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Referential null subjects in German

Dialects and diachronic continuity

11.1 Introduction

Null subjects (NSs) have been a central research topic in generative syntax ever since the 1980s (cf. e.g., Rizzi 1982, 1986a; Huang 1984; Jaeggli and Safir 1989; and, more recently, Biberauer et al. 2010; Camacho 2013a; etc.). One of the important distinctions is between languages that restrict the null realization of subjects to referential subject pronouns typically licensed in discourse and languages that structurally license NSs based on some overt realization of agreement. The latter is often dubbed pro-drop, and languages such as English and German are classical examples of non-pro-drop languages. However, historical studies have shown that in older stages of German the situation is more complicated, and at least partial pro-drop seems to be attested (Axel 2007; Volodina 2009, 2011; Axel and Weiß 2010, 2011; Volodina and Weiß 2016). Similarly, pro-drop phenomena have been reported in some Present Day German dialects (e.g. in Cooper 1995; Weiß 2005a, 2016; Bohnacker 2013). The connection between the dialectological findings and the historical findings has always remained unclear, however, given the nearly thousand years of historical gap between the respective language stages.

This chapter considers the situation of German NSs from both a dialectological and a diachronic perspective and attempts to reconstruct a direct line concerning the licensing conditions of pro-drop from Old High German (OHG, 750–1050) through Middle High German (MHG, 1050–1350) and Early New High German (ENHG, 1350–1650) to current dialects of New High German (NHG, 1650–today). This chapter is therefore a first attempt to close the research gap mentioned above in the theoretical study of the history of German.

The chapter is organized as follows: § 11.2 describes the distribution of (various kinds of) NSs in Present Day German; § 11.3 gives a first overview of the diachrony of NSs; in § 11.4, we discuss two types of pro-drop in German, namely symmetric and asymmetric pro-drop; § 11.5 presents what is known about pro-drop in non-root

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clauses up to now; in § 11.6, we discuss and analyse pro-drop in MHG and ENHG in more detail (partially based on new findings); § 11.7 concludes.

11.2 Null subject in Present Day German

In classical pro-drop languages such as Italian, Hungarian, or Greek, there is a rich inflection system and non-stressed pronominal subjects can freely be omitted, that is, they can be realized as NSs. Crucially, this is a widely unrestricted phenomenon,[1] as it applies both to referential and non-referential subjects, to clause initial and clause internal subjects, and to root and embedded subjects. A brief comparison between German and Italian concerning such environments illustrates the known fact that Present Day Standard German (which we simply refer to as German in this chapter) is not a classical pro-drop language, as shown in (1)–(3). In particular, in (1) we witness a clause-internal drop of a pronominal subject, in (2) a subject drop in an embedded clause, and in (3) expletive drop. All of these are grammatical in Italian but not in German.

(1) a. Probabilmente [Ø] lavora a Frankfurt. (Italian)
probably works in Frankfurt
'He/She probably works in Frankfurt.'

b. Wahrscheinlich arbeitet *(er) in Frankfurt. (German)
probably works he in Frankfurt
'He probably works in Frankfurt.'

(2) a. Ha detto che [Ø] è pronta. (Italian)
has said that is ready
'She said that she is done.'

b. Sie sagt, dass *(sie) fertig ist. (German)
she says that she finished is
'She says that she is done.'

(3) a. Piove. (Italian)
rains
'It rains.'

b. *(Es) regnet. (German)
it rains
'It rains.'

It has been noted early in the literature on German that the situation is a bit more complicated in the sense that in impersonal passives, the expletive subject can be dropped as shown in (4), in which the expletive *es* is strictly necessary in the left

[1] It is often assumed that in these languages *pro* is licensed structurally (e.g. via c-command by I° in consistent NS languages, cf. Camacho 2013a: 68), but there is much debate on the precise mechanisms (cf. Biberauer et al. 2010; Wratil 2011; Camacho 2013a: ch. 4).

periphery, but once the left periphery is occupied by other explicit material, the expletive can no longer be realized (cf. Haider 1993).[2]

(4) a. Es wurde auf der Hochzeit viel getanzt. (German)
it was on the wedding much danced
'There was a lot of dancing at the wedding.'

b. Auf der Hochzeit wurde (*es) viel getanzt.
on the wedding was it much danced
'There was a lot of dancing at the wedding.'

c. Alle waren sehr glücklich, weil (*es) viel getanzt wurde.
everybody was very happy because it much danced was
'Everybody was very happy because there was so much dancing.'

For this reason, German is also sometimes described as a *semi-pro-drop language* (e.g. Sternefeld 1985; Grewendorf 1989; but see Haider (1993: 140–2) for arguments against the existence of expletive *pro* in general).

However, apart from this complication, in German, there is a whole variety of cases in which NSs can occur. They are limited to cases of referential pronominal subjects that can only be dropped given some contextual restrictions. Therefore, we will call them *context-linked NSs*. We discuss three sub-classes of these constructions.

The first one is the classical case of *topic drop*, in which third person referential pronominal subjects can be dropped. This is shown in (5).

(5) a. Was macht Peter am Abend?
what does Peter at evening
'What is Peter doing tonight?'

b. (Er) geht aus mit den Jungs.
(he) goes out with the boys
'He's going out with the boys.'

Topic drop does not only concern subjects. Direct objects can also be dropped, if they are topical, as in (6), which clearly distinguishes the phenomenon from pro-drop. Moreover, both subject and object can only be dropped if they are contextually given, topical, and situated in SpecCP, as opposed to the weaker requirements of pro-drop.[3]

(6) a. Kommst du mit in=s Kino? Der neue Bond läuft.
come you with in=the cinema the new Bond runs
'Are you coming with us to the cinema? The new Bond movie is screening.'

b. (Den) habe ich schon gesehen.
(that) have I already seen
'I've already seen that one.'

[2] In certain cases, as answers to specific questions, colloquial German allows *expletive drop* in SpecCP, cf. Fries (1988), but this is a very restricted phenomenon, see also Auer (1993).

[3] For a more detailed description and analysis of topic drop in Present Day German, cf. Trutkowski (2016).

The second case is the drop of first and second person referential subjects, also known as *diary drop* in English (cf. Haegeman 2000; Haegeman and Ihsane 2001). In this case, a pronominal subject may be optionally omitted in SpecCP, but, in contrast to topic drop, the referent needs no previous mention. This is evident in (7). The subject in (7b) and (7c) does not have to be realized, although it is not explicitly mentioned in the context (of course one can standardly assume that speaker and addressee are to be represented as parts of the context of any utterance). Another crucial difference to topic drop is that objects cannot be dropped this way.

(7) a. Das oben angegebene Script funktioniert doch!
the above mentioned script functions nevertheless
'The above mentioned script works nonetheless!'

b. (Ich) hab-e gestern zu schnell aufgegeben.
have-1SG yesterday too fast renounced
'I gave up too fast yesterday.'

c. (Du) ha-st gestern zu schnell aufgegeben.
have-2SG yesterday too fast renounced
'You gave up too fast yesterday.'

