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Evidence for a syntactic Parameter at work in Övdalian

Abstract: Within the Scandinavian languages, there is a notable variation regarding verb agreement. Holmberg and Platzack (1995) suggested that this basic feature is linked to both verb raising and the presence of a handful of syntactic phenomena, such as stylistic fronting, oblique subjects, transitive expletives etc. In subsequent works, addressing dialect syntax as well as variation within the standard languages (Julien 2007; Bentzen 2009; Wiklund et al. 2009; Heycock et al. 2010, 2011 etc.), it has been shown that the correlation between agreement, verb raising and for instance oblique subjects is not as straightforward as was proposed by Holmberg and Platzack (1995) and others (cf. Roberts and Holmberg 2010; Holmberg 2010). In this paper, I argue that null referential subjects in Övdalian require both distinct verb agreement and verb raising, which indicates that these linguistic features are related to each other, possibly through the setting of a Parameter. Thereby the gist of the analyses presented by Holmberg and Platzack (1995) is supported.

1 Introduction¹

In Chomsky (1981), it was suggested that universal Principles restrict human language (making all natural languages similar at a certain level of abstraction), while the specific setting of Parameters vary across languages. The Parameters were seen as language-internal settings which govern surface word order, and since the number of Parameters must be limited, it was predicted that the setting of one single Parameter would result in a cluster of syntactic features (a detailed discussion of parameters in generative syntax is provided in Roberts and Holmberg (2010: 1–57), while Angantýsson (2011) presents a theoretically oriented study of the Scandinavian languages from this perspective).

In an influential work, Holmberg and Platzack (1995) proposed that the verb morphology of Icelandic, Faroese and Övdalian makes a number of syntactic con-

¹ Previous versions of this paper have been commented by Piotr Garbacz, Christer Platzack, Lars Steensland and an anonymous reviewer. I am grateful for their constructive critique; only I can be held responsible for remaining errors and shortcomings.

structions in these languages possible (verb raising, expletive null subjects, transitive expletives, etc.). In Swedish, Danish and Norwegian, on the other hand, verbs do not inflect for person and number, and accordingly the specific syntactic constructions are impossible in these languages. The underlying cause for these differences was assumed to be a parameter associated with the syntactic head I (i. e., T).

The notion of Parameters has subsequently been seriously challenged on conceptual as well as theory-internal grounds (cf. Newmeyer 2004; Haspelmath 2008; Boeckx and Hornstein 2009 etc.), and the generalizations suggested by Holmberg and Platzack (1995) have also been found to be problematic, as new data from varieties of Scandinavian have become accessible (cf. Julien 2007; Bentzen 2009; Wiklund et al. 2009; Heycock et al. 2010, 2011; Garbacz 2011; Angantýsson 2011 etc.). In short, it has been shown that the variation within the Scandinavian standard languages is greater than was previously presumed, and the same is true for the dialectal variation within Scandinavia.

In this study I claim that there is one specific syntactic phenomenon in Scandinavian which does indicate that a syntactic Parameter is at work: Övdalian referential null subjects. Verb inflection, word order and this specific syntactic phenomenon all correlate in this particular case, as would be expected if a Parameter was involved.

In section 2, background to the research context is provided, whereupon referential null subjects in Övdalian are briefly introduced in section 3. The high-NegP, which causes difficulties in observing verb raising in Övdalian, is discussed in section 4. Section 5 shows that there is a way to solve this problem, and section 6 contains a brief concluding discussion.

