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SPEAKER COMMITMENT: BACK TO THE SPEAKER

EVIDENCE FROM SPANISH ALTERNATIONS

Bert Cornillie and Nicole Delbecque
F.W.O. Flanders - Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

Abstract

This paper proposes an alternative cognitive account of the notion of speaker commitment in terms of speaker involvement and processing. The focus will be on the role of the speaker as conceptualizer. Invoking conceptualizer-related processing instead of speaker commitment has the advantage of avoiding reliance on non-speaker-related dimensions to determine degrees of speaker commitment for introducing some propositional content. Our theoretical claim is based on two case studies from Spanish.

First, canonical direct *que* ‘that’-clauses and oblique *de que* ‘of that’-clauses present an occasional switch to the alternate oblique and non-oblique construction, known as *dequeísmo* and *queísmo*, respectively. *Dequeísmo* has hitherto been related to notions such as doubt, hearsay, or distancing, i.e., to weak speaker commitment. Context analysis, however, shows that this approach is descriptively inadequate and that the phenomenon can best be accounted for in terms of speaker involvement: the speaker-conceptualizer is highly involved in selective information retrieval. *Queísmo*, by contrast, minimizes stage-managing, thus yielding low speaker involvement. In both cases, the relative strength of the speaker’s commitment is to be inferred on other grounds.

Second, the Spanish modals *poder*, *deber* and *tener que* have been described in terms of weak, intermediate and strong speaker commitment. Yet, it will be shown that speaker involvement in downplaying the force structure decreases from *poder* to *tener que*. The more the deontic background can be subjectified the more the speaker is involved in the subjective construal. Here, weak commitment thus correlates with strong speaker involvement, and vice versa.

1. Introduction

Our starting-point is the observation that previous accounts of speaker commitment (i) all too often rely on contextual clues and non-speaker related dimensions and (ii) pay little attention to the relation between the linguistic forms used and the conceptual network they belong to. In this paper, we therefore argue that in some cases it is more appropriate to use the notion of “speaker involvement” based on the viewing and processing of image schemas, than that of “speaker commitment”.¹

The empirical part of this paper presents data of two different Spanish expression types that are usually dealt with in terms of speaker commitment, viz., (i) *(de)queísmo* constructions and (ii) modal/evidential (semi-)auxiliaries. We will show that an account in terms of speaker involvement yields a better insight into what the speaker actually does to define his/her relation to the propositional content.

The paper is structured as follows. In section 2, we discuss the notion of speaker commitment as it is usually viewed in the literature (2.1) and show the problems it raises (2.2). In 3, we formulate the hypothesis that by focusing on the conceptualizer role in statements and expressions, speaker commitment can be restricted to conceptualizer-related processing. As will be demonstrated by our case studies in section 4, such a cognitive account has the advantage that, unlike speaker commitment, speaker involvement can be determined without invoking contextual indices or dimensions external to the speaker him/herself. The first case study (4.1) is concerned with Spanish *(de)queísmo*, the second one (4.2) addresses the Spanish modals. Finally, section 5 presents the conclusions of this paper.

2. Previous views

2.1 *The notion of commitment*

In the linguistic literature, the notion of speaker commitment is usually employed to account for a broad range of modal expressions (e.g. deontic, epistemic, evidential expressions, but also discourse markers). We will here briefly deal with the application of the notion to epistemic and evidential qualifications. Within the realm of epistemic modality, speaker commitment to the state of affairs denoted (or the proposition expressed) by an utterance refers to the speaker's epistemic stance, i.e. the likelihood that the speaker attributes to what (s)he is saying. With epistemic qualifications, the degree of speaker commitment refers to the extent to which the modalized proposition is likely to be or become true. On the other hand, in evidentiality studies, the speaker commitment associated with evidential qualifications is linked to the speaker's appraisal of the knowledge used and the hearer's interpretation of its reliability. Palmer (1986: 54, 2001: 52) argues that the degree of speaker commitment and the probability value attributed to the statement depend on the type of information used, and Nuyts (2001: 344) mentions that "evidentials bring the naming of sources to bear on the state of affairs in terms of degrees or types of speaker commitment".

Both qualifications convey a continuum of degrees of commitment, i.e. different values between the poles of commitment and non-commitment. The degree of speaker commitment can be low, intermediate or high. For epistemic modality, this amounts to weak possibility, probability and strong certainty,

while for evidential qualifications the degree of proximity of the evidence with regard to the speaker – hearsay being more distal than inference – is said to determine the degree of speaker commitment. Direct evidence is valued highest, while hearsay is usually considered lowest on the scale of evidential speaker commitment.

2.2 *Problems*

The above notion of speaker commitment is ambivalent. It raises the question whether the current definitions of speaker commitment can be combined as easily as is usually done in previous studies. If speaker commitment is interpreted in terms of different degrees of likelihood that a state of affairs is true, this kind of commitment holds with epistemic qualifications. However, the link between source-evidentiality and speaker commitment is not always warranted (see Chafe 1986; Floyd 1996; Fitneva 2001; Plungian 2001, amongst others). For example, the value of reported knowledge is also associated with the authority attributed to the source of information, so that speaker commitment can differ from one reported voice to another.

Another problem is that speaker commitment is all too often defined in terms external to the speaker him/herself. This external dimension can be situated on two levels: on the one hand, the criteria for defining degrees of commitment tend to rely on contextual indices that cause the hearer to interpret the speaker's stance as doubt; on the other hand, they involve processes that are not clearly or necessarily based on the speaker's own appraisal of the situation, but are related to the value people attribute to hearsay and logical processes based on general truths, for example.

2.3 *Alternative view*

In his analysis of epistemic modality, Nuyts (2001) defines speaker commitment in terms of performativity and descriptivity. According to this view, when a speaker utters a modal qualification, (s)he either is or is not committed to it. When the speaker endorses the qualification, it is used performatively, entailing speaker commitment. In the cases without speaker endorsement, the qualification is used descriptively, i.e. without speaker commitment. This alternative view has the advantage that (i) it is centered on the speaker him/herself, and (ii), in this respect, it is more clearly controllable in that the commitment is directed to the qualification only. However, this usage of the term *commitment* also has disadvantages. The continuum is replaced by a binary opposition. The consequence is that this usage reduces the scope of its use drastically, and, hence, does not allow a more refined view of speaker commitment in terms of degrees on a continuum. Moreover, it is mainly limited to (non-)endorsement of modal qualifications, whereas commitment also plays a role in other linguistic phenomena.

3. Towards a cognitive definition of speaker commitment in terms of involvement

The previous observations emphasize the need for a generally applicable conceptualist definition of speaker involvement. That is, we need a definition that can be applied to different types of expressions and different kinds of qualifications. General applicability comes within reach by looking at cognitive patterns in language. Hence, our definition will be centered around speaker-oriented processes that pattern with human cognition.

