

# Null Referential Subjects in Övdalian

Henrik Rosenkvist

This article is concerned with the description and analysis of Övdalian referential null subjects. A general background to Övdalian is provided together with the syntactic restrictions on the possible null subjects (*wið* ‘we’ and *ið* ‘you’). Interestingly, these null subjects in Övdalian do not appear in the same syntactic positions. This syntactic difference leads us to the conclusion that the distribution of the two possible null subjects must be explained individually. I argue here that the syntactic restrictions indicate that null *wið* requires a link to the surrounding context in order to be identified, whereas the identification of null *ið* seems to be dependent on the agreement affix. I build on the proposal of Koenenman (2006), and argue that affixes may have pronominal properties, proposing that this gives an explanation as to why null *ið* is not restricted in the same fashion as null *wið*. Finally, Övdalian is discussed in a wider Germanic context, and it is shown that Övdalian is one of a small number of non-standard Germanic languages which allow referential null subjects.

**Keywords** null subjects, Övdalian, syntax

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most remarkable features of Övdalian syntax is the possibility of referential null subjects. The pronouns corresponding to *we* and *you* (plural) are in general null, as similarly evidenced in well-known null-subject languages such as Spanish or Turkish. Examples of the phenomenon in Övdalian are given in (1).

- (1) a. Byddjum i Övdalim.  
*live.1PL in Älvdalen*  
 ‘We live in Älvdalen.’  
 b. Ulið färå nu.  
*shall.2PL leave now*  
 ‘You ought to leave now.’

All other pronouns in Övdalian, including the non-referential *eð* ‘it’, ‘there’ and the generic pronoun *an* ‘one’, which can also mean ‘he’, must be pronounced, however.<sup>1</sup> In this respect, Övdalian corresponds to Germanic vernaculars such as Bavarian or Frisian – in these language varieties, certain pronouns, but not all, are regularly omitted. They are thus partial null-subject languages (Platzack

2003, 2004; Holmberg 2005, 2010; Koenenman 2006; Shlonsky 2009; Biberauer 2010).

In this paper, I show that Övdalian is a partial null-subject language, and that the two possible null subject pronouns actually obey different syntactic restrictions. Therefore, I conclude that two different analyses must be provided. The Övdalian data are then used as a background for a general discussion about referential null subjects in wider Germanic and in partial null-subject languages in general.

Section 2 contains a brief introduction to Övdalian, while Section 3 provides evidence that Övdalian is a partial null-subject language as stated above. In Section 4, the syntactic properties of the Övdalian null subjects are further discussed, and in Section 5 I propose an explanation for the syntactic properties of null *wið* 'we'<sup>2</sup> based on proposals made by Frascarelli (2007) and Sigurðsson (2010). The topic of Section 6 is null *ið* 'you-plural'. In the analysis of null *ið* presented here, I assume that the corresponding agreement affix (*-ið*) may have pronominal properties, following work by Koenenman (2006). Section 7 contains a brief overview of other Germanic partial null-subject languages. A conclusion and some final comments of a more general character can be found in Section 8.

The main purpose of this paper is to present a new set of relevant data and to discuss these data in the light of recent theories about null subjects (Koenenman 2006; Frascarelli 2007; Sigurðsson 2010), not to develop a new theory for the null-subject phenomenon.

## 2. NULL SUBJECTS – A BRIEF THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In most of the world's languages, referential subjects may in general be omitted (Gilligan 1987). Rizzi (1982, 1986) suggested that the languages of the world can be divided into null-subject languages (NSLs) and languages in which subjects must be overt. In NSLs, the subject role is fulfilled by a null pronoun (*pro*), which must be licensed and identified. Licensing decides which syntactic configurations allow *pro* and identification recreates the semantic content of the omitted subject, typically by 'strong' or 'rich' verb agreement (see Vikner 1995, 1997; Rohrbacher 1999), the idea being that the content of a referential subject cannot be identified unless the specific person/number combination of the subject is reflected by agreement on the finite verb or elsewhere in the clause. In a language with 'weak' verb agreement on the other hand, only non-specific (i.e. non-referential) subjects may be omitted. Hence, a strict implication follows from Rizzi's hypothesis: any language which allows referential null subjects (RefNSs) will also allow non-referential null subjects.

A significant factor for the identification of RefNSs is thus verb agreement (Taraldsen 1978; Jaeggli & Safir 1989:26ff.).<sup>3</sup> Borer (1986) suggests that agreement affixes on the finite verb actually may function as subjects *per se*, being 'I-subjects'. This proposal has become a standard analysis: 'Indeed, the possibility of null subjects

in a given language has been generally attributed to the pronominal character of its agreement morphology' (Frascarelli 2007:692). Similar proposals have been made by Platzack (2004), Koenenman (2006) and Barbosa (2009).

Languages with 'weak' or no verb agreement which nonetheless allow RefNSs, such as Mandarin (Huang 1984), constitute a problem for Rizzi's hypothesis. Furthermore, partial and asymmetrical NSLs have called into question the simple division into NSLs and non-NSLs. In a partial NSL such as Hebrew or Finnish, for instance, RefNSs only appear in certain person/number combinations, and in asymmetric NSLs (e.g. Arabic, see Alexiadou 2006), the syntactic distribution of RefNSs is limited to certain positions in the clause. In generative grammar (Chomsky 1995, 2001), the subject role cannot be fulfilled by an unrealized pronoun (*pro*) which is identified by agreement on the finite verb, since syntactic  $\varphi$ -features only are interpretable on a DP/NP. Hence,  $\varphi$ -features on a verb are uninterpretable and must be valued and deleted in the course of the syntactic derivation. Indeed, Holmberg (2005:536) emphasizes that

The theory of *pro* . . . cannot be maintained in a theory making the distinction between interpretable and uninterpretable features that plays a crucial role in Chomsky 1995: chapter 4 and subsequent work by Chomsky and others.

New analyses have therefore been put forth by Holmberg (2005; Finnish), Ackema et al. (2006a), Frascarelli (2007; Italian), and Barbosa (2009; Portuguese), among others. These analyses depart either from Borer's (1986) pronominal-affix hypothesis ('I-subject') or from the assumption that RefNSs may in some way be identified via the discourse, or from a combination of these hypotheses. Frascarelli (2007) proposes that null subjects in Italian are identified in an Agree relation with an Aboutness-shift Topic, and Sigurðsson (2010) claims that all null arguments, subjects as well as objects, must be successfully Context-Linked in order to be properly identified. Below, after having demonstrated that the two possible null subjects in Övdalian obey different syntactic restrictions, I argue that the properties of null *wið* 'we' suggest that the latter type of analysis (context-linking) is on the right track, whereas the properties of null *ið* 'you' appear to support the idea that agreement affixes may function as pronouns in some NSLs.

In the Germanic languages, non-referential subjects may be omitted in Icelandic and German (Sigurðsson & Egerland 2009), but no standard Germanic language allows RefNSs. This fact led Jaeggli & Safir (1989) and Rohrbacher (1999) to the conclusion that RefNSs are incompatible with V2 word order. For this reason, the Germanic V2 languages have played a very small role in research on null subjects and hence there are no comprehensive studies or analyses of RefNSs based on Germanic language varieties. However, RefNSs do appear in several non-standard Germanic language varieties, such as Bavarian (Bayer 1984; Weiß 1998), Zürich German (Cooper 1995), Schwabian (Haag-Merz 1996), Frisian (de Haan 1994;

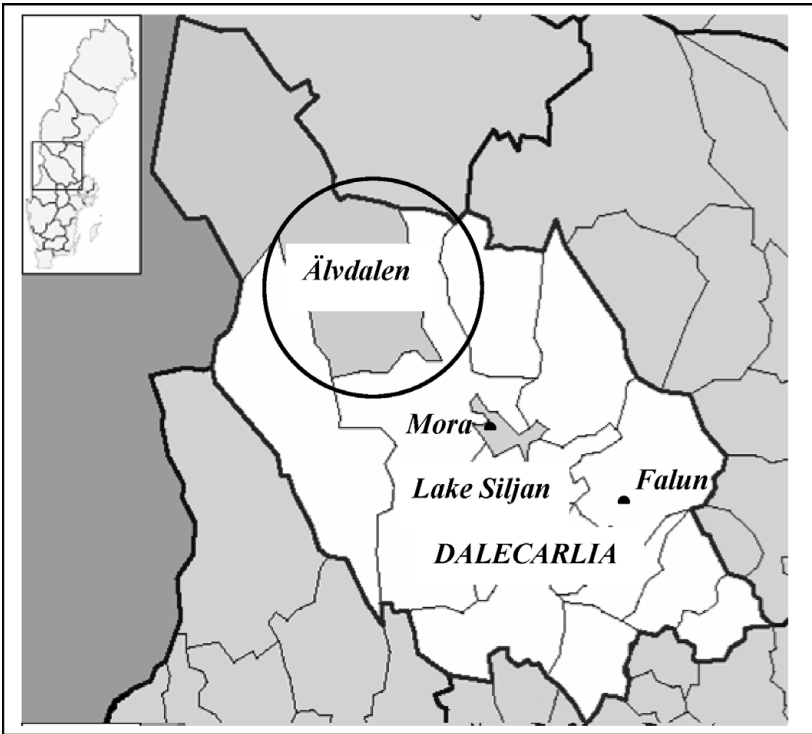


Figure 1. The location of Älvdalen. Övdalian is spoken in the southern, encircled part of the municipality.

Hoekstra 1997), Yiddish (Prince 1998; Jacobs 2005), and Övdalian (Levander 1909; Rosenkvist 1994, 2006, 2009). In this paper, the main topic is the syntactic properties of Övdalian null subjects, but in Section 7 the perspective is widened and I expand the discussion to include other Germanic partial NSLs.

