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Foreword

This is a revised version of my doctoral dissertation submitted to the University of Potsdam in May 2014. My reviewers were Prof. Dr. Peter Staudacher (University of Potsdam) and Prof. Dr. Helmut Weiß (Goethe University Frankfurt am Main). The date of the oral examination was 21 November 2014.

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E.T.

Contents

1 Overview

1.1 What this Book is About

This book deals with two different kinds of ellipsis, (i) topic drop and (ii) null subjects. In both cases an argument is omitted ("dropped") in the sentence-initial position of a declarative verb-second (V2) clause in German.

As for the description of these constructions I refer to standard notions known to those familiar with the German topological field model (*Topologisches Feldermodell*) and a standard version of Generative Grammar (Theory). Besides this overview (constituting chapter 1) the book contains three more chapters. Chapter 2 and chapter 3 deal with topic drop, i.e. with antecedent-dependent subject/object omissions as exemplified by (1):

(1) A: *Wo ist dein Ring?*
         Where is your-sg ring-Nom?
     B: _ *Hab ich verkauft.*
         [Acc] (= ~~My ring~~) have I sold ('I have sold it.')

Whereas chapter 2 focuses on a syntactic issue, namely the case features of the gap and its antecedent, chapter 3 is concerned with the interpretation of topic dropped elements. Chapter 4 is about subject omissions which are independent of the presence of an antecedent / which can take place 'out of the blue', cf. (2):

(2) ∅*Bin dann mal weg!*
     ~~I~~ am then PRT[1] away ('I'm off then.')

In the following I sum up the main findings.

1.2 The Syntax and Semantics of Topic Drop

As mentioned above, in chapter 2 and chapter 3 I discuss German topic drop. Thus, the greatest part of this book deals with the topic drop construction.

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1 PRT means 'particle'.

Chapter 2 is about the syntax and semantics of (structural vs. oblique) case. Following Blume (1998, 2000) I elaborate an event-related syntax for obliquely cased topic dropped arguments. In sum, I argue that oblique case is the overt marker of an implicit subevent denoted by the verb. Before arriving at this hypothesis, I present a small survey on the acceptability of structurally and obliquely cased gaps and examine whether seemingly synonymous (two- and three-place) predicates selecting structural vs. oblique case for their (in)direct argument differ with respect to their (fine-grained) semantics. Further, I show that dative gaps behave in-between with respect to topic drop, i.e. dropping dative arguments is not as unconstrained as the drop of structurally cased (nominative, accusative) arguments, but subject to much looser conditions than the drop of genitive cased arguments and prepositional phrases (PPs). Thus, in the light of chapter 2 topic drop is elaborated as "another instance that separates nominative and accusative on the one hand and dative on the other" (Haider 2010:269).

In chapter 3 I focus on the interpretation of topic dropped elements. I show that two kinds of binding have to be distinguished: 'referential binding' vs. 'non-referential binding' (that is, 'bound by a referential term' vs. 'bound by a non-referential term'). Whereas a non-referential binding relation can be established despite phi-feature mismatches between the context binder and the non-referential target binder, this does not hold with respect to the former. I.e., referential binding of the bindee part of the gap is only possible when context binder and referential target binder bear the same phi-feature specifications (or when context bindee (which is the antecedent of the bindee part of the gap) and target binder are PF-compatible[2]). As will be shown in detail, the differentiation between non-referential and referential binding allows us to distinguish relations which cannot be reduced to coreference (= "real" binding relations) and relations that are ambiguous between coreference and binding on a morpho-syntactic basis.

1.2.1 The Syntax of Topic Drop

Besides the fact that subjects and objects can be equally well topic dropped, cf. (3)-(4), other, non-nominal, elements can be dropped as well (see Fries 1988), cf. (5).

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2 This special case arises due to the occurrence of syncretisms within the paradigm of possessive pronouns.

