

# The Acquisition of Adjective Phrases in Welsh: The Input Language

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## 1 Introduction

This study provides an account not only of the adjective phrases which occur in the Welsh of children who are acquiring Welsh as a first language but also of the adjective phrases in the input language of adults who interact with the children. Here we look at adult Welsh in the input language. The children's Welsh is described in

[https://users.aber.ac.uk/bmj/Ymchwil/ymadroddion\\_ansoddeiriau\\_plant2.pdf](https://users.aber.ac.uk/bmj/Ymchwil/ymadroddion_ansoddeiriau_plant2.pdf).

All the examples in this study are taken from the utterances of adults and children in an electronic database of transcribed audio-recordings of spontaneous adult-child interactions which were collected by an ESCR-funded project, the details of which are available at

[https://users.aber.ac.uk/bmj/aberold/cronfa18\\_30/sae/intro.html](https://users.aber.ac.uk/bmj/aberold/cronfa18_30/sae/intro.html). There are 21 adult Welsh speakers who variously provide a total of 5969 examples of adjective phrases and a total of 5830 of the occurrences of adjectives (including repetitions of the same adjective within the same phrase). There are seven children who variously provide a total of 1957 examples of adjective phrases and a total of 2085 of the occurrences of adjectives (including repetitions of the same adjective within the same phrase). For an outline of the data, transcription conventions, the calculation of averages and proportions of the numbers of speakers see also <https://users.aber.ac.uk/bmj/aberold/the-welsh-acquisition-data-general-matters.pdf>

This database is not only a valuable resource for the study of the input language which children experience but also provides very useful data for the study of adult Welsh.

The descriptions of adjective phrases in the performance data which are given here variously draw upon analyses in Jones (2009) and Thomas (1996) and, where relevant to the Welsh data, Huddleston and Pullum (2002) and Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (1985). Tribushinina (2018) provides a valuable typological outline of the studies of the acquisition of adjectives. In comparison with the latter, this current study concentrates primarily on the acquisition of the syntax of an adjective phrase rather than the acquisition of adjectives as a category.

This account of adjective phrases in the adults' Welsh is organized as follows: section 2 looks at the syntax of adjective phrases; section 3 examines the distribution of adjective phrases in different syntactic contexts; section 4 looks at co-ordination in adjective phrases; and the final section, 5, presents summary and conclusions.

## 2 The syntax of adjective phrases

In this account, we describe the internal syntax of adjective phrases in terms of modification and complementation. We shall also consider the ordering of adjective lexemes in a sequence of different adjectives.

Before setting out the descriptive details of modification and complementation, it is important to establish that the majority of adjective phrases which occur in the adults' Welsh are unmodified, have no complements and occur as single-word phrases.

- 1 a. *melyn,, oh.*  
'yellow, oh.'
- b. *blodyn bach.*  
flower small  
'a small flower.'
- c. *mae 'r bag yn2 wag,, yndy?*  
be.PRES.3SG the bag PRED empty Q.be.PRES.SG  
'the bag is black, isn't it?'
- d. *du 'dy'o?*  
black be.PRES.3SG it  
'is it black?'

The example in (1a) is the most obvious illustration of a single-word adjective phrase. But single word phrases also occur in different syntactic contexts as example (1b, c, d) show (see section 3).

There are 4042 examples of single-word adjective phrases in the corpus without a form of modification and without a complement. We shall see that there are 1081 examples of adjective phrases which contain a form of modification and only 124 examples which contain a complement. Clearly bare single-word adjective phrases are very much in the majority in the input language.

### 2.1 Modification

There are several ways of modifying an adjective in the database.

### 2.1.1 Degree

The equative degree, the comparative degree and the superlative degree modify gradable adjectives. The positive degree is conveyed by the base form of the adjective and, in the absence of any other form of modification, is unmodified.

- 2 a. *yndy,, mae 'n2 wag.*  
 be.PRES.3SG be.PRES.3SG PRED empty  
 'yes, it's empty.'
- b. *blody` bach.*  
 flower small  
 'a small flower.'
- c. *du.*  
 'black.'

There are only three examples of the equative degree in the database.

- 3 a. *'dy hwn ddim mynd yn2 gystal,, na 'dy.*  
 be.PRES.3SG this not go PRED good.EQ neg be.PRES.3SG  
 'this isn't going as good, is it?'
- b. *o'dd Menna mor browdl a: ti.*  
 be.IMPF.3SG Menna as proud as you.sg  
 'Menna was as proud as you.'
- c. *'dy 'o ddim mor ddrwg a: hynna.*  
 be.PRES.3SG it not as bad as that  
 'it isn't as bad as that.'

Example (3a) shows morphological realization of the equative degree in the form *gystal* (the predicative particle *yn2* is unexpected here). The adjectives in the other two examples have uninflected forms. These latter two examples occur in a two-part construction. The first part is headed by the equative particle *mor* 'as' and contains the equative adjective. The second part is a prepositional phrase which is headed by the preposition *a:* 'with' and is followed by the equated entity. When the equative particle is *mor*, the equative adjective can be uninflected (as in (3b, c)). In some dialects (and in formal Welsh) *cyn* occurs as the equative particle and the equative adjective is inflected – but there are no examples in the database. There are examples in the database which contain *mor* followed only by an adjective but *mor* in such examples *mor* is accounted for as a degree word, as outlined in section 2.1.2.

The comparative degree can also involve two parts. The first contains the comparative adjective, which can be analytic (as in the examples in (4)) or periphrastic (as in the examples in (5)). The second part is introduced by the particle *nal* and contains the entity which completes the comparison.

- 4 a. *a dw i 'n2 fwy na1 chdi,, yndw.*  
 and be.PRES.1SG I PRED bigger than you.SG be.PRES.1SG
- b. *pwysicach na1 fabis,, yndyn.*  
 important.COMP than babies be.PRES.3PL  
 ‘more important than babies, yes.’

But the majority of examples of the comparative degree occur without the *na1* phrase.

- 5 a. *wneud 'o yn2 fwy taclus.*  
 do it PRED more tidy  
 ‘do it tidier.’
- b. *dyle 'r gyrrwr fynd yn3 fwy araf,, yn' dyle.*  
 should the driver go ADV more slow Q.NEG should  
 ‘the driver should go more slowly, shouldn’t he.’

The superlative degree can be marked analytically or periphrastically. In the database only the analytic form occurs.

- 6 a. *pwysy 'di gadael rhain yma tro diwethaf?*  
 who be.PRES.3SG PERF leave these here turn latest  
 ‘who has left these here last time?’
- b. *pwysy 'n byw drws nesaf i' ni?*  
 who be.PRES.3SG PROG live door next to we  
 ‘who lives next door to us?’
- c. *lle ma' 'r un1 ola' 'n mynd?*  
 where be.PRES.3SG the one last PROG go  
 ‘where is the last one going?’
- d. *dyna 'r diweddara,, yh.*  
 that+is the latest uh  
 ‘that’s the latest, uh.’
- e. *gad i' ni wneud un arall gyntaf.*  
 leave.IMPV.2SG for we do one other first  
 ‘let us do another one first.’
- f. *injan+da:n sy 'n mynd nesaf?*  
 fire+engine be.PRES.3SG PROG go next  
 ‘is the fire engine going next?’

Tables 1a and 1b contain the frequencies for the four degrees.

*Table 1a.* Frequencies of the positive, equative, comparative and superlative degrees

Positive		4719	
Equative	inflected	1	
	not inflected	2	
		<hr/>	3
Comparative	inflected	170	
	periphrastic	5	
		<hr/>	175
Superlative	inflected	221	
	periphrastic	0	
		<hr/>	221
		<hr/>	5118

*Table 1b.* Frequencies of the syntax of equative and comparative degrees

Positive		4719	
Equative	one-part only	1	
	two-part	2	
		<hr/>	3
Comparative	one-part only	168	
	two-part	7	
		<hr/>	175
Superlative		221	
		<hr/>	5118

Table 1a shows that the positive degree is by far the dominant degree, accounting for 92.20% of all examples of adjectives which are open to degree contrasts. The other degrees are very infrequent. Of these, the superlative degree is the next most common but accounts for only 4.32%. The comparative degree accounts for 3.42% and the equative degree is especially infrequent, accounting for only 0.06%. In contrasting the positive degree with the three other degrees, only those adjectives which are not modified or which are themselves not modifiers can enter into such contrasts for the purpose of frequency counts. Table 1b shows that two part-constructions are rare in the database and that the vast majority of examples contain only the degree form of the adjective.

