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The syntax and pragmatics of Tungusic revisited

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This paper considers the changes in clause-combining structures as the Siberian Tungusic languages, represented here by Evenki, are undergoing shift due to contact with Russian. Native clause-combining strategies, specifically parataxis and subordination with converb forms, are being replaced by coordination and subordination with finite verbs based on Russian models. Surprisingly few Russian conjunctions are borrowed, contrary to the predictions of borrowing hierarchies. A comparison of data from monolingual speakers, bilingual speakers, and Russian-dominant speakers raises questions about the processes of typological restructuring versus language shift.

1. Introduction

The Tungusic language family consists of approximately eighteen languages¹ (depending on the classification system) spoken in Siberia and northern China. The Tungusic languages are agglutinative, left-branching, head-marked, SOV, and are characterized by ATR vowel harmony. Like other languages of this type, such as Turkic and Mongolic, they have a complex system of nonfinite converb forms that are used in subordination. Although they differ in the particulars, they are remarkably similar in terms of structure.

The Tungusic languages are spoken over a wide span of territory in Eurasia. In Siberia, Tungusic speakers are in contact with speakers of a variety of languages from several different families and types, including Mongolic, Turkic, Paleo-Asiatic languages and, of course, Russian. Tungusic speakers have been in contact with Russian speakers for centuries (Forsyth 1992). In Sakha (Yakutia), there is also frequent contact with Sakha, a Turkic language, and, in Buryatia, with Buriat, a Mongolic language.

1. The exact number of Tungusic languages depends on the classification system one follows and whether all attested varieties are included or only those with speakers. For a “cautious taxonomic framework,” see Janhunen (2005:38), following Ikegami (1974/2001).

In addition, there is long-standing contact between Tungusic varieties and other indigenous Siberian languages. Although they may have left an imprint on Tungusic morphosyntax, at present it is the influence of Russian that is most clearly seen today. There are effectively no monolingual speakers of any Siberian Tungusic language, although in regions where the languages are still more or less robustly spoken, it is still possible to find monolingual children of preschool age. Shift starts as soon as the children enter the school system. Although revitalization efforts are in place to counteract this, Barry et al. (2013) find a marked decrease in speakers of all Siberian Tungusic languages for the time period from 1989 to 2010.

2. Syntax and pragmatics in Tungusic, revisited

In 1979, Johanna Nichols published an article on the syntax and pragmatics in the Tungusic languages in the CLS Parasession volume. Some twenty years later, it remains, to the best of my knowledge, the only article on pragmatics in this language family. Despite the fact that recent years have seen increased study of this family, most analyses still focus on morphology, or morphosyntax, and do not broach the syntax-pragmatic interface. Since 1979, there have been fundamental changes in the study of these languages and in the languages themselves, both of which warrant a follow-up investigation. First, Nichols relied on published reference grammars and text collections for her study. These grammars were written from a relatively normative standpoint and almost certainly do not provide a full picture of both variation and any ongoing language shift at the time. Rather, each individual language is described as a unified and relatively codified system. The texts that were collected at the time consist almost exclusively of folklore and do not reflect actual speech. Moreover, the Soviet linguistic tradition of the time was much more oriented to prescriptive norms and not concerned with spontaneous conversation. The transcripts have been edited and normalized and thus do not show features of actual speech, such as hesitations, false starts, and so on. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, there has been a considerable increase in fieldwork and documentation of these languages, meaning that we now have access to recordings of actual speech and conversation.

Second, the Siberian Tungusic languages are all undergoing massive shift and attrition. This means, among other things, that they exhibit significant contact effects from Russian. There is good reason to suspect that shift was already underway in the 1970s, at least for some speakers in some regions, and that there were changes in clause-combining strategies either due to external factors (e.g. contact-induced change) or simply due to internal change. The former is more likely, given ongoing shift and the widespread commonality of changes, suggesting that they are not the result of language internal change.

Thus the linguistic systems that Nichols used as the basis of her description of syntax and pragmatics no longer exist. All varieties spoken today show influence from Russian. This influence can be found in all parts of the languages: phonology, lexicon, morphology, and syntax. Moreover, there are changes that affect the mechanisms of discourse and pragmatics. There are ongoing shifts away from a more prototypical Tungusic (or Altaic) means of clause combining that center around parataxis on the one hand, and clause chains of nonfinite converbs on the other, toward a more Indo-European kind. Examples of language shift are pronounced in the word order of Tungusic languages. The Siberian Tungusic languages as a whole show a shift away from verb final to much freer, discourse-determined word order following the Russian model, where word order is key to signaling information structure. Although there are changes in morphology, in my corpus these involve a general shrinkage in overall morphology (in terms of the numbers of derivational and inflectional morphemes used, such as the loss of certain more peripheral spatial cases, subspects, and certain verbal forms). Occasionally prepositions are found, but in most cases these are either borrowed from Russian or are code switches and may be best understood as representing attrition and interference from Russian. All Siberian Tungusic languages are in a state of shift under Russian influence.

Here I focus on changes in clause-combining strategies. Each of these is illustrated with detailed information from a single Tungusic language, Evenki, by first examining the expected constructions and then turning to current structures that show the effects of Russian contact. The Evenki discussion is framed within a broader Tungusic context. A full study of these changes in all Tungusic languages is beyond the scope of this paper, and more work is needed on the effects of contact and attrition on the structure of other Tungusic languages (see Grenoble 2000, 2011, 2012 for Evenki; Li 2005 for Mandarin and Oroqen; Pakendorf 2007 for Sakha (Turkic) and Evenki).

Evenki data are taken from three corpora. The first comprises published folklore texts from fluent speakers with limited or no knowledge of Russian (Bulatova 2004; Myreeva & Romanova 1971). All of these speakers were born before 1950: that is, before massive language shift occurred among Evenki. These serve as a baseline corpus for comparison purposes, but they are not without problems. They have all been normalized and edited. They do not reflect actual conversation: there are no false starts, pauses, or corrections. It is impossible to say to what extent the language has been changed to fit what the editors perceived as the norm, but it is clear that they have been edited. Second, my own field recordings – collected together with N. Ja. Bulatova in 1998 and 1999 in two villages in the Amur oblast' and in the village of Iengra, southern Sakha/Yakutia – provide a set of texts collected from bilingual speakers. These speakers use Evenki on a daily basis. Some are Evenki dominant and speak Russian with hesitations and less fluency, while others are fully fluent in Russian. Finally, the third corpus consists of text recorded in Tura in 2008, formerly the administrative center of

what was the Evenki Autonomous Okrug, now part of Krasnoyarsk Krai. These speakers exhibit varying degrees of shift and varying levels of proficiency in Evenki. For all of them, Russian is the preferred language of communication. The texts in this corpus reflect interference from Russian and typological restructuring, while the texts from bilingual speakers show a more transitional stage, adhering more closely to expected Tungusic patterns but showing some borrowings from Russian. In the case of conjunctions, the borrowings are widespread and regular, while in the case of subordination, they are sporadic and not predictable.

