

Multiple source explanations in constructional change: the case of V1 word order in Welsh*

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Abstract

The characteristic VSO word order of Modern Welsh developed in part as a result of the increase in use in the Early Modern Welsh period of a specific verb-initial construction, Absolute V1, where a synthetic finite verb comes in absolute-initial position in a positive declarative main clause. Although Absolute V1 is attested throughout the history of Welsh, there is major diachronic and synchronic variation in its use. This paper argues that the increase in use of Absolute V1 in prose texts from the 16th century has multiple sources, representing, on the one hand, the continuation of an existing construction (i.e. Absolute V1 in earlier Welsh) and, on the other hand, an innovation where Absolute V1 also derives from other constructions through the loss of a preverbal particle. It is further argued that a multiple source approach can help explain certain patterns in the variation in use of Absolute V1 in Early Modern Welsh.

Keywords: Multiple source constructions, multiple causation in language change, V1, Welsh, word order, Diachronic Construction Grammar

Večvzročnost v jezikovnem spreminjanju: primer razvoja besednega reda z začetnim glagolom v valižanščini

Za moderno valižanščino značilen besedni red VSO je deloma rezultat večje rabe posebne konstrukcije z glagolskim začetkom v obdobju zgodnje moderne valižanščine, in sicer konstrukcije z absolutno stavbo V1 (Abs V1), kjer sintetična osebna glagolska oblika zaseda absolutni začetni položaj v trdilnih glavnih stavkih. Čeprav je konstrukcija Abs V1 izpričana skozi celotno zgodovino valižanščine, so razlike v njeni rabi velike, tako na diahroni kot na sinhroni ravni. Prispevek skuša pokazati, da je na povečano rabo konstrukcije Abs V1 v proznih besedilih iz 16. stoletja vplivalo več dejavnikov, saj gre pri tej rabi po eni strani za nadaljevanje že obstoječe konstrukcije (Abs V1 v zgodnji valižanščini), po drugi pa za inovacijo, pri kateri Abs V1 izvira tudi iz drugih konstrukcij, ki so izgubile predglagolski členek. Članek skuša obenem pokazati, da večdejavniški pristop lahko pomaga pri razlagi določenih vzorcev v raznolikosti rabe konstrukcije Abs 1 v obdobju zgodnje moderne valižanščine.

Ključne besede: večdejavniške konstrukcije, večvzročnost v jezikovnem spreminjanju, V1, valižanščina, besedni red, diahrona konstrukcijska slovnica

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1 Introduction

1.1 Multiple source constructions

Although the prototypical conception of a linguistic change is of one linguistic unit changing into another (A > B, e.g. the sound change in the history of French involving the fronting of [u] to [y]), there are also frequent cases, known as MULTIPLE SOURCE CONSTRUCTIONS (De Smet, Ghesquière, and Van de Velde 2015b), where a phoneme, morpheme, word or grammatical construction has more than one diachronic origin.¹ De Smet, Ghesquière and Van de Velde (2015b) understand multiple source constructions broadly as encompassing all linguistic subsystems and give examples of the phenomenon in phonology, morphology, lexical semantics and syntax. Often the existence of more than one diachronic source may be apparent in the synchronic form and/or meaning of a lexeme or construction, and in some such cases, for example the English word *brunch*, a lexical blend of “breakfast” and “lunch”, the existence of multiple sources and origin of the form are transparent to language users. In other cases, synchronic irregularities or alternations provide evidence of multiple sources, as in, for example, the suppletive past tense *went* of the English verb “to go”, though their actual origin may not be (fully) transparent to the language user unless they have historical linguistic knowledge (i.e. that *went* derives from another verb, Old English *wendan* “to turn”). Such formal traces of multiple sources may also be present in syntactic constructions. Gaeta (2015), for instance, examines the so-called “German scandal construction”, illustrated in (1), thus termed because it displays “a number of synchronic form-meaning mismatches” (2015, 95).

(1)

<i>Hans bedauert,</i>	<i>es</i>	<i>nicht</i>	<i>verhindert₃</i>	<i>haben₁</i>	<i>zu</i>	<i>können₂</i>
Hans regrets	it	not	prevent:PSTPTCP	have:INF	to	can:INF

Karl regrets not having been able to prevent it' (Gaeta 2015, 96)

The ‘German scandal construction’ contains the following mismatches, according to Gaeta:

1 Professor Janez Orešnik, to whom I am dedicating this chapter, was a pioneer of theoretical linguistics in Slovenia in many fields, one of which is historical linguistics. It is a privilege to contribute a paper on historical linguistics to this volume in recognition of his contribution to the teaching and research of historical linguistics in Slovenia.

- deviant form/meaning relation:
 - a past participle (*verhindert*) instead of an infinitive (*verhindern*)
 - an infinitive (*können*) instead of a past participle (*gekonnt*)
- deviant linearization:
 - inverted order of *haben*₁ *zu können*₂ instead of **können*₂ *zu haben*₁
 - displacement of *zu* with regard to its logical dependency *haben* (Gaeta 2015, 96)

Gaeta (2015, 95) argues that “[t]he scandal is solved if a diachronic point of view is adopted, which shows that the mismatches result from the intraference of two different source constructions expanded in the course of the German linguistic history, namely the *Perfekt* construction and the *zu*-infinitive construction”.

Multiple source approaches to constructional change are relatively new: Van de Velde, De Smet, and Ghesquière’s (2013) special issue on the topic, republished as an edited volume (De Smet, Ghesquière, and Van de Velde 2015a), represented a landmark in the field. The volume includes broader theoretical discussions of multiple source explanations in syntactic change: a general overview of the phenomenon in different areas of grammar (De Smet, Ghesquière, and Van de Velde 2015b); a discussion of the relevance of the Construction Grammar concept of multiple inheritance for multiple source analyses of constructional change (Trousdale 2015); a discussion of the role of multiple sources in grammaticalization processes (Fischer 2015), and a discussion of multiple source explanations in relation to multiple causation in language change more generally (Joseph 2015). At the same time, the volume includes several case studies of multiple source constructional change in different languages: in English and Dutch (De Smet and Van de Velde 2015), German (Gaeta 2015), Finnish and Estonian (Riionheimo 2015) as well as a multiple source perspective on the development of HAVE and BE perfectives in multiple European languages (Drinka 2015). However, such multiple source approaches to constructional and syntactic change also overlap theoretically and to an extent methodologically with broader and longer-established MULTIPLE CAUSATION approaches to language change (Malkiel 1983 [1967]). Multiple causation approaches have played a particularly significant role in the explanation of contact-induced language change, where it has been argued that language-internal motivations or mechanisms often complement contact phenomena (e.g. linguistic borrowing, copying, interference) and that a holistic or multi-model approach, encompassing both language-internal and language-external dimensions, is necessary to understand contact-induced change as well as language change more generally (Thomason and Kaufman 1988, 57-61; Matras 2007; Chamoreau and Léglise 2012). Multiple

causation is, however, not limited to contact scenarios, but is a more general feature of language change, since, as Breban and De Smet (2019, 896), note ‘there is also a multiplicity of factors involved in individual cases of change.’ Similarly, Joseph (2015) argues that

if multiple causal pressures on some part of a language system can be recognized, then rather than having to simply choose one, arbitrarily, as the single cause explaining why a change happened as it did, we can perhaps come closer to a true understanding of the developments in question by considering multiple causes acting in concert or even independently. (Joseph 2015, 207)

Multiple sources of language changes could thus be seen as a subtype of multiple causation or multifactoriality, which in turn raises the question where we draw the line between sources, on the one hand, and CAUSES of or FACTORS contributing to language change, on the other. I prefer the term FACTORS to CAUSES here, as CAUSES can be understood in a deterministic way, though not by Joseph 2015 cited above, as implying that if given causes or conditions apply, then a change necessarily follows, whereas factors tend to be understood in a more neutral sense. Breban, Börjars, and Moretti (2025, [2]) distinguish between PRIMARY and SECONDARY SOURCES in multiple source change, where primary sources are ‘the source constructions that combine to form’ another construction (English auxiliary *do* in their study), and secondary sources ‘include other factors that play a role in, and facilitate, the innovation, but do so in an indirect way.’² The rationale for grouping together the direct sources of a construction and other factors which contributed to its development as different types of source is that, according to Breban, Börjars, and Moretti (2025, [2]), ‘both types are integral to a multiple source explanation.’ While the primary and secondary sources of constructional change, in Breban, Börjars and Moretti’s terminology are complementary, they are, however, different in nature. The multiple source constructional change discussed in the present paper, for instance, involves the development and increase in use of a specific verb-initial construction in Early Modern Welsh (ABSOLUTE V1 – defined in the following section), which I argue derives from at least two different source constructions. At the same time, one

2 I am grateful to Kersti Börjars for sending me copy of the draft article (Breban, Börjars, and Moretti 2025), which had been accepted for publication but not yet published by the journal *Diachronica* at the time of writing of the present chapter; the page numbers of citations, given in square brackets, are provisional. I also thank her, Tine Breban and Lorenzo Moretti for organising the workshop on ‘Multiple source explanation in syntactic change’ on 21 August 2025 at the 27th *International Conference on Historical Linguistics* at the Pontificia Universidad Católica, Santiago de Chile, which also informed this chapter.

of the factors which contributed significantly to the increase (and variation) in use of this new(ish) verb-initial construction, is that it seems to have been perceived as functionally equivalent to and interchangeable with two other existing and productive constructions. Absolute V1 could thus expand into the syntactic environments occupied by these existing competing constructions, which in turn influenced the semantics of Absolute V1. Nevertheless, these competing (secondary source) constructions remained productive throughout the period under investigation and so cannot be said to have merged into the Early Modern Welsh Absolute V1 construction, unlike its direct or primary source constructions.

1.2 Absolute V1 in Welsh as a potential multiple source construction

This paper focuses on a construction – Absolute V1 in Early Modern Welsh (c.1500-c.1800) – where there are no obvious formal traces of multiple sources such as form-meaning mismatches or formal alternations or irregularities. However, it is argued here that it may not be possible to explain certain patterns of diachronic change as well as of synchronic variation in its use without invoking multiple sources. In the Absolute V1 construction, a synthetic finite verb comes in absolute-initial position in a positive declarative main clause, illustrated in (2), which gives examples from each of the main periods in the history of Welsh. In Construction Grammar terminology, Absolute V1 is a schematic, lexically open construction (Fillmore, Kay, and O'Connor 1988, 505; Croft 2001, 17), even more so than the German ‘scandal construction’ discussed by Gaeta (2015), and it has a very general function, essentially as an unmarked word order. The term *Absolute* V1 is used to distinguish the construction from other finite verb-initial constructions where the verb does not come in absolute-initial position in a positive declarative main clause, but is preceded by an affirmative verbal particle or a negative particle in a negative main clause or subordinating conjunction in a subordinate clause.

