

# Between Narrative and Dialogue: Syntactical Features of Signalling Speech in Narrative in Modern Welsh

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## Abstract

Dialogue is a key element in narration: be it a fairy tale, a short story or a novel, the characters usually *speak*. In literary text, dialogue and narrative are closely interwoven.

**Some syntactical features of the interface between narrative and dialogue in Modern Literary Welsh will be examined in this paper, on the basis of ‘*Te yn y Grug*’ (1959) by Kate Roberts (1891–1985).** This text-linguistic domain is hitherto unexplored in Welsh.

Narrative and dialogue (*Erzählen* and *Besprechen* in WEINRICH (1971); *histoire* and *discours* in BENVENISTE (1971)) are two principal and complex *textemes* (that is, signalled and bounded units manifesting distinctive and complete (sub-)systems of grammar). Studying the mutual connections between them is of great importance to both general linguistics and our understanding of the text-grammatical system of Welsh (and of ‘*Te yn y Grug*’ in particular).



*Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, ‘and what is the use of a book,’ thought Alice, ‘without pictures or conversation?’*

— Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, Down the Rabbit-Hole

# Structure

0. Introduction
1. Speech and narrativity:
  - (a) The information structure of signalling speech
  - (b) Three patterns (A, B and C):
    - i. Their formal properties (*signifiant*)
    - ii. The functional distinction between them (*signifié*)
    - iii. Examples from the text
2. Focus on pattern A: a positive *verbum dicendi* (verb of speaking) versus the lack thereof.

## 1 Speech and narrativity

### 1.1 The information structure of signalling speech

I quoted text speaker *verbum dicendi*  
          {          }          {          }          {          }  
          '...'          he          said .

II SHISHA-HALEVY (1995, p. 215):

**Theme:** one of the two main constituents of the basic information structure of the clause: the information-basis segment (given presupposed or taken for granted) in the clause extent for the point (message) made in it. The theme is constituent that least advances the communication made by the clause.

**Rheme:** one of the two main constituents of the basic information structure of the nexal clause: the constituent that conveys new information about the theme.

III Rheme Theme Rheme (cont.)  
          {          }          {          }          {          }  
          '.....'          MEDDAI hi.          '.....'

1 Gofid:

[...] Aeth at y tân o lech i lwyn, eistedd ar y stôl a beichio crio.

[...] She went to the fire furtively, sat on the stool, and burst out crying.

'Taw â chlegar,' **ODDI WRTH** ei thad. [...]

'Stop squawking,' **FROM** her father. [...]

## 2 Te yn y Grug:

'Sut ydach chi'n gwbod mai i'r mynydd ydan ni'n mynd?' 'How do you know that we're going to the mountain?' **WAS BEGW'S QUESTION.**  
**OEDD CWESTIWN BEGW.**

**IV** ¶ SPEAKER (MODE OF SPEAKING and/or CO-INCIDENTAL ACTION): *UTTERANCE* ¶

## 1.2 Patterns of signalling speech

### 1.2.1 Formal properties

- V** A.  $\begin{cases} \text{A+}: \text{¶ '...'} \text{ [VERBUM DICENDI] ([SPEAKER]). ('...')} \text{¶} \\ \text{A-}: \text{¶ '...'} \text{¶} \end{cases}$
- B. ... [A SENTENCE WITH A VERBUM DICENDI]: ¶  
¶ '...' ¶
- C. ... [A SENTENCE WITH A VERBUM DICENDI AND A QUOTATION]. ...

## 3 Pattern A+: *Dieithrio* (C ex. 10):

Wedi gorffen bwyta, cododd pawb.

After they finished eating, everybody got up.

'Diolch i chi,' **MEDDAI** Lisi Jên reit ffwr-bwt.

'Thank you,' Lisi Jên **SAID**, quite brusquely.

Meddylodd Begw oddi wrth ei hosgo fod Winni am wneud araith broffwydol cyn ymadael, [...]

Begw thought from her bearing that Winni meant to make a prophetic speech before leaving, [...]

## 4 Pattern A-: *Y Pistyll* (D ex. 26; Begw's father asks her mother):

'A mi fyddi di hefyd gei di weld. Ust, gwrando. Dyma fo ar y gair.'

And you will be too, you'll see. Shush, listen. Here he is this minute.

