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

Bob Morris Jones

bmj@aber.ac.uk

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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. 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. oo gnaf.

oh do.FUT.1SG

'(I) 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 clauses — various shortened versions of these labels are used for economy of presentation.

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, that is, there is a structural gap following the overt or dropped subject. In one view, this structural gap can be said to be due to ellipsis. A predicate phrase can be added to minimal finite clauses, as can be shown by comparing the examples in (1) with other examples in the database which are 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: finite clauses which are minimal are at their minimum structure but can be expanded with predicate addition; finite clauses which are maximal cannot be expanded with predicate addition and are at their maximum structure. These are basic, introductory comments. We shall see 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 byse fe.
                    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 cofio gneud y peth yma?
                    be.PRES.2SG PROG remember do the thing here
                    'do you remember doing this thing?'
        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-sujbject 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).

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', *dylai* 'should, ought' and *ddaru*, which marks the past perfect. 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. 'aru   hi.
       PERFV   she
       'she did.'
   g. 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 is only one example of *ddaru* in a minimal clause. It does not occur in maximal finite clauses: *ddaru* is a perfect tense marker and the perfect anwser word *do* in response to utterances which contain the pefect tense (and its negative form *naddo*). There are no examples of the auxiliary *dylai* in maximal finite clauses in the database, although they can occur as such.

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. This is a complex matter which cannot be pursued in detail here. But, 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. 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) 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 the adverbial negator *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 preverbal particle form *na* is used in place of the 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'* 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?

     INT.NEG do.FUT.1PL

     'can't we?

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 dtabase.

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. nag o'dd,   ddim.
     NEG be.IMPF.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.
        be. PRES.1SG I NEG   PROG
        'I'm not.'

   c. o'dd   e ddim yn.
        be.IMPF.3SG   he NEG   PROG
        'he wasn't.'

   d. 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 only three examples of minimal phrases containing predicatival three examples of minimal phrases containing predicatival *yn2* in the database.

5 Subject: pro-drop and constituency.

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 only 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.

25 a. mae   dim.
   be.PRES.3SG   NEG
   '(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.'

There is, then, no either-or difference 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	3300	39	3339	98.83%
Interrogative-negative	45	14	59	23.73%
Minimal finite clause	20	923	943	2.12%
Totals	3365	976	4341	

The table shows that pro-drop is more frequent in maximal finite clauses. But the table also shows that an overt subject is more frequent in interrogative-negatives than in other maximal finite 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	39	0	39	0.00%
Interrogative-negatives	14	0	14	0.00%
Minimal finite clause	495	428	923	46.37%
Totals	548	428	976	

There are substantial differences in the constituency of the subject phrases in minimal and maximal finite clauses. In minimal finite clauses, phrases which are not personal pronouns amount to 46.37% while such phrases do not occur at all in 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. ti'!
   be.PRES.2SG
   '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. ond ni'   yn!
   but be.pres.1pl PROG
   'but we (are)!'
  b. ti'   wedi.
   be.PRES.2SG PERF
   'you have.'

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　　rywbeth?
　　be.PRES.3SG there something
　　'is there something?'

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. mae   'na.

  be.PRES.3SG there

  '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. 's   gynno   chdi   ddim!
     be.PRES.3SG with.2SG you.SG NEG
     '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. dim+ond dou sydd.

       only   two be.PRES.3SG

       'it's only two (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.

       well do.PERV.2SG you.SG NEG

       'well you didn't.'

   b. so dw   i ddim.

       so be. PRES.1SG   I NEG

       'so I'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	1104	145	1249	11.61%
Maximal	3345	5	3350	0.18%
Interrogative-negatives	61	0	61	0.00%
Totals	4510	151	4660	

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. There are no examples in the database of an interrogative-negative which contains an adjunct.

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.'

  c. y1 oeddan.
     PT be.IMPF.1PL
     'were.'

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 (??) 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 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 *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 auxiliary 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 ?? gives the frequencies for the occurrences of minimal and maximal verb-subject finite clauses in the database.

Table ??. Frequencies of minimal and maximal finite clauses

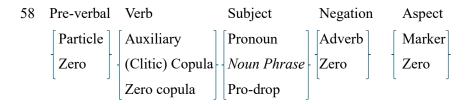|	Positive	Negative	Int.-neg.	Totals
Minimal	961	276	0	1237
Maximal	2568	769	61	3398
Totals	3529	1026	61	4635

The table shows that maximal clauses occur more frequently than minimal clauses, accounting for 73.31% 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'   hi.

    be.PRES.3SG be. PRES.3SG she

    'is,she is.' = 'yes, she 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.'

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

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 4. The table is organized in such a way that it brings together differences and similarities.

Table 4. 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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