(2)

a. Old Welsh (OW) prose (c.700- c.1100)

Rodesit	elcu	guetig	<i>equis</i>	<i>tres</i>	<i>vache</i>
Give-3SG.PAST	Elgi	afterwards	[Latin] horse	three	cows

‘Elgi gave afterwards a horse and three cows’³ (c.8th century) (Jenkins and Owen 1983)

3 All translations of examples are my own unless otherwise stated.

b. Middle Welsh (MW) prose (c.1100- c.1500)

Gwelsant	niuer	Otgar	eu	meint
See-3PL.PAST	retinue	Otgar	their	strength

‘Otgar’s retinue ascertained their strength’ (c.1300-c.1350) (Bromwich and Evans 1988, line 1039)

c. Early Modern Welsh (EMnW) prose (c.1500-c.1800)

Lladdodd	Meurig	eu	brenin	hwy	mewn	brwydr
Kill-3SG.PAST	Meurig	their	king	they	in	battle

‘Meurig killed their king in battle’ (1677) (Edwards and Williams 1936 [1677], 152)

d. Modern Welsh (MnW) prose (c.1800-)

Tynnodd	y	wraig	ei	llaw	yn ôl	yn	frysiog
Pull-3SG.PAST	the	woman	her	hand	back	ADVZ	hurried

‘The woman hurriedly withdrew her hand’ (1977) (Roberts 1977, 12)

The fact that the construction Absolute V1 is found in a similar form throughout the documented history of Welsh but shows considerable diachronic variation in its frequency of use highlights a fundamental challenge in investigating constructional change, which is to what extent we can talk of continuity in the history of a construction. While diachronically it would appear relatively straightforward to trace the history of a construction which looks the same in the textual record, from a synchronic perspective the question arises whether it can be regarded as the same construction if, at least from a structuralist or formal perspective, it is used in different synchronic systems or is generated by different synchronic grammars.

Although the Insular Celtic languages, of which Welsh is one, are generally associated with VSO word order, only the Goidelic subgroup – Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Manx – have been consistently VSO throughout their history. Welsh, in the Brythonic subgroup along with Breton and Cornish, is, however, characterised by major word order variation and change throughout its history. In Old Welsh, Absolute V1 is attested in both prose and poetic texts, but the textual record is fragmentary, so it is not possible to conclude how frequently Absolute V1 was used overall and whether Old Welsh can be described as a VSO language. In Middle Welsh, Absolute V1 is frequent in poetry but is rare in prose, where instead we find a predominant V2 word order in positive declarative main clauses (PDMCs). At the same time, there is word order variation in Middle Welsh prose between positive declarative main clauses, on the one hand, which have V2, and negative main and subordinate clauses, on the other, which have predominantly VSO word order. In Early Modern Welsh, there is a noticeable increase in the frequency of use of Absolute V1 in PDMCs in prose texts

from the second half of the 16th century, but we find marked variation between different prose writers, not just variation between prose and poetry as in Middle Welsh. At one extreme, some writers use Absolute V1 as the single most frequent word order (e.g. in over 50% of PDMCs), and at the other extreme, other writers avoid the construction altogether. In between these two extremes, other writers still show various intermediate patterns of use of Absolute V1, using it alongside competing word orders (notably personal pronoun subject or dummy subject + verb constructions), in some cases interchangeably, in other cases preferring Absolute V1 in certain environments and the competing constructions in different environments. There are even cases, such as in the 16th-century Welsh Bible translations, as discussed in Currie (2016, 2023) and in section 3.2 below, of writers style shifting between Absolute V1 and competing constructions. Finally, Modern Welsh has generalised VSO, which is the predominant word order in positive declarative main clauses, negative main clauses and subordinate clauses, though there is variation between different verb-initial constructions in positive declarative main clauses, with competition between Absolute V1, finite verb-initial constructions with affirmative preverbal particles and analytical (progressive and periphrastic) verb-initial constructions.

This paper focuses on the increase in use of Absolute V1 in Early Modern Welsh prose and investigates whether this increase may have multiple sources. More specifically, the paper argues that the Absolute V1 construction in Early Modern Welsh may in part represent the continuation of an existing construction (i.e. Absolute V1 in Middle Welsh) and in part represent an innovation where Absolute V1 also derives, on the one hand, from other constructions – the Adv+y+Verb construction in (4) and the *y(r)*+verb construction in (5)a and (5)b through the loss of the preverbal particle *y(r)* – and on the other hand, from the extension of the use of Absolute V1 in poetry, where it was common, to prose, where it had been rare. Absolute V1 in Welsh is, thus, potentially a more unusual instance of a multiple source construction and at the same time a particularly interesting one. First, the evidence for multiple sources is of a different nature than that discussed in other studies of multiple source constructional change (Fanego 2015; Gaeta 2015; Trousdale 2015; Drinka 2015; Fischer 2015; Riionheimo 2015), as it is based on syntactic and stylistic/sociolinguistic variation rather than differences or mismatches in form and function. Second, the case of Absolute V1 in Welsh highlights, in turn, another aspect of the contribution which multiple source explanations can make to our understanding of constructional change, that is how different sources of a construction can influence subsequent stylistic and sociolinguistic patterns of variation in its use.

The rest of this chapter is structured as follows. The next section (2) gives a brief general overview of the word order change under investigation, the increase in Absolute V1 in Early Modern Welsh. Section 3 then examines three potential sources for the increase in use of Absolute V1: in 3.1, the loss of the preverbal particle *y* in Adverb+*y*+verb constructions; in 3.2, the extension of Absolute V1 from poetry to prose and in 3.3 the loss of the preverbal particle *y* in [Subordinate clause], *y(r)*+verb constructions.⁴ Finally, section 4, the discussion and conclusion, discusses the significance of multiple sources in explaining the development of Absolute V1 in Early Modern Welsh as well as the interest of this constructional change in Welsh for the study of multiple source constructions more generally.

2 The change from V2 in Middle Welsh towards V1 in Early Modern Welsh

2.1 Middle Welsh word order

The change under investigation – the increase in use of Absolute V1 in Early Modern Welsh – is part of a wider systemic word order change in Welsh from V2 in positive declarative clauses in Middle Welsh (prose) to VSO in Modern Welsh (Willis 1998; Currie 2025). In the Middle Welsh V2 word order, a constituent (or argument) is fronted before a finite verb in a positive declarative clause and a preverbal particle – *a* or *y* – comes between the fronted constituent and the verb. If the fronted constituent is a subject (as in examples 3a and 3b), direct object (3c) or verbal noun object of an auxiliary verb in a periphrastic construction (3d), the particle *a* is used (Pope Forthcoming; Meelen 2020; Currie 2025). If the fronted constituent is an adverbial or prepositional phrase, the particle *y* is used, as illustrated in example 4.

(3)

Fronted subjects or direct objects in Middle Welsh prose

- a. Personal pronoun Subject + *a* + verb (PronS-V)

mi **a** wnaf dy gynghor di

I **PRT** do-1SG.FUT your.2SG advice you.2SG

‘I will act on your advice’ (Thomson 1957, line 402)

4 In Middle Welsh, the particle *y* takes the form *y* before verb beginning with a consonant and *yd/əð/* before verbs beginning with a vowel. In Early Modern and Modern Welsh, the form *yr* is used before verbs beginning with a vowel. Here *y* is used to refer to the particle in Middle and Early Modern Welsh, instead of *y(d)* or *y(r)*.

- b. Nominal Subject + *a* + verb (NomS-V)
 E kennadeu **a** aethant ar ol Matholwch
 the messengers **PRT** go-3PL.PAST after Matholwch
 ‘The messengers went after Matholwch’ (I. Williams 1930, 33)
- c. Nominal Object + *a* + verb (Obj-V)
 Y march **a** gymerth
 the horse **PRT** take-3SG.PAST
 ‘He took the horse’ (Thomson 1957, line 217)
- d. Verbal noun object + *a* + AUX *gwneuthur* ‘to do’ (the ‘*gwneuthur*-inversion’, Gwn)
 Kynhewi **a** oruc Pwyll
 Fall silent-VN **PRT** do-SG.PAST Pwyll
 ‘Pwyll fell silent’ (Thomson 1957, line 323)
- (4) Adverb + *y(d)* + Verb (Adv-y-V)
 Ac y’r llys **y** deuthant yn dangneuedus (Adv-y-V)
 And to the court **PRT** come-3PL.PAST ADV peaceful
 ‘And they came to the court in peace’ (I. Williams 1930, 34)

The particles *a* and *y(d)* are identical in form to relative particles: *a* is the relative particle used in direct relative clauses when the antecedent is a subject or direct object, and *y* is used in oblique relative clauses when the antecedent is an indirect object, genitive or prepositional phrase. It is believed, relatively uncontroversially, that the Middle Welsh as well as the cognate Middle Breton and Cornish V2 constructions derive diachronically from cleft focus constructions with a clause-initial copula (i.e. a VSO structure) which expanded in use, lost the initial copula and became semantically bleached as topicalization constructions (Eska 2020, 44-45; Meelen 2020; Padel 2021, 282-283; Willis Forthcoming).

Finite verb-initial constructions are also found in PDMCs in Middle Welsh prose, most frequently with the preverbal particle *y*, less frequently with the preverbal particle *neu*, while Absolute V1 (as in example 2b) is rare (Willis 1998, 123-124; Meelen 2020, 428-429; Currie 2025, 15-17). The *y*+Verb construction is particularly common in positive declarative main clauses which follow subordinate clauses, as in example 5a (the form “*y kymher*”), but is also found in standalone positive declarative main clauses, especially after the coordinating conjunction *a(c)* “and”, as in example 5b.