Our hypothesis is that speaker commitment can be restricted to conceptualizer-related processing if we focus on the speaker's role in conceptualizing and construing a linguistic expression. In cognitive linguistics the construal relationship "between the conceptualizer of a linguistic predication and the conceptualization that constitutes this predication" (Langacker 1987: 128) is crucial. *Construal* is used to refer to the speaker's ability to construe one and the same situation in a number of alternate ways and of making sense of it differently. Analysing the construal relationship allows us to distinguish between different kinds of speaker involvement.

A restricted definition of speaker commitment in terms of involvement has several advantages: different degrees of speaker commitment then correlate with different kinds of speaker involvement, triggered by cognitive processes such as comparison, appropriation or subjectification. Thus, the degree of speaker commitment can be determined without invoking non-speaker-related dimensions.

The way we use the notion of speaker involvement differs slightly from the way it is used to account for causal relations by Pander Maat & Sanders (2000), Pander Maat & Degand (2001) and Pit (2003). We share the view that "speaker involvement refers to the degree to which the present speaker is implicitly involved in the construal of [a] [...] relation" (Pander Maat & Degand 2001: 214). Yet, we do not take into account speaker-hearer relations or inferencing yielded by the flow of discourse. Instead, our conceptualist approach focuses on how the conceptualizer is involved in construing specific linguistic expressions.

4. Empirical evidence

We will now present two phenomena sometimes dealt with in terms of speaker commitment. We will show that the analysis gains in clarity if speaker commitment is redefined as speaker involvement. The first case study addresses Spanish (*de)queísmo* (4.1), the second one is concerned with the conceptual structure of the Spanish modals (4.2). Both case studies are based on data from the Corpus del Habla Culta [HC], which consists of the standard Spanish spoken by the urban middle class of a series of capitals (Samper Padilla et al. 1998).

4.1 Spanish (de)queísmo

The term *(de)queísmo* refers to two so-called “deviations” that are each other’s opposite: *dequeísmo* or the insertion of *de* before *que* where it is precluded by the norm (1) and *queísmo*, or the omission of *de* before *que* where the norm, conversely, requires *de* (2).

- (1) *Entonces después me llama, y me dice **de que** lamentablemente el puesto de sumariador no era posible.* [HC - Caracas 17.607-609]
‘Then afterwards he calls me, and tells me *of that* unfortunately the job of investigator was not possible.’
- (2) *Me acuerdo **Ø que** la principal me dijo que no todo el mundo era material de universidad.* [HC - San Juan 02.24-34]
‘I remember *Ø that* the head-mistress said to me that not everybody was suitable for university.’

Both constructions occur in Spain as well in Latin America, and their use seems to have increased considerably since their first attestations in the 13th century (mostly in the 20th century, cf. del Moral 2004: 143). Their syntactic context is variable. *Dequeísmo*, for example, does not only occur in complement clauses (1), but also in subject clauses (3), predicate clauses (4), dislocated object clauses (5) and even in consecutive (6) and relative (7) clauses.

- (3) ***De que** todas las niñas se vayan a enfermar es mucho más difícil.*
‘*Of that* all the girls are going to be ill is much more difficult.’
- (4) *La idea es **de que** entraran los alumnos de la facultad...*
‘The idea is *of that* the students of the faculty enter...’
- (5) *Qué es lo que yo le había dicho? **De que** ustedes, ... no les conviene...*
‘What had I said to him? *Of that* you people, ... don’t like...’
- (6) *Plantamos **de forma de que** sea bueno para el ganado.*
‘We plant in a way *of that* it is good for the cattle.’
- (7) *El sistema **de que** yo encuentro que es viable es el darle responsabilidad a la gente.*
‘The system *of that* I think is manageable is that of giving people responsibility.’
[examples from del Moral 2004: 164-165]

Queísmo, on the other hand, is very frequent in clauses that depend on verb phrases (2), but also shows up in clauses following a noun phrase (8), a prepositional (9) or conjunctive (10) expression, an adjective (11) or a pronoun (12).

- (8) *Entonces – después nos dimos cuenta y teníamos un miedo bárbaro **Ø que** no nos dejaran pasar otra vez.* [HC- Buenos Aires 22.345-351]
 ‘Then afterwards we realized it and we had a terrible fear \emptyset that they wouldn’t let us pass a second time.’
- (9) *Después **Ø que** salí de la Universidad, estudié un curso de fisioterapia.* [HC - San Juan 11.017-027]
 ‘After \emptyset that I left university, I studied a course of physiotherapy.’
- (10) *Pero en esta cátedra, por ejemplo, se abarcan los problemas... no son precisamente problemas de la educación (...) a pesar **Ø que** ese es el nombre de la cátedra, sino que...* [HC - Santiago 08.287-293]
 ‘But in this chair, for example, we study the problems... it’s not about educational problems (...) although \emptyset that’s the name of the chair, but...’
- (11) *Estoy segura **Ø que** hubiese preferido que ella hubiese pecado con aquel sacerdote que era todo un señor hombre.* [HC - San Juan 15.622-632]
 ‘I’m sure \emptyset that he would have preferred that she had sinned with that priest, who was a real gentleman.’
- (12) *Entonces, en ese sentido, yo no sé si algún día... eh... este rechazo y esta... y esto **Ø que** vayan siendo ciudades propias... la ciudad abierta, por ejemplo, vaya a dar resultado.* [HC - Santiago 26.168-170]
 ‘So, in that sense, I don’t know if one day... eh... this rejection and this... and this \emptyset that they are becoming real cities... the open city, for instance, will give any results.’

In what follows we will report on research by Delbecque (2006) and Keersmaekers (2006) and shed new light on the speaker commitment conveyed by these two constructions.

4.1.1 Accounts of (de)queísmo in the literature

Since the 1970s, the conviction has gained ground that the *que/de que*-alternation does not occur at random, but has a specific communicative function. Bentivoglio & D’Introno (1977) were the first to assume that the construction with *de que* “weakens” the assertion of the clause. According to their theory, the speaker in (13) uses a *dequeísta* construction² to emphasize that she does not agree with the contents of the subordinate clause:

- (13) *Eh... la gente siempre comenta **de que**... a pesar... a... a medida que van pasando los años, uno se va endureciendo; la verdad es que la enfermera nunca se endurece ante los problemas de los seres humanos, y la muerte de un paciente siempre a uno le ocasiona problemas.* [HC - Santiago 551]
 ‘Eh... people always comment of that... in spite of... as... as years go by, you get used to it; but in fact, a nurse never gets used to the problems of human beings, and the death of a patient always causes you problems.’

