fast-paced narrative style, seemingly designed to create intrigue and draw readers' attention to the events unfolding. One possibility is that, in these contexts, writers can exploit the punchiness of the construction to add drama. Furthermore, if we consider the relatively low number of subjunctives within 'Adventure and Western', to which these extracts belong (i.e., 4 out of a total of 42, as shown in Tables 5.1 and 5.2), we could also argue that the construction is marked and, as such, helpful in creating a narrative climax. As discussed in Chapter 1, markedness can be defined as 'a variable's less frequent, natural, simple or predictable instantiations' (Beltrama and Staum Casasanto, 2021, p.84); when variants of this kind are chosen over less marked alternatives, their 'distinctiveness' (Irvine, 2001) becomes in itself an important semiotic resource. These characteristics may also combine with other, indexical properties of mandative subjunctives: in extract (15), for instance, the construction evokes a certain degree of authority and assertiveness, in which the use of a strong trigger like *demand* plays an important role.

5.2.3 Summary: the mandative subjunctive in writing

In this first part of the chapter, I have analysed the use of mandative subjunctives in written British English, focusing on extracts from the BE06. After presenting the

frequency of these forms across different mandative triggers and text categories, I proceeded to explore their social meanings and functions within specific genres. In particular, we saw how, starting from the 'canonical' use of the construction in official and institutional documents, the authority and 'gravitas' associated with it can then be exploited in different contexts, such as academic papers, advice-giving columns and even memoirs. We then observed the gradual colouring of mandative subjunctives with more specific connotations, depending on the genre in which they are used as well as other social and semiotic resources locally available. For example, they can help portray a confident female character, combining authority with sexual empowerment; they can be used in texts such as editorials to persuade readers, often adding an aura of legitimacy to the author's main argument, or they can be part of a more neutral style and help construct the official tone of 'on the record' statements. Finally, they can also be part of a more sensationalistic style of journalism, while their punchiness can be used in certain types of fiction to add drama and help create a build-up of tension. In other words, what I have presented so far is an exploration of different areas of the 'indexical field' (Eckert, 2008, p.454) of mandative subjunctives, a journey that will continue in the next section, as we turn to the meanings and functions of these forms in spoken exchanges. For now, an important point to take away with us is that, in each case, the mandative subjunctive is not the sole carrier of multiple social meanings; rather, its complex 'indexical potential', which results from its history and ideological background, is unlocked by the specific characteristics of the context (Ochs, 1996, p.418).

5.3 Mandative subjunctives in speech: the Spoken BNC2014

5.3.1 Frequencies and distribution

Table 5.4 shows raw and normalised frequencies per million words (pmw) of mandative subjunctives in the Spoken BNC2014 for each mandative trigger.

Table 5.4 Frequencies of mandative subjunctives for each mandative trigger.

Trigger	Raw frequencies	Normalised frequencies (pmw)
Ask + that	1	0.09
Advise		
Advice		
Anxious		
Beg		
Crucial		
Demand (V)	1	0.09
Demand (N)		
Desire (V)		
Desire (N)		
Desirable		
Essential		
Important + that		
Insist	2	0.18
Insistent		
Insistence		
Keen that		
Necessary		
Propose		
Proposition		
Recommend	2	0.18
Recommendation		
Request (V)		
Request (N)		
Require	2	0.18
Requirement		
Stipulate		

Stipulation		
Suggest	15	1.31
Suggestion		
Urge		
Total	**23**	**2.01**

As we can see, only 23 instances (2.01 pmw) of the mandative subjunctive were found across a corpus of nearly 11.5 million words (based on the chosen set of triggers). This finding is perhaps even starker when we compare it with the figures from the written corpus presented above (Table 5.1). In particular, after looking at the two normalised total figures (2.01 vs. 36.61), which account for the different sizes of the corpora, we can say that, with just over 1,100,000 tokens, the frequency of the construction in the BE06 is eighteen times higher than in the Spoken BNC2014, which is a much bigger corpus. This is consistent with several studies that have focused on the different usage of subjunctives in writing and speech (e.g., Hundt, 1998; Waller, 2005; Klein, 2009; Peters, 2009), highlighting their long-standing association with formal (written) registers. Arguably, the overall rare occurrence of mandative subjunctives in this spoken corpus makes an in-depth analysis of their uses even more interesting; this will be the aim of the next section. Another important point is the distribution across mandative triggers shown in Table 5.4. While, in the BE06, this tends to be scattered across a higher number of triggers, in the Spoken BNC2014 it appears to be concentrated around fewer items, from which *suggest* once again emerges as the most frequent trigger. Quite striking is also the frequency associated with *demand*, which was the second most frequent trigger in the written corpus; here, as we can see, there is only one instance. In the conclusion to this chapter, I will reflect on the role of mandative triggers across the two corpora and I will attempt to explain what lies behind these quantitative trends.

Similarly to my investigation of the BE06, I was also interested in discovering new triggers using a bottom-up approach. In this case, this type of query returned two additional examples of the target construction, which are shown below:

(16) It's not a **prerequisite** that it <u>be</u> in Solihull or Birmingham.

(17) Because I think one of the reasons that they had stopped using course books was that they are so dry and they are so boring (.) but I think it gives the kids also a focus (.) that they should be colourful that they should be somewhat you know well designed so that it attracts the eye (.) <u>that they be clear</u> (.) that they have you know the vocabulary written down.

In the first example, we have a nominal trigger (*prerequisite*) which had not been included in my list. Its role as subjunctive trigger can be explained in light of its meaning of 'something required or necessary', which is semantically close to other known mandative expressions. Much more interesting is the second example, which has already been discussed in Chapter 3 in light of its implications for my syntactic-semantic model. Here, there does not appear to be a clear trigger; the clause 'that they be clear' is simply conjoined to two preceding clauses containing the modal *should*, where the speaker lists a series of requirements that, in her opinion, textbooks should meet. In their analysis of Australian English, Vaughan and Mulder (2014, p.494) describe a similar example as a 'contextually governed' subjunctive, providing the following explanation:

The interaction of the context itself with the use of *be* allows the intended mandative meaning to be conveyed without requiring the explicit use of a mandative lexeme trigger (2014, p.494, italics in original).

The same line of reasoning could be applied to the above extract from the Spoken BNC2014; particularly, the deontic modality expressed by the two clauses containing

should seems to 'spill over' into the following clause, allowing us to interpret the bare *be* as conveying the same modality, even though the modal in this case is phonologically null.

As previously discussed, in addition to transcripts of recorded conversations, the Spoken BNC2014 provides several types of 'metadata' about both the recordings and the speakers. Overall, this information was very helpful for contextualising and interpreting the extracts and will therefore inform the qualitative analyses presented in the next section. The two tables below show the distribution of mandative subjunctives across two key categories of metadata, namely inter-speaker relationship and speakers' age range.

Table 5.5 Distribution of mandative subjunctives across different
types of inter-speaker relationship.

Inter-speaker relationship	Freq. mandative subjunctives
Acquaintances	2
Close family/partners/very close friends	17
Friends, wider family circle	5
Unanswered	1

Table 5.6 Distribution of mandative subjunctives across speakers' age range.

Age range	Freq. mandative subjunctives
19-29	9
30-39	4
40-49	4
50-59	3
60-69	2
70-79	2
80-89	1

Interestingly, Table 5.5 shows that the majority of exchanges featuring the mandative subjunctive occurs between speakers with close friendship or family ties[18]. This supports the general argument that, in spite of the low frequency of mandative subjunctives, it is important to look 'behind the numbers' (Vaughan and Mulder, 2014, p.503) and examine in detail the contribution of this construction to different situations. In particular, an indexicality-based approach can shed light on the process of ideological (re-)interpretation (Eckert, 2008, p.458) whereby a prestige and ceremonious form is exploited in informal contexts. With regard to Table 5.6, the concentration of mandative subjunctives among younger age groups raised some initial questions about the presence of language change in progress (Labov, 1963). To assess the suitability of the 'apparent time' construct, the corpus manual was consulted; this revealed that the overall size of each age group is, in fact, quite different and tends to decrease with age, as shown below in Table 5.7. After normalising the frequencies of mandative subjunctives in each group, the emerging pattern was clearly inconsistent and was not taken to indicate any generational change.

Table 5.7. Distribution of mandative subjunctives across speakers' age range, along with total number of speakers in each age group and normalised frequencies per a hundred speakers.

Age range	Freq. mandative subjunctives	N speakers in each group	Normalised frequencies (x 100)
19-29	9	250	3.6
30-39	4	89	4.5
40-49	4	76	5.3
50-59	3	77	3.9
60-69	2	65	3.1
70-79	2	33	6.1
80-89	1	19	5.3

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[18] Unlike other categories of metadata, the corpus manual does not contain any indications as to the overall frequency of different types of inter-speaker relationship within the corpus; therefore, it is not possible to normalise the frequencies shown in Table 5.4.

5.3.2 Discourse analysis

In what follows, I present my discourse analysis of extracts from the Spoken BNC2014. As I highlighted in Chapter 2, in this case three categories emerged, based on the socio-pragmatic functions of mandative subjunctives; they are shown in Table 5.8, along with the frequency of subjunctives for each of them.

Table 5.8. Distribution of mandative subjunctives across three socio-pragmatic categories (shown in the same order as my discourse analysis below).

Category	Freq. mandative subjunctives
Mixing genres	10
Divergent stances	11
Polite requests	4

These three categories will be presented below using their most significant examples. Similarly to my analysis of the BE06, the amount of context included will vary on a case-by-case basis; the general principle, in this case, is to respect the natural boundaries of the exchange, identifying transitions that '[reflect] the way [participants] are making sense of the activity' (Snell and Lefstein, 2015, p.489). Furthermore, the excerpts below are presented with the same transcription conventions found in the corpus, i.e.: '(.)' for short pauses between one and five seconds; '(…)' for longer pauses over five seconds; '>>' for speech overlap (Love et al., 2017, pp.37-39). Once again, to help the reader identify the mandative subjunctive construction, the trigger is shown in **bold**, while the subjunctive form itself is <u>underlined</u>.

Mixing genres

To start my analysis of spoken discourse, I will focus on a group of examples where the mandative subjunctive is associated with the temporary embedding of a written genre. This 'genre mixing' (e.g., Biber and Conrad, 2009, pp.72-73; Lefstein and Snell, 2011, p.42) happens, for example, when one of the speakers references a book

or article they have previously read. While this process can be more or less explicit, what is common to all these extracts is the fact that the mandative subjunctive brings to life 'a particular situational context other than the actual context of the interaction' (Biber and Conrad, 2009, p.73). In other words, by using the subjunctive, speakers evoke genres such as 'legal documents' or 'academic writing', which, as we know, have been traditionally associated with the construction.

In the first two extracts presented in this section, the embedding of a new genre is overtly signalled by the speakers. In particular, in the example below, after discussing ELT (English language teaching) methodology, two close friends start planning a workshop and exchange ideas on how it should be run.

(18)   Friend 1: it's all really active and task-based but completely down to their own learning and what they wanna do

Friend 2: mm making your own decisions

Friend 1: and we have different four different things running at the same time always

Friend 2: yeah

Friend 1: and you could have it in like two-hour slots so you change so effectively everyone runs the same things that day but you er you just change the rooms or you have more things going on you 'd need a variety of resources to

Friend 2: yeah you 'd need a good amount of resources

Friend 1: but erm it could work I think

Friend 2: >>that 's why I feel like the resources and the material that you would need to make it good would be well could be what costs quite a bit initially

Friend 1: mm yeah and especially if if they get ruined

Friend 2: >>if you need to how long would the that it would run how long would a --UNCLEARWORD semester ?

Friend 1: yeah I do n't know

Friend 2: run for a semester twelve weeks

Friend 1: >>yeah I guess so (.) you could even get like them to sign something for upkeep of the materials er do you know what I mean ?

Friend 2: yeah like take good care of them

Friend 1: >>just like if you damage yeah just ask them to do it but like if you damage any of the materials we **ask** that you <u>be</u> honest and come up and here 's the exact price list of what they are and have it very reasonably priced

Friend 2: yeah

Friend 1: if you break a little token on a board game it's ten pence or something do you know what I mean ?

In this case, the subjunctive plays a central role in the embedding of another genre, which we could describe as 'contracts/official documents'; more specifically, the two speakers are brainstorming a potential form that participants would have to sign before the event. The use of a mandative subjunctive construction reflects the legal language typically found in official documents and, as such, stands out from the overall informal tone of the conversation. This language shift is also accompanied by a change in participant structure and communicative purpose, which is reminiscent of the 'metaphorical code-switching' discussed by Blom and Gumperz (1972, pp.407-434): in other words, the switch to a different style or register brings about a shift in the situation. With regard to participant structure, there is a shift from a one-to-one interaction to a different type of communication, where the two speakers become co-authors and together address an unspecified number of (imaginary) readers. The purpose of this is to set some basic rules around the use of the workshop materials, informing participants of the consequences they might face should such materials be damaged. The indexicality of the subjunctive is thus exploited to invoke a sense of legal and moral responsibility, similarly to what have been described above as the 'canonical' uses of the construction in documents and governmental reports.

With regard to the next extract, the metadata available in the Spoken BNC2014 informs us that the conversation involves a 'corpus administrator', namely someone who was directly involved in compiling the SpokenBNC2014; in particular, she is in a car with two friends. Up to this point, the three interlocutors have been talking about the general corpus collection methodology, including, for instance, the use of Dictaphones and other recording devices. In this specific exchange, they turn to

'recruitment' strategies and, in particular, how to convince people to record their conversations.

