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Converbal auxiliary constructions in Selkup[1]

The present study is based on a Selkup text corpus that currently is being developed at the University of Hamburg[2]. Converbal constructions in all Selkup dialects cover a series of different functions such as free adverbial, subordination, coordination and auxiliary constructions. But there are significant differences in the distribution of converbal constructions in general and converbal auxiliary constructions between Northern, Central and Southern Selkup (see table 1). The question arises, what the reason(s) for this significant differences could be.

Table 1: Converbal constructions in Selkup

	Northern	Central	Southern
Total	99	50	471
Auxiliary constr.	22	14	243

The term "Converbum" was introduced in Altaic studies by Ramstedt (1903) and originally referred to "halb verbale, halb nominale formen des verbums"[3]. The term was later captured in a broader typological context and is commonly used today as a synonym for *verbal adverb, gerund* (English), *deepričastie* (Russian) and *gérondif* (French).[4]

Selkup converbs can be used in various auxiliary constructions. The finite verb form in these constructions is semantically reduced at different rates.

Northern (mainly) and Central Selkup (only) uses infinitive forms in constructions containing a phase verb, as in (1). In Southern Selkup, however, phase verbs only appear within a converbal construction as in (2).

(1) Tǖ-p   čadɨ-gu laqqa-ta.
     fire-ACC light-INF begin-IPFV[3SG]

     'She began to make a fire.'

                                    [ChDN_1983_MistressOfFire_flk_31], Vasyugan

(2) Pōne-la-n   pal'd'u-l'e oldɨ-ŋ.
     outside-PL-LOC.ADV go-CVB   begin-3SG.S

     'He began to go out.'

                                    [PVD_1961_FarmAssault_flk_145], Upper Ob

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[2] The corpus is created within the DFG-project: "Syntactic description of southern and central Selkup dialects: a corpus-based analysis" (WA 3152/3-1)
[3] "half verbal, half nominal verb forms"
[4] Tikkanen 2001, Haspelmath 1995

Mainly in Southern Selkup converbs are used in constructions where the semantic meaning of the finit verb form is reduced to a high degree. It becomes an auxiliary to express either a complex movement or different aspectual meanings. In all three dialectal groups converbs may be used in constructions containing a motion verb to express complex movements. The converbal form indicates the type of movement, the finite verb form the path, as in (3).

(3) Ku-la-m   pone   čanʒe-le   kuan-na-det.
    human.being-PL-1SG.POSS outside go.out-CVB go.away-AOR-3PL.S/O

    'My people went out.'

[NN_1855_Hero3_song_309], Tym/Middle Ob

Converbal constructions containing finit verb forms as *qalɨ* 'stay', *qwandə* 'carry away', *qwən* 'go away', *tādə* 'bring', *al'ča* 'fall', *čāǯɨ* 'go' and *āmdā* 'sit, sit.down' can form different aspectual meanings. In (4) *āmdā* 'sit.down' is a dynamic non-transformative auxiliary that forms an imperfective aspectual reading because of its inchoative-stative meaning.

(4) Tɨ̄-ɣoŋ   īd'ä-n   ər-tšə-bbəle aj   aps-tə-bbəle āmdā-n.
    tatar-prince Itja-GEN drink-TR-CVB and eat-TR-CVB   sit.down-3SG.S

    'The tatar prince feeded and watered Itja.'

[NN_1913_Itja_flk_42], Middle Ob

The distribution of Selkup converbal constructions in general and converbal auxiliary constructions follows a north-south disparity: In Southern Selkup there are much more converbal (auxiliary) constructions than in Central and Northern Selkup. Auxiliary constructions with an aspectual meaning as in (4) in Central Selkup only rarely appear, in Northern Selkup not at all. A possible reason could be seen in the Turkic influence from Chulym[5]. Similar to Kamas (Klumpp 2002) – the closest related language of Selkup – under Turkic influence[6] the Selkup converbal constructions has undergone a grammaticalization process: *main verb -> aspectual auxiliary -> aspectual suffix* and could be seen as aspectual auxiliaries in Southern Selkup.

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[5]For contacts between Selkup and Chulym see Tuchkova et al. 2010.

[6]In Turkic languages converbal auxiliary constructions are very common (see also Schönig 1984, Johanson 1995.

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