The opposite phenomenon, the *queísta* construction, would then logically indicate a strong speaker commitment. Later hypotheses have elaborated on this

idea of strong vs. weak commitment in various ways. García (1986), for example, claims that the sequence with *de que* implies a distancing strategy of the speaker, which contrasts with the *que*-construction as a sign of *closeness* and identification. She bases her claim on the analysis of minimal pairs (i.e. *de que*- and *que*-constructions uttered by the same speaker) as in (14) and (15):

(14) – *Cuando es una verdadera amistad claro; se puede mantener una amistad a la distancia también.*

– *Claro; pero no garantizo que si yo por ejemplo también las circunstancias me obligarían a irme diez años afuera, eh, eso no sé, se disiparía bastante. ¿No? es decir, no sé hasta qué punto me escribiría todos los meses, por ejemplo. **Pienso de que** no, no sé; no... no... no tengo mi seguridad en eso. [HC - Buenos Aires 77/12:14-24; García 1986: 57]*

‘– When it is a real friendship, of course, you can also maintain a friendship at a distance.

– Of course; but I don’t guarantee that if, for example, the circumstances also obliged me to go abroad for ten years, eh, I don’t know, it would weaken quite a lot, wouldn’t it? I mean, I don’t know up to which point he would write me every month, for example. I think *of that* not, I don’t know; I’m not... I’m not... I’m not sure about that.’

(15) – *Y vos, ¿qué decís de vos mismo? vos ¿sos un buen amigo?*

– *Sí, yo **pienso que** sí. Este...en...la...la amistad es una de las cosas que más o menos ando bien. [HC - Buenos Aires 77/13:26-34; García 1986: 57]*

‘– And you, what do you say about yourself? Are you a good friend?

– Yes, I think so. Eh... in... friendship is one of the things in which I’m doing quite fine.’

In (14), the speaker does not seem to be very certain about the eventual outcome, whereas in (15) he clearly endorses his own assertion. This is why García (1986: 57) analyses these utterances in terms of doubt (14) and certainty (15), respectively, that is, in terms of weak (*de que*) vs. strong speaker commitment (*que*).

In a similar pragmatic approach, Schwenter (1999) assumes that the preposition *de* is an evidential marker, which signals that the source of the information presented is situated outside the speaker (“hearsay”). Constructions with *de que* supposedly indicate that the speaker does not want to be seen as responsible for the proposition, and that, in other words, (s)he is not committed to it.

Del Moral (2004) relies on the same idea of weak commitment and accounts for it in terms of subjectification theory. Based on a detailed diachronic study, his hypothesis holds that, over time, the *de que* sequence has become increasingly associated with the speaker’s distant attitude towards the clausal content.

Although there are cases in which the explanation in terms of weak vs. strong commitment may seem correct, it does not hold for the majority of the cases. Indeed, for most of our corpus examples no clear evidence can be adduced in favor of this hypothesis. Consider the *dequeísta* construction in (16). Since the speaker clearly endorses his own opinion (cf. the predicative complement *fundamental*), an explanation in terms of distancing / weak commitment would be difficult to make sense of:

- (16) *Por lo menos yo **estimo fundamental** en la lectura **de que** uno sienta agrado en leerlo.* [HC - Santiago 04.101-102]
 [‘At least I estimate (as) fundamental in the lecture of *that* one feels pleasure in reading it.’]
 ‘At least I consider a fundamental [dimension of] reading of *that* one likes what one is reading.’

In the same way, *queísta* constructions do not always convey a speaker’s agreement or strong commitment, unlike what García (1986), Schwenter (1999) and del Moral (2004) suggest. In (17), for instance, it is highly improbable that the speaker agrees that she was not interested (*no tenía interés*), since she declares immediately before that her professor – who knew her well – said she was a good student.

- (17) *Entonces teníamos una... la profesora de práctica, que era ayudante del Físico también, y a mí me conocía mucho, entonces ella le... le decía al doctor (...): "Es una buena alumna, doctor; usted está equivocado", porque parece que hubo **un comentario Ø que** yo no tenía interés; una cosa así.* [HC - Santiago 19.015-018]
 ‘We had a professor of practice, who also was an assistant in physics, and she knew me very well, so she said to the doctor: “She’s a good student, doctor; you are wrong”, because apparently there was a comment Ø that I had no interest; something like that.’

Moreover, even in the cases that seem to corroborate the commitment-theory, the question arises whether this kind of explanation clarifies the mechanism underlying (*de*)*queísmo*. Often, the evidence adduced in favor of the hypothesis is based on contextual clues and not on the construction itself. In examples (13) and (18), for instance, analysts are inclined to invoke the negation (*la enfermera nunca se endurece* (‘a nurse never gets used’) in (13) and *¡No, señor! No creo en esa cuestión* (‘No sir! I don’t believe in that issue’) in (18)) as an argument for analyzing *de que* in terms of weak commitment, without really dwelling on the meaning of the very combination of *de* and *que* itself.

- (18) *Entonces, que llegue un individuo a un cafetín a **decirme a mí de que**:
 ‘Mire, que tenemos que luchar por la igualdad [sic] de clases sociales.’*

¡No, señor! No creo en esa cuestión, porque, en primer lugar... [HC-Caracas 15.377-380]

‘So, if someone enters a bar and comes to tell me *of that*: “Listen, we have to fight for the equality of social classes.” No sir! I don’t believe in that issue, because, in the first place...’

An important criticism vis-à-vis the studies carried out by García (1986), Schwenter (1999) and del Moral (2004), is that the degree of commitment is based on mere inferences from the context. In such a pragmatic approach, the contribution of the preposition *de* (that is, the construction itself) and the conceptualization processes involved are totally ignored. Since we want to clarify the proper role of the speaker in the construal alternation, we turn to a more cognitive account.

4.1.2 Cognitive account

(*De*)*queísmo* typically occurs in complex clauses with animate subject and sentential complement. According to recent counts (De Mello 1995: 121) more than 80% of the cases are found in this environment. This explains why this context has received the most attention.

In line with a basic tenet of cognitive grammar, the *que/de que*-alternation is to be seen as a matter of construal. Far from being meaningless, the alternation can be assumed to have a crucial bearing on the relational profile. The context in which the alternation occurs, corresponds to what Achard (1998: 46), in his analysis of complex clauses in French, has coined “subject conceptualizing constructions” (CSC): “CSC verbs present the sort of mental operation the main clause subject performs on the complement content. In the CSC cases, the event in the complement is viewed as dependent on its perception, report, desire, etc.”

The content of the complement clause is hooked on the main, reporting, clause in two alternate ways. While *queísmo* is a way of transitivizing an otherwise intransitive construction, *dequeísmo* is a way of intransitivizing an otherwise transitive one. The \emptyset /*de* alternation thus hinges on how the dependence relationship between the reporting and the reported clause is conceived of. Especially crucial is the way the conceptualizer role of the subject entity, the “original” sayer-cognizer, is understood.

In both cases, the main, reporting, clause is conceptually dependent on the reported clause for its semantic completion, while at the same time it is the profile determinant of the composite construction: e.g., (18) designates a saying by an unknown individual (*un individuo*), not the duty of fighting for social equality. Yet, in the *de que*-construction the conceptualizing subject (*un individuo*) is not held speech-functionally responsible for the reported clause. The link between the current – reporting – and the represented conceptualizing situation (*llegue a decirme* ‘comes to tell me’) is of a weaker and more inferential nature. The echoed speech or thought is not primarily construed from the intensional perspective of the conceptualizing subject of the reporting clause,

but from the spatiotemporal deictic centre, i.e., the actual ground. The speaker is selecting the representation for current expressive purposes, thus downgrading the “original” sayer-cognizer’s expressivity. The preposition *de* introduces a mental space that is conceptually independent of the reporting clause: it signals appropriation by the current speaker.

