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# NULL REFERENTIAL SUBJECTS IN OEVDALIAN

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**Abstract:** In this article, Oevdalian referential null subjects are introduced and analysed. A general background to Oevdalian is provided, whereupon the syntactic restrictions of the possible null subjects (*wið* ('we') and *ið* ('you')) are presented. Interestingly, these null subjects do not appear in the same syntactic positions; whereas null *ið* seems to be unrestricted, null *wið* may only appear in positions immediately preceding the finite verb. It is suggested that null *wið* has emerged through two successive reanalyses, in which imperative clauses in 1p plural have been interpreted as indicative, while null *ið* is possible since the pronoun *ið* has merged with the verb affix, i.e. it has become a (kind of) clitic.

In the second part of the paper, the syntactic properties of referential null subjects in Oevdalian is utilized in a more general discussion concerning the syntactic properties of null subjects in partial null subject languages, following e.g. Platzack (2003, 2004) and Holmberg (2005).

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

When studying Oevdalian syntax, one of the most remarkable features immediately stands out: the referential null subjects. The pronouns corresponding to *we* and *you* (plural) are in general omitted, as in well known null subject languages such as Spanish or Turkish:

1. a. Byddjum i Övdalim.  
live-1PL in Älvdalen  
'we live in Älvdalen'
- b. Ulið fãrå nų.  
shall-2PL leave now  
'you shall leave now'

All other pronouns, including the non-referential *eð* ('it', 'there') and the generic pronoun *an* ('one'; *an* also means 'he'), must be pronounced, however.<sup>2</sup> In this

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is a revised and improved version of Rosenkvist (2006). First, I wish to thank all of the Oevdalian informants, some of which have been very patient with me. I also thank Piotr Garbacz, Marit Julien, Christer Platzack, Lars Steensland and several participants in the ScanDiaSyn Grand meeting 2007 for constructive comments; however, noone but me can be held responsible for remaining errors.

<sup>2</sup> Only a few isolated examples of null *eð* have been found in older texts, all in the following syntactic context:

Og war sumãrn an war dar-aute.  
*and was summer-the he was out-there*  
'and it was summer when he was out there'

respect, Oevdalian 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).

In this article, I demonstrate that Oevdalian is a partial null subject language, and that the two possible null subject pronouns actually obey different syntactic restrictions. I argue that there are diachronic explanations for this difference. The Oevdalian data are then used as a background for a general discussion about referential null subjects in Germanic and in partial null subject-languages.

Section 2 contains a brief introduction to Oevdalian, while section 3 gives evidence that Oevdalian is a partial null subject language. In section 4, the syntactic properties of the Oevdalian null subjects are discussed further and analysed in a generative model, and in section 5 I suggest a diachronically based explanation of the syntactic distribution of null *wið* ('we').<sup>3</sup> In section 6, I discuss approaches to null subjects in partial null subject languages, mainly originating from Platzack's (2003, 2004) and Holmberg's (2005) hypotheses. On the basis of Holmberg's proposal, I suggest a formal analysis of the Oevdalian null subjects. Section 7 contains an overview of other Germanic partial null subject languages, and some final comments of a more general character.

## 2. Oevdalian – a very brief introduction

Oevdalian<sup>4</sup> is spoken in the north western part of Dalecarlia, Sweden, by 3000-4000 speakers (Steensland 2000; cf. figure 1). Oevdalian and Swedish are mutually incomprehensible (but there are no longer any monolingual speakers of Oevdalian), and, according to Dahl (2005), Oevdalian is typologically closer to Icelandic and Faroese than to Swedish. The linguistic peculiarity of the Upper Siljan region, including Älvdalen, was noted by Swedish linguists already 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, compared with surrounding dialects: "The archaic and diversified dialects of Dalarna hold an exceptional position" (Hallberg 2005:1697).

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All contemporary speakers, except for a few older ones, reject such examples.

<sup>3</sup> Nasalization of vowels is phonematic in Oevdalian, and hence *wið* ('we'), with a nasal vowel, forms a minimal pair with *wið* ('at').

<sup>4</sup> Other alternatives are *Elfdalian* and *Övdalian*; Oevdalian is used here for two reasons. First, it is derived from the native term *Övdalsk*, and not from the Swedish *Älvdalska*. Hence, Oevdalian is derived from an endonym while *Elfdalian* comes from an exonym. Second, Oevdalian seems to function well in English (*Elfdalian* has an unwanted ring of fantasy literature – *elf* is not synonymous with Swedish *älv* 'river').



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

To mention but a few Oevdalian morphosyntactic features which separate Oevdalian and Swedish, Oevdalian has a three way gender system and a complex case system (Ringmar 2005), null referential subjects (Rosenkvist 2006), negative concord and verb raising (Garbacz 2006), but it seems to lack e.g. object shift and (possibly) preposition stranding; further syntactic exploration of Oevdalian 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 Oevdalian (Björklund 1958, Helgander 1996, 2005). Hence, there is at present a notable variation between generations, older speakers having been forced to learn Swedish at the start of school – now most older speakers avoid Swedish when they can – while younger speakers increasingly use Swedish in all contexts (Helgander 1996).

At present, the organisation for preservation of Oevdalian (*Ulm Dalska* 'we shall speak Oevdalian'/'let us speak Oevdalian') is striving for minority language status, and to this end they have encouraged the production of a grammar (Åkerberg 2004) as well as of an Oevdalian-Swedish lexicon (Steensland 2006), and they support courses in what is known as "classic"

<sup>5</sup> The URL is: <http://uit.no/scandiasyn/3517/>

Oevdalian (i.e, the Oevdalian described by Levander 1909). Also the new ortography, which is utilized in the present paper, is a result of their endeavour.

### 3. Oevdalian verb agreement and null subjects – initial data

#### 3.1. Initial data

In Oevdalian, subject pronouns in 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 e.g. Spanish or any other pro-drop language, the default option in Oevdalian is accordingly to use covert forms of *we* and *you* – these pronouns may only be overt in clause initial position if the speaker wants to stress the subject.<sup>6</sup> However, all generic and non-referential subjects must be overt – it would be ungrammatical to omit *an* in (2 c.) or *eð* in (2 d. and e.).<sup>7</sup>

- 2. a. Irum iema.  
*are-1pl home*  
'we are home'
- b. Irið iema.  
*are-2pl home*  
'you are home'
- c. An ir unggrun nų, 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'

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<sup>6</sup> In section 4.1, I present a number of arguments against the hypothesis that these covert subjects are instances of Topic Drop.

<sup>7</sup> *An* is used both as the 3sg masculine ('he') and as the generic ('one') pronoun.

