

Converbs in Welsh and Irish

A Note

The converb, in its least specific and sharp resolution, is used to mean ›adverbial verb form‹, or ›verbal adverb‹ (see the subtitle of HASPELMATH & KÖNIG 1995). Mostly and for long it has been known, in the description of various languages, as ›gerund‹¹. Definitions of the converb reveal an underlying blurredness: HASPELMATH (1995: 3 ff.): ›Non-finite verb-form whose main function is to mark adverbial subordination‹²; NEDJALKOV'S (1995) is more sophisticated: ›a verb-form which depends syntactically on another verb-form but is not its syntactic actant, that is does not realize its semantic valences‹. (This is surely unsatisfactory, for the converb is arguably actantial in cases like ›start walking‹). Probably the worst is the definition in HIMMELMANN & SCHULTZEBERNDT (2005: 60): ›we use the term converb for ›participles‹ which are used primarily as adjuncts‹. As GRØNBECH (1979: 35) says of Turkic postpositions and gerundial forms, the converbs are ›fluid and hard to hold on to‹, which, for a ›cross-linguistically valid category‹ (HASPELMATH & KÖNIG 1995, in which see Haspelmath's and König's own contributions), is not an ideal condition. And indeed, one detects symptoms of terminological and descriptive insecurity or malaise in the distinction between ›canonical‹ and ›non-canonical‹ converbs; between ›general‹ and ›adverbial‹ converbs (HASPELMATH 2004: 232 ff.), or ›contextual‹ as against ›specialized‹ converbs; symptomatic is also the use of quotes, or of prefixes such as ›pseudo-‹ or ›old-‹ or ›half-‹ (consider ›Old Perfective‹, ›Parfait ancien‹, ›Pseudopartizip‹, all for the Egyptian Stative, an eminent converb; also ›half-gerunds‹, or ›half-participles‹ in Baltic grammatical terminology),³ along with certain red herrings which I find no less than pseudo-queries, e.g. of polysemy *vs.* vagueness (KÖNIG 1995: 59 ff.). The issue of the English *-ing* – converb – ›gerund‹, ›adverbial‹ and non-adverbial participle, verbal noun and infinitive, the notorious terminological-conceptual muddle involving *-ing* forms and constructions in English – is a fine illustration of the havoc wrought by simplistic obstinate superimposing of a ›prefabricated‹ primitive, essentially morphological model on a complicated reality of syntactic dynamicity and sophistication (cf. KORTMANN 1995).⁴

The term ›converb‹ was coined, so far as I know, without definition, by the Finnish Altaicist G. Ramstedt as ›Converbum‹ or ›Converbium‹, in his 1902 monographic description of Khalkha, the most famous of Mongolian dialects⁵, which is the basis of today's standard Mongolian. The term is still widely used in Altai and Turkic linguistics, where it is considered by its users to be apt, referring to a notion ›not existing in Indo-European‹. Following Ramstedt, the term was used by

The general paragraphs which form the first part of this paper overlap and to a degree repeat the general introduction to a paper on converbs in Egyptian and Coptic by the present writer, presented in 2006 at the NACAL 35 conference in San Antonio, Texas (SHISHA-HALEVY forthcoming). Terms like ›adverbial participles‹ or ›gerund‹ are to my knowledge not currently used in Celtic linguistics for this notion (consider Irish *gerind*, *geireann*, later Welsh *gerwnd*, *gerwndin*, all for the Latin inflecting verbal noun, but also the Lat. participles and *-tum* supine).

¹ Historically a misnomer, for some reason especially widespread in English-language writing, more or less corresponding to the French ›gérondif‹ (English ›gerundive‹ must be a gallicism). See GOLDENBERG (1977: 489–99, 2002: 28–30). LEWIS (1967: 174) explains his preference of ›gerund‹ over ›converb‹ by the ›merit of brevity‹ (!); see also his Chapter XI on ›deverbal adverbs‹.

² ›Embedded/incorporated to the superordinate clause‹ (HASPELMATH 1995: 8) is no less question-begging.

³ KORTMANN (1995: 196 ff.), on cases like ›Our children hate John singing folk-songs‹.

⁴ If the Celtic converbal systems seem less obscure, ›simpler‹ than the English ones, it is only because and in the sense that there is in Celtic less homonymy – diachronically, merging, since (for instance) the prepositional prefixes mark and distinguish individual, mutually opposed converbs; still, the systems are as complex and as sophisticated.

