On some epistemic access effects
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1. Introduction

- Epistemic access and source of knowledge have been subject of extensive research (via the category of 'evidentiality').
- A specific mode of epistemic access is given by introspection (involved in what is known as 'self-knowledge' or 'self-awareness' in philosophy of mind).
- The aim of the present talk is showing that epistemic access and the notion of self-knowledge can be profitably taken in in explaining some phenomena involving the semantic properties of subordinate clauses, and specifically 'subjunctive obviation' (see (1)) and some related phenomena.

  (1) # *Penso   che   io parta   domani.*
       think-1SG   that   I   leave-SUBJ.1SG   tomorrow
       Lit. 'I think that I leave tomorrow.'

- I'll focus on data from Italian involving:
  o the first person;
  o doxastic attitude predicates (*pensare* 'think', *credere* 'believe', *sospettare* 'suspect', *temere* 'be afraid', etc.).
- I'll try here to explore a hypothesis resorting to the notion of self-knowledge, as generally understood in the field of philosophy of language and philosophy of mind, that is knowledge of one's own mental state (Shoemaker 1996, Burge 1988, 1996, 2007, Recanati 2007).
- I take this hypothesis to be in line with much work done in recent years w.r.t. to volitional predicates (Stegovec 2018, Kaufmann 2019, Goncharov 2020), which I claim to be a subset of the whole empirical framework involving subjunctive obviation.

2. Subjunctive obviation

- In subjunctive argument clauses the subject cannot refer to the same individual the matrix subject refers to (compare (1) and (2)-(4)).

  (2) *Penso   che   Pietro   parta   domani.*
       think.1SG   that   Pietro   leave-SUBJ.1SG   tomorrow
       'I think that Pietro is/is going to/will leaving tomorrow.'

  (3) *Penso   che   partirò   domani.*
       think-1SG   that   leave-IND.FUT-1SG   tomorrow
       'I think that I'll leave tomorrow.'

(4)   *Penso   di   partire   domani.*
        think-1SG P-C leave-INF   tomorrow
        'I plan to leave.'

- Some subjunctive clauses do not trigger obviation (obviation 'weakening'; see Ruwet 1984, Raposo 1985, Farkas 1992, Schlenker 2005).

(5) ✓ *Spero   che io possa   partire   domani.*
        hope-1SG that I can-SUBJ.1SG leave   tomorrow
        'I hope I can leave tomorrow.'

(6) ✓ *Credo   che io sia   stato ingannato.*
        believe-1SG   that I am.SUBJ.1SG been deceived
        'I think I have been deceived.'

(7) ✓ *Temo   che io abbia   fatto   molti   errori.*
        suspect-1SG   that I have-SUBJ.1SG   made   many   mistakes
        'I suspect I have made many mistakes.'

⇒ **Why do only some subjunctive clauses (apparently) trigger obviation?**

- Several hypotheses have been explored to answer this question:
  (a)   Subjunctive obviation is caused by a Binding domain extension owing to the semantic properties of subjunctive (Picallo 1984, Raposo 1985, a.m.o.).
  (b)   Subjunctive obviation originates from Competition between subjunctive and infinitive (Farkas 1992, Schlenker 2005) – compare (1) and (4).
  (c)   Subjunctive obviation (w.r.t. 'decisive modality') has recently been claimed to stem from a semantic conflict (Stegovec 2018, Kaufmann 2019, Goncharov 2020, Szabolcsi 2020).
- I'll pursue here a hypothesis in line with (c) (subjunctive obviation arises from a semantic clash), which however expands on some intuitions of theories in (b), and particularly on Schlenker's idea of 'event *de se*' (admittedly 'extremely preliminary' in its original formulation).

3. 'Event de se' and epistemic access

- Farkas (1992) and Schlenker (2005) point out that obviation appears to involve not only the interpretation of the embedded subject but also the semantics of the embedded clauses as a whole.
- Farkas (1988: 36) claims that in obviative subjunctive clauses the subject is in a 'responsibility' relation with the situation expressed in the embedded clause; in nonobviative subjunctive clauses the responsibility relation does not hold between the embedded subject and the situation expressed in the embedded clause.

(8)   *Responsibility relation (RESP)*
        Two place relation holding between an individual *i* and a situation *s* just in case *i* brings *s* about, i.e., just in case s is the result of some act performed by *i* with the intention of bringing *s* about".