(3) A: *Heute hab ich **den Hans** gesehen.*
　　 Today have I the Hans-Acc seen
　 B: *Echt? _ Ist mir ja schon seit Ewigkeiten nicht mehr begegnet.*
　　 Really? [Nom] is me PRT already for ages not came-across

(4) A: *Heute ist mir **der Hans** begegnet.*
　　 Today is me the Hans-Nom came-across
　 B: *Echt? _ Hab ich ja schon seit Ewigkeiten nicht mehr gesehen.*
　　 Really? [Acc] have I PRT already for ages not more seen

(5) A: *Was machst du **heute**?*
　　 What make you-sg today?
　 B: *_ Mach ich mal gar nichts.*
　　 [Adverb] make I PRT at-all nothing

Here and in the following data examples the antecedent of the gap is marked **bold**. As case features of antecedent and gap will play a major role in the following, I indicate them by SMALL CAPS. Furthermore, the gap is represented by an underline '_' or by the underlying (crossed-out) PF-form (both variants stand for an (internally structured) *pro*-category, see chapter 3.4).

　　 Although expressions of different grammatical categories can be dropped in the German prefield (= the position in front of the finite verb in V2 clauses), cf. Fries (1988), I will concentrate on dropped arguments. In particular, I argue for a decomposition of topic drop into non-verbatim topic drop (NVTD) and verbatim topic drop (VTD). I show that NVTD gaps are limited to structural case (nominative, accusative) and that they allow case/theta role mismatches between antecedent and gap, i.e., they can be embedded under different predicates, cf. (3)/(4) and (6a). VTD gaps, on the other hand, are possible with all cases as long as predicates in context and target are semantically identical, cf. (6b)/(6c). Thus, case features of antecedent and gap can depart from each other in VTD environments, cf. (6c), whenever antecedent and gap bear the same finely granulated (micro) theta role (to be discussed in connection with examples as (7)-(9)). Of course, the structurally case marked gap in (6b) is also analysable as an NVTD instance:

(6) A: *Der Hans hat **die Oma** gestern beim Einkaufen <u>getroffen</u>.*
　　 The Hans has the grandma-Acc yesterday at shopping met
a. B: *_ Hat der Otto heute <u>zum Flughafen gefahren</u>.*　　　　　　 NVTD
　　 [Acc] has the Otto today to-the airport driven

b. B: _ *Hat der Otto heute beim Bäcker getroffen.* VTD (and NVTD)
        [ACC] has the Otto today at-the baker(y) met
c. B: _ *Ist der Otto heute beim Bäcker begegnet.* VTD
        [DAT] has the Otto today at-the baker(y) come-across

The need to define VTD in terms of an identical predicate constraint rather than in terms of identical case features becomes more obvious when we look at nominal phrases (NPs) which are obliquely case marked. Whereas micro theta role identity does not play a role when the gap is structurally case marked, cf. (3)/(4), example (7) shows that identity of micro theta roles seems to be a well-formedness condition on obliquely cased gaps (and PPs as well). Data as (7) are not well-formed because the respective micro theta role assigned to antecedent and gap in context and target (respectively) is not identical (enough). In (8) the identical micro theta role condition is (trivially) satisfied by the presence of identical predicates in context and target. (9) is well-formed, because it is an instance of NVTD (although the gap's antecedent is a genitive marked NP, the gap itself is structurally case marked). I.e., micro theta role identity is not a necessary condition on the well-formedness of nominative or accusative marked gaps:

(7) A: *Der Hans gedenkt **der Rosa Luxemberg**.*
        The Hans commemorates the R.L.-GEN
     B: *_ *Schämt sich manch ein Politiker.* *NVTD
        [GEN] ashamed REFL some a politician

(8) A: *Der Hans gedenkt **der Rosa Luxemberg**.*
        The Hans commemorates the R.L.-GEN
     B: _ *Gedenkt der Otto auch.* VTD
        [GEN] commemorates the Otto as-well

(9) A: *Der Hans gedenkt **der Rosa Luxemberg**.*
        The Hans commemorates the R.L.-GEN
     B: _ *Kennt der Otto gar nicht.* NVTD
        [ACC] knows the Otto at-all not

Thus, the first thing that is worth noting is the fact that there are two kinds of topic drop, NVTD and VTD. Whereas structurally cased gaps can undergo NVTD as well as VTD, obliquely cased gaps cannot undergo NVTD but are only well-formed in a 'verbatim environment', where context and target predicate are

semantically identical. The only way to drop an obliquely cased argument is by making sure that the micro theta role that an obliquely cased gap receives from the target predicate is the same which its antecedent received from the context predicate. In chapter 2 it is shown that "the more obliquely case marked a gap is" (on the Keenan/Comrie hierarchy), the stricter are the well-formedness conditions on topic dropped elements – in particular: semantic identity between context and target predicate becomes a necessary condition.

