

A Grammatical Sketch of Middle Welsh  
(based on Evans' *Grammar of Middle Welsh*)

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## 1 Introduction

Middle Welsh (MW) is the language of Wales as found in the written documents of the 12th to 14th centuries A.D. In many respects it is still very close to Old Welsh (8th century A.D. and later). Modern literary Welsh (cf. Williams [1980]) has retained many features of the medieval language, whereas the spoken language of Wales has undergone significant changes (cf. King [1993]).

This short sketch follows Evans [1964] with hints from Jones [1931] and Strachan [1909]. The marginal notes (as demonstrated on the margin of this line) will guide the reader to the appropriate sections of Evans [1964]; ‘**IEW** §’ refers to Strachan [1909], ‘**WG** §’ to Jones [1931]. The orthography of the examples was brought to the standard of contemporary literary Welsh using Thomas [1950] and Anwyl [1925]. This has the advantage that the learner is confronted with an orthography which can be unambiguously mapped onto phonological forms. Based on that, the reader will easily get used to the orthographic conventions and ambiguities of the original texts **and** the modern literary language.

§n

WG §n

## 2 Abbreviations

1, 2, 3	first, second, third person
abs.	abstract
adj.	adjective
aff.	affixed
C	consonant
conj.	conjunctive (pronoun)
consuet.	consuetudinal
f.	feminine
gen.	genitive
imperf.	imperfect
impers.	impersonal
ind.	indicative
m.	masculine
n.	noun
O	object
part.	particle
pl.	plural
prep.	preposition
pres.	present
pron.	pronoun
redupl.	reduplicated
S	subject
sg.	singular
subj.	subjunctive
superl.	superlative
V	vowel
unv.	unvoiced
voi.	voiced
vn.	verbal noun

### 3 Orthography and Phonology

#### 3.1 Consonants

There is a great deal of orthographic variation and subsequent ambiguity in the medieval manuscripts. Especially, *dd* is usually written just *d*, *f* mostly *u* or *v*. For [k], *k* is written before high vowels, *c* elsewhere.

§9-17

Other than in English or German, digraphs (*ll*, *ng*, *rh*, etc.) are usually listed separately in Welsh dictionaries (such that *llabed* comes directly after *lytenont*, and not after *lili*).

		labial	dental	alveolar	lateral	velar/uvular	laryngeal
<b>plosive</b>	<b>unv.</b>	<i>p</i> [p]		<i>t</i> [t]		<i>c, k</i> [k]	
	<b>voi.</b>	<i>b</i> [b]		<i>d</i> [d]		<i>g</i> [g]	
<b>fricative</b>	<b>unv.</b>	<i>ff, ph</i> [f]	<i>th</i> [θ]	<i>s</i> [s]	<i>ll</i> [ɬ]	<i>ch</i> [χ]	<i>h</i> [h]
	<b>voi.</b>	<i>f, u, v</i> [v]	<i>dd</i> [ð]				
<b>trill</b>	<b>unv.</b>			<i>rh</i> [r̥]			
	<b>voi.</b>			<i>r</i> [r]			
<b>nasal</b>	<b>unv.</b>	<i>mh</i> [m̥]		<i>nh</i> [ɲ]		<i>ngh</i> [ŋ̊]	
	<b>voi.</b>	<i>m</i> [m]		<i>n</i> [n]		<i>ng</i> [ŋ]	

#### 3.2 Vowels and Diphthongs

When standing between a consonant and a vowel, *u*, *v*, and *w* represent [w]. In the same position, *i* represents [j]. In MW this glide is sometimes not written.

§1-8

IPA	Orthography	IPA	Orthography
i	<i>i</i>	εi	<i>ei</i>
i	<i>y</i>	ae	<i>ae</i>
ɥ	<i>w</i>	oi	<i>oe, ay, oy</i>
u	<i>u</i>	ui	<i>wy</i>
ε	<i>e</i>	eu	<i>eu</i>
ə	<i>y</i>	au	<i>aw</i>
ɔ	<i>o</i>	eu	<i>ew</i>
a	<i>a</i>	iu	<i>iw</i>
		iū	<i>yw</i>

Generally speaking, it is assumed that accent (cf. 3.3:6) and vowel length cooccur (as in Modern Welsh), but for accented vowels in MW, it plays a role whether the syllable in which the vowel occurs is long open or closed. [Strachan, 1909, §2] reduces the thorough description of Jones [1931] to the following rules.

