

On the structure of (personal) pronouns in Inuktitut

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Abstract

This article examines the internal structure of personal pronouns in Inuktitut. Building on previous work on syntactic variation and universals in personal pronoun systems (Harley and Ritter 2002, Ghomeshi and Massam 2020) and drawing on arguments that these and demonstrative pronouns are structurally complex (Déchaine and Wiltschko 2002, Leu 2015), it is argued that Inuktitut pronouns are morphosyntactically complex, with exponents realizing multiple functional heads as well as an overt root. In particular, it is claimed that (local) person is represented twice, both as a root and in a higher functional projection. Previous arguments that Inuktitut pronouns should instead be analyzed as D heads based on Adnominal Pronoun Constructions are also addressed (Yuan 2018, 2021).

Keywords: pronoun, determiner, pronominal, demonstrative, Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun

Résumé

Cet article examine la structure interne des pronoms personnels en inuktitut. En s'appuyant sur des travaux antérieurs sur la variation syntaxique et les universaux dans les systèmes de pronoms personnels (Harley et Ritter 2002, Ghomeshi et Massam 2020) ainsi que sur des arguments selon lesquels ces pronoms ainsi que les pronoms démonstratifs sont structurellement complexes (Déchaine et Wiltschko 2002, Leu 2015), il est proposé que les pronoms en inuktitut sont morphosyntaxiquement complexes, avec des exposants réalisant plusieurs têtes fonctionnelles ainsi qu'une racine prononcée. En particulier, on soutient que la personne (locale) est représentée deux fois, à la fois en tant que racine et dans une projection fonctionnelle supérieure. Des arguments précédents selon lesquels les pronoms en inuktitut devraient

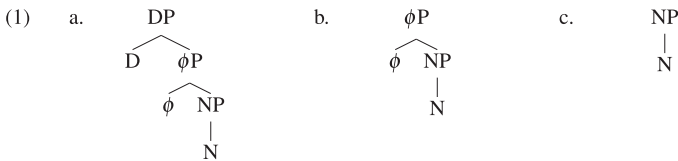
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plutôt être analysés comme des têtes D, basés sur des constructions de pronoms adnominaux, sont également abordés (Yuan 2018, 2021).

Mots clés: pronom, déterminant, pronominal, démonstratif, inuktitut, inuinnaqtun

1. INTRODUCTION

Since Postal (1969) argued that English pronouns are essentially definite articles, pronouns cross-linguistically have often been analyzed as (or assumed to be) determiners.¹ With the adoption of the DP hypothesis (Abney 1987), this came to mean that pronouns were treated as intransitive determiners, lacking an NP complement. For instance, Ritter (1995) argues that first and second person pronouns in Hebrew are D heads. Our conception of pronouns has been further refined by Déchaine and Wiltschko (2002: 410), who argue that the size of pronouns varies cross-linguistically (and even language-internally), with pronouns being instantiated as pro-DPs, pro- ϕ Ps, and pro-NPs, as shown in the structures in (1).



Déchaine and Wiltschko's evidence for different-sized pronouns includes the syntactic distribution of pronouns in a given language (e.g., whether they appear in argument or predicate positions), their binding possibilities (as ϕ Ps are argued to be able to act as bound variables, while DPs are instead argued to act as R-expressions), and their morphological properties, such as their ability to combine with determiners (see Moskal 2015 and Smith et al. 2019 for other decompositional approaches to pronouns).

Inuktitut² pronouns not only corroborate this type of decompositional approach to the structure of pronouns, they appear to extend it; realizing both the exponents of an extended functional projection and a (nominal) root which is often considered to be null or elided in languages with pro-DP and pro- ϕ P pronouns (Ritter 1995; Déchaine and Wiltschko 2002; Elbourne 2001, 2005; Merchant 2014). In particular, I argue that since pronouns conform to the word-initial root requirement of words of the language, they can undergo noun incorporation as expected of nominals (containing a

¹The following abbreviations are used: ABS: absolutive case; ABL: ablative case; ALL: allative case; APC: Adnominal Pronoun Construction; ASP: aspect; ASSOC: associative; COP: copula; CTMP: contemporative clause type; DECL: declarative/participial clause type; DEM: demonstrative; DIST.PST: distant past; DU: dual; ERG: ergative case; FUT: future; INDIC: indicative; INS: instrumental case; INTERR: interrogative clause type; INTR: intransitive; LOC: locative case; NEAR.FUT: near future; NEG: negation; NMLZ: nominalizer; O: object; PL: plural; POSS: possessive; REC.PST: recent past; REFL: reflexive; RSTR: restricted; S: subject; s: singular; SIM: similaris case; TR: transitive; VIA: vialis case; VSBL: visible.

²*Inuktitut* is the term proposed by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami for the Inuit language in Canada. The more commonly known term 'Inuktitut' refers to dialects in the eastern Canadian Arctic.

root), and they exhibit categorial flexibility insofar as *wh*-pronouns can also serve as predicates, which is consistent with pronouns (of all types) containing overt roots.

In addition, pronouns in Inuktitut appear to constitute a counter-example to the generalization made by Ghomeshi and Massam (2020) that pronominal number is dependent on person.³ Instead, number-marking on Inuktitut pronouns largely patterns as on common nouns. I suggest in what follows that this is tied to the fact that Inuit pronouns contain roots and are thus noun-like.

Finally, I consider arguments by Yuan (2018, 2021) based on Adnominal Pronoun Constructions (APCs) that Inuktitut pronouns are instead D heads, and provide alternative analyses of these forms that suggest they are not in fact APCs. The main empirical and theoretical claims of the present article are as follows:

(2) Inuktitut pronouns:

- a. are full DPs, with an articulated structure realizing multiple functional projections,
- b. realize person features twice: on both a dedicated root and a higher π (or ϕ) projection (which interacts with number and case, suggesting it is part of the same functional sequence),
- c. contain an overt root, instead of an elided expression, as typically found in languages with *pro*-DPs and *pro*- ϕ Ps,
- d. are noun-like insofar as their number marking patterns with common nouns.