⁵ RAMSTEDT (1902: 55): ›Da sie (i.e. the Converbs) aber im Khalkhassischen eine wichtige Rolle spielen, habe ich die nichtsagenden und in viel engerer Bedeutung angewandten Namen Supinum und Gerundium durch die hoffentlich deutlichere, geeignetere Benennung ›Converbum‹ ersetzt.‹ See also pp. 44 ff., 61 ff., 104 ff. etc. Ramstedt, always historically and morphologically associating the Mongolian Converbs with verbal nouns, still uses here ›Gerundium‹ (e.g. 76 f.), despite his explicit rejection of this term as ›meaningless‹. In the posthumous Russian version of Ramstedt's *Introduction to Altai Linguistics* (Moscow 1957), the term used is *gerundivno-pričastnaya forma* (e.g. 111): *deepričastiya* is, of course, the Russian correspondent of ›gerund‹.

Poppe 1951/52, by A. von Gabain, by Menges (converbs and participles constitute the ›nomina verbalia temporum‹, used alongside ›Gerundium‹ and ›gerundial forms‹, also ›Verbal Adverbs‹; see also RAHMATI 1928, GRØNBECH 1979, AALTO 1987: 186) In 1951, the term was applied by Hans-Jakob Polotsky to Ethiopian languages, notably Gurage and Amharic (POLOTSKY 1951: 41 f., GOLDENBERG 1977: 489–94)⁶, as a *syntactical category*, ›converb‹ specialized, co-existing with, and contrasted to, the morphological ›gerund‹ (POLOTSKY 1951: 45, GOLDENBERG 1977: 491). In 1995, the converb was celebrated as a typologically important ›Cross-Linguistically Valid Category‹ by Martin Haspelmath and Ekkehard König, editing an anthology of studies that point to the importance of converbal forms on Finnish, Slavonic, Japanese, Asian and European languages of different genetic affiliations, For some reason, Ethiopian is not represented beyond a single footnote;⁷ neither is Celtic in Europe, nor Egyptian in Africa. However, it appears the converb is ubiquitous – converb-less languages seem to be the exception, not the rule, and may be of interest on that very account.

Formal and functional perspectives

Problematik, methodological and theoretical issues: Following a cluster of terminological-conceptual theoretical reflections, I wish to no more than hint here at a systematic consideration of Welsh and Irish verbal adverbial-slot and adverbial-commutation features, in this scope merely isolating them and appreciating their inventory and distribution – here not evaluating their systemic standing and their structural profile. The benefits of terminological-conceptual deliberation, whether comparative-contrastive or internal-typological, are obvious. There is, I believe, an exercise no more salubrious than judging the degree of comparability of linguistic phenomena, putting in sharper focus and forcing us to contemplate critically notions we take for granted and use automatically, almost thoughtlessly. (The argument, often explicitly or implicitly advanced, that terminology is a trivial concern is unacceptable: not only do terms, by evoking concepts and conceptualization, subtly, insidiously guide our descriptive view and insight; felicitous revisionist terminology may suggest (cor)relations that would otherwise be invisible or hidden, or ignored due to traditional conceptualization.)

Adverbiality

First, we must contemplate the descriptive meaning of ›adverbiality‹, refining our conception of this most difficult, and perhaps most dubious of word-classes (the

word-class aspect is, structurally speaking, more important than any other). Where and what is the adverb? Can ›adverbiality‹ represent this category at all? And is this quality, thus conceived, of any importance for understanding the converb, when we consider such an overruling set of parameters as *syntactical slotting*? Adverbiality, if we stay rigorously analytical (a ›word-class‹ distinct, in distinct paradigmatic commutation, in distinct syntagmatic slotting), is too fragmented to be useful even as an overall umbrella. Adjunctal; adnominal (especially instructive, for often opposed as adnexal to the attributive relative); adlexemic (valential and non-valential); ad-(verbal)-nexus; adclausal; rhematic; rhematic (›predicative‹) complement⁸: adnexal; focal; topical-presetting, and many more.

Moreover, there exist (in Celtic as in other languages) formal statuses in which adverbiality cannot be recognized and resolved as such, or seems irrelevant; for instance, as formally differentiated from substantivity or nominality (preeminently in topic or rheme status). The immediate or conventional adjunctal association of adverbiality (e.g. in NEDIALKOV 1995: 98; I quote, ›an adverbial in a simple sentence‹), does not connect *ohne weiteres* with the other two alleged converbal roles (*ibid.*), namely ›secondary or coordinate predicate‹ and ›predicate of a subordinate clause‹.

The converb's formal characteristics I

Is the converb in essence and by definition a non-finite or a finite verb form, or either? Is this essentially morphological distinction at all important, especially since the infinitive, and indeed the converb, may be finitized by various constructional devices. Moreover, the infinitive or participle constituents of a Nominal-Sentence type nexal pattern, are ›finite‹ in construction and interdependence with their theme or subject. The typology of actor-expression of converbs as compared with infinitives in very instructive.⁹

⁶ See MYHILL & HIBIYA (1988: 355 ff.), on the converb as a narrative form in the Gurage language Soddo.

