

Investigating Manchu Converb from a Diachronic Cross-linguistic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates Manchu converbs from a diachronic cross-linguistic perspective. This thesis is based on the assumption that function words are not loanwords because of the conservative nature of syntax in general. Secondly, it is assumed that one word is the same as the other word if 1) both share similar or same syntactical functions, 2) both share similar or same phonological features, and 3) both have overlapping semantic fields.

It proposes that Manchu phrases headed by converbs should not be regarded as AdvP or a degree word. Rather, Manchu converbal phrases are essentially ConvPs. Evidences supporting this conclusion are two folds. First of all, analogous converbs in Korean and Japanese suggest that Manchu converbs are also ConvPs. Secondly, the analytical problems occurred when Manchu converbal phrases are regarded as AdvP or degree words also suggest that Manchu converbal phrases should be regarded as ConvPs.

Keywords: Converb, Manchu, Altaic Languages, Category of Speech

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1. Abbreviations

acc./ACC: Accusative

CMP: Case-marked Phrase

ConM: Converb Marker

ConvP: Converb Phrase

Dat.: Dative

Lat.: Lative

Ma.: Manchu

MK/M.K.: Middle Korean

NCMP: Non-case-marked Phrase

norm.: Normative

WM: Written Mongolian

2. Introduction

The Manchu Language was one of the official languages of China and Mongolia during the Qing Period. There were about 20 native speakers of this language in 2007, despite the fact that there were more than ten millions of Manchu people living both inside and outside of China (“Manchu.”). It was a language regarded as nearly distinct (“Manchu.”). It has been written in traditional Mongolian script with minor adaptations since 1599 (“Manchu.”). It is a Tungusic language belonging to the Altaic Language Family (“Manchu.”). Because it is sure that Manchu is a Tungusic language belonging to the Altaic Language Family, if the genetic relationship between Manchu and Korean or between Manchu and Japanese could be demonstrated, the question of whether Korean or Japanese belongs to the Altaic Language Family could be solved.

Comparative syntax is the key to solve the Altaic problem concerning Korean and Japanese. Syntax is a more reliable indicator of genetic relationship because syntax is more difficult to be borrowed from one language to another language. For example, English set phrase “Long time no see” is obviously a phrase directly translated from Chinese, “h n ji• bú jiàn (很久不见)”. Nevertheless, this English phrase borrowed from Chinese is merely a set phrase. It is not syntactically productive at all. The followings are not acceptable in English: *long period no see, *long era no look, *long time no visit. This suggests the fact that Chinese syntax is unlikely to be borrowed into English, even if certain Chinese set phrase may be borrowed into English. Indeed, this is a cross-linguistic phenomenon and suggests that syntax is a reliable indicator of genetic relationship among languages.

In addition, substantives are problematic parameters when it comes to the investigation of genetic relationship among languages. This is because substantives may be due to borrowing or may be due to genetic relationship. However, it is almost impossible in most cases to distinguish

a borrowing relationship from a genetic relationship. Let's take the Russian word “ (hljeb/)” as an example. This word is a well-known cognate of English word “loaf” meaning “bread”. Nevertheless, in the Manchurian dialect of Mandarin, there is also a word called “h i liè b (黑裂巴)”, which is obviously related to the Russian word, “ ”. In fact, “h i liè b ” is not a cognate of Russian word, “ ”, and is a loanword from Russian. This example shows that it is difficult to tell whether a substantive is a cognate or loanword given the surface similarity among similar words in different languages. Therefore, it is better to avoid using substantive as evidences of indication of genetic relationship among languages.

Thus, this paper is interested in investigating certain Manchu syntactical words from a comparative diachronic perspective. It is going to specifically examine the relationship among Manchu converb -me-, Japanese converb -t-, and Korean converb -ko/-go-.

