Chapter 9

General converbs in Mehweb

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This paper deals with the morphological and syntactic properties of general converbs in Mehweb. I discuss the markers used to form general converbs, periphrastic converbs, independent uses of converbs, their behaviour in combination with verbs in the imperative, different strategies of argument sharing between the converb clause and the main clause, and coordination/subordination properties of the general converb. The description of the syntactic properties of the converbs is based on both elicited examples and corpus evidence.

1 Introduction

Converbs are determined as nonfinite verb forms whose main function is to mark adverbial subordination (Haspelmath 1995: 3). Mehweb specialized converbs, i.e. converbs which specify the semantic relation between the main and the converb clause (e.g. causal, immediate precedence in time, other temporal relations and so on), are discussed in Sheyanova (2019) [this volume]. This paper is devoted to general converbs which do not specify this relation – or, at least, do it in a more subtle way, leaving some room for contextual interpretation (hence an alternative label for this category is *contextual* converbs).

In §2, the basic uses and morphology of perfective and imperfective converbs will be discussed, §3 describes periphrastic converbs, and §4 deals with independent uses of general converbs in Mehweb. §5 discusses different patterns of argument sharing between converb clauses and main clauses. Finally, in §6 I discuss the coordination and subordination properties of the Mehweb general converb.

2 Perfective and imperfective converbs: background information

General converbs in Mehweb are derived from perfective and imperfective stems. Below I will refer to them as perfective and imperfective converbs, respectively. The perfective converb is formed by adding the converb marker *-le* to the verb in the aorist (Magometov 1982: 110); the affix undergoes a number of morphophonological alternations (see Moroz 2019; Daniel 2019). The formation of perfective converbs is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: The formation of the perfective converb

	1ˢᵗ conjugation class	2ⁿᵈ conjugation class	3ʳᵈ conjugation class
Aorist	*b-at-ur* N-leave:PFV-AOR 'left'	*b-ic-ib* N-sell:PFV-AOR 'sold'	*b-elč'-un* N-read:PFV-AOR 'read'
Perfective converb	*b-at-ul-le* (<*b-at-ur-le*) N-leave:PFV-AOR-CVB 'having left'	*b-ic-i-le* (<*b-ic-ib-le*) N-sell:PFV-AOR-CVB 'having sold'	*b-elč'-uwe* (<*b-elč'-ul-le*) N-read:PFV-AOR-CVB 'having read'

The imperfective converb is formed by adding *-uwe* to the imperfective stem. Here, the process is the same for all conjugation classes and could be interpreted as a combination of the participle suffix *-ul* and the converb suffix *-le* (Magometov 1982: 112). The formation of imperfective converbs is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The formation of the imperfective converb

	1ˢᵗ conjugation class	2ⁿᵈ conjugation class	3ʳᵈ conjugation class
Present participle	*b-alt-es* N-leave:IPFV-INF 'leaving'	*b-ilc-es* N-sell:IPFV-INF 'selling'	*luč'-es* N-read:IPFV-INF 'reading'
Imperfective converb	*b-alt-uwe* N-leave:IPFV-CVB.IPFV '(while) leaving'	*b-ilc-uwe* N-sell:IPFV-CVB.IPFV '(while) selling'	*luč'-uwe* read:IPFV-CVB.IPFV '(while) reading'

The perfective converb is used to describe an event preceding the situation denoted in the main clause. Situations that take place simultaneously with the main event are described by the imperfective converb. Both imperfective and perfective converbs can be combined with finite verbs with present or past time reference, cf.:

(1) *deč'=ra*   *b-aq'-i-le*   *musa* *w-aˤq'-un*   *quli.*
     song=ADD   N-do:PFV-AOR-CVB   Musa   M-go:PFV-AOR   house(LAT)
     'Having sung a song, Musa went home.'

(2) *deč'=ra*   *b-iq'-uwe*   *musa* *w-aˤq'-un*   *quli.*
     song=ADD   N-do:IPFV-CVB.IPFV   Musa   M-go:PFV-AOR   house(LAT)
     'Singing a song, Musa went home.'

