A phasal account of ergativity in Inuktitut

by

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<td>3</td>
<td>3rd person</td>
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<td>4th person</td>
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<td>ABL</td>
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<td>ASP</td>
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<td>CL</td>
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1 INTRODUCTION

This paper is a Minimalist (Chomsky 1995, et seq.) examination of ergativity in Inuktitut, an Eskimo-Aleut language spoken across northern Canada. I claim that the ergative-absolutive case alignment of Inuktitut is predictable from the available phase heads in the language, if phases are not defined by their introduction of uninterpretable $\phi$-features, as assumed by e.g. Chomsky (2008), but are rather defined by their assignment of structural Case. I argue that ergativity in Inuktitut arises from clausal nominalization, and that ergative and absolutive case in Inuktitut are equivalent to structural genitive and nominative case (Case),\(^1\) licensed by phase heads D and C. I further contend that transitive $v$ (or $v^*$), also a phase head, is absent in Inuktitut; consequently, accusative Case is absent as well. Finally, although this paper focuses primarily on morphological ergativity (i.e. the case patterns), I demonstrate that certain syntactically ergative properties of Inuktitut are also accounted for by the analysis developed here.

The objectives of this paper are twofold. From an empirical standpoint, the data in this paper illustrate a wide range of syntactic phenomena in Inuktitut, including previously undocumented ones, and thus contribute to the existing literature on the Inuit languages, particularly that on Inuit syntax. On a more conceptual level, this paper also provides insight into various topical issues in Minimalist syntactic theory, including case (and Case), phasehood, categories, and clausal architecture.

1.1 Overview of Inuktitut syntax

One of the more well-known properties of Inuktitut is that it is polysynthetic (Mahieu and Tersis 2009, Dorais 2010). As shown in (1),\(^2\) morphemes may be sequentially and continuously affixed to a root, resulting in the formation of a highly complex word equivalent to an entire sentence in a more isolating language like English:

\(^1\) Throughout this paper, I refer to structural case specifically as Case.
\(^2\) Uncited data is my own from the South Baffin dialect of Inuktitut, while cited data is from a variety of Inuit dialects/related languages including Inupiaq, Caribou, Labrador, and West Greenlandic. Though Inuktitut is a dialect continuum, drawing from different dialects does not affect the proposals made in this paper.
‘I would never ever even want to try to end up in jail ever again even for a bit.’

(Johns 2007b)

The order of affixes in an Inuktitut word corresponds to structural hierarchy or scope, and is fixed accordingly. While this was traditionally explained using lexical rules (e.g. Fortescue 1980), recent proposals treat Inuktitut morphology as entirely derivable via syntax (e.g. Compton and Pittman 2010). Under this approach, each morpheme occupies its own head in a clausal structure, which accounts for both the rigidity and the compositionality of the order of affixes.

However, the polysynthetic property of Inuktitut refers only to its capacity to form complex words, and does not entail that all words in the language are complex and clause-like. This also does not preclude it from having a word-external syntax, which is relatively freer:

(2) a. anguti kii-jau-lauq-tuq qimmir-mut
   man.ABS bite-PASS.PART-PST-INTR.3S dog-ALL
   ‘The man was bitten by the dog.’

b. anguti qimmirmut kiijaulauqtuq
c. kiijaulauqtuq qimmirmut anguti
d. qimmirmut kiijaulauqtuq anguti
e. qimmirmut anguti kiijaulauqtuq
f. kiijaulauqtuq anguti qimmirmut

Although all six word orders are grammatical in (2), other constructions (e.g. wh-movement) are subject to certain restrictions (Gillon 1999, Sherkina-Lieber 2004); this will be illustrated in Sections 4 and 5.

Finally, as discussed above, Inuktitut is an ergative-absolutive language (Dixon 1979, Johns 1992, Manga 1996, etc.). As illustrated in (3), the subject of an intransitive clause and object of a transitive clause are case-marked identically to the exclusion of the subject (agent) of a transitive clause.
In (3a), the agent of the transitive verb ‘bite’ is case-marked with ergative -up, whereas the object of ‘bite’ in (3a) and the intransitive subject of ‘eat’ in (3b) are both absolutive, hence morphologically unmarked. Ergativity in Inuktitut is also manifested through person and number agreement; while the transitive verb is marked with double agreement with both the agent and the object in (3a), only subject agreement is found on the intransitive verb in (3b). Thus, whether a verb is transitive or intransitive in Inuktitut is determined by the type of agreement found on the verb, rather than by particular lexical properties of the verb root. Indeed, comparing (3b) above with (4), we see that the same verb root √NIRI ‘eat’ may be transitive, in which case it agrees with both the agent and the object.

Many ergative languages allow an alternative construction, called the antipassive, which is effectively an intransitive counterpart to a transitive construction (e.g. Dixon 1979, Spreng 2010). The antipassive construction in Inuktitut is provided below:

Examining (5) and (3a) above, we see that the two sentences are roughly semantically equivalent, though morphosyntactically distinct. The verb in (5) is inflected with single (intransitive) agreement with the sole argument in the clause, the subject; the subject takes absolutive rather than ergative case. Another difference is the presence of the antipassive
morpheme -si on the verb. Finally, the thematic object arnaq ‘woman’ takes what is often referred to in the literature as the modalis case marker (-mit).\(^3\) The antipassive construction in (5) is thus intransitive, despite the presence of two nominals, since only one nominal is a core argument. I provide further discussion of the antipassive construction in Section 5.4.3.

1.2 Theoretical issues

Ergativity, first described by Dixon (1972), has been the topic of much scrutiny and debate in the generative literature, the fundamental issue being why a language might exhibit ergativity rather than accusativity. Analyses of ergativity generally fall into three camps (and we will see in Section 2 that all three have been applied to Inuktitut). One approach treats ergative case as assigned by transitive \(\nu\) to the external argument of the transitive clause (Woolford 1997, 2006). Under this view, ergative case is inherent, associated with agent \(\Theta\)-role assignment, rather than some structural position in the syntax; according to Woolford (2006), inherent case is always associated with some \(\Theta\)-position. Since \(\Theta\)-roles are assigned to an argument in its base-generated position (Chomsky 1995), inherent case is too; thus, because external arguments (agents) are typically assumed to be Merged into Spec-\(\nu\)P, \(\nu\) is responsible for both agent \(\Theta\)-role and ergative case assignment in ergative languages. Implicit in this type of account is the existence of a distinct case which marks agents in ergative languages but which is absent in accusative languages. See e.g. Legate (2002), Aldridge (2004), and Anand and Nevins (2006) for instantiations of this type of analysis for Dyirbal, Tagalog, and Hindi-Urdu respectively.

A second, perhaps less pervasive, view ties ergativity to nominalization. A number of ergative languages have been noted to apparently exhibit ergative-genitive syncretism, including Inuktitut (Johns 1987, 1992), Mebengokre (Salanova 2007), and Chol (Coon 2008, Coon and Preminger to appear). In these languages, the case found on possessors is morphologically identical to that found on agents. This has led to accounts in which ergative is genitive, and ergativity rather than accusativity arises from the projection of a nominal phrase rather than a verbal one. In this type of approach, ergativity is in some sense epiphenomenal, since the pattern stems from the nominalization of the transitive clause rather than from particular case-assigning properties of the language.

\(^3\) Or -mik in other dialects.
Finally, a third view of ergativity treats ergative and absolutive case as equivalent to (structural) nominative and accusative Case, i.e. assigned by T and v respectively (e.g. Bobaljik 1993, Laka 2000). This approach views ergativity as arising from the setting of a macroparameter determining whether a particular case-assigning head is active. In ergative languages, v is active while, in accusative languages, T is active; this setting is visible only in intransitive clauses, in which the sole argument is either assigned accusative/absolutive case by v (in ergative languages) or nominative/ergative case by T (in accusative languages). The intransitive subject thus takes the same case as objects do in ergative languages and as agents do in accusative languages.

There is therefore little consensus on the whole as to how and why some languages exhibit ergativity while others exhibit accusativity. A related issue is whether there is one underlying explanation for ergativity or several. Whereas e.g. Bobaljik (1993) and Woolford (1997) argue for the former, others such as Johns (1992), Bittner and Hale (1996), and Paul and Travis (2006) suggest that, cross-linguistically, ergativity is not one single phenomenon per se, but rather numerous language-specific phenomena surfacing as such.

This paper takes an intermediate view of the origins of ergativity. As mentioned, the analysis developed here takes ergative and absolutive case as equivalent to genitive and nominative case, and thus assigned by functional heads D and C, which are also phase heads. It thus appeals to Minimalist tenets of cross-linguistic uniformity in that it assumes that languages make use of the same set of projections, which, in turn, have certain properties which hold across languages. On the other hand, the current analysis links ergativity to clausal nominalization, which is a language-specific occurrence that applies to Inuktitut but not necessarily all ergative languages. This paper therefore assumes that ergativity has varying underlying sources, of which nominalization is one.

1.3 Contents of paper

In section 2, I provide an overview of some competing analyses of ergativity in Inuktitut. I also provide some discussion of absolutive case, which is overall less controversial than the mechanisms behind ergative case; generally, it is assumed, both in Inuktitut and cross-
linguistically, that absolutive case in both transitive and intransitive clauses is structurally nominative case assigned by T or some functional equivalent.

Section 3 argues that the analyses of Inuktitut which treat ergative case as either inherently assigned or equivalent to nominative case are empirically untenable. I describe a number of wide-ranging parallels between the so-called ergative case and genitive case in Inuktitut and between the transitive clause and possessive phrase, and conclude that Inuktitut transitive verbs are best analyzed as nominalized. I thus follow Johns (1992) in proposing that ergative case is equivalent to genitive case, and that the transitive clausal structure of Inuktitut consists of clausal nominalization followed by predication.

In Section 4, I develop a Minimalist account of ergativity in Inuktitut based on Johns (1992). I suggest that ergative and absolutive case are structural genitive and nominative Case, licensed by (possessive) D and C respectively. I also compare the Inuktitut transitive clause to an independent predication construction in the language and demonstrate that they are structurally similar, further corroborating the nominal analysis of ergativity maintained in this paper.

Section 5 provides some theoretical discussion of D and C both as Case-assigners and as phase heads. I argue, following Miyagawa (2011), that phasehood in Inuktitut is associated with structural Case assignment; possessive D and C are phasal in Inuktitut because they license uninterpretable Case features. I then demonstrate that DP and CP both exhibit phasal properties in Inuktitut with respect to extractability. Finally, I argue that phasal transitive vP (v*P) is absent in Inuktitut, correlating with an absence of accusative Case, though intransitive vP is present.

Finally, in Section 6, I discuss previous accounts of syntactic ergativity in Inuktitut, which is manifested through a putative Ā-extraction restriction on ergative arguments. I argue that this restriction is spurious, having nothing to do with Ā-movement. I extend Compton’s (2012) nominal analysis of adjectival modification in Inuktitut to relative clauses, and demonstrate how this readily follows from and further supports the analysis of ergativity developed in this paper.

Section 7 concludes.
2 PREVIOUS ANALYSES OF ERGATIVITY IN INUKTITUT

2.1 Ergative case is inherent

As discussed in Section 1.2, Woolford (1997, 2006) suggests that ergative case is inherent, assigned by transitive \( \nu \) to external arguments in Spec-\( \nu \)P. This approach has been adopted for Inuktitut by Spreng (2005, 2006), who argues that, in certain eastern dialects such as South Baffin and Igloolik, ergative case is inherent rather than structural. Spreng follows Woolford’s (2006) claim that inherent case is assigned on the basis of \( \Theta \)-positions, and that ergative case is more specifically assigned to external arguments by \( \nu \); she thus argues that, in South Baffin and Igloolik, \( \nu \) inherently assigns ergative case and \( T \) structurally assigns absolutive (nominative) case. Spreng provides the following structure of an Inuktitut transitive clause:4

\[
(6) \quad \text{TP} \quad \text{Anautaq} \quad \text{T'} \\
\text{T} \quad \nu \text{P} \\
\text{Piita-up} \quad \nu' \\
\text{V} \quad \text{NP} \\
\text{surak-} \\
\text{Piita-up anautaq surak-taa} \\
\text{Peter-ERG stick.ABS break-TRANS.3S/3S} \\
\text{‘Peter broke the stick.’} \quad \text{(Spreng 2006)}
\]

Spreng moreover argues that ergative case in Inuktitut is assigned to proto-agents in the sense of Dowty (1991), who considers both agents and possessors to be proto-agents. This is, according to Spreng, why the same case is found on agents and possessors in Inuktitut:

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4 Though it is not explicitly stated or shown in her tree, presumably Spreng (2006) derives the SOV surface word order in (6) via \( \dot{\lambda} \)-movement of the agent \( \Piita-up \) to a higher position such as Spec-CP.
Spreng claims that ergative case in Inuktitut has all of the properties of inherent case outlined by Woolford (2006), as follows: inherent case is associated with Θ-role licensing (and ergative case is more specifically associated with the agent Θ-role), only light v heads may license inherent case, and inherent case is typically limited to “high” Θ-roles such as agents and goals.

Spreng also provides an interesting piece of evidence for the inherent nature of ergative case in Inuktitut. Though the agent of the passive construction normally takes an allative case marker -mut (or, in the western dialects, -mit), the South Baffin and Igloolik dialects allow the agent of the passive to be optionally marked with the ergative case marker instead. This is shown in (8).

(8) a. arnaq kunik-ta-u-juq anguti-mut
    woman.ABS kiss-PASS.PART-be-INTR.3S man-ALL
    ‘The woman was kissed by the man.’

    b. qimmiq quqir-ta-u-juq Piita-up
    dog.ABS shoot-PASS.PART-be-INTR.3S Peter-ERG
    ‘The dog was shot by Peter.’   (Spreng 2005)

Spreng takes this alternation to be evidence that ergative case is inherent, her reasoning being that ergative case is found on agents regardless of the type of construction the agent is found in.

2.2 Ergative is genitive

The idea that the Inuktitut verb is somehow nominal in nature dates back to Hammerich (1951). From a generative perspective, Johns (1992)\(^5\) argues that ergative-absolutive case patterns surface in Inuktitut because the transitive verb cannot project a VP; instead, a nominal passive participle nominalizes the verb, which is then possessed. The possessive phrase is then linked to another nominal via predication. The transitive clause in Inuktitut is thus structurally distinct

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\(^5\) See also Johns (1987).
from that in a language such as English; it is also distinct from the intransitive clause in Inuktitut. This is illustrated in (9) below.6

(9) anguti-up nanuq kapi-ja-a
    man-ERG polar bear.ABS stab-PASS.PART-3S/3S
    ‘The man stabbed the polar bear.’ OR ‘The polar bear is the man’s stabbed one.’