Due to the fact that topic drop is sensitive to the distinction between structural and oblique case (cf. the literature from Ross 1982 to Haider 2010 and the results of a little survey that I have conducted on 60 native speakers), the question which factors keep structural and oblique cases apart will be discussed in great detail. In order to answer this question I refer to the +/-complexity of events that are denoted by +/-oblique case assigning verbs (in the spirit of Engelberg 1995, Lenz 1997, Blume 1998, 2000) and maintain that an obliquely case marked element indicates the presence of a complex event, e.g. in the case of *helfen* (to help) the dative object is – next to its patient/theme properties within the main event – a secondary agent in a (preceding) subevent. I.e., I assume that for actants of verbs the involvement within complex events implies that they have to bear certain proto-properties (in the sense of Dowty 1991) and that oblique case assignment constitutes the overt marker of these (additional) proto-properties. In particular, I claim that oblique case marking is the spell-out of a certain semantic content. Due to a general constraint that meaningful content cannot be absorbed/has to be spelled out at PF, these specific properties have to be spelled out as well – which, however, is impossible under topic drop. Therefore, the "meaning" of an obliquely cased dropped NP (that is 'marking the presence of a complex event') has to be ascertained/reconstructed via semantic identity with its antecedent/(the micro theta role assigned by) the context predicate. I.e., obliquely case marked gaps evade the (in principle necessary) obligation to be spelled out by establishing a semantic identity relation with this/these element(s) which can ensure the reconstruction of the features that the gap is lacking at PF (Phonetic/Phonological Form). This hypothesis is confirmed by independent evidence (relative clause data from German dialects, the cessation of micro theta role identity when the additional event is spelled out).

1.2.2 The Interpretation of Topic Dropped Elements

Chapter 3 is on the interpretation of topic drop gaps. There I show that the bindee part of a gap resulting from topic drop can be bound under predicate identity/synonymy (in the sense of semantic equivalence) in context and target, cf. (10). Gaps in NVTD environments do not display the bound (sloppy) reading, instead the gap can only be interpreted strictly, cf. (11):

(10) A: *Der Hans$_i$ hat gestern **seinen**$_{i/k}$ **Prof** <u>getroffen</u>.*
 The Hans has yesterday his prof-ACC met

 B: *_$_{i/k/m}$ Hat der Otto$_m$ heute auch <u>getroffen</u>.*
 [ACC] has the Otto today also met

(11) A: *Der Hans$_i$ hat **seinem**$_{i/k}$ **Prof** gestern beim Umzug <u>geholfen</u>.*
 The Hans has his prof-DAT yesterday at moving-house helped

 B: *_$_{i/k/*m}$ Hat der Otto$_m$ heute im Supermarkt <u>getroffen</u>.*
 [ACC] has the Otto today in-the supermarket met

Thus, the occurrence of different readings supports splitting up topic drop into VTD and NVTD also from a semantic point of view.

As mentioned above, I argue that one has to differentiate whether the binder is a referential NP or not – depending on whether this condition is met or not, two different instances of binding can be postulated in the context of topic drop. These two instances of binding differ with respect to the +/-necessary phi-feature compatibility of context bindee (which is the antecedent of the bindee part of the gap) and target binder. When the target binder is a referential NP, (PF-related) phi-feature compatibility is necessary, (12a)/(12b), otherwise the gap remains unbound, cf. (12c). However, when the target binder is a non-referential NP, the phi-features of context bindee and target binder can depart from each other, cf. (13).

