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NOUN INCORPORATION IN BRIBRI

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0. Objectives

- Offer a preliminary description of the ‘productive’ phenomenon of Noun Incorporation (NI) in Bribri, a Chibchan language spoken in Costa Rica by approximately 10.000 people. Noun incorporation occurs when “a N stem is compounded with a V stem to yield a larger, derived V stem” (Mithun 1984: 847).
- Argue that NI in Bribri is best analyzed as a lexical phenomenon (with syntactic implications) rather than a syntactic one (Baker 1988, Saddock 1980), following the lexicalist approach of Mithun (1984, 1986, 2000, 2010), Mithun and Corbett (1999), and Anderson (2000), among others.

1. Relevant morphosyntactic features of Bribri

- ABS-V constituent order: the ergative phrase can go either before or after ABS-V.
- Morphologically (i.e. ‘surface’) ergative (but syntactically nominative-accusative).
- Only one set of pronouns (same for S, A and P). S/P is never marked. A is marked by postpositions both on nouns and pronouns.
- Entirely suffixing verbal morphology. No agreement morphology with A. Marginal and optional agreement morphology on the verb with S/P if 3PL and animate.
- Verb paradigm based on voice (active vs. middle) and aspect (perfective vs. imperfective).
- A clear syntactic category of Nouns with morphosyntactic properties distinct from Adjectives (i.e. they can be pluralized and modified by numerals which indicate the class to which the N belongs).
- Transitivity is lexicalized at the stem/root level. In the imperfective aspect of active voice, verbs take different imperfective suffixes depending on whether they are transitive or intransitive (Constenla 1998: 82). This is shown in (1) and (2) with the verbs *katók*¹

¹ In Bribri orthography, <ë> corresponds to [ɪ] and <ö> to [ʊ]. The symbol <'> represents [ʔ]. The grapheme <y> represents [ɟ], <j> represents [x], <r> represents [r], <l> represents [ɾ], <ch> represents [tʃ] and <sh> represents [ʃ]. In my description, unlike others, falling tone is indicated as <â>, whereas high tone is

‘to eat hard things’ and *chakók* ‘to eat’. The former takes the imperfective transitive suffix *-é* (1a) and thus must occur in a clause with two core arguments (cf. ungrammaticality of (1b)):

- (1) a *sa' = tö* *kóchi chaká kat-é*
 1PL.EXCL = ERG pig meat eat.hard.things-IPFV.TR
 ‘We are eating pork meat’
- b **sa' = kat-é*
 1PL.EXCL = eat.hard.things-IPFV.TR
 *‘We are eating’

The latter takes the imperfective intransitive suffix *-ó* (2a) and can never occur in a clause with two core arguments (2b):

- (2) a *sa' = chak-ó*
 1PL.EXCL = eat-IPFV.INTR
 ‘We are eating’
- b **sa' = tö* *kóchi chaká chak-ó*
 1PL.EXCL = ERG pig meat eat-IPFV.INTR
 ‘We are eating pork meat’

2. The data

The data consists of 150 active voice verbs from Margery (2005). The analysis, limited to cases where Noun (N) and Verb (V) stems are synchronically identifiable, has been conducted with a native consultant. There are around 18 V stems (Table 1) used recurrently in combination with a close set of N stems (Table 2).

TABLE 1: RECURRENT V STEMS IN NI

indicated as <á>. Low tone is not marked in orthography. All examples come from elicitation. Abbreviations are as follows: 1 = first person, 3 = third person, CLF = classifier, COM = comitative postposition, DET = determinative form; DST = distal, ERG = ergative postposition, EXCL = exclusive, H = human, INCL = inclusive, INTR = intransitive, INSTR = instrumental postposition, IPFV = imperfective, MVC = middle voice cluster, L = long, NFUT = near future, PFV = perfective, PL = plural, PRX = proximal, R = round, REC = recent, SG = singular, TR = transitive.

