Variation in Control into Subordinate Clauses in Indonesian

In spoken Indonesian, arguments in subordinate adjunct clauses which are coreferential with overtly expressed matrix clause arguments are frequently realized as null. However, individual speakers appear to systematically differ in which range of interpretations of the null argument is available to them. Consider (1). In the absence of context, for some speakers, the only salient interpretation is (1A), where the null argument is co-referent with the matrix subject; for other speakers, both (1A) and (1B), where the null argument is co-referent with the matrix object, are equally salient interpretations.

(1)	Pak	Guru	memarahi	kita,	karena	jehat.
	father	teacher	*meng*-angry-APP	1PL	because	evil

            A.   'The teacher scolded us, because he is unkind.'
            B.   'The teacher scolded us, because we are unkind.'

I hypothesize that the two groups of speakers differ according to their 'strategy' of resolving null arguments. At first blush, it appears that for the first group of speakers, control possibilities into subordinate clauses are first and foremost constrained by the syntax. Conversely, for the second group of speakers, control possibilities are first and foremost constrained by pragmatics; if the subordinate clause predicate could plausibly apply to either matrix clause argument, both interpretations will be available. If the subordinate clause predicate can plausibly apply to only one of the matrix clause arguments, be it subject or object, the null argument can only be interpreted as coreferent with that matrix clause argument.

For the first group of speakers, demonstrating that these null arguments surface as PRO is relatively unproblematic, as by definition PRO only appears in ungoverned positions, such as [Spec, TP] of a nonfinite clause. Adjunct clauses can be shown to be nonfinite, as overt tense markers (e.g. *telah*) do not appear in the adjunct clause (Vamarasi 1997), and regardless of the linear order of the subordinate and matrix clauses, matrix clause arguments cannot be realized as null. The obligatory control (OC) into adjuncts displayed by this group of speakers can be accounted for by Hornstein 2001's theory of control (cf. Potsdam & Polinsky 2003, for Malagasy). Under this theory, PRO is derived via movement: the controlling DP originates in the position of the null argument, and then moves to a higher position (where it is phonologically realized) to check the theta feature of a higher predicate. Control into adjunct clauses can be accounted for via a theory of sidewards movement (Nunes 1995), and economy restrictions are hypothesized to prohibit object control from an adjunct.

However, if Indonesian syntax encodes OC into adjuncts, it appears to be able to be overridden by pragmatic factors in the second group of speakers, who routinely display non-obligatory control (NOC). For Hornstein 2001, NOC is the 'elsewhere' case, obtaining only when the structural conditions for OC are not met; as a last resort, *pro* is inserted into the null argument position, and NOC obtains. If we wish to maintain a Hornsteinian analysis, we would need to show that the structure of (1) differs in some crucial way between the two groups of speakers, or that there is a systematic variation in the licensing of *pro* and PRO for the two groups of speakers. In this paper, I pursue the second hypothesis: the first group of speakers licenses PRO in certain environments, such as the null subject of subordinate clauses, where the second group cannot. There are certain environments where both groups license PRO, such as null subject of complement clauses (e.g. complements of matrix verb *coba* 'try'); however, it does not yet appear to be the case that there are any control contexts where both groups license *pro*. This hypothesis is motivated through an in-depth empirical comparison of differing types of control contexts (e.g. adjunct vs. complement subordinate clauses; adjunct clauses headed by conjunctions vs. temporal adverbials; and differing matrix clause verbs), and their permissible interpretations, in conjunction with varying types of matrix clauses (e.g. 'active', 'canonical passive' and 'subjective passive' clauses, in the terminology of Guilfoyle Hung & Travis 1992).