

Ergativity and object movement across Inuit*

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Although the Inuit language is generally characterized as ergative, it has been observed that the ergative case patterning is relatively weaker in certain Eastern Canadian varieties, resulting in a more accusative appearance (e.g. Johns, 2001, 2017; Carrier, 2017; Murasugi, 2017). This paper presents a systematic comparison of ergativity in three Inuit varieties, as a lens into the properties of case alignment and clausal structure in Inuit more broadly. Building on the previous insight that ergativity in Inuit is tied to object movement to a structurally high position (Bittner, 1994; Bittner and Hale, 1996a,b; Woolford, 2017), I demonstrate that the relative robustness of the ergative patterning across Inuit is tightly correlated with the permissibility of object movement—and not determined by the morphosyntactic properties of transitive (ERG-marked) subjects, which are uniform across Inuit. I additionally relate this correlation to another point of variation across Inuit concerning the status of object agreement as affixes vs. pronominal clitics, building on Yuan (2021). These connections offer testable predictions for the status of ergativity across the entire Inuit dialect continuum, and yield cross-linguistic implications for the typology of case alignment, especially in how it interacts with the syntactic position of nominals.

Keywords: Inuit, ergativity, case, agreement, object shift, clitic-doubling, variation

1 Introduction

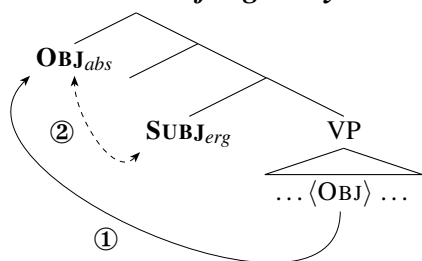
A major typological split across the world’s languages concerns the encoding of grammatical function, with many languages categorized as either accusative or ergative. In languages with case morphology on nouns, this corresponds to whether it is the transitive object or the transitive subject, respectively, that is case-marked distinctly from the other core arguments. Much research on ergative languages has focused not only on the conditions governing the distribution of ERG case morphology on subjects, but also on the respective structural positions of the ERG and ABS arguments in the clause (e.g. Dixon 1994, Manning 1996, Bittner and Hale 1996a,b, Wechsler and Arka 1998, Coon et al. 2014, Ershova 2019; see also Polinsky 2017a for a recent overview).

In this paper, I offer a novel perspective on the interaction between ergative alignment and clause structure from the Inuit dialect continuum. Although Inuit is typically characterized as ergative, this has been described as diminished in certain Eastern Canadian varieties, based on the reduced usage of the ergative construction in the encoding of transitive sentences (Johns 1999, 2001, 2006, 2017, Beach 2011, Carrier 2012, 2017, 2020, Murasugi 2017, Yuan 2018). These varieties thus generally display a more accusative appearance. Consequently, a comparative approach to Inuit offers a unique testing ground for examining the aforementioned phenomena.

*Acknowledgments to be added.

This paper compares a canonically ergative variety, Kalaallisut, with two Eastern Canadian Inuit varieties, Labrador Inuttut and Inuktitut, both of which are shown to display a reduced ergative patterning. I argue that this variation in ergativity is not random, but rather constrained in a systematic way. The central theoretical proposal of this paper is that these Inuit varieties share a uniform clausal syntax, as well as a uniform mechanism of ERG case assignment to the transitive subject. However, they differ in the types of *objects* that may participate in the derivation of this clause structure. Following Bittner (1994) and Bittner and Hale (1996b), all Inuit varieties permit the object to move to a clause-peripheral syntactic position above the subject, which, in turn, feeds ERG case assignment to the lower subject via a dependent case rule (Yip et al., 1987; Marantz, 1991; Baker, 2015). This is schematized in (1). Crucially, we will see that the Eastern Canadian Inuit varieties display independent restrictions on the *types of objects* that may undergo this movement step—thus constraining the appearance of ergativity.

(1) *Derivation of ergativity across Inuit*



A closer examination additionally reveals an interaction between ergativity, object movement, and the verbal agreement markers cross-referencing high (ABS) objects. Building on Yuan (2021), the permissibility of object movement is correlated with whether the object agreement morphology reflects genuine ϕ -agreement (as in Kalaallisut) or is derived by pronominal cliticization (as in the Eastern Canadian varieties). Assuming a movement-based approach to pronominal cliticization (Déprez, 1989; Sichel, 2002), we may thus localize variation in object movement in terms of the nature of the heads and tails of such movement chains.

More broadly, this paper proposes that it is ultimately the status of the ABS object that is central to understanding the nature of ergativity across Inuit, rather than the ERG-marked subject. Furthermore, the clear correlation between ergativity, object movement, and object ϕ -morphology seen in Kalaallisut, Labrador Inuttut, and Inuktitut offers testable predictions for the integration of other Inuit varieties, and thus paves the way for more fine-grained analysis in subsequent research.

This paper is organized as follows. In §2, I introduce key properties of the Inuit case and agreement system and provide an initial illustration of the variation in ergativity across Inuit. §3 reviews Bittner’s (1994) and Bittner and Hale’s (1996b) movement-based account of ergativity in Inuit, and outlines the empirical predictions that emerge from this approach in light of the aforementioned variation in ergativity. §4 focuses on the reduced ergative patterning found in Labrador Inuttut, which I show to be shaped by independent constraints on object movement. This section builds on Woolford (2017), in which parallels are drawn between structurally high objects in the larger Inuit-Yupik-Unangan language family and object shift in Scandinavian languages. In §5, I turn to the status of object agreement in Inuit, which will be shown to similarly vary across varieties. Extending recent work by Yuan (2021), we will see that object agreement is highly relevant to the overall picture of ergativity across Inuit, since its exact nature in a given Inuit

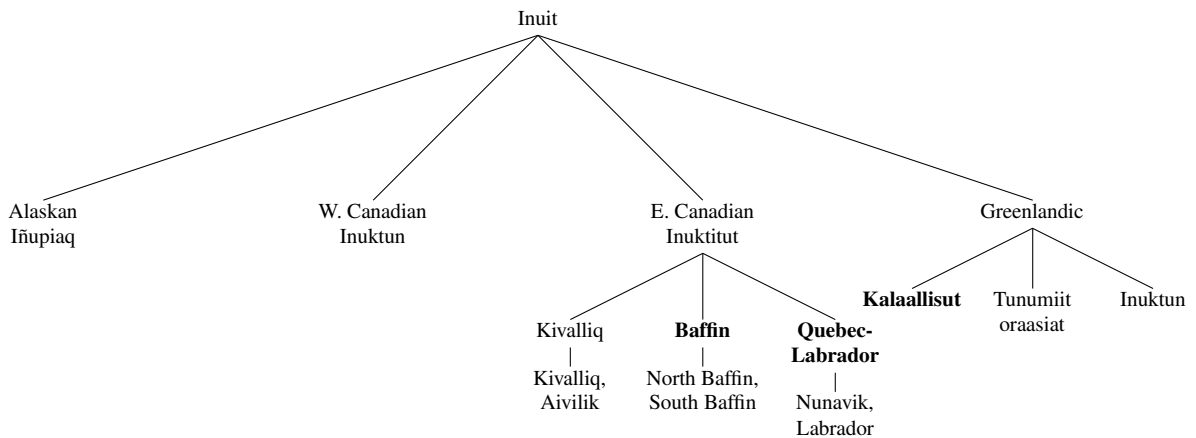
variety directly determines the behaviour of the high objects in that variety. Evidence for this comes primarily from Inuktitut, which falls between Kalaallisut and Labrador Inuttut along all empirical dimensions considered. §6 concludes by revisiting the paper’s core proposal linking ergativity and object movement, and outlines some broader theoretical and typological implications.

2 Overview of Inuit case and agreement

2.1 Language background

The Inuit language, belonging to the Inuit-Yupik-Unangan (aka Eskimo-Aleut) language family, is comprised of a continuum of generally mutually intelligible varieties spoken across the North American Arctic and Greenland (Dorais, 2010; Johns, 2010; Berge, 2016). The tree in (2) provides four major dialect groups: Inūpĭaq, Inuvialuktun, Inuktitut, and Greenlandic (the bolded text reflects the varieties to be investigated in this paper).

(2) *The Inuit languages (adapted from Dorais 2010)*



As indicated above, the paper focuses on ergativity in three Inuit varieties: Kalaallisut (also known as West Greenlandic), the Labrador varieties of Inuktitut (henceforth called ‘Labrador Inuttut’), and the Baffin varieties of Inuktitut (henceforth simply ‘Inuktitut’ in this paper).¹ Unless explicitly cited, the Labrador Inuttut data were elicited by the author in the communities of Nain, Nunatsiavut and Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador, in December 2019; the uncited Inuktitut data were elicited by the author between August 2016 and September 2017 in the community of Iqaluit, Nunavut, and represent multiple dialects spoken on Baffin Island.² The empirical focus on Kalaallisut, Labrador Inuttut, and Inuktitut in particular is motivated by the existence of previous literature on their morphosyntactic properties, as well as the fact that their ergative patternings diverge in an especially clear-cut way. The generalizations that emerge from this study may, in turn, provide a blueprint for the integration of other Inuit varieties (and related languages) not surveyed here.

¹Additional data from other representatives in the Inuit-Yupik-Unangan language family will also be provided, where relevant.

²The elicitation tasks primarily consisted of translations from English and grammaticality judgments for constructed Inuit examples. In the elicitation tasks, speakers were often provided with contexts in the form of descriptive scenarios and pictorial illustrations.

The Inuit language is traditionally described as polysynthetic, with pragmatically unmarked SOV word order (Fortescue, 1984, 1993, 2017; Dorais, 2010).³ Verbs generally follow the schema given in (3a), with the root at the leftmost edge of the word, followed by a series of optional derivational and inflectional suffixes, and finally followed by ϕ -agreement morphology cross-referencing the subject and, if present, the object, (3b). As additionally shown in the bracketed structure in (3c), summarizing the morpheme order in (3a-b), Inuit generally adheres to the Mirror Principle: left-to-right morpheme order corresponds to the expected hierarchical order of syntactic heads along the clausal spine. To reflect this correspondence, the Inuit tree structures in this paper are right-headed.

(3) ***Schema of Inuit verb complex***

- a. $\sqrt{\text{VERB}}-(\dots)\text{-AGR}$
- b. **puiur-sinnaa-sima-ssa-**vaa****
 forget-can-PERF-FUT-INT.**3S.S/3S.O**
 ‘Who could ever forget it (the great plain)?’ (Kalaallisut; Fortescue 1984, p. 194)
- c. [[[[[Verb] Modal] Asp] Tense] Mood.Agr]

Following Compton (2016, 2017), Inuit ϕ -agreement morphology (in boldface above) is located in the extended CP-domain. This not only accords with their rightmost position in the word (given the Mirror Principle), but is evidenced by the fact that the forms are organized into paradigms sensitive to clause type, often also referred to as “mood” in the literature. This is shown throughout (4), which present 2SG subject and 2SG/3SG subject/object combinations with the declarative (participial), interrogative, and dubitative moods (paradigms are from Dorais (1988) from an Arctic Quebec variety of Inuktitut). As also indicated below, mood is consistently encoded at the left edge of the mood/agreement sequence.

(4) ***Mood-sensitive agreement (Inuktitut)***

	Participial	Interrogative	Dubitative
2SG.S	-jutit/-tutit	-vit/-pit	-mmangarpit
2SG.S/3SG.O	-jait/-tait	-viuk/-piuk	-mmangarpiuk

(Dorais, 1988, pp. 70, 73, 79, 81, 92)

While some of the above agreement forms are portmanteaux, there are a number of contexts in which the subject- and object-referencing morphemes are expounded separately, as demonstrated in (5). I take this to indicate the underlying presence of two distinct agreeing heads and assume that whether these heads are realized as portmanteaux or separate forms is determined postsyntactically. The relative order of these morphemes additionally suggests that the head bearing object ϕ -morphology is *structurally higher* than that associated with subject ϕ -morphology, and that both are, in turn, structurally higher than the mood-bearing head.⁴

³As discussed by Fortescue (1993), among others, deviations from the ‘neutral’ SOV word order may arise from a number of pragmatic or narrative considerations, as well as from influence from rigidly SVO languages such as English.

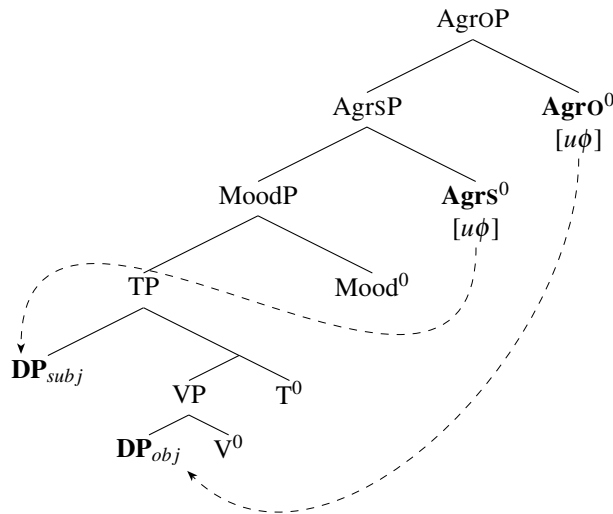
⁴As discussed in Yuan (2021), one way to capture the different combinations of portmanteaux across clause types is to appeal to the notion of *spanning* (Svenonius, 2012; Merchant, 2015), such that contiguous heads along an extended projection (here, the CP-domain) may be expounded by a single morph. This work also shows how this may extend to the Inuit varieties whose object agreement markers are clitic in nature (as will be argued to be the case for

(5) *Separate subject- and object-agreeing morphemes in Inuktitut*

a.	taku-luni	b.	taku-mmat	c.	taku-li
	see-CTMP.3S.S		see-CAUS.3S.S		see-OPT.3S.S
	‘While (s)he/it shall see’		‘Because (s)he/it sees’		‘May (s)he/it see!’
	taku-luni-uk		taku-mma-uk		taku-li-uk
	see-CTMP.3S.S-3S.O		see-CAUS.3S.S-3S.O		see-OPT.3S.S-3S.O
	‘While (s)he/it shall see it’		‘Because (s)he/it sees it’		‘May (s)he/it see it!’

Put together, this suggests that the structure of the Inuit clausal periphery can be represented as in (6). Note that the agreeing heads are labeled Agrs^0 and AgrO^0 purely for convenience, to clarify which arguments they target. Each head cyclically targets the closest accessible argument (i.e. not rendered inactive by a previous instance of Agree) within their local c-command domain, resulting in nested ϕ -agreement dependencies (cf. Murasugi, 1992, 1997).⁵

(6) *Structure of the clausal periphery in Inuit*



Labrador Inuttut and Inuktitut later in this paper). However, it may also be possible to capture these facts in terms of a single head (e.g. C^0) probing for multiple arguments, as suggested by anonymous reviewers. A multiple-Agree approach could presumably account for the non-portmanteau forms in (5) via a postsyntactic process such as Fission (Embick and Noyer, 2001); moreover, it could capture the variation in the status of object agreement morphology in terms of variation in the featural requirements of the probing C^0 , assuming that cliticization is also Agree-driven (Kramer, 2014). I leave open here whether one approach fares better than the other empirically or conceptually. Regardless of the exact treatment of the agreement morphology, what is important for our purposes is that probing of the object takes place *after* probing of the subject, in order to ensure that the object raises to a structural position higher than the subject.

