

On the phasal status of DP in Inuktitut*

Michelle Yuan
University of Toronto

SUMMARY

In Compton and Pittman's (2010) investigation of word-formation in Inuktitut, syntactic constituents are spelled out as phonological (standalone) words only if they correspond to the domains of CP and DP – i.e. syntactic phases. Focusing primarily on the DP, this paper argues that only some DPs are phasal, based on converging evidence from the nature of Case licensing, word order, and restrictions on \bar{A} -movement. Ultimately, the analysis presented here supports Miyagawa's (2011) conjecture that the syntactic phase is universally defined by Case.

RÉSUMÉ

Selon l'étude de Compton and Pittman (2010) sur la formation des mots en inuktitut, les constituants syntaxiques sont envoyés à Spell-Out en tant qu'unités phonologiques si et seulement si ceux-ci correspondent à des CPs ou des DPs, constituants qui renvoient par la même occasion à des phases syntaxiques. Ayant mis l'accent sur l'analyse des constituants DPs, les auteurs proposent aussi qu'une partie d'entre eux seulement constituent une phase syntaxique, compte tenu d'une combinaison de facteurs telles que la nature de l'attribution des cas grammaticaux, l'ordre des mots ou les restrictions concernant les opérations de mouvement A-bar. Par le fait même, les résultats de leur analyse soutiennent la thèse de Miyagawa (2011), selon laquelle les phases syntaxiques sont universellement définies par l'assignation des cas grammaticaux.

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper is an investigation of the complex DP in Inuktitut and its status as a phase. Since Chomsky's (2000) conception of syntactic phasehood, there has been much debate on how phasehood should be defined – i.e. what makes a phase a phase. For instance, while Chomsky

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(2008) proposes that a phase head is the locus of uninterpretable phi-features, others (e.g. Rackowski and Richards 2005) concentrate on the role of the phase in successive-cyclic movement. There is also some disagreement with respect to which projections are phasal; while Chomsky (2000, et seq.) considers C and transitive *v* to be phase heads, other such as Svenonius (2004) have sought to include DP as a phase head based on parallels with CP. Yet others (e.g. Bošković 2008; 2012) propose that AP, NP, and PP may also be phasal.

This paper considers a different approach to phasehood developed by Compton and Pittman (2010), who argue that phasehood in Inuktitut corresponds tightly to phonological wordhood; under this view, CP and DP are phases, but not *v*P. I focus on an underexplained aspect of their analysis of Inuktitut – namely, the nature of Case licensing – and demonstrate that this consideration of Case challenges their notion of phonological wordhood by phase. Rather, I conclude that Inuktitut provides evidence for defining phasehood on the basis of Case valuation, following Miyagawa (2011).

2 AN OVERVIEW OF INUKTITUT

Inuktitut is an ergative-absolutive language (Johns 1987; Manga 1996, etc.), meaning that the subject (agent) of a transitive verb is case-marked differently from the subject of an intransitive verb and the object. This is shown in (1):^{1 2}

- (1) a. qimmi-up kii-ja-nga arnaq
 dog-ERG bite-PASS.PART-3S/3S woman.ABS
 ‘The dog bit the woman.’
 b. qimmiq niri-juq
 dog.ABS eat-3S.INTR
 ‘The dog is eating.’

In (1a), the agent of the transitive verb is case-marked with ergative *-up* and the object is absolutive, whereas, in (1b), the intransitive subject is absolutive. Moreover, the transitive verb in (1a) exhibits phi-feature agreement with both the agent and the object, while the intransitive verb in (1b) agrees solely with the subject.

There are varying accounts of ergativity in Inuktitut. Bobaljik (1993) and Pittman (2005) view ergative case as licensed on the agent by T, while Bittner and Hale (1996) and Manga (1996) suggest that it is the object that is assigned case by T. Conversely, Johns (1987; 1992) provides a nominal account of ergativity, in which ergativity arises out of, among other things, clausal nominalization; under this view, ergative is genitive. Finally, Spreng (2005) argues against an account of ergative case as a structural case altogether, and instead proposes that ergative case is assigned inherently, as per Woolford (1997).