<i>balók</i> ‘to store, to hide’ ²	<i>ppók</i> ‘to hit with long objects’	<i>ūk</i> ‘to make’
<i>iók</i> ‘to pour’	<i>tók</i> ‘to hit with round objects, to cut’	<i>ttók</i> ‘to talk’
<i>sáūk</i> ‘to see, to know’	<i>kuók</i> ‘to bite, to purify’	<i>wók</i> ‘to grind’
<i>tchók</i> ‘to stab, to poke’	<i>tawók</i> ‘to squeeze’	<i>chók</i> ‘to say’
<i>tsók</i> ‘to listen, feel, hear’	<i>kók</i> ‘to touch, to push’	<i>batsók</i> ‘to paste’
<i>yók</i> ‘to drink’	<i>yawók</i> ‘to do’	<i>ishtók</i> ‘to pick up, write’

TABLE 2: RECURRENT N STEMS IN NI

<i>apá</i> ‘body’	<i>chál</i> ‘urine’	<i>kāné</i> ‘work, task’
<i>aká</i> ‘tooth’	<i>chóli</i> ‘vomit’	<i>dió</i> ‘liquid’
<i>kaló</i> ‘leg, foot’	<i>ñâ</i> ‘impurity, excess’	<i>kuá</i> ‘plant’
<i>kó</i> ‘mouth’	<i>wóyök</i> ‘bad omen’	<i>alá</i> ‘child’
<i>kú</i> ‘tongue’	<i>kichá</i> ‘reed, rope’	<i>sibó</i> ‘god’
<i>tó</i> ‘footprint’	<i>dalér</i> ‘physical pain’	<i>wák</i> ‘appearance, aspect’
<i>tsu</i> ‘(one) breast’	<i>bulu</i> ‘king, chief’	<i>balá</i> ‘center’
<i>ulá</i> ‘hand’	<i>kâ/kô</i> ‘time, space’	<i>sīwá</i> ‘air’
<i>wá</i> ‘content’	<i>daló</i> ‘fear’	<i>kūlú</i> ‘incest’
<i>wó</i> ‘face, fruit, round thing’	<i>nūí</i> ‘debt’	

All V stems used in NI are transitive at the root level (i.e. they all take the *-é* imperfective transitive suffix when found outside of NI contexts) except for *ttók* ‘to talk’. In the great majority of cases, the semantic role of the Incorporated Noun (IN) is that of Patient (and more rarely Instrument). The resulting compound V is often semantically non-transparent. I have identified so far three types of NI in Bribri corresponding to Mithun’s (1984) Type I (lexical compounding), Type II (manipulation of case) and Type IV (classificatory NI).

3. NI Types in Bribri

3.1 NI Type I

² Claims of polysemy are impressionistic at the present time. I have not carried out semantic tests (the antonym test, Zeugma test, etc.) to determine whether some of these verbs are truly polysemous.

Regardless of the degree of phonological cohesion between the constituent stems, NI Type I displays the following basic features (Mithun 1984: 856): (i) V stem and N stem combine to form an intransitive predicate denoting a unitary concept (i.e. *cherry-picking*); (ii) the compound usually indicates an institutionalized activity or state; (iii) the IN does not refer to a specific entity but only narrows the scope of the verb; (iv) despite of its semantic role, the IN is usually unmarked for case, number, definiteness, etc.

In Bribri, the compound Vs resulting from NI Type I are usually considered single words by speakers, they show a single main stress (usually on 1st/2nd syllable) and undergo common phonological processes such as aphaeresis (*kó* ‘time, space’ + *apá* ‘body’ + *kök* ‘to touch’ > *kó-pa-kök* ‘to chat’) and/or syncope of vowels (*kulú* ‘incest’ + *balók* ‘to store’ > *kulú-blök* ‘to commit incest’). Syntactically the resulting V is intransitive. All V stems change their imperfective suffix from transitive (3) to intransitive when found in NI contexts (4):