⁵As pointed out by a reviewer, the DP subject does not become a defective intervener after it has undergone agreement with Agrs^0 , since AgrO^0 may then skip past it to target the next closest DP (the object in transitive configurations). Rather, a DP that is agreed with is rendered invisible to further Agree operations.

2.2 Ergative and antipassive across Inuit

Transitive constructions in Inuit are generally described as displaying an ergative (ERG-ABS) case patterning, with agreement morphology cross-referencing both the ERG subject and ABS object. However, transitive constructions may also appear with a non-ergative case patterning, typically referred to as the *antipassive* construction: in the antipassive, the logical transitive subject is ABS rather than ERG, the object takes the so-called ‘modalis’ (MOD) case, and only the ABS subject is cross-referenced by verbal agreement. The ergative and antipassive constructions may thus be characterized as two complementary ways of encoding transitive sentences.

As mentioned, this paper examines variation in ergativity in three Inuit varieties: Kalaallisut, Labrador Inuttut, and Inuktitut. Thus, we are more precisely concerned with what governs the *distributions* of the ergative and antipassive constructions in each variety. Whether a given sentence is expressed with one or the other construction may be determined by the syntacticosemantic properties of the object, with variation in what exactly these properties are. In what follows, I develop this idea by comparing Kalaallisut and Labrador Inuttut, as they diverge in a fairly straightforward manner. As Inuktitut will be shown to share certain properties with both Kalaallisut and Labrador Inuttut, Inuktitut will be introduced in §5 only once the general picture of ergativity across Inuit has been made clear.

We start with Kalaallisut, in which the ergative and antipassive alternation is fairly well-studied (e.g. Sadock, 1980; Fortescue, 1984; Bittner, 1987, 1994; van Geenhoven, 1998; Berge, 2011). The examples in (7) demonstrate that the choice of ergative vs. antipassive in Kalaallisut has an effect on the interpretation of the object. Following Bittner (1994), I assume that the relevant semantic distinction may be cast in terms of wide vs. narrow scope; this will be further developed in §3.⁶

(7) *Ergative and antipassive alternation in Kalaallisut*

- a. sulī Juuna-p **atuagaq ataasiq** tigu-sima-nngi-laa
 still Juuna-ERG **book.ABS one.ABS** get-PERF-NEG-3S.S/3S.O
 ‘There is one (particular) book Juuna hasn’t received yet.’ (∃ > NEG; *NEG > ∃)
- b. sulī Juuna **atuakka-mik ataatsi-mik** tigu-si-sima-nngi-laq
 still Juuna.ABS **book-MOD one-MOD** get-AP-PERF-NEG-3S.S
 ‘Juuna hasn’t received (even) one book yet.’ (NEG > ∃; *∃ > NEG)
 (Bittner, 1994, p. 35)

The Eastern Canadian Inuit varieties have been observed to show key divergences from the Kalaallisut pattern seen above (Johns, 1999, 2001, 2006, 2017; Beach, 2011; Carrier, 2012, 2017, 2020; Yuan, 2018). This is most clearly illustrated with Labrador Inuttut, which displays a relatively reduced ergative patterning. Johns (1999, 2001) was the first to observe that Labrador Inuttut employs the antipassive construction as the *primary* way to express transitive sentences. Thus, antipassive constructions in Labrador Inuttut permit interpretations of the MOD object that are unavailable in their Kalaallisut counterparts, since, in Kalaallisut, they would instead require the erga-

⁶The relevant semantic effect has been variably characterized as pertaining to scope (Bittner, 1994; Wharram, 2003), (Manga, 1996; Beach, 2011), topicality (Berge, 1997, 2011; Johns and Kučerová, 2017), and definiteness (Fortescue, 1984; Hallman, 2008). Despite the lack of consensus, the *directionality* of the contrast between ABS and MOD objects is agreed upon. This paper adopts the scope-based account, since scope may be readily discussed in syntactic terms.

tive construction. As an initial illustration, (8) demonstrates that the antipassive is used to encode discourse-given information, in contrast to prior characterizations of MOD objects in Kalaallisut as necessarily non-topical (Berge, 1997, 2011).

(8) **Transitive sentences are by default antipassive in Labrador Inuttut**

Nancy angka-li-mmat akġa-gulak iksiva-juk
 Nancy.ABS home-PROG-BECAUS.3S.S black.bear-dear.ABS sitting-3S.S
 Kaksi-tâ-gula-ngmi, iksiva-ju Kaksi-tâ-gula-ngmi **Nancy-mi** tautuk-tuk⁷
 hillock-get-dear-LOC sitting-PART hillock-get-dear-LOC **Nancy-MOD** look.at-3S.S
 ‘... if Nancy was coming home, the young black bear would be sitting on a little hill, sitting on the little hill, watching Nancy’ (Rigolet Inuttut; Johns 2001, p. 134)

The quantificational data in (9), from my fieldwork, additionally demonstrate that both of the readings from the Kalaallisut ergative-antipassive examples in (7) above may be expressed with *solely* the antipassive construction in Labrador Inuttut.

(9) **MOD objects in Labrador Inuttut are scopally ambiguous relative to negation**

a. *Context:* Johnny received several candies for Christmas and ate them all, but didn’t like any of them.

Jâni **atautsi-mi=luunniit uKumiaga-mik** piutsa-sima-**ngi**-tuk
 Johnny.ABS **one-MOD=NPI** **candy-MOD** like-PERF-NEG-3S.S
 ‘Johnny didn’t like a single candy.’ (NEG > ∃)

b. *Context:* Johnny received several candies for Christmas and ate them all, and liked most of them.

Jâni **atautsi-tuina-mik uKumiaga-mik** piutsa-sima-**ngi**-tuk
 Johnny.ABS **one-only-MOD** **candy-MOD** like-PERF-NEG-3S.S
 ‘There was only one candy that Johnny didn’t like.’ (∃ > NEG)

The patterns shown above may thus be summarized as (10):

(10) **Properties associated with antipassive (MOD) object DPs**

	Kalaallisut	Labrador Inuttut
Wide scope?	No	Yes
Narrow scope?	Yes	Yes

In contrast to the antipassive construction, the ergative construction in Labrador Inuttut is highly constrained: as discussed by Johns (2017), it generally only surfaces when the object is a *referential pronoun*, as shown in (11). This generalization will be further refined in §4.

⁷Non-transparent orthographic conventions specific to Labrador Inuttut are as follows: â = [a:], e = [i:], o = [u:], **ng** = [ŋŋ], K = [ç]. Additionally, Labrador Inuttut is subject to a phonological effect known as *Schneider’s Law* or *Law of Double Consonants*, which results in the reduction of alternating CC clusters (Schneider, 1972; Dresher and Johns, 1995; Rose et al., 2012) and whose application is reflected in the examples below.

(11) *Ergative construction used with pronominal object in Labrador Inuttut*

- a. John asi-jj-laut-tuk jaika-mi-nik
 John.ABS lose-AP-PST-3S.S jacket-POSS.REFL-MOD
 ‘John lost his jacket. . .’
- b. siagolittilugu **pulesi-up** nagvâ-laut-**tanga** tunu-a-ni ilinniavi-up
 later **police-ERG** find-PST-**3S.S/3S.O** back-POSS-LOC school-GEN
 ‘. . . and later the police found **it** behind the school.’ (Alana Johns, p.c., cited in Yuan (2018, p. 127))

Comparing Labrador Inuttut to Kalaallisut, overall, Labrador Inuttut displays a simultaneous widening of the distribution of the antipassive construction and reduction of the distribution of the ergative construction. As a result of the predominant usage of the antipassive construction, the case alignment of Labrador Inuttut appears *accusative*, in that we may recast the ABS-MOD case frame of the antipassive construction recast as a NOM-ACC one. This is at the heart of previous characterizations of Labrador Inuttut as “less ergative” (e.g. Johns, 2001, 2006).

The contrast between the canonical ergative patterning seen in Kalaallisut and the reduced ergative patterning found in Labrador Inuttut (and other Eastern Canadian Inuit varieties) has been framed by various authors as *diachronic* in nature (Johns, 1999, 2001; Carrier, 2012, 2017, 2020; Allen, 2013; Janic and Hemmings, 2021). Under this view, the latter may be described as displaying a gradual loss of ergativity and a concomitant shift towards an accusative case system. The investigation of the synchronic grammars of the Inuit varieties under discussion will be shown to shed light on the drivers of this proposed syntactic change.

3 Object movement and ergativity

As alluded to above, the ergative vs. antipassive alternation is conditioned by a number of factors, which may also differ depending on the particular Inuit variety. This section outlines the basic syntax underlying this alternation. Following Bittner (1994) and Bittner and Hale (1996a,b), it is the structural position of the transitive object that determines the case and agreement patterns seen in the entire clause. §3.1 reviews the evidence that ABS objects are structurally high and MOD objects are structurally low, and that the locus of the former is derived by movement. §3.2 then demonstrates how movement of the object may trigger (dependent) ERG case assignment to the subject. Finally, §3.3 discusses how this model of ergativity in Inuit provides a straightforward roadmap for the rest of the paper: if the ergative case patterning arises from movement of the object, then the Eastern Canadian Inuit varieties observed to have a diminished ergative patterning should also have a diminished capacity for object movement.

3.1 High ABS objects

The idea that ABS objects of ergative constructions are located in a structurally high position (above the ERG subject) is not specific to Inuit, as it is a hallmark of syntactically ergative languages more generally. In such languages (considered a subtype of morphologically ergative languages), ABS subjects and ABS objects occupy a common syntactic position, distinct from that of the ERG subject, and therefore share a number of structural properties beyond morphological case (Manning,

1996; Deal, 2016; Ershova, 2019).

The syntactic positions of nominals in Inuit cannot be easily deduced from word order, which seems to be primarily governed by pragmatic or discourse-related considerations (e.g. Fortescue, 1993).⁸ Nonetheless, evidence for a structurally high locus of ABS objects in Inuit has come from morphosyntactic and semantic considerations, as well as comparisons with unrelated languages in which word order does correlate to structural height. In particular, we find in Inuit an extraction asymmetry commonly seen in other syntactically ergative languages, as well as an obligatorily wide scope or specific interpretation of such nominals. Moreover, that the ABS object *moves* to a high position can be deduced through reconstruction effects surfacing in select environments. I illustrate these properties with Kalaallisut below, following work by Bittner (1994) and Bittner and Hale (1996b).

The most widely studied manifestation of syntactic ergativity concerns a restriction on \bar{A} -movement, which only ABS arguments may undergo (see Polinsky (2017b) for a recent overview); compare (12a) with (12b-c).⁹ Because of this restriction, the relativization of a transitive subject requires using the non-ergative (antipassive) construction, in which the transitive subject is ABS rather than ERG.¹⁰ There is much cross-linguistic evidence that this restriction is correlated with syntactic height (e.g. Tada 1993, Aldridge 2004, Coon et al. 2014; Coon et al. 2021); see in particular Murasugi (1992, 1997) for an account of Inuit ergativity that directly references this correlation. The fact that ABS objects pattern like ABS subjects in this respect reinforces the idea that they occupy the same structurally high position.

(12) *No relativization of ERG in Kalaallisut*

- a. *angut [RC ___ aallaat tigu-sima-saa]
 man.ABS (*ec.ERG*) gun.ABS take-PERF-PART.3S.S/3S.O
 Intended: ‘the man who took the gun’ (ERG subj. gap)
- b. angut [RC ___ aalaam-mik tigu-si-sima-suq]
 man.ABS (*ec.ABS*) gun-MOD take-AP-PERF-PART.3S.S
 ‘the man who took the gun’ (ABS subj. gap)
- c. miiqqat [RC Juuna-p ___ paari-sai]
 child.PL.ABS Juuna-ERG (*ec.ABS*) look.after-PART.3S.S/3P.O
 ‘the children that Juuna is looking after’ (ABS obj. gap)
 (Bittner, 1994, pp. 55, 58)

⁸Therefore, the movement-based analysis of high ABS objects in Inuit does not necessarily induce a change in word order.

⁹This is not the only diagnostic of syntactic ergativity, though it appears to be the most common. See Dixon (1979), Manning (1996), Deal (2016), and Ershova (2019) for other (less common) patterns of syntactic ergativity found cross-linguistically.

¹⁰This restriction is only found in relativization contexts in Kalaallisut and other Inuit varieties, though not in other potential types of \bar{A} -movement. This is in contrast to similar extraction asymmetries in other syntactically ergative languages, e.g. Mayan languages, in which ERG subjects are banned from undergoing any kind of \bar{A} -movement (e.g. wh-movement, focus fronting). One possible explanation for this difference is that these other types of \bar{A} -movement are not found in Inuit to begin with. For instance, Sherkina-Lieber (2004) argues that Inuit is a wh-in situ language, citing no differences in word order between declarative sentences and wh-questions in Inuktitut (see also Fortescue 1984 for similar findings for Kalaallisut). Similarly, while Inuit displays scrambling, resulting in many different word orders beyond the unmarked SOV, it is not obvious that this is due to \bar{A} -movement.

Converging evidence comes from the uniform semantic interpretation of ABS arguments compared to the other nominals, as first introduced in §2.2 above. Below, we see that ABS subjects and objects in Kalaallisut display semantic properties that are consistent with a structurally high position, while other arguments (e.g. MOD objects of antipassives) lack such properties.

Bittner (1994) uses quantificational elements to demonstrate the scope-taking properties of different nominals in Kalaallisut. She argues in particular that ABS subjects and ABS objects obligatorily take wide scope relative to other elements, such as sentential negation; conversely, MOD objects of antipassive constructions receive a narrow scope interpretation. Indeed, per the translations of the Kalaallisut sentences throughout (13) (with (13b-c) repeated from (7)), the numeral ‘one’ may only be interpreted above negation when ABS, and only below negation when MOD. Moreover, although the data are not provided, Bittner (1994, p. 138) notes that the same effect can be seen relative to modals (e.g. *-tariaqar* ‘must’) and high adverbs (e.g. *-juannar* ‘always’), which appear as suffixes within the verb complex.

