# S Berkeley Linguistics Society

Word Order, Mutation, and Topic in Welsh

Author(s): Nicholas Kibre

Proceedings of the Twenty-First Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society: General Session and Parasession on Historical Issues in Sociolinguistics/Social Issues in Historical Linguistics (1995), pp. 174-185

Please see "How to cite" in the online sidebar for full citation information.

Please contact BLS regarding any further use of this work. BLS retains copyright for both print and screen forms of the publication. BLS may be contacted via <a href="http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/bls/">http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/bls/</a>.

The Annual Proceedings of the Berkeley Linguistics Society is published online via <u>eLanguage</u>, the Linguistic Society of America's digital publishing platform.

## Word Order, Mutation, and Topic in Welsh Nicholas Kibre University of California, Santa Barbara

#### **Overview:**

Although Welsh has generally been described as a language with VSO or VSX constituent order, a number of clause constructions in the language deviate from this pattern. In this paper I argue that these reflect an organizing principle of Welsh constituent order, that the position immediately following a clause-initial verb or complementizer serves as a grammatical Topic. Under this hypothesis, the language's tendency towards VSX clauses follows from the typically high topicality of subjects, and I will demonstrate that other orders occur precisely where subjects are un-topical, or where non-subjects are topical.

Several important lines of evidence corroborate the role of this Topic category in the organization of the Welsh clause. First, it can function as a pivot in conjoined clauses. Second, a comparative argument can be made based on a somewhat different, but plausibly related, aspect of clause structure in Irish. Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, it can serve as the basis for an elegant

account of an interesting rule of consonant mutation.

## 1. Constituent Order in the Welsh Clause:

Welsh is generally described as a VSO language. In fact the situation is somewhat more complex; an increasing preference for periphrastic conjugations has meant that VSO clauses like 1.1, typical of literary Welsh, have come to be replaced by ones better described as Aux-S-(Particle)-V-O in spoken and more current written Welsh, as in 1.2. (For a overview of relevant Welsh sociolinguistics see Ball, Griffiths et al. 1988, Davies 1988, B. P. Jones 1988, D. G. Jones 1988, and other works collected in Ball 1988).

- 1.1 Fe Lwerthodd Huw Lgar.
  PRT sell.3SPST NAME car
  "Huw sold a car." (Tallerman 1990)
- 1.2 Gwnaeth Huw Lwerthu car. do.3SPST NAME sell.INF car. "Huw sold a car." (ibid)

Note that words prefixed by  $^L$  are ones which have undergone a consonant mutation termed Lenition—a point I will return to later.

Another non-VSO order occurs in all varieties of Welsh in clauses governed by certain complementizers, which must be SVO.

1.3 Disgwyiliodd Huw i Olwen Lwerthu car. expect.3SPST NAME COMP NAME sell.INF car "Huw expected Olwen to sell a car." (Tallerman 1990)

These clause types differ in their relative orderings of subjects and main verbs. A number of authors have argued that these alternations can be explained transformationally, including Awbery 1976, Sproat 1985 and Sadler 1988. Less attention has been paid to the relative order of subjects and other clause arguments. Objects and obliques generally follow the subject in verb-initial clauses, and follow

the verb in verb-medial clauses, but in some cases, elements besides subject can immediately follow the verb. This is only a property of specific constructions, making it tempting to write them off as idiomatic or irregular; nevertheless, there is a functional cohesion to them. Three of these constructions are particularly common, and will be reviewed in the sections below.

#### A Presentative Construction:

Although Welsh has a special presentative copula, this has been supplemented and partly replaced by a construction borrowed from the English "there + be". However, this construction has been nativized to Welsh's verb-initial syntax by reversing the order to "be + there", as in 1.4 and 1.5.

- 1.4 roedd na Lddwy yn cystadlu
  COP3SPST there two PRT compete.INF
  "There were two competing..." (Radio Cymru)1
- 1.5 bod 'na stori tu allan i 'r Ledal Lryddiaith
  COPINF there story side back to the medal prose
  "(we know that) there's a story behind the prose medal..." (Radio Cymru)

#### The Possessive Construction:

Welsh does not have a verb "to have". Like Finnish and Russian, it uses the copula to describe possession (when the possessum is indefinite, this is the same presentative copula which elsewhere is being replaced by bod + 'na), making the possessed item the subject and the possessor an oblique, marked by one of the prepositions gan or (gy)da, both of which mean "with".

