Verb-subject Clauses in Young Children's Welsh: A Descriptive Account

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July 2025

This work examines finite clauses whose basic structure is [finite verb + (subject)] in which the subject is either overt or omitted through pro-drop. Collectively, such finite clauses are referred to as verb-subject finite clauses in this work. An account of such clauses contributes to any taxonomy of the general syntactic types of children's utterances.

Unless otherwise indicated, all examples in this study are based on a database of the conversations of young children three to seven years of age and for whom Welsh is their first language. Details about the database are available at https://users.aber.ac.uk/bmj/abercld/cronfa3_7/sae/intro.html.

The spellings of the words in the examples retain those used in the database, which are determined by (i) pronunciations in spontaneous spoken Welsh e.g. *ma'* for *mae*, and *wedo'* for *wedodd* 'said, told' and (ii) the need to distinguish homonyms e.g. aspect marker *yn*, preposition *yn1* 'in' and predicatival particle *yn2*. The examples also contain conventions which indicate various phenomena found in spontaneous spoken interactive discourse (such as repetition or overlapping speech).

For reasons which will be made clear, there are grounds for distinguishing two sorts of verb-subject clauses in Welsh, which are illustrated in the following introductory examples.

1 a. oo alla' i?
oh can.PRES.1SG I
'oh I can.'

b. na' i.
do.FUT.1SG I
'I will (do).'

c. ma' digon.
be.PRES.3SG enough
'there's enough.'

d. o'dd y teigar.
be.IMPF.3SG the tiger
'the tiger was.'

2. a. cei.
have.PRES.2SG
'(you) can / may.'

b. medraf.
can.PRES.1SG
'(I) can.'

c. neith.
oh do.FUT.3SG
'will do.'

d. oes.
be.PRES.3SG
= 'Is.'

We shall refer to the examples in (1) as minimal verb-subject finite clauses and to those in (2) as maximal verb-subject finite clauses — various shortened versions of these labels are used for economy of presentation. Maximal clauses are mainly translated literally in the examples in this work but positive ones amount to 'yes' and negative ones amount to 'no'.

We shall consider both types under the same analytic criteria and we shall see that they share some characteristics but are also considerably different.

1 Predicate phrase, ellipsis and anaphora

Both types of verb-subject clauses lack a predicate phrase: a structural gap follows the overt or dropped subject. This structural gap can be due to ellipsis. A predicate phrase can be added to minimal finite clauses, as a comparison of the examples in (1) with other database examples given in (3).

3 a. alla' i neud e?
can.PRES.1SG I do it
'I can do it.'

b. na' i no:l y tywod i' ti.
do.FUT.1SG I fetch the sand for you.SG
'I'll fetch the sand for you.'

c. ma' digon yn1 y cornel.
be.PRES.3SG enough in the corner
'there's enough in the corner.'

d. o'dd y teigar wedi mynd lan mewn1 fanna.
be.IMPF.3SG the tiger PERF go up into there
'the tiger had gone up into there.'

The addition of a predicate phrase is not possible with maximal finite clauses, as the following devised illustrations show.

4. a. * cei yn dod i' fama. [Devised illustration]
have.PRES.2SG PROG come to here
translation not possible

b. * medraf weld yn iawn. [Devised illustration]
can.PRES.1SG see ADV alright
translation not possible

c. * oo gnaf roi hwn yn+o:l. [Devised illustration]
oh do.FUT.1SG put this.M back
translation not possible

d. * oes wedi mynd. [Devised illustration]
be.PRES.3SG PERF go
translation not possible

Assuming that ellipsis applies to both minimal and maximal clauses, we can say that it is optional with minimal clauses but compulsory with maximal clauses.

The test of predicate phrase restoration provides a major syntactic difference between minimal and maximal finite clauses. It is the basis for the labels maximal and minimal: minimal finite clauses are at their minimum structure but can be expanded with predicate addition; maximal finite clauses cannot be expanded with predicate addition and are at their maximum structure. These are basic, introductory comments. We shall see in sections 3, 4, 6.2 and 8.2 that some words and phrases can be added.

The use of ellipsis in verb-subject utterances can depend upon anaphora, that is for the purposes of this study, backward reference to previous utterances in discourse. Previous utterances can supply a missing predicate.

5 a. CHILD1: w i 'di gorffen.
be.PRES.1SG I PERF finish
'I've finshed.'
CHILD2: wyt ti?
be.PRES.2SG you.SG
'have you?'
b. CHILD1: os xxx [= 2 sill] ni 'n cal e ' n2 rhydd, byse 'n2 help.
if xxx we PROG have it PRED free be.CNTF.3SG PRED help
if xxxx we get it free, it would be a help.'
CHILD2: oo bysefe.
oh BE.CNTF.3SG it
'oh it would.'

6 a. CHILD1: ma' 'n2 galed.
be.PRES.3SG PRED hard
'it's hard.'
CHILD2: ydy.
be.PRES.3SG
'(it) is.'
b. CHILD1: ti' 'n llanw hwnna?
be.PRES.2SG PROG fill that.M
'are you filling that?'
CHILD2: odw.
be.PRES.1SG
'(I) am.'