This paper, however, largely follows Johns (1987; 1992) as well as loosely follows Bittner and Hale’s and Manga’s (1996) treatments of absolutive case on T.³ One reason for adopting

¹ All uncited data come from my own elicitations from the South Baffin dialect of Inuktitut.

² Abbreviations: abs = absolutive case, ap = antipassive, dec = declarative mood, dist.pst = distant past, erg = ergative case, gen = genitive, intr = intransitive, neg = negation, nmz = nominalizer, obl = oblique case, pass.part = passive participle, 1s = 1st person singular, 3s = 3rd person singular.

³ Arguing against the other analyses of ergativity in Inuktitut mentioned here is unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper; however, I direct readers to Johns (2000) and Aldridge (2008) for overviews of at least some of these analyses.

Johns' (1987; 1992) nominal approach is that Inuktitut exhibits ergative-genitive syncretism. As shown in (2), the genitive case marker on the possessor is identical to that on the transitive verb in (1b); moreover, the possessor/possessum phi-feature agreement on the possessum is identical to the verbal morphology on the transitive verb.

- (2) Jaani-up qimmi-nga
 John-GEN dog-3S/3S
 'John's dog'

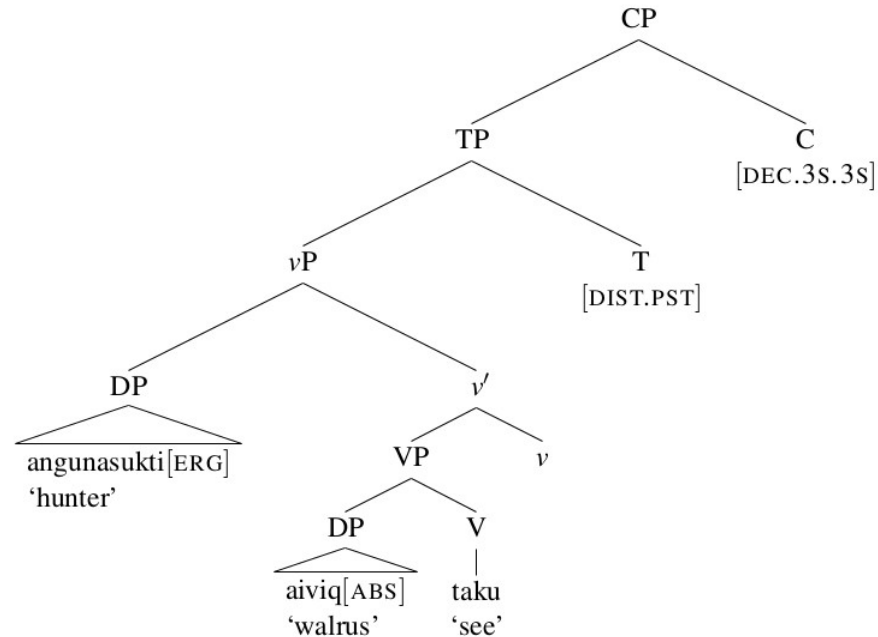
Johns (1992, p.68) demonstrates that this syncretism is displayed throughout the third person paradigm. As such, she treats this phenomenon not as syncretism *per se*, but rather as a sign that ergative *is* in fact genitive case. This will be elaborated upon in greater detail in Section 4.

3 THE DEFINITION OF PHASEHOOD

As mentioned in Section 1, this paper focuses on Compton and Pittman's (2010) treatment of phonological words in Inuktitut as corresponding to phases. Although they take a standard view of phases whereby the syntactic structure is sent to Spell-Out in chunks (Chomsky 2000), the twist is that, in Inuktitut, these chunks are outputted from PF as phonological words. Thus, word boundaries in the language correspond exactly to phase edges. This approach follows basic tenets of Minimalist syntax (Chomsky 1995, et seq.) and assumes that structures are generated bottom-up; as soon as a phasal projection (CP or DP in their analysis) is Merged, the phasal complex is sent to Spell-Out and the individual components of the phase are packaged into a single word. Let us illustrate with an example:

- (3) angunasukti-up taku-lauq-tanga aiviq
 hunter-ERG see-DIST.PST-DEC.3S/3S walrus.ABS
 ‘The hunter saw the walrus.’