3. Literature Review

Comparative method has been receiving criticisms from many linguists. In my linguistic class, the following example is used to highlight the danger of relying on only phonology and semantics to establish the cognates in different languages. Here is the example:

	Mandarin	Armenian	Greek
'two'	Er	erku	duo

Table 2-1

It was claimed that, despite the similar look between Mandarin “er” and Armenian “erku”, there is no relationship between them, and that Armenian “erku” is actually related to Greek “duo” even though these two words do not resemble each other. Thus, the conclusion that “‘looking similar’ is neither necessary nor sufficient to establish a genetic relationship is drawn.

This line of reasoning is similar to that of Alexander Vovin. Vovin is a prominent critic of comparative method. Vovin wrote extensively on criticizing comparative method and he offers additional reasons other than dependence on surface resemblance to criticize the methodological validity of comparative method. Several of Vovin’s critical works include: “The End of the Altaic Controversy”(Vovin 2005), “Why Koreanic is not demonstrably related to Tungusic?”(Vovin 2013), “Why Japonic is not demonstrably related to ‘Altaic’ or Korean.”(Vovin 2011). Vovin’s criticism on comparative method seems to be insightful at first glance. Nevertheless, further examination of his criticism suggests that his negative views on comparative method are based on problematic evidences or problematic mappings from evidences to conclusions.

First of all, I am still unconvinced by the example shown in table 2-1. This is because the analysis is not from a diachronic perspective and the reasoning from evidence to conclusion is

not persuasive. Although “er” is the word meaning “two” in Modern Mandarin, it was not the case for its predecessors. The following data illustrate this point:

Character	Reading
二	Modern (Beijing) reading: èr
二	Preclassic Old Chinese: nijs
二	Classic Old Chinese: nić
二	Western Han Chinese: nj•ś
二	Eastern Han Chinese: ń•ś
二	Early Postclassic Chinese: ńiś
二	Middle Postclassic Chinese: ńij
二	Late Postclassic Chinese: ńi
二	Middle Chinese: ńi

Table 2-1 (Starostin 2006)

From these data, it is easy to see that, for most part of the history of the Modern Mandarin word, “er”, there was a “n-” as the onset of the reading of the Chinese character meaning “two”. This is an interesting fact because, when we look at the Armenian word, “erku”, we find that there is a “-k-” in the middle, and because, when we look at the Greek word, “duo”, we find that there is a “d-” at the beginning. “d”, “k”, and “n” have interesting relationships with one another and the following chart show how they relate to each other.

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Alveolar	Post Alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar
Plosive			d				k
Nasal			n				

Table 2-3

As shown in table 2-3, “d” and “k” shares the same manner of articulation, while “d” and “n” share the same place of articulation. If we rearrange the first syllable and the second syllable of Armenian “erku” and recover the original version of “erku” before metathesis, we will have “*kuer”, which was related to Greek word, “duo”. In fact, “*kuer” is related to “duo” because “k-” and “d-” share at least one common phonological feature, because they are at the same position of the syllable of the respective words they formed in Greek and Armenian, and because the words they formed share similar meaning. In addition, if we apply all these three criteria to compare historical Chinese reading of the character “二” and Greek “duo”, we are going to draw the conclusion that the historical reading of Chinese character “二” is suggests the Chinese word meaning “two” is related to the Greek word meaning “duo” meaning “two”. This is because both “n-” and “d-” share at least one phonological feature with each other, because both of them share the same position in the syllable of the respective words they formed, and because the respective words they formed share similar meaning in respective language. Because the Greek word “duo” is related to Armenian “erku” and because the historical version of the Chinese word meaning “two” is related to Greek “duo”, the further corollary to draw is that the Chinese word meaning “two” is related to the Armenian word, “erku”. In sum, all the three words meaning “two” in Chinese, Greek, and Armenian are related to each other, and the conclusion that the Chinese word meaning “two” is unrelated to Armenian “erku” is not convincing.

