

Incorporation in Discourse

The construction in Polynesian termed ‘Pseudo-Noun Incorporation’ (PNI) in Massam (2001) is where the complement of the verb is a bare NP, receiving an indefinite interpretation. The following pair is from Tongan. (1a) shows a transitive verb with an indefinite object and (1b) is the paraphrase using PNI.

- (1) (a) *na'e tauhi ha pepe 'e Nisi*
 PAST care INDEF baby ERG Nisi
 “Nisi looked after some baby”
- (b) *na'e tauhi pepe 'a Nisi*
 PAST care baby ABS Nisi
 “Nisi looked after babies”

Previous analyses (e.g. Van Geenhoven 1998, Chung and Ladusaw 2004) have established that the incorporated object (IO) is interpreted as a non-specific indefinite, obligatorily taking narrow scope with respect to sentential operators (such as negation, universal quantifiers, conditionals, etc.). Clauses lacking other scope-taking operators, such as (1b), are given the following denotation.

- (2) $\exists x.\text{care}'(n, x) \wedge \text{baby}'(x)$

This formula ends up not distinguishing (1b) from (1a). Using data from Tongan, I argue this lack of distinction does not capture the differing behaviour of IOs and indefinite DPs with respect to sluicing and fragment *wh*-questions. Indefinite DPs are able to serve as the inner antecedent to a sluice, while IOs are not.

- (3) (a) *na'e tauhi ha pepe 'e Nisi ka oku i kai ilo pe ko hai*
 PAST care INDEF baby ERG Nisi but 1SG T NEG know Q who
 “Nisi looked after some baby but I don’t know who”
- (b) *#na'e tauhi pepe 'a Nisi ka oku i kai ilo pe ko hai*
 PAST care baby ABS Nisi but 1SG T NEG know Q who
 “Nisi looked after babies but I don’t know who”

Recent work within the Inquisitive Semantics (IS) framework (Anderbois 2010) has extended the hypothesis originating in Merchant (2001) that sluicing requires semantic isomorphism between the ellided clause and the antecedent clause. For an interrogative clause to be ellided, it must be truth-conditionally equivalent to the antecedent clause, and it must also raise the same *questions* as the antecedent clause into the discourse. I argue that the key difference between IOs and indefinite DPs is that clauses with IOs do not raise any questions into the discourse, and therefore are semantically non-identical to the ellided clause. I formalise this generalisation by introducing double negation into the denotation of clauses containing an incorporated object. Within IS, double negation deletes the potential of indefinites to raise any question in to the discourse (Groenendijk & Roelofson 2009).

References

AnderBois, S. 2011. Sluicing as Anaphora to Issues. *Proceedings of SALT 20*; Chung, S. and W. Ladusaw. 2004. *Restriction and Saturation*. MIT Press; Groenendijk, J. and F. Roelofson. 2011. Inquisitive Semantics and Pragmatics. *Proceedings of SPR 09*. Massam, D. 2001. Pseudo Noun Incorporation in Niuean. *NLLT 19*, 153-197; Merchant, J. 2001. *The Syntax of Silence*. OUP; Van Geenhoven, V. 1998. *Semantic Incorporation and Indefinite Descriptions*. CSLI Publications.