These examples give illustrtations of the role of anaphora and ellipsis. But it is not the case that all examples in the database are as clear as these and in many instances the anaphoric source is in the mind of the speaker and the assumptions of the addressee; or it may be lost through missing data in preceding utterances.

The examples in (5) and (6) give some indication of the semantic relationships between verb-subject clauses with their anaphoric sources. Both minimal and maximal clauses can be used in agreements and disagreements but maximal clauses are especially used in answers to yes/no questions as in (6b).

The uses of maximal phrases in discourse can provide an alternative label for them, namely, responsives. We are, however, concerned with the syntax of both types in this account and not with their functions in discourse. Jones, B.M. (1999) covers the latter and also considers syntax.

2 Types of verbs

2.1 Auxiliary verbs and the copula

In both minimal and maximal finite clauses, the finite verb is either an auxiliary verb or the copula (which is traditionally viewed as an auxiliary verb in some contexts).The auxiliary verbs found in verb-subject clauses in the database are *cael* 'have, get, receive', *gwneud* 'do', *gallu* 'can', *medru* 'can', and *dylai* 'should, ought'. Examples of auxiliary verbs and the copula in minimal and maximal finite clauses are as follows respectively.

7 a. ga' i?
have.PRES.1SG I
'may i?'

b. nei di?
do.FUT.2SG you.SG
'will you?'

c. allwch chi.
can.PRES.2PL you.PL
'you can.'

d. hei dylen' nw.
hey should.3PL they
'hey they should.'

e. ond fedrwch chi rwan.
but can.PRES.2PL you.PL now

f. ma' fe.
be.PRES.3SG he

8 a. cawn.
have.pres.1pl
'(we) can / may'

b. gneith.
do.FUT.3SG
'will do.'

c. gallwn.
can.PRES.1PL
'(we) can.'

d. medraf.
can.PRES.1SG
'(I) can.'

e. bydd.
be.FUT.3SG
'will be.'

There are no examples of the auxiliary *dylai* 'should' ought' in maximal finite clauses in the database, although they can occur as such. Section 9 outlines problems of identifying the category of *gweud* and *cael* in verb-subject clauses.

It is not the case that all examples of utterances which have the sequence finite verb + subject are verb-subject clauses.

9 a. wedo' Mami.
say.PERV.3SG Mammy
'Mammy said.'

b. cwmpodd e.
fall.PERV.3SG he
'he fell.'

c. neidiodd pob un ceffyl.
jump.PERV.3SG every one horse
'every single horse jumped.'

d. a da'th tractor.
and come.PERV.3SG tractor
'and a tractor came.'

The finite verbs are lexical verbs (*gweud* 'say, tell', *cwympo* 'fall', *neidio* 'jump' and *dod* 'come') and not auxiliaries and, further, they are part of a predicate phrase. Verb-initial word-order in Welsh does not make this latter point obvious but can be substantiated by more abstract analyses which involve verb movement. See Borsley, Tallerman and Willis (2007: 48-52, 54-56) for discussion.

2.2 The copula again: *m*-, *y*- and *o*- forms

Although the copula can occur in both minimal and maximal finite clauses as examples (1c-d) and (2d) show, there is a difference relating to the third person forms (singular and plural) of the present tense. In brief, there are three forms which are relevant to this discussion:

- *m*-forms: *mae* 'is' and *maen* 'are'
- *y*-forms: *ydy / yw* 'is' and *ydyn* 'are'
- *o*-form: *oes* 'is'.

The realizations of these forms varies in the spontaneous spoken speech of the dialects and in the database, but for economy of presentation we shall not provide all the details here (but variation can be found in the examples). For economy and ease of presentation, too, we shall not explore all the contexts in which these forms can occur (Borsley, Tallerman and Willis 2007: 256-260 for details). The important point at this stage is that *m*-forms occur in positive and declarative minimal finite clauses.

10 a. a ma' un1 fi.
and be.PRES.3SG one I
'and mine is.'

b. ma'n nw.
be.PRES.3PL they
'they are.'

c. ma' fe.
be.PRES.3SG he
'he is.'

A maximal clause can be said to be positive and declarative — for instance when giving a positive answer to a question as in (6b). But only *y*- and *o*-forms occur in maximal finite clauses and *m*-forms do not occur occur. Examples (55a), (55c) and (57) provide illustrations of *y*- and *m*-forms together.

3 Negation

Negation provides very clear differences between minimal finite clauses and maximal finite clauses.

3.1 Preverbal particles and adverbial negators

The negation of minimal finite clauses depends upon the characeristics of the subject. Those which contain a definite subject are made negative by using an adverbial negator such as *ddim* (which also occurs as *'im* or *'m*) in post-subject position.

11 a. 'dy hwnna ddim!
be.PRES.3SG that.M NEG
'this isn't!'

b. fuo dad fi ddim.
be.PERV.3SG dad I NEG
'my dad wasn't.'

c. w i ddim
be.PRES.1SG I NEG
'I'm not.'

Minimal finite clauses which contain an indefinite but non-generic subject are made negative with the negative quantifier *dim*.