(Johns 1992)

Johns argues that the transitive clause in (9) is derived in three stages, and that each stage exists independently in the language. For expository reasons, we will use the sentence in (9) above to illustrate Johns’ derivation of the transitive clause. The three stages are as follows:

(10) a. kapi-jaq
    stab-PASS.PART
    ‘the stabbed one’

    b. anguti-up kapi-ja-a
    man-ERG stab-PASS.PART-3S/3S
    ‘the man’s stabbed one’ or ‘the one that the man stabbed’

    c. anguti-up nanuq kapi-ja-a
    man-ERG polar bear.ABS stab-PASS.PART-3S/3S
    ‘The polar bear is the man’s stabbed one.’ OR ‘The man stabbed the polar bear.’

(Johns 1992)

Although other analyses of Inuktitut treat the agreement marker -jaa as a single morpheme inflecting for participial mood7 and transitive (double) person/number agreement, Johns argues that it should be broken down into two morphemes -ja-a, the first being the nominal passive participle and the second encoding agreement.

In Stage I, the affixation of the nominal passive morpheme -jaq (or its phonologically-conditioned allomorphs -taq and -gaq in this particular dialect) nominalizes the verb. Evidence for the nominal category of the passive participle is provided in (11b), in which the affixation of the passive participle is shown to be able to form a noun.

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6 Johns’ (1992) data is from the Caribou dialect of Inuktitut, spoken west of Hudson Bay.
7 Mood will be generally set aside for the purposes of this paper, though see Section 7.2 for some discussion.
(11) a. Passive construction
   anguti arna-mit kuni-ga-u-juq
   man.ABS woman-ALL kiss-PASS.PART-be-INTR.3S
   ‘The man was kissed by the woman.’

   b. Passive nominal
   kuni-gaq aanniaq-tuq
   kiss-PASS.PART.ABS sick-INTR.3S
   ‘The one kissed is sick.’ (Johns 1992)

Stage II is the formation of a possessive phrase. Johns points out that the ergative and genitive case markers in Inuktitut are morphologically identical, as are the double agreement markers found on transitive verbs and possesseees:8

(12) a. anguti-up qimmi-a
    man-ERG dog-3S/3S
    ‘the man’s dog’

   b. anguti-up kapi-ja-a
    man-ERG stab-PASS.PART-3S/3S
    ‘the man’s stabbed one’ OR ‘the one that the man stabbed’ (Johns 1992)

Johns thus takes the two constructions in (12) to be structurally identical, arguing that the putative ergative agent is actually a genitive possessor and that the nominalized verb is a possessee within a possessive construction.

Finally, in Stage III, we arrive at the following structure:

---

8 See Johns (1987:50) and (1992:68) for a partial paradigm of the agreement morphology found on transitive verbs/possesseees. The paradigms exhibit one or two small discrepancies, though the agreement is otherwise identical.
The absolutive argument *nanuq* ‘polar bear’ is found outside of the possessive phrase, within an *AgrP* projection (functionally equivalent to IP). I set aside the specifics of Johns’ analysis for simplicity, as what is important here is that absolutive case is assigned higher than ergative case, and that the default SOV word order of Inuktitut is derived via the high adjunction of the ergative/genitive argument to the clause (this adjunction occurs for reasons having to do with case assignment and government). The S-structure of (9) is provided below in (14):
2.3 Ergative is nominative

Bobaljik (1993) analyses ergativity to arise from the setting of a macroparameter which he terms the Obligatory Case Parameter (OCP), stated as follows:

(15) **Obligatory Case Parameter (OCP):**
\[\begin{align*}
\text{a. In NOM-ACC languages, case } x \text{ is nominative.} \\
\text{b. In ERG-ABS languages, case } x \text{ is absolutive.}\n\end{align*}\]
\[\ldots\text{where case } x \text{ is obligatorily assigned/checked.}\]  

(Bobaljik 1993)

Following Levin and Massam (1985), Bobaljik argues that ergative and absolutive case are analogous to nominative and accusative case. The difference between ergative and accusative languages hinges on the direction to which the OCP is set. This difference is visible only in intransitive clauses, in which there is one argument yet two possible case assigners. If nominative case is obligatorily assigned in intransitive clauses, then it is assigned to the sole subject, resulting in accusativity; if accusative case is obligatorily assigned, then the intransitive subject patterns with transitive objects, thus appearing ergative. The setting of the OCP thus determines which case assigning head is active. The structure in Bobaljik’s system is as follows:

(16) 

\[
\text{Agr}_1P \quad \text{TP} \quad \text{Agr}_1 \\
\text{ERG/NOM} \quad \text{Agr}_2P \quad T \\
\text{ABS/ACC} \quad \text{VP} \quad \text{Agr}_2 \\
\text{A} \quad \text{O} \quad \text{V}
\]

(Bobaljik 1993)
In the tree above, Agr\(_1\) and Agr\(_2\) assign nominative/ergative and accusative/absolutive case respectively. In accusative languages, Agr\(_1\) is active, whereas Agr\(_2\) is active for ergative languages.

Finally, Bobaljik’s account predicts that the subject of an unergative verb, which he assumes is underlingly transitive (following Hale and Keyser 1986, 1993), takes nominative/ergative case. This accounts for languages such as Basque, in which absolutive case is found on unaccusative subjects (underlyingly objects) but ergative case is found on unergative subjects. However, other ergative languages, including the Inuit languages, do not exhibit this pattern. Bobaljik discusses West Greenlandic, proposing that the underlying object of the unergative verb is incorporated into the verb, effectively detransitivizing the verb and resulting in absolutive case assignment on the sole argument.

Pittman (2005) updates Bobaljik’s analysis to account for Inuktitut within a Minimalist framework, arguing that nominative/ergative case is assigned by T while accusative/absolutive case is assigned by v. Thus, the OCP is reformulated such that T and v are active in accusative and ergative languages respectively. The agent of the transitive clause is merged in Spec-vP before moving to Spec-TP for Case, while the object is merged as the complement of V and moves to Spec-vP, also for Case. I take Pittman’s system to look as follows:

(17)

```
TP
   Agent
      T'
         T
             [NOM/ERG] vP
                 <Agent> vP
                     Object
                        V
                            [ACC/ABS] VP
                                <Object>
```
However, Pittman’s approach diverges from Bobaljik’s in her treatment of Case assignment in intransitive clauses. As mentioned, Inuktut does not pattern like Basque, since intransitive subjects in Inuktut invariably receive absolutive case whether the verb be unergative or unaccusative. Thus, Pittman proposes that the intransitive argument in Inuktut is always assigned absolutive case by $v$, though the underlying transitivity of the unergative clause leads us to expect ergative case on its subject. In unaccusative clauses, the intransitive subject is underlyingly an object, merged as the complement of $V$, so it is able to receive case from $v$. However, in unergative constructions, $v$ cannot find a goal in its search domain because the sole argument is Merged in Spec-$v$P, outside of $v$’s c-command domain. Thus, Pittman adopts a Cyclic Agree approach (e.g. Rezac 2003, Béjar 2003, Béjar and Rezac 2009), such that the probe in $v$ expands its search domain to include its specifier after failing to find a matching goal in its initial search. This allows the argument in Spec-$v$P to receive absolutive case. Both unergative and unaccusative subjects then move from Spec-$v$P to Spec-TP due to an EPP feature.

### 2.4 A note on absolutive


Although most accounts of ergativity in Inuktut focus on the properties of the agent (the ergative case-marked argument), Bittner (1994) and Manga (1996) instead examine the semantic nature of the absolutive arguments. Bittner (1994) observes that absolutive arguments in West Greenlandic, whether they be intransitive subject or transitive object, are invariably wide scope with respect to VP-operators such as negation.

(18) **West Greenlandic:**  
    a. atuasaq ataaqiq tikis-sima-nngi-la-q  
       book.ABS one.ABS come-PRF-NEG-IND-3S  
       ‘One book hasn't come (yet).’
To account for this, Bittner argues that absolutive case in West Greenlandic is equivalent to nominative case, assigned by T. Because nominative case is assigned above VP, arguments which take nominative case (and raise to Spec-TP as a result) are by default wide scope with respect to VP-operators.

Manga (1996) also discusses the wide scope property of absolutives, though she claims instead that absolutes in Inuktitut are obligatorily specific. Like Bittner (1994), Manga argues that objects in ergative languages move to Spec-TP, where they receive absolutive (=nominative) case from T; this, according to Manga, is both typologically and empirically borne out. Typologically, absolutive case is generally cross-linguistically unmarked (Dixon 1994), and so is nominative case; empirically, Manga provides the following contrastive examples:

(19) a. anguti-up tuktu taku-janga
    man-ERG/GEN caribou.ABS/NOM see-TRANS.3S/3S
    ‘The/a man sees the caribou’

b. anguti tuktu-mik taku-juq
    man.ABS/NOM caribou-MOD see-INTR.3S
    ‘The man sees a caribou’  (Manga 1996)

Whereas the ergative/genitive agent in (19a) may be interpreted as specific or non-specific, both absolutive/nominative arguments in (19a) and (19b) are obligatorily specific. Moreover, the object of the antipassive in (19b) is obligatorily non-specific (see also Wharram 2003). According to Manga, this may be accounted for if absolutive case is assigned by T; the specificity of the absolutive arguments in (19) arises because they move out of VP, which result in their wide scope relative to other arguments in the structure. Conversely, the antipassive object tuktu-mik in (19b) takes obligatory narrow scope because it remains within the VP.

(20) further illustrates the specific/non-specific distinction, again by comparing the transitive construction with the antipassive:
As with (19) above, the examples in (20) differ in that the object in (20a) is absolutive whereas that in (20b) is the object of an antipassive. Again, structurally the two differ in whether the object is outside of or within VP. Notice that the interpretations of specificity fluctuate between the two examples. In (20a), the object asia ‘another one of a different kind’ refers to a specific thing that was made, while in (20b) it is unspecified which particular object the speaker wants, so long as it is of a different kind. Thus, Manga concludes that specificity refers to the intentions of the speaker to pick out the object, and that, in Inuktitut, this property is found only in arguments raised to Spec-TP.

2.5 Summary

Although most sources treat absolutive case in Inuktitut as equivalent to nominative, assigned by T or some other functional equivalent, there is little consensus in the literature as to how and where ergative case is assigned. While Spreng (2005, 2006) argues that it is inherent, assigned to external arguments by transitive v, Johns (1992), Bobaljik (1993), and Pittman (2005) treat ergative case as structurally assigned. However, while Johns analyzes ergative case as equivalent to genitive case, Bobaljik (1993) and Pittman (2005) equate it with nominative case.

I examine these proposals more closely in the following section, and ultimately advocate for a nominal analysis of ergativity, following Johns (1992).

3 ERGATIVITY VIA NOMINALIZATION

In this section, I demonstrate that analyses of ergativity which treat ergative case either as inherent or as nominative case cannot capture a wide range of properties found in Inuktitut;
conversely, there is an overwhelming amount of evidence in favour of the nominal analysis of ergativity.

3.1 Against ergative as inherent

Woolford (1997, 2006) uses the following diagnostics to support her proposal that ergative case is inherently assigned to external arguments by transitive v:

(21)  

a. Case preservation under A-movement  
b. Case preservation of the external subject position (where nominative is normally licensed)  
c. Allowing nominative objects  

I demonstrate below, however, that either Inuktitut fails these diagnostics or they are simply inapplicable. Woolford (2006) argues that, if an argument retains its case in A-movement operations such as passivization and raising, then this is evidence that the case is inherent rather than structural. Though Woolford points out that the passive cannot be used to diagnose ergative case (since passives, being intransitive, involve only absolutive case), she provides an example of raising in Tongan, an ergative language:

(22) ‘E lava ‘e Pita [‘o ako ‘a e lea faka-Tonga]  
    AUX can ERG Peter COMP learn ABS the language Tongan  
    ‘Peter can learn Tongan.’  

(Woolford 2006)

According to Woolford, the retention of the ergative case marker ‘e on the agent Pita in the raising construction is evidence that ergative case is inherent. However, when this test is extended to Inuktitut, such a pattern is not maintained. Pittman (2009) points out that, in raising constructions in Inuktitut, ergative case on the agent of the embedded predicate is prohibited:

(23) Labrador:  
*anguti-up sugusi-up taku-kqu-vaa annak  
man-ERG child-ERG see-want-3S/3S woman.ABS  
Intended: ‘The man wants the child to see the woman.’  

(Pittman 2009)
Because ergative case is not preserved under A-movement in Inuktitut, Pittman takes this as evidence that ergative case in Inuktitut is structural.

Another diagnostic noted by Woolford is the preservation of non-nominative case on the external subject, on which nominative case is typically found. She illustrates this with Icelandic (24), in which a non-structural case such as the dative may be found on the subject instead of nominative case, and compares Icelandic to Basque, an ergative language (25):

\[(24)\]
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a.} & \quad \text{Bátnum} & \text{hvolfdi} & \quad \text{‘The boat capsized.’} \\
& \quad \text{boat-DAT} & \text{capsized} & \\
\text{b.} & \quad \text{Bátinn} & \text{rak á land} & \quad \text{‘The boat drifted to shore.’} \\
& \quad \text{boat-ACC} & \text{drifted to shore} & (\text{Woolford 2006})
\end{align*}
\]

\[(25)\]
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a.} & \quad \text{ni} & \text{etorri} & \text{naiz} & \quad \text{‘I came.’} \\
& \quad \text{I-NOM} & \text{come} & \text{AUX} & \\
\text{b.} & \quad \text{gizona-k} & \text{kurritu} & \text{du} & \quad \text{‘The man ran.’} \\
& \quad \text{man-ERG} & \text{run} & \text{AUX} & (\text{Woolford 2006})
\end{align*}
\]

Woolford argues that the Icelandic and Basque examples are parallel, and that the fact that ergative case is found on the unergative subject in (25b) is evidence that ergative case is inherent.