(5)

- a. Y+Verb order in a PDMC following a subordinate clause (postposed PDMC)

A phan del yno, y kymher vn o'r kyllleill
 And when come-3SG.PRES-SUBJ there, PRT take-3SG.PRES one of the knives

yn y law ac y dywait o'e lawn llef, "Yr karyat ar vyn duw
 in his hand and PRT say-3SG.PRES in his full voice out of love for my god

y torraf i vyng kic."
 PRT cut-1SG.PRES I my meat

- b. Y+Verb order in a standalone of sentence-initial PDMC (non-postposed PDMC)

Ac y kymher yr hynn a dorro
 And PRT take-3SG.PRES what REL cut-3SG.PRES-SUBJ

ac y bwrw yn wyneb y geu duw;
 and PRT-it throw-3SG.PRES in face the false god

"And when he comes there, he takes one of the knives in his hand and says in his full voice "Out of love for my God I cut my meat." And he takes what he cuts off and throws it in the face of the false god.' (S.J. Williams 1929, 40)

A key challenge in analysing Middle Welsh word order – which is particularly relevant to understanding the later increase in use of Absolute V1 in Early Modern Welsh – is determining the status of V1 word orders and in particular Absolute V1 in Middle Welsh. Willis (1998, 129) analyses Middle Welsh within a formal, Principles and Parameters framework as a strict V2 language where *unmarked* verb-initial order is ungrammatical. Verb-initial constructions with the preverbal particle *y* are, thus, in Willis' analysis assimilated to the V2 system by positing a null topic operator. Instances of Absolute V1 in Middle Welsh, as in example 2b, are recognised as genuine exceptions to the V2 grammar but are rare and also considered by Willis to be marked constructions in contrast to the general, unmarked VSO word order in Modern Welsh (example 2d). There remains, however, the problem of explaining the variation between Middle Welsh prose, where Absolute V1 is rare, and Middle Welsh poetry, where the construction is frequent. The evidence of 16th and 17th-century slander case records (Suggett 1983, 1992), where we have transcriptions of oral statements (the texts closest to spoken discourse available) and where Absolute V1 is also rare, suggests that Middle Welsh prose word order is likely to have been closer to spoken usage than that of Middle Welsh poetry. The more frequent use of Absolute V1 in poetry could perhaps be attributed, on the one hand, to greater conservatism and continuity in the Welsh poetic compared to the prose tradition, and on the other

hand, to the fact that the use of Absolute V1 came to be incorporated into key formal features of medieval Welsh poetry such as metre, syllable count and assonance patterns. Absolute V1 may, thus, have become a feature of Welsh poetic style – in the prestigious *canu caeth* (“strict metre”) poetic tradition (Fulton 2011, 201) – at a time when Absolute V1 was more frequent in spoken discourse and may have subsequently been maintained because it was formally useful.

It is not necessary on either empirical or theoretical grounds, as I have argued in Currie (2013; 2025, 4-5, 15-17), to go as far as Willis (1998) in analysing (“unmarked”) Absolute V1 as ungrammatical. From an empirical perspective, since Absolute V1 is attested in Middle Welsh prose, an alternative approach would be to analyse Absolute V1 as a grammatical but marginal and weakly motivated construction, as it does not conform to the predominant V2 pattern. Further, from a theoretical perspective, since V1 is attested as a variant word order in other languages analysed as V2, including within formal frameworks, there is also no theoretical necessity to rule out grammatical V1 in a V2 language (Fontana 1997, 210).

2.3 Increase in use of Absolute V1 in Early Modern Welsh

The diachronic development of Absolute V1 in the early modern period was investigated using a self-compiled corpus of 32 prose texts by 26 different writers for the period c.1550-1763 including 6,507 PDMCs. The corpus is subdivided into four (approximate) 50-year periods: six texts for the period c.1550-1599, six texts for 1600-1649, eight texts for 1650-1699 and six texts for 1700-1763. The composition of the corpus reflects the different types of prose texts available during the period, which have been subdivided into the following broad categories: expository prose, that is discursive texts and treatises mostly religious in subject matter (Exp. prose), first-person narrative prose (Narr. prose 1SG), third-person narrative prose (Narr. prose 3SG) and autograph manuscript sermons (Sermons). In addition, there is a separate subcorpus comprising six extracts from the 16th-century Bible translations: the 1567 New Testament and Psalms translated mostly by William Salesbury and the 1588 revised translation of the New Testament and Psalms and new translation of the rest of the Old Testament and Apocrypha by William Morgan. The Bible subcorpus includes extracts from the 1567 gospel of Mark (books 1-5) and 1567 Psalms (books 1-21) translated by William Salesbury, the corresponding extracts of William Morgan’s revised 1588 translations of Mark and the Psalms, as well as Morgan’s 1588 translations of the book of Esther and Isaiah (1-9), which had not previously been translated. Since insufficient Early Modern Welsh texts have been digitalised and tagged, the corpus was compiled by manually extracting

and annotating PDMCs from the selected texts. The linguistic features that were annotated include the word order or construction used, the syntactic status of fronted adverbials (whether they are arguments of the verb or not), information relating to the verb (person, number, lexical item, voice) as well as the retention or omission of the preverbal particles *a* and *y*.

Tables 1-5 show the frequency of Absolute V1 (abbreviated as “Abs. V1”) both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of PDMCs (that is the only clause type where Absolute V1 can occur) in each half-century period of the corpus: Table 1 non-biblical texts for 1550-1599, Table 2 extracts from the 1567 and 1588 Bible translations, Table 3 1600-1649, Table 4 1650-1699 and Table 5 1700-1763.

Table 1: Frequency of Absolute V1 in prose corpus texts 1550-1599 (excl. Bible)

Text	Text type	Date	PDMCs n°	Abs. V1 n°	% Abs. V1
Ff c.1550	Exp. prose	c.1550	213	0	0.0%
Ep 1567	Exp. prose	1567	128	1	0.8%
Cr c1575	Narr. prose 3SG	c.1575	82	0	0.0%
Gw 1580	Exp. prose	1580	198	2	1.0%
Eg 1583	Narr. prose 3SG	1583	160	0	0.0%
De 1595	Exp. prose	1595	170	3	1.8%

Table 2: Frequency of Absolute V1 in extracts from 1567 and 1588 Bible translations

Text	Text type	Date	PDMCs n°	Abs. V1 n°	% Abs. V1
Mark 1-5 (1567)	NT prose	1567	219	5	2.3%
Psalms 1-20 (1567)	OT poetry	1567	268	55	20.5%
Mark 1-5 (1588)	NT prose	1588	217	14	6.5%
Esther	OT prose	1588	191	18	9.4%
Psalms 1-20 (1588)	OT poetry	1588	278	114	41.0%
Isaiah 1-9	OT poetry	1588	226	56	24.8%

Absolute V1 was rare in Middle Welsh prose, with no examples in some texts and often only one or two when it is attested. The frequency of use of Absolute V1 in the six prose texts in Table 1, ranging between 0% and 2% of PDMCs does not seem to be significantly different from that of Middle Welsh prose. However, the 1567 and 1588 Bible translations, especially the extracts from books translated from Old Testament Hebrew poetry – the 1567 Psalms, 1588 Psalms and 1588 Isaiah – show a much

a much higher frequency of Absolute V1: 21% of PDMCs for the 1567 Psalms, 41% for the 1588 Psalms and 25% for Isaiah (1588). Although the frequency of Absolute V1 in the prose books of the 1567 and 1588 Bibles is significantly lower than that of the poetic books, it is still for most of the books in the corpus sample within a range of 2.3%-9.4%, which is noticeably higher than that of Middle Welsh prose texts.

Table 3: Frequency of Absolute V1 in prose corpus texts 1600-1649

Text	Text type	Date	PDMCs n°	Abs. V1 n°	% Abs. V1
WG c1600	MS sermon	c.1600	192	2	1.0%
EM 1610	MS sermon	c.1610	154	1	0.6%
Go 1615	Exp. prose	1615	216	57	26.4%
Ed 1629	Exp. prose	1629	170	0	0.0%
Ca 1631	Exp. prose	1631	126	21	16.7%
JP c1641	MS sermon	c.1641	179	18	10.1%

Table 4: Frequency of Absolute V1 in prose corpus texts 1650-1699

Text	Text type	Date	PDMCs n°	Abs. V1 n°	% Abs. V1
LITA 1653	Exp. prose	1653	378	2	0.5%
NLW3 1675	MS sermon	1675-6	176	10	5.7%
Ys 1675	Exp. prose	1675	243	0	0.0%
Ffydd 1677	Narr/Exp. prose	1677	390	246	63.1%
Gwydd 1679	Exp. prose	1679	200	80	40.0%
JG 1683	MS sermon	1683-5	175	0	0.0%
YBM 1691	Exp. prose	1691	299	64	21.4%
Be 1693	Exp. prose	1693	202	95	47.0%

Table 5: Frequency of Absolute V1 in prose corpus texts 1700-1763

Text	Text type	Date	PDMCs n°	Abs. V1 n°	% Abs. V1
BC 1703	Narr. prose 1SG	1703	185	66	35.7%
HBA 1718	Narr. prose 3SG	1718	258	55	21.3%
Pel 1735	Narr. prose 3SG	1735	197	44	22.3%
H1 1737	Narr. prose 1SG	1737	138	13	9.4%
Pr 1750	Narr. prose 1SG	1750	138	6	4.3%
H2 1763	Narr. prose 1SG	1763	141	42	29.8%

After 1600, not only is Absolute V1 widely attested in texts outside the Bible translations (occurring in 10% or more of PDMCs in 11 out 20 corpus texts after 1600), but in some texts it is used particularly frequently (in 40% or more of PDMCs) and as the single most frequent word order, for example with a frequency of 63% in Charles Edwards' *Y Ffydd Ddi-ffuant* (Ff 1677), 40% in Charles Edwards' *Gwyddorion y Grefydd Gristnogol* (Gwydd 1679) and 47% in James Owen's *Bedydd Plant o'r Nefoed* (Be 1693). Over time, we also find relatively fewer texts with no or only one or two examples of Absolute V1. In the period 1550-1650, 8 out of 12 texts have a frequency of Absolute V1 of 1% or less compared to 3 out of 14 in the period 1650-1763. There is still, however, marked variation between contemporary and near contemporary texts, for example Rondl Davies' 1675 *Profiad yr Ysprydion* (Ys 1675) has no instances of Absolute V1 in contrast to Charles Edwards' 1677 *Y Ffydd Ddi-ffuant* (Ffydd 1677), which has Absolute V1 in over 63% of PDMCs.

The underlying reason for the marked variation in the frequency of use of Absolute V1 between individual writers seems to have been competition with other productive constructions, specifically Personal pronoun subject (PronS) + Verb and Dummy subject (DU) + Verb, with which Absolute V1 seems to have been perceived as largely functionally equivalent and interchangeable. The variation between Absolute V1, Personal Pronoun Subject + Verb (PronS-V) and Dummy Subject + Verb (DU-V) constructions has been examined in more detail in Currie (2000, 2013, 2023, 2025). Here, for reasons of space, I will simply illustrate the interchangeability with examples (in 6-10 below) of the substitution of Absolute V1 for PronS-V or DU-V or vice-versa as well as of Adv-V for Adv-PronS-V and Adv-DU-V in different versions of the same text. Example 5 gives corresponding lines from two different manuscript versions of an original (untranslated) verse morality play (*Y Gwr Kadarn* – “The Strong Man”), with Absolute V1 in the earlier version (6a) dated to the mid-16th century and PronS-V order in the later version (6b) dated to c.1600. Such interchangeability of Absolute V1 and PronS-V is possible because Welsh is optionally pro-drop. A personal pronoun subject can be overtly expressed with a preverbal pronoun, which can be either emphatic and stressed (as in 6b) or unstressed (as in 7a), or with a postverbal clitic pronoun (as in 6a). Alternatively, since the person of the verb is indicated in the verbal inflections, a personal pronoun subject need not be used at all (as in 7b and 8a).