An examination of the lexemes which are involved in degree shows that there is more to degree than the frequencies in table 1 show. Table nn provides the frequencies of the various lexemes which occur in degree forms (excluding the positive degree).

*Table nn* Frequencies of the equative, comparative and superlative degree forms

Comparative	<i>gwell</i> ‘better’	137	<i>ysgafnach</i> ‘lighter’	2
	<i>haws</i> ‘easier’	8	<i>agosach</i> ‘nearer’	1
	<i>mwy</i> ‘bigger, more’	7	<i>caletach</i> ‘harder’	1
	<i>cynt</i> ‘earlier’	3	<i>hytrach</i> ‘rather’	1
	<i>uwch</i> ‘higher’	3	<i>pellach</i> ‘further’	1
	<i>neisach</i> ‘nicer’	2	<i>pwysicach</i> ‘more important’	1
	<i>nes</i> ‘nearer’	2	<i>talach</i> ‘taller’	1
	Total of comparatives			170
Superlative	<i>nesaf</i> ‘next’	97	<i>mwyaf</i> ‘biggest’	1
	<i>cyntaf</i> ‘first’	90	<i>olaf</i> ‘last’	1
	<i>diwethaf</i> ‘latest’	29	<i>pwysicaf</i> ‘most important’	1
	<i>diweddaraf</i> ‘latest’	1	<i>lleiaf</i> ‘least’	1
	Total of superlatives			221
Equative	<i>cystal</i> ‘as good as’	1		

There are 14 lexemes which occur with the comparative degree, eight with the superlative degree and one with the equative degree. All this compares with 208 lexemes which occur with the positive degree with total frequencies of 4719.

Certain lexemes predominantly occur with the comparative and superlative degree. There are 221 examples of the superlative, and of these *nesaf* ‘next’ (43.89%) occurs 97 times and *cyntaf* ‘first’ occurs 90 times (40.72%). Further, although examples (6a–c) show superlatives being used as attributive adjectives and example (6d) shows a superlative being used as a nominal, *nesaf* ‘next’ and *cyntaf* ‘first’ in the database are mainly used as adverbials (see section 3.1.1). Of the comparatives, their total frequencies are 170 and of these *gwell* occurs 136 times (80.00%), and predominantly with an *i*-clause as its complement. Of the equative degree, only *cystal* is an inflected form.

### 2.1.2 Degree words

A major way of modifying an adjective is to use a degree word, which is placed either before the adjective or after the adjective. There are far more pre-adjective degree words than post-adjective degree words.

The pre-modifiers are: *go* ‘fair’, *rhy* ‘too’, *mor* ‘so’, *bron* ‘nearly’, *hollol* ‘completely, wholly’ and *eitha* ‘rather, quite’.

- 7 a. *mae*            *'o* 'n2    *rhy fawr i' fynd yna*, *cyw*.  
 be.PRES.3SG it PRED too big to go there chick  
 ‘it’s to big to go there, chick,’

- b. *ie,, pe:l go iawn 'dy hon,, ie.*  
 yes ball fairly proper be.PRES.3SG this yes  
 'yes, this is a fairly proper ball.'
- c. *ie,, mae 'n edrych fel buwch reit ryfeddhefyd,, on'd yw hi?*  
 yes be.PRES.3SG PRED look like cow right strange Q.NEG be.PRES.3SG it  
 'yes, it looks like a right strange cow, doesn't it?'
- d. *'dy 'o ddim mor dda,, na 'dy.*  
 be.PRES.3SG it not so good NEG be.PRES.3SG  
 'it's not so good, is it.'
- e. *mae 'n2 bron amhosib gweld ei2 wyneb.*  
 be.PRES.3SG PRED nearly impossible see CL.3SG.F face  
 'its nearly impossible to see its face.'
- f. *ti 'n2 hollol iawn.*  
 you.SG PRED complete right  
 'you are completely right.'
- g. *eitha agos.*  
 quite near  
 'quite close.'

The post-modifiers are *byth* 'ever, still' and *iawn* 'very'.

- 8 a. *ww,, neis iawn,, diolch.*  
 ooh nice very thanks  
 'ooh, very nice, thanks.'
- b. *hei,, wnaeth un yna yn mynd yn2 bellach byth,, do.*  
 hey do.PERF.3SG one there PROG go PRED further still yes  
 'hey, that one went further still, yes.'
- c. *oh,, gwell fyth.*  
 oh better still  
 'oh, better still.'

*Reit* 'right' can be a pre- or post-adjective degree word.

- 9 a. *ie,, mae 'n edrych fel buwch reit ryfedd hefyd,, on'd yw hi?*  
 yes be.PRES.3SG PROG look like cow right strange also Q.NEG be.PRES.3SG it  
 'it looks like a right strange cow also, doesn't it.'
- b. *ma' dy wallt ti 'n edrych yn2 ole reit fanna.*  
 be.PRES.3SG CL.2SG hair you.SG PROG look PRED light right there  
 'your hair looks right light there.'

The frequencies of these various degree words are listed in table 2.

Table 2. Frequencies of degree words.

<i>iawn</i>	309
<i>rhy</i>	174
<i>go</i>	13
<i>mor</i>	8
<i>hollol</i>	3
<i>reit</i>	3
<i>byth</i>	2
<i>eitha</i>	2
<i>bron</i>	1
	515

There are nine degree words but two dominate: *iawn* ‘very’ (60%) and *rhy* ‘too’ (33.79%). In contrast, the remaining seven lexemes together account for only 6.21% of the total frequencies. Again, we see that lexis is relevant to the discussion of syntax.

### 2.1.3 Adjectives as modifiers

An adjective can be modified by another adjective. In most cases, the modifying adjective is in post-position.

10 a. *a mae 'n2 job diflas ofnadwy.*

and be.PRES.3SG PRED job tasteless awful

‘and its an awfully tasteless job.’

b. *slo bach rwan.*

slow small now

‘quite slow now.’

c. *ie,, ara degl.*

yes slow fair

‘yes, fairly slow.’

d. *hwn yn2 gynnes neis,, on'd yw e?*

this PRED warm nice Q.NEG be.PRES.3SG it

‘this is nise and warm, isn’t it?’

e. *peth lleia posibil.*

thing least possible

‘the least possible thing.’



- f. *gla gole.*  
 blue light  
 ‘light blue.’
- g. *gwallt brown dywyll, hir, ie.*  
 hair brown dark long yes  
 ‘long dark brown hair.’

There are only two examples of a modifying adjective which precedes the adjective which is modified.

- 11 a. *oh,, mae e 'n2 hen siwr o fod wedi torri.*  
 oh be.PRES.3SG it PRED old sure of be PERF break  
 ‘oh, it is (old) sure to be broken.’
- b. *Tiny yw hwnna os ti isie bod yn2 fanwl gywir.*  
 Tiny be.PRES.3SG that if you.SG want be PRED detail correct  
 ‘that is Tiny if you want to be correct in detail.’

Table 3 gives the frequencies for adjectives which can modify other adjectives.