(Ghomeshi and Massam 2020)

In the next section, I begin by presenting some background on Inuktitut pronouns. Then I present arguments that these pronouns instantiate multiple syntactic projections and include a root, drawing on evidence regarding Inuit word structure, the ability of pronouns to undergo noun incorporation, and additional aspects of the behaviour of demonstrative and *wh*-pronouns.

2. BACKGROUND ON INUKTUT PRONOUNS

Inuktitut has distinct (strong) personal pronouns only for first and second persons, as illustrated in Table 1, with data from Inuinnaqtun (Western Canadian Inuktitut) (Lowe 1985a: 94–96); various demonstratives (such as *una* ‘this one’) are used for third person referents.⁴ As with nouns in the language, three numbers are

³Ghomeshi and Massam (2020: 605) state that “[p]ronominal number is not a head that forms part of the phrase-defining syntactic spine”, suggesting that pronominal number is instead bundled with other features.

⁴An exception to the lack of dedicated third-person pronouns is an oblique reflexive pronoun, *ingmi-*, which is restricted to third person in Inuinnaqtun, but can also be used with first and second person in at least some dialects of Inuktitut. Having only oblique forms, this pronoun cannot occur in ergative and absolutive case positions, as illustrated here.

(i) a. *ing-mi-tigun* *ilihaq-taat*
 self-REFL-VIA.PL learn-DECL.TR.3PL:3SG
 ‘they learned it by themselves’

(Lowe 1985a: 96, glosses added)

	SG	DU	PL
1	uvanga	uvaguk	uvagut
2	ilvit	ilittik	iliffi
DEM	una	ukuak	ukuat

Table 1: Inuinnaqtun (absolute) personal pronouns and sample demonstratives

distinguished: singular, dual, and plural.⁵ Pronouns also inflect for case, as discussed in section 3.1.⁶

While Inuktitut is often characterized as a pro-drop language, it is primarily ergative and absolutive personal pronouns that are omitted, arguably because these same arguments have their phi-features coindexed on the verb (see Yuan 2018, and references cited therein). Personal pronouns routinely surface in oblique cases, as in (3a); in constructions without a verb, as in (3b); and for focus, as in (3c).⁷

- (3) a. uingayaq-taa uvamnun
 explain-DECL.TR.3SG:3SG 1SG;ALL
 ‘s/he explained it to me’

(Inuinnaqtun; Kudlak and Compton 2018: 259)

- b. uvanga ivvilluunniit
 uvanga ivvit=luunniit
 1SG(ABS) 2SG(ABS)=OR
 ‘me or you?’

(North Baffin; Pirurvik Centre 2020: 102)

- c. uvanga Taiviti-up taku-qqau-jaanga, Carol
 1SG.ABS Taiviti-ERG see-REC.PST-DECL.TR.3SG.S/1SG.O Carol.ABS
 taku-nngi-&uni-uk
 see-NEG-CTMP.3SG.S-3SG.O
 ‘It’s me that Taiviti saw, not Carol.’

(North Baffin; Yuan 2018: 158, adapted)

Applying the diagnostics of Déchaine and Wiltschko (2002) to Inuktitut personal pronouns, they appear to behave as pro-DPs. In particular, they have the distribution

- b. ing-mi-nun qaya-liuq-taa
 self-REFL-ABL.SG kayak-make-DECL.TR.3SG:3SG
 ‘s/he made it for {her/him}self’

(Lowe 1985a: 96, glosses added)

Like the other pronouns examined herein, it appears to have an articulated structure, containing the reflexive morpheme *-mi-*, found on third-person possessed nouns bound by their subjects, as well as possessor agreement.

⁵While this three-way number contrast holds for most dialects in Canada, the South Baffin dialect has lost the contrast between dual and plural on both verbs and nouns, including pronouns, as have Greenlandic dialects.

⁶The second person plural pronoun *iliffi*, presented here in the Inuinnaqtun orthography, is given in subsequent examples in its underlying form, /iliphi/.

⁷Glosses have been adjusted for consistency with the rest of the data in this article.

	VSBL	RSTR	1ST	2ND	Additional Meaning
u-na	+	+	+		
man-na	+	-	+		
taam-na	+	+		+	
kan-na	+	+			down
un-na	+	-			down
sam-na	-				down/downstairs
ping-na	+	+			up
piking-na	+	+			up
pang-na	+	-			up
pam-na	-				up/upstairs
pakim-na	-				up/on roof
king-na	+	+			outside
qang-na	+	-			outside
qakim-na	-				outside
sakim-na	-				outside/by door/on cold porch
kim-na	+				inside
qam-na	-				inside/in East
ing-na	+	+	-	-	
iking-na	+	+	-	-	
taavam-na	+	-	-	-	
taamam-na	-		-	-	
ang-na	+	-			across
akim-na	-				across
im-na	-				remote time/place

Table 2: Sallirmiutun demonstrative pronouns (with ABS.SG ending *-na*)
(extracted from Lowe 1985b)

of arguments and can only act as predicates when accompanied by a copula, which in turn hosts tense, clause-type marking, and agreement.⁸

As noted above, demonstratives can be used for third persons. The language has a rich system of demonstrative pronouns, whose inventory varies by dialect. Western dialects have a particularly extensive set of contrasts, as exemplified with data from Sallirmiutun (formerly called Siglitun) in Table 2. While absolutive singular is null on nouns, it is marked by *-na* on demonstratives, appearing across all (and only) absolutive singular forms (as has also been reconstructed for Proto-Inuit-Yupik forms by Fortescue et al. 2010: 499–526), as well as some *wh*-items.⁹

⁸The lack of overt definiteness marking in the language makes it impossible to test their compatibility with determiner heads. Also, while Déchaine Wiltschko (2002) propose that acting as a bound variable is a property of ϕ Ps, the lack of third-person pronouns render this diagnostic inconclusive as well, particularly since special switch reference forms of agreement on verbs and possessed nouns serve this role.

