Two Types of “Incorporation” in Mi’gmaq

This paper explores the structure of verb stems in Mi’gmaq (Eastern Algonquian) by investigating Noun Incorporation (NI). In Mi’gmaq, there are at least two different synchronically productive constructions that can both be superficially called NI. These are shown in (1) below:

(1)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. Medial incorporation, primary derivation</th>
<th>b. DNV, secondary derivation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maq-atp-a-t</td>
<td>Ti’am-u-e’ge-t</td>
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<tr>
<td>big-head-VAI-3</td>
<td>moose-DER-get.VAI-3</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘s/he has a big head’</td>
<td>‘S/he hunts moose’ (lit. ‘S/he moose-Vs’)</td>
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</table>

The first type, shown in (1-a), is what Algonquianists refer to as medial or stem-internal incorporation. In this construction a stem is derived directly by inflectional material affixed to the Root—primary derivation in Algonquianist literature. The second type, shown in (1-b) is a denominal verb construction (DNV), where -e’ge is a light verb meaning something like ‘get’. This is formed via secondary derivation, which involves category-changing and valence-changing operations (Goddard 1990).

In this paper I compare the two constructions in (1) and show that they differ; the incorporee in the first type is a Root while the incorporee in the second type is a little n. I analyze body-part medial-incorporation constructions as syntactic compounds using M-Incorporation, which allows a head to be adjoined to another head via external Merge to create a compound (Tomoka 2006). Previous analyses have taken these compounds to be a case of Root-Root Merger in the lexicon (e.g. Barrie & Mathieu to appear).

There has been a long-standing debate about whether DNVs should be considered as Noun Incorporation (Mithun 1986; Sadock 1986; Haugen 2007, among others). I argue that DNVs are an instance of NI, building on the analysis of Barrie & Mathieu (to appear). However, unlike Barrie & Mathieu (to appear), who argue that DNVs in Ojibwe involve phrasal movement, I show that in Mi’gmaq this construction involves head movement. This is supported by the fact that DNVs in Mi’gmaq are 1) not referential; 2) do not allow for stranded modifiers; 3) cannot be plural, and 4) do not allow NP doubling (hyponymous objects). However, like DNVs in Ojibwe, DNVs in Mi’gmaq can take nominalizing/derivational morphology.

(2) Medial Incorporation

(3) DNV

The data in this paper supports the idea that incorporation phenomena are not homogenous (Mithun 1984; Mithun 2010). The proposed analysis provides an in-depth look into morphology in Mi’gmaq, situated within the generative syntactic framework of Distributed Morphology (DM) (Halle & Marantz 1993; Marantz 1997). More broadly, this study advances our understanding of how words are built up in polysynthetic languages.
References