(19) Friend 1: I should think --UNCLEARWORD go into a pub like okay I 'll buy you a drink if you 'll talk to me for an hour

Corpus admin: yeah (.) yeah you can do that

Friend 2: well I 'm sure the barman 's always willing to do that

Corpus admin: yeah that's true actually (.) probably

Friend 1: or barmaid even better

Corpus admin: --UNCLEARWORD I think so (.) bar staff are actually bar staff and there would never be an advert for a barmaid and it would n't be y- your job title

Friend 1: I 'm sure that must have existed at some point

Corpus admin: yeah (.) the seventies probably

Friend 1: --UNCLEARWORD topless waitresses (.) although so so it 's er a book of old laws I 've got and it 's just

Friend 2: yeah best one off to the pub

Friend 1: yeah (.) erm (.) a bit of creative steering (.) different then (.) erm --UNCLEARWORD Erm so erm a book of erm old er English laws and one of them was that the seventies erm a bylaw passed in Birmingham that erm in an effort to er combat the immoral indecencies of erm topless er dancers and waitresses it is er it was required that erm slick (.) it **was required** that all erm all all er go-go dancers <u>wear</u> er brassieres

Friend 2: right

Friend 1: the law was later amended erm to reflect that it was possibly unnecessary for male go-go dancers to --UNCLEARWORD

Corpus admin: excellent

Friend 2: I liked that (.) --UNCLEARWORD

Corpus admin: shit

Friend 2: right

Friend 1: UNCLEARWORD not only which but they 're also responsible for the of parking signs --UNCLEARWORD city

Corpus admin: yeah

Friend 2: thanks very much --UNCLEARWORD I may or may not know

Friend 1: have as much fun as possible

As we can see, there are quick jumps from one topic to the next: the suggestion to go to a bar to record strangers for money is followed by a short debate over gender-based job titles (i.e., 'barman' and 'barmaid'), which then reminds one of the speakers of a book of English laws they have been reading. Citing one of these laws - regarding, in particular, the attire of go-go dancers in the '70s - a mandative subjunctive is used ('it was required that go-go dancers <u>wear</u> brassieres'). This construction is therefore instrumental to the insertion of another genre into the conversation; similarly to the previous example, its legalistic flavour, enhanced in this case by the use of *require* as trigger, enables the speaker to recreate the style and jargon we could expect in a legal text. Furthermore, the fact that it is embedded within a passive structure ('it was required') contributes to an overall formal tone. Alongside this linguistic shift, the social roles of the interlocutors also seem to change, thanks to a stance of epistemic authority with which the speaker positions himself as someone with more knowledge than the others. As the rest of the excerpt shows, it is, overall, a brief shift; although some 'echoes' of formality are still visible in the word choice and structure of the next sentence ('the law was later amended to reflect that it was possibly unnecessary…'), the tone and topic of the conversation quickly change again, as the participants turn to their surroundings and to the challenges of driving and parking in an urban area.

In the following two extracts the process of genre mixing appears to be more subtle; whereas in the above examples speakers used key words to signal the transition (such as the verb 'sign' in (18), or the explicit mention of a 'book of old English laws' in (19)), in what follows the subjunctives simply gives us, to paraphrase Bakhtin (1981, pp.288-289), a 'flavour' of a different genre. First, we have a conversation about art therapy. In this case, the speakers are a 76-year-old woman (identified below as 'grandmother'), her daughter and her grandson.

(20) Grandmother: well it was art therapy and I thought it w- cos honest I've got no talent you know I just know I haven't

Daughter: you don't you don't need to be an artist for art therapy

Grandmother: no course you don't er er apparently it's very de-stressing

Daughter: it is if you if you get in touch with your inner child you use your non-dominant hand and do do stuff w-

Grandmother: >>ah I 've been reading about that

Daughter: do stuff with that

Grandmother: did you know if you want to write something really meaningful it **was suggested** that you <u>use</u> your non-dominant hand?

Grandson: >>oh well in badminton on Thursday there's two of us that take it seriously and there was a doubles tournament so what we did we played left-handed we still beat everyone seven nil

Grandson: but we played with our left hand instead so er that helped us be -- UNCLEARWORD inner children

The excerpt starts with an exchange between mother and daughter, in which the latter displays her knowledge on the topic of conversation: she clarifies that no artistic skills are required to do art therapy and she highlights the benefits of using one's non-dominant hand to 'get in touch with your inner child'. At this point, she is interrupted

by her mother (as indicated by the '>>' symbol in the transcript) who has also 'been reading about that' - and intends to prove it. Her following utterance, which contains a mandative subjunctive (it was suggested that you <u>use</u> your non-dominant hand), is interesting on many levels. First, although it appears in an interrogative structure, the illocutionary force of this sentence is arguably declarative and corresponds to an indirect show of knowledge (i.e., 'did you know that…' really means 'here's what I know'); second, by posing it as a question of the 'did you know' kind, the speaker seems to present it as a new piece of information, when in fact a very similar statement has just been made by her daughter; finally, the particular combination of a passive structure ('it was suggested that'), an impersonal subject ('it') and a mandative subjunctive helps evoke formal written genres, such as 'the academic paper', or, even more specifically, the 'research findings' section of a paper. Therefore, with this utterance, the speaker (re)claims her status as the 'expert' in this conversation and does so by merely rephrasing what was already the topic under discussion. In this process, the subjunctive construction helps mimic the language of scientific discourse, indexing the authority and wisdom of the academic community[19]. As in the previous example, the allusion to a more formal genre fades quickly and is replaced by the informal tone typical of face-to-face interactions. In this case, the speaker's grandson jokingly applies the new insights on the use of one's non-dominant hand to a Badminton match played the day before.

Finally, another formal genre evoked in interaction is the 'medical consultation'. There are a few extracts in the corpus where this is the case; the embedding of this genre is usually achieved via the use of a mandative subjunctive preceded by triggers such as *recommend* and *suggest*, as in the excerpt below. Here, a couple are discussing their plans for the following day, but one of them is injured and is therefore advised by the other to be careful.

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[19] We could argue that the speaker's motivation for positioning herself as the 'wise one' is that it matches her role of mother and grandmother in the family dynamics.

(21) Partner 1: >>no definitely I wa- (.) I was going to **suggest** that you completely
<u>sit down</u> with some ice (.) get it up resting (.) I 'll

Partner 2: no I don't think --UNCLEARWORD It's been good to come out for a
little bit but I think that I need to sort of

Partner 1: >>but yeah (.) tomorrow will include less walking

Partner 2: well it was more sort of a wandering around the shops it wasn't hugely
healthy

Partner 1: >>yeah (.) no tomorrow we 'll think of something to do which doesn't
involve that

Partner 2: --UNCLEARWORD So going round will probably be a mistake

Partner 1: hmm (.) we can get you a like a little er segway to go round on (.) that
would be cool

Partner 2: erm we could hit the gym and do some weights

Partner 1: tonight ?

Partner 2: I 'm tempted to leave that for tonight cos it is still sort of active and
walking round

Partner 1: erm yeah (.) yes (.) I was going to say I mean (.) I think if it's a bit
sore now maybe the best thing is just to completely rest it for tonight and then
tomorrow yeah maybe do some weights which would involve a bit of walking
but not

Partner 2: not too much yeah

Partner 1: not too much (.) nothing that should be a problem erm but doing it
tonight might just be a bit too much (.) do you think?

The use of the mandative subjunctive in official medical settings has already been
attested in Australian English (e.g., Vaughan and Mulder, 2014, p.503); in particular,
according to Vaughan and Mulder (2014, p.503), the construction allows the speaker

to position themselves as an authoritative source within an asymmetrical doctor-patient dyad. In the above example, the subjunctive helps recreate a similar dynamic in response to a health issue. Although the relationship is not asymmetrical per se (nor do we have an actual doctor), the use of this construction facilitates the assumption of new roles, namely the 'carer' and the 'cared for', and adds a certain degree of authority to the speaker's suggestion, making it sound more compelling. Interestingly, the same recommendation is repeated a few lines later, when it is embedded in a more complex 'medical statement', composed of a diagnosis ('I think it's a bit sore now'), a short-term intervention ('completely rest it for tonight') and a potential treatment for the following day ('then tomorrow maybe do some weights which would involve a bit of walking but not [too much]').

In summary, the extracts presented in this section show the ability of mandative subjunctives to index written genres of which they are considered a marker. It is an example of that 'process of bricolage' (Hebdige, 1984, cited in Eckert, 2008, p.456) that was discussed in Chapter 1, whereby a linguistic form commonly found in formal writing can make its way into speech. In the following examples, we will see how this process of 'segmentation and (re)interpretation' (Eckert, 2008, p.458) can lead to increasingly creative outcomes.

Divergent stance triangles

While in the above extracts the mandative subjunctive was an important component in speakers' stance-taking processes, in the following group of examples the subjunctive's ability to convey specific stances becomes particularly visible. In particular, the evocativeness of this construction, stemming from its legalistic, authoritative tone, is used for dramatic purposes and to signal criticism and/or indignation.

In the following example, three friends discuss their plans for a social gathering and their efforts to keep costs down to no avail.

(22) Friend 1: >>it's a bit annoying as well because we had obviously suggested doing an afternoon tea at the house just to

Friend 2: >>yeah

Friend 1: >>just to keep costs down cos I mean we can do that on I du n no

Friend 2: yeah

Friend 1: >>like a big scale like for cheaper but then obviously --ANONnameF 's mum **suggested** that we <u>go</u> to a to a tearoom or something

Friend 3: >>on the way home

Friend 2: yeah

Friend 1: but like I 'm just trying to keep costs down and stuff and like obviously we 've already mentioned the afternoon tea thing and like

Friend 2: >>yeah

Friend 1: it was kind of like cos I wan na take people like ideas into consideration but we have thought about a lot of it already

Friend 2: yeah

Friend 1: >>kind of thing

The subjunctive here seems to convey annoyance at the suggestion 'to go to a tearoom', especially when the speaker was clearly 'trying to keep costs down'. There is also an element of sarcasm, signalled by that 'obviously' which precedes the mandative construction. If we refer back to the notion of 'stance triangle' (Du Bois, 2007, pp.162-169), here the speaker (i.e., the 'first subject', in Du Bois's conceptualisation) is expressing her divergence, or, in other words, her disagreement

with the 'second subject' (identified as somebody's mother), while simultaneously producing a negative evaluation of their suggestion (i.e., the 'object'). In this case, the subjunctive's ability to index power and authority is exploited to add a dramatic effect and to highlight the 'stuffiness' of said suggestion. We may notice the contrast with the speaker's initial intention to simply have 'an afternoon tea at the house', which is presented through a more common and arguably less emphatic construction, namely a gerund ('we had obviously suggested <u>doing</u> an afternoon tea at the house').

The following is a casual conversation between friends, who talk about music and old acquaintances.

(23) Friend 1: really amazing white rapper he's really good I really like him he's really chilled and like (.) I really like him but nobody seems to know him

Friend 2: no I don't know

Friend 3: >> he's not that chilled

Friend 1: he's pretty chilled as w- as a hip hop rap goes

Friend 2: I still have memories of --ANONnameF coming to the house in --ANONplace and her boyfriend's into like rap isn't he? and like **insisting** that she <u>play</u>

Friend 3: >> oh yeah?

Friend 2: like (.) just the most abysmal kind of new era rap

The criticism that arises from the use of the subjunctive is also visible here, with Friend 2 using a mandative construction to 'frown' upon the insisting boyfriend, as it were. This subtle criticism is soon followed by a much more open attack to his music ('the most abysmal kind of new era rap'), which differs from the previous part of the conversation where another rapper was being praised ('really amazing', 'he's really good', 'I really like him'). In this case, then, the subjunctive is used to portray an

inappropriate, almost oppressive exercise of power, made even more dramatic here by the presence of a strong mandative trigger ('insisting'). Similarly to the previous example, we can observe a stance triangle (composed of the speaker, the boyfriend under consideration and the latter's behaviour), in which the subjunctive helps the first subject produce a negative evaluation of the object and at the same time express disalignment with the second subject.

The next extract is part of a longer conversation occurring during a family meal and involving an old couple, their son and the son's partner; however, only three of them (namely mother, father and son) feature in the selected excerpt. The mandative subjunctive is used within an exchange between the old couple and contributes to an overall ironic and 'mocking' tone.

(24) Father: ah (.) that was nice wasn't it ?

Mother: that was lovely

Father: not enough I told you it wouldn't be darling

Mother: don't you dare say that to me

Father: why not ?

Son: what ? your stove ?

Mother: that no the the erm darling how

Son: >>what are you talking about

Father: the casserole

Mother: >>I said to him at the beginning that that wasn't a big enough casserole for four

Son: well dad dad historically never makes them

Mother: >>no exactly

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Son: always leave them wanting that little bit more --ANONnameM

Father: well that's true

Son: I mean it's just as well I I added quite a bit more gravy to it

Mother: yeah

Father: the only gravy it it had was a wee bit of red wine actually

Son: there was tomato in it

Father: yes because previously mum **had insisted** I <u>make</u> a curry

Son: really ?

Father: yeah she she just goes on about --UNCLEARWORD and actually it turned out very nice didn't it darling ?

Mother: yes yeah the curry did yeah

The exchange starts at the end of the meal and is essentially a commentary on the food just consumed, as well as culinary skills, more broadly. To understand the function of the subjunctive used by the father, it is useful to go back to the initial remark he makes about the quantity of the casserole ('not enough I told you it wouldn't be darling'), which hints at a previous conversation between him and his wife in the privacy of their home. This comment effectively sets off a back-and-forth between the old couple, characterised by irony and a certain dose of 'attitude'; we can see it in the wife's response, with the use of the verb 'dare' in what seems to be a parody of someone arguing ('don't you dare say that to me'), followed by an explanation to the rest of the group of what had actually happened ('I said to him at the beginning that that wasn't a big enough casserole for four'). At times, their son intervenes in this exchange, for example jokingly rebuking his father ('dad historically never makes them (…) always leave them wanting that little bit more') and shifting the 'blame game' back to him.