⁹Here and throughout I use the dominant orthographies for each dialect. These mostly correspond to an IPA broad transcription, except for the following: <g>=[ɣ], <r>=[ʁ], <ng>=[ŋ],

Following Compton and Pittman (2010) and Compton (2012), I assume demonstratives with a nominal restrictor bearing the same case to be two DPs in apposition.

Finally, the language has a set of *wh*-pronouns, such as *suna* ‘what’, *kina* ‘who’, and *qanuq* ‘how’, which also inflect for case and number and whose behaviour we return to in section 3.2.

3. EVIDENCE FOR INTERNAL STRUCTURE

This section presents evidence that Inuktit pronouns do not merely instantiate a single functional head, but instead instantiate multiple syntactic projections, including an overt root. While the focus is on personal pronouns, additional arguments are drawn from the behaviour of demonstrative pronouns and *wh*-pronouns.

3.1. Inuktit pronouns are multi-morphemic DPs

A first observation about Inuktit personal pronouns is that they contain two main parts: an initial stem indicating person (argued to be a root in the next subsection), followed by a series of functional morphemes marking person (a second time), number, and case. These two domains can be observed in Tables 3 and 4, where the various forms of the first and second person pronouns in Inuinnaqtun are presented.¹¹ Note that while ergative and absolutive forms are syncretic here, the two cases are distinguished elsewhere in the language (e.g., on singular unpossessed nouns, on possessed nouns, on demonstratives, and on *wh*-words).

	SG	DU	PL
ABSOLUTIVE	uva-nga	uva-gu-k	uva-gu-t
ERGATIVE	uva-nga	uva-gu-k	uva-gu-t
INSTRUMENTAL	uva-m-nik	uva-p-ting-nik	uva-p-ting-nik
LOCATIVE	uva-m-ni	uva-p-ting-ni	uva-p-ting-ni
ALLATIVE	uva-m-num	uva-p-ting-nun	uva-p-ting-nun
ABLATIVE	uva-m-nin	uva-p-ting-nin	uva-p-ting-nin
VIALIS	uva-p-kun	uva-p-tik-kun	uva-p-ti-gun
SIMILARIS	uva-p-tun	uva-p-tik-tun	uva-p-ti-tun

Table 3: Inuinnaqtun first-person pronouns (adapted from Lowe 1985a: 94)

The only morpheme common to all first-person forms is the stem *uva*. Similarly, only the stem *il(i)* appears in all second-person forms. Furthermore, in some dual oblique-case forms, these morphemes are the only element distinguishing first and second person. As such, we can conclude they contribute FIRST PERSON and SECOND

¹¹Note that /ph/ sequences in Inuinnaqtun, such as those occurring in second person nouns, surface as [ff]. The underlying phonemes /ph/ are used herein to underscore the systematic distribution of the morpheme *-m/p-* marking PARTICIPANT.

	SG	DU	PL
ABSOLUTIVE	il-vit	ili-p-tik	ili-p-hi
ERGATIVE	il-vit	ili-p-tik	ili-p-hi
INSTRUMENTAL	ili-ng-nik	ili-p-ting-nik	ili-p-hing-nik
LOCATIVE	ili-ng-ni	ili-p-ting-ni	ili-p-hing-ni
ALLATIVE	ili-ng-nun	ili-p-ting-nun	ili-p-hing-nun
ABLATIVE	ili-ng-nin	ili-p-ting-nin	ili-p-hing-nin
VIALIS	ili-p-kun	ili-p-tik-kun	ili-p-hi-gun
SIMILARIS	ili-p-tun	ili-p-tik-tun	ili-p-hi-tun

Table 4: Inuinnaqtun second-person pronouns (adapted from Lowe 1985a: 94)

PERSON, respectively, or analogous combinations of ϕ -features such as SPEAKER/HEARER and PARTICIPANT (Harley and Ritter 2002). That a root might encode person is not entirely surprising, given that Déchaine and Wiltschko (2002) argue that Japanese *kare* ‘he’ is a pro-NP consisting of a noun.

The remaining morphemes co-vary with person, number, and case (with some instances of syncretism between dual and plural) and, in fact, appear in other contexts. The absolutive and ergative endings occur as agreement on verbs, as illustrated in (6) (Lowe 1985a: 108).¹² In particular, *k* and *t* are default realizations of dual and plural number in the language, appearing on verbs in the third person, as in (7), but also on bare unpossessed absolutive nouns (e.g., *arnaq~arna-k~arna-t* ‘woman, two women, more than two women’) (Kudlak and Compton 2018: xxiii).¹³

- | | | | |
|--------|-----------------------|--------|-------------------------|
| (6) a. | niri-yu- nga | (7) a. | niri-yuq |
| | eat-DECL-1(SG) | | eat-DECL.3SG |
| | ‘I am eating’ | | ‘s/he is eating’ |
| b. | niri-yu- gu-k | b. | niri-yu- k |
| | eat-DECL-1(DU/PL)-DU | | eat-DECL-DU |
| | ‘we (two) are eating’ | | ‘they (two) are eating’ |
| c. | niri-yu- gu-t | c. | niri-yu- t |
| | eat-DECL-1(DU/PL)-PL | | eat-DECL-PL |
| | ‘we (>2) are eating’ | | ‘they (>2) are eating’ |

¹²Note that Yuan (2017) argues instead that *-gu(t)* in first person dual and plural pronouns is the associate marker *-kku(t)* found elsewhere in the language and discussed in section 4. Herein I take its absence from second person forms to support a different analysis. Fortescue et al. (2010: 418) note in their entry for the reconstructed proto-form **uvakut* ‘we’ that “the *kut* seems to be the same as the 1pl verbal subject marker of the same shape” (see, e.g., their p. 489). Corbett and Mithun (1996: 16) also compare the equivalent forms in Yup’ik, but ultimately suggest the similarity may be a coincidence.

¹³Note that, like many suffixes in Inuktut, dual *-k* and *-t* delete a word-final consonant, such as *q*. The plural form *-t* in Inuinnaqtun co-exists in variation with the phonologically conservative form *-n*.