The order of a possessive clause can be the usual VSX, that is "be+thing+with+owner", as in 1.6a; but more often the possessor comes first, as in 1.6b.

- 1.6a Mae llawer o arian gyda nhw. COP3S a.lot of money with 3P
- 1.6b Mae gyda nhw Llawer o arian.

  COP3S with 3P a.lot of money

  Both: "They have a lot of money" (Jones 1992).

## An Obligative Construction:

In Welsh, obligation ("to have to"), is traditionally expressed with an expression we can loosely sketch as "be+need+for"+NP+VP. This can be seen in example 1.7.

1.7 efallai fydd rhaid ini <sup>L</sup>gynnal ysgolion perhaps COP3SFUT need for 1P support INF schools "Maybe we will need to support schools." (Radio Cymru)

In speech and less formal writing, however, the copula is usually dropped in the present tense, as in 1.8.

1.8 rhaid i ni Lgeisio rhedeg ei eglwys need for 1P try.INF run.INF 3MGEN church "we need to try to run his church" (Hedyn)

In a sense, rhaid has been grammaticized into an auxiliary. But what seems to function as its subject, ("us" in 1.9) is still an oblique, governed by i.

### 2. Evidence for a Topic Category in Welsh

In each of these three cases, some sort of oblique or adverbial element is in the position immediately following the clause's main verb (in terms of dependency), or verbs in the case of 1.7. The grammatical roles of these three obliques are different, but this should not keep us from asking whether some functional similarity unifies this similarity in their surface order.

The hypothesis I want to propose is the following:

 The position immediately following the (hierarchically) main verb of a clause, or sequence of verbs, or the complementizer i, codes a grammatical Topic category.

This category expresses the discourse function of clause Topic (Givón

1983), or starting point (Chafe 1976, 1994).

In a transformational analysis, we might unify reference to "main verb" and "complementizer" with some kind of V-to-COMP-raising rule<sup>2</sup>. For now I will just assume that both verbs and complimentizers serve as some kind of "cognitive reference point" which arguments can be positioned relative to.

As in English, the subject in Welsh is largely the home of topical participants. Thus it is unsurprising that subjects are generally realized in the Topic position. Notably, though, the non-VSO-type constructions we have examined are all ones in which the relationship between subject and topicality breaks down.

In the *rhaid* obligative construction, there is no true subject to compete in topicality with the NP marked with *i*, and this is also the "logical" subject of the semantically main verb. In the presentative, we can surmise that the subject is bumped from the Topic position by the pleonastic *yna* because it is new and discontinuous, or quintessentially *un*-topical; expressing this fact is the point of a presentative construction. In the possessive, the topicality of the possessor seems intuitively correct because it is coded as a subject in languages which do have a verb "to have". And whereas a possessum is usually inanimate, possessors are human.

Intuitions, of course, are only the beginning of an explanation. In the next section I will make a more empirical argument for this hypothesis in terms of discourse patterns associated with one of these constructions, the possessive.

## Discourse Evidence for the Topic Category:

Topicality can be measured. In Givón 1983's methodology, topicality is quantified in terms of the quantity of co-referential NP's in preceding and following clauses. Chafe 1994, on the other hand, has suggested less empirical but more subtle measures in which the analyst, partly intuitively, must classify referents as given, accessible or new.

Another way is to observe how speakers code NP's. Givon 1983:18, 1990:905 has proposed that the "weight" of an NP is proportional to its

discontinuity, where weight ranges on the following scale:

Zero Anaphora < Bound Pronominals < Free Pronouns < Lexical NP's

If we accept this, then we can measure the tendency of sentence positions to be have topical referents by quantifying the relative frequencies of lexical NP's, pronouns, and nulls.

Zero anaphora occur only in restricted environments in Welsh (such as in the "gapped" arguments of relative clauses), and the distinction between free and bound pronouns is not always clear<sup>3</sup>. But the proportion of lexical NP's vs.