It is in this context that the father refers once again to a previous conversation with his wife, using a mandative subjunctive ('mum had insisted I <u>make</u> a curry'). The evocativeness of this construction implicitly reminds us of hierarchies and power imbalances and, especially when coupled with a strong trigger like *insist*, it seems to suggest resentment and a certain degree of 'unfairness'. The stance that the subjunctive contributes to is therefore, once again, one of divergent alignment between the two subjects. In this context, however, it takes on a slightly ironic/caricatural tone; in fact, I would argue that this is a good example of a 'caricaturised re-enactment' (Goffman, 1981, p.2), in other words, the 'retelling' of a previous conversation. Goffman explains that when we re-enact a past interaction in front of an audience, we need to portray a wide range of gestural resources from the original exchange, such as body language, tones and glances. In order to capture some of those paralinguistic and prosodic features, we may use linguistic resources, such as word choice or sentence structure. As Goffman puts it: 'in retelling events (…) we are forced to sketch in these shadings a little, rendering a few movements and tones into words' (1981, p.2). In this case, we can almost imagine this couple bickering at home and, thanks in part to the subjunctive, the echoes of that conversation are brought into the current exchange. Similar 'intertextual' references are arguably present throughout the excerpt, starting from the initial discussion about the quantity of the casserole and ending with the wife's final comment ('yeah the curry did [turn out nice] yeah'), which seems to allude to yet another episode (or episodes) where her husband's cooking did not actually satisfy expectations.

To conclude this section, I present an extract in which the stance-taking process appears to be more complex, resulting from a combination of convergent and divergent alignments. The interlocutors are two siblings and a close friend of theirs, while the conversation revolves around parent-child relationships and manners.

(25) Sibling 1: okay well we're here the whole --UNCLEARWORD the whole weekend next weekend cos erm my brother's birthday's on the Friday so mum's being kicked out so she's here on Friday night

Sibling 2: oh yeah this is hilarious

Friend: >>--UNCLEARWORD bless her

Sibling 1: and she's helping us wallpaper on Saturday and --ANONnameM's car's in for service Saturday as well

Sibling 2: so we were sat round having a meal after --ANONnameF's graduation and --ANONnameM mentioned that it was his birthday for on that weekend and we all thought that he was maybe **suggesting** that we <u>go out</u> for a meal and he was like so yeah mum er can can I have the house to myself ? And we were like really ? -- UNCLEARWORD

Friend: I would never be like that to my parents my parents would be like oh

Sibling 2: yeah

As we can see, the two siblings are discussing the behaviour of another sibling who is not present. From the first few lines, we sense a disapproving tone ('mum's being kicked out'), while the sarcastic comment from the second sibling prepares us for more criticism to come ('oh yeah this is hilarious'). We soon learn about a family meal during which their brother brought up the subject of his approaching birthday; there was a general expectation that he would want to spend this special day with the family, perhaps eating out ('he was maybe suggesting that we go out for a meal'), but, to everyone's shock, his plans were quite different ('he was like so yeah mum…can I have the house to myself ?'). As we can see, the surprise and disappointment are immediately echoed by their friend ('I would never be like that to my parents'). What is crucial here is the complex stance-taking process that the subjunctive is part of. Unlike all previous examples, the mandative form is used to express a 'general consensus' among the family, or in other words, a shared expectation dictated by 'propriety' and common sense. The type of alignment between the speaker and other family members is, therefore, convergent ('<u>we all</u> thought he was maybe suggesting that we go out for a meal') and is based on the subjunctive acting in this case as an index of 'politeness' (Auer, 2009, p.58), 'agreeableness' (Klein, 2002, p.874) and implicit rules of etiquette. On the other hand, the unexpected request is quoted as direct

speech ('so yeah mum er…can I have the house to myself?'), creating a sharp contrast with the elegance of the previous construction. The difference in syntactic structure embodies the opposition between what is seen as the behavioural 'canon' and the impudence of this demand. As a result, the overall stance emerging from the exchange is one of divergent alignment between the entire family and the brazen brother, but as we have seen, this is achieved in a stepwise fashion: there is an initial convergence around the family's shared values, which then allows to single out the inappropriate behaviour.

To summarise, in the examples analysed in this section, the mandative subjunctive helps the speaker take a stance, conveying criticism and annoyance. Crucial to this is the fact, in all the extracts considered here, the construction is used in indirect speech; in other words, by using a mandative subjunctive, the speaker is able to report and at the same time distance themselves from what somebody else has said, expressing disapproval. This was particularly evident in extract (24), where I argued that the back-and-forth between husband and wife amounted to a 'caricaturised re-enactment' (Goffman, 1981, p.2), namely the 'retelling' of a previous conversation. Interestingly, in the final example, while the overall tone was still one of disapproval, the subjunctive itself was used as an index of 'propriety' and good manners, in contrast with a request unanimously perceived as rude.

Polite requests

One way of interpreting the next and final group of examples is that they illustrate the type of 'polite request' which the family members in extract (25) were hoping for. While in that case the speakers were discussing their unfulfilled expectations as part of a complex stance-taking process, in the following examples we can see actual requests that meet the criteria of politeness and agreeableness. In particular, three extracts show this type of usage and will be presented below. I include more context for the first one, which is part of a broader conversation occurring during a family meal; as the situational characteristics tend to be quite similar across the other extracts, I will then simply present the sentence containing the target construction.

(26)   Son: it's very good isn't it ?

              Mother: yeah it's lovely

              Father: yeah

              Son: you can give me more of that --ANONnameM

              Mother: apparently he has one bottle left he thinks

              Son: I was gonna **suggest** you <u>pick me up</u> from --ANONplace so I can pop into Lidl so I can buy a crate of you know their little French beers

(27)   I nearly **suggested** that we <u>bring up</u> the pork casserole too.

(28)   Yes I'll **suggest** uncle ANONnameM <u>take</u> us out shall I?

As we can see in these examples, while the mandative subjunctive occurs within informal conversations, it is used to express a 'delicate' request which shows a certain level of politeness. As we saw in Chapter 4, the association between the subjunctive mood and the language of 'the politest speakers' (White, 1761, cited in Auer, 2009, p.56) was particularly strong in 18th-century England; at its core, politeness was understood as 'consciousness of form' and in particular a careful 'management of words and actions' (Klein, 2002, p.874), both of which were exemplified by the 'gentleman'. The type of usage observed here could therefore reflect the long-standing association between subjunctive forms and the language of elegance and refinement. From a pragmatic point of view, it is important to note that in all three cases the construction is introduced by the trigger *suggest*, which is one of the 'weaker' verbs in terms of deontic force, as opposed to other triggers like *insist* or *demand* (e.g., Greenbaum, 1977; Quirk, 1995). We could argue that, in this case, the particular combination of *suggest* + mandative subjunctive helps the speaker convey a request in a 'toned-down' manner and thus avoid potential 'face-threatening acts' (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.191) such as direct imperatives. Furthermore, in all three extracts we can see other 'softening mechanisms' (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.70) that act

as 'hedges on the illocutionary force of the act' (p.70): in (26) the mandative subjunctive is included within a periphrasis with *be + going + to*; a similar effect is then achieved in (27) with the insertion of the adverb 'nearly', and in (28) with the use of a tag question ('shall I?').

5.3.3 Summary: the mandative subjunctive in speech

Similarly to my analysis of the BE06, in this second part of the chapter I initially focused on the frequency and distribution of mandative subjunctives across the Spoken BNC2014. After comparing the normalised frequencies of the construction in both corpora, I highlighted their relatively rare occurrence in speech, likely due to their traditional association with formal (written) registers. Nevertheless, I argued for an in-depth analysis that looks 'behind the numbers' (Vaughan and Mulder, 2014, p.503) and explores the creative uses of this construction across a range of speaking situations. Specifically, we saw how the traditional association with formal genres allows the mandative subjunctive to make its way into speech, helping speakers reference legal texts or academic articles, or even imitate the style of medical consultations. At the same time, the ability to index moral authority and power can be reinterpreted and used in situations where speakers complain about a perceived imbalance or express frustration at overly formal, unfair or inappropriate requests; in this case, mandative subjunctives tend to occur in reported speech and are part of a stance-taking process which signals 'divergence' between subjects (Du Bois, 2007, pp.162-169). Finally, I highlighted a number of extracts in which the construction injects 'politeness' into a potentially face-threatening request, which is revealing of the continuing link with the 'language of gentlemen' (Auer, 2009, p.56) discussed in Chapter 4. Interestingly, this started to emerge in extract (25) but was still part of an overall critical stance conveyed by the speaker; conversely, in examples (26), (27) and (28) we saw this 'softening' quality of the subjunctive in action.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented my corpus-based analysis of mandative subjunctives in written and spoken British English. In keeping with previous studies (e.g., Hundt, 1998; Waller, 2005; Klein, 2009; Peters, 2009), my frequency analysis showed that this construction is more common in writing than it is in speech. However, consistently with my indexicality-based approach, my goal was to go beyond quantitative trends and investigate the functions of mandative subjunctives across texts and spoken exchanges.

In this exploration of the 'indexical field' (Eckert, 2008, p.454) of the mandative subjunctive, we saw its ability to adapt to different contexts and communicative needs, as a result of the interaction with social and semiotic resources locally available. This concept has been articulated by Ochs in terms of a distinction between the 'indexical potential' of a linguistic feature and the social meanings '*actually* [indexed] in a particular instance of use' (1996, p.418). In other words, the indexical potential of mandative subjunctives, which results from their history and ideological background, is unlocked by specific characteristics of the context. At its core, the mandative subjunctive evokes a sense of authority and gravitas, owing to its legal (and religious) past but also its association with the prestige sociolect of the 'gentlemen' (Auer, 2009, p.56). It is also a 'marked' variant (Beltrama and Staum Casasanto, 2021, p.84), due to its generally low frequency; while, as already mentioned, there is a difference between writing and speech, it is undeniable that the frequency counts shown above paint the picture of an overall rare construction. As Beltrama and Staum Casasanto point out, when linguistic variants are marked, they also become 'especially suitable carriers of social meanings' (2021, p.88). All these characteristics can be exploited in creative ways through constant 'segmentation and (re)interpretation' (Eckert, 2008, p.458), based on writers' and speakers' communicative purposes.

A good example of this is the use of mandative subjunctives in informal contexts, which is a significant development for a form that has often been considered obsolete or even archaic (Fowler, 1926, p.574, cited in Waller, 2017, p.64). In particular, the

traditional association with propriety and moral authority can be exploited, as discussed above, to convey a sense of indignation. In speech, we saw this as part of 'stance triangles' (Du Bois, 2007, pp.162-169) where speakers try to signal disapproval and resentment; within the written corpus, a similar usage was found in the *News of the World* article, which arguably exemplifies the sensationalistic style of tabloid journalism. In the latter case, in particular, the moralistic flavour of the subjunctive helped convey the idea of 'scandal' and therefore fit within a style reminiscent of 'gossip talk' (Franks and Attia, 2011, pp.169-186).

Finally, it is also important to note the semantic-pragmatic contribution of specific mandative triggers, and specifically the difference between stronger triggers such as *demand* and *insist* and a weaker verb like *suggest*. While each of them can be used in unique and creative ways depending on the context, we can also see a general tendency emerging from the extracts above. Specifically, *demand* and *insist* add deontic force to the whole construction and are therefore used to emphasise assertiveness (extract 7), authority and urgency (extracts 10, 11, 12), as well as exaggeration and unfairness (extracts 13, 23, 24). Conversely, *suggest* tends to have a 'softening' quality; this is visible in extract (25), where the verb is used for rhetorical purposes to contrast agreeableness with insolence, and it is even more evident in extracts (26), (27) and (28), where the use of *suggest* is central to what I described as 'polite requests'. These different properties might help explain some of the quantitative trends discussed above. Specifically, the softening properties of *suggest*, and in particular its ability to counterbalance the deontic force of the subjunctive, might explain why this trigger is most commonly found to precede the construction. On the other hand, the low frequency of *demand* in the spoken corpus compared to the BE06 may be due to its face-threatening potential in situations of higher vulnerability (i.e., face-to-face conversations; see also Goffman, 1964, p.135; 1983, p.4).

In the next chapter, my study of the indexical field of mandative subjunctives will continue by focusing on the language-expert discourse of practitioners and style guides. This way, the social meanings and pragmatic functions emerging from the

'situated use' (Eckert, 2008, p.454) of the construction will be compared with metalinguistic comments about it.

Chapter 6

Interviews and style guides: the metalinguistic discourse around the subjunctive

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to the language-expert discourse around mandative subjunctives and, to some extent, the subjunctive mood as a whole. It presents a content analysis of 15 interviews with language practitioners and three style guides, namely *New Hart's Rules: The Oxford style guide* (Oxford University Press, 2014), *The Economist style guide* (The Economist Newspaper Ltd, 2015) and *The Guardian and Observer style guide* (Guardian News & Media Ltd, 2020). My analytical framework is based on Gillham's (2000, pp.59-72) approach to content analysis. This is, as mentioned earlier, a stepwise, inductive method whereby 'substantive statements' are first coded and then used to identify meaningful categories.

Whereas in the previous chapter I explored the social meanings indexed in written texts and spoken interactions, the main focus here is on the metalinguistic commentary around subjunctives and the indexical properties it can shed light on. Any new insights will therefore be considered alongside the meanings and pragmatic functions identified in Chapter 5 and contextualised within the historical analysis presented in Chapter 4. Furthermore, as I mentioned when discussing my methodology, although my investigation revolves around mandative constructions, exploring a specific subtype also requires analysing the 'subjunctive mood' as a whole, and the ways in which this grammatical category is constructed in the discourse of language practitioners.

6.2 Content analysis and emerging themes

As I discussed in Chapter 2, all my interviews started with the presentation of three sets of sentences, each containing respectively a subjunctive, an indicative and an

option with the modal *should*; this was aimed at eliciting comments on the mandative subjunctive by looking at a few examples of the construction along with its main alternatives in British English. The examples shown, the specific questions that were asked and the rest of my interview schedule can all be found in Appendix B.

In what follows, I present the results of my analysis of both interviews and style guides, and in particular the four themes emerging from it: (1) *Contexts, registers and genres*, (2) *Profile of the subjunctive user*, (3) *The meaning(s) of the mandative subjunctive: semantics and pragmatics* and, finally, (4) *Teaching grammar and the subjunctive.* These will be described below and accompanied by illustrative quotations.

Contexts, registers and genres

The first theme emerged from comments regarding both the general linguistic setting where subjunctives are expected to be found and more specific (written) genres. Overall, subjunctive constructions were overwhelmingly described as 'formal'; some of my interviewees referred to them as 'highbrow', while for others they were the perfect example of 'Standard English', or even 'the Queen's English'.