12 a. 's dim lot o dywod.
be.PRES.3SG NEG lot of sand
'there's not a lot of sand.'

b. 's dim wa'n'ieth.
be.PRES.3SG NEG difference
'there's no difference.'

c. 's dim ots.
be.PRES.3SG NEG odds
'there's no odds / it doesn't matter,'

Maximal finite clauses are made negative by using the preverbal particle *na*, which occurs as *nac* before vowels or, in spontaneous speech, *nag*.

13 a. na chei.
NEG have.PRES.2SG
= '(you) can /may not..'

b. na fedra'.
NEG can.PRES.1SG
'(I) can't.'

c. na neith.
NEG do.FUT.3SG
'will not do.'

d. na dw.
NEG be.PRES.1SG
'(I) am not.'

In spontaneous speech, the negative particle form *na* is used in place of the maximal finite clause.

The form *ddim* can occur in maximal clauses, as is outlined in section 3.4.

3.2 Negative clitic

Negative minimal finite clauses can use a negative preverbal clitic *d / t* subject to constraints, namely, that it is confined to the past imperfect and present tense of the copula.

14 a. d oedd 'o ddim.
CL.NEG be.IMPF.3SG he NEG
'he wasn't.'

b. d ydw i ddim.
CL.NEG be.PRES.1SG I NEG
'I'm not.'

c. d ydy 'o ddim!
CL.NEG be.PRES.3SG he NEG
'he isn't!'

d. on' d o'n1 i ddim.
but CL.NEG be.IMPF.1SG I NEG
'but I wasn't.'

In the database, for the purposes of computer searches and retrieval, the *d / t* forms are tagged as a word-form — a convention which is followed in the illustrations in (14). It is significant, however, that these forms are limited to occurring before copular forms which begin with a vowel, which in negative clauses includes the third person forms. There is, then, a phonological basis to their occurrences. On this basis, they are analysed not as preverbal particles but as clitics which occur (i) in

negative clauses and (ii) if the past imperfect and present tense forms of the copula occur — that is, if there is a vocalic context. In written versions of spontaneous spoken Welsh, they are written attached to the copular forms — *dydw i ddim* and *doedd o ddim*. (In a wider view of these forms, the vocalic context is confined to the copular forms and not to lexical verbs which have vocalic beginnings. The relevant context is not entirely phonological.) Borsley and Jones (2005) provide a more detailed account of this clitic and negation in general.

3.3 Interrogative-negative particle

There is a preverbal particle which is used to ask a negative question. It occurs in the following forms: *ynd*, *'d*, and *'t* before vowels and *yn'* and *'n'* before consonants. It is used in maximal finite clauses.

15 a. ynd ydw.
INT.NEG be.PRES.1SG
'aren't I.'

b. 'd ydy?
INT.NEG be.PRES.3SG
'isn't it?

c. 't ydy?
INT.NEG be.PRES.3SG
'isn't it?'

d. yn' gnawn,, Alan?
INT.NEG do.FUT.1PL Alan
'won't we, Alan?'

The initial apostrophe in the spelling of the interrogative-negative preverbal particle, *'d / 't* is a transcriptional device which distinguishes it from the negative clitic *d / t* in the database.

Interrogative and negative clauses are possible with minimal clauses but they are produced not by using an interrogative-negative preverbal particle but by giving interrogative intonation to a negative minimal clause.

3.4 Emphatic *ddim*

We have seen that adverbial *ddim* is used to negate minimal finite clauses while a preverbal negative particle is used to negate maximal finite clauses. But there are examples of maximal finite clauses

which contain *ddim*. In the database, they are preceded by a comma for the purposes of computer search and retrieval, and that convention is retained here. (Translation is difficult with these examples.)

16 a. na dw, ddim.
NEG be.PRES.1SG NEG
'(I) am not, not.'

b. nag y't, ddim.
NEG be.PRES.2SG NEG
'(you) are not, not.'

c. na 'dy, ddim.
NEG be.PRES.3SG NEG
'was not, not.'

d. nag oes, ddim.
NEG be.PRES.3SG NEG
'is not, not.'

e. nag w i, ddim.
NEG be.PRES.1SG I NEG
'I am not, not

There is a problem of interpretation here. One reading can say that *ddim* in such examples is adverbial *ddim*, which as we have seen is associated with minimal finite clauses. But this interpretation is not straighforward. First, the question arises as to why the negative preverbal particle *na / nac / nag* occurs and not the negative clitic *d / t*. Second, the copula form *oes* in (16d) does not occur with adverbial *ddim* but with quantifier *dim*. Third, and finally, the vast majority of negative maximal finite clauses occur only with a nagative preverbal particle and occurrences of *ddim* are infrequent. A different reading is offered, namely, that the function of *ddim* in examples like those in (16) is to supply emphasis. This reading avoids the contentious matters. Further, it also explains why *ddim* can occur in positive maximal finite clauses.

17 a. yndw, ddim.
be.PRES.1SG NEG
'(I) am, not.'

b. ydyn, ddim.
be.pres.1pl NEG
(we) are, not.'

c. ody, ddim.
be.PRES.3SG NEG
'is, not.'

In such examples *ddim* is not negative but is emphatic.