### 3. ÖVDALIAN

#### 3.1 A brief introduction to Övdalian

Övdalian<sup>4</sup> is spoken in the north western part of Dalecarlia, Sweden, by 3000–4000 speakers (Stensland 2000; see Figure 1). Övdalian and Swedish are mutually incomprehensible, but there are no longer any monolingual speakers of Övdalian. According to Dahl (2005; see also Dahl 2009), Övdalian is typologically closer to Icelandic and Faroese than it is to Swedish. The linguistic peculiarity of the Upper Siljan region, including Älvdalen, was noted by Swedish linguists in the 17th century,

and the first academic dissertation concerning the language varieties of Dalecarlia was written in 1733 (Näsman 1733). Still, this area is remarkably different when compared with surrounding dialects: ‘The archaic and diversified dialects of Dalarna hold an exceptional position’ (Hallberg 2005:1697).

To mention but a few Övdalian morphosyntactic features which separate Övdalian from Swedish, Övdalian has a three-way gender system and a complex case system (Ringmar 2005), null referential subjects (Rosenkvist 2006), and negative concord and verb raising (Garbacz 2006, 2010), but seems to lack object shift; further syntactic exploration of Övdalian is currently underway within the ScanDiaSyn project.<sup>5</sup>

During the 20th century, several radical social changes have affected the sociolinguistic situation in Älvdalen, none of which have strengthened the position of Övdalian (Björklund 1958; Helgander 1996, 2005a, b). Hence, there is at present a notable variation between generations as older speakers have been forced to learn Swedish at the start of school – now some older speakers avoid Swedish when they can – while younger speakers increasingly use Swedish in all contexts (Helgander 1996).

At present, the organization for the preservation of Övdalian (*Ulm Dalska* ‘we shall speak Övdalian’/‘let us speak Övdalian’) is striving for minority language status, and to this end they have encouraged the production of a grammar (Åkerberg 2000) as well as an Övdalian–Swedish lexicon (Steensland 2006), and they support courses in what is known as ‘classic’ Övdalian (i.e. the Övdalian described by Levander 1909). The new orthography, which is utilized in the present paper, is a result of their efforts.

### 3.2 Övdalian verb agreement and null subjects

In Övdalian, subject pronouns in the 1st and 2nd person plural are regularly omitted, but no other pronouns (with the exception of deletion due to topic drop or deletion in coordination, etc.). Levander (1909:109) remarks:

Personal pronouns in first and second person plural are omitted when they are used as subjects and when the corresponding clause in Swedish would be subject initial. . . When Standard Swedish has inverted word order pronouns may likewise be omitted, but are in general pronounced. (my translation)

Just as in Spanish or any other NSL, the default option in Övdalian is to use covert forms of ‘we’ and ‘you’ – these pronouns are overt in clause-initial position only when the speaker wants to stress the subject. However, all generic and non-referential subjects must be overt – it would be ungrammatical to omit *an* in (2c) or *eð* in (2d and e).<sup>6</sup>

- (2) a. Irum iema.  
*are.1PL home*  
'We are home.'
- b. Irið iema.  
*are.2PL home*  
'You are home.'
- c. An ir ungrun nu, kanenda!  
*he/one is hungry now indeed*  
'One is indeed hungry now!'
- d. Eð far raingen.  
*it starts to.rain*  
'It starts raining.'
- e. Eð ir ruolit kweðå.  
*it is fun to.sing*  
'It is fun to sing.'

The requirement that non-referential subjects be spelled out in Övdalian, even though some RefNSs are possible, contradicts the generalization that languages with RefNSs always allow non-referential null subjects. Roberts & Holmberg (2010:8) claim that '[t]here is thus an implicational relation between the presence of referential null subjects and the presence of expletive null subjects', and this generalization is taken as a point of departure in their subsequent categorization of possible null-subject languages.<sup>7</sup> The Övdalian data suggest, however, that the basic generalization may need to be revised.

Null referential subjects of the type discussed above have occurred in Övdalian at least since the beginning of the 17th century – all of the following examples (which are presented in their original orthography) display a null *wið* 'we'.<sup>8</sup> Note that in (4b) and (6), the null pronoun functions as a subject in an embedded clause.

- (3) a. Wiliom nu wårå lostegar och glädier. (Prytz 1622)  
*want.1PL now be merry and happy*  
'Now we want to be merry and happy.'

(Swedish translation by Noreen 1883:xxi)

- b. Kappom i oss, so länge wijhr bellom nodh, du;  
*pour.1PL.IMP in us so long we can.1PL anything you*  
*siå nu kumbe Lasse Olson atte; wiljom gåma bort oss,*  
*look now comes Lasse Olson back shall.1PL hide away us*  
*taste ahn gohr iådå.* (Prytz 1622)  
*until he goes to.eat*  
'Let's drink as long as we can. Look, now L. O. comes back – we should hide until he goes away to eat!'

- (4) a. Ulum dar håkå i huop (J.E.L.R. 1679)<sup>9</sup>  
*shall.1PL there hook together*  
'We shall get married there.'

- b. Kappum rett i hwoss tast werdum iär duoller  
*pour.IPL.IMP right in us until become.IPL here happy*  
 ‘Let’s drink until we become happy here.’ (J.E.L.R. 1679)
- (5) O adum ni diem i bettjin, du wet... (Levander 1917)  
*and had.IPL down them in creek you know*  
 ‘And we put them in the creek, you know’  
 (Swedish translation by Björklund 1958)
- (6) A du twajd ferdugan dig nu so bellum go aut? (Olsson 1988)  
*have you washed ready you.REFL now so can.IPL go out*  
 ‘Are you done washing now so that we can go out?’

There are thus reasons to believe that null subject pronouns have been a regular property of Övdalian for at least four centuries.

Universally, there seems to be a correlation crosslinguistically between languages with robust subject–verb agreement (see Vikner 1997; Rohrbacher 1999) and languages with null subjects. Weak verbs in the present tense indicative in Övdalian are inflected as in Table 1 (Levander 1909:84ff.); Icelandic verbs are shown as a comparison, and the respective personal pronouns are also included.

		Övdalian	Icelandic
Infinitive	‘to bite’	baita	bíta
sg	1	ig bait	ég bít
	2	du bait	þú bítur
	3	an bait	hann bítur
pl	1	(wǫð) baitum	við bítum
	2	(ið) baitið	þið bítið
	3	dier baita	þeir bíta

**Table 1. Verb agreement and personal pronouns in Övdalian and Icelandic.**

As can be seen, the Övdalian singular verb forms are not inflected for person, and 3pl is identical to the infinitive (as in many Germanic languages):

When it concerns present tense indicative plural it should be noted that the third person is always identical to the infinitive. (Levander 1909:85; my translation)

In discourse, the form for 3pl furthermore often coincides with the singular form in Övdalian, since the affix *-a* is deleted in non-final position due to apocope. Hence, only the forms for 1pl and 2pl are distinctly marked for person, and Övdalian null subjects only appear with these verb forms (in present and past tense). In Icelandic, on the other hand, no referential null subjects are possible.

The forms for 1pl and 2pl indicative are furthermore in general homonymous with the imperative forms, as illustrated in (7).

- (7) a. Dalskum i Övdalim.  
*Speak.Övdalian.1PL.IND/IMP in Älvdalen*  
 ‘We speak Övdalian in Älvdalen/let us speak Övdalian in Älvdalen!’
- b. Dalskið i Övdalim.  
*Speak.Övdalian.1PL.IND/IMP in Älvdalen*  
 ‘You speak Övdalian in Älvdalen/speak Övdalian in Älvdalen!’

In clauses such as the ones above, the pragmatic context and the prosody determine whether the clause should be interpreted as indicative or imperative. This circumstance may have played a vital role for the emergence of null *wið* and I return to this matter in Section 7.

Null subjects seem to be an Övdalian innovation – the Old Scandinavian languages did not allow null subjects such as those of Övdalian (Håkansson 2008; Rosenkvist 2009),<sup>10</sup> and there are no traces of null subjects of this type (i.e. ‘we’ and ‘you’ are overt only when they are stressed) in the Dalecarlian Law, a provincial law from the 13th century (the oldest preserved text from this general area). However, due to the lack of historical evidence, it is probable that there will be no definitive solution to this matter.

There are however similar null subjects in the nearby Våmhus dialect, but apparently not in the Mora and Orsa dialects, all of which are spoken in the Upper Siljan area.

### 3.3 Common properties of null subject languages – the case of Övdalian

It is well-known that the Romance null subject languages exhibit a number of syntactic features that have been assumed to go hand-in-hand with the possibility of having null referential subjects (Rizzi 1982, 1986; see Roberts 2007:24ff.). Also Greek, for example, appears to display the same cluster of syntactic properties (Roberts 2007:27ff.). In this section, three such features (disjoint subject reference, free subject inversion and *that*-trace effects) in Övdalian are presented and discussed.<sup>11</sup>

#### 3.3.1 Disjoint subject reference

In Italian, for example, a language which allows referential null subjects, an overt subject pronoun embedded below a subject in matrix clause does not in general refer to the main clause subject as shown in (8).

- (8) Il professore<sub>i</sub> ha parlato dopo che (lui<sub>\*i/j</sub>) è arrivato. (Italian)  
*the professor has spoken after that he is arrived*  
 ‘The professor spoke after he arrived.’



In (8), *lui* cannot refer to *il professore* unless *lui* is stressed, modified or coordinated (Rizzi 1986). In non-null-subject languages such as English or French, ‘he’ in a corresponding position is ambiguous, referring either to the subject of the matrix clause or to an antecedent in the discourse. Övdalian patterns with non-null-subject languages in this respect, as shown in (9).