(12) A: *Die Eltern$_i$ mögen **ihren**$_{i/k}$ **Hund**.*
 The parents like their dog-ACC

a. B: *~~Ihren~~$_{i/k}$ ~~Hund~~ / ~~Ihren~~$_m$ ~~Hund~~ mögen die Tanten$_m$ auch.* Ref. binding
 [ACC] like the aunts as-well

b. B: *~~Ihren~~$_{i/k}$ ~~Hund~~ / "~~Ihren~~"$_m$ ~~Hund~~ mag die Maria$_m$ auch.* Ref. binding
 [ACC] likes the Maria as-well

c. B: *~~Ihren~~$_{i/k}$ ~~Hund~~ / ~~Seinen~~$_{*m}$ ~~Hund~~ mag der Peter$_m$ auch.* No binding
 [ACC] likes the Peter as-well

(13) A: *Hans$_i$ mag **seinen$_{i/k}$** **Vater**.*
            Hans likes his father-Acc
      B: ~~*Seinen$_{i/k}$ Vater*~~ / ~~*Ihren$_m$ Vater*~~ *mögen fast alle$_m$ Jungs.*   Non-ref. binding
            [Acc] like nearly all boys

I.e., in case of referential binding the target binder must either have the same phi-feature specifications as the context binder, or phi-feature specifications that are PF-compatible with the phi-feature specifications of the context bindee. In (12a) the context binder (*die Eltern*), the context bindee (*ihren*) and the target binder (*die Tanten*) all have the same feature specifications, namely 3rd person plural (gender forms being uniform in the plural). In (12b) the feature specifications of context binder and target binder differ from each other, however the surface form of the context bindee (*ihren*), which is bound by the context binder (*die Eltern*), is PF-compatible with the phi-feature specifications of the new target binder (*Maria*). When the feature specifications of context binder and target binder are not the same and the feature specifications of the context bindee are not PF-compatible with those of the target binder, referential binding is not possible, and hence the gap lacks a sloppy reading, cf. (12c).

Besides other requirements (as e.g. the above mentioned PF/phi-feature identity obligation in referential binding contexts), the crucial condition for bound readings in topic drop dialogues is the presence of a verbatim environment, which ensures that context and target are semantically parallel. In addition, the gap in the target can only be interpreted sloppily when the relation between the dependent and the independent element in the context is a "real" (e.g. quantifier) binding relation or a relation that is ambiguous between coreference and binding. (14) exemplifies a case where this condition is not met:

(14) A: *Irene$_i$ mag **seine$_{*i/k}$** **Schwester**.*
            Irene likes his sister-Acc
a.   B: ~~*Seine$_{k/*s}$ Schwester*~~ *mag der Hans$_s$ auch.*   No coreference/no binding
            [Acc] likes the Hans as-well
b.   B: ~~*Seine$_{k/*r}$ Schwester*~~ *mag jeder$_r$ Junge.*   No binding
            [Acc] likes every boy

(15) summarises (further) necessary conditions for bound readings in topic drop dialogues:

(15) Conditions on sloppy gap readings in topic drop dialogues
    (a) The antecedent of the gap must be a non-rigid designator such that its reference can vary across context and target
    (b) Syntactic conditions on binding must be met (cf. c-command)
    (c) Presence of a binding/coreference relation in the context (cf. two coindexed elements)
    (d) Identical/synonymous predicates in context and target (= verbatim environment)

The differentiation between "real" binding (= non-referential binding) on the one hand and referential binding on the other hand is further supported by a small survey conducted on 60 native speakers.

In chapter 3 I also discuss the interpretation of topic dropped 1st/2nd person objects. I show that in fact there is nothing wrong with topic drop of indexical pronouns (contra Ross 1982, Cardinaletti 1990, Rizzi 1994, Thrift 2003, Steinbach 2007). The (only) problem is the shifting operation that speakers have to carry out in order to get the possible/intended interpretation – which is often difficult because of the indexical character of 1st/2nd person pronouns (moreover, this difficulty combines with the fact that in German 1st/2nd person object pronouns serve to express both a reflexive and a non-reflexive meaning). Generally, a dropped indexical object pronoun can have two different interpretations: A (with respect to the reference of antecedent and gap) non-shifted (strict) interpretation which involves a different form of antecedent and gap in context and target, cf. (16a), and a (with respect to the reference of antecedent and gap) shifted (sloppy) interpretation under an identical form in context and target, cf. (16b):