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

3. a. wiliom nu vårå 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; siå nu kumbe Lasse Olson atte; wiljom gäma bort oss, taste ahn gohr iädå. (Prytz 1622)  
*pour-1pl.imp. in us, so long we can anything, you; look now comes L. O. back; shall-1pl hide away us until he goes away*  
 'let's drink as long as we can. Look, now L. O. comes back – we should hide until he goes away!'
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 (J.E.L.R, 1679)  
*pour-1pl.imp. right in us until become-1pl. here happy*  
 'let's drink until we become happy here'
5. O adum ni diem i bettjin, du wet, so lop ostå budär [...] (Levander 1917)  
*and had-1pl. down them in creek you know that runs east-of shacks*  
 'and we put them in the creek, you know, that goes east of the shacks'  
 (Swedish translation by Björklund 1958)
6. A du twajd ferdugan dig nu so bellum go aut? (Olsson 1988)  
*have you washed ready refl. now so can-1pl go out*  
 'are you done washing now so that we can go out?'

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

Universally, there seems to be a correlation crosslinguistically between languages with robust subject-verb agreement and languages with null subjects (cf. Rohrbacher 1999, Vikner 1997). Weak verbs in present tense indicative in

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<sup>8</sup> Null *ið* is quite rare in the earliest texts; one reason for this is that 2nd person plural pronouns frequently are absent from the discourse (wedding poems, dialogues etc). There are however some examples in Näsman (1733:66).

<sup>9</sup> The examples in (4) and (5) are quoted from Hesselman (1937).

Oevdalian are inflected as in table 1 (Levander 1909:84ff); Icelandic verbs are shown as a comparison, and the respective personal pronouns are also included:

		Oevdalian	Icelandic
	infinitive	baita	bíta ('to bite')
sg.	1.	ig bait	ég bít
	2.	du bait	þú bítur
	3.	an bait	hann bítur
pl.	1.	(wið) baitum	við bítum
	2.	(ið) baitið	þið bítíð
	3.	dier baita	þeir bíta

Table 1: *Verb inflection in Oevdalian and Icelandic.*

As can be seen, the Oevdalian singular verb forms are not inflected for person, and 3pl is identical with the infinitive:

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

In discourse, the form for 3rd person plural furthermore often coincides with the singular form in Oevdalian, 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 (in present and past tense), and Oevdalian null subjects only appear with these verb forms. 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:

7. a. Dalskum i Övdalim.  
*speak-Oevdalian-1pl.ind/imp in Älvdalen.*  
 'we speak Oevdalian in Älvdalen/let us speak Oevdalian in Älvdalen!'
- b. Dalskið i Övdalim.  
*speak-Oevdalian-2pl.ind/imp in Älvdalen*  
 'you speak Oevdalian in Älvdalen/speak Oevdalian in Älvdalen!'

In clauses such as the ones above the pragmatic context and the prosody decide whether the clause should be interpreted as indicative or imperative. This circumstance may have played a vital role for the emergence of null *wið* (I return to this matter in section 5).

The null subjects seem to be an Oevdalian innovation – the Old Scandinavian languages did not allow null subjects such as the Oevdalian ones (Håkansson in



progress),<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).

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.

### 3.2. Common properties of null subject languages – the case of Oevdalian

It is well known (Rizzi 1982, 1986; cf. Roberts 2007:24ff) that the Romance null subject languages exhibit a number of syntactic features that have been assumed to go hand-in-hand with the possibility to have null referential subjects. In this section, disjoint subject reference, free subject inversion and *that*-trace effects in Oevdalian are presented and commented.

#### 3.2.1. Disjoint subject reference

In e.g. Italian, 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:

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

In (10.), *lui* cannot refer to *the il professore* unless *lui* is stressed, modified or coordinated (Roberts 2007:27). In non-null subject languages such as e.g. English or French, *he* in a corresponding position is ambiguous, either referring to the subject of the matrix clause or to someone outside of the discourse. Oevdalian patterns with non-null subject languages:

9. Prest'n<sub>i</sub> glämäð min kullum tast an<sub>i/j</sub> sãmneð.  
 priest-the spoke with girls-the until he fell-asleep  
 'The priest spoke with the girls until he fell asleep.'

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

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<sup>10</sup> Wessén (1992:53f) 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 Oevdalian null subject pronouns that are discussed here are not context dependent in any other fashion than regular personal pronouns.

### 3.2.2. Free subject inversion

In the Romance null subject languages, the subject of a regular declarative clause may be posited in clause final position (10 a.). This is however not an option in Oevdalian (10 b.),

- 10. a. È arrivato Gianni.  
is arrived Gianni  
'Gianni has arrived.'
- b. \*Ar kumið Lasse.  
has arrived Lasse

Again, Oevdalian differs from regular null subject languages.

### 3.2.2. *That*-trace effects

Another feature that seems to unite the Romance null subject languages – also e.g. Greek (Roberts 2007:27ff) appears to display the same cluster of syntactic properties – is the possibility to keep the complementizer in embedded clauses with an extracted subject, as in the Italian example below (11 a.). In non-null subject languages such as English (11 b.) and Swedish (11 c.), *that* must on the other hand be deleted when the subject is extracted:

- 11. a. Chi hai detto che ha scritto questo libro?  
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?  
who said you wrote this book-the  
'Who did you say wrote this book?'

In Oevdalian, there actually seems to be at least three syntactic options for corresponding constructions, but it is not possible to spell out *that* in a Romance fashion:

- 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 (12 a.), it is shown that the strategy applied in non-null subject languages is viable also in Oevdalian. The complementizer must be covert.

However, in (12 b.) 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 Oevdalian). Also in Northern Norwegian, resumptive pronouns may obviate the *that* trace-effect (Taraldsen 2005).

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

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

#### 4. Detailed syntactic properties of Oevdalian null subject pronouns

Reading Levander (1909:108; see the first quote in section 3), one gets the impression that there is no difference between *wið* 'we' and *ið* 'you' when it concerns their syntactic distribution. This is however not the case – the following restriction seems to have applied throughout the entire period from which Oevdalian data are known:

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

Accordingly, *wið* may be omitted only from what appears to be the topic position (SpecCP), while this restriction does not apply for *ið*:

13. a. \*Nū **irum** iema.  
*now are-1pl. home*  
 'now we are home'
- b. \*Wiso **kāytum**?  
*why run-1pl.*  
 'why are we running?'

14. a. Nų **irið** iema.  
*now are-2pl. home*  
 'now you are home'
- b. Wiso **kåytið**?  
*why run-2pl.*  
 'why are you running?'

Both types of subjects may however be covert in adverbial subordinated clauses:

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'

So, there seems to be some form of restriction for null *wið*, whereas null *ið* may appear wherever a pronounced subject *ið* is possible. All informants that have been questioned about null subjects by me (about 70) uphold this distinction very consequently, regardless of age. In the remainder of this section, I take a closer look at the syntactic properties of null *wið* and discuss possible explanations for the contrast that was demonstrated in (13) and (14).

