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Brittonic

Introduction

This study looks at the Brittonic sub-group of the Celtic languages: Breton, Cornish and Welsh. These are traditionally treated as separate languages from the middle of the sixth century AD, with an initial split into Old Welsh on the one hand, and Old South-West British on the other, which later split further into Breton and Cornish, perhaps around the eighth century. This latter split is difficult to document, and Breton and Cornish (and perhaps also Welsh) may have remained mutually intelligible for much longer than this (Schrijver 2011a: 4–5). The 'old' stages—Old Welsh, Old Breton and Old Cornish—are all fairly poorly attested, and most of the extant material is in the form of interlinear glosses in Latin manuscripts. These do not include examples of many of the phenomena we are interested in, and therefore the corpus used for this study consists mainly of Middle Welsh, Middle Breton and Middle Cornish. The time periods of the three languages are given below.

Old South-West British (previously Old Breton, Old Cornish)	9c to 11c	Middle Breton	end of 11c to mid-17c	Early Modern Breton	mid-17c to end of 18c
		Middle Cornish	12c to end of 16c	Late Cornish	extinct by the end of 18c (revival in 20c)
Old Welsh	mid-8c to mid-12c	Middle Welsh	mid-12c to c. 1500	Early Modern Welsh	c. 1500 to c. 1700

Although the 'middle' period for all the three languages is traditionally given as beginning around the same time, there is a major difference between Welsh and the other two languages. While we have several manuscripts written completely in Welsh from the thirteenth century onwards, full-length texts in Middle Breton and Cornish only exist from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Because Middle Breton and Cornish examples are generally later than Middle Welsh ones, and also because of the availability of searchable corpora, most of our examples in this chapter come from Middle Welsh. Given the time gap between early Middle Welsh and the earliest Middle Breton and Cornish, it is possible that, although some of the formations discussed below are not attested in Breton and Cornish, we might expect to find some examples if we were to find earlier texts in these languages.

Our data comes from a range of texts including prose and sometimes poetry. Examples were initially collected from reference books such as Evans (1964) and the *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru/A Dictionary of the Welsh Language* (Thomas et al. 1950–;

abbreviated *GPC*) and from text corpora (these are listed in the bibliography). References are given in the chapter, where possible, to printed editions of the texts (in the future!). The biggest Middle Welsh text corpora (*Rhyddiaith Cymraeg* 1300–1425, ed. Luft et al. and *Rhyddiaith 13g.*, ed. Isaac et al.) contain prose texts of various types, including the well-known *Mabinogion* corpus of narrative tales (including the *Four Branches of the Mabinogi*), law texts and historical texts (e.g. translations of Geoffrey of Monmouth). While the manuscripts can be dated fairly accurately, the exact date of most of the texts is still debated; for example, the suggested dates for the *Four Branches of the Mabinogi* range from the eleventh to the fourteenth century. For Early Modern Welsh and Modern Welsh up until 1850, Willis & Mittendorf (2004) cover a wide range of texts of very different registers, from the first Welsh translations of the Bible to travel writing in an informal register.

Constructions expressing gradation

1. Similative constructions

1.3 Type 3: standard marker (STM) is flag, parameter marker (PM) is E (verb/adjective)

1.3.2 flag is adposition

Two verbs can express similative degree in Middle Welsh:

1. *tebygaf*: *tebygu* 'to be(come) similar (to), resemble; liken, compare; assimilate'
2. *cyffelybaf*: *cyffelybu* 'to compare, make alike, assimilate; be similar to, resemble, match; imitate; hint, allude, refer'

With both verbs, the standard is marked by the preposition *i* 'to'.

- (1) Middle Welsh (Gwaith Llywelyn Goch ap Meurig Hen p. 45 (poem 8.52–3), ed. Johnston 1998, 14th c.):

<i>Rhy=debygu</i>	<i>Lleucu Llwyd / I</i>	<i>hardd</i>	<i>flodeuros</i>	<i>gardd gain</i>
PTC=liken	L.L.	to	beautiful	sunflower.PL garden fair
PM	CPREE	STM	STAND	

'having compared Lleucu Llwyd to the beautiful sunflowers of a fair garden'

(extra) Late Middle Welsh (*GPC*, 15th c.)

a'r lliw hwnn y mae Ovydd yn i debygu i vaen glas
 'and this colour which Ovid likens to a grey stone'

Middle Breton has a verb *hualier* (derivative of the adjective *hual* 'like, similar') (Ernault 1888 s.v. *hual*):

- (2) Middle Breton (*Buez Santez Nonn*, ed. Le Berre et al., 1999, 16th c.):
- | | | | | | |
|---------------|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------|--------------------|
| <i>Ouz vn</i> | <i>clezeff a pep</i> | <i>queuer / vn</i> | <i>barner mat</i> | <i>hep</i> | <i>nep atfer /</i> |
| to | ART sword | in every point | ART judge | good | without any delay |
| STM | STAND | | CPREE | | |
- a hualier etre =n gweryn.*
 PTC liken among=the people.

PM

'a good judge with delay is to be compared before the people to a sword in every point'

In Middle Cornish, the cognate verb is attested in negative form, and lacking the similitive meaning: *defaleby* 'to disfigure, deform' (also a derivative of *haual* 'like similar') (Williams 1865 s.v. *defaleby*, *haual*); the positive form is not attested.

1.4 Type 4: standard marker (STM) is flag, parameter marker (PM) is not expressed

1.4.2 flag is adposition

The preposition MW *mal* (later *fal*, *fel*), MB *euel*, *evel*, *eval* (OB *amal*), MC *avel* 'like' can be used in the similitive construction CPREE + STM + STAND:

(3) Middle Welsh (*Efengyl Nicodemus*, NLW Peniarth 5 (Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch), 32v, ed. Luft et al. 2013, 14th c.)

<i>a=e</i>	<i>wisc</i>	<i>mal</i>	<i>eiry</i>
and=his	dress	like	snow
	CPREE	STM	STAND

'and his clothes (were) like snow'

While e.g. 'clothes like snow' (meaning 'as white as snow') is possible in Middle Welsh, we are not aware of any examples of adjective + *mal* + standard. This is possible in Modern Welsh, e.g. *gwydr gwyn fel llaeth* [glass white like milk] 'a glass white like milk' (CEG corpus). This construction is, however, attested in Middle Cornish: *Fenten bryght avel arhans* (fountain bright like silver) 'a fountain bright like silver' (*Origo Mundi* l. 771, ed. Norris 1859). This similitive construction is similar to the equative discussed in 2.2.2 (e.g. 'as white as milk') with the exception that the similitive construction lacks a parameter marker.