*'A sut mae Begw heno?'*

*'Newydd gael pwl eto,' ebe'r fam yn ddistaw.*

*'And how is Begw tonight?'*

*'Just had an attack again,' her mother said quietly.*

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Pattern B: *Dianc i Lundain* (▷ex. 11):

[...] Aethai hithau i'r siamber gefn i strancio, ac wrth weld na thalai hynny aeth at ei dol i chwilio am gysur, a daliai'r ddol honno gerfydd ei choes yn awr wrth edrych i fyny ac i lawr y ffordd i chwilio am ryw gysur arall.

Yna gwelodd rywbeth tebyg i frân fawr yn dyfod wrth y capel. **Gwnaeth y frân lwybr syth at Begw A DWEUD:**

*'R ydw i'n dengid go iawn y tro yma. 'R ydw i wedi dŵad i ben 'y nhennyn. Tyd, Begw, mi awn ni.'*

Rhoes Begw luch i'r ddol dros ben gwal yr ardd, a neidiodd i law Winni Ffinni Hadog, [...]

[...] She'd gone to the back bedroom to act up, and on seeing that that didn't pay, went to her doll to look for comfort, and she was holding the doll by her leg now as she looked up and down the road in search of some further comfort.

Then she saw something like a great crow coming by the chapel. **The crow made a straight path to Begw and SAID:**

*'I'm escaping for real this time. I've come to the end of my tether. Come, Begw, we'll go.'*

Begw gave the doll a toss over the garden wall, and leapt to the hand of Winni Ffinni Hadog, [...]

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Pattern C: *Gofid* (=ex. 13):

Pan gododd, nid oedd Sgiatan o gwmpas yn unlle, **ac er GWEIDDI** 'Pws, Pws', **ni ddaeth o unman**. Toc, mentrodd agor y drws cefn a dyna lle'r oedd Sgiatan — nid ar garreg y drws yn codi ei chynffon ac yn barod i'w rhwbio ei hun yn ei choesau, ond yn gorwedd mewn crwc o ddŵr, ei phedair coes wedi ymestyn allan [...]

When she got up, Sgiatan wasn't anywhere around, **and though she'd SHOUTED** 'Puss, Puss', **she didn't come out from anywhere**. Presently, she ventured to open the back door and there was Sgiatan—not on the doorstep raising her tail and ready to rub herself on her legs, but lying in a bucket of water, her four legs stretched out [...]

## 1.2.2 Functional distinction

VI	Pattern A	Pattern B	Pattern C
	unmarked 'passing the microphone'	marked the speaking is an event	marked not a part of a dialogue
VII	Pattern A	Pattern B	Pattern C
	-narrative +dialogue	+narrative +dialogue	+narrative -dialogue

## 1.3 Examples

### 1.3.1 Pattern A

7 Dieithrio:

'Mae gynnoch chi ryw  
oglau da iawn, Winni,'  
**OEDD CYFARCHIAD ELIN GRUFFYDD,**  
er mwyn cuddio'r chwithigrwydd, a  
rhag sylwi ar yr ôl crio ar Winni – crio  
glân y tro hwn.

'Meistres roth sent ar fy hances boced i,'  
**MEDDAI** hithau, 'ac ylwch, mae hi wedi  
rhoi ruban coch imi glymu fy ngwallt i fynd  
efo fy nghap i, a mi ges i swllt gin Mistar i  
dalu fy mrêc.'

'Da iawn. Ydach chi'n meddwl y liciwch  
chi'ch lle?'

'Gna, am wn i, crystal ag y licia i unman. Mi  
fuo bron i mi â marw gin hiraeth yr wsnos  
yma. 'R oedd o yn fy mygu fi wrth fynd i  
'ngwely.'

'R un fath mae pawb, Winni, mae o'r un  
fath â thorri ceffyl, rhaid peidio â rhoi i  
mewn.'

'Hiraeth am Sionyn oedd arna i,' **MEDDAI**  
gan ddechrau snwffian.

'You smell very nice, Winni,'  
**WAS ELIN GRUFFYDD'S GREETING,**  
to conceal the awkwardness, and to  
avoid taking notice of the traces of  
crying on Winni—clean crying, this  
time.

'Mistress put scent on my pocket  
handkerchief,' she **SAID,** 'and look,  
she gave me a red ribbon for tying my hair  
back that goes with my cap, and I had a  
shilling from Mister to pay for my brake.'

'Very good. Do you like your place?'

'Yes, I suppose, as well as I like anywhere.  
I was almost dying with homesickness this  
week. It choked me when I went to bed.'

'Everybody's the same way, Winni, it's the  
same as breaking a horse, you mustn't give  
in.'

'I was homesick for Sionyn,' she **SAID,**  
beginning to sniffle.