(6)

- a. **Absolute V1** – *Y Gwr Cadarn*, Cardiff MS 2.83, 71 (c.1550)

gadawa fi hi yn sykutor om holl goweth
 leave-1SG.FUT I her PRED executor of my whole wealth

- b. **PronS-V** – *Y Gwr Cadarn*, NLW MS Peniarth 65, 56 (c.1600)

Myfi ai gadawa hi yn secktor Ar fy holl olyd
 I PRT-her leave-1SG.FUT her PRED executor on my whole wealth

‘I shall leave her as executor of all my wealth [...]’

Examples showing the interchangeability of Absolute V1 and PronS-V order are found throughout the two-century corpus period and in different text types. Example 7 illustrates such interchangeability in two 18th-century Welsh translations of John Bunyan’s *Grace Abounding*: the earlier translation of 1737 by John Einnion in 7a has PronS-V order, while 1763 translation by Rhys Thomas of the corresponding sentence has Absolute V1. Similar interchangeability is also found after clause-initial adverbial phrases, so that Adv-V constructions are substituted for Adv-PronS-V and Adv-DummyS-V or vice versa. Thus, in 8a, Adv-PronS is used in the 1737 translation of *Grace Abounding*, which has been replaced with Adv-V order in the 1763 translation of the corresponding sentence, as shown in 8b.

(7)

- a. **PronS-V** – *Grace Abounding*, 1737 (H1 1737, 18)

mi a ddichwelais yn ffromwyllt at fy chwariaeth drachefn
 I PRT return-1SG.PAST ADVZ brazen to my play back
 ‘I returned brazenly to my play’

- b. **Absolute V1** – *Grace Abounding*, 1763 (H2 1763, 18)

dychwelais at fy Ynfydrwydd drachefn
 return-1SG.PAST to my folly back
 ‘I returned to my folly’

(8)

- a. **Adv-PronS-V** – *Grace Abounding*, 1737 (H1 1737, 12)

amser arall mi syrthiais or Bad i Afon Bedford
 Time other I fall-1SG.PAST out of-the boat into river Bedford

- b. **Adv-V** – *Grace Abounding*, 1763 (H1 1763, 10)

Amser arall syrthiais o'r Bâd i afon Bedford
 Time other fall-1SG.PAST out of-the boat into river Bedford

‘Another time I fell out of the boat into the Bedford River’

Examples (9) and (10) illustrate the interchangeability of DU-Verb and Absolute V1 as well as Adv-DU and Adv-V respectively. In 9b, William Morgan has substituted Absolute V1 in his 1588 revised translation of Mark 1:40 for the dummy subject in William Salesbury's 1567 translation of the same sentence (9a). Nearly two centuries later, in example 10b, Rhys Thomas uses Adv-V in his 1763 translation of John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* where John Einnion in his 1737 translation of the same sentence had used Adv-DU-V (10a).

(9)

- a. **Dummy Subject (DU-V)** – Mark 1:40, 1567 (Salesbury, Davies, and Huet 1567)

Ac e ddaeth ataw ddyn clavrllt
And DU come-3SG.PAST to-him man leprous

- b. **Absolute V1** – Mark 1:40, 1588 (W. Morgan and National Library of Wales 1987 [1588])

A daeth atto ef [vn] gwahan-glwylus
And come-3s-PAST to-him he [one] leprous
'And a leper came up to him'

(10)

- a. **Adv-DU-V** – *Grace Abounding*, 1737 (H1 1737, 12)

Heblaw hynny amser arall pan oeddwn yn y maes gyd ac un
Besides that time another when be-1SG-IMPERF in the field with one

o'm cydfilwyr, fe ddigwyddodd i Neidir groesi 'r ffordd
of my fellow soldiers DU happen-3SG.PAST to snake cross-VN the road

'Besides that another time, when I was in the field with one of my fellow soldiers, a snake happened to cross the road'

- b. **Adv-V** – *Grace Abounding*, 1763 (H2 1763, 4)

Bryd arall, pan oeddwn yn y maes gyd ag un
time another when be-1SG-IMPERF in the field with one

o'm cyfeillion, digwyddodd i neidr ymlusgo o'm blaen
of my companions happen-3SG.PAST to snake slither-VN of my front

'Another time, when I was in the field with one of my companions, a snake happened to slither in front of me'

The functional equivalence and interchangeability of Absolute V1 with the PronS-V and DU-V constructions is relevant for explaining both the diachronic increase and the synchronic variation in the use of Absolute V1. PronS-V and DU-V were productive constructions which together covered a wide range of syntactic

environments: DU-V could be used with nominal subjects and in impersonal constructions, while PronS-V could be used with all personal pronoun subjects. Therefore, once Absolute V1 was reintroduced as a productive construction as a result of the changes described in the following section and was perceived as interchangeable with PronS-V and DU-V, it could expand into the syntactic environments where these two constructions were used. Absolute V1 could thus potentially be used extremely frequently, even as the majority or single most dominant word order, which we find, for example, in Charles Edwards' *Y Ffydd Ddi-ffvant* (Ffydd in Table 4, with 63% Absolute V1) and James Owen's *Bedydd Plant o'r Nefoedd* (Bedydd in Table 4, with 47% Absolute V1). On the other hand, since the competing constructions (PronS-V, Du-V and Nominal Subject + Verb) remained productive, Absolute V1 need not be used at all and, indeed, we find authors who seem to avoid Absolute V1 altogether, such as Rondl Davies in *Profiad yr Ysprydion* (Ys 1675 in Table 4) and John Griffith in his manuscript sermons (JG in Table 4) with no examples of Absolute V1 in the corpus sample. In between these two extremes there are various intermediate patterns of use.

3 Possible multiple sources for the increase in Absolute V1

3.1 The omission of the preverbal particle *y* in Adverb-*y*-Verb constructions

Evans (1950, 1968) was the first to argue that Absolute V1 in Early Modern and Modern Welsh was the result of syntactic change in the early modern period, specifically the loss of the preverbal particle *y* in Adv-*y*-Verb constructions. Noting examples of Absolute V1 as well as of Adverb+Verb (Adv-V) constructions in late 16th and early 17th-century Welsh prose texts, and supposing that Adv-V constructions derived from Adv-*y*-Verb constructions as a result of the loss of *y*, Evans argued that the loss of *y* after clause-initial adverbial phrases also effectively enabled the emergence of Absolute V1 order:

With the disappearance of the unaccented *y* the syntactical connection between adverb and predicate, which was an essential element in the sentence order adverb+*y*+verb, which had evolved in M.W., was broken. The adverb would no longer be confined to the position it occupied in the 'abnormal' order. Consequently its position could be changed, and '*Yma gellir dangos*' [here can-3s-PRES/FUT-PASS show-VN — 'here it can be shown' — my tagging] could be rendered '*Gellir dangos yma*', or '*Gellir yma ddangos*' without change of meaning. (Evans 1968, 335)

Evans' statement that adverbs were confined to initial position in the 'abnormal order' (i.e. the V2 and SV word order patterns in Middle and later Welsh prose, so called in traditional Welsh grammar as they deviate from the characteristic VSO order of Modern Welsh) is an oversimplification, since adverbs could also already appear regularly in other positions in Middle Welsh prose, in particular postverbally (Poppe 1989/90, 1991). Nevertheless, Evans' hypothesis of a link between the loss of the preverbal particle *y* in Adv-*y*-Verb constructions was an important insight which marked a turning point in the investigation of the diachronic development of VSO in Welsh. Using a formal Principles and Parameters framework, Willis (1998) argued more systematically that the loss in the sixteenth century not only of the preverbal particle *y* but also of the preverbal particle *a* combined with other syntactic changes led to a loss of V2 word order and the emergence of grammatical unmarked V1, specifically Absolute V1. Willis (1998) proposed a formal (Principles and Parameters, P&P) analysis of the loss of V2 and rise of V1 in Welsh, where unmarked V1 was ungrammatical in PDMCs in Middle Welsh (a strict V2 constraint), but became grammatical after the resetting of the V2 parameter to negative in the 16th century ("the loss of V2"). One of the most important triggers for the resetting of the V2 parameter in Willis' analysis is the loss of the preverbal particles *a* and *y*, which Willis (1998: 62, 183) argues functioned as topic or Spec-Head agreement markers and which he claims were lost as a result of 'phonological erosion' in the 16th century (Willis 1998: 204). However, neither Evans (1968) nor Willis (1998) provide systematic empirical corpus data to demonstrate, on the one hand, that the loss of the preverbal particles *a* and *y*(*d*) actually happened as claimed and, on the other hand, that the increase in use of Absolute V1 can be linked to the loss of the particles.

Currie (2025) investigated empirically the putative connection between the loss of the preverbal particles *a* and *y* on the basis of a corpus comprising 94 prose and verse texts and over 10,000 PDMCs spanning the period c.1550-1772. While Currie (2025) shows that there is no evidence of a widespread and rapid loss of the preverbal particles *a* and *y* in the sixteenth century as claimed, but rather only a more gradual and partial omission of the particles which varied depending on the syntactic environment, there does seem to be evidence of a more specific connection between omission of *y* and the increase in the use of Absolute V1. Currie (2025) compared the frequency of Adv-V order (as a proxy for the omission of *y* in Adv-*y*-Verb constructions) with the frequency of Absolute V1 in individual corpus texts and found that there was a strong positive correlation between the use of Adv-V order, on the one hand, and the use of Absolute V1 on the other. In other words, writers who used Adv-V order frequently also tended to use Absolute V1 frequently, while writers who

used Adv-V order infrequently also used Absolute V1 infrequently and, indeed, some writers in the sample of texts included in the corpus also avoided both constructions. The correlation between Adv-V order and Absolute V1 is, moreover, part of a wider pattern of symmetry between the word order in PDMCs with clause-initial adverbial phrases, on the one hand, and PDMCs without clause-initial adverbial phrases, on the other, as the frequency of Adverb+XP (personal pronoun subject and dummy subject)+ Verb constructions also correlates with that of XP+verb constructions, as illustrated in figure 1.