(extra) Middle Welsh (Peniarth 17, ed. Isaac et al. 2013, 13th c.)

yd eheta endau adar ual y nouya y pyscaut en e duuyr
'birds will fly like fish swim in water'

1.12 Other Types

The following is a possible example with three entities and three predicates in Middle Welsh:

(4) Middle Welsh (*Peredur*, NLW Peniarth 4 (Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch), p. 35v, ed. Luft et al. 2013, 14th c.)

<i>a</i>	<i>chyffelybu</i>	<i>duhet</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>vran</i>
and	comparing	blackness	ART	crow
	PM	PAR		CPREE
<i>a</i>	<i>gwynder</i>	<i>yr</i>	<i>eira</i>	
and	whiteness	ART	snow	

	PAR		CPREE				
<i>a</i>	<i>chochter</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>gúæet</i>				
and	redness	ART	blood				
	PAR		CPREE				
<i>y</i>	<i>wallt</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>wreic</i>	<i>uwyhaf</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>garei ...</i>	<i>a=e</i> <i>chnawt...</i>
to	hair	ART	woman	most	PRT	love.IPFV.3SG	and=her skin
STM	STAND						STAND
<i>yr</i>	<i>deu</i>	<i>van</i>	<i>gochyon</i>	<i>yg</i>	<i>grudyeu</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>wreic</i>
ART	two	spot	red.PL	in	cheek.PL	ART	woman
STAND							

‘and he compared the blackness of the crow and the whiteness of the snow and the redness of the blood to the hair of the woman he loved the most...and to her skin...(and) to the two red spots on the cheeks of the woman’

1.13 Formal means of expressing grading and comparison

2. Equative constructions

2.1 Type 1: standard marker (STM) is flag, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

2.1.2 flag is adposition

In Middle Welsh, the most common way of forming equatives is by adding *-(h)et* (/-(h)ed/) to the adjective. This form is preceded by the particle *cyn/cy* (also spelled *ky(n)* in Middle Welsh orthography; see below for more discussion of this particle). Equative degree is marked twice on the adjective in this construction: by the bound morpheme *-(h)et* and the free morpheme *cyn/cy*. The standard is identified by *a* 'as' (Modern Welsh *â*) before consonants and *ac* /*ag*/ (ModW *ag*) before vowels. This *a(c)* is homophonous with the preposition *a(c)* 'with' and is likely to be the same word in origin; we therefore treat it as a preposition here. *Cyn/cy* causes soft mutation of the following consonant, while *a(c)* causes aspirate mutation.¹ Alongside this way of forming equatives, there is another with the free morpheme *mor* 'as' + adjective (see 2.2.2 below).

¹ While the initial consonant mutations go back to phonologically motivated processes, the motivation is often no longer visible, and the mutations appear synchronically arbitrary. Prepositions and particles (and many other lexical items) may trigger alternations on the initial segment of the noun, provided it is a consonant of the right type. The most common of these is known as soft mutation (sometimes ‘lenition’) whereby in Modern Breton /p t k b d g gw m/ (orthographically the same) become /b d g v z h w v/ (orthographically <b d g v z c’h w v>, there is more spelling variation in Middle Breton), for more details see Ternes (2011: 458–461). Soft mutation is triggered on adjectives following feminine singular nouns (in all three languages) and adjectives following plurals of masculine nouns denoting humans (only in Breton and Cornish). The Cornish and Welsh soft mutation patterns are in part identical to Breton with some differences. In Middle and Late Cornish, /p t k b d g m tʃ/ (orthographically <p t c/k b d g m ch>) become /b d g v ð ø/w v dʒ/ (orthographically <b d g v/f th zero/w v g/j>), see Williams (2011: 304–305). In Modern Welsh, /p t k b d g m tʃ/ (orthographically <p t c b d g m ll rh>) become /b d g v ð ø v l r/ (orthographically <b d g f dd> zero <f l r>, spelling variation occurs in Middle Welsh) (see Awbery 2009: 376–381 for Modern Welsh, and Schumacher 2011: 112–113 for Middle Welsh). The second type is aspirate mutation, whereby /p t k/ become /f θ x/ in Welsh and Cornish (orthographically Welsh <ph th ch>, Middle/Late Cornish <ph th h>) respectively. In Breton, the aspirate mutation of /t/ became /ð/ in Middle Breton, further developing into /z/ in some dialects (orthographically <z>). Breton and Cornish also have provection (unvoicing of /b d g/) while Welsh has a third

(5) Middle Welsh (*Peredur*, NLW Peniarth 7, 9r, ed. Luft et al. 2013, 14th c.)
a=y devrud oed kyn gochet a gwaet
 and=her cheek.DU be.PRET.3SG as red-EQD as blood
 CPREE PM PAR-PM STM STAND
 'and her cheeks were as red as blood'

(extra) Middle Welsh (*Breuddwyd Rhonabwy*, Jesus College Oxford MS 111 (Llyfr Coch Hergest), 135v, ed. Luft et al. 2013, 14th c.)
cyn wynnet y wyneb ac ascórn yr eliffant
 'his face was as white as ivory (lit. bone of the elephant)'

(extra) Middle Welsh (Jesus College 111, *Ystoria Carolo Magno: Rhamant Otfel*, 100v, ed. Luft et al. 2013, 14th c.)
taryan newyd gadarn kyn wynnet oed ar eiry
 'a new steadfast shield that was as white as the snow'

Furthermore, *cy* sometimes seems to occur as a bound morpheme *cy-*, e.g. *niuer ky-hard-et a hwnnw* 'a host as beautiful as that' (*hard* 'beautiful') (*Owein*, Jesus College Oxford MS 111 (Llyfr Coch Hergest), 157r). These are quite rare, and we cannot be sure that *cy-* is indeed prefixed in such instances, as word division in medieval Welsh manuscripts is not completely reliable (short function words are sometimes written together with a following noun). *Cyn*, which we know to be a free morpheme /kɪn/ from its use in Modern Welsh, can sometimes be written together with the adjective (e.g. *kyngochet* 'as red as' for *kyn gochet*, *Owein* 156r). This possible prefixal usage of *cy* may have been influenced by that of a homophonous prefix *cy-* which probably has a different historical origin (see 2.13).

Middle Breton also has the suffix *-(h)et*, but it has not survived in its original equative function that we still find in Middle Welsh. Instead, it is confined to the so-called 'exclamative', that is, an adjectival form expressing admiration, blame, surprise, etc. (Hemon 1975: 63–64), e.g. *caezr-et den* 'what a fine man!' (*caezr* 'fine'). We agree with Hemon and Schrijver (2011b: 392) that this construction is probably equative in origin, like its Welsh counterpart, and the exclamative function is a further development from that. There is no trace of this suffix in Cornish, as far as we are aware.