*'Oedd o'n falch o'ch gweld chi?'  
**GOFYNNODD** Begw.*

*'Mi'r oedd o'n swil i gychwyn, yn cuddio'i  
wyneb ym marclod i fam, ond mi fynnodd  
gael i de ar fy nglin i.'*

[...]

*'Was he glad to see you?' Begw **ASKED**.*

*'He was shy at the start, hiding his face  
in his mother's apron, but he insisted on  
having his tea on my knee.'*

[...]

### 1.3.2 Pattern B

- 8 *Nadolig y Cerdyn* (Nanw Siôn destroys Begw's romantic dream of *Nadolig hen ffasiwn* ('Old fashioned Christmas')):

**Ni fedrai Begw DDWEUD gair.** Yr oedd wedi cael ei thwylo ar hyd yr amser. Wedi gweld rhyw fyd rhamantus ymhell yn ôl lle'r oedd plant bach yn cael Nadolig gwyn bob blwyddyn. **MENTRODD toc.**

*'Wel, mae 'u celwydd nhw wedi dŵad yn wir y tro yma beth bynnag, ac ella mai rŵan 'r ydan ni'n dechra cael Nadolig hen ffasiwn.'*

**Begw couldn't SAY a word.** She'd been deceived all the time. Had seen a romantic world long ago where little children had a white Christmas every year. **Presently she VENTURED:**

*'Well, their lie has come true this time anyway, and maybe now is when we start having an old-fashioned Christmas.'*

- 9 *Ymwelydd i De* (Begw is eagerly waiting for Winni to come):

**Toc clywsant sŵn clocsiau ar lechi'r drws, ac yr oedd mam Begw yno o'i blaen YN DDWEUD:**

*'Dowch i mewn, Winni,' yn groesawus.*

**Presently they heard the sound of clogs on the doorstep, and Begw's mother was there before her, SAYING:**

*'Come in, Winni,' welcomingly.*

- 10 *Ymwelydd i De* (Lisi Jên came; they began eating):

Wedi gorffen bwyta, cododd pawb.

After they finished eating, everybody got up.

'Diolch i chi,' meddai Lisi Jên reit ffwr-bwt.

'Thank you,' Lisi Jên said, quite brusquely.

Meddylodd Begw oddi wrth ei hosgo fod Winni am wneud araith broffwydol cyn ymadael, ond y cwbl a **DDYWEDODD** oedd:

Begw thought from her bearing that Winni meant to make a prophetic speech before leaving, but all that she **SAID** was:

'Diolch yn fawr i chi, Elin Gruffydd, dyna'r pryd gora' ges i 'rïoed. Mi fydd yn rhaid iddo fo 'neud imi am hir.'

'Thank you very much, Elin Gruffydd, that was the best meal I ever had. It will have to do us for a long while.'

**DIWEDODD** hyn gan edrych ar ei llysfam [...]

She **SAID** this looking at her stepmother [...]

11 *Dianc i Lundain:*

Yna gwelodd rywbeth tebyg i frân fawr yn dyfod wrth y capel. **Gwnaeth y frân lwybr syth at Begw** **A DWEUD:**

Then she saw something like a great crow coming by the chapel. **The crow made a straight path to Begw and SAID:**

'R ydw i'n dengid go iawn y tro yma. 'R ydw i wedi dŵad i ben 'y nhennyn. Tyd, Begw, mi awn ni.'

'I'm escaping for real this time. I've come to the end of my tether. Come, Begw, we'll go.'

12 *Dianc i Lundain* (Begw and Winni are looking on the lake, after they've been walking for a while):

**Troes Begw o'r diwedd, ac yn sydyn** **GWAEDDODD:**

**Begw turned at last and suddenly SHOUTED:**

'Dyna hi.'

'There it is.'

'Beth eto?'

'What now?'

'Y lôn bost.'

'The post road.'

1.3.3 Pattern C

13 *Gofid* (Begw is looking after the lost Sgiatan):

Pan gododd, nid oedd Sgiatan o gwmpas yn unlle, **ac er GWEIDDI** ‘Pws, Pws’, **ni ddaeth o unman**. Toc, mentrodd agor y drws cefn a dyna lle’r oedd Sgiatan [...]

When she got up, Sgiatan wasn’t anywhere around, **and though she’d SHOUTED** ‘Puss, Puss’, **she didn’t come out from anywhere**. Presently, she ventured to open the back door and there was Sgiatan [...]

