CONVERBS AND INTERPROPOSITIONAL RELATIONS IN XIBE

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Xibe is a Manchu-Tungus language spoken by approximately 40,000 individuals in North-western China (Xinjiang Uygur [Uighur] Autonomous Region). Most of the data for this paper is drawn from natural discourse, primarily folk narratives.

Like other Machu-Tungus languages, Xibe employs partially inflected "converbs" [1] extensively in discourse. Recent work on clause combinations (e.g., [2], [3], *inter alia*) indicates that multi-clause constructions impose constraints on possible interpropositional relations, but do not determine them categorically. In this paper we show that clauses headed by converbs, and other dependent clause types, in Xibe constrain inferencing to varying degrees. Some constructions are very specific as to what interpropositional relations may be involved, whereas others are quite vague, allowing a variety of inferences depending on the context. Another interesting finding of this study is that there is a clear difference between dependent verb suffixes used in written vs. oral discourse.

In this paper we describe the various dependent verb suffixes (including converbs) and arrange them on a continuum according to the degree to which each one constrains the possible semantic relations between the dependent and independent verb in the same construction.

The following chart summarizes the construction types described in this study, along with the general degree of constraint they impose on possible interpropositional relations with the main, or "final" clause:

Inferencing highly constrained			Inferencing loosely constrained	
Nominalized clauses	Adnominalized clauses	Serial Verbs	Converbs	Chain medial clauses

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