2.2 Type 2: standard marker (stm) is flag, parameter marker (pm) is free morpheme
 2.2.2 flag is adposition

As discussed above, degree is marked in Middle Welsh by a combination of the bound morpheme *-(h)et* added to the adjective, and the free particle *cyn/cy*. This is paralleled in Breton by the use of the cognate particle *ken* (also spelled *quen* in Middle Breton), which has the dialect variants *kel* and *ker* (Hemon 1975: 48). Unlike Welsh, where the adjective also has to be suffixed with *-(h)et* in this construction, Breton *ken/quen* is followed by the simple form of the adjective (see above on the 'exclamative' use of *-(h)et* in Breton). The

mutation not shared by the other two languages, namely nasal mutation. These are not relevant to the present discussion; see the references above for details.

standard is identified by *ha(c)*, *ha(g)* /ag/ or *euel*, *euel* 'as'. Example (5) above serves to illustrate the Welsh construction, while (6) is given for Breton:

- (6) Early Modern Breton (*Instructionou var...ar Rosera*, c. 1710; Hemon 1975: 49)
- | | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|------------|-----------|-------------|
| <i>quen</i> | <i>calet</i> | <i>hac</i> | <i>ar</i> | <i>mean</i> |
| as | hard | as | ART | stone |
| EQD | PAR | STM | STAND | |
- 'as hard as stone'

In Breton, it is also possible to repeat the parameter and degree for comparee and standard (this is also mentioned in the Introduction, where (7) is given as example (85):

- (7) (Early) Modern Breton (*D'an Dreinded Santel*, ed. Morvan 1889: 9)
- | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|------------------|-----------|------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| <i>an</i> | <i>tri</i> | <i>ferson=ze</i> | <i>zo</i> | <i>ker</i> | <i>koz</i> | <i>ha</i> | <i>ker</i> | <i>koz</i> |
| ART | 3 | person=DEM | is | EQD | old | and | EQD | old |
| | CPREE.STAND | | | PM | PAR | | PM | PAR |
- 'those three persons are equally old'

All three Brittonic languages have another equative construction in addition to the ones discussed in 2.1 and 2.2 above. This involves the degree particle *W mor*, *B* and *C mar* 'as, so' (probably in origin a form of the adjective *W mawr*, *B meur*, *C mur* 'big') followed by the basic form of the adjective. Cornish also has another equative particle *maga* 'as'. These are followed by *W a(c)*, *B ha(c)/ha(g)*, *euel/euel*, *C ha(g)*, *avel* 'like, as' to identify the standard:

- (8) Middle Welsh (*Gwyrtheu Mair*, NLW Llanstephan 27 (Llyfr Coch Talgarth), 173v, ed. Luft et al. 2013, 14th c.)
- | | | | |
|------------------|------------|-----------------|--------------|
| <i>gúeithret</i> | <i>mor</i> | <i>dybryt a</i> | <i>hónnú</i> |
| act | as | vile as | that |
| CPREE | PM | PAR | STM |
- 'an act as vile as that'

- (extra) Middle Cornish (*Ordinalia*, l. 2274, ed. Norris 1859)
- kyn fo mar pos avel men*
'though he was as heavy as stone'

- (extra) Middle Cornish (*Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, l. 3138, ed. Norris 1859)
- maga whyn avel an leth*
'as white as milk'

2.5 Type 5: standard marker (STM) is particle, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

Not attested. Note that the marker *a/ac* 'as' used in the Middle Welsh equative constructions to mark the standard could also be analysed as a particle, although it derives from the preposition *a/ac* 'with'. We analyse *a/ac* in equative constructions as a preposition, while recognizing that a fully synchronic analysis could treat it as a particle.

2.10 Type 10: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

The degree markers MW *cyn/cy*, MB *ken* and W *mor*, MB and MC *mar* can all be used without degree being explicitly expressed. Such phrases can have an exclamative force (Evans 1964: 43). There is one such Old Welsh example: *mortru* 'so sad', from *tru* 'sad, wretched' (a gloss on Latin *heu* 'ah!, alas!') (Falileyev 2000: 114–115).

(9) Middle Breton (*La Vie de Sainte Nonne*, Hemon 1975: 51)

den mar sanctel

man so saintly

CPREE DEGR PAR

'so saintly a man'

(extra) Middle Welsh (*Efengyl Nicodemus*, Peniarth 5 (Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch), 35r, ed. Luft et al. 2013, 14th c)

Pa vn wyt ti mor vaur a mor vychan

'which one are you, (one) so big and so small'

(extra) Middle Breton (*La Destruction de Jérusalem*, Hemon 1975: 48)

an neff quen scler

'the sky so bright'

2.12 Other Types

One entity and two predicates

We have not been able to find examples of this construction.

Two entities and two predicates

We have not been able to find examples of this type of construction in any period of the Brittonic languages. They are theoretically possible in Modern Welsh and native speakers are able to translate e.g. 'you are as clever as I am stupid'; this, however, is not necessarily evidence that this type truly exists in Welsh, since (bilingual) speakers were simply translating them from English and they were generally unfamiliar with the construction. In Middle Welsh, our sense is that such expressions would make use of abstract nouns in -*(h)ed* rather than the equative (see 2.13 where it is suggested that these abstract nouns may be the source of the equative construction). While not an exact example of this, the following sentence from *Pwyll* is instructive, with *gwynned* 'whiteness' and *coched* 'redness':

(10) Middle Welsh (*Pwyll*, NLW Peniarth 4 (Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch), 1r, ed. Luft et al. 2013, 14th c)

<i>Ac</i>	<i>ual</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>llathrei</i>	<i>wynnet</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>cwn,</i>
and	as	PTC	shine.IPFV.3SG	whiteness	ART	dog.PL

<i>y</i>	<i>llathrei</i>	<i>cochet</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>clusteu</i>
PTC	shine.IPFV.3SG	redness	their	ear.PL

'and as the whiteness of the hounds shone, so the redness of their ears shone'

Evans (1964: 42) describes examples such as (10) as 'affective', expressing admiration or surprise (he translates 'exceeding whiteness', 'exceeding redness'). In our view, this might simply be analysed as an equative-like construction, which could be rephrased with something like 'their fur was as white as their ears were red'. This suggests that instead of an equative construction with two entities and two predicates, Welsh is more likely to make use of abstract nouns to express such meanings.