(16) A: *Wir mögen **uns**.*
        We like us/ourselves-Acc
a. B: *~~Euch~~ mögen wir auch.*
        [You-pl-Acc] like we as-well
b. B: *~~Uns~~ mögen wir auch.*
        [Ourselves-Acc] like we as-well

Thus, dropped indexicals (which are directly referential elements) can be bound by an element that is an indexical pronoun as well, under phi-feature identity between context binder and target binder (as known from referential binding, see above). By adapting Kaplan's (1989a,b) view on indexicals, the strict reading, (16a), is referred to by *character conversion under content identity*, and the

sloppy one, (16b), by *content conversion under character identity*. A third option, namely *content conversion under character conversion* is only available when the target binder is a non-referential element and binds a (possessive) indexical in determiner position (at LF), cf. (17), but not when the indexical is a 'pure indexical', cf. (18):

(17) A: *Wir_i mögen **unsere_i Oma**.*
   We like our grandma-ACC
   B: *~~Eure_i Oma~~ / ~~Ihre_r Oma~~ mögen fast alle_r (Menschen).*
   [Your-pl grandma-ACC/Their grandma-ACC] like almost all (humans)

(18) A: *Wir_i mögen **uns_i**.*
   We like us/ourselves-ACC
   B: *~~Euch_i~~ / ~~Sich·_r~~ mögen fast alle_r (Menschen).*
   [You-pl-ACC/REFL-ACC (= themselves)] like almost all (humans)

Finally, I show that the differences between non-verbatim topic drop and verbatim topic drop (with/without a sloppy interpretation of the gap) can be captured by assuming different extensions of the Parallelism Domain as argued for by Takahashi & Fox (2005) with respect to elliptical constructions that involve re-binding.

1.3 Null Subjects in German

In chapter 4 I investigate 1st/2nd (vs. 3rd) person null subjects in German. I focus on referential (thematic) null subjects that can be dropped independently of the presence of a discourse antecedent and contrast the occurrence of null subjects in German with the occurrence of null subjects in German dialects as well as in other languages / language types.

I show that in contrast to 3rd person subject gaps, 1st and 2nd person null subjects occurring in the German prefield, i.e. in the Spec-CP position of finite V2 clauses, are grammatical *out of the blue*, cf. (19):

(19) a. *Ø Komme/Kommst/*Kommt leider immer zu spät.*
   [I/You-sg/He, she, it] come(s) unfortunately always too late
   b. *Ø Kommen/Kommt/*Kommen leider immer zu spät.*
   [We/You-pl/They] come unfortunately always too late

No contextual antecedent, whether linguistic or non-linguistic, is needed to identify the omitted 1st/2nd person referent. By using several diagnostics for that claim, I show (following Trutkowski 2011) that this *out of the blue-drop* (OBD) of 1st/2nd person subjects is neither topic drop nor diary drop, but an instance of inflection-dependent subject omission. I claim that in German 1st/2nd and 3rd person null subjects are syntactically and pragmatically two different phenomena. In particular, I argue that 3rd person subject omissions are an instance of antecedent-dependent topic drop, whereas 1st/2nd person referential null subjects are licensed and identified by discrete inflectional endings notwithstanding apparent syncretisms within the German verbal inflectional paradigms, cf. (20):

(20) Verbal inflectional paradigms (indicative present/preterite active of the verbs *können* (can), *sagen* (to say), *kommen* (to come), *tragen* (to wear), *sein* (to be)); syncretisms are marked **bold**

	Praeterito-praesentia	Weak conjugation	Strong conjugation	Strong-umlauting conjugation	Suppletive conjugation
1 sg	**kann/konnte**	sage/**sagte**	komme/**kam**	trage/**trug**	bin/**war**
2 sg	kannst/konntest	sagst/sagtest	kommst/kamst	trägst/trugst	bist/warst
3 sg	**kann/konnte**	**sagt/sagte**	**kommt/kam**	trägt/**trug**	ist/**war**
1 pl	**können/konnten**	**sagen/sagten**	**kommen/kamen**	**tragen/trugen**	**sind/waren**
2 pl	könnt/konntet	**sagt**/sagtet	**kommt**/kamt	tragt/trugt	seid/wart
3 pl	**können/konnten**	**sagen/sagten**	**kommen/kamen**	**tragen/trugen**	**sind/waren**