#Adv + V (S) (O)	↔	#V (S) (O)
#Adv + PronS + V (O)	↔	#PronS + V (O)
#Adv + DU + V (S) (O)	↔	#DU + V (S) (O)

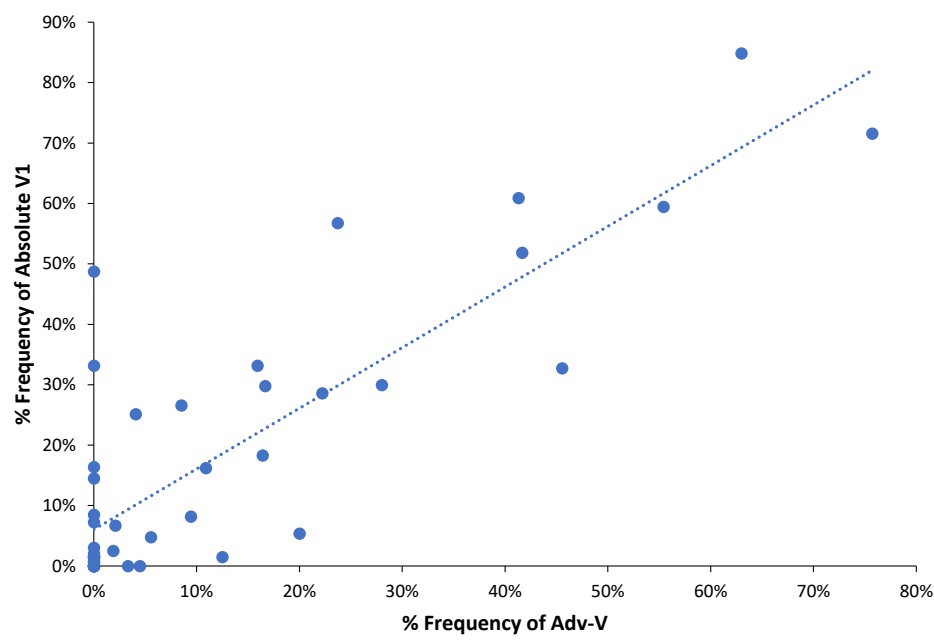
Figure 1: Word order symmetry between adverb-initial and non-adverb-initial PDMCs⁵

The emerging pattern of word order symmetry between adverb-initial and non-adverb-initial PDMCs in Early Modern Welsh corpus texts is significant for two reasons. First, it represents a fundamental change in relation to Middle Welsh, where there was a different, V2-based pattern of structural symmetry: all types of fronted constituents, including adverbials, followed a similar schema, *C-particle-V*, though a different particle (*y*) was used after fronted adverbials compared to fronted subjects or direct objects (*a*). Second, although there is an apparent association between the omission of *y* after adverbial phrases and the use of Absolute V1, the omission of *y* does not necessarily give rise to Absolute V1, since, as shown in the previous section, there is variation between individual writers, with some writers using both Adv-V order and Absolute V1 frequently and other writers using the constructions less frequently or avoiding them altogether.

Evidence of the correlation between the use of Adv-V order and Absolute V1 is shown in Graph 1, which plots the frequency of Absolute V1 in PDMCs without clause-initial adverbial phrases (along the y-axis) against the frequency of Adv-V order in PDMCs with a clause-initial adverbial phrase (along the x-axis) for the larger corpus of 73 prose texts by 40 different writers in Currie (2025). Table 6 also gives the corresponding Pearson correlation coefficients between the frequency of the three adverb-initial constructions and their non-adverb-initial counterparts: Adv-V vs. Absolute V1, Adv-PronS-V vs. PronS-V and Adv-DU-V vs. DU-V. Both Graph 1 and

5 Abbreviations: “#” denotes the beginning of a clause, PronS = personal pronoun subject, DU = Dummy subject

Table 6 show that there is a strong positive linear correlation between the frequency of Adv-V and that of Absolute V1 (with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.842), but there are less strong positive correlations for the personal pronoun and dummy subject constructions (0.608 and 0.655 respectively).



Graph 1: Correlation between the frequency of Adv-V and Absolute V1

Table 6: Correlation between frequency of adverb-initial orders with corresponding non-adverb-initial orders

Word orders compared	Pearson correlation coefficient	
	All prose corpus texts	Prose corpus texts excl. Bible
Adv-V vs. Absolute V1	0.842	0.919
Adv-PronS-V vs. PronS-V	0.608	0.604
Adv-DU-V vs. DU-V	0.655	0.615

While in most prose corpus texts both Absolute V1 and Adv-V co-occur and with a comparable frequency, there is a significant exception to this pattern: the Bible translations and John Piers’ manuscript sermons, which seem in turn to have used the Bible as a linguistic model. As shown in Table 6, if we exclude the Bible translations,

the Pearson correlation coefficient for Adv-V and Absolute V1 is even more strongly positive (0.919). In the texts which represent an exception to the correlation, shown in Table 7, we find Absolute V1 with varying degrees of frequency (ranging from 2% of non-adverb-initial PDMCs in 1567 Mark to 48% in the 1588 Psalms) together with frequent Adv-y-V order but with no or (in the case of the 1567 Psalms) few examples of Adv-V order.

Table 7: Exceptions to the correlation between the Adv-V and Absolute V1

	% frequency in adv-initial PDMCs		% frequency in non-adv-initial PDMCs
	Adv-y-V	Adv-V	Absolute V1
Mark (M1 1567)	94%	0%	2%
Psalms (S1 1567)	84%	4%	21%
Psalms 1588 (S2 1588)	96%	0%	48%
Mark 1588 (M2 1588)	76%	0%	9%
Esther 1588 (Es 1588)	44%	0%	16%
Isaiah 1588 (Is 1588)	84%	0%	33%
John Piers' sermons (JP c.1640)	82%	0%	15%

The 1588 Bible translations were in part a revision of the 1567 translations and the 1588 translator, William Morgan, seems to have reacted against the inconsistent and idiosyncratic language of the 1567 translations (I. Thomas 1976, 1988; Currie 2022). One of William Morgan's linguistic revisions was to consistently retain the preverbal particles *a* and *y* which were occasionally omitted in the 1567 translations; (11) is an example where Morgan adds the particle *y(r)* after a clause-initial adverbial phrase where it was omitted in the 1567 Bible.

(11)

- a. 1567 Psalms
yntho ymddiriedaf
in-3SG.M trust-1SG.PRES
- b. 1588 Psalms
ynddo ef **yr** ymddiriedaf
in-3SG.M him **PRT** trust-1SG.PRES

'In him I trust' (Psalm 18:2)

The correlation between the frequency of use of Adv-V and Absolute V1 suggests that the omission of the preverbal particle *y* in Adv-*y*-V constructions may indeed have been a source of Absolute V1. However, the fact that the earliest prose texts where Absolute V1 occurs most frequently – the 16th-century Bible translations – are also those which represent an exception to the correlation suggests that either the use of Absolute V1 in the Bible had another source or that subsequent changes (e.g. linguistic standardization) have partly obscured the link between the diachronic origin of Absolute V1 and its textual distribution, or perhaps both factors are at work at the same time.

The preverbal particle *y* may have begun to be lost after adverbial phrases as a result of sound change. It seems likely that *y* was unaccented at least when the preceding adverbial phrase was not an argument of the verb or a focused constituent. Willis (1998, 188) posits a ‘widespread’ loss of the particle by the second half of the 16th century, which he attributes to ‘phonological erosion’ (1998, 204). While the ‘phonological erosion’ of an unaccented particle seems plausible, this was not an abrupt across-the-board loss as Willis argues, since Adv-*y*-V continues to be used relatively frequently in 18th-century corpus texts alongside Adv-V and Adv-XP-V (i.e. Adv-S-V and Adv-DU-V) constructions. Table 8 shows the frequency of Adv-*y*-V, Adv-V and Adv-XP-V constructions in adverb-initial PDMCs alongside that of Absolute V1 in non-adverb-initial PDMCs in chronological order for all corpus texts. In the latest corpus text, Rhys Thomas’ 1763 Welsh translation of John Bunyan’s *Grace Abounding*, Adv-*y*-V occurs in 38% of clause-initial adverbial phrases compared to 42% for Adv-V. While Table 8 also shows that there is a gradual decline in the frequency of use of Adv-*y*-V order over the corpus period from an average of 66% for the 16th-century to an average of 25% for the 18th-century texts, this decline does not consistently correlate with an increase in use of Adv-V order. In fact, in texts up to the mid-17th century, a less frequent use of Adv-*y*-V is associated with a more frequent use of Adv-XP-V rather than of Adv-V order. This means that the decline in use of Adv-*y*-V cannot be attributed solely to the omission of the particle *y* (if the use of Adv-V is taken as proxy for the loss of *y* in Adv-*y*-V constructions), but rather to a combination of competition with Adv-XP-V orders and (to a lesser extent) the loss of *y*.

Table 8: Frequency of Adv-y-V, Adv-V, Adv-XP-V and Absolute V1 orders in prose corpus texts

Text	Adverb-initial PDMCs				Non-adverb-initial PDMCs	
	n° clauses	% Adv-y-V	% Adv-V	% Adv-XP-V	n° clauses	% Abs. V1
Ff c1550	118	84%	0%	14%	95	0%
Ep 1567	62	85%	0%	10%	66	2%
M1 1567	53	94%	0%	6%	166	3%
S1 1567	49	84%	4%	4%	219	25%
Cr c.1575	30	20%	3%	77%	52	0%
Gw 1580	59	34%	0%	66%	139	1%
Eg 1583	67	40%	4%	54%	93	0%
M2 1588	52	77%	0%	23%	165	8%
S2 1588	44	95%	0%	5%	234	49%
Es 1588	81	44%	0%	56%	110	16%
Is 1588	57	84%	0%	16%	169	33%
De 1595	52	52%	2%	45%	118	3%
WG c1600	72	60%	0%	38%	120	2%
EM 1610	26	46%	0%	54%	128	1%
T 1615	44	32%	16%	52%	172	33%
Ed 1629	52	65%	0%	33%	118	0%
Ca 1631	47	64%	9%	28%	79	27%
JP c1641	55	82%	0%	18%	124	15%
LI 1653	61	33%	0%	66%	317	1%
NLW3 1675-6	53	75%	9%	15%	122	8%
Ys 1675	71	63%	0%	37%	172	0%
Ff 1677	100	35%	63%	1%	290	85%
G 1679	59	59%	24%	17%	141	57%
JG 1683-5	43	37%	0%	63%	132	0%
YBM 1691	84	55%	17%	29%	215	30%
Be 1693	46	39%	41%	20%	156	61%
BC 1703	74	12%	55%	32%	111	59%
HBA 1718	90	28%	46%	27%	168	33%
Pe 1735	50	24%	28%	48%	147	30%
H1 1737	67	27%	16%	57%	71	18%
Pr 1750	48	23%	2%	75%	90	7%
H2 1763	60	38%	42%	20%	81	52%

If the particle *y* is lost in Adv-*y*-V constructions, a possible mechanism by which this could have given rise to Absolute V1 is proportional structural analogy. The use of a construction after clause-initial adverbial phrases also motivated its use in clause-initial position and vice versa. So, if Adv-XP-V motivated #XP-V constructions and vice versa, then Adv-V motivated Absolute V1 constructions and vice versa, as illustrated schematically in figure 2.