(13) *ABS arguments take wide scope over negation in Kalaallisut*

- a. **atuagaq ataasiq** tikis-sima-**nngi**-laq
book.ABS one.ABS come-PERF-NEG-3S.S
 ‘There is one (particular) book that hasn’t arrived.’ (∃ > NEG; *NEG > ∃)
- b. sulī Juuna-p **atuagaq ataasiq** tigu-sima-**nngi**-laa
 still Juuna-ERG **book.ABS one.ABS** get-PERF-NEG-3S.S/3S.O
 ‘There is one (particular) book Juuna hasn’t received yet.’ (∃ > NEG; *NEG > ∃)
- c. sulī Juuna **atuakka-mik ataatsi-mik** tigu-si-sima-**nngi**-laq
 still Juuna.ABS **book-MOD one-MOD** get-AP-PERF-NEG-3S.S
 ‘Juuna hasn’t received (even) one book yet.’ (NEG > ∃; *∃ > NEG)
 (Bittner, 1994, p. 2, 35)

Bittner additionally provides the examples in (14), which additionally show scopal asymmetries between two nominals through the availability of collective and distributive readings of numerals. According to Bittner, only the inverse scope interpretation is available in (14a), yielding a reading where three particular women were bitten; this would, for instance, be compatible with a scenario wherein each woman was bitten by two dogs (yielding six dogs in total, i.e. a collective reading). In contrast, (14b) only permits the surface scope interpretation, thus compatible with a reading where a total of six women were bitten.

(14) *ABS quantifiers outscope other quantifiers in Kalaallisut*

- a. qimmit marluk **arnat pingasut** kii-vaat
 dog.PL.ERG two.ERG **women.PL.ABS three.ABS** bite-3P.S/3P.O
 ‘Two dogs bit three women.’ (3 > 2, *2 > 3; i.e. three particular women were bitten)
- b. **qimmit marluk** arna-nik pingasu-nik kii-si-pput
dog.PL.ABS two.ABS woman-PL.MOD three-MOD bite-AP-3P.S
 ‘Two dogs bit three women.’ (2 > 3, *3 > 2; i.e. two particular dogs bit three women)
 (Bittner, 1994, pp. 98-99)

As subsequently developed by Bittner and Hale (1996b), these data may be captured by appealing to the idea that ABS objects move to a structurally high position (on par with ABS subjects in intransitive sentences), while MOD objects remain in situ. Assuming that the interpretation of a given element is determined by its structural height (Diesing, 1992), this movement step permits the object to take scope above other elements in the sentence. Note that, although object movement is cross-linguistically often associated with the ν P-edge, this by itself is insufficient to account for the data in (13)-(14). ABS objects take wider scope above ERG subjects, and, more tellingly, even take wider scope above sentential operators such as negation. Thus, ABS objects must occupy a *clause-peripheral* position.

In contrast to full DP objects, which may surface as ABS or MOD, referential pronominal objects in Kalaallisut only surface within ergative constructions, i.e. constructions containing subject/object verbal ϕ -morphology, (15a).¹¹ Pronominal objects in antipassive constructions, on the other hand, are interpreted as non-referential or indefinite, (15b).¹² Although there are no overt independent (non-demonstrative) 3rd person pronouns in Inuit (and 1st/2nd person pronouns are typically *pro*-dropped, unless emphasized), this generalization can be made from the interpretations of such null objects. Thus, we may conclude that, just like full DPs, referential pronominal objects in Kalaallisut obligatorily undergo the movement step posited above, while non-referential pronominal objects remain in situ.

(15) *Referential and non-referential pronominal objects in Kalaallisut*

- a. (*pro*) (*pro*) pisiar-aa 160 kuruuni-nik
 (3S.PRON.ERG) (3S.PRON.ABS) buy-3S.S/3S.O 160 kroner-PL.MOD
 ‘He bought **it** for 160 kroner.’
- b. (*pro*) niviarsia-mut (*pro*) uqar-put
 (3P.PRON.ABS) girl-ALLAT (3S.PRON.MOD) say-3P.S
 ‘They said **something** to the girl.’ (Fortescue, 1984, p. 63, 88)

Finally, it is important to establish that the structurally high position of ABS objects is a *derived position*, in that objects that surface as ABS are base-generated low prior to movement (Murasugi, 1992; Bittner, 1994; Bittner and Hale, 1996b; Manga, 1996). This can be evidenced by the fact that ABS arguments may in rare instances be interpreted in their ν P-internal position, such as in NPI-licensing contexts. To see this, (16) first establishes that the relevant NPIs (quantificational nouns bearing the disjunctive enclitic =*luunniit*) are interpreted as minimizers under negation, and that they must be introduced within the c-command domain of sentential negation.

(16) *NPI requires c-commanding negation in Kalaallisut*

- a. [atuagaq **ataasir=luunniit** tikis-sima-suq] ilumuu-**nngi**-laq
 book.ABS **one.ABS=NPI** come-PERF-PART.3S.S true-NEG-3S.S
 ‘It’s not true that any book has come (yet).’

¹¹Although one example of an antipassive (MOD-marked) pronominal object in Kalaallisut is presented in Bittner (1987, p. 196, ex. (5)), it has been subsequently suggested that there are some confounds that contribute to the formedness of the given data point; see De Hoop (1992, p. 70) and Manning (1996, pp. 94–96) for discussion.

¹²The obligatoriness of this contrast has additionally been confirmed to me by Jerrold Sadock (p.c.).

- b. *miiqqa-p **ataatsi-p=luunniit** [Kaali Jaaku-mut
 child-ERG **one-ERG=NPI** Kaali.ABS Jaaku-ALLAT
 unatar-sima-**nngin**]-nirar-paa
 hit-PERF-NEG-say-3S.S/3S.O
Intended: ‘Any child said that Jaaku had not hit Kaali.’ (Bittner, 1994, p. 142)

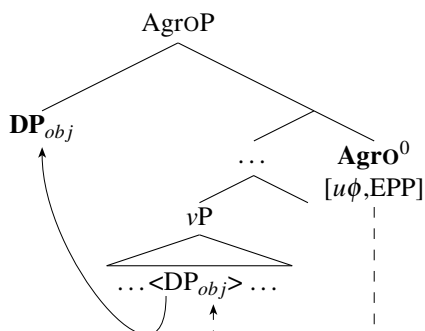
With the c-command requirement of NPIs in place, the examples in (17) demonstrate that NPIs in *all* structural positions—crucially, including ABS object position—may be licensed by c-commanding negation. This is despite the fact that non-NPI ABS objects were shown in (13b) above to otherwise obligatorily take scope above sentential negation. Following Bittner (1994), we may understand these facts in terms of movement of the ABS NPI object, coupled with *obligatory reconstruction* at LF in order to be licensed by negation.

(17) *Licensing of NPIs available in all positions*

- a. atuagaq **ataasir=luunniit** tiki-sima-**nngi**-laq
 book.ABS **one.ABS=NPI** come-PERF-NEG-3S.S
 ‘No book has come (yet).’ (Bittner, 1994, p. 142)
- b. kuruuni-nik **marlu-innar-nil=luunniit** piqa-**nngi**-langa
 kroner-MOD.PL **two-just-MOD.PL=NPI** have-NEG-1S.S
 ‘I don’t have even two kroner.’ (Fortescue, 1984, p. 221)
- c. **kina=luunniit** taku-**nngi**-laa
who.ABS=NPI see-NEG-3S.S/3S.O
 ‘He didn’t see anyone.’ (Fortescue, 1984, p. 138)

Overall, then, the uniform syntactic and semantic behaviour of ABS subjects and ABS objects in Kalaallisut may be readily captured by the idea that ABS objects raise to a structurally high position. What is this position? Since structurally high (ABS) objects are always cross-referenced by verbal ϕ -morphology, I assume (without evidence to the contrary) that the same functional head responsible for agreement also triggers syntactic movement of the targeted nominal to its specifier. We may model this by providing the agreeing head (AgrO^0 in this paper) with an [EPP] feature (Chomsky, 1981). This assumption will moreover permit us to later unify the Kalaallisut pattern with that found in the Eastern Canadian Inuit varieties, in which the agreement/movement correlation is more apparent (§4-5). Thus, (18) illustrates the derivation of high ABS objects in Kalaallisut.

(18) *Object agreement and movement in Kalaallisut*



In sum, transitive objects in Kalaallisut may either undergo movement to a syntactically high position or remain in situ, with these options yielding distinct clusters of properties. These are repeated below in (19).

(19) *Properties correlated with (non-)movement of objects in Kalaallisut*

Construction	Obj. movement?	Interpretation	Agreement	Case
Ergative	Yes	Wide scope/specific	Yes	ABS
Antipassive	No	Narrow scope/non-specific	No	MOD

At this point, we have not provided an account of the correlation between the structural height of the object and its morphological case (ABS vs. MOD), nor have we discussed the morphological case of the transitive subject (ERG vs. ABS). I turn to this next.

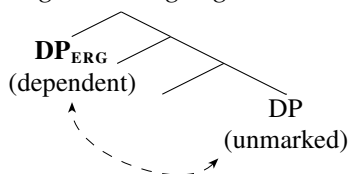
3.2 A configurational approach to ERG case

The rest of this section formalizes the notion that ergativity and object movement are causally linked in Inuit. I develop an account of ERG case assignment using a dependent case framework (Marantz 1991; Baker 2015, cf. Bittner and Hale 1996a), and offer some suggestions on how ABS and MOD case on objects may be integrated into this approach.

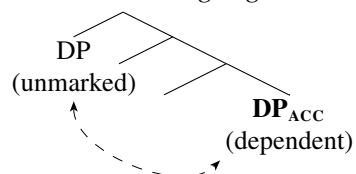
According to dependent case theory, case is assigned along a hierarchy of case assignment mechanisms (lexical > dependent > unmarked), with nominals no longer able to participate within the case calculus once they have received case (Yip et al., 1987; Marantz, 1991; Baker, 2015). Dependent case is assigned configurationally, based on the c-command relationship between two (or more) nominals within some structural domain, rather than assigned by functional heads via Agree. A version of this theory has also been previously advanced with explicit reference to Inuit by Bittner and Hale (1996a,b). As illustrated in (20a-b) below, this framework takes ERG and ACC case to both be dependent cases, differing in the *directionality* of case assignment (parameterizable across languages). Generally, it is assumed that dependent ERG case is assigned upwards to the higher of two nominals, while ACC case is assigned to the lower of two such nominals. The remaining nominal—the case competitor—is assigned an unmarked case (e.g. ABS or NOM case).

(20) *Syntactic configurations for dependent case assignment*

a. *Ergative language:*



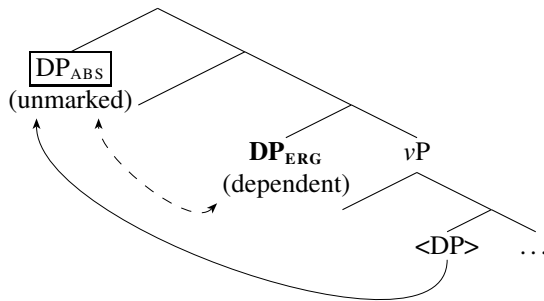
b. *Accusative language:*



Since the realization of ERG case on the subject in Inuit correlates with the presence of a high (ABS) object, ERG case must be assigned only *after* the object has moved to its clause-peripheral position. Building on Baker (2015), I propose that this can be captured by bifurcating the clause into two distinct domains for case assignment, with *vP* as the point of division. Thus, dependent ERG case is assigned within the *vP-external domain* after the object has moved.¹³ ABS case is, in turn, an unmarked case, assigned to *vP*-external arguments (e.g. intransitive subjects, raised

transitive objects) that do not receive lexical case or dependent case. This is schematized in (21) below (note that the ABS DP c-commands the ERG DP; we will return to this point shortly).

(21) **ERG and ABS case assignment**



Starting with ERG case assignment, that it is contingent on object movement does not, by itself, point unequivocally towards a dependent case system (see, for instance, Woolford (2015, 2017) for an alternative analysis of this interaction). However, there is independent evidence that ERG case in Inuit is indeed dependent. I illustrate this point with a diagnostic from Baker and Vinokurova (2010) and Baker (2014) regarding the distribution of case in unaccusative constructions. In unaccusative constructions, transitive v^0 , the head typically taken to assign structural ACC or inherent ERG, is unavailable.¹⁴ If ERG or ACC case is nonetheless present in unaccusative constructions, then it must have a different source. In Shipibo (Panoan), for instance, unaccusative subjects are normally ABS, as expected—but they may bear ERG case when they co-occur with a lower nominal, such as an applicative, (22) (Baker, 2014). This is difficult to reconcile with inherent analyses of ERG, but follows straightforwardly from a dependent approach: the applied argument serves as the case competitor for the subject, thus satisfying the requisite configuration for dependent ERG

¹³The idea that ERG case assignment to the subject may follow object shift into the vP -external domain can be seen cross-linguistically, as shown in (i) with Eastern Ostyak (Baker, 2015). In these examples, the occurrence of object shift is indicated by the position of the object relative to the vP -level adjunct. Similar facts can be shown for dependent case assignment in accusative languages such as Sakha, (ii) (Baker and Vinokurova, 2010).

(i) **Object shift and dependent ERG case assignment in Eastern Ostyak**

- a. Mä [t'əkäjəylämnä ula] mənɣäləm
we.DU.ABS younger.sister.COM berry pick.PST.1PS
'I went to pick berries with my younger sister.'
- b. Mə-ɣən ləɣə [əllə juɣ kanɣa __] aməɣaloɣ
we-ERG them.ABS large tree beside put.PST.3PO/1PS
'We put them (pots of berries) beside a big tree.' (Gulya 1966, cited in Baker 2015, p. 9)

(ii) **Object shift and dependent ACC case assignment in Sakha**

- a. Masha [türgennik salamaat] sie-te
Masha.NOM quickly porridge.NOM eat-PST.3SG.S
'Masha ate porridge quickly.'
- b. Masha salamaat-y [türgennik __] sie-te
Masha.NOM porridge-ACC quickly eat-PST.3SG.S
'Masha ate the porridge quickly.' (Baker and Vinokurova, 2010, p. 602)

¹⁴According to the inherent analysis of ERG case assignment (Woolford, 1999, 2006; Aldridge, 2008b; Legate, 2008), ERG case is assigned by (transitive) v^0 to its specifier, the external argument.

case assignment, as in (20a).¹⁵

(22) *Dependent ERG case in Shipibo*

- a. Kokoti-ra joshin-ke
 fruit-PRT.ABS ripen-PRF
 ‘The fruit ripened.’ (baseline)
- b. **Bimi-n-ra** Rosa joshin-xon-ke
fruit-ERG-PRT Rosa.ABS ripen-APPL-PRF
 ‘The fruit ripened for Rosa.’ (unaccusative applicative)
 (Baker, 2014, pp. 345-346)

Crucially, the availability of ERG case in unaccusative-applicative contexts is also seen in Inuit, as well as in related languages. Inuit has several productive applicative morphemes (including the reason applicative morpheme *-gutigi* in the examples below), which promote an otherwise oblique applied argument to core argument status; this may result in an ERG-ABS case frame.¹⁶ As shown in (23), unaccusative (e.g. anticausative) subjects may indeed receive ERG case in such contexts. In (23b), the applied argument is generated below the transitive subject, before undergoing the object movement step; this, in turn, feeds ERG case assignment per the configuration in (21).¹⁷

(23) *ERG case on unaccusative subjects (Inuktitut)*

- a. **niuvirvik** matui-sarait-tuq
store.ABS open-early-3S.S
 ‘The store opened early.’