Table 3. Frequencies of adjectives which modify adjectives

<i>neis</i>	19
<i>bach</i>	9
<i>teg</i>	3
<i>ofnadwy</i>	2
<i>golau</i>	1
<i>hen</i>	1
<i>manwl</i>	1
<i>posib</i>	1
<i>tywyll</i>	1
	38

Various distinctions can be made about these modifying adjectives. *Bach* ‘small, little’ and *teg* ‘fair’ modify adjectives which convey movement. *Golau* ‘light’ and *tywyll* ‘dark’ occur with colour adjectives and convey a shade. *Posib* ‘possible’ occurs with superlatives. The inclusion of *neis* ‘nice’ as a post-modifying adjective is perhaps contentious. It is possible to interpret an example like the one in (9d) in a manner whereby the warmth is qualified as being nice. But an alternative interpretation is that something is both warm and nice: that is, we have a sequence of adjectives of the sort which is discussed in section 2.3. But table 3 shows that *neis* ‘nice’ is the most frequent of the adjectives which can qualify another adjective, which may indicate a more general function as a modifier — which is the view adopted in this study.

## 2.1.4 Quantifiers

The quantifier *digon* ‘enough’ can also modify an adjective. *Digon* premodifies.

- 12 a. *'dy 'o ddim yn2 ddigon da.*  
 be.PRES.3SG it not PRED enough good  
 ‘it’s not good enough.’
- b. *dyn' nhw ddim yn2 ddigon hir* [% legs forpedals].  
 be.PRES.3PL they not PRED enough long  
 ‘it’s not long enough.’
- c. *'dy ddim yn2 ddigon oer i' gael ta:n heddiw.*  
 be.PRES.3SG not PRED enough cold to have fire today  
 ‘it’s not cold enough to have a fire today.’

Modification can also be achieved by using the quantifier *i+gyd* ‘all’ in post-position.

- 13 a. *melyn i+gyd.*  
 yellow all  
 ‘all yellow.’
- b. *ie,, ma'n nhw wedi cal ofane achos bod e 'n2 wyn i+gyd.*  
 yes be.PRES.3SG they PERF have fear it because be it PRED white all  
 ‘yes, they’ve had a fright because it is all white.’
- c. *ydy,, mae 'di mynd yn2 ddu i+gyd.*  
 be.PRES.3SG be.PRES.3SG PERF go PRED black all  
 ‘yes, it has gone all black.’

However, it is also possible to interpret *i+gyd* ‘all’ as a floating quantifier rather than a modifier (see Jones (2008) for details).

## 2.1.5 Noun modifiers

There are two nouns which can modify a very small number of adjectives. The nouns are *top* and *sopen* and they can respectively modify *llawn* ‘full’ and *gwlyb* ‘wet’.

- 14 a. *mae 'n2 llawn dop.*  
 be.PRES.3SG PRED full top  
 ‘it’s full to the top.’
- b. *lyb sopen.*  
 wet soaking  
 ‘soaking wet.’

### 2.1.6 Prepositional phrase patterns

Prepositional phrases are involved in modification in two ways.

First, the modified adjective is the complement in a prepositional phrase which is headed by the preposition *o* ‘of’. The prepositional phrase is itself the complement of another adjective which acts as the modifier.

15 a. *mae 'n2 ofnadwy o anodd i' wneud.*

be.PRES.3SG PRED awful of hard to do

‘it’s awfully hard to do.’

b. *ah,, uffernol o ddrwg,, ie.*

ah hellish of bad yes

‘ah, hellish bad, yes.’

The modifying word can also be a noun which has the prepositional phrase as its complement. *Coblyn* occurs in the database

16 a. *goblyn o anodd.*

goblin of hard

‘fiendishly hard.’

Second, a different sort of prepositional phrase pattern occurs where the prepositional phrase is a post-modifying adjunct in the adjective phrase.

17 a. *o'dd hi 'n2 neis dros ben.*

be.IMPG.3SG it PRED nice over head

‘it’s “over head” nice.’

b. *smart ar y naw.*

smart on the nine

‘smart to the nines.’

### 2.1.7 Reduplication

The adjective can be reduplicated for emphasis.

18 a. *pensilau mawr mawr,, yndyn.*

pencils big big be.PRES.3PL

,big big pencils, yes,’

b. *lle mae 'r mochyn bach bach bach?*

where be.pres.3sg the pig little little little

‘where’s the little little little pig?’

- c. *rhwbeth mawr mawr mawr mawr mawr a hen hen hen hen hen.*  
 something big big big big big and old old old old old  
 ‘something big big big big big and old old old old old.’

The most frequent reduplication is one which involves two mentions of the same lexeme. There are a few examples of three mentions and one examples which involves five mentions of two lexemes in a co-ordinate phrase.

#### 2.1.8 Other methods of modification

The expression *tu hwnt* ‘beyond’ also occurs as a modifier.

- 19 *mm blasus tu+hwnt,, yn' o'dd e.*  
 mm tasty beyond Q.NEG be.IMPF.3SG it  
 ‘mm “beyond” tasty, wasn’t it.’

The determiner *rhyw* ‘some’ (in the sense of ‘somewhat’ or ‘sort of’) can be used as a premodifier

- 20 *na,, rhyw felyn ne' brown.*  
 no some yellow or brown  
 ‘no, sort of yellow or brown.’

#### 2.1.9 The modification of modifiers

There are two methods of modification which can themselves be modified, namely, degree and the degree word *rhy* ‘too’.

There are various ways of modifying the comparative degree.

- 21 a. *mae 'n2 well o lawer rwan.*  
 be.PRES.3SG PRED better of much now  
 ‘it’s much better now.’
- b. *well rhywfaint.*  
 better some+much  
 ‘better somewhat.’
- c. *cadair lot gwell.*  
 chair lot better  
 ‘a lot better chair.’
- d. *oh,, gwell fyth.*  
 oh better still  
 ‘oh better still.’

- e. *ie, ta+ta,, weli di e nes2 'mla'n,, ife?*  
 yes ta+ta see.FUT.2SG you.SG he nearer forward yes  
 'yes, ta+ta, you'll see him later on.'

Example (21a) shows that *gwell* can be modified by a post-modifying prepositional phrase which contains the quantifier *llawer* 'much, many'. Example (21b) shows that it can be post-modified by the quantifier *rhywfaint* 'somewhat'. Example (21c) shows that comparatives can be premodified by *lot* 'lot', and example (21d) shows that it can be post-modified by the adverb *byth* 'ever'. The first three examples contain an expression of quantification. Some comparatives can be modified by directional adverbs like *ymlaen* 'onward, forward', as shown in example (21e).

The superlative degree can be modified by the adjective *posib* in post-modifying position.

- 22 *peth lleia posibil.*  
 thing least possible  
 'the least possible thing.'

Modification also applies to the degree word *rhy* 'too'. Its modification shares some of the characteristics of the modification of the comparative degree.

- 23 a. *rhy fawr o lawer.*  
 too big of much  
 'much too big.'
- b. *ti 'n2 lot rhy fawr,, ynd wyt, ynd wyt.*  
 you.SG PRED lot too big Q.NEG be.PRES.2SG Q.NEG be.PRES.2SG

*Rhy* is post-modified by the quantifier phrase *o lawer* 'of much' in (23a) and is pre-modified by the quantifier *lot* 'lot' in (23b).

We can also include here the modification of a modifier by reduplication.

- 24 *nag o'dd [x 2],,, o'dd e 'n2 fabi da iawn iawn.*  
 NEG be.IMPF.3SG be.IMPF.3SG he PRED baby good very very  
 'no, he was a very very good baby.'

There is one example which shows not the modification of a modifier but the double modification of an adjective

- 25 *mae 'n2 hen hen iawn.*  
 be.PRES.3SG PRED old old very  
 'it's very old old.'

The adjective is reduplicated and also modified by the degree word *iawn*.

### 2.1.10 Frequencies

Table 4 gives the frequencies for the patterns of modification.