Adv-PronS-V	:	#PronS-V
Adv-NomS-V	:	#NomS-V
Adv-DU-V	:	#DU-V
Adv-V	:	X, i.e. #V (Absolute V1)

Figure 2: Proportional structural analogy motivating the use of Absolute V1

Moreover, if clause-initial adverbial phrases are analysed as outside the verbal phrase – which is more likely when the clause-initial adverbial or prepositional phrase functions as a clausal connector or scene setter as in example 10 as opposed to 11 where it is an argument of the verb – the occurrence of a verb directly after such a clause-initial adverbial could in turn be analysed as an instance of Absolute V1 (i.e. Adv-V > Adv, #V). In this way, the omission of the particle *y* in Adv-*y*-V constructions could have led directly to a more frequent use of Absolute V1 in discourse.

The fact that the use of Adv-V correlates with the use of Absolute V1 throughout the two-century corpus period from the mid-16th to the mid-18th century can be interpreted in two ways. The first interpretation is that the loss of *y* after clause-initial adverbial phrases was gradual, increasing in extent over time. In Currie (2025, 42-46), I presented evidence of a gradual decline in the use of Adv-*y*-V order, noting a sharper fall in the frequency of use of Adv-*y*-V where clause-initial adverbial phrases were not arguments of the verb compared to when they were. As a result, Adv-*y*-V order came to acquire a more specialised function as marking fronted adverbials which were an argument of the verb or focused, as opposed to fronted adverbials more generally. As *y* came to be more frequently omitted over time, Absolute V1 in turn came to be used more frequently. The second interpretation is that since Absolute V1 also motivated the use of Adv-V, the observable increase in use of Adv-V over time could be a secondary phenomenon driven primarily by an increase in use of Absolute V1. So, if Absolute V1 came to be used more frequently, perhaps motivated by other factors complementary to or even independent of the omission of *y* in Adv-*y*-V constructions, this could have also contributed to the increase in use of Adv-V.

3.3 Extension of Absolute V1 from poetry to prose

It was noted in section 2.1 above that while Absolute V1 was rare in prose in Middle Welsh, it was common in contemporary poetry, and it was suggested that the poetic use of Absolute V1 could have been a potential additional source for the increase in its use in Early Modern Welsh prose. Now, it may seem a priori unusual for poetic language to be the source of major word order change in written prose let alone spoken discourse, however, there is a specific context where poetic language might (logically) have influenced prose style and this is the (prose) translation of poetic parts of the Bible. The 1567 and 1588 Welsh Bible translations also seem to have coincided chronologically with the beginning of the loss of *y* after adverbial phrases. In section 2.1 and specifically in Table 2, it was shown that the 1567 Psalms which were translated from Biblical Hebrew poetry had a significantly more frequent use of Absolute V1 (20.4%) than the 1567 Gospel of Mark, which was translated from New Testament Greek prose (2.3%). The Psalms were the only Old Testament and only poetic book translated in 1567. In 1588, however, the whole Old Testament was translated and the contrast between more frequent Absolute V1 in poetic books and less frequent Absolute V1 in prose books is even more marked: not only does William Morgan, the 1588 translator, use Absolute V1 twice as frequently in his 1588 revision of the 1567 translation of the Psalms (41.0% vs. 20.4%) and maintain a less frequent use of Absolute V1 in Mark (6.5%), but he also extends the pattern to Old Testament books which had not been translated in 1567. He, thus, uses Absolute V1 more frequently in Isaiah (24.8%), a mostly poetic book, but less frequently in Esther (9.4%), a prose book. To investigate further the question of word order differentiation between prose and poetic parts of the Bible, the biblical subcorpus was expanded to include additional extracts of different text types from the 1567 and 1588 Bibles: from the (prose) New Testament, the 1567 and 1588 translations of the book of *Revelation* (a prose vision) and Paul's letter to the *Galatians* (expository prose); from the Old Testament, the 1588 translation of the *Song of Songs* (lyric poetry) and *Ecclesiastes* (a prose sermon). Table 9 gives the frequency of Absolute V1 for all the extracts in the expanded biblical subcorpus and shows that there is a consistent pattern of more frequent Absolute V1 in the books translated from Old Testament Hebrew poetry compared to Old Testament Hebrew or New Testament Greek prose.

Table 9: Frequency of Absolute V1 in selected books of 1567 & 1588 Bible translations

Book of Bible	Translated from	Prose/Poetry	% Abs. V1 order (n° PDMCs)		
			1567 ⁺	1588	1620
Song of Songs	Hebrew	Poetry	n/a	46.8% (79)	44.6% (83)
Psalms (1-21)	Hebrew	Poetry	20.5% (268)	41.0% (278)	41.0% (271)
Isaiah (1-9)	Hebrew	Mostly poetry	n/a	24.8% (226)	26.2% (222)
Esther	Hebrew	Prose	n/a	9.4% (191)	10.5% (200)
Ecclesiastes	Hebrew	Prose	n/a	3.9% (128)	4.4% (136)
Mark (1-5)	Greek	Prose	2.3% (219)	6.5% (217)	11.4% (210)
Acts (1-4)	Greek	Prose	2.9% (103)	6.7% (105)	9.1% (110)
Galatians	Greek	Prose	6.6% (61)	1.9% (53)	2.0% (50)
Revelation (1-6)	Greek	Prose	0.0% (93)	4.0% (100)	8.9% (101)

The main 1567 Bible translator, William Salesbury seems to have initiated this pattern, possibly to exploit the stylistic association of Absolute V1 with earlier and contemporary 16th-century Welsh poetry and to give a poetic flavour to a prose translation of Biblical Hebrew poetry. This may have been an individual, idiosyncratic decision on his part, but significantly his stylistic choice seems to have been noted and indeed extended by 1588 Bible translator William Morgan. Table 9 also gives the frequency of Absolute V1 in the 1620 revised Bible translation and shows that William Morgan's use of Absolute V1 was retained in this version, which remained the authoritative Welsh Bible translation until as late as 1988 and formed the basis for an emerging Welsh literary standard. As a canonical and widely used text, the 1620 Bible provided a linguistic model for later writers, and it should be stressed that a majority of Welsh prose texts from the period are religious works that drew on and quoted from the Welsh Bible. Although the word order of the Bible was mixed and SVO predominated in the more numerous prose books, the frequency of Absolute V1 was greater in the Bible as a whole than in other contemporary prose texts. Absolute V1 was also particularly frequent in the Psalms, which was arguably one of the most frequently encountered and influential books of the Bible, as psalm singing and reading was a regular part of public and family worship. Absolute V1, as I have argued in Currie (2016, 2023), is also particularly salient in the Psalms, because it occurs in sequences of consecutive clauses and verses and its use is integral to rendering the parallelism characteristic of Biblical Hebrew poetry. Oliver Thomas' 1631 popular printed religious work *Carwr y Cymry* (Ca 1631) is perhaps a text where a strong

argument could be made for a specific linguistic and stylistic influence of the Psalms in the use of Absolute V1, as Absolute V1 is used significantly more frequently in the prayer section of the text (50%, 12 out of 24 PDMCs), which is similar to the Psalms in genre and discourse type, than in the rest of the text, which is expository prose (9%, 9 out of 102 PDMCs).

We do not have any commentary by the Bible translators themselves explaining their linguistic and stylistic choices, so the analysis suggested here of poetic stylistic influence on their prose word order must remain a hypothesis rather than a confirmed fact. Further arguments supporting the plausibility of this hypothesis – notably the salience of Absolute V1 as a stylistic feature of Middle Welsh poetry and the fact that the 1567 Bible translator, William Salesbury, who initiated the use of frequent Absolute V1 in the Psalms, consulted a medieval Welsh liturgical text with prose translations (without Absolute V1) of extracts from the gospels and verse translations (with Absolute V1) of some psalms and hymns – are discussed in more detail in Currie (2016, 2023).

3.4 The omission of preverbal particle *y(r)* in PDMCs following a subordinate clause

It was shown in section 2.1 that in addition to Adv-*y*-V constructions, the preverbal particle *y* was also used commonly in Middle Welsh prose in clause initial position, both in standalone or sentence-initial PDMCs ('non-postposed PDMCs' for short, as in example 5b) and especially in PDMCs following a subordinate clause (or 'postposed' PDMCs for short, as in example 5a). Another potential – and possibly more straightforward – source for the increase in use of Absolute V1 in Early Modern Welsh prose could, therefore, have been the loss of *y* in these constructions, as it could have given rise directly to Absolute V1 ($\#y-V > \#V$). This hypothesis was tested by comparing the frequency of both *y*+Verb and Absolute V1 order in non-postposed PDMCs with that in postposed PDMCs, which is shown in Table 10 for 16th-century and in Table 11 for 17th and 18th-century texts.

Table 10: Frequency of *y*+Verb order and Absolute V1 in 16th century corpus prose texts

Text	Date	Sentence-initial / standalone PDMCs			Postposed PDMCs		
		PDMCs	<i>y</i> +Verb	Abs V1	PDMCs	<i>y</i> +Verb	Abs V1
Ffes	c.1550	195	5.1%	0.0%	18	22.2%	0.0%
Epist	1567	114	0.9%	0.9%	14	0.0%	0.0%
Mark 67	1567	180	1.7%	6.7%	39	46.2%	2.6%
Psalms 67	1567	260	0.0%	21.2%	8	50.0%	0.0%
Crwydrad	c.1575	62	1.6%	0.0%	20	0.0%	0.0%
Gwss	1580	159	0.6%	0.6%	41	0.0%	2.4%
LIEC	1583	142	0.0%	0.0%	12	0.0%	0.0%
Mark 88	1588	181	0.0%	6.7%	36	16.7%	5.8%
Psalms 88	1588	271	0.0%	41.3%	7	42.9%	28.6%
Isaiah	1588	217	0.0%	24.8%	8	25.0%	25.0%
Deffyn	1592	135	0.0%	2.2%	35	0.0%	2.9%

Tables 10 and 11 show that *y*+Verb order had already become infrequent in sentence-initial or standalone PDMCs at the beginning of the corpus period, that is before the observable increase in Absolute V1. The earliest corpus prose text, the mid-16th century *Y Llyfr Ffestifal* has the highest frequency of *y*+Verb order in non-postposed PDMCs at 5% and no other text has a frequency of more than 2%; most texts, even 16th-century ones, have no examples at all. In the 17th and 18th-century, *y*+Verb is unattested in non-postposed PDMCs in 18 out of the 20 texts and the remaining two texts only have one example each. This suggests that the loss of *y* in *y*+Verb constructions in non-postposed PDMCs is an unlikely source for the increase in Absolute V1.