The status of diary drop is debated, however. Trutkowski (2011: 207; 2016) argues that, in German, the distribution of what was called diary drop depends on verbal inflection and not only on pragmatic factors. In particular, she argues that dropping first and second person pronominal subjects is licit because the verb exhibits non-syncretic inflection. This correctly restricts the distribution to first and second person singular pronouns, as the other endings are typically syncretic as shown in (8). Based on such considerations, Trutkowski calls this phenomenon 'out of the blue drop', a term that we will use in this chapter as well.

(8) a. [Ø] Komm-e/Komm-st/*Komm-t am besten nachher vorbei.
come-1SG/come-2SG/come-3SG at best later along
b. [Ø] Komm-en/Komm-t/*Komm-en am besten nachher vorbei.
come-1PL/come-2PL/come-3PL at best later along
'I/You/He/We/They best come/s over later.'

Finally, there is a class of NSs in coordination structures in German that we call *antecedent linked subject drop*. There are two types of antecedent linked subject drop: *Coordination ellipsis* and *subject gap constructions* (Volodina and Weiß 2016). In coordination ellipsis constructions, the two conjuncts exhibit a parallel syntactic structure. This allows the omission of the subject in the second clause because the position of both the antecedent and the NS is the specifier of CP. This is shown in (9a). In subject gap constructions, the position of the elided subject is debated. Te Velde (1999), for example, considers the gap to be in the prefield (Vorfeld) of the second conjunct, but Büring and Hartmann (1998) posit the gap in the middle field[4] of the

[4] We use the English translation of the traditional German names in the topological model of German syntax following Drach (1937); Reis (1980); Grewendorf (1993); etc. Roughly, the prefield incorporates

second conjunct. In either analysis, however, the crucial difference to coordination ellipsis is the position of the antecedent in the first conjunct. While it is in SpecCP for coordination ellipsis, it is in the middle field in the case of subject gap constructions, as shown in (9b). Cf. also Reich (2009) for further discussion.

(9) a. Peter kommt früh heim und sieht den Nachbarn vor der Tür.
Peter comes early home and sees the neighbour outside the door
'Peter comes home early and sees the neighbour at the door.'

b. Früh kommt Peter heim und sieht den Nachbarn vor der Tür.
early comes Peter home and sees the neighbour outside the door
'Peter comes home early and sees the neighbour at the door.'

Summing up, in standard Present Day German, there is a whole variety of NSs. While there is a limited range of expletive drop, which may justify the term *semi-pro-drop*, in general, NSs are referential and context linked. They are either instances of topic drop, of out of the blue drop, or antecedent linked drop—also known as different varieties of coordination ellipsis and subject gap. Crucially, these instances of NSs never occur in the middle field of a German sentence, and they also do not appear in embedded clauses. While even these data give rise to some theoretical discussion, the situation is much more complicated and richer in older stages of German and in dialects. We turn to these in § 11.3.

11.3 Null subjects in older stages of German

In older stages of German starting from Old High German (OHG) up to Early New High German (ENHG),[5] the distribution of NSs is much more complex than in Present Day German and it is also subject to significant diachronic change. In this section, we discuss some of the relevant examples.

Topic drop as in (10) (cited from Axel 2007: 308) and subject gap constructions as in (11) are attested in OHG just as much as in Present Day German (Volodina and Weiß 2016).

material to the left of the finite verb, also known as SpecCP, and the middle field, also known as inversion context, is the part of the sentence between the finite verb and the base generated position of the main verb.

[5] Abbreviations of the primary sources: [AH] *Der arme Heinrich* (Müller 1784); [Ava, JG] *Das Jüngste Gericht. Die Dichtungen der Frau Ava* (Maurer 1966); [Diemer] *Deutsche Gedichte des XI. und XII. Jahrhunderts* (Diemer 1849); [*Ein kurtzweilig Faßnachtspill*] *Regensburger Fastnachtspiel.* (Hartmann 1893); [Fischart: Geschichtsklitterung] Johann Fischart: *Geschichtklitterung (Gargantua)* (Nyssen 1963–64); [FNS], [ML] *Hans Sachs. Werke* (von Keller 1870–1909); [Freisinger PN B] *Freisinger Paternoster und Auslegung* (Haug and Vollmann 1991a); [HL] *Hildebrandslied* (Haug and Vollmann 1991b); [Is] *Der althochdeutsche Isidor. Nach der Pariser Handschrift und den Monseer Fragmenten* (Eggers 1964); [Kottanerin] *Die Denkwürdigkeiten der Helene Kottannerin (1439–1440)* (Mollay 1971); [MF] *The Monsee Fragments. Newly collated text with introduction, notes, grammatical treatise and exhaustive glossary and a photo-lithographic fac-simile* (Hench 1890); [Muspilli] *Muspilli* (Haug 1991); [O] *Otfrid von Weißenburg. Evangelienbuch.* (Kleiber 2004); [Parz] *Parzival* (Lachmann 1833); [Rheinfrk. Gebet] *Rheinfränkisches (Augsburger) Gebet* (von Steinmeyer 1971); [Wiener Genesis] *Die Wiener Genesis* (von Hartel and Wickhoff 1895/1970).

(10) Gilóubist thu … \ thiu minu wórt$_j$ ellu?
believe you … the mine words all
'[Ø]$_j$ sint, druhtin' quad si, \ 'fésti in mines hérzen brusti …'
are Lord says she fast in my heart's breast
(OHG; O III 24,33)
'Do you believe all my words? They are all secure in my heart.'

(11) denne uuarant engila$_j$ uper dio marha, [Ø]$_j$ wechant deota,
then go angels over the land wake people
[Ø]$_j$ wissant ze dinge (Muspilli 79f.)
point to the.place.of.execution
'Then angels walk over the land, wake the people, and point them to the place of execution.'

This is not surprising, since the pragmatic and syntactic restrictions for subject gap and many types of topic drop are the same as today. In (10), for instance, we have a question–answer sequence. The antecedent of the pronominal subject is in the question, but it is omitted in the prefield of the answer because it is a topical constituent licensed by the preceding discourse. This is the same as in Present Day German, as shown in (5) and (6) above.

In OHG, however, we find additional types of examples of NSs which are not grammatical in Present Day German, such as the examples in (12).

(12) a. In dhemu druhtines nemin archennemes … fater (Is. 279)
in the Lord's name recognize.1PL.surely father
'We surely recognize in the Lord's name … father.'

b. Sume hahet in cruci (MF XVIII, 17–18; Mt 23,34)
some hang.2PL on the.cross
'Some will crucify you.'

c. Hwanta sprihhis za=im in biuurtim (MF VIII, 16–17; Mt 13,10)
why speak.2PL to=them in parables
'Why do you speak in parables?'

In the examples in (12), the NSs are realized in the middle field and not in the prefield (SpecCP), in which we found all instances of context linked NSs as discussed for Present Day German. The position of the NSs in the middle field is important because we take this to indicate that these examples are real examples of pro-drop. Claiming that *pro* in the middle field is an instance of pro-drop, we follow the assumption in the literature that *pro* in the middle field is licensed by a c-command relation to AGR. This is the result of verb movement to C° (cf. Axel 2007; Volodina 2009, 2011; Axel and Weiß 2010, 2011).