However, the Basque data is not comparable to Inuktitut. As mentioned earlier, unergatives in Inuktitut take absolutive (nominative) rather than ergative subjects:

\[(26)\]
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{anguti} & \quad \text{pisuk-tuq} & \quad \text{‘The man is walking.’} \\
\text{man.ABS} & \quad \text{walk-INTR.3S} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

Finally, Woolford claims that certain languages allow nominative objects only if the subject is assigned nonstructural case. She illustrates this once again with Basque in (27), in which the
external argument may take ergative case or dative case. The argument takes an agent thematic role in (27a) and an experiencer thematic role in (27b).

(27) a. Miren-ek atea ireki du
   Miren-ERG door-NOM open AUX
   ‘Miren opened the door.’

   b. Ni-ri zure oinetako-a-k-Ø gustatzen zaizkit
   I-DAT your shoes-DET-NOM like AUX
   ‘I like your shoes.’

Woolford takes dative case to be non-structural, so the fact that Basque allows both ergative and dative external arguments with nominative objects suggests that ergative case too is non-structural.

However, Inuktitut does not allow non-structural cases on transitive external arguments, such as obliques, as shown in (28). Rather, external arguments of transitive clauses, whether agent or experiencer, must always take ergative case.

(28) a. qimmi-up anguti kii-janga
   dog-ERG man.ABS bite-TRANS.3S/3S
   ‘The dog bit the man.’

   b. Jaani-up qimmiq taku-janga
   John-ERG dog.ABS see-TRANS.3S/3S
   ‘John sees the dog.’

   c. *qimmir-mut/*-kkut/etc. anguti kii-janga
      *dog-ALL/*-VIA man.ABS bite-TRANS.3S/3S
      Intended: ‘The dog bit the man.’

   d. *Jaani-mut/*-kkut/etc. qimmiq taku-janga
      *John-ALL/*-VIA dog.ABS see-TRANS.3S/3S
      Intended: ‘John sees the dog.’

Moreover, the co-occurrence of ergative external arguments with nominative objects is not necessarily evidence for the inherent nature of ergative case assignment, if putative transitive objects are underlyingly (structurally) subjects. As shown earlier in Section 2.4, objects in Inuktitut behave like subjects with respect to scope, which has resulted in their being analyzed as
subjects, i.e. merged high in the structure and assigned nominative case. However, the assignment of nominative case on a subject (which is then interpreted as an object) does not affect the case-assignment of non-subjects, whether structural or inherent. This particular diagnostic is therefore problematic in that it does not offer conclusive evidence either way.

Thus, Woolford’s diagnostics do not demonstrate that ergative case in Inuktitut is inherent. The fact that she generally successfully illustrates her claim with Basque perhaps provides support for the heterogeneity of ergativity as a cross-linguistic phenomenon; whereas ergative case is perhaps inherent in a language such as Basque (though this is controversial too; see Rezac et al. 2011), the inapplicability of her diagnostics to Inuktitut indicates that ergativity in Inuktitut has a different source.

Recall, however, that Spreng (2005, 2006) analyzes ergative case in Inuktitut to be inherent, following Woolford. To account for the apparent ergative-genitive parallel in Inuktitut, Spreng suggests that ergative case is assigned to proto-agents, which includes both agents and possessors. This conflation is problematic, however, because Spreng takes ergative case to be assigned by \( v \); in a standard possessive construction, it is not obvious why there should also be a \( v \) in the structure of the noun phrase. Moreover, (29) suggests that the assignment of ergative/genitive case is not necessarily associated with thematic roles:

\[
(29) \quad \text{kikia-p puu-nga} \\
\text{nail-\textsc{erg/\textsc{gen}} sack-\textsc{3p/3s}} \\
\text{‘sack of nails’}
\]

In (29), \textit{kikia-p} ‘nails’ is not a proto-agent since it is thematically not a possessor, yet it is marked with ergative/genitive \textsc{-up}. Therefore, ergative/genitive case seems to be associated with a structural position rather than a thematic role, since (29) is structurally a possessive phrase.

Finally, Spreng points out that the ergative \textsc{-up} may be optionally found on agents in passive constructions in the South Baffin and Igloolik dialects in place of the standard allative marker \textsc{-mut}; she takes this as evidence for the inherent nature of ergative case. However, I believe that the presence of the ergative \textsc{-up} in the passive is independent of thematic roles. First, as demonstrated in (30), the presence of this passive \textsc{-up} is semantically conditioned; arguments which take \textsc{-up} rather than the allative \textsc{-mut} exhibit obligatory wide scope over negation.
Thus, the presence of -up instead of -mut in the passive seems to serve a semantic purpose in Inuktitut. Though an account of the distributional facts is beyond the scope of this paper, it seems that the -up-passive is accompanied by some additional feature (perhaps [+specific]) which is absent in the -mut-passive, and that -up is inserted instead of -mut to express said feature.

Furthermore, the ergative -up marker on the agent of the passive exhibits certain properties of the genitive case rather than of external arguments per se. For instance, as will be further discussed in Section 3.3.2, a third person genitive possessee (i.e. a nominal that is simultaneously a possessor and possessee) is inflected with -ngata rather than -up. (31b) demonstrates that -ngata may replace -up on the agent of the passive if it is possessed; this is in contrast with (31a), in which the possessed agent is marked with -nut, an allomorph of the allative -mut.

This supports the notion that ergative -up vs. allative -mut alternation is independent of thematic roles and is, in turn, counterevidence to the claim that ergative case is inherently assigned.
3.2 Against ergative as nominative

As discussed, Bobaljik (1993) argues that ergative and absolutive case are equivalent to nominative and accusative case, and that, in ergative languages, the Obligatory Case Parameter is set such that absolutive case is obligatorily assigned to intransitive subjects. An issue with the implementation of Bobaljik’s system for Inuktitut, however, surfaces given his assumption that, following Hale and Keyser (1986, 1993), unergative verbs are underlingly transitive. Although this assumption readily captures languages such as Basque, in which unergative subjects take ergative (nominative) case, the absolutive subjects of unergatives in languages such as Inuktitut, exemplified in (32), require further explanation.

(32) qimmiq niri-juq
    dog. ABS eat-INTR.3S
    ‘The dog is eating.’

Bobaljik thus posits that Inuktitut unergatives involve obligatory incorporation of a null object into the verb stem. However, Inuktitut also has obligatory overt object incorporation:

(33) tuktu-viniq-tuq-tunga
    caribou-former-consume-INTR.1S
    ‘I’m eating caribou meat.’ (Johns 2007b)

Johns (2007b) observes that noun incorporation in Inuktitut differs from that in other incorporating languages such as Mohawk, in that only a small set of verbs in Inuktitut incorporates, and incorporation is obligatory with these verbs. Johns further points out that these verbs are semantically ‘light’ while non-incorporating verbs are full or lexical (see Section 5.4.2 for further discussion). In light of these facts, Bobaljik’s analysis would stipulate that lexical verbs such as niri- ‘eat’ optionally incorporate null objects but can never incorporate overt objects, while true incorporating verbs such as -tuq (also ‘eat’) must incorporate overt objects but
can never incorporate null objects. There is, however, no clear and principled way to account for this distinction; Bobaljik’s account of unergatives is thus less tenable under closer scrutiny.

Pittman (2005) amends Bobaljik’s treatment of unergatives in Inuktitut by implementing the notion of Cyclic Agree (Rezac 2003, Béjar 2003, Béjar and Rezac 2009), so that \( v \) is able to assign absolutive case to the unergative subject in Spec-\( v \)P. Pittman thus treats accounting for unergatives in Inuktitut as a matter of feature checking rather than transitivity. Despite this amendment, however, there still remains a general challenge for Bobaljik’s and Pittman’s view of ergative and absolutive case in Inuktitut, and that is the default wide scope property of absolutive arguments. As discussed in Section 2.4, Bittner (1994) and Manga (1996) demonstrate that, in both West Greenlandic and Inuktitut, absolutive arguments take wide scope with respect to negation and specificity. (18) and (20) are repeated as (34) and (35) below:

(34) **West Greenlandic:**

a. atuasaq ataasiq tikis-sima-nngi-la-q
   book.ABS one.ABS come-PRF-NEG-IND-3S
   ‘One book hasn't come (yet).’

b. Juuna-p atuagaq ataasiq tigu-sima-nngi-la-a
   Juuna-ERG book.ABS one.ABS get-PRF-NEG-IND-3S.3S
   ‘There is a book which Juuna hasn't got (yet).’ (Bittner 1994)

(35) **Inuktitut:**

a. asia sana-laur-mi-janga
   another.ABS/NOM work-past-also-TRANS.3S/3S
   ‘He made another one of a different kind’

b. asia-nik pi-juma-junga
   another-MOD something-want-INTR.1S
   ‘I want another one of a different kind’ (Manga 1996)

For Bittner and Manga, the scope properties of absolutes specifically have to do with absolutive case being assigned by I/T, since that means that they are case-assigned above the

9 Noun incorporation in Inuktitut requires that the incorporated object always be overt. As shown below, a dummy object \( pi- \) is inserted in the absence of an overt one:

i. pi-si-juq
dummy-buy-INTR.3S
   ‘He bought something.’ (Johns 2007b)
domain of various operators such as negation (Manga additionally posits a [+specific] feature on T). That absolutive arguments are obligatorily wide scope is corroborated by Wharram (2003), who independently argues that only the antipassive object is narrow scope. Conversely, Bobaljik’s and Pittman’s analyses of Inuktitut cannot account for the wide scope properties of absolutes since, for them, absolutive case is assigned low in the syntax.

3.3 Towards nominalization

Under Johns’ (1992) view, the source of ergativity in Inuktitut is nominalization; ergative case is genitive case assigned within a possessive phrase, while absolutive case is assigned high in the syntax outside of the possessive phrase. In Section 4, I reformulate Johns’ analysis into Minimalist terms, and demonstrate that this has certain empirical advantages and better appeals to theoretical tenets of cross-linguistic uniformity. In the meantime, I provide additional evidence in support of the nominal analysis of ergativity maintained in this paper.

First, however, I would like to clarify this paper’s view of nominalization. For instance, although sentences such as (36) below involve nominalization via possession, I do not take the nominalized eventuality to be possessed in the literal sense; rather, nominalization is a syntactic construct involving the Merge of a nominal projection above the event (see e.g. Alexiadou 2001 for some discussion of this):

(36) I learned about John’s smoking stogies.       (Alexiadou 2001)

Structurally, the gerund in (36) appears to be possessed in the sense that John, the smoker of stogies, is inflected for possession. However, the gerund is not literally possessed (i.e. owned) by John in any way; rather, the fact that John’s is genitive is a structural reflex of the gerundive nominalization of the verb smoking. I thus take the verbal nominalization in Inuktitut to be a parallel phenomenon; the genitive (ergative) argument is not semantically a possessor, but appears in the genitive case due to syntactic requirements arising from nominalization.
3.3.1 Agreement

Johns (1992) notes that the φ-feature agreement found on transitive verbs is identical to that found on possessee. The third person subject and object paradigms are provided below:

(37) Verb agreement Possessee agreement
a. taku-ja-ra ‘I see it’ nasa-ra ‘my hat’
b. taku-ja-it ‘you (sg.) see it’ nasa-it ‘your (sg.) hat’
c. taku-ja-a ‘he sees it’ nasa-a ‘his hat’
d. taku-jaq-put ‘we see it’ qimmiq-put ‘our dog’
e. taku-jaq-si ‘you (pl.) see it’ qimmiq-si ‘your (pl.) dog’
f. taku-ja-at ‘they see it’ qimming-at ‘their dog’ (Johns 1992)

Johns’ data is from Caribou, a western dialect of Inuktitut, whereas my consultant speaks South Baffin Inuktitut, which is more eastern. (38) shows that the South Baffin paradigms are slightly different from those found in Caribou; nonetheless, the agreement endings remain identical between the transitive verb and possessee. Moreover, the third person plural gaps in (38f) are common to both sets, despite differences of paraphrasing:

(38) Verb agreement Possessee agreement
a. kapi-ja-ra ‘I stab it’ qimmi-ra ‘my dog’
b. kapi-ja-it ‘you (sg.) stab it’ qimmi-it ‘your (sg.) dog’
c. kapi-ja-nga ‘he stabs it’ qimmi-nga ‘his dog’
d. kapi-ja-vut ‘we stab it’ qimmi-vut ‘our dog’
e. kapi-ja-si ‘you (pl.) stab it’ qimmi-si ‘your (pl.) dog’
f. kapi-si-juit ‘they stab it’ ikkua qimmi-nga ‘their dog’

stab-AP-INTR.3P dem dog-3s/3s

It is unclear why the gaps in (38f) are present; the paradigm apparently does not extend to third person plural forms. My consultant preferred the antipassive (intransitive) construction (kapisijuit) in place of a transitive construction with a third person plural agent, whereas the third person plural possessive construction could only be expressed with the third person singular

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10 See Johns (1992:68) for the entire paradigm, as I have only provided an excerpt here.
possessee accompanied by a plural demonstrative (*ikkua qimminga* ‘their dog,’ lit. ‘those, his dog’).

The fact that the transitive and possessive agreement paradigms in (37) and (38) remain identical despite morphological differences across the two dialects (-a vs. -nga for third person singular being one such difference) strongly suggests that the verbal agreement and possessive agreement are one and the same; that is, there is only one paradigm, which is subject to cross-dialectal variation. This is thus evidence for a nominal analysis of ergativity, which considers a transitive verbal complex such as e.g. (38a) *kapi-ja-ra* ‘I stab it’ as possessive, compositionally along the lines of ‘my stabbed one.’

### 3.3.2 Double possession

As shown in 3.1, singular possessed genitive arguments (e.g. those found in double or recursive possessive constructions) are marked by the morpheme -ngata rather than the standard genitive case marker -up. In (39), *ilisaiji* ‘teacher’ is both a possessor and a possessee and is thus inflected with -ngata.

(39) Jaani-up ilisaiji-ngata niuvikvi-nga
    John-GEN teacher-DBLPOSS.3S/3S store-3S/3S
    ‘John’s teacher’s store’

Evidence in favour of the argument that ergative is genitive comes from the fact that -ngata is also found in transitive clauses, in cases where the agent is possessed. Compare (40a) and (40b):

(40) a. qimmi-up kii-lauq-ta-nga anguti
dog-GEN bite-PST-PASS.PART-3S/3S man.ABS
    ‘The dog bit the man.’

b. Miali-up qimmi-ngata kii-lauq-ta-nga anguti
Mary-GEN dog-DBLPOSS.3S/3S bite-PST-PASS.PART-3S/3S man.ABS
    ‘Mary’s dog bit the man.’
This follows from a nominal analysis of ergativity, in which the possessee *qimminga* ‘the dog’ is, in turn, the possessor of the nominalized verb *kiilauqtanga* ‘his bitten one.’ Because *qimmiq* ‘dog’ is both possessor and possessee, it takes the double possession marker *-ngata*.