#### 4.1. Null *wið* ('we')

As was mentioned above, null *wið* appears to be confined to clause initial position. In main clauses, this is SpecCP, and the omission of *wið* from this position is not in principle to be structurally distinguished from cases of Topic Drop. Therefore, I will argue against the Topic Drop-hypothesis below.

There are at least two Oevdalian clause structures where the null *wið* cannot be an instance of Topic Drop: omission from main clauses with initial *kanstji* ('maybe'), as in (16), and omission from embedded clauses (17, see also 15 above).<sup>11</sup>

16. Kanstji eddum bellt råkas i morgu atte? (Nyström & Sapir 2005:29)  
*maybe had-1pl. could meet tomorrow again*  
 'maybe we could meet tomorrow again?'

<sup>11</sup> 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 as *maybe*). Oevdalian *kanstji* has of course the same background, and similar distribution. The point is that not just any adverb may precede *eddum* in (13). See further below.

17. ...dar wilum glåmá min wennanan.  
*when want-to-1pl chat with each other*  
 'when we want to chat with each other.'

In (17), the finite verb follows the subordinator (presumably in  $C^\circ$ ), and also in (15) it was shown that null *wið* is grammatical in subordinated clauses, although SpecCP is not an available position (cf. Platzack 1998:107f).

The circumstance that SpecCP is not the sole position for null *wið* excludes Topic Drop as a possible explanation for null *wið*.

There are however also other circumstances that conflict with a Topic Drop-hypothesis; null *wið* may e.g. be discourse initial, and, in general, omission of other pronouns than *wið* and *ið* is uncommon. Furthermore, as Håkansson (in progress) shows, omission of *vi* ('we') from non-initial position of the clause occurred, but was quite rare, in Old Swedish; in his Old Swedish material only 2% of the omitted subjects were 1pl pronouns, and, likewise, only 2% were 2pl pronouns. The great majority of covert subjects were 3rd person singular (56%) and 3rd person plural (36%). Concerning Old Icelandic, where subjects also could be omitted from non-initial positions, Sigurðsson (1993) remarks that 3rd person subjects were by far the most frequent to be omitted. Hence, if Topic Drop was the key factor in the emergence of Oevdalian null subjects, and if the situation in early Oevdalian was similar to Old Swedish and Old Icelandic, i.e. that Oevdalian allowed omission of subject pronouns from non-initial positions due to discourse presence (some form of atypical Topic Drop), then one would expect that the subject pronouns that probably were most frequently omitted (3rd person subjects) would be the best candidates for eventual true null subjects. In Oevdalian, however, the pronouns that most frequently were overt in Old Swedish and Old Icelandic have become true null subjects.

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, and that 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 a. and b.), the finite verb has raised to  $C^\circ$  from  $T^\circ$ , and as subjects must raise to SpecTP due to an EPP-feature, *wið* must have appeared 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 (13 a. and b.) would have been grammatical.

Platzack (2004:96ff) shows that in a number of languages, verbal agreement may be "weaker" when the finite verb precedes the subject, "weaker" indicating agreement in fewer aspects than when the subjects precedes the verb. This is also the case for Oevdalian clauses with coordinated subjects (Levander 1909:94). Below, a post-verbal plural subject appears with a verb in the singular

form (18 a.), but as soon as the subject precedes the verb, agreement is compulsory (18 b.):<sup>12</sup>

18. a. Og so stur ir Andes og Ulov.  
*and so big-sg. is-sg A. and U.*  
 'and so big is A. and U.'
- b. \*Andes og Ulov ir so stur.  
*A. and U. is-sg. so big-sg.*  
 'A. and U. is so big.'

With number agreement, any order between the subject and the verb is of course fully grammatical:

19. a. Og so sturer irå Andes og Ulov.  
*and so big-pl. are-3pl. A. and U.*  
 'and so big are A. and U.'
- b. Andes og Ulov irå so sturer.  
*A. and U. are-3pl. so big-pl.*  
 'A. and U. are so big.'

Also for other Dalecarlian varieties, Levander (1928:163) reports that finite verbs that precede plural subjects may occur in singular forms. From Orsa, he provides the following examples:

20. a. Nug liv wi bra.  
*surely live-sg. we well*  
 'surely we live well'
- b. Wi liwum bra.  
*we live-1pl. well*  
 'we live well'

Hence, it is possible that also the Oevdalian verb inflection is "weak" when the verb precedes the subject, "weak" in this case meaning 'allowing default agreement, but not allowing a null *wið*'. This would explain the ungrammaticality of the sentences in (13 a, b), in which the finite verb probably is situated in C° and in which SpecCP is occupied by topicalized items. A more formal analysis along these lines is presented in section 6.2.

This solution also predicts that null *wið* should be ungrammatical in subordinated clauses where a non-subject is topicalized (SAG IV:537ff) – in

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<sup>12</sup> Cardinaletti (1997) presents very similar data from an Italian dialect.

such a case, there is no available position for the subject in front of the finite verb.<sup>13</sup> This prediction is borne out:

21. a. Bo saggd at irum tungner djärå ittað i morgu.  
*Bo said that are-1pl. forced 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 do this*  
 'Bo said that we have to do this tomorrow'
- c. Bo saggd at i morgu irum wið tungner djärå ittað.  
*Bo said that tomorrow are-1pl. we forced do this*  
 'Bo said that we have to do this tomorrow'

The topicalized adverbial *i morgu* seems to prevent a null *wið* in (21 b.), whereas the sentence is grammatical when the same adverbial occurs in final position (21 a.) or when there is an overt subject (21 c.). This circumstance and the ungrammatical sentences in (13 a, b) are good arguments for the hypothesis that the requirement for null *wið* is a pre-verbal subject (in a visible VP-external position). This also explains that null *wið* is grammatical in regular subordinated clauses. Oevdalian, like Icelandic, has (optional) verb movement across clause adverbials to a phrase below CP (see Holmberg 2003:15, Garbacz 2006, in progress, Hróarsdóttir et al 2007). Hence, Icelandic and Oevdalian subjects are merged in the Spec of this phrase in subordinated clauses, across the finite verb (younger speakers may deviate from this pattern; cf. section 6.1.) Here, this phrase is represented as TP; the main point in the present paper is that TP is above the negation. In main clauses, the only possible position in front of the finite verb is of course SpecCP.

Still, it remains mysterious why *kanstji* may occur in topicalized position together with a null *wið* (as in 16). I address this question below.

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<sup>13</sup> Vikner (1995:chapter 4) 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 Oevdalian pre-verbal subjects are the same. Cf. also Julien (2007:139).