(3) *deč'=ra*   *b-aq'-i-le*   *musa* *ʔaˤr-q'-uwe*   *le-w*
     song=ADD   N-do:PFV-AOR-CVB   Musa   away-go:IPFV-CVB.IPFV   AUX-M
     quli.
     house(LAT)
     'Having sung a song, Musa is going home.'

(4) *deč'=ra*   *b-iq'-uwe*   *musa* *ʔaˤr-q'-uwe*   *le-w*
     song=ADD   N-do:IPFV-CVB.IPFV   Musa   away-go:IPFV-CVB.IPFV   AUX-M
     quli.
     house(LAT)
     'Singing a song, Musa is going home.'

In sentence (1), a perfective converb is combined with a finite verb in the aorist, in (2) an imperfective converb is combined with a verb in the aorist, in (3) a perfective converb is combined with a verb in the present tense, and in (4) an imperfective converb is combined with a verb in the present tense.

3 Periphrastic converbs

Apart from the perfective and imperfective converbs described above, most speakers of Mehweb allow forms consisting of a converb and a copula in the converb form. Essentially, these are converbs formed from periphrastic verb forms. Below I refer to such forms as periphrastic converbs.

A periphrastic converb consisting of a perfective converb and a copula in the converb form corresponds to the resultative, a finite periphrastic form consisting of a perfective converb and a tensed copula.

(5) *jaˤbu* *b-ic-i-le*   *le-b-le*   *maˤʜmud-ini* *χʷe*
     horse N-sell:PFV-AOR-CVB   AUX-N-CVB   Mahmud-ERG   dog
     as-ib.
     take:PFV-AOR
     'Having sold a horse, Mahmud bought a dog.'

The same construction with an imperfective converb corresponds to the present progressive, which Magometov (1982: 87) terms definite imperfect.

(6) *jaˁbu   b-ilc-uwe   le-b-le   maˁʜmud le-w*
    horse   N-sell:IPFV-CVB.IPFV   AUX-N-CVB   Mahmud   AUX-M
    w-is-uwe.
    M-weep:IPFV-CVB.IPFV
    'While selling a horse, Mahmud is crying.'

Speakers also allow sentences like (7) and (8), where the copula in the converb form is preceded by a perfective or an imperfective infinitive. Morphologically, these forms correspond to the future resultative (composed of a perfective converb and a copula in the converb form) and the future progressive (an imperfective converb and a copula in the converb form). The semantic difference between the two periphrastic converbs remains unclear.

(7) *jaˁbu   b-ic-es   le-b-le   maˁʜmud-ini χʷe as-ib.*
    horse   N-sell:PFV-INF   AUX-N-CVB   mahmud-ERG dog take:PFV-AOR
    'Going to sell a horse, Mahmud bought a dog.'

(8) *jaˁbu   b-ilc-es   le-b-le   maˁʜmud le-w   w-is-uwe.*
    horse   N-sell:IPFV-INF   AUX-N-CVB   mahmud   AUX-M M-weep-CVB
    'Going to sell a horse, Mahmud is crying.'

4 Independent use

In most cases, converbs are used in complex clauses that also contain main finite clauses. However, some speakers allow sentences that contain only converbal predication.

When used independently, the perfective converb can have resultative semantics, as in (9).

(9) *urši-ni   diʔ   b-erk-uwe.*
    boy-ERG   meat   N-eat:PFV-AOR.CVB
    'A boy has eaten the meat (he finished it, so there is none left for me).'

Imperfective converbs can have the same semantics as habitual forms, i.e. sentences (10) and (11) have the same meaning.

(10) *urši-ni   diʔ   b-uk-uwe.*
boy-ERG meat N-eat:IPFV-CVB.IPFV

'A boy eats meat.'

(11) *urši-ni   diʔ   b-uk-an.*
boy-ERG meat N-eat:IPFV-HAB

'A boy eats meat.'

Although examples with a converb as a sole predicate are allowed by some speakers, the corpus (about 900 sentences) does not contain any instances of such sentences.

