OBVIATION EFFECTS IN ROMANIAN SUBJUNCTIVE COMPLEMENTS: EVIDENCE FROM OVERT VS. NULL PRONOUNS

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The aim of the present paper is to (a) argue against the claim that obviation effects in Romanian subjunctives (term made explicit below) arise due to the presence of a lexical complementizer, i.e., *ca*, (b) use evidence on the different behaviour and reference preferences of null vs. overt pronominals to derive such effects in Romanian subjunctives and (c) offer further evidence from Questionnaires & naturally-occurring examples. The paper is divided into three main sections, as follows: *Section 1* is meant to briefly elaborate on 'obviation', a term used to describe the reference requirements of pronominal subjects inside Romance subjunctive complements. Here we also deal with the corresponding 'lack of obviation' phenomenon claimed to be at work in Romanian subjunctive clauses. *Section 2* discusses the possibility of obviative effects within Romanian subjunctive complements, drawing on the different reference preferences of null vs. overt pronominals, as exposed by Ariel (1991, 1994). *Section 3* contributes the concluding remarks, reiterating the main ideas advanced throughout the paper.

1. Earlier accounts: Obviation in Romance subjunctives, Lack of Obviation in Romanian Subjunctives

1.1. *Obviation in Romance subjunctives*

The term 'obviation' has been used in the literature to designate the *obligatory* disjoint reference between the subject of a matrix clause and the (null or overt matching subject) of its subjunctive complement, cf. (1).

This has been accounted for by drawing on the anaphoric nature of the subjunctive complement (cf. (2), (3) and the chart in (4)): matrix present verbs disallow past subjunctives and matrix past verbs disallow present subjunctives, such that the subjunctive has to copy the time reference of the matrix predicate.

(1) a. *Jean$_i$ veux qu'il$_{*i/k}$ vienne.* (Fr.)
b. *Juan$_i$ quiere que pro/ el$_{*i/k}$ venga.* (Sp)
c. *Gianni$_i$ vuole che pro/ lui$_{*i/k}$ parta.* (It.)
'John$_i$ wants for him$_k$ to come/leave.'

(2) a. *Gianni vuole che io lavori / *lavorassi con voi.*
Gianni want-pres-3sg that I work-**pres-subj**/***past-subj** with you
'Gianni wants me to work/to have worked with you.'

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b. *Juan quiere que io trabaje / * trabajara contigo*
Juan want-pres3sg that I work-**pres-subj** / ***past-subj** with you
'Juan wants me to work/to have worked with you. '
c. **O Manel deseja que o filho fosse o melhor aluno.*
Manel wishes that his son was-SUBJ the best student
'Manel wants his son to be the best student.' (Terzi 1992: 78)

(3) *Gianni voleva che io lavorassi / *lavori con voi.*
Gianni want-imperf-3sg that I work-**past.subj /*pres.subj** with you
'Gianni wanted me to have worked/to work with you.' (Terzi 1992: 77)

(4)

Main clause	***Embedded Clause***
Present	*Present*
**Present*	*Past*
**Past*	*Present*
Past	*Past*

Given the evidence in (1) and (2), summarized in the chart in (4), an extension of the binding domain of the complement clause to that of the Main Clause has been proposed (cf. Rizzi 1989). As such, null & overt (matching) pronominal subjects behave like pronouns, liable to Principle B of Binding Theory.

1.2. ***Lack of obviation in Romanian***

Taking into account similar examples from Romanian, no such effects are at work. This can be seen in (5), where the null subject of a subjunctive complement can be either co-referent with (the default reading) (5a) or disjoint from the matrix subject (5b):

(5) a. *Ion$_i$ vrea [să vină pro$_i$.]* – co-referent reading (default / preferred)
John wants come-subj.3sg/pl
'John wants to come. '
b. *Ion$_i$ vrea [să vină pro$_k$] = Ion vrea să vină Maria / musafirii.*
– disjoint reading (marked)
John wants come-subj.3sg/pl
'John$_i$ wants him$_k$ to come / wants Mary / the guests to come.'