#### 4.1.1. Topicalized *kanstji* ('maybe')

Swedish *kanske*-initial sentences may violate V2,<sup>14</sup> and (as their Oevdalian counterparts) they may be interpreted either as declarative or as interrogative (SAG IV:21f, 418, 676, 695):

22. a. Kanske Lina är färdig snart?  
*maybe Lina is ready soon*  
'Lina is maybe ready soon?'
- b. Kanske är Lina färdig snart.  
*maybe is Lina ready soon*  
'Lina is maybe ready soon'

Assuming that Oevdalian *kanstji* may appear in the same positions as *kanske* above, then it may seem unproblematic to explain (16) as a *kanstji*-clause of the same type as in (22 a). (23 a.) is an authentic example of *kanstji* preceding an overt subject, and hence also *wið* may appear just before the finite verb (20 b; cf. 16).

23. a. Kanstji an tyttjer it um uoss. (Lars Steensland, pc)  
*maybe he thinks not particle us*  
'maybe he doesn't like us'
- b. Kanstji (wið) eddum bellt råkas i morgu atte?  
*maybe 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 (22 a), as well as in other non-V2 *kanske*-clauses, the finite verb may not precede the negation in Swedish:

24. a. Han kanske inte har ringt.  
*he maybe not has called*  
'he has perhaps not called'
- b. \*?Han kanske har inte ringt.

This suggests, according to Egerland (1998), that *kanske* actually is situated in C°. Considering the etymology of *kanske/kanstji*, this analysis is not unexpected

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<sup>14</sup> Egerland (1998) investigates Swedish *kanske*, which closely corresponds to Oevdalian *kanstji*, and finds that it is a "verbal element" (1998:13) with specific syntactic distributional properties.



– grammaticalized items tend to retain properties from their source constructions, and *kanske/kanstji* was originally a collocation of two verbs. Accordingly, the finite verb in such clauses remains in a low position in Swedish, below the negation. In Oevdalian, however, the verb raises (as in 23 a.) to the middle field, appearing in a position adjacent to the subject, above the negation. As for (16) and (23 b.), two structural analyses are therefore possible:

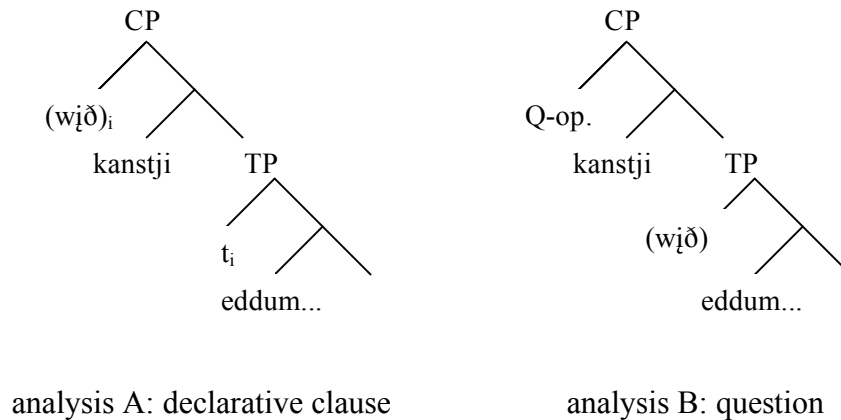


Figure 2. Two analyses of *kanstji*-initial clauses with null *wið*.

As can be seen, in both analyses *wið* directly precedes a verbal element – either *kanstji* or the finite verb – which explains why it may be covert. In analysis B, where Spec-CP is occupied by an operator, the conditions for null *wið* are very similar to the conditions in a subordinated clause. These analyses also explain why *kanstji*-initial clauses may be interpreted either as declaratives or as questions.

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

25. *Welest wartum kwitter ålåellum.* (Steensland 2006a:61)  
*good become-1pl rid forest-lizards*  
 'thank God that we got rid off the forest lizards'

Just as *kanstji*, *welest* may also trigger V3-word order:

26. *Welest du ar gart eð-dar nu.* (Steensland 2006a:122)  
*good you have made that now*  
 'thank God that you have done that now'

*Welest* is (probably) derived from the adjective/adverbial *wel*, and it has hence no verbal features in its background. It is however likely that both (25) and (26) should be analysed as *welest* plus a *that*-clause (as the English translations indicate; also Steensland (pc) assumes that this is the correct analysis). In Oevdalian, *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 (25) may be posited in front of the finite verb *wartum* (*Welest* (*wið*) *wartum kwitter ålåellum*).

#### 4.2. Null *ið* ('you')

Unlike *wið*, *ið* can be covert in all positions, as was demonstrated in (14) and (15). These sentences are repeated below:

27. a. Nu irið iema.  
           *now are-2pl. home*  
           'now you are home'
- b. Wiso kâytið?  
           *why run-2pl.*  
           'why are you running?'
28. ...um irið iema.  
       *...if are-2pl. home*  
       '...if you are home'
29. Irið iema?<sup>15</sup>  
       *are-2pl home*  
       'are you home?'

Discussing Oevdalian 2pl affixes, Björklund (1956:98-107) assumes that the Oevdalian 2pl verb form originally had the suffix *-in* (as in Old Swedish), claiming that the present day suffix developed through successive reanalyses, in the following fashion:

30. 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, and speakers may thus interpret it as a clitic pronoun. An argument for this is that *-ið* may appear in isolation in writing (31 a.) (Lars Steensland, pc).<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Levander (1909:109) states that also *wið* could be covert in yes/no-questions – in current Oevdalian, this is however impossible. Nor have I found any such examples in older transcriptions, or indeed anywhere else.

<sup>16</sup> Another morphosyntactic runaway in modern Oevdalian is the genitive suffix *-es*. Contemporary speakers tend to write this morpheme in isolation, especially with proper names (Dahl & Koptjevskaja-Tamm 2006:66f):

- ii. Anna es buok  
       *Anna gen. bok*  
       'Anna's book'

Levander (1928:164; reprinted in Brännström 1933:126) provides an authentic example (31 b.), and even Prytz (1622) provides a possible example (31 c.):

31. a. Ir int ið iema i morgu?  
*are- not -2pl home tomorrow*  
 'are you not at home tomorrow?'
- b. Stå int ir jän og gåpå!  
*stand- not -2pl here and shout*  
 'don't stand here shouting!'
- c. Huru säyi ir?<sup>17</sup>  
*how say you-2pl*  
 'what do you say?'

If the suffix 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*. This hypothesis will be pursued further in section 6.2, in more formal terms.

