The Relevance of Syncretisms in the Context of Null Subject Licensing

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0. Topic/Aim of This Talk

‣ The influence of syncretisms on the licensing of referential null subjects
‣ To show that an inflectional paradigm is a relevant linguistic entity (in the spirit of Stump 2015)

1. The Connection between Null Subjects and Rich Inflection

The existence of null subjects in a particular language is determined/constrained by multiple/different conditions (e.g. pragmatic, syntactic, morpho-phonological, cf. (1)-(3)).

(1) Improper antecedent / lack of an identifying (default-)antecedent
(2) Inappropriate syntactic configuration / position of the null element
(3) Lack of discrete inflectional endings (i.e. syncretisms within the paradigm)

Plan:
‣ Looking at (partial) pro-drop languages and investigating the presence of null subjects in dependence of (1), (2) and (3), with a focus on (3)
‣ Proposing a strong version of the Rich Agreement Hypothesis (RAH) which I will specify later (without reference to V-to-I / V-to-T movement, see e.g. Rohrbacher 1999), cf. (4):

(4) RAH, version 1:
Morphological richness and the presence of null subjects are not only correlated, but the presence of null subjects is dependent on discrete verbal inflectional endings.

‣ (4) is most prominently evidenced by pro-drop languages.

- In pro-drop languages (e.g. Spanish, Latin, Polish) null subjects occur in every person/number constellation within an inflectional paradigm
- In partial pro-drop languages (e.g. Finnish, Hebrew, Bavarian) null subjects occur in at least person/number constellation(s) within an inflectional paradigm

[See Roberts & Holmberg (2010] for an overview of the literature, and Holmberg & Sheehan (2010) for partial pro-drop languages]

In the following...
‣ I will examine the null subject licensing property in dependence (of the intra- and interparadigmatic distribution) of syncretisms in (partial) pro-drop languages.
‣ Showing how (differently) partial pro-drop languages and pro-drop languages handle syncretisms, mostly speaking about German and Spanish, Polish.

1. Null Subjects in (Colloquial) German vs. pro-drop Languages

First, consider the inflectional paradigms, we will deal with.

‣ The paradigms of various German verbs in the Present Tense and Preterite, (5)
‣ The (defective) Imperfect paradigm of Spanish *tener*, (6)
‣ The (defective) Paradigm of Present Tense 'Text Message Polish', (7)

(5) Inflectional paradigms of German *can / to say / to come / to wear / to be*

	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**

(6) Inflectional paradigms of Spanish *to have*

Person/Number	*tener*, indicative imperfect active
1 sg	**tenía**
2 sg	tenías
3 sg	**tenía**
1 pl	teníamos
2 pl	teníais
3 pl	tenían

(7) Inflectional paradigms of Text Message Polish (TMP) and Polish *to write back*
(Text Message Polish = Standard Polish without diacritic signs)

Person/Number	*odpisac* indicative present active	*odpisać* indicative present active
1 sg	**odpisze**	odpiszę
2 sg	odpiszesz	odpiszesz
3 sg	**odpisze**	odpisze
1 pl	odpiszemy	odpiszemy
2 pl	odpiszecie	odpiszecie
3 pl	odpiszemy	odpiszemy

Observation: The inflectional paradigms in (5)-(7) can be dubbed 'rich' – although they display a lot of syncretisms.

Question: Does the "defectiveness" in form of syncretisms have an influence on null subject licensing?

... Trying to answer this question by considering null subjects in different contexts

1.1 Null Subjects in two different *Out of the Blue*-Contexts

In German, 1st and 2nd person null subjects are well-formed when uttered *out of the blue* (see also Trutkowski 2011).