2 Background

In the wake of seminal works such as Falk (1993), Holmberg and Platzack (1995), and Vikner (1995), the relation between the position of the finite verb and a handful of other syntactic phenomena has been a recurrent topic of research within Scandinavian syntax. Specific syntactic constructions, such as null expletive subjects, transitive expletives and stylistic fronting, were in these works assumed to be strongly linked to verb raising in embedded clauses, which in turn was caused by “strong” or “rich” verb morphology (cf. Angantýsson 2011 for an overview of this research). However, while these conjectures initially seemed to hold relatively well for the Scandinavian standard languages, it has been shown that Scandinavian dialects vary considerably in this respect. During the last decade, there has been a growing interest in Scandinavian dialect syntax, and ongoing research

suggests that the syntactic features of various dialects do not support strong generalizations regarding agreement, word order in embedded clauses and other phenomena. There is also considerable word order variation within the standard languages when one looks at different types of embedded clauses, different types of clause adverbials, and different types of subjects. Current research thus indicates that there is no straightforward connection between verb raising, verb morphology and the syntactic constructions that were mentioned above, *contra* for instance Holmberg and Platzack (1995). In turn, this might indicate that there are no underlying macro-parameters in syntax which, when turned on or off, simultaneously influence different parts of syntax that on the linguistic surface seem to be unrelated (cf. Newmeyer 2004; Haspelmath 2008).

Acknowledging the problems with the hypotheses presented in for instance Holmberg and Platzack (1995), Holmberg (2010) incorporates recent theoretical developments and empirical findings in a new version of a parameter-based approach to the differences between Scandinavian languages, maintaining the idea that the syntactic differences can be attributed to “richness” of inflection and arguing, consequently, that Holmberg and Platzack (1995) were actually on the right track:

What I will argue is that we were basically right, descriptively, in that most (though not all) of these differences are due to a parameter to do with the features of I. Later empirical findings and theoretical developments do not justify abandonment of that theory, only a refinement of it. The conclusion is that there are ‘deep parameters’, and furthermore, I will argue that this is perfectly consistent with minimalist theorizing. (Holmberg 2010: 3)

Holmberg (2010: 13) suggests that there are six syntactic features that are directly related to agreement differences in the Scandinavian languages. However, it is shown by Garbacz (2011) that when Holmberg’s predictions are tested in northern Dalecarlia, an area where several agreement-rich vernaculars are spoken (one of them is Övdalian), the predictions are not borne out. Garbacz (2011: 117) shows that there are no null expletives, no null impersonal subjects, no right-dislocated heavy subjects, no oblique subjects and no stylistic fronting in this region. Interestingly, in some places transitive expletives do occur, but, contrary to what would be expected, transitive expletives are possible also in the only variety which lacks “rich” agreement, i. e. the vernacular of Venjan, while it is missing in Övdalian. It can thus be concluded that in spite of Holmberg’s recent revision of the Parameter-related rich agreement hypothesis, new data from Dalecarlia present additional problems which cannot be ignored.

In this study I will nevertheless argue that there is at least one Scandinavian syntactic phenomenon that without any exception is intertwined with “rich” verb morphology and verb raising in embedded clauses: referential null subjects in

Övdalian (cf. Rosenkvist 1994, 2009, 2010; Garbacz 2010). This implies that in this language, verb raising yields particular syntactic effects (cf. the discussion about verb movement in the minimalist program in Roberts 2010). Among the Scandinavian languages, Övdalian and the adjacent Våmhus-variety are unique, since referential null subjects do not occur anywhere else, and for this reason it is only possible to attest and test this correlation in Älvdalen and Våmhus. In the following section, I briefly present null subjects in Övdalian.

3 Null *wjð* ('we') and *ið* ('you' plural) in Övdalian²

In Övdalian, the pronouns corresponding to *we* and *you* (plural) are in general omitted, just as in well-known null subject languages such as Spanish or Turkish. Examples of the phenomenon in Övdalian are given in (1) and (2); omitted pronouns are in bold in the English translations.

- (1) a. Byddjum i Övdalim.
live.1PL in Älvdalen
 'We live in Älvdalen.'
- b. Ulið fàrà nų.
shall.2PL leave now
 'You ought to leave now.'
- (2) a. Witið at byddjum i Övdalim.
know.2PL that live.1PL in Älvdalen
 'You know that we live in Älvdalen.'
- b. Mienum ulið fàrà nų.
think.1PL shall.2PL leave now
 'We think that you ought to leave now.'

No other pronouns are regularly omitted – not even impersonal or expletive pronouns.