One should note that under the classical view, which distinguishes between pro-drop as a structural/syntactic phenomenon, on the one hand, and topic drop and diary drop as more discourse oriented/pragmatic phenomena, on the other, one could say that the difference between OHG and Present Day German is very radical. In particular, we have topic drop in both, but we have pro-drop only in OHG. In addition, OHG could be argued to be a consistent pro-drop language, since NSs were possible in all persons

Table 11.1. Types of null subjects in OHG and NHG

	Structurally licensed NSs		Antecedent linked NSs	Topic drop
	out of the blue drop	pro-drop		
OHG	(probably) yes	yes	yes	yes
NHG	yes	only dialects	yes	yes

(although they seem to have been the default only in the third person, cf. Axel 2007: 315, and not in all persons as in prototypical consistent pro-drop languages such as Italian or Spanish, cf. Camacho 2013a: 31f.). In any case, OHG was not a partial pro-drop language that allowed NSs only in certain persons (cf. Camacho 2013a: 34).

The findings in Trutkowski (2016), however, allow for a more sophisticated distinction which shows that the difference between the two stages of German is less radical. In particular, we follow Trutkowski's argument that in German, out of the blue drop is structurally (i.e. via agreement) and not pragmatically licensed. Then, we can observe that both OHG and NHG have structurally licensed NSs, namely the out of the blue drop, but the referential pro-drop property of OHG (i.e. referential NSs in the middle field) has been lost in NHG. Crucially, however, in German dialects, pro-drop has persisted to a certain extent, as will be discussed later. The difference between OHG and NHG then would be that (non-dialectal) NHG has lost structurally licensed NSs in the middle field (i.e. in the Wackernagel position[6] to be more precise, cf. Weiß 2005a, 2015, 2016). The arising generalization is captured in Table 11.1 and will be illustrated in more detail in §§ 11.4–11.6.[7]

We are well aware that there are several accounts which do not make such a sharp distinction between the two types of NSs, cf. Sigurðsson and Maling (2008), Walkden (2014), or, especially for early OHG, Schlachter (2012). Since NSs in German behave completely differently in the prefield (SpecCP or SpecFinP) and in the middle field, we think such approaches do not make sufficiently differentiated predictions (cf. Volodina and Weiß 2016 for more details). In Walkden's (2014) account, NSs (in Early West Germanic languages) are in SpecTP and get licensed by an aboutness topic operator in SpecShiftP. However, it remains unclear why in some cases (i.e. antecedent linked NSs) SpecCP has to be empty, whereas in examples like (12) above this is not required. Note that Farasyn and Breitbarth (2016) also come to the

[6] The so-called Wackernagel position (WP) is the part of the middle field furthest to the left (Haider 1993: 179). Descriptively speaking, it corresponds to the position directly following the finite verb in C°/Fin° in main clauses and the subordinating conjunction in embedded clauses; it is here that elements such as clitic/weak pronouns appear. Note that the WP is not identical to SpecTP, the position of non-pronominal subjects, because clitic/weak object pronouns always precede non-pronominal subjects (Weiß 2015, 2016).

[7] We assume that OHG had out of the blue drop, although we have no clear evidence for our assumption. However, some of the OHG examples of V1 clauses with first or second person NSs may qualify as instances of out of the blue drop (e.g. Axel 2007: 313 (32a)). Note that, since we are exclusively concerned with pro-drop in the following, nothing hinges on that assumption.

conclusion that in Middle Low German NSs are located either in the prefield or in the middle field and both types underlie different licensing conditions.[8]

As for the root-dependent asymmetry in OHG, Schlachter (2012) has correctly pointed out that there is a certain quantity of referential NSs in dependent verb final clauses which could not be attributed to the influence of Latin (as Axel 2007: 311 assumes), that is, they are true exceptions from the postfinite restriction of *pro* (cf. exx (16) and (17) below). Note, however, that the quantity of these true exceptions, although it is not yet really known, must be considerably smaller than the numbers given by Axel (2007: 310—between 8% and 15%) and Schlachter (2012: 172—between 14% and 15%) for all *pro*-containing dependent clauses because they form only a subset of it. In § 11.5, we will return to NSs in embedded clauses and present new data.

11.4 Symmetric versus asymmetric pro-drop

Since the only systematic difference between the two historical periods of German concerns pro-drop in the narrow sense (i.e. NSs in the middle field, more specifically in the so-called Wackernagel position, cf. Weiß 2015, 2016), we now focus on a further distinction within the domain of referential pro-drop: the distinction between symmetric and asymmetric pro-drop. According to Benincà (1984) and Cognola (2014), symmetric pro-drop applies if subjects can be dropped in both matrix clauses and embedded clauses whenever they are c-commanded by agreement in C° typically occupied by the finite verb. Symmetric pro-drop happens for instance in Bavarian, as shown in (13) and (14). In (13), we have an instance of agreement on the verb which occurs in C°, following standard rules for German root clauses. In (14), we have an unusual case of a complementizer exhibiting agreement. Thereby, the complementizer of the embedded clause naturally occupies the C° position.

(13) morng bist *pro* wieda gsund (Bavarian, from Axel and Weiß 2011: 36)
tomorrow are again healthy
'Tomorrow you will be healthy again'

(14) wennst *pro* moanst!
if.2SG mean.2SG
'If you think so!'

In the case of asymmetric pro-drop, the occurrence of *pro* is limited to root clauses, which is typically the case in V2 languages such as OHG or Old Romance (Benincà 1984; Cognola 2014). As for OHG, this is not very surprising if one assumes the licensing conditions mentioned above for pro-drop. The reason is that it is only in root clauses that verbs move to C° and verbs are typically the only elements

[8] Additionally, a special problem for Walkden's (2014) approach seems to be the great number of first/second person NSs—according to Axel (2007: 315) between 30% and 40% of all pronominal first/second person subjects in some early OHG texts. This is unexpected under an account in which an aboutness topic operator licenses NSs, because topic drop is mainly restricted to third person and, at least in Present Day German, first/second person NSs in the prefield are mostly an instance of out of the blue drop rather topic drop (see Trutkowski 2016: 187).

in C° having the respective kind of inflection that allows pro-drop. In fact inflected complementizers are only available in more recent dialects of German (or, to be more precise, of Continental West Germanic, cf. Weiß 2005a). Note that, in Old Romance, the (non-)availability of pro-drop in root or embedded clauses, respectively, was also connected to the presence or absence of the finite verb in C° (Benincà 1984; Cognola 2014).

With these definitions and the observations reported in the literature, it is quite clear that OHG was an asymmetric pro-drop language, for quantitative data see Eggenberger (1961), Axel (2007) and Schlachter (2012) (see also Weiß 2005a; Axel and Weiß 2010, 2011).[9] Moreover, it seems that MHG still was an asymmetric pro-drop language of the same kind as OHG, that is, pro-drop is attested mostly in root clauses, and only rarely in embedded clauses (but see § 11.5). (15) is a typical example of an MHG sentence with NS: *pro* is c-commanded by AGR-in-C which is the result of verb movement to C°. Note that Held (1903: 89f.) gives many more examples of this kind.

(15) daz koufest *pro* an uns beiden (MHG; AH 662)
that purchase at us both
'You purchase that for both of us.'

This nice generalization, however, is challenged by a whole range of additional data from various stages of German, starting from OHG, MHG, and even in the early stages of NHG. Such syntactic contexts involve, for example, embedded *dass*- and *ob*-clauses with *pro*, in which the finite verb is not moved to C° but inflection on the complementizer is lacking as well, as shown in (16). These examples are not predicted to be acceptable by the theory of Weiß (2005a); Axel (2007); Axel and Weiß (2010, 2011).

