

A Classification of Ainu Noun Incorporation and its Implications for Language Typology

Tomomi Sato
(Hokkaido University)

The Ainu noun incorporation (NI) can be classified into the four major types: object NI (*ku₁-turep₂-ta₃* ‘I₁ dig₃ up₃ **wild₂ lily₂ roots₂**’) (85.9%), intransitive (natural force/phenomenon) subject NI (*sir₁-pirka₂* ‘(The) **weather₁** is₂ good₂.’) (6.8%), intransitive (possessor-requiring) subject NI (*tek₁-e₁-pase₂-as₃* lit. ‘We₃ were₂ heavy₂-**hand₁**(ed)’, =were old, **-e** is a possessive suffix) (5.6%), and transitive (natural force/phenomenon) subject NI (*ku₁-koy₂-yanke₃* ‘I₁ am₃ **wave₂**-raised₃’) (1.7%). This distribution can be accounted for in terms of the interaction between a number of restrictions and principles on incorporation, such as subject incorporation restriction, referentiality restriction, semantic discrepancy restriction, backgrounding principle, and reflexive interpretation rescue principle (Sato 2012). What is important is that while this distribution exhibits a hierarchy of accessibility to NI in Ainu, there is also a conspicuous gap in it: possessor-requiring noun “object” NI proper does not occur in Ainu, e.g. only *ku₁-tek₂-sini₃-re₄* ‘I₁ let₄ (**my**) hands₂ rest₃’, but not **ku₁-tek₂-e₂-sini₃-re₄* ‘I₁ let₄ (**somebody**’s) hands₂ rest₃’, **e-** (POSS)) is possible. This gap is in fact compensated by an idiomatic phrasal verb construction consisting of a fixed possessor-requiring object and transitive verb (*i₁-par₂ a₃-o₄-yki₅* lit. ‘People₃ cook₅ at₄ my₁ mouth₂’, =feed me), which can be seen as a subtype of quasi-incorporation (QI) as discussed in Booji (2009).

The case of Ainu NI suggests that NI and QI are not essentially unrelated phenomena, but rather should be unified as a means for including a nominal concept into a single (either a word or not), closely-knit verbal complex; QI comes into play only after all possibilities in the NI hierarchy are exhausted.

NI hierarchy: O > S (natural force) > S (possessive) > A (natural force) > O (possessive)

Ainu: -----

Japanese: ?---

QI as a means for filling in the lower (inaccessible) positions in the NI hierarchy

Apparently, Japanese and Ainu are completely different. In Japanese, NI is peripheral, while QI (*shigoto-suru* ‘to do work’) exists as a productive type. In Ainu, on the other

hand, NI is productive, while QI is rather limited. Furthermore, Japanese QI exhibits a simple ‘object + vt’ type, whereas Ainu QI exhibits a marked ‘possessor requiring object + vt’ type. However, these profound differences can be explained by the above-mentioned hierarchy: since in Japanese even an ‘object + vt’ type located in the highest position of the NI accessibility hierarchy, is highly problematic (e.g. *na-zuku* ‘to give a name’), QI turns out to be the last resource to combine a nominal concept with a verb in a tighter fashion. This contrasts with Ainu, in which the NI accessibility extends further into the ‘A (natural force) + vt’ type. Thus, QI appears later at the ‘possessor requiring object + vt’ position, which is inaccessible to the NI in Ainu. I have shown that Ainu, with its rich NI as well as QI, is of great importance for constructing a more general morphosyntactic hierarchy for language typology.

References

- Booji, Geert (2009) A constructional analysis of quasi-incorporation in Dutch. *Gengo Kenkyu* 135: 5-27.
- Sato, Tomomi (2012) Ainugo chitose hōgen ni okeru meishihōgō: sono shurui to kanrenshokisoku. *Hokkaidōritsu Ainu minzoku bunka kenkyū sentā kiyō* 18: 1-31.