As shown in (1) and (2), *wjð* and *ið* are in general omitted, in main clauses as well as in (all types of) embedded clauses. The omission of *wjð* and *ið* correlates with agreement on the finite verb; the verb forms for 1pl and 2pl are distinct, i.e., these forms may unambiguously serve as a basis for reconstruction of the missing subject – see table 1, where Övdalian, Icelandic and Faroese finite verb agreement and personal pronouns are shown. The Övdalian form for 3pl is fur-

² In Rosenkvist (2010), Övdalian null subjects are discussed in more detail. For an introduction to Övdalian, see Garbacz (2010) or Garbacz and Johannessen (in progress).

thermore identical either with the infinitival form (as illustrated in table 1) or with the form for the singular – or both. In non-final position the ending *-a* is deleted due to apocope, a prominent feature of spoken Övdalian which also is manifested in writing. This phonetic process applies to both infinitival verbs and verbs in 3pl. The verb form *baita* will thus often appear as *bait* in spoken and written Övdalian, coinciding with the singular form.

Table 1: Verb agreement and personal pronouns in Övdalian, Icelandic and Faroese

		Övdalian	Icelandic	Faroese
infinitive ‘to bite’		baita	bíta	bíta
sg.	1.	ig bait	ég bít	eg bíti
	2.	du bait	þú bítur	tú bítur
	3.	an bait	hann bítur	hann bítur
pl.	1.	(wǵð) baitum	við bítum	vit bíta
	2.	(ið) baitið	þið bítid	tit bíta
	3.	dier baita	þeir bíta	teir bíta

Table 1 also shows that there are at least three distinct forms in the Icelandic verb agreement paradigm, but null referential subjects are nevertheless not possible in Icelandic.

The agreement patterns that are illustrated in table 1 constitute the basis for dividing the Scandinavian languages in Mainland Scandinavian (Swedish and other non-agreeing languages) and Insular Scandinavian (Icelandic, Faroese and Övdalian), as suggested by Holmberg and Platzack (1995) as well as by Holmberg (2010) – although Holmberg considers Icelandic to be the only Insular Scandinavian language.

4 High negations and obscure verb positions

One of the most significant differences between the Mainland Scandinavian languages and the Insular Scandinavian languages is that in the former, finite verbs occur to the right of clause adverbials (such as the negation) in embedded clauses, while the reverse order is the default in e. g. Icelandic (see Heycock et al. 2010 for a detailed study of embedded word order in contemporary Faroese and Angantýsson 2011 for details about Icelandic). These differences are illustrated in (3).

- (3) a. Detta är brevet som jag inte har läst. (Swedish)
this is letter-def. that I not have read
‘This is the letter that I haven’t read’

- b. Þetta er bréfið sem ég hefur ekki lesið. (Icelandic)
this is letter-def. that I have not read
 ‘This is the letter that I haven’t read’

The difference between Icelandic and Swedish has been attributed to verb raising in the embedded clause. The verb moves from a lower position (vP) to a higher position (TP) in Icelandic, across the negation, whereas the verb remains in vP in Swedish. It is thus generally assumed that the negation occupies a fixed position between the lower vP and the higher TP – indeed, the immobility of the negation is a prerequisite for establishing the contrast in (3).³ However, in standard Swedish it is possible to place the negation (*inte*) directly adjacent to the subordinator in virtually any embedded clause, as illustrated in (4).

- (4) a. Jag vet att inte tomten finns.
I know that not Santa exists
 ‘I know that Santa Clause doesn’t exist’
 b. Detta är brevet som inte jag har läst.
this is letter-def. that not I have read
 ‘This is the letter that I haven’t read’
 c. Vi åker till havet om inte det regnar.
we go to sea-def. if not it rains
 ‘We are going to the sea, if it isn’t raining’

Since the negation occurs between the subordinator and the subject in the sentences in (4), it is in principle impossible to tell whether the finite verb remains in vP or if it has raised to TP.