(16) a. deme sin gewissede daz sagete
whom his conscience that said
daz [Ø] gotes hulde niene habet (Ava, JG 9,7)
that (he) God's grace not had
'His conscience tells him that he doesn't have God's grace'

b. ich solt auf das haws
I should up the house
vnd solt versuechen,
and should try
'I should enter the house and try.'
ob [Ø] ier kran vnd ander ir klainat
if (I) her crown and other her treasuries
mocht hinab zu ier bringen (early NHG; Kottanerin, 13,139)
could down to her bring
'If I could bring her crown and other of her treasuries down to her.'

[9] According to the numbers given in Axel (2007: 310, table 2), NSs occurred in root sentences five times more frequently than in embedded clauses (root clauses: *ca.* 50% vs. embedded clauses: 10,7%). As noted at the end of § 11.2, the amount of pro-drop in embedded clauses was presumably even less frequent than suggested by Axel's counting, based on Eggenberger (1961).

Moreover, we find embedded verb final clauses with an NS without an overt complementizer, as shown in (17).

(17) a. wir sprachen [Ø] fride brâhten (MHG; Wiener Genesis 4422)
we said peace brought
'We said that we brought peace.'

b. sie sprachen [Ø] iz gerne taeten (Diemer 133,11)
they said it like do
'They said that they would do it gladly.'

c. jâ wând ich, [Ø] ergezet waere (Parz. 177,5)
yes thought I pleased were
'Yes, I thought that I would be pleased.'

According to Held (1903: 37, 61), examples like (17a–c) are frequent in the OHG of Otfrid and in the early MHG of the Wiener Genesis, but are infrequent in other texts. It is probable that NSs in these embedded verb final clauses were already an archaism at the time when the manuscript of the Wiener Genesis was written, that is, between 1060 and 1068 (Haug and Vollmann 1991: 1408), because slightly later records (the Millstätter and the Vorauer Genesis) tend to insert the complementizer *that* plus the subject pronoun in the respective sentences (Held 1903: 61). Given the fact that their occurrence is mainly restricted to two texts (Otfrid and the Wiener Genesis, respectively), it is hard to tell whether this kind of NS were really part of the grammar in OHG times.

NSs in clauses introduced by a complementizer (as in ex. (16)) mainly occurred in *that*-clauses in OHG (Held 1903: 38) as well as in early MHG (Held 1903: 62); however, other complementizers are seldom attested with NSs (Held 1903: 62). All in all, so far, we do not have enough data to be able to draw any firm conclusions from the examples in (16). Nevertheless, it is obvious that the existing data from OHG and early MHG (as presented in (16) and (17)) are a challenge for the generalization about the licensing conditions of pro-drop in German discussed so far. In § 11.5, we discuss this topic further, and in § 11.6.2, we present new data from ENHG for this type of NS.

As a preliminary summary we may say: in OHG, we have pro-drop in both root clauses and embedded clauses, but NSs occurred much more frequently in V2-clauses, hence, Axel's (2007) explanation covers the vast majority of pro-drop cases. But the problem persists that the pro-drop data in embedded verb final clauses remain unexplained by the licensing conditions proposed in Axel (2007) and Axel and Weiß (2010, 2011). Unfortunately, there is little systematic research on NSs in embedded clauses from a diachronic perspective in recent times, so we do not know precisely how productive they were in OHG and MHG, but see Schlachter (2012), for example, for a limited set of novel data from early OHG (which nevertheless reveal a clear root-embedded asymmetry, cf. the comments at the end of § 11.2 above). According to the comments in Held (1903), we cannot entirely exclude the possibility that they are only reflecting an older stage of grammar (because written languages are often more conservative than spoken languages, cf. Kroch 2001; Weiß 2005b).

However, on the other hand, we are not forced to draw this conclusion. At the moment, we can at least say that OHG was a pro-drop language which shows a very slight symmetry in that NSs were almost in free variation with overt subjects in root clauses (with subject verb inversion), whereas the subject was rarely dropped in embedded (verb final) clauses.[10] The same probably holds for early MHG, although we cannot say for sure because there is no recent systematic investigation (comparable to Axel's 2007 study on OHG). Concerning MHG, we must rely on Held's (1903) investigation according to which (early) MHG frequently shows NSs in root clauses (Held 1903: 89), but rarely in embedded (verb final) clauses (see examples (16) and (17) above).[11]

11.5 *Pro* in non-root clauses

In this section, we will restrict ourselves to NSs in clauses introduced by a complementizer (and mostly to *that*-clauses). As we have seen, they pose a problem for the analysis of pro-drop adopted here since their NSs are clause-internal and thus have to be classified as *pro* according to our definition. The problem clauses introduced by a complementizer pose is that the NS can only be clause internal. This makes these cases candidates for *pro*, despite the absence of an AGR-in-C licenser. Concerning NSs in embedded clauses without a complementizer we cannot decide whether they are in the prefield or clause internal in the WP because the left periphery is empty, so both positions are in principle able to host the NS. However, since clause-initially, only topic drop or out of the blue drop are possible, both are mainly restricted to root clauses (Trutkowski 2016), it is very likely that they are instances of *pro* occurring clause internally. Subsequently, we face the problem that there is no AGR-in-C that could license them. So NSs in both syntactic contexts are problematic for the proposed licensing conditions. The open question is, therefore, what licensed *pro* in clauses introduced by a complementizer?

As mentioned in § 11.3, some modern German dialects exhibit symmetric pro-drop. Bavarian is one such a dialect, allowing NSs in root clauses (18a) as well as in (verb final) clauses introduced by a complementizer (18b).

(18) a. morng bist *pro* wieda gsund. (Bavarian, from Weiß 1998: 125)
tomorrow are.2SG again healthy
'Tomorrow, you will be healthy again.'

b. wennst *pro* moanst!
if.2SG mean.2SG
'If you think so!'

For modern dialects, the answer to the question why they allow NSs in verb final clauses is rather clear. The complementizer in (18b) is inflected like the verb, so the

[10] OHG is not the only elder Germanic language that displays this asymmetry between root and non-root clauses (cf. van Gelderen 2013 for Old English).

[11] However, (early) MHG differs from OHG in that NSs in root clauses are restricted to the 2SG with inversion contexts (Held 1903: 89).

licensing condition is identical to root clauses: *pro* is licensed by AGR-in-C. The symmetry of pro-drop is completely balanced in modern dialects: whenever a person allows (for) pro-drop in root clauses, it does so in non-root clauses too. This symmetry has emerged somewhat by coincidence because the development of complementizer agreement was initially completely independent of it (Axel and Weiß 2011; Weiß 2018). With respect to symmetry, we can therefore observe an expansion of the NS property of German, since OHG was, at best, only a slightly symmetric NS language.

On the other hand, modern dialects of German are only partial NS languages because *pro* is not possible (or available) for all person–number combinations but mostly only for 2SG (Weiß 2005a). To see what the confinement of pro-drop consists of, consider the following contrast, which, according to Weise (1900: 56), shows up in the Thuringian dialect spoken in Altenburg: *pro* is possible with 2SG, but not with 2PL! The difference between the inflectional marker *-st* in 2SG and the *-t* in 2PL is that only the former contains a pronominal element, namely /t/, which evolved from reanalysis of the enclitic pronoun as part of the inflection in OHG times.

