

Syntactic Linkage and Event Relations in Multi-Verb Constructions in Sidaama (Sidamo), a Cushitic Language of Ethiopia

Kazuhiro Kawachi

(National Defense Academy of Japan / ILCAA Joint Researcher)

This study examines the syntactic linkage of conjuncts sharing the same subject in two multi-verb constructions (*-e* construction and *-nni* construction) in Sidaama, a Cushitic language of Ethiopia, and semantic relations between events expressed in them. While different uses of each construction exhibit various degrees of the tightness of syntactic linkage (nexus-juncture types), which reflect semantic relations between the events that they express, as predicted by the principle of the iconic syntax-semantics relations formulated by previous researchers ('the closer the semantics, the tighter the syntax') (Silverstein 1976, Givón 1980, Foley & Van Valin 1984, Van Valin 1984, Van Valin & LaPolla 1997, Van Valin 2005), there is one aspect of the relations involving the syntax and semantics of these constructions that does not seem to be consistent with the principle. Specifically, although sequential actions are supposed to be a less tight semantic relation than simultaneous actions, the *-e* construction expressing the former (e.g. (1)) is syntactically tighter than the *-nni* construction expressing the latter (e.g. (2)) – the former is a clausal cosubordination, where the clauses share illocutionary force and negation, whereas the latter is a clausal subordination, where the subordinate clause is structurally dependent on the main clause. While simultaneous actions as expressed in the *-nni* construction usually have a mere temporal relation, sequential actions are often not simply temporal but bear additional non-temporal relations such as enablement and cause. This is especially evident when the verbs share the same subject, as in the *-e* construction. These additional non-temporal relations are semantically closer than simple temporal relations, and make syntactic linkage tighter. This suggests that sequential actions may not have a uniform category of semantic relation.

- (1) ise waalčó č'uf-f-e ofol-t-ino.
3SG.F.NOM door.ACC close-3SG.F-CON sit-3SG.F-REMOTE.PERF.3
'She closed the door, and sat down.'
- (2) isi sirb-ø-a-nni č'aabiččó
3SG.M.NOM sing-3SG.M-INF-while light.ACC
č'aabiš-i-'r-ø-ino.
light-EP-MID-3SG.M-REMOTE.PERF.3
'While singing, he lit a light.'