It seems therefore that Romanian subjunctives are different from Romance subjunctives: subjunctives selected by volitional verbs in Romanian can establish their own T-chain (cf. Enc 1987), hence they are temporally independent and also allow perfect subjunctives, which signal anteriority with respect to the time reference of the matrix predicate:

(6)

Main Clause	***Embedded Clause***
Present	*Present*
Present	*Perfect*
Past	*Perfect*
Past	*Perfect*

By comparing (4) to (6), as well as the examples from Romance, on the one hand, to those from Romanian on the other, there seems to be a difference between Romanian and

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Romance with respect to what sort of element can function as anaphor: in Romance subjunctives, both empty and overt pronominal subjects behave as pronouns (liable to Condition B of Binding Theory), whereas PRO is the (intrinsic) anaphor used for (obligatory) co-reference (i.e., obligatory control); in Romanian, the empty subjects of free subjunctives (i.e., those selected by desiderative predicates) are more readily interpreted as anaphors than overt matching pronominal subjects, an issue we expand on in the next section.

2. On the possibility of obviative effects in Romanian free subjunctive complements

The claim or rather claims we want to start from are the following:

(a) Romanian free subjunctive complements *can* display obviation effects;

(b) these effects are not due to the presence of a lexical complementizer (*ca*), as claimed by Terzi (1992), Landau (2004), Roussou (2001).

Examples (8b) and (8c) below show that in spite of an overt *ca*, the two subjects can still co-refer – this actually being the preferred/default reading. Hence, *ca* does not induce obviation in Romanian, it is merely a last-resort option meant to host left-dislocated embedded material.

(7) a. *Ion$_1$ vrea ca e$_{2/*1}$ să mănânce.* (Landau 2004: 857, from Terzi 92: 109)
John wants that-subj e eat-subj.3sg/pl
b. *Ion$_i$ vrea ca (pro$_j$) să mănânce (pro$_j$).* (Roussou 2001: 92)
John wants that-subj (pro) eat-subj.3sg/pl (pro)
'John$_i$ wants him/her/them$_k$ to eat.' (intended reading)

(8) a. *Ion vrea să cumpere tortul mâine.*
John wants buy-subj.3sg/pl the cake tomorrow.
b. *Ion$_i$ vrea [**ca** mâine să cumpere pro$_{i/k}$ tortul.]*
John wants that-subj tomorrow buy-subj. 3sg/pl the cake
c. *Ion$_i$ vrea [**ca** tortul să -l cumpere pro$_{i/k}$ mâine.]*
John wants that-subj the cake buy-subj. 3sg/pl tomorrow
'John wants to buy the cake tomorrow' (default) or
'John wants him/her/them to buy the cake tomorrow.'

2.1. *A (preliminary) proposal*

Given that obviation effects are not triggered by an overt complementizer, we want to claim that they are instead induced by to the presence of an *overt* matching 3rd person pronominal subject. This amounts to saying that in Romanian the null subject (*pro)* behaves like a (semantic) anaphor, preferring to co-refer with a local antecedent, i.e., the main clause subject (in the default reading), whereas a matching overt pronominal (i.e., *el)* induces obviation effects, preferring to (behave like a pronoun and) retrieve a more distant antecedent. Relevant examples are given under (9):

(9) a. *Petru$_i$ vrea [să plece pro$_i$]*
Petru wants leave-subj.3sg
'Petru wants to leave' (intended/default co-referential reading)
b. *Petru$_i$ vrea ca el$_k$ să plece.* #
Petru wants that-subj he leave-subj.3sg
'Petru wants him to leave' (disjoint reference reading (preferred))

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c. Petru$_{\mathbf{i}}$ vrea să plece el$_{\mathbf{i/k}}$.
Petru wants leave-shubj.3sg he
'Petru wants that he should be the one to leave.'

An important remark is in order at this point regarding the examples listed under (9): we maintain the above claim in 1) (i.e., the possibility of obviative effects in Romanian free subjunctives) with respect to examples of the type in (9b), where the overt pronominal subject appears in the left periphery of the complement (arguably as identificational focus). This triggers the overt presence of the complementizer *ca*, which is not however responsible for the obviation effect (see (8) above and the discussion thereof). In (9c), the pronoun is part of the focal domain of the sentence and as such is more liable to be construed as a bound variable, (also) yielding co-reference readings. Interestingly, similar claims have been made for Italian by Progovac (1993: 48):

(10) a. *Maria$_{\mathbf{i}}$ spera che vinca lei$_{\mathbf{i}}$.*
'Mary$_{\mathbf{i}}$ hopes that she$_{\mathbf{i}}$ is the one to win' vs.
b. *Maria$_{\mathbf{i}}$ spera che lei$_{\mathbf{k}}$ vinca*.
'Mary$_{\mathbf{i}}$ hopes that she$_{\mathbf{k}}$ will win.'