4 Function words: aspect and predicatival particle

Minimal finite clauses can contain an aspect marker. It occurs in a post-subject position. In examples (18a-c), the form *yn* occurs as a progressive aspect marker. In (18d-e). the form *wedi* occurs as a perfect aspect marker. (Translating the progressive examples is difficult.)

18 a. dw i yn.
be.PRES.1SG I PROG
'I am.'

b. ma' un1 fi yn.
be.PRES.3SG one I PROG
'mine is.'

c. ma' 'r pelican yn.
be.pres.3SG the pelican PROG
'the pelican is.'

d. wel o'dd Paul wedi.
wel be.IMPF.3SG Paul PERF
'well Paul has.'

e. dw i wedi.
be.PRES.1SG I PERF
'I have.'

f. bysaf fi wedi 'wan.
be.CNTF.1SG I PERF now
'I would have now.'

Aspect markers also occur in negative minimal clauses, in which case they follow the adverbial negator.

19 a. dw i ddim wedi.
be.PRES.1SG I NEG PERF
'I haven't.'

b. dw i ddim yn,, na.
be. PRES.1SG I NEG PROG no
'I'm not, no.'

c. ond oedd yr Almaenwyr a 'r pobl eraill ymm ddim wedi.
but be.IMPF.3SG the Germans and the people others uhm NEG PERF
'but the Germans and the other people haven't.'

Maximal finite clauses do not contain aspect markers.

The predicatival particle *yn2* can also occur in minimal clauses but not in maximal clauses. For extra clarity, the discourse context is provided in these examples.

20 a. CHILD1: gofalus be ti' 'n neud,, A---.
careful what be.PRES.2SG PROG do A---
'careful what you are doing, A---.'

A---: dw i yn2.
be.PRES.1SG I PRED
'I am.'

b. CHILD1: o'dd hwnna 'n2 <good one,,> [%Saesneg] boi.
be.IMPF.3SG that.M PRED good one boy
'that was a good one, boy.'

CHILD2: o'dd e yn2.
be.IMPF.3SG he PRED
'it was.'

There are fewer examples of minimal phrases containing predicatival *yn2* in the database than examples which contain an aspect marker.

5 Subject: pro-drop and constituency

In describing the phrases which can occur as subjects in minimal and maximal clauses, the following distincions are made:

i. phrases which are not noun phrases are excluded (see section 7).

ii. trace phrases are excluded (see section 8.1)

iii. noun phrases which follow expletive *yna* 'there' are included (see section 6.2)

5.1 Pro-drop

The subject in a maximal finite clause is either omitted by pro-drop or it is a personal pronoun. Previous examples of maximal finite clauses have involved pro-drop but examples are also given here in (21) for convenience of comparison with examples which contain a pronominal subject given in (22).

21 a. na chei.
NEG have.PRES.2SG
= 'no.'

b. na na'.
NEG do.FUT.1SG
'(I) will not.'

c. nag w.
NEG be. PRES.1SG
'(I) am not.'

d. nag yw.
NEG be.PRES.3SG
'is not.'

e. oi nag y'n'.
hoy NEG be.PRES.3PL
'hoy we are not.'

22 a. na chei di.
NEG have.PRES.2SG you.SG
= 'no.'

b. na na' i.
NEG do.FUT.1SG I
'I will not.'

c. nag w i.
NEG be. PRES.1SG I
'I am not.'

d. nag yw e?
NEG be.PRES.3SG he
'he is not.'

e. nag y'n' nw.
NEG be.PRES.3PL they
'they are not.'

The overt pronouns in maximal finite clauses occur in negatives in the database.

Interrogative negative maximal clauses, with the interrogative-negative preverbal particle, likewise can occur with pro-drop or an overt subject.

23 a. ynd ydw.
INT.NEG be. PRES.1SG
'am (I) not / aren't (I).'

b. 'd ydy?
INT.NEG be.PRES.3SG
'isn't (it /he / she)?'

c. 't ydy?
INT.NEG be.PRES.3SG
'isn't (it /he / she)?'

d. yn' gnawn?
INT.NEG do.fut.1pl
'won't (we)?'

24 a. ynd wyt ti?
INT.NEG be.PRES.2SG you.SG
'aren't you.'

b. yn' bydd 'o?
INT.NEG be.FUT.3SG he
'won't he?'

c. 'd o'n' nhw?
INT.NEG be.IMPF.3PL they
'weren't they?'

d. 't ydy fe.
INT.NEG be.PRES.3SG he
'isn't he / it.'

The presence of subjects in minimal finite clauses is different. It is mainly the case that the subject is present and pro-drop mainly occurs in the database if the verb is followed by another constituent, which means that pro-drop occurs in negative clauses and clauses which contain an aspect marker. There are two examples of pro-drop in a minimal clause and in both cases the minimal clause occurs with a maximal clause, illustrated in (25d).

25 a. na,,, ma' ddim.
no be.PRES.3SG NEG
'no, (he) isn't.'

b. oo mae wedi.
oh be.PRES.3SG PERF
oh (he) has.'

c. a weithia ma' ddim yn.
and sometimes be.PRES.3SG NEG PROG
'and sometimes (he) isn't.'

d. ydy,,, mae.
be.PRES.3SG be.PRES.3SG
'is,is.'