2.13 Formal means of expressing grading and comparison

-(h)ed

As already discussed, the equative forms in *-(h)ed* based on adjectives are restricted to Welsh. They may be nominal in origin (Schumacher 2011: 134–135 "Adjektivabstraktum" and cf. ex. 10 above). Griffith (this volume) analyses the Irish equative suffix *-ithir/-idir* as containing a cognate nominal abstract suffix *-eth/-ed* combined with a suffix *-ir*. Beside this, Old Irish has a formation *com-* + adj. (cf. Meid 1967), e.g. *comdhub fri h-éc* 'as black as death'. More work is needed to establish the status of this construction in Brittonic.

cyn/cy

As for the particle(s) or prefixes *cyn/cy*, these forms present a problem of analysis and these remarks should be regarded as provisional pending further research. All three Brittonic languages show a form with a prefixed *cy-* but they appear to be mainly relic forms, e.g. B *quehit, keit* 'as long' (*het, hed* 'length') and C *kemmys* 'as much as' (= W *cymaint, B quement*), *kepar* 'like, as' (= B *par, W cymmar*), *kynyuer* 'as many as' (= W *cynifer*), *ketoth* 'as quick as' (Hemon 1975: 51, Lewis 1946: 21; cf. W *tuth* 'movement'); the Cornish examples quoted by Lewis (1946: 21) suggest the last two could be used with equative syntax, e.g. *ketoth ha'n ger* 'as swift as the word' (= 'no sooner said'). In Welsh, there are two variants, a vowel final *cy-* and a consonant-final *cym-/cyf-*, e.g. *cyfurdd* 'of the same rank' (*urdd* 'rank, order'), *cymonedd* 'so noble, as noble (as)' (*bonedd* 'nobility'), *cyhyd* 'of the same length, as long' (*hyd* 'length'); these are clearly products of word-formation and not comparative forms of adjectives. Both are derived from the prefix **kom-*, cf. Irish *com-*, e.g. OIr *comlín* 'of equal number'. *Kyf-* generalised from **kom-* + a stem with an initial vowel, and *kyn-* perhaps from **kom-* + consonant-initial stem where there was assimilation to a dental.

On the other hand, the accented particle, Welsh *cyn*, Breton *quen, ken*, has proved more problematic; in the first instance, insofar as it is mentioned at all, there is confusion as to how it is to be analysed, whether as a prefix (Schumacher 2011: 134) or a preposition (Thurneysen 1946: 237). Medieval word-spacing is of little help as there is considerable variation as to whether there is a space between it and the following equative (e.g. *kyngochet* 'as red as' for *kyn gochet*, Owein 156r, see Luft et al. 2013). However, it cannot be a prefix as the modern pronunciation is /kɪn/ rather than /kən/ which it would be as a prefix, e.g. Welsh *cyn gynted â* /kɪn gənted a/ 'as soon as'; cf. Middle Welsh *kyn deccet* 'as fair (as)' (W *teg* 'fair'), *kyn huotlet* 'as fluent as', *kyn urasset* 'as thick as'; note that where *kyn-* is prefixed in these forms the following consonant is lenited. This seems to be the pattern most often when the equative suffix *-(h)ed* is used. In Breton, *quen* is usually written as a separate word, e.g. *quen guenn han nerch* 'as white as the snow'. On the other hand, its

origin remains a problem though the most likely possibility is that it is somehow related to the *cy-* (< **kom*) prefix.

Furthermore, there are ambiguous examples of apparently prefixed *cy-*, e.g. *niuer kyhardet a hwnnw* 'a host as beautiful as that' (*hard* 'beautiful') (*Owein*, Jesus College Oxford MS 111 (Llyfr Coch Hergest), 157r, see Luft et al. 2013). These are quite rare, and we cannot be sure that *cy-* is indeed prefixed in such instances, as word division in medieval Welsh manuscripts is not completely reliable (short function words are sometimes written together with a following noun). *Cyn*, which we know to be a free morpheme /*kɪn*/ from its use in Modern Welsh, can sometimes be written together with the adjective (e.g. *kyngochet* 'as red as' for *kyn gochet*, *Owein* 156r). This possible prefixal-like usage of *cy* may have been influenced by that of the homophonous prefix *cy-* (e.g. *cymaint*, see above) which probably has a different historical origin.

Case as standard marker

It would appear that in the Brittonic languages there is no evidence for original case-forms marking gradation (alongside other markers) in the way that happens in Irish (and in other languages; e.g. Latin *quam* beside the use of an ablative).

There is, however, one possible trace of this pattern to be found in the syntactical variation after the preposition (originally a comparative form) *kyn(n)* 'before (originally 'earlier than')'. It is usually argued that as *kyn* shifted towards prepositional usage, the medieval pattern of using *no(c)* 'than' (e.g. *kyn no'r oet*) gradually disappeared (Evans 1948–1950; 1979–1980; summarised in Evans 1964: 43–44). However, the distribution of constructions with and without *no(c)* is more complicated: in Middle Welsh *no(c)* is significantly rare before nouns and verbal nouns, but much more common before pronouns (both personal and demonstrative); in more complex forms, e.g. possessive pronoun + verbal noun the distribution is more mixed. More research is needed on this, and in particular the data needs to be sifted out more clearly so as to understand whether there is any difference in distribution between verse and prose. However, it may be that, rather than there being a straightforward development from comparative (+ *no(c)*) to preposition, it might be worth exploring the hypothesis that originally different syntactical patterns were used with nouns and pronouns; with the *kyn* + (verbal) noun, the pattern may reflect an original case form (as a standard marker, like in Early Irish) after *kyn* rather than loss of *no(c)*. Another issue to be explored is why earlier examples of 3 sg. possessive pronouns after *no(c)* show *noe* rather than *noc y*; does this suggest that the *-c* is a late development perhaps on the analogy of *a(c)* and *na(c)*?

Diachrony of the different equative expressions

In Middle Welsh, the two strategies described in 2.1.2 and 2.2.2 exist side by side, namely *cyn/cy* + adj-(*h*)*et* (where degree is marked twice) and *mor* + adj. There is no quantitative study of the comparative frequency of the two strategies, but our impression is that *mor* + basic form of the adjective gains in frequency in the Early Modern Welsh period. The two strategies may always have been features of particular registers, perhaps with *mor* + adjective as a more colloquial variant, as is the case in Modern Welsh. In Modern Welsh, especially in the colloquial register, *mor* + adj is the standard way of forming equatives, with the *cyn* + adj-*ed* strategy still existing especially in high-frequency phrases, e.g. *cyn lleied â* 'as little as' with the irregular equative *lleied* of *bychan/bach* 'little, small'. Another one is *cyn gynted â* 'as soon as possible' (Thomas 2006: 223–239). Such phrases are probably

learned as a whole and are not evidence of the productivity of the pattern with *cyn*. There is also a dialect dimension, with the *cyn* + *adj-ed* formation still being productive in southern dialects, as seen with English loanwords, e.g. *ffein* 'fine', *cyn ffeined* 'as fine' (Watkins 1961: 160).

In Breton, on the other hand, *mar* + adjective has become mostly obsolete in Modern Breton (Hemon 1975: 51) while *ken* (also realised as *kel* or *ker* depending on the following word) followed by the basic form of the adjective is the standard way of forming equatives (Jouitteau; http://arbres.iker.cnrs.fr/index.php?title=Ken,_ker,_kel). In Cornish, as discussed above, we only have the *mar* + *adj.* pattern (alongside another particle *maga* + *adj.*). All in all, it appears that analytic equative formations have become more common with time in all of the Brittonic languages, with the synthetic formation surviving alongside it in Welsh only.