(Compton and Pittman 2010)



In (3), the DPs *angunasuktiup* ‘hunter’ and *aiviq* ‘walrus’ are sent to Spell-Out as soon as their respective DP layers are Merged. The clausal structure containing these DPs then continues to be built until CP is Merged. At this point, the remaining components of this structure (i.e. everything save for the spelled-out DPs) are sent to Spell-Out and are ultimately outputted as one phonological word, *takulauqtanga* ‘s/he saw it.’

An advantage for this kind of analysis is that it provides an elegant account of the polysynthetic nature of Inuktitut. As shown in (4) below, Inuktitut extensively makes use of strictly-ordered affixation:

- (4) uqa-limaar-vi-liu(ng)-inna-nngit-tunga
 speak-all.of-NMZ-make-always-NEG-DEC.1S
 ‘I was not always making libraries.’

(Compton and Pittman 2010)

Compton and Pittman’s analysis provides a syntactic basis for the morphological composition of complex words in Inuktitut, contra older analyses that posit various morphological or lexical rules to account for constructions such as (4) (e.g. Fortescue 1980).

However, one challenge for their approach is that some basic aspects of the syntax of Inuktitut are left unexplained. For instance, Compton and Pittman generally abstract away from Case licensing in Inuktitut; it is unclear how, and by which functional heads, Case is licensed, nor is it explained how exactly Case morphology ends up affixed to the DPs if they are spelled out as

soon as the DP projections are Merged – i.e. prior to Case licensing. Moreover, though their analysis is phase-based, it is never explicitly stated how phasehood is defined – what sets apart CP and DP as phases to the exclusion of other projections such as *vP*? Compton and Pittman note that *v* is non-phasal in their analysis because it lacks uninterpretable phi-features, but simple DPs, which *are* phasal in their view, also lack uninterpretable phi-features. Thus, even if Compton and Pittman are ultimately correct that wordhood in Inuktitut corresponds to phasehood, there still must be some underlying and universal property of CP and DP (and not *vP*) that paints them as phasal in the first place.

As such, the rest of this paper examines the nature of Case licensing in Inuktitut and whether it sheds insight on the definition of phasehood. It turns out that Inuktitut provides much evidence for a Case-based definition of phasehood, as per Miyagawa (2011).⁴ In such an approach, a functional head is phasal only if it licenses structural Case; thus, while a phase head may bear both uninterpretable Case and phi-features, it is the presence of the Case feature, and not the phi-feature, that defines it as a phase. For Miyagawa, who focuses on Japanese and Turkish, phase heads are C, *v*, and D, which license nominative, accusative, and genitive case respectively (Miyagawa assumes that nominative case, along with phi-features, originate on C and is inherited by T, following Chomsky 2008).

In the following section, I show how a Case-based approach to phases follows from a nominal analysis of ergativity in Inuktitut.

4 A NOMINAL ANALYSIS OF ERGATIVITY

As noted in Section 2, Inuktitut is an ergative-absolutive language. However, the nature of this alignment is, according to Johns (1987; 1992), not as straightforward as it appears. This is shown in (5).⁵

- (5) anguti-up nanuq kapi-ja-a
 man-ERG bear.ABS stab-PASS.PART-3S/3S
 ‘The man stabbed the bear.’ (~ ‘The bear is the man’s stabbed one.’)
- (Johns 1992)

Johns (1992) notes that, while the semantic meaning of the construction in (5) resembles that of a typical transitive sentence found in a language like English, it is more compositionally something like ‘the bear is the man’s stabbed one.’ This leads Johns (1992) to propose a nominal analysis of ergativity, which takes the putative agent of a transitive clause to be a possessor, and the putative transitive verb to be a nominalized possessum. Similar (recent) analyses of ergativity have been proposed for e.g. Tagalog (Kaufman 2009) and Chol (Coon and Preminger to appear). This type of analysis treats the surface appearance of ‘ergativity’ as largely epiphenomenal, arising from various independent yet interacting properties of the language in question.

Loosely following Johns (1992), I take the Inuktitut transitive clause to be derived in the following stages, as shown in (6). This derivation assumes that the structure is generated from the bottom-up.