They were also perceived to be more common in writing rather than speech, often as a result of an association with archaic and formulaic language. Interestingly, the suitability of mandative subjunctives for the written language tended to be emphasised by describing the 'oddness' of the construction in speech; for example, the following are the comments made by a writer in response to the subjunctive clause in Set 2 (i.e., 'The school rules demand that pupils <u>not enter</u> the gym at lunchtime'):

> I wouldn't say that naturally at all. I think the missing auxiliary 'do' makes that sound very odd to my ears; but then I would expect to see it written down and not think it was particularly odd in that context.

Other interviewees also made a similar point:

> It's more formal and it just doesn't sound natural, usually (Year 6 teacher).

> Very formal way of writing, not naturalistic (Writer).

> I don't think I would use them in my natur..., you know, in my personal life (Writer).

As we can see here, the subjunctive tends to be excluded from the language of ordinary conversation and from one's 'personal life'; not only is it more suitable for a 'very formal way of writing', but its use in speech is seen as 'odd' or simply does not 'sound natural'. The mention of 'natural' usage, which the formality of the subjunctive seems to deny, is somewhat reminiscent of the commentary by 20th-century British language authorities and reveals, perhaps, a continuing thread. As we saw in Chapter 4, central to that discourse was the opposition between 'artificial' language (Fowler, 1926, p.574, cited in Waller, 2017, p.64), of which the subjunctive was considered an expression, and the 'instinct' of speakers (Fowler, 1906, pp.157-158, cited in Waller, 2017, p.64). I also suggested that that commentary might have been influenced by a 'leave your language alone' ideology (Cameron, 1995, pp.3-4), according to which it is important to distinguish between spontaneous changes (coming 'from below') and other 'forms of language manipulation' (Lakoff, 1990, p.298, cited in Cameron, 1995, p.4) associated with political elites.

As we now know, in Britain, the historical association of the subjunctive with 'the capricious influence' of Latin (Fowler, 1926, p.574, cited in Waller, 2017, p.64) and the 'language of gentlemen' (Auer, 2009, p.56), made its return in the 20th century less likely to be perceived as an example of natural usage. It is possible that this history

continues to influence the perceptions of language experts and is further reinforced by the recent introduction of the subjunctive in the National Curriculum (Department for Education, 2013), an arguably clear example of change coming 'from above'.

The formality of mandative subjunctives is also emphasised in the three style guides taken into consideration. However, an interesting concept present here which is not mentioned in any of my interviews is the difference between American and British English in the use of these constructions. In particular, *New Hart's Rules* (2014, p.421) explains that 'US English more readily uses the subjunctive after nouns, verbs, and adjectives of requiring and demanding', adding that 'these uses are acceptable but not always idiomatic in British English'. *The Economist style guide* (2015, p.52) confirms that 'in Britain [this construction] fell into disuse some time ago except in more formal contexts', while *The Guardian and Observer style guide* (2020) simply says that 'it is particularly common in American English', drawing an implicit parallel with British usage.

Turning now to specific written genres where mandative subjunctives are expected to be frequent, overall my interviewees referred to four: legal documents and official letters, scientific and academic writing, news articles and novels. On the other hand, no particular genre was mentioned in the three style guides analysed.

The mention of legal or quasi-legal texts is consistent with what we saw in previous chapters, namely that this genre constitutes one of the 'canonical' uses of mandative subjunctives; in this case, some of my informants referred to 'official agreements' as well as documents dictating particular 'protocols'; others alluded to letters of complaint or letters generally 'requesting something'. One of the Year 6 teachers I interviewed gave me a more specific example when she explained how she usually introduces the mandative subjunctive to her students:

We would be writing a letter formally. I can think of the example that we did, er, reading a class novel called 'Cosmic', which is by a fantastic author called (unclear), about a boy who accidentally ends up in space and he forges a letter to his parents telling them he's going on this trip to the Lake District. So he has to make it sound as if an adult has written it. So we would do a similar thing, although requesting permission to go to space. So you've got to make it sound as if a teacher has written it, a head teacher has written it, so it all has to be correct, so we look for using examples, 'we request that he be at school at this time'.

This example is interesting because it highlights how the indexicality of the mandative subjunctive may be used in the classroom to promote students' understanding of it. In particular, its use in an official letter is linked to qualities such as formality and 'correctness'; furthermore, in the above quote, it is also presented as an index of 'adult' writing ('he has to make it sound as if an adult has written it'), particularly in a professional capacity ('as if a teacher has written it, a head teacher has written it'). The latter point also gives us some insights into the perceptions of the typical 'subjunctive user', which I will return to in the next section.

The reference to scientific and academic writing is also in keeping with my analysis in Chapter 5, where I highlighted the role of mandative subjunctives in constructing epistemic authority. Again, this aspect seems to be exploited in the classroom, as the following two quotes illustrate:

If you are doing a set of instructions kind of thing. If you're doing a science experiment and you're doing the write-up, and you're doing the procedure, it might be a teaching tool in that (Year 6 teacher).

> I might expect it in (…) something like 'the experiment requires', if they were doing a science experiment (…) with the conclusion and the analysis at the end (Year 6 teacher).

With regard to news articles, these were only mentioned by the (trainee) journalist I interviewed, who alluded to the brevity of the mandative subjunctive as important for the efficiency and punchiness required:

> I would see that most likely in a newspaper, in a headline context (…) I find, like, with articles, it's very efficient, like, no words that aren't necessary sort of thing (…) 'should' and things like that, we're sort of taught that they're not necessary. Unless it's a direct quote, then, cut out all the sort of words that you don't need. If you can make a sentence shorter, then do it. That's what we're taught.

This point seems to confirm Waller's (2017, p.258) insights on the efficiency of mandative subjunctives in the broad 'press' genre and in particular their ability to meet editorial demands for 'densification'. However, my discourse analysis in Chapter 5 highlighted that these forms have multiple rhetorical functions, which vary across subgenres, publications and based on the author's communicative purpose. Therefore, while certain generalisations can be useful, it is always important to consider specific uses and the social meanings that they shed light on.

Finally, with respect to fiction, several interviewees saw the use of the mandative subjunctive as instrumental in portraying a 'formal' character or making a dialogue sound more 'official', depending on the context. However, the most interesting remarks arguably came from a writer who imagined employing this construction to depict a 'dystopian future':

> If I was trying to convey a character, yes, I might use these structures. So, what popped into my head, there's that movie, the hunger games. You know, if I was trying to write about a somewhat, maybe a dystopian future, where there's a sort of 1984 type, you know, body that's in charge, I might try and use that language to sort of demonstrate that this is a sort of bureaucratic world with politics and intrigue and Machiavellian behaviour. That's the sort of world I would build those things into.

As the quote illustrates, my informant associates the mandative subjunctive with an Orwellian or Machiavellian world of 'politics and intrigue'. This is significant because it once again reminds us of the historical link between subjunctives, power and political elites (Auer, 2009, p.58); specifically, the same idea of power imbalances that, as we saw in the previous chapter, can be evoked in spoken interactions to signal 'unfairness' and frustration, is used here to imagine a 'dystopian' world, dominated by a menacing 'body that's in charge'. The mention of Orwell's *1984* is also intriguing because the author had been part of a 'Saxon-English' campaign which, starting from the 19th century, had rejected the classical tradition as a 'servant of euphemism and political deceit' (Adamson, 2000, p.609); as I argued in Chapter 4, this ultimately affected the perception of Latin and the Latin-based sociolect, including the subjunctive mood. *1984* certainly shares some of these ideas; in it, Orwell shows the dangers of extreme political control, particularly when achieved through the manipulation of language and information. It is therefore significant that, in his creative process, my informant linked the mandative subjunctive with this type of world.

In conclusion, the first theme identified in my analysis captures comments pertaining to both general and specific contexts of use. First, an important aspect is the difference between writing and speech, with subjunctives being perceived as more suitable for the former; this is borne out by the findings reported in Chapter 5, in which we saw that the frequency of mandative subjunctives in the written corpus was significantly higher than in the Spoken BNC2014. Related to this is the notion of formality, frequently mentioned across my interviews. Another central aspect is the

continuing association between subjunctives and the prestige language of political elites. This link is implicitly present in the perception that these forms are not 'natural' outside very formal registers, but it appears most clearly in the mention of a dystopian world of 'politics and intrigue'.

Finally, with regard to the written genres referred to by my informants, these mostly coincide with the distribution of mandative subjunctives across the BE06 shown in Table 5.6. In particular, we saw that 'academic prose', 'miscellaneous' (i.e., legal and institutional documents) and 'press reportage' are the text types within the corpus with the highest frequency of these forms. Interestingly, my informants linked the use of the mandative subjunctive in novels to their general perceptions of formality and prestige, whereas, as I highlighted in the previous chapter, my discourse analysis revealed a more complex picture. For instance, when coming from the lips of a confident character such as Bridget (extract 6), the construction fits within an overall mocking tone and helps convey power but also persuasiveness; in other cases (i.e., in crime fiction: extracts 14 and 15) the subjunctive is part of a fast-paced narration, and therefore its punchiness and conciseness combine with other elements of the writing to add drama.

Profile of the subjunctive user

The second category to emerge from the data was the profile of the typical 'subjunctive user'. Generally, subjunctive constructions were seen as typical of 'adult language' and were associated with older speakers, due to their perceived complexity. The two quotes below provide an illustration of this:

> In my mind it's probably associated with older rather than younger people, in terms of understanding, knowing and feeling confident about using that particular form (Retired grammar school teacher).

Well-spoken, older person, somebody who's 50 or 60 (…) a very good command of the language (Writer).

In these comments, age is synonymous with 'confidence', expertise and a 'good command of the language', which are seen as necessary to understand these forms. Yet, we know that mandative subjunctives are not significantly more complex than, for example, constructions with *should*; in fact, as we saw in Chapter 4, the efficiency of the subjunctive from a psycholinguistic point of view is one of the factors put forward by Overgaard (1995, pp.45, 49-50) to explain the revival of mandative constructions. Furthermore, in my frequency analysis of the Spoken BNC2014, no significant correlation with age emerged. Arguably, then, knowledge of the subjunctive is not really a function of age; rather, the key factor at play here is 'well-spokenness', which in turn stems from access to education and, therefore, class privilege. This was confirmed by some of the Year 6 teachers I interviewed. In particular, very prominent in their answers was the link between an understanding of the subjunctive and students' achievement or 'ability' levels. This is shown, for example, in the following extract:

If I was having a child in my upper-ability group, I might be focusing on something like this, whereas with my middle-ability, where I'm just trying to get them to natural expectations, I'm not as concerned (…) I would say probably the only reason I might look for the subjunctive mood in, when moderating a child's piece of work is if they were going for 'greater depth', where they really look at the formality and the use of the correct tenses and verb structure.

Here, my informant is alluding to the teacher assessment framework for English writing (Standards and Testing Agency, 2017), which identifies three 'standards' or levels of attainment: 'working towards the expected standard', 'working at the expected standard' and 'working at greater depth'. These are presented in the form of 'pupil can' statements (2017, pp.4-5); for example, at the first level, it is stated that

'the pupil can use capital letters, full stops, question marks, commas for lists and apostrophes for contraction mostly correctly'; working at the expected standard means that 'the pupil can select vocabulary and grammatical structures that reflect what the writing requires, doing this mostly appropriately'; finally, working at greater depth entails that 'the pupil can exercise an assured and conscious control over levels of formality, particularly through manipulating grammar and vocabulary to achieve this'.

Furthermore, in my interviewee's comments there seems to be a link between this framework and the grouping of children into different 'ability' levels. The practice known as 'ability grouping' has been well documented (e.g., Boaler, William and Brown, 2000; William and Bartholomew, 2001; Gillard, 2008) and even regarded as 'traditional' in the UK school system, particularly in England (Boaler, William and Brown, 2000, pp.631-634). As William and Bartholomew (2001, p.2) explain:

> Since the primary aim has been to reduce the range of attainment in a class because it is believed that this makes teaching easier, both within-class and between-class grouping strategies have focused on grouping students on the basis of assumptions about ability, achievement, attainment, or, in some cases, motivation (…) What is meant by ability (and in particular whether this is some fixed notion of ability, or just what a student is able to do at a particular time) is rarely made clear.

This is echoed by Snell and Lefstein (2018, p.41), who point to the prevalence of an ideology in Anglo-American education, 'according to which pupils have inherent, fixed, context-independent abilities'. Some research (Gewirtz et al., 1993) has highlighted that the structure and constraints of the National Curriculum introduced in 1988 may be partly responsible for the continuation of this phenomenon. What is interesting is that, across several of my interviews, the learning and understanding of subjunctive forms was consistently attributed to the so-called 'higher-ability' group, also referred to as 'the top 10-15%' or 'the very able children'. The culmination of

this was the following metaphor provided by one of my informants, another Year 6 teacher:

> It's kind of, if you think, in terms of a pyramid, you've got nouns, verbs, the basics. [The subjunctive] is kind of a smaller thing that's at the top that it's the higher ability children you're more worried about.

Here, the subjunctive sits atop a hierarchy of grammatical complexity which mirrors the ordering of students along levels of ability.

However, upon closer examination, my interviews with teachers revealed that this varying 'ability' to use and recognise subjunctive constructions is simply the surface-level manifestation of social inequalities. Specifically, what emerged from my data is that it is not an innate or fixed predisposition that determines learning outcomes, but the different socio-economic backgrounds of students. Several comments point to this intimate relationship, as we can see in these two examples:

> I am so focused on just getting to the 'expected' [standard], because, you know, they're from poor backgrounds, they've not had great teaching possibly in earlier grades, that kind of things, and you always feel like you're playing catch-up (…) Unless the children read a lot, em, then we're going to have difficulties, because they don't see that grammar in action. So children from poorer backgrounds, yeah, they are done a bit of a disservice when it comes to [the subjunctive], because they don't have as much access to books, they don't, they're not reading, they don't have parents reading to them at home (…) parents who are, er, who aren't, you know, academically inclined. We have to come along and make up for it. So I think a lot of it is the exposure to reading (Year 6 teacher).

