The diachrony of complementizer-verb interactions in the Welsh left-periphery

Frances Dowle
University of Oxford
frances.dowle@ling-phil.ox.ac.uk

ICL2024

Link to digital version of this handout: https://tinyurl.com/4bmb75y2

1 Overview of Talk

- In this paper, I consider the position of different complementizers in the left-periphery in Welsh, building on diachronic work by Willis (1998, 2007) and Meelen (2020); Modern Welsh work by Roberts (2005); and general work on verb-second languages especially that by Poletto (2014) and Wolfe (2016, 2019).[1] (By verb-second language, I mean that the verb generally occurs after one initial phrasal constituent.)
- The ultimate goal of this work is to compare and contrast (at least) a Minimalist and Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG)[2] analysis of the phenomenon, although that goes beyond the scope of this talk, which will focus on describing the data and sketching out a Minimalist analysis.[3]
- The data presents fertile ground for exploring and contrasting different syntactic theories, as issues of form selection, relative positions of words and phrases, interfaces to morphology and information-structure are all at the forefront, and of course different frameworks deal with these things in their own, sometimes quite different ways, meaning that different challenges arise.
- Welsh (a.k.a. *Cymraeg* /kəmraːg/) is a language with approximately 700,000 speakers worldwide, the vast majority of whom are located in the United Kingdom, and particularly in Wales (a.k.a. *Cymru* /kəmri/). It is an Indo-European language, belonging to the Brythonic group of the Celtic branch.
- I will (loosely) define three periods of the Welsh language:
  1. Middle Welsh: 1100-1500
  2. Early Modern Welsh: 1500-1700
  3. Modern Welsh: 1700-Present Day
- Of primary concern in this talk is the complementizer system in Middle Welsh, and the changes that take place by the Modern Welsh period.

[1] Acknowledgements: Many thanks to my funders (AHRC & Worcester College, Oxford), the Ertegun Programme for providing me with a desk, to my supervisor David Willis for his guidance, to Krishnan Ram-Prasad and Eleanor Walsh for insightful discussion, and to Ash Asudeh for moral support and comments on an earlier draft. Remaining errors all very much my own!

[2] See e.g. Dalrymple (2023).

[3] See Borsley (2021) for an HPSG account.

2 Welsh Complementizers

- There are many kinds of elements that might be analysed as complementizers in Welsh.
- In general, these may be sensitive to:
  - Whether the clause is a SUBORDINATE or MATRIX one;
  - Whether the clause is NEGATIVE, DECLARATIVE, INTERROGATIVE, IMPERATIVE or RESPONSIVE (i.e. is the answer to a question);
  - The presence of a FOCUS PHRASE in the clause;
  - Whether or not there is NEGATION or INTERROGATIVITY with SCOPE OVER THE FOCUS PHRASE;
- I group Welsh complementizers into two types: pre-focus and (immediately) pre-verbal ones.
- Although the forms undergo considerable changes between Middle and (colloquial) Modern Welsh, many aspects of the system remain relatively stable.
- I summarise the the situation in the table below, although interested parties are directed to Jones (Unpublished) for a wonderfully comprehensive overview of the Modern complementizer system.[4]

Fronting?	POL	EMBED	Middle	Modern
Y	+	–	*y/a*	∅
N	+	–	*y/a*	*mi/fe* [-Q]
Y	+	+	*y/a*	∅
N	+	+	*y/a*	∅
Y	–	–	*ny*	∅
N	–	–	*ny*	*na*/∅
Y	–	+	*na*	*na*
N	–	+	*na*	*na*/∅

Table 1: The immediately pre-verbal complementizers of Middle and Modern Welsh

FOCQ	FOCPOL	EMBED	Middle	Modern
–	+	–	∅	∅
–	+	+	*(y)mae/panyw*	*mai/taw/na/p'un*
–	–	–	*nyt ≻ nid*	*dim/nage*
–	–	+	*nat ≻ nad*	*dim / nage / mai dim*
+	+	–	*ay*	*efe*/∅
+	+	+	*ay/os*	*ai/p'nai/os/os mai*
+	–	+	*onyt ≻ onid*	*dim/nage/nagefe*
+	–	–	*onyt ≻ onid*	*on'd/os mai dim*

Table 2: The pre-focus complementizers of Middle and Modern Welsh

- The system of pre-verbal complementizers seems to undergo more radical reorganization than the pre-focus ones (which become more compositional, but express similar features as before).
- The choice between *y/a* depends on the grammatical function of the phrase that is fronted (more detail below); *ny* appears to allow topic-fronting but possibly does not allow focus-fronting.[5]

[4] FOCPOL] and FOCQ refer to postive/negative/interrogative scope over the focused constituent, not the whole clause, and the fronting column indicates whether or not a phrase can be fronted past the complementizer.

