Towards a diachronic typology of converbs

Recent decades have witnessed a growing interest in converbs and related categories (cf. e.g. the papers in Haspelmath and König (eds.) 1995, Nedjalkov 1995, Bickel 1998, van der Auwera 1998, Tikkanen 2001, Ylikoski 2003, Coupe 2006, Pompei 2012, Lowe 2017, Söhnen-Thieme 2019, Stroński and Kulikov 2021). A majority of the relevant research in this field has a predominantly synchronically oriented perspective, even though there exist important diachronic studies as well (cf. e.g. Fanego 2004, Banfi 2010, Zivojinovic 2021). However, while typological surveys such as Haspelmath (1995), Tikkanen (2001) and Coupe (2006) mention a number of diachronic sources of converbs, a systematic exploration of the diachronic dimension of different types of converb constructions remains a desideratum. Consequently, the diachronic typology of converbs is not well understood, and the present workshop aims to remedy this situation.

One of the central observations of early typologically oriented studies like Haspelmath (1995), König (1995) and Nedjalkov (1995) is that so-called converbs are subject to considerable morphosyntactic and semantic variation across languages. Indeed, in his review of Haspelmath and König (eds.) (1995), Bickel (1998: 394) questions the viability of the converb as a cross-linguistic category, noting that the available data are indicative of at least two types of converb, which he labels 'European' and 'Asian', characterized by the following properties:

- 'European' converbs are restricted 'to adverbial (verb-modifying) and adsentential subordination, with extensions to illocutionary force hedging and complement functions' (Bickel 1998: 394)
- 'Asian' converbs 'systematically conflate[s] adverbial modification and narrative chaining in a single (set of) dependent verb form(s)' (Bickel 1998: 395).

Genetti (2005) explores this perspective further, suggesting that this distinction possibly correlates with other typological features, notably 'the presence or absence of robust structures of coordination' (Genetti 2005: 36). These considerations suggest that the typological properties of a given converb construction is strongly determined by areal features. It remains a largely unexplored question, however, to what extent similar considerations apply to the origin and development of converbs. As regards diachronic source constructions of converbs, Haspelmath (1995: 17) mentions two, namely 'adpositional or case forms of masdars/verbal nouns which have become independent from their original paradigm; and (co-predicative) participles which lost their capability for agreement'. Tikkanen (2001: 1121) adds verbal adverbs formed with adverbial affixes, aspect stems, and simple and complex verb stems with or without tense/aspect morphology. Finally, Coupe (2006) notes the verb 'to say' as a 'recurrent target of grammaticalization (…) widely found to function both as a quotative complementizer and a converb', which, however, is restricted to the South Asian subcontinent. Thus, the synchronic typological variation among converb constructions is mirrored in diachronic variation.

From this brief survey of previous research, it is clear that many open problems remain to be explored. A fundamental question concerns the relationship between areal features of converbs and their diachronic origin. An important insight of the tradition of grammaticalization research is that typologically similar constructions originating from similar source constructions tend to show similar behavior across genetically and areally unrelated languages (cf. e.g. Bybee et al. 1994). Since there seems to be a clear correlation between geography and converb type, as pointed out by Bickel (1998), this would imply that converb constructions arise from source constructions of roughly the same type within a given area of linguistic contact. However, while this is the case in some instances, as convincingly argued by Banfi (2010) for Greek and Romance in the Mediterranean area, other cases present a less clear-cut picture, as regards the

influence of the French gerundival construction upon the English gerund in *-ing*, where the source constructions clearly are different (cf. Fanego 2004 for discussion). Another, related issue pertains to the relationship between source construction and synchronic typology. Specifically, one might expect that converbs originating from the same type of source construction would have similar or even identical properties, independently of geographical or genetic factors, an assumption in apparent conflict with the correlation noted by Bickel (1998). This problem remains unexplored and merits further research. A third set of problems concerns the role of the source construction within the broader verbal and/or nominal system prior to grammaticalization into converb. In recent years, there has been a growing appreciation of the role played by typological and/or systemic factors in morphosyntactic change (cf. e.g. Narrog and Heine (eds.) 2018). Thus, the existence of two or more competing categories with overlapping morphosyntactic and/or semantic properties in a given language might be expected to mutually influence their possible paths of development. It remains to be explored whether and to what extent systemic constraints can be invoked to account for the rise of different types of converbs. We expect these and related questions to open new and fruitful avenues of research, which in turn will contribute significantly to our understanding of the diachronic typology of converbs.

The workshop will take place in **Verona from 6-8 October 2022**. We plan to organize the workshop in person but will also accommodate online participation. The deadline for abstract submission is **June 1**, notification of acceptance will be sent out by **June 15**. We invite scholars working on converbs and related categories from different theoretical and methodological angles. Topics may include but are not restricted to the following:

- Converb as a metalinguistic concept through history and in different traditions
- The synchronic properties of converbs in typological perspective
- Converbs and related constructions as areal features
- Converbs in the context of linguistic families
- Converbial constructions and competing construction types
- The diachronic typology of converbs and their source constructions

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