- Schlenker (2005) introduces the idea of 'event *de se*' in order to refine Farkas's (1992) analysis. *De se* attitudes have two properties:
  (i) they are about the attitude holder ('Aboutness condition', Pearson 2016: 694);
  (ii) the attitude holder is aware that the attitude is about herself ('Awareness condition', *ibid.*)

3.1. 'Event *de se*' and epistemic perspective

- Scenario 1: "A man, to be called 'Quintus', who is brought unconscious to a military tent, but on gaining consciousness suffers from amnesia, and during the next months becomes a war hero and gets lost in combat and completely forgets the military chapter of his life. Later on Quintus studies all accounts of the war hero" (Castañeda 1968: 449).

  (9)   # *Sono un eroe!*
        # I am a hero.

  (10) *Quest'uomo è un eroe!*
        This man is a hero.

  (11) *Quintus pensa   di   essere   un   eroe.*
        Quintus thinks   C-P   be-INF   a   hero

  (12) *Quintus pensa   che   lui stesso   sia   un eroe.*
        Quintus thinks   that   he himself   is-SUBJ   a   hero

- Scenario 2: As he reads Quintus realizes that the person he is reading about is actually himself.

  (13) *Comincio   a   pensare che   io sia   un   eroe.*
        I start   C-P   think   that   I am   a   hero

  (14) # *Comincio   a   pensare di   essere   un   eroe.*
        I start   C-P   think   C-P   be-INF   a   hero

- Higginbotham (2003) distinguishes between remembering/imagining 'from the inside' (see Shoemaker 1968 and Pryor 1999) and 'by inferring' (by recollecting some details about one's past experiences, see scenario 2).
  ➤ The idea of remembering 'from the inside' clearly concerns the philosophical notion of self-knowledge.

3.2. Self-knowledge

- Self-knowledge (or 'self-consciousness', 'self-awareness') is defined as knowledge of one's own mental states (beliefs, wishes, emotions, sensations, etc.; Shoemaker 1996, Burge 1988, 1996, 2007, Recanati 2007, Gertler 2015).
- It relies on a unique method of knowledge: introspection.
  ➤ Introspection guarantees a direct, non-inferential access to mental states;
  ➤ Introspection is highly epistemically secure (if a speaker utters sentence (15)A, it would be nonsensical to ask the question in (15)B; by contrast, this question is not odd if the speaker utters sentence (8)A, which does not involve introspection).

(15) A: I feel pain.
    B: #How do you know that you feel pain?/Why do you think that?

(16) A: He feels pain.
    B: How do you know that you feel pain?/Why do you think that?

➢ Introspective knowledge is such that the agent is authoritative (under normal circumstances self-knowledge is endowed with the presumption of truth.

(17) A: I feel pain.
    B: # No, you don't.

(18) A: He feels pain.
    B: No, he doesn't.

- Self-knowledge has clear relations to grammatical evidentiality, i.e. the morphosyntactic category indicating the source and the reliability of information (Chafe and Nichols 1986, Rooryck 2001; the kind of evidential source involved here may be personal experience evidentiality, see Willett 1988, Davis et al. 2007, or so-called ego-evidentiality, see Garrett 2001).
- Doxastic predicates (predicates, like *believe*, *think*, etc.) can function as indirect or inferential evidentials (Izvorski 1997, Rooryck 2001, Simons 2008).
- In (19) the information conveyed in the embedded clause is not completely reliable and the source of the information is not the speaker's own perceptual experience.

(19) I think it's raining.

(20) It's raining.

- (19) would be infelicitous in a scenario where, for instance, the speaker (assuming she is not experiencing some sort of delusion) is seeing from his window that it is raining, or where he is walking in the rain. In such scenario (20) is on the contrary felicitous.
  o Gazdar (1979) and Levinson (1982) point out that belief verbs introduce clausal implicatures as in (21).

(21) *a* believes ϕ
       a. +> $\neg$ [*a* knows ϕ]
       b. +> $\diamond \neg \phi$

  o See also Kaufmann's (2019) Epistemic Uncertainty Condition which I take can be very naturally extended from decisive modality to doxastic modality:

(22) Epistemic Uncertainty Condition (EUC)
       In uttering a sentence translated as $\Box^B p$, speaker S holds both p and $\neg p$:
       $\diamond^{Bs} p \wedge \neg \diamond^{Bs} p$

➢ *These observations suggest that clauses expressing self-knowledge cannot be embedded under doxastic predicates*: a clash between evidential sources would obtain.