WG §49-56

## LENGTH OF ACCENTED VOWELS IN MW

<b>long</b>	in open monosyllables (-V)	<i>tȳ</i> ‘house’
	in monosyllables with -VC	<i>māb</i> ‘son’, <i>crȳch</i> ‘curly’
<b>short</b>	in monosyllables with -VCC	<i>pĕnn</i> ‘head’, <i>trv̄m</i> ‘heavy’
	<small>This refers to historical double consonants except the historically also double <i>s</i>, <i>ch</i>, <i>th</i>, <i>ff</i></small>	
<b>short</b>	in closed syllables of polysyllables (-VC-)	<i>ũndeb</i> ‘unity’
<b>half-long</b>	in open syllables in polysyllabic words	<i>dinas</i> ‘city’

Notice that contemporary phoneticians and phonologists usually deny the existence of half-long segments in general.

### 3.3 Accent

The accent is always on the last syllable of the word or prosodic unit (which includes clitics). In Modern Welsh, it has moved to the penult.

### 3.4 Initial Mutations

#### 3.4.1 Overview

MW, like other Celtic languages, shows morphosyntactically conditioned mutation of initial consonants. Various triggers (words standing before the mutated word, or certain syntactic positions) cause the first consonant of a word to undergo lenition, aspiration, or nasalization.

§18-25

<b>unmutated</b>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>rh</i>	<i>ll</i>	<i>m</i>
<b>lenited</b>	<i>b</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>dd</i>	<i>g</i>	∅	<i>r</i>	<i>l</i>	<i>f</i>
<b>aspirated</b>	<i>ph</i>		<i>th</i>		<i>ch</i>				
<b>nasalized</b>	<i>mh</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>nh</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>ngh</i>	<i>ng</i>			

§18-23

## 3.4.2 Causes of Lenition

<b>proper names</b>	after f. sg. nouns (gen. position)		<i>Branwen ferch Lyr (Llyr)</i> ‘Branwen, the daughter of Llyr’
<b>nouns</b>	in apposition as adverbials  in object position  as subjects of <i>bod</i> : 3. sg. pres. ind. <i>oes, yssit</i> 3. sg. consuet. pres. <i>bidd</i> 3. sg. imperf. <i>oedd</i> 3. sg. consuet. past <i>byddei</i> 3. sg. past <i>bu</i> 3. sg. pres. subj. <i>bo</i> 3. sg. imperf. subj. <i>bei</i>		<i>Branwen ferch (merch) Lyr</i> <i>trigaw y gyd a mi flwydyn (blwyddyn)</i> ‘abide with me a year’ <i>y cynhelis Benigeidfran Franwen</i> ‘supported Bendigeidfran (S) Branwen (O)’  <i>nyd oes bont (pont) arnei hitheu</i> ‘not is bridge over her’
<b>f. sg. nouns</b>	after the article after the numerals	<i>y(r)</i> <i>un</i> <i>deu, dwy</i> <i>wyth</i>	<i>y wreig (gwreig)</i> ‘the woman’ <i>yr un gerdded (cerdded)</i> ‘one (=the same) pace’
<b>adjectives</b>	after f. sg. nouns  as predicatives		<i>y wreig ddeccaf (teg, superl.)</i> ‘the woman fairest’ <i>od oedd fawr (mawr) ef</i> ‘if was big he’ = ‘if he was big’
<b>nouns, verbs, adjectives</b>	in compound second position		<i>morfarch (mor + march)</i> ‘sea horse’
<b>verbs after</b>	most particles the pronouns  the conjunctions	<i>a</i> <i>pa</i> <i>pwyl</i> <i>pan</i> <i>tra</i> <i>yny</i>	(relative) (interrogative) (interrogative) (‘when’) (‘while’) (‘until’)

## 3.4.3 Causes of Aspiration

§24

<b>nouns</b> after	the possessive the numerals the preposition	<i>y</i> ('her') <i>tri</i> <i>chwech</i> <i>tra</i>	<i>y phen (pen)</i> 'her head'
<b>verbs</b> after	the conjunctions the interrogative	<i>no</i> <i>na</i> <i>o</i> <i>cw</i>	('than') ('neither') ('if') ('where')
<b>conjunctions</b>	after 'a(g)'		<i>a phan (pan)</i>