Although the Tura corpus was recorded ten years after the bilingual corpus, it reflects regional differences in vitality and not actual loss over time. Evenki continues to be more robustly spoken in the Amur and Sakha regions than in Krasnoyarsk Krai, for a number of reasons (Grenoble 2009), but shift is occurring in all regions. In other words, the different data sets do not represent different stages in a continuum of language shift: within each region, at each time of recording, different speakers had varying levels of fluency and interference. In all three regions, there are fluent speakers across generations for whom Evenki is the dominant language, as well as speakers whose knowledge of Evenki is limited to a few greetings.

Rather than providing a continuum of change, these different data sets provide the opportunity to analyze contact-induced change where language shift is not advanced in contrast to those situations where it is in order to examine whether and how the processes differ. There is good reason to begin answering these questions by focusing on the level of the clause and clause-combining strategies. Within studies of borrowability, it has been shown that coordinating conjunctions and subordinating strategies are easily borrowed. Matras argues that, cross-linguistically, connectors stand out in this regard; they are readily borrowed and generally follow a borrowability hierarchy for connectors (Elšik & Matras 2006; Matras 1997, 2007):

but > *or* > *and*

This hierarchy indicates that the borrowing of *and* implies the borrowing of both *or* and *but*, an order that has been shown to hold for a large number of languages. Thus we find examples where all three conjunctions (*but*, *or*, *and*) are borrowed, such as Domari, Otomi, Guarani, Kildin Saami, and Western Neo-Aramaic; and languages in which only two (*but*, *or*) are borrowed, such as Tasawq, Purépecha, Vietnamese, Rumungro, K'abeena, and Likpe (Matras 2007: 54). There are a few exceptions. For example, in Macedonian Turkish, *i* 'and' and *ili* 'or' have been borrowed from Macedonian, but the word *ama* 'but' is still of Turkic origin, so that the hierarchy is violated. (Notably, the Turkish word *ama* 'but' has been borrowed into Macedonian (Matras 2007: 54) and thus the hierarchy is upheld in this case.) More importantly for our purposes, however, is the fact that the borrowing of connectors often proceeds hand in hand with changes in subordinating strategies. As the data presented here show, this is the case in Evenki. What is less clear, however, is to the extent that

such changes represent typological change versus shift. The last few decades have seen accelerated language attrition in Siberia; the changes taking place in Evenki are not stabilizing across a population of speakers because that population is itself disappearing.

Such changes are widespread in the indigenous languages of Siberia, a situation that is magnified by the fact that the changes are coupled with language loss, making it difficult to determine whether these changes are the result of a restructuring of the languages in question or of imperfect acquisition or language loss and interference from Russian. In the latter case, the language could be seen as being in a transitional state, but not a transitional state from SOV to SVO typology, rather than in a state from language X (the indigenous language) to language Y (Russian).

3. Clause combining

While the Tungusic languages show a range of formal strategies to combine clauses through parataxis, coordination, and clause chaining, the different languages are strikingly similar in their structures. There is extensive use of parataxis, with finite verbs typically strung together without any conjunctions (Section 3.1). Historically, there was a very limited use of conjunctions and conjunctive particles, with particles more frequent than conjunctions. This category is in a state of flux in many modern Tungusic languages (Section 3.2). Subordinating conjunctions are increasingly used (under Russian influence) but are not part of the inherited linguistic system. Tungusic syntax typically involves the use of nonfinite verb forms – that is, converbs and nominalizations – followed by a single finite verb form. This system is also under flux, with an increasing usage of finite subordinate clauses, again based on a Russian model (Section 3.3). The impact of contact is summarized in Section 5.

3.1 Parataxis

Historically, the Tungusic languages have made widespread usage of parataxis for clause combining. Although there are differences among them, their overall syntactic structures for clause combining are similar. Most Tungusic languages are described as rarely using complex sentences but rather parataxis, or the use of a coordinating particle. In general, parataxis is preferred over coordination. Such is the claim for Even (Malchukov 1995:20), Evenki (Konstantinova 1964:249), Negidal (Cincius 1982:40), Ul'ch (Sunik 1985:54), and Udihe (Girfanova 2002:47). For some languages, the description explicitly states that there are no conjunctions (e.g. Orok; see Sem 2001:380). Classical Manchu is characterized by greater use of analytical conjunctions than other Tungusic languages, but the majority of them derive from grammaticalized forms of nouns, participles and, occasionally, converbs (Gorelova 2002:468).

Clear examples of parataxis are found in Evenki folklore texts collected in the 1950s from fluent (and often monolingual) speakers, as seen in Examples (1) and (2):

- (1) *Ge: bi-mi: ugu: buga bukatirin dʒə*
 PTL be -CVB.COND upper world hero PTC
təgə-rə-n il-da-n
 wake.up-AOR-3SG get.up-AOR-3SG

‘That hero of the upper world woke up and got up.’

(Romanova & Myreeva 1971:54)

- (2) *ɲinakin ə-tʃə:n-n ɲi:r-ə ə-tʃə:n kulus-pa bu:r-rə*
 dog NEG-PST-3SG open-PART NEG-PST-3SG key-ACC give-PART
 ‘The dog didn’t open [the door], didn’t give [him] the key.’

(Romanova & Myreeva 1971:322–323)

In (1), the two finite verbs (*təgərən*, *ildan*) are in final position in the sentence, one after the other, without any kind of connector. Both verbs in (2) are finite analytic constructions: they are formed with the negative verb *ə-* ‘not be’, which is marked for person, number, and tense – that is, *ə-tʃə:n* is the finite form – and the RA participle, which can take aspect and mood suffixes. This is the expected negative construction in Evenki; the negative finite verb takes a dependent RA participle. Konstantinova (1964:216–218) distinguishes two types of paratactically conjoined clauses: those in which the predicates represent simultaneously occurring actions and those in which they signal sequencing. The latter are found most frequently in narrative speech and the verbs occur most typically with the morpheme *-rV-*: that is, the aorist form of the verb, seen here in (1). Other finite verb forms are possible (as the past in Example (2)), as are participles, although the aorist is by far more common. Thus Examples (1) and (2) are representative of parataxis in narrative.

Intonation is the primary means for distinguishing clauses that are joined paratactically from those that are not conjoined but rather represent separate sentences. In (1) and (2), the finite verb forms share a single subject and so are unambiguously coordinated. In other cases, however, identification of clauses coordinated through parataxis is dependent solely upon intonation and pauses (Konstantinova 1964:214). This makes it particularly problematic for texts that were collected historically and have been published; one is dependent upon the editor or linguist to have represented intonational contours accurately with punctuation. (See also Nikolaeva & Tolskaya (2001a), who make a similar point for Udihe.) Example (3) illustrates some of the difficulties in rigorously determining the structure:

- (3) *si: munə-βə baldiβ-tʃa:s bəjə*
 3SG 1PL.EXCL-ACC give.birth-PST-2SG person
o:βkan-tʃa:s tarit dulin buʏa
 make-CAUS-PST-2SG **therefore** middle earth

əhilə mit-ŋi *o:ra-n*
 now 1PL.INCL-POSS become-AOR-3SG

‘You gave birth to us, made us people, therefore the middle
 earth became ours.’