POSSESSOR	SG	DU/PL	
INSTRUMENTAL	iglu- m-nik	iglu- p-ting-nik	‘with my/our house(s)’
LOCATIVE	iglu- m-ni	iglu- p-ting-ni	‘in my/our house(s)’
ALLATIVE	iglu- m-nun	iglu- p-ting-nun	‘to my/our house(s)’
ABLATIVE	iglu- m-nin	iglu- p-ting-nin	‘from my/our house(s)’
VIALIS	iglu- p-kun	iglu- p-ti-gun	‘through my/our house(s)’
SIMILARIS	iglu- p-tun	iglu- p-ti-tun	‘like my/our house(s)’

Table 5: Inuinnaqtun first-person possessed oblique noun
(extracted from Lowe 1985a: 71)

The oblique form endings of pronouns also occur in other contexts, matching almost exactly the endings on the corresponding possessed nouns.¹⁴ For instance, the first-person endings mark a first-person possessor on nouns, as in Table 5.

On some singular oblique possessed noun forms (as well as the corresponding pronouns), a velar consonant *-ng-* marks second person, as contrasted with a labial consonant *-m/p-* marking first-person forms, as shown in (8).¹⁵ However, in other forms, this contrast is neutralized to the labial consonant, yielding forms ambiguous between first and second person, as in (9). For concreteness, I assume this syncretism to be due to feature impoverishment (Bonet 1991, Halle 1997), removing the feature HEARER and leaving the feature PARTICIPANT.¹⁶

- (8) a. tupi-**m-ni** b. tupi-**ng-ni** c. tupi-**a-ni**
 tent-1-LOC tent-2-LOC tent-3-LOC
 ‘in my tent’ ‘in your tent’ ‘in his/her tent’

- (9) utkuhi-**p-ting-ni**
 cooking.pot-1/2-DU/PL-LOC
 ‘in our (DU/PL) / your (DU) cooking pot(s)’

This decompositional approach yields to the following descriptive schema for Inuit personal pronouns. An initial stem marking person, followed by an independent morpheme marking person (as further evidenced by possessive forms), a morpheme marking non-singular number, and a morpheme marking oblique cases.

¹⁴The vialis and similaris case dual and plural endings, distinguished by a geminate consonant when part of the first person pronoun, are syncretic as possessor marking on nouns.

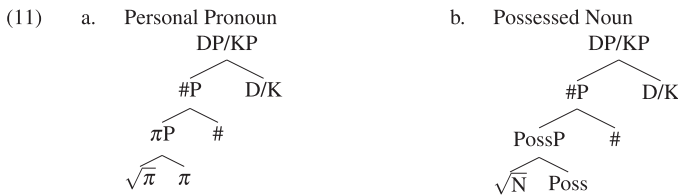
¹⁵Though not decomposed in this way, traces of this marking can also be seen in reconstructed case forms in Fortescue et al. (2010: 487–488), who attribute the origin of *m* to ergative (their relative) case.

¹⁶That *-m/p-* is the exponent of the feature PARTICIPANT is further evidenced by the fact that while it appears with both first and second person forms, it never arises as part of third person possessor forms (the reflexive *-mi-* being unrelated). Similarly, *-ng-* marking second person is also absent from third person endings, although a dual number marker *-k* may surface as *ng* due to assimilation.

(10) Template for Inuktitut personal pronouns

$$\sqrt{\pi} - \pi - (\#) - (D/K)$$

Abstracting away from cases where feature impoverishment removes certain features, and setting aside pronoun roots for the moment, I propose the following structures (adapted from Ghomeshi and Massam 2020) and Vocabulary Insertion rules for both personal pronouns and their corresponding possessor marking on nouns.¹⁷ For convenience, I use both SPEAKER and HEARER features here in lieu of bivalent features (see, e.g., Nevins 2011, for arguments in favour of binary person features).¹⁸

(12) Morphemes competing for insertion at π :¹⁹

- a. [SPEAKER] ↔ -nga
- b. [HEARER] ↔ -vit
- c. [SPEAKER] ↔ -gu- / — [GROUP]
- d. [PARTICIPANT] ↔ -m/p- / — [OBLIQUE]
- e. [HEARER, PARTICIPANT] ↔ -ng- / — [OBLIQUE]²⁰

¹⁷The proposed structure for pronouns is similar to that of Moskal (2015: 365, ex. 6), who also posits that # occurs higher than person (which is instead realized on a lower D head), but without pronouns containing a root. For expository purposes, Smith et al. (2019: 1056–1057) treat the pronominal bases in Moskal (2015) as roots instead of D heads, but note that they “do not intend to take a stand on whether pronouns have roots” (Smith et al. 2019: 1036, note 10).

¹⁸Little *n* is omitted from alongside the nominal for expository purposes. I abstract away from the possible distinction between D and K. While the number marking shown thus far on possessed nouns tracks the possessor, and thus might well co-occur with person features on the Poss head, the fact that these number contrasts are neutralized/bled by non-singular number of the possessum noun suggests they compete for insertion on a single head. For instance, *iglu-vuk* ‘our two houses’ is compatible with either a dual or plural possessor.

¹⁹While there is overlap between the Vocabulary Items marking ϕ -features in pronouns and the possessor agreement forms on nouns, they are not always identical. In some cases this may be due to context-sensitive allomorphy or to the fact some possessor agreement forms on nouns are portmanteau, bearing two bundles of phi-features indexing both the number of the noun and the ϕ -features of the possessor (see, e.g., Oxford 2019 on portmanteau agreement).

²⁰Given that *-hi-* alone marks second person plural agreement on verbs, it may instead constitute a span or instance of fusion marking both person and number.

(13) Morphemes competing for insertion at #:²¹

- a. [GROUP] ↔ -t
- b. [GROUP, MINIMAL] ↔ -k
- c. [GROUP] ↔ -ti({ng/k})- / — [OBLIQUE]
- d. [GROUP] ↔ -hi(ng)- / — [OBLIQUE, HEARER]

Crucially, personal pronouns are multimorphemic and structurally more complex than might be expected of simple determiners.