As will be discussed in 3.3.3 below, transitive verbs in Inuktitut are nominal in category. (41) demonstrates that *-ngata* is also attachable to a nominalized verb, in the event that the verb is structurally a possessor. Though (41) is difficult to translate into English, the consultant suggested that it could be uttered if John stabbed the polar bear, upon which someone else showed off its tooth.

(41) Jaani-up kapi-lauq-ta-ngata nanu-up kiguti-nga
    John-GEN stab-PST-PASS.PART-DBLPOSS.3S/3S polar bear-GEN tooth-3S/3S
    ‘The polar bear that John stabbed’s tooth’ (lit: ‘John’s stabbed one’s, the polar bear’s, tooth’)

In such a context, ‘John’ is the structural possessor of the nominalized verb, which, in turn, forms a similar relation with ‘the polar bear’s tooth.’ The fact that the verb may be inflected with *-ngata* not only emphasizes the parallel between transitive verbs and possessive phrases, but also demonstrates that the verb is nominal. This is further developed below.

### 3.3.3 Nominal properties of Inuktitut verbs

Johns (1992) shows that the passive participle morpheme has a nominal variant which acts as a nominalizer; (11) is repeated below as (42):

(42) a. *Passive construction*
    angut arna-mit kuni-ga-u-juq
    man.ABS woman-ALL kiss-PASS.PART-be-INTR.3S
    ‘The man was kissed by the woman.’

    b. *Passive nominal*
    kuni-gaq aanniaq-tuq
    kiss-PASS.PART.ABS sick-INTR.3S
    ‘The one kissed is sick.’

    (Johns 1992)
My consultant did not find constructions such as (42b) acceptable, in that the South Baffin dialect apparently does not allow the nominalizer to be the last morpheme in the word. However, she provided similar constructions such as in (43); affixal adjectival modifiers, which attach to nominals as in (43a), may also modify nominalized verbs (43b).

(43) a. anguti tuktu-viniq niri-ja-nga
    man.ABS caribou-former eat-PASS.PART-3S/3S
    ‘The man is eating the caribou meat.’

    b. sana-ja-viniq
       make-PASS.PART-former
       ‘the one made before’ ~ ‘the formerly made one’

The fact that the entire unit sanajaq is able to be modified by the adjective -viniq ‘former’ suggests that -jaq is a nominalizer. Note that -viniq cannot attach directly to verb roots.

(44) *sana-viniq

(43b) above additionally shows that -jaq may appear separate from agreement morphology, contra other treatments of Inuktitut which conflate them as one portmanteau morpheme expressing mood and transitive (double) agreement. That these are two separate (and separable) morphemes is consistent with the position that -jaq is a nominal passive participle and thus independent of agreement. (45) further illustrates the separability of the passive participle and the agreement morphology:

(45) sana-ja-viniq-nga
    make-PASS.PART-former-3s/3s
    ‘the one he/she made before’
    Lit: ‘his/her formerly made one’

In further support of the view that transitive verbs are nominalized, (46) shows that these verbal constructions may act as arguments:
Finally, nominalized transitive verbs are frequently case-marked. Whereas the verb in (46) above is presumably marked with (null) absolutive case, it may also take overt case markers; the nominalized verb in (47) is acting as the object of the antipassive and is marked with -mit accordingly.

(47) Miali kapi-si-juq nanur-mit taku-ja-nga-mit
Mary.ABS stab-AP-INTR.3S polar bear-MOD see-PASS.PART-3S/3S-MOD
‘Mary stabs the polar bear that he/she saw.’
Lit: ‘Mary stabs the polar bear, his/her seen one.’

According to Compton (2012), such instances are not due to case concord (i.e. agreement between a non-nominal and a nominal), but rather true case assignment on a nominal. This will be fully elaborated upon in Section 6; for now, the fact that transitive verbs may be case-marked is further evidence for their nominal category.

3.4 Summary

So far, I have shown that the ergative case on transitive agents is neither inherently assigned nor equivalent to nominative case. Rather, this section points strongly towards a nominal analysis of ergativity in Inuktitut, in which ergative case is truly genitive case and the transitive construction is nominalized. Not only are there clear parallels between transitive verbal complexes and possessive phrases with respect to both case and agreement morphology, but the transitive verb shows several signs of nominalization. In Section 4, I develop a Minimalist analysis of Inuktitut based on these facts.
4 THE ANALYSIS

Although Johns (1992) provides various insights into the language-specific mechanisms behind ergativity in Inuktitut, in this section I present a Minimalist analysis that I believe captures both the fundamental ideas behind Johns (1992) and other independent facts about the language. I argue that ergativity in Inuktitut follows from a particular view of phase theory (Chomsky 2000, et seq.) which ties phasehood with structural Case assignment, following Miyagawa (2011).

4.1 Overview of analysis

Throughout this section, I will illustrate my analysis with the transitive example in (48):

(48) anguti-up nanuq kapi-ja-nga
    man-ERG polar bear.ABS stab-PASS.PART-3S/3S
    ‘The man stabbed the polar bear.’

In 4.2, I propose that genitive (ergative) case in Inuktitut is structural, licensed by D, following e.g. Bittner and Hale’s (1996a-b) analysis of West Greenlandic and Miyagawa’s (2011) analysis of Japanese. In 4.3, I suggest that the absolutive argument is assigned structural nominative Case by Infl, and that the derivation of the transitive clause so far resembles a null predicative construction independently found in the language; I also propose a separation of tense from Infl, following Ritter and Wiltschko (2009, 2010). Finally, in 4.4 I discuss Ā-movement to the left periphery of the clause, which I take to be Spec-CP (e.g. Rizzi 1997), thus deriving the variable word-external word orders found in Inuktitut. CP is also, I argue, the true locus of nominative Case assignment; it is found on Infl via Feature Inheritance (Chomsky 2008). That CP and DP are Case assigners is non-trivial, corresponding to their status as syntactic phases.

4.2 Complex DP

As discussed in Section 3.3, the agreement found on a transitive verb is identical to that found on a possessee in a possessive phrase; moreover, the transitive verb morphology, often considered one morpheme encoding both mood and person/number agreement, actually appears to be two
separate morphemes. Thus, I follow Johns (1992) in analyzing the transitive verb as being nominalized by the passive participle morpheme (-jaq~taq in South Baffin). The passive participle morpheme may follow T-level material such as tense and negation in addition to the verb root:

(49) niri-lau-nngit-ta nga
    eat-PST-NEG-PASS.PART-3S/3S
    ‘He did not eat it.’ ~ ‘It is not his eaten one.’

Inuktitut has an inverse morpheme order (e.g. Compton 2009), meaning that the left-most morpheme in a phonological word (the root) occupies the lowest position in the structure; subsequent morphemes correspond to higher Merge positions.\(^{11}\) Thus, the fact that the passive participle morpheme is found to the right of tense and negation suggests that it is above the TP-domain and nominalizes the clause. I assume that the head hosting the passive participle is of category \(n\), in the spirit of e.g. Marantz (2001), and that the entire nominalized verb projects a DP, following Compton (2004) and Gillon and Wharram (2008) who treat all nominals in Inuktitut as DPs.

As mentioned, I take ergative case in Inuktitut to be equivalent to genitive case, licensed by D within a complex (possessive) DP. Bittner and Hale (1996a-b) come to similar conclusions in their analysis of West Greenlandic, though they propose a different mechanism of case assignment; Miyagawa (2011) also assumes that genitive case on Japanese subjects is assigned by D. The structure for the Inuktitut transitive clause derived thus far is provided in (50); the putative agent \(angutiup\) ‘the man’ and transitive verb \(kapijanga\) ‘stab’ are structurally in a possessor/possessee relationship:

\[^{11}\text{I leave open whether the word-internal syntax of Inuktitut is left-branching, as assumed in e.g. Compton and Pittman (2010), or right-branching with roll-up, as in Johns (2007b).}\]
As a final point, I would like to note that I have been referring to the transitive person/number morphology as “agreement.” Johns (2013) suggests that this agreement morphology is actually clitic doubling, citing parallels with the distantly related Aleut language Unangax, whose agreement morphology is also arguably clitic in nature (cf Merchant 2011). I take neither side in this paper, but will continue referring to the morphology as “agreement” for convenience.

4.3 Absolutive case

Upon the derivation of the possessive DP, the absolutive argument is Merged in a higher projection which I take to be InflP (to be defended below). This accounts for the wide scope and specificity facts discussed in Bittner (1994), Manga (1996), and Wharram (2003). The (simplified) structure of the transitive clause up to this point is schematized in (51).
The putative transitive clause is thus structurally a copular clause in which the two nominals are linked by Infl. I consider this head to be Infl in particular (i.e. not T). This is because the head of this projection never displays any properties of T such as tense, negation, or modality; rather, its head is obligatorily null, and this holds for both transitive and intransitive clauses. As shown earlier in (49), T-like elements are always affixal, Merged above the verb root. Yet, in the constructions in (52), there must be something in the structure to link the absolutive subject to the rest of the clause. I suggest that this is Infl.

(52) a. Jaani tiki-lauq-tuq  
   John.ABS arrive-PST-INTR.3S  
   ‘John arrived.’

   b. nanuq anguti-up kapi-lauq-tanga  
   polar bear.ABS man-ERG stab-PST-TRANS.3/3S  
   ‘The man stabbed the polar bear.’

Ritter and Wiltschko (2009, 2010) argue that Infl is universally found in all languages, though its content differs across languages. This is defined in their Parametric Substantiation Hypothesis:

(53) **Parametric Substantiation Hypothesis:**
   a. Universal Grammar makes available a core set of abstract functional categories (COMP, INFL, ASPECT, …).
   b. Languages vary in the substantive content associated with functional categories.  
   (Ritter and Wiltschko 2010)

Ritter and Wiltschko argue that Infl serves to anchor the event(uality) to the utterance, though languages may differ with respect to how this anchoring takes place; this, in turn, depends on the content associated with Infl. Crucially, the content must be deictic in some way in order to be an anchor. For instance, in English, a language with tense, tense in Infl anchors the event to the utterance *temporally*; in Halkomelem Salish, a tenseless language, it is location that substantiates Infl, so the event is *spatially* anchored to the utterance. This is illustrated in (54):

(54) **English:**
   a. Yoshi is playing.
   b. Yoshi *was* playing.
The English examples contrast in that the event and utterance time coincide in (54a) whereas in (54b) they do not; featurally, they differ in the specification of the feature [+/-past] in Infl. Similarly, in Halkomelem, the event either coincides with the utterance location or it does not, depending on a [+/-distal] feature in Infl.

The relevance of this discussion to the current analysis is that Ritter and Wiltschko show that tense is not necessarily associated with Infl. Although I abstract away from exploring the full ramifications of this idea for Inuktitut, it at least seems that Inuktitut exhibits a separation of T-level elements from Infl. Infl in Inuktitut thus only serves as an anchor.

There is some evidence for this property of Infl in Inuktitut, even though Infl itself is never phonetically expressed. Inuktitut has two predicational constructions, shown in (56), which are semantically nearly identical.

(56) a. Jaani  ilisaiji-u-juq
John.ABS teacher-be-INTR.3S
‘John is a teacher.’

b. Jaani  ilisaiji
John.ABS teacher
‘John is a teacher.’

(56a) is a typical copular construction, with an overt affixal copula -u as well as intransitive verb morphology. Conversely, (56b) is entirely functionally bare (save for, I suggest, a null Infl). The bare predication construction in (56b) is subject to certain contextual restrictions:

(57) **Context:** uttered out of the blue.
✓ John ilisaiji-u-juq
# John ilisaiji
(58) **Context:** Speaker A and Speaker B already know John. Speaker A wants to know who the teacher is. Speaker B knows that John is the teacher.

Speaker A: ‘Who is the teacher?’
Speaker B: ✓ John ilisaiji-u-juq
    ✓ John ilisaiji

(59) **Context:** Speaker B knows John, but Speaker A does not. Speaker A wants to know who the teacher is.

Speaker A: ‘Who is the teacher?’
Speaker B: ✓ John ilisaiji-u-juq
    # John ilisaiji

The restrictions on the bare predicational construction are thus that it cannot be used out of the blue (57) and must be contextually known or salient to the speech participants (58-59). More generally, the bare construction appears to be limited to contexts in which the subject is deictically anchored somehow. I attribute these restrictions in the bare construction to the presence of Infl, even though it is always null.12

Thus, in (52), repeated as (60) here, Infl links the subject to the rest of the clause:

(60) a. Jaani (INFL) tiki-lauq-tuq
    John.ABS arrive-PST-INTR.3S
    ‘John arrived.’

b. nanuq (INFL) anguti-up kapi-lauq-tanga
    polar bear.ABS man-ERG stab-PST-TRANS.3S/3S
    ‘The man stabbed the polar bear.’ ~ ‘The polar bear is the man’s stabbed one.’

I propose that the transitive clause in (60b) is essentially the same type of construction as the predication construction in (56b), in that both are schematizable as follows:

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12 The copular construction in (56a), an intransitive clause, would also have a null Infl, which links the subject to the copular verbal complex. As shown in (57)-(59), however, this construction is not subject to any of the restrictions exhibited by the bare construction. A possible reason for this is that the bare construction is entirely bare, consisting only of two DPs linked by Infl, so deictic anchoring is obligatory; conversely, the copular construction contains additional structure, thus obfuscating the deictic property of Infl.
The difference is that the DP$_2$ of the transitive construction is complex (possessive) rather than simplex. Indeed, we do see predication constructions with possessive DPs; (62) is structurally identical to the transitive construction in (60b).

(62) Jaani Miali-up ilisaiji-nga
     John.ABS Mary-GEN teacher-3S/3S
     ‘John is Mary’s teacher.’

Thus, we have reason to analyze the Inuktitut transitive clause as a predication construction consisting of two DPs linked by Infl.