(Romanova & Myreeva 1971:51)

Each of the three finite verb forms in this example could constitute a separate sentence, but they are represented as being clauses conjoined in a single sentence, depending on how accurate the transcription is. What is clear, however, is a lack of embedding and a general lack of conjunctions. In older texts, where they do occur, they usually are not connectives but signal causal or temporal meaning, as seen in the use of *tarit* ‘therefore’ in line 2.

3.2 Coordinating particles and conjunctions

Coordinating particles are traditionally distinguished from coordinating conjunctions in Tungusic linguistics. Tungusic particles are clitics and cannot occur in first position in a sentence or clause; they must be attached to a host at the end of a morphological word, following derivational and inflectional morphology. Particles are not independent words and follow the rules of vowel harmony. The pan-Tungusic coordinating particle is *-dV*. It can be used to conjoin noun phrases as well as clauses. Unlike the particles, coordinating conjunctions are independent words: they are not attached to other words, can be preceded by pauses, and do not exhibit vowel harmony.

From a historical standpoint, the expected Tungusic pattern is asyndetic coordination over syndetic, and with syndetic coordination the use of a coordinating particle *-dV* has been described as more frequent than separate conjunctions per se for Even (Malchukov 1995:20), Evenki (Nedjalkov 1997:87, 90), and Udihe (Girfanova 2002:47). In Even, Novikova (1997:302) notes the use of two other coordinating particles (*-ta/-tə* and *-gu/-ku*). In Udihe the particle *-dV* is used as a conjunction, or borrowings of the Russian conjunctions *i* ‘and’, *a* ‘and’, ‘but’, or *no* ‘but’ are used (Nikolaeva & Tolskaya 2001b). In Oroch, two particles can be used with a coordinating function (*-dV*: and *-dʒi*), although their distribution is somewhat different (Avrorin & Boldyrev 2001:380–381). The first, *-dV*:, when used to combine like conjuncts, can occur with both of these; when used to combine unlike conjuncts, its interpretation is somewhat dependent on context.

This preference for asyndetic coordination is seen with noun phrases as well. Analogous to clause combining and parataxis, apposition is the most common way of conjoining noun phrases in Evenki, and then the particle *-dV*, and then *taduk*. Furthermore, although *taduk* can be used in a meaning very analogous to a comitative construction, in fact comitative suffixes are more frequent (Nedjalkov 1997:90–91), as in the difference between (4a) and (4b), with the comitative *-nun*:

- (4) a. *ətirkən taduk atirkan*
 old.man and old.woman
 ‘an old man and an old woman’
- b. *ətirkən atirkan-nun-mi*
 old.man old.woman-COM-REFL
 ‘an old man with an old woman’

(Nedjalkov 1997:91)

There are a number of different comitative suffixes in Evenki. In my corpus, *-nun* is the most frequent. For our purposes here, the central point is that use of *taduk* is the least preferred strategy for combining NPs.

Similarly, it is dispreferred for conjoining clauses. The topic of coordination is complicated in Tungusic, beginning with the very definition of coordination. We can first consider the formal means for combining clauses, along several different parameters. One of these is prosodic (Section 3.1). Next, we can distinguish between clauses that are combined syndetically and those that are combined asyndetically. Finally, there is the option of subordination or (in a more Russian linguistic tradition) how clauses are related to a single more “principal” part (Cheremisina & Kolosova 1987:96–7; Gorelova 2002:467). Gorelova makes the point that a variety of devices, such as relative pronouns and pronominal adverbs, are in some sense conjunctions because they perform connective functions between clauses: through their anaphoric uses, while also functioning as parts of dependent attributive clauses. Manchu has more of what Gorelova calls analytic connectives than any other Tungusic language, but even here they are historically derived from nouns, participles in certain cases, and converbs. Tungusic, or Altaic more generally, differs typologically from Indo-European languages in that the suffixes are more syntactic in Altaic (Gorelova 2002:468; Ubrjatova 1976:7); the agglutinative typology of these languages makes them fundamentally different from Indo-European.

Strong agglutination accounts for the preference of a conjunctive particle over a conjunctive word. There is a strong tendency in Tungusic for morphosyntactic information to be encoded in affixes. The particle *-dV* attaches to the first word in a conjoined clause, as in (5):

- (5) *bi: omo:lgi-ya a:tʃin bi-si-m*
 1SG SON- ACC.INDF NEG be-PRS-1SG
atirkan-ya-da a:tʃin bi-si-m
 wife-ACC.INDF-PTC NEG be-PRS-1SG
 ‘I have no son *and* I have no wife.’

(Bulatova 2004:71)

The particle *-dV* can be used to conjoin NPs as well as VPs as seen in (6), which was uttered in response to the question *How many children do you have?*

- (6) *V zhiviyx umuko:n huna:dzi-m-da omo:lgi-m*
 alive one daughter-1SG-PTC son-1SG
 ‘I have one daughter and [one] son alive.’

(Iengra, speaker b. 1934)

In this example, the speaker begins the response in Russian with the phrase *v zhiviyx* ‘alive’ and switches to Evenki, conjoining the two NPs with the particle *-da*. The use of the particle to conjoin both VPs and NPs is a clear indicator of its coordinating function.

The very existence of coordinating conjunctive words in Tungusic (other than Manchu) is controversial. Robbek (1989: 148) does not see evidence for the existence of conjunctions as a separate category in Even, asserting that it is difficult to argue for the existence of what he calls “pure conjunctions” – that is, words that are used solely as conjunctions. Although there certainly are adverbial and pronominal words that can be used with a conjunctive function, they can also have other meanings in a given context. That is to say that even when they are fulfilling the role of a conjunction, they are open to additional interpretations at the same time and “one and the same word can signal what is sometimes a coordinating and sometimes a subordinating link.” That said, the very category of conjunctions is problematic for Tungusic.

For Evenki, Brodskaja (1988: 49) argues that so-called “conjunctions” such as *tarit* ‘therefore’ and *təli* ‘then’ (which does not occur in my corpus, either in the folklore texts or in my field recordings) are best analyzed not as conjunctions per se but rather as anaphoric deictic pronominal adverbs. This claim is also made for the use of *ta:duk* ‘then,’ as an adverbial signaling temporal sequence. It is by far the most frequent of all of these potential conjunctions in my corpus, in the older and newer texts. Following Brodskaja’s line of reasoning, these words would occur only with adverbial meanings. But in fact, in the historical texts it is difficult to separate the sequential meaning from a simple coordinating function. In narrative, finite clauses most frequently occur in chronological order, mapping the chronology of events. Thus either reading – sequential or coordinating – is possible.