As for Övdalian, Levander (1909: 123) points out that “The word *not* cannot as in Swedish occur between the subject and the finite verb in embedded clauses; if it is not situated in the beginning of the clause, it must be put after the verb” [my translation]. In the beginning of the 20th century, the Övdalian negation thus occurred either after the finite verb in embedded clauses (as in the Icelandic example in 3 b) or directly after the subordinator, in the high-NegP (Garbacz 2010). However, in a small study of Övdalian word order by Rosenkvist (1994), no less than 80 % of the negations in embedded clauses occurred in the high-NegP. No other adverbials were found in this position. Some examples are provided in (5).

- (5) a. ... fast int eð ir finwedreð olltiett.
although not it is fine-weather always
 ‘although the weather isn’t always fine’

³ The idea that verbs occupy different positions in different languages and that clause adverbials reveal their position goes back to Emonds (1976) and Pollock (1989).

- b. ... um int du kumb.
if not you come
'if you're not coming'
- c. ... um int eð war iðer fil
if not it was your.2PL fault
'if it wasn't your fault'

The survey made by Rosenkvist thus suggests that the default option is to place the negation in high-NegP in contemporary Övdalian. In the longest Övdalian text ever published by a native speaker of Övdalian, Larsson (1985), this placement of the negation is also very frequent, and in the detailed study of Övdalian word order by Garbacz (2010), it is clear that speakers prefer to place the negation in the high-NegP in embedded clauses. The judgements of the sentences in (6) are taken from Garbacz (2010: 228); the acceptability scale goes from 1 to 5, with 5 as the highest grade.

- (6) a. Eð ir bar i iss-jär buðn so int Marit andler jätå. (mean score: 4,66)
it is only in this-here shop-def. that not Marit buys food-def.
'It is only in this shop that Marit doesn't buy food'
- b. Eð ir bar i iss-jär buðn so Marit int andler jätå. (mean score: 3,83)

While both of the sentences in (6) are accepted, (6 a), with the negation in high-NegP, receives a higher score and should therefore be seen as the unmarked alternative (cf. also Garbacz 2010: 132, 139). It is also shown by (6 b) that embedded clauses without verb raising are possible in modern Övdalian (as amply shown by Garbacz 2010), although embedded clauses with verb raising are equally frequent. Just as in Faroese (cf. Heycock et al. 2010, 2011), word order varies in modern Övdalian embedded clauses.

The possibility to place the negation in high-NegP in Övdalian obscures verb raising. Furthermore, this circumstance becomes particularly irksome when there is a referential null subject in the embedded clause, since both of the salient overt constituents, the finite verb and the negation, may occur in different positions. The possible analyses of the sentence in (7), which is quoted from Rosenkvist (1994), are presented in table 2.⁴

- (7) ... um int windið brott ɔn.
if not throw.2PL away her
'if **you** don't throw it away'

⁴ Garbacz (2010: 113) claims that there are two possible analyses of sentences such as (7), but Rosenkvist (1994: 22) shows that there are in fact three, as illustrated in table 2.

Table 2: Three possible analyses of embedded clauses with negation and null subject

	CP	High-NegP	TP	NegP	vP
analysis 1	um	int	windið		brott qn
analysis 2	um	int			windið brott qn
analysis 3	um			int	windið brott qn

The analytical alternatives in table 2 are unique for Övdalian (and the Våmhus-variety), since these languages are the only Scandinavian language varieties in which null referential subjects occur. For this reason, negations and adverbials in high-NegP are irrelevant in studies of verb raising in other Scandinavian languages and dialects – the subject in SpecTP will always reveal the position of the negation or the adverbial (see for instance Heycock et al. 2011, where high-NegP is not an issue).

In order to investigate whether there is a correlation between verb raising and referential null subjects in Övdalian, it is clear that embedded clauses with a negation do not constitute an operational testing ground. To get a clear view of the position of the finite verb, especially in combination with a null subject, an adverbial which cannot appear in high-NegP is necessary. Garbacz (2010: 113, fn. 123) reports that “I have not yet found an adverbial of this kind”, but in the following section I will demonstrate that there are such adverbials in Övdalian, and that differences between speakers (acceptance of null subjects with the verb (seemingly) in vP or not) should be attributed not to syntactic variation, but to lexical variation.