Finally, note that I have analyzed DP$_1$ as taking absolutive case. I equate absolutive case with nominative Case, structurally assigned by Infl. I adopt Chomsky’s (2008) Feature Inheritance mechanism$^{13}$ wherein uninterpretable features originate on phase heads before lowering onto their complements. Thus, I propose that, in Inuktitut, an uninterpretable absolutive/nominative Case feature originates on C, a phase head, before being transferred to Infl, where it is assigned to an argument occupying Spec-InflP. This is contrary to Ritter and Wiltschko’s (2009) conjecture that, assuming structural Case is associated with tense (Pesetsky and Torrego 2001), languages which lack tense on Infl also lack nominative Case. Ritter and Wiltschko claim that this is borne out in Blackfoot, whose lack of A-positions suggests an absence of Case on TP (Ritter and Rosen 2005); diagnostics include the absence of A-binding and valence-changing operations such as passivization. However, there is no evidence for the absence of nominative Case in Inuktitut. Ritter and Rosen’s diagnostics fail for Inuktitut, which exhibits both A-binding and passivization:

$^{13}$ This will be discussed in greater detail throughout Section 5.
Thus, according to Ritter and Rosen’s diagnostics, Inuktitut has an A-position for subjects as well as a Case assigned to subjects.

Though Ritter and Wiltschko assume that tenseless Infl cannot assign nominative Case, I suggest the opposite, which I believe is more faithful to their (2009, 2010) Parametric Substantiation Hypothesis. Implicit in this hypothesis is the idea that tenseless Infls are not deficient in any sense relative to tensed Infls; instead, they bear other non-tense deictic features. Under Chomsky’s (2008) Feature Inheritance mechanism, C transfers features, including tense features, to its complement; it stands that C should be able to instead transfer non-tense deictic information to Infl in languages which either lack tense or have tense separate from Infl. It seems to follow, then, that, if tense is associated with nominative Case, this association is only found in languages in which Infl is substantiated by tense. Indeed, Pesetsky and Torrego (2001), whose treatment of nominative case as uninterpretable tense Ritter and Wiltschko follow in their analysis, note that “the features we are calling ‘T’ [may be] more properly analyzed as some other member of the Tense-Mood-Aspect system” (p. 365), though they leave the exact nature of this feature an open question. Thus, I would like to posit that, in Inuktitut, C passes on its uninterpretable features and non-tense deictic information to Infl, which then assigns nominative (absolutive) case to its subject in Spec-InflP. This departs from the assumption that structural Case is necessarily associated with tense, since it takes the substantive content of Infl to vary cross-linguistically.

Thus, our structure so far looks as follows:
The subject is Merged in Spec-InflP, where it receives nominative Case; Case is lowered onto Infl from C, a phase head. Infl links the nominative subject to the complex DP.

4.4 Focus fronting

At this point, both arguments in the Inuktitut transitive clause have been Merged, and occupy Spec-DP and Spec-InflP respectively. According to various sources, the unmarked word order of Inuktitut is SOV (e.g. Fortescue 1984, Johns 1992, Gillon 1999, Sherkina-Lieber 2004). As mentioned in Section 2.2, Johns (1992) considers the SOV word order to be derived via adjunction of the possessor to AgrPv (IP). However, the motivation for this adjunction assumes pre-Minimalist concepts such as trace theory and government, which are incompatible with Minimalism, since Minimalism eliminates both. Moreover, while SOV is the default word order in the language, it is not the only one, and this is not accounted for in Johns’ analysis.

As such, I propose that the variable word orders in Inuktitut are derived by Ā-extraction – focus fronting, in particular. In the default SOV word order, the genitive (ergative) argument moves from within the complex DP to a position higher than the nominative (absolutive) argument in Spec-InflP; I assume that this landing site for focus is Spec-CP (e.g. Rizzi 1997).
Recall from 4.3 that C also functions as a phase head and bears uninterpretable features which are lowered onto Infl via Feature Inheritance. The structure of the full transitive clause in Inuktitut is thus presented in (65).

As mentioned, other word orders are also permissible in Inuktitut. For instance, (66) demonstrates that OSV word order is most natural in certain contexts.

According to Sherkina-Lieber (2004), different word orders in Inuktitut arise due to pragmatic considerations such as focus. Sherkina-Lieber notes that declarative ergative clauses are subject to certain word order restrictions, as shown in (67):
and (69) demonstrate that this holds true for my consultant as well, for both declarative and wh-questions. A ready explanation for this is that declarative clauses exhibit focus fronting, and that focus fronting and wh-movement are both instances of movement.

(68) a. qimmi-up arnaq kii-ja-nga
    dog-GEN woman.NOM bite-PASS.PART-3S/3S
    ‘The dog bit the woman.’

b. arnaq qimmiup kiijanga
   (OSV)

c. qimmiup kiijanga arnaq
   (SVO)

d. * kiijanga arnaq qimmiup
   (VOS)

e. * kiijanga qimmiup arnaq
   (VSO)

f. * arnaq kiijanga qimmiup
   (OVS)

(69) a. kia Alaana kii-ja-nga
    who-GEN Alana.NOM bite-PASS.PART-3S/3S
    ‘Who bit Alana?’

b. Alaana kia kiijanga
   (OSV)

c. kia kiijanga Alana
   (SVO)

d. * kiijanga Alaana kia
   (VOS)

e. * kiijanga kia Alaana
   (VSO)

f. * Alaana kiijanga kia
   (OVS)

A generalization we can make from (67) is that S must always precede V (though not necessarily immediately precede, as O can intervene). I present a formal account of this in Section 5.3.1. For now, this section serves to demonstrate that the movement of the genitive argument to the
highest position of the clause is optional; word orders vary depending on what is Ā-extracted to Spec-CP.

4.5 Summary

This section presents an analysis of ergativity in Inuktitut in which ergative and absolutive case are genitive and nominative Case, licensed by D and C (Infl) respectively. Under this view, the so-called transitive clause is actually a construction in which two DPs are linked by Infl and the lower DP is a possessive phrase. Variable word orders are derived via Ā-movement to Spec-CP. In Section 5 below, I show that this particular analysis of ergativity follows from a theory in which phase heads are Case-licensers, based on Miyagawa (2011).

5 CASE AND PHASEHOOD

In this section, I expand upon the idea that, in Inuktitut, a functional head is phasal only if it assigns Case. Already under the view of most Minimalist work on phase theory is the idea that DP, transitive vP, and CP are phases; in the current analysis, these projections are associated with the assignment of genitive, accusative, and nominative Cases respectively. I argue that, in Inuktitut, only DP and CP are available; the unavailability of transitive vP translates to the absence of accusative Case in the language.

5.1 Overview of phases

The existence of the syntactic phase, originally put forth in Chomsky (2000, 2001) and modified in subsequent papers, is motivated by the tenet that syntax proceeds in cycles; the syntactic structure is not built in its entirety and then sent to Spell-Out in one fell swoop, but is sent to Spell-Out in increments. A byproduct of this concept is the Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC), whose (2000) incarnation is defined as follows:

\begin{equation}
\text{(70) In a phase } \alpha \text{ with head } H, \text{ the domain of } H \text{ is not accessible to operations outside } \alpha; \text{ only } H \text{ and its edge are accessible to such operations.} \quad \text{(Chomsky 2000)}
\end{equation}
The PIC is a condition on locality. Once a phase has been sent to Spell-Out, only the phase edge, but not the phasal domain itself, is visible for further syntactic operations such as movement; thus, movement must proceed successive cyclically (i.e. locally), in that displaced elements must stop at every phase edge in its trajectory.

Though it is generally agreed that CP, transitive vP, and possibly DP are phases (Chomsky 2000 for CP and vP; Svenonius 2004, Hiraiwa 2005 for DP), there is less consensus with respect to other projections. The definition of phasehood also varies in the literature. Chomsky (2008) argues that a given head is phasal only if it bears unvalued φ-features. He additionally notes a connection between C and T such that T has φ-features and is finite only when it is selected by C (and is absent and non-finite when C is absent); he thus argues that T inherits its φ-features from C. v* and V exhibit a similar parallel: just as T attracts subjects to its specifier, objects have long been proposed to move to Spec-VP. Chomsky argues that this is because a similar Feature Inheritance mechanism exists between v* and V. This fact, Chomsky claims, unifies C and v* in that both are phasal because they are the locus of uninterpretable φ-features which lower onto their complements. See also Richards (2007) for further discussion of phases and φ-features.

In contrast to Chomsky’s proposal, Miyagawa (2011) argues that a head is phasal only if it introduces an uninterpretable Case feature. Examining data from clausal nominalization in Japanese, Miyagawa observes that the subject of a relative clause takes genitive case when the relative clause is reduced (=TP) but nominative case if it is full (=CP); he moreover notes that Turkish and Dagur exhibit the same Case alternations in similar constructions. Crucially, Miyagawa notes a lack of visible φ-feature agreement in Japanese, and more generally argues that “many languages lack φ-feature agreement while all languages presumably have Case in some fashion” (2011:1273). This observation is echoed by Alboiu (2006), who points out that structural Case is always licensed by Spell-Out regardless of whether φ-features are present. Miyagawa cites this universality of Case assignment as why phases should be defined by Case, not by φ-features.

Finally, other researchers such as McGinnis (2001), den Dikken (2007), Takahashi (2010), and Boškovič (2012) argue for a more flexible definition of phasehood, in that what constitutes a phase is contextually determined. As an example, McGinnis proposes that the verb-level phase head is whatever happens to be the sister of VP, whether that be v or an Appl head.
This paper contributes to this debate along two dimensions. I argue that phases in Inuktitut are defined by Case, following Miyagawa (2011), and show that this treatment both accounts for the ergative-absolutive case patterns in the language and is also consistent with other facts about the language. However, the fact that phases can be contextually determined (e.g. McGinnis 2001) suggests that a single universal definition of phasehood is too strong. Although McGinnis (2001) and others are concerned with variable phasehood within a given language, one could also consider the possibility that the criteria for phasal status vary across languages (e.g. defined by Case in language X but by \( \varphi \)-features in language Y). Thus, while Case seems to be the defining property of phasehood in Inuktitut, I do not claim that this holds true in all languages, contrary to Miyagawa (2011).

5.2 Phasehood in Inuktitut

As far as I am aware, Compton and Pittman (2010) is the only other account based on phasehood in Inuktitut. Compton and Pittman take a standard view of phases whereby the syntactic structure is built bottom-up and then sent to Spell-Out in chunks; however, they argue that, in Inuktitut, these chunks are shipped to PF as phonological words. Under this view, phonological words in Inuktitut correspond to phases, and word boundaries in the language correspond exactly to phase edges. As soon as a phasal projection (CP or DP in their analysis) is Merged, the phasal complex is sent out to Spell-Out and the individual components of the phase are packed into a single word. They illustrate with an example:
In (71), the two DPs *angunasuktiup* ‘hunter’ and *aiviq* ‘walrus’ are sent to Spell-Out as soon as their DP layers are Merged. The rest of the clausal structure continues to be built upwards until CP is Merged. Because CP is also a phase, the remaining components of this structure (i.e. everything except the spelled-out DPs) are sent to Spell-Out; these are outputted as one phonological word, *takulauqtanga* ‘s/he saw it.’ An advantage for Compton and Pittman’s analysis is that it provides a straightforward account of the polysynthetic nature of Inuktitut; Inuktitut is polysynthetic because of a language-specific property preventing non-phasal material from being outputted as independent words.

However, one challenge for their approach is that some basic aspects of Inuktitut syntax are left unexplained; this, in turn, casts doubt on their overall analysis upon closer scrutiny. It is unclear in Compton and Pittman’s analysis how, and by which functional heads, Case is
licensed, nor is it explained how the DPs exhibit Case morphology if they are spelled out as soon as the DP projections are Merged (prior to Case assignment). Moreover, Compton and Pittman’s account faces empirical challenges. For instance, Compton and Pittman argue that incorporated nouns are of size NP (72a), whereas non-incorporated nominals are of size DP (72b); this is consistent with their claim that phonological words can only be DP or CP.

(72)  

a.  

\begin{verbatim}
pitsi-tu-vunga  
godfish-consume-INTR.1S  
\end{verbatim}  
‘I’m eating dried fish.’

b.  

\begin{verbatim}
pitsi-mik  
nigi-vunga  
dried.fish-mod  
eat-INTR.1S  
\end{verbatim}  
‘I’m eating dried fish.’

(Johns 2007b)

However, Compton (2013) points out that Inuktitut allows the incorporation of DP-sized nominals including proper names (73a), nominals inflected for case (73b), and demonstrative pronouns. Compton notes that this is problematic for Compton and Pittman (2010), since it shows that DPs in Inuktitut do not necessarily correspond to standalone phonological words.

(73)  

a.  

\begin{verbatim}
guuti  
liv-liuq-lauq-tuq  
god.abs  
evemake-pst-INTR.3S  
\end{verbatim}  
‘God made Eve.’

b.  

\begin{verbatim}
Ottawa-min-ngaq-tunga  
Ottawa-abl-come-INTR.1S  
\end{verbatim}  
‘I’m coming from Ottawa.’

c.  

\begin{verbatim}
ikkua-[ng]u-jut  
those.ones-be-INTR.3P  
\end{verbatim}  
‘It’s those ones.’

(Compton 2013)

Furthermore, on a more conceptual level, it is never explicitly stated how phasehood in Inuktitut is defined. This raises the question: what sets apart CP and DP as phases to the exclusion of other projections, including transitive (normally phasal) vP? Compton and Pittman suggest that v is non-phasal in their analysis because it lacks uninterpretable \( \phi \)-features (even though it is transitive), but simple DPs, which are phasal in their view, also lack uninterpretable \( \phi \)-features.
As such, this paper takes a different approach to phasehood, in that it argues for a Case-based definition of phasehood in Inuktitut. Like Compton and Pittman, I take DP and CP to be phases. However, following Miyagawa (2011), I take only complex D – i.e. D that licenses genitive Case – to be phasal, rather than all Ds; moreover, I assume that transitive vP is absent in Inuktitut. I set discussion of transitive vP aside until 5.4.

5.3 Evidence for DP and CP phasehood

5.3.1 DP: Word order restrictions

As discussed in Section 4.4, Inuktitut exhibits certain word order restrictions; (69) is repeated below as (74). The generalization once again is that the subject must always precede the verb, though the object may intervene.

(74) SOV *VOS
     OSV *VSO
     SVO *OVS

Under the analysis maintained in this paper, (74) may be restated as (75):

(75) GEN-NOM-V *V-NOM-GEN
     NOM-GEN-V *V-GEN-NOM
     GEN-V-NOM *NOM-V-GEN

If we redefine the subject as the genitive possessor (GEN), the object as the nominative subject (NOM), and the verb as nominalized and possessed (V), then the generalization is actually that the genitive possessor necessarily precedes the nominalized verb possessee, with the nominative subject optionally intervening.