- (3) *aláköl-pa=tö* *aláralar* *bal-é* *ie’pa* *sku’=ã*
 woman-PL=ERG child.PL store-IPFV.TR 3PL small.bag=in
 ‘Women (usually) put children in their small bags (chácaras)’ [i.e. hanging from a tree when they work in the field]

- (4) *ie’=wóyö-bal-ó* *i = aláköl = tã*
 3SG.PRX.H=bad.omen-store-IPFV.INTR 3SG = woman = COM
 ‘He (usually) casts bad omens to his woman’

Intransitivity is further shown by: (i) the IN cannot refer to a specific entity; (ii) no ergative phrase is allowed; (iii) any other argument, regardless of its semantic role, appears as an oblique (cf. (4), (5), (6), (7)). Note that two Ns can be incorporated to a V stem (7) and that the meaning of the compound V is often not the sum of its parts (esp. (5) and (7)):

- (5) *Alí* *kã-ch-ó* *i = aláköl = tã*
 A. time.space-say-IPFV.INTR 3SG = woman = COM
 ‘Alí usually lies to his woman’

- (6) *Alí* *kö-ch-ó* *aláköl = ã/tã*
 A. mouth-say-IPFV.INTR woman = to, in, from/COM
 ‘Alí usually begs the woman’

- (7) *Alí kó-pa-k-ó aláköl = tā*
 A. time.space-body-touch-IPFV.INTR woman = COM
 ‘Alí usually chats with the woman’

Other instances of NI Type I include usual actions (8), physiological processes (9) and taboos (10):

- (8) *Alí kaló-t-ó aláköl = e' = tā*
 A. leg-hit-IPFV.INTR woman = that.DST = COM
 ‘Alí usually dances with that woman’

- (9) *alá kâjkê chóli-taw-ó táĩ*
 child tall vomit-squeeze-IPFV.INTR much
 ‘The tall child usually vomits a lot’

- (10) *wēm = e' kũlú-bal-ó i = kutá = tā*
 man = that.DST incest-store-IPFV.INTR 3SG = sister = COM
 ‘That man over there usually commits incest with his sister’

Verbs resulting from NI Type I are far less than those resulting from NI Type II (around 20%). Other instances of NI Type I are shown in Table 3:

TABLE 3: OTHER COMPOUND VS RESULTING FROM NI TYPE I

OTHER TYPE I NI VERBS	N STEM(S)	V STEM
<i>apákök</i> ‘to visit’	<i>apá</i> ‘body’	<i>kók</i> ‘to touch, push’
<i>chálkuók</i> ‘to urinate’	<i>chál</i> ‘urine’	<i>kuók</i> ‘to purify’
<i>kàkók</i> ‘to perambulate’	<i>kâ~kô</i> ‘time, space’	<i>kók</i> ‘to touch’
<i>kalótchök</i> ‘to kick’	<i>kaló</i> ‘leg’	<i>tchók</i> ‘to stab’
<i>kānébalök</i> ‘to work’	<i>kāné</i> ‘work’	<i>balök</i> ‘to store’
<i>ñāwök</i> ‘to defecate’	<i>nâ</i> ‘impurity, excess’	<i>wök</i> ‘to grind’
<i>sīwābalök</i> ‘to be/keep quiet’	<i>sīwā</i> ‘air’	<i>balök</i> ‘to store’
<i>sīwátchök</i> ‘to breathe’	<i>sīwā</i> ‘air’	<i>tchók</i> ‘to stab’
<i>tsāikalök</i> ‘to comb oneself’	<i>tsā</i> ‘hair’ + <i>i</i> 3SG (?)	<i>kalök</i> ‘?’
<i>uláppök</i> ‘to clap’	<i>ulá</i> ‘hand’	<i>ppök</i> ‘to hit with long objects’
<i>wíritawök</i> ‘to spit’	<i>wíri</i> ‘saliva’	<i>tawök</i> ‘to squeeze’

3.2 NI Type II

Basic features of NI Type II (Mithun 1984: 859): (i) the IN loses its syntactic status as an argument of the clause; (ii) the IN is unmarked for definiteness, number, case, etc; (iii) NI allows an oblique argument to occupy the case role vacated by the IN (i.e. NI Type II results in a transitive predicate). 70% of verbs in the corpus are of this type. NI Type II in Bribri produces causative verbs or transitive (non-causative) verbs. In the case of causative verbs, the V stem *ũk* ‘to make’ forms a compound with one of the following elements: [N], [N + N] (11) or [N + Adj].

