College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences
Department of Linguistics and Translation
翻譯及語言學系

From Syntax to Lexicology
Noun Incorporation in Chinese

WANG Yong
Central China Normal University

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My research orientation

- Typological perspective, SFL as the theoretical framework, with special reference to Chinese ，English, etc.
  - To locate a research topic under the backdrop of typological studies, to tell the particular features from the universal ones.
  - The SFL framework helps bring depth to the research and explore its theoretical relevance.
    - How the form is related to the meaning and function (from description to explanation)
  - Chinese is my native language. There are many questions left unanswered.
    - There are several large-scale discussions about some issues in the history of Chinese grammar.
    - Do we have sensible things to say concerning these questions? Etc.

  - Are we just give new labels to old terms? Or can we offer new/alternative insights?
- How do we know where theory ends and description begins? How can we adapt the theory to the description of particular grammars ? And how may the description contribute to the theory for it to be typologically adequate?

目录 CONTENTS

1 Introduction

- Noun-Incorporation is a process of word-formation in which a nominal constituent is added to a verbal root, and the resulting construction is both a verb and a single word. The incorporated element is typically the object of the verbal element; it may also denote the agent, instrument, location, etc., **e.g., baby-sit, rope-walk, window-shop.**

- Mithun（1984: 847）describes it as the *most nearly syntactic* of all morphological processes that has morphological, syntactic and discourse consequences.

- The meaning of the resulting new word is more than the sum of its two constituents. The verbal is the head of the new word, with the nominal dependent on it.

1 Introduction

- **NI is one of the most common and productive process of word-formation in Chinese.**

- **There are many questions that are yet to be answered concerning this phenomenon.**

- **This paper is to probe into**

  - **the structural, semantic, and functional features of NI in Chinese**

  - **theoretical implications of studying NI in Chinese**

- The most important typological studies of NI are: Sapir (1911) and Mithun (1984). The latter proposed four type of NI mainly on the basis of native American languages.

- Mithun's (1984) typology is widely referred to and accepted as a reference framework for studying NI in other languages.

- The following typological review is based on Mithun (1984), Shopen (2007), Johns (2017).

-     TypeⅠ：Intransitive

-     This type of NI is not unlike compounding. The nominal element and the verbal element involved in the incorporation may or may not undergo morphological changes before they are juxtaposed to form a new word.

-     The whole clause becomes intransitive when the nominal element (which is typically the object) becomes part of the verb and it does not take any new object.

E. g.: Mokilese, an Austronesian language (Shopen 2007: 15)

Ngoah kohkoa oaring-kai
I   grind   coconut-these
'I am grinding these coconuts'

Ngoah ko-oaring
I   grind-coconut
'I am coconut-grinding'

The resulting verb, which has typically undergone some process of lexicalization and idiomaticization, denotes habitual activities. And its meaning may not be derived from the sum of its components.

- The resulting verb (RV) is transitive. This may have syntactic consequence regarding the pattern of the overall clause which contains the RV due to the fact that what is formerly the patient of the clause is incorporated. The vacated position makes it possible for formerly indirect participants, e.g., instrument, manner, or location to participate in the process directly (Shopen 2007: 16).

Subih tɔb   tɨh   ta-ma
Subih house 1SG   THEME-make
'I am making Subih's house'

Subih tɨh tɔb-ta-ma
Subih I   house-THEME-make
'I am making a house for Subih'
(literally 'I am house-making Subih')

- **Similarities of Type I and II:**

  - The incorporated nominal element does not show any marking in gender, number, or case.

  - As a morpheme in RV, the nominal element does not function in the syntax of the clause.

- **The difference mainly lies in the syntactic consequence:**

  - Type I NI renders the whole clause intransitive, while the Type II retain the transitive status of the clause by taking a new object when the former object is incorporated and becomes part of the verb (see Section 3).

- Type III noun incorporation is discourse-based; an incorporated nominal is more backgrounded (given) than a non-incorporated one.

  - Huahtla Nahuatl

A: *askeman ti-'-kwa nakatl.*
never you-it-eat meat
'You never eat meat.'

B: *na' ipanima ni-naka-kwa.*
I always I-meat-eat
'I eat it (meat) all the time.'

TYPE IV: CLASSIFICATORY NOUN INCORPORATION. A relativ[...] incorporated to narrow the scope of the V, as in Type III; b[...] accompanied by a more specific external NP which identifies [...] IN, e.g., in Mohawk:

A N stem may be incorporated to narrow the scope of a V, while a more specific external NP identifies the grammatical patient of the V.

