

## 8 Noun Incorporation

---

**Summary** 8.1 Background Information and Observation. – 8.2 Research. – 8.3 Analysis and Description.

### 8.1 Background Information and Observation

Noun incorporation (NI) is a process by which a noun stem, a noun root, or a noun phrase is combined with a verb to form one single stem. There have been many approaches to noun incorporation, some of which discuss it as a morphological process (e.g. Modena, Muro 2009) and some others that discuss it as a syntactic process (e.g. Baker 1988) or as semantic process (Chung, Ladusaw 2004). Traditionally, NI is said to be a valency-decreasing strategy, meaning that when the noun is incorporated in the verb this latter subcategorises for one less argument – if it is a transitive verb it becomes intransitive, if it is an intransitive verb already it becomes a zero-valency verb. After incorporation happens, the incorporated noun does not count as a verbal argument anymore, but it is part of the verb.

HA and SA showcase several cases of noun incorporation. In both varieties incorporation usually concerns the subject of intransitive verbs and the object of transitive verbs (i.e. the S and O arguments), while incorporation of the subject of transitive verbs is rare (Dal Corso 2021). Examples (1) and (2) illustrate S- and O-incorporation in HA, examples (3) and (4) illustrate the same in SA.

- (1) ***Sir-pirka.***  
condition-be.good  
'The condition is good.' = 'The weather is good.' (Tamura [1973] 2001, 119)

- (2) *E-wakka-ta*            *kusu*            *e-arpa*.  
 2SS-water-collect    CAU.FIN    2SS-go.PL  
 ‘You go to draw water.’ (UT 1987, line 457)
- (3) ***Sir-u-kunne***.  
 condition-0-be.dark  
 ‘The condition is dark.’ = ‘It is night.’ (Dal Corso 2021)
- (4) ***Kito-ta-hci***            *kusu*            *makap-a-hci*.  
 kito-collect-3PS    CAU.FIN    go.uphill.PL-0-3PS  
 ‘They went up inland to collect *kitos*.’ (Dal Corso 2021)

→ Consider this additional information...

Noun incorporation in Ainu is found to influence the stress pattern, which is then taken as a piece of evidence that incorporation has (not) occurred (Bugaeva 2004, 29). For example, in (1) stress falls only on *sir*, but in the non-incorporated synonymous version *sir pirka* both *sir* and *pirka* would bear the stress. The stress pattern of *sirpirka* in (1) is therefore a signal that noun incorporation has happened.

→ Dataset 1 – Evidence of incorporation

Consider the following examples. Some feature noun incorporation and some do not (\* marks ungrammaticality). What morphosyntactic evidence do we have to say that noun incorporation has or has not occurred? What are the syntactic processes or the morphology that are insightful in this regard? Why does ungrammaticality arise?

**Set 1.1** (Hokkaidō Ainu)

1. *Orota eahun wa ape eare*.  
 ‘You enter there and light a fire.’
2. *Rapok suy tokap wakkataan*.  
 ‘Meanwhile I again drew water at noon.’ (IH 1987, line 453)
3. \* *Rapok suy tokap awakkata*.  
 ‘Meanwhile I again drew water at noon.’
4. *Eare ape*.  
 ‘The fire that you light.’
5. *Sirsesek*.  
 ‘It is hot.’ (Tamura 2000, 194)
6. *Ata wakka*.  
 ‘The water that You drew.’
7. *Orota eahun wa eapeare*.  
 ‘You enter there and light a fire.’ (OS 1977, line 409)

8. \**Taan wakka.*  
'The water that You drew.'
9. \**Kusirsesek.*  
'I am hot.'
10. *Rapok suy tokap wakka ata.*  
'Meanwhile I again drew water at noon.'

**Set 1.2** (Sakhalin Ainu)

1. *Mahkoro'an 'ike yacyisekoro'an.*  
'I got a wife (= married) and got myself a house.' (adapted from Dal Corso 2021)
2. *Ahapan teh [...] 'unci 'an'aare.*  
'I entered and lit a fire.' (Dal Corso 2021)
3. \**Yaykoro'an cise.*  
'The house I got [for] myself.'
4. \**Koro'an mah.*  
'The woman I married.'
5. *Cehrayki'an [...] hekacita tura 'an'ee.*  
'I killed fish (= fished) [and] ate them with the boys.' (Dal Corso 2021)
6. *Koro kun mah 'isam manu.*  
'They say that there is not a woman whom he could have.' = 'There's no good wife for him.' (Dal Corso 2021)
7. \**Ancehrayki [...] hekacita tura 'an'ee.*  
'I killed fish (= fished) [and] ate them with the boys.'

## 8.2 Research

Now look at this other dataset and also read the examples from other languages given after it, which you will need for the third and last activity of this lesson.

→ *Dataset 2 - Limits and peculiarities of NI*

Consider the sentences given below (\* marks ungrammaticality, ? marks dubious cases). Only SA examples are given for this dataset. Is there any syntactic or non-syntactic behavior that does not comply with what you have just observed about noun incorporation in Set 1? Why do you think ungrammaticality arise?