On the other hand, the presence of an overt *ið* would perhaps be surprising, since the clause then would contain two subjects, a possible problem mentioned by Björklund (1956:106). However, reduplication of subject pronouns has been reported from Oevdalian (Levander 1909:109, Rosenkvist 2007) – hence a clause with two subject pronouns (like *Ið farið*) would not be ungrammatical (although an overt *ið* appears only when it is emphasized). A similar phenomenon is attested in Bavarian (Fuß 2005:159):

32. ob-ts es/ihr noch Minga kumm-ts  
*whether-2pl you-2pl to Munich come-2pl*  
 'whether you come to Munich'

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

To conclude, a possible explanation for null *ið* is that the speakers of Oevdalian have reanalysed the agreement affix *-ið* into a clitic form of the pronoun *ið*, a proposal launched by Björklund (1956). The formal syncretism must of course have facilitated the morphosyntactic change. Hence, it is reasonable to say that the Oevdalian *ið* has an unclear status, balancing between affix, clitic and pronoun. In clauses where the pronoun is not overt, it is however close at hand to analyse the verb affix as a clitic pronoun. This would explain the distribution of null *ið*.

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<sup>17</sup> In some villages, *ið* has the form *ir*.

## 5. A possible explanation for the emergence of null *wið* ('we')

In the preceding section, the syntactic properties of null *wið* and *ið* were discussed, as well as the emergence of null *ið*. Here, I turn to the emergence of null *wið* and the consequences for the syntactic distribution of this null pronoun.

As was mentioned above (section 3), the verb affixes for 1pl present tense indicative and 1pl imperative are homonymous (-*um*). A verb such as *drusum* is therefore ambiguous ('run', 1 pl. imp./ind.). A possible explanation for the emergence and distribution of null *wið* is accordingly that speakers have analysed imperative clauses as indicative, transferring the null subject from one clause type to another (see figure 3 below). From a speech act perspective, first person imperatives (but not second person) are often quite close to declaratives, since an exhortation directed to oneself rarely is declined. Furthermore, in Oevdalian, as in Swedish, present tense is often used to express futurity (Åkerberg 2000:49). All in all, only intonation may decide 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>18</sup>

A reanalysis from imperative to indicative cannot explain why null *wið* 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 3). Below, I suggest how the initial reanalysis as well as the analogical spread may be illustrated. 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 two distinct structural analyses (cf. 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.

### 33. Dalskum i Övdalim.

imperative:	'let us speak Oevdalian in Älvdalen'
indicative:	'we speak Oevdalian in Älvdalen'

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<sup>18</sup> As pointed out by Piotr Garbacz (pc), the hypothesis predicts that null *wið* first spread from imperatives to indicatives in the present tense. Indeed, there are no instances of null *wið* 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.

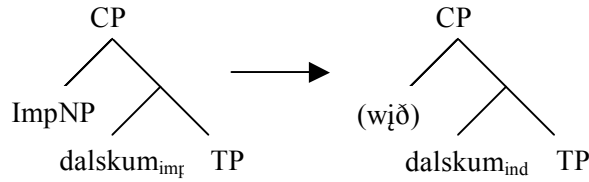


Figure 3. Reanalysis from imperative to declarative clause.

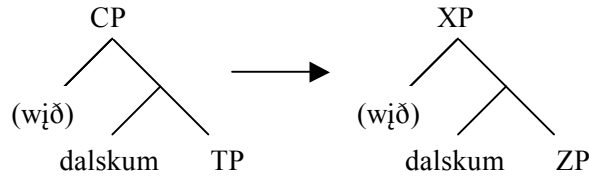


Figure 4. Analogical spread of null *wið*.

In figure 3, the reanalysis from imperative to indicative clause is illustrated; the result is a possibility to omit *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 4, consists of a generalizing reanalysis in which the possibility to omit *wið* spread to all Spec-positions directly in front of a visible finite verb, as in subordinated clauses.

This explanation for null *wið* is of course a mere hypothesis (like all putative explanations for diachronic 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.

## 6. Oevdalian – a partial null subject language

The relation between verb agreement and verb raising has been a popular domain of inquiry within Germanic generative studies (cf. e.g. Vikner 1995, Rohrbacher 1999). Referential null subjects do not occur in any standard Germanic language, however, and studies on the relation between these features and referential null subjects in Germanic are therefore not as common (Germanic vernaculars are however discussed by e.g. Hoekstra & Marácz 1989, Haegeman 1990, Cooper 1995, Fuß 2005:chapter 4). Null subject languages belonging to other language families have on the other hand been explored in depth, and recently Platzack (2003, 2004) has issued a proposal that is intended to explain both verb raising and the possibility to omit subjects, in regular null subject languages as well as in partial null subject languages. It has been criticized by Holmberg (2005), who suggests that referential null subjects in one and the same language actually may be qualitatively different from each other.

In this section, it is first shown that there is a very close correspondance between verb raising and null subjects in Oevdalian. Then proposals concerning the nature of null subjects are discussed, taking the Oevdalian null subjects as a point of origin.

## 6.1. Verb raising and null subjects in Oevdalian

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

The word *inte* ['not'] cannot appear between the predicate and the subject in subordinated 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)

In present day Oevdalian, both alternatives below are however possible (Garbacz 2006:177):<sup>19</sup>

34. 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 subordinate clause is null. In that case, verb raising appears to be required (cf. Rosenkvist 1994, Garbacz 2006, in progress):

35. a.   Fåm luv kringg uoss, ettersos irum naug tungner djärå eð-dar nų.  
          may-1pl PL hurry us since are-1pl probably forced to-do that now  
          'We must hurry, because we probably have to do that now.'
- b.   \*Fåm luv kringg uoss, ettersos naug irum tungner djärå eð-dar nų.  
              may-1pl PL hurry us since probably are-1pl forced to-do that now
- c.   Fåm luv kringg uoss, ettersos wið irum naug tungner djärå eð-dar nų.  
              may-1pl PL hurry us since we are-1pl probably forced to-do that now  
              'We must hurry, because we probably have to do that now.'

---

<sup>19</sup> *Noð* is a negative polarity item. Furthermore, the form of the negation varies between *it* and *int*, depending on the syntactic context.

Hence, it is plausible that verb raising (to T°) is a prerequisite for null subjects in Oevdalian – younger speakers, who often use Swedish word order in subordinate clauses, consequently do not omit subject pronouns as often as older speakers (Rosenkvist 1994, Helgander 2005b:23f).<sup>20</sup>

## 6.2. Two recent approaches to null subjects (Platzack 2004 and Holmberg 2005)

Rizzi (1982, 1986) observed that the Romance null subject languages seemed to share also other syntactic properties (as mentioned above), and in the wake of Rizzi's findings, intensive research on null categories in various languages followed (cf. Holmberg 2005:534ff, Roberts 2007:24ff, Frascarelli in print). In later versions of generative theory, however, the earlier analyses of null arguments have become theoretically obsolete, as pointed out by Holmberg (2005:536): "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." In current generative theory, there are in principle two possible approaches to null subjects, Holmberg argues: the verb agreement affix itself plays the role of the subject (hypothesis A), or null subjects are really common pronouns that just are not pronounced (hypothesis B).

