

Left-periphery φ -agreement and A-movement in Inuktitut

Richard Compton, Université du Québec à Montréal

Background: φ -agreement is generally argued to occur on T (e.g., Nevins 2011), concomitant with nominative/absolutive case. However, Inuktitut tense marking and agreement are discontinuous, with aspect, negation, and clause-type/mood marking intervening between:

- (1) taku-**lauq**-sima-nngip-**pinnga(a)**?
see-**DIST.PAST**-PERF-NEG-**INTERR.2SG.1SG**
‘Haven’t you seen me before?’

Claim: I argue that φ -agreement in Inuit occurs high on C (i.e., ForceP) instead of on T, following analyses of *wh*- and \bar{A} -agreement on C in other languages (Deal 2014, van Urk 2015). This analysis will be used to explain (i) the relative position and exponence of φ -indexing morphemes, as in (1); (ii) the default word order and high scope of structural case arguments; (iii) the fact that structural case in Inuit is licensed by C, not T; and (iv) how such an analysis makes the right predictions for the syntax of switch reference.

Evidence from word order and scope: An analysis in which both ergative and absolutive arguments move to the left-periphery for case and agreement will derive the default SOV order of these arguments (versus the antipassive’s SVO order, in which O bears oblique case). Furthermore, Wharram (2003) observes that absolutive arguments in Inuktitut scope over clausal negation while oblique-marked patients scope under negation. A high landing site for absolutive case offers a potential explanation for the unavailability of low scope.

Evidence from case licensing: If T were the locus of AGREE in Inuktitut, we would expect a correlation between the presence of (finite) T and case positions. And yet, although verb-incorporation in the languages allows overtly tensed TPs to undergo verb incorporation, these additional tense markers do not allow any additional structural case positions—example (2) with two distinct T heads can still only admit one ergative and one absolutive argument:

- (2) Jaani-up niri-**qqau**-nira(q)-**lauq**-taa tuktu Miali-mu(t)
John-ERG eat-**REC.PAST**-say-**DIST.PAST**-DECL.3SG.3SG caribou(ABS) Mary-ALLAT
‘(A while ago) John said that Mary was eating the caribou.’ (Pittman 2009)

Application to switch reference: One result of analyzing φ -agreement in Inuit as being the result an agreement probe on C is that it offers a potential structural explanation for why adjoined clauses bearing subordinate (clause-type) moods exhibit a phenomenon of switch reference whereby both a same-subject and different subject third person (with respect to the matrix clause) are distinguished. If agreement occurs high, on C, it is possible that the search domain for the probe includes both the complement of C, (i.e., the rest of adjunct clause itself), as well as the arguments in the matrix clause (assuming the adjunct CP is adjoined high and that its search space includes what this maximal projection c-commands). Such a configuration allows for the possibility of probes on C being sensitive to matching arguments in both clauses, yielding sensitivity do joint/disjoint reference.

Summary: Crucially, positing φ -AGREE on C, with arguments raising high to check structural case, provides an account of word order, scope, and the correlation between availability of case and clause-type marking (as well as the lack of correlation with T). In addition, if AGREE occurs at the clause edge, this offers an insight into why (cross-clausal) switch-reference interacts with agreement. Finally, such an account correctly predicts that it is clause-type marking that should condition the exponence of agreement, not T (not shown).

References:

- Arregi, Karlos & Andrew Nevins (2008). Agreement & Clitic Restrictions in Basque. In Roberta D'Alessandro, Susann Fischer and Gunnar Hrafn Hrafnbjargarson (eds.) *Agreement Restrictions*, 49-86. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Bittner, Maria & Ken Hale (1996a). The Structural Determination of Case and Agreement. *Linguistic Inquiry* 27.1:1-68.
- Bittner, Maria & Ken Hale (1996b). Ergativity: Toward a Theory of a Heterogeneous Class. *Linguistic Inquiry* 27.4:531-604.
- Compton, R. (2012). The Syntax and Semantics of Modification in Inuktitut. Ph. D. thesis, University of Toronto.
- Cook & Johns (2009). Determining the semantics of Inuktitut postbases. In *Variations on Polysynthesis*. John Benjamins.
- Deal, Amy Rose (2014). Properties of probes: Evidence from Nez Perce complementizer agreement. Presentation at NELS 45, MIT.
- Dchaine, Rose-Marie & Martina Wiltschko (to appear). Micro-variation in Agreement, Clause-typing and Finiteness: Comparative Evidence from Blackfoot and Plains Cree. *The Proceedings of the 42nd Algonquian Conference*.
- Dorais (1988) *Tukilik: An Inuktitut Grammar for All*. Inuit Studies Occasional Papers 2.
- Fortescue (1980). Affix ordering in West Greenlandic derivational processes. *IJAL* 46(4).
- Fortescue (1984). *West Greenlandic*. Croom Helm.
- Halle & Marantz (1993). Distributed morphology and the pieces of inflection. In *The View from Building 20*. MIT Press.
- Johns, Alana (to appear). Anaphoric arguments in Unangax and Eastern Canadian Inuktitut.
- Johns, Alana (2013). Ergativity lives: Eastern Canadian Inuktitut and *clitic doubling. Presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Linguistics Association, University of Victoria.
- Nevins, Andrew (2001). Multiple agree with clitics: person complementarity vs. omnivorous number. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 29(4).
- Oxford, Will (to appear). Multiple Instances of Agreement in the Clausal Spine: Evidence from Algonquian. *Proceedings of WCCFL 31*.
- Pittman, M. Christine (2009). Complex verb formation revisited: Restructuring in Inuktitut and Nuu-chah-nulth. *Variations on Polysynthesis: The Eskaleut languages*, Mahieu M.-A. & Tersis N. (eds.), 19-34. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Spalding, Alex (1998). *Inuktitut - A Multi-dialectal Outline Dictionary*. Nunavut Arctic College.
- van Urk, Coppe (2015). Agreement and the left periphery in Dinka. Doctoral dissertation, MIT.
- Wharram, Douglas (2003) On the interpretation of (un)certain indefinites in Inuktitut and related languages. Doctoral dissertation, UConn.
- Yuan, Michelle (2017). Decomposing transitive agreement in Inuktitut. LSA 2017, Austin, Texas.