The reason why null subject licensing in German is independent of syncretisms between the 1st/2nd and the 3rd person is due to the fact that the licensing of 1st/2nd person null subjects takes place in a different discourse domain than the licensing of 3rd person null subjects: Whereas 1st/2nd person null subjects are licensed (and identified) *out of the blue*, 3rd person null subjects can only be licensed (and identified) by the presence of a discourse antecedent (i.e., they are an instance of topic drop), cf. table (21):

(21) Null subject licensing and identification in German (OBD and topic drop)

Number	Person	Discourse Domain/Licensing Mechanism	Construction Type
SINGULAR	1/2 sg	Antecedent-independent / *out of the blue*,	OBD

Number	Person	Discourse Domain/Licensing Mechanism	Construction Type
		by non-syncretic inflection	
	3 sg	Antecedent-dependent	Topic Drop
PLURAL	1/2 pl	Antecedent-independent / *out of the blue*, by non-syncretic inflection	OBD
	3 pl	Antecedent-dependent	Topic Drop

In pro-drop languages, on the other hand, not only 1st/2nd person null subjects are licensed via discrete inflections but 3rd person null subjects as well (even if the latter need a discourse antecedent for identification, see Samek-Lodovici 1996), cf. table (22) for an overview:

(22) Null subject licensing and identification in pro-drop languages (pro-drop + antecedent-dependent identification of 3rd person null subjects)

Number	Person	Discourse Domain/Licensing Mechanism	Construction Type
SINGULAR	1/2 sg	Antecedent-independent / *out of the blue*, by non-syncretic inflection	pro-drop (for all person and number combinations)
	3 sg	Non-syncretic inflection + antecedent-dependent identification	. . .
PLURAL	1/2 pl	Antecedent-independent / *out of the blue*, by non-syncretic inflection	. . .
	3 pl	Non-syncretic inflection + antecedent-dependent identification	. .

As a consequence of not having (3rd person) topic drop, in pro-drop languages as Italian, Spanish etc. syncretisms between the 1st/2nd and the 3rd person matter and cause (e.g.) a 1st person *out of the blue* dropped null subject in Spanish to be ill-formed (in contrast to German):

(23) *Juan y yo llegamos tarde. *Ø Tenía mucho que hacer.*
      Juan and I came-1pl late. [I/he] had-1/3sg lot to do

(24)   *Hans und ich kamen spät. Ø Hatte viel zu tun.*
       Hans and I came-1pl late. [I] had-1(/3)sg a-lot to do

On the basis of minimal pairs as (23)/(24) I conclude that in German (but not in e.g. pro-drop languages) we have to do with two different constructions (namely 1st/2nd person *out of the blue* dropped null subjects vs. 3rd person antecedent-dependent topic drop) and that because of the independent co-existence of these two constructions syncretisms become neutralised and unique identification of a given referent is possible despite syncretic forms in a given verbal inflectional paradigm.

   To prove that a language licenses null subject*s* really *out of the blue* (that is, to exclude the presence of a possibly interfering (default) antecedent), I use the so-called 'Coordinated Antecedents Test' (CAT), cf. the examples (23)/(24) above. This test goes back to Cole (2009) and works as follows: When two XPs are coordinated, they constitute equally salient/non-salient antecedents for a subsequent null element. Furthermore, the presence of the two coordinated antecedents makes a default antecedent choice impossible, because antecedents that are located within a coordination are subject to some Coordinate Structure Constraint, as known from Ross (1967). As a consequence, in a CAT context none of the coordinated items can act as an antecedent for a subsequent null subject. Thus, a null subject that is licensed under the CAT, is not licensed by the presence of one of the coordinated antecedents but *out of the blue*, under its own steam – either by speaker/hearer features (as could be the case in Chinese) or by discrete inflectional endings at the finite verb (which will be shown to be (also) the case in German and some German dialects). If a null subject is ill-formed when embedded under the CAT, it may be the case (i) that this language does not license null subjects at all, or (ii), that the relevant (and otherwise active) licensing mechanism cannot apply (e.g. because inflectional endings are not discrete enough in a given inflectional paradigm, cf. the plural of Swabian, the Imperfect paradigm of Spanish or the Subjunctive paradigm of Italian).