From a diachronic perspective, hypothesis A sounds quite plausible, considering that verb agreement affixes often have developed from clitic pronouns (Fuß 2005:chapter 4). Above, I have suggested that the Oevdalian null 2pl referential subject may have emerged in this fashion, and as for other Germanic languages, diachronic developments may explain e.g. the difference between Bavarian (2sg and 2pl referential subjects are allowed) and standard German (no null referential subjects). In Bavarian, the verb affixes for 2sg and 2pl (-st and -ts, respectively) consist of common Germanic affixes together with the rests of former clitic pronouns (Fuß 2005:158ff). Hence, the clitic pronouns have coalesced with the affixes, and the Bavarian verb forms for 2sg and 2pl can thus be assumed to actually have the potential to act as subjects.

Furthermore, in some languages "rich" verb agreement actually may prohibit overt pronouns, while "weak" agreement does not. Fuß (2005:11) provides examples from the Austronesian language Chamorro:

36. a. Ginin man-mañ-añakki (siha) kamuti kăda dia.  
*IMPERF PL-AP-steal they sweetpotato every day*  
 'They used to steal sweet potatoes every day.'

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<sup>20</sup> It is possible that Oevdalian will gradually lose the null subjects, following the same path of development as Brazilian Portuguese (Duarte 2000). Although the Oevdalian verb agreement seems to be relatively stable, younger speakers frequently leave the verb in the VP in embedded clauses, thereby blocking the possibility of a null subject.

- b. Ha-fahan pro/\*gui' i lepblu.  
 3sg-buy he the book  
 'He bought the book.'

In (36 b.), the pronoun *gui'* ('he') cannot be overt, since the verb agrees in person and number, while *siha* ('they') may optionally be overt in (36 a.). It is hence plausible to assume that *ha-* in (36 b.) actually functions as a subject, although it has the shape of an affix.

Recently, Platzack (2003, 2004) has proposed that verb affixes actually act as subjects in null subject languages as well as in partial null subject languages. His suggestion, an instantiation of Holmberg's hypothesis A, is discussed in section (6.2.1) below, while Holmberg's hypothesis B is discussed in section (6.2.2).

#### 6.2.1. Hypothesis A: Platzack's (2004) view on null subjects

Platzack (2003, 2004) assumes the following difference between null subject languages and languages without null subjects:

null subject languages:	the verbal agreement is pronominal (the suffix <i>is</i> the subject)
languages without null subjects:	no verbal agreement, or anaphorical verbal agreement (must be bound by a subject).

Table 2. Platzack's (2003, 2004) approach to null subjects.

In Platzack's analysis, the agreement (or a pronoun) is merged in Pers°:

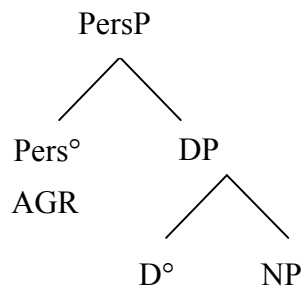


Figure 5. The structure of PersP (Platzack 2004:85).

In null subject languages, pre-verbal visible subjects must appear in A'-positions, otherwise the subject would bind a pronominal agreement clitic and thereby violate binding principle B. Visible subjects must hence merge internally to the left edge of the clause, in an A'-position. In languages that do not allow null subjects, however, the agreement is anaphorical and must be bound by a subject in an A-position. For example, Icelandic does not allow personal null subjects, and thus no items, e.g. adverbials, may occur between the subject in the A-position SpecTP and



the finite verb in T° (Platzack 2003:340ff, 2004:94f: due to V2 in Icelandic, Platzack illustrates his point with an embedded clause):

37. \*Ég veit að Pétur ekki/igær keypti bókina.  
*I know that P. not/yesterday bought book-the*  
 'I know that Peter did not buy the book/bought the book yesterday'

Regarding Oevdalian 1pl and 2pl subjects, Platzack's hypothesis predicts the possibility to insert an adverbial between *wjð* /*ið* and the finite verb. This word order is possible (especially for younger speakers, as was noted above), but not compulsory, and if the subject is covert, the verb must precede the adverbial (cf. also 34):

38. a. ...um (*wjð*) kweðum sakt fint.  
*if we sing-1pl. sakta nicely*  
 'if (WE) actually sing nicely'
- b. ...um \*(*wjð*) sakt kweðum fint.

Furthermore, it follows from Platzack's (2003:348, 2004:102f) proposal that in partial null subject languages, only certain parts of the verbal agreement paradigm are pronominal (allowing null subjects; in Oevdalian 1pl and 2pl would be pronominal). This implies that embedded clauses with overt 1pl and 2pl subjects would display a different word order (subject-adverbial-verb) than clauses with other overt subjects (subject-verb-adverbial), since possibly null subjects would appear in A'-positions.<sup>21</sup> In Oevdalian, the word order in embedded clauses do not vary depending on the subject pronoun, however, but other factors, such as type of adverbial, seem to determine the word order possibilities (Garbacz 2006, in progress). The Oevdalian data do hence not support Platzack's (2003, 2004) hypothesis. Neither have word order variations of the type predicted by Platzack been reported from other partial null subject languages, such as Bavarian, to the best of my knowledge. As a matter of fact, any theory that predicts word order differences between null subject languages and non-null subject languages will be challenged by partial null subject languages, as long as it cannot be asserted that the word order in such languages varies, and that this variation is linked to the choice of subject pronoun (or some other related syntactic factor).

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<sup>21</sup> In main clauses, however, overt *wjð* and *ið* are interpreted as especially pragmatically significant when they appear in initial position, unlike other subject pronouns. This is an indication that overt *wjð* and *ið* occupy a special initial position in main clauses. It has however not been possible to discern any corresponding word order differences yet – V2 ensures that there is only one constituent preceding the finite verb.

### 6.2.2. Hypothesis B: some null subjects are unpronounced pronouns

Holmberg (2005) brings out the Finnish null subjects in the scholarly debate on null arguments. In Finnish, 1sg, 2sg, 1 pl and 2 pl subjects may be null, whereas generic pronouns and quasi-argumental subjects with weather predicates must be null:

39. a. (Minä) puhun englantia.  
      *I speak-1sg English*  
      'I speak English.'
- b. Täällä ei saa polttaa.  
          *here not may smoke*  
          'One can't smoke here.'
- c. Sataa vettä.  
          *rains water-PAR*  
          'It's raining.'

The present tense verb agreement morphology in Finnish is rich, distinguishing all persons distinctively.

The Finnish referential null subjects interact with the expletive pronoun *sitä* in such a way that Holmberg is able to determine the position of the null subjects. He shows (2005:53ff) that *sitä* is not allowed in null subject sentences (if the null subject is referential), concluding that the null subject must check the EPP in SpecIP, and thereby a null referential subject by necessity blocks a possible expletive subject. Finnish null referential subjects thus act as regular subject pronouns, with one difference: they are not pronounced.