Kanekwarúnyu wa'-k-akya'tawi'tsher-ú:ni.
it.dotted.DIST PAST-I-dress-make
'I dress-made a polka-dotted one.' ('I made a polka-dotted dress.')

2 NI from a Typological Perspective: An Implicational hierarchy (Mithun1984: 874-875)

- According to Mithun (1984: 874), NI within particular languages observes the chronological sequence of Type I, Type II, Type III, and Type IV.

- Typologically, a implicational hierarchy exists among the four types, i.e.,
  - Type IV ⊃ Type III ⊃ Type II ⊃ Type I
  - If a language contains productive Type IV NI, it also shows Type III. All languages with productive Type III also have Type II. Those with productive Type II also have Type I.

- In terms of the syntactic role of incorporated nominal, Mithun (1984: 875) found:
  - If the sole participant of the intransitive verb can be incorporated, the patient of the transitive verb can also be incorporated.
  - The agent of transitive verbs cannot be incorporated.

NI in Chinese

- **Definition: This is a word-forming process in which a nominal morpheme is incorporated into a verbal one to form a new verb.**

- **Chinese is a language which does not show morphological variation. It is very likely for bare nouns to co-occur with verbs. When verbs and nouns are abbreviated into mono-syllabic morphemes, NI will take place (Roberts 2010).**

- **NI in Chinese is open-ended and productive. Semantically the incorporated element may denote the patient, agent, location, instrument, manners in the clause.**

- **NI of Type I and II is commonly found in Chinese though the existence of Type III and IV NI is to be questioned.**

- **We concentrate on NI of Type I and II in this study.**

- Our discussion of NI in Chinese mainly concerns the types, the structural and syntactic features, the semantic and functional features, and lexicalization.

- 3.1 Types

- Type I: Intransitive (The RV is intransitive, though the incorporated verbal element may be transitive or intransitive before incorporation)

散	步	伤	心	逛	街
scatter	step	hurt	heart	look around	street
'take a walk'		'break one's heart'		'window shop'	
见	面	丢	人	留	心
see	face	loose	people	remain	heart
'meet'		'loose face'		'be mindful of'	
请	假	念	书	照	相
ask	leave	read	book	flash	photo
'ask for leave'		'study'		'take a photo'	
头	疼	兵	变	地	震
head	ache	soldier	change	earth	quake
'have a headache'		'have a mutiny'		'have an earthquake'	

Type II: Transitive

操　　　心
Wear up　heart
'be concerned about'

同　　情
same　emotion
'sympathize'

注　　意
focus　mind
'pay attention to'

怀　　疑
harbor　doubt
'to doubt'

瓜　分
melon　divide
'divide up'

品　　味
savour　taste
'taste'

结　　　束
make a knot　knot
'put an end to'

负　　责
shoulder responsibility
'to be responsible for'

联　　　系
connect　　tie
'contact'

Type II: Transitive

- **There are more Type I incorporated verbs than Type II ones.**

- **Some RVs can be both transitive and intransitive.**

头	疼			打	假
head	ache			beat	fake
'have a headache'/ 'be troubled by'				'crack down on fake products'	

心	疼
heart	ache
have a heartache/ cherish	

告	状	/	状	告
report	indictment		indictment	report
'accuse'			'accuse'	

过	路	/	路	过
pass	path		path	pass

'pass by'   'by-pass'

3.2 Structural features

- NI is a kind of compounding. The incorporated nominal is a mono-syllabic morpheme; it combines with the verbal morpheme to form a new verb. If the incorporated nominal is of more than one syllable, the result is a phrase, not a word.

熬	通宵	泡	网吧
stay up	overnight	linger	Internet bar
'stay up overnight'		'linger at the Internet bar'	
走	绿道	打	主攻手
walk	Greenway	play	ace spiker
'take a walk along the Greenway'		'play as the ace spiker'	

- Xing Fuyi (1992)

- Both the nominal and the verbal morpheme in the incorporation are mono-syllabic, yielding a bi-syllabic verb, in accordance with the general tendency of word formation in Chinese (Lv Shuxiang 1963, Feng Shengli (1997), Dong Xiufang 2016)

- RVs are lexicalized to different degrees (Dong Xiufang 2016).

