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4. CONVERBS

Converbs as against other strategies

Compare Longacre (1986). The semantics of the storyline in East and West Africa. *Journal of Semantics* 5(1): 51-64.

The major storyline consideration in Ethiopian SOV languages which are represented is the matter of the storyline scheme status of various kinds of "gerunds" (non-final verbs) as opposed to final verbs in chaining structures. Some Nilotic languages, of which Luwo of Sudan is representative, have strict VSO structures. The function of consecutive tenses in various VSO and SVO languages is then considered along with the consideration of storyline schemes in SVO languages which do not have special consecutive tenses. A general parallelism of the medial and final clauses in SOV languages to initial and consecutive clauses in VSO and SVO languages is noted. Several further parallelisms and differences among SOV, VSO, and SVO languages are noted.

- Haspelmath, Martin, and Ekkehard König (eds.) 1995 *Converbs in Cross-Linguistic Perspective: Structure and Meaning of Adverbial Verb Forms, Adverbial Participles, Gerunds*. Berlin /New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

- Masica, Colin P. 1976 *Defining a Linguistic Area: South Asia*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
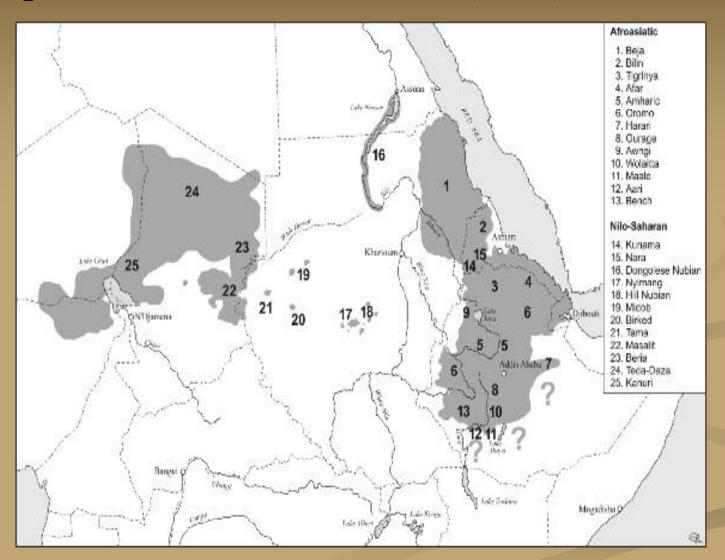
Map Amha and Dimmendaal (2006)

Table 1. Alternative terms for converb constructions in Afroasiatic studies

Language	Label	Author
Amharic, Oromo, Wolaitta	Gerund	Ferguson 1976, Leslau 1995, 2000, Kapeliuk 1997, Lamberti and Sottile 1997
Gurage, Amharic, Awngi, Aari	Converb	Polotsky 1951, Hetzron 1969, 1975b, Tosco 1996, Hayward 1990, Azeb Amha 2001
Afar, Beja, Bench	Participle	Tucker and Bryan 1966, Bliese 1976, Hudson 1976, Breeze 1990
Oromo	Consecutive	Gragg 1976,
Amharic	Constructive mood	Isenberg 1842
Amharic	Short imperfect	Cotterell 1964
Amharic, Argobba	Conjuctive verbs	Hudson 1997
Hadiyya,	Oromo Serial verbs	Sim 1989, Griefenow-Mewis and Tamene 1997
Hadiyya	Medial verbs	Sim 1989
Burji, Gedeo, Sidamo	Dependent verbs	Wedekind 1990

Maba (Maban, Nilo-Saharan)

- (20) *sol   n   abdu lke ri m   u ld   gam*
  ga   k

  sultan Abdulkerim   son   of.Djame   when

  makkagine   r

  Mecca.from

- *taranu   da   r tongur-na   karan*
  he.came   land Toundjour-GEN   come:CNV

  ioko   n   tuguno

  seen:CNV he.returned
  'When Sultan Abdulkerim Ould Djame came from Mecca,
  he went to explore the land of the Toundjour and returned.'