- (9) Prest’<sub>n<sub>i</sub></sub> glämäð min kullum tast an<sub>i/j</sub> sãmneð.  
*priest.DEF spoke with girls.DEF until he fell.asleep*  
 ‘The priest spoke with the girls until he fell asleep.’

In (9), the embedded pronoun *an* is ambiguous.

### 3.3.2 Free subject inversion

In the Romance null subject languages, the subject of a regular declarative clause may occur in clause-final position (10a). However, this is not an option in Övdalian, as shown in (10b).

- (10) a. È arrivato Gianni. (Italian)  
*is arrived Gianni*  
 ‘Gianni has arrived.’  
 b. \*Ar kumið Lasse.  
*has arrived Lasse*  
 ‘Lasse has arrived.’

Again, Övdalian differs from regular null subject languages.

### 3.3.3 That-trace effects

Another feature that seems to unite the Romance null subject languages is the possibility of retaining the complementizer in embedded clauses with an extracted subject, as shown in the Italian example below in (11a). In non-null-subject languages such as English (11b) and Swedish (11c) on the other hand, ‘that’ must be unpronounced when the subject is extracted as shown in the contrast.

- (11) a. Chi hai detto che ha scritto questo libro? (Italian)  
*who have.2SG said that has written this book*  
 ‘Who did you say wrote this book?’  
 b. Who did you say (\*that) wrote this book?  
 c. Vem sa du (\*att) skrev den här boken? (Swedish)  
*who said you that wrote this here book.DEF*  
 ‘Who did you say wrote this book?’

In Övdalian, there actually seems to be at least three syntactic options for corresponding constructions, but it is not possible to spell out *at* in a Romance fashion as shown in (12).

- (12) a. Ukin truo'dd du (\*at) uld kumå?  
*who thought you would come*  
 'Who did you think would come?'
- b. Ukin truo'dd du at an uld kumå?  
*who thought you that he would come*  
 'Who did you think would come?'
- c. Ukin truo'dd du so uld kumå?  
*who thought you so would come*  
 'Who did you think would come?'

In (12a), we see that the strategy applied in non-null-subject languages is viable also in Övdalian. The complementizer must be covert. However, in (12b) the structure is salvaged by a resumptive pronoun in the embedded clause, and *at* need not be omitted (it should be pointed out that *an* is the default generic pronoun in Övdalian). In Northern Norwegian also, resumptive pronouns may obviate the *that*-trace effect (Taraldsen 2005).

In (12c), *so* is used as a complementizer. *So* is multifunctional; it may be a relative pronoun, an adverb, or a coordinator. Levander (1909:120) remarks that the Övdalian *so* very often occurs in contexts where it would be ungrammatical in Swedish, and Vangnes (2007) has observed that in the Sogn area (Norway), *som* may be inserted in the very same manner as shown in (12c).

As for the complementizer *at*, it is well-known that it is generally omitted in Övdalian: '*At* introduces finite embedded clauses, but is omitted in most cases' (Åkerberg 2000:68; my translation; see also Levander 1909:119). The syntactic behaviour of Övdalian *so* and *at* are at present unknown, and hence the detailed syntactic structure of (12b and c) must be left for future research. Neither of these Övdalian constructions are however grammatical in standard Swedish.

#### 4. THE SYNTACTIC PROPERTIES OF ÖVDALIAN NULL SUBJECT PRONOUNS

Reading Levander (1909:108; see the first quote in Section 3.2 above), one gets the impression that there is no difference between *wjð* 'we' and *ið* 'you' as far as their syntactic distribution is concerned. This, however, is not the case – the following restriction seems to have applied throughout the entire period from which Övdalian data are known:

The two pronouns *wjð* 'we' and *ið* 'you' are omitted when the subject is initial . . . When the word order is inverted, *wjð* must be overt, but not *ið*.  
 (Nyström & Sapir 2005:25; my translation; see Levander 1909:108–109)

Accordingly, *wjð* may be omitted only from what appears to be the topic position (SpecCP) and must be spelled out when SpecCP is occupied by another constituent – see the examples in (13) – while this restriction does not apply for *ið*, as shown in

(14). In (13c), I assume that there is a question operator in SpecCP, which prohibits null *wjð*.

- (13) a. \*Nū irum iema.  
*now are.1PL home*  
 ‘Now we are home.’  
 b. \*Wiso kâytum?  
*why run.1PL*  
 ‘Why are we running?’  
 c. \*Kâytum strai’tt?  
*run.1PL fast*  
 ‘Are we running fast?’
- (14) a. Nū irið iema.  
*now are.2PL home*  
 ‘Now you are home’  
 b. Wiso kâytið?  
*why run.2PL*  
 ‘Why are you running?’  
 c. Kâytið strai’tt?  
*run.2PL fast*  
 ‘Are you running fast?’

Both types of subjects may, however, be covert in adverbial embedded clauses, as in (15).

- (15) a. ... um irum iema.  
*if are.1PL home*  
 ‘... if we are home.’  
 b. ... um irið iema.  
*if are.2PL home*  
 ‘... if you are home.’

In contemporary Övdalian, some (mainly younger) speakers seem to prefer the Swedish word order (the finite verb follows sentential adverbs) in embedded clauses, while other speakers prefer the Icelandic word order (the finite verb precedes sentential adverbs) (Garbacz 2006:177, 2010: Chapter 6). The latter word order is probably representative of older Övdalian; Levander (1909:123) explicitly remarks that:

The word *inte* [‘not’] cannot appear between the predicate and the subject in embedded clauses, as in the standard language [i.e. Swedish]; if it does not appear in initial position, it must hence be put after the predicate. (my translation)

However, in present-day Övdalian, both alternatives below are possible:<sup>12</sup>

- (16) a. Dier werd lie’ssner um Lasse kumb it (noð).  
*they become sorry if Lasse comes not NPI*  
 ‘They’ll be sorry if Lasse doesn’t come.’

- b. Dier werd lie'ssner um Lasse int kumb.  
*they become sorry if Lasse not comes*  
 'They'll be sorry if Lasse doesn't come.'

The situation changes, though, when the subject of the embedded clause is null. In that case, verb raising appears to be required (see Rosenkvist 1994; Garbacz 2006, 2010:112f.). This applies to both of the possible null subjects (*wið* and *ið*). In (17b), it is shown that a pre-verbal adverbial (in this case *naug* 'probably') in the embedded clause is incompatible with a null subject.

- (17) a. Fåm luv kringg uoss, ettersos irum naug tungner djärå  
*may.IPL PRT hurry us since are.IPL probably forced to.do*  
 eð-dar nu.  
*that now*  
 'We must hurry, because we probably have to do that now.'
- b. \*Fåm luv kringg uoss, ettersos naug irum tungner djärå  
*may.IPL PRT hurry us since probably are.IPL forced to.do*  
 eð-dar nu.  
*that now*  
 'We must hurry, because we probably have to do that now.'
- c. Fåm luv kringg uoss, ettersos wið irum naug tungner  
*may.IPL PRT hurry us since we are.IPL probably forced*  
 djärå eð-dar nu.  
*to.do that now*  
 'We must hurry, because we probably have to do that now.'

Hence, it is plausible that verb raising (to T<sup>o</sup>) is a prerequisite for null subjects in Övdalian – younger speakers, who often use Swedish word order in embedded clauses, consequently do not omit subject pronouns as often as older speakers (Rosenkvist 1994; Helgander 2005b:23f.).<sup>13</sup>

So, there seems to be some form of restriction for null *wið*, whereas null *ið* may appear wherever a pronounced subject *ið* is possible.<sup>14</sup> In the following sections, I take a closer look at the syntactic properties of these RefNSs. Due to the syntactic differences illustrated above, I suggest one analysis for null *wið*, and another for null *ið*.

## 5. THE SYNTACTIC PROPERTIES OF NULL *WIÐ* – A DETAILED DESCRIPTION

### 5.1 Syntactic properties of null *wið*

As mentioned above, null *wið* appears to be confined to clause-initial position. In main clauses, this position is SpecCP, and the omission of *wið* from this position

is not in principle to be structurally distinguished from regular cases of topic drop. Therefore I will first establish the non-applicability of the topic-drop hypothesis below.

There are at least two Övdalian clause structures where the null *wið* cannot be an instance of topic drop: omission from main clauses with initial *kanstji* ‘maybe’, as in shown in (18), and omission from embedded clauses, as in (19).<sup>15</sup> In the Scandinavian languages, some types of embedded clauses may display main clause word order, allowing topicalization (see Julien 2007). It is therefore important to point out that *wið* can be omitted from all types of embedded clauses, including such clauses that disallow topicalization (such as relative clauses, for example).

- (18) *Kanstji eddum bellt råkás i morgu atte.*  
*maybe had.1PL could meet tomorrow again*  
 ‘Maybe we could meet again tomorrow.’ (Nyström & Sapir 2005:29)
- (19) ... *so wilum djärå i morgu.*  
*which want.to.1PL do tomorrow*  
 ‘... which we want to do tomorrow.’

In (19), the finite verb in the relative clause follows the subordinator (presumably in  $C^\circ$ ), and in (16) it was shown that null *wið* is grammatical in a conditional clause, although SpecCP is not an available position in such clauses (see Platzack 1998:107f.). Thus, the fact that SpecCP is not the sole position for null *wið* excludes (regular) topic drop as a possible explanation for null *wið*.

Having excluded topic drop as an explanation, a possible generalization concerning null *wið* is that the null pronoun must precede the finite verb, in a Spec–Head relation. In main clauses the relation between null *wið* and the finite verb is established in CP, and in embedded clauses it is established in TP. When the order is reversed (the verb precedes the subject), a null *wið* is disallowed. The relation between null *wið* and the finite verb must furthermore be visible in overt syntax. In (13), the finite verb has raised to  $C^\circ$  from  $T^\circ$ , and as subjects must raise to SpecTP due to an EPP-feature, *wið* appears in a Spec–Head relation with the finite verb in  $T^\circ$  in covert syntax. Had this structural relation been the only requirement for null *wið*, then the sentences in (13) would be grammatical. It can thus be concluded that although verb raising is required, null *wið* is not solely licensed by some syntactic device in TP.