5 Argument sharing

In Mehweb, the S, A, P or other argument of the converb clause may – but need not – be referentially identical to an argument of the main clause. This shared argument can be expressed in either of the two clauses. Below I will refer to such situations as *argument sharing*. In this part I discuss sharing of core arguments, including S, A and P. Logically, a large list of different argument sharing configurations could be derived by alternating syntactic parameters, including the role of the shared argument in the main clause, the role of the shared argument in the converb clause and the locus of its expression (main or converb clause). However, not all of them are grammatical. Below I classify different argument sharing strategies in accordance with the consultants' ability to interpret them. Note that some of the sentences may be grammatical when interpreted in a different way, so I checked not just grammaticality but also the availability of the intended interpretation with shared arguments.

Generally, all configurations which include sharing of two S-arguments or an S-argument and an A-argument, regardless of the clause where it is expressed (the main or the converb clause), are interpretable, cf. (12) and (13).

(12) *musa w-akʼ-i-le   rasuj-če   b-aˤq-ib.*
Musa M-come:PFV-AOR-CVB Rasul-SUPER(LAT) N-hit:PFV-AOR

'When Musa came, (he) hit Rasul.' [1] (The S-argument of the intransitive converb clause is coreferential with the A-argument of the transitive main clause and is expressed in the converb clause.)

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[1]The verb *=aqˤas* 'hit' takes the instrument as S, though it does not have to be expressed in the sentence. This is why the noun *Rasul* is not marked as S and the verb has a neutral gender agreement marker.

(13) *dag*   *χʷe* *har-b-uq-uwe*   *išbari* *ʡaˤš-b-aˤq-ib.*

     yesterday dog PV-N-flee:PFV-AOR.CVB today back-N-come:PFV-AOR

     'Yesterday the dog ran away, today (it) returned.' (Two intransitive clauses sharing their S-argument, which is expressed in the converb clause)

In example (12), the fact that the shared argument is expressed in the converb clause is obvious from case marking. The verb *=ak'es* 'come' is intransitive and takes an S-argument, while *=aˤqas* 'hit' is transitive, with its A-argument in the ergative. Since the shared argument takes S-marking (nominative), it is dependent of the converb, not of the main verb. Therefore, it belongs to the converb clause.

As for (13), the same fact can be established on the basis of word order. The word *dag* 'yesterday' belongs to the converb clause, and the shared argument stands between this adverb and the converb. Therefore, I conclude that the shared argument belongs to the converb clause.

Sentences that include no argument sharing at all, like (14) and (15), are perfectly grammatical as well.

(14) *maˤнmud-ini* *diʔ* *as-i-le*   *pat'imat-ini* *χʷe* *dub*

     Mahmud-ERG meat take:PFV-AOR-CVB Patimat-ERG dog eat

     aˤʔ-aq-ib.

     LV:PFV-CAUS-AOR

     'Mahmud bought some meat, Patimat fed the dog.'

(15) *adami-li-ni*   *q'ar* *b-iˤšq-i-le*   *xunuj-ni*   *buruš*

     husband-OBL-ERG hay N-mow:PFV-AOR-CVB wife.OBL-ERG bed

     b-aq'-ib.

     N-make:PFV-AOR

     'The husband mowed the hay, the wife made the bed.'

Sharing that involves P-argument, like (16) and (17), is less straightforward.

In (16), both clauses are transitive, the P-argument of the converb clause is coreferential with the A-argument of the main clause and the shared argument is expressed in the main clause (which can again be seen from the case marking of the shared argument):

(16) *maˤнmud-ini* *as-i-le*   *gatu-ini* *waca*   *b-uc-ib.*

     Mahmud-ERG take:PFV-AOR-CVB cat-ERG mouse N-catch:PFV-AOR

     'Mahmud bought a cat and it caught a mouse.'

Note that in (16) the P-argument of the main clause cannot be coreferential with the P-argument of the converb clause, i.e. the example cannot mean that Mahmud bought a mouse who was then caught by a cat.

