A pseudo-relative in Inuit

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1. Introduction

Despite surface appearances, pseudo-relative constructions are considered to be structurally distinct from the subject relative clauses that they otherwise resemble. As schematized with the Italian example in (1), a common analysis of pseudo-relatives is that they are *small clauses*, consisting of a nominal subject and a CP predicate (e.g. Guasti 1988, Cinque 1995, Rafel 2000, Casalicchio 2014, Koopman & Sportiche 2014, Moulton & Grillo 2015). Moreover, it is often proposed in this body of work that the nominal is linked to the apparent gap within the embedded clause via *control*, assumed here as well.[1]

(1)   Ho   visto [$_{SC}$ Gianni$_i$ [$_{CP}$ che *PRO$_i$* correva]]
      I.have seen   Gianni   that   run.IMPF
      'I saw Gianni running.'   (Italian; Moulton & Grillo 2015)

While there has been much prior research on this construction, nearly all of it has been restricted to European languages—for instance, French (Kayne 1975, Koopman & Sportiche 2014), Italian (Cinque 1995, Moulton & Grillo 2015), Portuguese (Brito 1995, Costa et al. 2016), Spanish (Aguilar & Grillo 2021), and Greek (Angelopoulos 2015), among others.[2] Moreover, the vast majority of this research has concentrated on the use of pseudo-relatives to encode complements of perception verbs, as in (1) above.

In this paper, I argue that pseudo-relative constructions are also found in Inuit (Inuit-Yupik-Unangan). However, the empirical focus of this paper is not on complements of perception verbs, provided in (2) solely for completeness. Rather, the identification of pseudo-relatives in a non-European language offers a window into investigating the construction in distinct syntactic configurations.

(2)   taku-qqau-junga   [$_{PR?}$ Taami-mik [irngusir-mik sura-i-qqau-jur   ]]-mik
      see-REC.PST-PTCP.1s.S   Taami-MOD cup-MOD   break-AP-REC.PST-PTCP -MOD
      'I saw Taami break the cup.'   (Inuktitut)

This paper instead investigates an under-described existential construction in Inuit, in which a clause (bearing so-called 'participial' mood morphology) is morphologically incorporated into a verb complex containing an existential (affixal) verb, *-qaq* 'have'. An initial illustration is provided in (3). Note also that, in (3), the nominal pivot of the existential construction is marked with so-called 'modalis' (MOD) case, and, although the pivot is plural, the verb bears 3SG agreement.
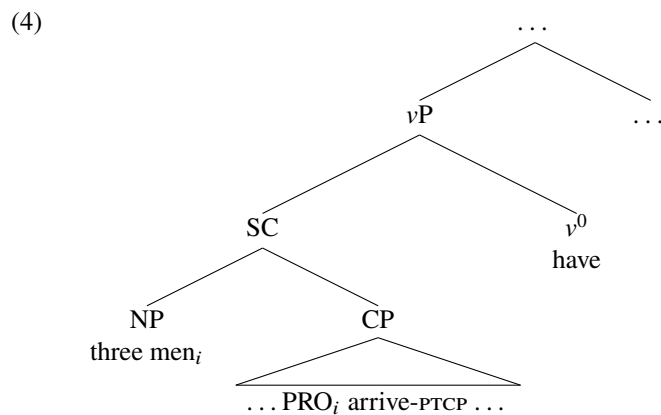
(3)   pingasu-nik anguti-nik   tikit-tu-qaq-tuq
      three-PL.MOD man-PL.MOD arrive-PTCP-have-PTCP.3s.S
      'Three men arrived.'   (Inuktitit)

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[1] Alternatively, the embedded gap has also been analyzed as a gap created by A-movement (Herbeck 2020) and as a null pronoun co-indexed with the higher nominal (Camacho 2011).

[2] The only study of pseudo-relatives in a non-European language that I am aware of is Wigderson (2014) on Hebrew.

I propose that this clause-incorporating existential construction has a pseudo-relative structure, schematized in (4). The existential verb takes as its complement a small clause (labeled neutrally as 'SC'), whose subject is the nominal pivot of the existential and whose predicate is the embedded CP.[3] Furthermore, the subject of the embedded CP is controlled by the small clause subject.