Overall, there is, then, no either-or difference between aximal and minimal clauses in terms of pro-drop but rather a difference of tendencies. Table 1 gives the frequencies and percentages for the occurrence of pro-drop in minimal and maximal finite clauses.

Table 1. Pro-drop in verb-subject clauses

	Pro-drop	Overt	Totals	% Pro-drop
Maximal finite clause	2929	35	2964	98.82%
Minimal finite clause	12	972	984	1.22%
Totals	2941	1007	3948	

The table shows that pro-drop is the norm in maximal finite clauses but is very infrequent in minimal clauses.

5.2 Constituency

The subject phrases in minimal finite clauses can be personal pronouns as in (1a) and (1b). But the subjects can also be phrases of varying constituency, as (1c) and in (1d) show. Other examples of subject phrases are as follows.

26 a. o'dd dau+ddeg+pump o bobl.
be.IMPF.3SG twenty-five of people
'there were twenty-fuve people.'

b. a ma' lloi bach y teirw.
and be.PRES.3SG calves small the bulls
'and there are the little calves of the bull.'

c. mae gyd o ffrinds e.
be.PRES.3SG all of friends he
'all his friends are.'

d. ma' chwaer hy:n a browd.
be.PRES.3SG sister older and brother
'older sister and brother are.'

In the case of maximal finite clauses, an overt subject is only realized by a personal pronoun. The frequencies for subject phrase constituency in maximal finite clauses and minimal finite clauses are revealing, as shown in table 2.

Table 2. Constituency of the subject in verb-subject clauses

	Personal Pronoun	Other phrases	Totals	% Other Phrases
Maximal finite clause	35	0	35	0.00%
Minimal finite clause	458	514	972	52.88%
Totals	493	514	976	

In minimal finite clauses, phrases which are not personal pronouns amount to 52.88% while such phrases do not occur at all in maximal finite clauses. Subject phrase constituency provides a major difference between minimal and maximal finite clauses.

6 More about copular clauses

6.1 Pronominal copulars

In certain conditions, the finite copula can be omitted, namely in the case of:

i. informal spontaneous spoken Welsh
ii. the present tense
iii. a personal pronoun subject

iv. and primarily with the first and second persons

The omission of the copula leaves the pronominal subject as the only overt indication of a finite copular clause — hence, the label pronominal copulars. In the case of the first peron singular, *fi* is used and not *i*. Such pronominal copulars can occur in minimal finite clauses. In the database, pronouns in pronominal copulars are tagged wiith a final apostrophe, a convention which is retained here.

27 a. ti'?
be.PRES.2SG
'(are) you?'
b. na,,, ti'!
no be.PRES.2SG
'NO, you (are)!'

Like canonical copulars, pronominal copulars can contain negative adverbial *ddim* and / or an aspect marker.

28 a. ti' ddim.
be.PRES.2SG NEG
'you (are) not.'
b. fi' ddim.
be. PRES.1SG NEG
'I (am) not.'
29 a. ni' yn.
be.pres.1pl PROG
'we (are).'
b. ti' wedi?
be.PRES.2SG PERF
'have you?'
30 a. ti' 'im yn?
be.PRES.2SG NEG PROG
'you (are) not.'
b. a fi' ddim yn.
and be.PRES.1SG NEG PROG
'I (am) not.'

In the database, the pronouns in pronominal copulars are overwhemingly *fi* 'I' or *ti* 'you.SG' but there are a few examples of *ni* 'we', *chi* 'you.PL' and *nw* 'they'.

6.2 Expletive *yna* 'there'

Expletive *yna* (shortened to *'na* and even *"a* in informal spontaneous speech) occurs in post-verb position in copular clauses which have an indefinite but non-generic subject. The following examples illustrate expletive *yna* 'there' in locative copular clauses, taken from the database.

31 a. ma' 'na rywbeth mewn fanna.
be.PRES.3SG there something in there
'there's something in there.'

b. ma' 'na dwll yn'o fo.
be.PRES.3SG there hole in.3SG.M it
'there's a ho;e in it.'

c. ma' 'na ffenest yn1 y to.
be.PRES.3SG there window in the roof
'there's a window in the roof.'

d. oes 'na gadeira 'na?
be.PRES.3SG there chairs there
'are there chairs there?'

e. ma' 'na un1 arall fanna.
be.PRES.3SG there one other there
'there's another one there.'

Examples like these have the linear sequence [Copula + *yna* + Subject + Locative Complement]. Expletive *yna* 'there' occurs in other syntactic contexts but the examples in (31) suffice for the purposes of this work. The locative complement can be regarded as the predicate. When this is omitted, we have examples like those in (32).

32 a. ma' 'na lot o sand.
be.PRES.3SG there lot of sand
'there's a lot of snad.'

b. ma' 'na dwll.
be.PRES.3SG there hole
'there's a hole.'

c. oes 'na un?
be.PRES.3SG there one
'is there one?'

d. ma' 'na fwcad arall.
be.PRES.3SG there bucket other
'there's another bucket.'

e. ma' 'na un1 arall.
be.PRES.3SG there one other
'there's another one.'

