

INCORPORATION AS A MEANS OF FORMING NEW SYNTACTIC MODELS

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Abstract

This article examines incorporation as a mechanism for forming new syntactic models based on data from languages of different structural types. It demonstrates that incorporating constructions contribute to linguistic economy, the compression of utterances, and the redistribution of functions between the word and the sentence. The article describes language types in which incorporation functions as either a system-forming or auxiliary device, as well as cases of its diachronic weakening. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between incorporation and the semantic organization of utterances, aspectuality, and modality. The role of cross-linguistic comparison in identifying both common and language-specific models arising from the interaction of morphology and syntax in incorporating constructions is emphasized. The findings can be applied to the typological description of languages, the development of linguistics courses, and further theoretical research in the field of syntax.

Keywords: Incorporation, syntactic models, polysynthetic languages, morphology, typological comparison, verbal constructions, role relations, linguistic economy, word formation, semantic integration.

Introduction

Incorporation is regarded as one of the principal mechanisms influencing the formation of new syntactic models in languages of different structural types. Its ability to combine lexical and grammatical components within a single word form makes this process significant for both linguistic typology and descriptive linguistics. Cross-

linguistic comparison demonstrates that incorporation occurs not only in polysynthetic languages, where it plays a system-forming role, but also in analytic and agglutinative systems, where it appears in modified or partial forms. Studies by Yu. A. Levitsky show that “incorporation represents a brilliant invention of a human being constrained by the formal boundaries of the ‘word-sentence’ and attempting to semantically segment a situation without going beyond these boundaries” [3]. Based on this perspective, the present study aims to identify how incorporation influences the organization of syntax in different languages, what factors determine its development, and how it can contribute to the formation of new grammatical models.

To address the objectives of the study, a cross-linguistic comparative method is employed, making it possible to analyze incorporating constructions in languages with varying degrees of morphological complexity. The study draws upon descriptions of polysynthetic languages of North America, data concerning Slavic and Germanic languages, as well as evidence of contemporary tendencies in word formation and syntax in analytic languages. Particular attention is given to the relationship between the morphological structure of the word and the syntactic organization of the sentence. The material is analyzed by comparing morphological markers, the nature of noun–verb interaction, types of role encoding, and means of expressing aspectual and modal meanings. This approach makes it possible to identify the universal features of incorporation and determine its variation across languages.

The results obtained demonstrate that incorporation does indeed contribute to the formation of new syntactic models, while the extent of its influence depends on the structure of a particular language. In polysynthetic systems, incorporation functions as a mechanism that transfers sentence-level functions to the level of the word form, creating complex verbal constructions that include nouns, markers of aspect and modality, and role markers. This results in models in which a word can function as an independent utterance. In Slavic and Germanic languages, residual forms of incorporation can be identified, primarily associated with word formation; nevertheless, even these forms influence syntax by creating stable patterns of noun–verb interaction. Semantic analysis has shown that incorporation most frequently occurs where there is a close relationship between an action and its object, making it possible to transfer part of the syntactic functions into the domain of verbal morphology. Furthermore, it has been established that incorporation affects word order, agreement, and the distribution of semantic roles within a construction.

The discussion of the findings leads to the conclusion that incorporation functions not only as a means of linguistic economy but also as a mechanism of structural transformation in syntax. In languages with a rigid word order, it partially compensates for the limitations of linear structure by increasing the role of morphological markers. In analytic systems, incorporation primarily functions as a stylistic or semantic device that creates additional shades of meaning and enhances the informativeness of an utterance. Diachronic observations confirm that incorporation may become more or less productive depending on the developmental tendencies of morphology and syntax; however, even when its productivity declines, it leaves traces that continue to shape the syntactic organization of a language. The findings demonstrate that incorporation possesses universal potential for creating new syntactic models, and its study is essential for understanding the mechanisms of grammatical evolution.