⁴ Though this paper focuses on the analysis presented in Miyagawa (2011), see also e.g. Alboiu and Barrie (2009) and Takahashi (2010) for other Case-based accounts of phases.

⁵ The data in Johns (1992) is from the Qairnirmiut dialect of Inuktitut, spoken in Baker Lake, Nunavut. This dialect is more westerly than the South Baffin dialect that my own data is from.

- (6) a. kapi-jaq → nominalization (4.1)
stab-PASS.PART
‘the stabbed one’
- b. anguti-up kapi-ja-a → possessive phrase (4.2)
man-GEN stab-PASS.PART-3S/3S
‘the man’s stabbed one’
- c. nanuq anguti-up kapi-ja-a → predication (4.3)
bear.NOM man-GEN stab-PASS.PART-3S/3S
‘the bear is the man’s stabbed one.’
- d. anguti-up nanuq kapi-ja-a → focus fronting (4.4)
man-GEN bear.NOM stab-PASS.PART-3S/3S
‘The man stabbed the bear.’

Because this section is essentially a reformulation of Johns (1992) into Minimalist terms (with a few amendments), only a summary the main points from Johns (1992) will be covered; see Johns (1992, p.62-81) for a more detailed account.

4.1 VERBAL NOMINALIZATION

Although some analyses of Inuktitut treat the transitive verb morphology as one morpheme (e.g. example (3) above from Compton and Pittman (2010)), Johns (1992) breaks this morpheme into two. For Johns, this morpheme actually consists of a passive participle morpheme *-jaq~taq* and a double person agreement morpheme; thus, under this treatment, the agreement is only exhibited on the second part of the overall ‘transitive’ morphology, while the first part is invariable.

According to Johns (1992), the passive participle morpheme *-jaq (~-gaq~taq)* may be verbal or nominal. The contrast is illustrated in (7):

- (7) a. angut arna-mit kuni-ga-u-juq
man.ABS woman-OBL kiss-PASS.PART-be-INTR.PART.3S
‘The man was kissed by the woman.’
- b. kuni-gaq aanniaq-tuq
kiss-PASS.PART.ABS sick-INTR.PART.3S
‘The one kissed is sick.’ (Johns 1992)

In (7a), a typical passive construction, the passive participle *-gaq* takes a verbal meaning. Conversely, (7b) demonstrates that a word may consist solely of a passive participle attached to a root; in this case, the word has a nominal meaning of ‘the one kissed.’ Although my consultant who speaks South Baffin Inuktitut was unable to replicate the construction in (7b), she offered the construction in (8b), which supports Johns’ claim that the passive participle may behave nominally.

- (8) a. *tuktu-viniq-tuq-tunga*
 caribou-former-consume-INTR.PART.1S
 ‘I’m eating caribou meat.’
- (Johns 2007)
- b. *sana-ja-vini-nga*
 make-PASS.PART-former-3S/3S
 ‘the one she made before’ ~ ‘her formerly made one’

In (8a), the adjectival affix *-viniq* ‘former’ is attached to the nominal *tuktu* ‘caribou’; the nominal complex is incorporated into the verb *-tuq* ‘consume.’ In (8b), the same affix is attached to *sana-jaq*, which consists of a verbal root $\sqrt{\text{SANA}}$ ‘make’ and the passive participle *-jaq*. This demonstrates that *-jaq* may function as a nominalizer and that the passive participle and the agreement morphology are separable. As a final note, *-jaq* more specifically behaves as a clausal nominalizer; (9) shows that an entire TP may be nominalized.

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

4.2 POSSESSIVE PHRASE

The next step in the derivation is, according to Johns (1992), the construction of a possessive phrase, as shown in (6b), repeated here.