**Set 2 (Sakhalin Ainu)**

1. *Iki'an.*  
'We act [like this].'
2. *Cehrayki'an [...] hekacita tura 'an'ee.*  
'I killed fish (= fished) [and] ate them with the boys.' (Dal Corso 2021)
3. *'Atuyonne 'ampene [...] haweikihci.*  
'They cried out loudly towards the sea.'
4. \**Cikahrayki'an [...] hekacita tura 'an'ee.*  
'I killed birds (= hunted for birds) [and] ate them with the boys.' (Dal Corso 2021)
5. ?*Pon cehrayki'an [...] hekacita tura 'an'ee.*  
'I caught small fish [and] ate them with the boys.'
6. *Neewa 'an haweikihci yahka ...*  
'Even though they make such voices (= they are so insistent) ...' (Dal Corso 2021)

**Examples from Other Languages...**

Mohawk (Iroquoian, USA and Canada)  
(examples from Baker 1996 in Muro 2009, 118)

**Thíka**            *ʌ-ye-nakt-a-núhwe?-ne?*  
**that**            FUT-3F.SG.S/3N.O-**bed**-LNK-like-PUNC  
'She will like this bed.'

In some languages incorporation only allows noun roots to be incorporated into a verb. Some others also allow **larger nominals** to be incorporated (like noun stems made up of a noun root plus, for example, an adjective root) but do not allow these nominals to have modifiers (like quantifiers, demonstratives, relative clauses, ...). This is not the case of Mohawk. In Mohawk a noun with **modifiers** can be incorporated, like we see for the noun *nakt* 'bed' in the example above. The modifier of this noun, here the demonstrative *thíka* 'that', remains **stranded** (i.e. outside of the verbal form) but it still references the incorporated noun (Muro 2009, 108-25). The languages that allow this kind of incorporation usually impose **limitations on the syntactic kind** of the element that can remain stranded, so that not all syntactic constituents are acceptable in that position.

Hindi (Indo-Aryan, India)  
(examples from Dayal 2011 in Borik, Gehrke 2015, 20)

<i>Anu</i>	<i>sirf</i>	<b>puraanii</b>	<b>kitaab</b>	<i>becegli.</i>
Anu	only	<b>old</b>	<b>book</b>	sell.FUT

'Anu will only sell old books.'

In some languages noun incorporation is less strict syntactically. The incorporated noun is usually **less marked morphologically** (e.g. it cannot have markers of person, possession, number, ...) but it **retains some syntactic freedom** – e.g. it can be separated from the incorporating verb by an adverb, a particle and the like. This never happens in noun incorporation proper, which is why these cases are defined as **pseudo-noun incorporation** (PNI) (Borik, Gehrke 2015). Pseudo-incorporated nouns too can have modifiers, like the adjective *puraanii* ‘old’ that modifies the pseudo-incorporated noun *kitaab* ‘book’ in the example above. However, PNI imposes some **restrictions in the semantics** of modifiers so that only modifiers with semantics that help deriving a verbal form describing an action with **cultural relevance** are acceptable. In Hindi, selling old books is recognised as an activity that belongs to the culture of the people speaking the language while, for instance, ‘selling red books’ is not. Therefore it would be impossible to substitute ‘old’ with ‘red’ in the example above. A different structure (one that does not involve PNI) must be used.

### Chukchi (Chukotka-Kamchatka, Russia)

(examples from Polinskaja, Nedjalkov 1987 in Muro 2009, 3)

*ətɫəg-ən*      *kawkaw-ək*      *mətqə-rkele-gʔe*.  
 father-ABS      bread-LOC      **butter**-spread.on-3SG.S  
 ‘Father spread butter on the bread.’

### Blackfoot (Algonquian, Canada)

(examples from Frantz 1971 in Mithun 1985, 858)

*lihpokón-sskaawa*      *nóko’sa*.  
**ball**-acquire.3SG      my.child  
 ‘My child got a ball.’

*Nít-ohpokón-sskoawa*      *nóko’sa*.  
 I-**ball**-acquire.3SG      my.child  
 ‘I provided my child with a ball.’

Noun incorporation may result in the **syntactic saturation** of the verb. For instance, if a noun is incorporated in a transitive verb, this verb becomes syntactically intransitive – i.e. it may take now just one argument, the subject. This is shown by the Chukchi example where the transitive *rkele* ‘spread on’ incorporates the noun *mətqə-* ‘butter’ and becomes intransitive. The new valency of the verb is clearly signalled by the **agreement** suffix *-gʔe*, that is used for marking third person subject on intransitives.

In other languages noun incorporation does not necessarily result in the syntactic saturation of the verb. In the first example from Blackfoot we see object incorporation of the noun *iihpokón-* ‘ball’ into the verb *sskaawa* ‘acquire’ which causes syntactic saturation – the only argument the verb can take is now the subject, here *nóko’sa* ‘my child’. However, this same incorporation **may not cause syntactic saturation** and the argument slot left vacant by the incorporated noun is filled by a new nominal or by an already present one. In the second example from Blackfoot *nóko’sa* ‘my child’ takes the empty slot of the object, it leaves the subject slot empty and so the verb can now take a new subject, here *nít* ‘I’. The verb **has not changed in valency** as it is still transitive. With this kind of incorporation (with no syntactic saturation) the semantics of the verb **may slightly change**. Furthermore, many languages impose **restrictions on the semantics** of the noun that can replace the incorporated noun.

### 8.3 Analysis and Description

In no less than 400 words discuss noun incorporation in HA and SA.

- Where did your analysis start from?
- What kind(s) of NI can you observe in HA and SA? Motivate your answer citing examples from Set 1 and Set 2 above where necessary.
- What is the morphosyntax of NI?
- What are the limitations of NI? Are they morphosyntactic or semantic?
- Is there any behavior or structure you observe that remains difficult to explain and define?