"lighter" alternatives still gives a good measure of topicality. To support the Topiccategory hypothesis, I have measured the proportion of lexical NP's in subject and oblique positions in "normal" clauses, and compared this with the level of anaphora in the two arguments of possessive clauses.

For the first measure, I selected 128 clauses from an informal discussion session broadcast on Welsh radio which were finite, active, and non-relative. Within this set, obliques were lexical NP's significantly more often than subjects; obliques were full NP's in 45 out of 61 tokens (74%), while subjects were full NP's in 36 out of 127 (28%). (Only object arguments from transitive verbs were measured, and one weather-type verb was considered to be inherently subjectless).

In possessives, this trend was reversed. Here the subject was usually a full NP, and often a indefinite/new one at that, as in 2.1.

2.1 Felly does gyda chi <sup>L</sup>ddim straeon newydd ini thus COPNEGEXIST with you no stories new for.1P heno te? tonight PRT

"so you don't have any new stories for us tonight then?" (Radio Cymru)

This text had only four examples of possessive clauses, so another written text, a (semi?)-autobiographical novel (Rhwng Dwy; see note 1), was searched for examples of the possessive construction in particular. Here, too, possessives proved to have topicality patterns opposite to those measured for non-possessive clauses: Possessor obliques were full NP's in 3 out of 24 tokens (12.5%), and possessa subjects were full NP's in 23 out of 24 tokens (96%).

The tendency towards the V-Possessor-Possessum pattern was fairly strong in this data. In 21 of the 24 examples (87.5%), the V-Possessor-Possessum constituent order was found. Interestingly, the lone anaphoric possessum in this data set, hon in 2.2, was one of the remaining three.

2.2 y mae hon gen i ers saith mlyneda PRT is this with 1S since seven years "I've had this for seven years." (Rhwng Dwy).

This suggests that speakers can actively manipulate these word order alternatives for information flow purposes, but for now this has to be left as a hunch which larger corpora will be needed to test.

In this section I have examined the relevance of the proposed Topic category to information flow. In the next I will examine its importance to other aspects of syntax.

## Topic as the Pivot Category in Welsh:

Welsh generally seems to be a subject-pivot language in the sense of pivot developed by Dixon 1972, 1979, and Comrie 1978. If two conjoined clauses have a co-referential subject, it may be omitted in the second (even in informal varieties where subjects are not usually dropped). That is, we find the pattern: (Verb Subji Obj) conj (Verb Subji Obj), but not: (Verb Subji Obj) conj (Verb Subj Obji), nor, (Verb Subj Obji) conj (Verb Subji Obji).

But this generalization does not hold when impersonal verbs are involved. In addition to first through third person singular and plural forms, each tense and mood paradigm of the Welsh verb has a special impersonal form. The impersonal resembles a passive (it can have a demoted agent as a chômeur) but is best

described as a subjectless active; that is, a voice in which the subject is demoted or dropped but the object is not promoted. There are several arguments for this analysis.

First, intransitive verbs can be impersonal, as in 2.3.

2.3 Rhedwyd yno. run.IMPRSPST there "One ran there."

Second, in impersonal periphrastic clauses, the patient comes in the usual position for objects, following the infinitive main verb.

2.4 Yr ydys yn gweld ci. PRT COPIMPRS PRT see INF dog "One sees a dog."

On the other hand, in non-periphrastic clauses, pronominal patients can be coded by a special set of "infixed" object pronouns cliticized between the main verb and a sentence-initial particle.

2.5 Fe 'i darlledir Lbum noson yr wythnos.
PRT 3F broadcast.IMPRS five night the week
"It is broadcast five nights a week." (Chi biau)

However, Sadler 1988 has observed that the objects of impersonals seem to count as pivots, just like subjects. They can be deleted if conjoined to a clause with a co-referential subject, as in 2.6, and subjects can be deleted in conjoined clauses if co-referential to them as in 2.7.