⁷ HASPELMATH & KÖNIG (1995: 342 n. 52): ›Thus, Amharic, which is not genetically related to Turkic, and has had no close contacts with it, exhibits a very similar constituent order and corresponding patterns of converb subordination.‹ POLOTSKY (1951) is not quoted; nor is POLOTSKY (1965), typologically comparing Amharic and Turkish syntax.

⁸ In verbal ›Secondary Predication‹ syntax, converbs play a striking role: see HIMMELMANN & SCHULTZE-BERNDT (2005).

⁹ Cf., for Modern Welsh and Modern Irish, SHISHA-HALEVY (1998: 56 f.); *o-* finitizes narrative infinitives in Welsh, especially Middle Welsh, *do-* narrative converbs in Irish; see also SHISHA-HALEVY (1998: 264, s.v. ›*i-* cum infinitivo‹).

An essentially junctural set of parameters concerns the converb *as a unit*, continuous or discontinuous. Analyticity and syntheticity are observable as both diachronic and synchronic qualities of converbal forms. Almost a curiosity in this context is the question of *unity*, which is largely psychological, namely a bias against viewing the [prefixed preposition+noun] syntagm – so in Celtic – as a single converbal unity, which is clearly a grammaticalized ›morphologized‹ pattern; apparently, there's no such difficulty with postpositions and case endings. Another formal question is one of *external* juncture: converbs, especially non-finite ones, are often ›induceable‹ for verb categories such as tense, mode, person or negation. The scale of this induction is a significant factor of linkage and delimitation about the converb.

Formal characteristics II

›Syntactic‹ features: ›Ordination‹. A question recurring in general and specific accounts of Altai and Turkic converbs: what is the ›main‹ and what the ›subordinate‹ verb, or action, or predication, in cases corresponding to ›he fell slipping‹, and especially to ›he started crying‹, ›he goes on crying‹ – descriptive or auxiliary or modal verbs, typical of Altai and Turkic languages but important elsewhere. The semantic query may perhaps be dismissed as subjective and non-illuminating, and it often appears to be trivial, leading to such problematic distinctions such as ›logical‹ as against ›grammatical‹ ›main-ness‹. Ramstedt himself, trying to make sense of the elusive ›Haupthandlung‹ and ›Nebenhandlung‹ (not *Hauptsatz* and *Nebensatz*) hierarchy, has recourse to the not really helpful ›psychologisches Hauptwort‹ (as against ›grammatical‹ or ›syntactical‹?), for the converb itself.

Formal characteristics III

Grammaticalization: Grammaticalization and analyzability are kindred, correlated properties, both a matter of gradience, and a function of diachrony – the earlier occurring, the less sharply analyzable a syntagm. Moreover, as noted above, cases of preposition governing infinitives, preeminent candidates for converb-hood, are, I suggest, not synchronically analyzable as prepositional phrases but grammaticalized as converbs. Infinitives ›alone‹, too, as narrative carriers – whether as tightly-linked verb-serialization forms, or (for instance) as dialogue response-forms – are arguably adverbial and thus converbal. Note too the fact that the focalized converb in ModW, the converb as Cleft Sentence focus, is homonymous with the infinitive: *Canu yr oeddwn* ›It

was singing that I was‹; another case of converb/infinitive homonymy is, I believe, in narrative-carrier slot (see below).

As an aspect of juncture and a symptom of advanced grammaticalization,¹⁰ the synchronic absence in Celtic (sometimes irregularity) of infinitive mutation inside some converbs is striking (Irish *ag-*, Welsh *yn-*, *wedi-*; this is only superficially paradoxical, for this feature indicates *reduced analyzability* (conditioned mutations, beside marking rection and *rectum* status, promote analyzability).

Structural identity

The converb's structural identity, as defined by commutation, compatibilities, relationships (synchronic or diachronic), distribution and affinities with verbal nouns (notably infinitives), not merely morphologically (the Altai Converbs are synchronic or diachronic case-forms of verbal nouns), but systemically, in the sense of the implicative significance of their respective performance (*Leistung*) and their mutual trade-off, homonymy (where applicable) and/or complementary distribution.¹¹

Syntactical-relation scanning

Once again, we face the theoretical conundrum of the epistemology and phenomenology of ›ordination‹, or ›inordination‹ (HAMP 1973: cf. *Einordnung*): the relation, and indeed the macrosyntactic patterning of *one predicative nexus adjoining another*, that is neither subordination, nor coordination (cf. KAZENIN & TESTELETS 2004): the *adnexal* expansion of one nexus by another, and of a noun syntagm or pronoun by a nexus (the latter opposed in-paradigm to *attributive expansion*). ›Subordination‹, which is a basic component of prevailing converb description, is, I believe, a faulted concept in syntactic analysis, and at the very least is question-begging, and not merely in ›esoteric‹ languages (including Celtic).