In the next subsection I argue that the stems of these pronouns are roots.

3.2. Inuktit pronoun stems are roots

A number of disparate phenomena point to Inuktit pronoun stems being roots as opposed to purely functional projections.

Beginning with the most general evidence, it has been observed in both descriptive and theoretical work on the language that words in Inuktit follow the schema in (14), having a root at their left edge (e.g., Johns 2014, Yuan 2018 and references cited therein):²²

(14) root-derivation-inflection=clitics

For instance, nominals and verbal complexes in Inuktit must normally begin with a root (Johns 2007). This includes instances of noun incorporation, where a closed class of suffixal verbs obligatory incorporate a noun, as in (15) where the NI verb *-tu-* ‘consume’ must incorporate its internal argument. Similarly, a closed class of suffixal restructuring and modal verbs can also incorporate a verb (Woodbury and Sadock 1986, Johns 1999, Pittman 2009), as in (16) where the restructuring verb *-rqu-* ‘order’ combines with the verb *oqalo-* ‘speak’.

(15) pitsi-**tu**-vunga
dried.fish-consume-INTR.INDIC.1SG.
‘I’m eating dried fish.’ (Labrador; Johns 2007: 541)

(16) Isuma-mi-nik oqalo-**rqu**-va-a
mind-3REFL-INS.SG speak-order-INDIC.3SGS-3SGO
‘He orders him to speak his mind.’ (West Greenlandic;
Grimshaw and Mester 1985, Woodbury and Sadock 1986: 238, adapted)

²¹An alternative analysis could posit that the *ng* portion of these morphemes was part of the subsequent oblique case markers. I set aside this possibility since this segment is absent from both third person possessive forms and unpossessed nouns in oblique cases. The possibility of *ng* in dual forms being an assimilated *k* is a potentially confounding factor, but cannot account for plural forms.

²²Two possible exceptions to this generalization include instances of *ta-* (the only prefix in the language), which arises only in the demonstrative system, and a phenomenon of stem ellipsis in Nunavik Inuktitut akin to VP-ellipsis where a verbal stem can be omitted when contextually/discourse salient (Swift and Allen 2002).

Given the fact that modals, restructuring verbs, and incorporating verbs in the language are argued to be functional in nature (Johns 2007, Cook and Johns 2009), this means that these elements cannot be pronounced in isolation, as they lack a root. Instead, a dummy root *pi* ‘do, get, thing’ is inserted in such contexts; for instance, appearing in dictionary entries to render such forms pronounceable:

- (17) a. *pi-liuq-tuq*
 thing-make-DECL.INTR.3SG
 ‘s/he made something’ (Inuinnaqtun; Kudlak and Compton 2018: 134)
- b. **liuq-tuq/-tanga*
 make-DECL.INTR.3SG/DECL.TR.3SG:3SG
 ‘s/he made something/it’
- c. **(pi)-limait-tuq*
 do/get-cannot-DECL.INTR.3SG
 ‘is unable to do, cannot do/get’ (Inuinnaqtun; Kudlak and Compton 2018: 134)

That pronouns need no such dummy root to satisfy the requirements for wordhood in the language is explained if they are not solely comprised of functional material, but instead already begin with a root.

Another phenomenon involving roots (and larger projections containing them) is incorporation. Closed classes of verbs obligatorily incorporate either nominal or verbal complements—both built up from a root (see, e.g., Johns 2007, Pittman 2009, and references cited therein). For instance, the copula in Inuktitut must incorporate its nominal complement. However, this requirement can be satisfied with a pronoun, as in (18) (from Baffin Inuktitut). Similarly, the incorporating verb *-liq-* ‘become’ can combine with the (case-marked) pronoun *ivvilitut* ‘like you’, as shown in (19), which in turn is modified by *-tuinnaq-* ‘merely, just’.²³

- (18) *Uvangauqqaungittuq*
uvanga-u-qqau-nngit-tuq
 1SG-COP-REC.PST-NEG-DECL.INTR(3SG)
 ‘It wasn’t me ...’ (Baffin Inuktitut; Farley 2012: 2001-03-06)
- (19) *Ivvitutuinnaaliqtunga* unikkaarijarni
ivvilitut-tuinnaq-liq-tu-nga unikkaarijaq-ni
 2SG.SIM-just-become-DECL.INTR-1SG statement-LOC.PL
 ‘I’m getting like you on my preambles...’ (Baffin Inuktitut; Farley 2012: 2002-05-16)

The ability of pronouns to undergo incorporation also extends to demonstrative pronouns, as in the following example.

- (20) *ukua-ri-lauq-ta-vut*
 DEM.PL-have.as-DIST.PST-DECL.TR-1PL:3SG
 ‘... was one of [those we had]’ (Baffin Inuktitut; Farley 2012: 2002-02-20)

²³While it is somewhat surprising that *-liq-* ‘become’ can incorporate an overtly case-marked nominal, Johns (2007) examines similar constructions where motion verbs incorporate oblique-case marked nominals.

Thus, like common nouns in the language, pronouns can also undergo incorporation into verbs that obligatorily incorporate a nominal complement, further suggesting that they too contain roots. Pronouns may also undergo modification by suffixal elements that typically modify nouns, such as *-ruluk* ‘bad’ in the following example:

- (21) Uvangeruluk, atausikkanirmik
 uvanga-ruluk atausiq-kkaniq-mik
 1SG-bad one-again-INS.SG
 uqarunnalangajuminiujunga.
 uqa-runnaq-langa-juq-miniq-u-ju-nga.
 speak-can-NEAR.FUT-DECL.INTR-former-COP-DECL.INTR-1SG
 ‘Shame on me, I could have had one more.’

