

## Towards an Operational Notion of Subjectification

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### 1. The Problem of Gradience in Subjectification

In a series of papers since the 1980s, culminating in the monograph *Regularity in Semantic Change* (Traugott and Dasher 2002), Elizabeth Traugott has elaborated a theory of diachronic meaning change grounded in the notion of subjectification, broadly construed as the tendency for meanings to change away from objective description of the external situation and towards the expression of the speaker's internal perspective or attitude. Subjectification is specifically a “*gradient* phenomenon, whereby forms and constructions that at first express primarily concrete, lexical, and objective meanings come through repeated use in local syntactic contexts to serve *increasingly* abstract, pragmatic, interpersonal, and speaker-based functions” (Traugott 1995:32; our emphasis).

But despite the characterization of subjectification as a gradual process, and as involving an increase in subjectivity during the diachronic trajectory of a given form or construction, the methodology of subjectification (and of semantic change more generally) has tended not to reflect such gradience. Nearly all research on subjectification has relied on the intuition of the analyst as the last word for determining whether a form-meaning pairing FM1 is of greater or lesser subjectivity than another, related form-meaning pairing FM2. As a result, the identification and distinguishability of FM1 and FM2 as distinct polysemies of the same lexeme or construction has been crucial to the subjectification enterprise.

Our goal in this paper is to provide a first approximation towards an operational notion of subjectification, using quantitative methods to compare the distribution of a form-meaning pairing across different context-types during its diachronic trajectory. Such an approach has at least two potential advantages over the traditional methodology of subjectification analyses. First, it would permit the analyst to ascertain degree(s) of subjectification in case studies where distinct polysemies of a given form/construction are not clearly determinable, as well as in the more familiar instances of putative separate polysemies. Second, it would establish one means for measuring degree(s) of subjectivity synchronically, thereby providing a synchronic test to complement the diachronic analysis.

Consider English *must* (Traugott and Dasher 2002:2, 127-132), the canonical subjectification example of the shift from deontic to epistemic modality.

- (1) a. They must be married, I demand it. (Deontic, diachronically earlier)  
b. They must be married, I am sure of it. (Epistemic, diachronically later)

The problem, in our view, is verifying the intuition that the epistemic modal use of *must* in (1b) is more subjective than the deontic use in (1a), if subjectivity is taken to represent “a speaker’s... perspective or point of view in discourse” (Finegan 1995:1). That is, it is not always evident that one polysemy constitutes a more subjective use than the other(s). Indeed, Langacker (1990:34) has characterized subjectivity as a notion not only of “subtlety” but of “near ineffability.” Furthermore, even if we accept the solution of ascribing polysemies to the problem of the ineffability of linguistic subjectivity, there are cases of subjectification that do not appear to involve polysemy, such as “experiential” progressives (Wright 1995) or “hot news” perfects (Schwenter 1994), where it is difficult to make a case for polysemy in the sense of a meaning shift across conceptual/functional domains. For example, while “hot news” uses of perfects involve (subjective) speaker assessments of relevance/information value, they are not easily distinguishable as a separate polysemy.

We propose that, in such cases at least, subjectification is manifested in increased use in contexts that display greater subjectivity. In other words, it is not so much the development of new polysemies (whose delimitability and distinguishability is oftentimes unclear) as the expansion of the functional range of a form or construction that evidences subjectification. It is by establishing these subjective contexts that we can operationalize subjectification, and provide greater empirical verification for this notion in semantic change.

## 2. A Case Study: Nominal to Concessive Grammaticization

In the 12<sup>th</sup> c. Old Spanish example in (2), the noun *pesar* means ‘sorrow, regret’, and the *de* ‘of’ + human adnominal phrase, *del rey* ‘of the king’, is a genitive denoting the sentient being who suffers the sorrow. In a modern Spanish example like the one in (3), however, Spanish *a pesar de (que)* ‘in spite of (that)’ is a typical concessive connective expressing “although p, q” in which both component clause propositions p, q are entailed and there is a conflict between them (cf. König 1985:265). Clearly between (2) and (3) grammaticization has occurred, whereby a nominal construction (preposition-noun-adnominal) has evolved into a connective.