## 3.4.4 Causes of Nasalization

§25

<b>nouns</b> after	the numerals the preposition the possessive	<i>seith</i> <i>naw</i> <i>deg</i> <i>deudeg</i> <i>pymtheg</i> <i>cant</i> <i>yn</i> <i>fy</i> 'my'	<i>seith mlynedd (blynedd)</i> 'six years' <i>yngharchar (carchar)</i> 'in jail' <i>fy mhen (pen)</i> 'my head'
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## 4 Morphology

### 4.1 Nominals

#### 4.1.1 The Definite Article

Definiteness in nouns is expressed by the definite article. The bare nominal is usually indefinite (except, e.g., proper names). The article has three forms.

§27-29

<i>yr</i>	before <b>vowels</b> , <i>h</i> , and <i>y</i>	<i>yr afon</i> ‘the river’
<i>y</i>	before <b>consonants</b>	<i>y cawr</i> ‘the giant’
<i>'r</i>	before vowels or consonants when standing <b>after</b>	<i>a</i> ‘with’ <i>y</i> ‘to’ <i>o</i> ‘of, from’ <i>o'r mab</i> ‘of the son’ <i>a</i> ‘and’ <i>no</i> ‘than’ <i>na</i> ‘neither’

#### 4.1.2 Nouns and Adjectives

Nouns and adjectives can inflect for number, adjectives also for gender and degree (comparison). The equative (both the morphological equative and the periphrastic construction, cf. 5.1.6:18) expresses equal degree, the comparative higher degree, the superlative highest degree or a degree perceived as rather high by the speaker (elative).

§30-34

§35-38

PL. MARKING	◇ change of the last stem vowel (mostly raising)
	◇ change of the last two stem vowels
	◇ affixation of a plural marker (usually ending in a dental)
	◇ vowel change plus one plural marker
	◇ vowel change plus two plural markers

PL. VOWEL CHANGES	<i>a</i>	→	<i>eily</i>	
	<i>e</i>	→	<i>y</i>	
	<i>o</i>	→	<i>y</i>	<i>corn</i> ‘horn’ → <i>cyrn</i>
	<i>w</i>	→	<i>y</i>	
	<i>ae</i>	→	<i>ei</i>	
	<i>oy</i>	→	<i>wy</i>	
	<i>aw</i>	→	<i>o</i>	(adjectives only)

PLURAL MARKERS	- <i>(j)on</i>		<i>mab</i> ‘son’ → <i>meibjon</i>
	- <i>(j)eit</i>		
	- <i>i</i>		<i>llestr</i> ‘vessel’ → <i>llestri</i>
	- <i>ydd</i>		
	- <i>edd</i>		
	- <i>ed</i>		
	- <i>od</i>		
	- <i>awd</i>		
	- <i>awr</i>		
	- <i>os</i>		
- <i>ant</i>			
GENDER OF ADJ.	<i>y m.</i>	→	<i>e f.</i> (vowel lowering)
	<i>w m.</i>	→	<i>o f.</i>
COMPARISON	positive	-∅	
	equative	- <i>(h)ed</i>	
	comparative	- <i>ach</i>	
	superlative	- <i>(h)af</i>	

§41-42

### 4.1.3 Pronouns

MW has a rich pronominal system, and it is virtually impossible, given the scope of this sketch, to cover all aspects of the pronouns’ usage. We give very rough generalizations. The reader is invited to check with Evans [1964] for a wealth of sample sentences.

§54-62

#### PERSONAL PRONOUNS

		<b>simple</b>	<b>redupl.</b>	<b>conj.</b>	<b>infixd</b>	<b>affixed</b>	<b>aff. conj.</b>
<b>sg.</b>	<b>1</b>	<i>mi</i>	<i>myfi</i>	<i>minheu</i>	<i>'m</i>	<i>fi, e (i)</i>	<i>(f)inneu, in(h)e</i>
	<b>2</b>	<i>ti</i>	<i>tydi</i>	<i>titheu</i>	<i>'th</i>	<i>di, te</i>	
	<b>3 m.</b>	<i>ef</i>	<i>(e)fe, (e)fo</i>	<i>ynteu</i>	<i>'y, 'e, 's</i>		
	<b>3 f.</b>	<i>hi</i>	<i>hyhi</i>	<i>hitheu</i>	<i>'y</i>	(cf. simple pronouns)	(cf. conjunct. pronouns)
<b>pl.</b>	<b>1</b>	<i>ni</i>	<i>nyni</i>	<i>nin(h)eu</i>	<i>'n</i>		
	<b>2</b>	<i>chwi</i>	<i>chwychwi</i>	<i>chwitheu</i>	<i>'(w)ch</i>		
	<b>3</b>	<i>(h)wy(nt)</i>	<i>(h)wyntwy</i>	<i>(h)wynteu</i>	<i>'y, 'e, 's</i>		