- 2.6 Canodd Siôn; a cymeradwywyd Ø; gan y gynulleidfa. sing.3SPST John and applaud.IMPRSPST with the audience. "John sang and was applauded by the audience." (Sadler 1988:228)
- 2.7 drawyd y cwchi gan Ldon anferth a dymchwelodd Øi hit.IMPRSPST the boat with wave huge and capsize.3SPST "...the boat was hit by a huge wave and capsized" (Hedyn)

Shibatani 1985's analysis of passives and impersonals claims that both involve "agent defocusing". Assuming that defocused agents are non-topical, these examples can be explained if we assume the following:

- Objects of Welsh impersonals are not promoted to subject, but as the most topical NP's available they do advance to Topic.
- The pivot category of Welsh is not actually Subject but Topic. The subject just appears to be pivot most of the time because subjects are usually in the Topic position.

The relevance of the Topic for other aspects of syntax is strong evidence that this category does exist, and plays an important role in the organization of the Welsh clause<sup>4</sup>.

# Comparative Evidence:

Evidence for the proposed Topic category can be found not only within Welsh but in comparison with at least one of its relatives. Noonan 1994 has proposed an analysis of several voice constructions in Irish in terms of an

"Information Structure Map" underlying certain types of clauses. Particularly, he makes the following proposal:

"In clauses with two arguments, immediate postpredicate position is reserved for arguments of high topicality; the position following this and prepredicate position are used for arguments of low (or, at least, lower) topicality."

Noonan 1994:295

My proposal for Welsh differs from this in several ways, but the "Information Structure Map" I have proposed seems like a plausible cousin to this one. Both claim high topicality for a position immediately following an element which may be thought of as central to the structure of the clause; in Noonan's Irish proposal, this centrality is defined semantically, whereas in the present hypothesis for Welsh centrality is defined in terms of structural dependency. In non-periphrastic main clauses these will be conflated, and while it would go beyond the scope of this paper and the available evidence to try to trace the topicality-marking strategies of Irish and Welsh to a common ancestor, it seems reasonable to conclude that they have one.

#### 3. Consonant Mutation:

So far, I have defined the Topic category in positional terms, and looked for evidence linking the function of Topic to this position. In this section I will argue that the Welsh Topic is also coded morphologically through a rule of initial consonant mutation.

### Grammaticized Sandhi:

Initial consonant mutations are a set of gradations in the manner of articulation of word-initial consonants. The phonological category of the mutation of interest to us here is traditionally termed Lenition. Lenition consists of the following changes:

- Voicing of stops:  $p, t, c \rightarrow b, d, g$ .
- Voicing of ll (=/l/) and rh (=/ $r^h$ /) into l and r.
- Frication of voiced stops:  $b, d, m \rightarrow f(=/v), dd(=/d), f(=/v)$ .
- Elision:  $g \to \emptyset$ .

Mutations are phonologically opaque: they are usually triggered following specific particles, but the shape of a particle does not predict which if any mutation it will cause. For example, the form ei means "his" if followed by Lenition, or "her" if the word following undergoes another mutation called Aspiration; furthermore, the homophonous (at least in Southern Welsh) pronoun eu "their" can only be distinguished from these in speech by the fact that it causes no mutation at all.

Mutations can also grammaticize into grammatical markers in their own right. For example, attributive adjectives are lenited when the noun they are modifying is feminine singular.

3.1a  $ci_{Masc}$  bach dog small  $cath_{Fem}$  Lfach cat small "A small dog." "A small cat."

This mutation has sometimes been described as triggered by feminine adjectives, in the same sense that a particle such as ei. "his" is a Lenition trigger (see, for example, Ball & Müller 1992:161-164). However, the cases in 3.2 show that this mutation is based on the structural relation of dependency rather than the simple presence of a preceding feminine noun in front of the adjective.

- 3.2a gwr<sub>Masc</sub> o <sup>L</sup>feddylfryd<sub>Fem</sub> cyffelyb man of action similar "A similar man of action."
- 3.2b gorsaf<sub>Fem</sub> radio<sub>Masc</sub> Lboblogaidd station radio popular "A popular radio station." (Chi biau)

For a thorough overview of mutation and approaches to the problem see Ball & Müller 1992 generally. For a more theoretically-driven look at the subject, as well as further arguments for the agreement analysis of this mutation, see Kibre 1995.