¹⁵This unaccusative diagnostic does not only point to a dependent case treatment of ERG case, as pointed out by Deal (2019). Deal demonstrates that Nez Perce displays a similar case pattern in unaccusative applicative constructions, but argues on the basis of other language-internal evidence that ERG case is not dependent: rather, ERG “case” in Nez Perce is essentially the portmanteau of the subject’s ϕ -features in T^0 and the object’s ϕ -features in v^0 , respectively, transferred onto the subject (see also Clem (2019) for a similar analysis of the Panoan language Amahuaca). While this type of approach appears on the surface to be a viable alternative to the dependent case approach pursued here for Inuit, it is untenable. First, both of the relevant Agreeing heads in Inuit are in the extended CP-domain, as established above, with the head targeting the object (AgrO^0) being higher; thus, Deal’s system would erroneously arise in the *object* receiving ERG case. Second, we can see in certain impoverished moods/clause types that ERG case morphology may appear even in the absence of subject ϕ -agreement (Dorais, 1988); an example of this is provided later in (24a) for Central Alaskan Yup’ik.

¹⁶See Fortescue (1984, p. 268) for a (non-exhaustive) list of applicative morphemes found in Inuit.

¹⁷An anonymous reviewer asks whether the Inuit applicative morphology shown in (23b) could be analyzed as bimorphemic (a nominalizing morpheme *-Cuti* followed by a transitivizing morpheme *-gi*, both independently attested in Inuit). Under this approach, the ERG DP would be analyzed as an external argument of the transitivizer, rather than the theme of the verb (such that (23b) would be literally, ‘The store has Miali as an opening-early-reason’); this would undermine the diagnostic for dependent ERG case. However, I am not aware of any language-internal synchronic evidence for this division (it is possible that the combination of the two aforementioned morphemes was at some point grammaticalized to create an applicative morpheme). Moreover, this idea cannot account for the Central Alaskan Yup’ik data in (24), since the applicative morphology provided (*-ut*) cannot be analyzed in this way.

- b. *Context:* Miali won a raffle and got to go to Northmart before normally opened to have her pick of items.
niuvirvi-up matui-sarai-gutigi-janga Miali
store-ERG open-early-REAS.APPL-3S.S/3S.O Miali.ABS
 ‘The store opened early because of Miali.’

Miyaoka (2012) additionally lists a number of examples of this sort for the related Central Alaskan Yup’ik; two are given in (24) (see also Woodbury 1981, pp. 332–333 for similar constructions with malefactive internal arguments, as well as Baker and Bobaljik 2017 for further contextualization within a dependent case framework). Thus, ERG case is dependent both in Inuit and in other Inuit-Yupik-Unangan languages.

(24) **ERG on unaccusative subjects (Central Alaskan Yup’ik)**

- a. angun=llu kis’-ul-luku **kica-m**
 man.ABS=and sink-APPL-CTMP.3S.S **anchor-ERG**
 ‘The anchor sank along with the man (entangled).’
- b. **ella-m** (*pro*) assi-ut-aanga
weather-ERG (1S.PRON.ABS) good-APPL-3S.S/1S.O
 ‘The weather is good for me.’ (Miyaoka, 2012, pp. 1080, 1082)

As indicated in (21), dependent ERG case in Inuit must be assigned to the *lower* of two *vP*-external nominals, rather than the higher of the two, in line with the clause-peripheral position of ABS objects. The downwards directionality of ERG case assignment advocated for here therefore resembles the standard treatment ACC case assignment in a dependent case approach. While seemingly unorthodox, this is essentially a version of Bittner and Hale’s (1996a) treatment of syntactically ergative or “raising” languages; see also Yuan (2018, 2020) and Ershova (2019) for applications of this idea to various unrelated syntactically ergative languages. Some typological implications of this proposed structure will be highlighted in §6.¹⁸

Finally, I briefly turn to MOD case assignment. While there are many analyses of MOD case compatible with the data presented in this paper,¹⁹ I assume here, for simplicity, that MOD is an unmarked case. However, unlike ABS, its assignment is localized to the *vP*-*internal* case domain.²⁰ In this way, the ABS vs. MOD distinction can be viewed as a direct morphological reflex of the structural height of the object.

¹⁸An anonymous reviewer wonders whether ERG case assignment in Inuit is necessarily downward in directionality, given standard assumptions about phasehood and successive-cyclicity in movement. If the object stops at Spec-*vP*, assuming that *vP* is a phase, and if dependent ERG case is assigned to the subject at that point of the derivation, then ERG case assignment would be upward, not downward (see Abramovitz (2020) for a recent proposal along those lines). It is difficult to evaluate this alternative based on existing data. However, Compton and Pittman (2010) have argued, on the basis of independent morphosyntactic considerations, that *vPs* in Inuit are not phasal to begin with. If Compton and Pittman are correct, then that may be a reason to instead assume the proposed structure in (21).

¹⁹For instance, Bittner and Hale (1996a,b) take MOD case in antipassive constructions to be an oblique case (see also Levin 2015). In contrast, Bok-Bennema (1991), Spreng (2012), and Yuan (2018) analyze MOD as akin to a structural ACC case, assigned by a particular flavour of *v*⁰ associated with the antipassive. Overall, the exact analysis of MOD case assignment is less central to the paper than ABS and especially ERG case assignment.

²⁰I thank an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion, and for offering a prediction of this approach: if subjects may remain within the *vP* (e.g. in existential and unaccusative contexts), they might be expected to surface with MOD case, even in the absence of an external argument. Indeed, (i) shows that this is borne out with subjects of existential

To sum up, the case system developed for Inuit thus far is as follows:

- There are two domains of case assignment within the clause, bifurcated by ν P
- ERG case is dependent, assigned to the lower of two arguments in the ν P-external domain
- ABS case is unmarked, assigned to a ν P-external element that cannot be assigned any other case
- MOD case is unmarked, assigned to a ν P-internal element that cannot be assigned any other case

3.3 Predictions for ergativity across Inuit

The idea that object movement may condition dependent ERG case assignment makes a straightforward prediction for all of Inuit: if there are independent restrictions on object movement in any given variety, then this should constrain the surface distribution of ERG case in that variety. Moreover, if such objects must remain in situ in a wider variety of contexts, we might expect the antipassive construction to have a wider distribution than the ergative construction. This prediction crucially hinges on the idea that ERG case is *uniformly* dependent across Inuit. Therefore, our account takes variation in ergativity across Inuit to actually be localized in the nature of the high (ABS) object—in contrast, there is no variation in the grammatical properties of the (ERG-marked) transitive subject.

I argue for these exact points, on the basis of the Eastern Canadian Inuit varieties that have been previously observed to display a relatively reduced ergative patterning. We start with Labrador Inuttut below (and turn to Inuktitut in §5). As already mentioned in §2.2, transitive sentences in Labrador Inuttut are primarily encoded using the antipassive construction. I demonstrate below that, not only do we indeed find restrictions on object movement in Labrador Inuttut, but the exact range of facts offers novel insights into object movement patterns cross-linguistically.

4 Restricted object movement in Labrador Inuttut

Recall that, in Labrador Inuttut, most transitive sentences are expressed using the antipassive construction, while the ergative construction is highly restricted (Johns, 1999, 2001, 2006, 2017). In §4.1, I provide novel data that make more precise the exact contexts that yield an antipassive vs. ergative construction in Labrador Inuttut, and show that Labrador Inuttut displays restrictions on the types of objects that may undergo movement. In §4.2, I compare the Labrador Inuttut pattern to

constructions (in which the subject is within the c-command domain of the existential affixal verb *-qaq* ‘have’). Bittner (1988) also mentions the possibility of MOD-marked unaccusative subjects in Kalaallisut, though the relevant data have not been reported elsewhere.

(i) ***ν P-internal MOD subject of existential construction***

TV-mi **su-mik** suqutiginar-tu-**qa**-nngil-aq
TV-LOC **what-MOD** be.interesting-PART-**have**-NEG-IND.3S.S
‘There is nothing interesting on TV.’

(Fortescue, 1984, p. 138)

a remarkably similar one found in the distantly-related language Unangam Tunuu (Aleut), as first noted by Johns (2017). Since the non-ergative transitive construction in Unangam Tunuu cannot be plausibly analyzed as antipassive, I conclude that the antipassive construction in Labrador Inuttut is similarly not syntactically intransitive or detransitivized, contra e.g. Fortescue (1984) and Baker (1988). §4.3 then expands on Woolford’s (2017) observation that the object movement patterns seen in the Inuit-Yupik-Unangan language family mirror variation in Scandinavian regarding object shift. I demonstrate that Labrador Inuttut may be straightforwardly integrated into Woolford’s account and propose that the parallels with Scandinavian object shift provide new insights into the semantics of antipassive objects in Labrador Inuttut.

4.1 Reduced ergativity in Labrador Inuttut

As first introduced in §2.2, the ergative construction is very restricted in Labrador Inuttut, such that certain propositions that would be expressed using the ergative construction in Kalaallisut instead require the antipassive construction in Labrador Inuttut. The antipassive construction in Labrador Inuttut thus permits a wider range of interpretations than it does in Kalaallisut. The properties of the Labrador Inuttut antipassive construction to be illustrated below are summarized again in (25), repeated from (10):

(25) *Properties associated with antipassive (MOD) object DPs*

	Kalaallisut	Labrador Inuttut
Wide scope?	No	Yes
Narrow scope?	Yes	Yes

As already shown in (9), repeated below in (26), quantificational antipassive objects in Labrador Inuttut are not obligatorily interpreted as narrow scope relative to operators such as negation, in contrast to their Kalaallisut counterparts. While (26a) shows the expected narrow scope interpretation of the MOD object under negation, (26b) additionally demonstrates that the MOD object may also take scope over negation. This is made clear by the fact that the sentence in (26b) was produced given the particular context provided (which specifically targets the inverse scope reading).²¹

(26) *MOD objects in Labrador Inuttut are scopally ambiguous relative to negation*

- a. *Context:* Johnny received several candies for Christmas and ate them all, but didn’t like any of them.

Jâni **atautsi-mi=luunniit uKumiaga-mik** piutsa-sima-**ngi**-tuk
 Johnny.ABS **one-MOD=NPI** **candy-MOD** like-PERF-NEG-3S.S
 ‘Johnny didn’t like a single candy.’ (NEG > ∃)

²¹The Labrador Inuttut speaker from whom this pair of examples was elicited preferred disambiguating the two sentences, in light of the contexts provided, using the minimizing NPI enclitic =luunniit and the suffix -tuin(n)aq, respectively. While these sentences are not perfect minimal pairs, the fact that (26b) occurs in the antipassive is meant to contrast with the generalizations previously made for Kalaallisut.

(28) *Ergative construction used with pronominal object in Labrador Inuttut*

- a. John asiu-ji-laut-tuk jaika-mi-nik
 John.ABS lose-AP-PST-3S.S jacket-POSS.REFL-MOD
 ‘John lost his jacket. . .’
- b. siagolittilugu **pulesi-up** nagvâ-laut-**tanga** tunu-a-ni ilinniavi-up
 later **police-ERG** find-PST-**3S.S/3S.O** back-POSS-LOC school-GEN
 ‘. . . and later the police found **it** behind the school.’ (Alana Johns, p.c., cited in Yuan (2018))

Crucially, although ergative constructions arise when the object is a pronoun, this does not entail that the presence of a pronominal object *obligatorily* triggers the ergative construction. Although not addressed in any previous research on Labrador Inuttut, the examples in (29) below demonstrate that pronominal objects may *also* occur in antipassive contexts, with no discernable difference in meaning from their ergative counterparts, nor any degradation in grammaticality.²³ In both examples below, the presence of the null pronoun can be concluded based on the interpretations of the sentences, due to the absence of independent 3rd person pronouns in the language.

(29) *Referential MOD pronominal objects in Labrador Inuttut*

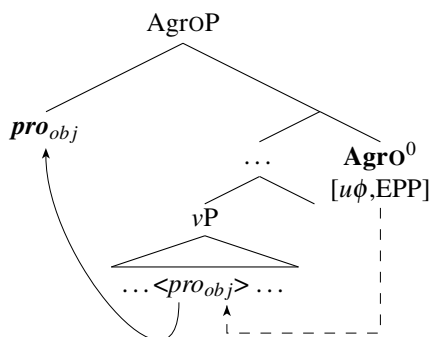
- a. Sâli aittosia-mik pisi-laut-tuk siagugiak Mary-mut (**pro**)
 Sally.ABS gift-MOD buy-PST-3S.S later.on Mary-ALLAT (**3S.PRON.MOD**)
 âtsi-laut-tuk
 give-PST-3S.S
 ‘Sally bought a gift and later she gave **it** to Mary.’
- b. Jâni âpalli-mit upva-Kau-juk tâvatuak (**pro**)
 Johnny.ABS apple-MOD wash-PST-3S.S but (**3S.PRON.MOD**)
 aggui-Kau-ngi-tuk
 cut.up-PST-NEG-3S.S
 ‘Johnny washed the apple but didn’t cut **it** up.’

In sum, the ergative construction is used only when the object is pronominal, while the antipassive construction may be used to encode pronominal and non-pronominal objects alike.

Given our account of Inuit ergativity developed in §3, we may reframe the restricted appearance of the ergative construction as due to *restrictions on object movement*. The patterns provided above show that full DPs must remain in situ in Labrador, regardless of interpretation, while pronominal objects in Labrador Inuttut may *either* remain in situ or undergo movement out of the *vP* domain. The occurrence of pronominal object movement is schematized preliminarily in (30). In this structure, a syntactic dependency between AgrO^0 and the (null) pronominal object triggers both the appearance of object ϕ -morphology in AgrO^0 and movement of the pronoun to Spec-AgrOP. This derivation will be refined in §5.2, once additional facts about the Eastern Canadian varieties of Inuit are introduced.

²³These particular Labrador Inuttut sentences were produced by two different linguistic consultants as translations of the English sentences given, i.e. not constructed by the author and then judged grammatical by the speakers.

(30) *Pronoun movement in Labrador Inuttut (preliminary version)*



Synthesizing the analyses of Kalaallisut and Labrador Inuttut thus far, we arrive at the table in (31), which casts their differences in terms of object movement. In Kalaallisut, full DP objects may move, while pronominal objects must move; in Labrador Inuttut, full DP objects may not move, while pronominal objects may move.