(4)

```
                    . . .
                   /    \
                 vP      . . .
                /  \
              SC    v⁰
             /  \   have
           NP    CP
      three menᵢ  /\
            . . . PROᵢ arrive-PTCP . . .
```

The main contribution of this paper is therefore to establish the cross-linguistic existence of pseudo-relatives beyond languages of Europe and in novel syntactic configurations. It also furthers our understanding of the clausal structure of Inuit, especially in how its syntax interacts with polysynthetic word-formation. Finally, the paper informs existing analyses of existential constructions, by providing further support for existentials built with small clauses (Massam 2009, McCloskey 2014).

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents an overview of Inuit morphosyntax, focusing on case, agreement, and incorporation. Section 3 then highlights key properties of the clause-incorporating existential. Finally, Section 4 details the pseudo-relative analysis and motivates the small clause structure illustrated in (4) above.

2. Overview of Inuit morphosyntax

The Inuit (Inuit-Yupik-Unangan) dialect continuum is spoken across the North American Arctic and Greenland. All uncited examples represent the Baffin dialects of Inuktitut (Eastern Canadian Inuit), although the findings of this paper are expected to hold for Inuit as a whole.[4]

It is well-known that transitive objects in Inuit may alternate between absolutive (ABS) or modalis (MOD) case. Following much previous work on this pattern, this case alternation reflects structural height—specifically, whether the nominal is within or outside of the vP-domain (Bittner 1994, Bittner & Hale 1996a,b, Woolford 2017, Yuan 2018, to appear). Importantly, *intransitive subjects* also display this alternation, suggesting a common analysis: while intransitive subjects are typically ABS, (5a), subjects of existential constructions are MOD, (5b). Therefore, I assume that MOD subjects are vP-internal (independent evidence for this claim will be presented later).[5]

(5) a. igalaaq   surak-ta-u-juq
           window.ABS break-PASS-be-PTCP.3s.S
           'The window was broken.'   (high subj.)
     b. [igalaar-**mik** surak-ta-u-ju   ]-qaq-tuq
          window-MOD break-PASS-be-PTCP -have-PTCP.3s.S
          'A window was broken.'   (low subj.)

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[3] I am abstracting away from the exact structure and category of the small clause, on which there is not much consensus (e.g. Bowers 1993, Citko 2011, Matushansky 2019). Moreover, the exact mechanism underlying CP-incorporation is beyond the scope of this paper.

[4] The uncited examples were elicited by the author in Iqaluit, Nunavut, in 2017, as well as remotely (online) in 2018–2019.

[5] Following Yuan (to appear), I assume that ABS and MOD are both "unmarked" cases within a dependent case framework (Marantz 1991, Baker 2015), assigned within the vP-external and vP-internal case domains, respectively.

Verb complexes in the language are invariably composed of an initial root, followed by a series of optional derivational and inflectional suffixes, and finally ending with mood (clause type) and ϕ-agreement morphology. ϕ-agreement is case-discriminating in the sense of Bobaljik (2008) and Preminger (2014), able to index only ERG and ABS nouns. As exemplified in (6), declarative clauses in Inuktitut often bear so-called *participial* (*-j/-t*-initial) mood morphology.[6] The order of morphemes within a word adheres to the Mirror Principle (Baker 1985), which I take to reflect a right-headed structure.

(6) a. matui-saali-qqau-janga
         open-early-REC.PST-PTCP.3s.S/3s.O
         'She opened it (e.g. the present) early.'
     b. [[[[VERB] ADV] TNS] MOOD.AGR]

Incorporated elements are always leftmost in the verb complex, adjacent to (i.e. embedded under) the verb, as in (7). In Inuit, incorporation is *obligatory* with a small set of affixal verbs, including *-qaq* 'have', and impossible with all other verbs (Sadock 1980, van Geenhoven 1998, Johns 2007, 2009), and can be diagnosed by certain phonological processes (e.g. deletion, assimilation) applying at morpheme boundaries but not word boundaries. Following Johns (2007), incorporating verbs are light verbs (v^0s).

(7) [**igvi-nngua**   ]-liu-qqau-juq
      2s.PRON-pretend   -make-REC.PST-PTCP.3s.S
      'He made a carving of you.'   ('carving of you' = igvit + nnguaq)

Note that incorporated constituents in Inuit are not bare heads (contra Baker 1988, Baker et al. 2005), as already seen in (7). That incorporated elements may be structurally complex is central to this paper, since our focus is on constructions containing an incorporated clause.