However, ellipsis can go ever further in copular clauses which contain expletive *yna* 'there' in that the subject can also be omitted.

33 a. o's 'na?
be.PRES.3SG there
'is there?'

b. oes,,, mae 'na.
be.PRES.3SG be.PRES.3SG there
'yes, there is.'

Examples like these are also viewed as minimal finite clauses.

7 Other minimal clauses

7.1 Possessive clauses

Possessive clauses in Welsh are formed with the prepositions *gan* 'with', *gyda* 'with' and *efo* 'with'. Examples which contain a possessor and possession are as follows.

34 a. ma' genno' i lot o d'wod.
be.PRES.3SG with.1SG I lot of sand
'I've got a lot of sand.'

b. mae gyda nhw ge:ms da.
be.PRES.3SG with they games good
'they've got good games.'

c. ma' gen i fforc.
be.PRES.3SG with I fork
'I've got a fork.'

The linear sequence of such examples is [Copula + Prep Phrase + Noun Phradse], in which the prepositional phrase contains the possessor and the noun phrase contains the possession. There are other syntactic formations of possessive clauses in Welsh but those in (34) are relevant to this work.

The noun phrase can be omitted to leave [Copula + Prep Ph], which can be viewed as a minimal finite clause.

35 a. mae genno' fi.
be.PRES.3SG with.1SG I
'I've got.'
b. oedd gan dadi chi?
be.IMPF.3SG with daddy you.PL
'has your daddy got?'
c. 's gen ti?
be.PRES.3SG with you.SG
'have you got?'

There are examples of possessives like those in (36) which also contain a negative.

36 a. 's gen fi ddim.
be.PRES.3SG with I NEG
'I haven't got.'
b. <nag> [<] oes,, 's gynno chdi ddim!
neg be.PRES.3SG be.PRES.3SG with.2SG you.SG NEG
'no, you haven't got!'

If the negative word is interpreted as quantifier *dim* and not adverbial *ddim*, then the negative examples in (36) are not minimal finite clauses as quantifier *dim* provides another constituent. Example (36a) would then be translated as 'I haven't got any' and (36b) as 'you haven't got any.'

There is more to the syntax of possessive clauses in Welsh, which would deviate too much from the aims of this work if pursued here. A detailed account is available in Jones (2018).

7.2 *Rhaid*

The noun *rhaid* ‘necessity’ can occur in examples such as the following.

37 a. ma' raid bod 'i1 'n2 sa:l.
be.PRES.3SG necessity be she PRED ill
‘she must be ill.’

b. ma' raid i' fi neud hwn.
be.PRES.3SG necessity for I do this.M
‘I must do this.’

c. ma' raid cal hwn.
be.PRES.3SG necessity have this.M
‘we / you must have this.’

The various expressions which follow *rhaid* can be omitted to create a minimal finite clause.

38 a. o's rhaid?
be.PRES.3SG necessity
‘must it be?’

b. 's dim rhaid.
be.PRES.3SG NEG necessity
‘it doesn’t have to be.’

The examples in (37) are the only two examples in the database.

Piau ‘own’ clauses can also be reduced to minimal clauses but there are no examples in the database.

8 Other matters

8.1 Fronting

Welsh is a verb-first language and fronting is a movement rule whereby a constituent can be moved from its canonical position to initial position before the verb. In the case of minimal finite clauses, the subject can be fronted.

39 a. y # ci na'th.
the dog do.PERV.3SG
‘it was the dog that did it.’

b. chdi sy!
you.SG be.PRES.3SG
‘it’s you (that is)!’

c. fi sy 'wan ’wan.
I be.PRES.3SG now
‘it’s me (that is).’

d. hogia sy.
boys be.PRES.3SG
‘it’s boys (that are).’

This does not happen with maximal finite clauses.

8.2 Adjuncts

In this study, we are mainly concerned whether adjuncts occur and no attempt will be made to analyse their properties. But we can say that they occur either initially or finally.

Adjuncts of various sorts can occur in minimal finite clauses.

40 a. wel ne'st ti ddim,, naddo.
well do.PERV.2SG you.SG NEG no.PERF
‘well you didn’t, did you.’

b. so dw i ddim.
so be. PRES.1SG I NEG
‘soI’m not.’

c. weithiau wyt ti.
sometimes be.PRES.2SG you.SG
‘sometimes you are.’

41 a. fedar 'o ddim chwaith.
can.PRES.3SG he NEG neither
‘he can’t neither.’

b. ti' yn 'fyd.
be.PRES.3SG PROG also
‘you are also.’

c. 's dim digon 'to.
be.PRES.3SG NEG enough yet
'there's not enough yet.'

Examples of adjuncts in maximal finite clauses are as follows.

42 a. wel o's.
well be.PRES.3SG
'well is.'
b. ydw 'te1!
be. PRES.1SG then
'am then.'
c. yy yndy rwan.
uh be.PRES.3SG now
'uh is now.'

Table 3 gives the frequencies for adjuncts in minimal finite clauses and adjuncts in maximal finite clauses.