Furthermore, null *wið* (but not null *ið*) is ungrammatical in embedded clauses where a non-subject is topicalized (SAG IV:537ff., Julien 2007) – in such a case, there is no available position for the subject preceding the finite verb as shown in the contrast between (20b) and (20c), unlike (20a) where no element is topicalized.<sup>16</sup> The topicalized adverbial *i morgu* ‘tomorrow’ seems to prevent a null *wið* in (20b), whereas the sentence is grammatical when the same adverbial occurs in final position (20a) or when there is an overt subject (20c).

- (20) a. Bo saggd at irum tungner djärå ittað i morgu.  
*Bo said that are.1PL forced to.do this tomorrow*  
 ‘Bo said that we have to do this tomorrow.’
- b. \*Bo saggd at i morgu irum tungner djärå ittað.  
*Bo said that tomorrow are.1PL forced to.do this*  
 ‘Bo said that we have to do this tomorrow.’
- c. Bo saggd at i morgu irum wjð tungner djärå ittað.  
*Bo said that tomorrow are.1PL we forced to.do this*  
 ‘Bo said that we have to do this tomorrow.’

This fact and the evidence provided by the ungrammatical sentences in (13), where we saw that null *wjð* requires an empty SpecCP in main clauses, seem to be good arguments for the hypothesis that a requirement for null *wjð* is a pre-verbal subject (in a visible VP-external position). This would also explain why null *wjð* is grammatical in regular embedded clauses. As was shown above, Övdalian, like Icelandic, has (optional) verb movement across clause adverbials to a phrase below CP (see Holmberg 2003:15; Garbacz 2006, 2010; Hróarsdóttir et al. 2007). Hence, Icelandic and Övdalian subjects are merged in the specifier position of this phrase in embedded clauses, across the finite verb (younger speakers may deviate from this pattern). Here, I assume this phrase to be TP; the main point in the present paper is that TP is above negation in Övdalian. In main clauses, the only possible position in front of the finite verb is SpecCP.

The hypothesis that the essential syntactic condition for null *wjð* is an available position directly preceding the finite verb implies that the specific syntactic features of the functional head ( $T^\circ$  or  $C^\circ$ ), which the finite verb occupies, are not directly related to the possibility of null *wjð*. In turn, that might point to the conclusion that *wjð* disappears at the interface between syntax and phonology; that is, null *wjð* is a mere PF phenomenon. However, another possibility is the assumption that *wjð* can only be covert in syntactic configurations that do not exclude the possibility of identifying null *wjð* through context, in line with analyses of null arguments presented in Frascarelli (2007) and Sigurðsson (2010). Below, the latter alternative is developed further.

## 5.2 A context-linking analysis of null *wjð*

In Övdalian, as in the Scandinavian languages in general, extraction from embedded clauses is blocked if there is a topicalized constituent in the embedded clause, which in this case displays main clause word order.<sup>17</sup> For example, Holmberg & Platzack (1995:80ff.) assume that extracted elements are  $A'$ -constituents, and hence they cannot cross another  $A'$ -constituent (the topicalized element in the embedded clause) due to Relativized Minimality.

Interestingly, the very same syntactic configuration that disallows extraction from an embedded clause also disallows null *wjð*, and, vice versa; when extraction from an embedded clause is permitted, *wjð* may be covert. Hence, extraction (21a) as well as null *wjð* (21b) are ungrammatical when there is a topicalized constituent in the embedded clause, while both extraction and a covert subject are allowed when there is no topicalized constituent (21c).

- (21) a. \*Ittað saggd Bo at i morgu irum wjð tungner djärå.  
*this said Bo that tomorrow are.PL we forced to.do*  
 ‘Bo said that we have to do this tomorrow.’
- b. \*Bo saggd at i morgu irum tungner djärå ittað.  
*Bo said that tomorrow are.1PL forced to.do this*  
 ‘Bo said that we have to do this tomorrow.’
- c. Ittað saggd Bo at irum tungner djärå i morgu.  
*this said Bo that are.1PL forced to.do tomorrow*  
 ‘Bo said that we have to do this tomorrow.’

In recent work, Sigurðsson (2010) suggests, building on Frascarelli (2007), that all arguments, overt as well as covert, must be linked to context via a Context Linker in the CP domain.<sup>18,19</sup> To be successfully valued, an argument must enter an Agree relation with the Context Linker. As for null subjects, it is well-known that in the Germanic languages, topic drop is only possible if SpecCP is empty (the Empty Left Edge Condition, see Sigurðsson & Maling 2010) and if an antecedent is present in the discourse context (see Mörnjö 2002). The examples below are taken from Sigurðsson (1993:254–255) and show that topic drop only is possible from SpecCP in Germanic languages.


- (22) a. (Ich) kenne das nicht. (German)  
*I recognize that not*  
 ‘I do not recognize that.’
- b. (Jag) känner det inte. (Swedish)  
*I recognize that not*  
 ‘I do not recognize that.’
- c. (Ég) þekki það ekki. (Icelandic)  
*I recognize that not*  
 ‘I do not recognize that.’
- (23) a. \*Jetzt kenne das nicht. (German)  
*now recognize that not*  
 ‘Now I do not recognize that.’
- b. \*Nu känner det inte. (Swedish)  
*now recognize that not*  
 ‘Now I do not recognize that.’
- c. \*Núna þekki það ekki. (Icelandic)  
*now recognize that not*  
 ‘Now I do not recognize that.’

Furthermore, subjects that are extracted from an embedded clause may also be dropped from the initial position in the matrix clause.

- (24) a. (Det) visste jag inte var förbjudet. (Swedish)  
*that knew I not was forbidden*  
 ‘I did not know that it was forbidden.’
- b. (Það) viss ég ekki að væri bannað. (Icelandic)  
*that knew I not that was forbidden*  
 ‘I did not know that it was forbidden.’

Övdalian follows the patterns illustrated in (22)–(24). Topic drop is only possible from SpecCP, and extracted arguments may also be topic-dropped.

In the light of these data, my interpretation of the syntactic restrictions for null *wjð* is that it obeys the very same set of rules. The subject pronoun *wjð* can only be null if it has access to the context, presumably through a Context Linker in the CP domain (Frascarelli 2007:718, 722; Sigurðsson 2010:17ff.). An intervening constituent (X in (25); a constituent that has been topicalized in the embedded clause) blocks the Agree relation between the Context Linker and the null subject, making null *wjð* (and extraction) impossible. Sigurðsson (2010:21) illustrates the operation schematically, repeated here as (25).

- (25) [CP ... {CLn} ... (X) ... [TP *pronoun* T ...
- 

In neither main nor embedded clauses can the syntactic features of a null argument be valued by Agree if a topicalized constituent blocks access to the Context Linker. In V2 clauses, the crucial location is SpecCP (or, following Frascarelli 2007, the Spec position of the Aboutness-shift TopicP, the topmost Spec position in the CP domain), which is the edge position of the CP phase: ‘in order to be dropped, a pronoun must sit in an edge position at the moment of Spell-out’ (Frascarelli 2007:722).

In embedded clauses that do not allow topicalization and which therefore are not V2 environments, I suggest that there is a Context Linker in the CP domain in Övdalian, but no structural position for topicalized constituents. Therefore, no topicalized constituent can interfere, and null *wjð* is always possible. Recall that in all types of clauses in Övdalian, a pre-verbal overt *wjð* (or *ið*) receives a contrastive/emphatic interpretation; this indicates that *wjð* can occupy a higher structural position than pronouns that must be overt (a common assumption, see Ackema et al. 2006a:16ff.). If this is the case, then *wjð* always may have access to the edge position of the CP phase in embedded clauses, unlike other pronouns which must be located in SpecTP at the point of Spell-out in embedded non V2 clauses. This hypothesis also explains a crucial difference between null *wjð* and extracted constituents; the latter, but not the former, requires a landing site in the matrix clause.<sup>20</sup>



Under Sigurðsson's analysis, agreement in those Germanic languages where verbs are inflected for person and number (Icelandic, German, etc.) is uninterpretable (non-pronominal), and its only function is to specify the antecedent of the null argument: 'the C/Edge-linking relation has to be featurally non-distinct from Agr' (Sigurðsson 2010:24). In a language without agreement, such as Swedish, the interpretation of arguments that are topic-dropped is on the other hand solely determined by the possibility of locating an antecedent in the discourse – if multiple antecedents are present, multiple interpretations may be possible (see Mörsjö 2002:70ff.).

If the agreement on the finite verb is not directly involved in the identification of null *wjð* in Övdalian, as suggested here, the fact that verb raising in the embedded clause is a necessary condition for null *wjð* must be explained otherwise. The immediate answer is that the subject must receive a value for its D- and  $\varphi$ -features before it is Context-Linked. These features are valued in an Agree relation between the subject and the finite verb in TP, where also the uninterpretable features on the finite verb are deleted. It is plausible that these feature checking operations cannot take place when the subject pronoun has been Context Linked, and that, vice versa, unchecked D- and  $\varphi$ -features would interfere with the Agree relation between the subject and the Context Linker. Again, extraction offers a parallel. Among the Scandinavian languages, only Icelandic and Faroese allow subjects to be extracted from an embedded clause over an overt 'that', and these languages may have (overt) V-to-I raising, where the finite verb establishes a local relation with the subject in SpecTP (see Hrafnbjargarson 2008:120ff.). Hence, it is possible that deletion of subject-related features subsequently enables subject extraction over 'that' in these languages.<sup>21</sup>

Frascarelli (2007) and Sigurðsson (2010) furthermore attribute different properties to subject pronouns depending on their person reference. 1st and 2nd person pronouns are 'inherently C/Edge-linked' (Sigurðsson 2010:8), since they are, per definition, always present in the discourse context, while a null argument in the 3rd person must be correlated to a linguistically realized subject in the preceding discourse.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, an antecedent in the discourse does not constitute a necessary prerequisite for null *wjð*.