Syntactic versatility and environmental sensitivity of the converb: privilege of occurrence as adjunctal expansion (›She turned to me dancing‹), adnominal expansion (›The girl dancing was too lovely for words‹), adnexal expansion (›I found her dancing‹), rheme (›She

¹⁰ For paradigmatic-junctural correlates of grammaticalization, see SHISHA-HALEVY (2003b, 2004): the prefixes of Irish and Welsh ›infinitival converbs‹ are, arguably, not synchronic prepositions at all, also by token of their paradigms.

¹¹ See HASPELMATH (1995: 28), ›a kind of infinitive‹ (KORTMANN 1995: n. 16).

was dancing when I first saw her), focalizability (›It was dancing that I first saw her), topicalizability (›Dancing, the girl looked at me), and others, e.g. exclamative status (›Dancing!).

Textemics

Textemic significance and properties of converbs, especially narrative concatenation by converb sequencing, often discussed in HASPELMATH & KÖNIG (1995).

Function I

›Adverbiality‹ yet again: what does this actually mean, functionally speaking, in an analytical view of language, one that rejects the Part of Speech model as aprioristic and logic-based? As a structurally conceived word-class, the adverb is not a category at all, but a synthetic and synthesizing cluster of numerous paradigms. See above.

Function II

The converb an *adnexal* satellite (expansion-form). As brilliantly pointed out by Johannes LOHMANN (1965: 295, see SHISHA-HALEVY 2009), the converb has striking affinities with the original and historically ›correct‹ conception of the *participle* – μετοχή, not ›partaking of the nature of verb and noun‹ or similar, but ›predication-sharing‹ or ›in predicative union‹ (other more or less descriptive appellations, by Lohmann and others, are ›durchkonstruierter Satz‹, ›adsentenziale Subordination‹. The intriguing status and slot that has been variously called ›halb-prädikativ‹ (Behagel), ›degradiertes Prädikat‹ (Hermann Paul), ›Prädikative Apposition‹ (Sommer), ›copredicative‹ (HASPELMATH 1995: 17 ff., of participles – nearest to Lohmann's ›predicative sharing‹); ›second‹ or ›secondary‹ predicate (HIMMELMANN & SCHULTZE-BERNDT 2005), all of which I prefer to call, following Otto Jespersen, ›adnexal‹ (SHISHA-HALEVY 2007: 695 s.v.). The relationship of *converbiality* with *rhematicity*, as a special sector of the clause-linkage spectrum, is here at issue.¹² On a yet higher general plane, I would pose the question of the *affinity of adverbiality to predicativity or rhematicity*, an affinity manifested by formal similarities – consider the Arabic accusative, Welsh lenition, or Coptic *n*-marking.

In the latter part of this paper, I shall suggest and illustrate¹³ Irish and Welsh candidates for converbhood, as well as syntagms or elements of relevance to the study of converbs. in a brief commented typology. (Note that all converbs are emphasized; converbs are

written as a continuous junctural unit.) In brief, Welsh and Irish converbs are formed by prefixing preposition-homonyms to the infinitives, or are infinitive-homonymous; in both cases, converbs may be finitized.

Adjunct converb I

In Welsh, this is a richer paradigm (category) of infinitive-base converbs than the rhematic one, with their precise individual semantics still unclear.¹⁴

(1) *Tawodd, gan-wlychu 'i wefusau.* ›He fell silent, moistening his lips.‹

(2) *Bwytai'n araf dan-edrych o'i chwmpas.* ›She ate slowly, looking around her.‹

(3) *Cododd yntau dan-grynu.* ›He arose, trembling.‹

(4) *Ni ddywedodd yntau ddim wedi-ei-ddarllen ...* ›He did not say anything after reading it.‹

(5) *Oedd, mi 'roedd o yno, yn-siarad ac yn-lolian efo thair o enethod ...* ›Indeed, he was there, talking and fooling around with three girls.‹

(6) *Gweld ei fam yn-gorfod gweithio'n galed ag yntau 'n-ennil dim ...* ›Seeing his mother having to work hard and he earning nothing ...‹

(7) *A-barnu oddiwrth ei olwg, nid oedd dim yn debyg i siopwr ynddo, yn ôl ei barn hi.* ›To judge from his looks, there was nothing in him resembling a shopkeeper, in her opinion.‹

(8) *Nid adwaenai ef, ag-eithrio ar brynhawn Sadwrn a dydd Sul, ond fel le i chwi ddychwelyd ar ôl diwrnod o waith ...* ›He did not know it, except for Saturday afternoon and Sunday, but as a place for you to return to after a day's work.‹

(9) *Crychodd ei thalcen wrth-gofio am Idris ... Anghofiodd ef wrth-glywed tramp y traed ar yr heol galed.* ›She frowned, upon remembering Idris ... She forgot him upon hearing the tramp of feet on the hard road.‹

(10) *Bhíos i-mo-shuí sa doras, ag-cur caoi ar líonta ronnach.* ›I was sitting at the door, repairing mackerel fishing-nets.‹

¹² The current concept of ›participant orientation‹ (e.g. in HIMMELMANN & SCHULTZE-BERNDT 2005) is germane here. This is essentially a complicated junctural feature, of the two predications inter-merging in looser linkage with common actants.