## Syntactic Mutation and the XP-Trigger hypothesis:

The mutation of interest here is another one triggered in syntactically defined environments. In the past it has been analyzed a kind of morphological marker akin to the gender agreement marker described above (Comrie 1975, 1976, Lieber 1983, 1987, Perlmutter & Postal 1983, Zwicky 1984) but never entirely successfully. A number of other accounts have been proposed, but since their solutions (although interesting) fail the test of descriptive adequacy, I will not go into them here (Fife 1992, Hannahs 1993; for a more detailed review of these proposals see Kibre 1995).

The most successful approach to date has been the NP- or XP-trigger hypothesis proposed in various forms by Harlow 1981, 1989, Sproat 1985, Borsley 1986, Tallerman 1990 and Borsley & Tallerman 1993. Since this model can at least account for most of the data, it seems like a good place to start. As its name suggests, this hypothesis states that words are subject to Lenition when immediately preceded by a maximal projection: NP, AP, PP, or VP.

This model makes a number of predictions which will be seen to be correct, if I may direct the reader to glance back at some of the earlier examples in this paper. Recall that words which have undergone Lenition have been marked by a preceding superscript <sup>L</sup> (for completeness I have marked all lenited words, including those whose mutations have been triggered by particles, so it should be understood that the statements below are not meant to account for all of the lenitions in the examples above). The environments for which it predicts Lenition include the following:

- Initial words in objects are mutated in VSX clauses (gar<car in 1.1).</p>
- Non-finite verbal complements are mutated in the object position of VSX clauses as well (werthu<gwerthu in 1.2).
- Objects are not mutated in periphrastic constructions: (car in 1.2); and neither are infinitives in this position.
- In presentatives, the subject is mutated after yna, which could be treated as a PP. (ddwy<dwy in 1.4)

- In possessives, the possessum subject is mutated when the possessor oblique, a PP, comes first (lawer<llawer in 1.6b) but not when the VSX order is maintained (1.6a).
- In the rhaid-obligative construction, the main verb is mutated after the PP with the agent: (gynnal<cynnal in 1.7; geisio<ceisio in 1.8)</p>

There seems to only be one case where an XP is not followed by mutation, which I will turn to shortly. There are, however, several cases where this mutation applies even though there is not a preceding XP. Literary, although not colloquial Welsh, allows null subjects in main clauses. As seen in 3.3, Objects are nevertheless mutated even though the subject NP is missing, as are verbal complements.

3.3 Gwerthodd Ø Lgar.
sell.3SPST car
"He/she sold a car." (Tallerman 1990)

Objects and verbal complements are mutated after the empty subject position of clauses relativized off of subject, and in a number of subject-fronting constructions.

3.4 dyn (a) Lwerthodd Lgar man REL sold.3SPST car "a man who sold a car" (ibid)

This includes cases where the subject is a fronted wh-word, or is focus-fronted.

3.5 Pwy (a) Lwerthodd Lgar. who REL sold.3SPST car "Who sold a car?" (ibid)

Imperative verbs also lack overt subjects, but their objects and infinitive complements are mutated as well.

- 3.6 Rho Llwyddiant i mi heddiw. give success to me today "Give me good fortune today." (Gen 24:12)
- 3.7 Cofiwch Lalw yn Siôp y Pethe.
  remember call in Shop the things
  "Remember to stop by a Siôp y Pethe." (Advertisement)

Proponents of the XP-trigger hypothesis propose to account for this data by allowing null NP's to trigger mutation as well as overtly realized ones. Although this solution works, it may be problematic from a phonological standpoint; Nespor & Scoretti 1985 and Nespor & Vogel 1986 have argued that empty categories are phonologically invisible. Although not fatal to the XP-trigger hypothesis, this is an objection which should be addressed.

Another problem for the proposal is that the empty subjects of impersonal verbs do not cause mutation to following objects and complement verbs. For example, note that pob has not become  $^{L}bob$  in 3.8, and darlledu has not lenited to  $^{L}ddarlledu$  in 3.9.

3.8 Cedwir pob hawl.
keep.IMPRS every right
"All rights reserved." (Publisher's notice)

3.9 cychwynnwyd darlledu 'n <sup>L</sup>fyw y Cwestiynau Seneddol start.IMPRS broadcast PRT live the questions senatorial Cymreig

Welsh

"live broadcasting of Welsh Parliamentary Questions began" (Chi biau)

A solution to this problem, proposed by Harlow, is to say that cased NP's (which include "real" NP's, the "little pro" of pro-drop clauses, and wh-traces) cause mutation, but that this empty subject is uncased "big PRO", so it does not.