In the transitive construction, by contrast, e.g. in (2), the speech or thought representation is understood with respect to the original sayer-cognizer (which may be the speaker in referential terms). It is presented in terms of reenactment. In this type of speech or thought representation, the conceptualizing subject’s deictic centre is fully operative. Without preposition, the illusion of mimesis is maintained, as the complement clause (CL₂) is construed with maximum objectivity from the vantage point of the referent of the main clause subject (C₁). By using the minimal subordination marking – the simple *que*-complementizer – the speaker makes the structure analogous to the unmarked accusative with nominal complements (cf. Delbecque 2002). Although the whole sentence of course represents the conceptualization of the speaker, the speaker’s role remains external to the scene, so that the referent of the main subject (C₁) is perceived as the sole conceptualizer of the content of the complement clause (CL₂).

In contrast, the oblique representation testifies to the speaker’s intervention: rather than simply echoing or reenacting, (s)he selects a thought or discourse representation. *De* marks the speaker’s intervention beyond the default conceptualization of the reporting clause (CL₁). It is a device for introducing a subjective speaker-oriented viewing arrangement into an otherwise objective construal of the complement scene (CL₂).³ By gaining independent access to the situation depicted in the complement, the speaker takes on a higher-order role as conceptualizer. This global account of the impact of the *que/de que* alternation on the viewing arrangement of conceptualizing subject (CSC) constructions is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: *The impact of the Ø/de alternation on the viewing arrangement of the conceptualizing subject constructions.* [C₀ stands for the speaker as conceptualizer, C₁ for the referent of the main clause subject, CL₂ for the complement clause.]

	viewing arrangement	conception of CL ₂
<i>que</i> (Accusative)	C ₁	solely of C ₁
<i>de</i> (Oblique)	C ₀	not solely of C ₁

The *que/de que* alternation is most commonly found with propositional attitude predicates that involve a kind of “report” of someone’s words or views (e.g. (1), (4), (5), (11), (13), (14), (15), (17)). The notion of speech or thought representation is to be taken in a broader sense, however. At a metarepresentational level, it also comprises mental state predicates (e.g. (2),⁴ (8)) and notional predicates (e.g. (3), (4), (7), (12)). And by extension, the alternation even affects

connective markers, such as the consecutive *de forma (de) que* ‘in a form (of) that’ (6), the temporal *después (de) que* ‘after (of) that’ (9), the concessive *a pesar (de) que* ‘in spite (of) that’ (10).

In a recent study, Delbecque (2006) therefore starts off from the partitive and extractive meaning of the preposition *de* to propose an account in terms of a part/whole-construal. By using a *dequeísmo*-construction, the speaker presents the proposition as one of the possible views that (s)he him/herself has in mind, i.e., as only *part of* a virtually wider picture. In other words, the *de que*-construction stands for a specific process of appropriation by the speaker who is gaining him/herself independent access to the situation referred to in the complement clause, beyond the discourse-internal perspective which is that of the conceptualizing subject of the main predicate that governs the complement clause. By shifting away from the more frequent transitive construction, the speaker downgrades the role of the conceptualizing subject and raises him/herself to the level of conceptualizer, stage-managing the relational profile of the speech/thought representation. Thus, rather than corresponding to weak commitment, *de que* involves high speaker *involvement* with reference to a specific background of personally held views.

The relation to the speaker’s ground makes for a supplementary meaning layer. In (13), for instance, the presence of the preposition conveys the image of a content being picked up from an external vantage point out of a stock of available comments. At the inferential level, the CL₂ content is not primarily relevant within the scope of the discourse space associated with the conceptualizing subject (*la gente*), but extends to the speaker’s current discourse space. The expression of disagreement, adduced by Bentivoglio & D’Introno (1977, cf. 4.1.1 supra) as the reason for using *de que*, is not part of the very meaning structure of the *dequeísta* construction but is expressed in the following utterance (*la verdad es que la enfermera nunca se endurece*, literally: ‘the truth is that the nurse never hardens’).

Queísmo-constructions, by contrast, are not characterized by such a selection involving a part/whole-relation: the speech or thought representation is conceived of as tied to the original speaker/cognizer. Since nothing (∅) intervenes, the deictic centre of the conceptualizing subject keeps its full value. In contrast to what the earlier hypotheses assumed, *queísmo*-constructions do not stand for strong commitment, but for low speaker *involvement*.

Such an account not only holds for cases of sentential complementation with verbal predicates. It also extends to the complementation of nominal heads expressing propositional attitudes such as *miedo* ‘fear’ (8) or *rechazo* ‘refusal’ (12). In (8), *miedo* is part of the (enlarged) complex predicate *tener [un] miedo [bárbaro] {de/∅} que*. In (12) the neuter pronoun *esto* retrieves the preceding propositional attitude nominal *rechazo*, thereby introducing speech or thought representation.⁵ The connective uses, for their part, are the outcome of grammaticalization processes tracing back to a verbal head, e.g. *pesar* ‘to weigh,

to (op)press' (10), or a nominal head, e.g. *forma (de) que* 'form, way of that' (6).⁶ In all cases, the representation can be accounted for in terms of the kind of relation the utterance bears to the discourse-internal vs. discourse-external perspective.

Adopting this notion of speaker involvement allows us to explain the cases that constitute counterexamples to the other accounts. Consider the *queísmo*-example in (17) again, where the speaker, a student, reports that "apparently there was a comment that (*Ø que*) I had no interest". There we pointed out that an analysis in terms of strong commitment would be incongruous, since the disagreement of the speaker with the content of the clause is clear from the context. The cognitive account resolves this paradox. Indeed, as postulated, involvement in this construction is low: the speaker remains backstage, suggesting she is not intervening in the conceptualization, the origin of which is left unspecified.⁷ Further contextual cues are needed to find out whether the opinion uttered is one of her own or not. In (17), she clearly does not adhere to it.

Furthermore, the cognitive hypothesis has considerably greater explanatory value than the other accounts in the literature, even in cases that seem to corroborate the pragmatic hypothesis. The contrast between the so-called "doubt" vs. "certainty" readings in (14) and (15), repeated below, becomes clearer in the light of the cognitive process capable of yielding such a pragmatic effect.

(14) – *Cuando es una verdadera amistad claro; se puede mantener una amistad a la distancia también.*

– *Claro; pero no garantizo que si yo por ejemplo también las circunstancias me obligarian a irme diez años afuera, eh, eso no sé, se disiparía bastante. ¿No? es decir, no sé hasta qué punto me escribiría todos los meses, por ejemplo. **Pienso de que** no, no sé; no... no... no tengo mi seguridad en eso.* [HC - Buenos Aires 77/12:14-24; García 1986: 57]

‘– When it is a real friendship, of course, you can also maintain a friendship at a distance.

