

A morphosyntactic account of Nunavimmiutut demonstratives

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Background: There are no dedicated 3rd person pronouns in the Inuit language. Rather, demonstratives are used both as adnominal modifiers, pronominal forms, adverbs and “presentatives” (Denny 1982; Fortescue et al. 2010). The Inuit demonstrative system exhibits a rich array of semantic contrasts (distance, visibility, classification) and is well known for its complexity, e.g. Aivilingmiutut allows for 686 theoretically possible forms built on its twelve demonstrative roots (Denny 1982). In complex constructions, Inuit demonstratives can bear affixal adjectives, exhibit multiple number marking, root mismatches between coreferential demonstrative roots.

(1) ukua-raapi-in-ikkua

these.REL/ABS-small/dear-PL-those.REL/ABS

‘It’s these nice ones.’ (Beach 2012, Itivimiut)

(2) taakkua-ngu-nguar-it

DEM.DIST.PL-be-fake-PL

‘These imaginary ones’

Compton (forthcoming) proposes a fine decomposition of personal pronouns, and argues they are morphologically complex DPs containing a root. While crosslinguistically, demonstratives have been analysed as phrasal specifiers of D (Leu 2015), the existence of a D head in Inuit has been the object of ongoing debate (Manlove 2015).

Goal: In this presentation, I characterize the morphosyntax of demonstratives in Eastern Canadian Inuktitut, focusing on recently elicited data, to pinpoint their degree of formal relatedness to other nominals, personal pronouns and wh-words. For this, I assume the basic machineries of Distributed Morphology (Halle & Marantz 1993).

Proposal: Demonstratives are complex DPs, built on a root and thus subject to incorporation, akin to personal pronouns (Compton forthcoming).

1/2PRO $\sqrt{\pi}$ - π -(#)-(D/K) (Compton forthcoming) **DEM** (taC)- $\sqrt{\text{DEM}}$ -(n.#)-(D/K)

To support this claim, I present novel data based on elicitation sessions with Nunavimmiut native speakers. It appears Nunavimmiutut allows cliticized prefixed predicative particles (3) and a bigger number of affixal adjectives can be affixed to them than the distal and proximal reported (Beach 2012). In some less clear cases, demonstratives appear to bear transitive inflection indexing two arguments (4).

(3) ukua=tavva

DEM.PROX=ta.DEM.PROX (pred.part)

(Baffin Inuktitut, Farley 2012, 2007-11-01)

(4) taanna-tara

DEM.SG-PTCP.1SG.SBJ/3SG.OBJ

‘s/he’s the one I talked about’

Furthermore, cliticization doesn’t seem to require perfect featural identity between the enclitic and the root demonstrative (1).

Implications: This typology of morphological constructions, and restrictions, involving attributive affixes, incorporation and cliticization possible in Nunavimmiutut, in relation to other nominals. This detailed account of a contemporary Inuit dialect has implications for the study of crossdialectal variation within the Inuit continuum, as well as for categorial status of nominal function words (pronouns as DP, Compton forthcoming; as D₀, Yuan 2021) and the existence of a D projection in the Inuit language (Manlove 2015).

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