(8)   ∅ *Hatte / Hattest / Hatten / Hattet viel zu tun.*
       Had-1sg / 2sg / 1(/3)pl / 2pl lot to do

3rd person null subjects can only be licensed and identified in dependence of the presence of a salient discourse antecedent (= an instance of topic drop), cf. (9) vs. (9'):

(9)   *Da vorne steht **der Hans**.*
       There in-front stands the Hans-NOM
       a.   _ *Is'n netter Typ!*
             [NOM] is a nice guy
       b.   _ *Kenn' ich nicht.*
             [ACC] know I not

(9')   a.   *_ *Is'n netter Typ!*
             [NOM] is a nice guy
       b.   *_ *Kenn' ich nicht.*
             [ACC] know I not

[Note that subjects, objects and non-arguments can undergo topic drop equally well; 1st/2nd persons are hard to omit (because of interpretational difficulties associated with their indexical character)]

The same pattern of null subject distribution can also be observed in pro-drop languages (with defective) paradigms:

‣ 1st/2nd person null subjects are fine
‣ Pro-drop languages do not have topic drop (or only a very restricted form of, see Kowaluk 1999). However, independently of having or not having topic drop, 3rd person null subjects in pro-drop languages can (also) only be properly identified under the presence of a salient and matching antecedent (independently of whether the paradigm is defective or not), cf. (13) below:

(10)   ∅ *Tenía / Tenías / Teníamos / Teníais mucho que hacer.*   (Spanish)
       Had-1sg / 2sg / 1pl / 2pl lot to do

(11)   *Juan llega tarde. Ø Tenía mucho que hacer.*
       Juan came late. [He] Had-1(/3sg) lot to do

(12)   ∅ *Jutro odpisze / odpiszesz / odpiszemy / odpiszecie.*   (Text Message Polish)
       Tomorrow write-back-1(/3)sg / 2sg / 1pl / 2pl

(13) *Akurat spotkalam Janka. ∅ Jutro odpisze.*
     Just met-1sg-fem Janek-ACC. [He] tomorrow write-back-(1/)3sg

Interim-Conclusion:
‣ In *out of the blue*-contexts 1st/2nd person sg/pl null subjects in German and pro-drop languages behave identical (modulo the confinement of German null subjects to the prefield/Spec-CP)
‣ 3rd person null subjects are dependent on the presence of a default/discourse antecedent (however, this holds for overt 3rd person pronouns as well: *He came* (=> who??)

Cysouw (2003:46) claims that in languages with syncretic 1st and 3rd person singular forms (by what he refers to as the 'Spanish-type homophony') the null subject licensing property is not touched ('these languages still count as rich')

... So far, this seems to be the case.

‣ However, the above German/Spanish/Polish null subjects could also be licensed by a default antecedent which is "unconsciously" added to the discourse.

Note: As discourses are often speaker-oriented, the presence of a default antecedent is particularly evident/problematic with respect to the 1st person singular, cf. (14), where German, Spanish and English (seem to) behave the same:

(14) a.   *∅ Hatte viel zu tun.*   (German)
            Had-1(/3)sg lot to do
      b.   *∅ Tenía mucho che hacer.*   (Spanish)
            Had-1(/3)sg lot to do
      c.   *∅ Had a lot to do.*   (English)
            [I/*You/*He...] had a lot to do

➲ 1st person contexts are not a reliable means to test the occurrence of null subjects; 2nd person contexts are better indicators
➲ Paragraph beginnings, headings or song/book titles may be good examples of simple *out of the blue* contexts because in these contexts nuisance factors are reduced to a minimum

In contrast to simple *out of the blue*-contexts, the 'Coordinated Antecedents Test' (CAT) – cf. (15)-(17) – which is inspired by Cole (2009), see Trutkowski (2016), delivers more reliable data contrasts.

‣ When two XPs (e.g. *John and I*) 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 it could be the case in English or Chinese) or by discrete inflectional endings at the finite verb (which presumably holds for (partial) pro-drop languages).

Note that the CAT delivers different outputs for German and pro-drop languages:

(15) *Hans und ich kamen spät. ∅ Hatte viel zu tun.*   (German)
        H. and I came-1(/3)pl late. [I] had-1(/3)sg lot to do
(16) *Juan y yo llegamos tarde. *∅ Tenía mucho che hacer.*   (Spanish)
        J. and I came-1pl late. [I/he] had-1/3sg lot to do
(17) **Gdy Tomek i ja wrocimy z Czestochowy, zaraz ∅ odpisze.*   (TM Polish)
        When Tomek and I come-back from C. immediately [I/he] write-back-1/3sg

In contrast to German, the null subjects in Spanish and Text Message Polish remain uninterpretable, cf. Cole (2009).