– Of course; but I don't guarantee that if, for example, the circumstances also obliged me to go abroad for ten years, eh, I don't know, it would weaken quite a lot, wouldn't it? I mean, I don't know up to which point he would write me every month, for example. I think *of that* not, I don't know; I'm not... I'm not... I'm not sure about that.'

(15) – *Y vos, ¿qué decís de vos mismo? vos ¿sos un buen amigo?*

– *Sí, yo **pienso que** sí. Este...en...la...la amistad es una de las cosas que más o menos ando bien.* [HC - Buenos Aires 77/13:26-34; García 1986: 57]

‘– And you, what do you say about yourself? Are you a good friend?

– Yes, I think so. Eh... in... friendship is one of the things in which I'm doing quite fine.'

In (14), the speaker envisages the possibility that his friend would not write to him as one among various possible outcomes. Next to the overt first-person conceptualizing subject role (*pienso* ‘I think’) limited to the discourse space, the speaker endorses a higher-order conceptualizing role anchored in his actual deictic base, thus transcending the internal perspective. In (15), there is no such underlying conceptualization: the speaker identifies with the first-person conceptualizing subject-role in an unmarked, transparent way, without processing the answer against a composite, personal experiential background. If the speaker had said *pienso de que sí*, he would have given the impression that he left open other possibilities or that he might have lost sight of the situation, conveying a reading close to ‘to my best knowledge’.

If (*de*)*queísmo* induced a “doubt” (14) vs. “certainty” (15) reading, as claimed by García (1986: 57), inverting the type of complementation could be expected to induce the opposite outcome. Yet, the interpretation remains unaltered. This suggests that it does not hinge on the construal alternation but is licensed by independent contextual clues, viz., the double hesitation tag (‘isn’t it?, I don’t know’) in (14), and the personal pronoun (*yo*)⁸ and subsequent self-appraisal in (15). The notions of evidential and epistemic modality cannot fully capture the discourse effects triggered by the construal alternation, since the way a piece of information is accessed does not necessarily shed light on the degree of certainty regarding its validity or truthfulness.

All these examples show that the key to understanding this phenomenon is not the distinction between strong and weak speaker commitment, but the presence vs. absence of speaker involvement as a specific appropriation process. The distribution of the two constructions offers further evidence for this analysis. The skewing of the distribution at type, token and frequency level indeed supports the idea that the *que*-construction is the unmarked option both in probabilistic and in cognitive-functional terms. The availability of two constructional schemas – each yielding a proper meaning structure – is not to be confused with the relative ease and frequency with which these schemas apply with individual verbs. The vast majority, over five hundred fifty, take a Direct Object clause (Levy Podolsky (1983); Subirats-Rüggeberg (1987); Delbecque & Lamiroy (1999)). The number of verbs that take a *de que*-clause is nearly five times lower. Adding those that combine with a *que*-subject clause, another three hundred, makes the disproportion even more striking.

The significant difference at the level of the available lexemes (*types*) is further strengthened at the level of the frequency of use (*tokens*). While quite a few transitive verbs construed with *que*-clause rank high on the frequency lists, the intransitive ones construed with *de que*-clause occur only marginally, and are more likely to be found in written language, especially in fictional prose. The contrast thus operates both at type and at token level.

Likewise, all counts confirm that *queísmo* is quite common, *dequeísmo* rather marginal. The preference for the \emptyset -construal thus seems to hold at all

levels. The frequency differences are statistically so robust that they point to an underlying cognitive-functional regularity that can be formulated as follows: the minimal separation between head and complement iconically reflects that CL₂ remains within the scope of the conceptualizing subject C₁. As a transitivity device, *queísmo* brings the relational profile in conformity with the majority use. Put otherwise: it effects a shift from a marked to an unmarked paradigm.

Whatever the type of speaker or situation, the transitive construction unquestionably matches the scope of the speech or thought representation with the vantage point of C₁. The subordinate CL₂ exhausts what is relevant to the conceptualizing subject from within its discourse space, i.e. without extra projection from the speaker's actual deictic center.

The relative success of the oblique construal, on the other hand, is not unmotivated, either. It is revealing for the possibility of transcending the C₁-initiated conceptualization, inserting it into an ampler epistemic base, beyond the realm of C₁'s conscience, memory storage, creativity, perception. The alternative thus also obeys a proper language logic, the consistency of which has to do with overall functionality, economy and transparency. The balancing of markedness strategies is an element hereof.

Unlike *queísmo*, *dequeísmo* can only occur after a verbal head and yields an oblique construal that fits into the niche of the regular *de que*-complementation. This niche, however, is doubly marked: quantitatively by being very small, and qualitatively by comprising a significantly high rate of reflexive-marked predicates, often referred to as "pronominal verbs" in the Romance tradition (e.g. *arrepentirse* 'repent', *avergonzarse* 'shame o.s.', *beneficiarse* 'benefit', *burlarse* 'laugh at', *dolerse* 'mourn over', *percatarse* 'notice', *(pre)ocuparse* 'take care').

Unlike the pragmatic view of speaker commitment, the concept of speaker involvement allows us to analyse the alternation in a context-independent, speaker-related way. In everyday speech, the speaker is generally not interested in distancing him/herself from what (s)he is communicating. On the contrary, one generally tends to be highly involved in what one says or reports. Hence, rather than turning to an analysis resorting to truth conditions, which actually remain unchanged between *dequeísmo* and *queísmo* constructions, we consider it preferable to rely on a conceptualist account distinguishing between two types of viewing arrangement: a fragmentary view (*de que*) and a view matching that of the conceptualizing subject (*que*).

Since this account is not truth-conditional, it predicts the possibility of having a speech report introduced by *de que* even if at the same time it is stated that the reported speaker just said one single thing. It is not a matter of matching the extent of the reporting speech with the reported one in a quantificational sense. Rather, turning to *de que* is a way for the speaker to hint at a wider scope: the idea that there is more to the story can go back to the reported speaker but does not do so necessarily. It reflects first and foremost the actual speaker's

option. It is therefore found in all kinds of registers, going from informal chatting to careful, debating style. Simple *que*-complementation, on the other hand, is a device for signaling that the current speaker's option is one of refraining from opening up the discourse space, superimposing his/her actual perspective on it. This low-profile option is typical of journalistic reports (cf. Delbecque 2008). Conversely, this account also predicts the possibility of speech reports introduced by *que* in contexts in which the reported speaker manifestly said various things, which, actually, is the most current situation.

Additional inferences regarding the speaker's position, e.g. in terms of assertion/attenuation, certainty/doubt, direct/indirect evidence, have to be separated from the very meaning structure of the complementation type. Modal values, e.g. reliability and commitment, hinge on the meaning of the head predicate, and can vary somewhat according to the context and the hearer/reader's background knowledge and expectations.

