

Anaphoric arguments in Unangax and Eastern Canadian Inuktitut.ⁱ

Alana Johns

Abstract

Unangax (Aleut) is known for the use of a certain class of verbal inflection as anaphoric agreement. One such use marks the presence of non-overt objects in a clause where an antecedent establishes reference (Bergsland and Dirks 1981; Fortescue 1985, etc.). Some dialects within Eastern Canadian Inuktitut show a similar patterning, in that ergative/transitive inflection is predominantly found when referring back to an already established object, i.e. is not merely transitive agreement. Given that these two varieties are quite remotely related, it is a puzzle why only they would display this shared pattern. This paper suggests that ergative verbal marking in Eskimo-Aleut is clitic in nature throughout the Eskimo-Aleut language family (see Merchant 2011 on Unangax), and that varieties differ as to whether they allow or do not allow clitic doubling, with only latter showing anaphoric effects.

1. Introduction

As Fortescue (1995, 61) states, a diachronic perspective may inform a synchronic analysis. It follows from this that a comparative perspective can also be useful for a

synchronic analysis.ⁱⁱ In this paper, I show that some properties of dialects of Eastern Inuktitut, possibly of recent development, display a closer similarity to Unangax (Aleut), a distant relative, than other Inuktitut varieties. This connection has not been previously observed in the literature. The Eskimo-Aleut language family divided into Aleut (Unangax) and Eskimo. Berge (2006) reports that the two split off around 4000 years ago, The Eskimo branch further divides into Yupik and Inuit. Eastern Canadian Inuktitut is a member of the Inuit branch, making Unangax and Eastern Canadian Inuktitut very distant relatives. If the two varieties share a property not shared by other members this is something of a puzzle.

2. Unangax and anaphoric agreement

Unangax is known for two patterns of verbal inflection. I will call them Pattern A and Pattern B. There are numerous and complex syntactic factors associated with the use of these patterns (see Bergsland 1978; Fortescue 1985; Leer 1987; Sadock 1999; 2000; 2006; Boyle 2000; Berge 2009; 2010; Merchant 2011), but in this paper I will focus exclusively on one of the most well known uses, leaving other properties aside. The use under discussion here is that Pattern A is used with both intransitive verbs and transitive verbs with overt objects. In contrast, Pattern B is associated with transitive verbs with non-overt or null objects. For this reason, Pattern B is generally referred to as anaphoric agreement, since the actual referent of the missing object is

understood from the discourse context. Sadock (2000) terms this factor the Aleut Effect. We see this A/B distinction illustrated in the data in (1) from Fortescue (1985, 106), based on Bergsland and Dirks (1981). Pattern A is seen in (1a) and (1c), while Pattern B is seen in (1b) and (1d). The labels A or B on the right have been added to aid the reader.ⁱⁱⁱ

- (1) a. asxinu-ḡ kidu-ku-ḡ
 girl-abs.s help-pres-3s **A**
 ‘He is helping the girl’
- b. kidu-ku-u
 help-pres-3s anaph **B**
 ‘He is helping her’
- c. asxinu-s kidu-ku-ḡ
 girl-abs.p help-pres-3s **A**
 ‘He is helping the girls’
- d. kidu-ku-ngis
 help-pres-3p anaph **B**
 ‘He is helping them’

Thus special case marking on the subject is found only when there is an object and the object is non-overt.

What I am calling here Pattern A inflection in Unangax is generally thought to be cognate to intransitive inflection in the Eskimo branch (i.e. Yupik and the Inuit language). What I call Pattern B is cognate to the transitive ergative inflection of the Eskimo branch (Fortescue 1985; Sadock 2009), which involves agreement with two arguments, irrespective of whether they are overt or non-overt. In the following section, we will examine this issue within the Inuit language, leaving discussion of Yupik aside.