In fact, the philosophy behind the aforementioned example's reasoning against comparative method is similar to that of Alexander Vovin in the sense that both of them tend to attribute similarity among words in different languages to either accidents or loanwords. For illustration, Vovin (2013) offers the following example to illustrate his point that similarity is due to loan relationship:

Middle Korean (M.K.) *kal-* 'to change' ~ Manchu (Ma.) *hala-* 'to exchange, to change' (Lee and Ramsey 2011: 25). Apart from the notice that MK form is *kól-*, not **kal-* (Nam 1997: 237), this comparison was addressed at greater length in Vovin (2013), where it had been demonstrated that the Manchu word is a loanword from Koreanic, and that the directionality of borrowing is Koreanic > Manchu > Mongolic.

In addition, Vovin (2013) offered another example as the following to prove his point that similarity is due to accidental chance:

MK *nem-* 'to exceed, to go over' ~ Ma. *neme-* 'to add, to increase' ~ Written Mongolian (WM) *neme-* 'to add, to increase' (Lee 1958a: 115, #168), (Lee and Ramsey 2011: 26). This is a clear case of a semantic embellishment designed to make the forms more cognate than they actually are. Since MK *:nem-* is a verb of Class 6 with R pitch accent that reflects earlier Proto-Korean (pK) structure of **nemV-* and it also has a parallel in Mongolic, it initially appears to be a valid argument for the genetic comparison, but once we evaluate all relevant evidence, it turns out to be just a chance resemblance. The basic semantics of the Koreanic verb involves going over or crossing over some physical obstacles like mountains, walls, and rivers, and primarily has nothing to do (except in much later stages of the language) with adding numbers or quantities. On the other hand, both Mongolian and Manchu etyma are intimately connected with the notion of adding

numbers or quantities or increasing thereof.

Nevertheless, I am still unconvinced by either example. In the first example, Vovin did not address the question why Manchu and Mongolian needed to borrow a basic word such as “to change” in the first place. Secondly, it is unusual to borrow the verb stem from one language to another one because syntactical or phono-syntactic constraints will block such borrowings if a language that borrows the verb is unrelated to the other language where a verb is loaned out. Vovin’s conclusion is not convincing unless he could first address these two theoretical issues.

In addition, the second example offered by Vovin is even more problematic. Vovin’s idea about the semantics of stems or roots is essentially fallacious. How could “going over or crossing over some physical obstacles like mountains, walls, and rivers” have nothing to do with “adding numbers or quantities”? If one wants to cross over some physical obstacles like mountains, wall, and rivers, one has to physically raise oneself up above certain relative horizon so as to cross these obstacles. In this sense, one’s height relative to the horizontal group will be added up. Because height could be quantified, adding height is a subset of adding numbers or quantities. Thus, “going over or crossing over some physical obstacles like mountains, walls, and rivers” has a lot of semantic fields overlapping with “adding numbers or quantities”, and they are closely connected to each other. In sum, the evidences offered by Vovin against comparative method are not persuasive.

In addition to aforementioned criticisms by Vovin, Vovin also had other reasons against comparative method. One noteworthy point he made is that comparative method as it is employed in *Etymological Dictionary of the Altaic Languages* (EDAL) ignores the cultural history of the language under investigation (Vovin 2005). Vovin (2005) elaborated his point as the followings: “...comparative linguistics does not exist in vacuum. One should not forget that

every language has a history, and that this history is intimately connected with the cultural and sociopolitical history of the people who speak a given language.” Vovin (2005) then offered an example to support this point: he claimed that one had to understand how a sword looked like in ancient Japan in order to reconstruct the Old Japanese word meaning “sword.”

