

AN INCLINATION TOWARDS ACCUSATIVE

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ABSTRACT

*This paper argues that linguistic hierarchies are not real in any linguistic sense but are summaries of linguistic observation or typology. Position in any hierarchy is based on intrinsic properties, specifically complexity of linguistic substance. To illustrate, an example involving a change in degree of ergativity across dialects of Inuktitut is discussed. A hierarchy account would only record changes in the use of case, but would not be able to probe the subtle changes in case structure which are suggested by the facts. Under this view, case is not a position on a hierarchy but a syntactic construct, where different cases may have differing complexities (Bejar and Hall 1999). In particular, accusative case has only a little *k* (or functional case), and cannot license an NP on its own, i.e., is structural. In contrast, a structure with a little *k* and a minimum lexical complement can license an NP, i.e., is oblique. The subtle interplay between accusative, partitive and instrumental case in different dialects is examined. It is argued that the Inuktitut case marker MIK originates as an oblique case in western dialects, but has undergone grammaticalization in eastern dialects. Grammaticalization is seen here to be structure reduction.*

1. INTRODUCTION: WHAT ARE HIERARCHIES?¹

Hierarchies are where each element is ranked with respect to lower elements to its right, as shown schematically in (1).

(1) R>S>T>U>V>W

Thus R is higher than anything else on the hierarchy, and equally W is lower than anything else on the hierarchy, with the intervening elements displaying intermediate points on the hierarchy. These hierarchies have been used in linguistics for many purposes. Within syntax, for example, a definiteness hierarchy is shown in (2a), and a person hierarchy is shown in (2b).

- (2) a. Definiteness: definite>referential>nonreferential
b. Person: first, second > third (Croft 1990: 127)

What is the significance of these hierarchies? They are a formalism which allows the linguist to express markedness ranking, where the least

¹ Thanks go to the organizers of WSCLA 6 in St. John's, where this paper was first presented.

marked element is that found on the right, i.e., the lowest element, while the most marked element is that found on the left. Linguistic hierarchies are often found in typological approaches to linguistics where it can be stated that if one member of the hierarchy is found, then it entails that all members to the right (i.e., all the less marked members) must also be found (Greenberg 1966, Croft 1990). More recently, hierarchies have been used in Optimality Theory to express markedness relations and how violations of these relations are encoded linguistically—see Aissen 2000.

Hierarchies pose two questions for the linguist interested in explanation as well as typology. 1. How does the learner, i.e., the child learning its first language, utilize this knowledge of hierarchies? Is the information contained within the hierarchies innate, and if so, is a relative ranking the type of knowledge we might expect to find innately in biological entities? It seems at first impression that a hierarchy as pure ranking cannot be a sort of innate mechanism since it is not a single constraint but is a set of constraints, and thus violates more strict notions against globality. The fact that members of this set are not fixed in number, i.e., the set may be from two to an unknown upper limit, also runs counter to our current concepts of fixed biological knowledge. 2. A related question for hierarchies is the question of whether or not they could be any other way than what they are, that is to say, in any one hierarchy is the ranking externally determined or is it the actual properties of its members which determine the hierarchy, i.e., are they intrinsically ranked?

I will assume here the position that hierarchies do not exist *per se*, but are the result of internal properties of the members which produce the phenomena we call hierarchies. Thus the answer to Question 1. is that no, hierarchies do not form part of the innate language mechanism but the underlying substantive properties which lead to them do. Since, as will be argued here, these properties are based on complexity of substance, the answer to Question 2. is also no—the ranking cannot be any other way. This restriction leads us to examine what appear to be novel rankings from the point of view that there is more to the difference than simple reranking. Substantive properties must be different. This approach to hierarchies can be formulated as in (3).

(3) Substantive Determination of Hierarchy

The content of the linguistic property determines its position in the hierarchy relative to any related property.² This content may be examined in terms of structural properties based on complexity of content.