[5] A question for further research: in Modern Literary Welsh, *ny* does not allow focus-fronting; *na* is used instead, even if the clause is a matrix clause.

3 Middle Welsh

- Main clause word order options in Middle Welsh are as follows (only adverb positions before C are indicated):[6]

(AdvP)* + (Topic) + (AdvP)* + C + V + (S) + (O)

(AdvP)* + (pre-focus C) + (AdvP)* + Focus + (AdvP) + C + V + (S) + (O)

- And Middle Welsh subordinate clauses:

C + V + (S) + (O)

pre-focus C + (AdvP) + Focus + (AdvP) + C + V + (S) + (O)

- There are additional positions after V that not marked, including additional adverb positions.
- **Key take-away: Middle Welsh exhibits a V2 word order in main clauses** (Willis, 1998; Borsley et al., 2007). In positive declarative main clauses, topic-fronting is pretty much obligatory (although see the appendix for some information about when topicalization is blocked or optional).
  - By default, **main clauses begin with a TOPIC,** i.e. a phrase with a referent familiar from the discourse context. There is no topic fronting in subordinate clauses. (Tallerman 1996; Willis 2007; Borsley et al. 2007).
  - Next is a **complementizer** which indicates the **POLARITY** of the sentence.
  - This complementizer is immediately followed by the **verb** (nothing may intervene between the complementizer and verb).[7]
  - **Alternatively, the first phrase can be the FOCUS instead of the TOPIC.** Unlike topic-fronting, focus-fronting is available in embedded clauses.
  - In embedded clauses, or in main clauses when the focused constituent is negated or questioned, **this focused phrase is preceded by an overt pre-focus complementizer**; there is *not* one before a topic.
    - This is a cross-linguistically unusual position for the focus complementizer to appear (before the focus phrase).
    - Diachronically, it is known that focused elements were originally part of a higher clause.
    - The pre-focus particles are all (at least partially) derived from ordinary complementizers (more on these shortly!) plus a form of the copula.
    - See Tallerman (1996) for an account which proposes that the multi-clausal structure was reanalysed over time as a structure involving two CPs in one clause.
  - Even if the first element is a focus rather than a topic, it is followed by the same sequence of elements.[8]
  - **Topics and focused phrases cannot co-occur**. (Meelen, 2020; Willis, 1998)
  - As well as themselves occupying the topic position, adverbs may also appear alongside a topic or focus phrase before the verb. If multiple phrases precede the complementizer, then all bar one must be adverbial. This leads us to assume that there is but one topic position, with additional adverbs occupying clause-adjunction rather than topic positions.

[6] For more detail and examples, consult Meelen (2020).

[7] With the exception of the infix/clitic object agreement marker.

[8] There is some effect on verb agreement: agreement of the verb with the topic is more likely than agreement of the verb with a focused phrase. With focused phrases, default third-person singular agreement is often found.

3.1 Examples of Complementizers

3.1.1 Pre-verbal complementizers:

- Positive declarative clause with fronted phrase (complementizer is sensitive to grammatical function of fronted phrase):

  (1) [E chwedyl]$_{\text{TOP}}$ **a** doeth...
  the news C come.PST.
  'The news came...' (PKM 132.17; Fife 1988: 5)

  (2) [Yn Hardlech]$_{\text{TOP}}$ **y** bydwch seith mlyned ar ginyaw...
  in Harlech C be.FUT.2P seven years at dinner
  'In Harlech you will be at dinner for seven years.' (PKM 45.2-3; Borsley et al. 2007: 288)

  - The choice between *a* and *y(d)* depends on the type of topic. If it is the subject or object of the verb, an object of a preposition, or the fronted verbnoun phrase, then the first form, *a*, is selected. If it is adjunct material, or a prepositional-phrase complement, then *y(d)* is chosen, with the final consonant surfacing only before a vowel-initial verb. For Middle Welsh, there is also a correlation between gap or resumptive strategies being used for NPs based on whether they occur with *a* or *y(d)* respectively. (Borsley et al., 2007: 288)
  - Borsley et al. (2007: 288) note that if a predicate adjective or noun phrase is fronted, then there is no overt complementizer; soft mutation is triggered on the verb.
  - The form of these positive complementizers is not sensitive to the EMBEDDED VS MATRIX form of the clause.

