Noun Incorporation and Absolutive in Chukchi: towards a constructionist approach[1]

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1. Introduction

1.1. NI in Chukchi

N(oun) I(ncorporation) in Chukchi interacts with argument structure alternations and Absolutive assignment (1); see (Nedjalkov 1976; Polinskaja & Nedjalkov 1987; Spencer 1997).

(1)   'Transitive Object Incorporation'[2]

a.   *ewirʔə-t*   *Ø-nwiriw-ni-ne-t*
     cloths-**ABS.PL**   2/3.S/A-take.off-**3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O-PL**

     pʔajmejoɬɣ-epə
     drying.stick-ABL

b.   *Ø-ewirʔə-nwirik-wʔ-i*   *pʔajmejoɬɣə-epə*
     2/3.S/A-cloths-take.off-TH-**2/3SG.S**   drying.stick-ABL

c.   *Ø-ewirʔə-nwiriw-ni-n*   *pʔajmejoɬɣə-n*
     2/3.S/A-cloths-take.off-**3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O**   drying.stick -**ABS.SG**

     'She took the cloths from the dry

General NI problems: How to treat (a-c) constructions?

(i)   What determines the possibility of incorporation of a given participant?

(ii)   What determines the coding of non-incorporated participants in an incorporating construction (when a participant can be *advanced* to Absolutive)?

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[2] All the examples are from a variety of Chukchi spoken in Amguema village. This data was collected during my fieldtrips in 2017-2018.

More specific NI problems: The relationship between syntax/lexicon?

(ii)   Can we answer (i); (ii) by observing the syntactic properties of non-NI construction?

(iii)   Is the information of the given verb's lexical entry enough to answer (i); (ii)?

Aims of this talk:

- ➢ Claim that neither the verb's lexical entry (e.g. Spencer 1995) nor the syntax of non-incorporative construction (e.g. Baker et al. 2005) is fully responsible for the syntax of NI construction.
- ➢ Observe some patterns of promotion to Absolutive in Chukchi P-participant NI construction
- ➢ Highlight some possible insights which a constructionist approach and causal chain representation of an event can bring us.

1.2. 'Projectionist' and 'Constructionist' approaches to argument structure

PROJECTIONIST APPROACH: semantically-based information in verb's lexical entry determines the morphosyntactic representation.

CONSTRUCTIONIST APPROACH: the morphosyntactic representation is determined by the (basic) semantics of a verb root and by the properties of a construction in which this verb occurs.

2. Chukchi NI is not 'derived'

PROJECTIONIST APPROACHES: Syntax of NI construction can be predicted by the verb's properties

- ➢ 'Syntactic' approaches: Internal argument is incorporated (e.g. Baker 1988); Absolutive is incorporated (e.g. Nedjalkov 1976; Polinskaja 1990). Indirect Object/IN's possessor is promoted to Absolutive (Baker et al. 2005).
- ➢ 'Lexicalist' approaches: Most P-like participant is incorporated (Spencer 1995). Another internal argument can be promoted to Absolutive (Rosen 1989).

2.1. NI construction syntax is not derived from non-NI construction syntax

Case 1: Promotion to Absolutive selects different Obliques

(2) Goal is promoted

a. *ətɬʔa-ta*   *keɬi-t*   *rumekew-ni-ne-t*
  mother-INS book-ABS.PL put.together-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O-PL
  ŋenqaj-etə *saŋɬa-**ɣtə***
  boy-DAT   box-**DAT**

b. *ətɬʔa-ta*   *keɬi-numekew-ni-n*
  mother-INS book-put.together-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O
  *seŋəɬ-**Ø*** *ŋenqaj-etə*
  box-**ABS** box-DAT

'Mother put some books together in a box for a boy'.

(3) Goal cannot be promoted

a. *qɬawəɬ-a* *ŋeɬɣə-t*   *ɣa-natwə-ɬena-t*
  man-INS skin-ABS.PL PF-bring(to.house)-PF.3SG-PL
  ra-səko-ɣtə   *ənaaɬʔ-etə*
  house-IN-DAT   older.brother-DAT

b. *qɬawəɬ-a*   *ɣa-ŋaɬɣə-natwə-ɬen*
  man-INS   PF-skin-bring(to.house)-PF.3SG
  *əneeɬʔə-**n***   *ra-səko-ɣtə*
  older.brother-**ABS.SG** house-IN-DAT

c. **qɬawəɬ-a* *ɣa-ŋaɬɣə-natwə-ɬen*
  man-INS   PF-skin-bring(to.house)-PF.3SG
  *jara-**ŋə***   *ənaaɬʔ-etə*
  house-**ABS.SG** older.brother-DAT

'The man brought some reindeer skins for his brother into jaranga (Chukchi house)'.