Irregular forms

It is probably useful to discuss the irregular patterns of gradation all in one place. Brittonic languages, like all other IE languages, have a group of adjectives where the patterns of marking gradation are irregular; they are the typical adjectives, 'big', 'small', 'good', 'bad', etc. In fact, in many cases in the Brittonic languages the irregular forms do have some regularity built into them, but it is simply different to the regular patterns.

	Positive	Equative	Comparative	Superlative
'big'				
Welsh	<i>mawr</i>	<i>kymaint</i>	<i>mwy</i>	<i>mwyhaf</i>
Cornish	<i>mur</i>	<i>kemmys</i>	<i>moy</i>	<i>moyha</i>
Breton	<i>meur</i>	<i>quement</i>	<i>muy</i>	<i>muyhaff</i>
'good'				
Welsh	<i>da</i>	<i>cystal</i>	<i>gwell</i>	<i>goreu</i>
Cornish	<i>mas</i>	<i>mar dha</i>	<i>gwell</i>	<i>gualla</i>
Breton	<i>mat</i>	<i>koulz</i>	<i>guell</i>	<i>guelhaff</i>
'near'				
Welsh	<i>agos</i>	<i>kyn nasset</i>	<i>ness</i>	<i>nessaf</i>
Cornish	<i>ogas</i>	<i>mar ogas</i>	<i>nes</i>	<i>nessa</i>
Breton	<i>hogos</i>	<i>ken hogos</i>	<i>nes</i>	<i>nessaff</i>

Irregular equatives do not usually match the pattern of the comparatives and superlatives as they often take nominal syntax, but the most common irregular pattern is one where the comparatives and superlatives are built on the same stem which is not that of the positive, e.g. *mawr* : *mwy-*, *agos* : *ness-*, etc. It is also clear that such patterns go back to the Common Brittonic period as they are similar in all Brittonic languages. There are some subsequent regularisations, e.g. the extension of *gwell-/guell-* to the superlative in Cornish and Breton, or the sporadic addition of *-(h)af* to *goreu* in Middle Welsh. The most striking feature of these irregular patterns is the lack of the comparative suffix (W *-ach*, C *-a*, B *-och*), while most superlatives, however irregular the stem, still have the superlative suffix. These comparatives reflect the older inherited Common Celtic comparative ending **-yu:s* (IE **-yo:s*; cf. Schrijver 2011a: 44–45); this explains the vocalism of, for example, W *mwy* < **ma:-yu:s* (cf. *mawr* 'big' < **ma:-ro-*), W *hyn* 'older' (cf. *hen* 'old') < **sen-yu:s*.

3. Comparative constructions

3.1 Type 1: standard marker (STM) is flag, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

3.1.2 flag is adposition

The standard way of forming comparatives in the three Brittonic languages is adding the ending W *-ach*, B *-och* (also spelled *-oh*, *-o* in Middle Breton and *-oc'h* in Modern Breton) and *-ac'h* (very rare, see Hemon 1984: 53), C *-(h)a/-e* to the basic form of the adjective (for the origin of these markers, see Schrijver 2011a: 44–45). The parameter marker *-ach* is attested in Old Welsh, although these are single word glosses with no comparee indicated: *iselach* and *isselach* (from *isel* 'low') and *guobriach* (from *gwofri* 'dignified') (Falileyev 2000: 71, 97). The standard is marked by W *no(c)* and C *ages* (*agis/es/ys/ey*s) which we analyse as particles (see 3.5 below). Breton has two markers to mark the standard, the particle *eguet/ eget* 'than' and also the preposition *eguit/evit* 'for':

(11) Early Modern Breton (*Christmas Hymns*, Hemon 1975: 54, 17th c.)

<i>caletoh</i>	<i>eut</i>	<i>main</i>
hard-CPD	than	stone
PAR-PM	STM	STAND
'harder than stone'		

3.5 Type 5: standard marker (STM) is particle, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

The standard is indicated by the particles W *no(c)* 'than' (*no* before consonants, *noc/nog* before vowels), B *eguet/ eget*, C *ages* (*agis, es, ys, ey*s). Breton also uses the preposition *eguit/evit* 'for' as a marker (see 3.1.2).

(12) Middle Welsh (*Peredur*, NLW Peniarth 4 (Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch), 42r, ed. Luft et al. 2013, 14th c)

<i>Danhed</i>	<i>hiryon</i>	<i>melynyon</i>	<i>melyn-ach</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>blodeu</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>banadyl</i>
tooth.PL	long.PL	yellow.PL	yellow-CPD	than	flower.PL	ART	broom
CPREE			PAR-PM	STM	STAND		
'long yellow teeth yellower than the flowers of the broom'							

(extra) Middle Welsh (*Culhwch ac Olwen*, NLW Peniarth 4 (Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch), 85v, ed. Luft et al. 2013, 14th c)

no bronn alarch gúynn oed gúynach y dóyuron
 'her breasts were whiter than the breast of a white swan'

(extra) Middle Cornish (*Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, l. 348, ed. Norris 1859)

teke ages kyns
 'more beautiful than before'

3.6 Type 6: standard marker (STM) is particle, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

Another way of forming comparatives in Welsh, in addition to the one discussed above in 3.1.5, is to use the degree marker *W mwy*, *B, muy*, *C moy* 'more' with the basic form of the adjective. These markers are in origin the suppletive comparative forms of *W mawr*, *B meur*, *C mur* 'big'. The standard is indicated as with the analytic comparative, discussed above. We are not aware of any examples with this construction in Middle Welsh, where all examples of the comparative are formed with the synthetic marker *-ach* added to the adjective. The first examples of *mwy* + adjective appear in Early Modern Welsh. This may be a parallel development to the grammaticalization of *lleir* 'smaller' (comparative of *bach/bychan* 'small') as a degree marker for the comparative of inferiority (see 4.1.6 and 4.4 below). For the corresponding analytic superlative formation, see 4.13. The first Cornish examples that we are aware of appear in the play *Beunans Merisek* dated to 1504 (see additional examples to section 3.10). All three examples in this text (see Lewis 1946: 19) could be perhaps read as having a superlative, rather than comparative, meaning and no standard is indicated. For Breton, Hemon (1984: 60) seems to suggest that this analytic construction is only possible with past participles used adjectivally, and he only lists examples in the superlative (see 4.10), the earliest of which is from 1576. There are some examples with other adjectives, however. The earliest we were able to find are two examples from the first half of the seventeenth century, including (13), interestingly with a code switch with the French adjective *désireux*. This is also the case with the second example (*muy angelic* 'more angelic', from *Confessional dastumet eves an Doctoret Catholic Apostolic Romain*, 1612).