Given the above, we should re-phrase our initial proposal by claiming then that obviative effects can obtain with an overt matching 3rd person pronominal subject left-dislocated to the complement's left periphery (and thus hosted by an overt complementizer which is however *not* responsible for the disjoint reading effect). Overt pronouns *in situ* can be interpreted as focal constituents and hence more readily accept co-reference with the matrix subject. Let us now elaborate some more on the null/overt disctinction, in order to give our theory more flesh.

2.2. *On the null/overt distinction*

There are several studies in the literature dealing with the null / overt distinction: Cardinaletti & Starke (1999), Motabletti (1984), Reinhart (1999, 2004), Ariel (1991, 1994). For reasons of space, we shall limit ourselves to the last one mentioned, noting also that on the basis of Reinhart's theory, null pronouns can be viewed as elements interpreted via *binding*, whereas the overt *el* gets the *co-valuation* interpretation (i.e., it is assigned a value from the discourse storage).

Ariel's (1991, 1994) Accessibility Theory focuses on anaphora resolution within and across sentences. The author dubs anaphoric expressions as "accessibility markers" ranked according to degrees of accessibility determined by the salience of the antecedents: the more salient the antecedent, the higher the degree of accessibility encoded by the anaphoric expression meant to resume it; the more distant/less salient the antecedent, the lower the degree of accessibility of the referring expression

Degrees of accessibility are influenced by three factors: informativity, rigidity (ability to refer to a unique antecedent) and attenuation (phonological size). Hence, the more informative / rigid / stressed the anaphoric element is, the lower its degree of accessibility. Conversely, the less informative/rigid & more attenuated an anaphoric element is, the higher its degree of accessibility. The ordering of these accessibility markers function of their degree of accessibility is given in (11):

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(11) *zero < reflexives < agreement markers < clitic pronouns < unstressed pronouns < stressed pronouns < stressed pronouns + gesture < proximal demonstrative (+ NP) < distal demonstrative (+NP) <proximal demonstrative (+NP) + modifier < distal demonstrative (+NP) + modifier < first name < last name< short definite description < long definite description < full name < full name + modifier*

(12) a. *Matei$_i$ a venit în vizită şi Ion$_k$ vrea [să plece pro$_k$]*
Matei has come to visit and Ion wants leave-subj.3sg/pl
'Matei has just come by to visit and Ion wants to leave.'
b. *Matei$_i$ a venit în vizită şi Ion$_k$ vrea [ca e**l**$_i$ să plece]*
Matei has come to visit and Ion wants that-subj he leave-subj.3sg
'Matei has just come by and Ion wants him to leave.'

Let us consider the examples under (12) within this theoretical framework: in (12a), the null pronoun is the highest accessibility marker and as such it will identify a highly accessible antecedent, which is unmistakably the NP subject *Ion* in the main clause. By comparison, the overt subject pronoun *el* in (12b) is more informative and unattenuated, therefore it will look for a less salient antecedent in the discourse: the more remote subject of the superordinate clause, i.e., *Matei*.

This obviously leads to a final formulation of our proposal, one that takes into account Ariel's assumptions as well as the make-up of the (larger) context in which free subjunctive complements may surface. Thus, the claim that we maintain at this point is that in ambiguous contexts where two available antecedents could each in principle be identified as the logical subject of the subjunctive verb, the null subject *pro* will prefer to pick up the closest matrix DP whereas the overt subject will retrieve the more remote DP.