In Evenki older texts, there is a strong tendency for conjunctive words to be used with a sequential, not coordinating, meaning. For example, the adverbial connector *ta:duk*² is frequently used to connect clauses, as seen in (7):

- (7) *urə təkən-dulə:-n is-kal su:ksə-l-βi:*
 mountain base-LOC-1SG.POSS reach-IMP lace-PL-REFL

2. Vowel length is phonemic in Evenki but has been lost by many speakers. Historically the first vowel *ta:duk* is long, but many speakers in my corpus pronounce it without length, thus it is transcribed differently here, depending on the source.

gurə-kəl taduk urə-βə tukti-kəl
 untie-IMP then mountain-ACC climb-IMP

‘Reach the mountain base, untie the laces, **then** climb the mountain.’

(Bulatova 2004: 73)

Here *ta:duk* ‘then’ clearly has a sequential meaning: as is clear from the plot of this folktale, it is critical that the protagonist untie her laces before going up the mountain. Such examples are very common, even in recordings of monolingual speakers, as in (8):

(8) *tar nəkədžərəktin ərgi:t-ta:rgi:t ədin burga*
 meanwhile from.here.from.there wind storm

o:-tʃa ta:duk hergu: buga-duk
 make-PST then lower earth-ABL

aβahi-l ataman-tin əmə-tʃə:
 devil-PL chief-3PL come-PST

‘Meanwhile the wind came from here and there, a storm began.

Then the ataman of the devils came from the lower earth.’

(Romanova & Myreeva 1971: 48)

These folklore texts show a consistent use of connectors in sentence- or clause-initial position or, more specifically, following a finite verb. A text count of 466 sentences with a total of 42 tokens of *ta:duk* and *tarit* shows that all but four occur sentence initially (Grenoble 2012). There is a strong tendency in narrative for finite verb forms to iconically map the chronology of events, so the use of sequential adverbial connectors as in (8) is redundant. This suggests that historically they were not necessarily combining clauses but rather serving a discourse function as a marker of continuing discourse or some sort of clausal boundary marker (Heath 2010). Still, in this representative sample, only 8 percent of the sentences begin with one of these connectors, although a number of other formulaic devices are also used.

The limited use of conjunctions is pan-Tungusic. Evenki handbooks describe them as very small in number (Konstantinova 1964), a statement that is true for other Tungusic languages (e.g. Udihe; see Nikolaeva & Tolskaya 2001a). Negidal, closely related to Evenki, is cited as using only two conjunctions *tadukkoj* ‘then’ and *tixəm* ‘therefore’ (Cincius 1982), and similarly Ul’ch uses the sequential *tara ~ tatara* ‘then’ or *gufi* ‘still’ (Sunik 1985). Even lacks conjunctions (Novikova 1980; Robbek 1989). Manchu presents a somewhat different picture and is worthy of more detailed discussion. Gorelova (2002: 356) distinguishes two basic groups of conjunctions in Manchu, according to their morphosyntactic and semantic functions. First she makes the distinction between coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. The former comprise connective (or copulative) conjunctions, adversatives, and disjunctives. It is the first two categories, connective and adversative conjunctions, which are of primary interest here. There are relatively few connective conjunctions in Manchu and, notably, none of

them correspond to ‘and’: *geli* ‘also’, ‘still’, ‘again’; *jai* ‘still’, ‘again’; *hono* (*hono bade*) ‘still’, ‘yet’. Finally, the word *uthai* can be used as a connective conjunction in the meaning ‘then’, ‘thereupon’, ‘and then’ (Gorelova 2002: 357).

3.3 Evenki under Russian influence

What we see in modern Evenki is the introduction of Russian-style coordination, a movement away from syntactic connection centered around asyndetic coordination to syndetic coordination. Evidence is found in modern Evenki for the use of both borrowed conjunctions from Russian and a reanalysis of other Evenki words as conjunctions. Borrowing of the conjunction *i* ‘and’ from Russian is attested as early as the 1950s in Evenki, as noted in Konstantinova (1964), illustrated in her example:

- (9) *hurkəkəkər*-r *so:t* *dəru-rə* *i* *so:t* *dʒəmu-l-lə*
 boy-PL very tire-AOR and very want.eat-A.INGR-AOR
 ‘The boys got very tired and very much wanted to eat.’
 (Konstantinova 1964: 250)

Example (9) shows a very clear case of coordination with two similar finite verbs (*dəru-rə*, *dʒəmu-l-lə*) marked in the aorist third-person plural and sharing the same subject (*hurkəkəkər*). This is exactly the kind of borrowing we would expect, based on the borrowability hierarchy given in Section 1 and, in fact, the borrowing of this particular conjunction into Itelmen was attested nearly one hundred years ago by Bogoras (1922). However, the borrowing of the Russian *i* ‘and’ is sporadic at best in my corpus and very infrequent in the texts from bilingual speakers. One of the very few examples is given in (10):

- (10) *ətirkən* *sukəʃə* *lanɡa:li-ra-n* *i* *garaganda-ra-n*
 old.man axe grab-AOR-3SG and throw-AOR-3SG
 ‘The old man grabbed his axe and threw it.’
 (Iengra, speaker b. 1948)

In Modern Evenki, the temporal adverbial is often best viewed as a coordinating, not a sequential, conjunction. At times it is not entirely clear, however, which is which. In (11) there is an alternation between the Russian ‘then’ and Evenki *ta:duk* ‘then’; here the meaning can readily be construed as sequential:

- (11) *potom* *ilan* *anjanir-ʃa* *təgə-t-tin* *ta:duk* *ju:tʃə-n*
then three year-ACC sit-PST-3SG then leave-PST-3SG
 ‘Then he sat [was in prison] for three years. Then he got out.’
 (Iengra, speaker b. 1948)

Nikolaeva and Tolskaya (2010b) cite an example in Udihe with repetition of the Russian word *potom* immediately followed by Udihe *utadigi* ‘then’, a phenomenon they refer to as lexical doubling or self-translation. Example (11) differs in that *ta:duk* is not translating *potom*; rather, the two appear to be in free variation for the speaker.

In contrast to (11), in (12) the coordinating reading is more natural:

- (12) *ədərŋəhi:–βi: oho:t-ŋki-n tāduk pastu-ri:-n*
 young-CVB.SIMUL-REFL hunt-PST-3SG and/then herd-PST-3SG
 ‘When he was young, he hunted and (then?) herded.’

Within the context of this story, either reading is possible. The different tense marking on the finite verbs (*-ŋki-* signals an iterated action and *-ri:-* is more neutral) suggests they may indicate different time periods, but the storyteller is here speaking about the subject’s youth. Furthermore, herders most commonly hunt in addition to herding, so real-world knowledge is likely to favor a conjoined interpretation.

In the most unambiguous cases of its use as a coordinator, *tāduk* conjoins two NPs, as in the following two examples, with (13) recorded by a bilingual speaker whose preferred language is Evenki (born in 1930) and (14) recorded by a Russian-dominant speaker:

- (13) *pjatnadcataj-duk mun-dulə dəg-ri:-hun Anna Myreeva*
 15th-ABL 1PL-LOC come-PST-2PL Anna Myreeva
Galja Kəptukə tāduk Nadja tar si: bi-tfə-s
 Galja Keptuke and Nadja that 2SG be-PST-2SG
 ‘You (pl.) came to us from the fifteenth [brigade]: Anna Myreeva, Galja Keptuke and Nadja, that was you (sg).’