Given the Empty Left Edge Condition, a necessary prerequisite for null *wjð* is that SpecCP is available in main clauses. As was demonstrated above, however, Övdalian main clauses with an initial *kanstji* 'maybe' nevertheless allow null *wjð*. I address this apparent problem in the following subsection.

### 5.3 Topicalized *kanstji* 'maybe' and null *wjð*

Swedish *kanske*-initial sentences may violate V2,<sup>23</sup> and they may be interpreted either as declarative or as interrogative (SAG IV:21f., 418, 676, 695):

- (26) a. Kanske Lina är färdig snart? (Swedish)  
*maybe Lina is ready soon*  
 'Lina is maybe ready soon?'
- b. Kanske är Lina färdig snart. (Swedish)  
*maybe is Lina ready soon*  
 'Lina is maybe ready soon.'

Assuming that Övdalian *kanstji* may appear in the same positions as *kanske* above, it may seem unproblematic to explain (18) as a *kanstji*-clause of the same type as in (26a). Example (27a) is an authentic example of *kanstji* preceding an overt subject, and hence also null *wjð* may appear just before the finite verb (as in 27b; see also 18).

- (27) a. Kanstji an tyttjer int um uoss.  
*maybe he likes not PRT us*  
 'Maybe he doesn't like us.'
- b. Kanstji (wjð) eddum bellt råkås i morgu atte.  
*maybe we had.1PL could meet tomorrow again*  
 'Maybe we would be able to meet tomorrow again.'

Thus, it seems to be the case that there is a position for *kanske* and *kanstji* in front of SpecCP. There is, however, a noteworthy circumstance here: Egerland (1998:17ff.) shows that in clauses such as (28a), as well as in other non-V2 *kanske*-clauses, the finite verb may not precede the negation in Swedish:

- (28) a. Han kanske inte har ringt. (Swedish)  
*he maybe not has called*  
 'He has perhaps not called.'
- b. \*?Han kanske har inte ringt. (Swedish)  
*he maybe has not called*  
 'He has perhaps not called.'

This suggests, according to Egerland (1998), that *kanske* actually is situated in C°. Considering the etymology of *kanskel/kanstji*, this analysis is not unexpected – grammaticalized items tend to retain properties from their source constructions, and *kanskel/kanstji* was originally a collocation of two verbs.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, the finite verb in *kanske*-initial clauses may remain in a low position in Swedish, below the negation. In Övdalian, however, the verb optionally raises (as in 27a) to T°, appearing in a position adjacent to the subject, above the negation. As for (18) and (27b), two structural analyses are therefore possible.

As can be seen in Figure 2, in both analyses null *wjð* directly precedes a verbal element – either *kanstji* or the finite verb – which explains why it may be covert. I presume that it also has access to a Context Linker, although this is not illustrated in Figure 2.<sup>25</sup> In the B analysis, the structural conditions for a null *wjð* are in essence the same as in an embedded clause.

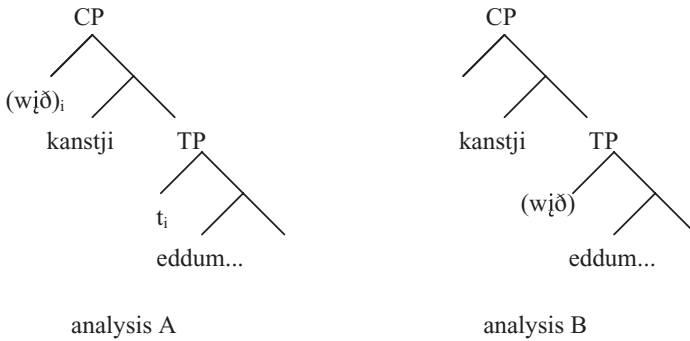


Figure 2. Two analyses of *kanstji*-initial clauses with null *wið*.

However, *kanstji* is not the only (apparently) topicalized item which allows a null *wið*; *welst* ‘thank God’ also is allowed before null *wið*:

- (29) *Welest wartum kwitter ålåellum.* (Steensland 2006:61)  
*good become.1PL rid forest.lizards*  
 ‘Thank God that we got rid off the forest lizards!’

Similarly to *kanstji*, *welst* may also trigger V3 word order as shown in example (30).

- (30) *Welest du ar gart eð-dar nu.* (Steensland 2006:122)  
*good you have done that now*  
 ‘Thank God that you have done that now.’

*Welest* is (probably) derived from the adjective/adverbial *wel* ‘good’, and thus it has no verbal features historically. It is, however, likely that both (29) and (30) should be analysed as *welst* plus a ‘that’-clause (as the English translations indicate; also Lars Steensland (p. c.) assumes that this is the correct analysis). In Övdalian, *at* ‘that’ is very often omitted (Åkerberg 2000:68). If this is the proper analysis, a null subject is of course perfectly grammatical – the null subject in (29) may be posited in front of the finite verb *wartum* in the embedded *at*-clause (*Welest (at) (wið) wartum kwitter ålåellum*).

## 6. THE SYNTACTIC PROPERTIES OF NULL *ið* – A DETAILED DESCRIPTION

### 6.1 *The syntactic properties of null ið*

Unlike *wið*, *ið* can be covert in all positions, as has been demonstrated above. The relevant sentences are repeated below.

- (31) a. Nu irið iema.  
*now are.2PL home*  
 ‘Now you are home.’  
 b. Wiso kâytið?  
*why run.2PL*  
 ‘Why are you running?’
- (32) . . . um irið iema.  
*if are.2PL home*  
 ‘. . . if you are home.’
- (33) Bo saggd at i morgu irið tungner djärå ittað.  
*Bo said that tomorrow are.2PL forced to.do this*  
 ‘Bo said that you have to do this tomorrow.’

Null *ið* thus may appear in all syntactic positions in Övdalian, in sharp contrast with null *wið* – null *ið* does not require an empty SpecCP, and nor is it sensitive to topicalization in embedded clauses. It is hence obvious that the structural conditions for the identification of null *wið* and null *ið* differ from each other, and that each of these null subjects must be given an explanation of its own. In the subsection below, I will argue that null *ið* is possible because the homonymous agreement affix *-ið* may provide a D-feature to T<sup>o</sup>, thereby, in essence, acting as a subject pronoun. This analysis thus agrees with one of the main approaches to null subjects in generative grammar, the pronominal-affix hypothesis (see the theoretical background in section 2). More specifically, I will utilize a version of this hypothesis presented in a paper by Koenenman (2006).

## 6.2 A pronominal-affix analysis of null *ið*

In Table 1 above, it was shown that the 2pl pronoun and the 2pl affix are homonymous: *ið* v. *-ið*. This circumstance has not gone unnoticed in previous research on Övdalian. Björklund (1956:98–107) assumes that the Övdalian 2pl verb form originally had the suffix *-in* (as in Old Swedish), claiming that the present-day suffix developed through successive sound changes and reanalyses, in the following fashion:

- (34) farin ið > fari ið > far ið > farið

Accordingly, the suffix *-ið* may be seen as a merger between the 2pl affix and the 2pl pronoun, Björklund argues, and speakers may thus interpret it as a clitic pronoun. An argument for this is that *-ið* may appear in isolation in writing (35a) (Lars Steensland, p. c.).<sup>26</sup> Levander (1928:164; reprinted in Brännström 1933:126) provides an authentic example (35b), and even such an early source as Prytz (1622) provides a possible example (35c):

- (35) a. Ir int ið iema i morgu?  
*are- not 2PL home tomorrow*  
 ‘Are you not at home tomorrow?’

- b. Stå int ir jän og gâpå!<sup>27</sup>  
*stand- not 2PL here and shout*  
 ‘Don’t stand here shouting!’
- c. Huru säyi ir?  
*how say you.2PL*  
 ‘What do you say?’

If *-ið* is analysed as a clitic pronoun, then it follows that there are no syntactic restrictions on null *ið* on a par with those that limit the distribution of null *wið*.

On the other hand, the presence of an overt *ið* (which always is interpreted as contrastive/emphatic) would perhaps be surprising, since the clause then would contain two subjects, a possible problem mentioned by Björklund (1956:106). A similar phenomenon is, however, attested in Bavarian (Fuß 2005:159):

- (36) *obts es/ihr noch Minga kummts.* (Bavarian)  
*whether.2PL you.2PL to Munich come.2PL*  
 ‘... whether you come to Munich.’

In the Bavarian example, a 2pl pronoun (either *es* or *ihr*) is possible in the same clause as two other markers for 2pl. Only those Bavarian pronouns that can be covert, i.e. 2sg and 2pl, may be doubled in this fashion.

To conclude, a possible explanation for null *ið* is that the speakers of Övdalian have reanalysed the agreement affix *-ið* into a clitic form of the pronoun *ið*, a proposal originally launched by Björklund (1956). The formal syncretism must of course have facilitated the morphosyntactic change. Hence, it is reasonable to say that the Övdalian *ið* has a lexically unclear status, balancing between affix, clitic and pronoun. Below, this hypothesis will be developed in more formal terms.