- Negative clause with fronted topic:

  (3) [A hynny]$_{\text{TOP}}$ **ny** thygy-wys idaw.
  and DEM C.NEG avail-PST to.3S.M
  'And that didn't work for him' (PKM 11.2; Borsley et al. 2007: 309)

- The negative pre-verbal complementizer is sensitive to the EMBEDDED VS MATRIX status of the clause :

  (4) A phan welas **na** thygy-ei idaw y hymlit...
  and whence see.PST C.NEG.SUB avail-IMPF to.3S.M 3S.F pursue...
  'And when he saw that it was not working for him to chase her...' (PKM 14.1)

- The pre-verbal complementizer can also be interrogative (without topic-fronting):

  (5) **A** oes heddwch?
  C.Q existential.be.PRS peace
  'Is there peace?'

3.1.2 The pre-focus complementizers

- Positive subordinate clause pre-focus complementizer (null in matrix clauses):

  (6) mwy a ddyweit **taw** [gwyrtheu duw neu wyrtheu nefawl]$_{\text{FOC}}$ a wna no gweithredoeth bydawl
  more C say.NF C.FOC miracles god or miracles heavenly C do.PRS not actions wordly
  'Some say that it's God's miracles or heavenly miracles which do it, not earthly actions.'
  (BL p.36v)

  - The positive subordinate clause pre-focus complementizer can also take the the form *mai/(y)mae*. In Modern Welsh, the form of the positive pre-focus complementizer is dialectally determined; *taw* is very rare in Middle Welsh (this is quite a late Middle Welsh text) and its distribution is not certain.

- Negative pre-focus complementizer:

  (7) **Nyt** [y geuyn]$_{\text{FOC}}$ a dyly neb y dangos y elynnon...
  C.NEG.FOC 3S.M back C should.PRS anyone 3S.M show.NF to+3S.M enemies
  'It is not his back that anyone should show to his enemies.' (YCM 140.26-7; Borsley et al. 2007: 293)

- Again, the negative complementizer is sensitive to the EMBEDDED VS MATRIX status of the clause:

  (8) Nyni a dywedwn **nat** [briduw]$_{\text{FOC}}$ yny gyfarffo y llaw yn_y_gilyd.
  1P.REDUP C say.1P C.$_{\text{NEG.FOC.SUB}}$ oath until meet.PRS.SBJ the hands together
  'We say it is not an oath until the hands meet together.' (LlT: p.52)

- Interrogative pre-focus interrogative clause complementizer:

  (9) ....**ay** [kyscu]$_{\text{FOC}}$ yd wyt ti?
  C.Q sleep.NF C be.PRS.2s 2s
  '...are you *sleeping*?' (i.e. 'is it sleeping you're doing?') (PKM 3)

  – Negation in the pre-focus complementizer has scope only over the focus phrase, not over the whole clause. In the examples above, the polarity of the clause as a whole is still positive. The interrogative pre-focus complementizer is in someways similar in its behaviour, since it creates an alternatives-question ('is it X or someone else who...?') rather than the question scoping over the occurrence of the action itself.

4 Middle Welsh Analysis

- Wolfe (2019) defines a typology of V2 languages, languages in which the verb generally occurs after an initial phrase.
- The V2 languages can be categorised according to whether or not they allow V4* orders (where the latter abbreviation is taken to mean four or more elements may precede the verb).
- **Non-V4* languages show "bottleneck effects"** such that topic and focus cannot both precede the verb. V3 orders are found, but are limited only to those contexts in which at least one pre-verbal phrase is a hanging topic and left-dislocated element.
- According to his analysis, whether or not a language is V4* or non-V4* depends on whether nor not the verb rises as high as Force:
  - All V2 languages have a V-probe in Fin that raises the verb to Fin, and an EPP feature on Fin that raises at least one phrase to the pre-verbal position (SpecFinP). This gets basic V2 order.
  - He says that non-V4* orders additionally have V-probe in Force and an EPP feature on Force that raises these elements all the way up the tree (possibly via FocP or TopP).
  - So-called "bottleneck" effects (not allowing both a topic and focus to front before the verb, for example) arise in these languages because the phrase and verb move through each position, preventing other material from being base-generated in these positions - crucially starting with the SpecFinP position, through which they must all pass.
  - The only position not blocked is SpecFrameP, which is where things like hanging topics get located (allowing some instances of V3).[9]
- Middle Welsh is a non-V4* language:[10] **It does not allow V4* word orders**. Consider this comment from Borsley et al. (2007: 293): "In cases of multiple fronting [in Middle Welsh], apart from clear instances of left dislocation, all the pre-verbal elements except one must be non-argument adverbials. A maximum of one of the pre-verbal constituents may be an argument, and this argument [determines] the form of the pre-verbal particle." Note also that Middle Welsh sentences with fronting are typically divided into two categories: those with focus-fronting vs. those with topic-fronting. This is indicative of the fact that Middle Welsh **exhibits the topic-focus "bottleneck effects" we expect.**

[9] For those uninitiated in Minimalism, the key takeaway here is that phrases have to pass through certain positions, but once they do so, they block other phrases from passing through that same position. In this way, there is a limit on how many phrases can move before the verb.