- NV (the nominal and verbal morphemes) are integrated and their closeness to each other is of different degrees. Some combinations are close enough to behave as typical words, others may allow certain insertions in between so that they behave more or less like phrases. That is, the RV may be used discontinuously.

  - 投资者或许可以稍微放一下心 （let go-once-heart, 'feel relieved for a while'）

  - 告了一状 。 (report-LE-one-indictment, 'accuse')

- The nominal morpheme does not take any numeral-classifier (though nouns typically take numeral-classifiers as premodifiers in Chinese), adjectives, demonstratives as premodifiers.

- It is very non-salient in terms of its referential force. The RV out of the nominal and the verbal morpheme relates directly to other syntactic elements within the clause

知 道–了	品 味–了	着 手–了	状 告了
know way–LE	savour taste–LE	start hand–LE	indictment report–LE
'have known'	'have tasted'	'have started'	'have accused'

ow the RV:

- **With some, aspect markers can both be added after the RV or in between its two components:**

produce	anger	open	course	dress	hair	go	appointment
生	气	开	课	理	发	赴	约
'be angry'		'offer course'		'dress hair'		'to go an appointment'	

- **With some, complements cannot be inserted:**
- 知道了好半天
- 品味了好久
- **With others, complements can both be added after the RV or in between its two components:**
- 生了一会儿气
- 理了三次发
- 赴了五次约

- **With regard to the order, both VN, e.g.,**
    - 操心 (wear up-heart, 'be concerned about')   动员 (persuade-people, 'persuade')
    - 负责 (shoulder-responsibility, 'be responsible')
  - **Some VN verbs come from the NV order:**
    - 走人 (walk-people, 'leave')   丢人 (lose-people, 'lose face')
- **And NV may occur:**
  - 头疼(head-ache, 'headache'), 兵变 (military-change, 'munity'), 地震 (earth-quake, 'earth-quake')
  - **Some NV verbs come from the VN order, e.g.,**状告 (indictment-report, 'accuse'), 路过 (path-pass, 'pass by')
- **The RV will be more lexicalized when the two component morphemes shift their position after incorporation. For example, they cannot be used discontinuously, and some may be used transitively, e.g.,**

  路过 (path-pass, 'pass by')   声张 (noise-spread, 'disclose')

   壁还 (jade-return, 'return something intact')   脑补(brain-make up, 'make up/imagine')

  状告 (indictment-report, 'accuse')   瓜分(melon-divide, 'divide like cutting melon')

  数说 (number-say, 'say by listing numbers')

- **In Chinese, verbs and adjectives may denote things/situations; thus they may participate in processes and they may be incorporated:**
    - 作死 (make-die, 'take the road to ruin')　　　　　冒死 (risk-die, 'risk one's life')

    - 害羞 (suffer-shy, 'be shy')　　　　　　　创新 (create-new, 'create/be creative'

    - 炫富(show off-rich, 'show off one wealth')　吃苦 (eat-bitter, 'have a rough time')

    - 打假 (beat-fake, 'crack down on fake products')　　哭穷 (cry-poor, 'tell people how hard　　　　　　　　　　　　　　up one is')

    - 履新 (carry out-new, 'assume one's new post')

- **Such cases also belong to noun-incorporation, and they are syntactic features that find their way into lexicology.**

- **3.3 Semantic relationship: Before incorporation:**

- This mainly refers to the experiential relationship between the nominal and the verbal involved in the incorporation. The relationship may be different before and after incorporation:

- The Range of transitive verbs

  - 吃亏 (eat-loss, 'suffer a loss'), 复员 (recover-people, 'demobilize'), 害羞 (suffer-shy, 'be shy'), 化妆 (change-make up, 'make up'), 离婚 (leave-marriage, 'divorce'), 留神 (leave-mind, 'be mindful of'), 散步 (scatter-step, 'take a walk'), 伤心 (hurt-heart, 'break heart'), 开户 (open-account, 'open an account'), 逛街 (go around-street, 'window shop'), 扫货 (swipe-goods, 'to buy a lot of things'), 路过 (path-pass, 'by-pass')

- The sole participant of intransitive verbs (agent, undergoer, etc.):

  - 走人 (walk-people, 'leave') , 丢人 (lose-people, 'lose face'), 头疼 (head-ache, 'have a headache')

  - 病变、兵变、声张、地震、蚕食、鲸吞、地震、情愿、头疼、心疼

- Both can be subsumed under the term Medium (in terms of ergativity).