(19) a. schreib mir einmal den Brief,
write.2SG me once a letter
kriegst *pro* auch einen Groschen (German; Weise 1900: 56)
get.2SG too a penny
'Please write the letter for me, you will get a penny.'

b. schreibt mir einmal den Brief, *kriegt *pro* auch einen Groschen[12]
write.2PL me once a letter get.2PL too a penny
'Please write the letter for me, you will get a penny.'

The same correlation between the possibility of pro-drop and pronominal AGR exists in other German dialects as well, for example in Central Bavarian. As the examples in (20) show, NSs are only possible in those cases where the inflectional marker is pronominal in the sense of Weiß (2005a), that is, where the marker (at least partly) emerged from the reanalysis of a subject clitic as an inflectional element.[13] In Central Bavarian, the inflectional markers of the 2SG and 2PL, and of the 1PL are of pronominal origin—and only they license *pro*, whereas the inflectional markers of the other person–number combinations do not. This special correlation explains the paradigmatic as well as the areal distribution of *pro* in German dialects (Weiß 2005a; Axel and Weiß 2011; Volodina and Weiß 2016).

[12] Example (19b) is not found in Weise (1900), but constructed by Weiß (2005a) according to his statement that subject omissions as in (19a) are not found in the plural ('Im Plural ist diese Ellipse nicht nachweisbar', Weise 1900: 56).

[13] Rosenkvist (Chapter 12 *this volume*) proposes an interesting alternative explanation according to which it suffices that the agreement marker is distinct within the paradigm. This condition seems to explain the distribution of NSs in many partial NS languages (cf. Rosenkvist, Chapter 12 *this volume*). However, 1SG in (Central) Bavarian poses a problem for Rosenkvist's explanation: although it has distinct agreement ('kumm'), it does not allow NSs! With the explanation proposed in Weiß (2005a) and adopted here (only pronominal AGR-in-C can license *pro*), this is expected.

(20) a. *Morng bin *pro* wieda gsund (* 1SG) (Central Bavarian)
tomorrow am again healthy
b. Morng bist *pro* wieda gsund (√ 2SG)
tomorrow are again healthy
c. *Morng is *pro* wieda gsund (* 3SG)
tomorrow is again healthy
d. Morng sama *pro* wieda gsund (√ 1PL)
tomorrow are again healthy
e. Morng sads *pro* wieda gsund (√ 2PL)
tomorrow are again healthy
f. *Morng san *pro* wieda gsund (* 3PL)
tomorrow are again healthy
'Tomorrow, I/you/she/we/you/they am/are/is gonna be healthy again.'

Central Bavarian
2SG – 1PL – 2PL (AGR-in-C is pronominal)
1SG – 3SG – 3PL (AGR-in-C is non-pronominal)

Compared to OHG, the possibility of pro-drop is restricted in modern dialects and the restriction results from a strengthening of the morphological requirement: only pronominal AGR-in-C can license *pro*. Therefore, modern dialects are partial pro-drop languages.

All in all, however, we can say that the possibility of pro-drop in modern dialects has been confined and expanded since OHG times. The relevant diachronic developments are:

- From **consistent** to **partial** pro-drop: From OHG to the recent dialects the licensing condition for *pro* became more specific with the consequence that pro-drop is no longer possible for all person-number combinations
- From **asymmetric** to **symmetric** pro-drop: The symmetry of pro-drop between root and non-root clauses increased (due to the development of complementizer agreement)

The latter development from asymmetric to symmetric pro-drop needs some clarification. As mentioned above, even in OHG NSs occurred in clauses introduced by complementizers to some extent, so it does not seem to be justified to qualify OHG as asymmetric. However, there is a very significant difference in the frequencies, because NSs are found in root clauses five times more often than in subordinate clauses (cf. Axel 2007: 310, table 2—root clauses: *ca.* 50% vs. embedded clauses: 10.7%). As we will see in § 11.6.2, at least NSs in *that*-clauses were quantitatively so marginal in OHG that it seems justified (as one reviewer suggested to us) to assume that there are two different types of *pro* in embedded clauses, namely, as an Indo-European relict, genuine *pro* without AGR-in-C in OHG, and AGR-in-C-dependent *pro* in the modern dialects. In this case, OHG would count as asymmetric regarding the latter type (present in root clauses) only. Whatever the correct analysis may be, it should be clear that AGR-in-C-dependent pro-drop as present in the modern dialects did not yet exist in OHG, so it remains an open question when it developed.

11.6 Pro-drop in MHG and ENHG

As mentioned before, there are no systematic investigations on pro-drop in MHG and ENHG. With the exception of Volodina and Weiß (2016), who also present newly collected data, all descriptions and comments on the topic made in grammars (Ebert et al. 1993; Paul 2007) and textbooks (Fleischer and Schallert 2011) are mainly based on the data collected and presented by Held (1903). Thus the empirical basis for statements on the NS property of MHG and ENHG is not very sound, but for all we know, we can at least be sure that they were pro-drop languages. Whether they followed the OHG system (consistent, but mostly asymmetric pro-drop) or the new system (partial, but symmetric pro-drop) is an open question (Table 11.2).

Table 11.2. Null subject property in the history of German

	symmetric	consistent
OHG	–	+
MHG	?	?
ENHG	?	?
NHG	+	–

In the following, we will present new data for ENHG, based on several small corpus studies.[14] Our investigation was guided by two key questions:

(1) are there any restrictions w.r.t. person?
(2) are there any restrictions concerning clause types?

We used these two parameters as indicators to decide whether or not pro-drop in MHG and in ENHG was similar to modern dialects or to OHG.

11.6.1 Person restrictions in the distribution of null subjects

Restrictions with respect to the person features which allow pro-drop are the defining property of partial NS languages of the same type as recent German dialects (Weiß 2005a, 2016). The system of pro-drop in modern German dialects is rather unbalanced with respect to its paradigmatic distribution: the core of the system is clearly the second person singular. That means that 2SG *pro* has the greatest areal distribution: it is attested in all major groups of German dialects. Examples from Upper, Middle, and Low German are given in (22) (taken from Weiß 2005a). Additionally, in many German dialects, *pro* is only available for the 2SG and for no other person. The extension to other person–number combinations is very rare and in nearly all cases predicted (or determined) by the above-mentioned correlation between

[14] More information on the texts that we investigated will be given in §§ 11.6.1 and 11.6.2 when the data are presented.

pronominal agreement and *pro*. If at all, there are really very few exceptions from this rule (Weiß 2005a). Therefore, we can state the implication in (21):

(21) If *pro*, then at least in the 2SG

(22) a. wennsd *pro* mogsd (Bavarian)
if.2SG want.2SG
'If you want.'

b. kriegst *pro* auch einen Groschen (Thuringian)
get.2SG too a penny
'You'll even get a penny.'

c. dat maakst *pro* recht (Low German)
that make.2SG right
'You are doing it right.'