- (2) PREP. *a* ‘to’ + NOUN *pesar* ‘sorrow’ + GENITIVE (SUFFERER)  
fue preso Daniel, **a pesar del rey** que lo querie enparar  
‘Daniel was imprisoned, **to the regret of the king** who wanted to protect him’  
(XII, La Fazienda de Ultra Mar, f. 67r)

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(3) CONCESSIVE CONNECTIVE

este piso **a pesar de** que tiene sesenta y cinco metros, parece que es más grande

‘this apartment **in spite of** having 65 meters, seems larger’

(XX, COREC, CCON007A.95)

We get from human sufferers like ‘the king’ in (2) to entire clauses as in (3) via a process of syntactic generalization. Table 1 shows the gradual expansion of the syntactic contexts of *a pesar de*: from human adnominals (100% in 16<sup>th</sup> c. data), to inanimates (55% in the 17<sup>th</sup> c.), then infinitives (17% in the 19<sup>th</sup> c.) and finite clauses (38% in present-day oral data).<sup>1</sup>

Table 1: Syntactic Generalization of *a pesar de* + X: Adnominal NP > Proposition

Century	Human	Inanim.	Infinitive	Clause	<i>todo/eso</i>	TOTAL
XVI	100%	--	--	--	--	27
XVII	45%	55%	--	--	--	156
XVIII	1%	93%	<1%	3%	<1%	142
XIX	1%	65%	17%	7%	7%	150
XX	<1%	50%	8%	17%	18%	286
Oral	<1%	29%	8%	38%	19%	113

Hand in hand with syntactic generalization is semantic change. The notion of sorrow deriving from the noun *pesar* becomes more abstract, first generalizing to a broader notion of opposition and thence to one of contradiction. In the 15<sup>th</sup> c. example in (4.1), *el diablo* ‘the devil’ is the bearer of sorrow, indicated by the weeping. In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> c. examples in (4.2), *a pesar de* comes to be used to indicate humans standing in opposition, as with the peasants with the axes ‘in spite of’ whom the hero got away (4.2a), and then inanimate entities constituting obstacles, as with the soporific *ungüento* ‘ointment’, ‘in spite of’ which the subject awoke (4.2b). These early inanimate adnominals are entities that constitute patent obstacles. The 19<sup>th</sup> c. inanimate example in (4.3) illustrates cases that go one step further, from obstacles to the notion of contradiction or incompatibility. Here the entity (the uniform) is evaluated as being potentially in contradiction with the clausal proposition (“militarism displeases me”).

<sup>1</sup> Data were extracted from CORDE ([rae/es/cordentet/html](http://rae/es/cordentet/html)) (Libros, Relato extenso novela y otras formas similares, España; 1500-1511, 1513-1546, 1600-1650, 1786-1799, 1950-1960; material in verse excluded); for the 19th c. (1870-1886) *Pepita Jiménez*; *La Regenta*, *Doña Perfecta*, *Los pazos de Ulloa* and for the 20th c. *La tabla de Flandes*, *La tempestad*; 20th c. oral data from COREC ([www.lllf.uam.es/~fmarcos/informes/corpus/corpusix.html](http://www.lllf.uam.es/~fmarcos/informes/corpus/corpusix.html)) and *El habla de la ciudad de Madrid* (Esgueva and Cantarero, 1981, Madrid: CSIC).