Such culturalist view by Vovin is problematic and his supporting evidence is also unconvincing. First of all, he unwarrantedly assumed that a sword in ancient Japan is so special that it doesn't share any common feature with a sword from other synchronic or diachronic places, or from Japan of later periods. A sword in ancient Japan was still a sword, after all, and therefore it should share certain feature or features with other swords of other provenances. For example, an ancient Japanese sword must not have a complicated animal shape such as a frog. Otherwise, this “sword” in ancient Japan would have been called a “frog” rather than a “sword”. In this sense, he overstretched the uniqueness of a certain culture and wrongly denied the fact that, despite the fact that certain aspects of a society might be different from another society, both of them must share something common because they are all human societies. Therefore, his evidence is not persuasive.

Secondly, I doubt whether the cultural and sociopolitical history of the people who speak a given language is so significantly related to the investigation of comparative etymology of different languages. This is because cultural and sociopolitical history of a given people who speak a given language tends to merely shape the proper nouns or its derivatives including eponyms in a given language. For example, the English word “herculean” is an adjective that is derived from the name of an ancient Greek hero named “Hercules”. In this sense, Greek culture shapes the etymology of the English word “Herculean”. Nevertheless, is “Hercules” a productive base to create neologism in English? The answer is no and we could hardly find any other

English word built on the base of “Hercules” besides “Herculean”. Proper nouns and their derivatives tend to be extremely unproductive, and in many cases they could only form a handful of words in a given language. In this sense, the overall number of lexicons shaped by cultural history is so small that it appears to be somewhat trivial. Therefore, I oppose the idea of viewing language in the context of culture when it comes to comparatively studying the etymology of different languages.

In fact, the great advantage of comparative method is neglecting the cultural and sociopolitical aspect of a given language or languages under investigation. Linguists of the Moscow school such as Starostin, G.S., and A.V. Dybo did extensive works on the comparative etymology based on comparative method. Starostin, G.S., and A.V. Dybo (2008) offered an insightful view on the disadvantage of culturalist approach of doing comparative diachronic linguistics:

Moreover, it is also our intention to show that if one were to uncritically accept all of Alexander Vovin (AV)’s arguments, this would, in the end, make thoroughly impossible *any* research on distant language relationship — along with invalidating quite a lot of research already conducted by linguists on well-accepted language families.

It is very important to separate the study of language from the study of culture. Putting the study of language in a cultural context will largely undermine the effectiveness of obtaining the results of linguistic research, especially the research on diachronic comparative etymology.

In sum, after offering all the counterarguments against the criticisms against comparative method, I would like to note that this paper on the comparative diachronic investigation of Manchu converb with Korean and Japanese converb will be based on the methodology of comparative method.

4. Manchu Converb “-me-”

Converb is very common cross-linguistically and it is found in many languages worldwide. It exists in East Asian languages including Mandarin, Manchu, Korean, and Japanese and serves as an important connecting element through which complicated and long sentences are built. This paper investigates Manchu converb, “-me-”, from a cross-linguistic perspective. It compares this Manchu converb with its Korean and Japanese equivalents.

First of all, is Manchu “-me-” a light verb like English “do”? The answer is no. Manchu “-me-” is by no means a light verb because a light verb can stand alone by itself whilst “-me-” can never stand alone. There is lexicon evidence supporting this fact. Manchu “*membi” is not found in Manchu dictionary. For example, in the online Manchu database compiled by Tohoku University, the hypothetical infinite form, *membi, is not found, and, given the fact that –me- is a basic word appearing in the Manchu language frequently, if it were a light verb, its indefinite form should have appeared in the Manchu lexical database. Another evidence comes from the Jerry Norman’s *A Comprehensive Manchu-English Dictionary*. In this dictionary, once again the hypothetical “*membi” is not found. In sum, both the online Manchu database of Tohoku University and Norman’s dictionary suggests the hypothetical “*membi” does not exist. Then, this suggests Manchu “-me-” is not a lexical item like English “do” or “make”. In this sense, “me” is not a light verb because “*membi” is not a lexical item.

Does this mean that Manchu converb “-me-” is an adverb or degree word marker? The answer is no. Consider the following example:

(3-1) Bi bithebe ureme h lambi
I book-ACC thoroughly read
“I thoroughly read the book.”