The predominance of 2SG with respect to pro-drop is also confirmed by the investigation of Bohnacker (2013) who explored the distribution of 4,000 null and overt pronominal subjects in a corpus of spoken Swabian (an Upper German dialect). She found a robust tendency for 2SG subjects to be null, whereas in most of the other person–number combinations, NSs are completely absent. There are two exceptions, namely the 1SG and 3SG, but with very low scores (cf. Table 11.3).[15]

Note that the restriction of pro-drop to the 2SG that we observe in many recent German dialects should not be confused with the person split that was found in OHG. As the data in Table 11.3 reveal, referential NSs in Swabian are not licensed in any person except the 2SG. In contrast to that, in OHG referential NSs are attested for all person and number combinations, although it is only in the third person 'that the null variant is used more frequently than the overt one' (Axel 2007: 314).

For MHG[16] we do not have any recent quantitative investigations, but we can present first results for ENHG: At least texts which are close to the spoken language show the expected predominance of the 2SG as the main person–number

Table 11.3. Clause-internal null subjects in Swabian

1SG	2SG	3SG [−neut]	3SG [+neut]	1PL	2PL	3PL
13/995	219/357	0/671	25/1005	0/185	0/9	0/375
1.3%	**61.3%**	0%	2.5%	0%	0%	0%

(Bohnacker 2013: 264)

[15] Note that the drop of 1SG subject pronouns in Alemannic has to be distinguished from ordinary pro-drop, because it is triggered by special conditions such as the presence of another clitic pronoun (cf. Weiß 2015: 87–8). Additionally, in Bohnacker's (2013) corpus, 'more than half of these [1SG NSs] occur with semi-formulaic *glaub* ['believe'] (7/13)'. The 3SG neuter NSs are probably the result of phonological assimilation (see Bohnacker 2013: 281–2 for details), so they also do not qualify as instances of ordinary pro-drop.

[16] According to Held (1903: 89), (early) MHG already displays a strong restriction to the 2SG and to inversion contexts in root clauses. How strong the restriction was remains to be shown in future research.

combination licensing *pro*.[17] This is, for example, the case for Hans Sachs (1494–1576), the famous Nurembergian shoemaker and Meistersinger (Drügh et al. 2012: 258, 260). In his carnival play *Der schwangere Bauer* (*The pregnant farmer*), we find many instances of pro-drop with 2SG subjects.[18] This is predominantly the case in main clauses where the verb is in the second position, as in the examples in (23):

(23) a. Daran must etlich unkost wenden (ENHG; FNS, p. 12)
that.on must.2SG some expenses apply
'You'll have many expenses with that.'

b. mein Kargas! wie sichst so schmal (FNS, p. 11)
my Kargas how look.2SG so thin
'My K.! You are so thin!'

An investigation of eleven carnival plays of Hans Sachs produced interesting results (cf. Figure 11.1).[19] In inversion contexts (like the ones in (23)), 2SG subject pronouns appear in three forms: as full pronoun (e.g. *bist du* 'are you'), as clitic pronoun

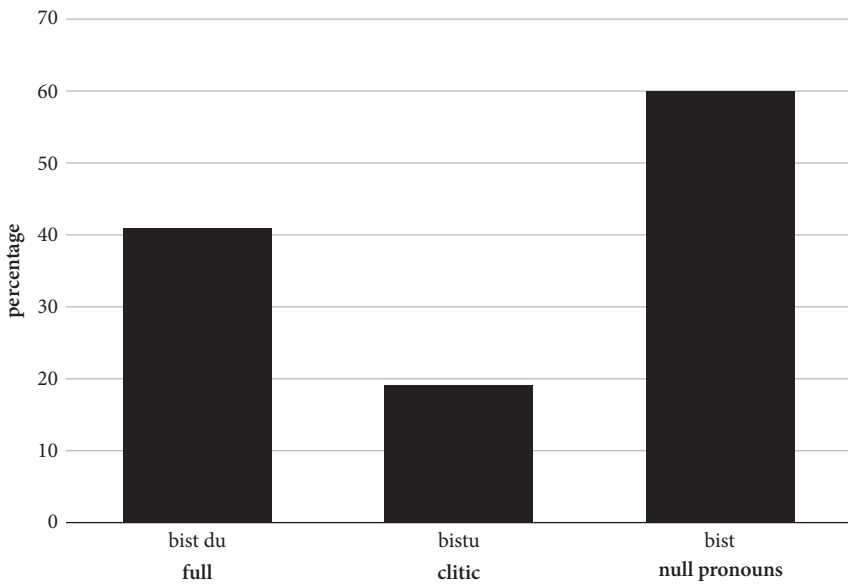

Figure 11.1 Distribution of full, clitic, and NS pronouns (eleven carnival plays by Hans Sachs)

[17] According to Ebert et al. (1993: 345), omission of subject pronouns occurs more frequently in text types such as poems, plays, dialogues, and letters ('in der Poesie, im Drama, im Dialog und im Briefstil') than in other text types.

[18] The material from Hans Sachs was firstly presented in Volodina and Weiß (2016: 200–1).

[19] The numbers in Figure 11.1 are taken from an investigation by a student of one of the authors (Hufnagel 2011), which evaluated eleven carnival plays of Hans Sachs.

(e.g. *bistu* 'are-you'), or as null pronoun (e.g. *bist* 'are').[20] Interestingly, the most frequent option Hans Sachs selected in such inversion contexts was pro-drop which occurs sixty times—that is the same number as for the use of full (forty-one) and clitic pronoun (nineteen) taken together. So we can observe an increased probability for the occurrence of NSs in 2SG in the writings of Hans Sachs (Figure 11.1).

However, the predominance of the 2SG NSs is no peculiarity of Hans Sachs. It occurs elsewhere as well. Another example is Hans Neidhart's translation of Terenz's *Eunuchus* (Ulm 1486), a Swabian text from the end of the fifteenth century. The distribution of pro-drop is similar to that found by Bohnacker (2013) in her Swabian corpus insofar as NSs only occur in the singular. The score for the 3SG in Neidhart's translation is unexpectedly high, but it also contains expletive NSs. The score for referential NSs alone would be much lower, cf. Table 11.4.[21]

As a first conclusion, we can say that in ENHG 2SG subjects showed an increased probability to appear as *pro* in root clauses—at least in texts which are close to the spoken language. In the other person–number combinations, pro-drop is nearly absent. According to Ebert et al. (1993: 345), pro-drop in the 1SG is not rare in formulaic expressions like wishes (*wolt/möcht* '(I) will/would like') or with special types of verbs (e.g. verba dicendi), but the examples they give are very likely to belong to the kind of out of the blue drop (or diary drop) introduced in § 11.2 since they are all verb first sentences in which the position of the NS is the prefield rather than the WP. With respect to root clauses, we therefore observe that the distribution of NSs in ENHG is very similar to that in recent dialects (Weiß 2005a, 2016) because pro-drop is mostly restricted to the 2SG.

Table 11.4. Distribution of overt/covert subject pronouns Hans Neidhart: Eunuchus (1486)

Number	Person	overt	%	covert	%
SG	1	196	98.5	3	1.5
	2	83	61.9	51	38.1
	3	105	86.8	16	13.2
PL	1	5	100.00	0	0.
	2	0	—	0	—
	3	11	100.00	0	0.

[20] This is already very similar to the situation in modern dialects where pronouns in WP occur also in several forms (Weiß 2015, 2016).