- (4.1) SORROW / REGRET (Old Spanish, 12<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> c.) →  
**a pesar del diablo**, con muchas oraciones le fue su carta visiblemente tornada, **llorando los diablos** muy agriamente por aquella ánima que perdían  
'**to the sorrow of the devil**, with many prayers his letter [signing over his fate] was reversed, **the devils weeping** bitterly for that soul they were losing'  
(XV, Martínez de Toledo, Corbacho, Primera parte, XIII)
- (4.2) → OPPOSITION / OBSTACLE →
- (4.2a) HUMAN: mas él salió muy presto d'él, **a pesar de los villanos** que con las hachas de todas partes lo herían  
'but he got away quickly from it [the slain horse], **in spite of the peasants** who with axes were coming at him from all directions'  
(XVI, Feliciano de Silva, Lisuarte de Grecia)
- (4.2b) INANIMATE: ordenó el cielo que, **a pesar del unguento**, Carrizales despertase  
'the sky ordered that, **in spite of the ointment**, Carrizales awaken'  
(XVII, Cervantes, Novelas Ejemplares, El celoso extremeño)
- (4.3) → CONTRADICTION / INCOMPATIBILITY  
**A pesar de mi uniforme**, me desagrada el militarismo  
'**In spite of my uniform**, militarism displeases me'  
(XIX, Pérez Galdós, Doña Perfecta, XX)

The semantic change depicted above is one whereby external opposition becomes a polyphonic structure involving superimposition of point of view. In his theory of polyphony, where "tout énoncé est une sorte de petite pièce de théâtre, est un sorte de petit dialogue" ('every utterance is a kind of small drama, a kind of small dialogue'), Ducrot (1996:97) distinguishes speakers who physically produce utterances from sources of point of view, or "enunciators." For example, negation presents two points of view, or puts two enunciators on the scene: in "John is not coming. And that saddens me because it would please me," the pronouns *that* and *it* refer to two different viewpoints, "not coming" and "coming," respectively.

Concessive *a pesar de* creates a polyphonic structure. In (5), the first viewpoint is that "the original name is Villa Rica, therefore it is *rica* 'rich'." This is the normative viewpoint, as the normal standard is that descriptive names of cities are felicitous. The second viewpoint agrees that "the original name is Villa Rica" but takes exception to the first viewpoint that "therefore it is *rica*." In (6), the abstract noun *sutileza* 'subtlety' is a "lexical enunciator," wherein point of view is contained within the lexical item itself, an evaluative adjective or expression of a quality (Ducrot 1996:89): the first viewpoint is 'subtle' therefore not 'simple', but the speaker takes exception to this with the viewpoint that, in this case at least, *sutil* 'subtle' is indeed *sencillo* 'simple'. In (7), the Infinitive

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provides the first, normative viewpoint that imputes certain qualities to mathematicians—they do not sense tombstones rising beneath their feet; the second viewpoint is that the mathematician in question actually did. It is worth noting that 42% (24/57) of all *a pesar de* + Infinitive tokens are with *ser* ‘to be’ and a predicative denoting a quality, which serves as a lexical viewpoint.

- (5) De rica tampoco tiene nada, **a pesar de que su nombre original es Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz**  
‘Neither does it have anything rich, **in spite of its original name being Rich City of Vera Cruz**’  
(XX, Fernando del Paso, Noticias del imperio, IV, 3)
- (6) siguiendo desde lejos al espíritu sutil, sencillo, **a pesar de tanta sutileza**,  
de la santa enamorada de Cristo  
‘following from a distance the subtle spirit, simple **in spite of so much subtlety**, of the saintly lover of Christ’  
(XIX, Alas “Clarín”, La Regenta II, XXI)
- (7) El matemático sintió que se levantaba bajo sus pies la losa... pero no, no se levantaba: es que él creyó notarlo así, **a pesar de ser matemático**  
‘The mathematician felt that the tombstone was rising beneath his feet ...but no, it wasn’t rising: it’s that he thought he noted it, **in spite of being a mathematician**’  
(XIX, Pérez Galdós, Doña Perfecta, XVII)

Remember that early concessive *a pesar de* occurs only with human adnominals (Table 1). In the 17<sup>th</sup> c. example in (8a) we have a situation, marrying someone, and the opposing point of view of the parents. In the 20<sup>th</sup> c. example in (8b), matrimony into another crown usually means allegiance to that crown, or at least the speaker presents this assumption as the normative viewpoint (which the speaker may well share), but disagrees in this case and presents a different point of view: Beatriz’s allegiance is to Borgoña, not Ostenburg. From a diachronic perspective, what has changed is that *a pesar de* goes from presenting the parents’ point of view to presenting the speaker’s point of view, that is, from expressing the opposition of an outside, objective force to expressing the speaker’s viewpoint as different from another, normative, one that the speaker also acknowledges. Thus, whereas in (8a) there was a situation (‘be my husband’) and an opposing force (against ‘his parents’), in (8b) we now have the superimposition of one point of view (*jamás ha dejado de ser de Borgoña* ‘she has never ceased to be of Borgoña’) on another (*por matrimonio, de Ostenburg* ‘by marriage, she is of Ostenburg’).