- Embedding predicates introduce the information expressed in the embedded clause either as not reliable (to different extents) or as indirect or inferred; on the contrary, self-knowledge is introspective and reliable.
- The status of sentences like (1) may derive from a conflict between the evidential nature of doxastic predicates and the propositional content of the embedded clause, provided that it is object of self-knowledge (that is, introspective, directly accessible, non-inferential knowledge)

(23) Hypothesis:
α V ϕ_α, where
(i) α is an attitude holder
(ii)   V is a doxastic predicate and
(iii) ϕ_α is a proposition the attitude holder can retrieve through introspection.

- If a clause expresses self-knowledge, then it cannot be embedded under a predicate that implicates that the propositional content of the embedded clause is indirect or inferential.

4. Deriving obviation

4.1. Present subjunctive as a futurate

(1)   # *Penso   che   io parta   domani.*
think.1SG   that   I leave-SUBJ.1SG tomorrow
Lit. 'I think that I leave tomorrow.'

- In sentence (1) the embedded eventuality most naturally refers to a future time reference, although no future morphology occurs
  - the embedded clause is 'futurate'

  'a sentence with no obvious means of future reference, which nonetheless conveys that a future oriented eventuality is planned, scheduled, or otherwise determined' (Copley 2008).

4.2. Futurate propositions as plans

- Copley (2008): futurates assert the existence of an entity (the 'director') that
  (i)   has the desire for a plan to be realized and is committed to the plan being carried out;
  (ii)   has the ability to act to the effect that the plan is realized.
  - Because of this, an embedded meteorological verb sounds much less natural in the subjunctive than in the indicative in embedded clauses selected by doxastic predicate (see (24) and (25)).

(24) # *Penso   che   domani   piova.*
think.1SG   that   tomorrow   rains-SUBJ.3SG
Lit. 'I think tomorrow it rains'.

(25) *Penso   che   domani   pioverà.*
think.1SG   that   tomorrow   rains-FUT-3SG
Lit. 'I think tomorrow it rains'.

➢ Quite obviously, plans are mental state, which, as such, are object of self-knowledge in the normal case

    (26) A: I'll have a coffee.
           B: # How do you know that?

- The director may be determined contextually or may be accommodated (Copley 2008: 270).

    (27) I'm leaving tomorrow.

  ○ In sentence (27) the presupposed director corresponds by default to the speaker.

- In embedded clauses the director may correspond to the subject, it can be established contextually, or it can be accommodated.

    (28) *Il mio collega mi ha detto che Pietro parte domani.*
          The my colleague me has said that Pietro leaves tomorrow
          'My colleague told me Pietro is leaving tomorrow.'

  ○ In (28), the leaving event may be planned by the embedded subject himself or by the matrix subject colleague (and even by another contextually relevant agent).

4.3. Obviation as a semantic conflict

- The embedded clause in (1) is futurate; it involves a plan and asserts the existence of a 'director' conceiving the plan and having the desire for it to be brought about.
- If in sentence (1) the director corresponds to the speaker (and subject of the embedded clause), the embedded clause expresses a self-ascription of a plan, which is introspectively accessible, and consequently highly epistemically reliable.
- Belief predicates function as indirect evidentials, so sentence (1) indicates that the information conveyed in the embedded clause is *not* epistemically reliable from the point of view of the attitude holder (the sepaker).
- A semantic conflict arises between the semantic of the doxastic predicate and the embedded proposition and obviation obtains.

4.3.1. Nonobviative indicative clauses

- The hypothesis explored here predicts that obviation does not arise if the propositional content of the embedded clause is not accessed through introspection.
- Future tense complement clauses are a case in point.

    (3) *Penso   che partirò   domani.*
          think-1SG that leave-IND.FUT-1SG tomorrow
          'I think that I'll leave tomorrow.'

- Future tense predicates do *not* generally express plans.

(29) # *Domani piove.*
    Lit. 'Tomorrow it rains.'

(30) *Domani pioverà.*
    'Tomorrow it's going to rain.'

4.4. Other obviative clauses

- The analysis does not require that the embedded clause be futurate in order for obviation to obtain: obviation is predicted to obtain whenever self-knowledge is potentially involved in the embedded clause.
- Progressive and habitual eventualities: in the normal case a speaker is aware about what she is doing and what her habits are; they may involve self-knowledge (thus, if (31)A and A' are truthfully asserted, it would be nonsensical to question them, as in (31)B).

