

Noun Incorporation in Michif

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In this presentation I discuss whether noun incorporation is attested in Michif in a comparative perspective with Plains Cree. Michif is a mixed language combining Plains Cree verbs and Metis French nouns.

Prototypical Noun Incorporation (NI) is defined in Mattissen (2003: 169) and Jacques (2012: 1208) as the compounding of a nominal root with a verbal root into a verb, on the conditions that (1) both the nominal and the verbal roots in question exist as independent stem words (even with morphophonological changes), (2) the resulting construction constitutes both a phonological and a morphological word, (3) which can occur in finite forms.

This is attested in Plains Cree. Example 1 results from the incorporation of the noun *iskwew* [animate noun] ‘woman’ into the transitive animate verb *wanih-ê-w* [verb transitive animate] ‘s/he loses s.o.’ (AI= animate intransitive; AN= animate; IND= independent; F= feminine; POSS= possessive; S= singular; TA= transitive animate; TI= transitive inanimate):

- (1) wana-iskwiiw-ii-w
lose-woman-AI-IND.3S
's/he loses her/his woman.'

In this sense, NI does not appear to occur in Michif. All Michif nouns are of French origin and there is no possibility to incorporate French noun roots into a verbal Cree structure. (1) becomes (2) in Michif:

- (2) wanih-ee-w sa faam
lose-TA-IND.3S POSS woman.F.AN

However, some Plains Cree incorporated forms are used also in Michif. In (3) and (4) I give a pair of Plains Cree and Michif equivalents:

- (3) kisîpêki-yâkan-ê-w Plains Cree
wash-plate-AI-IND.3S
's/he washes dishes'
- (4) kishiipeeki+yaakan-ee-w Michif
wash+dishes-AI-IND.3S
's/he washes dishes'

(3) is the result of the synchronic process of incorporation of the noun *oyâkan* ('dish') and a verb root meaning 'to wash' (e.g. *kisîpêk-î-w* AI, 's/he bathes'). Instead, Michif uses a lexicalized word form (4), since there is no separate entry for *yaakan*.

Moreover, some noun incorporated verbs in Plains Cree appear to be synchronically parsed as complex in Michif as well:

- (5) *li* *savooñ* *pur* *kishiipeek-ishtikwaan-ee-hk*
DEF.M.S soap.M.INAN for wash-head-AI-IND.INDEF.AC
'the shampoo' (lit. 'the soap for head washing')

Etymologically, the Michif element *ishtikwaan* in (5) derives from the Plains Cree inanimate noun *mistikwân* 'head'. The word for 'head' in Michif is the French-derived *tet*. Michif speakers appear to single out the component *ishtikwaan* as 'related to the head' in elicitation. This is probably due to the existence of several other occurrences in Michif where the same component appear, such as *kee-shtikwaan-ee-w* 's/he has a headache', or *maachi-ishtikwaan-ee-w* 's/he is stubborn'.

399 words excluding references

References

Jacques, Guillaume. 2012. From denominal derivation to incorporation. *Lingua* 122: 1207-1231.

Mattissen, Johanna. 2003. *Dependent-head synthesis in Nivkh: a contribution to a typology of polysynthesis*. Benjamins, Amsterdam.