

# **Some ambiguities in the singular/plural distinction in contemporary Welsh**

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Several grammatical and typological descriptions of Welsh (e.g. Morris Jones 1913, Thomas 1992, Thomas 1996, Williams 1980, Ball and Muller 2009, Awbery 2009) portray this Celtic language as having only two grammatical numbers; singular and plural. However, a recent study by Nurmio (2020), broadly in line with some other sources (e.g. Pederson 1913, King 2003, Roberts and Gathercole 2006, Stolz 2001), contests this interpretation and argues for acknowledging another noun category in Welsh, what she terms ‘morphological collectives’, asserting that there are ‘sufficient reasons for treating collective/singulative as its own category, separate from the more common singular/plural category’ (Nurmio 2020: 58).

This paper will present new data obtained from online questionnaires to assess the extent to which a distinction is made between morphological collective and singulative pairs in contemporary varieties of Welsh. It will be argued that there is some evidence to suggest that some base forms of morphological collectives are in fact used as singulatives by some speakers, as opposed to the situation of more ordinary types of singular/plural pairs. The implications of these findings for recent morphological and typological hypotheses will be explored, as well as their relevance to the acquisition of Welsh as a second language.