*Table 4.* Frequencies of the various forms of the modification of adjectives

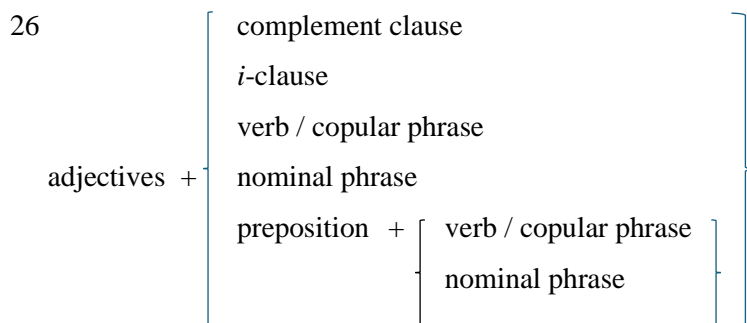
Unmodified	4719
Degree words	511
Equative, comparative, superlative	392
Reduplication	94
Adjectives as modifiers	38
Quantifiers	25
Noun modifiers	5
Prepositional patterns 1	4
Prepositional patterns 2	3
Other methods	2
	1074
	5793

There is a total of 1074 examples of some form of modification, and degree words are the most dominant form, accounting for 47.58% of the total of modified adjectives. Of the degree words, *iawn* ‘very’ and *rhy* ‘oo’ are by far the most frequent. Of the degree forms of adjectives, *cyntaf* ‘first’, *nesaf* ‘next’ and *gwell* ‘better’ dominate, the superlative form occurs mainly as an adverb and the comparative form occurs with an *i*-clause complement. However, the vast majority of adjective phrases are bare phrases and the modified phrases amount to only 18.54% of the total of modified and unmodified adjective phrases.

## 2.2 Complementation

Some, but not all adjectives, can take a complement. The adjectives in the database which have a complement are: *gwell* ‘better’, *siwr* ‘sure’, *parod* ‘ready’, *tebyg* ‘similar’, *da* ‘good’, *styc* ‘stuck’, *sownd* ‘sound’, *braf* ‘fine’, *agos* ‘near’, *clir* ‘clear’, *llawn* ‘full’ and *lwcus* ‘lucky’.

The phrases which occur as complements are: complement clause, *i*-clause, verb or copular phrase, nominal phrase and prepositional phrase. In the case of the latter, different prepositions are involved, which themselves can take various phrases as their complements.



*Siwr* 'sure' and *lwcus* 'lucky' take complement clauses as their complements. In the database the clauses are *bod* 'be' clauses.

27 a. *siwr bod hi 'n teimlo 'n2 well nawr.*

sure be she PROG feel PRED better now

'sure that she feels better now.'

b. *lwcus bod napi gen ti,, ie.*

lucky be nappy with you yes

'lucky that you've got a nappy, yes.'

*Gwell* 'better' is the only adjective which has an *i*-clause as its complement.

28 a. *well i' mi gael hwn.*

better for me have this

'(I'd) better have this.'

b. *well i' ti beidio rhoi hwn yn1 dy geg.*

better for you.SG not put this in CL.2SG mouth

'(you'd) better not put that in your mouth.'

c. *basai well i' mi roi y dw:r yma yn1 y tebot*

be.CNTE.3SG better for me put the water here in the teapot

*\$a dweud y gwir\$.*

and tell the truth

'I'd better put this water in the teapot, to tell the truth.'

There is one example in which the verb phrase of the *i*-clause has been deleted, leaving only the initial prepositional phrase of the *i*-clause.

29 *well i' ti.*

better for you.SG

'you'd better.'

*Gwell* 'better' also occurs with a verb phrase.

- 30 a. *ie,, well rhoi tebot ar y ford,, on'd yw e?*  
 yes better put teapot on the table Q.NEG be.PRES.3SG it  
 'yes, better put teapot on the teapot on the table, isn't it?'
- b. *well rhoi rhein rhywle.*  
 better putt hese somewhere  
 'better put these somewhere.'

There is one example in which *gwell* 'better' is followed by the preposition *a:* 'with' and a verb phrase.

- 31 *well a: mynd i' garej.*  
 better with go to garage  
 'better go to the garage.'

There is only one adjective in the database which takes a nominal phrase complement, namely, *llawn* 'full' (the complement noun indicates the material which is causing fullness).

- 32 a. *llawn wiwi.*  
 full wee-wee  
 'full of wee-wee.'
- b. *ti 'n2 llawn bywyd,, on'd wyt ti?*  
 you.SG PRED full life Q.NEG be.PRES.3SG you.SG  
 'you're full of life, aren't you?'
- c. [ $<$ ] *llawn o wiwi,, ydy?*  
 full of wee-wee be.PRES.3SG  
 'full of wee-wee, isn't it?'

The example in (32c) shows an alternative use of *llawn* which contains a post-occurring prepositional phrase, which can be compared with (32a).

There are adjectives whose complements contain a preposition which is followed by either a verb phrase or the copula. *Bownd* 'bound', *siwr* 'sure', and *balch* 'proud' occur with the preposition *o* 'of'.

- 33 a. *ma' hwanna bownd o fod ar waelod y bocs,, on'd yw e?*  
 be.pres.3sg that bound of be on bottom the box Q.NEG be.PRES.3SG it  
 'that is bound to be on the bottom of the box, isn't it?'
- b. *ti 'n cal dy sbwylio \$siwr o fod\$.*  
 you.SG PROG have CL.2SG spoil sure of be  
 'you are being spoiled, sure.'
- 34 *o't ti 'n2 falch o weld e?*  
 be.IMPF.3SG you.SG PRED pleased of see he  
 'were you pleased to see him?'



The adjective *da* ‘good’ occurs with *am* ‘for’.

- 35 *wel,, ti 'n2 dda am neud jigsos.*  
 wel you.SG PRED good about do jig-saws  
 ‘well, you are good at doing jig-saws.’

There are other adjectives whose prepositional phrase complements contain noun phrases. The adjective *tebyg* ‘similar’ occurs with *i* ‘to’.

- 36 a. *ie,, mae e 'n2 debyg i' goeden,, on'd yw e?*  
 yes be.PRES.3SG it PRED similar to tree Q.NEG be.PRES.3SG it  
 ‘yes, it’s similar to a tree, isn’t it?’
- b. *mae e 'n2 rhywbeth tebyg i' blastisin,, on'd yw e?*  
 be.PRES.3SG it PRED something similar to plasticine Q.NEG be.PRES.3SG it  
 ‘it’s something similar to plasticine, isn’t it?’

In adjective phrases which contain such complements, there are adjectives whose complements indicate location and in which a variety of prepositions can occur.

- 37 a. *paid ti a: mynd yn2 agos at y ta:n,, nei di?*  
 don’t you.SG with go PRED near to the fire, do.FUT.2SG you.SG  
 ‘don’t go near to the fire, will you?’
- b. *oh,, well i' ni roi hwnna 'n2 sownd wrth y tractor,,ife?*  
 oh better for we put that PRED sound to the tractor yes  
 ‘oh, better put that stuck to the tractor, yes?’
- c. *sownd yn1 y pump.*  
 stuck in the pump  
 ‘stuck in the pump.’
- d. *oh, gre:t,, gadwa' i 'n2 glir <o 'r prom 'te1> [>].*  
 oh great keep.FUT.1SG I PRED clear of the prom then  
 ‘oh, great, I’ll keep clear of the prom then.’
- e. *mae dy ffrog yn2 styc arno fo.*  
 be.PRES.3SG CL.2SG frock PRED stuck on.3SG.M it  
 ‘your frock is stuck on it.’

The adjective *braf* occurs with the preposition *ar* ‘on’

- 38 *ww,, braf arnoch chdi.*  
 ooh fine on.2PL you.SG  
 ‘ooh, fine / nice for / on you.’

Other examples outside the general system outlined above are given in (39).

- 39 a. *dda i' ddim.*  
 good for nothing  
 'good for nothing.'
- b. *barod i' beth?*  
 teady for what  
 'ready for what?'
- c. *het debyg i' bwy 'dy hwnna?*  
 hat similar to who be.PRES.3SG that  
 'that is a hat similar to who?'

