Action sensitivity in grammar

Subjunctive obviation: Kempchinsky (2009)

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1 Subjunctive obviation: basic facts

- In many European languages (notably in Romance, but also in Slavic, Hungarian, Greek), complement clauses can appear in the indicative or subjunctive mood. In some cases, both are possible, in other cases matrix predicates select the subjunctive mood (desideratives, directives).[1]

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(2)  a.  Me molesta que el tren siempre llegue tarde.
         ´It bothers me that the train always arrives (S) late´

     b.  Me molesta que el tren siempre llega tarde.
         ´It bothers me that the train always arrives (I) late´


(5)  a.  El maestro quiere que Arturo se calle/*calla.
         ´The teacher wants that Arturo be quiet (S/*I)´

     b.  Irene me pidió que le prestara/*presté dinero
         ´Irene asked me that (I) lend (S/*I) her money´
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Fact 1: obviation

- *Subjunctive obviation* (also *disjoint reference effect, (generalized) subject obviation*) refers to the observation that the subject of a subjunctive clause cannot refer to the same individual as the subject of the matrix clause.

(1)   a.   Yo$_i$ quiero que *pro*$_{*i/j}$ baje a la calle.
           I want that *pro* go-down.SUBJ.1SG/3SG to the street
      b.   [El jefe del departamento]$_i$ insistía en que *pro*$_{*i/j}$ enseñara esa clase.
           the chair of the department insisted on that *pro* teach.SUBJ.1SG/3SG that class
      c.   *Tú siempre deseas que *pro* salgas primero.
           you always desire that *pro* go-out.SUBJ.2SG first

- If the complement is in the indicative, coreference is possible:

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[1] 1 Examples in the typewriter font are from Kempchinsky (1986).

b. Ana$_i$ admitió que [pro]$_i$ estaba equivocada.

'Ana admitted that (she) was (I) wrong'

Fact 2: infinitives

- Subjunctive obviation is not found with infinitives:

(5) a. *Fred$_i$ quiere que [pro]$_i$ gane la lotería.

'Fred wants that he win (SUBJ) the lottery'

b. Fred$_i$ quiere [PRO$_i$ ganar la lotería]

'Fred wants to win the lottery'

Fact 3: objects

- Subjunctive obviation does not affect objects.

c. Animé a Elisa$_i$ a [que *pro*$_i$ estudiara en el extranjero].
'I encouraged Elisa that she study (SUBJ) abroad.'

d. La$_i$ animé a [que *pro*$_i$ estudiara en el extranjero].
'I encouraged her (ACC) that she study (SUBJ) abroad.'

Fact 4: weakening with reduced agent control

- Speakers accept coreferential subjects in passive sentences, sentences with modals, and sentences with a focused subject in the subjunctive clause.

(11) a. % [El niño]$_i$ fue forzado a que *pro*$_i$ tomara la medicina.
'The child was forced that he take (SUBJ) the medicine.'

b. % Ana$_i$ espera que *pro*$_i$ sea elegida para el puesto.
'Ana hopes that she be (SUBJ) elected to the position.'

c. % José$_i$ espera que *pro*$_i$ pueda terminar el proyecto a tiempo.
'José hopes that he be able (SUBJ) to finish the project on time.'

d. % [La ministra]$_i$ insiste en que ELLA$_i$/[ella misma]$_i$ presida la sesión.
'The minister insists that SHE/she herself chair (SUBJ) the session.'

2   Historical note: Binding Theory approaches

- Principle B of the Binding Theory (Chomsky 1981, 1986) was used to explain why *him* in (1) cannot refer to *John*, but in (2), it can.

(1) John$_i$ saw him$_{*i/j}$ in the mirror.

(2) John$_i$ said that Alex$_j$ saw him$_{i/*j/k}$ in the mirror.

- **Principle B:** a pronoun must not be bound in its 'binding domain'. X *binds* Y means that X is co-indexed with Y and X c-commands Y. For simplicity, let us assume that the relevant binding domain is a tensed clause.

- To explain subjunctive obviation using Principle B, it has been proposed that (for one reason or another) the matrix and the subjunctive clauses constitute one binding domain (Picallo

1985; Kempchinsky 1986).

(3) [$_{domain}$ yo$_i$ quiero que pro_i baje (SUBJ) a la calle]

(4) [$_{domain}$ Ana$_i$ admitio [$_{domain}$ que pro_i estaba equivocada (IND)]]

Does this simplified system based on Principle B account for Facts 2-4?

3 Proposal in Kempchinsky (2009)

- Kempchinsky (2009) combines two ideas:

    - (i) subjunctive sentences are parallel to imperatives in that "they denote events or states of affairs which do not obtain in the actual world W at the moment of speaking" (p. 1795).

    - (ii) models of evaluation are represented in syntax

3.1 (i) Subjunctives are like imperatives

- Imperatives and subjunctives are pragmatically similar:

(20) Person A: Sube!
                climb.IMP.2s-in (e.g. into a car)
      Person B: Qué dices?
                'What are you saying?'
      Person A: Que subas!
                that climb.SUBJ.2SG-in

- Portner (2004) proposes that imperatives denote properties that can be true only about the addressee. This is achieved by the condition that x is the addressee in the context of utterance c. If x is not the addressee, the property is neither true nor false (e.g., 1P.SG imperatives are impossible). The discourse role of an imperative is to add the property it denotes to the addressee's To-Do-List.