The simple, reduplicated, and conjunctive pronouns occur as initial subjects in declarative sentences (and as objects of imperatives). The affixed pronouns are subject pronouns occurring postverbally. The simple pronoun can follow a postverbal subject in (redundant) apposition with *ag* plus another noun. The infixd pronouns are object pronouns and are placed between the preverbal particle (or a conjunction) and the verb.



<i>pa beth</i>	‘what’ (‘what thing’)
<i>pa amser</i>	‘when’ (‘what time’)
<i>pa pryd</i>	‘when’ (‘what time’)
<i>pa dydd</i>	‘when’ (‘what day’)
<i>pa awr</i>	‘when’ (‘what hour’)
<i>pa lle</i>	‘where’ (‘what place’)
<i>pa tu</i>	‘where’ (‘what side, what place’)
<i>pa ffordd</i>	‘how’ (‘what way’)
<i>pa delw</i>	‘how’ (‘what manner’)
<i>pa gwedd</i>	‘how’ (‘what mode’)
<i>pa ffur(y)f</i>	‘how’ (‘what form’)
<i>pa ansawdd</i>	‘how’ (‘what quality, what structure, what nature’)
<i>pa modd</i>	‘how’ (‘what mode, what form’)
<i>pa ham</i>	‘what for’ (‘what cause’)

#### 4.1.5 Conjugated Prepositions

The conjugated prepositions are lexicalized contractions of preposition and a pronoun. We first give a general pattern of the personal affixes which are added to the prepositions, then some sample paradigms. In the general pattern, V can be *-a-*, *-o-*, *-y-*, T stands for a dental plosive. Umlaut can occur in the prepositional root if the vowel in the suffix is high.

§63

##### GENERAL PATTERN

<b>sg.</b>	<b>1</b>	-Vf
	<b>2</b>	-Vd
	<b>3 m.</b>	-Taw
	<b>3 f.</b>	-Tei, -i
<b>pl.</b>	<b>1</b>	-Vm
	<b>2</b>	-Vch, -Vwch
	<b>3</b>	-Tu, -Tunt, -Tun, -Tudd

##### SAMPLE PARADIGMS

		<i>ar</i> ‘on’	<i>rag</i> ‘before’	<i>gan</i> ‘with’	<i>y</i> ‘to’
<b>sg.</b>	<b>1</b>	<i>arnaf</i>	<i>ragof</i>	<i>genyf</i>	<i>ymi</i>
	<b>2</b>	<i>arnat</i>	<i>ragot</i>	<i>genhyt</i>	<i>yti</i>
	<b>3 m.</b>	<i>arnaw</i>	<i>radaw</i>	<i>gantaw</i>	<i>iddaw</i>
	<b>3 f.</b>	<i>arnei</i>	<i>ragdei</i>	<i>genti</i>	<i>iddi</i>
<b>pl.</b>	<b>1</b>	<i>arnam</i>	<i>ragom</i>	<i>genym</i>	<i>ynni</i>
	<b>2</b>	<i>arnwch</i>	<i>ragoch</i>	<i>genwch</i>	<i>ywch</i>
	<b>3</b>	<i>arnu</i>	<i>racdudd</i>	<i>gantu</i>	<i>uddudd</i>

## 4.2 Numerals

MW has a vigesimal counting system (based on the number twenty). Actually, it is a kind of mixed decimal-vigesimal system. In the following table, you will notice that some numerals have alternative forms with an extra plosive at the end; these are used if the numeral directly precedes the noun. Cf. 5.1.5:18 for a summary of the syntax of counted nouns.