In (17), both clauses are transitive and share both their A- and P-arguments. The shared A-argument is expressed in the converb clause, and the shared P-argument belongs to the main clause (evidence based on word order, as in (13)):

(17) *dag   ħamzat-ini   as-i-le   išbari   kʷiha*
     yesterday Hamzat-ERG take:PFV-AOR-CVB today lamb
     b-erh-un.
     N-slaughter:PFV-AOR

     'Yesterday Hamzat bought a lamb, today he slaughtered it.'

Sentences where A- and P-arguments of one transitive clause were intended to be criss-cross coreferential with the P- and A-arguments of the other transitive clause were not interpreted in this way by any of the speakers. Cf. (18):

(18) *rasul   uc-i-le   musa   w-aˤbʔ-ib.*
     Rasul   M.catch:PFV-AOR-CVB Musa   M-kill:PFV-AOR

     Intended *'Musa caught Rasul, Rasul killed Musa.'
     Possible interpretation: 'Rasul was caught, Musa was killed.'

Table 3 below shows the distribution of different argument sharing strategies according to the native speakers' ability to interpret them in the intended way.

Table 3: The acceptability of different core argument sharing strategies

configurations that were always interpreted as expected	configurations that were ambiguous or difficult for some speakers	configurations that were never understood in the intended way
S=S	S=P	A=P & P=A
S=A	A=A	
no sharing	P=P	
	A=P	
	A=A & P=P	

Note that not all theoretically possible configurations are included in the resulting table. It appears that configurations where the X-argument of the converb clause is coreferential with the Y-argument of the main clause behave in exactly the same way as those where the X-argument of the main clause is coreferential

with the Y-argument of the converb clause. The locus of expression did not seem to matter, either. The configurations in the table are thus only represented by the arguments which are shared.

6 Coordination and subordination properties

An English translation equivalent for a converb construction is often coordination (Haspelmath 1995: 8). The syntactic status of this parallel is treated in Kibrik (2007). Below I will explore the syntactic properties of the Mehweb converb construction in terms of coordination vs. subordination.

6.1 Three syntactic tests

To find out whether the converbal construction in Mehweb is subordinate to the main verb or not, three syntactic tests were applied, including changing the linear order (§6.1.1), embedding the converb clause in the main clause (§6.1.2), and relativization (§6.1.3) (the tests are described in Creissels 2012: 143–145).

To run the tests, I will use sentences (19) and (20). In sentence (19), the converb clause shares its A argument with the main clause, while sentence (20) has no argument sharing.

(19) *musa-ini qali b-ic-i-le iz-es w-aʔ-ib.*
Musa-ERG house N-sell:PFV-AOR-CVB be.ill:IPFV-INF M-begin:PFV-AOR
'Musa, having sold the house, became ill.'

(20) *adami-li-ni q'ar b-iˤšq-i-le xunuj-ni buruš*
husband-OBL-ERG hay N-mow:PFV-AOR-CVB wife.OBL-ERG bed
b-aq'-ib.
N-do:PFV-AOR
'The husband mowed the hay, the wife made the bed.'

6.1.1 Linear order of the clauses

When two or more coordinate clauses describe a sequence of events, their order is iconic and cannot be changed without changing the sense of the entire sentence. In contrast, if one of the clauses is subordinate, the order can be changed with no influence on the general meaning. For instance, *I came, I saw, I conquered* is not semantically identical to *I came, I conquered, I saw*. However, the sentences *Having seen it, I conquered it* and *I conquered it, having seen it* are both possible

and described the same sequence of events. In this respect, Mehweb general converbs seem to behave more like English subordinate clauses:

(21) *iz-es*   *w-aʔ-ib*   *musa-ini*   *qali*   *b-ic-i-le.*
be.ill:IPFV-INF   M-begin:PFV-AOR   Musa-ERG   house   N-sell:PFV-AOR-CVB
'Musa became ill, because he had sold the house.'

(22) *xunuj-ni*   *buruš*   *b-aq'-ib,*   *adami-li-ni*   *q'ar*
wife.OBL-ERG   bed   N-make:PFV-AOR   husband-OBL-ERG   hay
b-iˤšq-i-le.
N-mow:PFV-AOR-CVB
'The wife made bed, because the husband had mowed the hay.'