To sum up, the *que/de que* alternation is not a matter of free variation. It has a semantic impact on the head-complement relation: it depicts a part vs. whole relation that functions as a device for modulating the relational profile of the complex clause in terms of viewing arrangement, and thus reflects one's choice to remain backstage as enunciator (*que*) or not (*de que*).

4.2 *The Spanish modals poder, deber and tener que*

In this section, we will deal with the different degrees of speaker commitment attributed to the three most common Spanish modal auxiliaries. *Poder* is the Spanish equivalent of 'can/may', *deber* can be translated by 'must', whereas *tener que* is, roughly speaking, the equivalent of 'have to'. In the Hispanic literature, a cline is posited from *poder* through *deber* to *tener que* in terms of weak, intermediate and strong speaker commitment (cf. Fernández de Castro 1999, Gómez Torrego 1999, Olbertz 1998). We will show that it is not easy to satisfactorily account for this gradience in terms of speaker commitment. From a conceptualist point of view, there seem to be different kinds of speaker involvement at stake in the conceptualization of the modal readings.

4.2.1 *Previous accounts*

The epistemic verb *poder* 'may' is most often defined in terms of the autonomous assessment of the possibility that the proposition expressed by the utterance corresponds to reality. Fernández de Castro (1999: 158) gives an elaborate semantic description of *poder* relying on Lyons's (1977) distinction between subjective and objective epistemic modality. Fernández de Castro (1999: 171) also claims that the context determines the epistemic, dynamic or deontic uses of *poder*, suggesting that there is only one meaning of *poder* with several contextual variants (see also Silva-Corvalán 1995: 73).

In the recent linguistic literature, the relation between "deontic" and "epistemic" uses of English *must* and its counterparts has been widely discussed

(cf. Bybee et al. 1994; Goossens 1999, 2000). In the Spanish linguistic tradition, the similarities between the two readings have not gone unnoticed either. Gómez Torrego (1999: 3348), for example, links the “likelihood” (*probabilidad*) reading of *deber* (*de*) in (19a) with an “obligation” (*obligación*) reading.⁹ That is, with *deber* the speaker presents a situation as “necessary” on the basis of “external or pragmatic circumstances”, while with *poder* (19b) no external evidence is assumed (Gómez Torrego 1999: 3348). With *deber* in (19a) there is a situation that induces the speaker to assume that his/her father is at home. Since the proposition is only true under the “condition” that nothing irregular happens, there remains a “margin of doubt” when *deber* is used.

(19) a. *Mi padre debe de estar en casa en estos momentos.*

‘My father *must* be at home at the moment.’

b. *Mi padre puede estar en casa en estos momentos.*

‘My father *may* be at home at the moment.’

Fernández de Castro (1999) and Silva-Corvalán (1995) refer to the obligation patterns in a more systematic way. Fernández de Castro (1999: 179-180) argues that what is communicated by means of *deber* is the “conviction that there exists a cause-effect relation” between the circumstances and the statement, which he calls an “illocutionary act different from a simple assertion, since it involves a ‘qualification of commitment’ by the speaker to the content of the message” [our translation]. Fernández de Castro (1999: 180) also observes that modal adverbs expressing strong likelihood, such as *seguramente* ‘certainly’ and *muy posiblemente* ‘very possibly’, can be used as paraphrases of epistemic *deber*, while epistemic *poder* corresponds to low likelihood, as expressed by adverbs such as *quizás* ‘maybe’ or *talvez* ‘perhaps’.

Olbertz (1998: 410) argues that the inferential modality expressed by *deber* followed by an infinitive differs from epistemic modality as regards “the source of the speaker’s commitment to the truth of the proposition”. While in the case of epistemic modality proper the source is the speaker with his/her personal convictions and beliefs, in the case of inferential modality, the speaker relies on evidence from which (s)he infers that the proposition must be true. In other words, with *deber* speaker commitment is perceived to be strong, but speaker involvement is medium since the qualification expressed by *deber* has more to do with external evidence than with personal endorsement.

The modal *tener que* is often argued to score highest on the commitment scale. Fernández de Castro (1999: 190) presents corpus data indicating that the “maximal” speaker commitment of *tener que* receives contextual support from the presence of elements such as *por fuerza* ‘by force’ and *estoy segura* ‘I am sure’, as in (20a).¹⁰ Other examples of Fernández de Castro (1999: 191) show that mental predicates such as *sospechar* ‘to suspect’ (20b) express too weak a

speaker commitment to combine with *tener que*, in contrast with *creer* ‘to think’, which easily combines with *tener que* (20c).

(20) a. *Vamos, que no le gusta [una determinada ciudad]. Pues también **tendrá que tener** cosas bonitas, hombre, estoy segura: monumentos artísticos, palacios [...]*

‘Thus, he doesn’t like it [a certain city]. Well it **must** also have beautiful things, you know, I am sure; artistic monuments, palaces.’

b. *¿La policía sospecha que **tuvo que tratarse** de un atentado.*

‘The police suspects that it **had to** be an attack.’

c. *Sí, creo que **tiene que haber** todavía una bolsa por lo menos.*

‘Yes, I think that **there** must be at least one bag.’

[examples from Fernández de Castro 1999: 164-165]

Olbertz (1998: 396, 413) argues that when using *tener que* + infinitive, the speaker commits him/herself to the truth of the proposition and that the source of the judgment is “general knowledge of the world and/or of the situation, which is not made explicit”. This leads her to hold that *tener que* does not express inferential modality. By contrast, with *deber*, the speaker’s commitment to the truth of the proposition depends on his/her data: “if the data turn out to be wrong, the speaker is no longer committed to the truth of the proposition”. This leads Olbertz (1998) to contend that *tener que* “expresses unconditioned modal necessity, whereas *deber* expresses conditioned modal necessity”. Olbertz bases her argument on the different distribution of negation, which we reproduce in (21). The infelicitous negation with *tener que* in (21a) is assumed to be illustrative of the fact that “strong truth commitment can be expressed in positive terms only” (Olbertz 1998: 405). In (21b) the negation falls within the scope of *deber* and refers to the proposition: the weaker commitment does not block the negation. In sum, the perceived speaker commitment is even stronger with *tener que* than with *deber*.

(21) a. * *No **tiene que ser** fácil para ti.*

‘it **must** not be easy for you.’

b. *Tú claro, de estas cosas no **debes estar** muy al tanto.*

‘You, of course, **are not** very much acquainted with these things, **I suppose.**’

[examples from Olbertz 1998: 405]

Now, how can we account for these degrees of speaker commitment; in other words, to what extent is the speaker him/herself committed? The previous studies mention “obligation” or “cause-effect relations” among other things, but do not explain how these dimensions relate to speaker commitment. Moreover, it is not clear how the statements that conform to the rules of general knowledge expressed by *tener que* bear a high degree of speaker commitment, while this

external knowledge actually blocks further speaker involvement. In the next section, the continuum from weak to strong speaker commitment will receive an alternative account.