Some might be tempted to consider the Manchu word “ureme”, which means “thoroughly”, a degree word because “thoroughly” is a degree word in English. The underlying assumption of such argument is that category of speech remains the same when one word in a language is translated into another language. This is a typical unwarranted assumption: it is not necessarily true. Here is an example to substantiate why this assumption is not necessarily true. Consider this example from Classical Japanese.

(3-2) Taketoriga ieni otsukai
 Taketori-Gen. home-Lat. imperial envoy
 tsukawasa se tamoo
 send honorably honorably

“His Majesty sent his envoy to the house of the Bamboo Cutter.” (“The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter.” n.d.)¹

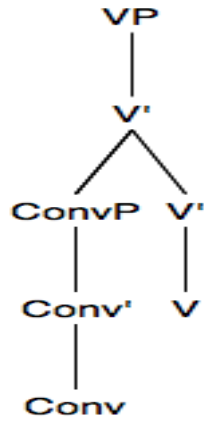
“-se-” is the conjugated form of honorific verb “su” and “tamoo” is also an honorific verb. However, because there is no verbal equivalent of “su” or “tamoo” in English, such Japanese honorific verbs have to be translated as adverbs in English such as “honorably”. This example suggests the fact that it is not necessarily true that the category of speech of a word will be maintained when translated from one language to another. In this sense, the fact that Manchu “ureme” is translated into English as adverb “thoroughly” does not imply anything certain about the category of speech of “ureme” and therefore it is problematic to consider “ureme” a Manchu adverb based on the fact that “thoroughly” is an adverb in English. If “ureme” is not necessarily

¹ Many Classical Japanese texts do not have an exact date of publication. *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter* is traditionally thought to be probably a 10th century text.

adverb, “me” is not necessarily an adverb marker. Because a degree word must be an adverb, “me” is also not necessarily a degree word marker.

Another difficulty occurred when “ureme” is regarded as an adverb is that we have to test out whether the cluster headed by “-me” is a degree word or an AdvP each time. This is very inconvenient because the result of such analysis depends on several factors. First of all, it depends on the meaning and semantic valence of the verbal stem preceding “-me-”. Secondly, it also depends on the required number of syntactical constituents of the verbal stem preceding “-me-”. In fact, the verbal stem preceding “-me” is polysemous and therefore the results based on meaning-based analysis are inevitably ambiguous in such circumstances. In addition, it is not always convenient or possible to conduct a syntactical analysis on the number of syntactical constituents of the verbal stem preceding “-me-”. In short, considering “-me” an adverbial marker or a degree word marker will create numerous problems when it comes to syntactical analysis of “-me-” and it is better to avoid regarding it as an adverbial marker or a degree word marker.

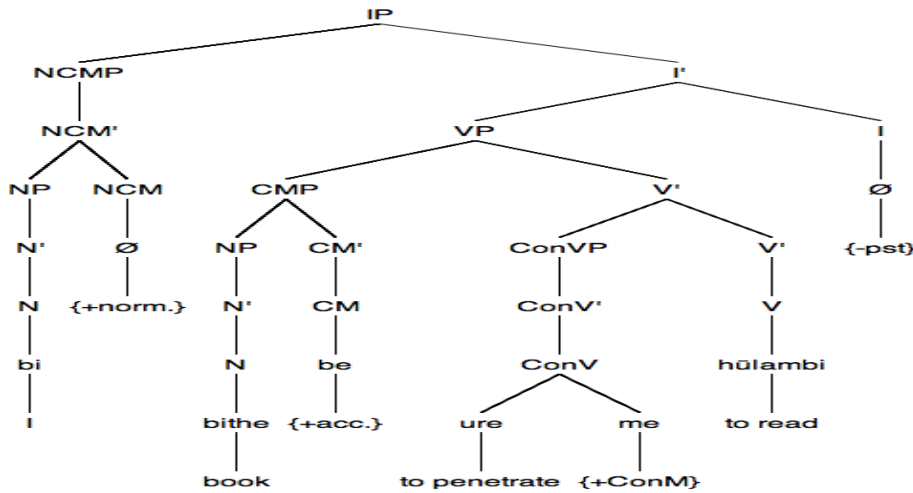
In fact, considering “ureme” a converbal phrase is a better way to solve this problem. In 1990, Vladimir P. Nedjalkov offers a definition of converb: “A converb is defined as a dependent verb form that is used neither as an actant nor as an attribute” (quoted in Bickel 1998). In 1998, Balthasar Bickel elaborates Nedjalkov’s definition of converb: “Nedjalkov’s converb includes both finite and nonfinite forms and ultimately subsumes, therefore, any adjunct clause that is marked by a verbal affix rather than by a free conjunction.” Nedjalkov’s is useful when it comes to clarifying difference between a verb and a converb: a verb can stand on its own but a converb cannot stand on its own. A converb is a nexus that connects a verb preceding it and a verb following it. In the case of Manchu converb, it should be like to the following,