5 Non-high adverbs and speaker-related lexical differences

In order to test the hypothesis that referential null subjects in Övdalian are only possible in an embedded clause if the verb has raised from vP to TP, as originally suggested by Rosenkvist (1994), it is thus necessary to find an Övdalian adverbial that always remains in the middle field and that accordingly can never appear in the high-NegP. When consulting Övdalian speakers, it appears that there are such adverbs, but that there is some variation between the informants as to which adverbs are possible in high-NegP.⁵ All informants accept the negation (*inte*), a

⁵ During the last years, I have had regular sessions with a handful of Övdalians in Lund, but I have also on several occasions done interviews on site, in Älvdalen. The regular contacts with my informants have led to the emergence of an elicitation methodology along the lines of Henry (2005).

majority accept *aldri* ('never') (or the older variant *older*) whereas very few accept other adverbials, such as *fel* (a highly polysemic adverb), *sakta* ('actually'), *naug* ('probably'), *kringgt* ('often') etc.

Garbacz (2010) has also investigated the possibility to place adverbs in the high-NegP, inter alia. He tested the adverbs *inte* ('not'), *sakta* ('actually'), *aldri* ('never'), *kringgt* ('often') and *milumað* ('sometimes') in high-NegP in relative clauses – one of the test sentences is quoted in (8): cf. Garbacz 2010: 125.

- (8) Eð ir iend buottjē so aldri ig har lesið.
it is only book-def. that never I have read
 'It is the only book that I have never read'

Although Garbacz reports that he has not found any adverbs that cannot appear in high-NegP (see the quote above), data that contradict this statement are presented in his table 6.4. In this table, it is shown that the adverbs *kringgt* ('often') and *milumað* ('sometimes') cannot appear between the subordinator and a pronominal subject in an embedded clause, and neither can they appear in this position with a DP-subject, if there is an auxiliary in the embedded clause (Garbacz 2010: 124). However, the information presented in the table is an interpretation of the data compiled in the informant studies; the complete set of informant data provided by Garbacz in the appendix (2010: 225–227) gives a slightly different picture. There are 12 informants in the study, and it actually appears that an acceptability hierarchy can be attested in their judgements of various adverbials in high-NegP. According to my own results, all Övdalians accept *inte* ('not') in high-NegP, but one of Garbacz's informants (informant 12) considers that to be ungrammatical. The second best adverbial in Garbacz's study is *aldri* ('never'), followed by *sakta* ('actually'), *kringgt* ('often') and *milumað* ('sometimes') in that order.

In Figure 1, the different adverbials are shown together with the informants (1–12) that accepted them. The figure illustrates that Garbacz's informants actually can be ranked according to their acceptability scores; all informants that accept *milumað* in high-NegP also accept all other adverbials; all informants that accept *kringgt* also accept *sakta*, *aldri* and *inte* etc. It is thus possible to see the informants that accept for instance *kringgt* in high-NegP as a subset of a group of informants that accept *inte*, *aldri*, *sakta* and *kringgt*. In other words, it seems to be the case that the informants have different lexical categorizations of these adverbials. One informant (informant 12) has no high-NegP-adverbials at all (and for this reason he/she is absent from figure 1), one informant has one single high-NegP-adverbial, *inte* (informant 6), and so forth. There is only one exception to this pattern – informant 2 accepts *kringgt* but not *sakta*.

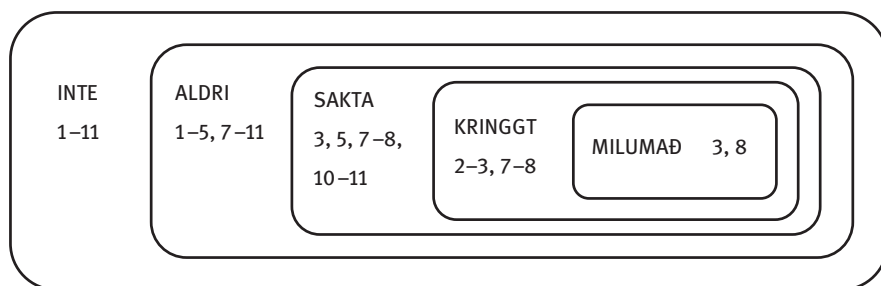


Fig. 1: Acceptability hierarchy in high-NegP in Övdalian

The results from the field work done by Garbacz as well as from my own studies show that there is individual variation among Övdalian informants as to which adverbials are possible in high-NegP, and that there is an implicational acceptability hierarchy (as illustrated in Figure 1) which separates the speakers from each other.⁶