- **Manner and instrument: 枪杀 (gun-kill, 'kill with a gun'), 目击 (eye-shot, 'witness'), 机打 (machine-print, 'print')**

- **Location: 库藏 (store-hide, 'store'), 库存 (store-keep, 'to store in stock'), 座谈 (seat-talk, 'have an informal discussion')**

- **3.3 Semantic relationship: After incorporation:**
  - **The patient or agent of the verb before incorporation functions to denote manner or instrument after incorporation:**
    - **瓜分 (melon-divide, 'to divide like cutting melons'), 数说 (number-say, 'say by listing numbers'), 蛇行 (snake-crawl, 'crawl like a snake'), 鲸吞 (whale-swallow, 'swallow as whales do'), 蚕食 (silkworm-eat, 'eat like a silkworm')**
    - **When the incorporated nominal is placed before the verbal, it functions as the adverbial to modify the verbal, thus reinforcing prominent status of the verbal in the RV.**
  - **Interestingly, in some cases when the nominal is preposed, the RV changes from intransitive to transitive: 路过 (path-pass, 'by-pass'), 脑补(brain-make up, 'make up/imagine'), 状告 (indictment-report, 'accuse')**

NI in Chinese

- **3.4 Lexicalization**
  - **This refers to the process in which the components of a word become integrated into one unit which acquires the status of a word (Dong Xiufang 2016：30).**
  - **Compared with other languages, the nominal in NI is more deeply incorporated in Chinese, in that it loses its referential force, and it does not function in the cohesion of the context. Li & Thomson (1981 :71–2) take semantic transparency/idiomaticity as a criterion for judging whether a case of NI results in a word proper. That is, if the meaning of the RV cannot be derived from its components, the RV is a word. Otherwise it is a phrase.**
  - **Lexicalized RV may have undergone some phonological change:**
    - **知道 (know-way, 'know') (NB: the stress)**
    - **头疼 (head-ache, 'be troubled by'), 心疼 (heart-ache, 'cherish')**
    - **吃饭 (eat-rice, 'have meal'), 喝茶 (drink-tea, 'to have a casual mean'), 过夜 (spend-night, 'have supper')**

- **（赵元任 1968/2006：299；Mithun 1984: 889-890; 董秀芳 2016：43）**

- Semantic transparency is a matter of degree.

- Generally, when nouns are vague and weak in their referential meaning (e.g., it is not specified in terms of quantity, reference, and definiteness), it does not figure as a typical participants. It becomes dependent on the process; it becomes part of the process, though it may be meaningful within it.

- The functional configuration of 'Process + Range' is applicable to most cases of NI, especially when the incorporated element is the object. This functional structure is process-oriented, rather than participant-oriented.

- *What*-probe can not applied to most cases.

    - 吃亏 (eat-loss, 'suffer losses'), 复员 (recover-people, 'demobilize'), 害羞 (suffer-shy, 'be shy'), 化妆 (change-make up, 'make up'), 离婚 (leave-marriage, 'divorce'), 留神 (leave-mind, 'be mindful of'), 散步 (scatter-step, 'take a walk'), 伤心 (hurt-heart, 'break heart'),

- **Though they may be analysed as 'Process + Range', they are lexicalized to different degrees.:**
  - 结婚(tie-marriage, 'marry'), 离婚(leave-marriage, 'divorce'), 吃亏 (eat-loss, 'suffer losses'), 开户 (open-account, 'open an account'), 开课 (open class, 'begin a class')
- **Those cases which can be analysed as 'Agent + Process' are less lexicalized, thus we can (marginally) apply *what/who*-probe to most of them.**
  - 头疼(head-ache, 'headache'), 病变 (disease-change, 'change pathologically'), 兵变 (military-change, 'munity'), 地震 (earth-quake, 'earth-quake'), 心疼 (heart-ache, 'cherish'), 自恋 (self-love, 'self love'), 自 顾 (self-care, 'take care of one's self'), 自虐 (self-torture, 'self-torture'), 自残 (self-mutilate, 'mutilate one's self'), 声张 (sound-spread, 'disclose')
- **Those which can be analysed as 'Manner/Instrument/Location + Process' are least lexicalized. The combination of the verbal and nominal is relatively loose.**
  - *How*-Probe: 蚕食，鲸吞，枪杀

- **Experiential and textual**

    - **The transitive usage and intransitive usages of the RV and the differences**

    - **Transitivity of the RV with reference to its non-incorporated counterpart**

    - **The textual meaning is manifest through more extended context, which also involve comparison between before and after incorporation.**