- (8) a. SITUATION vs. OPPOSING FORCE →  
con la promesa de ser mi esposo, **a pesar de sus padres**, que para otra le guardaban  
'promising to be my husband, **in spite of his parents**, who were keeping him for another'  
(XVII, Cervantes, Novelas ejemplares, Las dos doncellas)
- b. → SUPERIMPOSITION OF ONE POINT OF VIEW ON ANOTHER  
...Beatriz de Ostenburg, que, **a pesar de su matrimonio**, por linaje y orgullo de sangre jamás ha dejado de serlo de Borgoña  
'Beatriz of Ostenburg, who, **in spite of her marriage**, for lineage and pride of blood has never ceased to be of Borgoña'  
(XX, Pérez-Reverte, La tabla de Flandes, IX)

In short, *a pesar de* has grammaticized from an originally nominal construction to a complex concessive connective. Subjectification in this case lies in the evolution of the opposition by an outside force into the superimposition of the speaker's viewpoint onto the viewpoint of another.

### 3. Measures of Subjectification

As is typical in subjectification studies, up to this point we claim to have established subjectification by comparison of form-meaning pairings across time periods, where more recent examples are considered more speaker-attitude-based than earlier, less subjective ones, relying exclusively on our intuitive assessment as analysts. We propose to take an important step further and operationalize subjectification, thereby subjecting our analysis to independent verification. Three distinct empirical measures in the grammaticization of *a pesar de* emerge from the data which can be regarded as correlates of greater vs. lesser subjectivity, and therefore as reflecting the diachronic subjectification process: coreferentiality, subjunctive forms, and preposing.

#### 3.1. Subject Coreferentiality

If the subjectification of *a pesar de* involves a change from the notion of opposition by another (person) to the superimposition of the speaker's viewpoint on another viewpoint, then one way to measure subjectification is to look at the subject of the verb and the notional subject of the abstract noun, that is, the referent of the possessive pronoun or the adnominal noun accompanying the abstract noun. Opposition by another would tend to be coded in non-coreferentiality, as in the examples in (9). While the aunt's *bondades* 'kindnesses' and the canon's *amistad* 'friendship' are not quite opposing forces to the speaker's leaving, they nevertheless constitute potential contradictions to leaving that originate (in persons) outside that *yo* 'I'. Similarly, the *laconismo* 'laconism' of the chess player, though no longer an opposing force, may be an impediment to or in conflict with Julia's knowledge and similarly originates outside Julia.

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- (9) ADNOMINAL GENITIVE IS NOT COREFERENTIAL WITH MAIN VERB SUBJECT
- a. A pesar de sus, bondades de Vd., querida tía, **a pesar de la amistad** cordial del señor canónigo, quizás decida yo marcharme...  
'**In spite of** your kindnesses, beloved aunt, and **in spite** of the cordial friendship of the canon, I may decide to leave'  
(XIX, Pérez Galdós, Doña Perfecta, XIV)
- b. Había algo más, supo Julia, **a pesar del laconismo** del jugador de ajedrez,  
'There was something more, Julia realized in spite of the laconism of the chess player.'  
(XX, Pérez-Reverte, La tabla de Flandes, XII)

In contrast, there cannot conceivably be an external opposer or source of incompatibility when the subjects are coreferential. In (10), pacifism is incompatible with head bashing, in the first viewpoint, but the second viewpoint is that (the) pacifism (of D. Luis) combined with (his) dignity was not. In the second example, young players are not normally mainstays of their team, but this one is. Here there is not even a tenuous link to an external source. Rather, the quality denoted by the abstract noun contains a point of view, is a "lexical enunciator," in and of itself, without any association to another person.