The one remaining descriptive hurdle for this approach I am aware of arises in conjoined NP's like those in 3.10, where the first NP *fara* fails to trigger Lenition on the following *menyn*.

3.10 Bwytais i Lfara, menyn/\*Lfenyn a chaws ate.1SPST 1S bread butter and cheese "I ate bread, butter, and cheese." (Borsley & Tallerman 1993)

Borsley & Tallerman 1993's solution to this problem is to propose that *bara* and *menyn* are actually separated by a phonetically null conjunction, and that this conjunction absorbs the mutation triggered by the first NP. There are several problems with this proposal. First, as with the proposal that empty NP's can trigger mutation, there is the issue of the phonological relevance of phonologically null constituents which needs to be addressed.

The second appears when we consider this proposal in relation to the feminine-agreement mutation of adjectives discussed earlier. In 3.11, we must ask why no invisible conjunction is present between the adjectives "tall" and "strong" to prevent the mutation of the latter.

3.11 merch <sup>L</sup>dal <sup>L</sup>gref a doeth girl tall strong and wise "a tall, strong, and wise girl" (Ball and Müller 1992)

# A Topic-Oriented Mutation Analysis:

Roughly speaking, the Harlow, Tallerman, Borsley proposal makes the following descriptive statement:

 In a series of XP's, the first word of all but the first XP is subject to Lenition.

I have argued that among the constituents following a verb or complementizer, the first has the special status of a grammatical Topic. Putting these two observations together, a new analysis of the mutation suggests itself: All the rightward dependents of a verb or a complementizer are subject to Lenition on their first word, except for the Topic. In essence, this claims that the Topic category is coded both by constituent order, and the use of a "mutation-morpheme" similar to that of gender mutation to mark non-topics.

Notably, this solution correctly differentiates between the empty subjects of relative clauses, pro-drop clauses, sentences with fronted subjects, and those in impersonals. In the first group, the subject is known, and still highly topical—the fact that its referent can be recovered from zero demonstrates its topicality. On the other hand, I have already argued that the objects of impersonals are topical, and we have seen structural evidence that they can function as Topics—thus their non-mutation is explained.

Furthermore, this proposal escapes the conundrum which conjoined NP's present to the XP-trigger hypothesis. In 3.10, for example, it will correctly assign Lenition to the first word of the object noun-phrase Lfara, menyn a chaws, but leave menyn unaffected since it only deals with constituents of clauses, not of compound NP's.

### Form beyond Motivation:

The Topic-centered model of mutation I have proposed is as descriptively adequate as the XP-trigger hypothesis, but the question remains open how well it explains the facts we have observed. In particular, we need to ask precisely how the Topic/Non-Topic distinction claimed to be encoded by position and mutation is related to actual discourse topicality.

First, note that although I have argued for the topicality of possessors in the possessive construction and the obliques marked by i in the rhaid-obligative, and for the un-topicality of subject in the be+yna presentative, alternatives to the standard VSX clause order sometimes arise through stylistic variation. It is possible, for example, for adverbial obliques to appear between verbs and subjects, mutating the latter.

3.12 Roedd or y bryn Lferch.
COP3SPST on the hill girl
"A girl was on the hill." (Tallerman 1990)

I have also found one example, unusual but too colorful to omit, in which the subject and verb are separated by a non-finite VP, and here the subject mutates too:

3.13 Yma mae yn gorwedd <sup>L</sup>gorph Richard Roberts.

here COP3S PRT lie.INF body NAME

"Here lies the body of Richard Roberts." (Tombstone near Llanfairfechan,
North Wales)

It has been suggested to me (Tom Shannon, P.C.) that such sentences might be fit into the current model of the Welsh clause with a slightly more broadly defined notion of Topic, expanded include something like the Prague school notion of Theme (see, for example, Firbás & Golková 1975, Firbás 1986, and Danes 1984). That is, although ar y bryn and yn gorwedd do not code topical entities in the Chafe/Givón sense (that is, high continuity referents) they do present background information into which the new referents "a girl", and "Richard Roberts" can be added.

