How similar are converbs and participles cross-linguistically?

Daniel Ross (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)
Ksenia Shagal (University of Helsinki)

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Workshop on Participles: Form, Use and Meaning (PartFUM)
## Defining non-finites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-finite form</th>
<th>Nominalization, (Infinitive)</th>
<th>Converb</th>
<th>Participle</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≈ Part of speech</td>
<td>noun</td>
<td>adverb</td>
<td>adjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subordinate clause</td>
<td>complement clause</td>
<td>adverbial clause</td>
<td>relative clause</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participles and converbs

- Participles

1. Russian

devočk-a [piš-ušč-aja] pis’m-o
   girl(F)-NOM.SG write-PTCP.PRS.ACT-F.NOM.SG letter(N)-NOM.SG
   ‘the girl [writing a letter]’

- Converbs

2. Khalkha Mongolian (Mongolian, Mongolia, Haspelmath 1995: 1)

   [xot-od or-ž] nom aw-aw
   town-DAT go-CVB book buy-PAST
   ‘Going to town I bought a book.’
Participles and converses

- Participles

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Traditional definitions

**PARTICIPLE:** A traditional term for a non-finite form of the verb. (Hartmann & Stork 1972: 165)

**PARTICIPLE:** A traditional grammatical term referring to a word derived from a verb and used as an adjective, as in *a laughing face*. <…> In linguistics the term is generally restricted to the non-finite verb forms of verbs other than the infinitive. (Crystal 2003: 337–338)

Trask (1993: 200–201): the label can also be extended to nonfinites which do not function as adjectival or adverbial modifiers, but only serve to combine with auxiliaries in the formation of periphrastic verb forms: *Lisa has finished her translation*.

+ **ADVERBIAL PARTICIPLES**
Multifunctional forms: PTCP + CVB

Krongo (Kadugli-Krongo, Sudan, Reh 1985: 256, 333)

(1)  n-úllà  àʔàŋ  kí-ǹt-àndìŋ  [n-úufò-ŋ
     1/2-IPFV.love  I  LOC-SGT-clothes  CONN.N-IPFV.sew-TR
     kò-níimò  kàtí]
     POSS-mother  my

   ‘I love the dress that my mother is sewing.’  (RELATIVE CLAUSE)

(2)  n-áa  t-ánkwà-ànì  [n-úrùná-ŋ
     CONN.N-COP  INF-go.round-DETR  CONN.N-IPFV.watch-TR
     úuní  kànáày]
     footprint  POSS.3PL

   ‘She goes round, watching their footprints.’  (ADVERBIAL CLAUSE)
Multifunctional forms: PTCP + NMLZ + CVB

Kayardild (Tangkic, Australia, Evans 1995: 474–476)

(1) nga-ku-l-da [wirr-n-ku] dangka-wu kurri-ju
   1-INC-PL-NOM dance-NMZ-MPROP man-MPROP see-POT
   ‘We will watch the dancing man.’ (RELATIVE CLAUSE)

(2) ngada kurri-ja [niwan-ji budii-n-marri]
   1SG.NOM see-ACTUAL 3SG.POSS-MLOC run-NMZ-PRIV
   ‘I saw that he was not running.’ (COMPLEMENT CLAUSE)

(3) [bilaangka-nurru kari-i-n-da] ngada warra-j
   blanket-ASSOC cover-MID-NMZ-NOM 1SG.NOM go-ACTUAL
   ‘I went along, covering myself in a blanket.’ (ADVERBIAL CLAUSE)
Multifunctional forms: PTCP + NMLZ + CVB

English

(1) The note was addressed to the girl [sitting in the back row].
(2) I hate [sitting in the back row], because I can’t see anything from there.
(3) During my first years in college, I mostly read comics [sitting in the back row].

Van Lier (2009): All possible combinations of functions are attested (balanced sample of 50 languages) > rigid vs. flexible dependent clauses
Typological definition: Form

Participles and converses are...

- verb forms
  - morphological expression (not phrasal: ≠ conjunctions)
  - inflection rather than derivation (general, productive, regular)

- non-finite (morphosyntactically deranked)
  - loss/reduction of verbal properties (TAM, verbal agreement, etc.)
  - argument expression (impossible, different)
Typological definition: Function

Participles are used for...

- adnominal modification (>relative clauses)

Converbs are used for...