- (10) ADNOMINAL GENITIVE IS COREFERENTIAL WITH MAIN VERB SUBJECT
- a. D. Luis, **a pesar de su**, carácter pacífico [...] no acertaba a compaginar con su dignidad el abstenerse de romper la crisma al conde desvergonzado  
'D. Luis, in spite of his, pacific character [...] was unable to reconcile with his dignity abstaining from bashing in the impudent count's head'  
(XIX, Valera, Pepita Jiménez)
- b. Un jugador, que, **a pesar de su**, juventud, [...], está siendo uno de los de los baluartes de Elgorriaga Bidasoa  
'A player, who, **in spite of his**, youth, [...], is being one of the bulwarks of Elgorriaga-Bidasoa'  
(XX, COREC, ADEP017C.4)

The data thus suggest a verifiable subjectification hypothesis: as opposition of another evolves into speaker viewpoint superimposed on another viewpoint, subjects should go from non-coreferential to coreferential. This may be akin to what Traugott (1995:38-39) has called "realignment of the syntactic subject", a shift from the *sujet de' énoncé* (subject of the proposition) to *sujet d' énonciation* (subject of the utterance) (cf. Benveniste 1966). Table 2 shows a clear pattern of increases of cases of coreferentiality, from 41% in 17<sup>th</sup> c. data, to 52% in 18<sup>th</sup>, 55% in 19<sup>th</sup>, and 66% in 20<sup>th</sup> c. data. These results indicate gradience in subjectification: for concessive *a pesar de*, subjectification is manifested quantitatively in increasing coreferentiality between the genitive of inanimate adnominals and the subject of the main clause.

Table 2: Coreferentiality (between main verb subject and human genitive of *a pesar de* + inanimate)

	<u>Coreferential</u>	<u>Non-coreferential</u>
XVII	41% (15/37)	59% (22/37)
XVIII	52% (32/62)	48% (30/62)
XIX	55% (23/42)	45% (19/42)
XX	63% (40/63)	37% (23/63)

*Proportion coreferential XX vs. XVII: Chi-square = 4.961238295, p = 0.0259*

### 3.2. Subjunctive Verb Forms in *a pesar de que*

A second measure of the subjectification of *a pesar de* is extension to subjunctive verb forms. Up to now, all the examples we have seen of “*a pesar de que p, q*” entail the truth of *p*, as is said to be generally true of concessives. Indeed, entailment of both their component clauses is what semantically distinguishes concessives from conditionals, according to König (1985:264). So, for example, in (11), *p* is “the apartment has [a size of] 65 meters,” with indicative verb morphology, and *q* is “it seems big.” Here *a pesar de que* can be considered factive; that is, it commits the speaker to the truth of the proposition. Subjunctive morphology may allow an irrealis interpretation of *p*, where the content of the *a pesar de que* clause is non-realized or where epistemic attitude toward the realization of the proposition is indicated. In (12), *nos parezca* [SUBJ] *como trivial* ‘this may seem [SUBJ] trivial to us’ indicates a lesser degree of commitment by the speaker to the truth of the proposition. Subjectification, then, lies in the development of irrealis uses of formerly solely factive *a pesar de que p*.

(11) FACTIVE *a pesar de que* + Indicative

No, es que este piso **a pesar de que tiene** [IND] sesenta y cinco metros, parece que es más grande  
 ‘it’s that this apartment **in spite of having** [IND] 65 meters, seems larger’  
 (XX, COREC, CCON007A.95)

(12) NON-FACTIVE *a pesar de que* + Subjunctive

Independientemente de que no sea lo mejor para la nutrición del niño, es básico que ella se siente muy a gusto y muy segura como madre, si ella hace esto que, a su vez, le fue enseñado. Es decir, esto **a pesar de que externamente nos parezca** [SUBJ] *como trivial*, es muy importante, y nos exige un respeto para cada una de las costumbres culturales de cada grupo. ‘Independently of whether it is best for the child’s nutrition, it is fundamental that she feels very comfortable and assured as a mother, in doing that which, in turn, she was taught. That is, this **in spite of externally seeming** [SUBJ] *perhaps trivial to us*, is very important, and requires respect for each one of the cultural practices of every group.’