### 4.2.1 Cardinals

<b>m.</b>	<b>unisex</b>	<b>f.</b>		
'1'	<i>un</i>		'11'	<i>un ar ddeg</i> 1 over 10
'2'	<i>deu</i>	<i>dwy</i>	'12'	<i>deuddeg</i> 2,10
'3'	<i>tri</i>	<i>teir</i>	'13'	<i>tri/teir ar ddeg</i>
'4'	<i>pedwar</i>	<i>pedeir</i>	'14'	<i>pedwar/pedeir ar deg</i>
'5'	<i>pym(p)</i>		'15'	<i>pymtheg</i> 5,10
'6'	<i>chwech</i>		'16'	<i>un ar bymtheg</i> 1 over 5,10
'7'	<i>seith</i>		'17'	<i>deu/dwy ar bymtheg</i>
'8'	<i>wyth</i>		'18'	<i>deunaw</i> 2·9
'9'	<i>naw</i>		'19'	<i>pedwar/pedeir ar bymtheg</i>
'10'	<i>deg</i>		'20'	<i>ugein(t)</i>
'21'	<i>un ar ugein</i>	1 over 20	'120'	<i>chwe ugein</i> 6·20
'30'	<i>deg ar ugein</i>	10 over 20	'180'	<i>naw ugein</i>
'40'	<i>deu ugein, dugein</i>	2·20	'200'	<i>deucan</i> 2·100
'41'	<i>un a ddeu ugein</i>		'300'	<i>trychan</i>
'60'	<i>trei ugein, trugein</i>	3·20	'1000'	<i>mil</i> (f. noun)
'100'	<i>can(t)</i>		'2000'	<i>dwy mil</i> 2·1000
'101'	<i>can ag un</i>	100+1	'6666'	<i>chwe a thri ugein</i> <i>a chwechan a chwe mil</i>

§48-50

### 4.2.2 Ordinals

Ordinals are formed from the cardinals with the suffix *-(h)ed*, and they are not marked for gender. However, the words for 'first' *cyntaf* and 'second' *eil* are irregular, whereas 'third' and 'fourth' distinguish between masculine *trydydd, pedwerydd* and feminine *trydedd, pedweredd*.

§52,53

### 4.3 Verbs

In dictionaries, verbs are listed in the form of the verbal noun. The sample verb in the paradigms is *caru* ‘to love’. The forms which have *ker-* instead of *car-* show a regular process of MW verbal morphology by which *a* changes to *e* in the respective forms. In the 3 sg. pres. ind. the stem vowel(s) change according to the following patterns.

§126-144

#### ABLAUT PATTERNS (3 sg. pres. ind.)

<i>a</i>	→	<i>ei</i>
<i>o</i>	→	<i>y</i>
<i>e</i>	→	<i>ei/y</i>
<i>w</i>	→	<i>y</i>
<i>aw</i>	→	<i>o</i>
<i>aw</i>	→	<i>eu/y</i>
<i>a..a</i>	→	<i>e..ei/y</i>
<i>a..o</i>	→	<i>e..y</i>
<i>a..e</i>	→	<i>e..y</i>

#### 4.3.1 Indicative

		<b>present</b>	<b>imperfect</b>	<b>preterite</b>	<b>pluperfect</b>
<b>sg.</b>	<b>1</b>	<i>car-af</i>	<i>car-wn</i>	<i>cer-eis</i>	<i>car-ass-wn</i>
	<b>2</b>	<i>cer-y</i>	<i>car-ut</i>	<i>cer-eist</i>	<i>car-ass-ut</i>
	<b>3</b>	<i>car</i>	<i>car-ei</i>	<i>car-awdd</i>	<i>car-ass-ei</i>
<b>impers.</b>	<b>3</b>	<i>cer-ir</i>	<i>cer-id</i>	<i>car-wyd</i>	<i>car-ass-id</i>
<b>pl.</b>	<b>1</b>	<i>car-wn</i>	<i>car-em</i>	<i>car-ass-am</i>	<i>car-ass-em</i>
	<b>2</b>	<i>cer-wch</i>	<i>car-ewch</i>	<i>car-ass-wch</i>	<i>car-ass-ewch</i>
	<b>3</b>	<i>car-ant</i>	<i>cer-ynt</i>	<i>car-ass-ant</i>	<i>car-ass-ynt</i>

The sg. 3 past has alternative forms: *-as*, *-wys*, *-ws*. *-es* occurs when the stem vowel is *o* (e.g., *torr-es*). *-is* occurs with verbs that have stem vowel *-a-* which umlauts to *-ei-* (e.g., *par-af* → *peir-is*).