Importantly, Unangax is not considered to be typologically an ergative language. A classic ergative pattern shows the subject of a transitive verb as marked distinctly, either through agreement or case, from the subject of an intransitive verb. In Unangax both intransitive subjects (2c) and transitive subjects with overt objects (1a, c) and (2a) show the same pattern A agreement on the verb pattern; moreover the case marking of the subjects is the same (absolutive) for both the intransitive and transitive (compare 2a and 2c). It is therefore a nominative-accusative pattern, since transitivity does not affect subject marking. Fortescue (1995, 70) considers Unangax to have lost its ergativity through reversion to an earlier stage (Fortescue's Stage 1) of the language (see Bergsland 1989). In the remainder of this paper, I will provide

contrasts with the Unangax example above in (2a), where the overt object in a Type A construction gets the same absolutive case as the subject.

In the Inuit language, we see Pattern B in transitive constructions, as shown in (4). The first example (4a) from Johns (1992) is from the Qairnirmiut dialect spoken in Qamani'tuaq (Baker Lake); the second in (4b) from Lowe (1985, p. 114) is from the Kangiryuarimiut dialect spoken in Ulukhaktok; and the example in (4c) from Sadock (2003, p. 40) is a Kalaallisut (West Greenlandic) example.

- (4) a. arna-up angut kuni-ga-a **B**
 woman-rel.s man.abs.s kiss-tr.part-3s/s
 'The woman kissed the man.'
- b. iqaluk qimmi-m niri-yaa **B**
 fish.abs.s dog-rel.s eat-tr.part.3s/s
 'The dog ate the fish'
- c. Nukappiaqqa-p issiavi-it sana-vai **B**
 boy-rel.s chair-abs.p make-tr.indic.3s/p
 'The boy made the chairs'

In these three Inuit dialects, Pattern B can be used with either overt or non-overt objects, in contrast to Unangax, as described above, where Pattern B is found only with non-overt objects.

These Inuit dialects exhibit a standard ergative pattern. The transitive clauses in (4) show a marked case on the subject $(-)(u)p/-m$ which is different from the absolutive case found on intransitive subjects in (3a); moreover the object in the transitive clauses in (4a) has the same case (absolutive) as the subject in (3a). If we leave aside the antipassive construction, the generalization for the Inuit language is that transitivity determines the case/agreement configurations. In Unangax, transitivity does not determine case/agreement configurations; instead they are determined by the overtness of the object. Unangax Pattern B is a marker of anaphoricity, not of transitivity. This difference between these two languages is shown in (5).

(5) Pattern B in Unangax and Eskimo

	Unangax	Inuit language
intransitive	Pattern A	Pattern A
transitive overt object	Pattern A	Pattern B
transitive <i>anaphoric object</i>	Pattern <i>B</i>	Pattern B
	= NOT ergative language	= ergative language

Unangax Pattern B is sensitive to the property in italics, while Eskimo Pattern B is sensitive to the property in bold. The marked subject associated with Pattern B will only surface when there is an anaphoric object in Unangax, but will surface with any transitive in the Inuit language. While the patterning in (5) makes Unangax and the Inuit language appear typologically distinct, in the next section we will see that evidence from other Inuit dialects shows the picture to be more complex.

4. Reduction of ergativity in Eastern Canadian Inuktitut

The Inuit language can be roughly divided into four main dialect groups (Fortescue 1983; Dorais 2010): Alaskan Inupiaq, Western Canadian Inuktun, Eastern Canadian Inuktitut and Greenlandic. In some Eastern Canadian dialects there is evidence that the use of the ergative pattern is on the wane (see Johns 1999; 2001a; 2001b; 2006 on the reduction of ergativity in Labrador Inuktitut). In these dialects the antipassive has become the unmarked transitive construction. Across all dialects the antipassive is to varying degrees a competing transitive construction with the ergative construction. Evidence that the antipassive is becoming less marked in the Labrador dialect comes from the fact that language consultants, on being presented with a typical English transitive construction, even one with a definite object, as in (6a), or a name as the

object, as in (6b), will unhesitatingly translate the sentence using the antipassive construction.^{vi}

- (6) a. anna-it tigu-si-vut ulu-mi-nit... **A**
 woman-abs.p take-AP-intr.indic.3p. ulu-3Rposs.-mod.3p.
 ‘The women picked up their ulus...’ (Labrador Institute 2009)
- b. Margarita Kuinatsa-i-juk Ritsati-mik **A**
 Margarita.abs.s tickle-AP-INTR.PART.3S Richard.-mod.s
 ‘Margarita is tickling Richard’ (Johns 2001a)

This phenomenon is also found in some South Baffin dialects, as in the Iqaluit example in (7a) and the Kinngait (Cape Dorset) example in (7b).