> We're quite lucky in that we work in quite an affluent area with children who
> are high attaining. So for us, I think, they can grasp [the subjunctive] and they
> can understand it (Year 6 teacher).

These remarks are consistent with the findings of studies that have focused on learning and identity processes in the classroom. Black (2004, p.47, cited in Snell and Lefstein, 2018, p.45), for instance, suggests that a pupil's 'cultural capital', which is a function of social class, can shape teachers' expectations of that pupil's ability, which in turn will influence their learning and developmental trajectories. This way, as Snell and Lefstein (2018, p.45) put it, 'social class (a socio-historical identity category) is locally contextualised in the classroom as "high achiever" versus "low achiever"'. What my informants' comments seem to indicate is that the subjunctive is part of the 'right kind of cultural capital' (Black, 2004, p.47), which tends to be interpreted as 'higher ability' but is presumably the result of repeated exposure to a certain level of grammatical complexity at home.

The 'exclusivity' of cultural and linguistic resources was also an important concept in the answers provided by some writers and editors. In this case, mastering the use of the subjunctive was seen as one of the skills required in their professions, as explained by this scriptwriter:

> If you are a teacher, obviously you need to know the language better; if you
> are a writer or an editor, then obviously you need to have a good grasp of the
> language's rules. So I think a lot of it would depend on the person's particular
> job or employment (…) Unless you're doing work with language, so with
> marketing, research, teaching, script writing, script editing, then you wouldn't
> need to know these things.

The Guardian and Observer style guide echoes this point by linking the expert use of the subjunctive to a writer's 'professionalism'. In this passage, the authors are

specifically commenting on the difference between 'was' and the subjunctive form 'were':

> As professional writers we should be aware of the distinction. Used properly, the subjunctive can add elegance to your writing (…) however, using the subjunctive wrongly is worse than not using it at all, and will make you look pompous and silly.

Here, I would argue that the use of abstract, binary terms such as 'proper' and 'wrong' contributes to a mystification of the subjunctive mood, which is constructed as a complex phenomenon that can only be mastered through expert guidance (Lippi-Green, 2012, p.70).

Particularly illuminating was an editor's description of her attitude towards subjunctive structures in her line of work:

> I think, as an editor, when I see someone using, like, a subjunctive form, as you said, I generally think that the article is a step up from other ones that don't use it so much. But that might just me being a bit like a language snob or whatever (laughing), I'm not sure; I think I like fluency in language and I think it does come across that way.

Asked to elaborate on her being a 'language snob', she talked about her own childhood. Her answer aligns with the insights provided by some of the teachers above:

> There's a lot of factors that go into it and I know that I had a very privileged background in the sense that I have been given access to books that have let

me access this kind of things and make them part of my every-day vernacular
(…) but then again, it depends on the lifestyle that you're going to lead and
the one you've been brought up in (…) language is a privilege in a lot of ways,
and the extent to which you know language and have abilities, like, I pride
myself on having quite a wide vocabulary, but I know that's also the result of
the childhood and the life I've had so far and I think it's a really good skill to
have and I'm probably a bit biased.

Crucially, this description shows an awareness that 'language is a privilege', in other
words, that one's upbringing plays a very important role for later linguistic 'abilities',
including mastery of such constructions as the subjunctive mood.

In summary, what we have seen so far is that the typical subjunctive user tends to be
seen as an 'older' speaker or, especially among teachers, a 'higher-ability' student, in
keeping with a general perception of the construction as somewhat 'complex'.
However, these surface-level comments tend to reveal a deeper truth, namely that
'language is a privilege'; therefore, to find subjunctive users we ultimately need to
look in 'affluent areas', among the 'well-spoken' and the 'academically inclined'.
This is also confirmed by the idea of a 'professional writer', who is expected to use
the subjunctive 'properly'. In other words, the metalinguistic discourse about the
subjunctive points, once again, to its association with the prestige sociolect, which
can be cloaked in ideas of cognitive complexity and 'higher abilities'.

Another characteristic of the subjunctive user emerging from my analysis is a certain
degree of social 'awkwardness'. This was mentioned in particular by a scriptwriter
in reference to his work on the popular television show *Coronation Street*:

There is a character, now that I think about it, there is a character in Coronation
Street, er, Roy, who, it is a character trait of his, that he speaks in a rather
stilted, rather formal sort of manner. His character is not described or not

officially autistic, but he does have certain mannerisms that would place him somewhere along that scale, although it's never identified certainly. So, I can imagine Roy giving a piece of advice, he's a very good-hearted, very warm character, but I can imagine him talking to one of his neighbours and saying 'well, it is important that we not allow…'. Roy Cropper (…) and possibly, Ken Barlow as well. But you'll see that within that show, those characters are definitely sort of at the upper end of a kind of intellectual formality. Ken was an English teacher and stuff like that, you know, he's been to university.

Something very interesting happens in the above extract: while the use of the mandative subjunctive is still placed 'at the upper end of intellectual formality', in keeping with the discussion above, it seems to come at the expense of one's social and interactional skills. Particularly, Roy is described as 'formal' and 'rather stilted'; although not officially diagnosed, his character displays mannerisms that might place him on the autistic spectrum. The internal tension between linguistic mastery and the potential social 'fallout' of using the subjunctive is also present in the aforementioned quote by *The Guardian and Observer style guide,* where, as we have seen, readers are warned against an incorrect use which could 'make you look pompous and silly'. In the same vein, an editor described to me his perception of mandative subjunctive constructions when reviewing someone else's writing:

I think I'd be torn between thinking they're very well educated and impressive, and at the other extreme, they're a bit pretentious.

One way to look at these comments is by relating them to the first theme identified above, *Contexts, registers and genres*; as we saw there, outside the contexts considered most typical for the subjunctive, and in particular 'very formal writing', the use of these forms is generally perceived as 'odd'.

However, in other circumstances, the 'pomp' and 'pretentiousness' of the subjunctive can be exploited for specific rhetorical purposes, as suggested by this writer:

> I write in a kind of a slightly smart aleck-y style, where I might jump between registers and take on a slightly arch persona, or stuff like that. So I can see myself writing in this more kind of formal register or that kind of thing.

Here, the formality of the subjunctive is associated with a 'know-all' persona and can therefore help to achieve an ironic and caricatural effect. A similar use of mandative subjunctives also emerged from my analysis in Chapter 5, both in speech and in writing; for instance, in extract (24), I noted that the construction was part of a sarcastic tone and helped convey disapproval within a 'caricaturised re-enactment' (Goffman, 1981, p.2); furthermore, in extract (6), we saw that the use of the subjunctive by the character named Bridget fit within her overall confident and 'mocking' persona.

The meaning(s) of the mandative subjunctive: semantics and pragmatics

Whereas the themes identified so far contain some indications as to the meanings attributed to mandative constructions, my analysis also found more explicit comments on the subject. Some of them referred to the semantic meaning of these constructions, while others focused on their pragmatic functions and therefore their social/interactional meanings; in other cases, some comments seemed to reflect a combination of both semantics and pragmatics[20].

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[20] This is consistent with Beltrama and Staum Casasanto's (2021) research, which, as previously mentioned, has shown that the semantic properties of a given form can sometimes '[bleed] into social interpretations' (Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.7). Ultimately, it is the reason why, in my analysis, comments pertaining to either semantic or social meanings were assigned one code and included in the same category.

With regard to the semantic meaning, two teachers emphasised the hypothetical component of the mandative subjunctive. In their words:

> [They are] statements of wish, I suppose, things that aren't necessarily fulfilled or may not happen.

> You know, a sentence that shows a desire or a wish that is probably not very likely to be the outcome.

The Guardian and Observer style guide's (2020) definition of 'subjunctive mood' chimes with this characterisation:

> Most commonly, the subjunctive is a third person singular form of the verb expressing hypothesis, typically something demanded, proposed, imagined: he demanded that she resign at once, I propose that she be sacked, she insisted Jane sit down.

Another characterisation was centred around the idea of objectivity and 'truth'. This was initially indicated by a scriptwriter, who generally referred to the mandative subjunctive as 'very matter-of-fact', and later expanded on by another informant (i.e., the trainee journalist) when discussing the rhetorical functions of mandative subjunctives in newspaper articles:

> I think it's very straight to the point and no unnecessary words sort of thing (…) Straight to the point and fact, there's not really much leniency with it; probably just conveying that it's true, in a way.

According to this description, in contexts like news reports the mandative subjunctive may represent a state of knowledge and truth and thus convey 'epistemic modality' (e.g., Zhang, 2019, pp.880-881). However, this is at odds with we know about the semantics of the construction, which is usually an expression of deontic or 'practical' modality (James, 1986, pp.11-16), in other words, a representation of 'constraints grounded in society: duty, morality, laws, rules' (Griffiths, 2006, p.113). My assessment is that the above remarks result from 'iconisation' (Irvine and Gal, 2000; Zhang, 2005; 2008, cited in Eckert, 2008, pp.460-462), an ideological process I mentioned in Chapter 1 whereby the physical structure of a linguistic form leads to a social and, in this case, rhetorical interpretation. Particularly, the bare morphology of the subjunctive, which disallows any 'unnecessary words', is interpreted as 'to the point and fact' and therefore an indicator of 'truth'; in other words, the 'starkness' of the construction might be seen as leaving no room for ambiguity ('there's not really much leniency with it'). We should also acknowledge that my interviewee's perception could be influenced by the use of mandative subjunctives in broadsheets, where, as we saw in Chapter 5, they are usually associated with a neutral and matter-of-fact tone and with the reporting of official, 'on the record' statements. We could argue that, in her journalism training, exposure to this type of texts is particularly frequent; her answer could therefore reflect the characteristics of the 'conventional context of use' (Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.5), of which the linguistic form is now seen to be a carrier (as is the case in indexical associations).

However, in the majority of my interviews, it was the deontic component of mandative subjunctives that was usually mentioned:

They are very regulatory, they're about rules (Year 6 teacher).

They convey insistence that things should be done (Year 6 teacher).

It's disciplinarian and forceful (Writer).

One particular description stood out in my analysis; in this case, a British writer directly compared the use of the mandative subjunctive with that of the indicative within the same sentence and, in doing so, highlighted a link between the syntactic-semantic properties of the former and its perceived 'harshness' or 'strictness' (in other words, its social/interactional meanings). In particular, my informant was looking at the third set of examples I provided, namely:

(a) Last week, my friend Elisa insisted that I *go* to the cinema with her.

(b) Last week, my friend Elisa insisted that I *should go* to the cinema with her.

(c) Last week, my friend Elisa insisted that I *went* to the cinema with her.

Commenting on what each sentence meant for him, the main difference he described was between (a) and (c):

> [In the third example] the word 'went' feels more collaborative; I thought about it and then I decided to go with her. In the first one, she just told me I had to go. [The first example] feels better, in terms of conveying exasperation and annoyance. If you were saying that and you were slightly annoyed and wanted to show that this is a dramatic moment, you would try to be short and succinct (…) you would rapidly say the second half of the sentence to emphasise that she sort of half-bullied me into it.

This answer was already partly reviewed in Chapter 3, where I argued that it corroborated my syntactic-semantic model and in particular the fact that the presence/absence of agreement morphology leads to different psychological properties of the embedded subject (in this case, 'I'). Here, I would like to focus on

the second part of the answer, where the syntax-semantics of the mandative subjunctive seems to guide a social interpretation of the two subjects and their relationship. Whereas Elisa, the speaker's friend, is seen as a forceful character who would take you to the cinema at all costs ('she sort of half-bullied me into it'), the speaker of the sentence ('I') is seen as annoyed and exasperated; according to my interviewee, the latter has been on the receiving end of some unsavoury insistence, and they are now expressing a negative evaluation of their friend's behaviour. This way, what starts as a syntactic-semantic asymmetry between two clausal subjects blurs into an interactional asymmetry between two social actors (the person insisting and the recipient of the insistence). In this context, the subjunctive user is perceived as taking a negative stance. In fact, what my informant is describing is arguably a 'stance triangle' (Du Bois, 2007, pp.162-169), with one of the two subjects positioning themselves with respect to a shared object (in this case, the other subject's behaviour; see also Snell, 2010, pp.644-645), while signalling their divergence from the second subject. As we saw in the previous chapter, this use of the mandative subjunctive tends to be especially common in speech, where the construction evokes the idea of 'unfairness' and helps signal frustration. My informant's reading of the sentence therefore aligns with my own analysis while also highlighting that the structural and semantic properties of mandative subjunctives play an important part in the interpretive process.

The fact that the semantics of a linguistic form may sometimes '[bleed] into social interpretations' (Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.7) has been shown, for example, in Beltrama and Staum Casasanto's (2021) research on the intensifiers 'totally' in English and '-issimo' in Italian, which I discussed in the first chapter. These authors have reported on social perception studies showing how, in some contexts, these intensifiers lead to an interpretation of the speaker as 'excitable' or 'outgoing', which is seen as the result, at least in part, of the semantics of these expressions indicating 'reaching the top' and 'an element of extremeness' (2021, p.97). Because the mandative subjunctive is a construction rather than a single grammatical element, it is plausible to think that it will give rise to more complex social inferences, involving not only the speaker but also the broader stance-taking process in which they partake.

However, it is important to mention that in this case 'iconisation' might also play a role. Particularly, my interviewee points out that the subjunctive is 'short' and 'succinct' and, as such, suitable for conveying 'exasperation and annoyance'. There is also an allusion to the prosody of the sentence, with its perceived speed ('you would rapidly say the second half of the sentence') linked to the ability to signal 'a dramatic moment'. In other words, the conciseness of the construction may give rise to its 'punchy' quality. In addition to spoken interactions, this is to some extent reminiscent of the use of mandative subjunctives in adventure fiction, where, as we saw in Chapter 5, they are often part of a fast-paced narration and contribute to a dramatic build-up.