(Baffin Inuktitut; Farley 2012: 2005-03-07)

Yet another root-like behaviour among pronouns in the language is found with *wh*-pronouns. In addition to their use as nominal *wh*-expressions, many of these stems can also serve as main predicates in a clause, taking the tense, clause-type, and agreement morphology normally found with verbal roots, as illustrated in (22) and (23).²⁴

²⁴For concreteness, I assume these are acategorical roots which combine with little *n* when used as nominal *wh*-expressions and little *v* when used as verbal predicates. As noted by Sherkina-Lieber (2004), *wh*-expressions in Inuktitut can also undergo incorporation, further demonstrating that their behaviour patterns with nouns:

- (i) suna-tu-ruma-vit?
 what-eat/drink-want-INTERR.2SG
 ‘What do you want to have?’ (Sherkina-Lieber 2004: 126, adapted)

While it was assumed earlier that *-na* marked absolutive singular on nouns, as its presence co-varies with case and number in Western dialects (Lowe 1985a,b,c), its appearance on incorporated *suna* ‘what’ here might instead suggest it to be a form of stem allomorphy. It could also be the realization of a little *n* categorial head, as it only appears in nominal and not verbal contexts.

It is also possible for some *wh*-expressions to occur with a nominal restrictor, in which case they nevertheless bear their own case and number marking. Compton and Pittman (2010) and Compton (2012) argue that such constructions in fact involve two DPs in apposition.

- (ii) Qassi-nik tuktu-nik taku-qqau-vit?
 how.many-INS.PL caribou-INS.PL see-REC.PST-INTERR.2SG
 ‘How many caribou did you see?’ (North Baffin; Pirurvik Centre 2018: 22)

While in such cases it is not possible for the *wh*-expression to incorporate, such an expression may nonetheless modify an incorporated noun.

- (iii) Qassinik qimmeqarpit?
 qassi-nik qimmi-qar-p-i-t
 how.many-INS.PL dog-have-INTERR-[-TR]-2SG
 ‘How many dogs do you have?’ (van Geenhoven 2002)

- (22) a. Qanuq ihumagi-viuk?
 how think-INTERR.2SG:3SG
 ‘What do you think about it?’
 (Inuinnaqtun; Kudlak and Compton 2018: 56)
- b. Qanurniaqpiung?
 qanuq-niaq-piung
 how-FUT-INTERR.2SG:3SG
 ‘How will you do it?’
 (Inuinnaqtun; Lowe 1985a: 66)
- (23) a. Sumik qiniqpit?
 su-mik qiniq-pit
 what-INS.SG look.for-INTERR.2SG
 ‘What are you looking for?’
 (Sallirmiutun; Lowe 1985b: 70)
- b. Suvit?
 su-vit
 what-INTERR.2SG
 ‘What are you doing?’
 (South Baffin; Pirurvik 2021: lesson 3)

In sum, the ability of wh-expressions to appear as both nominal and verbal is consistent with their being acategorical roots whose category is determined by their syntactic environment.²⁵ As such, they too display root-like behaviour, suggesting a more general property of Inuktitut is that pronouns – of all types – contain roots.²⁶

A final observation about wh-expressions in Inuktitut is that we might expect a D-linked wh-expression like *naliak* ‘which’ to be a determiner, given that D-linked wh-items are presuppositional and such information is often encoded by determiners (Pesetsky 1987).²⁷ Crucially, unlike other wh-words which simply inflect for case and number, this wh-item also bears possessive morphology, as noted by Lowe (1985a,b,c):

- (24) nali-anni it-pa?
 which-3PL.POSS.LOC.SG be.located-INTERR.3SG?
 ‘In which one (of many) is it?’ (lit. ‘in their which-one is it located?’)
 (Sallirmiutun; Lowe 1985b: 110)

That *naliak* ‘which’ bears the possessive marking normally found on nouns with third-person possessors is consistent with it too being nominal, and not of category D. Moreover, while *naliak* can combine with a nominal restrictor, it once again

²⁵An additional function of wh-items is to serve as a base to create indefinite pronouns.

(i) nak(k)ikkiaq
 nakkit-kkiaq
 where.ABL-uncertain
 ‘I don’t know from where; from somewhere’

(Spalding and Kusugaq 1998, Pirurvik Centre 2020)

²⁶That pronouns behave like nouns coincides with the descriptive literature that claims words are either nouns or verbs, with a small class of particles (Fortescue 1980).

²⁷Thank you to an anonymous reviewer who pointed this out.

appears to be in a possessor relationship with the nominal, with the two bearing distinct morphological cases, as illustrated in (25).²⁸

- (25) nali-atigun apqut-it tahuq
 which-3PL.POSS.VIA.SG road-ERG.PL lake.ABS
 upak-pak-pihiung?
 go.OVER.TO-USUALLY-INTERR.2PL.3SG
 ‘by which road (lit. by which one of the roads) do you get to the lake?’
 (Inuinnaqtun; Lowe 1985a: 100)

Such examples suggest the existence of two DPs, which is again consistent with *naliak* containing a nominal root.

3.3. Pronominal number patterns like grammatical number on nouns

Part of deciphering the structure of Inuktitut pronouns involves isolating the position of number. In a study of the morphosyntactic position of number in pronominals based on data from Persian and Niuean, Ghomeshi and Massam (2020: 604) make the following claims (amongst others regarding, e.g., proper nouns):

- (26) a. Grammatical number in common noun phrases is part of the nominal spine [...], similarly to TP within CP, allowing for individuation, hence for referentiality.
 b. Pronouns do not include a number position in their spine [...]. Number in pronouns never plays a role in individuation; rather, person does.
 c. Pronominal number is always bundled with π (or it is attached to another position within the pronoun) and it is always subordinate to π , which is spinal.

Ghomeshi and Massam argue that number is both syntactically and semantically distinct in pronouns and nouns, proposing that pronominal number is expected to be bundled with person. For instance, they argue that (bundled) pronominal number may be used for social deixis in Persian (see also the *tu–vous* distinction found in French), with a higher (grammatical) number projection being added at times to disambiguate “ambiguities created through the honorific system” (Ghomeshi and Massam 2020: 601).