(19) a. (You) be quiet!
          [λwλx: x = addressee(c). x is quiet]

- It follows directly from this proposal that imperatives are infelicitous when it is known in advance that they cannot be followed. This consequence of the proposal will help us to account for **Fact 4**.

(5) #Eat this salad! But I know you won't.

(19) a. # Ana, sea elegida al puesto!
            'Ana, be elected to the position!'
      b. # José, pueda terminar el proyecto para mañana!
            'José, be able to finish the project by tomorrow!'

- The property assigned to the addressee by an imperative does not obtain in the actual world, which suggests that there is a modal operator in the left periphery of the clause.

3

(6) $[_{CP} \ldots \text{OP}_{imp} \ldots [_{IP} \ldots]]$

- Kempchinsky (2009) observes that like with imperatives the state of affairs described by subjunctive clauses do not obtain in the actual world, which suggests that there is a modal semi-imperative operator in the left periphery of the clause, more precisely in Fin.

(7) $\ldots \text{V} \ldots [_{CP} \text{C} [_{ForceP} \text{Force} [_{FinP} \text{OP}_{subj} [_{IP} \ldots]]]]$

- There are two differences between OP_{subj} and OP_{imp} which help us to account for **Facts 1-3**:
  - First, OP_{imp} represents the possibilities on the addressee's To-Do-List, whereas OP_{subj} represents the possibilities on the matrix subject's To-Do-List.
  - Second, OP_{imp} is logophoric, that is to say it restricts the reference to the individual in question (the addressee), whereas OP_{subj} is antilogophoric, that is to say it restricts the reference by excluding the individual in question (the matrix subject).

3.2 (ii) Models of evaluation are in syntax

- What is left unexplained at this point is the difference between constructions that allow both indicative and subjunctives and those that can take only the subjunctive and whether this difference affects subjunctive obviation.

(2) a. Me molesta que el tren siempre llegue tarde.
   ´It bothers me that the train always arrives (S) late´

   b. Me molesta que el tren siempre llega tarde.
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(5) a. El maestro quiere que Arturo se calle/*calla.
   ´The teacher wants that Arturo be quiet (S/*I)´

   b. Irene me pidió que le prestara/*presté dinero
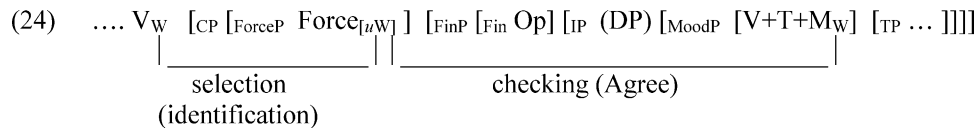   ´Irene asked me that (I) lend (S/*I) her money´

- The truth of a proposition is relativized to a model of evaluation. In case of simple sentences like *John left*, the truth is relativized to the body of information mutually known by participant of the conversation (Common Ground).

- In case of embedded sentences, the truth is often relativized to the information held/believed by the matrix subject.
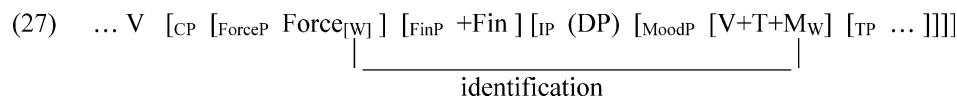
(8) Mary believes that John left.

- In languages with indicative/subjunctive distinction, the use of subjunctive signals that the embedded clause is evaluated relative to the beliefs of the matrix subject (attitude holder). The indicative, on the other hand, signals that the embedded proposition is evaluated relative to Common Ground which includes mutual beliefs of (at least) the speaker and the hearer.

4

(22) a.   # Yo no creo que los estudiantes merecen un premio.
        'I don't believe that the students deserve (IND) a prize.'

     b.   El decano no cree que los estudiantes merezcan un premio
        … y yo tampoco lo creo.
        … pero yo sí lo creo.
        'The dean doesn't believe that the students deserve (SUBJ) a prize
        … and I don't believe it either.'
        … but I do think so.'

     c.   El decano no cree que los estudiantes merecen un premio
        … #y yo tampoco lo creo.
        … pero yo sí lo creo.
        'The dean doesn't believe that the students deserve (IND) a prize
        … #and I don't believe it either.'
        … but I do think so.'

- Constructions that select for the subjunctive (desideratives, directives) have the following syntactic representation where lexical selection is captured as an uninterpretable W feature on Force.

(24)   …. V_W $[_{CP} [_{ForceP} Force_{[uW]}] [_{FinP} [_{Fin} Op] [_{IP} (DP) [_{MoodP} [V+T+M_W] [_{TP} …]]]]$
             |_____| | |_____|
                  selection   checking (Agree)
               (identification)

- In cases where both indicative and subjunctive are possible, the use of subjunctive syntactically marks the shift in evaluation:

(27)   … V $[_{CP} [_{ForceP} Force_{[W]}] [_{FinP} +Fin] [_{IP} (DP) [_{MoodP} [V+T+M_W] [_{TP} …]]]]$
                    |_____|
                        identification

- Note that OP_{subj}, which is responsible for subjunctive obviation, is absent in the structure in (27) above, where the shift of the model of evaluation is signaled by the subjunctive itself. This predicts that in these cases subjunctive obivation is absent.

4   Possible questions

- Is the prediction in the last bullet point confirmed?
- How well does the proposal deal with challanges such as subjunctive obviation in implicatives and emotive factives (discussed in the paper)?
- Is the fact that subjunctive has different distribution in different languages (Italian, Romanian, Greek) problematic for the account?

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