- In their survey of the Maban group, Tucker and Bryan (1966: 197) again use the term "participle" (formed by way of a suffix –Vn in the Maban group) in their description of this syntactic phenomenon. The authors also point out (p. 204) that "[w]here several Verbs are involved, the Participle…is used for all except the last." An example from Bura Mabang, where the 'ing' in the interlinear glossing, retained from Tucker and Bryan, marks off converbs:

- Interestingly, Tucker and Bryan draw attention towards typologically similar constructions in Nilo-Saharan groups such as Barya, Kunama, as well as to the Cushitic language Bilin (p. 589) and the Semitic language Amharic; clearly, then, the authors were fully aware of the fact that similar strategies are found in these other languages.

Tucker, A.N., and M. A. Bryan. 1966. *Linguistic Analyses: The Non-Bantu Languages of Northeastern Africa.* London: Oxford University Press for the international African Institute.

See also the description of Beria (Saharan, Nilo-Saharan):

- Jakobi, Angelika, and Joachim Crass. 2004. *Grammaire du beria (langue saharienne).* Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe.

Hetzron (1975a: 113) summarizes the origin and the distribution of the converb construction in Ethio-Semitic languages.

- A number of features common to ALL the Ethiopian Semitic languages but not found elsewhere in Semitic are probably all due to the early influence of Cushitic and argue for monogenesis... Some features are not found in all the languages, but they are found in representatives of each branch while not in the closest relatives of these. Such a feature is the use, employing a Semitic form according to a Cushitic pattern (i.e. calqued on Cushitic), of the converb (gerund) instead of sentence coordination. The converbial constructions are common in all the Ethiopian Semitic languages and were already so in Ge'ez, but the original converbial forms (based on the Semitic pattern (säbir(ä)-) are found today (in addition to Ge'ez) in Tigrinya, (but not in Tigre), Amharic, Argobba and, with a limited application, in central and western Gurage (with a modified pattern *sibirtä-*) and Gafat.

Hetzron (1972: 99-100) identifies three 'major functions' for the above converb forms in Amharic. According to this author, each of the three functions is distinctively signalled by word-final pitch/stress.

- *Consecutive*, where the action of the converb takes place prior to the event expressed in the next verb. In this function, the final syllable of the converb has 'high pitch stress'.

- *(12a) k'om-ó   tänaggärä*
  get up-3msg:CNV   speak:3msg:PAST
  'He got up and talked'

- *(12b) bält-ó   hedá*
  eat-3msg:CNV   go:3msg:PAST
  'He ate and went'

- *Serial*, where a chain of actions, each marked by a converb, takes place, constituting one activity and the final verb is the conclusion of the activity. In this function, the final syllable of the converb has 'rising stress'.

- *(13) bärr-u-n   käft-´ó   ï-bet*
    door-DEF- ACC   open-3msg:CNV   LOC-house
    gäbt´-ó
    enter-3msg:CNV

    ïk'awïn   azzägajt-´ó   bet-u-n
    goods.DEF-ACC   arrange-3msg:CNV   house-DEF-ACC

    t'ärg-´ó   hedä
    sweep-3msg:CNV   go:3msg:PAST

- 'He opened the door, entered the house, arranged the things, swept the house, and left'

- This prosodic distinction on the intonational-phrase-final syllable, however, does not appear to be made by all native speakers, according to our information.

- *Coextensive*, where there is no subsequent relation. In this function, the converb does not carry special stress. Three sub-functions are included under the coextensive: 1) the actions of the converb and the final verb occur simultaneously (and the converb is a stative verb), as in ex. (14); 2) the contents of the two verbs (converb and final) make up one verbal meaning, as in (15); 3) the use of the converb is governed by the lexical nature the subsequent verb, as in (16):

- *(14) k'om-o*   *tännaggära*

  get up-3msg:CNV   speak:3msg:PAST

  'he talked standing'

- *(15) tämällïs-o*   *hedä*

  return-3msg:CNV   go:3msg:PAST

  'he went back [=returning]"

- *(16) t'ät't'ït-o*   *c'ärräsä*

  drink-3msg:CNV   finish:3msg:PAST

  'he finished drinking'

Issues:

- Same subject /different subject

- When does a speaker of a language using converbs decide to start a new sentence?