Why is this so?

‣ Note that the uninterpretability of the null subjects in (16)/(17) is due to the presence of syncretisms. Whenever verb forms are discrete, the respective null subjects are well-formed and receive an unambiguous interpretation, cf. (real) Polish in (17')

‣ Note further that coordinated 3rd person entities can never be dropped within the CAT, because 3rd person pronouns need an antecedent in order to be omitted (cf. **odpisze* in (17')), thus in CAT contexts only the +/-presence of 1st (or 2nd) person null subjects is crucial!

(17')   *Gdy Tomek i ja wrócimy z Częstochowy, zaraz ∅ odpiszę / *odpisze.* (Polish)
          When Tomek and I come-back from C. immediately [I/*he] write-back-1/3sg

That German behaves differently than pro-drop languages, is further evidenced by the following pairs:

(18) *[[Hans] und [Du]] // [[Du] und [Hans]] (, ihr) seid auch eingeladen.*
        Hans and you-sg // you-sg and Hans (, you-pl) are also invited
a.   *∅ Wirst sicher was nettes anziehen.*   (2nd person sg)
        [You-sg] will surely something nice wear
b.   **∅ Wird sicher was nettes anziehen.*   (*3rd person sg)
        [He] will surely something nice wear

(19) *[[Die Müllers] und [wir]] // [[Wir] und [die Müllers]] waren im Zoo.*
        The Müller's and we // We and the Müller's were at-the zoo

a.   *Ø$_i$ Haben uns$_i$ total gelangweilt.*[1]   (1st person pl bound pronoun)
         [We] Have us-refl absolutely bored
b.   **Ø$_i$ Haben sich$_i$ total gelangweilt.*   (*3rd person pl bound pronoun)
         [They] Have REFL absolutely bored

I will suggest that the reason why German licenses null subjects despite syncretisms is due to the fact that it has two different dropping options:

(i) Inflection-based subject-drop (*out of the blue drop*, Trutkowski 2011; 2016)
(ii) Antecedent-dependent topic drop

‣ In German, the particular syncretic (1st/3rd person) forms are not in competition, because they are associated with different phenomena (*out of the blue* drop vs topic drop)
‣ As a consequence, syncretisms between the 1st and the 3rd person do not matter in German; however they crucially prohibit null subject licensing in pro-drop languages!

➲ Thus, we can state that the following hypothesis, cf. (20)

(20) <u>Null subject licensing and identification – pro-drop languages (a) vs. German (b)</u>
a. *Pro-drop languages* identify and license 1st/2nd person null subjects via discrete inflectional endings; 3rd person null subjects are also licensed by discrete inflectional endings, but their identification takes place via a discourse or default antecedent.
b. *German* identifies and licenses 1st/2nd person null subjects via discrete inflectional endings but uses topic drop to identify and license 3rd person null subjects.

‣ (20) can also be stated in a more abstract way (from Trutkowski 2016:217), cf. (21):

(21) <u>Null subject licensing is confined to particular discourse domains</u>
The fact that null subjects are well-formed despite the fact that particular inflectional endings within verbal paradigms are syncretic does not matter as long as the respective person/number combinations bearing these forms are subject to different licensing conditions / 'licensing domains/paradigms, namely (i) antecedent-independent (inflection-based) subject omission and (ii) antecedent-dependent subject omission.