14 *Marwolaeth Stori* (A description of Dafydd Siôn):

[...] Weithiau, fe edrychai drwyddi heb na gwên na gwg ar ei wyneb, **dim ond edrych arni a rhoi pwniad yn ei brest, A CHWYRNNU** ‘By’ fel pe bai’n ceisio ei dychryn. [...]

[...] At times, he’d look through her without a smile or a frown on his face, **just look at her and give her a nudge on the chest, and SNARL** ‘Buh’ as if he were trying to frighten her. [...]

15 *Marwolaeth Stori* (Begw is in bed):

Ni fedrai gysgu. **Deuai sŵn y siarad o’r gegin fel sŵn gwenyn yn yr haf, ac ambell ‘Ha, ha’ ODDI WRTH Bilw yn ei ganol.**

She couldn’t sleep. **The sound of the talk was coming from the kitchen like the sound of bees in summer, with an occasional ‘Ha, ha’ FROM Bilw in the middle of it.**

16 *Dianc i Lundain* (Winni says she once prayed ‘like the devil’):

**Dychrynodd Begw, A GOLLWNG** ‘O’ ofnus **ALLAN**.

**Begw was horrified, and LET OUT a timid ‘Oh’.**

17 *Marwolaeth Stori* (Begw’s mother putting her to bed):

**Cusanodd ei mam a GWAEDDODD** ‘Nos dawch’ ar y lleill.

**She kissed her mother and CALLED** ‘Good night’ to the others.

18 *Nadolig y Cerdyn* (Nanw Siôn is going over the things Elin Gruffydd sent):



Datbaciwyd y fasedd, a Nanw Siôn YN DWEUD, ‘Wel O!’ am bob dim a dynnai allan. ‘Y gryduras ffeind.’

The basket was unpacked, with Nanw Siôn SAYING ‘Well! Oh!’ about everything that came out. ‘The kind creature.’

19 *Marwolaeth Stori* (A description of Bilw):

[...] ac yr oedd Bilw yn dyfod yno—Bilw na byddai byth yn edrych yn gas, Bilw a chwarrddai o hyd, **Bilw a DDYWEDAI**: ‘Lle mae Begw?’ fel pe buasai wedi chwilio’r ddaear cyn dyfod o hyd iddi. [...]

[...] and Bilw was coming there—Bilw who never looked mean, Bilw who was always laughing, **Bilw who’d SAY** ‘Where’s Begw?’ as if he’d been searching the earth before finding her. [...]

20 *Marwolaeth Stori*:

Ond y munud hwnnw dyna’r gwynt yn chwibanu yn y drws a Bilw yn sefyll yn y cysgodion ac YN GOFYN: ‘Sut ydach chi heno? Lle mae Begw?’ A hithau’n rhedeg a’i dynnu at y setl. [...]

But at that moment, there was the wind whistling at the door and Bilw standing in the shadows and ASKING: ‘How are you tonight? Where’s Begw?’ And she ran and pulled him to the settle. [...]

## 2 A positive *verbum dicendi* versus the lack thereof

VIII Pattern A { Pattern A+: ¶ ‘...,’ [VERBUM DICENDI] ([SPEAKER]), (‘...’) ¶  
Pattern A–: ¶ ‘...’ ¶

### 2.1 The distribution between A+ and A–

IX ¶ SPEAKER (MODE OF SPEAKING and/or CO-INCIDENTAL ACTION): UTTERANCE ¶

### 2.1.1 Interruptions

21 Y Pistyll (Robin and his mother are speaking about Mr Huws and the fact he beat Wil y Fedw. Each line in the dialogue is marked by a lack of *verbum dicendi*. The mother says—):

‘Mi ’nath yn iawn.’ *‘He did the right thing.’*  
‘Hwre! Da iawn, Mr Huws!’ **EBE** Begw. *‘Hooray! Well done, Mr. Huws!’* Begw  
**SAID.**

22 Marwolaeth Stori (Dafydd Siôn was telling a story; Begw, who knows the story, interrupts him—):

‘Rydach chi wedi anghofio dweud sut oedd Gwen,’ meddai Begw. *‘You’ve forgotten to say how Gwen was,’*  
Begw **SAID.**

23 Marwolaeth Stori (Dafydd Siôn continues the story and then Begw interrupts him again by telling what happens next, in first person):

‘Dyma fi’n clywed sŵn meddal ffrwd,’ *‘Then I hear the soft sound of a brook,’*  
**MEDDAI** Begw. Begw **SAID.**

24 Ymwelydd i De (Winni comes to Begw’s house):

‘Dew, mae gynnoch chi le glân yma,’ *‘God, you have a clean place here,’* she  
meddai. ‘Mae’n tŷ ni fel stabal.’ *said. ‘Our house is like a stable.’*  
‘Well i chi ddwâd at y bwrdd rŵan,’ *‘You’d better come to the table now,’*  
**MEDDAI** mam Begw gan dorri ar ei *Begw’s mother SAID, interrupting her.*  
thraws.