¹³ Examples are quoted from fiction by (ModW) Kate Roberts, Saunders Lewis, Islwyn Ffowc Elis, T. Rowland Hughes; (ModIr.) Myles na gCopaleen, Pádraic Breathnach, Pádraic Ó Conaire, Liam Ó Flaithearta. The examples are selective and representative.

¹⁴ The present writer is engaged in a special study of the construction and meaning of converbs in narrative, as part of a comprehensive study of Kate Roberts's narrative syntax.

(11) *D'airigh sé go raibh sí amuigh ag-damhsa.*
 ›He noticed she was outside dancing.<

Adjunct converb II

The converb completing a descriptive action-phase-marking finite verb: In information-structure terms, the converb is here a rhematic (predicative) complement.

(12) ... *gweld defaid a gwartheg yn-pori 'n hapus a hamddenol ...* ›... seeing sheep and cattle grazing happily and leisurely.<

(13) *Stop an stócach óg ag-caint.* ›The youth stopped speaking.<

(14) *Tosnaigh sé ag-rith.* ›He started running.<

(15) *D'éirios i-mo-sheasamh.* ›I rose up (lit. arose standing).<

(16) *›Tá mé tinn tuirseach ag-breathnú ort is ag-éisteacht leat! is chuir sí ina-sheasamh amuigh le balla sa gcúinne é.* ››I'm sick and tired watching you and listening to you!‹ and she made him stand (lit. put him standing) outside against the wall in the corner.<

(17) *Dhearbhaigh sé dhi, lom díreach, go raibh sé ag-dul ag-pósadh go luath.* ›He declared to her, straight out, that he was going to get (lit. getting) married soon.<

Rhematic converb, predicated in the existential-statal nexus pattern (›adverbial-rheme nexus<)

The converb supplying periphrastic durative-statal and perfectal components of the verb-system.

(a) Observe in Welsh the typical interlocutive environment of the rhematic *wedi*-converb.

(b) The ›future‹ converbs in Welsh: deontic *i-*, ›tempus instans‹ *am-*: none expresses a purely temporal future (if there is such a thing).

(c) The embracing nexal negation of this pattern in Welsh, by means of *ni...* (*ddim*) must be kept distinct from the negation of the constituent converb itself (for which see below).

(d) Observe in Irish the almost full resemblance of the intransitive converb to the incidental noun predication (see SHISHA-HALEVY 1998: 193 ff., 201): *Bhí Fear-danand ina sheanduine críonna.* ›F. was a wise old man.<

(e) In the same rhematic slot in this predication pattern we find in Irish also ›ppp‹-type (*-ta/te*) participles, which are here considered and illustrated as converbs. However, adjectives that share this slot (*tá sí óg* ›she is young‹), while still ›adverbial‹ in the paradigmatic sense, cannot be converbal (except in the sense of ›rhematic adverbials‹; ›non-verbal converbs‹ is a contradiction in terms; SHISHA-HALEVY 1998: 202 ff.).

(18) *Yr ydych wedi-gorffen nofel, meddwch.* ›You have finished a novel, you say.<

(19) *Nid wyf wedi-prynu llyfrau Cymraeg ers tro.*
 ›I haven't bought Welsh books for a while.<

(20) *Mae M. yn-ei-ddarllen rŵan; ac yr wyf wedi-ei-dyngedu nad yw i-siarad efo mi.* ›M. is reading it now; and I have condemned him not to speak to me.<

(21) *Ydach chi wir-yr am-brynu car?* ›Are you really going to buy a car?<

(22) *Cawell wyt ti i-fod i-ddweud.* ›It's ›cage‹ you should call it.<

(23) *Dydach chi ddim am i-adael o ... yn nag ydach, Mari?* ›You are not going to leave him ... are you, Mary?<

(24) *Pwy sy'n-dweud fy mod i am-dynnu'r drol?*
 ›Who says I'm going to pull the cart?<

(25) *Tá siosarnach na bhfeithidi ar-siúl fós.* ›The insects' humming is still going on.<

(26) *Bhí a dhá suil ar-lasadh.* ›His two eyes were ablaze.<

(27) *Tá tú le-pósadh!* ›You are about to get married!<

(28) *Bhíos i-mo-shuí sa doras, ag-cur caoi ar líonta ronnach.* ›I was sitting at the door, repairing mackerel fishing-nets.<

(29) *Tá sí báite.* ›She has/is drowned.<

(30) *Tá sé ráite go ...* ›It is said that...<

(31) *Cad a bhí déanta agam?* ›What had I done?<

(32) *Ni raibh an tae ólta agam ...* ›I had not (yet) drunk the tea ...<

Adnominal converb

Only for non-specific substantival nucleus?