Another apparent problem for the topicality model of consonant mutation are presented by sentences such as 3.9. In order to explain how the infinitive verbal complements of impersonals escape mutation, such as the verb *darlledu* here, we have to assume that infinitive VP's are selected as Topic; infinitives have many nominal characteristics in Welsh, and are traditionally called verb-nouns, but the discourse category of topicality is only really relevant to true NP's.

These cases are informative, but do not really disprove the functional explanation I have proposed. This hypothesis attempts to explain the motivation for certain patterns in Welsh grammar, but it does not claim that this mutation functions as an "untopic marker" in each and every sentence. The mutation may have been developed to express aspects of information flow, and still does so in most cases—but once absorbed into the grammar of a language, a category may take on a life and momentum of its own.

<sup>1</sup>In addition to previous linguistics publications, which have been cited, examples are taken from several written and spoken texts:

Chi Biau: Chi biau BBC Cymru/Wales. BBC Cymru/Wales. Canolfan y BBC, Llandaf, Caerdydd CF5 2YQ. (Pamphlet guide to radio and television programs)

Hedyn: Hedyn: O Gymru, Edifarhewch. Mudiad Efengylaidd Cymru, Bryntirion, Pen-ybont ar Ogwr, Canol Morgannwg CF31 4DX. (Evangelical pamphlet)

Radio Cymru: Welsh-language radio broadcasts in July of 1992.

Rhwng Dwy: Jones, R. E. (1976). Dinbych: Gwasg Gee. (Novel)

<sup>2</sup>Formalist accounts of Welsh syntax have been proposed in this vein by Jones & Thomas 1977, Harlow 1981, and most recently Sproat 1985—although it should be noted that Sproat classifies *i* and auxiliaries as instances of INFL, and considers lexical inflected verbs to be raised to INFL rather than COMP.

 $^3$ For example, /gɛni/, "with me" can be analyzed as a single inflected form of gan, "with" or as an inflected preposition gen plus a free pronoun i; it is freely written as one word or two.

<sup>4</sup>Eve Sweetser has suggested an alternative explanation for the subject-like characteristics of impersonals' objects: that the impersonal is being reanalyzed as a true passive. This is not unreasonable, since the impersonal is a largely literary form in modern Welsh, and is being replaced by a true passive in the spoken language. Space does not permit me to address this point here at length, but I have taken up the issue elsewhere (Kibre to appear).

In any case, a crucial question here is whether impersonals' objects were pivotal before the construction's decline or have only acquired this quality recently. Unfortunately I do not have an answer to this at present, and will have to leave the matter open to future research.

#### References:

Awbery, Gwenllian Mair. 1976. The Syntax of Welsh: A Transformational Study of the Passive. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Ball, Martin J., Ed. 1988. The Use of Welsh: A Contribution to Sociolinguistics. Multilingual Matters. Philadelphia, Multilingual Matters.

Ball, Martin J., et al. 1988. Broadcast Welsh. In The Use of Welsh: A Contribution to Sociolinguistics. Clevedon, Multilingual Matters. 182-199.

Ball, Martin J. and Nicole Müller. 1992. Mutation in Welsh. London, Routledge.

Borsley, Robert. 1986. "A note on 'traditional treatments' of Welsh." *Journal of Linguistics* 23:185-190.

Borsley, Robert and Maggie Tallerman. 1993. Phrases and soft mutation in Welsh. Revised MS of a paper read at LAGB Spring Meeting, University of Birmingham,

Chafe, Wallace. 1976. Givenness, contrastiveness, definiteness, subjects, topics, and point of view. In Subject and Topic. New York, Academic Press. 25-56.

Chafe, Wallace. 1994. Discourse, Consciousness, and Time. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Comrie, Bernard. 1975. The antiergative: Finland's answer to Basque. The Chicago Linguistics Society, Chicago, University of Chicago.

Comrie, Bernard. 1976. In defense of spontaneous demotion: the impersonal passive. In *Syntax and Semantics*. New York, Seminar Press.

Comrie, Bernard. 1978. Ergativity. In Syntactic Typology. Austin, University of Texas Press.