### 6.2.1 Correspondences between affixes and pronouns in partial NSLs

The process whereby pronouns are reanalysed as clitics and subsequently into affixes (a type of grammaticalization, see Hopper & Traugott 2003) is studied in great detail by Fuß (2005). The morphosyntactic changes in Bavarian are especially relevant to the present paper, considering that Bavarian is a Germanic partial NSL, just like Övdalian. In Bavarian, only 2sg and 2pl may be null, and in both of these cases the present-day verb agreement must be seen as a merger between an older verb ending and the clitic form of a pronoun (Fuß 2005:162ff.). In 2sg, the original ending was *-s* and the pronoun *thu*, and in 2pl *-t* and *ēs*, respectively.

- (37) a. *-s thu > sth(u) > -st* (Bavarian, 2sg)  
 b. *-t ēs > t(ē)s > -ts* (Bavarian, 2pl)

Fuß (2005:168) concludes that ‘the reanalysis of the former subject clitic as an agreement marker forced the learner to assume the presence of a referential *pro* in the subject position, which is the historical source of the limited *pro*-drop properties

	1sg	2sg	3sg	1pl	2pl	3pl
AGR	<b>-n</b>	<b>-t</b>	-V	<b>-mme</b>	<b>-tte</b>	-vAt
Pronoun	<b>minä</b>	<b>sinä</b>	hän	<b>me</b>	<b>te</b>	he

Table 2. Verb agreement and personal pronouns in Standard Finnish.

	1sg	2sg masc	2sg fem	3sg masc	3sg fem	1pl	2pl	3pl
AGR past	<b>-ti</b>	<b>-ta</b>	<b>-t</b>	-o	-a	<b>-nu</b>	<b>-tem</b>	-u
AGR future	<b>e-</b>	<b>te-</b>	<b>te-</b>	<b>-i</b>	ye-	<b>te-</b>	<b>ne-</b>	<b>te-</b>
Pronoun	<b>ani</b>	<b>ata</b>	<b>at</b>	hu	hi	<b>anaxnu</b>	<b>atem</b>	hem

Table 3. Verb agreement and personal pronouns in Hebrew.

of present-day Bavarian'. In the rest of the inflectional paradigm, no similar fusion between an affix and a clitic pronoun has occurred, and accordingly Bavarian only allows 2sg and 2pl null subjects.

Also in some other partial NSLs there seem to be striking correspondences between the forms of personal pronouns and inflectional affixes, and Koeneman (2006) takes this observation as a starting point in an attempt to explain why partial NSLs do not allow RefNSs across the board. In Hebrew and Finnish, the partial NSLs that Koeneman investigates, 1st and 2nd person pronouns may be covert, but not 3rd person pronouns even though the verb agreement is maximally distinct. As for Hebrew, RefNSs are furthermore only possible in the past and future tense (see Shlonsky 2009). Crucially, in these cases the Hebrew and Finnish agreement affixes seem to be quite similar to the personal pronouns (Koeneman 2006:81ff.). The data are reproduced in Tables 2 and 3 – relevant forms are in bold.

As in Bavarian, the reason why there is a match between the forms of the pronouns and the agreement affixes is of course that historically, the latter have developed from the former. In some cases, subsequent sound changes, which has affected one category but not the other, have reduced the similarity. However, in none of the languages do the 3p pronouns correlate with the 3p affixes (which have been derived from other sources, historically).

Koeneman suggests that the apparent link between 1p/2p affixes and pronouns in Hebrew and Finnish has led the language users to assume that these categories are lexically related to each other:

The morphological correspondence between agreement and pronoun forms in these languages is not merely a superficial property but triggers this encoding in the lexicon. More concretely, the first/second-person affixes share one property with the third-person agreement affixes – the fact that they are bound morphemes – and one property with the pronouns – their morphological similarity. The fact that first/second-person affixes have these

two properties combined in them has a consequence that the paradigms of personal pronouns and agreement affixes are intertwined ... (Koeneman 2006:87)

Koeneman's conclusion is that in the lexicon, 1p and 2p affixes are underspecified for the feature  $+/-$ pronominal in Hebrew and Finnish (in Koeneman's terms, they are  $\alpha$ pronominal), while 3p affixes are non-pronominal. The language acquiring child has two clues that point towards this conclusion: the similarities between affixes and pronouns illustrated above, and the actual presence of RefNSs in the language. For many authors, the lack of null subjects in morphologically 'rich' languages (such as German and Icelandic) has been a prevailing problem (see e.g. Holmberg 2010:112f.). In this respect, the idea that correspondence between pronouns and affixes may facilitate null subjects in a given language is promising, since this hypothesis does not directly relate null subjects to rich inflection.

In Övdalian, only in 2pl is there a clear correspondence between the agreement affix and the personal pronoun. In 1pl, the affix (*-um*) shows no similarities whatsoever to the 1pl pronoun (*wjð*). This is, of course, another reason why the two possible RefNSs require different analyses.

Under my syntactic analysis of null *ið*, I will assume that in Övdalian the language users have also collapsed the 2pl pronoun and the 2pl affix in the lexicon, thereby giving rise to null *ið* while at the same time retaining the possibility of keeping an overt 2pl subject in combination with 2pl agreement.

### 6.2.2 A syntactic analysis of null *ið*

Consider again the explanation for null *ið* that was presented above: the pronoun and the agreement affix have been reanalysed as one single lexical unit, probably due to the obvious syncretism between the affix and the pronoun. While an overt subject *ið* can be assumed to be a full DP (see Déchaine & Wiltschko 2002), it is probable that the ending *-ið* has a dual syntactic status in Övdalian (regular affix or pronominal affix). When there is no overt pronoun in the clause, I suggest that the subject DP in SpecvP has been split. The head D, realized as *-ið*, cliticizes to  $T^\circ$ , where it contributes a D-feature to  $T^\circ$ , while the remainder of the DP (a  $\varphi$ P-pronoun without any phonological content) EPP-merges in SpecTP. In the ensuing Agree relation, the D-feature in  $T^\circ$  causes the null pronoun to be interpreted as definite, and the  $\varphi$ -features are valued. Hence, null *ið* may be an analogue to null referential subjects in consistent null subject languages (and, according to Déchaine & Wiltschko 2002:428ff., to French subject clitics). The crucial aspects of the derivation of (38) are illustrated in Figure 3.

- (38) Kåytið strai'tt.  
*run.2PL fast*  
 'You run fast.'

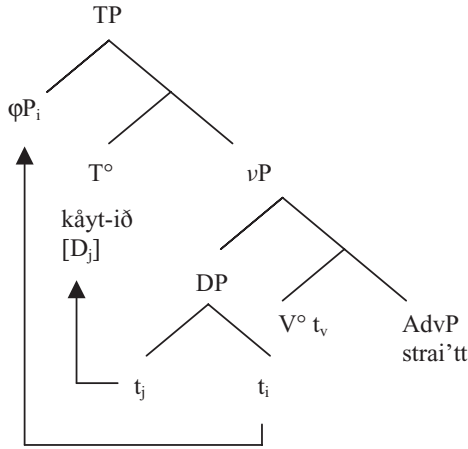


Figure 3. The derivation of null *ið*.

The Övdalian  $\varphi$ P-pronoun in SpecTP can thus never be interpreted as generic – it must always merge in SpecTP, where the Agree relation with  $T^\circ$  (with a D-feature)<sup>28</sup> always ensures that  $\varphi$ P is interpreted as definite, as was mentioned above. Holmberg (2005) has also suggested that in Finnish, there is a  $\varphi$ P which appears as a null subject (see also the discussion in Holmberg 2010). But since this  $\varphi$ P cannot receive a D-feature from  $T^\circ$  (there is no D-feature in that position in Finnish), it is interpreted as generic, unless it is bound by a higher DP subject (Holmberg 2005:557). Neither is there in general a D-feature in  $T^\circ$  in Övdalian, I assume – it is only when null *ið* appears that there is a D-feature in  $T^\circ$ , originating from the DP in SpecvP.

The analysis of the derivation of null *ið* is similar to the explanation of Dutch clitic doubling presented in van Craenenbroeck & van Koppen (2006). These authors suggest that the doubling element is a  $\varphi$ P, which has moved out of the subject DP. There are therefore independent arguments which indicate that internal merge of parts of the DP in SpecvP may be a viable syntactic operation.

As soon as an overt 2pl subject is present, I assume that the derivation of Övdalian syntax returns to its regular state of affairs: the DP-pronoun *ið* functions as a subject, and the affix *-ið* is non-pronominal, just as all other Övdalian agreement affixes.

### 7. A POSSIBLE EXPLANATION FOR THE EMERGENCE OF NULL *WİÐ*

In the preceding sections, the syntactic properties of null *wið* and *ið* have been discussed in detail, as well as the emergence of null *ið*. Here, I turn to the possible historical background of null *wið* and the consequences for the syntactic distribution of this null pronoun.



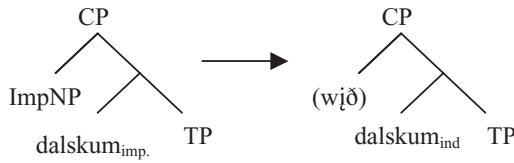


Figure 4. Reanalysis from imperative to declarative clause.

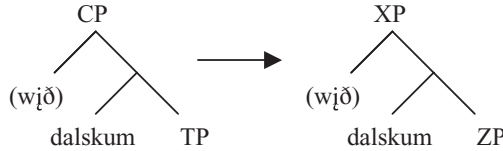


Figure 5. Analogical spread of null wǐð.