The situation is quite different in postposed PDMCs, where *y*+Verb order is used relatively frequently (ranging between 17% and 50%) in six 16th-century texts (*Y Llyfr Ffestifal* and the Bible translations) and continues to be used though at a lower frequency (2%-9%) in six 17th-century texts and in one 18th-century text. This suggests that by the 16th century *y*+Verb order may have become practically limited to postposed PDMCs and therefore could have become associated with this specific syntactic environment. If the particle *y* also came to be lost in *y*+Verb constructions in postposed PDMCs, one might expect to see more frequent Absolute V1 in postposed PDMCs.

Table 11: Frequency of *y*+Verb order and Absolute V1 in 17th and 18th-century prose texts

Text	Date	Sentence-initial / standalone PDMCs			Postposed PDMCs		
		PDMCs	<i>y(r)</i> +Verb	Abs V1	PDMCs	<i>y(r)</i> +Verb	Abs V1
EM	c.1610	130	0.0%	0.8%	24	0.0%	0.0%
Gors	1615	167	0.0%	20.4%	49	2.0%	46.9%
Edif	1629	123	0.0%	0.0%	21	0.0%	0.0%
Carwr	1631	103	0.0%	18.4%	23	8.7%	8.7%
JP	c.1641	146	0.0%	11.0%	33	6.1%	6.1%
LITA	1653	329	0.0%	0.6%	49	0.0%	0.0%
NLW 3	1675-6	154	0.0%	5.2%	22	4.5%	9.1%
Ysrydd	1675	199	0.5%	0.0%	41	7.3%	0.0%
Ffydd	1677	328	0.3%	59.8%	62	0.0%	80.6%
Gwydd	1679	172	0.0%	41.3%	28	0.0%	32.1%
JG	1683-5	153	0.0%	0.0%	22	0.0%	0.0%
YBM	1691	226	0.0%	14.2%	73	0.0%	32.1%
Bedydd	1693	177	0.0%	48.0%	25	0.0%	40.0%
Gwel	1703	143	0.0%	28.7%	42	0.0%	59.5%
HBA	1718	221	0.0%	20.4%	37	0.0%	27.0%
Pel	1735	168	0.0%	20.2%	28	0.0%	35.7%
Hel I	1737	107	0.0%	9.3%	31	0.0%	9.7%
Prof	1750	113	0.0%	4.4%	25	0.0%	4.0%
Hel II	1763	113	0.0%	26.5%	28	7.1%	42.9%

Table 10 provides no evidence of more frequent Absolute V1 in postposed PDMCs in 16th-century texts. In the case of the non-biblical texts, Absolute V1 is too infrequent to perform any meaningful analysis and, in the case of the biblical texts where Absolute V1 is relatively frequent, *y*+Verb order is still productive in postposed PDMCs and is used more frequently than Absolute V1. In the 17th and 18th-century texts in Table 11, the frequency of Absolute V1 has been highlighted in the column denoting the environment (sentence-initial/standalone or postposed PDMCs) where it is used significantly more frequently. Eight of the twenty texts in Table 11 show significantly more frequent Absolute V1 in postposed PDMCs compared to four texts which show significantly more frequent Absolute V1 in non-postposed PDMCs; of the remaining eight texts, three have no examples of Absolute V1 in either environment, and five show only a very small difference in

the frequency of Absolute V1 between the two types of PDMC. In contrast to the strong positive correlation between the use of Adv-V and Absolute V1 (with the well-defined exception of the Bible translations), the distribution of Absolute V1 according to whether a PDMC is postposed or not shows more unpredictable variation, which raises the question whether we are dealing with a more random pattern or perhaps only a partial association between postposed PDMCs and Absolute V1, apparent only in certain writers.

The use of Absolute V1 in 17th and 18th-century corpus texts seems, indeed, to be characterised by unpredictable variation more generally. We find marked variation between contemporary or near contemporary texts of the same type (religious expository and narrative prose, original and translated) and by authors of a similar background (mostly clergy), the most extreme contrast in the corpus being between Rondl Davies' 1675 original religious treatise *Profiad yr Ysprydion* (Ys 1675), which has no examples of Absolute V1, and Charles Edwards' 1677 original religious treatise *Y Ffydd Ddi-ffvant* (Ffydd 1677) with 63% Absolute V1. We also find significant variation between different versions of the same text, such as between William Salesbury's (1567, 21% Absolute V1) and William Morgan's (1588, 41% Absolute V1) translations of Psalms 1-21 and between John Einnion's (1737, 9.4% Absolute V1) and Rhys Thomas' (1763, 29.8% Absolute V1) translations of John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*. The predominant factor influencing the variation thus seems to be writers' individual stylistic choice. While such marked individual variation may *a priori* appear unusual, it is perhaps understandable given the nature of the construction Absolute V1. As noted in section 1.2 above, Absolute V1 is a schematic, lexically open construction with a very general function – essentially an unmarked word order – which could be used in a very wide range of syntactic environments and with any verb. Since Absolute V1 was also interchangeable and competed with other productive constructions, PronS-V and DU-V, Absolute V1 could be used very frequently or not at all. Absolute V1 seems to have reemerged as a productive construction in written prose and spoken discourse as a result of the omission of the preverbal particle *y* in Adv-*y*-V and perhaps also *y*-Verb constructions in postposed PDMCs. In the absence of pre-existing models on how and where to use Absolute V1, different writers seem to have rationalised different patterns of use. At one extreme, Charles Edwards (Ffydd 1677 – 63%, Gwydd 1679 – 40%) and James Owen (Be 1693 – 47%) use Absolute V1 as the predominant word order; at the other extreme, writers like Rondl Davies (Ys 1675 – 0%) and John Griffith (JG 1683-5 – 0%) avoid the construction. In between there are various intermediate patterns of use, with some

writers preferring Absolute V1 in some environments (e.g. in postposed PDMCs) or in certain constructions, and other writers using Absolute V1 and DU-V interchangeably in the same constructions or idioms (Currie 2013). Other writers still, mostly notably the Bible translators William Salesbury and William Morgan, but also Oliver Thomas (O. Thomas and Ballinger 1930 [1631]) and Charles Edwards (Gwydd 1679) exploit the interchangeability between Absolute V1 and the competing constructions for stylistic purposes and style shift in their use of Absolute V1 between different parts of the same text (Currie 2023).

4 Discussion and conclusion

The goal of this paper has been to explore whether the construction Absolute V1 in Early Modern Welsh can be analysed as a multiple source construction and how such an approach can contribute to explaining the observable diachronic increase and synchronic variation in its use. Absolute V1 might not appear *a priori* to be an obvious candidate for a multiple source construction, as it is attested continuously throughout the history of Welsh and is not a amalgam of formally different constructions like the English *-ing* gerundive (Fanego 2015). Indications of possible multiple sources for Absolute V1 in Early Modern Welsh can, however, be found in the diachronic and synchronic variation in its use: first, synchronic variation in Middle Welsh between prose (where it is rare) and poetry (where it is common) and second, the diachronic increase in its use in Early Modern Welsh prose characterised by marked inter- and intra-writer variation. Certain patterns of variation in the use of Absolute V1 in Early Modern Welsh prose texts can be associated with different potential sources of the construction. The first and most systematic association is the strong positive and linear correlation between the use of Absolute V1 and another construction, Adverb-Verb, which, it has been argued here as well as in Evans (1968), Willis (1998) and Currie (2025), may have originated from the loss of the preverbal particle *y* in Adverb-*y*-Verb constructions. This correlation, which appears to hold for all corpus texts except the Bible translations and texts linguistically modelled on the Bible translations, suggests that the loss of the particle *y* may have been a significant source for the increase in the use of Absolute V1 in Early Modern Welsh. The second association is that between Absolute V1 and poetry, evidenced by the more frequent use of Absolute V1 in poetic compared to the prose books of the Bible. It was argued here, as in Currie (2016, 2023), that the Bible translators William Salesbury and William Morgan may have exploited the

association of Absolute V1 with poetry by using Absolute V1 more frequently in poetic books of the Bible to create a poetic style in their prose translations of Biblical Hebrew poetry. In this way, the synchronic variation between Middle Welsh poetry and prose in the use of Absolute V1, which enabled Absolute V1 to be perceived as indexing poetic style, in turn became a source for the diachronic increase in use in Absolute V1 in Early Modern Welsh prose. While this association is less systematic in that it affected a limited number of texts (the 1567, 1588 and 1620 Bible translations) it seems to have made a significant contribution to the wider increase in use of Absolute V1 and complemented the effect of the loss of *y* in Adverb-*y*-Verb constructions. The poetic books of 1567 and 1588 Bible texts were the first prose texts to show a frequent use of Absolute V1 and as canonical and influential texts, they in turn provided a model for a more frequent use of Absolute V1 by later writers. The third and last association identified was that between the use of Absolute V1 and postposed PDMCs: in a number of 17th and 18th-century corpus texts Absolute V1 occurs more frequently in PDMCs which follow a subordinate clause compared to standalone PDMCs or ones which preceded a subordinate clause. Since the construction *y*+Verb had by the 16th century come to be associated with postposed PDMCs, it is argued that the loss of *y* in *y*+Verb constructions, in parallel to the loss of the same preverbal particle in Adverb-*y*-Verb constructions could have given rise to Absolute V1. While this correlation is the least systematic and conclusive, it may also have contributed to the increase in use of Absolute V1 in Early Modern Welsh.

In addition to these direct sources – or primary sources in the terminology of Breban, Börjars, and Moretti (2025) – of the Early Modern Welsh Absolute V1 construction, I also argue that other indirect factors – or secondary sources in Breban, Börjars and Moretti's terminology – contributed significantly to the increase (and variation) in its use. This is the perceived functional equivalence and interchangeability of Absolute V1 with two other existing and productive constructions: Personal pronoun subject + Verb (PronS-V) and Dummy subject + Verb (DU-V). Absolute V1 could thus expand into the syntactic environments occupied by these two existing competing constructions, which turn influenced the way Absolute V1 was used. The two competing (secondary source) constructions remained productive throughout the period under investigation and so cannot be said to have merged into the Early Modern Welsh Absolute V1 construction, unlike its direct or primary source constructions. The various direct (or primary) sources of and factors contributing to the development of Early Modern Welsh V1 are summarised in Table 12.