- (11) *Alí=tö* *aláköl-pa* *bôl=e'* *wô-aë-w-é*
 A. = ERG woman-PL two.CLF.H = that.DST face-color-make-IPFV.TR
 ‘Alí usually embarrasses those two women’

Arguably, the body part term *wô* ‘face’ is backgrounded in an example such as (11) and the owner (i.e. *aláköl* ‘woman’) has the status of a core argument, rather than a simple possessor (Mithun 2000: 918)³. Syntactic evidence in favor of this fact is shown by the numeral which modifies the N *aláköl* ‘woman’. If the clause in (11) meant ‘Alí made those two faces of women colorful’, the numeral used for ‘face’ would be of round class (i.e. *bók* and not *bôl*) and it would go after the N ‘face’ not after ‘woman’.

Examples of NI Type II which give as a result a transitive (non-causative) verb are shown in (12) and (13):

- (12) *se'=tö* *kô* *kichá-tch-é* *kál=e'=mĩk*
 1PL.INCL = ERG basket reed-stab-IPFV.TR tree = that.DST = on
 ‘We (usually) hang the basket on that tree’

- (13) *Alí=tö* *awâ* *dalô-i-é* *tãĩ*
 A. = ERG shaman fear-pour-IPFV.TR much
 ‘Alí respects the shaman a lot’

The transitivity is shown by: (i) the V stem retains its imperfective transitive suffix; (ii) an erstwhile oblique NP occupies the absolutive role vacated by the IN; and (iii) an ergative phrase occurs.

³ Also, “inalienable possessions are more often incorporated than alienable ones, and their possessors appear more often as core arguments of the clause” (Mithun and Corbett 1999: 63).

The N *apá* ‘body’ is widely used in NI Type II. It should be noted that according to Alí García Segura (p.c.), in (14) the N *apá* can also form a prosodic unit with *aláköl* ‘woman’ rather than with the V:

(14) *Alí=tö* *aláköl* *apá-bal-é*
 A. = ERG woman body-store-IPFV.TR
 ‘Alí pampers/spoils the woman’

(15) *Alí=tö* *aláköl-pa* *bôl* *ôjké=e’* *apá-sāw-é*
 A. = ERG woman-PL two.CLF.H fat = that.DST body-see-IPFV.TR
 ‘Alí takes care of those two fat women’

Note in (15) that, however, *aláköl* ‘woman’ and *apá* ‘body’ is unlikely to function as a possessive NP because if that were the case, the numeral, modifier and demonstrative would go after *apá* ‘body’ and not after *aláköl* ‘woman’ as in (16):

(16) *Alí=tö* *aláköl-pa* *apá* *bôl* *ôjké=e’* *sāw-é*
 A = ERG woman-PL body two.CLF.H fat = that.DST see-IPFV.TR
 ??‘Alí usually sees those two fat bodies of women’

Some Vs incorporate an additional element along with the N stem, not always easily identifiable:

- *daléitsök* ‘to make so. feel pain, love, miss so.’, formed by *dalér* ‘physical pain’ + *i* ‘(possibly) 3SG’ + *tsók* ‘to feel, listen, hear’;
- *apáskuök* ‘to wash objects other than clothes, wash oneself from impurity (when used reflexively)’, formed by *apá* ‘body’ + *se* ‘1PL.INCL’ + *kuök* ‘to bite, to purify’;
- *wöalátsök* ‘kiss’, formed by *wó* ‘face’ + *alá* ‘child’ (??) + *tsók* ‘to feel, listen, hear’.