- (6) a. *kapi-jaq*
 stab-PASS.PART
 ‘the stabbed one’
- b. *anguti-up kapi-ja-a*
 man-GEN stab-PASS.PART-3S/3S
 ‘the man’s stabbed one’

As noted in Section 2, the apparent ergative-genitive syncretism observed in Inuktitut is, under this analysis, not syncretism at all – rather, ergative *is* genitive. Here, I diverge slightly from Johns (1992), who operates within a pre-Minimalist framework, although the basic idea is the same. I take genitive (ergative) case to be structural Case licensed by phasal D, as assumed by Miyagawa (2011). As shown in (1a) and (2) in Section 2, not only does the agent of a putative transitive clause get Case-marked with the same Case as the possessor of a possessive phrase, but the agreement morphology on the transitive verb is identical to that on the possessum. The South Baffin data in (10) below demonstrates that this holds not only for the Qairnirmiut data found in Johns (1992), but also for South Baffin, even though the two dialects have different paradigms (the 3S/3S agreement marker is *-a* in Qairnirmiut but *-nga* in South Baffin):

- (10) a. anguti-up nanuq kapi-ja-nga
 man-GEN bear.NOM stab-PASS.PART-3S/3S
 ‘The bear is the man’s stabbed one.’ OR ‘The man stabbed the bear.’
 b. anguti-up qimmi-nga
 man-GEN dog-3S/3S
 ‘The man’s dog’

Again, I assume that genitive case is licensed by D and that, in turn, the possessive phrase is a complex DP. Further support for this is provided in (11):

- (11) Miali kapi-si-juq [nanur-mit [Jaani-up taku-ja-nga-(mit)]]
 Mary.NOM stab-AP-3S.INTR [bear-OBL [John-GEN see-PASS.PART-3S/3S-OBL]]
 ‘Mary stabbed the bear that John saw.’

In the object relative clause in (11), both the head of the relative clause and the clause itself are Case-marked with oblique *-mit*. Note that the relative clause is structurally identical to both the agent and transitive verb complex in (10a) and the possessive phrase in (10b). The fact that the relative clause is able to be Case-marked thus supports the claim presented here that the transitive clause involves the presence of a nominalizing DP layer. Finally, further support for this comes from Compton (2012), who argues that relative clauses in Inuktitut are two DPs in apposition; under this view, a more compositional translation for (11) would be something like, ‘Mary stabbed the bear, John’s seen one.’

In summary, this subsection demonstrates that the Inuktitut transitive clause is nominal in nature and, more specifically, that nominalization arises from Merging a DP layer that licenses genitive case on a possessor argument. The rest of the paper argues that this DP layer is phasal, and that this is because D is a Case-licenser.

4.3 PREDICATION

At this point in the derivation of the transitive clause, the putative object is Merged. (6c) is repeated here:

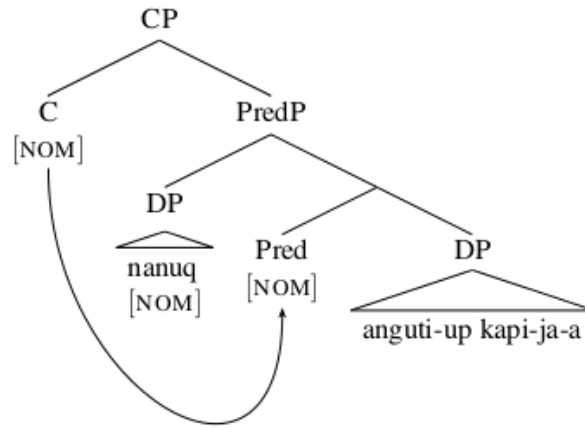
- (6) a. kapi-jaq
 stab-PASS.PART
 ‘the stabbed one’
 b. anguti-up kapi-ja-a
 man-GEN stab-PASS.PART-3S/3S
 ‘the man’s stabbed one’
 c. nanuq anguti-up kapi-ja-a
 bear.NOM man-GEN stab-PASS.PART-3S/3S
 ‘the bear is the man’s stabbed one.’

Implied in Johns (1992) is that the object is Merged high in the structure while the agent is Merged low. As mentioned in Section 2, I follow Bittner and Hale (1996) and Manga (1996) in taking the object in Inuktitut to be assigned case by T, though I take this case-licensing head to be

a Pred head (Bowers 1993) for reasons that will be clear shortly.⁶ This kind of proposal has also been put forth by Ura (2001) and Coon, Mateo Pedro and Preminger (in prep.). Under this view, what is labeled as ‘absolute’ case in a so-called ergative language is actually nominative case (hence the NOM case glosses in the examples); moreover, what is interpreted as the object is (structurally) actually the subject of a predicative (intransitive) construction.