Omotic (Afroasiatic)

Amha, Azeb. 2001. *The Maale Language*. Leiden: CNWS.

(4) a. ʔizí   mísʼ-ó   tikʼ-áʔʔo   ʔáá-ɗ-é-ne
         3MSG:NOM tree-ABS   cut-CNV₂   left-PF-A:DCL
         'He left, having cut the wood'

    b. ta   ʔindá   túk-ó   burkʼ-iʃ-í
        1SG:GEN   mother-NOM   coffee-ABS   boil-CAUS-CNV₁

        káts-ó   kats-í   ʔas-ó   ʔééll-é-ne
        food-ABS   cook-CNV₁   people-ABS   call-PF-A:DCL
        'My mother made coffee and she prepared food and invited the
        people (who were working on the farm into the house)'

    c. ʔizí   mísʼ-ó   tík-ém   núúní   makiin-aa
        3MSG:NOM wood-ABS   cut-CNV₃   1SG:NOM   car-LOC

        cʼaan-é-ne
        load-PF-A:DCL
        'He having cut the wood, we loaded it on the car'

83. bóʔʔ-á   karr-ó-na   naʔʔ-ómma   ked-áʔʔo   ʔekk-í
w.animal-NOM   horn-ABS-INST   child-DIM:ABS   carry-CNV₂ take-CNV₁

ɓaʃk-áza · kan-éll-á   bérta   bérta   ɓaʃk-í   ɓaʃk-í
run-TEMP₁ dog-F-NOM   in_front in_front run- CNV₁   run-CNV₁

gá-á-nte   mági   kéémm-ats-idda mukk-áʔʔo iika
say-IPF-SIMUL   cliff:ABS huge-M-LOC   come-CNV₂ there

mágg-a   ʒib-áʔʔo   bóʔʔ-atsí   maʔ-í   ʔááɗ-áza
cliff-LOC   throw-CNV₂ w.animal-M:NOM   return-CNV₁ go-TEMP₁

iika lúú   mágg-ó   gidd-ó-ídda   naʔʔ-ómmá
there down cliff:DF-ABS   interior-ABS-LOC child-DIM:NOM

ʔágitsi   loomm-í   bak'anná-ppa mek'k'-í   ɗab-áʔʔo
backwards fall-CNV₁   neck:ABS-ABL break-CNV₁   err-CNV₂

kan-éll-ó-na   wolla   ɓaʃʔ-í   súkk-ó   pink'-é-ne
dog-F-ABS-INST together run-CNV₁   across-ABS cross-PF-A:DCL

'The wild animal ran with the little boy on its horns. The dog also ran in
front of it. And then they reached the edge of a big cliff. The wild animal threw
the little boy there, over the cliff and went away. Down in the ravine, the little
boy fell backwards, almost breaking his neck. Then he and the dog crossed the
cliff running.'

(lit. 'The wild animal having carried the little boy with its horn, when it is
running, while the dog also is running in front (of the wild animal), having
reached the edge of a big cliff, there, having thrown (the boy) in the big cliff
when the wild animal went back, there, down inside the ravine the little boy
having fallen backwards, his neck almost broken, (he) together with the dog
crossed to the other side')

When to start a new sentence in a language with converbs: The Omotic picture

Cross-linguistically, languages commonly distinguish between indicative (or Declarative), imperative, and interrogative mood on the verb as speech acts, as pointed out in the typological survey by König and Siemund (2007).