Table 12: Possible sources of Early Modern Welsh Absolute V1 and factors contributing to its increase in use

Possible direct or primary sources	Other factors or secondary sources
Loss of <i>y</i> in Adv- <i>y</i> -V constructions Loss of <i>y</i> in <i>y</i> -V constructions (postposed PDMCs) Use of Absolute V1 in poetry Existing use (rare) of Absolute V1 in prose and/or spoken discourse (?)	Perceived interchangeability with PronS-V Perceived interchangeability with DU-V

The influence of poetic usage on prose – especially in the Welsh Bible translations – can be argued to be a primary (as opposed to secondary) source of Early Modern Welsh Absolute V1, in that Absolute V1 seems to be formally identical in poetry and prose and to have been perceived at least by some writers as the same construction (unlike PronS-V or DU-V which were and remained distinct constructions from Absolute V1). Nevertheless, the process by which poetic usage may have influenced prose usage is comparable to the process which led to the increase in use of Absolute V1 through the perceived interchangeability of Absolute V1 with the PronS-V and DU-V constructions. Observable variation between Absolute V1, on the one hand, and PronS-V and DU-V, on the other, both between prose and poetry and also within prose was the underlying common factor which enabled the increase in use of Absolute V1 in both cases. In this respect, the influence of poetic style on prose could be argued to be both a primary and secondary source of Early Modern Welsh Absolute V1 at the same time.

The multiple source analysis of Absolute V1 in Early Modern Welsh presented in this paper can also be framed as a multiple causation approach in the tradition of studies of contact-induced change which, as noted in 1.1, explore the interaction of internal (e.g. structural) and external (contact and sociolinguistic) factors in language change, since the sources proposed here for the increase in Absolute V1 are both structural and sociolinguistic in nature. The structural sources encompass formal and functional changes to existing constructions (the loss of *y* in Adverb-*y*-Verb and *y*-Verb constructions and the expansion in range of the resulting construction Absolute V1), while a key sociolinguistic or stylistic factor is the influence of poetic style, characterised by frequent Absolute V1, on prose. Language contact is also at least indirectly present in the latter, in that the (hypothesised) poetic influence on prose takes place in a translated text through the apparent emulation of Biblical Hebrew poetic style, though using existing Welsh linguistic resources. Multiple source

analyses of constructional change and multiple causation approaches to language change can, further, be argued to be inherently complementary, since sociolinguistic factors can also be involved in constructional change, in particular in changes in their frequency of use.

Abbreviations

ADVZ	Adverbializer
DU	Dummy subject
Exp. prose	Expository prose
IMPERF	Imperfect
INF	Infinitive
M	Masculine
Narr. prose 1SG	First-person narrative prose
Narr. prose 3SG	Third-person narrative prose
NT	New Testament
NomS	Nominal subject
OT	Old Testament
PL	Plural
PronS	Personal pronoun subject
PRED	Predicative particle
PRT	Particle
PSTPTCP	Past participle
SUBJ	Subjunctive
VN	Verbal noun

Appendix – Early Modern Welsh corpus

Abbreviation	Text
BC 1703	Wynne, Ellis. 1703. <i>Gweledigaethau y Bardd Cwsc</i> . Llundain gan E. Powell. Edited in Wynne and Lewis (1976 [1703], 5-49).
Be 1693	Owen, James. 1693. <i>Bedydd Plant o'r Nefoedd Neu Draethawd am Natur a Diben Bedydd yn profi, Trwy ddeuddeg o Resymmau Scrythuraidd y dylid bedyddio plant y ffyddloniaid</i> . 1-126. Llundain.
Ca 1631	[Thomas, Oliver.]. 1631. <i>Carwr y Cymry</i> . Edited in O. Thomas and Ballinger (1930 [1631], 7-115).
Cr c1575	<i>Y Marchog Crwydrad</i> . Edited in Parry-Williams (1988, 96-105).
De 1595	Kyffin, Maurice. 1595. <i>Deffynniad Ffydd Eglwys Loegr</i> . Edited in Kyffin and Williams (1908 [1595], vi-xix, 1-105).
Ed 1629	Lloyd, Robert. 1629. <i>Pregeth dduwiol yn traethu am iawn ddull, ac agwedd gwir edifeirwch</i> . Llundain: Printiedig gan Nicholas Derwen dros Mihangel Wreichionen. [Translation of Dent, Arthur (1613) <i>A Sermon of repentance. A Very godly and profitable sermon preached at Lee in Essex</i> . London: for John Harrison.]
Eg 1583	Puleston, Roland. 1583. <i>Llefr o'r Eglwys Crhistnogedd MS., NLW 716B, 1a-25a, 149a-153b, 161a-168a</i> .
EM 1610	Evan Morgan, vicar of Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant 1588, vicar of Llanasaph 1601. MS, NLW 8498B: 1-35, 54-63. 4 sermons: 3 untitled and 1 on Rom 4:25. Dated 1610. Edited in G. Morgan (1969, 578-647).
Ep 1567	Davies, Richard. 1976 [1567]. <i>Epistol Episcop Menew at y Cembru</i> . Edited in Hughes (1951, 17-43).
Es 1588	Morgan, William. 1588. <i>Llyfr Esther</i> . In W. Morgan and National Library of Wales (1987 [1588], 202a-205a).
Ff c.1550	<i>Darn o'r Ffestifal (Liber Festialis): allan o lawysgrif Havod 22</i> . Edited in Lewis (1925, 18-34).
Ffydd 1677	Edwards, Charles. 1677. <i>Y Ffydd Ddi-ffvant sef, Hanes y Ffydd Gristianogol, a'i Rhinwedd</i> , 3 rd ed. Facsimile reprint and edited in Edwards and Williams (1936 [1677], 1-21, 150-162, 259-280).
Go 1615	Smyth, Rhosier. 1615. <i>Theater du Mond (Gorsedd y Byd)</i> . Edited in Smyth and Parry (1930 [1615], 1-110).
Gw 1580	Gwyn, Robert. 1580. <i>Gwssanaeth y Gwyr Newydd</i> . Edited in Gwyn and Bowen (1970 [1580], 4-39)
Gwydd 1679	Edwards, Charles. 1679. <i>Gwyddorion y Grefydd Gristianogol Wedi eu hegluro i ddealltwriaeth y gwaelf, Ai Cymmwyso tuag at hyfforddi buchedd dda. 1-53</i> . Llundain: Printiedig gan Tho. Dawkes. [Translation of Gouge, Thomas. 1679. <i>The Principles of the Christian Religion explained to the Capacity of the Meanest with Practical Applications to each Head Whereby the Great and Necessary Duty of Family-Catechising may with ease be performed</i> . London.]

Abbreviation	Text
HBA 1718	Thomas, Simon. 1718. <i>Hanes y Byd a'r Amseroedd</i> . 1-48, 59-67, 91-103, 140-9. Y Mwythig: Argraphwyd gan John Rhydderch.
H1 1737	Einnion, John. 1737. <i>Helaethrwydd o Ras i'r Gwaelaf o Bechaduriaid. Mewn hanes gywyr a ffyddlon o fywyd a marwolaeth John Bunyan</i> . 3-30. Caerfyrddin. [Translation of Bunyan, John. 1692. <i>Grace Abounding to the chief of sinners</i> . 7th ed. London: Printed for Robert Ponder.]
H2 1763	Thomas, Rhys. 1763. <i>Helaethrwydd o ras i'r pennaf o bechaduriaid, mewn cywir hanes o fywyd a marwolaeth John Bunyan</i> . 1-17. Caerfyrddin. [Translation of Bunyan, John. 1692. <i>Grace Abounding to the chief of sinners</i> . 7th ed. London: Printed for Robert Ponder.]
Isaiah 1588	<i>Llyfr Prophvyddoliaeth Esay</i> , chapters 1-9. In W. Morgan and National Library of Wales (1987 [1588], 261a-264a).
JG 1683	John Griffith, rector of Llanellian 1683-1689, vicar of Llangernyw 1689. MS., Bangor 95. 9 sermons on 1 John 5:4, Eph. 5:3, Luke 17:10, 1 John 4:7, Philip 4:4, James 5:12, Col. 3:16 (twice) & Luke 24:6. Preached in Llanellian 1683-1685.
JP c1641	John Piers, vicar choral of Caerwys 1637-8, vicar 1640-3, rector of Llandderfel 1663-1675. MS., NLW 12205A. 5 sermons on Gen 2:17-24, Mark 16:14, Luke 14:7-11, Luke 2:21 & John 1:1. c. mid C17th (English sermon in same collection annotated as preached in 1641).
LITA 1653	Llwyd, Morgan. 1899 [1653]. <i>Llyfr y Tri Aderyn</i> . Edited in Ellis (1899, 157-266).
Mark 1 67	Salesbury, William. 1567. <i>Llyma Cysseersanct Euangel Iesu Christ yn ol Marc</i> , chapters 1-5. Edited in Parry (1967, 1-12).
Mark 2 88	Morgan, William. 1588. <i>Efengyl Iesu Grist yn ôl S. Marc</i> , chapters 1-5. Edited in W. Morgan and National Library of Wales (1987 [1588], 454b-457a).
NLW3 1675	MS., NLW 3B, 23-97. 6 sermons on: Acts 11:27-28, Rom. 7:19, Matt. 6:31-34, 1 Cor. 2:2, Eph. 5:15 & Eph. 6:12. Preached 1675-1676.
Pe 1735	Thomas, Simon. 1735. <i>Histori yr Heretic Pelagius</i> . 13-73, 137-141. [Hereford: Argraphwyd gan Nicholas Thomas?]
Prof 1750	Lloyd, Henry. 1750. <i>Profiad Tufewinol o Nefoedd ag Uffern</i> . Brista.
S1 1567	Salesbury, William. 1567. <i>Psalmae David</i> , chapters 1-21. In Richards and Williams (1965 [1567], ii-xii).
S2 1588	Morgan, William. 1588. <i>Psalmau Dafydd</i> , chapters 1-21. In W. Morgan and National Library of Wales (1987 [1588], 218a-221a).
TB 1687	Owen, James. 1715 [1687]. <i>Trugaredd a Barn neu yn agos i Drichant o Siampleu Rhyfeddol o farnedigaethau Duw ar yr Annuwiol</i> . 2nd ed., 1st edition in 1687. 1-30. Llundain.
WG c1600	William Griffith. MS, NLW 5264B: 95-111, 249-264, 295-303. 3 sermons on Rev 3:20, Rom 5:1 & 1 Cor 11: 27-29. Late C16th/early C17th. Edited in G. Morgan (1969, 70-92, 144-153, 314-331)

Abbreviation	Text
YBM 1691	Williams, Thomas. 1691. <i>Ymadroddion Bucheddol Ynghylch Marvvolaeth</i> . 1-84, 200-359. Rhydychen: Thomas Jones. [Translation of William Sherlock. 1689. <i>A Practical Discourse concerning Death</i> . London.]
Ys 1675	Davies, Rondl. 1675. <i>Profiad yr Ysprydion neu Ddatcuddiad Gau Athrawon, A rhybudd iw gochelyd NEU Draethawd byrr ar 1. St. Jo. 4. 1....</i> Rhydychen: Printiedig gan H. HALL. ym mlwyddyn yr Arglwydd 1675.

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