[10] Clearly I use "V2" in a structural rather than a linear sense; for discussion of the distinction see Catasso (2024). The description here therefore accounts for V1, V2, V3 linear word orders; for more on V1 orders see the appendix.

- This would imply, following Wolfe (2019), that Middle Welsh is a ForceP-V2 language. This works fine for a topic-first clause:
  - See the analysis of (1) in fig. Fig. 1.

(1) [E chwedyl]$_{\text{TOP}}$ **a** doeth...
the news C come.PST.
'The news came...' (PKM 132.17; Fife 1988: 5)

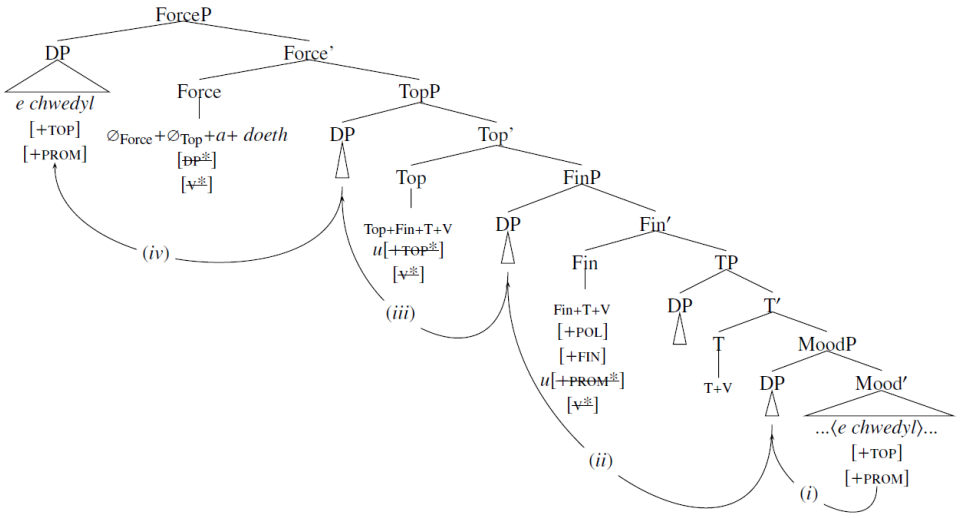

Figure 1: Derivation of a Topic-Fronting Clause in Middle Welsh

- Note: I have used the feature [+PROM] to attract both foci and topics to SpecFinP. This is an interpretable information-structure feature that both topics and (the relevant) foci have. This follows work by (Choi, 1999: 92) who decomposes topic and focus into features as follows:

	+PROM	-PROM
+NEW	contrastive focus	completive focus
-NEW	topic	tail

Table 3: Information features according to Choi (1999)

- However, as we have seen, at least one complementizer-like element precedes the focus phrase in Welsh. This seems to leave us with two options: either, the focus phrase only raises as far as SpecFocP, leaving us without a neat typological explanation as to why SpecForceP cannot be filled (giving us V4 orders):

(6′) ...**taw** [gwyrtheu duw]$_{\text{FOC}}$ a wna...
C.FOC miracles god C do.PRS
'...that it's God's miracles that do it'
(BL Additional MS. 14,912. p.36v; Luft et al. 2013)

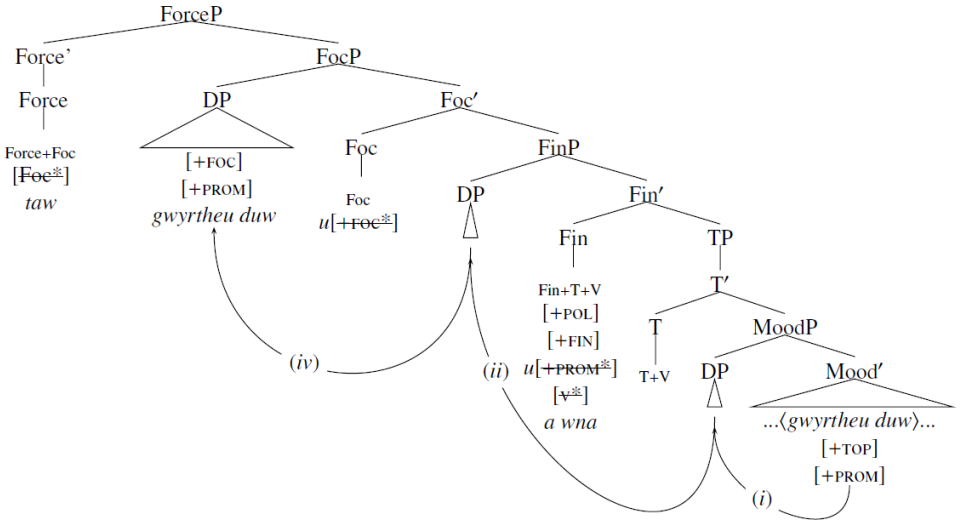

Figure 2: Derivation of Focus-Fronting Clause in Middle Welsh; without raising to FrameP

