

Contextual converb in Kina Rutul: criteria for structural (in)dependence

According to König (1995:58) and Nedjalkov (1995), contextual converb is a converb that may have different interpretations depending on the context. In Rutul (Lezgic < East Caucasian) there is a perfective contextual converb in *-r* that (i) may head a subordinate¹ clause and (ii) can be combined with auxiliaries to form finite verbforms. But *-r* converb (iii) can also head an independent predication without any auxiliary cliticized to it.

- (1) žama?at **jašmiš w-iši-r=x^{wa}** kasib-ar d-i?i-j=x^{wa}
people gather 3-become.PFV-CVB=ADD poor-PL HPL-COP1-PST=ADD
“People gathered; they were poor.”

As the form in *-r* can head both subordinate and independent clauses, it is not clear how to interpret complex sentences where this converb is used, such as the following:

- (2) **q-irq'i-r χal-a** rasul aa luku-r=a-j
BACK-come.PFV-CVB home-IN.EL R. down lie.down.1.PFV-CVB=be-PST
“Rasul came back home and lay down.”

Is *-r* converb in (2) a subordinate verbform, or does it head an independent predication? To answer this question, clausal relation tests may be applied. I used (primarily) some of the tests discussed in Bickel 2010, namely (i) tense-iconicity test, (ii) center-embedding test (when possible) and (iii) extraction test. They show that in (2) *-r* converb is a subordinate verb form:

- (3) **Tense-iconicity test: non-iconic (→ subordination)**
rasul aa luku-r=a-j **q-irq'i-r χal-a**
R. down lie.down.1.PFV-CVB=be-PST BACK-come.PFV-CVB home-IN.EL
“After coming home, Rasul lay down.”, but not “After lying down, Rasul came home.”

- (4) **Extraction in the form of relative clause test: possible (→ subordination)**
fatima-ra lut'a h-i?i-r [χal-a q-irq'i-r
F.-ERG wake.up.IMP 1-do.PFV-CVB home-IN.EL BACK-come.PFV-CVB
aa luku-d] rasul
down lie.down.1.PFV-ATR R.
“Fatima awoke Rasul, who after coming home had lay down.”

Drawing upon these tests, I have established that the major criterion playing a role in determining the syntactic structure of complex sentences with *-r* converb is as follows:

- (5) **Semantic relationship between clauses**

Event described by *-r* converb construction **must** be the **ground** for the event in the main clause (hence a **figure**) in terms of Talmy 1975. In other words, the event described in converb clause must be “conceptualized as a cause, precondition, or reference point” (Cristofaro 2003:44) for the main clause.

This criterion is to be satisfied in **any** subordinate clause governed by *-r* converb; still, it is not enough. One of the other criteria should be met, too:

¹ The notion of subordination is not unproblematic, since “subordinate” constructions are not uniform across the languages; see Bickel 2010.

(6) **Subject coreference**

-r converb construction needs to share the subject with the main clause to be interpreted as (uniformly) subordinate clause.

(7) **Negation used with non-finites**

$\check{z}V$ - is an affix that can only be used with non-finite verbforms in Rutul.

-r converb construction needs to contain this negation marker to be interpreted as (uniformly) subordinate clause.

The criterion in (6) is illustrated by the examples (2-4). Let us consider criterion (5) in more detail. When it is not clear which of the two events is the ground for another event, the converb construction is an independent predication:

- (8) patimat-a ile-s-di h-i?i-r χ iris=xa ji<w> χ i-r=a
P.-ERG eat.IPFV-INF-ATR 4-do.PFV-CVB besom=ADD <3>sweep.PFV-CVB=be
“Patimat cooked the meal and swept the floor”

(9) **Tense-iconicity test: iconic (\rightarrow no subordination)**

χ iris ji<w> χ i-r=a patimat-a ile-s-di h-i?i-r
besom <3>sweep.PFV-CVB=be P.-ERG eat.IPFV-INF-ATR 4-do.PFV-CVB
“Patimat swept the floor and {then} cooked the meal.”, but not “Patimat swept the floor after cooking the meal.”

The event of cooking the meal and the one of mopping the floor are not related in any (expected) way; the former event is not a cause or a reference point for the latter event, unless in a very special context. That is why in (8-9) we have an instance of parataxis.

References

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