[21] The numbers in Table 11.4 are taken from an investigation by a student of one of the authors (Bohn 2011). Neidhart's translation is part of the Bonner Early New High German corpus (http://www.korpora.org/Fnhd/FnhdC.HTML/123.html).

11.6.2 Clause type restrictions in the distribution of null subjects

As we have seen, pro-drop was possible in root clauses in ENHG. But did it occur productively in verb final clauses introduced by a complementizer as well? As mentioned above, there was a very small number of *that*-clauses in OHG that showed pro-drop. Since they lack overt AGR-morphology in C, they pose a serious problem for the standard analysis of pro-drop in OHG. In the same way as NSs in root clauses, there seemed to be no restriction with respect to the person. The examples in (24) represent 3SG and 3PL, and 2SG.

(24) a. daz *pro* inan leidotin (OHG; MF, Matthäus XII,10)
that him accuse.3PL
'that they accuse him'

b. dat *pro* in dem sciltim stont (HL 64)
that in the shield stick.3PL
'that they stick in the shield'

c. daz *pro* unsih niulazze den tiuual so uram kaechoron (Freisinger PN B)
that us not.let.3SG the devil so far tempt
'that he does not let us the devil tempt so far'

d. (Got, thir eigenhaf ist,) thaz *pro* io genathih bist (Rheinfrk. Gebet)
God your inherent is that ever gracious are.2SG
'(God, your virtue is,) that you are ever gracious'

The overall numbers of *pro* in *that*-clauses, however, are very small: in the corpus of *that*-clauses (collected from the so-called minor OHG documents included in Köbler's (1986) *Sammlung kleinerer althochdeutscher Sprachdenkmäler*, an anthology comprising 38 OHG texts, and from the OHG *Isidor*, cf. Petrova and Weiß (2018) for further information about the corpus) only eight out of 247 *that*-clauses have NSs, that is only 3.24 per cent. This small number may be evidence that this type of embedded *pro* is indeed a relic from Indo-European (as one reviewer suggested). In any case, it clearly differs from the modern type of embedded *pro* because it shows no restrictions with respect to person. We stay agnostic about how to analyse it.

For the MHG period, we mainly depend on Held's (1903) study.[22] Concerning early MHG, Held (1903: 62) makes an interesting observation: according to him, NSs in verb final clauses introduced by a complementizer occurred in early MHG almost exclusively in *that*-clauses (25a,b) (quoted after Held 1903: 62), whereas in other types they are attested very rarely.[23] Only two of the examples Held gives are not from *that*-clauses, and both are from relative clauses (one of them is given in (25c)).

[22] Held (1903) subdivides MHG into two periods: early MHG (roughly from 1050 to 1150) and classical and late MHG (until the end of the fourteenth century).

[23] F. Cognola (p.c.) pointed out to us that the fact that *pro* is restricted to *that*-clauses is precisely the prediction of Schlachter's (2012) and Walkden's (2014) approaches, which connect pro-drop to the presence of a topic. Since most *that*-clauses exhibit root phenomena, it is expected that NSs may be possible. Note, however, that *that*-clauses is a generic label which also comprises types of *that*-clause which scarcely show any root phenomena (e.g. purposive or relative *that*-clauses).

There was obviously no person restriction (in (25a, b) third person NSs can be seen and, in (25b), identity with the subject of the matrix clause was not necessary for *pro* to occur).

(25) a. der antwurte ime sâ, daz vile gerne sâhe (early MHG)
this answered him quickly that much gladly saw
'He answered him quickly that he gladly saw many.'

b. Maria [...] sagete in zwâre, daz erstanden wâre
Mary said them truly that resurrected was
'Mary told them truly that he was resurrected.'

c. der meister, den dô gewan
the master whom (he) there gained
'the master whom he won there'

In early MHG, we thus seem to encounter roughly the same situation as in OHG with respect to embedded *pro*. In his section on classical and late MHG ('mhd. Blüte- und Verfallszeit'), Held (1903: 63–105) reports some cases of NSs in verb final clauses introduced by a complementizer for the 1SG. Held (1903: 86) explicitly mentions and gives examples for *that*-clauses (26a), embedded wh-questions (26b), and relative clauses (26c) (26a–c are quoted after Held 1903: 86). In most (but not all) cases, embedded *pro* is co-referential with the matrix subject (Held 1903: 86).

(26) a. daz nie liebers niet gwan (classical/late MHG)
that never dearer not gained
'that I never grew more fond of'

b. nu=ne weiz ich wie=s beginne[24]
now=not know I how=it begin
'Not now I know how I begin it.'

c. die dort sihe so hêrlichen stân
who there see.1SG so wonderful stand
'who I see standing there so wonderfully'

For the 2SG (and PL) Held (1903: 92) explicitly only mentions relative clauses, however they constitute a special case because the subject is additionally represented by a relative pronoun (e.g. *du, der du* ... 'you, who you') and in this case, the personal pronoun can be both absent and present in NHG as well (cf. Trutkowski and Weiß 2016). For other types of verb final clauses introduced by a complementizer, Held (1903) neither mentions the possibility of 2SG NSs nor does he give examples. This is somewhat surprising, given the fact that second person NSs (especially 2SG) are so frequent in root clauses even in classical MHG (Held 1903: 89). Whether this results from a grammatical prohibition of NSs in the second person in non-root clauses or is

[24] In this case, the NS could simply be the result of a phonological reduction (note that the reduced form of *ich* 'I' is *i* in many (Upper) German dialects): *wieies* 'how I it' > *wies*—a possibility Held (1903: 87) mentions. Interestingly, this kind of phonologically triggered subject drop in the 1SG does still occur in Alemannic dialects, but in no other dialects (cf. Bohnacker 2013; Weiß 2015).

just due to an accident of attestation, is hard to say as long as more reliable quantitative investigations are missing. We cannot entirely exclude the second option because the texts Held (1903) evaluated in his study are primarily literary texts in a highly conventionalized and standardized language.

The lack of the 2SG in classical and late MHG is even more surprising than in ENHG, as we will see now, it is the dominant person for NSs. In ENHG, the situation has changed insofar as, first, NSs are no longer restricted to *that*-clauses but also occur in relative clauses, and second, NSs are now mostly confined to the second person—frequently in the singular but rarely in the plural. Examples (quoted after Held 1903: 132) are given in (27a,b). Held (1903: 132) does not explicitly mention other kinds of clauses introduced by a complementizer (such as adverbial clauses), but he gives examples as in (27c) so we can say that there was obviously no restriction to a certain clause type either!

(27) a. zeigt das bey uns wilt halten stat (ENHG)
shows that at us will.2SG keep calm
'shows that you will stay calm with us'

b. wer pist, der hinden und forn umgeben pist
who are who rear and front surrounded are
'Who are you, who is surrounded from all sides?'

c. weil die Schiffart verachtst
because the shipping despise.2SG
'because you despise seafaring'

The predominance of the 2SG is also confirmed by a small study we have undertaken. From the satirical book *Geschichtsklitterung* by Johann Fischart, who lived in the second half of the sixteenth century (Drügh et al. 2012: 261), we created a small corpus of nearly 1,000 *that*-clauses. There, we found only thirteen occurrences of *pro* and only the 2SG exhibits a significant amount of NSs—nearly 43 per cent—whereas in the other person–number combinations, NSs are nearly or completely absent (Table 11.5).