Thus, I take (6c) to have the (simplified) structure in (12):

(12)



As just mentioned, this analysis assumes that nominative (absolute) case is licensed by Pred, rather than T. This is because this head never displays any properties of T such as tense, negation, or modality – rather, its head is obligatorily null.⁷ Although this paper generally remains agnostic with respect to whether there is a null copula present in Pred (or whether there is no copula, but just Pred), there is at least evidence that the structure does have a predicational layer that links the nominative (absolute) argument to the possessive phrase. (13) demonstrates that Inuktitut allows full sentences consisting of two adjacent DPs; (13b) in particular appears to be structurally identical to (6c).

- (13) a. Jaani ilisaiji
 John teacher
 ‘John is a teacher.’
 b. Jaani Miali-up ilisaiji-nga
 John.NOM Mary-GEN teacher-3S/3S
 ‘John is Mary’s teacher.’

Finally, in the structure in (12) above, although the nominative argument is Case-licensed by Pred, the Case feature on Pred originates on C. As mentioned in Section 3, Miyagawa (2011) takes nominative case as originating on a phase head, C, before lowering onto T via Feature Inheritance. In the analysis developed so far, then, structural Case features (genitive and

⁶ It follows that the intransitive subject in Inuktitut is also licensed by Pred, although the structure of intransitive clauses is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁷ See Imanishi (2013) for a similar proposal of null predication and genitive agents in Kaqchikel and Q’anjob’al (Mayan).

nominative) originate on D and C. If Miyagawa (2011) is correct that uninterpretable Case is found on phase heads, then D and C are phases in Inuktitut; Compton and Pittman come to the same conclusion on the basis of phonological wordhood. Recall, however, that Compton and Pittman suggest that *v*P is non-phasal because it lacks uninterpretable phi-features; more specifically, they note: “*v*P need not be a phase cross-linguistically, based on arguments in Chomsky (2007) for the non-phase status of unaccusative/passive *v*Ps in English. In an ergative language like Inuit, it is possible that *v* does not ever have the uninterpretable phi-features responsible for accusative case-assignment” (p. 2169). I believe that Compton and Pittman are correct, except that *v* cannot assign accusative case because Inuktitut lacks a phasal *v*P to begin with.⁸ Thus, the only two structural Cases available are nominative and genitive, because in Inuktitut, only CP and DP are phasal.

4.4 FOCUS FRONTING

Finally, we arrive at the last stage in the derivation of the transitive clause; (6) is repeated once again for full effect.

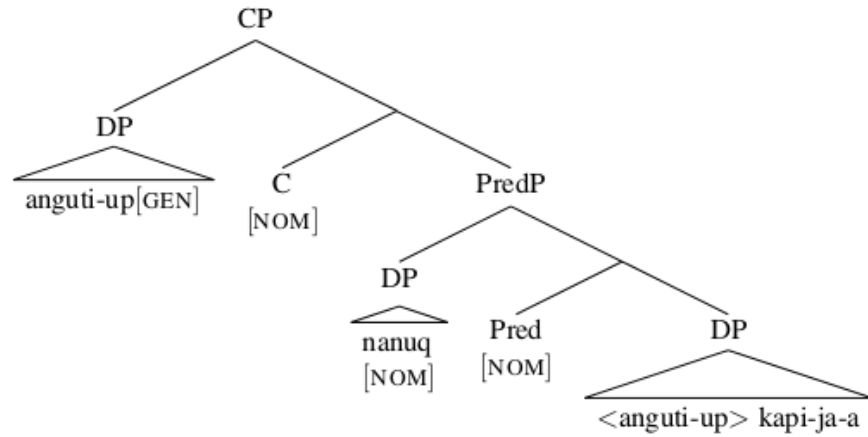
- (6)
- a. kapi-jaq
stab-PASS.PART
'the stabbed one'
 - b. anguti-up kapi-ja-a
man-GEN stab-PASS.PART-3S/3S
'the man's stabbed one'
 - c. nanuq anguti-up kapi-ja-a
bear.NOM man-GEN stab-PASS.PART-3S/3S
'the bear is the man's stabbed one.'
 - d. anguti-up nanuq kapi-ja-a
man-GEN bear.NOM stab-PASS.PART-3S/3S
'The man stabbed the bear.'