Lyons (1968: 307) points out that interrogative sentences "... are not traditionally regarded as modal, because in most languages ... the syntactic distinction between declarative and interrogative sentences is not associated with a difference of verbal inflexion or the selection of a particular auxiliary, but with the employment of various interrogative particles or pronouns, with a difference of word-order, or with intonation, together with the 'indicative mood'." Lyons presents the label 'indicative mood' as a sneering quote, because "[s]imple declarative sentences ... are, strictly speaking, non-modal ('unmarked' for mood). If, however, a particular language has a set of one or more grammatical devices for 'marking' sentences according to the speaker's commitment with respect to the factual status of what he is saying (his emphatic certainty, his uncertainty or doubt, etc.), it is customary to refer to the 'unmarked' sentences also (by courtesy as it were) as being 'in a certain mood'; and the traditional term for this 'unmarked' mood is *indicative* (or *declarative*)" (Lyons 1968: 307).

Declarative affirmative in Maale (data from Amha 2001):

(1) ʔatsi   zigina   mukk-é-ne

     person-M:NOM   yesterday   come-PERF-A:DCL

     'the man came yesterday'

Declarative mirative:

(2) ka   hay-i   amm-é-y

     INTJ this-NOM   give.fruit-PERF-MIR

     'oh, this one has given fruit (talking of a three-year-old

     mango tree)'

Declarative veridical [as a modal distinction expressing an increased intensity of the truth of a proposition]:

(3) ʔekk-i

     take.VER

     'yes, I will certainly take'

Modality marking in Maale also interacts with evidentiality marking, as with the Declarative informative:

(4) lúù   díil-á   ʔáá-skay

     down flour-NOM   exist-NEW:DCL

     'there is flour in (the house) down there'

The strategies for Declarative mood marking contrast with (polar) interrogative mood marking in Maale, which is characterized by the absence of mood marking, as is common for Omotic.

(5) ʔatsi   mukk-iya   'did the man come?'

     person-M:NOM   come-PERF:Q

The functional linguist Halliday (1994: xxvii) has made an interesting observation in this respect:

> "The basic opposition, in grammars of the second half of the twentieth century, is not that between 'structuralist' and 'generative' as set out in the public debates of the 1960s. There are many variables in the way grammars are written, and any clustering of these is bound to distort the picture; but the more fundamental opposition is between those that are primarily syntagmatic in orientation (by and large the formal grammars, with their roots in logic and philosophy), and those that are primarily paradigmatic (by and large the functional ones, with their roots in rhetoric and ethnography)...The latter interpret language as a network of relations, with structures coming in as the realization of these relationships; they tend to emphasize variables among different languages, to take semantics as the foundation (hence the grammar is natural), and so to be organized around the text, or discourse. "

The "black hole" of Omotic languages

Mood is frequently coded on verbs cross-linguistically, presumably because of the close interaction between the expression of the state of affairs through this syntactic category and the way this state of affairs is to be understood, i.e. the illocutionary force involved with a specific utterance.

Omotic languages are particularly interesting from a typological point of view in that the formal expression of illocutionary *as well as* the perlocutionary dimension conflate or converge on the verb. Hellenthal (2010), for example, shows for Sheko that the verb-final slot is used to mark Irrealis, Realis, Optative, but also semantic notions like Viewpoint, Implicative , Imminence, or Obvious. An example of the latter from Sheko (Hellenthal 2010: 311).

(6)   bàʒ = á-kn

        work=3M:SG-KNOWN

        'it works'

Typological properties	Omotic, in particular Ometo cluster	[former] Nilo-Saharan extension of the "Ethiopian" convergence area along northern Sudan into Chad
Case marking	Yes, extensive	Yes, but not always as extensive as in Omotic
Verb-final	Yes	Yes
converbs	Yes	Yes
Adverbial clauses	Precede the main clause and are marked with a *clause-final* conjunction	Precede or follow main clause, often with *clause-initial* conjunctions
Marking illocutionary force (attitude, evidentiality etc.)	Typically on final constituent [i.e. verb] of a clause	Usually marked with separate particles

References

Halliday, M. A. K. 1994. *Introduction to Functional Grammar*. 2nd edition. London: Arnold.

Hellenthal, Anneke Christine. 2010. A Grammar of Sheko. PhD dissertation, Leiden University.

