

Lesson 7 Handout

Week 4: 26 September 2023

Converbs are a special kind of verb form which are used in a variety of ways. Converbs differ from participles and finite forms in that they cannot end a sentence; they are necessarily subordinated to a main verb (such as one ending in *-mbi*, *-ra/-re/-ro*, or *-ha/-he/-ho*). In this way, converbs are connecting words, they attach two phrases together. As we will see, what kind of converb form is used will determine what relationship is formed between the subordinate and main verb. Today we will look at the three most commonly used converbs: the imperfective *-me*, perfective *-fi* and conditional *-ci*.

Imperfective Converb *-me*

-me is the imperfective converb — it is thus generally used to express that an action of the subordinate clause is simultaneous to an action of the matrix clause.

The uses of the *-me* are as follows:

(1) *-me* is used to express

a. An action that occurs simultaneous to the main verb.

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bi buda je-tere-de , yali be je-me nure be omi-mbi .
 I meal eat-IPFV.PTCP-DAT , meat ACC eat-IPFV.CVB wine ACC drink-IPFV.FIN

‘When I eat a meal, I eat the meat and drink the wine.’

b. The manner of an action, used like an adverb. Can be paraphrased as “in an X way” or “in a way of X-ing”.

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bi bithe be hala-me ara-ha .
 I book ACC correct-IPFV.CVB write-PFV.PTCP .

‘I rewrote the book.’ Lit. I wrote the book in the way of correcting.

c. Note: for some verbs the adverbial use of the converb is somewhat independent from its normal use. See *sireneme* “continuously” vs. *sirenembi* “to connect”.

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alin cecike sirene-me guwe-mbi .
 mountain bird connect-IPFV.CVB chirp-IPFV.FIN .

‘The russet sparrow (lit. mountain bird) continuously (lit. in a connected way) chirps.’

d. With verbs of speech or thought, the *-me* form may be used before introducing quotation.

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mini ama minde hendu-me jio se-he .
 My father me.DAT say-IPFV.CVB come.IMP say-PFV.PTCP .
 ‘My father said to me, “Come!”’

-me does not undergo vowel harmony.

-me forms combinations with certain main verbs to form special combinations

- (2) a. *V-me mutembi* meaning “able to V”
jui boigon be jafame mutembi “The child can manage the household”
 b. *V-me bahambi* meaning “able to V”
cahar i qooha korcin be afame bahara “The Chahar army can fight the Korchins”
 c. *V-me bahanambi* meaning “understand how to V”
bi hangnara okto be arame bahanara “I can make solder”
 d. *V-me tuwambi* meaning “try to V”
Batu kiyo be durime tuwaha “Batu tried to seize the bridge.”

The difference in meaning between *mutembi* and *bahambi* is subtle in these cases; it is similar to the difference between 能 and 会, with *mutembi* performing more like 能 and *bahambi* performing more like 会 or even 得. When not used with *-me*, *mutembi* means “to complete” while *bahambi* means “to obtain”. Another way of thinking about *-me bahambi* is as the English colloquial “get how to do V” as in “The Chahar army gets how to fight the Korchins”.

Two other special combinations with *-me*:

- (3) a. *V-me jaka* or *V-me saka* meaning “just as V”, used in combination with a following clause denoting what happened “just as” the previous clause happened.
 b. *semeo* is the verb *sembi* “to say” in the imperfective converb form, with the question particle *-o* after it. *semeo* is used after the main verb of a sentence to mark a rhetorical question, much like Chinese 難道. This is the one case where the last verb of a sentence can be a converb.

Perfective Converb *-fi*

Some verbs have the perfective converb ending *-mpi* or *-pi* instead of *-fi*, but these are rare and noted in dictionaries. For instance, the version of *jembi* which means “to tolerate” has the perfective converb form *jempi*, while the version of *jembi* which means “to eat” has the perfective converb form *jefi*.

- (4) *-fi* is used to denote sequential action, such that the clause before *-fi* happens before the clause after *-fi*.

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jadūhai bira ci tuci-fi mederi de dosi-ha .
 ship river ABL come.Out-PFV.CVB sea DAT enter-PFV.PTCP .

‘The boat, having come out from the river, entered into the sea.’

Special combinations with *-fi*:

- (5) *V-fi sambi* means “know from V”. It is most commonly used in the construction *bahafi sambi* a compound meaning “to know” or “to learn”, literally “know from obtaining”.
han erebe bahafi sambi. “The Khan knows this.”

Special form with *-fi*:

- (6) *ofi*, the perfective converb form of *ombi* “to become” has taken on a meaning of “because” — it denotes that the preceding phrase is the reason for the following phrase.
i nikan niyalma ofi nikan gisun be gisureme mutembi. “Because he is a Han person, he can speak Chinese.”

Conditional Converb *-ci*

-ci is the conditional converb — it is used to connect two phrases, where the first phrase is the antecedent and the second phrase is the consequent (the thing that happens if the first happens). The uses are as follows:

- (7) *-ci* is used to express

- a. The meaning of ‘if’

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si gene-ci bi inu gene-mbi .
you go-COND.CVB I also go-IFPV.FIN

‘If you go, I will also go.’

- b. The meaning of ‘when’

ᠪᠢ ᠪᠣᠭᠡᠳᠡ ᠵᠢᠴᠢ ᠤᠮᠠᠢ ᠨᠢᠶᠠᠯᠮᠠ ᠠᠬᠤ ”
bi boo-de ji-ci umai niyalma akū .
I home-DAT come-COND.CVB not.at.all people not.have .

‘When I come home, there is no one there.’

- c. At the beginning of a sentence, verbs of thought or perception (think, see, hear) can be marked with the conditional to denote ‘when I think/see/hear’ or more naturally ‘As I think/see/hear’.

