Deriving (non)agreement in Welsh

Introduction. Welsh canonically displays agreement only with pronouns, never with full NPs. Yet numerous cases of full agreement with displaced (both A- and Ā-moved) NPs are robustly attested, and, on close inspection, resist incorporation into frameworks where agreement only targets pronouns. I motivate an account of AGREEMENT vs. NONAGREEMENT patterns in Welsh based on locality, clitic incorporation, and cyclic movement, within a typology of RESUMPTIVE vs. GAP structures. Past accounts have argued that the nominal characteristics of Celtic verbs naturally derive the 'regular' complementary agreement patterns (pronoun-only). I argue these properties also derive the 'irregular' (unrestricted) patterns in Welsh.

Background. In Welsh, full agreement occurs with pronominal goals—pronominal subjects get full 3PL agreement on the inflected verb (1), and pronominal objects of uninflected verbs in periphrastic (i.e. auxiliary) constructions are doubled by matching clitics (3). However, full agreement is ungrammatical with nominals: (non-pro)nominal subjects get default 3SG agreement (2), while nominal objects of uninflected verbs resist clitic doubling (4).

(1) Can-**on/*-odd** nhw.
sing-PST.3P/*3S they
'They sang(pl).'

(2) Can-**odd/*-on** y cŵn.
sing-PST.3S/*3P the dogs
'The dogs sang(sg).'

(3) Dwi'n **ei** gweld (hi).
be.PRS.1S-PRG **3MS** see her
'I see her.'

(4) Dwi'n (***ei**) gweld y gath.
be.PRS.1S-PRG (***3FS**) see the cat
'I see the cat.'

The pattern PRON = FULL AGR | NOM = DEFAULT/NO AGR is robust across all feature dependencies in the language: prepositional agreement, pre-nominal possessor cliticization, etc. (Borsley et al. 2007).

Problems. In displacement configurations built on the object of an uninflected verb (that is, in a periphrastic construction with an inflected auxiliary), this agreement pattern is violated.

(5) <u>y llyfrau</u> o'n i'n **eu** darllen __
the books be.IMPF.1S I-PRG **3P** read
'the books that I read' **VN-OBJ RELATIVE**

(6) Cafodd <u>y dynion</u> **eu** gweld __
get-PST.3S the men **3P** see
'The men were seen.' **CAEL-PASSIVE**

The object clitics in (5) and (6) track the features of a nominal relativized object of the uninflected verbal noun (VN) and raised passive subject respectively. The relative example in (5) is matched in VN-object wh-questions (not shown, but see 13 below). Previous literature on Welsh agreement assumes that the agreement operation itself is restricted to pronominal goals, e.g. by a *u*pro feature on the probe (Rouveret 2002) or an LF feature checking restriction (Willis 2000). The data in (5–6) poses a challenge for such accounts—I conclude that Welsh agreement cannot be parameterized to only track the features of pronouns.

Desiderata. An analysis must derive **a)** the general 'complementary' pattern in (1–4), while **b)** admitting the exceptions in (5–6) on independent grounds.

Nominal properties of verbs. Some accounts have connected 'default' agreement in Celtic languages with the presence of 'default' (i.e. basic π and #) ϕ-features on the verb. In particular, the Breton verb has been argued to have exceptionally nominal characteristics consistent with its bearing such default ϕ-features (Jouitteau & Rezac 2006). I present matching evidence for 'noun-y' verbs in Welsh, two pieces of which are presented in (7–10). Examples (7–8) show the similarity of (NP) possessor and (VP) object morphology, while the NP in (9) and VP in (10) both undergo what has been argued to be accusative case-marking consonant mutation (Roberts 1997). I still distinguish verbs from basic nouns on the basis of their argument taking properties (Borsley 1993), arguing that the morphological and syntactic behavior of verbs with respect to Case and agreement is consistent with a verbal element bearing default ϕ-features.

(7) ei=gath e
3SM=cat him
'his cat'

(8) ei=garu e
3SM=love him
'(to) love him'