Let us now recall the hypothesis (dubbed “Rosenkvist’s generalization” by Garbacz 2010: 113) that null subjects require verb raising in Övdalian, and the fact that adverbials may occur in a pre-verbal high-NegP. The informants’ grammaticality judgements in Garbacz (2010) indicate that informants 3 and 8 (see Figure 1) would consider a sentence such as (9) grammatical, whereas informant 6 and 12 would consider it ungrammatical – if the generalization is correct. Informants 3 and 8 would put *kringgt* in high-NegP and raise the verb to TP, but informants 6 and 12 would not be able to put *kringgt* in high-NegP and would therefore be forced to assume that the verb remains in vP, which would make (9) ungrammatical.

- (9) Ittað-jär ir ię buok so kringgt wilum leså.

this-here is a book that often will.1PL read

‘This is a book that **we** will read often’

expected scores for (9): informant 3+8: OK

informant 6+12: *

The possible correlation between adverbials in high-NegP, verb raising and referential null subjects is not tested by Garbacz, but the informants that I have consulted fully comply with these conjectures. All of my informants accept *inte* in

⁶ It is not clear to me if or how this pattern ties in with cartographic approaches to adverbial hierarchies, such as Cinque (1999) and subsequent works.

high-NegP (10 a) and they also accept a referential null subject in an embedded clause with *inte* preceding the verb (10 b).

- (10) a. Ittað-jär ir ię buok so int ig wil leså.
 this-here is a book that not I will read
 ‘This is a book that I will not read’
- b. Ittað-jär ir ię buok so int wilum leså.
 this-here is a book that not will.1PL read
 ‘This is a book that **we** will not read’

Most informants also accept *aldri* (‘never’) in the same positions as *inte* in (10 a) and (10 b), but reject all other adverbials, whereas one informant, who is not from Älvdalen but from the neighbouring village of Våmhus, accepts all tested adverbials in both positions. Crucially, I have not encountered any informant who accepts a specific pre-verbal adverbial in an embedded clause with a null subject (as in 10 b) and at the same time rejects sentences with the very same adverbial in high-NegP (as in 10 a). My interpretation of the informants’ responses is that they have slightly different lexical categorizations – some informants have only one high-NegP-adverbial (*inte* ‘not’), but most informants have two such adverbials: *inte* and *aldri* (‘never’). One of my informants and two of the informants (3 and 8) in Garbacz’s study consider all adverbials to belong to the high-NegP-class.⁷ My conclusion is that a positive judgement of a sentence such as (11) by an Övdalian informant cannot be considered to be a counter-argument against the generalization under discussion, unless it can be shown that this informant also rejects sentences with the same adverbial in high-NegP with an overt subject in an embedded clause.

- (11) Ittað-jär ir ię buok so int/aldri/sakt/kringgt/milumað wilum leså.
 this-here is a book that not/never/actually/often/sometimes will.1PL read
 ‘This is a book that **we** will not/never/actually/often/sometimes read’

The attested acceptability correlation between sentences such as (10 a) and (10 b) underlines that while the Övdalian informants differ in their lexical categorizations, they all consistently apply one and the same syntactic principle: a referential null subject is only possible if the verb has raised to T. In other words: there

⁷ These informants are from Åsen, Loka and Våmhus, respectively, three villages which are not particularly close to each other. The liberal attitude towards putting anything in high-NegP is thus not a geographically determined feature.

is no syntactic variation. In (12), this generalization is formulated in more formal terms.