As has been mentioned above (Section 3), the verb affixes for 1pl present tense indicative and 1pl imperative are homonymous (-um). A verb form such as *drusum* (‘run’ 1pl.imp/ind) is therefore morphosyntactically ambiguous. A possible explanation for the emergence and distribution of null wǐð is accordingly that speakers have analysed imperative clauses as indicative, transferring the null subject from one clause type to another (see Figure 4). From a speech act perspective, first person imperatives (hortatives) are often quite close to declaratives, since a request directed to oneself rarely is denied. Furthermore, in Övdalian and Swedish, present tense is often used to express futurity (Åkerberg 2000:49). Therefore an Övdalian 1pl imperative clause, which is inherently hypothetical, could be interpreted as a futural, and hence hypothetical, declarative clause, since they are morphosyntactically identical. Givón (2001:320) claims that there is a universal continuum between imperatives and declaratives, and futural declaratives are actually located on the middle of this continuum.<sup>29</sup> All in all, only intonation may determine whether a clause such as *Baiðum dar ien taima* should be understood as ‘let us wait there for one hour’ or as ‘we (will) wait there for one hour’, and intonation may of course be blurred in discourse.<sup>30</sup>

A reanalysis from imperative to indicative cannot explain why null wǐð occurs in embedded clauses, however. One must therefore assume a further syntactic change, in which the context that allowed null subjects was widened (as in Figure 5). Below, I suggest how the initial reanalysis as well as the analogical spread may be represented. Platzack & Rosengren (1998) have argued that imperatives lack a number of functional phrases in the CP and TP domains; however, the exact structural differences between declaratives and imperatives are not relevant in the perspective of reanalysis, the crucial point being that one and the same string of words may be attributed to two distinct structural analyses (see Harris & Campbell 1995: Chapter 4).

Therefore a simple CP structure will be sufficient for my purposes; I have utilized Platzack & Rosengren's notion of ImpNP (the covert imperative subject), though.

- (39) Dalskum                    i    Övdalim.  
       *Speak.IPL.IND/IMP in Älvdalen*  
       imperative: 'Let us speak Övdalian in Älvdalen.'  
       indicative: 'We speak Övdalian in Älvdalen.'

In Figure 4, the reanalysis from imperative to indicative clause is illustrated; the result is the possibility of omitting *wið* in indicative clauses when it appears in the same position as the null subject in imperatives, i.e. SpecCP. The latter (analogical) change, illustrated in Figure 5, consists of a generalizing reanalysis in which the possibility of omitting *wið* spread to all Spec positions directly preceding a visible finite verb, as in embedded clauses. Perhaps the restrictions for null *wið* also can be seen, partially, as a residue from the imperative null subject, which cannot survive in contexts prohibiting access to the discourse (see Platzack & Rosengren 1998).

This explanation for null *wið* is a mere hypothesis (like all putative explanations for language changes), but it would be strengthened if similar changes in other languages could be attested. Given the very specific prerequisites for this change, however, it cannot be expected that a reanalysis from imperative to indicative is common in the languages of the world. A somewhat similar change can however be found in English, where the imperative *let us* has developed into the verb form *let's* (Hopper & Traugott 2003:10ff.), which is not always used as a straightforward imperative verb (Hopper & Traugott (2003:11) provide the non-standard English example *Let's you go first. . .*).

## 8. WIDENING THE VIEW – GERMANIC PARTIAL NULL SUBJECT LANGUAGES

There is no standard Germanic language in which RefNSs of the Övdalian type are grammatical, but a number of non-standard varieties allow such null subjects, to varying degrees (see Bayer 1984, Weiß 1998, and Fuß 2005 for Bavarian and Lower Bavarian; Cooper & Engdahl 1989, and Cooper 1995 for Zürich German; Haag-Merz 1996 for Schwabian; Prince 1998, and Jacobs 2005 for Yiddish; Hoekstra & Marácž 1989, de Haan 1994, and Hoekstra 1997 for Frisian). In these languages, the null subject property seems to be tightly linked to the existence of specific agreement morphemes on the finite verb. In Table 4 (taken from Rosenkvist 2009:171), the verb forms that allow null subjects are in bold.

As can be seen from the table above, null subjects are only allowed in these varieties if the agreement on the finite verb unambiguously identifies the covert subject (but the reverse implication does not hold; a unique verb form does not always license a null subject). Similar connections between agreement and null subjects can

Number	Person	Bav	LBav	ZG	Schw	Fris	Övd	Yidd
sg	1	kumm	kumm	chume	komm	kom	kumb	kum
	2	kummst	kummst	chunnsch	kommisch	komst		kumst
	3	kummt	kummt	chunnt	kommt	komt		kumt
pl	1	kumman	kummu	chömed	kommet	komme	kumum	kumnn
	2	kummts	kummts				kumiö	kumt
	3	kumman	kumman				kumå	kumnn
infinitive		kemma	kemma	chu	komma	kommen		

Bav = Bavarian; LBav = Lower Bavarian; ZG = Zürich German; Schw = Schwabian; Fris = Frisian; Övd = Övdalian; Yidd = Yiddish

**Table 4. Verb inflection and RefNSs in some Germanic non-standard language varieties.**

Person reference	Type of constituent
person 1, 2	DP
person 3	$\varphi$ P
generic	NP

**Table 5. The syntactic status of English pronouns (Déchaine & Wiltschko 2002:426).**

be found in Estonian, where negated verbs have lost their person agreement affixes and tend to lose the ability to allow null subjects (Pajusalu & Pajusalu 2004; Pajusalu 2005), in Hebrew (Shlonsky 1997:116; see also Platzack 2004:103), in Brazilian Portuguese (Duarte 2000) and also in an acclaimed null subject language such as Italian. Renzi & Vanelli (1982: footnote 17) point out that a second person singular pronoun is necessary in present and imperfect subjunctive – a part of the Italian verb inflection paradigm that does not differ between the forms in the singular. On the other hand, in Icelandic and German, null subjects are disallowed, in spite of seemingly sufficient verb morphology (as is well-known). Hence, in the Germanic languages verb agreement seems to be a necessary but not sufficient condition for null referential subjects.

Furthermore, it seems that only first and second person pronouns can function as true null subjects (i.e. not including subjects that are omitted due to topic drop and coordination deletion, etc.) in the Germanic languages.

There may actually be tangible syntactic differences between on the one hand 1st and 2nd person pronouns and on the other hand 3rd person pronouns. Above, Holmberg’s (2005) analysis of Finnish 3rd person pronouns was discussed. He suggests that Finnish 3sg pronouns are  $\varphi$ Ps, i.e. deficient DPs, while 1st and 2nd person pronouns are full DPs. This idea originates from Déchaine & Wiltschko (2002), who propose that English pronouns may be classified as in Table 5.

The classification rests, inter alia, on the observation that 1st and 2nd person pronouns may function as determiners (*we linguists*), while 3rd person pronouns cannot (*\*they linguists*).<sup>31</sup> Déchaine & Wiltschko (2002:419ff.) proceed to show that

the English pronouns also differ with respect to binding properties and compounding, for example. Under the assumption that covert pronouns are also DPs,  $\varphi$ Ps or NPs, we would expect the syntactic qualities of null subjects to vary accordingly, in English and perhaps also in other Germanic languages. The pattern in Table 4 is at least an indication that 1st and 2nd person null subjects have a special status in Germanic, a status which might be a reflex of the fact that these null subjects are DPs (with an inherent D-feature that might facilitate recoverability), while 3rd person null subjects are  $\varphi$ Ps.

However, taking a closer look at the syntax of the Germanic null subjects, one finds that there are quite peculiar restrictions involved in many cases (see Rosenkvist 2009). Övdalian has been discussed above; the two possible null subjects have different syntactic properties. And in Zürich German, for example, covert *I* (1sg) is only possible in positions preceding pronominal clitics, and, oddly, before the dative masculine marker *em*, which is homonymous with the clitic for third person dative singular masculine (Cooper 1995:63). In Yiddish, null subjects are only allowed in the initial position of main clauses, according to Prince (1998), and all null subjects but, crucially, 2sg require some form of embedding in the discourse context. However, Jacobs (2005:261) shows that 2sg may also be null in embedded clauses, and I find it probable that only 2sg is a genuine null subject – the examples of other types of RefNSs provided by Prince (1998) strongly remind about instances of topic drop. As shown in Table 4, only the verb form for 2sg is distinctive in Yiddish.

One may conclude that although the Germanic null subject varieties are all dependent on verb agreement for the identification of null subjects, as it would seem, it is obvious that there are also language idiomatic restrictions, which determine the finer syntactic details of the distribution of the null subjects. If these finer details are the result of syntactic innovations, then diachronic studies are probably necessary prerequisites for a satisfactory analysis (see in this respect Axel & Weiß, to appear). Hence, there are definitely opportunities for broad generalizations concerning the possible conditions for null subjects in Germanic, but such generalizations will, of necessity, require language specific adjustments, if the ultimate goal is an understanding of the syntax of null subjects in each specific language.

## 9. CONCLUSION

In the generative research on the distribution of null subjects, Rizzi's original insights (1982, 1986) have been very influential. However, since then, it has been convincingly demonstrated that a wide variety of languages allow referential null subjects, and that individual languages may have specific restrictions for certain types of null subjects, whereas others occur freely. The rich and varied data, taken in combination with recent theoretical developments, have added significantly to the complexity of the original question: what determines whether a particular language allows RefNSs, and, if it does, in which syntactic configurations RefNSs occur.

In this paper, I have introduced the Övdalian RefNSs into the debate, and it has been demonstrated that Övdalian only allows 1pl and 2pl null subjects. Övdalian is hence a partial null subject language. However, these two null subjects obey different syntactic restrictions; whereas 1pl can only be null if access to the discourse context is not blocked by some intervening constituent, 2pl can be null in every possible syntactic environment. Övdalian is therefore also an asymmetric null subject language (see Alexiadou 2006). In order to provide a structural explanation for both of the null subjects, I have suggested that null *wið* 'we' is to be analysed as a null subject which is identified through the discourse context, following recent proposals by Frascarelli (2007) and Sigurðsson (2010). Null *ið* 'you', on the other hand, rather seems to behave like a null subject which is tightly related to the agreement affix – an analysis in which affixes may function as subjects, such as Koenen (2006) is therefore to be preferred, I suggest. Historically, it has also been argued that the 2pl affix (*-ið*) can be seen as a fusion between the original 2pl affix (*-in*) and the subject, a change which reminds one strongly of the development that gave rise to RefNSs in Bavarian (Fuß 2005).