(13) Late Middle Breton (*Buhez Sant Euzen*, date 1623, p. 36, Le Menn 2002: 120)
an pobl comun muy desireux de cleuet oz sarmon euit vn all
 ART people common more desirous to hear.INF to sermon than one other
 CPREE PM PAR STM STAND
 'the common people more eager to hear a sermon than any other'

(extra) Early Modern Welsh (1819, see Willis & Mittendorf 2004)
nid oedd neb mwy dyfal a chysson... na Jane
 NEG be.PRET.3SG anyone more diligent and consistent than J.
 CPREE PM PAR PAR STM STAND
 'there was no one more diligent and consistent...than Jane'

(extra) Early Modern Welsh (1840, see Willis & Mittendorf 2004)
Yr oedd Ohio yn llawer mwy afiachus... nac ydyw yn bresenol
 'Ohio was a lot unhealthier...than it is at present'

(extra) Early Modern Welsh (1799, see Willis & Mittendorf 2004)
Rhai mwy diweddar o honynt
 'some more recent ones of them'

In Modern Welsh, the analytic construction is common especially with long adjectives of three or more syllables. In the Early Modern Welsh corpus by Willis & Mittendorf (2004), there are 32 examples (33 tokens) of *mwy* + adjective of less than three syllables (as seen in (13)). On the other hand, there are 23 examples (34 tokens) of *mwy* + adjective of three or

more syllables, so the spread of the analytic construction is not clearly driven by long adjectives. There are also two examples of *mwy* followed by an adjective with the synthetic comparative marker *-ach* (*mwy tybyccach* 'more similar', *mwy hyfach* 'braver' by Ellis Roberts, 1783, see Willis & Mittendorf 2004).

As for the comparative of inferiority, Modern Welsh has a degree marker *llai* 'less' (MW *lle*) to mark this degree. This is historically the suppletive comparative form of *bach/bychan* 'little, small'. The standard is indicated by the particle *na(g)* 'than' (MW *no(c)*). Similarly to the degree marker *mwy* 'more' for the comparative of superiority (see 3.1.6 above), this marker is not attested in Middle Welsh. The Early Modern Welsh corpus yields no examples either, suggesting perhaps that *llai* developed into a comparative marker even later than *mwy* 'more' (although late attestation does not mean it did not exist earlier). Example (14) is from Present-day Welsh:

(14) Present-day Welsh (CEG)

<i>tân</i>	<i>yn</i>	<i>llai</i>	<i>pwysig</i>	<i>na='r</i>	<i>sawl</i>
fire	PTC	less	important	than=ART	those
CPREE		PM	PAR	STM	STAND

<i>a</i>	<i>achubwyd</i>	<i>ohono</i>
REL	save.PRET.IMPERS	from it
(STAND CONTINUED)		

'a fire [may be] less important [to report] than those who were saved from it'

We were not able to find examples of MC *le* 'less' (or the superlative *leia*, *lyha* 'least') + adj. as an analytic comparative. Middle Breton has lost the irregular comparative forms of 'small' (Old Breton still has *lei* 'less', see Lewis & Piette 1966: 16).

3.10 Type 10: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

The analytic construction W *mwy*, B, *muy*, C *moy* 'more' + adj., discussed above in 3.6, can be used on its own without a following standard marker and standard. Some examples like this can be translated with exclamative force ('so careful' in (15)). Example (15) is also the earliest attested example of the analytic construction *mwy* + adj. in Welsh, alongside another example (*mwy gogoneddus* 'more glorious') in the same text.

(15) Early Modern Welsh, 1588 Bible translation (see Willis & Mittendorf 2004)

<i>a</i>	<i>chan</i>	<i>fod</i>	<i>yn</i>	<i>fwy</i>	<i>gofalus</i>
and	by	be.INF	PRT	more	careful
				PM	PAR

'and because he was so careful'

(extra) Early Modern Welsh (1765, see Willis & Mittendorf 2004)

trwy donnau'r byd i'r llawnfyd mwy llonfawr

'through the waves of this world to the more joyful world of heaven'

(extra) Early Modern Welsh (c. 1759, see Willis & Mittendorf 2004)

Mi glwyais Eiriau clæar clir / Mwy difir ar dy dafod

'I heard gentle, clear words / more pleasant (or 'so pleasant') on your tongue'

(extra) Late Middle Cornish (*Beunans Meriasek*, 192, ed. Stokes 1872, see also Lewis 1946: 19)

moy gracyus flogh yn bysma

'the more (most) gracious child in this world'

W *llai* 'less' + adj. can also be used on its own without an explicit standard of comparison:

(16) Modern Welsh (*CEG*)

<i>âi='r</i>	<i>ddaear yn</i>	<i>llai</i>	<i>ffrwythlon</i>
GO.IPFV.3SG=ART	earth PTC	less	fruitful
	CPREE	PM	PAR

'the earth turned less fruitful'

3.13 Formal means of expressing grading and comparison

The standard marker MW *no(c)* (later *na(c)/na(g)*)

Welsh *no(c)* (also in early Welsh *nogyt*) has no parallels in the other Brittonic languages (where we find C *ages*, B *eget* and *evit*). A detailed discussion of the possible origins of MW *no(c)* and later *na(c)* by Laker (2008) connects them with the negative particles, Welsh *na(c)/na(g)* and Irish *nách* (for a dated and inadequate suggestions, see Morris-Jones 1913: 243, 447; and Pedersen 1909–1913: I. §285; for pleonastic negatives in Welsh, cf. also Willis 2011: 24–40). Laker (2008) calls *no(c)* and *na(c)* negative comparative particles (NCP) in their use in comparative constructions. Interestingly, it has also been proposed that English *nor* 'than' as a NCP (in dialects of southern England, Scotland and Ireland and also in Scots) arose due to substrate influence from MW *no(c)* and *na(c)* (Laker 2008, Filppula, Clemola & Paulasto 2008: 99–102). For an earlier proposal that OE *bonne* 'than' contains an NCP *-ne* but without the argument for substrate influence, cf. also Joly 1967 (rejected by Mitchell 1985: § 302 and Laker 2008). Laker (2008: 14–17) also explores, but then rejects, the possibility that the English pattern was influenced by French. As with all these topics, more work is needed.

Irregular forms

For discussion, see 2.13.

4. Superlative constructions

4.1 Type 1: standard marker (STM) is flag, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

4.1.2 flag is adposition

The standard way of forming superlatives in all the three medieval Brittonic languages is adding the ending MW *-(h)af*, MB *-(h)aff* or *-añ* and MC *-(h)a/-e* to the basic form of the adjective (for the origin of these markers, see Schrijver 2011a: 44–45). Note that the Cornish ending does not differ from that of the comparative, while Breton and Welsh have distinct markers for the two. The *-h-*, which is often omitted in spelling, is historically part of the ending and causes unvoicing of /b, d, g/, e.g. W *caled* ‘hard’, superlative *caletaf* ‘hardest’. The final *-f*, pronounced /v/, in Middle Breton and Welsh is lost in the modern languages. The standard marker is Welsh *o*, B/C *a* ‘of, from’. The marker is homophonous with the preposition W *o* and B/C *a* ‘from, of’ and we therefore treat the marker as such as well (compare the same treatment of the marker *â* above in 2.1.2).