Example (39a) is a set phrase which is of interest in a study of negation. Examples (39b, c) show how a *wh*-word can replace the complement in a prepositional phrase. In the case of (39b), *beth* 'what' could represent either a verb / copular phrase or a nominal phrase.

Table 5 gives the frequencies for the types of complements.

Table 5. Frequencies of the complements of adjectives.

No complement	4719
<i>I</i> -clauses	60
Prepositional phrases	24
Verb / copula phrases	24
Nominal phrases	23
Verb phrase	4
Nominal phrase	4
Complement clause	6
Others	3
	124
	4843

This table shows that the use of *gwell* 'better' with an *i*-clause complement is the most frequent form of complementation. Prepositional phrase complements are the next most frequent but in these cases there are a variety of adjectives which are followed by a variety of prepositions. Chief amongst them are *siwr o fod* 'sure to be', *parod* 'ready' and an *i* 'to' verb phrase and *tebyg* 'similar, like' and *i* 'to' nominal phrase. The table also shows that adjective phrases with complements are very much in the minority: the majority of adjective phrases have no complements and those with complements account for only 2.56%.

Table 6 lists the adjectives which occur with the different complements.

Table 6. Adjectives and their complements

	<i>gwell</i>	<i>siwr</i>	<i>tebyg</i>	<i>parod</i>	<i>lwcus</i>	<i>da</i>	<i>balch</i>	<i>bownd</i>	others		
Comp. Cl.		3			3					6	
<i>I</i> -clause	60									60	
VP	4									4	
Cop/VP	<i>o</i>	15					1	1		17	
	<i>am</i>					1				1	
	<i>a:</i>	1								1	
	<i>i</i>			5						5	
Prep. Ph.	<i>i</i>		12	2					1	15	
	<i>o</i>								2	2	
	<i>wrth</i>								2	2	
	<i>ynl</i>								1	1	
	<i>at</i>								1	1	
	<i>ar</i>								2	2	
Nom. Ph.									4	4	
<i>Wh</i> -word			1	1						2	
<i>i ddim</i>						1				1	
		65	18	13	8	3	2	1	1	13	124

The predominant adjectives which take a complement are, in descending order, *gwell* ‘better’, *siwr*, *tebyg* and *parod*. The predominant complements are an *i*-clause, a copular phrase in a prepositional phrase introduced by *o*, and a nominal phrase in a prepositional phrase introduced by *i*. There are clear links between lexis and syntax in complementation. *I*-clauses are restricted to *gwell* ‘better’; the copular phrase with *o* occurs mainly with *siwr*, and nominal phrase with *i* occurs mainly with *tebyg*.

Table 6 does not give exact details about the adjectives which occur with locative prepositional phrases. They come in the column headed by ‘others’. They are all low frequency occurring only once or twice with the relevant preposition: *styc i*, *styc wrth*, *sownd yn l*, *sownd wrth*, *agos at*, *llawn o*, *clir o*, and *braf ar*. The ‘others’ column also includes the adjective *llawn* ‘full’ which takes a nominal phrase complement.

It is possible for an adjective to be both modified and to have a complement. In the database this only occurs with *gwell* ‘better’, which takes an *i*-clause as its complement. All other adjectives are either modified or have a complement or are neither modified nor have a complement (a bare adjective phrase).

We can consider whether adjective phrases can contain both modification and a complement, which would increase the syntactic complexity in an adjective phrase. There are such examples but they are

confined the comparative adjective *gwell* ‘better’, which realizes the modification, and four types of complements — all of which are illustrated in the examples in (??).

40 a. *well i' mi gael hwn.*

better for me have this  
‘I’d better have this.’

b. *well rhoi rhein rhywle.*

better put these somewhere

c. *well a: mynd i' garej.*

better with go to garage  
‘better go to the garage.’

d. *well i' ti.*

better for you  
‘you’d better.’

There are 66 examples which contain both modification and a complement and the majority (62) are like those in example (40a) in which the complement is an *i*-clause. There are only two examples in which the complement is a verb phrase as in (40b). The remaining two examples in (40) occur only once each.

### 2.3 Sequences of adjectives and ordering

In section 2.1.7 we described sequences of adjectives which are made up of the same lexeme and which we accounted for as a method of modification, termed reduplication. In this section we describe the sequences of different adjective lexemes in an adjective phrase. To do this we group adjectives into semantic classes. However, grouping adjectives in this way is not a straightforward matter. The following classes are used in this study for the adjectives which occur in sequences in the database.

length e.g. *hir* ‘long’

colour e.g. *coch* ‘red’

size e.g. *bach* ‘little’

feel e.g. *meddal* ‘soft’

sight e.g. *del* ‘pretty’

age e.g. *newydd* ‘new’

weight e.g. *trwm* ‘heavy’

shape e.g. *tew* ‘fat’

But there are adjectives which are difficult to classify such as *posh* ‘posh’, *sic* ‘sick’, *rhyfedd* ‘strange, odd’, *doniol* ‘funny’, *handi* ‘handy’, *drwg* ‘bad, naughty’. A more extensive outline of possible

semantic classes is available in Quirk *et al* (1985: 1337–1344) and Huddleston and Pullum (2002: 453–454, 527–528).

The sequencing of different adjective lexemes is based on tendencies rather than firm rules. In the following account, for convenience of presentation, we shall use the terms first and second to indicate their positions in the sequence. We can gain a convenient picture of the sequences of semantic classes by cross-tabulating the sequences of different classes in first and second position, as in table 7.

Table 7. The ordering of semantic classes of adjective lexemes in sequence

	length	look	colour	age	weight	shape	size	texture	???	
length	1									1
colour	3	1	3	1			4			12
size	2	4	38		1	3		2	11	61
texture			1							1
???				2						2
	6	5	42	3	1	3	4	2	11	77

The left-most column gives those classes which occur first in the sequence while the top-most row gives those classes which occur in second position. The right-most column gives the frequencies of those classes which occur first in the sequence and the bottom-most row gives the frequencies of those classes which occur in second position.

There are two main classes of adjectives which occur more frequently than other classes, namely, colour and, especially, size. The class which occurs in first position is predominantly size or to a much lesser extent, colour.

41 a. *blodau bach, del.*

flowers little pretty

‘small, pretty flowers.’

b. *a 'r llyged mawr, hyll,, ynde?*

and the eyes big ugly q.neg

‘and the big, ugly flowers, isn’t it?’

c. *trwyn mawr, hir,, oes?*

nose big long be.PRES.3SG

‘a big, long nose, was there?.’

42 a. *yr unl glas, del,, yndy?*

the one blue pretty be.PRES.3SG

‘the blue, pretty one, isn’t it?’

- b. *gwallt melyn, hir.*  
 hair yellow long  
 'yellow, long hair.'
- c. *dyna 'r bag plastic du, newydd.*  
 there+'s the bag plastic black new  
 'there's the new, black plastic bag.'

When adjectives of size and colour occur in sequence, size mainly precedes colour.

- 43 a. *dy:n bach, gwyrdd.*  
 man small green  
 'a small, green man.'
- b. *mochyn bach, pinc.*  
 pig little pink  
 'a little pink pig.'
- c. *ie,,, tafod mawr, coch.*  
 yes tongue big red  
 'yes, a small, red tongue.'

But there are four examples in which colour precedes size.

- 44 a. *tyd a: bocs melyn, bach yna yfama.*  
 come.IMPV.2SG with box yellow little there there  
 'bring that yellow, little box there.'
- b. *unl gwyrdd, bach.*  
 one green little  
 'a green, little one.'
- c. *tractor gwyrdd, bach yna.*  
 tractor green small there  
 'that green, little tractor.'
- d. *rhai melyn, mawr?*  
 ones yellow big  
 'yellow, big ones.'

There is one example of two adjective of length in sequence..

- 45 *ffrog llaes, hir.*  
 frock long long  
 a long long-dress.'

The adjective *hir* ‘long’ has its literal meaning. The expression *ffrog llaes* is used to convey a long dress but is probably a strong collocational sequence for a type of dress for special or formal occasions. On this basis, we do not really have two adjectives of length in sequence.