The Övdalian data thus suggest that a single language does not necessarily have only one distinct strategy for the identification of RefNSs. Furthermore, the hypothesis that languages which allow RefNSs always also allow non-referential null subjects is disconfirmed by Övdalian, a language in which non-referential null subjects are disallowed. And, finally, the idea that V2 word order is incompatible with RefNSs (Jaeggli & Safir 1989; Rohrbacher 1999) must be abandoned – in the final section of the paper, it was shown that Övdalian just is one of a handful Germanic V2 partial null-subject languages.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## APPENDIX

### ***A short text In Övdalian***

This short text is written in standard Övdalian orthography, as decided upon by *Rådðjörum* (the Övdalian Language Council) in 2005. It is quoted from their document concerning the new orthography, in which it serves as an example. For convenience, I have set all finite verbs in bold.

Ig **wet** fel ur ruoli eð **brukeð** wára dar gešlpáytjin **add** dugáð riet nán uonngums. **Addum** ien slaikan uonngums i gešlun iessn. Dar páytjin **add** rietað upp gumsan so an **kam** uppend og **ulld** tágá páykan, so **káy'tt** páytjin muot ienum sturum tolle og gumsn attánað föstá'ss og **ulld** tágá páykan. Men me gumsn **uppeð** til, so **uppeð** páytjin undá tollem, so gumsn **sluo** uonne daiti tolln so eð **small**. Men se **káy'tt** allt gumsn atter att og ini smáláuopin og **skákäð** skollam. Krytyre **wiss** fel so wel dar eð **byrd** á laið mot kweldem, so dar dier **add** ietið stinnan sig, so **byrd** dier á liet att diem-dar småwea so **kollдум** för smáláweer, og **byrd** á drágá sig etter diem mot fläðsweem. Og smáláuopin **fygd** fel á dier og.

Ja, eð **war** je plág að gešlkallum, dar eð **war** slaik uondlostjyner i gešlun. Ig **wet** dar **addum** dugáð pass diem so dier **add** eldeð sig ini fläð iel da'n, end tast **kamum** daitá fjásbokkan um kweldn, so **brukeð** dier-dar uondlostjynár pass sig, inná **addum** uonneð ev in diem i fjáseð, og **káyt** frá fjásbokkam og að raise. Eð **war** fel tä iweg og káyt etter og biuð til sjá um an **dugd** wend diem.

## NOTES

1. Only a few isolated examples of null *eð* have been found in older texts and all occur in the following syntactic context:

(i) Og war sumárn an war dar-aute.  
*and was summer.DEF he was out-there*  
 'And it was summer when he was out there.'

The structure of these sentences is not entirely clear. All contemporary speakers, except for a few older ones, reject such examples.

2. Nasalization of vowels is phonemic in Övdalian, and hence *wjð* 'we', with a nasal vowel, forms a minimal pair with *wið* 'at'.
3. This is a classic observation that goes back at least to Wessén (1956:120ff.).
4. Other alternatives are Elfdalian and Oevdalian; Övdalian is used here for two reasons. First, it is derived from the native term *Övdalsk*, and not from the Swedish *Älvdalska*. Hence, Övdalian is derived from an endonym while Elfdalian comes from an exonym. Second, Övdalian seems to function well in English (Elfdalian has an unwanted ring of fantasy literature – *elf* is not synonymous with Swedish *älv* 'river').
5. The URL is: <http://uit.no/scandiasyn/3517/>.
6. *An* is used both as the 3sg masculine ('he') and as the generic ('one') pronoun.
7. See also Huang (2000:53ff.).
8. Null *ið* is quite rare in the earliest texts; one reason for this is that 2pl pronouns are frequently absent from the discourse (wedding poems, dialogues etc). There are however some examples in Näsman (1733:66).
9. The examples in (4) and (5) are quoted from Hesselman (1937). 'J.E.L.R. 1679' indicates the initials of the anonymous author and the year the poem was composed.
10. Wessén (1956:53f.) states that in Old Swedish, '[a] personal pronoun used as a subject may be omitted if it is clear from the context [i.e. the discourse context] who is referred to' (my translation). The Övdalian null subject pronouns that are discussed here are not context dependent in any other fashion than regular personal pronouns.

11. As pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, Newmeyer (2005) rejects the connection between these properties (but see Roberts & Holmberg 2005 for a critical discussion of Newmeyer's claims).
12. *Noð* is a negative polarity item (glossed NPI). Furthermore, the form of the negation varies between *it* and *int*, depending on the context.
13. It is possible that Övdalian will gradually lose the null subjects, following the same path of development as Brazilian Portuguese (Duarte 2000). Although the Övdalian verb agreement seems to be relatively stable, younger speakers frequently leave the verb *in situ* in embedded clauses, thereby blocking the possibility of a null subject.
14. All informants that have been questioned about null subjects by me (about 70) uphold this distinction very consistently, regardless of age.
15. The Swedish cognate *kanske* is known to allow both V2 and V3 word order (SAG IV:418, Egerland 1998:8ff.), presumably due to its etymological background; it was originally a compound of two verbs (just like *maybe*). Övdalian *kanstji* of course has the same background, and similar distribution. The point is that not just any adverb may precede *eddum* in (18). See further below.
16. Vikner (1995:65–129) analyses such constructions as instances of CP recursion, which in this case would yield the structure:

(i) [CP [C° at [CP i morgu C° irum] . . .

Hence, there is just no room for a pre-verbal subject. Westergaard (2005:57) translates this solution into a FinP + TopP structure, but the consequences for Övdalian pre-verbal subjects are the same. See also Julien (2007:139).

17. Extraction and word order in embedded clauses in the Scandinavian languages has been intensively debated by generative grammarians – some recent contributions are Haegeman (2007), Wiklund et al. (2007) and Hrafnbjargarson (2008).
18. The idea that null arguments may be identified by antecedents in the discourse, and that the identification is mediated by a syntactic device in the left periphery of the clause (an operator) goes back at least to Huang (1984) and Raposo (1986).
19. Frascarelli (2007) only discusses Italian 3sg (null) pronouns, while Sigurðsson (2010) develops a general theory for the interpretation of all types of (null) referential arguments. In this paper, I am only concerned with those aspects of Sigurðsson's argumentation that are relevant for the Germanic V2 languages.
20. Indeed, null *wið* appears to be possible also in embedded clauses which disallow extraction:

(i) Ig wet at igår saggd Lasse at ulum fãrà að Stokkol.  
*I know that yesterday said Lasse that shall.1PL go to Stockholm*  
 'I know that Lasse said that we will go to Stockholm yesterday.'

In (i), null *wið* functions as a subject in a 'that'-clause which is embedded in another 'that'-clause with a topicalized constituent (*igår*). Extraction is not possible from either of these clauses – it is probably blocked by *igår* – but null *wið* is permitted in the lower 'that'-clause. My interpretation of these data is that there is a Context Linker in all clauses.

21. Although Övdalian does not pattern exactly with Faroese and Icelandic in this respect, speakers of Övdalian still have more options than speakers of Swedish and other Mainland Scandinavian languages to rescue the derivation when a subject is extracted over *at* 'that' – see the examples in (12).
22. This difference is hence analogous with the difference between deep and surface anaphora, as discussed by Hankamer & Sag (1976).

23. Egerland (1998) investigates Swedish *kanske*, which closely corresponds to Övdalian *kanstji*, and finds that it is a ‘verbal element’ (1998:13) with special syntactic distributional properties.
24. These two verbs often appeared juxtaposed to each other (in clauses such as *Det kan ske att... ‘It may be that...’*), presumably, and the reanalysis of these two verbs into one would be a regular case of univertation (in the sense of Hopper & Traugott 2003:134).
25. As shown in (13c), null *wjǫ* is not allowed in yes/no-questions, and neither can *kanstji*-initial sentences be interpreted as yes/no-questions if the subject is a null *wjǫ*.
26. Another morphosyntactic runaway in modern Övdalian is the genitive suffix *-es*. Contemporary speakers tend to pronounce and write this morpheme in isolation, especially with proper names (Dahl & Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2006:66f.):
  - (i) Anna es buok  
     *Anna GEN bok*  
     ‘Anna’s book’
27. In some Övdalian villages, *iǫ* has the form *ir*.
28. Alternatively, T may have an inherent D-feature (see Holmberg 2010:94ff.). In that case, null *iǫ* is merged as a  $\varphi$ P in SpecvP. However, that analysis infers that there are different types of *iǫ* in the lexicon (overt *iǫ* (a DP), null *iǫ* (a  $\varphi$ P) and an affix *-iǫ*), an analysis which fails to capture to observations made by Koenenman (2006). Furthermore, it is implausible that T would have an inherent D-feature when the subject cannot be null, as often is the case in Övdalian.
29. In Spanish, there is no imperative form for 1pl. To express a hortative such as *Let’s eat*, one may use either a futural indicative form of the verb (*¡Vamos a comer!*) or a subjunctive form (*¡Comamos!*) (Inger Enkvist, p. c.).
30. As pointed out by Piotr Garbacz (p. c.), the hypothesis predicts that null *wjǫ* first spread from imperatives to indicatives in the present tense. Indeed, there are no instances of null *wjǫ* with a past tense verb in Prytz (1622), a fact which could be taken as an indication that the reanalysis had not spread to other tenses at that time.
31. This observation goes back at least to Postal (1966).

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