(31) A: I'm reading a book.
    A': I read the newspaper every day.
    B: # How did you get to know that?

- Obviation also arises when the embedded clause in the subjunctive refers to progressive and habitual eventualities:

(32) # *Penso   che io stia   leggendo il   giornale.*
    think-1SG that I am.SUBJ   reading   the newspaper

(33) # *Penso   che io legga   il   giornale ogni   mattina.*
    think-1SG that I read   the newspaper every morning

5. Obviation weakening

- The hypothesis explored here predicts that obviation obtains if and only if the embedded clause expresses introspective knowledge
- Thus, one expects that examples (5) to (7) do not to involve introspective knowledge because they are nonobviavive.

5.1. Modal eventualities

(5) *Spero   che io possa   partire   domani.*
    hope-1SG that I can-SUBJ.1SG leave   tomorrow
    'I hope I can leave tomorrow.'

- The fact that one can reply as in (34)B to sentence (34)A shows that this type of modality does not express introspective knowledge.

(34) A: *Posso uscire subito, se voglio.*
        'I can go out immediately, if I want'.
    B': *No, non puoi!*
        'No, you can't!'
    B": *Cosa te lo fa pensare?*
        What makes you think so?

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➢ The fact that obviation does not occur in sentence (5) is expected.

5.2. Passive eventualities

    (6)   *Credo   che io sia   stato ingannato.*
             believe-1SG   that I am.SUBJ.1SG been deceived
             'I think I have been deceived.'

- One can reply as in (35)B to a sentence like (35)A.

    (35) A: I believe I have been deceived.
          B: What makes you believe so?

➢ No introspective knowledge, hence no obviation!

5.3. Past eventualities

    (7) ✓ *Temo   che io abbia   fatto   molti   errori.*
             suspect.1SG   that I have.SUBJ-1SG   made   many   mistakes
             'I suspect I have made many mistakes.'

- Past eventualities can be recollected introspectively (Higginbotham's 'remembering from the inside') or 'by inferring'.
- In the first case one expects that an attitude towards a past eventuality must be obviative.

    (36) [Scenario: the speaker has just eaten an ice-cream (and does not suffer from short term memory loss)]
         # *Penso che io abbia mangiato un gelato.*
         I think I have just eaten an ice-cream.

- Remembering by inferring is *not* introspective: one expects that obviation will not occur.

    (37) [Scenario: the speaker suffers from short term memory loss; he has just eaten an ice cream, but cannot recollect it]
         ✓ *Penso che io abbia mangiato un gelato.*
         I think I have just eaten an ice-cream.

➢ Sentence (7) is fine provided that the speaker has not introspective knowledge about her own past actions.

    (38) A: *Temo   che io abbia fatto   molti errori.*
           suspect.1SG   that I have.SUBJ-1SG made   many mistakes
           'I suspect I have made many mistakes.'
         B: *Come fai dirlo?*
         What makes you think so?

6. Some consequences of the analysis

6.1. Epistemic access and mood

- Obviation may occur no matter what the mood selected by the main predicate is, as long as a semantic conflict occurs between the semantics of the matrix verb and the semantic of the embedded clause.
- In Italian semifactive verbs (*sapere* 'know', *scoprire* 'discover', *rendersi conto* 'realize' etc.), select for indicative embedded clauses (excluding indirect questions), as the following example shows:

  (39) *Ho saputo che Maria è partita.*
       have known that Maria is.IND left
       'I have come to know that Maria has left.'

  o In using semifactive verbs, one implicates that the source of information is indirect. Sentence (39), for instance, is normally *infelicitous* in a context where the speaker has witnessed Maria's leaving.
- If the embedded clause expresses a proposition whose source can only be introspection, obviation is expected to occur.

  (40) # *Ho saputo che ho il mal di testa.*
       Have.1SG known that have-IND.1SG a headache
       'I've come to know that I've a headache.'

  ➢ Sentence (40) would not be infelicitous in a scenario where the speaker wonders whether the pain she is feeling is actually a headache or only a mild discomfort and is subsequently reassured that what she is feeling is actually a headache.
  ➢ Crucially, in such scenario the information expressed in the embedded clause is not introspective!

