Towards a diachronic typology of non-finites in Indo-Aryan

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Abstract

In Indo-Aryan scholarship the notion of converb occupies a special place since it is one of the elements defining a so called 'linguistic area' (cf. Masica 1976, Subbarao 2012). The form itself has been analysed at various stages of IA and in a number of dialects (e.g. Dwarikesh 1971; Schumacher 1977; Davison 1981; Kachru 1981; Tikkanen 1987; Peterson 2002; Yadav 2004; Lohar 2012). This study will outline the basic trends in semantic and pragmatic behaviour of converbs, from a diachronic and typological perspectives, based on empirical evidence from a number of selected Indo-Aryan vernaculars.

We adopt two complementary methodologies which have so far strong synchronic and typological bias, namely the RRG approach (Van Vallin & LaPolla 1997; Van Valin 2004; 2007) and the 'multivariate analysis' (Bickel 2010) and we apply them to diachronic analysis. We inspect various types of junctures: nuclear, clausal and sentential, mainly focusing on the last type. We utilize a set of variables chosen from the list proposed by Bickel (2010), i.e.

a) Scope of the IF operator: conjunct, disjunct, local, extensible, constraint-free

b) Tense Scope: conjunct, local, extensible

c) Who-questions in dependent clauses: banned, allowed

d) Focus marking in dependent clauses: banned, allowed.

We will demonstrate how the system works for the converbal chain construction in a text corpus consisting of early Rajasthani prose texts from the 15th to 17th centuries (Bhānāvat and Kamal 1997-1998). The early Rajasthani data will be compared with other early NIA dialects such as Braj (Vājpeyī 2009) and Awadhi (Gautam 1954). The corpora have been tagged by means of the 'IA tagger' – a programme designed for tagging early NIA texts at 5 different levels, namely – morphological, parts of speech, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic (IA Tagger 2014). Optical recognition of Rajasthani texts was supported by a Hindi OCR programme (HindiOCR 2013).

Preliminary research shows that the scope of illocutionary operators can be local (limited to the main clause) or conjunct. This seems to be continued in contemporary NIA, cf. Davison (1981), Bickel (2010)). However, tense operators in early NIA had predominantly conjunct scope, although this is not always the case in the contemporary IA (cf. Peterson 2002). Question operators in early NIA had basically local scope, although in contemporary NIA they can have conjunct scope as well (cf. Davison 1981; Bickel 2010). The same pertains to negation. It seems that the scope should be dependent on the position of the question or negation markers, but this still requires more detailed cross-linguistic verification. Our general hypothesis is that the features of converbs have been rather stable throughout the centuries, but the corpora inspected by us may show minor differences as regards extension of the scope of selected operators.

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