

## ***Querer* ‘want’ and *Dizer* ‘tell to’ in EP: obviation and control**

**Introduction.** Obviation is a well-known property of subjunctive complement clauses in Romance Languages, including European Portuguese (EP): the embedded and the higher subject must be disjoint in reference (1). In obviation contexts, the obligatory interpretation of the embedded subject contrasts with the preferred one in complement clauses with indicative (2) and with the obligatory one in cases of subject control with infinitive (3). Classic accounts of obviation considered Binding to be at stake (Piccolo 1985, Raposo 1985). More recently, Hornstein & San Martin (2001), adopting the movement theory of control, consider obviation a consequence of economy and reinterpret obviation as an anti-control effect. However, we identify two types of obviation contexts: (i) contexts with the volition verb *querer* (want), showing standard obviation (see 1) – in this case, the subject of the finite complement of *querer* ‘want’ contrasts with the subject of the infinitival complement of *querer* ‘want’, which is controlled by the matrix subject (3); (ii) contexts with the directive verb *dizer* (tell), a case in which the subject of the subjunctive complement preferably gets an interpretation parallel to the controlled subject of the non-finite complement, whether the “controller” argument is explicit or implicit (see 4 and 5) – (4) threatens an approach to obviation as anti-control. In contrast, the verb *dizer* with an indicative complement is interpreted as a declarative verb and its subject is preferentially correferent with the matrix subject (2).

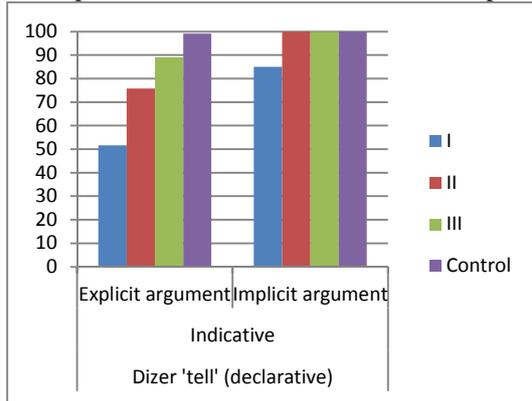
Previous studies have shown that children do not interpret null subjects of subjunctives in an adult-like manner (Padilla 1990, Avrutin & Wexler 1999/2000, Goodluck, Terzi & Díaz 2001, also Silva 2015 for EP), whether this is due to the difficulty in acquiring the grammatical principles determining obviation or to processing factors (Avrutin & Wexler 1999/2000). They also show a positive effect of an explicit internal argument in obviation contexts (Silva, 2015), even though not specifically comparing control and obviation.

**Research questions:** (i) Do children interpret obviation contexts with *dizer* ‘tell’ as control in non-finite complements with the same verb? (ii) Do children maintain a control / obviation interpretation (in complements to *dizer* ‘tell’) when the controller is implicit?

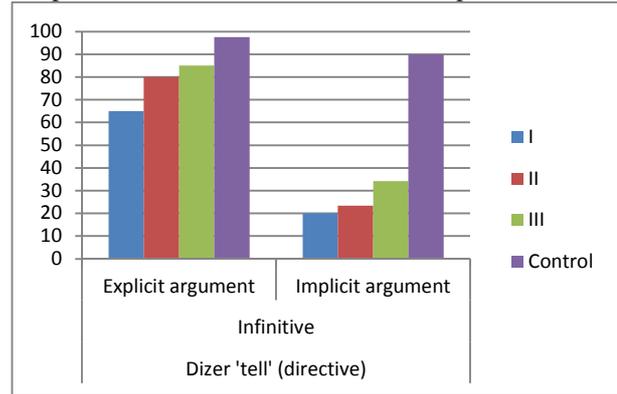
**Method:** A reference judgment task based on McDaniel and Cairns (1990) was applied to 90 children in order to test the interpretation of the structures exemplified in (1)-(5). The task was applied to three groups of children - group I (3 to 4 years old); group II (5 to 6 years old) and group III (7 to 8 years old) – and to an adult control group (18 subjects). In all contexts for the target sentences, three characters were involved, one corresponding to the matrix subject, and two other characters, one always playing the role of the addressee in the case of situations with *dizer* ‘tell’.