- (7) a. Piita qimmir-mit uasaq-si-juq **A**
 Peter.abs.s dog-mod.s wash-incept.-intr.part.3s
 ‘Peter is washing the dog’
 Context: I am married. We have a son Peter and we also have a
 dog. My husband comes in and asks “Where is Peter?”
- b. ippatchaq John mali-laut-tuq Fred-mik **A**
 yesterday John.abs.s follow-d.past-intr.part.3s Fred-mod..s
 ‘Yesterday John followed Fred’

The property whereby the object in an antipassive construction can be definite or even a proper name (see Kalmar 1979, 68 on Baffin dialects) contrasts with Kalaallisut (West Greenlandic). Fortescue (1982, 93) states that Kalaallisut does not allow names as objects in the antipassive (or in his terms *half-transitive*) construction.^{vii} Similarly Fortescue (1984, p. 86) says that the modalis (instrumental) case *-mik* in the antipassive construction marks the object as indefinite or “de-emphasized.”^{viii}

5. Ergativity again

As we have seen, the ergative structure in Inuit dialects is characterized by a) the presence of relative case on the subject if it is third person and b) double (or transitive) inflection person on the verb for all persons. We have also seen that this package of features is not generally used in some Eastern Canadian dialects for the translation of an English transitive sentence into Inuktitut, even when the object is a definite or a proper name (see 6. above). Hallman (2007), however, shows that ergative features are in fact still robust in these dialects, but crucially contingent on context. The following examples are from the Iqaluit (S. Baffin) dialect.

- (8) a. Miali sikituuq-mit niuvi-ruma-juq A
 Mary.abs.s skidoo-mod.s buy-want-intr.part. 3s

‘Mary wants to buy a skidoo.’

b. ammalu Pita-up niuvi-ruma-ngmi-**janga** **B**
also Peter.-rel.s buy-want-also-tr.part.3s/s
‘Peter wants to buy it, too.’

b’. ammalu Pita niuvi-ruma-ngmi-**juq** **A**
also Peter.abs.s buy-want-also-intr.part.3s
‘Peter wants to buy one, too.’ Hallman (2007) S. Baffin

The a. example in (8) precedes the b. examples forming two separate sequences (a, b) and (a, b’). The example in (8b) shows our two ergative properties, with relative/ergative case on the agent, and double/transitive agreement on the verb. The example in (8b’) is the antipassive construction, with intransitive agreement on the verb and absolutive case on the subject (as is 8a). What (8b) shows is that the traditional morphology of the ergative persists in these dialects, but only as second mention of the object, i.e. in an anaphoric relation to a previously mentioned discourse element (the object of the verb in 8a. *sikituuq* ‘skidoo’). This eastern Inuit dialect is therefore exhibiting something resembling the Aleut Effect.^{ix} Further evidence of the presence of ergative morphology in anaphoric object contexts is

found in other Eastern Canadian dialects, as can be seen in (9) and (10). The sequence in (9) is from the Kinngait dialect, and (10) from the Labrador dialect.

(9) a. John kata-i-zuq irngusir-mik **A**
 John.abs.s drop-AP-intr.part.3s cup-mod.s

b. asuillaak irngusiq siqumim-mat
 and.then cup.abs.s break-caus.3s

aaqqitaq-**qauk** niputi-mut **B**
 fix-tr.indic.3s/s glue-instr.s

'John dropped the **cup** (a.) and then when the **cup** broke, he fixed **it** with the glue (b).'