Table 3. Adjuncts in verb-subject clauses

	No adjunct	With adjunct	Totals	% with adjunct
Minimal	886	143	1029	13.70%
Maximal	2975	5	2980	0.17%
Totals	3861	148	4009	

Overall, there are few adjuncts in verb-subject clauses but there is a tendency for more to occur in minimal finite clauses than maximal finite clauses.

8.3 Preverbal particles again

We have seen that a preverbal particle in maximal finite clauses and in negative minimal finite clauses. It is also possible to use a preverbal particle in positive minimal finite clauses – *fe* and *mi* can occur (written as *fe1* and *mi1* in the database). There are not enough examples in the database to make reliable generalizations and in a few cases the data are puzzling.

There is only one example of a positive precerbal particle in a minimal finite clause, namely, *mi*.

43 mi1 fedra' i weithia.
PT can. PRES.1SG I sometimes
'I can sometimes.'

There are examples which seem to involve *yr* before the copula but all instances are questioned by the transcriber.

44 a. 'r1 ydw i!
PT be. PRES.1SG I
'I am.'
b. 'r1 ydw ddim.
PT be. PRES.1SG NEG
'am not.'

In (44b), *yr* and the negative are unexpected together. No more will be said about these examples.

8.4 Omitted *wh*-word in questions

There are some examples of a verb-subject phrase which are questions and in which there is the possibility that a *wh*-word has been omitted.

45 a, ma' un1 glas?
be.PRES.3SG one blue
'is blue one?'
b. ma' bwced?
be.PRES.3SG bucket
'is bucket?'
c. ma' cowboi arall?
be.PRES.3SG cowboy other
'is cowboy other?'

Such examples contain an indefinite but non-generic subject. If these were minimal clause questions *oes* is expected rather than *mae*, as in the following examples.

46 a. o's rhagor o dywod?
be.PRES.3SG more of sand
'is there more sand?'

b. o's un1 arall?
be.PRES.3SG one other
'is there another one?'

c. o's dau glip?
be.PRES.3SG two clip
'are there two clips?'

Consequently, there are grounds for reading examples like those in (45) as utterances in which a *wh*-word has been omitted, namely, *lle?*. The following devised illustrations show *wh*-questions.

47 a, lle ma' un1 glas? [Devised example]
where be.PRES.3SG one blue
'where's the blue one?'

b. lle ma' bwced? [Devised example]
where be.PRES.3SG bucket
'whetre's the bucket?'

c. lle ma' cowboi arall? [Devised example]
where be.PRES.3SG cowboy other
'where's the other cowboy?'

In essence, then, examples like those in (45) are not verb-subject examples as there is an implied locative predicate.

8 Particle, expletive *yna* or pronoun?

There are examples which contain a form of *oes* (namely, *oes*, *o's*, *'s*) which are followewd by a form which has been transcribed as *'e*.

48 a. oes 'e?
be.PRES.3SG PT
'is?'

b. ynd oes 'e?
INT.NEG be.PRES.3SG PT
'isn't?'

c. nag oes 'e?
NEG be.PRES.3SG PT
'isn't?'

There is a comparison of the use of the form *fe* with the negative responsive *nage*, namely, *nage fe*, and the perfective responsive form *do*, namely, *do fe* and *yn' do fe*. In these expressions, *fe* has the appearanve of the third person masciline pronoun. It may be the etymolgical origin of the occurrence of *fe* in such expressions but by today it is more appropriate to analyses *fe* in *nage fe*, *do fe* and *yn' do fe* as a particlw of sorts. Likewise, *'e* can be viewed as a particle which occurs in maximal finite clauses and interrogative-negatives when the form *oes* occurs. However, there is an alternative consideration, namely, that *'e* is a form of expletive *yna* 'there'.

9 *Cael* 'have' and *gwneud* 'do, make' again

The verbs *cael* 'have, receive, get' and *gwneud* 'do, make' can occur as auxiliary verbs and as lexical verbs. The following examples illustrate their use as auxiliary verbs in clauses which contain a predicate phrase which is a verb phrase, that is, in so-called periphrastic verbal expressions

49 a. gewch chi benthyg hwn.
have.PRES.2PL you.PL borrow this.M
'you can borrow this.'

b. ga' i symud hwn o ffor?
have.PRES.1SG I move this.M from road
'can / may I move this out of the way.'

c. ia,,, geith 'o fynd.
yes have.PRES.3SG he go
'yes, he can / may go.'

50 a. na' i gal hwn.
do.FUT.1SG I have this.M
'I'll have this.'

b. na'th 'o golli 'i betha.
do.PERV.3SG he lose CL.3SG.M things
'he lost his things.'

c. na' i droi peth i' chdi.
do.FUT.1SG I turn some for you.SG
'I'll turn some for you.'

As an auxilary verb, *cael* indicates permission. *Gwneud* indicates tense and agreement features and provides a periphrastic alternative to simple inflected verbs.

The following examples illustrate their use as lexical verbs, that is, in so-called simple verbal expressions.

51 a. gawn ni ddrwg gin yn4 mamis ni,, na'n, na.
have.FUT.1PL we bad with CL.2PL mammies we do.fut.1pl NEG
we'll have a row from our mammies, won't we, no.'

b. gei di hwn.
have.FUT.2SG you.SG this.M
'you can have this.'

c. ge's i chips a tato.
have.perv.1SG I chips and potato
'I had chips and potato.'