(31) *ABS and MOD objects in Kalaallisut and Labrador Inuttut*

		Kalaallisut		Labrador Inuttut	
Construction	Object type	Full DP	Pronoun	Full DP	Pronoun
Ergative	ABS (movement)	✓	✓	✗	✓
Antipassive	MOD (no movement)	✓	✗	✓	✓

Finally, the case assignment system developed in §3.2 extends straightforwardly to the Labrador Inuttut data. MOD and ABS are vP-internal and vP-external unmarked cases, respectively. DP objects remain in situ, so are always MOD; however, when the pronominal object does move out of the vP, it triggers dependent ERG case assignment to the subject.

In the rest of this section, I further refine this analysis, drawing from empirical insights from both the wider Inuit-Yupik-Unangan language family and from unrelated languages.

4.2 The Aleut Effect and implications for the Labrador Inuttut antipassive

As noticed by Johns (2017), the Labrador Inuttut pattern is strikingly similar to a set of constructions found in the distantly-related Unangan Tunuu (Aleut). Transitive constructions in Unangan Tunuu are generally bi-absolutive, with only the ABS subject indexed by ϕ -morphology on the verb, (32). However, as the examples in (33) demonstrate, the case and agreement pattern changes when the object is understood as a *pronoun*.²⁴ In such a context, the subject bears the “relative”

²⁴Specifically, the pronominal object must be 3rd person; participant pronominal objects in Unangan Tunuu surface within the non-ergative bi-absolutive construction. I follow Woolford (2017) in taking this to be a Person-Case Constraint effect on the subject/object agreement morphology. Moreover, I assume Labrador Inuttut lacks such an effect, given that participant objects are available in ergative and antipassive constructions alike (though not shown here for reasons of space); see also Compton (2019) for arguments *against* the existence of a PCC effect in Labrador Inuttut. Thus, I set aside participant objects in the ensuing discussion, and focus on the obligatory vs. optional pronominal object movement distinction between Unangan Tunuu and Labrador Inuttut.

case marker *-m*, cognate to ERG *-up* in Inuit (Fortescue et al., 1994, 2011), while the pronominal object is encoded by ϕ -morphology on the verb (as with Inuit, Unangam Tunuu lacks overt 3rd person pronominal forms).²⁵ This pattern is known as the Aleut Effect (e.g. Bergsland, 1997; Hale, 1997; Sadock, 2000; Merchant, 2011; Woolford, 2017).

(32) *Bi-absolutive constructions in Unangam Tunuu*

- a. **Piitra- \hat{x}** tayagu- \hat{x} kidu-ku- \hat{x}
Peter-ABS man-ABS help-PRES-3S.S
 ‘Peter is helping the man.’
- b. (*pro*) asxinu- \hat{x} kidu-ku-q
(1S.PRON.ABS) girl-ABS help-PRES-1S.S
 ‘I am helping the girl.’

(Bergsland, 1997, pp. 126, 139)

(33) *The Aleut Effect in Unangam Tunuu*

- a. **Piitra-m** kidu-ku-u
Peter-ERG help-PRES-3S.S/3S.O
 ‘Peter is helping him/her.’
- b. **tayagu-m** kidu-qa-ngis
man-ERG help-PST-3S.S/3P.O
 ‘The man helped them.’

(Bergsland, 1997, pp. 126, 140)

As alluded to above, this alternation strongly resembles the distribution of the ergative and antipassive constructions in Labrador Inuttut. In both Labrador Inuttut and Unangam Tunuu, it is the non-ergative (antipassive in Labrador Inuttut; bi-absolutive in Unangam Tunuu) construction that surfaces in most transitive contexts; however, the presence of some pronominal object, encoded as verbal ϕ -morphology, co-occurs with ERG (or “relative”) case on the subject. Moreover, one analysis of the Unangam Tunuu facts, put forth by Merchant (2011), is very similar to the approach to Inuit advocated for in this paper: Merchant (2011) proposes that the movement of a pronominal object to a structurally high position (Spec-TP under his assumptions) feeds contextually-sensitive spell-out rules for the morphological case of the subject.²⁶

(34) *Morphological case rules for singular NPs in Unangam Tunuu (Merchant, 2011, p. 393)*

- a. */-m/* \leftrightarrow [Case] / *__ pro*
- b. */- \hat{x} /* \leftrightarrow [Case] / *elsewhere*

I suggest that Merchant’s approach may be straightforwardly unified with the present analysis of Inuit, if we simply recast the contextual allomorphy rules as rules of dependent case assignment: in proximity to a pronoun (due to movement), the subject is assigned ERG case. Furthermore, the non-ergative case patternings in the two languages may be unified under a single system of case assignment, the core difference being that, in Unangam Tunuu, *both* vP-external and vP-internal

²⁵Note that there are additional properties of Unangam Tunuu ϕ -morphology that are set aside here, such as their interaction with raised possessors. See Sadock (2000) and Woolford (2017) for discussion.

²⁶See also Woolford (2017) for an alternative analysis of Unangam Tunuu that also ties pronominal object movement to ergativity.

unmarked cases are ABS (rather than ABS and MOD, as proposed for Inuit).

That being said, the distributions of the ergative and non-ergative constructions in Unangam Tunuu and Labrador Inuttut are not precisely identical, which I take to reflect differences in the availability of object movement. What they do have in common is that full DP objects must remain in situ. However, pronominal objects are treated differently in the two languages: in Unangam Tunuu, pronouns obligatorily raise, while in Labrador Inuttut they optionally do so. This is summarized in (35) (an updated table from (31) above).

(35) *Ergative vs. non-ergative patternings in Kalaallisut, Unangam Tunuu, Labrador Inuttut*

		Kalaallisut		Unangam Tunuu		Labrador Inuttut	
Construction	Object mvt?	Full DP	Pronoun	Full DP	Pronoun	Full DP	Pronoun
Ergative	Movement	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
Non-ergative	No movement	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓

More broadly, this comparison is useful in that it sheds light on how the Labrador Inuttut antipassive construction should be characterized. In particular, although antipassives are cross-linguistically often treated as intransitive, with the logical object demoted to oblique status (see e.g. (Polinsky, 2017a) and references therein), it is now clear that this is not tenable for Labrador Inuttut. Just as it would be conceptually odd to treat the bi-absolutive transitive construction in Unangam Tunuu as detransitivized, the Labrador Inuttut antipassive is similarly difficult to capture under such an approach. Moreover, as (35) shows, the Labrador Inuttut antipassive surfaces in a slightly wider range of morphosyntactic contexts than the Unangam Tunuu bi-absolutive, since both full DPs and pronominal objects are able to remain in situ in Labrador Inuttut.

4.3 More on object movement: Insights from Scandinavian object shift

I now demonstrate that the variation in object movement between Kalaallisut, Unangam Tunuu, and Labrador Inuttut is precisely paralleled by *variation in object shift* in Scandinavian languages, extending recent work by Woolford (2017) in this domain. Although Woolford focuses on Kalaallisut and Unangam Tunuu, we will see that Labrador Inuttut pattern may be straightforwardly integrated into this picture, thus further strengthening the comparison. Additionally, I draw a novel connection between these language groups concerning the interpretive properties of objects that *cannot* undergo movement and, in doing so, offer an account of the semantic flexibility of antipassive (in situ) DP objects in Labrador Inuttut.

Starting with the Kalaallisut-type pattern, Woolford (2017) points out that a similar set of facts has been shown for Icelandic (Holmberg, 1986; Diesing, 1992; Collins and Thráinsson, 1996; Thráinsson, 2008). In Icelandic, objects that have undergone movement are interpreted as (what has been characterized as) *specific*, while non-shifted objects are non-specific. This contrast is exemplified in (36), with the occurrence of object shift diagnosable by the position of the object relative to the adverb. In addition, (37) shows that, whereas full DPs in Icelandic may undergo object shift, referential pronouns must do so:

(36) *Full DP object shift in Icelandic*

- a. Hann les **lengstu bókina** sjaldan
He reads **longest the.book** seldom
'He rarely reads the longest book.'
Reading: There is a book longer than all the others that he rarely reads.
- b. Hann les sjaldan **lengstu bókina**
He reads seldom **longest the.book**
'He rarely reads the longest book.'
Reading: Given any group of books, he rarely reads the one that is the longest.
(Diesing, 1996, p. 79)

(37) *Pronominal object shift in Icelandic*

- a. Jón las **hana** ekki
John read **it** not
'John did not read it.'
- b. *Jón las ekki **hana**
John read not **it**
Intended: 'John did not read it.' (Thráinsson, 2008, p. 164)

Following Chomsky (1995) and Rackowski and Richards (2005), I assume that object shift targets the ν P-edge; see also Déprez (1989) and Johnson (1991) for similar ideas. A notable syntactic difference between Icelandic and Kalaallisut, then, is that in Kalaallisut the object raises *above* the subject, given the syntactically ergative nature of the latter.

Woolford additionally observes that the Aleut Effect seen in Unangam Tunuu is highly reminiscent of object shift in certain Mainland Scandinavian languages (Holmberg, 1986; Holmberg and Platzack, 1995; Vikner, 1994, a.o.). In Danish, for instance, DPs do not undergo object shift, while pronouns obligatorily do so, (38).²⁷

(38) *Pronoun-only object shift in Danish*

- a. *Studenten læste **bogen** ikke
student-the read **book-the** not
Intended: 'The student didn't read the book.'
- b. Studenten læste ikke **bogen**
student-the read not **book-the**
'The student didn't read the book.'

²⁷This discussion of pronominal object shift pertains specifically to *weak* (e.g. unstressed) pronouns, as it is known that strong pronouns behave like full DPs with regards to object shift. The fact that only weak pronouns may undergo object shift in Mainland Scandinavian languages has resulted in analytical parallels being drawn between object shift and *pronominal cliticization* cross-linguistically (Déprez, 1989; Josefsson, 1993; Bobaljik and Jonas, 1996), since strong pronouns similarly resist movement-derived cliticization cross-linguistically in the sense of (Cardinaletti and Starke, 1999). This comparison will be revisited in §5.2, once we have introduced additional data from Inuktitut.

- c. Studenten læste **den ikke**
 student read **it not**
 ‘The student didn’t read it.’
- d. *Studenten læste **ikke den**
 student read **not it**
Intended: ‘The student didn’t read it.’ (Thráinsson, 2008, p. 150)

Thus, Woolford identifies two language groups with parallel movement patterns: in Icelandic and Kalaallisut, full DPs may undergo object shift, while pronouns must; in Danish and Unangam Tunuu, full DPs may not undergo object shift, while pronouns must.

Crucially, I propose that the parallel observed by Woolford (2017) may be made even stronger once we incorporate the Labrador Inuttut pattern into the overall picture. Indeed, there are Mainland Scandinavian languages that, like Labrador Inuttut, permit pronominal objects to *optionally* undergo object shift and ban full DPs from doing so (e.g. Josefsson, 1992, 2003; Andréasson, 2010; Vikner, 2017). One such language is Swedish, (39):²⁸

(39) *Optional pronominal object shift in Swedish*

- a. Varför läste Peter **den aldrig**?
 why read Peter **it never**
 ‘Why did Peter never read it?’
- b. Varför läste Peter **aldrig den**?
 why read Peter **never it**
 ‘Why did Peter never read it?’ (Vikner, 2006, p. 394)

Therefore, we find *three* pointwise parallels between the two language groups, as summarized in (40). ① In Kalaallisut and Icelandic, full DPs may undergo object movement, while pronouns must; moreover, the occurrence of DP movement is correlated with a semantic difference pertaining to specificity or scope. ② In contrast, Unangam Tunuu and Danish do not permit full DPs to undergo object movement, though this is still required for pronouns. ③ Finally, Labrador Inuttut and Swedish are like ② in banning full DP object movement; however, pronouns may optionally move or remain in situ.

(40) *Object movement patterns cross-linguistically*

① Full DPs/pronouns	Pronouns only	
	② <i>Obligatory</i>	③ <i>Optional</i>
Kalaallisut	Unangam Tunuu	Labrador Inuttut
Icelandic	Danish	Swedish

With these parallels in place, I propose that the connection between these language groups offers new insights into the semantic properties of antipassive constructions in Labrador Inuttut.²⁹ Recall that MOD objects in Labrador Inuttut permit a wider range of interpretations than their Kalaallisut

²⁸Pronominal object shift has also been reported to be optional in Norwegian (Holmberg 1986, pp. 228-229, Anderssen et al. 2011) and in non-standard varieties of Danish (Pedersen, 1993).

²⁹By assumption, this discussion extends to bi-absolutive constructions in Unangam Tunuu, though the relevant semantic data are not available.

counterparts, and that this is surprising under the assumption that scope is directly determined by syntactic height. Scandinavian object shift provides a crucial insight into this puzzle: the semantic correlates of object shift *disappear* when movement is independently unavailable (e.g. Adger, 1994; Diesing, 1997; Vikner, 1997, 2001; Thráinsson, 2008).³⁰ I show that, not only is this effect at the heart of the interpretive flexibility of MOD objects in Labrador Inuttut, but it is also relevant in certain under-described corners of Kalaallisut.

In the Scandinavian languages, object shift requires lexical verb movement (Holmberg's Generalization; Holmberg 1986): if the verb remains in situ—for instance, because an auxiliary has raised instead—then object shift is no longer permitted. Against this backdrop, consider the Danish and Icelandic examples below, in which the lexical verb does not move. In (41), the pronoun in Danish is still understood as referential, despite remaining in situ. Similarly, in (42), the in situ full DP object in Icelandic may be interpreted as specific (see Thráinsson (2008, pp. 190-194) for discussion). Finally, it has already been shown in (39) that, in languages such as Swedish in which pronominal object shift is optional rather than required, the occurrence of this movement seems generally semantically vacuous. While I am not aware of any literature tying this point to the observations above, I assume that it is related.

(41) *Holmberg's Generalization in Danish: In situ pronouns*

Hvorfor har Peter aldrig læst **den** ?
why has Peter never read **it**
'Why has Peter never read it?'

(Vikner, 2006, p. 395)

(42) *Holmberg's Generalization in Icelandic: In situ DPs*

Nemandinn hefur ekki lesið **þrjár bækur**
student-the has not read **three books**

'It is not the case that the student has read three books.' ($\neg > 3$) OR

'There are three books that the student hasn't read.' ($3 > \neg$) (Thráinsson, 2008, p. 191)

This effect is, of course, highly reminiscent of the behaviour of antipassive objects in Labrador Inuttut. Some representative examples are repeated below as (43): antipassive pronominal objects may still be understood as referential, and in situ DP objects may be interpreted with wide scope. Just like in Scandinavian, the semantic contrast between raised vs. in situ objects in Labrador Inuttut is lost when object movement is not available for various reasons (whether because pronominal object movement is not obligatory *or* because full DP object movement is not an option to begin with). Therefore, the fact that antipassive (MOD) objects in Labrador Inuttut permit readings normally associated with ABS objects in Kalaallisut is due to independent restrictions on deriving such ABS objects in the first place.

³⁰Moreover, that this is a general cross-linguistic phenomenon not specific to Scandinavian has been shown by Rackowski and Richards (2005) on the basis of Tagalog.