#### 4.3.2 Subjunctive and Imperative

		<b>subj. pres.</b>	<b>subj. imperf.</b>	<b>imperative</b>
<b>sg.</b>	<b>1</b>	<i>car-h-wyf</i>	<i>car-h-wn</i>	
	<b>2</b>	<i>cer-h-ych</i>	<i>car-h-ut</i>	<i>car</i>
	<b>3</b>	<i>car-h-o</i>	<i>car-h-ei</i>	<i>car-ed</i>
<b>impers.</b>	<b>3</b>	<i>car-h-er</i>	<i>cer-h-id</i>	
<b>pl.</b>	<b>1</b>	<i>car-h-om</i>	<i>car-h-em</i>	<i>car-wm</i>
	<b>2</b>	<i>cer-h-och</i>	<i>car-h-ewch</i>	<i>car-wch</i>
	<b>3</b>	<i>car-h-ont</i>	<i>cer-h-ynt</i>	<i>car-ent</i>

## 4.3.3 Verbal noun and Verbal Adjectives

## FORMATIONS OF THE VERBAL NOUN

stem contains	morpheme	example
	bare stem	<i>adaw</i> ‘the leaving’
<i>-a-</i> , <i>-ae-</i> , <i>-e-</i> , <i>-y-</i>	add <i>-u</i>	<i>caru</i> ‘the loving’
<i>-y</i>	add <i>-aw</i>	<i>ceissyaw</i> ‘the seeking’
<i>-o-</i> , <i>-oe-</i>	add <i>-i</i>	<i>agori</i> ‘the opening’

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## COMMON VERBAL ADJECTIVES

<b>past</b>	<i>car-edig</i>	≈ past participle: <i>darparedig</i> ‘prepared’
<b>future</b>	<i>car-adwy</i>	≈ future participle: <i>credadwy</i> ‘to be believed’

## 4.3.4 Tense

This section covers the semantics of the tense system of MW. For reasons of clarity, Reichenbach’s formalism Reichenbach [1947] is used occasionally. Aspect is not expressed grammatically in MW.

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PRESENT	1. simple present, also gnomic (S,R,E) 2. consuetudinal present 3. future (S - R,E) 4. perfect, only with <i>bod</i> (E - R,S/XN)
CONSUEUDINAL PRESENT	habitual/customary actions in the present
PROGRESSIVE	progressive present in the paraphrase: <i>bod + yn + vn</i>
IMPERFECT	1. continuous past (esp. in paraphrase: <i>bod[imp] + yn + vn</i> ) 2. consuetudinal past 3. present in indirect speech 4. posteriority (embedded in past sentences), cf. ex. 1 5. conditionality (embedded in subjunctive sentences), cf. ex. 2
CONSUEUDINAL PAST	habitual/customary actions in the past
PRETERITE	simple past (E - S,R)
PLUPERFECT	posteriority in the past (E - R - S)

ex. 1 *Diheu oedd genthi na defei Ereint fyth.*  
 sure was to her part. never Ereint came  
 ‘She was sure that Ereint would never come.’

ex. 2 *Bei gwnelhit fy nghyghor i ny thorrit kyfreitheu llys.*  
 would-be followed-were my advice I not did break laws court  
 ‘If my advice was followed, the laws of the court would not be broken.’

## 4.3.5 Mood

The indicative is used for declarative sentences (statements), whereas the subjunctive is either triggered in

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embedded structures (ex. 1), or it is used to express possibility, uncertainty, etc. (ex. 2). The imperative is used for orders and recommendations.

- ex. 1 *Mi a wyn pwy wyt ti.*  
 I part. know who are (subj.) you  
 ‘I know who you are.’
- ex. 2 *Nyd oes yndi neb.*  
 not would be in it anyone.  
 ‘Not that there would be anyone in it.’