The table also shows that far more classes of adjectives occur in second position than in first position, which have we have seen is dominated by colour and, especially, size.

The sequences mainly involve two adjectives but there is one example in which there are three adjectives: they are all colour adjectives.

- 46 *unl coch, gwyrdd, oren.*  
 one red green orange  
 ‘a red, green, orange one.’

The sequence of adjectives is not only a matter of individual adjectives co-occurring. It can also involve an individual adjective and an adjective phrase.

- 47 a. *cadair bach bach, pinc.*  
 chair little little pink  
 a little little, pink chair.’
- b. *ma' hwnna 'n2 ddoli fach rhyfedd iawn,, M---*  
 be.PRES.3SG that PRED dolly little strange very M---  
 ‘that’s a small very strange dolly, M---.’
- c. *sic go iawn y bore 'ma,, T---*  
 sick fairly proper the morning here T---  
 ‘fairly properly sick this morning, T---’

In summary we can say that first position is occupied either by size or colour and that all other classes of adjectives follow these two. In examples where both colour and size occur, size mainly occurs first but this rule is not absolute as there are a small number of occurrences in which colour precedes size.

### 3 Distribution: syntactic context

The adjective phrases which we have described in section 2 — bare, modified and those with complements — occur in different syntactic contexts. A major distinction is one which divides the syntactic context into two: (i) adjective phrases which occur as a constituent of another phrase, which we shall refer to as subordinate adjective phrases, and (ii) adjective phrases which are not a constituent of another phrase, which we shall refer to as main adjective phrases.

#### 3.1 Clause constituents

The term clause is used widely to refer not only to those patterns which contain a finite verb but also patterns whose structure is different in various ways. We can distinguish predicate demonstratives,

which are headed by *dyma*, *dyna* and *dacw*. We can also distinguish those utterances which lack a verb but which have a subject-predicate structure. Finally, there utterances which contain one or more phrases but which do not form a subject-predicate structure. We shall refer to the latter as fragments.

### 3.1.1 Finite clauses

In finite clauses adjective phrases can occur as: sentence adverbs, predicative phrases, fronted phrases, subject, and object. The frequencies of adjective phrases as these possibilities vary as table 8 in section 3.1.6 shows.

In finite clauses, adjective phrases occur as sentence adverbs. They are mainly one-word phrases containing the superlatives *gyntaf* and *nesaf*.

- 48 a. *gad i' ni wneud un arall gyntaf.*  
 leave.IMPV.2SG for we do one other first  
 'let us do another one first.'
- b. *y goets mae hi 'n licio gorau.*  
 the pram be.PRES.3SG she PROG like best  
 'it's the pram that she likes best.'
- c. *be mae isio gwisgo nesaf?*  
 what be.PRES.3SG want wear next  
 'what does she want to wear next.'
- d. *Glesni fydda 'n cael pen+blwydd go fuan,, yndy?*  
 Glesni be.CNTE.3SG PROG have birthday fairly soon be.PRES.3SG
- e. *"sa bach 'ta1.*  
 wait.IMPV.2SG small then  
 'wait a little then.'
- f. *ie, ta+ta,, weli di e nes2 'mla'n,, ife?*  
 yes ta+ta see.DYF.2SG you.SG he nearer forward yes  
 'yes, ta+ta, youll see him later on, yes?'
- g. *dere 'n+o:l a: 'r fuwch glou.*  
 come.IMPV.2SG back with the cow quick  
 'bring the cow back quick.'
- h. *beth o'dd yna gynt?*  
 what be.IMPV.3SG there earlier  
 'what was there earlier.'
- i. *ymhell bell.*  
 far further  
 'far further.'



Adjective phrases occur in copular clauses as predicational phrases in post-subject position. Some adjective phrases in this position could contain the predicational particle *yn2* but which has been omitted.

- 49 a. *'sa well i' ni gael+...*  
 be.CNTE.3SG better for we have  
 'we'd better have ...'
- b. *mae 'r ga:t agored iddo fo rwan.*  
 be.PRES.3SG the gate open for.3SG.M he now  
 'the gate is open for him now.'

Some adjective phrases in this position contain degree words.

- 50 a. *mae rhy fach i' chdi,, yndy?*  
 be.PRES.3SG too small for you.SG be.PRES.3SG  
 'it's too small for you, isn't it?'
- b. *'dy 'o ddim mor ddrwg a: hynna.*  
 be.PRES.3SG it not as bad as that  
 'it's not as bad as that.'

There are also examples of copular clauses in which the subject is fronted and a superlative adjective occurs in predicational position.

- 51 *be sy gorau gen ti?*  
 what be.PRES.3SG best with you  
 what is the best by you?'

An adjective phrase can occur in fronted position in finite clauses. A common instance involves fronting an adjective phrase out of a predicational phrase, omitting the predicational particle *yn2*.

- 52 a. *du 'dy 'o?*  
 black be.PRES.3SG it  
 'it's black.'
- b. *coch 'dy 'r crayon yna.*  
 red be.PRES.3SG the crayon there  
 'that crayon is black.'
- c. *sbiwch da 'dy 'r ceir 'na.*  
 look.IMPV.2SG good be.PRES.3SG the cars there  
 'look — those cars are good.'
- d. *dim coch yw 'r gole 'na.*  
 not red be.PRES.3SG the light there  
 'that light is not red.'

There is one example of the fronting of an adjective phrase which contains a degree word.

- 53 *drycha mor lliwgar ma'n nhw.*  
 look.IMPV.2SG so colourful be.PRES.3PL they  
 'look — they're so colourful.'

Other adjective phrases also occur in fronted position.

- 54 a. *styc fasai Anna yn ddweud* [% that is English].  
 stuck be.CNTF.3SG Anna PROG say  
 b. *posh mae E--- yn galw nhw.*  
 posh be.PRES.3SG E--- PROG call they  
 'posh E--- calls them.'  
 c. *sa:l iawn 'swn i 'n ddweud.*  
 ill very be.CNTF.1SG I PROG say  
 'very ill I'd say.'

Lastly, there are examples in which adjective phrases occur as an object and a very few examples as a subject.

- 55 a. *ylwch hyll.*  
 look.IMPV.2SG ugly  
 'look — ugly.'  
 b. *gwaedda barod.*  
 shout.IMPV.2SG ready  
 'shout ready.'  
 c. *dweud pinc.*  
 say.IMPV.2SG pink  
 'say pink.'
- 56 a. *hwn yw melyn.*  
 this be.PRES.3SG yellow  
 'this is yellow.'
- b. *mae mawr mawr yn mynd i' fyw.*  
 be.PRES.3SG big big PROG go to live  
 'big big is going to live.'

The examples like the one in (55a) bear some similarity with the examples like the one in (52c).

### 3.1.2 Predicate demonstrative clauses

Predicative demonstrative clauses are headed by *dyma*, *dyna* or *dacw*. Adjective phrases occur as the complements in these clauses.

- 57 a. *oh,, 'na2 bert.*  
 oh there+'s pretty  
 'oh, that's pretty.'
- b. *wel,, 'na2 glefyr.*  
 well there+'s clever  
 'well, that's clever.'
- c. *'na2 neis,, yndefe?*  
 there+'s nice Q.NEG  
 'that's nice, isn't it?'
- d. *'na2 fo pinc.*  
 there+'s it pinc  
 'that's it pink.'
- e. *oh,wel,, dyna chi smart.*  
 oh well there+'s you smart  
 'oh, well, that's smart for you.'

Examples (57d, e) are different in that they contain personal pronouns but are included here as examples of adjective phrases in predicative demonstratives. (A more detailed discussion of pronouns in predicate demonstrative clauses is available in Jones (2024).)

### 3.1.3 Subject-predicate clauses

Subject-predicate clauses are clauses which lack a finite verb but which contain a subject and a predicate. Adjective phrases also occur as the predicate in such clauses.