- ✓ Participants with different semantic/syntactic roles are promoted.
- ✓ It is unlikely that the difference between (2b) and (3c) arises because of argument/adjunct distinction or different structural positions of objects…

Case 2: Oblique is incorporated instead of Absolutive/Direct Object

Verbs of hitting/contact with a body (*pirik* 'grab'; *wejpək* 'tweak'; *małek* 'stroke'; *jəɣuk* 'bite'; *tała(jwə)k* 'hit/beat').

The affected individual is represented as Absolutive DO (4a). The place of contact (body-part) is expressed as Ablative Obl (4a). What is incorporated is a place of contact (4b-c)[3].

(4) 'Absolutive' cannot be incorporated

a. *termesʔə-ŋinqej-e*   *ławt-epə*   *ʔattʔəqej*
    brute-boy-INS   head-ABL dog.ABS.SG
    tałajwə-ne-n
    hit.hard-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O

b. *termesʔə-ŋinqej   *ławt-epə*   *ʔattʔə-tałajwə-ɣʔ-e*
    brute-boy.ABS.SG   head-ABL   dog-hit.hard-TH-2/3SG.S

c. *termesʔə-ŋinqej-e*   *ʔattʔəqej*   *ławtə-tałajwə-ne-n*
    brute-boy-INS   dog.ABS.SG   head-hit.hard-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O

'A bully hit the dog on the head / Hit the dog's head'.

- ✓ We can't directly predict what is incorporated employing only construction-independent notions like 'Absolutive' / 'Direct Internal Object'

3.2. Chukchi NI is not derived from the verb's lexical entry

Case 1: Possibility of participant's incorporation depends on the expression of other participants.

Contact/hit verbs: When no Place is present, the incorporation of affected individual is possible (5).

(5)

a. *termesʔə-ŋinqej-e*   *ʔattʔəqej*   *tałajwə-ne-n*

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[3] Spray/load verbs in Amguema Chukchi exhibit similar behavior (compare with the data on another Chukchi variety discussed by Nedjalkov (1976)). Consider also similar construction with contact verbs described in (Dunn 1999).

brute-boy-INS dog.ABS.SG hit.hard-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O

b. *termesʔə-ŋinqej* *ʔattʔə-tałajwə-ɣʔ-e*
brute-boy.ABS.SG dog-hit.hard-TH-2/3SG.S

'A bully hit a dog hard'.

✓ Under lexicalist approach like (Spencer 1995) we would need two separate lexical entries for hit/contact verbs.

Case 2: Some promoted participants seem not to be present in a verb's lexical entry

Spencer's (1995) proposal: all promoted participants are represented in a verb's lexical entry.

Evidence: Locative 'External possession' constructions (6). Possessors can be case-marked by verbs → they are treated as verbs' arguments.

(6) *ətłəɣə-k* *ʔətwʔet* *jərʔet-ɣʔ-i*
father-LOC boat.ABS.SG flood-TH-3SG.S

'Father's boat flooded'. (Nedjalkov 1976: 189; glosses are mine)

Amguema Chukchi: (6) is ungrammatical (with this semantics). Some promoted participants can not be expressed as Obliques (8).[4]

(7)
a. *rətəmnew-ni-n* *saj-koka-ken* *kaɣərɣajpə-n*
lose-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O tea-pot-REL cover-NOM.SG

b. *kaɣərɣajpə-nətəmŋew-ne-n* *saj-kok*
cover-lose-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O tea-pot.NOM.SG

'He lost the tea pot's cover'.

(8) *rətəmnew-ni-n* **saj-koka-jpə/k* *kaɣərɣajpə-n*
lose-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O tea-pot-ABL/LOC cover-NOM.SG

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[4] There is a possibility that the process of promotion to Absolutive is entirely separate from the NI formation. Spencer (1995) points out that the promotion happens in denominal verbs, too. However, the range of semantic roles of promoted participants in denominal verb construction is more narrow than the range of semantic roles which can be promoted in NI construction (see Inenlikej, Nedjalkov 1967).

Intended meaning: 'He lost the tea pot's cover (He lost the cover from the tea pot)'.