6.2. Competition

- According to the present analysis, competition between subjunctive and infinitive is not predicted to affect the interpretation of the embedded subject.

6.2.1. Oblique experiencers

- In Italian some psychological predicates, like *piacere* 'please', select an oblique experiencer (see Belletti-Rizzi 1988).

  (41) *Mi piace questo.*
       1SG.DAT likes this
       'I like this.'

- In infinitival clauses PRO can only be a canonical subject (see example (42)b): it cannot be an oblique DP (see example (43)b).

(42) a. *Pietro   teme questo.*
Pietro   fears this
'Pietro is afraid of this.'

b. *Pietro   ha   detto di   PRO temere   questo.*
Pietro   has   said C-P PRO fear-INF this
'Pietro has said he's afraid of this.'

(43) a. *A   Pietro   piace   questo.*
To   Pietro   likes   this
'Pietro likes this.'
b. * *Pietro   ha   detto di PRO piacere questo.*
Pietro   has   said C PRO like-INF this

- It is possible to build examples where the embedded clause in the subjunctive contains a psych-verb selecting for an oblique experiencer (see example (44)).

(44) *Dubito che questa situazione gli piaccia.*
Doubt that this situation him.DAT likes
'I doubt that he likes this situation.'

- Clauses including psych-verbs typically express mental states; self-ascribing this predicates expresses self-knowledge (cf. (45)).

(45) A: I like ice-cream.
B: # How did you get to know that?

➢ Clausal arguments of doxastic predicates having a psych-verb with a quirky subject referring to the attitude holder should be ungrammatical, because a conflict arises between the semantics of the matrix verb and the embedded clause expressing self-knowledge.

(46) # *Suppongo che mi piaccia il gelato.*
suppose-1SG that me.DAT likes.SUBJ ice-cream
'I suppose I like ice-cream.'

➢ Since sentence (46) does not have an infinitival competitor, its infelicity is completely unexpected under competition-based theories.

6.2.2. Epistemic modals and epistemic access effects

- Epistemic modals cannot select for a control infinitival argument clause (Epstein 1984, Bhatt and Izvorski 1998).

(47) a. * It is probable/likely to read the newspaper.
b. * *È probabile leggere il giornale.*

(48) *È probabile che piova.*
Is probable that rains.SUBJ
'It is probable that it will rain.'

- Epistemic modals are relative to a 'judge', i.e., the person in view of whose evidence an epistemic possibility or necessity is asserted (the speaker, if not differently specified, see Lasersohn 2005).
  - ➢ Because epistemic modals are uttered in view of some evidence – that is, they cannot express introspective, direct knowledge (sentence (48) would be infelicitous if uttered by a speaker walking in the rain) according to the hypothesis (23), a proposition expressing self-knowledge cannot be embedded under an epistemic modal:

(49) # *È probabile che io abbia il mal di testa.*
     is probable that I have-SUBJ the headache
     lit. 'It is probable that I'm having a headache.'

  - ➢ Since epistemic modals cannot select for infinitival clauses, the unavailability of the first person in example (49) remains unexplained under competition models.

7. Conclusion and suggestions for further research

- Epistemic access appears to play a role in the interpretation of embedded clauses.
- Subjunctive obviation derives from a semantic clash between the interpretative properties of the attitude predicate and those of the embedded clause.
- Subjunctive obviation obtains when the embedded clause refers to a proposition accessed via introspection: introspective source of the embedded proposition is incompatible with attitude predicates whose semantics calls for an indirect epistemic access to the proposition referred to by the embedded clause.
- Further research should address the following questions:
  - o How to 'translate' the analysis to predicates involving the third person?
    - ➢ Obviation is someway less prone to weakening with predicates in the third person.

(50) ? *Pietro₁ pensa che pro₁ possa partire domani.*
     Pietro thinks that *pro₁* can-SUBJ leave-INF tomorrow
     'Pietro thinks he can leave tomorrow.'

(51) ? *Pietro₁ pensa che pro₁ sia stato ingannato.*
     Pietro thinks that *pro₁* be.SUBJ been deceived
     'Pietro thinks he has been deceived.'

(52) ? *Pietro₁ pensa che pro₁ abbia fatto molti errori.*
     Pietro thinks that *pro₁* have.SUBJ made many mistakes
     'Pietro thinks he has made many mistakes.'

  - o Subjunctive and infinitive: how do they differ w.r.t. epistemic access?

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