(10) a. John kata-i-juk Kajotta-mik **A**
 John.abs.s drop-AP-intr.part.3s cup-mod.s

b. amma-lu Kajottak siKumi-mmat,
 also-and cup.abs.s break-caus.3s

âkKi-sima-**janga** nipi-ti-guti-mmut. **B**

fix-perf.-tr.part.3s/s adhere-cause-instrument-instr.s

'John dropped the **cup** and then when the **cup** broke, he fixed
it with the glue.'

In (9a) and (10a) we see that even when the target English translation has a definite object 'the cup', the Inuktitut shows the antipassive construction (Pattern A); however when the object is referred back to again, in the b. examples, the use of the double/transitive (ergative) agreement (Pattern B) is found.^x

This pattern of Eastern Canadian dialects was in fact first described and analyzed in Kalmar (1979), working on S. and N. Baffin dialects (Iqaluit and Igloolik respectively). Kalmar proposes that the use of the ergative indicates that an argument is given, while the use of the antipassive indicates it is new. Kalmar explicitly advocates what he calls a "trans-sentential" approach to the difference between the ergative and the antipassive construction. For Kalmar, the critical feature determining the choice between the ergative vs. antipassive in these dialects is not found within the clause (i.e. not just transitivity), but across clauses. This cross-clausal property is the very feature that distinguishes Unangax from the Inuit language in (5) above.

Thus evidence indicates that Eastern Canadian dialects share a striking parallel with the Unangax language, in that both varieties use Pattern B inflection to indicate that an object is anaphorically linked to a discourse element.

6. Discussion and proposal

The Unangax language and Eastern Canadian dialects of Inuktitut, although related historically, are close in neither geography nor time. As such, it is an interesting fact that both varieties would show a similar property, one which has not been attested in other members of the language family. Is it a coincidence that they both use Pattern B inflection in this manner? As mentioned above, Fortescue (1995, 70) considers that Unangax has restructured into an earlier stage of the grammar, where Pattern A inflection is found on both transitive and intransitive verbs. If Eastern Canadian dialects are exhibiting a similar pattern, perhaps they also are unraveling to this earlier stage?

Another slightly different account might be that these two varieties are not in fact different from the other varieties of Eskimo-Aleut languages in their use of Pattern B for anaphoric marking. Perhaps all Eskimo-Aleut varieties use Pattern B as an anaphoric inflection. If this is the case, then our question becomes revised to why do some varieties (Unangax and Eastern Canadian dialects) use Pattern B inflection in complementary distribution with overt object arguments, while other varieties do not have complementary distribution of Pattern B inflection and overt object arguments? The answer to this question may lie in the claim that enclitic pronouns were involved in Pattern B inflection (Fortescue 1995, 68). If, however, Pattern B inflection has continued to remain clitic in nature (see Merchant 2011 on Unangax),

then the difference between varieties that have Pattern B inflection in complementary distribution with overt arguments, and those where overt arguments may, but need not, co-occur with Pattern B inflection be related to clitic doubling. In the former, the clitic (Pattern B) will only be found with a discourse antecedent i.e. it functions like canonical pronoun. In the latter variety, the pronoun may or may not occur with a doubled overt argument, i.e. no complementary distribution. Under this view, both Unangax and some Eastern Canadian dialects of Inuktitut have lost the property of clitic doubling.

There are clearly many challenging questions for such a proposal.

Nevertheless, an analysis which analyses differences in the distribution of Pattern B inflection as variation in the feature of clitic doubling would make these changes much less surprising. That Unangax and Eastern Canadian dialects of Inuktitut would vary from other members of the language family in this way becomes not expected but certainly a change we might expect equally from any member of the family.

References

Allen, S. 1996. *Aspects of Argument Structure Acquisition in Inuktitut*. Amsterdam:

Benjamins.