- Otherwise, if we allow the focused phrase to get as high as SpecForceP, we are left with the question of where to put the pre-focus complementizer:

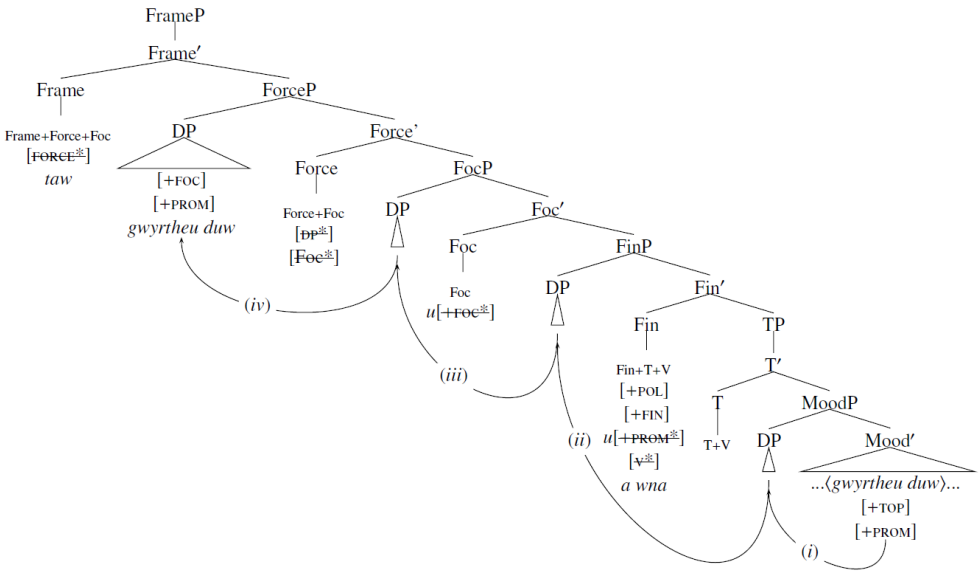

Figure 3: Derivation of Focus-Fronting Clause in Middle Welsh; without raising to FrameP

- Frame is not a good option: we don't typically expect it in embedded clauses, which this example is, and, there's no

reason to think Welsh is special in this regard —we don't get hanging topics in embedded clauses, which suggsts no FrameP.

- There's no particular evidence that the pre-focus particles are sensitive to anything typically associated with Frame:[11]

Q	FOCPOL	EMBED	Spell-Out
−	+	+	*(y)mae/panyw*
−	+	−	∅
−	−	+	*nat*
−	−	−	*nyt*
+	+	+/−	*ay*
+	−	+/−	*onyt*

Table 4: Minimum Feature Inventory for Complementizer Spell-Out

- Getting rid of an articulated CP altogether also does not solve our problems of where to put the pre-focus complementizer.
- Note that, either way, we have a Foc that doesn't have a V-probe. So, in focus-first sentences, Fin + T + V only rises as far as Fin and no further.
- Personally, I think this points to having EPP-less Force heads in Welsh, and some independent reason why SpecForceP cannot be filled directly. Any ideas what this could be?

[11] In this table, FOCPOL is used to refer to the whether or not there is negation that scopes over the focus phrase, which is independent of the polarity that scopes over the clause and which is hosted in Fin.

5 Modern Welsh

- Modern Welsh clauses generally have a $V_{FIN,LEX}SO$ or (increasingly) $V_{FIN}SV_{LEX}O$ word order.
- **We lose topic-fronting, but maintain focus-fronting.**
- What's more, whilst we time-travelling forward to Modern Welsh, our pre-verbal complementizers have been busy causing mischief. *Y(d)* has become *y(r)*, and both *y(r)* and *a* increasingly fail to be realized (these were our pre-verbal, positive complementizers).
- There are already some specialized forms of *be* in Middle Welsh: (3rd person *m*-forms such as *mae* are only used in affirmative main clauses); *sydd* is used after a fronted subject. The *m*-forms, laong with other present tense forms of *be*, don't allow fronting across them (see appendix).
- But more specialized forms develop from the complementizers *y(r)* and *a*, and their negative counterparts *nid/nad*. Forms of *be* that were previously vowel-initial undergo this reanalysis:

(10) ər oɪð > ə roɪð > roɪð
C_{+ve} be.IMPF > C_{+ve} be.IMPF > ?

