Control in Subjunctive Clauses in Brazilian Portuguese: Evidence for Tense Defectiveness

It is standardly assumed referential null subjects in BP are different from those of typical pro-drop languages. Null subjects in BP indicatives are allowed only in embedded clauses, and display all the diagnostics of obligatorily controlled (OC) PRO. Based on Hornstein’s (2001) Movement Theory of Control, they have been analyzed as traces of A-movement (Ferreira 2009, Rodrigues 2004). Ferreira, e.g., proposes finite Ts in BP are ambiguous in that they can enter the derivation specified as $\phi$-complete or $\phi$-incomplete, respectively yielding standard nominative Case marked embedded subjects or OC null subjects derived by movement (1). By contrast, null subjects in BP subjunctives do not always behave in this way. Control structures involving subjunctives are allowed in the complement clauses of dubitative and factive-emotive predicates (2)-(3) but banned from subjunctive complements of volitional predicates (4). Significantly, subjunctive complements of volitional predicates in BP (and many other Romance and Slavic languages) also show subject obviation, where the pronominal subject of the subjunctive clause must be disjoint in reference with the matrix subject (5). Thus, given that finite indicative clauses in BP may constitute a porous domain for A-movement due to their defective $\phi$-specification (T$^+$, $\phi$), the restrictions on finite control into subjunctive clauses seem rather unexpected. With this picture in mind, in this paper I address the following issues: [1] why is OC not allowed exclusively in obviative subjunctives in BP? [2] What do BP data reveal about obviation effects? I follow Hornstein’s (2010) approach to Principles A/B, where reflexivization is a result of movement, with reflexives spell out of traces. When movement is not possible, a pronoun is inserted to get the bound reading. For Hornstein, Move (i.e. reflexivization) is cheaper than Construe (pronominalization). Obviation then falls out as a consequence of economy of derivation. I argue that BP facts provide empirical evidence that obviative subjunctives are underlying infinitives since they compete derivationally. I propose that sentences like (4), (5) and (6) involve untensed domains that share the same syntactic properties, regardless of their morphological distinctions (for which I will provide an account in the talk). More specifically, they are defective Tense domains (T) that need to agree in Tense value with the matrix clause. Once (5a) and (6) share the same numeration, they compete. The unvalued embedded T in the relevant step of the derivation is not allowed to Case mark its subject, being a defective probe (Chomsky 2001), which allows the DP to move to the matrix clause for Case requirements. Thus, the movement alternative is the only convergent result starting from a numeration with a single DP for a subject and it surfaces as an infinitive (6). The same considerations hold for (5b), the only difference being that (5b) starts with a numeration with two distinct DPs. After getting valued by the matrix T, the embedded T can value the Case of its subject, which leads to a nominative embedded subject and subjunctive morphology on the verb.

Back to questions [1] and [2], BP data show that a $\phi$-defective value in T does not necessarily lead to OC. In obviative contexts, infinitives and subjunctives compete as they are both Tense defective and share the same underlying numeration. Once the infinitive wins the competition, it licenses OC (cf. (6)), whereas the subjunctive will be chosen just in case it does not compete with an infinitive, i.e. when they have different numeration (more than one DP for the subject positions; I will show that Case licensing fails for the embedded infinitive subject DP); hence the unacceptability of (4). Thus, this proposal accounts for the tense dependency in subjunctive complements of obviative predicates, as repeatedly attested in the literature (e.g. Raposo 1985, Kempchinsky 1986). I show that radically different tense properties of two subjunctive complement types in BP provide strong support for this analysis. Specifically, I show that the obviative/non-controlled subjunctive (a) sentences of (7)-(10) patterns with infinitive complements in that it shows morphological anaphorocity, obligatory Sequence of Tense embedded tense interpretation, unavailability of Double Access Reading (DAR) and transparency with respect to polarity item licensing. In contrast, non-obviative subjunctive complements that
allow OC (2)-(3) show the opposite pattern (b) sentences of (7)-(10)), behaving like indicative complements with respect to the same properties, which confirms their independence in Tense. Tense defectiveness is the key property that ties both obviative subjunctives in Romance and non-controlled subjunctives in BP.

The paper concludes by discussing more supporting data for the competition analysis of movement/infinite and bound-pronoun/subjunctive structures that come from de se/non-de se readings of obviative pronouns. Specifically, I will show that languages that display two series of pronominals (pro and ello/lui), like Spanish and Italian, show strong obviation with weak pronominals (pro) - i.e. neither de se nor non-de se readings are possible - and weak obviation with strong pronominals (ello/lui), where non-de se readings can be obtained. By contrast, BP has homophonous versions for these pro-forms and only displays weak obviation. I will show that these facts can be straightforwardly explained once we consider the differences in the pronominal status of the relevant elements and the (im)possibility of bound variable readings (cf. Hornstein and Pietroski 2010).

(1)  a. Joãoi disse que elei/Maria vai viajar
    Joãoi said that he/Mary will travel
     [TP [o Joãoi; Tφ-complete [vP t; disse [CP que [TP t; Tφ-incomplete [vP t; vai viajar]]]]]
     ‘John said he/Mary was going to travel.’

(2)  Joãoi duvida que ti ganhe a corrida
    John doubts that win-SUBJ the race
     ‘John doubts that he would win the race.’

(3)  [O professor]i lamenta que ti tenha chegado tarde na reunião
    The teacher regrets that has-SUBJ get-PAST.PART late in the meeting
     ‘The teacher regrets that he got late to the meeting.’

(4)  *O Joãoi quer/deseja que ti participe da corrida
    the John wants/wishes that participate-SUBJ of the race
     ‘John wants/wishes to participate in the race.’

(5)  a.*Joãoi quer que elei leia um livro por semana
    b. Joãoi quer que elei leia um livro por semana
     John wants that he reads-SUBJ one book a week
     ‘John wants him to read one book every week’.

(6)  Joãoi quer ti ler um livro por semana
    John wants read-INFINITIVE one book a week
     ‘John wants to read one book every week’.

(7)  a. João quer que Maria *ganhasse/ganhe a corrida
    John wants-PRES that Mary win-IMPERF/win-PRES the race
     b. Pedro lamenta que Ana acordasse/acorde tão cedo
    Peter regrets-PRES that Ana wake up-IMPERF/wake up-PRES so early

(8)  a. Ana exigiu que o Pedro estudasse mais naquela época (SOT/*shifted reading)
    Ana demanded that Peter study-IMPERF more in that time
     b. Pedro lamentou que Ana acordasse tão cedo naquela época (SOT/shifted reading)
    Peter regreted that Ana wake up-IMPERF so early in that time

(9)  a.*Pedro queria que Ana esteja grávida. (*: DAR)
    Peter wanted that Ana is-PRES.SBJ preganant
     b. Pedro lamentou que Ana esteja doente. (OK: DAR)
    Peter regreted that Ana is-PRES.SBJ ill

(10) a. A Maria não quer que o Pedro converse com ninguém (OK:NPI)
     the Mary not wants that the Peter talk-SUBJ with nobody
     b.*A Maria não lamenta que o Pedro saia com ninguém (*:NPI)
     the Mary not said that the Peter go.out-SUBJ with nobody