Interestingly, Inuktitut seems to be an exception to generalizations (26b) and (26c), insofar as at least the first-person pronoun exhibits an identical pattern of number marking as is found on unpossessed common nouns, demonstrative pronouns, and wh-pronouns, as in Table 6 (showing absolutive forms) – all of which arguably lack (marked) person features (Ghomeshi and Massam 2020: 601).²⁹

²⁸A reviewer notes that the form *apqut-it* is in principle ambiguous between ABS.PL and ERG.PL and suggests *naliatigun* and *apquit* could be in apposition. However, given that the inflectional ending *-atigun* indicates a singular referent with a plural possessor, it seems unlikely that there would be a number mismatch between appositives. Unfortunately this is difficult to test, as we would not predict the unambiguous ergative singular form *-up* to be able to occur on nominal restrictors of *naliak*, for the same reason that **which of the road* is not possible in English. Lowe only gives examples with dual and plural restrictors.

²⁹Pronouns, demonstratives, wh-words, and also common nouns display varying degrees of allomorphy, as illustrated by the stem allomorphy in the demonstratives shown here.

	SG	DU	PL	
PRO	uvanga	uvagu-k	uvagu-t	‘I/we/us’
N	iglu	iglu-k	iglu-t	‘house(s)’
DEM1	una	ukua-k	ukua-t	‘this/these (restricted)’
DEM2	hamna	hapkua-k	hapkua-t	‘this/these (extended)’
WH	huna	huna-k	huna-t	‘what?’

Table 6: Systematic number marking across (pro)nominals
(Inuinnaqtun; Lowe 1985a)

As with common nouns in Inuktut, grammatical number occupies a position in the functional spine of the DP between the root and lower exponents of person, on one hand, and higher case-marking (on D or K), on the other. Even in more complex forms that are affected by allomorphy, such as the oblique pronouns in Tables 3 and 4, the set of distinct exponents (i.e., for person and number) and their relative order, as in (27) repeated from (10), suggest that person and number occupy distinct syntactic positions, with number realized on a higher projection, as might naturally be expected given the Mirror Principle (Baker 1985).

(27) Template for Inuktut personal pronouns

$$\sqrt{\pi} - \pi - (\#) - (D/K)$$

This relative order also coincides with the fact that the exponence of number is conditioned both by person morphology and by case, as expected if it occupies an intermediate position between the two. For instance, the forms *ti({ng/k})/hi({ng/k})* are the exponents of GROUP number after *-p-* (marking PARTICIPANT), but show further conditioning according to case (see, e.g., the plural forms of the second-person pronoun in Table 4).

I propose here that the exceptionality of Inuktut pronouns with respect to the generalizations proposed by Ghomeshi and Massam (2020) is due to the fact that they exhibit a structure more similar to common nouns: they contain a root and the sequence of functional projections typically found with nouns, including an independent # projection.

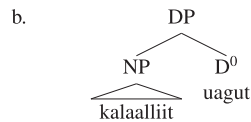
4. COUNTER-EVIDENCE FROM ADNOMINAL PRONOUN CONSTRUCTIONS

As part of a much larger analysis of (split) ergativity and ϕ -marking in Inuktut, Yuan (2018: 152) proposes that “independent pronouns in Inuit are bare D^0 s, not phrasal DPs” (see also Yuan 2021). Evidence for this claim is drawn from Adnominal Pronoun Constructions (APCs), following work by Postal (1969) that argues that (plural) pronouns in English may combine with nouns and in such constructions are in complementary distribution with articles. Yuan (2018) illustrates this phenomenon with the examples from German and Italian in (28), likening them to the

Kalaallisut (West Greenlandic Inuit) example in (29a), for which she proposes the structure in (29b).³⁰

- (28) a. Wir (*die) Studenten (German)
 we the students
 ‘We students’
 b. Noi (*gli) studenti (Italian)
 we the students
 ‘We students’

- (29) a. kalaalliit uagut
 Greenlanders 1PL
 ‘We Greenlanders’
 (Fortescue 1984: 110)



In addition, Yuan (2018) proposes that the following examples from Inuktitut also constitute APCs, analyzing the suffixes as pronominal clitics (and observing parallel forms of agreement on verbs).

- (30) a. ilisaiji-tigut
 teacher-1PL
 ‘We teachers’ (North Baffin, Arctic Bay)
 b. ilinniaqtu-hi
 student-2PL
 ‘you (pl.) students’ (Kivalliq, Arviat; Yuan 2018: 153)

Beginning with the Kalaallisut example in (29a), there are several factors that call into question whether this is indeed an APC involving a bare D^0 combining with an NP. Firstly, the word *kalaalliit* in (29a) includes the suffix *-(i)t*, marking plural number and case (albeit ambiguous between absolutive and ergative), and thus would surface identically as a full DP without the pronoun. Crucially, full DPs can occur in apposition with each other, as noted by Fortescue (1984) and illustrated in (31).³¹

- (31) a. arnaq kalaaliq
 woman.ABS.SG greenlander.ABS.SG
 ‘(the/a) woman who is Greenlandic’
 b. kalaaliq arnaq
 greenlander.ABS.SG woman.ABS.SG
 ‘(the/a) Greenlandic who is a woman’

(Kalaallisut; Fortescue 1984: 51)

³⁰The abbreviations used in glossing Yuan’s examples, particularly for SG and PL, have been modified in some cases for reasons of consistency, but the content has not been changed, unless otherwise noted.

³¹More generally, relativization in the language employs nominalized clauses in apposition with a head noun.

Given the extensive use of DP-DP appositives in the language, the proposed APC in (29a) might well involve two full DPs in apposition.³²

Turning to the Inuktitut examples in (30), as Yuan (2018) observes, these same suffixes appear as ϕ -marking on verbs. Setting aside their status as clitics or agreement (although see Compton 2014, Yuan 2015, Compton 2017, Johns and Kučerová 2017, and Yuan 2018, 2021 for discussion), we can first note that they are formally distinct from the independent pronouns that are the focus of this article (although they appear to instantiate a subpart of these pronouns). However, in addition to this, there is reason to believe that they too are not APCs. Crucially, the ending *-tigut* in (30a) is in fact the expected vialis case first-person plural possessive form (cognate with the Inuinnaqtun form *-ptigun* in Table 5, but also identified as *-(t)tigut* for Inuktitut by Dorais 1988: 36, who calls it translative case).³³ Moreover, while the expected form of ‘teacher’ is *iliniq-ti*, with an agentive nominalizing suffix, the form in (30b) appears to instead involve the intransitive declarative/participial ending *-tu(q)*. As such, I propose the alternative glosses and translations in (32), where (32a) is a possessive construction where the vialis case adds the meaning ‘among’,³⁴ and (32b) is either a

³²Such an analysis for the first-person pronoun might further be supported by the fact that, as proposed above, it contains the possessive ending *-gut* ‘1PL.POSS’.