König, Ekkehard, and Peter Siemund. 2007. Speech act distinctions in grammar. In Timothy Shopen (ed.), *Language Typology and Linguistic Description Vol. 1, Clause Structure*, pp. 276-324. 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lyons, John. 1968. *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Benchnon (Rapold 2006, 2008)
(see pdf-file on CD)

Medial verbs as against converbs

- Rapold distiguishes between two types of dependent, non-argumental and non-adnominal verb forms:

- Converbs do not carry person-sensitive markers (and thereby are less finite), and are subordinate.

- Medial verbs carry person-sensitive markers, and are cosubordinate .

- Neither converbs nor medial verbs are marked for mood in Bench. As pointed out by Rapold (2008: 177), it is not possible in Bench to combine a clause with a medial verb with a main clause containing a verb expressing interrogative mood
  ** 'Kargu sold his car, and what did he buy?'

Examples from Benchnon

Table 1: Uses of the term "converb"

verb form			
+dependent, -argumental, -adnominal			
+embedded		-embedded	
+finite	-finite	-finite	+finite
subordinate "mood"	narrow converb	medial verb	cosubordinate "mood"
broad converb 1 (L1)			
	broad con-_		_verb 2 (L2)
broader converb (XL)			
broadest converb (XXL)			

Table 3: Switch reference markers

function	same subject		different subject
form	-í̆	-á̆	-n̄
gloss	m	f	DS
gender	masculine	feminine	-

(8) ... *hān-k'-í̆* [*ĭ̆ts* *yīst-āg-ùç*] **dŏd-ī** *bŏd-ń̆*
go-FS-m 3hon be.located-BE-M country-NOM.m road-LOC

t'ŭm-m̄...
get.dark-DS

'...they went and it got dark where they were, on the road...'

- Verbal compounding as an instance of "self-organizing principles" in languages.

- The important role of "self-organizing principles in languages"

  A process, where the organization of a system spontaneously increases without this increase being controlled by an external system (e.g. the environment) is known as "self-organization" in the natural sciences.

- Verbal compounding as a widespread lexical property of languages with converbs

Adjacency

- Subject (A, S) coreferential

- Object of the two verbs identical (and preceding the first verb)

- Amha, Azeb, and Dimmendaal, Gerrit J. 2006. Verbal compounding in Wolaitta. In: Alexandra Aikhenvald and R. M. W. Dixon (eds.), *Serial Verb Constructions: A Cross-linguistic Typology*, pp. 319-337. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

(4) ʔǐ ʔoós-uwa wurs-ǐn ʔetǐ
    3MSg:NOM work-M:ABS finish-DS:CONVB 3pl:NOM

TABLE 1. Inflection in main verbs and converbs in Omotic

Omotic	Converb	Main verb
Wolaitta	gender + number	person, gender, number, aspect, mood, polarity
Aari (Eastern Omotic)	person + number	person, number, tense, aspect, mood, polarity
Bench (=Gimira)	tense, aspect, person + gender	person, gender, tense, aspect, mood, polarity
Maale	no marking for tense, aspect, person, or gender; one marker for S or A	aspect, mood, polarity

If both converb and main verb are transitive and share an object, the object occurs before the converb (8a); otherwise, each transitive verb is preceded by its own object noun, as in (9).

(8) (a) ʔǐ̆   maay-úwa   meecʼcʼ-ǐdǐ̆   mǐ́cʼcʼ-iisi
        3MSg:NOM   cloth-M:ABS   wash-CONVB   hang-3MSg:PERV
        'Having washed the cloth, he hung it up'

    (b) *ʔi   meecʼcʼ-ǐdǐ̆   maay-úwa   mǐ́cʼcʼ-iisi
        3MSg:NOM   wash-CONVB   cloth-M:ABS   hang-3MSg:PERV

(9) ʔǐ   maay-úwa   meec'c'-ĭdǐ   keettáa
3MSG:NOM cloth-M:ABS wash-CONVB   house:ABS
fítt-eesi
sweep-3MSG:IMPERV
'(After) having washed the cloth, he sweeps the house'