In other words, the presence of the overt pronominal contributes to disambiguate a potentially ambiguous sentence and make the reference relation clear(er), thereby inducing obviation effects**.**

2.3. *Further evidence*

2.3.1. *Naturally occurring examples*

For reasons of space, we only quote here a couple of the many examples found in online sources. The examples under (a) are given unaltered, exactly the way they were found on the internet. The (b) version has been purposively altered by removing the overt pronominal subject (and the complementizer alongside it), in order to show how the reading of the sentence changes in its absence. In more plain words, once the overt pronominal subject disappears and a *pro* null subject is used instead, the latter is obviously more compatible with a reading whereby co-reference is established with the antecedent *immediately* above it. In any case, the absence of *el* / presence of *pro* renders the example ambiguous:

(13) a. *El$_i$ e foarte debil şi mama$_k$ nu vrea [**ca el**$_i$ să se obosească prea mult]*[1]
he is very weak and mother not wants that he strife-subj.3sg too much
'He is wery weak and mother **doesn't want him to strive** too much.'
b. *El$_i$ e foarte debil, şi mama$_k$ nu vrea [să se obosească pro$_i$ prea mult.]*
he is very weak and mother not wants strife-subj.3sg too much
'He is very weak and mother **doesn't want to strive** too much.' (with him)

[1] http://lectio.ro/proza-online/legende-populare-Legende-populare-romanesti.php

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(14) a. *Organismul$_i$ este în asa fel "setat" încat cere singur ce are nevoie*
body-the is in such way 'set' that asks alone what has need
iar omul$_k$ trebuie să fie receptiv dacă vrea pro$_k$ ***[ca el$_i$*** *să funcţioneze corect]*[1]
and man has to be-subj receptive if wants that-subj he function-subj. 3sg correctly
'Our body is built in such a way that it asks by itself what it needs, and
man has but to lend an ear **if he wants it to function** properly.'

b. *iar omul$_k$ trebuie să fie receptiv dacă vrea pro$_k$ [să funcţioneze pro$_k$ corect*]
and man has sbj be-subj receptive if wants function-subj.3sg correctly
'…and man need only lend an ear (to it) **if he wants to function** properly. '

2.3.2. *Questionnaire*

In what follows, we shall briefly elaborate on the findings of a questionnaire we have conducted in order to get speaker insight with respect to the reference preferences of null vs. overt pronominal subjects in contexts similar to the ones we have been analyzing so far. Our questionnaire contained 20 sentences of the type in (15). Pragmatically and semantically, either antecedent could have been chosen as the agent of the embedded action. We had a total of 28 respondents.

(15) [Main Clause]$_1$ *and/but/.* [Main Clause]$_2$ [subjunctive complement]
a. [**DP$_1$** + verb] *and/but/.* [**DP$_2$** + volitional] [să + verb ***pro***]
b. [**DP$_1$** + verb] *and/but/.* [**DP$_2$** + volitional] [ca **el** să + verb]

The 20 sentences were divided into 10 pairs, each with a *pro* and overt *el* in the complement. Importantly, the pairs *pro* / overt *el* were not given one after the other, but randomized, so as to increase the likelihood of objective answers. Two possible interpretations A & B were furnished for each sentence (see (17)), one identifying the closest DP (i.e., DP$_2$) as a proper antecedent for the (null or overt) embedded subject, another identifying the more remote DP$_1$ as a proper antecedent for the (null or overt) embedded subject.

Therefore, the prominence criterion distinguishing the two DPs was distance / proximity with respect to the subject of the subjunctive subordinate. Needless to say that our expectation was for *pro* to pick up the most salient antecedent (the closest DP$_2$) and for the overt 'el' to retrieve the less prominent antecedent, i.e., the more remote DP$_1$, cf. (16):

(16) a.[DP$_1$ + verb] *and/but/.* [**DP$_2$** + volitional] [să + verb ***pro***]
b.[**DP$_1$** + verb] *and/but/.* [DP$_2$ + volitional] [ca **el** să + verb]

(17) a. [***Tudor$_{DP1}$*** *are nişte cărţi interesante] şi [****Matei$_{DP2}$*** *ar vrea [să le citească* ***pro$_{DP2}$***]]
Tudor has got some interesting books and Matei wants them readsubj.3sg
A. Matei vrea să citească Tudor cărţile.
Matei wants read-subj.3sg Tudor books-the
= Matei wants Tudor to read the book
B. Matei vrea să citească el însuşi cărţile ê
Matei wants read-subj.3sg himself books-the
= Matei wants to read the books himself.

[1] http://www.plusdieta.ro/forums/pentru-ca-vrei-sa-arati-cat-mai-bine/dieta/diverse/16599-vreau-sa-schimb-ceva-la-mine-si-am-nevoie-de-putin-ajutor-print.html

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b. [***Matei***$_{DP1}$ *are câteva cărţi interesante] şi [****Ion***$_{DP2}$ *ar vrea [****ca el***$_{DP1}$ *să le citească*]].
Matei has got some interesting books and Ion really wants that-subj he them read-subj.3sg
A. Ion vrea să citească el însuşi cărţile
Ion wants read-subj.3sg himself books-the
= Ion wants to read the books himself
B. Ion vrea să citească Matei cărţile. ê
Ion wants sbj read-3sg Matei books-the
= Ion wants Matei to read the books.