The tables in (22) and (23) summarise the main point (once more):

(22) Null subject licensing in German (*out of the blue*-drop, OBD, and topic drop)

Number	Person	Discourse Domain/Licensing Mechanism	Construction Type
SINGULAR	1st person	Antecedent-independent / out of the blue,	OBD
	2nd person	by non-syncretic inflection	
	3rd person	Antecedent-dependent	Topic Drop
PLURAL	1st person	Antecedent-independent / out of the blue,	OBD
	2nd person	by non-syncretic inflection	
	3rd person	Antecedent-dependent	Topic Drop

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[1] Note that (19a) can also be analysed as an instance of topic drop where the whole coordinated NP acts as licensing antecedent.

(23) Null subject licensing in pro-drop languages

Number	Person	Discourse Domain/Licensing Mechanism	Construction Type
SINGULAR	1st person 2nd person	Antecedent-independent / out of the blue, by non-syncretic inflection	pro-drop
	3rd person	Non-syncretic inflection + antecedent-dependent identification	
PLURAL	1st person 2nd person	Antecedent-independent / out of the blue, by non-syncretic inflection	
	3rd person	Non-syncretic inflection + antecedent-dependent identification	

What does that mean for the RAH?

‣ In pro-drop languages syncretisms are crucial (contra Cysouw 2003)
‣ As to German, 1st/3rd person syncretisms are not relevant for null subject licensing because 3rd person omission is an instance of topic drop and thus, it does not fall in the RAH's application domain
‣ The RAH domain of German only contains the 1st and 2nd person sg/pl

In what follows I will examine the role of syncretisms within the 'RAH domain' of German. If the German RAH domain exclusively contains the 1st and 2nd person sg/pl, syncretisms between the 1st/2nd person should be crucial for null subject licensing in (Colloquial) German (as 1st/3rd person syncretisms are crucial in pro-drop languages).

2 The Role of (Occasional) Syncretisms in the Context of /s/-Stem Verbs

From the data above we know that in German 1st/3rd person syncretisms do not matter. In the following, I will present independent evidence for the claim that the 1st and 2nd person are really members of the same class (to which the 3rd person does not belong).

‣ If so, we would expect that syncretisms between the 1st and 2nd | 1st and 1st | 2nd and 2nd person sg/pl block the licensing of null subjects.
‣ When null subjects are licensed despite the presence of syncretisms between the 1st and 2nd person sg/pl we had to assume that null subjects in German are e.g. licensed by speaker/hearer features (but not by discrete verbal inflectional endings).

Systematic syncretisms in German are represented below (note that the forms of the 1st and 2nd person sg/pl are never syncretic), cf. (24):

(24) Systematic syncretisms within German inflectional paradigms

Syncretism	Number	Conjugation class	Tense
1 sg / 3 sg	singular	all conjugation classes	preterite
		modal conjugation classes (e.g *wissen*, *können*)	present
1 pl / 3 pl	plural	all conjugation classes	all tenses
3 sg / 2 pl	mixed	weak/strong conjugation classes (e.g. *machen* / *kommen*)	present

Further syncretisms occur only occasionally, e.g. when the verb has an /s/-stem, cf. *motzen* (to grumble)*, rasen* (to race)*, küssen* (to kiss)*, heißen* (to be called)*,* cf. (25):

(25) Inflectional paradigms of German indicative present/preterite active
to make / to grumble / to let / to be called

	Weak conjugation, no /s/-stem	*Weak conjugation, /s/-stem [+syncretism_{pres}]*	*Strong umlauting conjugation, /s/-stem [+ syncretism_{pret}]*	*Strong conjugation, /s/-stem [+syncretism_{pres + pret}]*
1 sg	mache/**machte**	motze/**motzte**	lasse/**ließ**	heiße/**hieß**
2 sg	machst/machtest	*motzt*/motztest	**lässt/*ließ*(es)*t***	***heißt/hieß*(es)*t***
3 sg	**macht/machte**	**motzt/motzte**	**lässt/ließ**	**heißt/hieß**
1 pl	**machen/machten**	**motzen/motzten**	**lassen/ließen**	**heissen/hießen**
2 pl	**macht**/machtet	*motzt*/motztet	lasst/***ließ*(e)*t***	***heißt/hieß*(e)*t***
3 pl	**machen/machten**	**motzen/motzten**	**lassen/ließen**	**heißen/hießen**