Most NI Type II compound Vs are semantically opaque:

- *bulu’katók* ‘to betray’ (*bulu* ‘spirit, image’ + *katók* ‘to eat hard things’);
- *chalóññük* ‘to tickle’ (*chaló* ‘lower part of the stomach’ + *ññük* ‘to eat soft things’);
- *wóyawök* ‘to sew’ (if the absolutive NP is inanimate), ‘to show off’ (if the absolutive NP is human) (*wó* ‘face’ + *yawök* ‘to do’).

Finally, some Type II NI verbs contain IN in the so-called ‘determinative form’, used when the N has a specific endophoric or exophoric reference. Some examples are *kalétchök* ‘to inaugurate, to establish’ (*kalé* determinative form of *kaló* ‘leg’ + *tchök* ‘to

stab’), *kapéyök* ‘to cure, to heal’ (*kapé* determinative form of *kapóli* ‘medicine’ + *yök* ‘to drink’) and *kábisāũk* ‘to dream’ (*kábi* ‘sleep’⁴ + *sāũk* ‘to see, to know’):

- (17) *kêkra* *ye’ = tö* *aláköl = e’* *ké-bi-sāw-é*
 always 1SG = ERG woman = that.DST tooth.DET-of-see-IPFV.TR
 ‘I always dream about that woman’

Other instances are shown in Table 4:

Table 4: OTHER COMPOUND VS RESULTING FROM NI TYPE II

OTHER TYPE II NI VERBS	N STEM(S)	V STEM
<i>apáchök</i> ‘to threaten’	<i>apá</i> ‘body’	<i>chók</i> ‘to say’
<i>apáklöũk</i> ‘to hug, to hold’	<i>apá</i> ‘body’ + <i>kaló</i> ‘leg’	<i>ũk</i> ‘to make’
<i>apáppök</i> ‘to shell legumes’, ‘to pat someone’	<i>apá</i> ‘body’	<i>ppök</i> ‘to hit with round objects’
<i>apátchök</i> ‘to send’	<i>apá</i> ‘body’	<i>tchók</i> ‘to stab’
<i>apátsök</i> ‘to taste’	<i>apá</i> ‘body’	<i>tsók</i> ‘to feel, hear, listen’
<i>biloulāũk</i> ‘to make so. snore’	<i>biló</i> ‘throat’ + <i>ulá</i> ‘hand’	<i>ũk</i> ‘to make’
<i>kúyök</i> ‘to lick’	<i>ku’</i> ‘tongue’	<i>yók</i> ‘to drink’
<i>ñóũk</i> ‘to burn sthg.’	<i>ñô</i> ‘impurity, excess’	<i>ũk</i> ‘to make’
<i>sichóũk</i> ‘to make so. a widow’	<i>sichó</i> ‘white moth’ (bad omen)	<i>ũk</i> ‘to make’
<i>tóioök</i> ‘to chase’	<i>tó</i> ‘footprint’	<i>ioök</i> ‘to pour’
<i>tsúyök</i> ‘to be breastfed’	<i>tsu’</i> ‘breast’	<i>yók</i> ‘to drink’
<i>uláũk</i> ‘to make sthg. make sounds’ (i.e. an instrument)	<i>ulá</i> ‘hand’	<i>ũk</i> ‘to make’
<i>wáchök</i> ‘to offer’	<i>wá</i> ‘content’	<i>chók</i> ‘to say’
<i>wátchök</i> ‘to pull up, to strip off’ (weeds, tree branches, etc.)	<i>wá</i> ‘content’	<i>tchók</i> ‘to stab’
<i>wóikök</i> ‘to blow, to cure’	<i>wó</i> ‘face’ + <i>i</i> ‘3SG’ (?)	<i>kók</i> ‘to touch’

⁴ Matthias Pache (p.c.) suggested this etymology to me. He informed me of the existence of a Proto-Chibchan root **kap* with the meaning ‘sleep’. See also Holt (1998: 94).