(Iengra, speaker b. 1930)

- (14) *huŋtu-l-kə ŋinakin tāduk čerepaxa so:t urun-dzəɾə*
 other-PL-PTC dog and turtle very rejoice-IMPF-AOR
 ‘The others – the dog and turtle – were very happy.’

(Tura, text A, speaker b. 1957)

These examples illustrate the ongoing development of *tāduk* from a sequential adverbial to a coordinating conjunction, beginning with examples such as (7), where it clearly signals sequential ordering, to those such as (13) and (14), where it conjoins noun phrases.

Coordinating conjunctions are readily borrowed cross-linguistically; Tungusic and other Siberian languages provide ample evidence of this. Komi, a Finno-Ugric language with considerably older documentation than most other Siberian languages, borrowed Russian conjunctions as early as the fourteenth century (Leinonen 2009: 324). The general assumption is that the use of conjunctions emerges through contact with languages that have them (see Grønbech 1979 for Turkic languages; Mithun 1988 makes a broader case for the impact of bilingualism and writing on the use of conjunctions). The fact that conjunctions are so easily borrowed is one motivation for viewing parataxis as asyndetic coordination with an empty conjunction slot (or an empty head in a conjunction phrase): that slot is easily filled with no effects on

syntax (Johannessen 1998: 88). If this is accurate, the borrowing of coordinating conjunctions cannot be viewed as a step toward typological restructuring.

At the same time, Evenki does not fully correspond to expectations for borrowing of conjunctions as predicted by the borrowability hierarchy for connectors discussed in Section 2 (Elšik & Matras 2006; Matras 1997, 2007). Instead, the data show relatively limited borrowing of ‘and’, some borrowing of ‘or’, and no borrowing of ‘but’ from Russian. Instead, there is widespread use of *taduk*, reanalyzed as ‘and’; see also Section 5.1.

4. Subordination

Historically, Tungusic narrative adhered to a relatively predictable structure, as Nichols (1979: 420) points out: “A typical sentence in Manchu-Tungus narrative consists of one or more nonfinite clauses followed by a finite clause. The nonfinites may have a variety of subordinate senses: ‘when’, ‘since’, ‘after’, ‘although’, etc. or they may be semantically equivalent to simple coordination.” The nonfinite forms in Evenki are most usually nominalizations and converbs; in this section, I focus on the use of converbs. Evenki has a complex converb system used to signal two different kinds of relations. One is temporal, with reference to the time frame of the main verb. In this sense the converbs signal discourse deixis, or relative tense, but not absolute tense, as their reference point is grounded with the time established by the tense marker of the main verb. The simultaneous, anterior, and posterior converbs are of this type and are widely used in discourse. Nichols (1979: 420) argues that a “typical sentence in Manchu-Tungus narrative consists of one or more nonfinite clauses followed by a finite clause,” suggesting that at the time of her study, clause chains would have been more common than parataxis in narrative.

In Evenki there are some fourteen different converbs, and fluent speakers use them frequently in conversation as well as narrative. Nedjalkov (1997: 87–88) argues that clause combining with converbs is the single most common strategy in Evenki; that coordination – asyndetic or syndetic – of two or more finite verbs is infrequent and dispreferred, regardless of whether the verbs share a subject: “it is much more common, however, both in coreferential and in non-coreferential constructions to place all but the last verb in the converbal form, without any enclitics or conjunctions” (p. 88), a fact that distinguishes Evenki syntax from what he calls “true” coordination.

4.1 Converbs and subordination

Converbs of anteriority can serve as a representative example of how converbs in general are used to combine clauses in Evenki discourse. Although parataxis is always an

option, converbs are widespread, with a key discourse difference between the two: paratactic (or coordinated) clauses simply signal the order of events, while converb clauses specifically put them in some relation to the action signaled by the main verb.³ Thus, for example, converbs of anteriority may be used to signal backgrounded actions that occur before that of the main verb, as in (15) and (16):

- (15) *Tar guni-ksə:, nuʃan dəgdʒə-hin-ə-n*
 that say-CVB.ANT 3SG fly-INCEP-FV-3SG
 ‘Having said that, he flew off.’

(Romanova & Myreeva 1971:53)

Such converbs are widespread in the older texts as well as the speech of bilingual speakers, as seen in (16):

- (16) *Papa, amin-mi: gu-nə-n hutə kə ga-kal*
 papa father-REFL say-PST-3SG child PART take-IMP
pəktirə:ʃun-mə bi: pəktirə:ʃun-mə ga-ha: pəktirə:n-mi-m
 gun-ACC 1SG gun-ACC take-CVB.ANT shoot-PST-1SG
halgan-ma:n napka:ni-m
 leg-ACC-3SG hit-PST-1SG
 ‘Papa, my father, said: “Child, well, take the gun.”
 I, having taken the gun, shot. I hit [it] in the leg.’

(Iengra, speaker b. 1986)

This is a normal pattern for Evenki narrative, with the converb of anteriority serving a coherence function in tail-head linkage between the two sentences (Section 3.4). Where there is no tail-head linkage, parataxis is frequent, as in the last clause of this excerpt.

Converbs do more than signal temporal relations; they also signal causal and modal relations. The conditional converb signals a condition that needs to be fulfilled for the matrix event to take place; it is often translatable with an “if-clause,” as in (17):

- (17) *Horokiz-ʃa ʃa:mi: ʃa:n bu:-tʃi-nni*
 grouse-ACC kill-CVB.COND again give-A.DUR-2SG
 ‘If you kill a grouse, again, you would give it [to everyone].’

(Iengra, speaker b. 1943)

In modern usage, converbs are sometimes used by speakers along with Russian prepositions, as seen in the next two examples. Example (18) uses a converb of anteriority,

3. In an examination of clausal chains, Bohnemeyer et al. (2010) argue that events which are packaged in these chains are more closely related than those which are not and constitute macroevents, a claim in keeping with the analysis here.

analogous to (16), but with the addition of the Russian preposition *posle* ‘after’. Example (19), analogous in meaning to (17), uses both a conditional converb and the Russian preposition *esli* ‘if’:

- (18) *Posle amə-hə kak-to tizalo večerom or-ra-n*
after come-CVB.ANT somehow hard in.evening become-AOR-3SG
 ‘After I arrived, it somehow got hard in the evening.’
 (Iengra, speaker b. 1932)

- (19) *esli əfə dʒaβa-ra bi-mi: bi: bu-mtʃə-m*
if NEG catch-RA be- CVB.COND 1SG die-COND-1SG
 ‘If I hadn’t caught-(if) [it], I would have died.’
 (Iengra, speaker b. 1943)

Use of these prepositions with converbs is a clear indicator of language shift. The converb of anteriority signals that the action preceded that of the main verb; the Russian preposition *posle* ‘after’ is redundant. Russian does use a perfective converb that generally signals anteriority (Weiss 1985 provides a detailed discussion), but the use of it with a preposition is strictly not allowed (R **posle pridja* ‘after having arrived’). Similarly in (20), the use of *esli* ‘if’ is redundant; the conditional converb alone encodes this meaning, as illustrated in (18).