(33) ... *swn cath yn-cerdded ar garped.* ›... the sound of a cat walking on a carpet.<

(34) ... *fel carcharor wedi'i-ddedfrydu i farwolaeth.* ›like a prisoner condemned to death.<

Focal converb (in cleft sentence)

In Modern Welsh, the *yn*-converb in focal status is homonymous with the infinitive, but different in the topical construction of the Cleft Sentence: *y*-conversion, not *a-*. The converb may be part of ›Envelope Focussing‹ (SHISHA-HALEVY 1998: 28, 31).

(35) *Clywed yr oeddech chi, gweld oedden ni.*
 ›You were hearing; we were seeing.<

(36) *Nid gwarafun pleser i'w thad yr oedd, ond gwarafun caethiwed ar ei threfniadau ei hun.* ›She was not refusing pleasure to her father, but refusing enslavement of her own arrangements.<

(37) *Gweiddi ormod yr ydan ni.* ›We're shouting excessively.‹

(38) *Trio osgoi'r cwestiwn yr ydach chi, yntê?* ›You're trying to evade the question, aren't you?‹

(39) *Ina-sheasamh agus a dhá lámh ina phócaí aige ag breathnú ar bhád beag béal fúithi ar an duirling a bhí F. Mac F. Lá Fhéile Sin Seáin ...* ›Standing on the beach with his two hands in his pockets, looking at a small boat with an opening in her bottom, was F. Mac F. on St. John's Day.‹

(40) *Ag-magadh fum a bhi sé, ag-magadh faoin amadán a chaith a chuid leis.* ›He was mocking me, mocking the fool who spent his substance on him.‹

(41) *Níd ag-éisteacht leis atáim, ach go bhfuil sé ag-dul tríom.* ›I'm not listening to him: he is rather going through me.‹

Topicalized ›preset‹ converb

(42) *Wrth-weled¹⁵ y cymylau duon a grogai fel bwganod dros y môr troes ei wyneb at Gwm Dugoed eil-waith.* ›Seeing the dark clouds which were hanging like bogeys over the sea, he turned his face towards Cwm Dugoed once again.‹

(43) *Wrth-edrych ar y llawr, yr oedd yno llanast anghyffredin.* ›Looking at the floor, there was an uncommon mess there.‹

(44) *Wedi-gadael y Bont a gadael llawer o bobl ar ôl yno, lledodd y gorwelion ...* ›After leaving the Bridge and leaving many people back there, the horizons widened ...‹

(45) *Ach ag-iarraidh dul suas an cnoc dhó, chuala sé caoineadh caol crua ...* ›But, attempting (lit. he-attempting) to climb up the hill, he heard shrill, hard crying ...‹

Converb in presented nexus (narrative/dialogue)¹⁶

(46) *Wedyn, dyma gychwyn i'r cae ...* ›Afterwards, they set out (lit. approx. here is setting-out) to the field ...‹

(47) *Dyna hi wedi-dwad.* Approx. ›Here she is (having) come.‹ (›la voilà venue‹)

(48) *Sin é anois é ag-damhsa agus ag-ce-olteoireacht.* Approx. ›Here he is now, dancing and singing.‹

Converb in narrative nexus I

Dynamic tableau:

(49) *Wedyn Wmffra'n-codi, ac yn-mynd i'r cefn*

am y ddwy ffured. ›Then W. arising, and going to the back for the two ferrets.‹

(50) *Ann yn-gwylltio ac yn-gweiddi digon i bobl y draws nesafei chlywed ... Sam a Bob, y ddau filgi 'n-eistedd un o bobtu Wmffra yn-edrych dan eu cuwch arno ...* ›Ann flying into a passion and screaming enough for the people next door to hear her ... Sam and Bob, the two greyhounds, sitting on each side of W. looking at him under their scowl ...‹

Converb as narrative carrier I (Welsh)

The difference and interplay between the two converb forms is subtle and not easy to describe. In autobiographical diary-style or logbook-style narrative, *yn*-converbs are used for locutive (1st-person) pivotal events, and/or for durative action (SHISHA-HALEVY 1997).