3. The clause-incorporating existential

Unlike noun incorporation in Inuit, the incorporation of a CP is limited to the existential construction shown in (3) above, embedded under v^0 *-qaq* 'have.' Although this construction is frequently attested in descriptive grammars, texts, and corpora, it has not (to my knowledge) ever been systematically examined.

Before turning to the proposed pseudo-relative structure illustrated in (4), we must confirm two key properties of this construction. First, the construction is indeed an existential: the nominal displays a definiteness restriction typical of existential pivots cross-linguistically (Milsark 1974, Zucchi 1995, Keenan 2003). Specifically, in Inuit, the nominal may not be a definite description (e.g. a proper name) or a strong quantifier, (8). As already indicated by its MOD case morphology, this reinforces that the nominal is within the c-command domain of the existential verb *-qaq* 'have'.

(8) a. #Jaani-mik tikit-tu-qaq-tuq
         Jaani-MOD arrive-PTCP-have-PTCP.3s.S
         Intended: 'Jaani arrived.' (*Only means:* 'Someone named Jaani arrived.')
     b. *arnar-nik   tamangmi-nik ani-ju-qaq-tuq
         woman-PL.MOD all-PL.MOD   leave-PTCP-have-PTCP.3s.S
         Intended: 'All the women left.'

Second, the incorporated clause is indeed a CP (as opposed to a structurally smaller constituent such as TP/vP). As shown in (9), the clause may contain tense, negation, and (participial) mood morphology.

(9) a. [arnar-mik   [$_{CP}$ tiki-**qqau-ju**   ]]-qa-qqau-juq
         woman-MOD   arrive-REC.PST-PTCP -have-REC.PST-PTCP.3s.S
         'A woman arrived earlier today.'
     b. [inung-mik [$_{CP}$ qai-**nngit-tu**   ]]-qaq-tuq
         person-MOD   come-NEG-PTCP -have-PTCP.3s.S
         'A person didn't come.'

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[6] The use of participial mood in matrix declarative clauses does not hold for all Inuit varieties, as will be returned to in Section 4.

Having established these basic facts about the clause-incorporating existential construction, I now demonstrate that this construction has a *pseudo-relative small clause* structure, consisting of the nominal pivot as its subject and the incorporated CP as its predicate. I also show that the subject controls a null PRO within the embedded clause.

4. A pseudo-relative analysis

4.1. The nominal pivot as the pseudo-relative subject

I start by showing that the nominal pivot is generated outside of the embedded CP, and that it is the subject of the small clause. Evidence for these claims comes from patterns of NPI-licensing and A-movement, respectively.

First, the NPI in question is composed of a wh- or quantificational element and an enclitic =*luunniit*. As discussed by Bittner (1994), such NPIs may appear in subject position and, if so, may be licensed by *clausemate negation* (-*nngit*). Assuming that NPIs must be within the scope of negation, this suggests that negation is structurally higher than the canonical subject position (e.g. Spec-TP). This is illustrated in (10) below, with a baseline sentence containing an NPI in ABS subject position.

(10) kina=luunniit saqi-lau-**nngit**-tuq
      who.ABS=NPI show.up-PST-NEG-PTCP.3s.S
      'Not a single person showed up.'

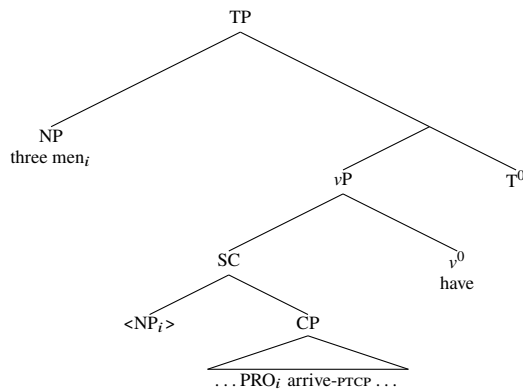Turning to the clause-incorporating existential, we now see that, while an NPI may serve as the nominal pivot, it *cannot* be licensed by CP-internal negation, as indicated by the ungrammaticality of (11a). Rather, the NPI may be licensed by matrix negation, as in (11b). This contrast reveals that the nominal pivot does not occupy the CP-internal subject position; rather, it must be base-generated higher.

