

Competition and Obviation from French to Newari

Introduction. In many European languages (Ruwet 1984, Kempchinsky 1985, Farkas 1988, 1992, Landau 2004, Constantini 2005, Schlenker 2005, 2011, among others), the subject of a finite embedded clause cannot be bound by the matrix subject when the embedded clause is in the subjunctive (1), as opposed to the infinitive or indicative (2). This disjoint reference effect is known as obviation.

- (1) *[TP ... Subject_i ... [TP Subject_i T-SUB]] (2) [TP ... Subject_i ... [TP Subject_i T-INF]]

Subjunctive subjects are exempted from obviation under specific circumstances (Ruwet 1984, Farkas 1992, Schlenker 2005, Szabolcsi 2010). In this paper, I present data from Newari (Tibeto-Burman, spoken in Nepal) that exhibit both obviation and exemption-from-obviation effects, but do not involve subjunctive mood, nor are limited to embedded clauses. I unify the two sets of data in the spirit of the Farkas-Schlenker competition account. In particular, I argue that the constructions in which obviation happens (subjunctive mood, disjunct marking) are defaults that are used when the conditions for their competitor constructions (infinitives, conjunct marking) are not fulfilled.

Conjunct/Disjunct Marking in Newari. In Newari, verbal suffixes encode both tense and the so-called conjunct-disjunct distinction, first reported in Hale (1980), and later discussed in DeLancey (1992), Hargreaves (2005) and Zu (2015). The Newari data below are from my own fieldwork. In main clauses, the so-called “conjunct” suffix *ā* occurs with first person subjects in declarative clauses (3) and with second person subjects in interrogative clauses (4). The so-called “disjunct” suffix *a* occurs elsewhere (5)-(6).

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>(3) <i>ji/*cha/*wa ana wan-ā.</i>
 I/you/(s)he there go-PAST.CONJ
 ‘I/*You/*(S)he went there.’</p> <p>(4) <i>cha/*ji/*wa ana wan-ā lā?</i>
 you/(s)he/I there go-PAST.CONJ Q
 ‘Did you/*I/*(s)he go there?’</p> | <p>(5) <i>cha/wa/*ji ana wan-a.</i>
 you/(s)he/I there go-PAST.DISJ
 ‘You/(S)he/*I went there.’</p> <p>(6) <i>ji/wa/*cha ana wan-a lā?</i>
 I/(s)he/you there go-PAST.DISJ Q
 ‘Did I/(s)he/*you go there?’</p> |
|--|--|

In complement clauses, the “conjunct” suffix *ā* occurs when the embedded subject and the matrix subject are co-indexed (7), whereas the “disjunct” suffix *a* occurs when the subjects of the two adjacent clauses refer to different persons (8). Note that both verbal markers occur in non-deficiently tensed clauses.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>(7) Shyam-o [wa ana wan-ā dhakā:] dhāla
 Shyam-ERG (s)he there go-PAST.CONJ that said
 “Shyam_i said that he_{i/*k} went there.”</p> <p>(8) Shyam-o [wa ana wan-a dhakā:] dhāla
 Shyam-ERG (s)he there go-PAST.DISJ that said
 “Shyam_i said that he_{*i/k} went there.”</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">(co-indexation)</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(disjoint reference)</p> |
|---|--|

Zu (2015) proposes a covert pronominal (*pron*) at the left periphery of each clause. It is bound by the speaker in declaratives (3), the addressee in interrogatives (4) and the matrix subject in complement clauses (7). When the lower subject is co-indexed with *pron*, the conjunct verb is used (9); otherwise the verb is suffixed with a disjunct marker (10). In this paper I make modifications to her account by allowing *pron* to be free from binding. I show that this provides yet another possibility besides (9) and (10).

- (9) Speaker/Addressee/Matrix subject_i *pron*_i [TP Subject_{i/*k} ... V-CONJ]
 (10) Speaker/Addressee/Matrix subject_i *pron*_i [TP Subject_{*i/k} ... V-DISJ]

Obviation and exemptions from obviation. I propose that conjunct marking in Newari parallels infinitives in European languages: both have their own conditions of application, and when those obtain, both involve the *de se* binding of a subject. When those conditions do not obtain, disjunct marking/subjunctive mood is used (competition account). Disjunct marking and subjunctive mood typically entail a disjoint reference effect, i.e. obviation. However, both construction types are exempted from obviation under the same circumstances, namely, when (i) the local subject is not an agent (11), when (ii) the local subject is an agent but the event is an accident (12), and when (iii) the local subject is agentive and intentional, but his/her knowledge of the event comes from an external source (13). In Newari, disjoint reference can be waived in main clauses as well. For space reasons, in this abstract I restrict myself to embedded clauses.