As can be seen from comparison of these examples with (19) and (20), in both cases the main and the converb clause can change places. It does not affect the interpretation of the order of the events. However, note that the translations provided by native speakers for both modified sentences changed so that their English translations now include the word 'because'. This fact will be discussed further in the paper.

6.1.2 Embedding

Further evidence for the subordination analysis is the possibility of embedding the converb clause in the main one.

In Mehweb, it is perfectly fine to place a converb clause that shares its A-argument with the main clause between the main verb and its dependents, cf. (23):

(23) *musa*   *qali*   *b-ic-i-le*   *iz-es*   *w-aʔ-ib.*
Musa   house   N-sell:PFV-AOR-CVB   be.ill:IPFV-INF   M-begin:PFV-AOR
'Musa, as he sold the house, became ill.'

In this sentence, it is clear that the shared argument belongs to the main clause because of its case marking. The verb *izes =aʔes* 'become ill' is intransitive, which is why its only argument stands in the nominative. If the noun belonged to the converb clause, it would appear the ergative, cf. (24):

(24) *musa-ini*   *qali*   *b-ic-ib.*
Musa-ERG   house   N-sell:PFV-AOR
'Musa sold the house.'

In the absence of argument sharing, however, embedding is severely degraded: speakers tend to either assign another interpretation or judge the sentence as unacceptable:

(25) *xunuj-ni,*   *adami-li-ni*   *q'ar* *b-iˤšq-i-le,*   *buruš*
      wife.OBL-ERG husband-OBL-ERG hay N-mow:PFV-AOR-CVB bed
      b-aq'-ib.
      N-make:PFV-AOR

      'The wife and the husband, having mowed the hay, made the bed.'

In (25), the converb clause with no argument sharing is embedded to the main clause. When the ergative arguments of the different clauses are placed next to each other as in (25), they are interpreted as belonging to one and the same clause (which can be either the converb clause or the main clause). As a result, interpretation of the sentence becomes problematic.

6.1.3 Relativization

Generally, clause coordination tends to place more severe restrictions on the use of relativization strategies than clause subordination. For instance, the English sentence *The girl ran away when the boy punched her* can be relativized as *The girl who ran away when the boy punched her came back*, whereas no such construction is possible with a sentence like *The boy punched the girl, and she ran away* (*The boy, who punched the girl, and she ran away, felt sorry*). Thus, where the relative construction is allowed, I will consider this an argument for the subordinate status of the converb. Unavailability of relativization will be considered as evidence in favor of coordination.

In Mehweb, relativization is allowed if the converb clause shares its S- or A-argument with the main clause:

(26) *qali*   *b-ic-i-le*   *iz-es*   *w-aʔ-ib-i*   *musa*
      house N-sell:PFV-AOR-CVB be.ill:IPFV-INF M-begin:PFV-AOR-ATR Musa
      w-ebk'-ib.
      M-die:PFV-AOR

      'Musa, who became ill because of selling the house, died.'

In (27), where no argument is shared, none of the speakers suggested the expected interpretation ('The wife, who made the bed after her husband had mowed the hay, came here'). They all suggested the paratactic reading, with the participle interpreted as the predicate of an independent main clause:

(27) *adami-li-ni*   *q'ar b-iˤšq-i-le*   *buruš*
      husband-OBL-ERG hay N-mow:PFV-AOR-CVB bed
      b-aq'-ib-i,   *xunul iše*   *r-ak'-ib.*
      N-make:PFV-AOR-ATR wife   hereLAT F-come:PFV-AOR

      'The husband mowed the hay and made the bed (for his wife), the wife
      came here.'

      * 'The wife, who made the bed after her husband mowed the hay, came
      here'

I conclude that, with respect to relativization, sentences with no argument
sharing display more coordinate properties, while those with argument shar-
ing tend to behave more like subordinate clauses. With respect to clause order,
the constructions behave similarly, irrespective of the presence or absence of a
shared argument: they both allow main clause – converb clause order, but the
speakers then specify the causal relation between the two events.