Not only are the prepositions completely redundant – the meaning of the preposition is encoded in the converb itself – but they are counter to the norms of both Russian and Evenki. Neither language permits the use of prepositions with these converbs. They occur sporadically in my corpus, without predictability. Their use suggests not only interference from Russian but also that the syntactic and semantic functions of the converbs have become bleached.

4.2 Narrative structure and converbs

In Evenki, an important function of converbs at the discourse level is their use as connectors between discourse units. *Tail-head linkage* occurs at the sentence-level (Thurman 1975), and *summary-head linkage* across larger discourse units, or episodes (Thompson & Longacre 1985). Tail-head linkage in Evenki is widely used in folklore texts and is characteristic of this genre. It usually occurs within episodes, where a converb or a converb clause links two sentences together. Most typically, the second sentence begins with a converb that repeats the finite verb of the preceding sentence, as in lines 2 and 3 of Example (16), where the converb of anteriority in line 3 (*gaha:*) repeats the verb of the preceding line (*gakal* ‘take’); this converb clause also repeats the complement of the finite verb. Similar to the use of connectors in (7) and (8), tail-head linkage does not add any semantic information. Instead it serves a discourse function, creating coherence. The arguments of that finite verb are often included in the linking

converb clause; more infrequently, the verb is not repeated but rather paraphrased. Tail-head linkage signals thematic continuity and serves textual coherence. Thus converbs have functions at the discourse level as well as the clausal level.

From a diachronic standpoint, then, widespread use of converbs is expected, both in terms of conjoining clauses (or VPs) and in terms of conjoining larger discourse units. As is seen in Section 4.3, under Russian influence converbs are being lost and replaced by finite verb forms. This has repercussions at the level of the clause, as many speakers do not create clause chains with nonfinite forms, as described by Nichols (1979), and in terms of borrowing or interference from Russian subordinators.

4.3 Contact and subordination: The impact of Russian

Subordination in Russian follows a basic Indo-European pattern, with some deviation. Relative clauses use relative and interrogative pronouns as complementizers. There are two converb forms: an imperfective and perfective converb. The former is used for actions that occur simultaneously to that of the main verb and the latter for those that occur sequentially (usually anterior to the main verb); see Weiss (1995) for full discussion. Use of these converbs in Russian may have arisen due to language contact, and they are more frequently used than in the other Slavic languages. Nonetheless, they are not the most frequent subordinating strategy in Russian, although their usage is not nearly as limited as claimed by prescriptive grammars.

Russian impact on subordination in Tungusic is long-standing. Kolesnikova noted this as early as 1966, pointing to the use of specific interrogative and adverbial words as complementizers under Russian influence. These include *aŋe*, *aŋi* ‘which’, *i:du* ‘where’, *i:le* ‘whither’, *o:ki:n* ‘when’, and *o:n* ‘how’, as in the following examples (Kolesnikova 1966: 19):

(20) *Bi: ətʃə:-β sa-ra, i:lə: nunan surusi-nə-n*
 1SG NEG-1SG know-RA **whither** 3SG go-PST-3SG
 ‘I don’t know where he went.’

(21) *Alagu:dʒari-l ala:tʃə-rə o:ki:n alagu:mni klassu-la: i:-dʒə-n*
 pupil-PL wait-AOR-3PL **when** teacher class-LOC enter-FUT-3SG
 ‘The pupils wait for when the teacher will come into the classroom.’

My own corpus shows a variety of borrowings from Russian. There are several instances of the use of an Evenki interrogative as a complementizer, as described by Kolesnikova. An example is given in (22), which shows the Evenki *o:ki:n* ‘when’ in the first line and then use of the Russian *poka* ‘until’ in the second line:

(22) *goro: o:ki:n is-tʃana:-β tar*
 far when get.to-FUT-1SG that

poka do poselka is-tʃana:-β *poka* Ljuda-βa baka-dzina:-β
 until to village get.to-FUT-1SG until Ljuda-ACC find-FUT-1SG

‘It was far until I would get there,
 until I would get to the village, until I would find Ljuda.’

(Iengra, speaker b. 1948)

The first token of *poka* is best seen as a code switch into Russian: it is followed by a prepositional phrase with the preposition *do* ‘to’ and a complement in the genitive case, following the norms of Russian syntax. The second instance is different, in that it is followed by a noun with the Evenki accusative ending and a finite verb in the future tense. It is not a complete copy of Russian syntax, which would require the negative particle *ne* (e.g. *poka ne najdu Ljudu* ‘until I would find Ljuda’). Note that this is reminiscent of the use of prepositions with converbs in Examples (18) and (19).

In a similar vein, Evenki would use converbs to express the alternating actions signaled in (23) with the Russian conjunctions *to...to* ‘now [X], then [Y]’:

- (23) *to* sirga-β kumtəβu-βki: ə-ηnə-m
 now sled-1SG turn.over-PART.HABT NEG-A.HABT-1SG
kumtə-lgə-rə *to* sirga-β suksəβu-βki:
 turn.over-un-RA now sled-1SG break-PART.HABT

‘Now my sled would turn over, I couldn’t upright it,
 now my sled would break.’

(Iengra, 1998, speaker b. 1943)

As this example suggests, the speaker has full command of Evenki morphosyntax and uses participial forms as expected but has inserted Russian conjunctions. This is in contrast to (24), where the syntax is calqued from Russian (*vsě, čto* ‘all, that’):

- (24) *Badzhalaki:-tkan* omηo-ro-n *upkat-βa*
 frog-DIMIN forget-AOR-3SG all-ACC
e:kun-ma o:-ra-n həgdi badzhalaki:
 what-ACC do-AOR-3SG big frog

‘The little frog forgot everything that the big frog had done.’

(Tura, text D, speaker b. 1964)

Instead of an expected nominalization, the sentence conforms to the norms of Russian subordination and word order and not to Tungusic patterns. This would be an indicator of syntactic restructuring, but, unlike the use of *taduk* as a coordinator, the use of prepositions, interrogatives, and complementizers is neither regular nor predictable in Evenki. Examples (22)–(24) represent one-off, nonce borrowings. Although there is an increasing use of complementizers, their use is still sufficiently idiosyncratic that it cannot be stated with certainty which forms will occur, or where, or by whom.

Rather, there is a tendency toward restructuring, most strongly found among speakers with weaker proficiency in Evenki than among bilinguals, although they use it as well. These sporadic uses represent change in progress, a change that has not yet stabilized.

Borrowing of Russian-style subordination along with Russian complementizers is found in a variety of languages. Nikolaeva and Tolskaya (2001b) cite the following example in Udihe (Tungusic), which is clearly a calque of Russian syntax, given here using their transcription:

- (25) *Site-ne-ni e-ti sa: j'e nixe:-ni abuga*
 son-PL-3SG NEG-PL know what do-3SG father
 'The sons do not know what their father is doing.'