Berge, A. 2009. Eskimo-Aleut. In *Concise Encyclopedia of Languages of the World*,

K. Brown & S. Ogilvie (eds), 371-377. Oxford: Elsevier.

Berge, A. 2009 Tracking topics: a comparison of topic in Aleut and Greenlandic

- discourse. In *Variations on Polysynthesis: The Eskaleut Languages*, Marc-Antoine Mahieu & Nicole Tersis (eds.), 185–200. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Berge, A. 2010. Unexpected non-anaphoric marking in Aleut. *Rara & Rarissima: Documenting the fringes of linguistic diversity*, J. Wohlgemuth & M. Cysouw (eds.), 1-22. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Berge, A. 2011. *Topic and Discourse Structure in West Greenlandic Agreement Constructions*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Bergsland, K. 1989. Comparative aspects of Aleut syntax. *Aikakauskirja / Journal de la Société Finno-ougrienne* 82: 7-80.
- Bergsland, K.. 1997. *Aleut Grammar: Unangam Tunuganaan Achixaasi*. Fairbanks: Alaska Native Language Center.
- Bergsland, K. and Moses Dirks. 1981. *Atkan Aleut School Grammar*. Anchorage: National Bilingual Materials Development Center.
- Carrier, J. 2012. L'expression de la transitivité en Itivimiut. Mémoire de Maitrise, Université du Québec à Montréal.
< <http://www.archipel.uqam.ca/5064/1/M12622.pdf> >
- Dorais, L.-J. 2010. *The Language of the Inuit: Syntax, Semantics and Society in the Arctic*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Fortescue, M. 1982. Review of Kalmar 1979. *International Journal of American Linguistics*, Vol. 48:1, 91-101.

- Fortescue, M. 1983. *A Comparative Manual of Affixes for the Inuit Dialects of Greenland, Canada and Alaska*. Man and Society 4. Copenhagen: Meddelelser om Grønland.
- Fortescue, M. 1984. *West Greenlandic*. Croom Helm Descriptive Grammars. London: Croom Helm.
- Fortescue, M. 1985. Anaphoric agreement in Aleut. In *Predicates and Terms*, A. M. Bolkestein, C. de Groot and J. L. Mackenzie (eds), 105-126. Functional Grammar Series 2. Dordrecht: Foris.
- Fortescue, M. 1995 The historical source and typological position of ergativity in Eskimo languages. *Études/Inuit/Studies* 19:2, 61-75.
- Hallman, P. 2007. Definiteness in Inuktitut. Unpublished manuscript Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität <http://www.peterhallman.com/index.html>
- Johns, A. 1992. Deriving ergativity. *Linguistic Inquiry*, Volume 23:1, 57-87.
- Johns, A. 1999. The decline of ergativity in Labrador Inuttut. In L. Bar-el, R. M. Déchaine, and C. Reinholtz (eds), *Papers from the Workshop on Structure and Constituency in Native American Languages*, 73-90. MIT Occasional Papers in Linguistics 17.
- Johns, A. 2001a. An inclination towards accusative. *Linguistica Atlantica*, 127-144.
- Johns, A. 2001b. Ergative to accusative: comparing evidence from Inuktitut. In J. T. Faarlund (ed), *Grammatical Relations in Change*, 205-221. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

- Johns, A. 2006. Ergativity and change in Inuktitut. In A. Johns, D. Massam and J. Ndayiragije (eds), 293-311. *Ergativity: Emerging Issues*. Dordrecht: Springer,
- Kalmar, I. 1979. *Case and Context in Inuktitut (Eskimo)*. National Museum of Man Mercury Series No 49. Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization.
- Labrador Institute. 2009. *The Polar Bear in the Rock: Two Windows on the World. Nanuk Ujagammi: Unikkausikkut Kaujimajunullu Kaujisautinga*. Happy Valley/Goose Bay: Labrador Institute of Memorial University.
- Lowe, R. 1985. *Kangiryuarmit Uqauhingita Ilihautdjutikhangit: Basic Kangiryuarmit Eskimo Grammar*. Committee for Original People Entitlement.
- Manning, C. 1996. *Ergativity: Argument Structure and Grammatical Relations*. Stanford: CSLI.
- Merchant, Jason. 2011. Aleut case matters. *Pragmatics and Autolexical Grammar: In honor of Jerry Sadock*, E. Yuasa, T. Bagchi and K. Beals (eds), 193-210. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Sadock, J. 2000. Aleut number agreement. Proceedings of Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society, 121-138.
- Sadock, J. 2003. *A Grammar of Kalaallisut (West Greenlandic Inuttut)*. Languages of the World/Material 162. Muenchen: LINCOM EUROPA.
- Sadock, J. 2009. The efficacy of anaphoricity in Aleut. In *Variations on Polysynthesis: the Eskaleut Languages*, M. A. Mahieu and N. Tersi (eds), 97-113. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Spreng, B. 2012. Viewpoint Aspect in Inuktitut: The Syntax and Semantics of Antipassives. Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto.