The only difference between (6c) and (6d) is the word order; while (6c) exhibits OSV word order, in (6d) the word order is SOV. This, according to various sources (e.g. Johns 1992; Gillon 1999; Sherkina-Lieber 2004), is the default word order in the language.

In Johns (1992), this word order is derived via adjunction of the genitive argument to Agr_v for case assignment reasons; see Johns (1992, p.76) for the full story. However, the motivation for this movement invokes both trace theory and government, two concepts not compatible with Minimalist tenets. As such, I propose that the genitive (ergative) argument is extracted from within the complex DP for focus reasons. The genitive argument must move higher than the nominative (absolute) argument in Spec-PredP; thus, I assume that the landing site for focus is Spec-CP (e.g. Rizzi 1997). The (simplified) structure of the full transitive clause in Inuktitut is presented in (14):

⁸ Johns (2007) proposes that Inuktitut does have a small class of light verbs, which trigger obligatory object incorporation. This is compatible with my analysis if the *v* in Johns (2007) is intransitive/non-phasal.

(14)



Empirically, this view is favourable because Johns (1992) takes this movement to be obligatory. However, other word orders are permissible in Inuktitut too; for instance, OSV word order is able to be elicited under a specific context, as demonstrated in (15).

(15) **Context:** A dog in the neighbourhood got loose and bit someone. You saw the attack and know that Alana was bitten. If I ask you who the dog bit, how do you reply?

→ Alaana qimmi-up kii-lauq-ta-nga
 Alana.NOM dog-GEN bite-DIST.PST-PASS.PART-3S/3S
 ‘It was Alana that the dog bit.’

According to Sherkina-Lieber (2004), different word orders arise due to pragmatic considerations such as focus. This will be revisited in the following section.

To summarize, this section develops an analysis of ergativity in Inuktitut in which ergative case is genitive case, licensed by D, and absolutive case is nominative case, licensed by Pred (from C). In a theory of phases in which Case-licensors are phase heads (e.g. Miyagawa 2011), DP and CP are phasal. Crucially, Inuktitut lacks phasal vP, a reflex of which being that Inuktitut does not bear accusative case. The following section focuses on some phasal properties of DP.

5 A PHASE-BASED ACCOUNT OF WORD ORDER

As noted in the previous section, Inuktitut allows different word orders depending on the context. Sherkina-Lieber (2004) provides the following permissible and impermissible word orders for the Mittimatalik (North Baffin) dialect of Inuktitut:

(16) Erg Abs V * V Abs Erg
 Abs Erg V * V Erg Abs
 Erg V Abs * Abs V Erg

According to Sherkina-Lieber (2004), this is true for both declarative sentences and wh-questions. (17) and (18) below moreover demonstrate that the word orders in (16) hold in South Baffin:

- (17) 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
 c. qimmiup kiijanga arnaq
 d. * kiijanga arnaq qimmiup
 e. * kiijanga qimmiup arnaq
 f. * arnaq kiijanga qimmiup
- (18) a. kia Alaana kii-ja-nga
 who.GEN Alana.NOM bite-PASS.PART-3S/3S
 ‘Who bit Alana?’
 b. Alaana kia kiijanga
 c. kia kiijanga Alana
 d. * kiijanga Alaana kia
 e. * kiijanga kia Alaana
 f. * Alaana kiijanga kia

This tells us two things. First, it provides further support for the analysis developed in Section 4.4 that treats the neutral SOV word order as being derived via focus fronting – i.e. it is not obligatory, contra Johns (1992). Given that *wh*-movement (as in (17)) and focus fronting (as in (18)) are both instances of \bar{A} -movement, and given that the constructions in (17) and (18) are structurally identical, it makes sense that not only do targeted arguments move to the same position, Spec-CP, but the same arguments are able to be extracted. The second point that the data in (17) and (18) illustrate is that the word orders are categorically grammatical if the ergative argument precedes the verb, but categorically ungrammatical in the opposite configuration. Put differently, the possessor must precede the possessum. Note that this does not mean *immediately* precede; the absolutive argument may intervene (as in Erg Abs V word order).