³³In another example, Yuan (2021: 21) proposes an alternative gloss of *-tigut* involving an associative marker.

- (i) Jaani-up piu-gi-nngit-taatigut ilisaiji-**tigut**
 Jaani-ERG like-have.as-NEG-3SG.S/1PL.O teacher-1PL.ASSOC.ABS
 ‘Jaani doesn’t like us teachers.’

Here too, I humbly disagree with the proposed glossing, insofar as *-tigut* is the expected form of the 1PL.VIA possessed case ending, perhaps suggesting a null absolutive argument. The following forms suggest that absolutive possessive markers would instead co-occur with and follow an associative marker:

- (ii) a. kuapa-kku-vut
 Coop-ASSOC-1PL.POSS
 ‘our Co-op’ (Baffin Inuktitut; Farley 2012: 2000-10-23)
- b. gavama-kku-vut
 government-ASSOC-1PL.POSS
 ‘our government’ (Baffin Inuktitut; Farley 2012: 2001-12-03, 2002-04-30)
- c. gavama-kkut-tigut
 government-ASSOC-VIA.1PL.POSS
 ‘throughout our government’ (Baffin Inuktitut; Farley 2012: 2001-03-08)

Although it frequently appears as the translation of ‘government’, the fact that *gavamakku* is decomposable is evidenced by such forms as *gavama-tuqa-kkut* ‘federal government’ (lit. ‘government-old-ASSOC’).

³⁴For instance, the vialis case form of a pronoun can be translated with ‘among’:

- (i) uvagu-tigut
 1PL-VIA.1PL.POSS
 ‘amongst ourselves’ (Baffin; Farley 2012: 2000-03-31)

declarative clause or a nominalized version thereof – both of which are compatible with the participial clause-type marker.³⁵

- (32) a. *ilisai-ji-tigut*
 teach-NMLZ-VIA.1PL
 ‘Among our teachers’
- b. *ilinniaq-tu-hi*
 study-DECL.INTR-2PL
 ‘you (pl.) (who) study’

To summarize, while the nature of appositive constructions in Kalaallisut, Inuktitut, and other varieties of the language, as well as properties of case and agreement, merit further study, the evidence examined here does not appear to support an analysis of these constructions as APCs (notwithstanding Yuan 2018, 2021).³⁶ As such, the data presented above should not lead us to conclude that Inuktitut *independent* pronouns are D⁰ heads.

As pointed out by a reviewer, Yuan’s (2018) D⁰ analysis of object-indexing morphemes (i.e., what the author casts as object agreement) might still be maintained, so long as it need not apply to independent determiners, which have been argued herein to be phrasal.

5. CONCLUSION

While so-called function words are often assumed to be morphosyntactically atomic or contain only functional morphemes, it has been argued above that Inuktitut pronouns are multi-morphemic and phrasal, containing a root (expressing person in pronominals) and an extended functional projection. This finding is similar to findings by Leu (2015) that demonstratives in Germanic languages should be analyzed as phrasal.

As to why pronouns should contain roots encoding person, one factor may simply be their diachronic origin. Fortescue et al. (2010: 418), in their proto-dictionary of Inuit-Yupik, suggest the first-person *uva-* ‘‘is apparently from the dem[onstrative] root *uv-*’, meaning ‘here’ (cf. *uvani* ‘here’; *ubva/uvva!* ‘right here’ and related forms in Spalding and Kusugaq 1998). Furthermore, they suggest a link between the proto-form **əlpət* ‘you’ (p.116) (cf. modern *ilvit~igvit~ivvit*) and the verb **ət-* ‘be’ (p.128), cognate with the modern enclitic verb *=it-* ‘be located’, arguably a verbal root.

As noted by a reviewer, *-tigut* may also simply be the non-possessed plural vialis ending, leading to ambiguity in some forms.

³⁵Crucially, the declarative/participial clause-type marker is used to create clausal nominalizations in the language.

³⁶Michelle Yuan (p.c.) notes that an Arviat speaker offered the form *ilinniaqtu-tigut*, and not *ilinniaq-tugut*, thus casting doubt on my proposed breakdown of *ilinniaq-tuhi* in what follows as a participial, instead of *ilinniaqtu-hi*. However, I would propose that all such forms containing *-tu-* are participial, bearing either verbal agreement directly or (possessed) vialis case.

As pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, an interesting consequence of this analysis is that “Inuktitut pronouns involve neither (i) a covert nominal predicate” (Evans 1977, Cooper 1979, Merchant 2014) “nor (ii) an elided or deleted nominal predicate” (Elbourne 2001, 2005; Merchant 2014), as has been assumed in much previous work on pronouns, particularly to account for cases of donkey anaphora. Instead, it is proposed herein that such roots are overt in Inuktitut.

It was further argued that number in pronominals patterns with nouns in the language, insofar as it appears to be both independent and structurally higher than person marking and undergoes allomorphy conditioned by case independently from person. This exceptionality with respect to cross-linguistic generalizations proposed by Ghomeshi and Massam (2020) was explained by the fact that the structure of Inuktitut pronouns is closer to that of nouns. The analysis herein also converges with work by Moskal (2015) and Smith et al. (2019), that places number higher than person in pronouns.

Finally, potential counter-evidence from constructions argued by Yuan (2018, 2021) to be APCs involving bare D⁰ pronouns was considered and alternative analyses for these forms were suggested, thereby maintaining the claim that Inuktitut (independent) pronouns are phrasal DPs.

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