However, the null generic pronoun (as in 39 b.) does not block the expletive *sitä*, and hence it does not check the EPP feature, probably because it is devoid of D-features. Holmberg (2005:552) claims that the null generic subject is a  $\phi$ P, in the terminology of Déchaine & Wiltschko (2002). In unbound positions, this  $\phi$ P will be interpreted as generic, but when it is bound it will appear as null third person pronoun:

40. Oppilas tietää ettei pysty rtkaisemaan tehtävää.  
      *student knows that-not can solve assignment*  
      'The student knows that he can't solve the assignment.'

Holmberg (2005:557) concludes that there are two types of null subjects in Finnish. The null generic subject "is an inherently null deficient pronoun", while a null referential pronoun is a "fully specified DP that is deleted". The content of null referential Finnish subjects is recovered by the distinct verb agreement in I°, while the generic null subject only is interpreted as definite when it is bound by a higher DP.

As for consistent null subject languages such as Spanish, Turkish and Greek, e.g., Holmberg (2005:557) claims that "all null subjects are of [...] the deficient type", i.e.,  $\phi$ Ps. Unlike Finnish and other partial null subject languages, consistent null subject languages have a D-feature in  $I^\circ$ , which makes it possible, or indeed mandatory, for null  $\phi$ Ps to receive a definite interpretation.

### 6.2.3. Explaining Oevdalian null referential subjects

In Oevdalian, it is not possible to omit any other subjects than *wið* and *ið* (again, excepting topic drop, coordination deletion etc). It follows that there is no null generic pronoun in Oevdalian. However, there is also a crucial difference between null *wið* and null *ið*, as has been shown above. Null *wið* can only appear in positions directly in front of the finite verb. Can the differences between null *wið* and null *ið* can be explained by the assumption that they are different types of pronouns, then? In the typology of possible pronouns suggested by Déchaine & Wiltschko (2002:410), there is no room for a subdivision of DPs, and it is thus unlikely that both of the null referential subjects just are unpronounced DPs of the Finnish kind.

Consider the explanation for null *ið* that was presented in section 4.2 above: the pronoun and the agreement affix have been reanalysed as one single unit, probably due to the obvious syncretism between the affix and the pronoun (*ið* 'you' v. *-ið* 2pl). It is hence probable that the ending *-ið* has an unclear syntactic status in Oevdalian (affix, clitic and/or pronoun). When the pronoun *ið* is null, then it may arguably be analysed as a  $\phi$ P, and then the ending *-ið* will contribute a D-feature to  $T^\circ$ , ensuring that the null pronoun in SpecTP is interpreted as definite. Hence, null *ið* would then be identical to null referential subjects in consistent null subject languages (and, according to Déchaine & Wiltschko 2002:428ff, to French subject clitics). In figure 6, the crucial aspects of the derivation of (41) are illustrated:

41. Kåytið strai'tt.  
     *run-2pl quickly*  
     'you run quickly'

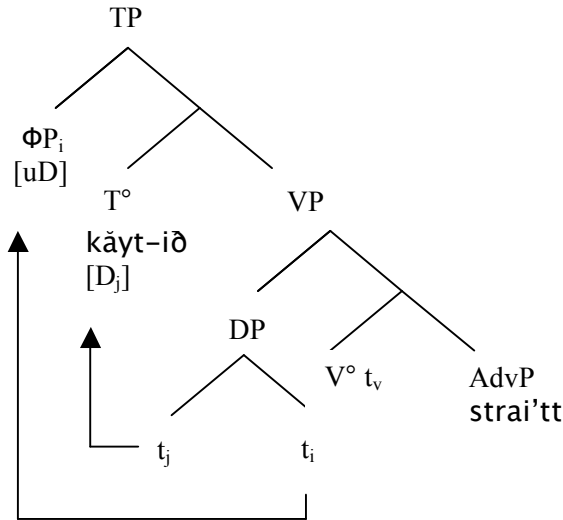


Figure 6. *The derivation of null ið.*

I suggest that the D-feature in the subject DP may be merged with the finite verb in  $T^\circ$ , but only when the finite verb is 2pl. In other cases, there is no syncretism between pronouns and verb inflections, and there is thus no possibility to reanalyse these elements, splitting the subject DP. When the 2pl-verb has merged with the D-feature, EPP ensures that the remaining subject  $\Phi P$  merges in SpecTP, where its unvalued D-feature receives a value from the D-feature in  $T^\circ$ . Thereby it is interpreted as definite. Also the  $\Phi$ -features are valued in this position, by Agree. Hence, this  $\Phi P$  can never be interpreted as generic – it must always merge in SpecTP, where it always receives a D-feature. Note that the Finnish generic  $\Phi P$  cannot receive a D-feature from  $T^\circ$  (Holmberg 2005:557), since there is no D-feature in that position in Finnish. Hence, the Finnish  $\Phi P$  will be interpreted as generic, unless it is bound by a higher DP. Neither is there in general a D-feature in  $T^\circ$  in Oevdalian, 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 quite similar to the explanation of Dutch clitic doubling presented by van Craenenbroeck & van Koppen (2006). These authors suggest that the doubling element is a  $\Phi P$ , which has moved out of the subject DP (making an intermediate landing in SpecDP). There are accordingly independent arguments which indicate that internal merge of parts of the DP in SpecVP may be a viable syntactic operation.

On the other hand, null *wið* may be a null subject of the Finnish type, being dependent on a close relation to the finite verb in order to receive an interpretation. In both cases, verb raising is a prerequisite for the interpretation of the null subjects, although the mechanism of interpretation differs: null *ið* receives values for  $\Phi$ -features and for the D-feature from  $T^\circ$  in SpecTP, and is satisfied by that. Null *wið* is on the other hand dependent on a close relation to the finite verb, being

a regular referential DP whose null form only can be recovered by the distinct agreement affix on the finite verb – and as has been shown, null *wið* requires no more than a Spec-position directly in front of the finite verb, and any Spec-position seems to be sufficient. Hence, it is unlikely that any formal syntactic features are involved in the identification of null *wið*.

As soon as an overt 2pl subject is present, I assume that the derivation of Oevdalian syntax returns to its regular state of affairs. Hence, the suggested analysis does not predict that there should exist any word order variation between on the one hand sentences with overt *ið* and, on the other hand, all other sentences. Both types actually follow the patterns presented in section 3.2.