(51) *Gweiddi ar Meri'r eneth hynaf i'r ty wedyn, iddi redeg ar neges i'r siop ...* ›Shouting for M. the oldest daughter to the house, for her to run to the shop on an errand ...‹

(52) *Cychwyn dan-chwibanu 'n hapus ...* ›Setting out, whistling happily ...‹

(53) *Diwrnod golchi. Wedi-rhoi fy nghas ar y peiriant golchi ...* ›Washing day. Put (lit. having-put) my pillow-case on the washing machine ...‹

(54) *Wedi-diffodd y goleuadau i gyd ond yr un dwaetha, codi fy ngolygon at y Mona Lisa, dim-ynhoffi ei golwg o gwbl.* ›Put (lit. having-put) out all the lights but the last, raising my eyes to the Mona Lisa, not liking her looks at all.‹

(55) *Y gath yn-neidio ar fy nglin; yn-ei-hel i lawr. Penderfynu peidio â mynd i'r capel yfory.* ›The cat jumping onto my knee; chasing her down. Deciding not to go to Chapel tomorrow.‹

Converb as narrative carrier II (Welsh)

a- + infinitive to complete a hyper-event (SHISHA-HALEVY 1997):

(56) *Diolchodd Harri a-chusanu Greta.* ›Harri thanked and kissed Greta.‹

(57) *Cododd Catrin a-mynd i eistedd.* ›Catrin rose and went to sit down.‹

(58) *Aeth allan a'i-gadael.* ›He went out and left her.‹

¹⁵ In this slot, *wrth* represents the entire paradigm *wrth-*, *gan-*, *dan-*, *yn-*.

¹⁶ Cf. SHISHA-HALEVY (1998: 184 ff., and 1999): App. ii, for the converb in narrative presented nexus in Middle Welsh.

Converb in narrative nexus II

Logbook Style:

(59) *Meddwl am ddoe, a dechrau poeni ... Margiad yn-galw. Dweud yr hanes wrthi ...* ›Thinking of yesterday, and starting to worry ... M. calling. Telling her the story ...‹

(60) *Poli wedi-gyrru Meg yn wallgof yn y gegin.* ›Poli drove (lit. having-driven) Meg crazy in the kitchen.‹

Converb with explicitly marked actants

Probably most challenging for the converbal interpretation of verbal forms, as well as instructive for the agglutinative typology of Irish and Welsh, is the specific morphological marking of a substantive or pronoun as the theme-*agens* constituent of a finite verb, or of a pronominal object actant of the verb's lexemic rheme-constituent. Welsh object and *agens* actants are infixes, the former by homonyms of the possessive articles, the latter *i*-marked (as the ›*i*-cum infinitivo‹ that-form;¹⁷ SHISHA-HALEVY 1998: 264 s.v.). In Irish, too, possessive-article-like infixes signal object actants, but *do*- marks the theme for adverbial rhemes (exx. 65–7 below, rhemes italicized), and, by that token, for converbs (68–71).

(61) *Ni ddywedodd yntau ddim wedi-ei-ddarllen ...* ›He didn't say anything after reading it ...‹

(62) *Yna, a'i gyfaill Emrys yn ei ddanfôn, i ffwrdd ag ef.* ›Then, with his friend E. accompanying him on his way, he left (lit. away with him).‹

(63) ... *an dá shuil sin do-mo-chriathrú ...* ›... those two eyes riddling me ...‹

(64) *Táim á (= {ag-} + {a}) dhéanamh seo anois ...* ›I'm doing this now ...‹

(65) *D'fhágadar ann é, agus is ann dó ón am sin i leith.* ›They left him there, and there he is from that time on.‹

(66) *Ní mar sin don ghasúr.* ›Not thus the boy.‹

(67) *Oíche dom agus mé ag-ól sa teach ósta seo ...* ›One night (lit. a night-me), I drinking at that tavern ...‹

(68) *Ar-fhilleadh abhaile dom, ...* ›I returning home, ...‹

(69) *Taréis-teacht ón Aifreann dúinn, ...* ›After us-returning from Mass, ...‹

(70) *I-mo-luí anseo san fhéar dom, ...* ›Me-lying there in the grass, ...‹

(71) ... *ag-dearcadh dom orthu, ...* ›... me-looking at them, ...‹

(72) *Yr oedd ef am-iddynt-briodi y calan gaeaf hwn.* ›He meant for them to marry (lit. was about for them to marry) on that All Saints' Day.‹

Converbs with infixes lexemic modification (Welsh)

A striking, difficult construction: lenition (if any) of the lexeme is a signal of its relation with the ›prepositional‹ prefix, not governed by the prelexemic modifier, which appears in a ›phantom slot‹ in the syntagm.

(73) *Yr oedd Rhys yn-hanner-cysgu wrth-gau ei ddrillad.* ›Rh. was half-asleep upon buttoning his clothes.‹

(74) *Yr oedd wedi-dirgel-gredu yr edifarasai Aels am yr hyn a wnaeth.* ›He secretly believed Aels would repent for what she did.‹

(75) *Wedi-llawn-ddefro sylweddolodd i'w lawenydd mai dyma'r dadmer.* ›After fully waking-up, he realized, to his joy, that that was the thaw.‹

Converbs negated

The question of Celtic converbs negated is difficult. Welsh *heb*-, elsewhere ›without‹, inflects like any preposition. It appears to negate the verb *as adverb*, neutralizing *yn*-, *wrth*-, *gan*- and *wedi*- converbs (non-adverbial infinitives are negated by *peidio* [â-]). *Dim*- is used to negate narrative converbs (see ex. 54).