- adverbial modification (>adverbial clauses)
  (+clause-chaining)
Data and sample

- Ad hoc sample of 135 languages
  Shagal (2017) for participles ∩ Ross (2016, f.c.) for converbs

- Enough data for comparison
- Sometimes compared two very closely related varieties (dialects)

- Genealogically and geographically diverse languages
Participles

Red: Participles (58)  Blue: No participles (77)
Converbs

Red: Converbs (50)  Blue: No converses (85)
### Participles and conversbs in the sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Participles</th>
<th>No participles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Converbs</strong></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No conversbs</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Languages tend to have both or neither

- Chi-square test confirms statistical significance ($p<0.0001$)
- Participles – Converbs

- Little morphology (e.g. South-East Asia, West Africa)
- Finite strategies mostly (e.g. North America, Australia)
+Particiles –Converbs

- No clear areal pattern
- North America: little data, participles with a high degree of finiteness
• Pacific Rim
• Postnominal relative clauses (>mostly finite)
Participles + Converbs

$\frac{2}{3}$ in Eurasia + a cluster in South America
Participles + Converbs: Overlap

- Even partial and/or diachronic overlap between participles and converses is rare in our sample! (11/37 languages with both)

- Few languages, though relatively common in Europe
Examples of overlap:

- Krongo has the same prefix for both: \( n- \)
- Only a subset overlap (e.g. Quechua \(-sha\))
- Some forms appear cognate/related:
  
  Ex: Marathi participle \(-ta\) and converb \(-tana\)

- Russian has a diachronic (not synchronous) relationship

Rare even with such an inclusive sense of ‘overlap’

Development path examples (in case of partial overlap):

- Loss of nominal agreement
- \( CVB < PTCP/NMLZ + (locative) \) case
Participles and converbs

Black: Both/Neither
White: Only one
Prefixing vs. suffixing and non-finites

Dryer (2013): Prefixing vs. suffixing in inflectional morphology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affixation</th>
<th>Little affix.</th>
<th>PREF</th>
<th>pref</th>
<th>pref/suff</th>
<th>suff</th>
<th>SUFF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Languages</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Converbs in (47)</td>
<td>1 (6 %)</td>
<td>0 (0 %)</td>
<td>3 (23 %)</td>
<td>6 (24 %)</td>
<td>7 (54 %)</td>
<td>30 (59 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participles in (55)</td>
<td>1 (6 %)</td>
<td>1 (11 %)</td>
<td>5 (38 %)</td>
<td>10 (40 %)</td>
<td>7 (54 %)</td>
<td>31 (61 %)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 79 % of converses are found in suffixing languages
- 69 % of participles are found in suffixing languages
Little affixation: Participles

Kharia (Austro-Asiatic > Munda; India; Peterson 2011: 413)

(1) [iɲ=te yo~yo] lebu
   1SG=OBL see~PTCP person
   ‘the person who saw/sees/will see me’

(2) [iɲ=aʔ dura=te ruʔ~ruʔ] kuŋji
   1sg=GEN door=OBL open~PTCP key
   ‘the key I opened/open/will open the door with’

Ma’di (Central Sudanic, Sudan, Uganda; Blackings & Fabb 2003: 205–206)

(3) aɗʒú [má-à `ɗi-dʒò] rì ʔì ēgwè di
   spear 1SG-POSS NPST-kill-SR DEF FOC lose COMPL
   ‘The spear with which I killed it is lost./The spear for which I killed it is lost.’
Prefixing: Participles

Nias (Austronesian, Indonesia, Brown 2001: 420)

(1) U-fake zekhula [ni-rökhi-nia].
1SG.REAL-use coconut.MUT PTCP.PASS-grate-3SG.POSS
‘I used the coconut which she grated.’

[Not only in strongly prefixing languages:
Georgian (Kartvelian, Georgia, Hewitt 1995: 540)

(2) [bavšv-is-tvis pul-is mi-m-c-em-i]
child-GEN-for money-GEN PREV-PTCP.PRS-give-TS-AGR
kal-i
woman-NOM
‘the woman giving money to the child’]
Prefixing: Converbs

Krongo (Kadugli-Krongo, Sudan, Reh 1985: 333)

(1)  \( n-\text{áa} \quad t-\text{ánkwà-ànì} \quad [n-\text{úrùná-ŋ} \quad \text{úuní} \quad \text{kànáåy}] \)

\begin{align*}
\text{CONN.N-COP} & \quad \text{INF-go.round-DETR} & \quad \text{CONN.N-IPFV.watch-TR} \\
\text{footprint} & \quad \text{POSS.3PL} & \\
\text{‘She goes round, watching their footprints.’} & 
\end{align*}
Suffixing (PTCP and/or CVB)
Conclusions

● Typological definitions (comparative concepts, Haspelmath 2010):
  ○ consistency across non-finite forms
  ○ importance of function (primary function?)

● Participles and converbs:
  ○ languages tend to have both or neither
  ○ languages with both usually do not use the same form
  ○ occur mostly in suffixing languages

● Future prospects:
  ○ other properties correlated with the existence of non-finites
  ○ the place of nominalizations
References