(11) nɪd oɪð > nɪ doɪð > doɪð
C_{-ve} be.IMPF > C_{-ve} be.IMPF > ?

- This gives us the following situation in Modern Welsh:

CLAUSE TYPE	3SG.PRES	1.SG.PRES	3SG.IMP	3SG.FUT
AFF, INITIAL	mae	rydw	roedd	bydd
AFF, POST-FOCUS	sydd/ydy/mae	sydd/ydy/rydw	oedd/roedd	fydd
NEG, INITIAL	dydy	dydw	doedd	fydd

Table 5: Specialized present and imperfect *be* forms (The *future* forms here behave exactly like other verbs)

- I call the vowel-initial forms *v*-forms; we all have the affirmative *r*- forms, with special *m*-forms in the third person, and the *d*-forms in the negative.
- These specialized verb forms initially retain incompatibilities with overt complementizers that *y(r)*, *a* had. Consider the following possible and impossible orders (setting aside d-forms):

1. **os* + *r*-form/*m*-form + ...
2. *os* + *v*-form + ...
3. *os* + (C) + focused phrase + *r*-form + ...
4. **os* + (C) + focused phrase + *m*-form + ...
5. *os* + (C) + focused phrase + *v*-form + ...

- Meanwhile (acutually, in conjunction with this) two new pre-verbal complementizers, *mi* and *fe* emerge. These two complementizers are in complementary distribution with each other (Willis (2007: 435) states that "the choice between them is determined by complex dialectal and stylistic factors".) These are incompatible with *r- m- and v*-forms of *be*. Instead of getting *mi/fe* + one of these forms, *r*- or *m*- forms occur alone, without *mi/fe* present.[12]
- An aside: the development of these new complementizers is intimately connected with the loss of V2 in Welsh and the erosion of *y(r)/a*. The broad overview of this loss of V2, developed in Willis (2007) is as follows:

1. *Y(r)/a* undergoes phonological erosion, especially in main clauses.
2. As a result, adjunct *topics* are no longer structurally distinguished from clause-adjoined adjuncts.

[12] In fact, these restrictions are now more relaxed in *mi* dialects. Now the only restriction on *mi* is that it cannot occur with third person (singular or plural) present tense forms of *be*, i.e., the *m*-forms; all the other combinations are now possible. But, the *mi* dialects passed through the stage outlined in the above table. (Borsley et al., 2007).

3. Increasingly, only subject pronouns and expletive pronouns are topic-fronted (they were common as fronted topics anyway):Exp/$S_{pro,\ TOP}$ + V + O
4. Expletive fronted pronouns undergo Spec-to-Head reanalysis as main-clause affirmative complementizers which are initial and have no fronting across them; this reanalysis then spreads to fronted subject pronouns are also reanalysed as complementizers which agree in form with the subject: C_{AGR} + V + S + O.
5. Particular forms of this new complementizer become generalized (1SG *mi* in some areas, 3SGM *fe* in others). Complementizers no longer agree: C + S + V + O. (Willis, 2007)

- Unlike *y(r)/a*, ***mi* and *fe* do not allow focus or topic fronting across them**; in this, they are like the *m*-forms, but not the *v*-forms.
  - Diachronically, given the prohibition of topics and foci co-occuring in the left-periphery, this is unsurprising.
  - From the perspective of the Modern language, the lack of topicalization is also unsurprising: **topic-fronting has been lost** everywhere.
  - The lack of focus-fronting however *is* more surprising from the synchronic perspective: **focus-fronting is still very productive in Modern Welsh**.
- Also, the particles *mi/fe* can only be preceded by temporal adverbs (propositional adverbs do not occur in this position) (Meelen, 2016: 115-6).
- Thus, the key things to be explained in the new system are:
  1. lack of focus-fronting across *mi/fe*
  2. incompatibilities of some forms of *m*- and *r*- forms of *be* with *mi/fe*
  3. the complex interactions between *os* and the *be* forms.

6 Modern Welsh Analysis

- For point (1), I propose that:
  - *Mi/fe* base-generate in Fin. They attract the verb to their position.
  - They lack an EPP feature.
  - Wherever they end up, they form a complex head with the verb.
  - The lack of focus-fronting across them perhaps indicates that they move very high in the structure. This is also corroborated by the fact that they are sensitive to the force of the utterance.
  - So let's say then up in Force; this means that *mi/fe+verb* is a spell-out of Force + Foc_0 + Fin + V + T.
- For point (2), I propose that:
  - If the verb attracted to Force is *be* in the present or imperfect tense, there is a special spell-out, such that the complex head is less transparently spelled out, and instead is spelled out with an *m*- or *r*- form.
  - Thus *m* and r-forms of *be* are irregular spell-outs of this complex head, specified in the lexicon when the V+T is question is *be*.
- For point (3), I propose that:
  - Recall that *os* can act either as a pre-verbal or a pre-focus complementizer.
  - I propose that this means that *os* can base-generate in Fin or in Foc, and then raises to Force. Later, it is base-generated in either Fin or in *Force*; this is what generates the possibility of an intervening pre-focus complementizers between *os* and the focused phrase (see above).
  - Fin-generated *os* attracts the verb to Fin. If this verb is *be*, the spell-out is quite regular and transparent, and we get a *v*-initial *be* form as the second element of the complex head.
  - For a focus-fronting Modern Welsh phrase, things proceed more or less as in Middle Welsh.