Irish *gan* is highly grammaticalized, non-inflecting (*gan tú, gan é*), and by that token not properly prepositional; it seems to include a ›non-existence‹ semantic component. The precise details of the negation of the Irish verb are still obscure, but it does not seem that *gan*- alone is the negativer in this case; may *agus gan*- be the negating exponent (*agus* adverbializing converter)?

(76) *Yr oedd yn lle digon hawdd loetran o'i gwmpas heb-i-neb-eich-gweld.* ›It was a place easy enough to loiter around without anyone seeing you.‹

(77) *Ymddiheuraf am yr holl oedi yma heb-anfon i-ddiolch am y llyfrau.* ›I appologize for that whole delay in (lit. not) sending to thank you for the books.‹

(78) ... *nó gur thit mé siar ar mo thóin ... gan cois fágtha agam le cur fúm.* ›... until I fell back on my backside ... without a leg left to me to put under me.‹

(79) ... *toisc gan Máire a-bheith I mo theannta.* ›... because of M. not being with me.‹

(80) ... *agus d'oibir sé seacht mbliana déag i Nua Eabhrach gan scríobh ariamh go hÉirinn le hinse cá rabh a bheo nó a mharbh.* ›... and he worked seventeen years in New York without ever writing to Ireland to say whether he was alive or dead.‹

¹⁷ The *agens* actant may be marked by *o*-. *Wedi-priodi o'i phlentyn oalf* ›Her last child having married.‹

(81) *Agus bhí sí thuas ansin agus-gan-dul-aici aon duine a fheicéail.* (p. 153)¹⁸ ›And she was up there without going to see any person.‹

Converb in focussed nexus

In Kate Robert's fiction, ›typographical focussing‹ by segmental italicization (SHISHA-HALEVY 1995: §3.1.1) is consistently applied to the *yn-/wedi-* prefix – nucleus of the rhematic converbial syntagm, thus representative – in a sense, the ›copula‹ – of the whole nexus, for nexus focusing).

(82) *'Rydw i yn-dibynnu arnoch chi.* ›I do rely on you.‹

(83) *Mi fasa'n haws gin Ann gredu 'mod i wedi-marw taswn i yn-sgwennu.* ›It would have been easier for Ann to believe I have died if I had written.‹

(84) *Rydych chi wedi-marw.* ›You have died.‹

Converb in adnexal nexus

(adverbial, adnominal to non-specific nuclei)

(85) *Yna, a'i gyfaill Emrys yn-ei-ddanfon, i ffwrdd ag ef.* ›Then, with his friend E. accompanying him on his way, he left (lit. away with him).‹

(86) *Agus a dhroim iompaithe liom, leag sé siar arís leath uachtarach a choirp.* ›With his back turned to me, he laid back again the upper half of his body.‹

(87) *Polláin agus-iad-lán le uisce.* ›small pools full of water.‹

Converbs in ›rank-shifted nexus‹

Exclamative nexus, nexus (or converb) as title, nexus as adjunct:

(88) *Ochón, a dúirt na daoine, fear bocht eile caillte!* ›Alas, said the people, another poor man lost!‹

(89) ›*Mé pósta*‹ ›*ag seilg sna Rosa*‹ ››I married.‹‹
›Hunting in the Woods.‹‹

(90) *Ní ar mo stól atáim anois ach i-mo-luí an ar urlár ... íse ina-suí le m'ais.* ›It's not on my stool that I am now but lying on the floor ... she sitting at my side.‹

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Abstract. Dieser gelegentlich abschweifende Beitrag mit einer gemischten metalinguistischen und metametalinguistischen Perspektive diskutiert die deskriptive Angemessenheit und die Vorteile, den Begriff *converb* in der grammatischen Analyse des Irischen und Walisischen anzuwenden. Es handelt sich um einen 1995 wiederentdeckten und allgemein verwendeten Begriff, der in der allgemeinen Linguistik ein verborgenes Dasein führte, seit er 1902 für die altaische Sprachwissenschaft geprägt wurde und 1951 von H.J. Polotsky auf die äthiopischen Sprachen angewandt wurde. Das *converb*, so wird gezeigt, scheint nicht weniger grundlegend für die linguistische Beschreibung zu sein als der Infinitiv (mit dem es unverkennbar Berührungspunkte aufweist).

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¹⁸ The two last exx. are from Malachy McKenna (ed.), *Seanchas Rann na Feirste*, Baile Atha Cliath 2005, pp.120, 153 respectively. I am indebted for them to my student, Ms. Orit Eshel.

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