Yakut (Sakha) is a Turkic language of northeastern Siberia with the SOV word order and agglutinative morphology typical of Turkic languages. Although sentences can be coordinated by means of a coordinating conjunction, both coordination and subordination are most frequently achieved through non-finite verbal morphology such as converbs and case-marked participles. Some of these converbs and participles interact in an elaborate system of reference tracking, as initially described by Efremov for temporal clauses [1]. For example, the converbal sequence -An baran, which has the meaning ‘after doing x’, is used nearly exclusively with coreferential subjects, while clauses with non-coreferential subjects take a person-marked past participle plus postposition kenne ‘after’.

In contrast to Turkic languages in general [2], Yakut converbs optionally take subject agreement markers that are identical to the predicate person markers. However, Yakut person-marked converbs do not participate in the switch-reference system mentioned above, with the exception of the immediate-precedence converb -A.t. Instead, person-marked converbs occur predominantly in (co-)subordinate clauses with a coreferential subject, thus leading to redundancy in subject agreement. This contrasts with the use of person-marked converbs in Evenki, which function as switch-reference markers [3].

In this paper, I will analyze the functions of Yakut person-marked converbs in complex sentences using a corpus of spoken personal life stories collected in four different districts of the Republic Sakha (Yakutia) and show that they mainly serve two purposes: a) to emphasize the main actant of the sentence (1), and (b) to facilitate reference tracking in discourse, with person-marked converbs being used after (and occasionally before) a switch in discourse referent (2). Furthermore, person-marked perfective converbs are in the process of taking the place of finite verbs, suggesting grammaticalization of a new TAM form (3).

Examples

(1) onno bili t’a-ttan ki ř-e h ɬəɣ-ɬə-am-m ŋ k řt-am-m ŋ
 there that.one taiga-ABL enter-IPF.CVB IPFV-PF.CVB-PRED.1SG join-IPF.CVB-PRED.1SG
 o-non ustun-an iti A’t̩k ansa’nb ĭ a’-ta’X h ɬəɣ-ab ŋ
 that-INSTR length-INSTR this Aryk ensemble name-PROPR AUX-PRS.1SG
 ‘Well, ever since I came back from the woods and joined, I am famous with the Aryk ensemble (an Evenki folklore singing group).’

(2) O-nu bier-beteX-tere. Ša’ň-a řa’-ta.
 that-ACC give-PSTTCP.NEG-POSS.3PL spring-POSS.3SG move.off-PST.3SG
 Üören bar-a’t̩-b ŋ kõp-pųt-üm afay.
 learn go-PURP.CVB-PRED.1SG fly-PSTTCP-POSS.1SG INTENS
 O-nu ɬəɣon-um a’X bier-beteX-tere.
 that-ACC people-POSS.1SG COLL give-PSTTCP.NEG-POSS.3PL
'But they didn’t send me. “She’s too old.” Thinking I would go to school, I was very happy (lit: flew). But my family didn’t let me (lit: give me).’

(3) keñje  mekñje-lerin  egin  tiri~ beye-ŋ
fur.leggings  sewn.reindeer.hide–ACC.POSS.3PL etc.  leather  self–POSS.2SG
imit-ęŋ-ŋin  beye-ŋ  tañas-ta~-ęŋ-ŋ n  bar~t ŋ

‘The fur leggings, the reindeer-hide clothes and that, you curry the leather yourself, you make clothes yourself.’

Abbreviations: 1/2/3 = 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person, ABL = ablative, ACC = accusative, AUX = auxiliary, IPF = imperfective, COLL = collective, CVB = converb, INSTR = instructive, INTENS = intensive, IPFV = imperfective verb, NEG = negative, PF = perfective, PL = plural, POSS = possessive, PRED = predicative, PRS = present tense, PROPR = proper name, PST = past, PSTPTCP = past participle, PURP = purposive, SG = singular, TAM = tense, aspect, mood, VR = verbal root.

REFERENCES