(43) *Referential/wide scope in-situ objects in Labrador Inuttut*

- a. Sâli aittosia-mik pisi-laut-tuk siagugiak Mary-mut (*pro*)
 Sally.ABS gift-MOD buy-PST-3S.S later.on Mary-ALLAT (3S.PRON.MOD)
 âtsi-laut-tuk
 give-PST-3S.S
 ‘Sally bought a gift and later she gave **it** to Mary.’
- b. *Context:* Johnny received several candies for Christmas and ate them all, and liked most of them.
 Jâni **atautsi-tuina-mik uKumiaga-mik** piutsa-sima-**ngi**-tuk
 Johnny.ABS **one-just-MOD candy-MOD** like-PERF-NEG-3S.S
 ‘There was just one candy that Johnny didn’t like.’ (∃ > NEG)

As further support for this idea, we may even detect this effect in certain antipassive contexts in Kalaallisut, despite our previous generalization that MOD objects obligatorily take narrow scope (Bittner, 1994). The generalization is actually more nuanced: if object movement is blocked, the behaviour of MOD objects in Kalaallisut is the same as in Labrador Inuttut (and Scandinavian). Transitive subject relative clauses offer such a context, since they are necessarily antipassive, as shown in (12b) in §3.1.³¹ Crucially, it is in these constructions that the MOD object may receive a wider range of interpretations. This has been reported by both Fortescue (1984, p. 54) and Bittner (1994, p. 116-118) (though Bittner does not provide the relevant scopal data). Indeed, Fortescue (1984, p. 54) (whose discussion of ABS and MOD objects references definiteness rather than specificity or scope) offers the following passage to describe the example in (44):

“Due to the impossibility of using transitive participial inflected forms in relative clauses one cannot attach a transitive relative clause—with relative case subject—to a main clause NP, but it may be possible to substitute a corresponding ‘half-transitive’ [antipassive] form with instrumental [MOD] case object (*not necessarily in the indefinite/deemphasized object sense that construction has in superordinate clauses*):” (emphasis mine)

(44) *Semantically ambiguous MOD object in Kalaallisut RC*

- piniaartuq [_{RC} — **nannu-mik** tuqut-si-suq]
 hunter.ABS (*ec.*ABS) **polar.bear-MOD** kill-AP-PART.3S.S
 ‘the hunter who killed a/the bear’ (Fortescue, 1984, p. 54)

As noted by various authors (Vikner, 1997, 2001; Thráinsson, 2008), this general pattern presents a challenge for approaches to object shift in which semantic interpretation is derived *solely* from syntactic height (Diesing, 1992, 1996; Diesing and Jelinek, 1995). Nonetheless, it is possible to accommodate this set of facts in a number of ways, though I do not adopt a particular approach in this paper. For instance, it has been proposed that object shift may take place covertly at LF just in case syntactic object shift is blocked (Diesing, 1996). That covert movement does not over-apply in the constructions in which only a narrow scope reading is possible could, in turn, be construed as due to an economy condition, dispreferring object shift with no morphosyntactic consequences.

³¹Bittner (1994) also discusses double object constructions as another environment in which in situ internal arguments may be semantically flexible due to the impossibility of movement; these constructions must take an ERG-ABS-MOD case frame (with the indirect object raising and the direct object remaining in situ).

Alternatively, one may posit that object shift would be better modeled in an Optimality Theoretic system, in which requirements on moving specific objects may be violated (e.g. Vikner, 1997, 2001). Finally, Bittner (1994, p. 117) offers a solution based on pragmatic competition, suggesting that, while movement vs. non-movement are normally associated with opposing semantics, this is actually pragmatically generated rather than semantically encoded, such that it may be cancelled when the alternation is lost.

Regardless of the exact mechanisms behind this phenomenon, it is clear that the disappearance of the semantic contrast when object shift is independently unavailable is a generalized and systematic effect.

4.4 Interim summary

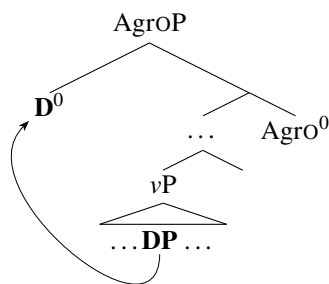
We have now seen two distinct patterns of object movement across Inuit (three patterns including Unangam Tunuu). Ergative constructions in Kalaallisut and Labrador Inuttut (and Unangam Tunuu) were shown to share a common syntactic derivation, i.e. movement of the object to a higher position, which feeds dependent ERG case assignment to the subject. Therefore, the varieties with independent constraints on object movement display a reduced ergative patterning. Finally, a broader examination of object shift patterns cross-linguistically reveals that the interpretation of an object depends on whether movement is independently available.

5 Three patterns of ergativity and object movement across Inuit

With the analysis of Kalaallisut and Labrador Inuttut in place, we finally turn to Inuktitut. The introduction of Inuktitut allows us to move beyond the previous two-way contrast between Kalaallisut and Labrador Inuttut, and supports the idea that the variation in ergativity across Inuit may be (informally) understood as an *ordered hierarchy*, as first suggested by Johns (2001). We will see that Inuktitut occupies an intermediate position in this hierarchy.

I argue that this, too, may be framed in terms of object movement. We have seen that Kalaallisut and Labrador Inuttut differ in whether both full DPs and pronouns may undergo object movement or whether only the latter may do so. To integrate Inuktitut into this system, I propose that, while DP and pronominal objects may move (as in Kalaallisut), the higher copy of the moved element is necessarily realized as a pronoun (as in Labrador Inuttut). The structure of an Inuktitut ergative construction is schematized in (45), with the pronoun represented as a D^0 (Postal, 1966; Stanton, 2016).

(45) *D^0 -DP movement chain in Inuktitut*



Notably, the D⁰-DP movement chain in (45) highly resembles a *clitic-doubling configuration* (e.g. Baker and Kramer, 2016, 2018). Following Yuan (2021), there is indeed independent evidence that ABS objects in Inuktitut are doubled by pronominal clitics and that the status of object agreement morphology is yet another point of variation across Inuit. This distinction, in turn, presents yet another factor relevant to shaping the appearance of ergativity across Inuit—precisely because it directly affects the movement chains formed in the course of object movement.

This section is organized as follows. §5.1 shows that the overall appearance of Inuktitut is less robust than in Kalaallisut, yet not as restricted as in Labrador Inuttut (Johns, 2001, 2006, a.o.). §5.2 then synthesizes Yuan’s (2021) arguments for the aforementioned clitic-doubling analysis, based on syntactic and semantic parallels with object clitic-doubling in other languages. Here, I unify this approach with our previous findings for Kalaallisut and Labrador Inuttut, and show how this elucidates the exact nature of the variation in object movement across Inuit. Finally, §5.3 considers diachronic approaches to the variation in ergativity across Inuit and offers a logical pathway for syntactic change, based on the present analysis.

5.1 An intermediate ergative patterning in Inuktitut

Much previous work has noticed that the antipassive construction in Inuktitut has a wider distribution than in Kalaallisut, resulting in the impression that ergativity in Inuktitut is somewhat reduced (Johns 2001, 2006; Beach 2011; Carrier 2012, 2017, 2020; Murasugi 2017; Yuan 2018). At the same time, it has been made clear by Johns (2001, 2006) that the ergative patterning in Inuktitut is not as restricted as in Labrador Inuttut. Put together, this suggests a *hierarchy of ergativity*, ordered as follows: *Kalaallisut > Inuktitut > Labrador Inuttut*. Note that the term “hierarchy” is used somewhat informally here, as a useful way to capture the intuition that certain varieties are systematically “more” or “less” ergative than others.

This section aims to clarify these observations, by making precise the exact nature of the ergative and antipassive constructions in Inuktitut. The intermediate status of Inuktitut within an ergativity hierarchy is quite motivated: it shares properties with both Kalaallisut and Labrador Inuttut. We will see that the Inuktitut ergative construction patterns like its Kalaallisut counterpart in permitting both full DP and pronominal objects, while the Inuktitut antipassive construction patterns like its Labrador Inuttut counterpart in allowing wide scope-taking MOD objects. These findings are summarized in (46) (note that (46) compares *only* wide scope-taking and referential objects).

(46) *Distribution of wide scope/referential nominal objects across Inuit*

	Object type	Kalaallisut	Inuktitut	Labrador Inuttut
Ergative (ABS obj.)	Full DP	Yes	Yes	No
	Pronoun	Yes	Yes	Yes
Antipassive (MOD obj.)	Full DP	No	Yes	Yes
	Pronoun	No	Yes	Yes

Starting with the properties of ergative constructions, the examples in (47a-c) demonstrate that both full DPs and pronouns are available as ABS objects, just as we have previously seen for Kalaallisut. The data point in (47a) comes from Beach’s (2011) survey of the Arctic Quebec varieties of Inuktitut; (47b-c) were elicited by the author and represent the Baffin Island varieties

of Inuktitut. These examples additionally show that ABS objects in ergative constructions are semantically unambiguous, as expected. For instance, Beach claims that the ABS object in (47a) may only be interpreted as “specific” (using his terminology). Similarly, (47b) can only mean that a total of three cookies were (collectively or cumulatively) eaten by two children.³² Finally, in (47c), the pronominal object must be understood as referring to the previously-mentioned pencil.

(47) **ABS objects of ergative constructions in Inuktitut**

- a. qautamaat (*pro*) **qimmiq** taku-qatta-tara
 every day (1S.PRON.ERG) **dog.ABS** see-HAB-1S.S/3S.O
 ‘Every day, I see a dog (“a specific dog”).’ (Beach, 2011, p. 53, 58)
- b. marruuk surusiit niri-qqau-jangit **pingasut sivalaat**
 two.ERG child.PL.ERG eat-REC.PST-3P.S/3P.O **three.ABS cookie.PL.ABS**
 ‘Two children ate three cookies.’ (3 > 2, *2 > 3; i.e. a total of three cookies were eaten)
- c. Jaani titirauti-mik tigu-si-juq titirauti-kkuving-mik amma tuni-**janga**
 Jaani.ABS pencil-MOD take-AP-3S.S pencil-receptacle-MOD and give-3S.S/3S.O
 Miali-mut
 Miali-ALLAT
 ‘Jaani took a pencil from the pencil case and gave **it** to Miali.’

The antipassive counterparts of (47) are provided throughout (48) below. Crucially, these data demonstrate that MOD objects in Inuktitut are semantically flexible, on par with MOD objects in Labrador Inuttut. In his discussion of antipassive objects, Beach (2011, pp. 53-64) claims that the MOD-marked *qimmimik* ‘dog’ in (48a) may be understood as “a specific dog” or “any dog”. In the same vein, the MOD object in (48b) permits both the aforementioned cumulative or collective reading (three cookies being eaten) and a distributive reading wherein six cookies have been eaten, while (48c) shows that referential pronominal objects may surface in the antipassive construction.³³

(48) **MOD objects of antipassive constructions in Inuktitut**

- a. qautamaat (*pro*) **qimmi-mik** taku-qatta-tunga
 every day (1S.PRON.ABS) **dog-MOD** see-HAB-1S.S
 ‘Every day, I see a dog (“a specific dog” or “any dog”).’ (Beach, 2011, p. 54, 58)
- b. marruuk surusiit niri-qqau-jut pingasu-**nit** sivalaar-**nit**
 two.ABS child.PL.ABS eat-REC.PST-3P.S three-PL.MOD cookie-PL.MOD
 ‘Two children ate three cookies.’
 (3 > 2; 2 > 3; i.e. a total of three cookies were eaten *or* six cookies were eaten)
- c. Jaani titirauti-mik tigu-si-juq titirauti-kkuving-mik amma tuni-si-juq
 Jaani.ABS pencil-MOD take-AP-3S.S pencil-receptacle-MOD and give-AP-3S.S
(pro) Miali-mut
3S.PRON.MOD Miali-ALLAT
 ‘Jaani took a pencil from the pencil case and gave **it** to Miali.’

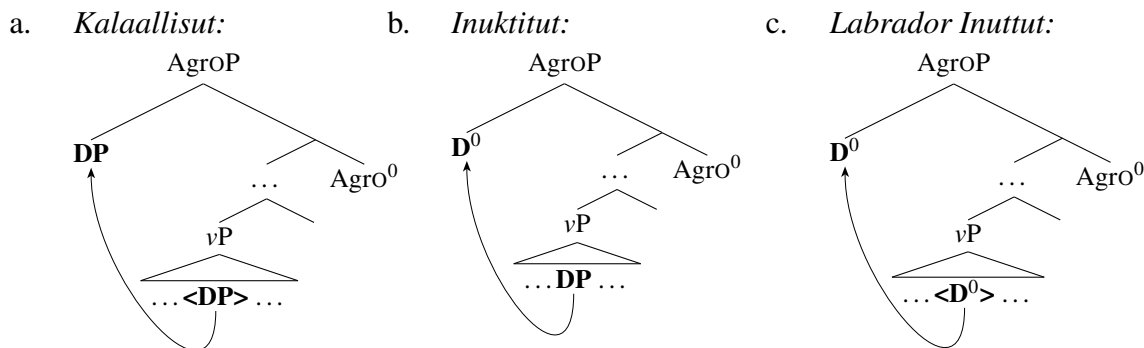
³²The pair of sentences in (47b) and (48b) are intended to evaluate the scopal relations of quantificational DPs, as a parallel to the Kalaallisut and Labrador Inuttut examples shown earlier in (14) and (27), respectively.

Given our broader analysis of ergativity across Inuit, the Inuktitut data presented above should be framed in terms of object movement. Impressionistically, object movement in Inuktitut appears to be fully optional, since *both* DP objects and pronominal objects may surface as ABS or MOD. However, we will see below that this is not the complete picture: a closer examination of ABS objects in Inuktitut reveals a number of additional properties that will inform the exact nature of object movement in Inuktitut.

5.2 Object agreement vs. pronominal clitics across Inuit

Our analysis of Inuit ergativity predicts that the intermediate position of Inuktitut within the ergativity hierarchy should correspond to an intermediate position within a concomitant hierarchy of *object movement possibilities*. Since Kalaallisut permits both full DP and pronominal object movement, and Labrador Inuttut permits only the latter, Inuktitut should in principle instantiate a hybrid of the two. I propose that this is indeed the case, with object movement in the three varieties modeled throughout (49) below. In (49b), repeated from (45), object movement in Inuktitut is schematized as involving a movement chain whose tail may be a DP but whose head is *invariably* a pronominal D^0 .³⁴

(49) Object movement across Inuit



The structure in (49b) is highly reminiscent of a pronominal clitic-doubling configuration (e.g. Torrego, 1988; Uriagereka, 1995; Anagnostopoulou, 2006; Nevins, 2011; Kramer, 2014; Baker and Kramer, 2016, 2018). I propose that, not only does this idea follow from the analysis of ergativity and object movement developed thus far, but it is directly tied to yet another point of variation across Inuit, recently identified by Yuan (2021)—concerning the *status of the verbal agreement morphology*

³³This observation is furthermore corroborated by naturally-occurring sentences found in in corpus data (Carrier, 2017), as shown in (i). Indeed, Carrier (2017, p. 679-680) discusses the referential pronominal usage of the (null) antipassive object in (i) as a manifestation of the weaker ergative patterning in Inuktitut.