   Note that a simple *out of the blue*-context does not yield the same output as the CAT. In particular, in an *out of the blue*-context the null subject in the Spanish sentence can be interpreted as 1st person singular, cf. (25), whereas this is not possible under the CAT, cf. (23) above. In German, the CAT, cf. (24), and an *out of the blue*-context, cf. (26), yield the same output:

(25)   *Tenía mucho que hacer.*
       [I] had-1(/3)sg lot to do

(26)   *Ø Hatte viel zu tun.*
    [I] had-1(/3)sg a-lot to do

I.e., we can assume that something like an *out of the blue* context does not really exist. Instead, to test 'out of the blue' null subject licensing (and identification) we must either use a non-accessible/not inferrable antecedent (as provided by the CAT) or an incompatible antecedent (i.e. one whose feature specifications depart from those of the finite verb). An example of the latter is provided by the context in (27):

(27)   *Die Eltern waren gestern da. Ø Hatte viel zu tun.*[3]
    The parents were yesterday there. [I] had-1(/3)sg a-lot to do

As to the syntactic location of OBD in German, I suggest that this kind of null subjects is confined to the prefield. I.e., they can only be licensed under a Spec-Head configuration because the finite verb in C° carries the person/number specifications of the null subject (located in Spec-CP) and stands in an Agree relation with it. Other kinds of null subjects in German, namely those occurring in Wackernagel position, are discussed separately.

In the (generative) literature different language types can be classified according to their property of (not) having null subjects, cf. (28), see e.g. Biberauer et al. (2010). According to such classifications I suggest that (Colloquial) German is a partial null subject language, or on the way to become one.

(28)   (Non-)null subject language types
    (i)   pro-drop languages (e.g. Latin, Italian, Spanish, Greek, Polish)
    (ii)   partial pro-drop languages (e.g. Finnish, Marathi, German)
    (iii) diary drop languages (e.g. English, Dutch (?))
    (iv) radical pro-drop languages (e.g. Thai, Chinese)
    (v)   "real" non-null subject languages (?)

As will be shown, this classification of German is not only based on the fact that German has a prefield-version of (partial) pro-drop (that is, OBD) as well as the ability to topic drop elements of different grammatical categories in the prefield, but also a 2nd person singular (and marginally: 2nd person plural) pro-drop op-

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3 However, the CAT is a better choice as it captivates possible but not accessible antecedents within a coordination, whereas in contexts as given in (27) a further (pragmatically inferrable) (partial) antecedent could slide in.

tion in Wackernagel position (which is independent of a Spec-Head configuration). This kind of subject omission, however, is hard to detect because in the singular the inflectional ending –*st* that licenses the null subject in (29a) could be regarded as a (reduced) variant of –*ste*, cf. *würdeste*. In the plural, on the other hand (where we do not find such overlapping), null subjects in Wackernagel position are very marginal, although one can find them on the internet (mainly in informal registers) quite frequently, cf. (29b):

(29) a. *Was würdest Ø mir empfehlen?*
        What would-2sg [you-sg] me recommend?
   b. (?)*Was würdet Ø mir empfehlen?*
        What would-2pl [you-pl] me recommend?

As will be shown at the end of chapter 4, the licensing/identification conditions for Wackernagel null subjects are much harder to fulfil than the licensing/identification conditions for OBD null subjects. In particular, for a Wackernagel null subject to be well-formed the licensing inflectional ending must be non-syncretic throughout all tenses of a given inflectional paradigm of a certain verb. As for the 2nd person singular, most verbs fulfil that requirement (despite verbs whose stem ends with an /s/[4]). With respect to the 2nd person plural, the relevant licensing condition can only be satisfied by a small group of verbs, namely by modal verbs and verbs belonging to the strong-umlauting conjugation as e.g. *raten* (to recommend), *schlagen* (to hit) or *sehen* (to see).