Finally, the social interpretation provided by my interviewee could also stem from what I referred to in Chapter 1 as 'systems of distinctiveness' (Irvine, 2001, cited in Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.7): the choice of a specific variant in contexts where alternatives are available tends to trigger a process of comparison, in which linguistically marked forms (as is, arguably, the subjunctive in British English) become 'especially suitable carriers of social meanings' (Beltrama and Staum Casasanto, 2021, p.88). The fact that my informant was presented with contrastive examples of the same sentence might have activated a similar process, facilitating an ideological interpretation of the subjunctive.

Overall, this example shows how the meaning of linguistic forms is the result of a complex interplay between multiple factors; in this case, the syntactic-semantic properties of mandative subjunctives appear to make an important contribution, but they need to be considered alongside other, ideologically driven processes.

Teaching grammar and the subjunctive

The final category emerging from my analysis captures comments on the teaching of the subjunctive and, more broadly, the place of grammar in the school curriculum.

The general view among my interviewees was that learning grammar is useful, even at a young age; on the other hand, the teaching of the subjunctive mood was singled out as unnecessary and potentially detrimental. In the latter case, the consensus was that this type of construction should be taught at a later stage or only in specialist contexts. Below I present a number of quotations illustrating these points:

I do think [the subjunctive] is one of those things that's probably a bit of a distraction for children at that age, but I can see a place to studying it when you get to sort of 16, 17, where you might be looking at older texts; for example it would make more sense for GSCE students, for the type of texts, 19th-century texts, they come across fairly regularly. So it may be useful to talk about subjunctive in that case (Writer).

They're having so much thrown at them in that school year at the moment, because of course of the compulsory test at the end of it, and I have a fear that it's one more hoop for the pupils to jump through, rather than something to specifically understand and get a hold of (Retired grammar school teacher).

You know, I don't think it would matter if they didn't learn it? It's always good to learn correct English, you know, if you want to use it in your career, later on in life, but (…) I had never heard of the term subjunctive mood until I started teaching it in 2014, you know, and I have done A-levels, degree, post-graduate (Year 6 teacher).

Grammar is important, it's a structural, it's the foundation of language, which we use to communicate with each other, either verbally or through audio or through the written word, and therefore it's important; Something like [the subjunctive] is useful, but I would say this is probably the sort of, the advanced class, this is for the students either passionate about it, or for maybe those more selective schools that have the capacity and the students to be able to go to that extra level of detail (Writer).

The last two quotations are particularly interesting in that they both hint at broader ideologies about language, namely the link between 'correct English' and socio-economic success 'later on in life' (see also Cushing, 2019), and the notion that grammar is 'the foundation of language', helping to protect it from the risk of fragmentation, which is typical of the 'standard language ideology' (e.g., Cameron, 1995, pp.109-111). Yet, in both cases, the subjunctive is explicitly excluded from this type of commentary; I would argue that this is the result of the perceived rarity of these forms[21], which sets them apart from the rest of grammar: they are an 'extra level of detail', as one of my informants would put it. Furthermore, the terminology around them feels quite 'new' and unfamiliar ('I had never heard of the term subjunctive mood until I started teaching it').

The general lack of familiarity with the construct of 'subjunctive mood' also seems to affect current teaching methods; in particular, from some of my interviews it emerged that these constructions are often taught 'in absentia', namely by pointing out instances where a subjunctive was not used, due to a mistake. This translates into a 'finger-wagging', mistake-driven teaching method, as exemplified by these two answers:

> We start by pointing out when it's used incorrectly in pop songs, so Justin Bieber, 'if I was your boyfriend'. Not correct. 'If I were a boy', correct. You know, we go and have a little video that someone's put together, and we say 'right, was this used correctly or incorrectly'? (Year 6 teacher).

> The more complex parts of grammar tended to be explained when students had a problem or difficulty. So if a problem or difficulty arose, for example, you know, somebody put 'if I was…bla bla bla', you know, if students came into the classroom saying something like that, my first reaction was 'what kind of English is that?', you know, and make them think about it. But no, there

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[21] This is consistent with my corpus findings. As we saw in Chapter 5, the mandative subjunctive is, overall, a low-frequency variant, and particularly so in speech.

would not be any particular context for deliberately addressing the subjunctive as a sort of lesson, you know, as an object for a lesson (Retired grammar school teacher).

According to both descriptions, students are introduced to the subjunctive through examples of incorrect usage, either in pop music or within the classroom, in other words, only if there is 'a problem or difficulty'. Arguably, this type of approach contributes to the mystification of the subjunctive mood that I mentioned above: it constructs it as an abstract and complex topic that cannot be 'deliberately [addressed]' and yet is easily assigned binary labels such as 'correct' and 'incorrect'.

6.3 Summary and conclusion

In this chapter, I presented my content analysis of 15 interviews with language practitioners and three style guides, in an attempt to explore the metalinguistic discourse around (mandative) subjunctives. In doing so, I contextualised my insights within both the corpus analysis conducted in Chapter 5 and the historical analysis presented in Chapter 4.

In particular, four main themes emerged from the coding of the data: (1) *Contexts, registers and genres*, (2) *Profile of the subjunctive user*, (3) *The meaning(s) of the mandative subjunctive: semantics and pragmatics* and, finally, (4) *Teaching grammar and the subjunctive.* Overall, subjunctives are characterised as formal and, therefore, more suitable for writing rather than speech. At the same time, such formality seems to deny these forms access to the language ordinary conversation, due to their not sounding 'natural'. I stressed that this point is reminiscent of the commentary of British language authorities during the 20th century, when the subjunctive was fundamentally rejected due to its being part of the 'artificial' Latinate sociolect (Fowler, 1926, p.574, cited in Waller, 2017, p.64).

Indeed, my corpus analysis in Chapter 5 confirmed that, in present-day British English, these constructions are still more common in writing; however, it is also important to point out that some of the nuances revealed in that analysis, especially as it relates to the use of mandative subjunctives in (informal) speech, were missing from my interviewees' answers. This can be explained by referring back to the notion of 'total linguistic fact' (Silverstein, 1985, p.220), which, as we saw in previous chapters, captures the intimate relationship between linguistic features, social contexts and ideology. In particular, while my corpus analysis in Chapter 5 gave us an insight into the (multiple) social meanings of mandative subjunctives in their 'situated use' (Eckert, 2008, p.454), the metalinguistic discourse about these forms is more likely to draw upon widely circulating ideologies, similarly to the historical commentary analysed in Chapter 4.

The written genres cited by my informants as most typical for the subjunctive, namely academic prose, official documents, press reports and fiction, largely coincided with the distribution across the BE06 highlighted in the previous chapter. One description that particularly stood out was provided by a writer, who associated the mandative subjunctive with a fictional dystopia; his mention of a Machiavellian world of 'politics and intrigue' was once again reminiscent of the long-standing association between the subjunctive and political elites.

This 'elitist' aspect was also present in the perceptions of the typical 'subjunctive user', who was generally seen as an 'advanced' speaker, due to the perceived complexity of these forms; specifically, teachers pointed to the fact that subjunctives only tend to be grasped by 'higher ability' children. However, my analysis revealed that these are surface-level correlations, hiding the fact that, ultimately, 'language is a privilege', and therefore a more reliable predictor of subjunctive usage is one's upbringing and socioeconomic status. Interestingly, the erudition involved in the use of the subjunctive can sometimes come at the expense of one's social skills; this 'stiltedness' was exemplified by *Coronation Street*'s Roy Cropper and could be related to the broader idea that, outside very formal contexts, the subjunctive is

generally perceived as 'odd' or 'pretentious'. In other circumstances, however, the same 'pomp' can be exploited for rhetorical purposes, for instance when a writer wants to project an arch, 'know-all' persona.

As for the meanings of mandative subjunctives, while some of my interviewees focused on the semantic properties of this construction, other comments reflected a complex interplay of multiple sources. For example, in newspaper articles, the perceived 'truthfulness' of mandative subjunctives may derive from a process of 'iconisation' (Irvine and Gal, 2000; Zhang, 2005; 2008, cited in Eckert, 2008, pp.460-462), whereby the bare morphology of the construction is interpreted as 'to the point' and therefore 'factual'. In another, significant exchange with one of my interviewees, the syntactic-semantic structure of the mandative subjunctive combined with its prosodic features and its markedness to drive perceptions of 'forcefulness', annoyance and drama. This not only corroborated my analyses in chapters 3 and 5, but it also confirmed Beltrama and Staum Casasanto's (2021) insight that the semantics of a linguistic form can sometimes '[bleed] into social interpretations' (Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.7); furthermore, it was an important reminder that multiple sources of meaning need to be considered in the study of linguistic features.

Finally, with respect to the role of the subjunctive in the (primary) school curriculum, an important difference emerged between grammar as a whole, seen as an essential tool for students, and the subjunctive itself, generally regarded as dispensable and 'extra'. Interestingly, while some of the comments around grammar reflected known ideologies, such as the 'standard language' ideology (e.g., Cameron, 1995, pp.109-111) or even the view of language as a proxy for socio-economic factors (e.g., Cushing, 2019), the subjunctive was consistently excluded from this commentary. I pointed, in this case, to the general lack of familiarity with the construct of 'subjunctive mood', which we can also see at play in current teaching methods, seemingly based on a mistake-driven approach that ends up mystifying the subjunctive.

I would argue that a common denominator to most of the commentary analysed in this chapter is the association between subjunctives and social class, particularly the prestige sociolect of the 'elites'. As we know, this association was clearly established during the 18th century (Auer, 2009, p.58), when English grammarians saw the subjunctive as part of the 'H' variety of language (Adamson, 1989, pp.204-213, cited in Auer, 2009, pp.162-163) and thus encouraged its use as a means to access the 'polite society'. What my analysis shows is that the ramifications of these ideological processes are still visible today; for example, they shape expectations of the contexts of use of the subjunctive, regarded, as we have seen, as 'very formal', and affect perceptions of its typical users, characterised as either 'higher-ability' and 'professional' or 'pompous' and 'stilted'; they can even percolate to a writer's creative process, where the subjunctive becomes the 'cryptolect' (Nunn, 2016) of a sinister political class.

All these characterisations and descriptors add to our understanding of the subjunctive as a whole, and of the mandative subjunctive more specifically; combined with the insights gained in the previous chapter, where the focus was on the 'situated use' of this variant, they illuminate the many facets of its indexical field. In the next and final chapter, I will provide the reader with a visual summary of this 'constellation' of social meanings (Eckert, 2008, p.454) and I will also offer an overview of the entire thesis.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

7.1 The big picture

The aim of my research was to explore the use of mandative subjunctives in present-day British English through an integrated approach combining syntax-semantics, history, ideology and social meaning. To my knowledge, it is the first study that offers a holistic view of these constructions, which is key to capturing their complexity.

As discussed from the beginning, British English has three main finite mandative constructions: indicatives (e.g., 'I suggest that Lewis *speaks* carefully'), *should*-clauses (e.g., 'I suggest that Lewis *should speak* carefully') and subjunctives (e.g., 'I suggest that Lewis *speak* carefully'). In the first chapter of this thesis and based on McGregor's (2013) proposal, I argued that these are 'options' in the grammar, which speakers can choose from. In particular, according to McGregor (2013, p.1152), optionality obtains when a) there are no grammatical requirements restricting speakers' choices and b) the relevant structural level does not change as a result of the choice made (i.e., 'structure invariance'). As we have seen, both conditions apply to English mandative constructions. Crucially, this does not mean that they have the same meaning and that, therefore, they alternate in 'free variation'; on the contrary, McGregor (p.1151) points out that optionality in syntax requires an investigation of the different social meanings of variants. He refers to this as the 'interpersonal' domain of 'how language is used to achieve speaker's goals and purposes, and the construal of relations among speech interactants' (McGregor, 2013, pp.1156-1157).

McGregor's framework is interesting because it appears to share the core tenet of variationist research, namely the idea that language variation patterns according to sociolinguistic constraints (Labov, 1972). However, historically, the study of syntactic variation has proceeded at a slower pace than that of phonological variation; this is

because establishing the 'semantic equivalence' of variants - the approach traditionally taken to the study of phonology - is not always possible in syntax (Cheshire, 1987; Moore, 2020, pp.86-87; Moore, 2021, p.54). More recently, thanks to a number of studies carried out in the 'third wave' of variationist sociolinguistics, this view has started to change in favour of a new focus on the 'socio-pragmatics of syntax' (Moore, 2020, p.73). Essentially, it is a shift from studying the distribution of alternating variants to an emphasis on 'the manner and nature of a feature's occurrence' (Moore, 2012, p.71), in other words, an in-depth analysis of how each variant is used in interaction to make social meaning.

In light of the above, my research started from the premise that the use of the mandative subjunctive is a matter of choice; establishing that it is not a grammatical requirement means that, if we want to understand its uses in present-day British English, we need to go beyond syntax proper and look into the complex meanings of this construction, both within semantics and socio-pragmatics, and at the intersection between the two.

I began by proposing a unified model of the syntax-semantics of mandative subjunctives (Chapter 3). My initial motivation was that, for the most part, the semantic and syntactic aspects of these constructions have been the object of separate analyses (e.g., Greenbaum, 1977; Inui, 2016); yet, their being inherently subordinate clauses introduced by specific, 'mandative' predicates naturally places the study of their properties at the syntax-semantics interface. We have seen how, to some extent, Aarts (2012) has started to formalise this in his account of the 'subjunctive clause type' (p.12), where morphosyntactic features are juxtaposed to descriptions of its predominant use.

However, as my research progressed, it also became clear that such syntactic-semantic properties cannot truly be separated from underlying ideological processes and they can, in fact, '[bleed] into social interpretations' (Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.7) of both the

speaker and the broader stance-taking process in which they partake. Moreover, the 'bare' morphology of the subjunctive may acquire 'symbolic' qualities in a process known as 'iconisation' (Irvine and Gal, 2000). I will return to both these points below.

To investigate the social meaning of mandative subjunctives, I adopted a theoretical and methodological framework underpinned by the concepts of 'total linguistic fact' (Silverstein, 1985, p.220) and 'indexicality' (Eckert, 2008, p.454). This study revealed the multiple and complex meanings associated with these constructions, as well their adaptability to a wide range of contexts and different communicative needs. On this journey through the 'indexical field' of the mandative subjunctive, we saw how the socio-pragmatic potential of these forms, stemming from their historical and ideological background, can be unlocked in the here and now by the interaction with other semiotic resources locally available (Ochs, 1996, p.418); this gives rise to particular 'style' (e.g., Campbell-Kibler et al., 2006, cited in Moore and Podesva, 2009, p.448).