3.3 NI Type IV

In NI Type IV “a general N stem is incorporated to narrow the scope of the V [...] but the compound stem can be accompanied by a more specific external NP which identifies the argument implied by the IN” (Mithun 1984: 863). Bribri shows evidence of classificatory NI (approx. 10% of verbs). Some general N stems are: *apá* ‘body’, *wó* ‘face, fruit, round thing’, *kuá* ‘plant’, *kāné* ‘work’, *dió* ‘liquid’.

The noun *apá* is often used in NI Type IV to indicate that the object of the action described by the compound V stem is of big dimensions (18), elongated (cf. (19) vs. (20)) or meaty. The noun *wó* is used to indicate that the object specified by an external NP must be round (i.e. a seed or a round fruit) (cf. (20)):

(18) *sawê = tö* *i = aláala* *bók* *apá-ku-y-é*
 rabbit = ERG 3SG = cub two.CLF.R body-tongue-drink-IPFV.TR
 ‘The rabbit is licking its two cubs’

(19) *awâ = tö* *pâköl* *pá-r-tch-é*
 shaman = ERG sugar.cane body-?-stab-IPFV.TR
 ‘The shaman usually chews sugar cane (long class)’

(20) *awâ = tö* *tsuru’ wó-r-tché*
 shaman = ERG cocoa round.thing-?-stab-IPFV.TR
 ‘The shaman usually chews cocoa (round class)’

Other instances are shown in Table 5:

Table 5: OTHER COMPOUND VS RESULTING FROM NI TYPE IV

OTHER TYPE IV NI VERBS	N STEM(S)	V STEM
<i>apátawök</i> ‘to squeeze’ (for meaty fruits)	<i>apá</i> ‘body’	<i>tawók</i> ‘to squeeze’
<i>diótawök</i> ‘to squeeze’ (for roots)	<i>dió</i> ‘liquid’	<i>tawók</i> ‘to squeeze’
<i>kānéük</i> ‘to do some work’	<i>kāné</i> ‘work’	<i>ük</i> ‘to make’
<i>kāsāük</i> ‘to know a place’	<i>kâ</i> ‘time, space’	<i>sāük</i> ‘to see, to know’
<i>kichátök</i> ‘to cut a fruit (which is hanging from a long reed)’	<i>kichá</i> ‘reed’	<i>tók</i> ‘to cut, to hit with round objects’
<i>kuátchök</i> ‘to plant’	<i>kuá</i> ‘plant’	<i>tchók</i> ‘to stab, to poke’

<i>wáksāūk</i> ‘to know the appearance of something’	<i>wák</i> ‘appearance, clan’	<i>sāūk</i> ‘to see, to know’
<i>wóishtök</i> ‘to pick up (fruits)’	<i>wó</i> ‘face, fruit, round thing’	<i>ishtök</i> ‘to pick up, to write’

4. Unusual behaviors of some NI compound verbs

Some NI compound verbs display a mismatch between the transitivity value of the V stem and the argument structure of the construction. The verb ‘to like’⁵ takes the transitive imperfective suffix (21) but the ‘liker’ appears in the absolutive case while the semantic object must appear as an oblique, followed by the instrumental postposition *wa*. This construction is not pragmatically marked, i.e. this is the common, standard way of saying ‘He likes that woman’:

- (21) *ie’ = wö-bats-é* *aláköl = e’ = wa*
 3SG.PRX.H = face-paste-IPFV.TR woman = that.DST = INSTR
 ‘He likes that woman’

The oblique phrase must be there for the clause to make sense:

- (22) **ie’ = wö-bats-é*
 3SG.PRX.H = face-paste-IPFV.TR
 *‘He likes’

The verb *nūítchök* ‘to blame’ presents a similar case:

- (23) *ie’ = nūítch-é* *aláköl = mīk*
 3SG.PRX.H = debt-stab-IPFV.TR woman = on
 ‘He blames the woman’

The verb *sibóchök* ‘to pray’ (lit: God of Bribris-say) also present an unusual argument structure. The one who prays appears as an absolutive, but the verb shows the imperfective transitive suffix:

- (24) *ie’ = sibóch-é*
 3SG.PRX.H = god-say-IPFV.TR
 ‘He (usually) prays’

⁵ The verb *wóbatsök* can also mean ‘cut/harvest fruits that do not hang from a long reed (i.e. an orange)’. With this meaning, the argument structure of the verb is transitive (i.e. it has an ergative and an absolutive argument).