(17) Middle Welsh (NLW Peniarth 9, *Ystoria Carolo Magno: Can Rolant*, 54r, ed. Luft et al. 2013, 14th c)

<i>y</i>	<i>pagan cadarnhaf</i>	<i>o=r</i>	<i>byt</i>
ART	pagan tough-SPD	from=ART	world
	CPREE PAR-PM	STM	STAND
	‘the toughest pagan in the world’		

(extra) Middle Welsh (NLW Peniarth 11, p. 45r, *Ystoriau Saint Greal*, ed. Luft et al. 2013, 14th c)

y wreic deckaf or byt
‘the most beautiful woman in the world’

(extra) Middle Cornish (*Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, l. 792, ed. Norris 1859)

ahanough neb yv moghya
‘the one who is the greatest of you (pl.)’

There are examples of superlatives in Old Welsh and Old Breton glosses, although without standard and parameter markers. The endings are OW/OB *-(h)am* /*(h)av*/. The first Old Welsh example is *hinham* ‘oldest’ (glossing Latin *patricius*), the superlative of *hen* ‘old’, but probably used here as a noun ‘head, chief, superior, lord’. Another example may be Old Welsh or Old Breton, as some of the examples in the manuscript (MS Angers 477) are difficult to assign to one language or the other: *pellaham* ‘farthest’, the superlative of W/B *pell* ‘far’ (Falileyev 2000: 84, 129).

4.2 Type 2: standard marker (STM) is flag, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

4.2.2 flag is adposition

Like the comparative, the superlative also has a free morpheme degree marker, attested at least in Welsh and Breton. For Cornish, we did not find examples, but a more detailed search is needed. These markers are W *mwy(a)f*, B *muy(h)aff* ‘most’ for the superlative of superiority and W *lleia(f)* ‘least’ for the superlative of inferiority. These are the irregular superlatives of ‘big’ and ‘small’ (see 2.13). The standard marker is *o* ‘of’ as with superlatives

formed with the bound suffix (see 4.1). Again, similar to the comparative, the analytical superlative construction is not attested until the Early Modern Welsh period. The earliest attestation of *mwyaf* ‘most’ + adj. is in 1595:

- (18) Early Modern Welsh (Huw Lewys, 1595, *Perl mewn adfyd*, ed. Willis & Mittendorf 2004)
- | | | | |
|------------------|-----------------|----------|------------------------|
| <i>bateloed'</i> | <i>enbydus,</i> | <i>a</i> | <i>mwyaf dialeddus</i> |
| battle.PL | perilous | and | most grievous |
| CPREE | | | PM PAR |
- ‘perilous and most grievous battles’

The corresponding construction with *lleiaf* ‘least’ is not attested in the Early Modern Welsh corpus by Willis & Mittendorf (2004) and only seems to appear in the Modern Welsh period (examples can be found in *CEG*). We did not find examples of this construction with *C leia*, *lyha* ‘least’, but more detailed work is needed on this.

4.9 Type 9: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

The superlative forms discussed in 4.1.2 can be used without the standard being overtly expressed.

- (19) Middle Welsh (*Peredur*, NLW Peniarth 7, 15r, ed. Luft et al. 2013, 14th c)
- | | | | | | | |
|-----------|---------------|--------------|--------------|----------|------------|---------------|
| <i>ny</i> | <i>myn</i> | <i>honno</i> | <i>namyn</i> | <i>y</i> | <i>gwr</i> | <i>dewraf</i> |
| NEG | want.PRES.3SG | she | except | ART | man | brave-SPD |
| | | | | CPREE | | PAR-PM |
- ‘she wants none but the bravest man’

- (extra) Middle Welsh (*Brut y Brenhinoedd*, Cardiff 1.363 (Hafod 2), p. 170r, ed. Luft et al. 2013, 14th c)
- parth ar mynyd mwyaf*
‘towards the highest mountain’

- (extra) Middle Welsh (*Cynghorau Catwn*, NLW Peniarth 3 part ii, p. 38, ed. Luft et al. 2013, 14th c)
- kanys or geiriev lleiaf a vo o drycannyan*
‘because from the smallest words there may be some malice’

4.10 Type 10: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

The analytic superlative described in 4.2.2 can be used without the standard and standard marker being expressed explicitly. The Breton example given here has a past participle form used adjectivally.

- (20) Middle Breton (*Buhez an Itron Sanctes Cathell* 31, 16th c., ed. Ernault 1887: 92, cf. Hemon 1975: 60)

<i>ma</i>	<i>muyaff</i>	<i>caret</i>
my	most	love.PASTPART
	PM	PAR

'my most beloved one'

4.13 Formal means of expressing grading and comparison

The diachrony of the synthetic and analytic comparative constructions

The patterns of the use of analytic parameter markers W *mwy* 'more' / *mwyaf* 'most' and *llai* (MW *llel*) 'less' / *lleiaf* 'least' to form comparatives and superlatives have never been mapped out in the Brittonic languages, and this is also the case of the corresponding English markers *more/most* and *less/least*, as far as we are aware. For English, the *OED* (s.v. *more, most*) states that "it is uncertain to what extent the emergence of periphrastic comparison in English was influenced by analogy with French comparison with *plus* and *le plus* or Latin comparison with *magis* and *maxime*", and confusion with adjectives in *-most* (e.g. *foremost*) and the use of the superlative *most* to denote 'greatest in size' are also mentioned as possible sources for the construction. It is likewise unclear whether the Brittonic analytical markers may have arisen as a result of language contact with English, (Norman) French or even Latin. The earliest attestations in Welsh appear in the Early Modern Welsh period (only for *mwy/mwyaf* 'more/most' + adj., while we have to wait until Modern Welsh for *llai/lleiaf* 'less/least' + adj.). For the use of these markers in Present-day Welsh, see Thomas (2006: 230–31). Breton and Cornish examples appear around the same period, namely from the sixteenth century onwards.

The earliest attestation of *more* + adj. as an analytical comparative in English is in the thirteenth century (*OED* s.v. *more*), making it early enough to be the consequent source of the Welsh construction. Interestingly, while the periphrastic comparative and superlative of inferiority (*llai* 'less' / *lleiaf* 'least' + adj.) appears very late in Welsh (as far as textual attestations are concerned), its first attestation in English is earlier than that of *more/most*, namely in the Old English translation of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* of 950AD where it is a translation from Latin and so may have been calqued on it (see Jäger & Walkden, this volume).

Irregular forms

For discussion, see 2.13.