Tree Gram 3-3

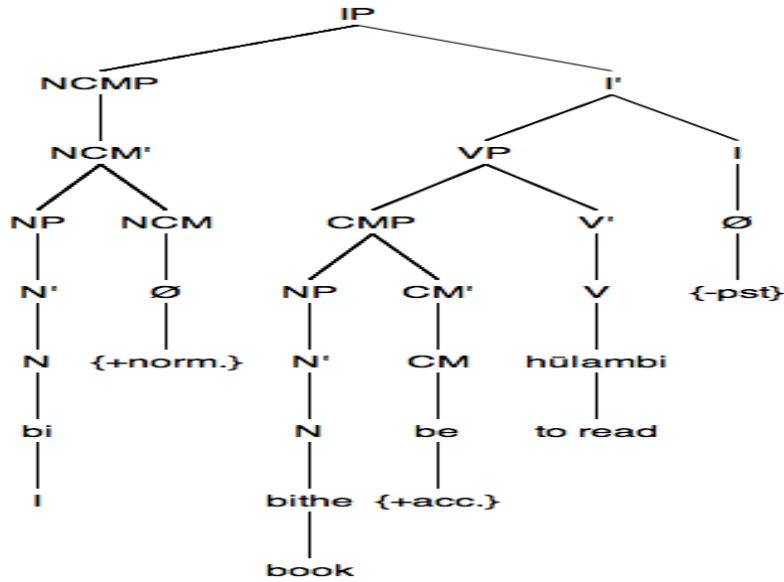
A ConvP is governed by a VP. The head of the governing of the VP is the verb following the Converb. Because ConvP is essentially an adjunct as pointed out by Bickel, the tree gram is more pellucid if an extra level of V' of the governing VP is added to distinguish the adjunct ConvP from complements.

Based on this model, the tree gram for the sentence in (3-1) should be the following,



Tree Gram 3-4

Compare this tree gram with the following tree gram for the Manchu sentence, “Bi bithebe hūlambi”, which means “I read a book”.



Tree Gram 3-5

In Tree Gram 3-5, the ConvP is completely been deleted, and the original sentence in (3-1) has been transformed to be a sentence meaning “I read a book”. The sentence for tree gram 3-5 is a well-formed Manchu sentence. This means that ConvP is not obligatory; rather, it is an optional element that adds meaning to the sentence. This case suggests the adjunct nature of ConvP because being deletable and optional is the feature that distinguishes an adjunct from an argument.