4.2.2 Analysis

In this section, we will show that (pure) speaker involvement decreases from *poder* to *tener que*: *poder* reflects the speaker's own evaluation of the likelihood, *deber* is based on the conceptualizer's reasoning, most often triggered by circumstantial evidence or speaker knowledge, whereas *tener que* involves deductive logical operations that often rely on external laws (cf. Cornillie 2004). As with the (*de*)*queísmo* phenomenon, so-called weak commitment correlates with strong speaker involvement, and vice-versa. The account below is based on a correlation between the degree of speaker involvement and the cognitive image schema of the modal.

We provide a cognitive-linguistic analysis of modal auxiliaries, which makes allowances for the polysemy of modal readings, that is, it takes into account the relationship between the dynamic (capacity), the deontic (obligation) and the epistemic/evidential readings. In a cognitive analysis, modality is analyzed in terms of the force dynamics or interplay of forces present in the dynamic and the deontic readings (cf. Pelyvás, 1996, 2000; Langacker 2000; Cornillie 2006). A dynamic reading presents a force relation between the referent of the grammatical subject (trajector) and the situation expressed in the infinitive (landmark) without clear counterforce. The deontic readings, by contrast, display both forces and counterforces. From a cognitive-linguistic point of view, the epistemic/evidential readings are the result of the speaker-conceptualizer's subjective construal (subjectification) of the interplay of forces associated with the dynamic and deontic basic readings of these verbs. Diachronically, the subjectification toward the epistemic readings of modals is based on the progressive attenuation of the interplay of forces to a scene in which no other force is involved. Different degrees of subjectification point to the varying extent to which the speaker downplays the dynamic or deontic reading.

Now, how is it that speaker involvement is higher with *poder* than with *tener que*? We will argue that the degree of speaker involvement in the epistemic/evidential reading correlates with the subjectification of the force structure belonging to the basic deontic or dynamic readings of the auxiliary. The more the speaker-conceptualizer is involved in the subjective construal, the more the deontic or dynamic force is subjectified. We will now present the epistemic readings of *poder*, *deber* and *tener que* as the result of the subjectification of different force and counterforce types (see also Cornillie 2005).

All three verbs can be accounted for in terms of attenuation of the force dynamics. First, epistemic *poder* yields a *potential reality* reading including

different possible realities, with the speaker not deciding upon any of them, as in example (22).

- (22) ... *una de las cosas que quizás... eh... actualmente más me ha llamado la atención es... eh... eh... la importancia que le está dando el cine a lo estético. Quizás puede ser por la competencia que hay con otros medios de comunicación de masas.* [HC - Santiago M8]

'... one of the things that at the moment strikes me most is the importance that the film industry attributes to the esthetic. This *may* be due to the competition with other mass media.'

This is in line with the dynamic reading of *poder*, the subject entity of which bears the potential to perform some purposeful action and could but does not necessarily experience a counterforce. Epistemic *poder* does not express strong likelihood. In other words, the weak commitment of the speaker to the likelihood expressed in epistemic *poder* is characterized by a weak interplay of forces. The same holds for the deontic reading: when a speaker grants permission by means of *poder*, (s)he removes possible counterforces but cannot impose anything on the addressee or the doer, who is the one who finally decides what to do. The same schema holds for requesting something with the only difference that the roles of the speaker and the addressee are reversed: now it is the addressee who can remove counterforces. Interestingly, not only are counterforces removed, there are no strong dynamic or deontic overtones that hinder epistemic speaker involvement. Thus, weak speaker commitment goes hand in hand with high speaker involvement, which consists in removing possible counterforces in the dynamic, deontic and epistemic readings.

Second, the epistemic/evidential reading of *deber* proceeds from a combination of potential and projected reality (cf. Langacker's *dynamic evolutionary model*). The deontic reading of this verb corresponds to the speaker's volition, on the one hand, and the addressee/doer's unspecified reluctance to perform the purposeful action, on the other (cf. Pelyvás 2000: 244). Hence, the speaker's force cannot remove the counterforces located in the addressee/doer. In other words, the degree of speaker commitment is considered intermediate in view of the reluctance of an entity external to the speaker. The deontic interplay of forces is the basic schema of *deber* and precedes other uses of the verb. The shift from a deontic to an epistemic/evidential reading can be explained by means of the subjectification of the force relations, i.e. the shift from an objective view to a subjective view of the force dynamics.

In epistemic/evidential readings, the deontic force structure of *deber* is strongly but not completely subjectified. In the epistemic/evidential readings, which attribute a significant role to the speaker, inductive or abductive inferences still present the strong forces and counterforces typical of the deontic reading.¹¹ Thus, subjectification turns the reluctance associated with the deontic reading into inductive or abductive inferences which are non-logical in nature.

In (23), for instance, the speaker's abductive reasoning, made explicit in the sentence preceding *deber*, is not to be equated with complete certainty.

(23) *Bueno yo... yo oí en el radio de que uno de los rehenes... había logrado escaparse por una ventana pero antes había tratado de suicidarse ¿no? lo cual me hace creer que bueno que el pobre debe de haber estado sufriendo horrores.* [HC - Caracas M15]

'Well I... I heard on the radio that one of the hostages succeeded in escaping through a window, but that he had tried to commit suicide before, hadn't he?, which makes me think, well, that the poor guy *must* have been suffering tremendously.'

This example testifies to the three stages of non-logical inferential reasoning. First, the speaker takes in the information heard (on the radio): one of the hostages had managed to escape after a suicide attempt. Second, the information is connected to the speaker's general knowledge and leads to the hypothesis that kidnappings are generally painful and that no one attempts to commit suicide without serious reason. Third, the resulting conclusion is an inference that combines the speaker's knowledge and the information received: *debe de haber estado sufriendo* 'he must have been suffering'. The speaker's choice of *deber* indicates that this conclusion has been substantiated as much as possible, but yet remains not fully ascertainable. Thus, epistemic *deber* correlates with weaker speaker commitment than is expressed by means of a simple, unmodalized assertion. At the same time, *deber* displays intermediate speaker involvement: the deontic dimension is still present, which may be due to the speaker's inability to remove possible counterforces. As for the epistemic/evidential readings, the subjectified counterforces result in inductive and abductive inferential processes which the speech participants can further validate with their own knowledge of the outside world.

Another point to be noticed is the use of *deber* + preposition *de* in Spanish to mark the epistemic/evidential reading (23). Along the lines of the *dequeísmo* analysis, one could interpret the possibility of inserting *de* as enhancing the speaker/conceptualizer involvement in viewing the scene. The preposition *de* can then be seen as explicitly marking the speaker's involvement in selecting one among various possible outcomes of an evaluative process of inferential reasoning. In sum, the construction with *de* reduces the chance of conveying deontic overtones.