6.2 Semantic properties of the converb clause

If two or more clauses are coordinated, each of them has a range of properties
of their own, which means that features like tense, aspect and mood (and some
others) are assigned to each predicate independently. A subordinate clause can,
however, inherit some features from a main clause – or, in other words, fall un-
der their scope. In this section, I will explore some of the converb clause prop-
erties which can potentially be inherited from the main clause. For each of the
(non-)shared features, I will suppose that inheriting a feature implies that the
construction behaves more like a subrodinate clause, and the absence of such
inheritance will make an argument for the coordination analysis.

6.2.1 Tense and taxis

As was mentioned in §2, the perfective converb describes an event preceding the
situation denoted in the main clause, whereas the imperfective converb describes
an event which takes place simultaneously with the main event. In other words,
the converb clause usually does not have a tense of its own, and its time reference
fully depends on that of the main clause.

Sentences which imply the presence of independent time reference within the
converb clause may nevertheless be accepted as fully grammatical, cf. (28):

(28) *išbari   duči-rk'-uwe   dag   pat'imat pašmaje   le-l-le.*
today laugh-LV:IPFV-CVB.IPFV yesterday Patimat sad.ADVZ be-F-CVB

'Today Patimat is smiling, yesterday she was sad.' ('Today smiling, yesterday Patimat was sad.')

Note that, however, such sentences are judged as ungrammatical if the converb clause is embedded to the main one, cf. (29):

(29) **dag   pat'imat išbari duči-rk'-uwe   pašmaje le-l-le.*
yesterday Patimat today laugh-LV:IPFV-CVB.IPFV sad.ADVZ be-F-CVB

'Today Patimat is smiling, yesterday she was sad.'

The same happens if the converb clause is placed after the main one: sentence (30) is ungrammatical as well.

(30) **dag   pat'imat pašmaje le-l-le   išbari duči-rk'-uwe.*
yesterday Patimat sad.ADVZ be-F-CVB today laugh-LV:IPFV-CVB.IPFV

'Today Patimat is smiling, yesterday she was sad.'

Overall, it seems that the Mehweb converb is capable of having a tense of its own, i.e. be tensed independently of the main clause. However, converbs inflected for a different tense than the main verb cannot be embedded to the main clause or placed after it. In other words, they fail the test on subordination. In this case, the converb clause is less clearly subordinate to the main clause.

6.2.2 Illocutionary force

When a subordinate predication depends on an imperative, it may or may not inherit the illocutionary force of the main clause. This means that the situation described in the subordinate predication can either be a part of the situation that the speaker wants to happen, or not. For instance, the English sentence *Having drunk wine, don't drive* does not mean that the speaker wants the addressee to drink the wine and then not to drive. This means that *Having drunk wine* does not inherit the illocutionary force of the main predication. On the contrary, the sentence *Having cut the tomatoes, add them to the salad*, which can easily be a part of a bigger instruction, does imply that the speaker wants the addressee both to cut the tomatoes and to add them to the salad. In this case, the subordinate clause inherits the main clause's illocutionary force.

In Mehweb, a converb depending on an imperative form may or may not inherit the illocutionary force of the main clause.

(31) *aquli huji-s   nuša-la šaˤ-baˤн   w-ak'-i-le,*
     next time.OBL-DAT we-GEN village-DIR M-come:PFV-AOR-CVB
     nuša-šu   quli   w-ak'-e.
     we-AD(LAT) house(LAT) M-come-IMP
     'When you arrive at our village next time, come at our place.'

(32) *kaltuška d-iˤšq-i-le   ħarši d-aq'-a.*
     potato   NPL-peel:PFV-AOR-CVB soup NPL-do:PFV-IMP
     'Having peeled the potatoes, cook the soup.'

In the contexts where the converb falls under the scope of the main verb's illocutionary force, using another imperative instead of the converb is possible. Thus, sentence (33) has almost the same reading as sentence (32).