Example (25) is very similar to (24), with the use of a native interrogative reanalyzed as a complementizer; word order in the subordinate clause in both examples has the subject in final position. The expected Tungusic pattern would be to have a finite verb in final position, with nominalizations or converbs preceding it.

The impact of Russian on subordination is seen throughout Siberian languages, replacing the more areally consistent use of converbs and nominalizations. Anderson (2003: 34) also notes the borrowing of the Russian *poka* into Abakan Xakas (Turkic), Leinonen (2009: 315) discusses the borrowing of clausal subordination strategies along with conjunctions and complementizers in Komi (Finno-Ugric), and Muhamedova (2009) discusses the phenomenon among bilingual Kazakh (Turkic) speakers.

5. Language contact, borrowability, and shift

The different corpora show different stages of Russian impact on Evenki. Russian influence is seen in the speech of bilingual speakers recorded in 1998 and 1999, but, as noted, the changes are not systematic but rather idiosyncratic. Russian patterns are found alongside Evenki, with Evenki more frequent. The changes have not stabilized and are not conventionalized but vary from speaker to speaker. There is no strong correlation with age, although a greater percentage of older speakers use more Evenki, but even fluent children can be found among those families engaged in traditional herding practices.

The texts collected from Russian-dominant speakers in Tura show a more progressed state of Russian influence. These texts were recorded from a retelling of Mayer and Mayer (1975), a picture book without words in the original print version, showing varying levels of fluency. All speakers were instructed to tell the story only in Evenki, and two of them did this, using absolutely no Russian words in their tales. This is itself extraordinary: an analysis of the twenty hours or so of recorded material from 1998 and 1999 shows that there is no speaker who never uses any Russian when speaking Evenki, even those whose preferred language is Evenki. Thus these two texts

narrating Mayer & Mayer (A and B), are artificial but do indicate that the speakers are capable of maintaining sustained narrative in Evenki. Of the remaining ten narratives collected, only four are analyzable for the purposes of this study. These show varying levels of fluency and code-mixing. (See Grenoble 2011 for discussion of the code-mixing.) In the remaining six narratives, the speakers are speaking Russian, inserting an occasional word in Evenki, or there is complete linguistic breakdown and they do not complete the task. A strict quantitative analysis of the material is not particularly useful, as it masks individual differences that are themselves more informative than the aggregate figures.

One of the challenges in analyzing contact-induced change in both this corpus and the corpus of bilinguals is distinguishing Russian borrowings from code mixes. Table 1 summarizes the length of each text from Tura in terms of words and the proportion of the words in the Evenki versus Russian. The texts range in length from 511 to 323 words and from 100 percent Evenki to less than half:

Table 1. Word counts: Tura frog stories

Text	Total words	Evenki words	Percentage Evenki
A	323	323	100%
B	511	511	100%
C	358	352	98%
D	465	388	83%
E	401	350	87%
F	475	217	46%

The speakers were all women: (1) A, age 51, born in Chitinskaja oblast"; (2) B, age 59, Ekonda; (3) C, age 36, Tura; (4) D, age 44, Chirinda; (5) E, age 32, Kislokan; and (6) F, age 50, Sovrechka.

A comparison of comparable narratives in the bilingual corpus (which is in fact much larger) shows a different pattern, with the majority of texts more than 90 percent in Evenki, and none at absolutely 100 percent. (The few texts that are lower than 90 percent are notably about events that the speaker experienced in Russian. They average at approximately 70 percent Evenki, with reported speech most notably reproduced in Russian, not Evenki.) From this we can conclude that the use of "pure" Evenki in the Tura corpus is the result of the unnatural situation in which the texts were collected; fluent speakers elsewhere use Russian in normal, unstructured conversation, and code mixing is frequent.

There are a number of problematic issues with the use of raw counts in evaluating these texts. First of all, the count for finite verb forms includes all Evenki finite verbs, regardless of whether they are ill formed, infelicitous, or repetitive. These are all included, skewing the count to be overly high and potentially suggesting that the

speaker is more fluent than in actuality: it includes forms that a fluent speaker would not create. Consider the following, taken from text D:

- (26) *Bəjətkə:n aɲi:βun-ma itʃə-rə-n aβsa-βa isə-rə-n*
 boy present-ACC see-AOR-3SG bag-ACC see-AOR-3SG
isə-rə-n Isə-rə-n aβsa-βa isə-rə-n
 see-AOR-3SG see-AOR-3SG bag-ACC see-AOR-3SG

‘The boy saw the present, saw the bag, saw. He saw the bag, saw.’

This example has five finite verb forms. If one does not look at the actual text, this might be taken as indicator of the speaker’s command of the language, but this is clearly a dysfluent text, where the speaker searches for a word, is uncertain about forms (note the vacillation between [tʃ] and [s] in the verb, which occurs elsewhere in this text), and stalls for time by repeating the verb. Speaker E presents a somewhat different problem: she uses 84 finite verb forms in this text, but many are tokens of the very same verb. For example, she uses the third -person singular aorist of ‘do’ (*o:ran*) ten times and the plural three times; a total of just three verbs (‘do’, ‘cry’, and ‘see’) constitute more than a third of all finite verbs. One solution would be to simply normalize the texts and eliminate repeated forms, but repetition does occur in the comparison baseline corpus of folklore texts. What is more important is the ratio of converb forms to finite ones. Here the counts should be taken at most as an approximate indicator of the use of these forms in the texts. They provide an overview impression but do not substitute for fine-grained analysis.

Second, none of the speakers recorded here uses Evenki on a daily basis, and texts D–F show significant amounts of code-mixing. There is strong interference from Russian and, arguably, they are not so much speaking Evenki as they are speaking Russian and inserting the Evenki words they remember into that frame. All metacommentary and asides are in Russian, and speakers explicitly comment on their use of Russian:

- (27) *I bəjətkən-du tože uruntʃədʒə-rə-n*
 and boy-DAT also be.happy-AOR-3SG
emu stalo veselo ot togo, čto oj opjat’ na russkom jazyke
 to.him became happy from that again in Russian

‘And the boy was also happy,
he became happy because...Oj, in Russian again!’

(Text F)

Example (27) exemplifies what I mean by inserting Evenki into a Russian frame: only two words in this excerpt are in Evenki. The Evenki verb in line 1 requires a nominative subject; the use of the dative case on *bəjətkən* ‘boy’ suggests that the speaker is anticipating the Russian construction *stalo veselo* ‘became happy’, which takes a dative

experiencer (*emu* ‘him.DAT’. The use of the Russian conjunction *i* in the first line is not obviously a borrowing into Evenki; the entire sentence is in Russian.

With these cautions in mind, an analysis of clause-combining devices shows very few converbs and an unexpected distribution of conjunctions, summarized in Table 2:

Table 2. Verbs and conjunctions in Tura texts

	A	B	C	D	E	F	Total
Finite verb	77	150	94	90	84	41 ⁴	
Converb ⁵	3	2	1	7	Ø	Ø	
Conjunctions							
<i>-dV</i>	Ø	6	10	Ø	2	Ø	12
<i>taduk</i>	6	Ø	Ø	9	3	1	19
<i>tarit</i>	Ø	1	1	Ø	Ø	Ø	2
<i>i</i>	Ø	Ø	1	1	4	3 ⁶	9

All but one of the converb forms in this count (uttered by speaker A) is a converb of simultaneity. Converbs of simultaneity signal that the action occurs at the same time as that of the matrix verb. In these texts, they are used almost descriptively, to indicate something about the subject’s state (e.g. ‘crying’, ‘lying down’, and so on). The lack of converbs of anteriority that are common in clause chains is striking.