Here, I propose that the phasal status of DP plays a role in determining which arguments are extractable and thus also which word orders are allowed. Phases are standardly assumed to adhere to the Phase Impenetrability Condition (Chomsky 2000; 2001), which essentially states that the elements inside a phase are invisible to further operations (e.g. extraction) once the phase is complete; only the phase head and its edge are accessible. Because this analysis takes D to be the locus of genitive Case, the possessor (the so-called ‘ergative’ argument) moves to Spec-DP once it is licensed for genitive case.⁹ Given the analysis presented so far, Spec-DP happens to be a phase edge, since phase heads license Case. Thus, because the possessor occupies a position at the phase edge, it is able to undergo further extraction, such as for focus fronting and *wh*-movement.

Conversely, the possessum (the nominalized verb in this analysis) is unable to move to the phase edge; this is because its route is blocked by the possessor, which, assuming the Extension Condition (Chomsky 1995), moves to Spec-DP as soon as the DP layer is Merged. Consequently, the possessum cannot extract out of the DP phase for focus fronting or *wh*-movement.

The grammatical word orders are thus explained as follows: For **Erg Abs V**, the standard, the absolutive (nominative) argument is Merged at Spec-PredP and the ergative (genitive)

⁹ Alternatively, D licenses genitive case on the possessor in situ via Agree, and the possessor is driven to Spec-DP by an edge feature. Either approach works for what is being presented here.

argument raises out of the possessive DP to Spec-CP. For **Abs Erg V**, the absolutive argument raises to Spec-CP while the ergative argument remains in situ within the DP. Finally, for **Erg V Abs**, I suggest that the entire phasal DP raises as posited by Rackowski and Richards (2005) for Tagalog (though with the CP phase).¹⁰ Rackowski and Richards define the notion of *closeness* as follows:

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

Put more simply, if goal α intervenes between a probe P and a (lower) goal β , then goal α (and not goal β) is what P agrees with. A necessary assumption that Rackowski and Richards make is that “phases are always in principle capable of moving” (2005, p.579); thus, the phase itself is capable of being a goal (i.e. in some sense ‘imbibe’ the feature whose presence on the blocked argument would otherwise trigger movement). What this means for Inuktitut is that, because the possessum is unable to raise to the edge of Spec-DP, the entire DP raises instead; because the order of arguments in the possessive DP is always **Erg V** (possessor-possessum), the raising of the possessive DP to Spec-CP derives the word order **Erg V Abs**. This is thus another instantiation of the Phase Impenetrability Condition, which is essentially a condition on locality; the raising of the phase rather than the blocked argument allows for the locality of movement to be maintained. This is, in turn, further evidence for the phasal status of the possessive DP.

6 CONCLUSION

In this paper, I demonstrated that Miyagawa’s (2011) approach to phases is implementable in Inuktitut, wherein D and C are phase heads because they license genitive and nominative case respectively. *vP* is not counted as a phase, because the analysis of ergativity in Inuktitut presented here assumes that Inuktitut lacks a phasal *vP* projection entirely (rather, if verbal projections are found in Inuktitut, they are conjectured to be non-phasal). The notion that DP is a phase is supported by various extraction restrictions that the possessum, but not the possessor, is subject to. The grammatical and ungrammatical word orders in Inuktitut are thus derived either by the movement of the possessor out of the DP or by the movement of the phasal DP itself.

Ultimately, this account of phasehood in Inuktitut is not entirely compatible with Compton and Pittman (2010), in which phases are outputted from Spell-Out as phonological words. While Compton and Pittman postulate that all CPs and DPs are phasal, the analysis presented here argues that only some DPs (perhaps better represented as *d*Ps*) are phasal. While complex (possessive) DPs are phasal, because D licenses genitive case, simple DPs lack Case-assigning heads and are thus non-phasal. This bifurcation of DPs is consistent with Chomsky (2000, 2001), who claims that *vPs* as found in passives and unaccusatives are non-phasal; these *vPs* do not introduce an external argument in its specifier. Similarly, a parallel could be extended to the DP.

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¹⁰ See also van Urk and Richards (2013) for a revised definition of closeness.

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