(10) (a) hage   súre   néná   <u>bak'k'í</u>   <u>ʔoik'-iisi</u>
          this:M   trousers:NOM   2sg:ABS   slap-CONVB   hold-3MSG.PERV
          'These trousers are too tight for you'

     (b) ʔí   ba   keett-áa   <u>baizz-í</u>   <u>ʔekk-iisi</u>
          3MSG:NOM   LOG.PN   house-M:ABS   sell-CONVB   take-3MSG:PERV
          'He sold his house'

TABLE 2. The asymmetrical set in Wolaitta

	Lexical meaning	Constructional meaning
?agg-	'give up'	immediacy
?ak'-	'spend the night'	duration
bay-	'disappear'	counterexpectation
be?-	'see'	adversive
digg-	'remove something, forbid'	irreversible state
?ekk-	'take, receive'	partitive
?er-	'know'	experiential
g-	'say'	decisive
haik'k'-	'die'	extreme degree
?iiss-	'insist, persist'	continuity of negatively perceived state, e.g. pain, noise
kaall-	'follow'	continuity/progress of positively evaluated action
kicc-	'remove oneself'	irreversible state
pe?-	'spend the day'	duration
ʃaac'c'-	'spend the season/year'	duration
t'eell-	'look at, examine'	adversive
?utt-	'sit down'	precedence, preparedness
wodʃɗ-	'descend'	suddenness
wor-	'kill'	extreme degree
wott-	'put down'	precedence, preparedness
wur-	'be finished'	near-complete action

(15) k'efeé-kka   gam?-énna-n   soh-uwá-ra
     wing-INC   be.late-NEG:IMPERV-DS:CONVB place-ABS-INST
     pat'-ĭ   ?agg-iisi
     be.cured-CONVB give.up-3MSg:PERV
     'The wing too got cured immediately'

(16) ?issĭ   gallassi   túmu   maah-eé   na?-aá-yyo
     one   day   true:GEN   leopard:NOM child-M:ABS-DAT
     sintá-n kĭy-ĭ   ?agg-iisi
     face-LOC go.out-CONVB give.up-3MSg:PERV
     'One day a real leopard suddenly appeared before the boy'

Converb	Main verb	
baizz-	m-	sell and squander (lit. sell-eat)
baizz-	ekk-	sell ((lit. sell-take)
bak'k'-	˜oik'-	be too tight (lit. slap-hold)
k'at't'-	zaar-	capture a person by misleading him/her (lit. twist-return)

How does a speaker "decide" when to start a new sentence?

- „Whenever a distinct illocutionary force is involved.“

- Neither converbs nor medial verbs are marked for mood in Bench. As pointed out by Rapold (2008: 177), it is not possible in Bench to combine a clause with a medial verb with a main clause containing a verb expressing interrogative mood

  ** 'Kargu sold his car, and what did he buy?'

- Declarative (formally marked; universally rare)

  Interrogative

  Jussive (Imperative, Optative, Hortative)

- Dependent verbs (converbs, medialverbs) combined with main verbs (marked for mood) in a proto-typical Omotic language express macro-events involving an identical modality statement or illocutinary force.

Some final conclusions:

- What language typology may be about these days
- Bickel, B. 2007. Typology in the 21st century: major current developments. *Linguistic Typology* 11, 239 – 251.
- "Instead of asking "what's possible?", more and more typologists ask "what's where why?" Asking "what's where" targets universal preferences as much as geographical or genealogical skewing, and results in probabilistic theories stated over sampled distributions. Asking "why" is based on the premises that (a) typological distributions are historically grown and (b) that they are interrelated with other distributions."
- Propagating Greenberg's method of dynamic comparison (intragenetic comparison, intergenetic comparison.

Explaining typological similarities between languages:

- Genetic inheritance

- Areal contact

- Self-organizing principles (language-internal interaction of subsystems

Thank you for
your kind interest!