Incorporation has traditionally been regarded as one of the most prominent mechanisms of linguistic economy and structural compression of utterances. V. A. Plungyan wrote: “A striking example of the most compact way of expressing a thought is incorporation – within a single word, the entire thought of a sentence is immediately packed” [4]. It makes it possible to combine several semantic components within a single grammatically structured complex. This property makes incorporating constructions an important tool for studying how syntactic models develop and how relationships between words within a sentence change. Cross-linguistic comparison demonstrates that incorporation is not restricted to particular language types. It occurs in different structural systems, manifests itself to varying degrees, and follows distinct paths of grammatical development. Thus, L. Tesnière stated in his scholarly research: “Agglutination has gone so far that it has absorbed all the elements of the sentence, resulting in one enormous agglutinated word. It is important to note that agglutination and, consequently, incorporation, to some extent, are characteristic of all languages of the world. This is quite natural, since incorporation is a manifestation of the linguistic economy principle, which affects all human languages” [6]. N. V. Perfilieva notes that “elements of incorporation have been identified in languages of various types, particularly incorporating, agglutinative, and inflectional languages.” To understand how incorporation contributes to the formation of new syntactic models, it is important to consider it as a multilevel process. It connects the morphological structure of the word with the

syntactic organization of the sentence. In some languages, incorporation becomes the basis for creating entire classes of verbal forms. In others, it performs an auxiliary function, making it possible to express thematic and semantic-role relations more precisely. There are also languages in which incorporation gradually disappears or is replaced by other means of expressing meaning in a more compact manner. In each case, the mechanism of incorporation affects the syntactic model differently and determines the direction of its development.

One of the key reasons for the emergence of incorporation is considered to be the language's tendency to organize and condense information while preserving the logical sequence of an utterance. In languages with a high degree of morphological complexity, incorporation becomes a natural extension of agglutination or polysynthesis. In such languages, the word is perceived as the central organizing unit. Many languages of the Indigenous peoples of North America provide examples of this phenomenon, where incorporating constructions play a crucial role in the formation of syntax. A verb may incorporate a noun, aspectual and modal markers, spatial characteristics, and person markers. As a result, a single form may contain what would be expressed as an entire sentence in analytic languages. In such systems, incorporation creates new syntactic models because it transfers some sentence-level functions into the domain of verbal morphology.

Another type of language demonstrates less stable but functionally significant forms of incorporation. For example, traces of earlier incorporating models can be found in Slavic languages, preserved in fixed combinations or particular verbal forms. This is where an important feature becomes apparent: even partial incorporation can influence syntactic development. It creates new ways of combining lexical and grammatical meanings, establishes structural patterns for emerging models, and provides a basis for further changes. In English, modified remnants of incorporation can also be observed, particularly in the domain of word formation, where a noun may be closely integrated with a verbal stem. Comparing such examples with polysynthetic languages demonstrates that the underlying mechanism remains common, although the degree of its use varies.

An important factor in the formation of new syntactic models is the semantic organization of the utterance. Incorporation generally occurs when one of the constituents denotes an entity closely associated with the action. This creates conventional constructions in which the noun functions as part of the verbal base. In

some languages, such a relationship develops into an obligatory grammatical category. In others, it remains a means of specifying or narrowing the meaning of an action. The role of semantics is particularly evident when a language employs incorporation to express aspectual or modal meanings. The inclusion of a particular object or characteristic within the verb makes it possible to create a new utterance model in which the action receives a more precise interpretation. Such constructions influence syntax because they alter patterns of agreement, word order, and the distribution of semantic roles within the sentence.

Table 1. Incorporation and the Formation of New Syntactic Models

Aspect	Polysynthetic Languages	Slavic Languages (Residual Forms)	Germanic Languages (Residual / Limited)	Analytic Languages (Modified Use)
 Role of Incorporation	System-forming mechanism	Mainly in word formation	Limited productivity	Stylistic, semantic device
 Structural Impact	Creates complex verbal constructions	Shapes stable noun-verb patterns	Forms lexical-syntactic patterns	Does not change basic syntax
 Encoding of Participants (Roles)	Encoded inside the verb	Roles expressed syntactically	Roles expressed syntactically	Roles fully syntactic
 Aspectual & Modal Meaning	Integrated in verbal morphology	Expressed analytically	Weak morphological interaction	Expressed analytically
 Effect on Syntactic Models	Compression of utterance; redistribution of functions	Influences valency and agreement	Moderate effect on word order	Does not change basic models
 Diachronic Tendency	Stable and productive	Decreasing productivity	Low productivity; historical remnants	Context-dependent; optional



Key Conclusion: Incorporation varies across languages but universally contributes to linguistic economy, semantic integration, and the creation of new syntactic models.