## 7. Null subjects and verb inflection in Germanic non-standard varieties

There is no standard Germanic language in which referential null subjects of the Oevdalian type are grammatical, but a number of non-standard varieties allow such null subjects, in varying degrees. In these (some of them are illustrated in table 3), the null subject property seems to be tightly linked to the existence of specific agreement morphemes on the finite verb. In table 3, the verb forms that allow null subjects are in bold:

		Bavarian	Zürich G.	Oevdalian	West Flemish	Yiddish	Frisian
sg.	1.	kumm	<b>chume</b>	kumb	<b>kom-k</b>	<b>kum</b>	kom
	2.	<b>kummst</b>	<b>chunnsch</b>	kumb	<b>kom-j</b>	<b>kumst</b>	<b>komst</b>
	3.	kummt	chunnt	kumb	<b>kom-j/-se/-t</b>	<b>kumt</b>	komt
pl.	1.	kumman	chömed	<b>kumum</b>	<b>kom-me</b>	<b>kumn</b>	komme
	2.	<b>kummts</b> <sup>22</sup>	chömed	<b>kumið</b>	<b>kom-j</b>	<b>kumt</b>	komme
	3.	kumman	chömed	kumå	<b>kom-ze</b>	<b>kumn</b>	komme

Table 3. *Verb inflection and null subjects in Germanic non-standard language varieties.*

As can be seen, in these varieties null subjects are only allowed if the agreement on the finite verb unambiguously identifies the covert subject, or, in the case of West Flemish, if there is a subject clitic attached to the finite verb.<sup>23</sup> As for Yiddish, it can be argued that only 2sg allows proper referential null subjects (see below). This can be taken as a strong argument for the strong form of the Rich Agreement Hypothesis (RAH; "rich" agreement on the finite verb causes verb raising, stylistic inversion and other syntactic phenomena, cf. Vikner 1995,

<sup>22</sup> or *kumma*, without null subject.

<sup>23</sup> It is probable that clitics have grammaticalized into affixes in several of the verb forms that allow null subjects in table 2. Above, I have argued that this is the case with Oevdalian *-ið*, and Fuß (2005:162, 164) points out that Bavarian *-st* as well as *-ts* are amalgams of an affix and a clitic. See also Cooper (1995:69f).

1997, Rohrbacher 1999; for some arguments against RAH, see Sundqvist 2002, Bobaljik 2003). Similar connections between agreement and null subjects can 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: cf 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 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.

With the exception of West Flemish and Yiddish, it seems that only first and second personal 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. This is true also when other varieties than the ones in table 2 are considered; in e.g. Lower Bavarian not only second person, but also first person plural pronouns may be covert (Fuß 2005:165).

Sigurðsson (2004) has recently suggested that person features can be analysed as binary branching, i.e. (in non-technical terms), they are first divided in +/- discourse participant and then in +/- me/we:

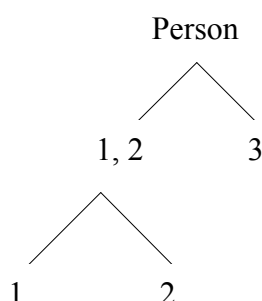


Figure 7. *Person features in grammar* (Sigurðsson 2004).

In the Germanic languages, only those referential pronouns that represent discourse participants, i.e. first and second person, appear to be possible to omit. Discourse features thus seem to have syntactic repercussions, an argument for Sigurðsson's hypothesis that such features actually partake in grammar.

Alternatively, there may actually be tangible syntactic differences between on the one hand 1st and 2nd person pronouns and on the other 3rd person pronouns. Above, Holmberg's (2005) analysis of Finnish 3rd person pronouns was discussed. He suggests that Finnish 3sg pronouns are  $\phi$ 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 below:

1 person + 2nd person	DP
3rd person	$\phi$ P
generic <i>one</i>	NP

Table 4. *The syntactic status of English pronouns (Déchaine & Wiltschko 2002:426).*

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>24</sup> Déchaine & Wiltschko (2002:419ff) proceed to show that the English pronouns also differ with respect to e.g. binding properties and compounding. Under the assumption that also covert pronouns are either DPs,  $\phi$ 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 3 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 would be  $\phi$ Ps. Furthermore, the investigation of impersonal null subjects in Icelandic by Sigurðsson & Egerland (in press) seems to support the idea that impersonal null subjects display certain syntactic properties which separate them from referential null subjects – tentatively, impersonal null subject may thus be bare NPs. However, the further explorations of null subjects in Germanic which are required to evaluate this hypothesis fall well beyond the scope of the present paper.

Taking a closer look at the syntax of the Germanic null subjects, one will however find that there are quite peculiar restrictions involved in many cases. Oevdalian has been discussed above; the two possible null subjects have different syntactic properties. And in e.g. Zürich German, covert *I* (1p sg.) is only possible in positions before 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, and all null subjects but, crucially, 2sg require some form of embedding in the discourse context (Prince 1998). As shown in table 3, only the verb form for 2sg is distinctive in Yiddish. Thus, it is possible that all other null subjects are instances of Topic Drop.

One may conclude that although the Germanic null subject varieties all are dependent on verb agreement for the identification of the 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

<sup>24</sup> This observation goes back at least to Postal (1966).

studies are probably necessary prerequisites for a satisfactory analysis. Hence, there are definitely opportunities for broad generalizations concerning the possible conditions for null subjects in Germanic (such as e.g. the Rich Agreement Hypothesis), but such generalizations will by necessity need language specific amendments, if the ultimate goal is an understanding of the syntax of null subjects in each language.



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## Appendix: a short text in Oevdalian

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

Ig **wet** fel ur ruoli eð **brukeð** wårå dar geshpåtjin **add** dugåð riet nån uonngums. **Addum** ien slaikan uonngums i geshun iessn. Dar påtjin **add** rietað upp gumsan so an **kam** uppend og **ulld** tågå pâykan, so **kây'tt** påtjin müt ienum sturum tolle og gumsn attånað föstå'ss og **ulld** tågå pâykan. Men me gumsn **uppeð** til, so **uppeð** påtjin undå tollem, so gumsn **sluo** uonne daiti tolln so eð **small**. Men se **kây'tt** allt gumsn atter att og ini smålåupin og **skäkäð** skollam. Krytyre **wiss** fel so wel dar eð **byrd** å laið mot kweldem, so dar dier **add** ietið stinnan sig, so **byrd** dier å liet att diem-dar småweå so **kolldum** för smålåweer, og **byrd** å drågå sig etter diem mot fläðsweem. Og smålåupin **fygd** fel å dier og.

Ja, eð **war** je plåg að geshkallum, dar eð **war** slaik uondlostjyner i geshun. Ig **wet** dar **addum** dugåð pass diem so dier **add** eldeð sig ini fläð iel da'n, end tast **kamum** daitå fjåsbokkan um kweldn, so **brukeð** dier-dar uondlostjynär pass sig, innå **addum** uonneð ev in diem i fjåseð, og **kåyt** frå fjåsbokkam og að raise. Eð **war** fel tä iweg og kåyt etter og biuoð til sjå um an **dugd** wend diem.