

Converbs in Muher

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One proposed feature of the Ethiopian language area is the existence of converbs. Recent typological studies, however, question the existence of converbs in some Ethiosemitic languages because they are overtly marked for person and/or aspect. The present paper attempts the description of morphosyntactic and semantic features of the category “converb” in Muher, a Gurage language belonging to the South Ethiosemitic language branch. First, several morphosyntactic asymmetries between converbs and main-clause verbs are established, which encompass the distribution of converb markers vs. main-clause markers, polarity features, aspectual and modal dependencies between main-clause verbs and converbs, and restrictions in referring to arguments on certain converbs. Second, semantic and pragmatic considerations for the use of several converb forms are discussed.