As the data in (26)-(28) show, null subjects are not licensed when the 2nd person singular is syncretic with the 2nd person plural:

(26) a. **Ø Löst keine der Aufgaben in der gegebenen Zeit!*
        [You-sg/pl] solve none of-the tasks in the given time!
    b. *Ø Hast / Habt keine der Aufgaben in der gegebenen Zeit gelöst!*
        [You-sg / You-pl] have none of-the tasks in the given time solved

(27) a. **Ø Kotzt mich total an!*
        [You-sg/pl] vomit me totally on ('...can't stand')
    b. *Ø Machst mich total an!*
        [You-sg] turn me totally on

The influence of (occasional) syncretisms becomes particularly clear when we consider modern (28a) and archaic forms (28b) of 2nd person sg/pl inflectional affixes:

(28) a. **Ø Hießt/Hießt mich gestern noch einen Kostverächter.*
        [You-sg/pl] dubbed me yesterday still a non-bon-vivant
    b. (?) *Ø Hießest/Hießet mich gestern noch einen Kostverächter.*
        [You-sg/pl] dubbed me yesterday still a non-bon-vivant

[The (?) in (28b) means that the archaic forms belong to more formal (= non-colloquial) registers]

According to the a. vs. b. contrasts in (26)-(28), we can conclude that (29) holds:

(29) <u>The application domain of the RAH in German</u>
a. 1st and 3rd person forms can freely coincide in German; syncretisms are not relevant, because the RAH application domain does not contain 3rd person sg/pl forms (however, it does so in pro-drop languages).
b. Syncretisms between 1st and 2nd person forms are relevant in German, because the application domain of the RAH contains the 1st and 2nd person sg/pl.

3 Null subjects in Wackernagel Position

Generally, it is assumed that null subjects in German are confined to the sentence initial position (Spec-CP). However, there are data which suggest that this is not entirely true:

(30) *Was würdest Ø mir empfehlen?*
      What would-2sg [you-sg] me recommend?

(31) *(?)Was würdet Ø mir empfehlen?*
      What would-2pl [you-pl] me recommend?

Problem with (30): The verb possibly contains a clitic-like/(silent) incorporated d-pronoun that represents a shortened version of *du* (= the 2nd person singular (nominative) subject pronoun) whose +/-presence in data as (30) is hard to detect because the 2nd person singular verb ending in German is *–st*, and so, the verbal ending and a 2nd person singular clitic-like element with the form *–t(e)* cannot be dissociated from each other on phonetic grounds (i.e. *würdest* could be considered as a shortened version of *würdeste*).

(31) is marked and for most speaker unacceptable. However, surprisingly, on *google* we find a lot of data similar to (31), cf. (32), which can hardly be attributed to chance:

Google search:

(32) a. "Was <u>würdet</u> Ø mir empfehlen?"   37 independent matches
         What would [you-pl] me recommend?

     b. "Was <u>würdet</u> Ø mir raten?"   22 independent matches
         What would [you-pl] me advise?

     c. "Wie <u>würdet</u> Ø euch verhalten?"   4 independent matches
         How would [you-pl] yourself-pl behave?

     d. "Was <u>würdet</u> Ø an meiner Stelle tun?"   2 independent matches
         What would [you-pl] in my position do?

     e. "Was <u>könnt</u> Ø empfehlen?"   27 independent matches
         What would [you-pl] recommend?

     f. "Was <u>könntet</u> Ø mir empfehlen?"   15 independent matches
         What would [you-pl] me recommend?

     g. "Was <u>habt</u> Ø gemacht?"   11 independent matches
         What have [you-pl] made?

     h. "Was <u>habt</u> Ø gesehen?"   5 independent matches
         What have [you-pl] seen?

‣ Note that the 2nd person plural null subjects in (32) only occur with modal and auxiliary verbs… So far: No positive evidence as to lexical verbs (as e.g. *Wann kommt vorbei?* (When come-2pl [you-pl] along?)).