The chart in (18) gives the results of our questionnaire, including percentages for both the co-reference and the disjoint reference readings with null as well as overt embedded pronominal subjects.

(18) Results for structures with null & overt subjects in contexts with two available antecedents

	Overt	Null
Co-reference *(with the closest DP)*	*18 (6.42%)*	*250 (89.28%)*
Disjoint reference *(from the closest DP)*	*262 (93.57%)*	*30 (10.71%)*

As can be seen, the majority of respondents (almost 94%) interpreted the overt pronominal as triggering disjoint reference effects, in that it was seen as co-referent with a less salient / prominent antecedent in discourse (the more remote DP in the super-ordinate clause). As far as the null subject is concerned, almost 90% of the informants interpreted it as co-referent with the closest (matrix) DP subject.

3. Concluding remarks

In the present paper, we have discussed the possibility of obviative effects in Romanian subjunctive complements selected by desiderative predicates (complements dubbed "free subjunctives"), arguing (against some claims in the literature, see (7) above) that such effects are not triggered by the overt complementizer *ca*. What we claim therefore is that *ca*-subjunctives are no different from *să*-subjunctives as far as the interpretation of embedded subjects is concerned: just as in *să*-subjunctives, the null subject of *ca*- subjunctives may be co-referent with the matrix subject – this being, in fact, the preferred reading lack of any other discourse clue (see, to this end, the examples under (8) above).

Drawing on the different behaviour and reference preferences of null vs. overt pronouns, our proposal was that obviative effects in Romanian can be obtained with overt embedded pronominal subjects whose phi-features match those of the matrix subject, especially when such overt pronominals appear topicalized in the left periphery of the complement (hence hosted by *ca*), in order to escape the (*in-situ*) focal domain.

We are thus led to conclude that the phenomenon of obviation is not restricted to Romance subjunctive complements, being also manifest in similar environments in Romanian

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(i.e., in Romanian free subjunctives)[11]. Nonetheless, there are significant differences in the way the two (types of) languages resolve such interpretative effects.

In Romance, obviation is a *syntactic* requirement designating the *obligatory* disjoint reference between the matrix subject and the embedded one – be it overt *or* null (in those Romance languages which are *pro*-drop, such as Italian or Spanish, but not French). Looked at in this light, Romance obviation is the opposite of control, read as obligatory co-reference (co-valuation).

In Romanian, we may merely speak of obviative *effects*, a term extensively used throughout the paper. Namely, the disjoint reference reading is not a syntactic constraint in Romanian (and as such neither is it obligatory), being rather a discourse requirement meant to disambiguate potentially ambiguous contexts. That is, the presence of an overt (and topicalized) matching pronominal – which, appearing in the complement's left periphery, also forces the complementizer to become overt – signals a distinct reading (obviative effects) from the one obtained with a null pronominal subject (co-valuation), in contexts where either of two available antecedents could in principle be identified as the subject/agent of the subjunctive verb.

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[1] The possibility of similar effects in similar environments and under similar conditions (i.e., the distinction between a *pro* and an overt embedded pronominal subject) in other Balkan languages shall be left for further/future research. Positive evidence from other Balkan languages (Greek, Albanian, Macedonian, Serbo-Croatian) will surely strengthen the present claim(s).

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(*Abstract*)

Starting from evidence regarding the distinct behaviour and interpretative effects of null vs. overt pronouns, we mean to (a) take issue with the claim that the phenomenon of (subject) obviation is restricted to Romance subjunctive complements, (b) argue against the claim that obviative readings in Romanian free subjunctives are triggered by the presence of an overt complementizer (*ca*) and (c) show that – if obviative effects are indeed to be considered in Romanian free subjunctive complements – these are triggered by the presence of a topicalized overt matching pronominal subject, which, unlike its null *pro* counterpart – signals co-reference with a more remote antecedent than the immediately superordinate subject DP in the matrix clause, thereby inducing (discursive) obviative effects.

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