In what follows, I will summarise the key points emerging from my analyses, highlighting the contribution of this thesis and recommending directions for future research.

7.2 Metaphysical-intentional causality and the syntax-semantics of mandative subjunctives

In Chapter 3, building on Gueron's (2008) account of metaphysical and intentional causality, and, in particular, her analysis of modals and control structures (pp.147-148, 161), I put forward a comprehensive model of the syntax-semantics of mandative subjunctives. This enabled me to integrate key insights from previous work: in particular, the suggestion that the subjunctive clause contains a phonologically null modal (Inui, 2016) and James's (1986, pp.35, 125) account of the semantics of the subjunctive, which conveys the matrix subject's sense of urgency.

Gueron's (2008) account is based on a distinction between 'intentional' and 'metaphysical' causality. A clause is characterised by intentional causality if its verb has an 'instrument content' (represented as little vP in the syntactic structure) that implies the manipulation of reality; in this case, the subject DP will be construed as an intentional entity (Gueron, 2008, pp.150-153). Furthermore, if there is agreement between subject and verb, the DP will also be able to check its person Feature and will be assigned 'psychological properties of consciousness, perception, and will' (p.147). The example Gueron provides in this case is 'John's pinched Mary's hand' (p.151).

Conversely, 'metaphysical causality' (Gueron, 2008, pp.153-155) occurs when the subject DP is not a sentient entity, and therefore the sentence cannot be construed from their point of view. Interestingly, this happens with modals, as in, for example, 'John must leave' (2008, p.148). For Gueron, the lack of agreement on the modal, which is the morphological counterpart to its lack of referentiality, prevents the subject from acquiring psychological properties such as intention and will; as a result, the event will be filtered through the speaker's perspective and the deontic semantics associated with them.

I argued that these insights can be applied to mandative subjunctives as well, due to the presence of a covert modal. As Inui (2016, pp.9-10) points out, we can assume that the null modal behaves like other modal auxiliaries, in that it is an impersonal verb that does not carry any agreement morphology due to its lack of referentiality. Building on this, I suggested that such constructions convey intentional causality in the matrix clause and metaphysical causality in the embedded subjunctive clause. By way of illustration, I used a sentence (i.e., 'Mary asks that John do it') which was modelled after Gueron's examples of control structures (2008, p.161). In particular, Mary's speech act targets an entire event ('John doing it'); thanks to the instrument content of *ask* and the presence of subject-verb agreement (in the form of the -*s* suffix), Mary can be construed as an intentional psychological being. Conversely, in the embedded subjunctive clause, the presence of a non-referential (covert) modal stops 'John' from acquiring psychological properties when it raises to Spec TP; as a result,

John will be a mere instrument within the matrix subject's temporal and psychological domain, and his point of view will not emerge.

From a semantic perspective, this model also sheds light on the specific contribution of the subjunctive as compared to the indicative mood, in keeping with James's approach (1986, pp.35, 125). Specifically, if we take a sentence like 'Mary asks that John *do* it', James's argument that the subjunctive reflects the matrix subject's (i.e. Mary's) point of view and the urgency of their request is compatible with the analysis presented above, where John's psychology does not emerge due to syntactic-semantic constraints. With regard to a sentence like 'Mary asks that John *does* it', the suggestion that the indicative prompts a more epistemic, matter-of-fact interpretation (James, 1986, pp.35, 125) could be explained as the result of verbal agreement (the *-s* suffix), which reintroduces John's consciousness and will.

As we saw in Chapter 3, in a successful case of data triangulation, I was able to corroborate key aspects of this analysis through my corpus and interview data. In particular, an extract from the spoken BNC2014 appeared to confirm the basic assumption that the subjunctive clause contains a covert modal (Inui, 2016). Additionally, the remarks of one of my interviewees, a British writer, aligned with the idea that the subjunctive-indicative contrast is associated with different semantic readings of the sentence; accordingly, the subjunctive mood in 'Last week, my friend Elisa insisted that I *go* to the cinema with her' was interpreted as 'She just told me I had to go', whereas the indicative in 'Last week, my friend Elisa insisted that I *went* to the cinema with her' was seen as a recognition of the subject's free will ('I thought about it and then I decided to go with her').

In other words, I argued that my informant acknowledged the existence of a 'psychological asymmetry', which is encoded in the syntax of the mandative subjunctive. Furthermore, when I analysed the rest of his answer in Chapter 6, I noticed ideological associations arising from both syntactic-semantic and

morphological aspects. First, the asymmetry between clausal subjects seemed to blur into an interactional asymmetry between two social actors (the person insisting and the recipient of the insistence), with the subjunctive user perceived as expressing 'exasperation' and 'annoyance', and therefore a negative evaluation of their friend's behaviour (Du Bois, 2007, pp.162-169). Second, the morphological make-up of the construction was associated with certain social and rhetorical functions, in a process reminiscent of 'iconisation' (Irvine and Gal, 2000); in particular, the brevity of the subjunctive (described as 'succinct') and the resulting fast 'tempo' of the clause (as indicated by the comment 'you would rapidly say the second half of the sentence'), were linked to an ability to signal 'drama'.

Interestingly, this kind of 'embodied quality' (Moore, 2021, p.58) is usually seen as typical of phonological features rather than syntactic variables (Eckert, 2018, cited in Moore, 2021, pp.58-59). Yet, it was not the only instance of iconisation that I recognised in my data; equally interesting was the link suggested by a trainee journalist between the 'bare' morphology of the subjunctive and its being 'to the point' and 'factual'. As shown by the previous example, one possibility is that, while these associations arise from morpho-syntactic properties, they are still mediated by resulting sound qualities, specifically brevity and conciseness; in this respect, we should acknowledge that during my interviews, informants tended to read my examples out loud, thus potentially foregrounding certain phonological aspects.

More generally, this analysis shows the synergy between intersecting layers of meaning; in this case, the contribution of syntactic-semantic properties was enhanced by (and therefore inseparable from) co-occurring ideological processes. In the next section, I will add yet another layer – the indexicality of mandative subjunctives.

7.3 The social meaning(s) of mandative subjunctives: history, ideology and present-day usage

Throughout this thesis, I argued that in order to investigate the social meaning of mandative subjunctives, it is necessary to retrace their history and the language ideologies woven into it, in order to then analyse their present-day uses in written texts and spoken interactions. This complex analysis, which was carried out over Chapters 4, 5 and 6, was informed by the idea that the attribution of social meaning to language (i.e. 'indexicality') is ultimately 'a process of association, where a linguistic form points to some dimension of its conventional context of use' (Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.5); furthermore, we know that this process is always 'ideologically mediated' (Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.5). In fact, the role of language ideologies as a crucial 'bridge between linguistic and social theory' (Woolard, 1994, p.72, cited in Piller, 2015, p.920) is captured by the notion of 'total linguistic fact', first defined by Silverstein (1985, p.220).

Exploring the historical and ideological background of the subjunctive was therefore key to unveiling indexical ties which can be exploited by speakers and writers in the present day. To that aim, I delved into the modern history of subjunctives starting from a relatively short resurgence of these forms in 18th-century England (Auer, 2009); I then proceeded with the more significant revival of mandative constructions in the 20th century under American influence (e.g., Overgaard, 1995); the end point of this analysis was the current version of the National Curriculum for England (Department for Education, 2013), where the subjunctive mood was formally introduced in 2013. In this process, in addition to quantitative trends (i.e., frequencies) over time, I was particularly interested in the metalinguistic discourse around these forms as a way to access widely circulating ideologies.

What emerged was that, in the United States, the revival of the mandative subjunctive was probably the result of immigration and language contact (Overgaard, 1995, pp.42-51); as such, it could be perceived as part of a 'new voice' in American literature and could easily feed into a narrative of independence from the British (Murphy, 2018,

pp.145-146). Conversely, in Britain, the subjunctive has historically been associated with the prestigious, Latin-based sociolect of the metropolitan elites (Adamson, 1989, pp.204-213, cited in Auer, 2009, pp.162-163; Auer, 2009, p.58); depending on the cultural context of the time, this has led to either encouraging or criticising its use, but, crucially, the overarching link to formality and 'high society' has persisted. We can see this, for example, in the descriptions of the typical 'subjunctive user', characterised as a 'gentleman' (Auer, 2009, p.56) in the 18th century, perceived as 'pretentious' during the 20th century (Waller, 2017, pp.63-73), and then celebrated, as it were, as a champion of literacy (and morality) in the Conservative ideology behind the Curriculum.

Though under different guises, these ideological processes could still be detected in the commentary provided by my interviewees, which I analysed in Chapter 6 along with three British style guides. In this case, the general view of subjunctives as prestigious and 'highbrow' had interesting ramifications, such as a perception of 'oddness' or even 'stiltedness' when used in speech, and the association with dystopian realities governed by powerful but sinister elites. Once again, perceptions of the typical subjunctive user revolved around the idea of privilege and wealth, but they were concealed by spurious correlations with age, higher 'abilities' and 'professionalism'. Overall, I noted the tendency to mystify the subjunctive (Lippi-Green, 2012, p.70) and to construct it as a 'cryptolect' (Nunn, 2016) that only few can master, and which can unpredictably make you look 'impressive' or 'pompous and silly' (*The Guardian and Observer style guide*; Guardian News & Media Ltd, 2020).

Notwithstanding the importance of analysing the language-expert discourse, I also acknowledged that our understanding of the 'indexical field' (Eckert, 2008, p.454) of mandative subjunctives is not complete unless we also consider their 'situated uses'. That is what I set out to do in Chapter 5, where I presented a corpus-based analysis of written texts and spoken exchanges featuring this construction. This study revealed a level of complexity, nuance and creativity that was missing in the explicit commentary of my informants. Such difference is consistent with the notion of 'total linguistic fact'

(Silverstein, 1985, p.220), that is to say, whereas metalinguistic comments tap into higher-order ideologies, the real-life data that makes up a corpus gives us a snapshot of human activities where social meaning is made.

More specifically, my discourse analysis showed that the ideological complexity of the mandative subjunctive can be exploited in a number of different ways based on the genre or situation in which it is used and in response to writers' and speakers' communicative purposes. In writing, its ability to index moral and epistemic authority is most visible in legal and institutional documents, where the use of this construction has been attested for centuries (e.g., Kovacs, 2010, p.62). This gravitas is then exported to other contexts with similar communicative goals, such as academic papers and advice-giving columns; furthermore, if there is a confident female character dominating the social and semiotic landscape, then the authority of the mandative subjunctive can be evoked to convey a sense of empowerment and assertiveness. In the press, the moralistic and legalistic flavour of these constructions can support attempts at persuasion in either editorials or more 'sensationalistic' styles of reporting; conversely, if they are part of an overall neutral and matter-of-fact style (as in the case of broadsheets), they can help construct the official tone of 'on the record' statements. Finally, their markedness can be used in certain types of fiction to add drama and create a build-up of tension.

With regard to spoken exchanges, the creativity in the use of these forms goes even further, ranging from references to legal texts and academic articles in cases of 'genre hybridity' (Biber and Conrad, 2009, pp.72-73; Lefstein and Snell, 2011, p.42), to situations where speakers express their grievances in reported speech (e.g., 'previously mum had insisted I make a curry'), reinterpreting the indexical link to authority and power to signal 'unfairness' or a perceived imbalance. Finally, the old association with the 'language of gentlemen' (Auer, 2009, p.56) can be used to express a 'polite request' and thus 'soften' a potentially face-threatening context (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.70), along with other hedging devices.

In summary, at its core the mandative subjunctive is characterised by an association with privilege and old hierarchies of power; intriguingly, this adds a historical and ideological layer to the idea of an 'asymmetry' emerging from my syntactic analysis. However, my discourse analysis also shows that this core association is subject to a constant process of '(re)interpretation' (Eckert, 2008, p.458) and 'bricolage' (Hebdige, 1984, cited in Eckert, 2008, p.456). This is significant for a construction often described as 'moribund' and 'archaic' (Fowler, 1926, p.574, cited in Waller, 2017, p.64); what we see instead is an ability to adapt to different social and semiotic landscapes and thus stay relevant. In figure 7.1 below, I offer a visual representation of the indexical field of mandative subjunctives, based on the analyses carried out in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Figure 7.1 Indexical field of the mandative subjunctive. Black = core properties, meanings and personae; grey = meanings and stances activated in 'situated' uses.

7.4 Discussion and directions for future research

To conclude, I focus on some aspects arising from this investigation which could be helpful in planning future research projects. As I mentioned above, the study of syntactic variation within the 'third wave' of variationist sociolinguistics has

increasingly focused on the 'socio-pragmatics' of syntax (Moore, 2020, p.73), thanks to a renewed emphasis on social meaning.

This shift has partly consisted in analysing the role of the 'grammatical formulation' in mediating certain indexical links (Moore, 2020, p.74); essentially, this means recognising that 'the social meaning of [certain features] is dependent upon the precise syntax of the phrase containing them' (Moore, 2020, p.74). An example of this is Beltrama and Staum Casasanto's (2021) research on the intensifiers 'totally' and '-issimo', which, as I mentioned a few times, illustrates the potential link between the semantics of a form and its social meanings. In particular, their study shows that the use of these intensifiers is more readily associated with qualities of the speaker (i.e., their indexical potential is strongest) when they accompany a certain class of predicates, namely properties that are not normally scaled or graded. We can appreciate this if we compare the sentence 'The bus is totally full' (2021, p.87), where *full* is characterised by scalarity, with an expression like 'Mary is totally coming to the party' (2021, p.87), in which *coming to the party* is a non-scalar predicate. For the authors, the 'semantic mismatch' (p.87) of the latter sentence violates expectations of the typical use of intensifiers and, as such, it becomes marked; as we know, when a variant is marked, it is also more likely to acquire social meaning, because it '[requires] a more complex chain of steps on the part of the listener to be interpreted' (p.86).