- 58 a. *oh,, G--- rhy fach 'to.*  
 oh G--- too small again  
 'oh, G--- too small again.'
- b. *G--- rhy fawr.*  
 G--- too big  
 'G--- too big.'
- c. *ie,, bert hwanna.*  
 yes pretty that  
 'yes, pretty that.'
- d. *oh,, hwanna rhy fawr i' 'r crocodeil.*  
 oh that too big for the crocodile  
 'oh, that's too big for the crocodile.'

In these examples the ordering is subject + predicate but predicate + subject occurs in (58c).

### 3.1.4 Fragments

Fragments are patterns which lack a finite verb and which do not form a subject-predicate pattern. In some fragments, adjective phrases can occur by themselves.

59 a. *du.*

'black.'

b. *da iawn.*

good very

'very good.'

c. *rhy brysur, ie?*

too busy yes

'too busy, yes?'

d. *ww,, braf arnoch chdi.*

ooh fine on.2PL you.SG

'ooh, fine on you.'

e. *well tynnu ffrog gyntaf, ie.*

better pull frock first yes

'better take off frock first, yes.'

They can also occur with other types of phrases to form more complex fragments.

60 a. *well ti gal neud 'te1.*

better you.SG have do then

'you'd better get to do it then.'

b. *iawn heddiw?*

alright today

'alright today?'

c. *rhy gynnar i' Dad,, ydy?*

too early for Dad be.PRES.3SG

too early for Dad, is it?'

f. *pam llawn wiwi 'te1?*

why full wee-wee then

'why full of wee-wee then?'

### 3.1.5 Peripheries

In this account, peripheral phrases are regarded as additions to the canonical structure of a clause (again, widely intended) without being constituents of the clause. Tags and vocatives are common examples of peripheral phrases.

Adjective phrases occur in the left and right peripheries of finite clauses.

61 a. *ew, annwyl,, oes* [% maybe A--- means ‘Tilly isio pee+pee’?]

hew, dear be.PRES.3SG

‘hew, dear, yes.’

b. *naci, wir,, dim tedi.*

no true not teddy

‘no, truly, not teddy.’

c. *oh, gre:t,, gadwa' i 'n2 glir <o 'r prom 'teI> [>].*

oh great keep.FUT.1SG I PRED clear of the prom then

‘oh, great, I’ll keep clear of the prom then.’

62 a. *d wnI i 'm,, wir* [% looking].

NEG know.PRES.1SG I not true

‘I don’t know, truly.’

b. *wel,, e'lla,, wir.*

well perhaps true

‘well, perhaps, truly.’

c. *ah,, yli,, bach.*

ah look.IMPV.SG small

‘look, little one [endearment].’

Adjective phrases which can occur in the left and right peripheries can also occur as intrusive phrase in the middle of an utterance.

63 *d wnI i 'm,, wir,, be mae 'o 'n wneud.*

neg know.PRES.1SG I not true what be.PRES.3SG he PROG do

I don’t know, truly, what he’s doing.’

For convenience of presentation, we can also include here examples like the following, which contain an epenthetical phrase which contains *siwr* ‘sure’.

64 a. *dim caws 'dy 'o \$siwr\$.*

not cheese be.PRES.3SG it sure

‘it’s not cheese, sure.’

b. *mae Mam 'di pacio nhw \$siwr iawn\$.*

be.PRES.3SG Mam PERF pack they sure very

‘Mam has packed them, very surely.’

c. *mae \$siwr o fod\$yn2 bryd iddyn' nhw fynd adre,, yndy?*

be.PRES.3SG sure of be PRED time for.3Pl they go home be.PRES.3SG

‘it’s sure to be time for them to go home.’

### 3.1.6 Frequencies

The frequencies for the main clause types and distinctions within these are given in table 8.

*Table 8.* Frequencies of adjective phrases as main phrases in different clause types

Fragments	AP only (inc. negatives)	820	
	AP and XP(s)	90	
		<hr/>	910
Finite	Adverb	88	
	Subject	3	
	Object	12	
	Predicative	42	
	Fronted Pred	56	
	Other fronted	3	
		<hr/>	204
Peripheries	Left	3	
	Middle	2	
	Right	58	
	<i>siwr</i>	23	
		<hr/>	86
Predicative Dem		82	
Subj-Pred		29	
Unclear		0	
Missing data		5	
		<hr/>	1316

The frequencies show that fragments are the most frequent of the clausal contexts in which adjective phrases occur and of these an AP standing alone is the main fragment. Next are constituents in finite clauses, and of these adverbs are the most frequent.

### 3.2 Adjective phrases as constituents in other phrases

Adjective phrases occur as a constituent in other phrases. The most common instance is as attributive phrases in nominal clauses. Some adjectives precede the noun and others follow the noun.

65 a. *rhywbeth newydd.*

something new

‘something new.’

- b. *blodyn bach*.  
flower small  
'a small flower.'
- c. *cacen goch?*  
cake red  
'a red cake.'
- 66 a. *hen fisged,, ie*.  
old biscuit yes  
'an old biscuit, yes.'
- b. *gwahanol fath o ddinosaur*.  
different sort of dinosaur  
'a different sort of dinosaur.'
- c. *yr unig feic gynnon ni ydy 'r un yma*.  
the only bike with.1PL we be.PRES.3SG the one here  
'this one is the only bike that we've got.'

We can also include here the occurrences of attributive adjective phrases in a number of other phrases which we can regard as nominal but which do not have nouns as their heads.

- 67 a. *naughty be?*  
naughty what  
'naughty what?'
- b. *<hen be> [>]?*  
old what  
'old what?'
- c. *good be?*  
good what  
'good what?'
- 68 a. *caru mawr*.  
love big  
'big [= lot of] loving.'
- b. *chwarae teg i' chdi*.  
play fair to you.SG  
'fair play to you.'
- c. *trwsio da*.  
repair good  
'good repair.'

- 69 *dim diddorol.*  
 nothing interesting  
 ‘nothing interesting.’

In the examples in (67) the head is a *wh*-word which is qualified by the adjective. In (68) the head is a verb being used as a nominal (a verbnoun, in traditional Welsh reference grammars). In (69), the adjective is an attributive to argument *dim*.

Adjective phrases also occur as complements to the predicative particle *yn2* in predicative phrases.

- 70 a. *ydy 'o 'n2 dynn?*  
 be.PRES.3SG it PRED tight  
 ‘is it tight?’
- b. *ah,, wyt ti 'n2 ddoniol.*  
 ah be.PRES.2SG you.SG PRED funny  
 ah, you’re funny.’
- c. *llaw yn2 fudr.*  
 hand PRED dirty  
 ‘hand dirty.’

Adjectives also occur in manner adverbial expressions which are headed by the particle *yn3*. (The spellings *yn2* and *yn3* occur in the database to facilitate computer searches.)

- 71 a. *dweud lemon yn3 iawn.*  
 say lemon ADV proper  
 ‘say lemon properly.’
- b. *cysgu yn3 sownd.*  
 sleep ADV sound  
 ‘sleep soundly.’
- c. *Taid yn canu yn3 dda,, yndy?*  
 Grandfather PROG sing ADV good be.PRES.3SG  
 ‘Grandad sings well, doesn’t he?’

Adjective phrases also occur in verb phrases as complements to the verb.

- 72 a. *ti 'n nabod coch,, ynd wyt?*  
 you.SG PROG know red Q.NEG be.PRES.2SG  
 ‘you know red, don’t you?’
- b. *ti 'n rhoid posh yn1 ei2 gwallt hi.*  
 you.SG PROG put posh in CL.SG.F hair she  
 ‘you put ‘posh’ in her hair.’
- c. *mae pawb yn gwisgo pinc heddiw.*  
 be.PRES.3SG everyone PROG wear pink today  
 ‘everyone wears pink today.’



In examples like those in (72), an adjective phrase is being used like a nominal phrase.

A nominal use of an adjective phrase is also seen when adjectives occur as the complements of prepositions.