5. Elative

5.9 Type 9: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

Welsh uses a range of bound and free morphemes to mark elativity. The bound morphemes, both prefix and suffix, are more common in Middle Welsh, while in early modern Welsh and later free morphemes become very common. It may be the case that at an earlier stage the free morphemes were sub-literary and so only emerge in the sources at a later stage. The most common bound morphemes are the prefix *go-* 'rather, somewhat,

quite' (lit. 'under') and the adjectival suffixes (added to adjectives), *-aidd* which often corresponds approximately to English *-ish*, e.g. 'blackish' (Zimmer 2000: 467–484).

(21) Middle Welsh (WM 403.28–9; Morris Jones 1913: 439)
Marchawc mawr go=chrwn penn isel go=athrist
 knight great quite=stooped head low quite=sad
 CPREE PM=PAR PM=PAR
 'a great, somewhat stooped, head-down, rather sad knight'

(extra) Middle Welsh (*Llyfr Ankyr Llandewibrefi*, 133; Zimmer 2000: 867–884)
ef a a y eneit y='r budr=edyon boeneu
 PTC PTC go.PRS.3SG his soul to=the dirty=quite.PL suffering.PL
 PAR=PM CPREE
 'his soul goes into rather dirty sufferings' (here MW *budreid* is reduced to *budred-* with the addition of a plural suffix *-yon*)

(extra) Early Modern Welsh (*Gwaith Huw Arwystli*, 331, 16th c)
kreylon wyd afn deifi /.../ dyfnaidd wyd
 'You are cruel, River Teifi /.../ you are quite deep'

5.10 Type 10: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

Welsh uses a range of bound and free morphemes to mark relative. The bound morphemes, both prefix and suffix, are more common in Middle Welsh, while in early modern Welsh and later free morphemes become very common. Again, it may be the case that at an earlier stage the free morphemes were sub-literary and so only emerge in the sources at a later stage. There are numerous adverbial elements which are used and here only the most common are noted. Of necessity they come from early modern and modern sources.

(22) Modern Welsh (CEG)
Amrywiai='r ysgolion hyn yn ddirfawr o rai
 vary.IPFV.3SG=the school.PL these PTC huge from those
 CPREE

gweddol dda i rai a gynhelid mewn ystafell fechan
 fairly good to those REL hold. IPFV.IMPERS in room small
 PM PAR

dywyll
 dark
 'these schools varied hugely from fairly good ones to those held in a small dark room'

(extra) Modern Welsh (Stephen Jones, *O Clermont i Nantes* (Llandysul, 2012))

Er bod yr Eidal yn amddiffyn yn dda r=o='n

although be.INF ART Italy PTC defend.INF PTC well PTC=be.PRET.3SG=PTC

ni'=n *eitha* *ffyddiog* *y* *gallen* *ni* *ga'l* *y*
we=PTC fairly sure PTC can.IPFV.1PL we get.INF ART
CPREE PM PAR

gore *arnyn* *nhw*
best on.3PL them

‘although Italy were defending well, we were fairly sure we could get the better of them’

(extra) Modern Welsh (*Y Dysgedydd* 3.204)

mae *pob* *diwygiad braidd* *yn* *anobeithiol*
be.PRS.3SG every revival rather PTC hopeless
CPREE PM PAR

‘every revival is pretty hopeless’

Eitha, earlier *eithaf*, is in origin a superlative ‘furthest’, while *gweddol* is an adjective meaning ‘approximately, fairly’. On the other hand, *braidd* seems to mean ‘hard, difficult’ and so perhaps used in the sense of ‘with difficulty’. In the last example, note that *braidd* often has predicative syntax.

6. Excessive

6.9 Type 9: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is bound morpheme

A few examples are found in Middle Welsh of a prefix *gor-* (lit. 'over') to indicate excess and examples can be found in Breton, e.g. *gourfaot* 'over-abundant', *gourhen* 'very old, too old'. But generally, even in the medieval period, it is superseded by the forms using a free morpheme.

(23) Old Welsh (Juvencus 3)

<i>mi=telu</i>	<i>nit</i>	<i>gur=maur</i>
my=retinue	NEG	too=big
CPREE		PM=PAR

'my retinue is not too big'

(extra) Middle Welsh (Einion Wan, Hendregadredd MS, 75b37, early 14th c)

<i>ny</i>	<i>leueir</i>	<i>geir</i>	<i>gor=chalet</i>
NEG	speak.PRS.3SG	word	over=harsh
		CPREE	PM=PAR

'he does not utter an overharsh word'

6.10 Type 10: standard marker (STM) and standard (STAND) are not expressed, parameter marker (PM) is free morpheme

The more common type is Middle Welsh *rwy*, later *ry*, Modern Welsh *rhy*, Breton *re* 'too' followed by an adjective.

(24) Middle Welsh (*Ystoria Bown de Hamtwn*, 13b, ed. Watkin 1958, 14th c)

<i>ry</i>	<i>anesmwyth</i>	<i>yv</i>	<i>dy</i>	<i>varch</i>	<i>di</i>
too	un-smooth	be.PRS.3SG	your	horse	your
PM	PAR		CPREE		

'your horse is too restless'

(extra) Late Middle Welsh (Sion Cent, IGE² 289, 15th c)

Rhy isel fydd dy wely
'your bed will be too low'

6.13 Formal means of expressing gradation and comparison

Welsh *rhy* /*rhi*/ 'too' seems to be the stressed equivalent of MW perfective particle *ry* /*rə*/. They seem to have the same relationship to each other as the apparently stressed *cyn* and *cy-* (corresponding to Breton *quen* and *ke-*) (see 2.13 above; cf. also alternations like *tra*, *traw*, *dros*, etc. and the discussion in Schumacher 2012).

Summary

Several points arise from this discussion of gradation in Brittonic languages; some are practical and others are of greater linguistic interest.

Among the former is the issue of the patchiness of the data and the difficulty of finding examples of features which one suspects are actually in the language(s). In part this is because for all these languages far-ranging and thorough databases are only just beginning to be developed and so it is simply not easy to find things.

Two points are worth noting in the latter category. First, the complexity of the structures involved in equatives, and also their historical origins; much more work is needed on this. Secondly, the rise of analytical parameter markers in the comparatives and superlatives is evidenced very late, often in the early modern period. One might wonder whether they are really that late or whether they operated from an earlier period at a sub-literary level and only later on surfaced in texts. While such markers could easily have arisen independently, because they appear in Latin, English and French, the languages with which speakers of Brittonic languages came into contact at various periods, they could also have arisen through contact.

Abbreviations

B	Breton
C	Cornish
GPC	Thomas et al., <i>Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru</i>
MB	Middle Breton
MC	Middle Cornish
ModW	Modern Welsh
MW	Middle Welsh
NLW	National Library of Wales
OB	Old Breton
OC	Old Cornish
OW	Old Welsh
W	Welsh

Corpora

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