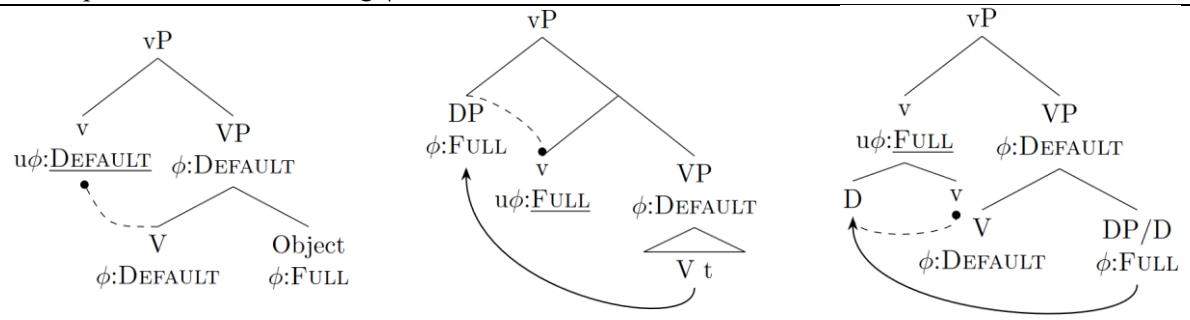
(9) Prynais i **g**adair. (c>**g** ACC)
buy-PST.3S I chair
'I bought a chair.'

(10) Gall y dyn **dd**reifio car. (d>**dd** ACC)
can.PRS.3S the man drive car
'The man can drive a car.'

Deriving the basic pattern (Welsh VN-objects). For VN-object clitic doubling (Tree A), I assume a probe on v associated with the object proclitic, specified for π, #, and gender. Crucially, the 'noun-y' verb does not bear a gender feature. In the basic case of an *in situ* nominal object, the verb itself is the closest feature-bearing target for agreement, leading to failed agreement due to feature mismatch, ignoring the object.

Deriving the exceptions. I propose that the same nominal properties of verbs interact with standard derivational mechanisms to produce the exceptions where both full nominals (Tree B) and pronouns (Tree C) agree. Crucially, all cases of full agreement with nominals involve successive cyclic movement through the vP phase edge, where the object probe is still active (Béjar & Rezac 2009). Because in this model, Agree is not inherently restricted to pronouns, agreement with elements displaced through the projection bearing an active probe is *expected*. I attribute the ability of pronouns to agree to a cliticization property: D heads cliticize within the vP domain—obviating the intervention effect of the verb's ϕ-features. The irregular cases of full agreement can thus be modeled as DISPLACEMENT EFFECTS, within the general system.

Subject agreement. Subject agreement never exhibits any displacement effect (see (12) below) because the projection bearing the inflectional probe (T/AgrS) does not define a phase—that is, only pronouns can ever escape the verb's intervening ϕ-features.



(A) VN-object nonagreement *(B) VN-object displacement+agree* *(C) VN-object clitic doubling*

Resumption vs. gaps. Some accounts assume the exceptional constructions in (5–6) contain a (null) resumptive pronoun at the displacement site—where unrestricted agreement would also be expected (Rouveret 2002). This approach is more viable in Irish and Breton, where full agreement is paired with obligatory pro-drop (McCloskey and Hale 1984), and the existence of obligatorily null pronouns is motivated on independent grounds. Following previous work (Willis 2011), I argue this solution to be undesirable in Welsh. While many dependencies in Welsh admit an overt resumptive pronoun at the displacement site, as in the possessor relative in (11), VN-object dependencies do not. An overt resumptive pronoun *nhw* at the base generation site is ungrammatical in (5–6). VN-object relatives behave more like subject (12) and object (not shown) relatives, in forbidding (overt) resumptives.

(11) *y dyn welais i ei chwaer e*
the men see-PST.1S I 3MS sister him
'the man whose sister I saw' (Willis 2011) **PSSR REL**

(12) *y gwraged*da *welodd (*hwy) y ddamwain*
the women REL see-PST.3S (*they) the accident
'the women who saw the accident' (Willis 2011) **SUBJ REL**

Semantic evidence also suggests a movement rather than null pronominal analysis of gaps in VN-object dependencies: e.g. a narrow scope reading of a quantifier under an intensional verb is available in both CAEL-passives (13) and VN-object wh-questions (14), in addition to the (surface) wide scope reading.

(13) ***Faint o lyfrau*** *ydy Sioned yn eu=DYMUNO?*
how.many books is Sioned PRG 3P=expect
'How many books is Sioned expecting?'

(14) *Roedd* ***ambell i berson*** *yn cael eu=DISGWYL.*
be.IMPF.3S some people PRG get 3P=expect
'Some people were expected.'

These facts, and quantifier/Principle C binding facts, seen in light of recent literature (Lechner 2019; *i.a.*), suggest full reconstruction of the internal argument to a lower copy, ruling out resumptive analyses.

Conclusion. Attributing the lack of (full) agreement with nominals to the nominal character of the Welsh verb naturally derives otherwise problematic exceptions to typical agreement patterns, while eliminating a stipulative 'pronoun-only' condition on the agreement operation.

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