- $\varnothing_1$ and $\varnothing_2$ are complementizers that can base-generate in Fin, and attract the verb, comparable to *y(r)* and *a* in Middle Welsh (and again sensitive to the grammatical-function of what preceded them).
- They attract a focus-phrase to their specifier position with an EPP feature. This probably then gets raised further to SpecFocP, before the Foc head itself rises to Force (just as in Middle Welsh).
- The difference compared to Middle Welsh in the generation of a focus-fronting phrase is in the spell-out of the Fin head. Recall that focus-attracting Foc heads do not raise Fin, so Fin+V+T is still sitting relatively low in the left-periphery.
- Post-focus *r*-forms (which are actually a sequence of $\varnothing_1$+*v-be*) are the spell-out of Fin+V+T when the V+T is *be*. Usually the morpheme corresponding to $\varnothing_1$ is null, it just happens not to be with *be*.
- Post-focus *v*-forms are actually regular, as $\varnothing_2$ is null with all verbs. It causes soft-mutation,[13] unlike $\varnothing_1$, but this is not relevant for a vowel-initial form.

- Thus *r*-forms of *be* are spell-outs of Force+Foc_0+Fin+V+T, or of Fin + V + T. This accidental homophony can only be explained with reference to diachrony.
- This is unfavourable, and the system becomes unstable, with *roedd* becoming *just* as spell-out of Fin+V+T, and occurring quite happily with Force+Foc morphemes.
- This is among the reasons why *mi* has spread to co-occcur with *r*-forms, but still not with *m*-forms; the *m*-forms are more stable.
- In both focus-fronting and verb-initial clauses we face a now familiar issue of having to explain why nothing can be base-generated in SpecForceP.

7 Conclusions

- Middle Welsh presents some complications with respect to Wolfe's (2019) (a possibility raised in the paper itself).
- This is before we even get into the issue of topicalization blocking and optionality (see appendix).
- The Modern Welsh exhibits the same restriction against SpecForceP being filled, but again, the reason for this is uncertain.
- The variation between Middle Welsh and other V2 languages, and the reanalysis from Middle to Modern Welsh can be captured by placing the locus of variation in the functional heads (and their featural inventories) that the lexicon makes available. *Mi* and *fe* are new functional heads that emerge, with a different set of features, which don't allow focus fronting.
- Some other changes are simply changes in spell-out rules.
- There are still questions to be answered about how material gets blocked from the left-periphery. Perhaps these positions just aren't available for base-generation in certain languages.

[13] Mutation is a phenomenon in Welsh in which the first segment of a word is changed in a regular way by a preceding word or syntactic context.

A Appendix: Further data concerning topic-fronting

- There are some other clause types in Middle Welsh that appear to be V1, as listed by Meelen (2020):

  1. those formed with impersonal verbs
  2. imperatives
  3. verba dicendi ('said he', etc.)
  4. answers or direct responses to questions or commands
  5. oaths and other idiomatic sayings

- But there are some additional V1 orders which are harder to explain.

  – Fronting across *ny* is not compulsory.

  (12) **Ny** wnn i dim y wrth honno...
  C.NEG know.PRS.1s 1s anything about DEM
  'I know nothing about her...' (PKM 54.9; Borsley et al. 2007: 310)

  – Fronting across present tense forms of *be* is prohibited (Borsley et al., 2007: 302).

  (13) Ie, ... **y mae** yno ryw ystyr hut.
  yes C be.PRS there some meaning magic
  'There is some magic meaning there.' (PKM 10.10; Borsley et al. 2007: 302)

  – With imperfect forms, it is noteworthy that, though possible, topicalization is optional:

  (14) Arglwyd, ... **yd oed** yn ediuar gennym ni gwneuthur hynny.
  lord C be.IMPF PRED sorry with.1P 1P do.NF DEM
  'Lord, ...we were sorry to have done that.' (YSG 4679-80; Borsley et al. 2007: 302)

  (15) [A drws y pebyll]$_{TOP}$ a **oed** yn agoret...
  And door the tent C be.IMPF.3s PRED open
  'And the doorway of the tent was open' (P 10.11; Borsley et al. 2007: 302)

- There is also the issue of null topic fronting, which is distinct (in terms of licensing contexts) to the above. Consider the following sentence:

  (16) Ac **y** deuth [y] wreic ohen a 'r vorwyn at y gwr llwyt.
  and C come.PST the woman very.old and the maiden to the man grey
  'And the very old woman and the maiden came to the grey man.' (P 38.9-10; Borsley et al. 2007: 301)

  – In this V1 clause, Borsley et al. (2007), following Willis (1998), argue that there is a null topicalized adjunct, based on the sentences it is conjoined with.