(i) **Referential pronominal MOD objects from Inuktitut corpus**

tuqu-nga-lik-suni=lu tagga takuna-liq-tugut (pro)
 die-PERF-PROG-CTMP.3S.S=also then look.for.long.time-PROG-1P.S **3S.PRON.MOD**
 ‘And now that [the caribou] is dead, we are looking at it.’ (Carrier, 2017, p. 680)

³⁴For simplicity, the pronouns in (49) are represented as a bare D^0 , in the spirit of Postal (1994), Elbourne (2005), Stanton (2016), and others. Pronominal movement is, in turn, modeled as long head movement of D^0 to specifier position (Harizanov, 2019).

indexing ABS objects. Below, I briefly summarize this line of analysis before extending it to the overall account of ergativity developed here.

5.2.1 Evidence for object clitic-doubling in Inuktitut

Through a close comparison of Kalaallisut and Inuktitut, Yuan (2021) proposes two distinct structures underlying the object agreement morphology cross-referencing ABS objects: in Kalaallisut, this morphology is genuine ϕ -agreement, but, in Inuktitut, it is the product of pronominal clitic-doubling.³⁵ Therefore, while subject agreement is uniformly ϕ -agreement across Inuit, the status of object agreement is a point of variation.

As Yuan notes, the pronoun within a clitic-doubling structure is semantically contentful and may thus affect the interpretation of its DP associate; across languages, clitic-doubled objects are often interpreted as topical, specific, or otherwise referential, in line with the interpretations associated with pronouns and definite determiners (D⁰s) (e.g. Suñer, 1988; Dobrovie-Sorin, 1990; Anagnostopoulou, 2006; Baker and Kramer, 2018). In contrast, ϕ -agreement is semantically vacuous since it is a purely morphosyntactic phenomenon. Therefore, whereas ABS subjects and ABS objects in Kalaallisut behave uniformly (since they are both targeted by ϕ -agreement and both surface in a structurally high position), we predict that ABS subjects and ABS objects should display *interpretive differences*, due to the clitic-doubled nature of ABS objects.

This is most straightforwardly illustrated with *wh*-phrases and negative indefinites, which interact with clitic-doubling in a particularly cross-linguistically stable way. In the Romanian data in (50), for instance, we see that simplex *wh*-phrases and negative indefinites cannot be clitic-doubled, because they cannot receive the aforementioned interpretations. Conversely, that D(iscourse)-linked *wh*-phrases (e.g. *which x*) require clitic-doubling. See also Baker and Kramer (2016, 2018) for an identical pattern in Amharic.

(50) *Object clitic-doubling in Romanian*

- a. **pe cine** ai văzut
PE who have (you) seen
 ‘Who did you see?’ (Non-D-linked *wh*-phrase; no doubling)
- b. nu am văzut **pe nimeni**
 not I.have seen **PE nobody**
 ‘I didn’t see anyone.’ (Negative indefinite; no doubling)
- c. **pe care** l-ai văzut
PE which him-have (you) seen
 ‘Which one did you see?’ (D-linked *wh*-phrase; doubling obligatory)
 (Dobrovie-Sorin, 1990, pp. 352-353, 364)

Crucially, the behaviour of ABS object *wh*-phrases and negative indefinites in Inuktitut matches

³⁵This account builds on much recent work reanalyzing putative object agreement as clitic-doubling (e.g. Woolford, 2008; Nevins, 2011; Kramer, 2014). It also mirrors similar contrasts found in other language groups, such as Bantu: as proposed by Riedel (2009), the object markers in certain Bantu languages behave like ϕ -agreement while surface-similar morphemes in Haya are the products of clitic-doubling. Evidence for this contrast can be found by examining the occurrence of the object markers with *wh*-phrases and negative indefinites, just as we will do for Inuktitut in (51) and (52) below.

the clitic-doubling pattern presented above. First, (51a) shows that ABS object *wh*-phrases are most naturally interpreted as D-linked; in (51b), we additionally see that this interpretation is *obligatory*, as “aggressively non-D-linked” *wh*-phrases cannot serve as ABS objects.³⁶ In contrast, *wh*-elements need not be interpreted as D-linked in ABS subject position, (52). This contrast supports the idea that the relevant effect is specific to elements indexed by object agreement—and do not stem from any properties of ABS arguments as a whole.

(51) *Obligatory D-linking of ABS wh-objects in Inuktitut*

- a. *Context:* You and a friend are at the grocery store, looking at the options.
kisu niri-guma-vi-**uk**
what.ABS eat-want-INT.2S.S-3S.O
 ‘Which one do you want to eat?’ (Yuan, 2021, p. 165)
- b. *Context:* You see that I’m experiencing symptoms of a food allergy.
 ***kisu=kiaq** niri-qqau-vi-**uk**
what.ABS=vague eat-REC.PST-INT.2S.S-3S.O
Intended: ‘What on earth did you eat?’ (Yuan, 2021, p. 165)

(52) *No obligatory D-linking of ABS wh-subjects in Inuktitut*

- a. *Context:* You’re trying to identify something that’s partly obstructed.
kisu inna
what.ABS DEM.PRON
 ‘What’s that?’ (#‘Which one is that?’) (Yuan, 2021, p. 165)
- b. *Context:* You’ve been getting calls from an unfamiliar number.
kina=kiar=imna uqaluq-tap-paa uvam-nut
who.ABS=vague=DEM.PRON call-ITER-INT.3S.S 1S-ALLAT
 ‘Who on earth keeps calling me?’ (Yuan, 2021, p. 165)

Turning to negative indefinites, recall from (17) in §3.1 that, despite the high locus of ABS objects in Kalaallisut, they may reconstruct under negation for purposes of NPI-licensing. However, (53a) demonstrates that in Inuktitut the same NPI =*luunniit* may not surface in ABS object position; again, no such issues arise in ABS subject position, (53b). Importantly, in these particular sentences the NPI is contained within an embedded syntactic island, with negation in the higher clause. It therefore cannot be that the ill-formedness of (53a) is due to the ABS object outscoping the negative element. Instead, these data point towards a general incompatibility between clitic-doubling and negative indefinites—again, consistent with the cross-linguistic profile of clitic-doubling.

(53) *No ABS object negative indefinites in Inuktitut*

- a. *Jaani iqauma-**nngit**-tuq [niri-lau-mmangaa-**gu** **kisu=luunniit**]
 Jaani.ABS remember-NEG-3S.S eat-PST-DUB.3S.S-3S.O **what.ABS=NPI**
Intended: ‘Jaani doesn’t remember if he ate a single thing.’
- b. Jaani iqauma-**nngit**-tuq [**kina=luunniit** qai-lau-mmangaa]
 Jaani.ABS remember-NEG-3S.S **who.ABS=NPI** come-PST-DUB.3S.S
 ‘Jaani doesn’t remember if a single person came.’ (Yuan, 2021, p. 163)

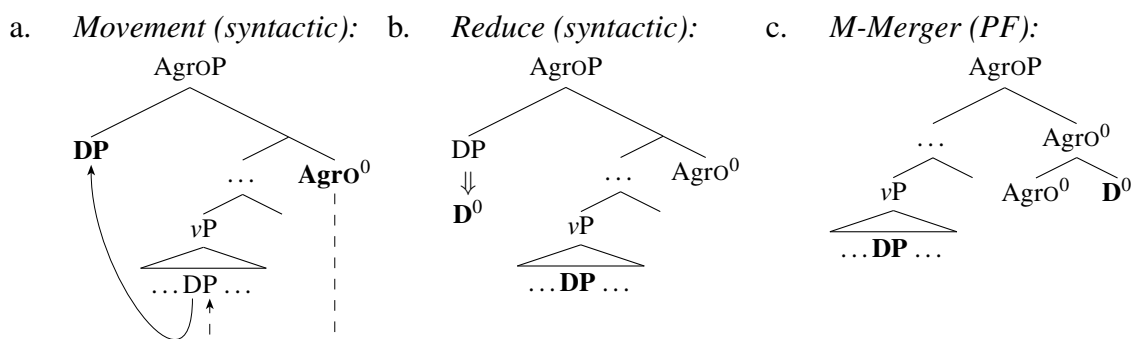
³⁶See Pesetsky (1987) and den Dikken and Giannakidou (2002) for cross-linguistic discussion of these elements.

These Inuktitut data pose a fundamental challenge for analyses of clitic-doubling that seek to unify it with object shift, as recently advocated for by Harizanov (2014). Harizanov proposes that clitic-doubling structures involve syntactic (phrasal) movement, followed by a morphological process that converts the DP into a bare D^0 at PF. Under this purely postsyntactic approach to clitic-doubling, clitic-doubling structures are expected to be semantically equivalent to object-shifted ones, since the pronominal clitic is syntactically and semantically a full DP. However, the fact that ABS objects in Kalaallisut (in which object shift takes place) and Inuktitut (in which object clitic-doubling takes place) *do not* behave alike demonstrates that object clitic-doubling structures in Inuktitut must be syntactically distinct from pure object movement.

While a number of analyses of clitic-doubling are available,³⁷ I follow Baker and Kramer (2016, 2018) in assuming that the sequence of derivational steps posited by Harizanov’s (2014) is essentially correct—however, both movement and the $DP \rightarrow D^0$ conversion process occur in the *syntax proper* (Baker and Kramer term this process *Reduce*). Because there is a pronominal D^0 present in the clitic-doubling structure in the syntax, it is semantically interpreted. The interpretive requirements of ABS objects thus arise from a matching requirement imposed between the pronominal D^0 and its DP associate, as proposed by Suñer (1988).

For concreteness, the clitic-doubling process is illustrated below in (54), a decomposition of the structure given in (49b) above. First, I assume that $Agro^0$ Agrees with the ABS object DP (even in the absence of ϕ -agreement), since movement is Agree-based; this triggers movement of the object to Spec-AgroP, (54a). This step takes place in both Kalaallisut and Inuktitut. However, as shown in (54b), in Inuktitut the higher copy undergoes *Reduce*, such that it is converted into a pronominal D^0 . Finally, to capture how a pronominal D^0 is realized as a verbal suffix, we may then introduce a postsyntactic operation of *M-Merger*, which rebrackets the Spec-Head configuration in (54b) into a complex head (Matushansky, 2006), (54c).³⁸

(54) *Derivation of clitic-doubling in Inuktitut*



With the clitic-doubling analysis in place, I briefly return to how this relates to the derivation of ergativity in Inuktitut. In the clitic-doubling structures given above, both the head and the tail

³⁷For instance, the Inuktitut facts shown here are also generally compatible with the Big DP analysis of clitic-doubling. Under this approach, the pronominal D^0 and its DP associate are generated as a complex constituent, with the D^0 then undergoing long head movement to its final landing site (Torrego, 1988; Uriagereka, 1995; Nevins, 2011; Arregi and Nevins, 2012).

³⁸The formation of the complex head may, in turn, feed the creation of portmanteaux, thus accounting for the cases where subject agreement morphology (ϕ -agreement) and object agreement morphology (pronominal clitic) are expounded within a single morph. See Yuan (2021, pp. 166-169) for an implementation based on spanning (Svenonius, 2012; Merchant, 2015), and fn. 4 of this paper for further discussion.

of the movement chain (i.e. the pronominal clitic and its DP associate) are spelled-out. Since ergativity relies on object movement, it must be the *structurally high pronoun* that serves as the case competitor for dependent ERG case assignment to the transitive subject. However, notice that the in situ full DP object is realized as ABS, contradicting the ABS and MOD case assignment rules developed earlier in the paper, since ABS case should only be assigned to ν P-external nominals. I assume that ABS case on the structurally low DP arises from a *case matching condition* between the pronominal clitic and its DP associate that overrides the unmarked case assignment rules that would otherwise apply. However, in the absence of pronominal clitic-doubling, i.e. in an antipassive construction, the object is realized as MOD, the ν P-internal unmarked case.³⁹

The remainder of this section considers how the analysis of Inuktitut may inform our treatment of Labrador Inuttut.

5.2.2 Tying object agreement to ergativity across Inuit

In light of the proposal that the object agreement morphology across Inuit is genuine ϕ -agreement in Kalaallisut but clitic-doubling in Inuktitut, a question that now arises is how Labrador Inuttut fits into this overall picture. Extending the analysis of Yuan (2021), I propose that the clitic-doubling analysis of object agreement in Inuktitut allows us to recast *pronominal object movement* in Labrador Inuttut as *pronominal cliticization without doubling*;⁴⁰ see also Johns (2017) for a precursor of this idea. This, in turn, yields yet another hierarchy, again ordered as *Kalaallisut* > *Inuktitut* > *Labrador Inuttut*, now concerning the relative *pronominality* of the object agreement.

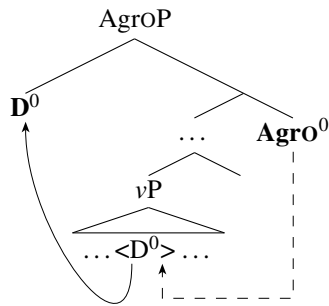
In §4.1, pronominal object movement in Labrador Inuttut was preliminarily analyzed as involving a null *pro* moving to Spec-AgrOP and indexed by ϕ -agreement in AgrO^0 (see (30)). On parity with Inuktitut, I propose instead that the object agreement morphology in Labrador Inuttut *is in fact the raised pronoun*—that is, AgrO^0 Agrees with the pronominal object, triggering movement to Spec-AgrOP, and then the pronoun cliticizes to AgrO^0 via M-Merger (cf. Déprez, 1989; Josefsson, 1993; Bobaljik and Jonas, 1996), as shown in (55). Under this treatment, the surface contrast between Inuktitut and Labrador Inuttut is simply in whether a pronominal clitic may be doubled by a full DP, akin to similar patterns in cross-linguistically more familiar languages, e.g. Romanian (clitic-doubling) vs. Standard French (no doubling) in Romance.

³⁹Interestingly, it is possible that the case matching condition need not hold universally. In a recent paper by Johns (2018), it is shown that some speakers of Labrador Inuttut permit a mixed ergative-antipassive transitive construction, with object agreement on the verb indexing (*full DP*) MOD objects (this dialect of Labrador Inuttut is thus similar to the one described in this paper in not permitting full DP ABS objects). Tentatively, such facts may be accommodated under the present account, if this dialect of Labrador Inuttut shares the same syntactic profile as Inuktitut, with pronominal clitic-doubling of full DP objects—but differs from Inuktitut in how the case of the doubled object is realized. If the case matching condition need not hold in this Labrador Inuttut dialect, then low objects are invariably MOD, regardless of whether they undergo clitic-doubling.