#### 4.3.6 Distribution of the 3rd Person Forms of *bod*

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The 3rd person (mainly sg. pres. ind.) of *bod* has more than one morphological form. The variants are triggered by syntactic constructions in which the forms occur. All forms in the following table are 3rd person sg. pres. ind. if not otherwise indicated.

form	construction	example
<i>ys</i>	1. in topicalization paraphrases [ <i>ys</i> + noun phrase + relative] 2. in the impersonal paraphrase [ <i>ydd</i> + <i>ys</i> + verbal noun]	<i>Ys mi a'e heirch.</i> ‘It is I that she searches.’ <i>Yd ys yn lluydaw.</i> ‘There is marching.’
<i>yw</i> , <i>ynt</i> (3 pl.)	in simple copular sentences	<i>Beth yw hynny.</i> ‘What is that?’
( <i>y</i> ) <i>mae</i> , ( <i>y</i> ) <i>maent</i> (3 pl.)	in existential sentences with definite subject (also questions)	<i>Mae ymma Matholwch?</i> ‘Is there Matholwch?’
<i>oes</i>	in non-affirmative existential sentences with an indefinite subject	<i>A oes porthawr?</i> ‘Is there a porter?’
<i>bo</i> (pres. subj.)	1. in subordinate clauses with a superl. adjective (meaning ‘the more...’)	<i>bo mynychaf yd edrychych</i> be more-often part. inspect = ‘the more often you inspect’
<i>bei</i> (imp. subj.)	2. introducing sentence-initial topics, giving a hypothetical meaning	<i>bei gwnelhit fy nghyghor...</i> would followed my advice ‘if one followed my advice...’

#### 4.3.7 On the Impersonal 3rd Person (‘Passive’)

There is no passive in MW. The impersonal forms are sometimes referred to as passives, but they are actually just 3rd person forms without specific reference (*Cerir Branwen*. ‘One loves Branwen.’) and are sometimes best translated as passives in English and other languages (‘Branwen is loved’).

Notice that the construction *bei gwnelhit fy nghyghor i, ny thorrit cyfreithu llys* (cf. *bo/bei* above) might look like a periphrastic passive with *bod*, but that it is just a strong topic word order. You can tell from the fact that *bei* and *gwnelhit* are both inflected for subjunctive, imperfect, and 3rd person.



## 5 Syntax

### 5.1 Nominal Word Order

#### 5.1.1 Noun and Noun

A noun following a noun stands in a genitive relationship with the first noun.

*Branwen ferch Lyr*  
 Branwen daughter of Lyr (positional gen.)  
 ‘Branwen, the daughter of Lyr’

#### 5.1.2 Noun and Adjective

The adjective follows the noun it modifies, but there is also a periphrastic construction with *a*.

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<b>noun + adjective</b>	<i>dial bychan</i> vengeance small = ‘small vengeance’
<b>adjective + <i>a</i> ‘of’ + noun</b>	<i>bychan a ddial</i> small of vengeance = ‘small vengeance’

#### 5.1.3 The two types of possessives

The stressed possessives pronouns function like nouns (see English ‘the **mine**’ etc.). They can not be used to modify a noun (as in English ‘**my** belongings’).

*y rei teu iddaw* ‘some of his’  
 the some the his to him

*arnaf i ag ar y meu* ‘on me and the mine’  
 on me I and on the mine

The unstressed and the suffixed possessives occur prenominal. The suffixed pronouns also attach to certain conjunctions (*a, no, na*) and prepositions (*a, y, o*). They are identical to the suffixed personal pronouns.

*fy mab*  
 my son

*y’th dy*  
 to your house

#### 5.1.4 Demonstratives

The demonstratives behave syntactically like adjectives, and can thus co-occur with the article in the noun phrase (ex. 1), or they function like nouns (ex. 2).

ex. 1 *yr ynys hon*  
 the island this = ‘this island’

ex. 2 *a hon a etholeis inheu*  
and she that elected I = 'and her, which I elected'

### 5.1.5 Counted Nouns

Numerals can behave syntactically like nouns (*y pedwar hynny* 'the four those' = 'those four'), or like adnominals. As adnominals, they precede the noun, which distinguishes them from adjectives (*deu wr* = 'two men'). The complex cardinals with *ar* place the noun between the first element and *ar*, e.g., *teir llong ar dec* 'three ships over ten' = 'thirteen ships'.

Ordinals precede the noun, sometimes forming a compound (e.g., *y trydygwr* 'the third man').