Third, the epistemic/evidential modal reading of *tener que* 'have to' is somewhat different from that of *deber*, in that it expresses the highest likelihood that the proposition is true, but does not express complete certainty. The force of the statement is stronger, but so are the counterforces. With deontic *tener que*, the speaker usually invokes external arguments to commit the doer to the realization of the purposeful action. These arguments can be the volition of other unspecified participants or logical requirements associated with the action

imposed. The subjectification of this pattern is very limited, as witnessed by the strong deontic overtones. The restrictions on negation in (21) show that *tener que* has strong deontic overtones which are hard to subjectify.

The subjectification of force can also help account for the strongly deductive epistemic/evidential reading, which involves a logical relation between the premises and the conclusion. Deductive inferential *tener que* is often accompanied by a conditional, causal or temporal clause with an explicit minor premise, as in (24), where we have a *si* ‘if’ clause.

- (24) *Pero si [la música] tiene ciento dos años y todavía se conoce y se... y se toca tiene que tener calidad ¿verdad?. ... exacto.... y el músico que lo compuso tenía que ser de calidad. [HC - Caracas M7]*
 ‘But if the music is one hundred and two years old and it is still known and it is played, it **must** be of quality, true? ... exactly ... and the musician who wrote it must be of quality.’

The speaker argues that insofar as century-old music is still played, one can conclude that it meets high quality standards. The minor premise is explicitly mentioned in the *si*-clause, while the major premise is that good things last. In (25), deductive inferential *tener que* combines with a causal *porque*-clause. The inferential statement is introduced by a *si*-clause situated on a higher syntactic level.

- (25) ... Claro que te digo que *si* las llevó a un buen joyero a España el joyero le **tiene que haber dicho** que eran muy baratas porque eran azulísimas, Claudia. [HC - Mexico M5]
 ‘Sure, I am telling you that if he brought them [the jewels] to a jeweler in Spain, the jeweler **must** have said to him that they were very cheap because they were very blue, Claudia.’

In (25) the speaker formulates a deductive conclusion on the basis of information about the jeweler and the jewels themselves. When similar premises are present with *deber*, which is rarely the case, they usually do not orient toward deductive inferential conclusions, while they typically do so with the evidentially used *tener que*.

There are strong correlations between the epistemic/evidential reading and the deontic reading of *tener que*: just as the speaker turns to external grounds, instead of relying on personal ones, to convince someone to do something, (s)he also invokes external arguments when using *tener que* as an epistemic/evidential modal to reach a deductive inferential conclusion. Thus, the logical inferences rely on rules and principles used in the world “out there”. As a matter of fact, the speaker involvement conveyed by non-deontic *tener que* is restricted to the speaker’s viewing of the explanatory power of generally accepted criteria that

are used as implicit premises of the statement, rather than the personal commitment to the likelihood that the state of affairs is real. Whereas *deber* (*de*) still leaves a margin for speaker involvement, *tener que* seems to block it. With respect to the preposition *de*, *tener que* not only lacks this possibility, it is instead tied to the complementizer *que*, which favors an objective construal of the proposition, detaching it from the speaker.

In sum, our investigation into how modal auxiliaries can express degrees of speaker commitment has led us to analyze the conceptual background of the epistemic and evidential readings. The network of basic deontic and dynamic readings of an auxiliary form turns out to determine the extent to which the conceptualizer/speaker has to subjectify the non-epistemic readings. Downplaying the deontic and dynamic interplay of forces turned out to be a crucial element for speaker involvement (through subjectification) to be possible. Thus, instead of explaining speaker commitment in terms of the speaker's stance in communicative exchanges, we have examined how the speaker proceeds as a conceptualizer to reach the degrees of commitment presented in previous accounts. The paradoxical conclusion is that strong and weak commitment corresponds to low and high speaker involvement, respectively.

5. Conclusion

The cognitive approach presented in this paper sheds new light on the weak vs. strong speaker commitment distinction. Unlike pragmatically-oriented accounts, our analyses of *(de)queísmo* and epistemic/evidential readings of modal auxiliaries highlight the specific involvement of the speaker/conceptualizer in construing the meaning of the construction. We have shown that it is possible to do justice to the crucial conceptualizing role of the speaker without invoking contextual indices or dimensions external to the speaker him/herself.

Contextual inferences apply but to a minority of cases of *(de)queísmo*, and their explanatory value is doubtful. It is more insightful to explain the alternation between oblique and bare complementation in terms of part/whole construal from the point of view of the speaker, viz., in terms of his/her involvement in the conceptualization process. As for the modal verbs *poder*, *deber* and *tener que*, they lend themselves to extended epistemic/evidential readings that present a degree of speaker involvement that stands in an inverse relation to the deontic and dynamic force they convey; and the more the force structure can be subjectified the more the speaker is involved in the subjective construal.

These case studies prove the utility of setting apart the notion of speaker involvement from that of speaker commitment. Although both notions are concerned with how the speaker views a state of affairs, speaker involvement

ultimately differs from speaker commitment in that it focuses on the cognitive principles that make speakers construe expressions the way they do.

Bert.Cornillie@arts.kuleuven.be, Nicole.Delbecque@arts.kuleuven.be

Notes

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² The adjectives *dequeísta* and *queísta* are derived from the nouns *dequeísmo* and *queísmo*.

³ It would be a step too far, however, to consider it an instance of subjectification in the sense of an "expression of the speaker's belief or speaker's attitude towards what is said" (Traugott 1995: 31).

⁴ *Acordarse* 'to remember', as used in (2), at the same time denotes mental processing.

⁵ In (12), the neuter demonstrative pronoun *esto* 'this' mediates between the nominal predicate *este rechazo* 'this refusal' and the complement clause. This way, the propositional content is retrieved in an evocative, vague and approximate manner, i.e., without labelling it in a straightforward way, unlike what occurs in (3) with the adjectival head *mucho más difícil* 'much more difficult', and in (4) and (7) with the nominal heads *la idea* 'the idea' and *el sistema* 'the system'.

⁶ The adverbial head of *después* 'later' (9), for its part, goes back to the Latin adverb *post*, preceded by the prepositions *de* and *ex*.

⁷ Instead of the impersonal (*hubo* 'there was') the speaker could have used a personal construction, e.g. *alguien hizo un comentario* 'somebody made a comment'. In that case, it would have been even more apparent that the perspective of *un comentario que* 'a comment that' remains exclusively linked to the conceptualizing subject (*alguien* 'somebody').

⁸ Since person marking is morphologically incorporated in the verbal ending, subject expression is discursively marked (cf. Delbecque 1992). Using the personal pronoun subject remains the minority option even in regions where it seems to be less marginal than in peninsular Spanish.

⁹ Normative Spanish grammar restricts *deber de* to epistemic/evidential readings. Actual language data, however, show that the construction with *de* also shows up very often in deontic contexts.

¹⁰ *Tendrá*, literally 'will have', represents the so-called modal use of the simple future, conveying maximal plausibility from the perspective of the speaker.

¹¹ It is worth mentioning that inductive inferences are the most frequent evidential readings of *deber* (see Cornillie 2007: chapter 7).

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