(XX, México, *Habla culta*, 347)



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A complementary angle from which we can consider the subjectivity of subjunctive morphology has to do with its function as a marker of presupposed information (Lunn 1989). The subjunctive allows speakers to explicitly acknowledge a point of view present in the discourse, perhaps one held by their interlocutor, as though to recognize, “I know this was said” or “I know you said this.” Then the speaker can go on to present their own take on that point of view. *A pesar de que* + Subjunctive can thus serve an interactional function. In (13), in the last line, speaker I says, *es una verdad, a pesar de que no sea* [SUBJ] *consciente* ‘it is a truth, in spite of not being [SUBJ] conscious’. The subjunctive acknowledges speaker E’s idea that “it is not conscious” and points to speaker I’s own take on the matter: “it’s still a truth.”

- (13) E: ...porque también tiene algo--o mucho ¿verdad?--- de humano. Quizá a eso te refieras tú, también ¿no?  
I: Sí. Pero una verdad humana no conscienzada.  
E: [...] No conscienzada ¿cómo? [...] Está medio rara esa palabra.  
I: ¿Cómo te diré..?  
E: Bueno, que no es consciente al... al...  
I: Que no es consciente; pero es una verdad, **a pesar de que no sea consciente** ¿no?

‘E: ...but also because it’s got something—or a lot, right—of the humane. Perhaps that’s also what you’re referring to, no?  
I: Yes. But a human truth not consciensized.  
E: [...] Not consciensized, how? [...] That word’s a little strange.  
I: How can I put it...?  
E: Well, that it is not conscious in...in...  
I: That it is not conscious; but it is a truth, **in spite of** not being [SUBJ] conscious, right?’

(XX, México, *Habla culta*, 372-373)

Table 3 shows a statistically significant increase of subjunctive morphology between 19th and 20th c. CORDE data, from 3% to 10%. This constitutes one more operational measure of gradience in subjectification.

Table 3: Subjunctive in *a pesar de* + *que* clause

	<u>Subjunctive</u>	<u>Indicative</u>
XIX	3% (10/300)	97% (290/300)
XX	10% (77/752)	90% (675/752)

*Chi-square* = 13.482331, *p* = 0.0002

### 3.3. Preposing

A third subjectification measure involves the position of the *a pesar de* phrase with respect to the main verb. *A pesar de* follows the main verb in nearly two-thirds (50/77) of the 17<sup>th</sup> c. tokens. In the postposed examples in (14), the adnominal *tiempo* ‘time’ is non-referential, *el mundo* ‘the world’ in spite of whose envy the promise will be kept is non-specific (14b), and *la versificación* ‘the versification’ is a general characteristic of poetry (14c). By contrast, in (15), the *a pesar de* phrase precedes the main verb. In such preposed examples, examination of the larger discourse context suggests that the *a pesar de* adnominal has a referential tracking function (Thompson 1997:69), already or to be talked about. In (15a), the *a pesar de* adnominal *estas reflexiones* ‘these reflections’ refers to earlier text in which the subject was described as ‘thinking’ and ‘pondering’; in (15b), *el llanto* ‘the crying’ sets up a following query about ‘where it hurts’; and in (15c), *el mal tiempo* ‘the bad weather’ is talked about in subsequent lines (‘downpour’, ‘like a cold and violent gust’).