(11) a. *[$_{SC}$ ilinniarti-mik atausir-mig=luunniit [$_{CP}$ saqi-**nngit**-tu   ]]-qa-lauq-tuq
          student-MOD one-MOD=NPI   show.up-NEG-PTCP -have-PST-3s.S
          Intended: 'Not a single student showed up.'   (*NPI > NEG)
      b. [$_{SC}$ ilinniarti-mik atausir-mig=luunniit [$_{CP}$ saqi-ju   ]]-qa-lau-**nngit**-tuq
          student-MOD one-MOD=NPI   show.up-PTCP -have-PST-NEG-3s.S
          'Not a single student showed up.'   (NEG > NPI)

Further evidence for the nominal pivot's CP-external base-generation site comes from the observation that, for a subset of Inuktitut speakers consulted, the nominal may surface as ABS in addition to MOD. That is, while the MOD case pattern is available for all speakers, some speakers also permit an ABS alternative. This is illustrated in (12); note that, in the latter case, the ABS variant is indexed by subject ϕ-agreement.

(12) a. pingasu-nik anguti-nik tikit-tu-qaq-tuq
          three-PL.MOD man-PL.MOD arrive-PTCP-have-PTCP.3s.S
          'Three men arrived.'   (available for all speakers)
      b. **pingasut angutit**   tikit-tu-qaq-**tuit**
          three.ABS man.PL.ABS arrive-PTCP-have-3P.S
          'Three men arrived.'   (available for some speakers)

Importantly, in the ABS configuration, we may nonetheless determine that the nominal still originates under v^0 *qaq* 'have'. As (13) demonstrates, such nominals still display the definiteness restriction typical of existential pivots—despite the fact that ABS subjects are otherwise structurally high.

(13) *tamangmik angutit   tikit-tu-qaq-tuit
      all.ABS   man.PL.ABS arrive-PTCP-have-3P.S
      Intended: 'All the men arrived.'   (cf. ✓tamangmik angutit tikit-tuit)

To reconcile these facts, I propose that the MOD vs. ABS case alternation reflects *optional A-movement* of

the nominal pivot to matrix subject position (Spec-TP), schematized in (14a-b).[7] I further assume that, when the pivot remains in situ, the subject position is occupied by a null expletive pronoun (which is, in turn, the target of the putatively invariant 3SG verbal agreement).[8]

(14)   a.   *No A-movement:*

```
                    TP
                   /  \
                  /    \
                 /      \
               NP        \
            pro_expl       \
                         vP    \
                        /  \    \
                       /    \    T⁰
                      SC      v⁰
                     /  \    have
                    /    \
                  NP      CP
              three men_i   / \
                     ...PRO_i arrive-PTCP...
```

