

## On the syntactic reflexes of focus in Inuktitut: a biclausal view on demonstrative enclisis

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**Background.** This paper focuses on enclitic DEMS (=DEM) in Inuktitut (Inuit–Yupik–Unangan), which have been loosely characterised as focus markers (Fortescue 2003; Sadock 2003), and examines the syntax of cleft focus constructions (CFC). Recent work on the morphosyntactic reflexes of information structure centers on topicality and its effect on alignment and word order (Berge 2011; Johns and Kucerova 2017; Carrier 2021). However, the status of =DEMS remains unclear.

**Claim.** We take Inuktitut DEMS to be morphologically complex and structurally analogous to possessed lexical nouns, as argued for personal pronouns by Compton (2022). We propose that (i) =DEMS are subjects of small clauses (SC) (Citko 2011) having a relative clause (RC) as their predicate; and (ii) focus triggers fronting of a [+FOC]-bearing constituent of the RC to Spec,FocP, akin to Frascarelli (2010)’s analysis of cleft-like narrow focus.

**Focus constructions.** In CFCs, =DEMS surface on sentence-initial focused elements. While non-cleft (1) is a statement of H.’s role, (2) identifies a unique member of a set. Material to the right is presupposed. CFCs are compatible with narrow informative and contrastive focus, e.g. in response to questions. Polar interrogatives also allow CFCs (3). ((1-4) Kalaallisut, Fortescue 1984).

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|-----|---|-----|--|
| (1) | Hansi pisurta-a-vuq<br>Hansi leader-BE-IND.3SG<br>'Hansi is leader'   | (2) | Hansi [=una] pisurtaq<br>Hansi=DEM leader<br>'It's Hansi who's the leader' |
| (3) | uatsinnun [=una] Hansi pulaar-niar-tuq<br>1PL.PRO.ALL=DEM H. visit-FUT-PTCP.3SG<br>'Is it us H. is going to visit?' | (4) | a. [aʔna{q,?}una] 'that woman'<br>b. [aʔnan[una]] 'it is a woman'          |

Crucially, =DEMS syntax, semantics and phonology are distinct from adnominal DEMS; (3) lacks number and person agreement, (2) doesn't mean 'this Hans is the leader' and specific sandhi processes occur (4). However, their exponents are identical to DEM.ABS occurring elsewhere, and can express distance (PROX-DIST), place (e.g. OUT) and number contrasts (not shown).

**Building focus sentences.** Building on Frascarelli (2010)'s proposal that biclausal cleft-like constructions can trigger Focus interpretation, we suggest that Inuktitut =DEMS are subjects of SCs, parallel to copular clause subjects. The SC predicate position is filled by a DP, as in (4.b), or by a RC, as in (3). The focused element, to which case may be assigned within the RC, is fronted to Spec,FocP where [+FOC] checking occurs. (5) illustrates clefting in copular sentences as in (4.b), (6) with a relative clause as a predicate as in (2-3).

- (5) [ $FocP$ [ $Spec,FocP$   $DP_{[+foc]}$ ]  $Foc_0$ [ $SC$ [ $sbj$  DEM ] [ $pred$  < $DP_{[+foc]}$ > ]]]
- (6) [ $FocP$ [ $Spec,FocP$   $DP_{[+foc]}$ ]  $Foc_0$ [ $SC$ [ $sbj$  DEM ] [ $RC_{pred}$ [ $DP$  THING ] [ $CP$  ... < $DP_{[+foc]}$ > ]]]]]

**Discussion.** Multiple empirical patterns in CFCs match the predictions of the current analysis. (A) Movement to a clause initial Spec,FocP gives rise to the Focus-DEM-Presup order. (B) SCs being devoid of case assigners (Bittner and Hale 1996), =DEMS surface in their default ABS form. (C) Attested instances of feature mismatches between the focused constituent and =DEMS (3) are expected, since they do not form a syntactic constituent. (D) Lack of personal pronouns enclitics in CFCs is due to the RC being headed by an abstract noun lacking person features. As such, =DEMS are not focus markers per se, but DPs as are other DEMS in the language.

**Conclusion.** To our knowledge, this paper constitutes the first attempt at formalization of Inuktitut clefting. Our contribution is threefold: (i) we provide a formal analysis of Inuktitut CFC, an understudied type of focus in Inuktitut; (ii) unify the account of =DEMS and Inuktitut DEMS at large; (iii) contribute our own elicited data detailing the syntax and semantics of Baffin Inuktitut CFCs.

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