(14) *a pesar de* FOLLOWS MAIN VERB

- a. cuyas obras y comedias merecen eternas alabanzas, **a pesar del** tiempo  
‘whose works and comedies deserve eternal praise, **in spite of** (the passage) of time’  
(XVII, Alonso de Castillo Solórzano, Aventuras del Bachiller Trapaza)
- b. cumplirá la palabra de la prometida ínsula, **a pesar de** la envidia y de la malicia del mundo  
‘he will keep his word on the promised island, **in spite of** the envy and malice of the world’  
(XVII, Cervantes, Quijote II, XXXIII)
- c. fuera del número de las sílabas, nada tenía de poético, **a pesar de** la versificación  
‘outside of the number of syllables, there was nothing poetic about it, **in spite of** the versification’  
(XVIII, Pedro Montengón, Eusebio)

(15) *a pesar de* PRECEDES MAIN VERB

- a. **A pesar de** estas reflexiones que no podían ser más racionales, no estaba tranquilo  
‘**In spite of** these reflections that could not be more rational, he wasn’t tranquil’  
(XIX, Leopoldo Alas “Clarín”, La Regenta I, XIV)
- b. le tomó en brazos, pudiendo ver que **a pesar del** mugre, la roña, el miedo y el llanto, era el más hermoso angelote del mundo  
‘he took him in his arms, discerning that **in spite of** the filth, the dirt, the fear and the tears, he was the most beautiful angel of the world’  
(XIX, Emilia Pardo Bazán, Los pazos de Ulloa, Tomo I, II)
- c. **A pesar del** mal tiempo seguía saliendo al monte cada día [...] A veces regresaba inesperadamente, en pleno aguacero; irrumpía en el cuartito con

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descuidada brusquedad, como una ráfaga fresca y violenta del temporal exterior

‘**In spite of** the bad weather he continued to go out to the mountain every day [...] Sometimes he would return unexpectedly, in the middle of a downpour; he would erupt into the little room with careless brusqueness, like a cold and violent gust of the storm outside’

(XX, Elena Soriano, *Caza menor*)

This preposing of *a pesar de* may be taken as an indication of widening of predicational scope and topicalization of the concessive relation as this is conceived by the speaker (cf. Schwenter and Traugott 1995:261). Table 4 shows an increase in preposed *a pesar de* (tokens with inanimate NP adnominals) from 35%, about one third, in the 17<sup>th</sup> c., to over 60% in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> c. data. Together with coreferentiality and subjunctive verb forms, increased preposing indicates a gradual subjectification process.

Table 4: Preposing: *a pesar de* + inanimate precedes main verb

	<u>Preceding</u>	<u>Following</u>
XVII	35% (27/77)	65% (50/77)
XVIII	55% (69/126)	45% (57/126)
XIX	62% (58/94)	38% (36/94)
XX	61% (101/166)	39% (65/166)

*Proportion preposed XVII vs. XVIII: Chi-square = 7.438770001, p = 0.0064*

#### **4. Conclusion**

Because subjectification research has concentrated on intuitively clear cases of diachronic change whereby “meanings become increasingly based in the speaker’s subjective belief state/attitude toward the proposition” (Traugott 1989:35), it has so far not been subject to many challenges. However, there are many more cases of meaning change where analysis beyond the intuitive assessment of greater or lesser subjectivity is called for—and indeed would seem necessary in order to corroborate and strengthen the strong hypothesis that subjectification sets forth.

In this paper, we have presented clear empirical—quantitative—evidence for the GRADUAL and INCREASING subjectification of the concessive *a pesar de* construction in Spanish. There is no sharp polysemous break apparent in the diachronic period (from the 16<sup>th</sup> c. onwards) that we have analyzed: *a pesar de* throughout conventionally encodes concessive meaning. Nevertheless, the results of our analysis strongly uphold the theory of subjectification. Rather than the development of new polysemies, subjectification is evidenced in changing distribution patterns, in particular, the expansion of the functional range of the construction. We would venture to hypothesize that even semantic change involving polysemy, like the development of epistemic from deontic *must*, should be manifested in changing distribution and co-occurrence patterns.

In broader perspective, operationalizing subjectification in empirical case studies is crucial if general “structural patterns of subjectivity” (Scheibman 2002) are to be discovered and verified. Indeed, our view is that this is the only way to progress beyond the overwhelmingly intuitive notion of subjectification as it is currently understood.

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