ⁱ I am grateful to Peter Hallman for showing me that these structures exist in South Baffin and to Daniel Kaufman for telling me it reminded him of Aleut. Thanks also to Saila Michaels, Oleekie Etungat and Katie Winters. This research was supported by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

ⁱⁱ By useful I mean that diachronic/comparative properties may suggest to the linguist aspects of the analysis which they may have not considered or have overlooked.

Naturally the child learning the language has access only to the synchronic data of the surrounding family and community.

ⁱⁱⁱ Abbreviations used: abs = absolutive case; rel = relative (ergative) case; mod = modalis case; instr = allative/instrumental case; s = singular; p= plural; pres = present; 3= third person; / = agreement with two arguments; anaph = anaphoric; R = reflexive agreement; intr = intransitive; part = participial mood; indic = indicative mood; caus = causative mood; AP = antipassive/half-transitive; d.past = distant past; incept = inceptive; perf = perfective.

N.B. throughout this paper I have slightly modified terminology in examples from other papers for consistency and transparency.

^{iv} The syntactic status of this argument may vary across dialects; see Spreng (2012). on the syntax and semantics of this construction.

^v This case is variously referred to in the literature as modalis, comitative, instrumental, etc. While the singular is usually *mik*, in South Baffin and some other dialects, the modalis and ablative have neutralized to *-mit*, likely related to a change in related dialects, which delete word final codas (Allen 1996, 39).

^{vi} This statement applies to the majority of verbs with a small number of exceptions, e.g. verbs which contain *-gi-* ‘have as’

^{vii} See Manning also (1996, 94-95) for discussion of this issue.

^{viii} Berge (2011, 158) suggests that definite objects can be found in antipassives/half-transitives in Kalaallisut. Her example concerns a phrase referring to the playing of “the piano,” where an actual piano had been mentioned as a place of sitting some few clauses earlier. It is not clear that the subsequent mention in Kalaallisut, translated as “Grandfather played the piano” actually refers specifically back to the earlier mention of a particular piano, or whether, as English allows, the definite can be used to refer to a musical activity, e.g. *I can play the piano* does not pick out a particular piano.

^{ix} It is important to remember, as pointed out to me by a reviewer, that Aleut and the Inuit language differ in details here. Aleut specifies only that a non-subject is missing, be it a possessor, a direct or indirect object. In addition, Berge (2011) states that ergative structures in Kalaallisut most commonly involve non-overt arguments. The point argued in this paper, however, is that Eastern Canadian dialects appear to use the antipassive predominately in transitive constructions, except when the object

has already been mentioned. This seem to be distinct from the Kalaallisut pattern.

Carrier (2012) shows that other patterns are also found in Eastern dialects. Note that the discussion in this paper is restricted to main clause transitives, and does not address transitivity in dependent clauses, where agreement/mood morphology is somewhat different.

^x In addition we also find the ergative pattern B in the Kinngait dialect when the ergative agent is anaphoric and the object is overt, as in:

i. a. John itir-tu-miniq

John.abs.s enter-intr.part.3s-past

b. asuillaak uasataq-**qauk** natiq **B**

and.then wash-tr.indic.3s/s floor.abs.s

‘John came and then he washed the floor’

More research is needed on the distribution of this pattern in these dialects.