ᠪᠢ ᠲᠤᠠᠭᠠᠨᠠᠨ ᠪᠣᠭᠡᠳᠡ ᠨᠢᠶᠠᠯᠮᠠ ᠠᠬᠤ ”
bi tuwa-ci boo-de niyalma akū .
I see-COND.CVB home-DAT people not.have .

‘It seems to me that no one is home’ Lit. As I see it, no one is home.

Special combinations with *-ci*:

- (8) a. *V-ci ombi* means “V is permissible” or “V may happen”

- si alin de geneci ombi* “You may do to the mountains”
- b. *V-ci acambi* means “V is required” or “V should happen”
muse boode marici acambi “We should return home.”
- c. Rarely, *V-ci bahambi* and *V-ci mutembi* are used instead of their *V-me* forms.

Special form with *-ci*:

- (9) a. *oci*, the conditional form of *ombi* “to become” has taken on the meaning of a topic marker, meaning “as for”
sefu oci, niyalma tondo gūnin sain bi “As for the teacher, he is an upright person of good mind.”
- b. *seci*, the conditional form of *sembi* “to say” has taken on the meaning of “although” or “while”. Because the verb here is a form of *sembi*, it can come after finite clauses
ere boode niyalma akū seci, bi emhun beye waka seme gūnimbi. “Although there is no one home, I feel like I am not alone.”
- c. *bahaci*, the conditional form of *bahambi* “to obtain” has taken on the meaning of “As X hopes”, or more literally “As X would have it.” when used at the beginning of the sentence.
Batu bahaci, ere morin tere morin ci hūdun. “As Batu would have it, this horse would be faster than that horse.”

Embedding Strategies

As seen through the various uses *-me*, *-fi*, and *-ci*, Manchu has a wealth of strategies to use to connect clauses together. When it comes to embedding — namely putting one clause inside of another — there are three main ways that this can be done.

Embedding with Converbs

As we have seen, certain verbs take converbs as their complement. These verbs appear to be ‘auxiliary’ or ‘light’ verbs — they have a meaning that they typically represent, as well as a less specific meaning that they use in these kinds of constructions (think of English ‘have’ vs. ‘have to’). I list the main ones that you will come across (as discussed earlier) and their constructions below.

	Verb	Meaning	Converbial Construction	Meaning
(10)	<i>mutembi</i>	be able to	<i>V-me mutembi</i> <i>V-ci mutembi</i> (rare)	can V can V
	<i>bahambi</i>	get, obtain	<i>V-me bahambi</i> <i>V-ci bahambi</i> (rare)	can/get how to V can/get how to V
	<i>bahanambi</i>	understand	<i>V-me bahanambi</i>	know how to V
	<i>tuwambi</i>	see	<i>V-me tuwambi</i> <i>V-ci tuwambi</i> (rare)	try to V try to V
	<i>sambi</i>	know	<i>V-fi sambi</i>	know from V-ing
	<i>ombi</i>	become	<i>V-ci ombi</i>	may V
	<i>acambi</i>	come together	<i>V-ci ombi</i>	should/must V

Embedding with Participles

As discussed in the previous week, participles *-ra/-re/-ro* and *-ha/-he/-ho* can be used to embed clauses, either as modifiers — *mini ama tehe boo* “The house my father lived in.” — as well as nominalizations — *bi mini ama i tubade tehe be sambi* “I know that my father used to live here.”.

Generally, the modifier use can be used like a relative clause with any noun. When participles are used as nominalizations, they are typically used as arguments with attitude verbs: verbs that denote knowledge, thought, belief, speech, emotions, etc.

- (11) ᠠᠮᠠ ᠡᠮᠡ ᠮᠢᠮᠪᠡ ᠤᠠᠵᠢᠷᠠ ᠳᠡ ᠭᠡᠯᠡᠮᠪᠢ ”
 ama eme mimbe uka-ra de gele-mbi .
 father mother me.ACC abandon-IMPF.PTCP DAT fear-IPFV.FIN .
 ‘I fear that my parents will abandon me.’

Embedding with *sambi*

The verb *sambi* “say” is the only verb in Manchu which can take full sentences as its complement; it can generally follow any kind of main clause, including those with question particles or other sentence final particles (which we will see in coming weeks). In this way, *sambi* has some major functions that cannot be filled by other sentences.

(12) Functions of *sambi*:

- a. *sambi* can be used to denote the verb “say”, in which case it can take either a main clause or a nominalization as its complement.
 batu abka agambi sehe “Batu said that it’s raining.”
 batu abka agara be sehe “Batu said that it’s raining.”
- b. *sambi*, typically in the converb form *seme* can be used to end a quotation — in this form it will typically just take finite clauses. These clauses can be direct or indirect quotation.
 batu abka agambi seme hendumbi “Batu said that it is raining.”
- c. *sambi*, typically in the converb form *seme* can be used to end an attitude report — generally, in these cases, the attitude is read like a quotation, though it is not necessarily a direct quote.
 batu abka agambi seme gūnimbi “Batu thinks that it will rain.”
- d. *sambi* can be used to denote a kind of thought process, particularly when used with optative forms (to be seen soon!)
 bi alin de geneki sambi “I want to go to the mountain” Lit. I say (to myself), ‘let me go to the mountain!’
- e. *seme*, particularly in a converbial form, can be used to denote the mental process associated with a certain action, or the purpose that the agent has in doing that action. The special use of *seci* can be seen as an example of this.
 tana bira de isinambi seme mumuhu be dangniyaha “Tana kicked the ball to have it reach the river” Lit. Tana kicked the ball thinking ‘It will reach the river.’