Another interesting example is Moore's (2020) work on right dislocations (e.g., 'I've got an accent, <u>me</u>'; Moore, 2020, p.74, my emphasis), where she analyses the pragmatic functions emerging from specific grammatical combinations. For instance, in a sentence like 'Aw, you well pissed me off, you' (p.81), the directness of a second-person pronoun tag, the relational process described by the verb and the negative stance towards the subject of the main clause all combine to maximise the pragmatic impact of the expression; in Moore's words, the 'grammatical environment intensifies the social meaning of a syntactic configuration' (2020, p.85).

In my discourse analysis of the mandative subjunctive, I tended to focus on broader social and semiotic dimensions, some of which coincided with categories of corpus metadata (e.g., topic of conversation, inter-speaker relationship), while others derived from studies of genre (Lefstein and Snell, 2011, p.51); this allowed me to identify the specific discourse function of each occurrence, based on the interaction with meanings and resources locally available. However, in some cases, I also highlighted the role of the more immediate grammatical context; perhaps the most notable example was my discussion of the semantic-pragmatic contribution of mandative triggers. In this respect, I drew a distinction between stronger triggers like *demand* and *insist*, whose deontic force helps to emphasise assertiveness, urgency, authority or 'unfairness', and a weaker verb like *suggest*, which had a central role in what I described as 'polite requests' due to its hedging properties. Future studies could further develop this point by analysing the specific functions of all the most common triggers. It would also be interesting to investigate other features of the grammatical environment, such as the effect of using different subject pronouns in the matrix and the embedded subjunctive clause; for instance, the use of 'I' as grammatical subject allows the speaker to position themselves as either the person issuing the mandative directive (e.g., 'I insisted that he be careful') or its recipient (e.g., 'He insisted that I be careful'), or indeed both (e.g., 'I asked that I be allowed to speak'). Each configuration could have important implications in terms of pragmatics, stance and social meaning.

Another important point regards my use of the Spoken BNC2014, which, as I discussed in Chapter 2, is made up of transcripts of informal conversation. While this corpus was an invaluable tool to study the use of mandative subjunctives in speech, thanks also to the additional 'metadata' provided by its compilers, future studies could benefit from accessing prosodic and paralinguistic features through audio and video recordings. O'Keeffe, Clancy and Adolphs (2011, p.33), for example, describe transcripts as the 'textual rendering of an event [that] is multi-modal in nature'. A potential remedy would therefore be the use of multi-modal corpora, where audio-visual recordings are provided alongside orthographic transcriptions (e.g., Dahlmann and Adolphs, 2009). For a construction like the mandative subjunctive, this means that researchers would be able to examine speech and image and identify, for example,

changes in footing (Goffman, 1981, pp.124-159) that are aligned with the syntactic structure. This would allow to test the idea put forward by one of my informants that the prosody of the subjunctive clause, and in particular its perceived speed ('you would rapidly say the second half of the sentence'), may contribute to a 'dramatic moment'. More generally, it would provide with the opportunity to explore 'how phonology and syntax work synergistically and in step to communicate social meaning' (Moore, 2021, p.60); this has been illustrated, for example, by Moore (2021) in her work on negative concord, where the construction is analysed alongside co-occurring clusters of phonological features.

7.5 A final word

As a student in Italy, I was taught that the Italian subjunctive is 'the mood of subjectivity' and, as such, should be used to express thoughts, uncertainty, wishes or regrets, among many other things. These semantic properties are common among European languages (albeit with minor differences in each case); for example, students of Spanish learn that the subjunctive is the mood that follows *verbos del corazón* ('verbs of the heart') (e.g., Gutiérrez Gamón, 2018). As I mentioned in this thesis, that was more or less the case in Old English as well, until a number of changes affected the subjunctive conjugation, relegating it to few formulaic uses.

However, I would argue that following its revival in the 20th century, the mandative subjunctive has reclaimed some of that meaning. As we have seen, these constructions are now semiotic resources available for 'taking stances, making social moves, and constructing identity' (Hall-Lew et al., 2021, p.1); their ideological background, which reflects eternal themes such as power and (in)equality, makes them suitable to convey subtle nuances and strong feelings alike. In other words, as the English subjunctive moves beyond syntax proper and enters the realm of social meaning, it becomes a new means of self-expression, bearing witness to the complexity of the human experience.

Appendix A:

Information Sheets and Consent Form

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Information Sheet for participation in English Language Research Project (teacher version)

Project Title: Subjunctive mood in present-day English

I am a PhD student from the University of Leeds who is studying English and its evolution over time. I would like to invite you to participate in this research project. You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why this activity is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Do ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. You should also feel free to discuss the research with my supervisors: Dr Diane Nelson (d.c.nelson@leeds.ac.uk) and Dr Julia Snell (j.snell@leeds.ac.uk).

- Aims of the project: This is a research project that I am conducting as a requirement to obtain my PhD qualification. I work in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Leeds and my research is being funded by the White Rose College of the Arts & Humanities (WRoCAH). My project investigates particular forms of the English language, usually called 'subjunctive mood'. I am interested to see how frequent these forms are, what meanings they convey and how people use and perceive them.

- What will happen if you agree to take part: I will invite you to take part in a one-to-one video interview at a time convenient to you. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes and will take the form of a discussion on the meaning of subjunctive mood

forms, their presence in the National Curriculum and how students usually respond to them.

- <u>Confidentiality, anonymisation and security procedures</u> will be in place throughout the entire duration of the project. Prior to the start of our interview, I will ask you to provide your informed verbal consent by reading out a series of statements and saying 'I agree' after each of them. It is only then that our interview will commence. Your verbal consent and the interview will be audio-recorded and stored in separate files. I will make you aware of when the recording starts. The recordings will be transferred to the University server at the first opportunity and removed from any portable devices (i.e. personal laptop). They will be encrypted and will only be accessible to me. The interview will then be transcribed and used for analysis. Transcripts will also be stored on the University server and will only be accessible to me.

- <u>Results of this research project, data sharing and subsequent research</u>. Coding and analyses based on the transcript, along with excerpts from the transcript, will be presented in my final PhD thesis, which will be deposited in the White Rose e-Thesis Repository (https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/) and might also be published. However, your name will never be used and your identity will remain anonymous at all times. The only detail that will be included is your job description and the general geographical location of your work (e.g. 'Teacher in North Leeds'). After the submission of my thesis, the recording will be destroyed. With your consent, the anonymised transcript will be stored and shared on the Research Data Leeds Repository (https://archive.researchdata.leeds.ac.uk/), where it will be available for further research conducted by me or others. If you do not want your transcript to be accessible to anybody other than me, you will be able to opt out upon providing your verbal consent. If you do wish your transcript to be deposited on the Research Data Leeds Repository, I will contact you at a later stage to show you the full transcript and agree with you on any further editing necessary to ensure your anonymity.

If you decide to take part, you will still be free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. After the interview, you may withdraw your data from the project up until September

2020, at which point it will be transcribed for analysis and used in the final presentation of my results.

If you would like to take part, please contact Mr Giulio Bajona at ml15gb@leeds.ac.uk.

Supervisor's Statement:

I (Dr Julia Snell) confirm that I have carefully reviewed the nature, demands and foreseeable risks (where applicable) of the proposed research and am happy that this research complies with the ethical approval granted from the University of Leeds's ethics committee. If you would like to discuss this research with me further, please contact me view email (j.snell@leeds.ac.uk).

Signed_____   _____   Date__02/06/2020_____

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Information Sheet for participation in English Language Research Project (non-teacher version)

Project Title: Subjunctive mood in present-day English

I am a PhD student from the University of Leeds who is studying English and its evolution over time. I would like to invite you to participate in this research project. You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to understand why this activity is being done and what your participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Do ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. You should also feel free to discuss the research with my supervisors: Dr Diane Nelson (d.c.nelson@leeds.ac.uk) and Dr Julia Snell (j.snell@leeds.ac.uk).

- <u>Aims of the project</u>: This is a research project that I am conducting as a requirement to obtain my PhD qualification. I work in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Leeds and my research is being funded by the White Rose College of the Arts & Humanities (WRoCAH). My project investigates particular forms of the English language, usually called 'subjunctive mood'. I am interested to see how frequent these forms are, what meanings they convey and how people use and perceive them.

- <u>What will happen if you agree to take part</u>: I will invite you to take part in a one-to-one video interview at a time convenient to you. The interview will last approximately 30 minutes and will start with me showing you examples of some of the structures under investigation. I will ask you how often you encounter these forms and in what

specific contexts; what meaning they are more likely to convey and how they could potentially affect your decisions while writing and/or editing a piece.

- ▪ <u>Confidentiality, anonymisation and security procedures</u> will be in place throughout the entire duration of the project. Prior to the start of our interview, I will ask you to provide your informed verbal consent by reading out a series of statements and saying 'I agree' after each of them. It is only then that our interview will commence. Your verbal consent and the interview will be audio-recorded and stored in separate files. I will make you aware of when the recording starts. The recordings will be transferred to the University server at the first opportunity and removed from any portable devices (i.e. personal laptop). They will be encrypted and will only be accessible to me. The interview will then be transcribed and used for analysis. Transcripts will also be stored on the University server and will only be accessible to me.

- ▪ <u>Results of this research project, data sharing and subsequent research</u>. Coding and analyses based on the transcript, along with excerpts from the transcript, will be presented in my final PhD thesis, which will be deposited in the White Rose e-Thesis Repository (https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/) and might also be published. However, your name will never be used and your identity will remain anonymous at all times. The only detail that will be included is your job description and the general geographical location of your work (e.g. 'Teacher in North Leeds'). After the submission of my thesis, the recording will be destroyed. With your consent, the anonymised transcript will be stored and shared on the Research Data Leeds Repository (https://archive.researchdata.leeds.ac.uk/), where it will be available for further research conducted by me or others. If you do not want your transcript to be accessible to anybody other than me, you will be able to opt out upon providing your verbal consent. If you do wish your transcript to be deposited on the Research Data Leeds Repository, I will contact you at a later stage to show you the full transcript and agree with you on any further editing necessary to ensure your anonymity.

If you decide to take part, you will still be free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. After the interview, you may withdraw your data from the project up until September

2020, at which point it will be transcribed for analysis and used in the final presentation of my results.

If you would like to take part, please contact Mr Giulio Bajona at ml15gb@leeds.ac.uk.

Supervisor's Statement:

I (Dr Julia Snell) confirm that I have carefully reviewed the nature, demands and foreseeable risks (where applicable) of the proposed research and am happy that this research complies with the ethical approval granted from the University of Leeds's ethics committee. If you would like to discuss this research with me further, please contact me view email (j.snell@leeds.ac.uk).

Signed_____   _____   Date__02/06/2020_____

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Consent Form

Please provide your verbal consent after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Subjunctive mood in present-day English

Thank you for considering taking part in this research. The person organising the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask before you decide whether to join in.

To provide your verbal consent, please read each statement and say 'I agree' after each of them. This verbal consent protocol enables the researcher to obtain your informed consent remotely. The recording containing your verbal consent will be stored in an encrypted device and separately from the interview recording.

- **I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.**

- **I understand that if I decide at any time during the project that I no longer wish to participate, I can notify the organiser and withdraw immediately without giving any reason. Furthermore, I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data up until the point stated on the Information Sheet.**

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- **I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for members of the research team (the lead researcher and his supervisors) to have access to my responses for the duration of the project. I understand that, after the completion of the project, my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the reports that result from the research. Furthermore, I understand that the recording of my interview will be destroyed at the end of this project.**

- **I agree for the fully anonymised transcript of my interview to be stored and used in relevant future research conducted by the lead researcher.**

- **I agree for the data I provide to be archived on the Research Data Leeds Repository. I understand that other genuine researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form.**

- **I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the lead researcher should my contact details change during the project and, if necessary, afterwards.**

Appendix B:

Interview schedule

Sample sentences (for all interviewees):

Set 1

The rules require that a vote be held.

The rules require that a vote should be held.

The rules require that a vote is held.

Set 2

The school rules demand that pupils not enter the gym at lunchtime[22].

The school rules demand that pupils should not enter the gym at lunchtime.

The school rules demand that pupils do not enter the gym at lunchtime.

Set 3

Last week, my friend Elisa insisted that I go to the cinema with her.

Last week, my friend Elisa insisted that I should go to the cinema with her.

Last week, my friend Elisa insisted that I went to the cinema with her.

---

[22] This example was taken from the National Curriculum (Department for Education, 2013, p.85); I then modelled the other two sentences (with *should* and *do*) after it.

Questions for teachers:

1) Mental associations: when you look at these examples, what immediately comes to mind? What do they make you think of? (e.g. Contexts of use? Genre? Register?)

2) Personal use: which of these sentences would you personally use? In what contexts or to convey what kind of meaning?

3) In each of these sets, there is an example of the 'subjunctive mood', in particular a 'mandative subjunctive'. At the moment, the 'subjunctive mood' is taught in year 6. I would like to focus now on the teaching of these forms.

    a) What is your approach to teaching or explaining subjunctive mood to your students? Both 'were' and mandative subjunctive?

    b) What is the typical response from students? Do they understand it? Do they enjoy it or find it boring?

    c) How useful do you think it is to learn about these forms in general and especially in year 6? What do you think about their presence in the National Curriculum and on SAT papers?

    d) More generally, how useful do you think it is to learn about grammar and 'Standard English', and why? What do you think about the role of grammar in the current curriculum?

Questions for writers/editors:

1) Mental associations: when you look at these examples, what immediately comes to mind? What do they make you think of? (E.g. Contexts of use? Genre? Register?)

2) Personal use: which of these sentences would you use, both in your line of work and in your private life (e.g. in conversation)? In what contexts or to convey what kind of meaning?

3) (Pointing at the subjunctive) If you saw this type of construction in someone else's writing, how do you think you would respond to it? What would you think about the writer?

4) Do you think it is useful to know about these forms and their meanings, both in your line of work (writing/editing) and for people in general, for example, starting from school? What about grammar, more generally?

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