5.1 Coordination and conjunctions

As seen in Table 2, there is considerable variation across speakers in the use of coordinators. The particle *-dV*, historically the most frequent, is also frequent in the present corpus, although not all speakers in this sample use it. The use of *taduk* has expanded and is the most frequent coordinator. The use of Russian coordinator *i* ‘and’ in texts E and F may be best analyzed as an instance of Russian interference, not Evenki borrowing; Example (27) is representative. Both texts are marked by hesitations, searching for words, very simple syntax, and a reduced lexicon. Case usage is not

4. Excluded from this count are finite forms that the interviewer supplied when asked for them. The speaker then repeated them after the interviewer; there are a total of five such tokens in this text.

5. The converb count does not include the RA converbs with the negative finite verb.

6. There are nine additional instances of *i*, but all are immediately followed by Russian and so they have been omitted from the count. Speaker F is arguably speaking in Russian and inserting Evenki words as she remembers them. See (27) for an illustration.

according to Evenki norms; in text E, the speaker consistently uses the accusative case in subject position when referring to the “company” of the boy and his animal friends.

Putting aside these two aberrant texts, or even if they are included, there is strikingly little use of the Russian *i*. Furthermore, there are no tokens of Russian *no* ‘but’ or *ili* ‘or’ that are not part of a Russian clause. The data here indicate that Evenki thus violates the predictions of the borrowability hierarchy for conjunctions.⁷

5.2 Converbs

As Table 2 shows, converbs are relatively infrequent and not used at all by some speakers. It is not entirely clear that the speakers who do use them can form them productively, as opposed to having memorized high-frequency converb forms. Speaker D, who uses the most converbs (nine), uses only the converb of simultaneity and only seven different verbs in the entire narrative. The use of converbs is so sparse that it is difficult to generalize, but one clear pattern emerges: the overwhelming majority of clauses are finite. Clause chains are not found.

The lack of converbs is not in and of itself definitive of restructuring, since parataxis is always an option for clause combining (and traditionally described as the preferred option). What is striking in the Tura database is where converbs are not used. Although tail-head linkage is widespread in older texts, there are no instances of this. Instead we find finite forms, as in (28) from text E:

- (28) *Tak taduk dzja-du: hægdi badžalaki:*
 so and boat-DAT big frog
hujukoko:n-mə buru-rə-n mu:-du:
 little-ACC throw-AOR-3SG water-DAT
buru-rə-n mu:-du: hujukoko:n badžalaki:
 throw-AOR-3SG water-DAT small frog
 ‘So, and on the boat the big frog threw the little one into the water.
 [It] threw the little frog into the water.’

This is exactly the kind of context where one would anticipate tail-head linkage with a converb, but instead a finite clause, *bururən mu:du:*, repeats the finite clause at the end of the preceding sentence. From a pragmatic standpoint, this fully serves the functions of tail-head linkage but at the same time violates the norm for this construction. It suggests – as does the remainder of the text – that the speaker has lost control of converb morphology but has still maintained a sense for the use of such linkage strategies in narrative. The absolute lack of tail-head linkage in this corpus is indicative of structural change.

7. This may reflect some aberration in the corpus, as the finding is unexpected and contrary to the experience of other linguists studying other Siberian languages who report widespread borrowing of Russian *i*.

6. Conclusion: Clause combining, contact, and shift

The analysis presented here has identified three stages of language proficiency (monolingual, bilingual, and shifted/Russian-dominant). These can be correlated with different strategies of clause combining in Evenki, based on the data available at this time. Note that these are not discrete stages and cannot be located on a continuum of change. One stage does not necessarily develop into another. Moreover, Evenki communities show variation in proficiency levels across speakers, even those of the same generation living in the same village.

Stage I is characterized by monolingual Evenki speakers; records of their clause-combining strategies in discourse have survived primarily in folklore. Historically, Evenki clauses were combined predominantly with parataxis and with converbal clause chains; this is the stage described by Nichols (1979). There was some but limited coordination, primarily with the use of the particle *-dV*. The folktale narratives are highly structured. There is frequent use of converbs in tail-head linkage. Word order is overwhelmingly verb final, with 99 percent of sentences ending in a finite verb in some texts.

Stage II is characterized by bilingual Evenki speakers. This is not a homogenous group; proficiency levels vary even within a single community. Clause-combining strategies include the continued use of parataxis and the continued use of clause chains with converbs. The use of converbs in tail-head linkage is found in the data; it is difficult to judge its frequency relative to that of Stage I, as its use may be genre specific. Stage II also exhibits an increased use of coordinators, in particular a reanalysis of the Evenki adverbial *taduk* 'then' as a coordinating conjunction meaning 'and'. In some contexts both meanings are possible, but it is also used in this stage to coordinate two NPs, showing it has changed and lost its sequential meaning for at least some speakers. There is an increased use of Russian-style subordination with finite verb forms; this strategy is not found in the folklore texts of stage I. In addition, Russian interrogatives are borrowed as complementizers, and native Evenki interrogatives are also used as complementizers, on the Russian model. The two strategies, finite verb clauses and converb clause chains, are both used by some speakers, although overall the use of converb clauses is more frequent. Some speakers borrow Russian prepositions and use them in combination with Evenki converbs, signaling a loss in meaning of the converb forms. Among bilinguals who speak Evenki on a daily basis, use of prepositions is quite limited.

Stage III is constituted by Russian-dominant speakers. Although this database is admittedly small, it is nonetheless possible to draw some tentative conclusions. None of the people in this group use Evenki on a daily basis; proficiency levels vary significantly from fluent speakers who are able to sustain a conversation in Evenki to those who would better be described as semispeakers. Code mixing is frequent, and there is significant interference from Russian. These speakers use very simple syntax, with a

sentence typically consisting of a verb and its complements. There are no clause chains, and the use of converbs is limited for all speakers. There is limited embedding and subordination.

In contrast to stage III, in which some speakers use a Russian syntactic frame and insert (some) Evenki words, in stage II the changes to Evenki clause-combining strategies are sporadic and unpredictable. Some speakers use both Evenki and Russian strategies; no speakers use only Russian strategies. Stage III is clearly indicative of language shift. There is no convergence in the usual sense; rather, Evenki is being replaced, or has already been replaced, by Russian. Stage II is more suggestive of convergence, and yet data from bilingual speakers are unclear about whether these changes would stabilize over time if speakers were to achieve a state of stable bilingualism. As it now stands, ongoing language shift and loss, especially as seen in the Tura data, suggest that this may be a transition state from Evenki to Russian, although further research into the effects of contact-induced change and attrition is needed.

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