Preposition Stranding in Welsh:
Current change from a resumptive to a gap strategy

P-stranding in Welsh

It has been pointed out that p(reposition)-stranding is a rather rare phenomenon across languages (van Riemsdijk 1978). Welsh also traditionally does not allow P-stranding. Rather the object of a preposition is questioned by pied-piping the entire prepositional phrase to the front, as in (1).

(1) [Gan bwy]$_i$ gest   ti   'r llythyr 'na t_i?
    with who get.PAST.2S you the letter   that
    'Who did you get that letter from?'

However, Borsley et al. (2007) mentions that P-stranding is also found in current colloquial Welsh as in (2).

(2) [Pwy]$_i$ gest   ti   'r llythyr 'na ganddo (fe$_i$ / *pro$_i$*)?
    who   get.PAST.2S you the letter that with.3SM him
    'Who did you get that letter from?'

This involves a resumptive strategy since the grammatical function of the *wh*-element is identified by a resumptive pronoun *fe* 'him'. Although the resumptive pronoun may be absent, a null pronoun (*pro*) is licensed by the rich agreement morphology of the preposition *ganddo* 'with (third person singular)' (Willis 2000). Moreover, the use of P-stranding without agreement on the preposition is found especially among young speakers as in (3).

(3) [Pwy]$_i$ gest   ti   'r llythyr 'na gan t_i?
    who   get.PAST.2S you the letter that with.ø
    'Who did you get that letter from?'

This involves a gap (movement) strategy since the *wh*-element is identified by a gap in the object of the preposition.

D-to-P incorporation approach to P-stranding: Law (2006)

Law (2006) proposes a D-to-P incorporation approach showing evidence of contraction forms between P(repositions) and D(eterminers). In his analysis, P-stranding is impossible if a preposition incorporates into a determiner since incorporated D no longer forms a syntactic unit with its complement; conversely P can be stranded when D does not incorporate.

Law's approach in Welsh

In Welsh, the determiner *(y)r* has the contraction form *'r* if prepositions end in vowel. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that Welsh Ds incorporate into Ps, as a consequence, P-stranding may not be allowed in Welsh. Law's account correctly captures the traditional pied-piping case in (1), but it cannot explain the P-stranding cases in (2) and (3). P-stranding which involves the resumptive strategy however would not be a problem, since the resumptive structure behaves differently from the ordinary gap structure. The striking difference is that the presence of a resumptive pronoun usually ameliorates island effects (Abels 2003, and McCloskey 2006). A resumptive pronoun *he* 'it (fem.)' with complex NP is acceptable in (4), but a trace with complex NP in (5) is very marginal (Borsley et al. 2007).

(4) Pa   ddinas$_i$ glywaist   ti [$_{DP}$ ʼr si   [$_{CP}$ y   byddwn ni ʼn   ymweld â   **hi$_i$**]]?
    which city   hear.$_{PAST}$.2$_S$ you   the rumour   that be.$_{FUT}$.1$_P$ we $_{PROG}$ visit.$_{INF}$ with it
    'Which city did you heard the rumour that we'll visit (it)?'   (Borsley et al. 2007: 149)

(5) ??I   ba   barti$_i$ glywaist   ti [$_{DP}$ ʼr si   [$_{CP}$ y   byddai   hi ʼn dod t_i]]?
    to which party hear.$_{PAST}$.2$_S$ you   the rumour   that be.$_{COND}$.3$_S$ she $_{PROG}$ come.$_{INF}$
    'To which party did you hear the rumour that she'd come?'   (Borsley et al. 2007: 149)

Although the resumptive structure is not a genuine case of P-stranding in the sense that the resumptive pronoun rather than the gap left by movement identifies the base position, the P-stranding using the gap strategy in (3) is a significant problem for Law.

Contact-induced change

Borsley et al. (2007) mention that P-stranding involving a gap strategy which is a problem for the D-to-P incorporation approach is a twentieth-century innovation resulting from English contact, modeled on P-stranding found in English. I will further argue that the current change in Welsh is a parametric change from the resumptive strategy to the gap strategy which is affected by English, rather than a transition from the pied-piping option to P-stranding.

I will also discuss the distribution of both strategies in various environments, such as *wh*-questions as shown above, relative clauses as in (6) and passives in (7).

(6) y   ddynes werthodd Ieuan y ceffyl iddi
    the woman sell.$_{PAST}$.3$_S$ Ieuan the horse to.3$_{SM}$
    'the woman that Ieuan sold the horse to'

(7) Cafodd   y   carped yma ei gamu arno.
    get.$_{PAST}$.3$_S$ the carpet this its step   on.3$_{SM}$
    'This carpet was stepped on.'

I conduct a grammaticality judgement test, it shows that the resumptive strategy is more restricted than the previous literature observed. The P-stranding option involving the resumptive strategy as in (2) is unacceptable for many speakers. Moreover the use of preposition without agreement is also available in prepositional relative clauses and passives.

References:

Abels, K. (2003) Successive Cyclicity, Anti-locality, and Adposition Stranding. Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Conneticut.

Borsley, R., Tallerman, M. and Willis, D. (2007) *The syntax of Welsh*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Law, P. (2006) Preposition Stranding. In *The Blackwell Companion to Syntax*, Vol.3 (Eds, Everaert, M. and Riemsdijik, H.V.) Blackwell: Malden, MA, pp.631-684.

McCloskey, J. (2006) Resumption. In *The Blackwell Companion to Syntax*, Vol.4 (Eds, Everaert, M. and Riemsdijik, H. V.) Balckwell: Malden, MA, pp.94-117.

Riemsdijk, H. van (1978) *A Case Study in Syntactic Markedness: The Binding Nature of Prepositional Phrases*. Dordrecht: Foris.

Willis, D. (2000) On the distribution of resumptive pronouns and wh-trace in Welsh. *Journal of Linguistics* 36, 531-573.