(33) *kaltuška d-išq-aˤ   ħarši d-aq'-a.*
     potato   NPL-peel:PFV-IMP soup NPL-cook:PFV-IMP
     'Peel the potatoes and cook the soup.'

The meaning of the two, however, is slightly different. Some speakers claim that (32) implies that potatoes should be peeled and then added to the soup, whereas (33) does not have this implication. Probably, using converbs with imperatives implies that there is a closer semantic link between the two events than there would be in a sentence with two imperatives. A similar phenomenon is described in Dobrushina (2008) for Archi.

6.3 Coordination vs. subordination

According to Creissels (2010), if it is difficult to determine whether a construction is a a case of coordination or subordination, there are a number of analytical possibilities. In particular, if one and the same construction within the same sentence can show both coordinate and subordinate properties, this would represent an instance of what he calls co-subordination. If a construction shows either coordinate or subordinate properties depending on the context, this is analysed as coordination in some of its uses and subordination in others.

After applying the tests to different sentences containing converbal predication, it seems that Mehweb converbal construction displays different coordination/subordination properties under different circumstances. I will take a closer look at the conditions that influence the syntactic properties of the constructions.

First, as can be seen from examples (21–23) and (26), in all the cases where the subordination tests worked, some sort of causal relation between the main clause

and the converb clause is implied. I suggest that the coordinate or subordinate characteristics of the construction mostly depend on the semantic relationship between the main clause and the converb clause. In other words, when a semantic link between the two appears, the converb construction is very likely to become subordinate.

Another important factor seems to be the presence or absence of argument sharing between the main and the converb clause. Examples (25) and (27) show that if the embedding test and the relativization test are applied to sentences with no argument sharing, the results may include the re-interpretation of the intended syntactic structure and lead to a different semantic interpretation. Relativisation and embedding of converb clauses without argument sharing is ungrammatical.

All in all, it seems that the behavior of the converb construction depends on (a) the semantic relation between the main and the converb clause and (b) the presence or absence of argument sharing between the clauses.

This seems very similar to the situation in Tsakhur as described by Kazenin & Testelets (2004). In this paper, the authors applied several tests for coordination vs. subordination to sentences containing general converbs. The tests turned out to give different results for one and the same sentence, depending on whether there was a causal relation between the converb clause and the main clause. If a Tsakhur sentence contains a converb construction and its semantics may imply some causal relation between the main clause and the converb clause, then embedding the converb clause into the main one is only possible with a causal interpretation. To put it differently, subordination tests produce positive results only if there exists a causal relation between the main clause and the converb clause. However, center embedding can also work without a causal relation between the clauses, if they both have the same subject.

7 Conclusion

In this paper I have considered the properties of general converbs in Mehweb Dargwa. I have described the converb marker and its morphophonological features, the distribution of perfective and imperfective converbs, the use of periphrastic converbs, the independent use of converbs, the way they can combine with imperatives, and how they may share their S-, A- or P-arguments with the main clause. Coordination and subordination properties of the Mehweb general converb were discussed. The syntactic status of converb clauses is either coordinate or subordinate, depending on (a) whether there is a causal relation

between the main clause and the converb clause, and (b) whether the converb clause shares its main argument with the main clause or not. Which of the principles (a) and (b) is prior, however, is still a question to be discussed.

List of abbreviations

ADD	additive particle
ADVZ	adverbializer
DIR	motion directed towards a spatial domain
AOR	aorist
ATR	attributivizer
AUX	auxiliary
CAUS	causative
CVB	converb
DAT	dative
ERG	ergative
F	feminine (gender agreement)
GEN	genitive
HAB	habitual (durative for verbs denoting states)
IMP	imperative
INF	infinitive
IPFV	imperfective (derivational base)
LAT	motion into a spatial domain
LV	light verb
M	masculine (gender agreement)
N	neuter (gender agreement)
NEG	negation (verbal prefix)
NPL	non-human plural (gender agreement)
OBL	oblique (nominal stem suffix)
PFV	perfective (derivational base)
PV	preverb (verbal prefix)
SUPER	spatial domain on the horizontal surface of the landmark

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