52 a. neith 'wn y tywod ni.
do.FUT.3SG this.M the sand we
'this wil do / make our sand.'

b. neith y+hwn ddim+byd,, na neith?
do.FUT.3SG this nothing NEG do.FUT.3SG
'this will do /make nothing, will it?'

c. na' i un.
make.FUT.1SG i one
'I'll do / make one.'

In their occurrences as auxiliary verbs and lexical verbs in all these examples, the sentential context makes their categorization clear. In the case of the auxilary verbs, a verb phrase occurs as the predicate, giving the linear sequence [Auxiliary + Subject + Verb Phrase]. In their occurrences as lexical verbs, the sentential syntactic context again makes their categorization clear: [Verb + Subject + Noun Phrase Object].

A problem arises when these verbs occur in examples which lack a predicate — either a verb phrase or a noun phrase. The following examples illustrate the difficulty.

53 a. gei di wedyn.
have.PRES/FUT.2SG you.SG after
'you'll get / may after.'

b. ga'th hi?
have.PERV.3SG she
'did she get / was she allowed?'

c. cawn ni.
have.PRES/FUT.1PL we
'we'll get / may.'

54 a. ne'sh i,, ia.
do.PERV.1SG I yes
'I made (it) / I did, yes.'

b. neith hwn.
do.FUT.3SG this.M
'this will make (it) / this will.'

c. ne'st ti?
do.PERV.2SG you.SG
'did you make (it) / did you?'

In such examples, these two verbs can be auxiliaries or alternatively lexical verbs. In some cases the preceding textual context can indicate to which category they belong. But thus it is not always the case.

10 Summary

Table 4 gives the frequencies for the occurrences of minimal and maximal verb-subject finite clauses in the database.

Table 4. Frequencies of minimal and maximal finite clauses

	Positive	Negative	Int.-neg.	Totals
Minimal	807	222	0	1029
Maximal	2223	704	53	2980
Totals	3030	926	53	4009

The table shows that maximal clauses occur more frequently than minimal clauses, accounting for 74.33% of predicate-less verb-subject clauses. Negative examples of maximal clauses face competition from responsives which are realized by *na* alone and this reduces their frequencies.

There are examples which show minimal and maximal clauses occurring together.

55 a. ydy,,, ma' 'o.
be.PRES.3SG be. PRES.3SG he
'is, he is.' = 'yes, he is.'

b. nag ydw,,, dw i ddim
neg be.PRES.1SG be. PRES.1SG I neg
'am not, I'm not' = 'no, I'm not.'

c. oes,,, ma' 'na lot.
be.PRES.3SG be. PRES.3SG there lot
'is, there's a lot.'

56 o' chdi,, o'chd?
be.IMPF.2SG you.SG be.PRES.1SG
'you were, were (you)?' = 'you were, were you?'

57 ydy,,, ma' fe,, on'd yw e.
be.PRES.1SG be.PRES.3SG he INT-NEG be. PRES.3SG he
'is, he is, isn't he' = yes, he is, isn't he.'

In (54), maximal phrases precede minimal phrases. In (55), a minimal phrase precedes a maximal phrase. In (56), a maximal phrase is followed by a minimal phrase, which is followed by an interrogative-negative maximal phrase.

The following schematic arrangement summarises the syntactic configuration of verb-subject clauses.

58

Pre-verbal	Verb	Subject	Negation	Aspect
Particle	Auxiliary	Pronoun	Adverb	Marker
Zero	(Clitic) Copula	*Noun Phrase*	Zero	Zero
	Zero copula	Pro-drop		

This configuration can be developed differently for minimal and maximal finite clauses, as summarized in table 5. The table is organized in such a way that it brings together differences and similarities.

Table 5. The syntactic properties of verb-subject clauses

	Minimal	Maximal
Auxiliary / copula	Yes	Yes
m-forms of copula	Yes	No
Predicate phrase expansion	Yes	No
negative adverbials *ddim*, *byth*	Yes	No
aspect or predicatival particle	Yes	No
subject — other phrases	Yes	No
fronting	Yes	No
pronominal copulars	Yes	No
negative clitic *d / t*	Constrained	No
subject — personal pronoun	Yes	Rarely
adjuncts	Yes	Rarely
negative preverbal *na*	No	Yes
interrogative-negative clitic *'d / 't*	No	Yes
subject — pro-drop	Constrained	Yes

Both types of utterances are finite clauses and share the same basic phrase structure which is made up of a finite verb constituent and a subject constituent. But the minimal clauses have much more syntactic variety than the maximal ones (indicated by the number of times that 'Yes' occurs). If key differences were sought, they would be syntactic characteristics which maximal clauses have but minimal clauses do not have or tend not to have — indicated at the bottom of the table and illustrated in sections 3.1 and 5.1. Maximal clauses mainly exhibit subject pro-drop and form the negative and interrogative-negative with preverbal particles. Although not discussed at length in this work, maximal clauses are also distinctive in that they are used in answers to questions.

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