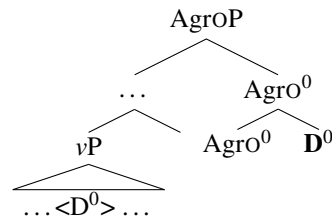
⁴⁰In Yuan (2021), Kalaallisut and Inuktitut are compared with Unangam Tunuu, rather than Labrador Inuttut. However, as we have seen in §4.2, the object movement patterns in Unangam Tunuu and Labrador Inuttut are very similar.

(55) *Pronominal cliticization in Labrador Inuttut*

a. *Movement:*



b. *M-Merger:*



As shown in (56), the structural correlates of the object agreement morphology in a given Inuit variety may directly impact the appearance of the object movement chain.

(56) *Hierarchy of object agreement across Inuit*

	Kalaallisut	Inuktitut	Labrador Inuttut
Obj. movement chain	DP ... DP	D ⁰ ... DP	D ⁰ ... D ⁰
Obj. morphology	ϕ -agreement	Clitic doubling	Pronominal clitic only (no doubling)

The idea that Labrador Inuttut displays not only pronominal object movement but also pronominal cliticization is reminiscent of early proposals that have sought to unify the two phenomena in other language groups (e.g. Déprez, 1989; Josefsson, 1993; Bobaljik and Jonas, 1996). In the Mainland Scandinavian languages, for instance, the pronouns that undergo object shift are necessarily prosodically weak (akin to clitics), while strong (e.g. stressed, focused) pronouns pattern like full DPs in remaining in situ. Although certain empirical challenges to such a unification have been raised for Scandinavian (e.g. Holmberg and Platzack, 1995), this general approach may be nonetheless plausible for Labrador Inuttut.⁴¹ A closer examination of the morphosyntactic and semantic properties of the object ϕ -morphology in the language may help inform whether this analysis is correct.

5.3 Extension: Variation in object movement and diachrony

The remainder of this section further examines the triangulation between ergativity, object movement, and object agreement across Inuit from a potential diachronic perspective. In §3.2, it was mentioned that the variation in ergativity found in Inuit is often assumed to be a syntactic change in progress; under such an approach, the variation in ergative case patterning across Inuit instantiates a gradual *loss* of ergativity, i.e. a shift from ergative to accusative case alignment (Johns, 1999, 2001; Carrier, 2012, 2017, 2020; Allen, 2013; Janic and Hemmings, 2021). Because Labrador Inuttut has the most restricted ergative patterning, it may be understood as representing the variety furthest along in this syntactic change; Inuktitut instantiates an intermediate stage, while Kalaallisut is the most linguistically conservative. While there has not been conclusive diachronic

⁴¹That being said, it is not obvious that pronominal object movement and subsequent cliticization in Labrador Inuttut are driven by prosodic considerations, given that 3rd person pronouns are generally null. Rather, to uphold the analytical parallel with Kalaallisut, we may take object movement in Labrador Inuttut to be driven by Agree.

evidence tying these three particular Inuit varieties together (though see Carrier (2020) for a diachronic analysis of ergativity in Inuktitut), I briefly outline here how the (synchronic) analysis of Inuit put forth here offers a logical pathway for such a change, based on what is known about historical developments in other language groups.

Since ergative case alignment is argued in this paper to co-vary with the (non-)occurrence of object movement, the relevant diachronic path would have to pertain to changes affecting the *derivation of high objects*—specifically, the gradual loss of object movement and concomitant shift from object ϕ -agreement to pronominal clitic. Which of these two factors is more likely to be the relevant factor driving this change? While pronouns are known to develop into agreement affixes via grammaticalization (e.g. Roberts and Roussou, 2003; van Gelderen, 2011), the opposite directionality seems less frequently attested. On the other hand, it has been recently proposed by Maddox (2019) on the basis of Old and Modern Spanish that full DP movement may develop diachronically into pronominal clitic-doubling (see also Harizanov 2014, p. 1080). It is therefore possible that this is at play in Inuit as well, with individual Inuit varieties displaying these steps in their synchronic grammars. This, in turn, could result in the subsequent reanalysis of ϕ -agreement as the clitic itself in Inuktitut and Labrador Inuttut, given that (i) movement is always accompanied by ϕ -morphology and (ii) the pronouns tracked by this morphology happen to generally be null.

As stated above, whether this variation is diachronic in nature is not clear, due to a present lack of relevant historical data. Nonetheless, the analysis of Inuit pursued here refines the empirical space of the conjecture, by making precise what is constant across grammars (ergative case assignment) and what truly varies (object movement).

To sum up, we have seen multiple dimensions of syntactic variation across Inuit, stemming from the core proposal that we find Inuit-internal variation in the types of objects that may move to a structurally high position. The surface ERG-ABS case patterning is derived by ERG case assignment to the subject, which takes place after this movement step, such that the overall appearance of ergativity is directly related to the (non-)occurrence of object movement. Again, this approach takes variation in ergativity to be divorced from the ERG case assignment process itself, which is proposed to be uniformly dependent in nature. Finally, I have shown that the occurrence of movement of the object (to Spec-AgrOP) seems to be linked to the underlying status of object-indexing ϕ -morphology (in Agr⁰), and offered a potential diachronic reason for this connection.

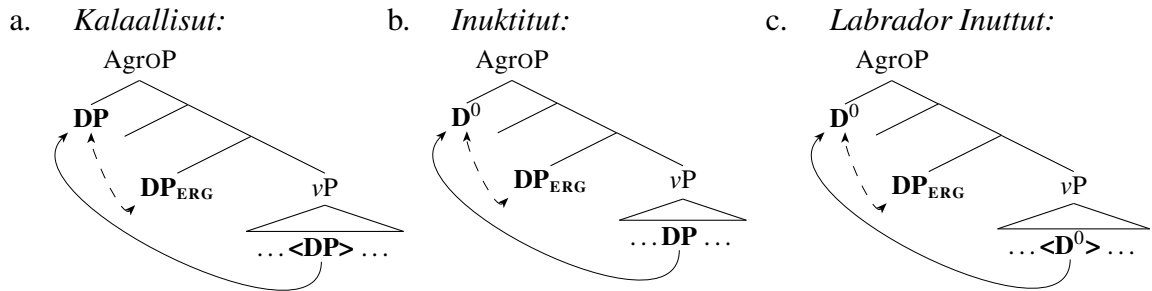
6 Conclusion and extensions

This paper has investigated variation in ergativity across Inuit, as seen through the relative distributions of the ergative and (non-ergative) antipassive constructions in three individual Inuit varieties. As I have shown, the existence of this variation provides a unique empirical domain for probing the theoretical underpinnings of ergativity. Building on the proposals of Bittner and Hale (1996a,b) and Woolford (2017) that ergativity in Inuit requires object movement, I have argued that *variation* in ergativity is similarly correlated with variation in the permissibility of object movement.

I have argued that this correlation follows from a syntactic derivation that holds uniformly across Inuit, with variation between individual Inuit varieties in (i) the types of objects that may undergo movement, and, relatedly, (ii) whether raised objects are cross-referenced by verbal ϕ -morphology, or if this ϕ -morphology is pronominal in nature. ERG case assignment is uniformly

dependent across Inuit, assigned to the lower of two vP-external nominals, after the object raises to its final landing site above the subject. Therefore, the status of ergativity in a given Inuit variety is ultimately best reflected by the properties of the object, rather than the properties of the transitive subject. The variation in object movement coupled with the uniform nature of ERG case assignment is schematized throughout (57):

(57) *Variation in ergativity across Inuit*



This analysis of ergativity in Inuit was, in turn, constructed based on several other interlocking pieces, including: (i) the interpretation of objects in antipassive constructions, (ii) the availability of full DP vs. pronominal objects in ergative constructions, and (iii) the nature of the agreement morphology cross-referencing ABS objects. These are summarized below in (58):

(58) *Summary of findings*

	Kalaallisut	Inuktitut	Labrador Inuttut
(i) MOD obj. scope	Narrow	Narrow/wide	Narrow/wide
(ii) ABS obj. type	DP/pronoun	DP/pronoun	Pronoun
(iii) Object agreement	ϕ -agreement	Clitic	Clitic

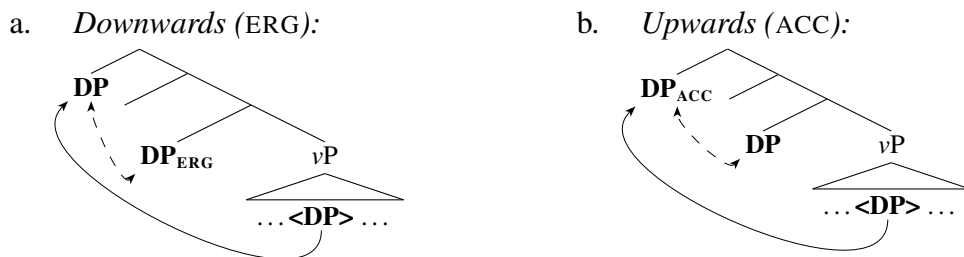
Overall, this paper has provided a case study in using linguistic variation as a tool for investigating syntactic theory, as illustrated in two concrete ways. First, our analysis of Inuit was motivated by point-by-point parallels with other, better-studied languages (e.g. Scandinavian), for instance in the treatment of objects. Second, the deep connections between ergativity, object movement, and pronominal cliticization, though not immediately apparent from any individual Inuit variety, were revealed via pointwise comparisons between otherwise extremely similar grammars (i.e. the behaviour of ergative and antipassive constructions in three closely-related related Inuit varieties). Ultimately, the paper has offered a general syntactic profile of Inuit with constrained space for variation, and therefore makes strong predictions for the syntactic behaviour of other Inuit varieties beyond the ones studied here.

Before concluding, I address a final prediction that arises from this analysis of Inuit, now concerning the typological landscape of case and movement interactions. I have argued that dependent ERG case is assigned *downwards* to the lower of two nominals, given that the object first raises above the subject. Far from being an idiosyncratic aspect of Inuit, this may rather offer a new perspective on the relationship between case and clause structure.

Since the directionality of case assignment is parameterizable in dependent case theory, we might expect the existence of languages with the same movement-derived clause structure as Inuit,

but with *upwards* dependent case assignment. Such a language might be labelled as “accusative,” since the case morphology would target the raised object. This is shown more concretely in (59).⁴²

(59) **High objects with directionalities of dependent case**



Such a language is not only logically predicted as the mirror image of Inuit, but is in fact a simple extension of the patternings found in languages like Sakha and Eastern Ostyak, for which we have already seen that object shift to the *vP* edge may trigger both dependent ACC and ERG case, respectively (see fn. 13 from §3.2). Put together, this is suggestive of two syntactic parameters (directionality of dependent case assignment and final landing site of object movement), whose settings may be cross-cut to predict four patterns. If this is on the right track, then we arrive at the typological categorization of languages given in (60):

(60) **A typology: Dependent case assignment and object movement**

	Object moves to Spec- <i>vP</i> (below subject)	Object moves above subject
Downwards	Sakha [ACC]	Inuit ⁴³ [ERG]
Upwards	Eastern Ostyak [ERG]	(Choctaw, Erzya Mordvin [ACC])

I offer here two possible candidates for the predicted language type, though leave a deeper investigation of these suggestions for future work. First, as shown in Broadwell (2006) and Tyler (2019), objects in Choctaw (Muskogean) are optionally case-marked when in situ, but obligatorily case-marked when extracted past the subject, as in (61). Assuming that optional case-marking on in-situ objects is determined by a confluence of factors independent of the ones conditioning obligatory case-marking on fronted objects (see Broadwell 2006, p. 73–75 for discussion), it may be possible to analyze Choctaw as an instantiation of the language type predicted here.

⁴²The idea that languages may allow objects to systematically raise above subjects was taken in §3.1 to contribute to the picture of Inuit as syntactically ergative. The present discussion of accusative languages with the same clause structure raises the question of whether these languages could *also* be understood as syntactically ergative, despite not being morphologically ergative. While such characterizations have been explicitly argued to not exist (see Larsen and Norman e.g. 1979, Dixon e.g. 1994, Manning e.g. 1996, Polinsky e.g. 2017b), I believe that this depends on how syntactic ergativity is defined to begin with. For instance, for Aldridge (2004, 2008a), syntactic ergativity arises from restrictions on \bar{A} -extraction, such that only the highest DP may be targeted; in languages with high objects, this results in only ABS arguments being extractable. A prediction, given the typology below, is that accusative languages with high objects might also only permit highest DPs to further extract. While this is yet to be tested, it is promising to me that highest DP \bar{A} -extraction restrictions are very common cross-linguistically, in ergative and accusative languages alike. For instance, in languages without high objects, this is instantiated as subject-only \bar{A} -extraction (cf. Keenan and Comrie, 1977).

⁴³See Ershova (2019) and Yuan (2020) for independent arguments that the ergative case patternings in the languages West Circassian and Yimas should similarly be analyzed as dependent case assignment to the subject, after movement of the object to a c-commanding position.

(61) ***Obligatory case-marking on fronted objects in Choctaw***

- a. Alíkichi-yat tákkon-(a) apa-tok
 doctor-NOM peach-(OBL) eat-PST
 ‘The doctor ate the peach.’
- b. Tákkon-*(a) alíkichi-yat apa-tok
 peach-*(OBL) doctor-NOM eat-PST
 ‘The peach, the doctor ate.’

(Tyler, 2019, p. 232)

Another language that may fit this profile is Erzya Mordvin (Uralic), following the analysis of Colley (2018) (citing data from Zaicz 1988).⁴⁴ As shown in (62), definite objects are both case-marked and are cross-referenced by ϕ -agreement, while indefinite objects co-occur with neither. Colley provides several morphosyntactic arguments (not given here) that the case and agreement system of the language follows if (i) Differential Object Marking of definite objects follows from movement and (ii) the object raises to a position *above* the subject such that it is more local to the c-commanding ϕ -probe. If Colley’s analysis is correct, then this is another instance of (upwards) dependent ACC case assignment triggered by movement of the object above the subject.

(62) ***Case and agreement with definite objects in Erzya Mordvin***

- a. skal-os^j t^jikše porn^j-i
 cow-DEF.NOM grass.NOM chew-PRES.3S
 ‘The cow eats grass.’
- b. c^jora-s^j n^je-i-n^jz^je t^jejt^jer^j-t^jjn^je-n^j
 boy-DEF.NOM see-PST-3S/3P girl-DEF.PL-ACC
 ‘The boy saw the girls.’

(Zaicz, 1988, pp. 208-209)

This paper has thus outlined a number of typological and empirical predictions stemming from a small set of interacting syntactic parameters. These predictions may inform future work on individual Inuit varieties (which are expected to broadly conform to the basic pattern proposed for Inuit) and other languages in the Inuit-Yupik-Unangan family, and may moreover offer new directions for cross-linguistic investigations of case.

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