(12) Every speaker of Övdalian follows generalizations A and B.

- A. Iff OK[COMP AdvIA subject FV] → OK [COMP AdvIA *pro* FV]
 B. Iff *[COMP AdvIB subject FV] → *[COMP AdvIB *pro* FV]

The generalization that was proposed by Rosenkvist (1994) is thus corroborated. It can also be concluded that two out of the three possible analyses that are illustrated in Table 2 are untenable. Only analysis 1 can be maintained.

6 Concluding discussion

The correlation between word order in embedded clauses and “strong” or “rich” agreement morphology on the finite verb, as formulated by for instance Falk (1993), Holmberg and Platzack 1995, and Vikner (1995), is not as straightforward as was originally supposed. For Icelandic, a language with both person and number agreement (see Table 1), it has been shown that the word order in embedded clauses varies (see Angantýsson 2011), while verb raising seems to be possible in some cases in Faroese, a language with relatively poor agreement (see Heycock et al. 2010, 2011). The relation between verb agreement and verb raising is accordingly more complex than previously thought, and when also embedded V2, stylistic fronting, different types of subject, different types of adverbials and different types of embedded clauses are included in the syntactic puzzle, the picture that emerges is hard to explicate coherently. Paying heed to these problems, Holmberg (2010) suggests a theoretical revision that captures the empirical facts while also retaining the idea that there is an agreement-related parameter which is the underlying cause of several syntactic differences between Insular and Mainland Scandinavian. However, not even his version of the hypothesis can explain the data presented by Garbacz (2011).

In this paper, I have argued that there is one Scandinavian syntactic construction that nevertheless requires robust verb raising: null referential subjects in Övdalian. It is argued that the apparent exceptions to this generalization are misleading, since the informants differ in their lexical categorizations. Some of them may for instance put all adverbials in the high-NegP, thereby creating a word order which seems to be a case of null subject with the verb in vP. But since these informants also accept all adverbials in high-NegP in embedded clauses with a pronounced subject, I conclude that all informants follow the same syntactic principle: referential null subjects require verb raising.

The notion of a syntactic parameter, the settings of which influence several aspects of the syntax simultaneously, has been criticized by Newmeyer (2004) and Haspelmath (2008), among others. Övdalian null subjects constitute an interesting example of how verb agreement seems to play a decisive role for syntax. The forms for 1pl and 2pl are distinct (see table 1), and it is only these forms that license null referential subjects. In this particular case, the agreement seems to be sufficiently rich for this syntactic option, although the other constructions that are predicted to occur by Holmberg (2010) are absent from Övdalian. Broadening the view and including other non-standard Germanic languages in the discussion, such as for instance Bavarian and Frisian (see Rosenkvist 2009, 2010), we find that distinct verb agreement is a prerequisite for referential null subjects in all modern Germanic language varieties in which referential null subjects are attested. This correlation offers a new possibility of restoring the link between verb agreement and a specific syntactic phenomenon within Germanic, which possibly is connected to a Parameter-setting.

Verb raising is furthermore a form of head movement. Chomsky (2001: 37–38) claimed that head movement is not a part of narrow syntax, motivating this both with theory-internal technical difficulties and the observation that head movement rarely (if ever) affects the interpretation of the clause, i. e. the LF-interface (see the comprehensive discussion in Roberts 2010, chapters 1 and 4). Accordingly, head movement, including verb raising, is assumed to be a PF-phenomenon – see Platzack (2010) for a more recent version of this idea. I have shown that verb raising is a necessary condition for referential null subjects in Övdalian; if verb raising is interpreted as a pure PF-phenomenon, it follows that also referential null subjects should be a PF-phenomenon – we do not expect PF-conditions for LF-syntax. In recent theorizing about referential null subjects (see the articles in Biberauer et al. 2010 and Sigurðsson 2011), referential null subjects are on the contrary analyzed as a part of core syntax, relating the possibility of null subjects to pronominal features in T. The data that I have presented in this paper can accordingly also be seen as an argument for the hypothesis that verb movement is not (always) just a PF-feature.

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