73 a. *Dad wedi 'i wisgo mewn coch?*

Dad PERF CL.3S.M wear in red

'Dad is dressed in red today.'

b. *hwyrach 'sa well i' ni fynd i' 'r gegin am bach.*

perhaps be.CNTF.3SG better for we go to the kitchen for little

'perhaps it would be better for us to go to the kitchen for a little (time).'

74 a. *mae 'na lot o las yna.*

be.PRES.3SG there lot of blue there

'there's a lot of blue there.'

b. *dipyn bach o oren,, ie.*

bit small of orange yes

'a little bit of orange, yes.'

75 a. *pan mae mynd ar frys i' rhywle.*

when be.PRES.3SG go on hurry to somewhere

'when he goes in a hurry to somewhere.'

b. *mae 'n mynd ar wib.*

be.PRES.3SG PROG go on streak

it goes in a streak.'

c. *pan wyt ti ar ddihun,, wyt.*

when be.PRES.2SG you.SG on awake be.PRES.2SG

'when you are awake, yes.'

In the examples in (74), the prepositional phrase which contains the adjective is part of quantifier phrase. The examples in (75) show certain adjectives as complements to the preposition *ar* 'on'. The adjectives are *brys* 'rush, hurry', *gwib* 'sprint' and *dihun* 'awake'. These prepositional phrases occur as predicative phrases in copular clauses. They can be compared with the use of *ar* before verb phrases as in the devised examples *mae'r drws ar gau* 'the door is shut' and *mae'r siop ar agor* 'the shop is open'.

There is a small number of other phrases in which an adjective phrase can occur as a constituent.

76 a. *pa mor hyll 'dy hi [% this is the Ghostbuster monster lady]?*

which so ugly be.PRES.3SG she

'how ugly is she?'

- b. *yli pa mor fach 'dy hi?*  
 look.IMPV.SG which so small be.PRES.3SG she  
 look how small she is.'

- 77 *nage,, ife # coch?*  
 no Q red  
 'no, is it red?'

The examples in (76) show that an adjective phrase which contains the degree word *mor* 'so' can occur in a phrase which is headed by the *wh*-word *pa* 'which'. The example in (77) shows an adjective as the complement of the interrogative particle *ife*, which can otherwise precede focus phrases in a fronted clause. An alternative to the examples in (76) is to use *faint o*.

- 78 *fath o destio faint o gryf dach chi?*  
 sort of test how+much of strong be.PRES.2PL you.PL  
 'sort of testing how strong you are.'

There is a small number of examples which contain English phrases.

- 79 a. *good girl*  
 b. <*teddy bear*> [% Saesneg] *bach*.  
 'small teddy bear.'

Finally, there are a small number of examples which are uncertain

- 80 *f'est ti 'n rhoi ta fach iddo fe?*  
 be.PERF.2SG you.SG PROG put ta small to.3SG.M he  
 'were you giving a small 'ta' to him?'

- 81 a. *xxx ynx barod?*  
 xx ADV/PRED read  
 'ready?'
- b. *mae xxx bach yn mynd.*  
 be.PRES.3SG xxx small PROG go  
 'small xxx is going.'

The phrase *ta fach* in (80) is uncertain and the examples in (81) contain missing data.

Table 9 gives the frequencies for the various phrases in which an adjective phrase can occur.

*Table 9.* Frequencies for subordinate adjective phrases

Nominal phrases	2725
Predicative phrases	1614
Manner adverb phrases	256
Verb phrases	10
Prepositional phrases	7
All others	11
	<hr/> 4623

There are three phrases in which adjective phrases mainly occur. Chief amongst these are nominal phrases, which account of 58.94% of the total. Predicative phrases account for 34.91% and manner adverb phrases account for 5.54%. The remaining possibilities are very small percentages of the total. In summary, nominal phrases and predicative phrases are the main phrases in which adjective phrases occur.

Table 10 summarises the occurrences of adjective phrases as constituents in another phrase or as phrases which can stand alone in various clause types.

*Table 10.* Adjective phrases as constituents in another phrase or as free-standing constituents

Constituents in a phrase	4623
Free-standing	1316
	<hr/> 5939

The adjective phrases which are constituents in another phrase are very much in the majority, accounting for 77.85% of the total of both syntactic contexts. The significance of this observation is that the syntax of the containing phrase need to be acquired by young children as well as the syntax of the adjective phrase.

## 4 Co-ordination

The account given in the sections above is based on adjective phrases which have one adjective as their head. But there are examples of phrases which contain co-ordinated adjectives. There are only 23 examples of co-ordinated adjective phrases in the database and they mainly involve colour adjectives. They can come under several of the topics discussed in previous sections.

Sequences of examples occur as free-standing constituents.

- 82 a. *coch a gwyn a glas a melyn?*  
 red and white and blue and yellow  
 ‘red and white and blue and yellow.’
- b. *brown a gwyn.*  
 brown and white  
 ‘brown and white.’
- c. *glas a coch.*  
 blue and red  
 ‘blue and red.’

Co-ordinated adjectives can occur as constituents in other phrases

- 83 a. *mae 'n2 coch a glas a oren.*  
 be.PRES.3SG PRED red and blue and orange  
 ‘it’s red and blue and orange.’
- b. *ceffyl du a gwyn.*  
 horse black and white  
 ‘a black and whiter horse.’

Two sets of reduplicated adjectives can be co-ordinated.

- 84 *rhwbeth mawr mawr mawr mawr mawr a hen hen hen hen hen.*  
 something big big big big big and old old old old old  
 ‘something big big big big big and old old old old old.’

We have seen in section 2.3 that colour adjectives can be listed in sequence. Co-ordination can also be used to terminate such a sequence.

- 85 a. *pinc, piws a melyn.*  
 pink puce and yellow  
 ‘pink, puce and yellow.’
- b. *ac maen nhw 'n newid, gwyrdd, coch a oren.*  
 and be.PRES.3PL they PROG change green red and orange  
 ‘they change, green, red and orange.’

The co-ordinator is mainly *a* ‘and’ but there are three examples of *neu* ‘or’.

- 86 a. *na,,, rhyw felyn ne' brown.*  
 neg some yellow or brown  
 ‘no, sort of yellow or brown.’
- b. *fel 'a mwy ne' lai.*  
 like that more or less  
 ‘like that more or less.’

- c. *Snow+White mawr ne' bach.*  
 Snow White big or little  
 'a big or little Snow White.'

As stated above, co-ordinated adjectives are mainly colour adjectives but examples (86b, c) contain adjectives of size. The first of these two examples, *fel 'a mwy ne' lai*, amounts to a set saying.

## 5 Summary and conclusions

The description of adjective phrases is multi-faceted, requiring an account of their internal syntax and their distribution in various syntactic contexts. We have also seen that lexis is a significant consideration as several syntactic patterns are realized mainly by a small number of adjective lexemes.

The syntax of adjective phrases is accounted for by modification and complementation. Degree and degree words are the main methods of modification. The lexemes *cyntaf* 'first', *nesaf* 'next' and *gwell* 'better' dominate the superlative and comparative degrees. The lexemes *iawn* 'very' and *rhy* 'too' are the most frequent of the degree words. Further, the two superlative forms occur mainly as adverbs and not attributive or predicative adjectives and the comparative form occurs with an *i*-clause complement.

Complementation also shows a close relationship between individual adjectives and syntax. The main combination is *gwell* + *i*-clauses. Prepositional phrase complements are the next most frequent but the most complex to describe. The main combinations of adjective and complement are [ *siwr* + *o* + copular ] and [ *tebyg* + *i* + nominal phrase ].

In terms of the distribution in syntactic contexts, adjective phrases occur more often as constituents in another phrase (4605) than as free-standing constituents in a clause. They are encountered more in nominal phrases and predicative phrases than any other phrasal or clausal context.

Where different adjectives are in sequence in an adjective phrase, adjectives of size tend to come first. Colour adjectives tend to precede all other types of adjective, except size (which they tend to follow).

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