    b.   *A-movement:*

```
                    TP
                   /  \
                  /    \
                NP      \
            three men_i   \
                         vP    \
                        /  \    \
                       /    \    T⁰
                      SC      v⁰
                     /  \    have
                    /    \
                <NP_i>    CP
                         / \
                  ...PRO_i arrive-PTCP...
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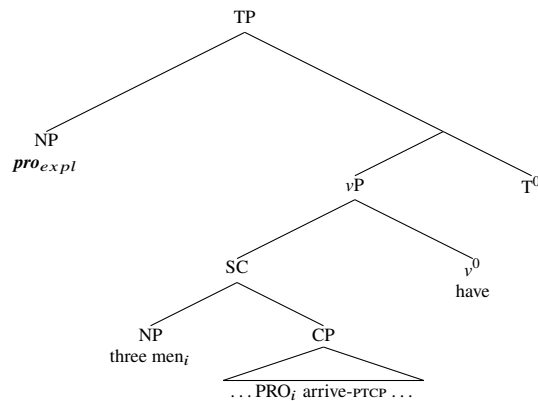
Altogether, the availability of (14b) provides tentative further support for the CP-external base-generated site of the nominal pivot, as CP predicates of pseudo-relatives have been argued to be islands for extraction (Brito 1995, Moulton & Grillo 2015).[9] Moreover, the nominal's ability to undergo A-movement is consistent with its treatment as a small clause subject, which is known to be able to undergo A-movement in other languages (cf. English: *She is considered __ smart*).

4.2. *The incorporated CP as the pseudo-relative predicate*

I now demonstrate that the incorporated CP displays many similarities with pseudo-relative CPs cross-linguistically and should be analyzed as the clausal predicate of the small clause.

To start, the incorporated CP does display a resemblance to genuine relative clauses in the language, which also bear participial mood morphology. The notability of this is obscured in Inuktitut, due to the wide distribution of participial mood in matrix and embedded clauses alike. However, in other Inuit varieties such as Kalaallisut (West Greenlandic), matrix declaratives are generally encoded with a different mood (the indicative). Kalaallisut thus makes more apparent the morphological similarity between relative clauses and incorporated clauses of existentials, which both use the participial mood, (15a-b); (15c)

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[7] In (14b), movement is schematized by enclosing the tail of the chain in < >.

[8] It is possible that the defaultness of the in situ construction reflects a more general principle of *Merge over Move*, as discussed by Chomsky (1995).

[9] However, the islandhood of the CP is admittedly difficult to replicate in Inuit, due to a number of independent properties of the language.

additionally demonstrates that the participial mood is also used in Kalaallisut to encode complements of perception verbs.

(15) a. piniartuq [$_{CP}$ nannu-mik   tuqut-si-**suq**   ]
       hunter   polar.bear-MOD kill-AP-PTCP.3s.S
       'the hunter who killed the polar bear'   (relative clause)

     b. *(pro)* [$_{CP}$ aggir-**su**   ]-qar-puq
             be.coming-PTCP -have-IND.3s.S
       'Someone is coming.'   (clause-incorporating existential)

     c. taku-aa   [$_{CP}$ aalla-lir-**suq**   ]
       see-IND.3s.S/3s.O   leave-INCP-PTCP.3s.S
       'He saw him leaving.'   (complement of perception verb)
       (Kalaallisut; Fortescue 1984)

Crucially, despite this surface resemblance, the incorporated CP is not a true relative clause. First, unlike genuine relative clauses (which, in Inuit, may introduce independent tenses), pseudo-relative CPs are *tense-deficient*. Although the example in (9a) above was used to illustrate the availability of tense morphology in the embedded verb complex, the embedded tense morphology is in fact optional, as now shown in (16a-b) below. Furthermore, if present, it must match matrix tense morphology, as illustrated by the ungrammaticality of (16c). Together, these facts suggest that the tense morphology within the pseudo-relative CP is semantically vacuous.

(16) a. arnar-mik   [$_{CP}$ tiki-∅-tu   ]-qa-**qqau**-juq
       woman-MOD   arrive-PTCP -have-REC.PST-PTCP.3s.S
       'A woman arrived (earlier today).'

     b. arnar-mik   [$_{CP}$ tiki-**qqau**-ju   ]-qa-**qqau**-juq
       woman-MOD   arrive-REC.PST-PTCP -have-REC.PST-PTCP.3s.S
       'A woman arrived (earlier today).'

     c. *arnar-mik   [$_{CP}$ tiki-**lauq**-tu   ]-qa-**qqau**-juq
       woman-MOD   arrive-PST-PTCP -have-REC.PST-PTCP.3s.S
       Intended: 'There was (earlier today) a woman who had arrived.'

This tense-deficient nature of pseudo-relatives is attested cross-linguistically (e.g. Moulton & Grillo 2015, Graffi 2017), as illustrated in (17), from Italian:

(17) a. Ho   visto Gianni che correva
       I.have seen Gianni that run.IMPF
       'I saw Gianni running.'

     b. *Vedo   Maria che correva
       I.see.PRES Maria that run.IMPF
       Intended: 'I see Maria that was running.'   (Italian; Moulton & Grillo 2015)

Next, the nominal pivot *must* be construed as the subject of the embedded CP, again mirroring a parallel restriction found in pseudo-relatives in other languages. The examples given throughout (18) demonstrate that nominal pivot may be construed as an intransitive subject, antipassive subject, or subject of a passive—i.e. an ABS *subject*—but not an ABS *object*. Coupled with the tense-deficient nature of the embedded CP, this subject-only restriction is highly indicative of a *control* relation between the nominal pivot and the CP-internal gap.