I argue that this generalization may be accounted for if we take complex DP to be a phase. Recall that extraction out of phases adheres to the Phase Impenetrability Condition, repeated below as (76):

46
In a phase $\alpha$ with head $H$, the domain of $H$ is not accessible to operations outside $\alpha$; only $H$ and its edge are accessible to such operations. (Chomsky 2000)

That is, only the phase head and its specifier are accessible for operations such as extraction. Because this analysis takes $D$ to be the locus of genitive case assignment, the possessor (the so-called ergative argument), the closest goal to the probe in $D$, moves to Spec-DP for genitive Case. Given the current analysis, Spec-DP is a phase edge, since Case licensors are phase heads. Thus, the possessor occupying Spec-DP is able to undergo further extraction, e.g. Ā-movement. The Ā-extraction of the possessor to Spec-CP derives the unmarked GEN-NOM-V (SOV) word order. Conversely, the possessee (nominalized verb) is never able to move to the phase edge because its route is blocked by the possessor, which already occupies Spec-DP. Because the possessee cannot Ā-extract out of the DP phase, word orders in which the possessee precedes the possessor are ungrammatical.

The word orders that are grammatical are thus accounted for as follows. For GEN-NOM-V (SOV), the unmarked word order, the nominative subject occupies Spec-InflP while the genitive possessor raises out of the complex DP to Spec-CP. For NOM-GEN-V (OSV), the nominative subject Ā-moves from Spec-InflP to Spec-CP whereas the possessor remains inside the DP. Finally, for SVO, I suggest that the entire complex DP raises to Spec-CP, as posited by Rackowski and Richards (2005) for Tagalog. Rackowski and Richards define the notion of *closeness* as follows:

(77) A goal $\alpha$ is the closest one to a given probe if there is no distinct goal $\beta$ such that for some $X$ ($X$ a head or maximal projection), $X$ c-commands $\alpha$ but does not c-command $\beta$. (Rackowski and Richards 2005)

That is, if a goal intervenes between a higher probe and a lower goal, then the higher probe agrees with the higher goal instead. This allows an entire phase to be extracted instead of an argument within the phase that is unable to move to the phase edge; Rackowski and Richards assume that "phases are always in principle capable of moving" (2005:579). Thus, I suggest that

---

14 The base-generated word order is also OSV given the nature of the so-called transitive clause in Inuktitut; however, the movement of the object to Spec-CP, an Ā-position, is necessary to account for examples like (66) in Section 4.4.

15 See Van Urk and Richards (2013) for another version of closeness.
the GEN-V-NOM (SVO) word order in Inuktitut is derived via raising the entire possessive DP to Spec-CP, since the possessee can never be extracted by itself.

5.3.2 CP: Strong islands and non-extractability

This paper also takes CP to be a phase, as is standardly assumed in Minimalism (Chomsky 2000, et seq.). Although evidence along the lines of extraction through Spec-CP is not readily available in Inuktitut, I present here some data that at least suggests that CPs in Inuktitut are strong islands for extraction. If strong islands may be phases, as Chomsky (2008) suggests for subject DP islands, then this suggests that CP in Inuktitut is phasal too.

Inuktitut allows biclausal constructions, as shown below in (78). I take the bracketed clause to be embedded within a matrix clause for the purposes of this paper, though, as subordination is a relatively unexplored area of Inuktitut syntax, more research is required to determine whether examples like (78) truly involve embedding. Note that Inuktitut lacks overt complementizers.

(78) Jaani uqaq-tuq [qimmi-up kii-qqau-ja-nga Alaana]  
John.ABS say-INTR.3S [dog-GEN bite-REC.PST-PASS.PART-3S/3S Alana.ABS]  
‘John says that the dog bit Alana.’

The bracketed constituent in (78) above is a full clause; its contents are subject to the same word order restrictions illustrated in 5.3.1:

(79) a. Jaani uqaqtuq [qimmiup kiiqqaujanga Alaana]  
    Jaani uqaqtuq [qimmiup Alaana kiiqqaujanga]  
    Jaani uqaqtuq [Alaana qimmiup kiiqqaujanga]  
    *Jaani uqaqtuq [kiiqqaujanga qimmiup Alaana]  
    *Jaani uqaqtuq [kiiqqaujanga Alaana qimmiup]  
    *Jaani uqaqtuq [Alaana kiiqqaujanga qimmiup]

Recall from 5.3.1 that the word order restrictions arise due to the Phase Impenetrability Condition on phasal DP; I assume that this holds in (79) as well. In the grammatical
constructions (a-c), I assume that the Ā-position is Spec-CP, just as in the monoclausal constructions described above.

(80) moreover demonstrates that the entire embedded CP may be topicalized.

(80) a. Jaani-up apiri-ja-nga Miali [qimmi-up
John-GEN ask-PASS.PART-3S/3S Mary.ABS [dog-GEN
Alaana kii-qqau-ja-nga] Alaana.ABS bite-REC.PST-PASS.PART-3S/3S]
‘John asks Mary whether the dog bit Alana.’

b. [qimmiup Alaana kiiqqaujanga] Jaanup apirijanga Miali
Lit: ‘The dog bit Alana, John asks Mary.’

Thus, the entire embedded clause can be raised to Spec-CP of the matrix clause. Note that this raising does not block Jaaniup ‘John’ from focus fronting to Spec-CP as well; following Rizzi (1997), I assume that the left periphery is expanded. That is, the embedded clause moves to Spec-TopP and the focused element moves to Spec-FocP, though in this paper I continue to refer to CP as a unitary projection regardless of how much it is actually articulated.

However, though arguments may move to the embedded Spec-CP, as shown in (79) above, they may not further extract to the matrix Spec-CP:

(81) a. *qimmiup Jaani uqaqtuq [ ____ Alaana kiiqqaujanga]
b. *Alaana Jaani uqaqtuq [ ____ qimmiup kiiqqaujanga]
c. *qimmiup kiiqqaujanga Jaani uqaqtuq [ ____ Alaana]

What we can glean from this is that CP and DP seem to behave differently with respect to extractability; while an element may extract out of DP so long as it first moves to its edge, the same cannot be said for CP. In other words, embedded CP in Inuktitut seems to behave like a strong island. I set aside the question of whether there exists an inherent difference in the phasal properties of DP and CP in Inuktitut, or whether the islandhood of CP is due to limitations on processing or accidental garden pathing. However, if strong islandhood can be taken as a property of (some) phases, then this is evidence for the phasal status of CP in Inuktitut.
5.4 Non-phasal \( v \)

In this section, I discuss the nature of the Inuktitut intransitive clause, which I view as structurally distinct from the so-called transitive clause. I suggest a distinction between intransitive \( v \) and transitive \( v^* \), wherein only the latter is phasal. I contend that \( v^* \) is absent in Inuktitut, correlating with the absence of accusative Case. The absence of accusative Case but presence of genitive and nominative Case arises in the ergative-absolutive case patterns in Inuktitut. In support of this, I argue that, contra Bok-Bennema (1991) and Spreng (2006), the object of the antipassive in Inuktitut is not accusative.

5.4.1 Intransitivity

The intransitive agreement paradigm of Inuktitut is as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
(82) & \quad a. & \text{pisuk-tunga} & \text{‘I walk’} \\
& \quad b. & \text{pisuk-tutit} & \text{‘You walk’} \\
& \quad c. & \text{pisuk-tuq} & \text{‘He walks’} \\
& \quad d. & \text{pisuk-tugut} & \text{‘We walk’} \\
& \quad e. & \text{pisuk-tusi} & \text{‘You (pl) walk’} \\
& \quad f. & \text{pisuk-tuit} & \text{‘They walk’}
\end{align*}
\]

The morphology exhibits person/number agreement with only the subject. Comparing (82) with the transitive verb morphology from (38), repeated below as (83), we see that several of the endings are morphologically distinct.

\[
\begin{align*}
(83) & \quad a. & \text{kapi-ja-ra} & \text{‘I stab it’} \\
& \quad b. & \text{kapi-ja-it} & \text{‘you s. stab it’} \\
& \quad c. & \text{kapi-ja-nga} & \text{‘he stabs it’} \\
& \quad d. & \text{kapi-ja-vut} & \text{‘we stab it’} \\
& \quad e. & \text{kapi-ja-si} & \text{‘you p. stab it’} \\
& \quad f. & \text{kapi-si-juit} & \text{‘they stab (something)’} \quad \text{(intransitive antipassive construction)}
\end{align*}
\]
Although a few similarities are evident (ignoring third person plural), there are also several differences, suggesting that the paradigms cannot be taken as intransitive and transitive counterparts to each other. This is readily explained under the current analysis, which views the transitive agreement as possessor/possessee agreement. Moreover, if transitive ‘agreement’ turns out to be actually clitic in nature whereas intransitive agreement is true agreement (as argued by Johns 2013), then this provides further reason to consider the transitive clause as structurally distinct from the intransitive.

Finally, although intransitivity is standardly associated with VP, at least in Government-Binding Theory, more recent research takes the intransitive verb to project (non-phasal) vP (e.g. Chomsky 2001). Thus, intransitive v must be differentiated from transitive v*; whereas the latter is phasal, the former is not (or is only a weak phase, as per Chomsky 2001). As such, the rest of this paper refers to transitive v as v*, and intransitive v as v.

5.4.2 v

The choice to differentiate between intransitive v and transitive v* is not just a matter of terminology; intransitive v has been proposed for a number of phenomena in Inuktitut including passives and noun incorporation. The Inuktitut passive construction is repeated below:

(84) anguti kii-ja-u-qqau-juq qimming-mut
     man.ABS bite-PASS.PART-be-REC.PST-INTR.3S dog-ALL
     ‘The man was bitten by the dog.’

Notice that the position of the passive participle in (84) differs from that in (transitive) nominalized clauses, shown in (85):

(85) qimmi-up kii-qqau-ja-nga anguti
     dog-GEN bite-REC.PST-PASS.PART-3S/3S man.ABS
     ‘The dog bit the man.’

---

16 Legate (2003) argues that unaccusative and passive vPs are in fact phasal, providing evidence from an assortment of phenomena including reconstruction effects and parasitic gaps. However, den Dikken (2006) argues that Legate’s diagnostics do not actually substantiate her claims. In this paper, I adopt den Dikken’s position, and treat unaccusative and passive v as non-phasal in contrast to transitive v*.
In (85), the passive participle morpheme follows the past tense marker rather than precedes it. Given the inverse morpheme order of Inuktitut (corresponding the right edge of a word to the highest structural position), the nominal passive participle is higher than its verbal counterpart. I suggest that this can be explained if we take the two morphemes to be introduced by different heads (which fits, given that they are of different categories). In Section 4.2, I associated the nominalizing passive participle with category-defining head $n$; here, I assume that its verbal counterpart is introduced by (intransitive) $v$. This is consistent with Cook and Johns (2009), who claim in their analysis of Inuktitut postbases that argument-shifting morphemes including the verbal passive morpheme $-jaq$-$taq$ are equivalent to $v$.

Another instance of intransitive $v$ is in noun incorporation constructions. In (86), the noun *qukiuti* ‘rifle’ is incorporated into the verbal complex containing the verbal affix $-taaq$ ‘get.’

(86) qukiuti-taaq-tunga
rifle-get-INTR.PART.1S
‘I got a rifle.’

(Johns 2007b)

Johns (2007b) points out that incorporation in Inuktitut differs from incorporation phenomena in other languages, in that only a small subset of Inuktitut verbs are incorporating, and, for such verbs, incorporation is obligatory (conversely, other languages allow optional incorporation with all transitive verbs). Johns argues that incorporating verbs in Inuktitut are light verbs in that they are functional rather than lexical (root) elements and hosted by $v$. As with the passive constructions, the $v$ in noun incorporation constructions is associated with intransitivity.

5.4.3 Antipassives

The antipassive\(^\text{17}\) construction in Inuktitut is contrasted with its transitive counterpart below:

(87) a. qimmi-up kii-qqau-ja-nga anguti
dog-ERG bite-REC.PST-PASS.PART-3S/3S man.ABS
‘The dog bit the man.’

\(^{17}\) The term ‘antipassive’ in Inuktitut is somewhat murky, given certain facts about the language (some of which discussed in this section). I set this aside for the purposes of this paper, and consider the Inuktitut antipassive to be as defined throughout this section.
Although the English translations of the two constructions are essentially equivalent, there are some differences. The presence of the antipassive morpheme -si corresponds to the intransitivity of the verb, which is reflected in its intransitive (subject) agreement. Moreover, the agent is absolutive rather than ergative, thus resembling an intransitive subject, while the object takes what is sometimes called the modalis case in the Inuit literature. The demoted nominal may be omitted:

(88) anguti kunik-si-vuq
    man.ABS kiss-AP-INTR.3S
    ‘The man is kissing someone.’ (Spreng 2002)

The case found on the object of the antipassive has been analyzed as accusative Case by Bok-Bennema (1991) and Spreng (2006); while Bok-Bennema posits that the object of the antipassive is invariably accusative, Spreng contends that it is sometimes accusative and other times inherent, depending on the context. However, the analysis developed in this paper argues for the absence of accusative Case, which it associates with phasal v* (also absent under this view). Although I abstract away from presenting a full competing analysis of the antipassive, there are a number of points indicating that the object of the antipassive is not accusative, contra Bok-Bennema (1991) and Spreng (2006).

Although the literature on the antipassive as a cross-linguistic phenomenon generally treats the case on the object as oblique (Blake 1994, Spreng 2010), this is not immediately obvious for the modalis case in Inuktitut, as the Inuktitut antipassive varies across dialects. Johns (2001, 2006) demonstrates that eastern dialects (e.g. Labrador Inuttut) have recently begun to exhibit a shift, in that the ergative construction is on the decline and is being replaced by the antipassive as the unmarked transitive construction; in other words, because the antipassive is becoming the default voice, these dialects are becoming less ‘ergative’ and more ‘accusative.’ While in the eastern dialects the object of the antipassive may be accusative, I do not believe that

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This paper focuses on differences pertaining to case and agreement, but see e.g. Spreng (2012) for aspectual differences between the antipassive construction and its transitive counterpart.
this extends to dialects in which ergativity is still robust. Evidence for this comes from the fact that the properties of the antipassive object vary between ergative and accusative dialects. According to Johns (2001), modalis proper names in ergative dialects are property- rather than individual-denoting, whereas the opposite is true in the accusative dialects; this is shown in (89). Johns (2001) further notes that the modalis case is oblique in the western dialects of Inuktitut. We can thus generalize that property-type antipassive objects are oblique while individual-type antipassive objects are accusative.