**Results.** Our results show a complex pattern: they suggest that children do not treat the indicative and the subjunctive mood alike, although they do not behave target-like. In the case of contexts with *querer* ‘want’, a GLMM model was produced including group and mood as predictors (both  $p < 0.001$ ). We highlight here the results obtained with matrix *dizer* ‘tell’. Percentage results are presented in graphs 1-3. A GLMM model, with subject as random factor, identifies as predictor variables mood (indicative, subjunctive, infinitive), and an interaction between group\*mood\*explicit/implicit indirect object (all  $p < 0.001$ ). The results in the three mood contexts (indicative, subjunctive, infinitive) all significantly differ ( $p < 0.001$ ), showing that obviative subjects of subjunctive complements are not interpreted in the same way as the controlled subjects in non-finite complements to the same verb. The negative effect of an implicit argument in children’s answers to the subjunctive and infinitive conditions is represented in Graph 4 – in these cases, the 7-8 year old group significantly differs from the control group ( $p < 0.001$ ), but the child groups do not significantly differ from each other. Even though implicit arguments may be syntactically represented (Landau, 2010), they do not seem to be integrated in the child’s syntactic representation.

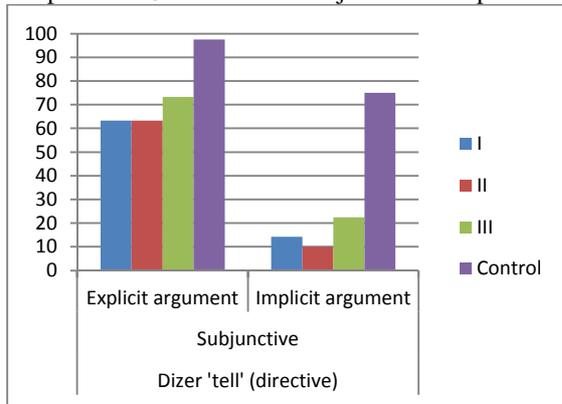
Graph 1 – *Dizer* ‘tell’ with indicative complement



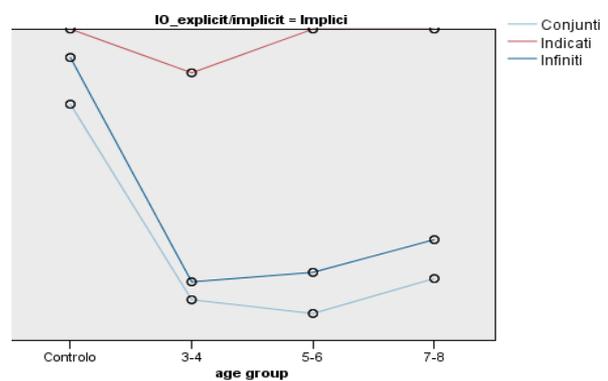
Graph 2 – *Dizer* ‘tell’ with infinitive complement



Graph 3 – *Dizer* ‘tell’ with subjunctive complement



Graph 4- Mood and implicit indirect object



- (1) O leão<sub>i</sub> queria que \_\_\_<sub>k</sub> trouxesse o jantar.  
the lion wanted that bring-3SUB the dinner  
“The lion wanted him to bring dinner.”
- (2) O leão<sub>i</sub> disse (ao esquilo) que \_\_\_<sub>i</sub> trazia o jantar.  
the lion said to+the squirrel that brought-3IND the dinner  
“The lion told the squirrel that he would bring the dinner.”
- (3) O leão<sub>i</sub> queria \_\_\_<sub>i</sub> trazer o jantar.  
the lion wanted bring-INF the dinner  
“The lion wanted to bring the dinner.”
- (4) O gato<sub>i</sub> disse (ao esquilo<sub>k</sub>) que \_\_\_<sub>k</sub> apanhasse os brinquedos.  
the cat said to+the squirrel that catch-3SUB the toys.  
“The cat told the squirrel to catch the toys.”
- (5) O gato<sub>i</sub> disse (ao esquilo<sub>k</sub>) para \_\_\_<sub>k</sub> apanhar os brinquedos.  
the cat said to+the squirrel to catch-INF the toys.  
“The cat told the squirrel to catch the toys.”

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