

## Phrasal Noun Incorporation in Tongan

General typological surveys of noun incorporation (e.g. Mithun 1984 and Rosen 1989) give the impression that noun incorporation in Polynesian languages is simple verb-noun compounding, with the the resulting compound verbs being intransitive. However, recent work on Polynesian languages (Massam 2001 for Niuean, Chung and Ladusaw 2004 for Māori) suggests that Polynesian noun incorporation is structurally more complex than this. Building upon this work, I offer evidence that this simple view also does not work for Tongan, and I offer a new analysis for this construction in Tongan within a constraint-based lexicalist framework.

Tongan noun incorporation exhibits three basic configurational properties. First, as shown in (1) and (2), ordinary transitive sentences contrast with sentences with incorporation in that prenominal function words cannot – and may not – appear in the incorporated version. Second, as shown in (3), phrases can incorporate. However, these phrases are restricted, as they allow no expression of case or determiners, nor certain kinds of relative clauses. Third, even within these phrasal incorporated expressions, the noun must be strictly adjacent to verb. This is shown in (4a & b), where the prenominal adjective *ki'i* is ungrammatical in incorporation in (4a), but the equivalent postnominal adjective *iiki* is grammatical in (4b).

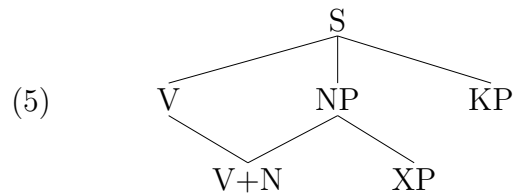
To handle this set of properties, I propose that this construction permits phrasal incorporates, but their placement and preceding elements are restricted because the verb + noun is in fact a single word. Under the mechanism of Lexical Sharing (Wescoat 2002), this verb + noun word projects two nodes in the syntax, a V and an N, and these nodes project further phrases, such as S and NP. Essentially, this analysis gives a structure like in (5), where nothing can precede the N inside NP, predicting the change from (1) to (2) and the contrast in (4).

Finally, even though the incorporate is phrasal, sentences with incorporation still follow the intransitive pattern where the external argument is marked with the absolutive case, as shown in (2)–(4). How can this be reconciled with the phrasal analysis proposed above? Following Massam (2001), I propose that only full nominal arguments participate in case marking (effectively, they are KPs), so that the incorporate, as an NP, does not figure in the determination of case.

The typology of nominal phrases – KPs, DPs, and NPs – can be used to account for the lack of case marking in noun incorporation, and is also useful in the analysis of clauses with “middle objects”. These clauses involve verbs of a low degree of transitivity, which have objects that also lack case markers, and subjects marked with absolutive case. This case marking pattern likewise seems sensitive to the appearance of an argument as a non-KP, more specifically, a DP.

## Data

- (1) Na'e inu 'a e kavá 'e Sione  
 PAST drank ABS DET kava ERG (name)  
 'Sione drank the kava' (Churchward 1953: 76)
- (2) Na'e **inu kava** 'a Sione.  
 PAST drink kava ABS (name)  
 'Sione drank kava.' (Churchward 1953: 76)
- (3) Na'e **fakama'a sea** 'i fale 'a Sione  
 PAST clean chair in house ABS (name)  
 'Sione cleaned chairs in the house.' (my fieldnotes)
- (4) a. \*Na'e **tō ki'i manioke** 'a Sione.  
 PAST plant small cassava ABS (name)  
 Intended: 'Sione planted a small amount of cassava.' (my fieldnotes)
- b. Na'e **tō manioke iiki** 'a Sione.  
 PAST plant cassava small ABS (name)  
 'Sione planted a small amount of cassava.' (my fieldnotes)



## References

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