(89)  a. **Inuvialuktun (western; ergative):**
    ?Alana-mik
    Alana-MOD
    ‘someone dressed up as Alana’

    b. **Labrador (eastern; accusative):**
    Margarita Kuinatsa-i-juk Ritsati-mik
    Margarita.ABS tickle-AP-INTR.3S Richard-MOD
    ‘Margarita is tickling Richard.’ (Johns 2001)

The primary data in this paper is drawn from South Baffin Inuktitut, which is considered an eastern dialect, though not as eastern as Labrador Inuktut; as has been shown throughout this paper, South Baffin Inuktitut still exhibits ergativity. Wharram (2003), who also examines South Baffin Inuktitut, provides the following data:

(90)  a. Tuglasi taku-lauq-ta-ra
    Douglas.ABS see-PST-PASS.PART-1S/3S
    ‘I saw Douglas’

    b. ippaksak Tuglasi-mik taku-lauq-tunga
    yesterday Douglas-MOD see-PST-INTR.1S
    ‘Yesterday, I saw someone named Douglas (‘a Douglas’).’ (Wharram 2003)

Like Johns, Wharram contends that the antipassive object in (90b) is of semantic type <e,t> (property-denoting) and is obligatorily narrow scope, whereas its absolutive counterpart in (90a) is of type <e> (individual-denoting). According to his analysis, the oblique status of the antipassive object is crucial to its scope properties.
Though my consultant, also from South Baffin, was unable to reproduce the property-denoting reading in (90b), she provided (91), in which the optimal translation of the antipassive construction is one in which the object is indefinite or narrow scope.

(91) anguti kapi-si-juq tuktu-mit
    man.Abs stab-AP-INTR.3S caribou-MOD

‘The man stabbed a caribou.’
# ‘The man stabbed the caribou.’
# ‘A man stabbed a caribou.’
# ‘A man stabbed the caribou.’

That the object of the antipassive is indefinite or narrow scope is a typologically common property of the antipassive, and is associated with its status as an oblique (e.g. Baker 1988, Deal 2007, Spreng 2010, Aldridge 2012). Although I am not prepared to argue that the antipassive object is oblique in all dialects of Inuktitut which exhibit ergativity, I do not believe that it is accusative in these dialects either; an accusative account cannot capture the scope effects illustrated in (90) and (91). Indeed, in a number of languages, arguments taking accusative case actually take wide scope by default (e.g. Turkish, Enç 1991; Kannada, Lidz 2006).

Furthermore, the modalis case marker is found in non-antipassive contexts. As shown in the Iñupiaq example in (92), the modalis case marker is also found on thematic instruments.

(92) anguti-m tuqut-kaa aŋnaq savin-š-mik
    man-ERG kill-TRANS.3S/3S woman.Abs knife-MOD

‘Man killed woman with a knife.’ (Nagai 1998)

Moreover, as will be further discussed in Section 6, relative clauses in Inuktitut may be (optionally) case-marked (though not via case concord). A relative clause which modifies a non-modalis oblique (allative) nominal may be case-marked with the modalis case. This is unexpected under an analysis which treats the modalis case as accusative.

(93) anguti pisuk-tuq qimmir-mut [Miali-up
    man.Nom walk-INTR.3S dog-ALL [Mary-Gen
    kapi-lauq-ta-ngal]-nit
    stab-PST-PASS.PART-3S/3S]-MOD

‘The man is walking towards the dog that Mary stabbed.’
A final challenge for the accusative analysis of the antipassive object is the standard assumption that accusative Case is associated with transitivity (e.g. Burzio 1981). An accusative object in the antipassive would entail the presence of a transitive \( v^*P \), for which there is no empirical basis (at least in the ergative dialects). Rather, I assume that the antipassive \(-si\) is introduced by intransitive \( v \). This is consistent, at least superficially, with Spreng (2006), who also takes \(-si\) to be in \( v \), though it is unclear whether she considers this \( v \) to be intransitive or transitive, given her accusative analysis of the antipassive object.

5.4.4 Summary

This section takes various intransitive constructions in Inuktitut to all involve intransitive \( v \) (distinct from both \( V \) and \( v^* \)), with slightly different instantiations. The discussion of \( v \) ties into the overarching claim of this paper that ‘transitivity’ in Inuktitut is spurious in that it actually has a nominal, not verbal, basis; this, in turn, is correlated with the absence of a transitive verbal projection in the language, namely \( v^*P \). The evidence for this absence is circular in that it is simply the absence of evidence for accusative Case.

The absence of \( v^* \) entails that the only structural Case assigners in Inuktitut are \( C \) and (possessive) \( D \). The ergative-absolutive case patterns in Inuktitut are thus attributable to the availability of only nominative and genitive Case.

6 EXTENSION: AGENT RELATIVIZATION

In this section, the current analysis is extended to account for some apparently syntactically ergative properties of Inuktitut, namely, a restriction against agent relativization. I contend that what appears to be syntactic ergativity in Inuktitut is epiphenomenal, and that this follows readily from my analysis. Ultimately, I conclude that Inuktitut is not syntactically ergative at all, despite surface appearances.
6.1 Syntactic ergativity

Up to this point, this paper has discussed only morphological ergativity – i.e. the ergative-absolutive case patterns and how they arise. It has been noted, however, that languages may also exhibit syntactic ergativity (e.g. Dixon 1994); in these languages, ergative arguments behave differently in the syntax from absolutive arguments. As Aldridge (2008a) notes, morphologically ergative languages may not necessarily be syntactically ergative, and may rather pattern instead like syntactically accusative languages; in fact, only a small subset of the world’s languages are both morphologically and syntactically ergative. These languages, according to Aldridge, include Dyirbal (Pama-Nyungan), some Mayan languages, the Eskimo-Aleut languages (including Inuktitut), and some Austronesian languages.

In syntactically ergative languages, absolutive arguments are more “subject-like” than the ergative agent, often because they are structurally subjects (Aldridge 2008a). Compare English (syntactically accusative) with Dyirbal (syntactically ergative) below:

(94) a. **English:**
[Father$_S$ returned [PRO$_A$ to see mother$_O$]]

‘Father returned to see mother.’

b. **Dyirbal:**
[ŋuma$_S$ banaga-ŋ$^\ddag$u [PRO$_O$ yabu-ŋgu$_A$ bura-li]]
father.ABS return-NONFUT(ABS) mother-ERG see-PURP

‘Father returned in order for mother to see him.’ (Dixon 1994)

(95) a. **English:**
[Mother$_A$ saw father$_O$] and [Ø$_S$ returned]

‘Mother saw father and (mother) returned.’

b. **Dyirbal:**
[ŋuma$_O$ yabu-ŋgu$_A$ buran] [Ø$_S$ banaga-ŋ$^\ddag$u]
father.ABS mother-ERG saw return-NONFUT

‘Mother saw father and (father) returned.’ (Dixon 1994)

In a syntactically accusative language such as English, the subject is the controller and coordination pivot regardless of whether the verb is transitive or intransitive; conversely, in
Dyirbal, the controller and coordination pivot must be absolutive (i.e. intransitive subject or transitive object).

However, Aldridge notes, “the absolutive coordination pivot…[and] the restriction of PRO to absolutive position is found in some, but not all, ergative languages…what is common to all syntactically ergative languages is the Ā-movement restriction” (2008a: 974). This restriction disallows the Ā-movement (e.g. relativization, wh-movement, focus fronting) of ergative agents, though absolutive arguments are extractable. This is illustrated for Tagalog (Austronesian) and Q’anjob’al (Mayan) in (96) and (97).

(96) **Tagalog:**

a. *tao=ng b-in-ili ang isda*

   person=LK TRANS.PRF-buy ABS fish

   **Intended:** ‘person who bought the fish’

b. *isda=ng b-in-ili ng babae*

   fish=LK TRANS.PRF-buy ABS fish

   ‘fish which the woman bought’

c. *sino ng b-in-ili ang libro*

   who ERG TRANS.PRF-buy ABS book

   **Intended:** ‘Who bought the book?’

d. *ano ang b-in-ili ng babae*

   what ABS TRANS.PRF-buy ERG woman

   ‘What did the woman buy?’

(97) **Q’anjob’al:**

a. *maktxel max-Ø y-il[-a’] ix ix*

   who ASP-ABS3 ERG3-see-TRANS CL woman

   **Intended:** ‘Who saw the woman?’

b. *maktxel max y-il[-a’] naq winaq*

   who ASP ERG3-see-TRANS CL man

   ‘Who did the man see?’

In Tagalog and Q’anjob’al, because the Ā-extraction of agents is disallowed, an alternative construction must be used to express the same idea; in both languages, the antipassive is used as

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19 Coon et al. (2011) only provide examples of wh-movement, but claim that the restriction on agents in Q’anjob’al holds for Ā-extraction across the board, including relativization and focus fronting.
a paraphrase. This is because the antipassive construction is intransitive, meaning that the agent is absolutive rather than ergative. The antipassive counterparts to (96) and (97) are given in (98):

(98)  

(98)  

a.  **Tagalog:**  

sino ang b<um>i>ili ng libro  
who ABS <INTR.PRF>buy OBL book  
‘Who bought the book?’  

b.  **Q’anjob’al:**  

maktxel max maq’-waj[-i] [OBL y-in no tx’i’]  
who.ABS ASP hit-AP-INTR GEN3-RN CL dog  
‘Who hit the dog?’  

Inuktitut and related Eskimo-Aleut languages such as West Greenlandic have also been long noted in the literature to exhibit a similar restriction (e.g. Woodbury 1977, Bittner and Hale 1996a, Manning 1996, Nowak 1996, Johns 2007a, Aldridge 2008a); as shown below, agents cannot be relativized.20

(99)  

(99)  

a. nanuq [anguti-up taku-lau-gaa] nutara-up tuqu-taa  
polar bear.ABS man-ERG see-PST-TRANS.3S/3S child-ERG kill-TRANS.3S/3S  
‘The child killed the polar bear that the man saw.’  

b. *angut [nanuq kapi-jaa] ani-juq  
man-ERG polar bear.ABS stab-TRANS.3S/3S went out-INTR.3S  
**Intended:** ‘The man who stabbed the polar bear went out.’  

Note that agent relativization refers to the role of the agent with respect to the contents of the relative clause rather than the matrix clause; for instance, the intended relativized nominal of the ungrammatical construction in (99b) is the agent of the relative clause *nanuq kapi-jaa* ‘stabbed the polar bear,’ but the intransitive subject of the matrix verb *ani-juq* ‘go out.’

20 Relativized arguments in Inuktitut take the case assigned to them in the matrix clause regardless of the contents of the relative clause. This is demonstrated in the example below, in which the relativized nominal takes modalis case, though it would be absolutive given the gap in the relative clause.

i. angunasukti kapi-si-juq tuktu-mit [arna-up taku-lauq-tanga]  
hunter.ABS stab-AP-INTR.3S caribou-MOD [woman-ERG see-PST-TRANS.3S/3S]  
‘The hunter stabbed the caribou that the woman saw.’  

59
Like Tagalog and Q’anjob’al, agent relativization in Inuktitut is only permitted if the antipassive construction is used:

\[
(100) \text{angut [nanur-mik kapi-si-juq] ani-juq} \\
\text{man.ABS polar bear-MOD stab-AP-INTR.3S go out-INTR.3S} \\
\text{‘The man who stabbed the polar bear went out.’ (Johns 2007a)}
\]

However, what has generally gone unmentioned in the literature is the fact that agents in Inuktitut may be Ā-extracted in cases of wh-movement and focus fronting. Moreover, whereas relativized agents may appear in any position in the matrix clause and thus be assigned any case accordingly (see footnote 20), Ā-extracted agents take ergative case:

\[
(101) \text{a. kia kii-ja-nga Alaana} \\
\text{who.ERG bite-PASS.PART-3S/3S Alana.ABS} \\
\text{‘Who bit Alana?’} \\
\text{b. qimmi-up arnaq kii-ja-nga} \\
\text{dog-ERG woman.ABS bite-PASS.PART-3S/3S} \\
\text{‘The dog bit the woman.’}
\]

This suggests that the restriction specifically targets relativization, not ergative arguments or across-the-board Ā-movement. I suggest that this is because relativization in Inuktitut does not involve Ā-movement at all; rather, following insights from Johns (1992) and Compton (2012), relativization is derived by the apposition of two nominals.

### 6.2 DPs in apposition

Although analyses of relativization vary (e.g. Chomsky 1977, Kayne 1994), they generally involve Ā-movement within a CP, whether of a null operator within the relative clause or of the relativized nominal itself. I demonstrate, however, that the Inuktitut relative clause is a DP rather than a CP. In turn, the restriction on agent relativization is simply an artifact of the DP nature of the relative clause.\(^{21}\) Johns (1992) also alludes to this in her analysis, taking possessive phrases and ‘transitive relative constructions’ to be structurally analogous.

\(^{21}\) I will, however, keep using the terms ‘relativization’ and ‘relative clause’ for convenience.
The idea that modification is expressed with DPs in apposition in Inuktitut is developed in Compton (2012), who demonstrates that adjective-like modifiers in Inuktitut may be categorized into two groups. Whereas strictly-attributive adjectives are affixal, verb-like adjectives are stative intransitives and constitute standalone words.

(102) a. **Strictly-attributive adjective:**
   iglu-tsiavaq  
   house-good  
   ‘a well-built house’

b. **Verb-like adjective:**
   taku-juq  
   tall-INTR.3S  
   ‘He/she/it is tall.’ (Compton 2012)

Whereas strictly-attributive adjectives are exactly that, verb-like adjectives may modify a nominal predicatively or attributively, as shown in (103). The current paper focuses on the attributive modification of verb-like adjectives.