Cross-linguistic comparison demonstrates that incorporation can serve as a source of new syntactic models even in cases where it is not the dominant mechanism. Kim M. A. argues that “incorporation, understood as the inclusion of morphemes with independent lexical meanings into the structure of another word, and complex word formation based on the combination of existing stems to create a new lexeme, occupy an important place in the system of semantic compression mechanisms” [1]. In languages with a fixed word order, incorporation can reduce the significance of linear structure. It shifts the emphasis toward the internal organization of the verb and strengthens the role of morphological marking. This creates conditions for the development of hybrid models in which syntax and morphology interact more closely. When a language already demonstrates a tendency to combine several elements into a single word, incorporation accelerates this process and gives rise to new types of verbal forms.

On the other hand, in analytic languages, incorporation is often used as a means of stylistic or semantic specification. In such systems, it can contribute to the formation of new syntactic models by modifying the informational load of an utterance. For example, incorporating a noun into a verbal stem can emphasize the close relationship between an action and its object. Although this does not alter the overall structure of the language, it creates new ways of structuring an utterance. The stylistic function of incorporation is important for cross-linguistic comparisons because it demonstrates that this mechanism can develop not only as a means of structural economy but also as a means of conveying additional meanings.

When incorporation is examined from a diachronic perspective, it becomes clear that it often emerges in response to the need to organize the structure of an utterance. In languages with extensive word-formation possibilities, incorporation functions as a mechanism for stabilizing syntax. It makes it possible to establish certain combinations as new structural models, which subsequently spread and acquire grammatical status. In other languages, particularly those in which morphology gradually becomes simplified, incorporation may play a less significant role and shift toward the domain of word formation. When analyzing inflectional and agglutinative languages, it is difficult to draw a clear boundary between incorporation and compounding. Linguist Kim M. A. concluded that “Previously, such types of verbs were studied as examples of word combination within the system of word formation. As complex words, these verbs constitute particular cases” [2]. This requires a distinction between “true” incorporation and the incorporative effect resulting from word-formation processes. Nevertheless, traces of earlier models are preserved in fixed forms, which continue to influence syntax and determine the further development of a language.

An important aspect of cross-linguistic comparison is the analysis of how incorporation interacts with other grammatical mechanisms. In languages where agreement is widespread, incorporation may complicate the system of person and number marking. In languages with a fixed word order, it may reduce the rigidity of the syntactic structure. In languages with elaborate systems of declension and conjugation, incorporation can create new types of word forms that subsequently alter the overall character of the sentence. Each of these cases demonstrates that the mechanism of incorporation does not exist independently of the rest of the

grammatical system. Rather, it is employed by a language to address specific structural requirements.

Cross-linguistic comparison confirms that incorporation forms new syntactic models primarily through its ability to combine lexical and grammatical content. It changes the boundaries between the word and the sentence, creating new forms of meaning expression. In some languages, this results in the emergence of long and complex words that perform the functions of entire utterances. In others, it contributes to the restructuring of syntax, making it more flexible and expressive. In certain cases, incorporation becomes the basis for new grammatical categories that subsequently become established in the language and determine the further development of syntactic models.

Thus, incorporation performs an important function in the formation of new syntactic models. It enables languages to create compact and expressive constructions, integrate different levels of grammar, and establish a balance between structural organization and flexibility. A comparison of different languages demonstrates that the mechanism of incorporation can develop in numerous directions. It may become more prominent, weaken, shift into the domain of word formation, or give rise to new groups of syntactic structures. Under all these conditions, incorporation remains an important means of language transformation and plays a key role in the development of syntax.

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