  – This kind of V1 clause, where the verb can be any verb, tends to occur in coordination contexts where there is an overt fronted topic in the first clause in the set of conjuncts. This motivates the null topic analysis.

- This kind of optionality with *ny* or imperfect forms of *be* is tricky to account for, as is the blocking of topicalization across present forms of *be*. It's not clear that a null topic analysis can be straightforwardly applied here, given the examples with genuine null topics, and the fact that the verb *be* is involved in the positive examples.

Abbreviations and Editions of Primary Texts

BL	BL Additional MS 14,912 From the online archive Luft, Diana, Thomas, Peter Wynn and Smith, D. Mark. 2013. Rhyddiaith Gymraeg 1300-1425
LlT	NLW MS. Peniarth 32 (Y Llyfr Teg) From the online archive Luft, Diana, Thomas, Peter Wynn and Smith, D. Mark. 2013. Rhyddiaith Gymraeg 1300-1425
P	Goetinck, Glenys W. (ed.) 1976. *Historia Peredur vab Efrawc*. Cardiff: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru.
PKM	Williams, Ifor (ed.) 1930. *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi*. Cardiff: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru.
YCM	williams, Stephen J. (ed.) 1930. *Ystorya de Carolo Magno.* Cardiff: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru.
YSG	Jones, Thomas (ed.) 1992. *Ysoryaeu Seint Greal.* Cardiff: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru.

References

Borsley, Robert. 2021. The Welsh of Jesus and Job: Verb-second in Middle Welsh. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar* .

Borsley, Robert D, Tallerman, Maggie and Willis, David W. E. 2007. *The Syntax of Welsh*. Cambridge University Press.

Catasso, Nicholas. 2024. A Cartographic Approach to Verb Movement and Two Types of FinP V2 in German. *Languages* 9(21).

Choi, Hye-Won. 1999. *Optimizing Structure in Context: Scrambling and Information Structure*. Dissertations in Linguistics, CSLI Publications.

Dalrymple, Mary (ed.). 2023. *Handbook of Lexical Functional Grammar*. Language Science Press.

Fife, James. 1988. *Functional Syntax: A Case Study in Middle Welsh*. Redakcja Wydawnictw Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego.

Jones, Bob Morris. Unpublished. The Complementizer System in Informal Welsh.

Luft, Diana, Thomas, Peter Wynn and Smith, D. Mark. 2013. Rhyddiaith Gymraeg 1300-1425.

Meelen, Marieke. 2016. *Why Jesus and Job Spoke Bad Welsh: The Origin and Distribution of V2 Orders in Middle Welsh*. Ph.D. thesis.

Meelen, Marieke. 2020. Reconstructing the rise of Verb Second in Welsh. In *Rethinking Verb Second*, Oxford University Press, _eprint: https://academic.oup.com/book/0/chapter/354247212/chapter-pdf/43697175/oso-9780198844303-chapter-18.pdf.

Poletto, Cecilia. 2014. The Old Italian Left Periphery. In *Word Order in Old Italian*, Oxford University Press.

Roberts, Ian G. 2005. *Principles and Parameters in a VSO Languages: A Case Study in Welsh*. Oxford University Press.

Tallerman, Maggie. 1996. Fronting Constructions in Welsh. In Robert D. Borsley and Ian G. Roberts (eds.), *The Syntax of the Celtic Languages*, pages 97–124, Cambridge University Press.

Willis, David W. E. 1998. *Syntactic Change in Welsh: A Study of the Loss of Verb-Second*. Clarendon Press.

Willis, David W. E. 2007. Specifier-to-head reanalyses in the complementizer domain: Evidence from Welsh. *Transactions of the Philological Society* 105(3), 432–480.

Wolfe, Sam. 2016. On the Left Periphery of V2 Languages: Evidence from Romance Fin and Force V2 systems. In *Selected Papers from the 41st Incontro di Grammatica Generativa. Rivista di Grammatica Generativa*, pages 287–310.

Wolfe, Sam. 2019. Redefining the Typology of V2 Languages. *Linguistic Variation* 19(1), 16–46.