(103) a. jappa  angi-juq  
   coat.ABS  big-INTR.3S  
   ‘The coat is big.’

b. taku-ju-up  arna-up  niri-janga  aapu  
   tall-INTR-ERG  woman-ERG  eat-TRANS.3S/3S  apple.ABS  
   ‘The tall girl is eating the apple.’ (Compton 2012, modified)

In the attributive modification example in (103b), both *taku-juq* ‘he/she/it is tall’ and *arnaq* ‘woman’ are marked with ergative case. According to Compton (2012), this is not case concord; (104a) shows that modifiers of incorporated nouns may also be inflected for case even though incorporated nominals themselves are generally bare (e.g. Johns 2007b, Compton and Pittman 2010). (104b) additionally shows that the modifier and nominal may be marked with different cases, which should not be possible under a case concord account.
(104) a. angi-jur-\textbf{mit} iglu-liu-lauq-tunga  
big-DEC-MOD house-make-PST-INTR.1S  
‘I made a big house.’

b. anguti pisuk-tuq sanngi-ju-mit paliisi-\textbf{mut}  
man.ABS walk-INTR.3S strong-INTR-MOD police officer-ALL  
‘The man is walking to(ward) the strong police officer.’  \hfill (Compton 2012)

Compton (2012) takes this as evidence that the modifier is nominal as well, noting that earlier researchers have come to similar conclusions (e.g. Creider 1978, Fortescue 1984). He further proposes that these modifiers are not nominal by default; they are nominalized when behaving as attributive modifiers, but verbal when predicative. Because these nominalized modifiers may be case-marked, they are more specifically DPs; in turn, the fact that they are DPs suggests that they do not modify nominals via Predicate Modification as APs do (cf Heim and Kratzer 1998), but via CI-Application (Potts 2005). The modifying and modified DPs are thus in apposition, with the former adjoined to the latter. This is illustrated in (105):\footnote{See Compton (2012:95-107) for the semantics of DP-DP apposition in Inuktitut.}

(105)  \begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
  \node (DP1) {DP$_1$};
  \node (DP2) [below left of=DP1] {DP$_2$};
  \node (DP3) [below of=DP2] {ang-i-juq};
  \node (DP4) [below of=DP1] {nanur-jju-aq};
  \node (DP5) [below of=DP4] {polar bear-big};
  \node (DP6) [below of=DP5] {big-intr.3s};

  \draw (DP1) -- (DP3);
  \draw (DP1) -- (DP4);
  \draw (DP4) -- (DP5);
  \draw (DP5) -- (DP6);
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

‘a big polar bear that is so big’ \hfill (simplified from Compton 2012)

Compton generally abstracts away from discussing relativization, though he mentions that “nominal modifiers (including relative clauses and demonstrative pronouns) are nominal appositives” (2012:107-8). Here, I extend his analysis to account for relative clauses in Inuktitut, which I take to be complex DPs. Interestingly, relative clauses exhibit the same properties as the verb-like adjectives shown earlier. Like Compton’s adjectival data in (104), (106) demonstrates...
that a relative clause may be case-marked even when the modified nominal is incorporated, and may also receive a case distinct from that found on the modified nominal.

(106) a. Miali  tii-tu-ruma-juq   [John-up
Mary.ABS tea-consume-want-INTR.3S [John-GEN
niuvi-lauq-ta-nga]-nit
buy-PST-PASS.PART-3S/3S]-MOD
‘Mary wants to drink the tea that John bought.’

   b. anguti  pisuk-tuq  qimmir-mut   (=93)
man.ABS walk-INTR.3S dog-ALL
[Miali-up kapi-lauq-ta-nga]-nit
Mary-GEN stab-PST-PASS.PART-3S/3S]-MOD
‘The man is walking towards the dog that Mary stabbed.’

Further evidence for the DP status of relative clauses is given in (107), which shows that possessive DPs may also be case-marked.

(107) a. Miali      kapi-si-juq  nanur-mit  [Jaani-up
Mary.ABS stab-AP-INTR.3S polar bear-MOD [John-ERG
taku-ja-nga]-nit
see-PASS.PART-3S/3S]-MOD
‘Mary stabs the polar bear that John saw.’

   b. Miali  niuviq-tuq  [Jaani-up qimmi-nga]-nit
Mary.ABS buy-INTR.3S [John-GEN dog-3S/3P]-MOD.PL
‘Mary bought John’s dogs.’

I take this parallel to indicate that transitive relative clauses such as that in (107a) are in fact possessive DPs. Thus, the compositional English translation of (107a) is something like ‘Mary stabs the polar bear, John’s seen one.’ Under this view, relative clause DPs also modify nominals not via Predicate Modification, but via CI-Apposition. The (simplified) structure of such a construction is provided in (108); the relative clause (complex nominal) DP is adjoined to the (simple) nominal DP.
6.3 Reanalyzing the agent relativization restriction

With the DP analysis of Inuktitut relative clauses in Inuktitut in mind, let us return to the restriction on agent relativization. (109) demonstrates that both absolutive and modalis nominals may be relativized. This is counter to analyses which assume that the restriction on agent relativization is in place because only the absolutive (nominative) argument may be relativized (see Keenan and Comrie’s 1977 accessibility hierarchy).

(109) a. anguti [taku-Ø-qqau-juq tuktu-mit] paunnau-nit niri-juq
man.ABS [see-AP-REC.PST-3S caribou-ALL] berry-ALL eat-3S.INTR
‘The man who saw the caribou is eating berries.’
(Lit. ‘The man, the seen caribou one, is eating berries.’)

b. Miali kapi-si-juq nanur-mit [Jaani-up
Mary.ABS stab-AP-INTR.3S polar bear-MOD [John-ERG
taku-ja-nga]-nit see-PASS.PART-3S/3S]-MOD
‘Mary stabs the polar bear that John saw.’
(Lit. ‘Mary stabs the polar bear, John’s seen one.’)

Note that the relative clause in (109a) is an antipassive construction whereas (109b) is a possessive DP. Following Compton (2012), I take the antipassive relative clause to be a DP via nominalization, based on parallels with verb-like adjectives. Thus, both constructions in (109) involve DP-DP apposition.

Unacceptable constructions are ones like (110), in which arnaq ‘woman’ is apparently the agent of the relative clause.
(110) *arnaq [kii-qqau-ja-nga iqaluk] qimat-si-juq
woman.ABS [bite-REC.PST-PASS.PART-3S/3S fish.ABS] run.away-AP-INTR.3S
‘The woman who bit the fish ran away.’

As (111) demonstrates, this ungrammaticality is localized to the relative clause itself; the relativized nominal may act as agent of the matrix clause and take ergative case accordingly.

(111) arna-p [ani-sima-su-p] angut taku-vaa
woman-ERG [go.out-PRF-INTR.3S/3S-ERG] man.ABS see-TRANS.3S/3S
‘The woman who had gone out saw the man.’ (Bittner and Hale 1996)

This shows that the ungrammaticality of (110) is due to properties of the relative clause DP as opposed to the nominal it modifies. I argue that the source of the ungrammaticality is the fact that the relative clause consists of a transitive verb and object. Consider the structure of the Inuktitut transitive clause as developed in Section 4 (112):

(112)

InflP

Infl’

Infl [NOM]

DP

anguti-up kapi-ja-nga

‘The polar bear is the man’s stabbed one.’

In (112), the ergative (genitive) argument is Merged within the possessive DP, whereas the absolutive (nominative) argument is Merged outside of the DP. It is thus impossible to form the relative clause in (110), because the transitive verb (possessee) and absolutive object (structural subject) can never form a natural constituent to the exclusion of the ergative agent (possessor).

The restriction on agent relativization, then, is not due to the illicit Ā-extraction of the agent nor due to the agent’s ergative case. Rather, Inuktitut disallows transitive relative clause DPs for which the gap is the agent, because these DPs are simply impossible to construct.
Constructions such as (110) are thus not ungrammatical in the formal sense, but are rather ineffable (Pesetsky 1997, Fanselow and Féry 2002); whereas typical ungrammaticality might arise in a Minimalist framework due to unchecked features or some other syntactic violation, ineffable constructions simply do not arise in the course of the derivation. I believe that this is the case for agent relativization in Inuktitut.

6.4 Syntactic ergativity in Inuktitut?

As noted in 6.1, Aldridge (2008a) considers the Ā-movement restriction on ergative agents to be a robust diagnostic for syntactic ergativity in morphologically ergative languages, since other characteristics such as absolutive control and coordination are typologically rarer. As shown in this section, however, Inuktitut, fails this diagnostic. The fact that Inuktitut, despite surface appearances, does not exhibit the Ā-extraction restriction thus casts doubt upon the idea that it is syntactically ergative at all.

In fact, Inuktitut lacks the other properties of syntactic ergativity mentioned above. Recall that languages such as Dyirbal are considered fully syntactically ergative since control and coordination constructions favour absolutes rather than ergatives. Manning (1996), however, argues that morphologically ergative languages are often cross-linguistically neither wholly syntactically ergative nor syntactically accusative, but rather exhibit “mixed pivots.” West Greenlandic, for instance, appears syntactically accusative with respect to control and coordination; I assume this holds for Inuktitut as well, though, of course, further research is necessary to determine whether this is truly the case. As shown in (113), PRO in West Greenlandic may be the subject of a transitive or intransitive verb.

(113) **West Greenlandic:**

a. miiqqat [PRO Juuna ikiu-ssa-llu-gu] niriursui-pput
   children.ABS [(ERG) Juuna.ABS help-FUT-INF-3S] promise-INTR.3P
   ‘The children promised to help Juuna.’

b. miiqqat [PRO qiti-ssa-llu-tik] niriursui-pput
   children.ABS [(ABS) dance-FUT-INF-4PL promise-INTR.3P
   ‘The children promised to dance.’             (Manning 1996)
We observe another departure from Dyirbal in coordination constructions, though a less obvious one. According to Manning, “coordination is a neutral construction in Inuit and neither supports nor undermines the establishment of an S/O [absolutive] pivot” (1996:99); i.e. coordination is not an effective diagnostic for syntactic ergativity in Inuktitut. This is because the Inuit languages are pro-drop and rarely coordinate clauses, and when clausal coordination does occur, gapping is not restricted to a particular position.

Thus, there is no real evidence that Inuktitut is syntactically ergative. Inuktitut appears syntactically accusative with respect to control and neutral with respect to coordination; moreover, the restriction on agent relativization has to do with the impossible structure of the relative clause as opposed to favourable properties of the absolutive argument. I therefore suggest that ‘syntactic ergativity’ is a typological construct that has no meaning in Inuktitut. For one thing, under the current analysis, Inuktitut is not truly morphologically ‘ergative’ either, in that there is no ergative case specially marking agents in the language; rather, its putative ergative-absolutive case patterns arise due to certain language-specific properties of the transitive clause resulting in genitive and nominative arguments. Moreover, although the current analysis takes absolutive arguments to be underlyingly (nominative) subjects, subjects are not favoured as pivots, as expected in a syntactically ergative language.

7 CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary

In this paper, I have demonstrated that ergativity in Inuktitut has two interacting sources: (a) a non-trivial correspondence between structural Case assignment and phasehood, and (b) a language-specific transitive structure consisting of nominalization followed by predication. What is labeled as ‘ergativity’ in Inuktitut is thus visible only when examining transitive clauses, in which both genitive and nominative Case are present; genitive Case is assigned by possessive D while nominative Case is assigned by C (lowering to Infl). The fact that possessive D and C license structural Case identifies them as phase heads. Accusative Case is never assigned in Inuktitut because phasal v* is absent.
The current analysis accounts for a number of independent properties of the language. The apparent similarities between ergative and genitive case and between transitive and possessive agreement morphology are because putative transitive structures involve possession. Certain restrictions on the bare predication construction are rooted in the deictic anchoring properties of Infl, which also assigns nominative Case. Permissible word orders of the transitive clause are explained by the Phase Impenetrability Condition on complex DP. Finally, the long-noted phenomenon of syntactic ergativity in Inuktitut is revealed to be an artifact of the DP-hood of relative clauses.

7.2 Remaining issues

In my presentation of the topic at hand, certain details were glossed over. One pertains to the nature of the intransitive clause. The view advocated for here is one in which the transitive and intransitive clauses are structurally very distinct; whereas the transitive clause is structurally complex, it is implied that the intransitive clause is comparatively more straightforward. Whether this is truly the case, however, remains to be seen.

This proposal also set aside non-participial mood morphology, which may pose a challenge for the current analysis. Though I take the transitive verb complex to contain a nominalizer and possessive morphology (i.e. two separate morphemes), others assume that there is one single morpheme encoding participial mood and double agent/object agreement. Support for this latter view comes from the fact that non-participial moods correspond to the absence of what I take to be a nominalizing morpheme -jaq---taq, as illustrated below:

(114) a.  
\text{taku-jara}  
\text{see-TRANS.PTCP.1S/3S}  
\text{‘I see him/her’}  
\text{OR}  
\text{taku-ja-ra}  
\text{see-PASS.PART-1S/3S}  
\text{‘He/she is my seen one’}  

b.  
\text{taku-vara}  
\text{see-TRANS.IND.1S/3S}  
\text{‘I see him/her!’}  

As shown in (114b), the indicative mood morphology is nearly identical to its participial counterpart, save for the initial consonant; there is no nominal reading available for this mood. As noted by Dorais (1988), however, the participial mood marker is a general declarative mood,
whereas the indicative mood marker is associated with additional pragmatic meaning; he also notes a parallel between the transitive indicative and interrogative moods. Johns (2007a) additionally suggests that it may be associated with evidentiality and mirativity, though this depends on the dialect. It is thus possible that the nominal analysis of ergativity only holds in the default mood, though breaks down in the presence of additional illocutionary force. I leave this open for further research.

Despite the outstanding issues, however, there is nonetheless much evidence to suggest that a nominal analysis of ergativity is the correct one for Inuktitut. An empirical advantage for the analysis developed here is that it provides a fairly straightforward account of a number of otherwise difficult to explain properties of the language; verb-like constructions that appear nominal in various ways are truly nominal.

7.3 Concluding remarks

As stated in the introduction, this paper has two objectives. The first is that it contributes to the existing literature on Inuktitut linguistics, especially within the domain of syntax, which is still largely underexplored. It is thus my hope that the empirical findings of this paper will be useful to as well as generate further research on Inuktitut.

On a broader scale, however, the intent of this paper is also to provide some discussion of cross-linguistic variation within a Minimalist framework. The major theoretical claim of this paper is that syntactic phases in Inuktitut are identified on the basis of Case assignment and that this arises in ergativity in the language. However, it is not necessarily the case that this criterion holds cross-linguistically. Thus, contrary to the view that all languages share the same syntax (e.g. a strict reading of Chomsky’s (2001) Uniformity Principle and variations thereof), this paper suggests that certain aspects of the narrow syntax may in fact be subject to cross-linguistic variation.
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