Other evidences suggesting the converbal nature of “-me” come from external evidences from Korean and Japanese. In Modern Korean, “ko/go” is a typical nexus that does not mean anything on its own. In both Classical Japanese and Modern Japanese, “te/de” is a typical nexus that does not mean anything on its own. Compare the phonological features among Manchu “me”, Korean “ko/go”, and Japanese, “te/de” and one could find that they are phonologically very similar to one another. First of all, they are monosyllabic and of a CV structure. The C- in each language is of special interest of comparison. In Korean, [k] and [g] are allophones, and in Japanese, /te/ and /de/ are allophones. We could consider [k] as /k/ in Korean and [t] as /t/ in

Japanese. The Japanese /t/ is [+front] while the Korean /k/ is [-front], but both of them are stops. When we look at Manchu /m-/ and we find that Manchu /m-/ is [+front], [-plosive]. In other words, Japanese converb /te/ shares one feature with Korean converb /ko/ and one feature with Manchu /me/ respectively: Japanese /t-/ shares the same manner of articulation with Korean /k-/ while it shares the similar place of articulation with Manchu /m-/. Such relationship suggests there might be a common source from which Japanese /te/, Korean /ko/, and Manchu /me/ are commonly derived. The proposed reconstruction is /*b-/. The following graph illustrates the reasons why *b- is the ancestor:

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar
Plosive	b		t			k
Nasal	m					

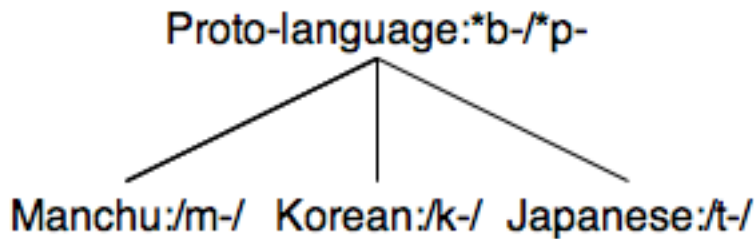
Table 3-6

*b- is [+front], [+plosive]. Therefore, *b- shares at least one feature with /m-/, /t-/, /k-/. This reconstruction is based several assumptions

- 1) Descendants retain at least one feature of its ancestor.
- 2) Place of articulation and manner of articulation are unlikely to change simultaneously.
- 3) Either feature of place of articulation of the ancestor or the feature of manner of articulation is retained by its descendant. Conservation of both the place of articulation and manner of articulation is unlikely.²

² These assumptions are cross-linguistically true. An example from Indo-European Languages could be cited to illustrate the validity of these assumptions. Compare the following example: Russian /bog/, which means “god” in Russian, and the English word, “god”. The switch between /b-/ and /g-/, and the switch between /-g/ and /-d/ show exactly what these aforementioned assumptions stated.

Moreover, because both Japanese and Korean do not regard voiced stops and voiceless stops as different phonemes and because they regard voiced stops and voiceless stops as allophones, if we base our reconstruction on the idea of major rule of historical reconstruction, it seems to be very likely that *b- should have an allophone *p- due to the fact that two out of three languages have allophonic stops. The genetic tree should be like the followings,





[Proto-language: *b-/*p- [Manchu: /m-/] [Korean: /k-/][Japanese: /t-/]

Another question regarding this reconstruction is which of the following hypotheses is true:

Hypothesis 1: *p- $\xrightarrow{\quad *b- \quad}$

Hypothesis 2: :*b- $\xrightarrow{\quad *p- \quad}$

Hypothesis 1 is more likely to be true for the following reasons. First of all, /t-/ and /k-/ are voiceless. Based on the reconstruction idea of majority rule, 2 of out of 3 descendants are voiceless suggest its ancestor should be originally voiceless. Secondly, hypothesis 1 is more likely to be correct because of one attested example in Japanese. Japanese /t-/ originally was a lexical item in Old and Middle Japanese. It was later fossilized as a converb and taken away from the Japanese lexicon as a verb. Whether or not Japanese /t-/ should be considered a verb or a converbal particle is the arbitrary choice of Japanese lexicographer. The issue of importance here is that it witnessed Japanese /t-/ witnessed a historical process of becoming voiced after certain voiced sounds. Consider the following analogous example in Japanese that demonstrates the historical process of the vocalization of certain voiceless consonants:

Middle Japanese: yomu (to read) + /t-/  yomit-
 Modern Japanese: yomu (to read)+ /t-/  yonde

Obviously, in the old days, the voiced feature of the last consonant of “yomu” is transmitted to the converb /t-/ whilst in later periods the voiced feature is transmitted to the converb /d-/ and converts /t-/ to be /d-/.