Examples (28) and (29) provide examples of *that*-clauses with and without an overt subject. They give the impression that null and overt subjects are more or less in free variation.

Table 11.5. Distribution of overt/covert subject pronouns in Fischart: Geschichtsklitterung (1575, see Nyssen 1963–64)

	overt		covert		overt + covert	
	absolute	%	absolute	%	absolute	%
***that*-clauses**	968	98.67	13	1.33	981	100
2SG	8	57.14	6	**42.86**	14	100
expletive	42	93.33	3	6.67	45	100
others	918	99.57	4	0.43	922	100

(28) a. Hey ich will noch erleben, (Fischart: Geschichtsklitterung, p. 194)
hey I will still live.to.see
das du Bapst würst.
that you pope become.2SG
'Hey, I want to live to see you become pope.'

b. das du bist ein Frosch (Fischart: Geschichtsklitterung, p. 218)
that you are a frog
'that you are a frog'

(29) a. daß nicht wirst ertrenckt (Fischart: Geschichtsklitterung, p. 366)
that not are drowned
'that you will not be drowned'

b. das gute zeitung bringst (Fischart: Geschichtsklitterung, p. 319)
that good news bring.2SG
'that you bring good news'

c. das kein Pferd i=m Stall trettest (Fischart: Geschichtsklitterung, p. 313)
that no horse in=the stable kick.2SG
'that you don't kick a horse in the stable'

Until now we have seen that clauses introduced by a complementizer in ENHG follow the 'modern' system insofar as pro-drop in them is mostly restricted to the 2SG. However, there seems to be one crucial difference: They lack complementizer agreement! Remember that in modern dialects, the possibility of pro-drop in embedded clauses depends on the presence of pronominal inflection on the complementizer. The earliest unambiguous example of an inflected complementizer known to us is from 1618 and can be found in the carnival play *Ein kurtzweilig Faßnachtspill* (cf. Volodina and Weiß 2016), as shown in (30):

(30) Ja! wanst mir wolst varliegn (p. 20, l. 28)
yes if.2SG me want.2SG to lie
'Yes! If you want to lie to me.'

The existence of the example in (30) implies that complementizer agreement may have developed around 1600, that is at the end of ENHG. However, nearly 100 years earlier, Hans Sachs had already used forms of the complementizer—as *dast* (31a–c) or *weilt* (31d)—which could arguably be inflected complementizers (cf. Volodina and Weiß 2016).

(31) a. Dast uns so weit fuerst aus der stat (Sachs, FNS 244 V.152)
that.2SG us so far lead out the town
'that you lead us that far out of town'

b. dast in habst verlorn (Sachs, FNS 172 V.127)
that.2SG him have lost
'that you have lost him'

c. dast ein zygeuner seist (Sachs, ML 126 V.211)
that.2SG a gipsy are
'that you are a gipsy'

d. weilt mir warst versprochwn (Sachs, ML 109 V. 126)
because.2SG me were promised
'because you were promised to me'

There are two reasons why it is appropriate to analyse these forms as inflected. First, the combination with the enclitic pronoun would give rise to forms like *dastu* which are widely attested at that time (cf. Volodina and Weiß 2016: 201). Second, ENHG forms like *dast* (in (32a)) or *weilt* (in (32b)) resemble a special type of complementizer inflection which formerly (and still with older speakers) occurred in Alemannic and Southern Bavarian (cf. Weiß 2005a). In these varieties, the inflectional marker on the complementizer consisted only of the dental /-t/, as one can see in the Zürich German example (33) which shows the form *öbt* instead of the form *obst* (which is nowadays much more common in German dialects). At least according to Cooper (1995), *öbt* is an inflected complementizer and not a combination of complementizer plus subject clitic. So the correct segmentation of the form *dast* (occurring in the writings of Hans Sachs) is probably the one in (34a) where the inflectional marker is only the *-t*.

(32) a. Dast uns so weit fuerst aus der stat (Sachs, FNS 244 V.152)
that.2SG us so far lead out the town
'that you lead us so far from the town'

b. weilt mir warst versprochwn (Sachs, ML 109 V. 126)
because.2SG me was promised
'because you were promised to me'

(33) Öbt nach Züri chunnsch (Zürich German)
if.2SG to Zurich come.2SG
'if you are coming to Zurich'

(34) a. dast = dass+t
b. dast ≠ dass+st

The result of this analysis is that even if we assume the analysis in (34a) instead of (34b), these forms could be instances of inflected complementizers. They would then be the first attestations of this micro-typological peculiarity of Continental West Germanic languages/dialects.

11.7 Conclusion

We have shown that in the history of German, two developments occurred which changed its nature as a pro-drop language considerably. The two changes are:

- From **consistent** to **partial** pro-drop: The reason for this development is that the licensing condition for *pro* became more specific: Only pronominal AGR-in-C can now license *pro*. The consequence was that pro-drop is no longer possible for all persons (as it used to be in OHG). According to our findings, ENHG was already a partial NS language of the modern type, whereas we somehow have contradicting information for MHG (probably yes for root clauses, but no for non-root clauses).

- From **asymmetric** to **symmetric** pro-drop: The symmetry of pro-drop between root and non-root clauses increased (due to the development of complementizer agreement). As we have seen, the symmetry was, if at all, very weakly expressed in OHG, whereas it is completely balanced in modern dialects. For symmetry, the development is similar to the development of consistency: ENHG already was a symmetric NS language of the modern type, but not MHG (if at all, then MHG was a weak symmetric pro-drop language of the OHG type).

  However, there was no change with respect to the structural licensing condition: *pro* is licensed via c-command by AGR-in-C. In this respect, we observe a remarkable continuity (Axel and Weiß 2010, 2011; Volodina and Weiß 2016). Table 11.6 summarizes our findings.

Thus, the new findings presented in this chapter further confirm the hypothesis proposed in Volodina and Weiß (2016) that the pro-drop system in ENHG was already much like the system we observe in modern German dialects: ENHG was a symmetric and partial NS language which probably already had complementizer agreement in the sixteenth century.

Unfortunately, we do not have enough reliable data from MHG, so we cannot decide whether it was still like OHG or already like the modern dialects. The information we have about NSs in MHG is somewhat inconclusive. This may be due to the fact that the pro-drop system was in a transitional stage from the OHG to the modern system—or it may just be due to an accident of attestation. Therefore, at least for MHG, we would need systematic corpus studies guided by theoretical assumptions because only results of such investigations would enable us to fill the gaps in Table 11.6.

A further unresolved problem is posed by clauses introduced by complementizers, in which NSs have been attested since OHG. They constitute a problem for the explanation given in Axel (2007) and Axel and Weiß (2010, 2011) (and adopted here) because *pro* could not be licensed by AGR-in-C before the development of complementizer agreement (presumably) in the sixteenth century. However, at present it is not clear whether they were indeed part of the grammar: They show unexpected restrictions (such as occurring mainly/exclusively in *that*-clauses in OHG and early MHG) so it could well be that they were a relic from earlier times.[25]

Table 11.6. Diachronic development of *pro* in German

OHG	−	+
MHG	?	?
ENHG	+	−
NHG	+	−

[25] However, this conclusion probably does not hold for the cases of embedded *pro* in the 1SG reported for classical and late MHG (see (26a–c) above).

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