Danes, F. 1984. On Prague school functionalism in linguistics. Trier, Linguistic Agency, University of Trier.

Davies, Cennard. 1988. Cymraeg Byw. In The Use of Welsh: A Contribution to Sociolinguistics. Clevedon, Multilingual Matters, 200-212.

Dixon, Robert. 1972. The Dyirbal Language of North Queensland. Canberra, The Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.

Dixon, Robert. 1979. "Ergativity." Language 55:59-138.

- Fife, James. 1992. "Autonomy and the Welsh impersonal verb." *Journal of Celtic Linguistics* 1:61-100.
- Firbás, Jan. 1986. On the dynamics of written communication in the light of the theory of functional sentences perspective. In Studying Writing: Linguistic Approaches. Beverly Hills, Sage.
- Firbás, Jan and E. Golková. 1975. An analytical bibliography of Czechoslovak studies in functional sentence perspective. Brno, Brno University.
- Givon, Talmy. 1983. Topic Continuity in Discourse: An Introduction. In *Topic Continuity in Discourse: Quantified Cross Language Studies*. Philadelphia, John Benjamins. 2-41.
- Givón, Talmy. 1990. Syntax: A Functional-Typological Introduction. Philadelphia, John Benjamins.
- Hannahs, S. J. 1993. A phonological account of soft mutation in Welsh. Paper presented at the LAGB autumn meeting, Bangor, Wales,
- Harlow, Steve. 1981. Government and relativization in Celtic. In *Binding and Filtering*. London, Croom Helm. 213-254.
- Harlow, Steve. 1989. "The syntax of Welsh soft mutation." Natural Language and Linguistic Theory 7:289-316.
- Jones, Berwyn Prys. 1988. Official Welsh. In The Use of Welsh: A Contribution to Sociolinguistics. Clevedon, Multilingual Matters. 205-181.
- Jones, Dafydd Glyn. 1988. Literary Welsh. In The Use of Welsh: A Contribution to Sociolinguistics. Clevedon, Multilingual Matters. 125-204.
- Jones, Morris and Alan Thomas. 1977. The Welsh Language. Cardiff, University of Wales Press.
   Jones, T. J. Rhys. 1992. Teach Yourself Welsh: A Complete Guide for Beginners. Chicago, NTC Publishing Group.
- Kibre, Nicholas. 1995. A Model of Mutation in Welsh. University of California, Santa Barbara.
- Kibre, Nicholas. to appear. Impersonals and Passives in Welsh: Motivations for a Structural Shift in Progress. In Working Papers in Grammatical Relations. Santa Barbara, UCSB Linguistics Department.
- Lieber, Rochelle. 1983. "New developments in autosegmental morphology: consonant mutation." Proceedings of the West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics 2:165-175.
- Lieber, Rochelle. 1987. An Integrated Theory of Autosegmental Processes. Albany, State University of New York Press.
- Nespor, Marina and M. Scoretti. 1985. Empty elements and phonological form. In *Grammatical Representation*. Dordrecht, Foris.
- Nespor, Marina and Irene Vogel. 1986. Prosodic Phonology. Dordrecht, Foris.
- Noonan, Michael. 1994. A Tale of Two Passives in Irish. In Voice: Form and Function. Philadelphia, John Benjamins. 279-311.
- Perlmutter, David and Paul Postal. 1983. Impersonal passives and some relational laws. In Studies in Relational Grammar. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Sadler, Louisa. 1988. Welsh Syntax: A Government-Binding Approach. New York, Croom Helm.
- Shibatani, Misayoshi. 1985. "Passives and Related Constructions." Language 61:821-48.
- Sproat, Richard. 1985. "Welsh Syntaxt and VSO Structure." Natural Language and Linguistic Theory 3
- Tallerman, Maggie. 1990. "VSO word order and consonantal mutation in Welsh." Linguistics 28:389-416.
- Watkins, T. Arwyn. 1992. Kurze Beschreibung des Kymrischen. Innsbruck, Institut für Sprachwissenschaft der Universität Innsbruck.
- Zwicky. Arnold. 1984. "Welsh soft mutation and the case of object NP's." The Chicago Linguistics Society 20:387-402.