4. Towards a constructionist approach

Interim summary

- ➢ We can not predict the possibility of NI of a given participant solely on the basis of a verb's lexical representation/the syntax of non-NI clause
- ➢ Verb's lexical entry/syntax of a non-NI construction provides to little information to predict which participant will be promoted
- ✓ Solution: consider n

4.1. Croft's (1991; 2012) Causal Chain approach

Proposal: Events tend to be constructed as directed, acyclic, non-branching causal chains

Causally undirected events:

- ➢ Locative relations: the Figure is construed as antecedent to the Ground
- ➢ Possessive relations: the Possessum is construed as antecedent to the Possessor

Argument realization rules (simplified version adopted for Chukchi NI):

- ➢ The verbal profile is delimited by Subject and Object (if any)
- ➢ In semantically transitive events, IN follows the Subject and precedes the Object (if any); In semantically intransitive events, IN precedes the Subject

(9)   *termesʔə-ŋinqej-e*   *ʔəttʔəqej*   *ɬawtə-taɬajwə-ne-n*
       brute-boy-INS   dog.ABS.SG   head-hit.hard-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O
       'A bully hit the dog on the head / Hit the dog's head'.

Bully	→	head	⊢	**dog**
ACTS		IS.HITTEN		**IS.AFFECTED**
SUBJ		INC		OBJ

(10)   *termesʔə-ŋinqej*   *ʔəttʔə-taɬa-jwə-ɣʔ-e*
       brute-boy.ABS.SG   dog-hit.hard-TH-2/3SG.S
       'A bully hit a dog hard'.

bully	→	dog
ACTS		IS.HITTEN&AFFECTED
SUBJ		INC

4.2. Two Chukchi NI+Promotion constructions

(A) Separation/Attachment construction

SUBJ acts on IN so it is 'separated from'/'attached to' the OBJ.

(11) *ajmak* *ɣətoɬqəɬə-swe-ne-n*
carcass   rib-cut-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O
'She cut the ribs off the body'.

(12) *əmmemə-ne*   *sajpatə-ttʔə-ne-n*   *kojŋə-n*
mom-AN.ERG   tea-pour-3sg.a.3.o-3sg.o   cup-ABS.SG
'Mom poured some tea into the cup'.

➢ An event can be construed via Separation/Attachment construction if there is a full contact between IN and DO (compare (12; 13) and (14; 15)).

(13) *ətɬʔa-ta*   *awerʔə-jme-ne-n*   *pʔajmejoɬɣə-n*
mother-INS   cloth-hang-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O   drying.stick-ABS.SG
'Mother hang clothes on the drying stick'.

(14) **ətɬʔa-ta*   *stoɬ-Ø*   *Ø-kojŋə-treɬ-ne-n*
mother-INS   table-ABS.SG   2/3.S/A-cup-put-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O
'Mother put a cup on the table' (ungrammatical in this interpretation).

(15) **qɬawəɬ-a*   *ɣa-ŋaɬɣə-natwə-ɬen*   *jara-ŋə*
man-INS   PF-skin-bring(to.house)-PF.3SG   house-ABS.SG
'The man brought some reindeer skins into jaranga (Chukchi house)'.

➢ The Source/Goal participants can be animate

(16) *<…>na-wəkwə-n-eɬɣe-t-ɣʔe-n=ʔəm<…>*
LOW.A-stone-TR-hang-VB-TH-3SG.O=EMPH

'They've tied a stone to his neck…'. (invincible_text)

(B) 'Benefit'/'Harm' construction

SUBJ acts on IN and this action affects/changes OBJ in a good or bad way.

(17) *ətɬəɣ-e waɬa-mna-ne-n   enaraɬʔə-n*
father-INS knife-sharpen-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O   neighbour-ABS.SG
'Father sharpened the knife for the neighbour'.

(18) *ekke-ne ətɬəɣə-n   ʔəttʔə-n-qametwa-w-ne-n*
son-INS   father-NOM.SG dog-TR-eat-CS-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O
'Son fed dogs for father'.

➢ Sometimes it is unclear which construction is used to describe a particular event

(19) *aʔasek-a man-enewna-ne-n   ŋinqej*
guy-INS   money-take.away-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O   boy.ABS.SG
'A guy took away some money from the boy'. (Money is separated from the boy/The boy's wealth is 'damaged')

➢ Some events can be construed via both constructions (different participants are profiled and promoted to OBJ)

(20) 'Separation construction'

ewirʔə-nwiriw-ni-n   pʔajmejoɬɣə-n   ŋaakka-ɣtə
cloth-take.off-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O   drying.stick-ABS.SG   daughter-DAT
'She took the clothes from the drying stick for the daughter'.

(21) 'Benefit construction'

ewʔirə-nwiriw-ni-n   ŋeekək-Ø
cloth-take.off-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O   daughter-ABS.SG

pʔajmejoɬɣə-tkən-epə
drying.stick-TOP-ABL
'She took the clothes from the drying stick for the daughter'.

