

What is Noun Incorporation?

Noun incorporation happens when part of a noun is 'incorporated' or added within a verb.

Here is an example of a noun:

oyɛhsra? blanket

And here is an example of a verb:

gadɛhda:? it's lying spread out on the ground

The next word is an example of a verb with an incorporated noun. Part of the noun (the -yɛhsr- part, which is not pronounceable on its own) is included in the verb:

gayɛhsradɛhda:? a blanket spread out on the ground

Here are some more examples. As before, part of the noun (in red) is incorporated within the verb meaning 'to wash something'. The noun part specifies what was washed.

gegɔhsa?geh agatgɔhsohae?
on my face I washed my face

knu?tsa?geh agatnu?tsohae?
on my teeth I brushed my teeth (literally: I washed my teeth)

gahɔhda?geh agatahɔhdohae?
on my ear I washed my ears

gahsi?da?geh agehsi?dohae?
on my foot I washed my feet

Cayuga and other Iroquoian languages are well known for their extensive use of noun incorporation. English uses noun incorporation, but in a very restricted manner. A few examples are 'to baby-sit' and 'to house-sit'.