‣ Thus, what makes 2nd person plural modals and auxiliaries so special (as to this particular person/number specification and in contrast to lexical verbs)?

➲ Investigation of the pattern of syncretisms of modal and auxiliary verbs (in contrast to those of lexical verbs)

(33) Verbal inflectional paradigms of German indicative present/preterite active
can / to say / to come / to wear / to be

	Modal verbs (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**

Empirical observation that can be inferred from the above table:
2nd person plural (and singular) modal and auxiliary verbs are non-syncretic throughout all inflectional paradigms in which they occur (as they lack the 3rd person singular/2nd person plural syncretism).

[Note e.g. that in the past tense of verbs of the weak and strong conjugation this kind of syncretism does not occur as well, but it occurs in the present tense]

Thus, a possible hypothesis could read as follows:

(34) Licensing of non-prefield null subjects in German
Verb forms which are discrete throughout all tenses of their inflectional paradigms license null subjects not only in the prefield (i.e. independently of a Spec-Head configuration).

‣ According to (33)/(34) not only modal verbs and auxiliaries should license 2nd person plural null subjects, but also verbs of the strong-umlauting conjugation (which do not display syncretisms between the 3rd person singular and the 2nd person plural throughout their whole conjugational paradigms as well)

‣ Positive evidence for (34): Null subjects licensed by the verbs *raten* (to recommend) and *vorschlagen* (to suggest) ... numerous examples can be found on the internet:

(35) *Guten Tag, Ich brauche Hilfe bei der Auswahl meines Bikes. Ich habe ein Budget von ca. 1400 € und hoffe dafür ein gutes gebrauchtes Bike zu bekommen. **Zu was ratet Ø mir?*** | To what recommend-2pl [you-pl] me-DAT?

(36) *Was ist eure Methode? **Was schlagt Ø vor?*** | What suggest-2pl [you-pl] PRT?

(37) *Vermutlich habt ihr recht und wir sollten wirklich nicht tatenlos herumsitzen.*
Aber was schlagt Ø vor zu tun? | But what suggest-2pl [you-pl] PRT to do?

‣ Independent evidence for the claim in (34): Swabian

In Swabian, the 2nd person singular form is non-syncretic throughout the whole para-digm. Expectedly, 2nd person singular WP null subjects are licensed, cf. (38a). Howev-er, 2nd person plural subjects remain unlicensed, cf. (38b) – which is no wonder, be-cause the Swabian plural paradigm is uniform:

(38)   a. *Wann bisch Ø losg'fahre?*   (Swabian)
          When are-2sg [you-sg] moved-off?
       b. **Wann sen Ø losg'fahre?*   (Swabian)
          When are-pl [you-pl] moved-off?

Note that (38) is absolutely parallel to the Colloquial High German data in (39) with the only exception(s) that...

‣ The Swabian 2nd person singular form does not end with a (possibly) amalgamated form, cf. (38a), and – as a consequence – we can be sure that no clitic is present.

‣ In contrast to Swabian, cf. (38b), the 2nd person plural null subject in Colloquial High German is licensed, cf. (39b) – which is so because the form of the 2nd person plural (*seid*) is non-syncretic throughout the whole paradigm of *sein* (to be).

(39)   a. *Wann bist Ø losgefahren?*   (Colloquial) German
          When are-2sg [you-sg] moved-off?
       b. *Wann seid Ø losgefahren?*   (Colloquial) High German
          When are-2pl [you-pl] moved-off?

Thus…

‣ <u>Prefield/Spec-CP null subjects</u> are licensed (and identified) by discrete verbal inflec-tional endings; discreteness is defined in relation to the immediate inflectional para-digm in which a particular (lexeme) form can occur (across all persons and numbers within a particular tense/mood/genus verbi).

‣ <u>WP null subjects</u> are licensed (and identified) by discrete verbal inflectional endings; discreteness is defined in relation to all inflectional paradigms in which a particular lexeme form can occur (across all persons and numbers and all tenses/moods/genus verbi).