5. The interplay of two constructions and Chukchi promotion puzzles

5.1. No causal chain interruption?

(22) *ətɬəɣə-n*   *na-mane-toɬʔat-ɣʔa-n*   *saŋɬa-jpə*
      father-ABS.SG   LOW.A-money-steal-TH-3SG.O   box-ABL
      'They stole the father's money from the box'.

➤ (23) cannot be construed via Separation Construction, while (24b) can be.

(23) **seŋəɬ-Ø*   *na-mane-toɬʔat-ɣʔa-n*
      box-ABS.SG   LOW.A-money-steal-TH-3SG.O
      Intended meaning: 'They stole the money from the box'

(24) Separation Construction

a.   *mane-toɬʔat-ɣʔa-t*   *ŋenqaj-ɣəpə*
      money-steal-TH-PL   boy-ABL

b.   *ŋinqej-Ø*   *na-mane-toɬʔat-ɣʔa-n*
      boy-ABS.SG   LOW.A-money-steal-TH-3SG.O

'They stole the money from the boy' (the money did not belong to this boy).

➤ Why (25) is ungrammatical? The 'Harm' causal chain is interrupted by what can be possibly constructed via Harm/Separation Construction.

(26) **aʔasek-a*   *ətɬəɣə-n*   *mane-toɬʔan-ne-n*
      guy-INS   father-ABS.SG   money-steal-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O
      ŋenqaj-ɣəpə
      boy-ABL
      Intended meaning: 'The guy stole father's money from the boy'.

guy	→	money	⊢	boy	⊢	father
ACTS		ARE.STOLEN		LOSES.MONEY		**GETS.HARMED**
SUBJ		INC		I.OBJ		OBJ

The interruption of similar kind is prohibited in Benefit Construction ()

(27) *ŋeekək awerʔə-jme-ne-n
    daughter.ABS.SG cloth-hang-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O
    pʔajmejoɣə-tkənə-k
    drying.stick-TOP-LOC
    Intended: 'She hanged the cloths on the drying stick for the daughter'.

she	→	cloths	⊢	drying.stick	⊢	daughter
ACTS		MOVES		IS.LOADED		**BENEFITS**
SUBJ		INC		I.OBJ		OBJ

(28) *ətłəɣ-e ekək wała-mna-ne-n
    father-INS son.ABS.SG knife-sharpen-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O
    enarałʔ-etə
    neighbor-DAT
    Intended meaning: 'Father sharpened son's knife for the neighbor'.

5.2. Causal chain interruption and event directionality

Sometimes a Benefit Construction seem to encode an event with an interrupted causal chain (29-31).

(29) ewʔirə-nwiriw-ni-n ŋeekək-Ø
    cloth-take.off-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O daughter-ABS.SG
    pʔajmejołɣə-tkən-epə
    drying.stick-TOP-ABL
    'She took the clothes from the drying stick for the daughter'.

she	→	cloths	⊢	drying.stick	⊢	daughter
ACTS		MOVES		IS.UNLOADED		**BENEFITS**
SUBJ		INC		I.OBJ		OBJ

(30) *ətɬʔa-ta*   *qepɬə-piri-ni-n*
mother-INS   ball-take-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O
ŋeekke-qej-Ø   *ŋenqaj-ɣəpə*
daughter-DIM-ABS.SG   boy-ABL
'The mother took a ball from her daughter for a boy'.

she	→	ball	⊢	boy	⊢	**daughter**
ACTS		MOVES		LOSES.BALL		**BENEFITS**
SUBJ		INC		I.OBJ		OBJ

(31) *awənraɬʔ-a*   *na-ɣətoɬqəɬə-swe-mək*   *ajmak-ɣəpə*
housewife-INS   LOW.A-rib-cut-1PL.S/O   carcass-ABL
'The houswife cut the ribs from the carcass for us'.

➢ Why (29); (30) are grammatical, while (26), (27) are ungrammatical?

Possible analysis:

➢ In (27) ATTACHMENT subevent precedes BENEFIT subevent; in (26) SEPARATION subevent precedes HARM subevent.
➢ In (29), (30) SEPARATION subevent precedes BENEFIT subevent.
➢ ATTACHMENT and BENEFIT subevents (as well as SEPARATION and HARM subevents) can be regarded as subevents with *harmonic directions*
✓ An event can not be construed via Benefit/Harm Construction if it can be constructed via Attachment/Separation Construction 'oriented' in the same direction

6. Summary

✓ Chukchi NI should not be regarded as a derivation from analytic construction (see Velázquez-Castillo (1996); Muro (2009) for similar approaches)
✓ Additional studies of Chukchi verb classes/alternations is required

✓ Promotion to Absolutive is associated not only with complex pragmatics (see Polinskaja & Nedjalkov 1987) but also with event structures

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