(18) a. [$_{SC}$ **arnar-mik** [$_{CP}$ tiki-tu   ]-qa-qqau-juq
          woman-MOD   arrive-PTCP -have-REC.PST-PTCP.3s.S
       'A woman arrived.'   (intransitive subject gap)

     b. [$_{SC}$ **pani-mik**   [$_{CP}$ anaana-mi-nik   iqi-ti-ju   ]]-qa-lauq-tuq
          daughter-MOD   mother-POSS.REFL-MOD hug-AP-PTCP -have-PST-PTCP.3s.S
       'A daughter$_i$ hugged her$_i$ mother.'   (antipassive subject gap)

    c. [$_{SC}$ **igalaar-mik** [$_{CP}$ surak-ta-u-ju   ]]-qaq-tuq
        window-MOD   break-PASS-be-PTCP -have-PTCP.3s.S
        'A window was broken.'   (passivized subject gap)

    d. *[$_{SC}$ **sivalaar-mik** [$_{CP}$ niri-ja   ]]-qaq-tuq
        cookie-MOD   eat-TR.PTCP   -have-PTCP.3s.S
        Intended: 'There is a cookie eaten.'   (*object gap)

This asymmetry between subjects/non-subjects is not found in true relative clauses in Inuit, in which *both* ABS subjects and ABS objects may be equally relativized, as shown in (19).[10]

(19)   a. anguti [$_{RC}$ __ taku-∅-qqau-juq   tuktu-mit   ]
        man   see-(AP)-REC.PST-PTCP.3s.S caribou-MOD
        'the man that saw the caribou'   (ABS subj. gap)

    b. nanuq   [$_{RC}$ Jaani-up __ taku-janga   ]
        polar.bear   Jaani-ERG   see-PTCP.3s.S/3s.O
        'the polar bear that Jaani saw'   (ABS obj. gap)

And finally, turning again to Italian as our point of comparison, (20) demonstrates that non-subject gaps are similarly disallowed in Italian pseudo-relatives (Moulton & Grillo 2015, Graffi 2017):

(20)   a. Ho   visto Luigi che __ salutava Maria
        I.have seen Luigi that   greet.IMPF Maria
        'I saw Luigi greet Maria.'   (subject gap)

    b. *Ho   visto Luigi che Maria salutava   __
        I.have seen Luigi that Maria greet.IMPF
        Intended: 'I saw Maria greeting Luigi.'   (*object gap)
        (Italian; Moulton & Grillo 2015)

4.3. Summary of findings

To sum up, I have proposed that the clause-incorporating existential construction in Inuit is a *pseudo-relative*, a small clause consisting of a nominal subject and clausal predicate. In particular, I have demonstrated the following properties:

- The nominal pivot of the existential construction is base-generated external to the clause

- The nominal pivot behaves on par with small clause subjects cross-linguistically (e.g. in being able to undergo A-movement)

- The incorporated clause is a CP that morphologically resembles a relative clause

- The CP is tense-deficient, even when it contains overt tense morphology

- The CP contains a null subject controlled by the nominal pivot

5. Conclusion

This paper identifies a pseudo-relative structure in Inuit. Although our empirical focus in this paper is a somewhat unusual construction, perhaps specific to Inuit, the pseudo-relative analysis of this construction is motivated by strong syntactic parallels with pseudo-relatives cross-linguistically. This is a notable finding, as it shows that pseudo-relatives are not a strictly European phenomenon; this, in turn, opens the door to further investigations of pseudo-relatives in other non-European languages, in potentially novel syntactic configurations.

Beyond pseudo-relatives, this paper also has implications for other areas of research. First, the core analysis of this paper bears on the syntactic structure of existential constructions. In particular,

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[10]In fact, in line with its syntactically ergative nature, only ABS arguments may undergo relativization (Creider 1978, Fortescue 1984, Johns 1992, Bittner & Hale 1996a, Murasugi 1997).

(21) demonstrates that the clause-incorporating existential co-exists in Inuit with a *noun-incorporating existential* (which employs a slightly different existential verb). This supports recent cross-linguistic work showing that existentials may be built on nominal and small clause predicates alike, even within a single language, rather than solely one or the other (e.g. Massam 2009, McCloskey 2014).

(21)   a.   pingasu-nik anguti-nik **tikit-tu**-qaq-tuq
                three-PL.MOD man-PL.MOD arrive-PTCP-have-PTCP.3s.S
                'Three men arrived.'   (clause-incorporating)
        b.   pingasu-nik   **anguti**-taqaq-tuq
                three-PL.MOD man-EXIST-have-3s.S
                'There are three men (e.g. here).'   (noun-incorporating)

Second, a question that remains unaddressed in this paper concerns the grammatical mechanisms underpinning incorporation in Inuit. While most previous work on Inuit incorporation has focused on *noun incorporation* (Sadock 1980, 1991, van Geenhoven 1998, Johns 2007, 2009), the simultaneous availability of *clause incorporation* constructions suggests that the incorporation of nouns is only one aspect of the larger phenomenon of polysynthetic word-formation in the language. Although no concrete answers are provided here, this paper aims to at least shed light on the types of syntactic structures available in incorporating contexts.

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