(40) (General) <u>Conclusion</u>
Whereas prefield null subjects are sensitive to intra-paradigmatic (2nd sg/2nd pl) person syncretisms, WP null subjects are sensitive to intra-paradigmatic <u>and</u> inter-paradigmatic syncretisms, i.e. forms must be discrete throughout the whole inflectional ('super'-)paradigm in order to license WP null subjects (analogous to pro-drop lan-guages).

4 Appendix: Further Languages where Syncretisms "do not matter" (cf. (21))

The principle in (21), repeated here for convenience, allows us to capture the occurrence of null subjects in other languages as well:

(21) <u>Null subject licensing is confined to particular discourse domains</u>
The fact that null subjects are well-formed despite the fact that particular inflectional endings within verbal paradigms are syncretic does not matter as long as the respective person/number combinations bearing these forms are subject to different licensing conditions / 'licensing domains/paradigms, namely (i) antecedent-independent (inflection-based) subject omission and (ii) antecedent-dependent subject omission.

<u>Modern Greek</u> (a pro-drop language) licenses 3rd person plural referential and impersonal pronouns at the same time (and by the same form). Lavidas & Papangeli (2007:11) note that "transitive [and intransitive[2]] verbs may be ambiguous between arbitrary and non-arbitrary interpretation of the subject […] It is only contextual considerations, pragmatic or extra-linguistic context that may decide between the two readings". They provide minimal pairs similar to those in (41) and (42):

(41) Εδώ χορεύουν συχνά (Οι φοιτητές)
      Edo xorevun sixna (i fitites)
      Here dance-3pl often (the students)
      'Here, one / people dance often'
      ('Here, students dance often')

(42) Εδώ τρώνε πολλά μήλα (Οι φοιτητές)
      Edo trone pola mila (i fitites)
      Here eat-3pl many apples (the students)
      'Here, one / people eat many apples'
      ('Here, students eat many apples')

In Modern Greek a 3rd person plural null subject receives an impersonal interpretation when the discourse does not provide an antecedent – then the null subject is licensed independently of an antecedent (*out of the blue*). On the other hand, it receives a definite (referential/thematic) interpretation when the discourse provides an antecedent – then the null subject is licensed by reference to its antecedent, cf. the principle in (21)

<u>Oevdalian</u> (cf. Rosenkvist 2008): Uniform singular[3], non-syncretic 1st/2nd pl
‣ 1st/2nd person pl referential null subjects
‣ No impersonal null subjects

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[2] Note that Lavidas & Papangeli's claim made for transitive verbs also holds for intransitive verbs. Thanks to Vasiliki Koukoulioti for pointing that out and discussing the data with me.
[3] "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", Rosenkvist (2008:6).

<u>Modern Icelandic</u>: Icelandic is said to have a relatively rich verbal inflectional paradigm, however, the paradigm displays some syncretisms, cf. the following table taken from Sigurðsson (1993:249):

(43) Modern Icelandic

1 sg	leita	segi	sé
2 sg	**leitar**	**segir**	sérð
3 sg	**leitar**	**segir**	sér
1 pl	leitum	segjum	sjáum
2 pl	leitið	segið	sjáið
3 pl	leita	segja	sjá
Present indicative paradigms for the verbs *leita* 'search', *segia* 'say' (representing the most regular pattern of 5 distinct forms) and sjá 'see'			

‣ Modern Icelandic has an impersonal (generic) 3rd person null subject 'one' (Sigurðsson & Egerland 2009:160). In some paradigms the antecedentless 3rd person singular and the 2nd person singular form fall together.

‣ According to (21), Icelandic should not license 2nd person singular null subjects (or, if it did, it should not have an impersonal null subject).

➲ This is in fact what is reported in the literature: Sigurðsson (2011) gives no examples for 2nd person subject omission, and notes that "[i]t is often hard to get 2nd person readings, and I will disregard them here", p. 279):

(44) Ligg/Liggur/Liggjum/Liggja bara á ströndinni.   (Sigurðsson 2011, his ex. (25))
     [I/He,She,It/We/They] lie just on the beach

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