The presence of an ergative marker changes the meaning of the construction (i.e. (25) can never mean ‘he prays’):

- (25) *ie'* = *tö* *sibó* *ch-é*
 3SG.PRX.H = ERG god say-IPFV.TR
 ‘He usually talks about Sibó (i.e. tells mythological stories about him, etc.)’

Some V stems (such as *batsók* ‘to paste’) can participate in NI Type I (26) and Type II (27), with a significant change in the meaning of the clause:

- (26) *ie'* = *ulá-bats-ó-ke* *aláköl* = *tã*
 3SG.PRX.H = hand-paste-IPFV.INTR-NFUT woman = COM
 ‘He is going to get married with the woman’
- (27) *ie'* = *tö* *aláköl* *ulá-bats-é-ké*
 3SG.PRX.H = ERG woman hand-paste-IPFV.TR-NFUT
 ‘He is going to marry the woman (to someone else)’

5. Theoretical considerations and conclusions⁶

Vs resulting from NI in Bribri are endocentric constructions in which a N stem (semantically a Patient or Instrument) combines with a V stem to form a derived V stem.

Evidence indicating that NI Vs are a lexical (word-formation) process:

Wordhood: NI Vs in Bribri generally constitute one phonological word (but not always). NI Vs have one primary stress, and they undergo word-internal phonological processes. The N stems and V stems cannot be separated by another constituent, but they can stand alone as separate words outside of NI contexts.

Productivity: is a feature of *individual, specific* N and V stems (i.e. there are Ns and Vs that never incorporate). It is lexically-determined and non-predictable.

Transparency: many NI Vs in Bribri are highly lexicalized, i.e. they are not semantically transparent but rather idiosyncratic. The semantic meaning of the NI compound V is very often not compositional. Vs can develop additional meanings, regardless of their internal structure.

NI does have syntactic implications in Bribri, most notably, it can alter argument structure. However, as Mithun and Corbett (1999: 65) argue, “if effect on argument

⁶ This section draws heavily from the theoretical considerations set forth in Mithun and Corbett (1999) and Mithun (2010).

structure is taken as evidence of a syntactic process, then lexical choice (i.e. ‘enter’ vs. ‘go’) should be considered a syntactic process as well”.

On boundaries between morphology and syntax

No Phrase Constraint: “morphological operations should have no access to the output of syntactic operations” (Mithun 2010: 8). It seems that INs in Bribri can be complex morphologically (i.e. N + Adj/N + Pron), but syntactic phrases are not involved in NI processes.

Lexical Integrity Hypothesis: “the syntax neither manipulates nor has access to the internal structure of words” (Anderson 1992: 84 cited in Mithun 2010). The fact that INs can serve as antecedents of a following anaphoric pronoun would indicate that the syntax has access to the internal structure of words. This does not seem to be possible in Bribri:

(28) *nãñěě* *Alí* *kalö-t-ê,* *íñě* *i = kaló* *dalé-n-ě*
 all.night A. leg-hit-PFV.REC today 3SG = leg hurt-
 MVC-PFV
 ‘Alí danced all night and today his leg hurts’

(29) *nãñěě* *Alí* *kalö-t-ê,* *íñě* *i = dalé-n-ě*
 all.night A. leg-hit-PFV.REC today 3SG = hurt-MVC-PFV
 ‘Alí danced all night and today he hurts everywhere’ (*his leg hurts)

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