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4 Consider therefore the following minimal pair with an /s/-stem verb, *hassen* (to hate), and a non-/s/-stem verb, *mögen* (to like):

(i) *Wen ✓magst / *hasst Ø am meisten?*
    Whom like-2sg [you-sg] / hate-2sg/2pl [you-sg/pl] at most?

2 Topic Drop in German: (The Lack of) Identity between Antecedent and Gap

2.1 Introduction

As is well known, topic drop (in German) refers to the antecedent-dependent omission of a constituent in the prefield of a declarative verb-second (V2) clause (cf. e.g. Ross 1982, C.T.J. Huang 1984, Fries 1988, Cardinaletti 1990, Sigurðsson 1993, Rizzi 1994, 2002, Y. Huang 2000, Ackema & Neeleman 2007, Erteschik-Shir 2007, Sigurðsson 2011). The examples in (1) and (2) show prototypical NP omissions (although elements with other syntactic categories (e.g. adjective phrases, VPs, etc.) can be omitted as well, see Fries 1988, I will mainly concentrate on NPs (and to a lesser extent: PPs)).

(1) SPIEGEL: *Herr Bundespräsident, besitzen Sie **Zertifikate**?*
                Mister Federal President, own you-formal certificates-ACC?
     Horst Köhler: *Nein, _ habe ich nie gezielt gekauft.*[1]
                No, [ACC] have I never purposely bought

(2) A: *Kennst du **den Hans**?*
          Know you-sg the Hans-ACC?
     B: *Na klar, _ is' mein Nachbar.*
          Of course, [NOM] is my neighbour

In the following, I will refer to the topic dropped element as the 'gap'. In the respective data examples the topic dropped element is represented by an underline, [_], as above. As the case features of the gap (and its antecedent) will play a major role in the further discussion, I indicate them within the interlinear glosses. In the glosses the gap is "represented" by squared brackets, bearing a case label which can be different from the case label of its antecedent. By *A* and *B* I refer to speaker A and speaker B who are involved in a given topic drop dialogue. English translations of the German examples will only be given when the glosses are insufficient to render the meaning of the respective dialogues.

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1 http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-61086119.html (checked 15.05.2014).

Previous syntactic analyses of topic drop were mostly concerned with questions, such as e.g. what kind of empty category "fills" the gap, why topic drop is only possible in the prefield, or which syntactic categories can be dropped. In this chapter I will not deal with these questions very extensively.[2] Instead, the focus of my investigation is on the relation between antecedent and gap, i.e., I will try to examine the syntactic and semantic identity conditions which (have to) hold between antecedent and gap and, in a broader sense, between context and target, respectively.

In the following, I will first introduce the phenomenon of topic drop by presenting some empirical facts and data – some of which are well-known, some are quite new and have not been noticed in the literature so far. The aim of this short introduction is to give the reader an impression/overview of some properties of topic drop in German.

2.1.1 Topic Drop is Restricted to the Prefield

It should first be noted that according to standard assumptions the German prefield can host only one syntactic constituent.[3] Whenever the prefield (i.e. the position in front of the finite verb in a V2 clause) is filled, topic drop becomes impossible, cf. (3) and (4).

(3) A: *Ich mag den Hans.*
          I like the Hans-Acc
     B: * *Ich mag _ auch.*
          I like [Acc] as well

(4) A: *Der Hans hat heute seinen Schlüssel vergessen.*
          The Hans-Nom has today his key forgotten
     B: * *Ja, heute ist _ wirklich ziemlich unkonzentriert.*
          Yes, today is [Nom] really fairly unconcentrated

However, one could object that topic drop (of different kinds of XPs) can also take place in the German middlefield and support such a claim by examples as the ones in (5)–(9):

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2 For the licensing and identification of topic dropped elements see chapter 3.4.
3 Since multiple filling of the prefield is subject to very special conditions, we can neglect it for our purpose.