25 Nadolig y Cerdyn (Nanw Siôn is lamenting her loneliness):

‘[...]. Dynas fel fi sy’n hel meddylia, am na *‘[...] A woman like me begins brooding,*  
febr cath na llygod mo’ch ateb chi—.’ *because a cat or mice can’t answer you—.’*  
‘Pam na brynwch chi boli parrot?’ *‘Why don’t you buy a poll-parrot?’* **BEGW**  
**GOFYNNAI** Begw. *asked.*

### 2.1.2 Adverbial expansion

26 Y Pistyll (Begw's father asks—):

'A sut mae Begw heno?'

'And how is Begw tonight?'

'Newydd gael pwl eto,' **EBE**'r fam  
**YN DDISTAW**.

'Just had an attack again,' her mother  
**SAID QUIETLY**.

27 Te yn y Grug:

'Welis i 'rïoed hogia drwg,' **MEDDAI** mam  
Begw **FEL PETAI** Robin ei mab yn angel.

'I've never seen wicked boys,' Begw's  
mother **SAID, AS IF** her son Robin were  
an angel.

28 Dieithrio:

'Hiraeth am Sionyn oedd arna i,' **MEDDAI**  
**GAN DDECHRAU** snwffian.

'I was homesick for Sionyn,' she **SAID,**  
**BEGINNING** to sniffle.

X ¶ SPEAKER (MODE OF SPEAKING and/or **CO-INCIDENTAL ACTION**): UTTERANCE ¶

## 2.2 Dialogues of two characters and of more than two

29 Ymwelydd i De (the absolute beginning of the story):

'Ydach chi'n licio Winni, **MAM?**' **MEDDAI**  
**BEGW** ymhen ychydig ddyddiau wedi'r  
te parti rhyfedd hwnnw ar ben y  
mynydd.

'Do you like Winni, **MAM?**' **BEGW SAID,** a  
few days after that strange tea party  
up on the mountain.

30 Ymwelydd i De (Begw asks her mother why do they try to be like Mrs Huws):

'Go drapia,' **MEDDAI**'r fam, 'dyna chdi  
wedi gneud imi blannu'r nodwydd yma yn  
fy mys.'

'Dart it,' her mother said, 'there you've  
made me plant this needle in my finger.'

*Te yn y Grug* (Winni and Begw are talking. Winni says her mother was a fool):

'Bedi lembo?'

'What's "numbskull"?''

'Dyn chwarter call yn meddwl i fod o'n gallach na neb.  
Tasa fo'n gall, fasa fo ddim wedi priodi'r cownslar dynas  
acw.'

'A dimwitted man who thinks he has more sense than  
anyone. If he'd had sense, he wouldn't have married  
her nibs there.'

'Nid y hi ydy'ch mam chi felly?'

'She isn't your mother then?'

'Naci, mae fy mam i wedi marw, a'i ail wraig o ydy hon.  
Ffŵl oeddy fy mam inna hefyd. Ffŵl diniwad wrth gwrs.'

'No, my mother's dead, and this one's his second wife.  
My mother was a fool as well. An innocent fool, of  
course.'

'O,' **MEDDAI** Begw, 'bedach chi'n deud  
peth fel yna am ych mam?'

'Oh,' Begw said, 'why are you saying a  
thing like that about your mother?'

### 3 Further research

1. The difference between the various *verba dicendi*; especially between *ebe* and *meddai*. The relationship between *ebe* and *meddai* is extremely interesting in both synchronic and diachronic perspectives.
2. The use of non-verbal elements anchoring speech, such as 'oddi wrth' (e.g. ex. 1) and nominal predication constructions (e.g. ex. 2).
3. The location of a *verbum dicendi* when inserted in the midst of the quoted text ('.....', *meddai Begw*. '.....'). Prosody, of course, plays here a major role.
4. The use of 'indirect speech' in narrative (not occurring in *Te yn y Grug*).
5. Direct address in terms of textual cohesion.
6. Mutual references between the events in the narrative and the conversation in the dialogue.
7. Extending the corpus to other writings of Kate Roberts and the writings of other authors.

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