In addition, it is very important to note that Japanese /te/, Korean /ko/, and Manchu /me/ all do not involve the process of vowel harmony at all. This is an interesting phenomenon that is unlikely due to accident. First of all, Korean and Manchu are languages where vowel harmony plays an important role in the phonology and syntax of these languages. This suggests the fact that -me- in Manchu, -t- Japanese, and -ko- in Korean might belong to the same category of converb in the proto-language, and also confirms the fact that they are very likely to be derived from the same ancestral source. Finally, it is also important to note that “-me-” is a transparent connector that does not add meaning to either the verbal stem preceding it or the verb following it. In Manchu, sometimes a converb adds meaning but sometimes it is simply a connector without adding any meaning to the VP headed by the verb following the converb. In the case of Manchu converb “-me-”, it is a connector that serves as a nexus without adding meaning. So is the case of Korean -ko- and Japanese -t-. Striking are such similarly transparent semantics of all the three converbs in three languages that share similar phonology as discussed above. It is unlikely that all the similarities in phonology, syntax, and semantics among Manchu -me-, Korean -ko-, and Japanese -t- are due to accidental chance.

Then, is it possible that such similarity is due to borrowing? The answer is no. Think of the following typologically parallel example. In Russian, adjectives have to agree in accordance with voice, number, case, and gender. For example, Russian word, “ /ozaritj/”, which

means “to light up”. If we want turn this verb into an adjective of passive voice to modify a noun, we have the following choices:

	Masculine	Feminine	Neutral	Plural
Norminative	"	"	"	"
Genitive	"	"	"	"
Dative	"	"	"	"
Accusative Inanimate	"	"	"	"
Accusative animate	"	"	"	"
Instrumental	"	" , "	"	"
Locative	"	"	"	"
Short Form	"		'	'

Table 3-7 (Zalizniak n.d.)

How could it be possible to borrow any of these adjectives into an analytical language such as Chinese systematically? If it were the case, there would have been something like the followings: *zhaoliang-*nn*†*j*, *zhaoliang-*nnogo*. Obviously, there does not exist any of these hypothetical forms in Chinese. This typologically parallel example shows that syntactical elements or paradigms are difficult, or in many cases impossible, to borrow. Therefore, syntactically element such as Manchu -*me*- is unlikely to be borrowed into Korean or Japanese. Nor is likely that Manchu -*me*- is borrowed from Korean -*ko*- or Japanese -*t*-.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper demonstrates that Manchu -me-, Korean -ko-, and Japanese -t- share similar phonological, syntactical and semantic features. Such similarities are unlikely to be simply accidental or the result of borrowing. Rather, it is very likely that they are due to the fact that they are from the same ancestral source. In addition, the paper also offers a review and criticism on the criticism by Alexander Vovin. The clarification and defense of comparative method will serve to further the understanding of this important methodology, while the elucidation of the relationship among the Manchu converb -me-, Korean -ko-, and Japanese -t- will serve to further the understanding of the different Altaic languages. From a typological perspective, this paper offers an example to contribute to the final solution of the typological problem of Korean and Japanese.

What remains to be addressed is the relationship among Korean, Japanese and other Western Branches of Altaic Languages such as Turkish. In the future, it might be interesting to compare Turkish, Korean, and Japanese. One issue that requires further exploration is the different degrees of similarity based on paired comparisons of Manchu, Korean, Japanese and Turkish. It might be useful to quantify the different degrees of similarity between different languages.

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