### 5.1.6 Comparison

The following table shows the patterns of comparative constructions. Notice the equative paraphrase with *mor. uch* is the irregular comparative of *uchel* 'high'.

degree	pattern	example
equative	<i>cy(n) A-(h)et a(c) N</i> 'as A as N'	<i>cyfelyned oedd a'r eur</i> 'as yellow it was as gold'
equative par.	<i>mor A a(g) N</i> 'as A as N'	<i>gweithred mor dybryd a hynny</i> 'an act as evil as that'
comparative	<i>A no(g) N</i> 'more A than N'	<i>y neb a vei uch nog ef</i> 'the somebody who would be higher than him'

## 5.2 Verbal Sentences

### 5.2.1 Preverbal Particles

The finite verb is almost always preceded by a particle which encodes the sentence type (declarative sentence, question, etc.). Only the infixed pronouns occur in between the particle and the verb. We list only the more frequent particles (which should be memorized) here.

#### AFFIRMATIVE PARTICLES

*a* most frequent in the 'abnormal order' (cf. 5.2.2:19)

*ef* only before 1, 3, impers. sg. verbs

It is **not** the pron. *ef*: *Ef gwneif beird byd yn llawen.*  
'I will make the bards of the world merry.'

*y(dd)* most frequent in 'normal order' (cf. 5.2.2:19)

*ydd* is used before V, *y* before C.



The verbal character of the verbal noun is preserved in that it can be modified by adverbial expressions (like *yn bryssur* ‘in haste’, as in *cerdded in bryssur* ‘to travel in haste’). Also, it occurs in the following (periphrastic) verbal constructions.

<b>construction</b>	<b>function</b>	<b>example</b>
<i>bod</i> + <i>yn</i> + vn.	progressive	<i>Yn eistedd ydd oeddynt ar garreg Harddlech.</i> lit. ‘Sitting they were on the rock of Hardlech.’
vn. + <i>a</i> + <i>gwneuthur</i>	focus	<i>Myned a orug Padrig y Iwerddon.</i> lit. ‘Going was Patrick to Ireland.’
finite verb + vn + vn + ..	coordination	(cf. example below)

*Y dygyfores fy nghyfoeth am ym penn a roddi dewis im.*  
part. rose (3 pl.) my people against my head and give (vn.) choice to me  
‘My people rose against me and gave me the choice.’

Notice that the logical subject of verbal nouns is usually a genitive (a noun standing after the vn.) or a prepositional construction with *o* (also standing after the vn.).

*cyn dyfod cwbl o’r oed*  
before coming (vn.) completion of the time  
‘before the end of the time came’

#### 5.4 Sentences with (ys)sef

(ys)sef is an irregular pronoun/copula of high frequency, formed as a contraction of a form of the verb *bod* (ys, 3 sg. pres.), and the pronoun *ef. sef* introduces a full sentence (including a finite verb) and is in construction with a (verbal) noun which follows that sentence. As you can see, the sentence-final phrase in the construction is in most cases separated by a comma.

*Sef a orug y macwyf yna, yscynnu ar y march.*  
this-is-what part. did the man then: mounting on the horse  
‘What the man then did was to mount the horse.’

*Sef lliw oedd arnunt, claerwyn llathreit.*  
this-is-what color was on-them: shining white  
‘The color they had was a shining white.’

#### 5.5 Relative Clauses

The preverbal particles usually connect the relative clause to its antecedent such that there are no relative pronouns (or other additional connectives) required. Usually, the verb in the relative clause does not agree in person and number with the antecedent; it is usually in the generic 3 sg. The following table summarizes all types of MW relative clauses.

type	construction	example
subject relative	n. + a + vb. <i>A charreg a oedd gyferbyn a phenn Nonn a holles.</i> 'And the stone, which was opposite to the head of Nonn, broke.'	
object relative	n. + a + vb. <i>Canys ti a fydy ebostol yn yr ynys a wely di.</i> 'For you will be bishop on the island which you see.'	
genetival relative	n. + a/y + vb. ... possessive <i>Ef a dysgawd llen a berthyni iddaw y dysgy.</i> 'He learned the knowledge the learning of which was necessary for him.'	
prepositional relative	n. + y/a + vb. ... conj. prep. <i>o achaws mab y roddes Duw iddaw bennaduraeth</i> 'because of the son to which God gave the authority'	
adverbial relative	n. + y + vb. <i>lle ny buassei ffynnawn eiryoet</i> 'at a place where there had never been a spring'	
'free' relative	a + vb. <i>ac a eilw y gyt y thi</i> 'and who he will call with you'	

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