- (11) Shyam-o [wa birāmi jul-*ā/a dhakā:] dhāla
 Shyam-ERG (s)he ill become-PAST.*CONJ/DISJ that said
 ‘Shyam_i said that he_i became ill.’ (non-agentive, exempt)

- (12) Shyam-o [wa lakha-e dun-*ā/a dhakā:] dhāla
 Shyam-ERG (s)he water-LOC submerge-PAST.*CONJ/DISJ that said
 ‘Shyam_i said that he_i (accidentally) fell into the water.’ (non-intentional agent, exempt)
- (13) Context: *Shyam was drunk and broke into his own apartment. The next day he rolled back the security tape and learned that it was him who broke the window. So he told his roommate he broke the window.*
 Shyam-o [wō: jhya tachhayāt-*ā/a dhakā:] dhāla
 Shyam-ERG (s)he window break-PAST.*CONJ/DISJ that said
 ‘Shyam_i said that he_i broke the window.’ (external source of knowl., exempt)

In Hungarian (Szabolcsi 2010) and French (Schlenker 2011) the subject of a subjunctive clause normally cannot be co-indexed with the matrix subject. However, the obviation effect is ameliorated when the embedded subject is not agentive (14) or not intentional (15).

- (14) (Azt) Akarom, hogy egészséges legyek.
 it-ACC want.1SG that healthy be.SUB.1SG
 ‘I want for me to be healthy.’ (Hung., non-agentive, exempt)
- (15) Nem akarom, hogy megöljek valakit.
 not want.1SG that kill.SUB.1SG someone
 ‘I don’t want for me to (accidentally) kill someone.’ (Hung., non-intentional agent, exempt)

Schlenker (2011) further observes that the obviation effect disappears in French subjunctives when the local subject learns the complement event from an external source (16).

- (16) Context: *I see myself in a mirror, and get the impression that the person I see is shivering.*
 J’ai l’impression que je grelotte.
 I.have the impression that I shiver.

‘I have the impression that I shiver (in the mirror).’ (French, external source of knowl., exempt)

Notice that in Newari, Hungarian, and French, the matrix subject takes no internal perspective on the complement event. (S)he is not responsible over (or in Farkas’s 1988 term, in a RESP relation with) him-/herself being ill (11) or healthy (14), or accidentally falling into the water (12) or killing someone (15). Nor does (s)he have a firsthand knowledge of the window-breaking (13) or shivering event (16). However, in all the exempt cases, the matrix subject is co-indexed with the complement subject and can be fully aware of this identity. Thus neither co-indexation nor *de se* binding of the subject can properly distinguish conjunct marking/infinitives on the one hand from disjunct marking/subjunctives on the other.

Competition and obviation. In this paper, I assimilate conjunct marking to infinitives and disjunct marking to subjunctives. Semantically, following Schlenker (2005, 2011), I distinguish individual *de se/de re* and event *de se/de re* readings, and argue that conjunct/infinitive verbs need to be read *de se* with respect to both the individual argument (i.e., the higher subject is aware of his/her identity with the complement subject) and the event argument (i.e., the higher subject takes an internal perspective on the complement event). Event *de se* entails individual *de se*, but event *de re* is still compatible with individual *de se*. Whenever the event *de se* reading is not available, the grammar resorts to the default—disjunct/subjunctive forms, which includes both cases of disjoint reference (5), (6), (8), and cases that involve event *de re* + individual *de se* (or even individual *de re*) readings (11)–(16). Syntactically, I extend Zu’s (2015) proposal of Newari conjunct/disjunct marking to infinitives and subjunctives, and argue that *pron* is the seat of knowledge (Speas & Tenny 2003) which holds a RESP relation (Farkas 1988) with the complement situation. As such it structurally mediates between the matrix subject and the embedded event argument. Conjunct/infinitive verbs occur when there is a three-way identity (17). When this chain of co-indexation is broken, either in the obviation cases (5), (6), (8), when the two subjects are distinct in reference (18), or in the exemption-from-obviation cases (11)–(16), when *pron* takes an external perspective (19), the disjunct/subjunctive verbs appear.

- (17) DP_i *pron*_i [TP Subject_i ... V-CONJ/INF] (co-indexation, event+individual *de se*)
 (18) DP_i *pron*_i [TP Subject_k ... V-DISJ/SUB] (obviation, disjoint reference)
 (19) DP_i *pron*_k [TP Subject_i ... V-DISJ/SUB] (exempt from obviation, event *de re*)

The present account has two advantages. First, it offers a cohesive approach to the conjunct-disjunct distinction in Newari and the infinitive-subjunctive distinction in Hungarian and French, and is not tied to any specific clause types. Second, it distinguishes two types of co-indexation/individual *de se* binding, (17) from (19), and allows them to be treated apart by the grammar.