- **4.1 Transitivity**

    - **Transitivity is of different degrees (Hopper & Thompson 1980)**

    - **Configuration of participant roles**

Transitivity as a matter of degree

	HIGH	LOW
A. PARTICIPANTS	2 or more participants, A and O.[1]	1 participant
B. KINESIS	action	non-action
C. ASPECT	telic	atelic
D. PUNCTUALITY	punctual	non-punctual
E. VOLITIONALITY	volitional	non-volitional
F. AFFIRMATION	affirmative	negative
G. MODE	realis	irrealis
H. AGENCY	A high in potency	A low in potency
I. AFFECTEDNESS OF O	O totally affected	O not affected
J. INDIVIDUATION OF O	O highly individuated	O non-individuated

Hopper, Paul J. & Sandra A. Thompson. 1980. Transitivity in Grammar and Discourse. *Language*. 56(2): 252.

Functional analysis: Transitivity

- ## 4.1.1 Transitivity

  - **Through incorporation, what is formerly a participant becomes part of the process. If no new participant is introduced, the process become less transitive. This is particularly true with Type I NI.**

    - 萧子禾为理工科的学生*开了一门自然辩证法的课*，……

    - 为此复旦大学力图通过深化人事制度改革激励教师积极从事教学和育人工作，多开课、开好课、*开新课*，……。

  - **If Type I RV becomes Type II RV, its transitivity increases significantly:**

    - 一位老人由南向北从人行道过路

    - 老公带着老婆散步,路过餐馆 ……

    - 农民购买农资产品要注意选择，有关部门也应继续"打假"。

    - 打假 方舟子，弘扬真善美。

Functional analysis: Transitivity

- **Transitivity analysis**

  - **From transitive to intransitive:**

    - 萧子禾为理工科的学生开了一门自然辩证法的课 （Actor + Process + Range）

    - 教师……多开课 ……。（Actor + Process）

  - **From intransitive to transitive:**

    - 老公带着老婆散步，从餐馆路过。（Agent + Circumstance + Process）

    - 老公带着老婆散步，路过餐馆。（Agent + Circumstance + Process + Range）

Functional analysis: textual

- **Incorporation of goal into the process makes it possible for formerly indirect participant to participate directly into the process. This constitutes a syntactic choice to bring an otherwise non-prominent participant into prominence.**
    - **把民众动员起来 vs 动员民众**
    - **把两个局长都撤了职 vs. 撤职了两个局长**
    - **把这件重大工作负责起来 vs. 负责这件重大工作 （吕叔湘 1948/1982：187）**

    - **老公带着老婆散步, 从餐馆路过。**
    - **老公带着老婆散步, 路过餐馆。**
    - **农民购买农资产品要注意选择，有关部门也应继续"打假"。**
    - **打假方舟子，弘扬真善美。**

- **1. Lexicology and syntax in Chinese (董秀芳2016：92）。**
  - **In some ways, NI is the most nearly syntactic of all morphological processes. It combines constituents, namely N's and V's, that are usually associated syntactically. It can be vastly more productive than other derivational processes, like nominalization or causativization, since it combines two potentially open sets of morphemes, N and V stems, instead of one set of stems and a limited set of affixes, ……(Mithun 1984: 889)**
  - **Today is morphology is yesterday's syntax (Givón1971: 413).**
  - **Lexis is more than the most delicate grammar.**
  - **It is the relic of grammar. They are mutually reflective and interwoven into each other.**

- 2. **NI in Chinese show ergativity feature of the language.**
  - Consider what is incorporated in transitive and non-transitive processes.
  - In the ergativity model, Medium is more central than Agent (Halliday 1985).
  - Since the incorporated noun is generally either a transitive P or an intransitive S but not the A of a transitive sentence, the pattern is basically ergative.
  - This is another piece of evidence to bear out the comment that ergativity is a common pattern of word formation even in otherwise accusative languages (Moravcsik 2013: 121).

- **3. Today is morphology is yesterday's syntax (Givón1971: 413). This has important implications for the SOV vs. SVO controversy in the literature.**
  - **I expect that if the synchronic word order of a language exhibits different possibilities from the relative order of the incorporated element and the verb, the incorporation order reflects an older order (Steele 1976: 39).**

Summary

- **Types of NI in Chinese**

- **Its structural, semantic, and functional features**

- **Its implications**

Thanks !