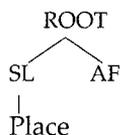
Such an approach to hierarchies lies behind recent theories of morphosyntax (c.f. Hanson, Harley and Ritter 2000 for a variety of morphological features within feature geometry). These featural approaches within morphosyntax are based on versions originating within the field of phonology (see Harley 1994 for the first bridge between feature geometry in phonology and morphosyntax). Consider a phonological example of this approach from Rice (1992), who discusses the sonority hierarchy. The sonority hierarchy is given in (4).

(4) Sonority Hierarchy

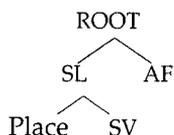
vowels>glides>liquids>nasals>obstruents

Instead of a hierarchy, Rice (1992) proposes that there are structural differences, i.e., differences in substance, between the properties represented in the ranking. An example of these structural differences is shown in (5), which shows an obstruent and a nasal representation of the same place of articulation.

(5) a. coronal stop



b. coronal nasal



SV = sonorant Voice; SL = Supralaryngeal; AF= Air Flow

In other words, the fact that the stop is lower on the hierarchy and less marked than the nasal is not simply a stipulative position on the hierarchy but is a direct consequence of the fact that the more marked element in the hierarchy (5b) has more structure. The assumption, of course, is that these structural differences can be argued for independently; otherwise structural representations would be simply notational variants of the hierarchy

² Substance and structure may be notational variants. Structure is more easily constrained. See for example Hale and Keyser (1993) who propose that theta roles are essentially structure.

rankings. If independent motivation for structural differences is possible, then the hierarchies are by-products of structural differences and we do not need to postulate them as innate mechanisms. Issues of globality and possible rerankings will disappear if differences can be shown not to result from positions on a continuum but from structural complexity. Under this view, (5b) is more marked than (5a) simply because it subsumes (5a). No hierarchy is needed to state this, although it might still serve as a device for typological investigation.

Throughout the following sections of this paper, I will examine what could arguably be a phenomenon based on a definiteness and case hierarchy, but will instead discuss it from the perspective of structure and structure diminishment, a type of grammaticalization. My intent is to show that the structural approach affords a finer-grained analysis which fits well with variationist data, and sheds light on the nature of the substantive properties involved.

2. DO HIERARCHIES DETERMINE INUKTITUT STRUCTURE?

Inuktitut has long been known to have two constructions which are akin to the transitive clause we are familiar with from Indo-European languages. The first construction is the ergative clause, consisting of an ergative agent and absolutive theme, and the second construction is the antipassive construction, consisting of an absolutive agent and a theme marked in a case which is neither ergative nor absolutive. The antipassive clause in many ways exhibits a nominative/accusative pattern, and has been argued to be such by Bok-Benema (1991) and more recently Spreng (2002). Examples of both constructions types from the Qairnirmiut dialect are shown (6) and (7), along with an intransitive clause for contrast in (6b).

- (6) a. arnaq-up angut taku-jaa (Ergative Clause)
 woman-ERG man(ABS) see-TR.3S/3S
 'the woman sees the man'
- b. angut sinik-tuq (Intransitive Clause)
 man(ABS) sleep-INTR.PART.3S
 'the man is sleeping'
- (7) a. arnaq anguti-mik taku-juq (Antipassive Clause)
 woman(ABS) man-MIK see-INTR.3S
 'the woman sees the/a man'
- b. arnaq anguti-mik kunik-si-juq (Antipassive Clause)
 woman(ABS) man-MIK kiss-ANTIPASSIVE-INTR.3S
 'the woman kisses the/a man'

As we can see in the examples in (6) the agent of the verb has a different case in the 'transitive' verb in (6a) than the subject of the intransitive verb in (6b). For this reason, the former case is termed ergative. The case on the patient in (6a) and the subject of the intransitive in (b) is absolutive, again conforming to the ergative pattern. In contrast, in the two antipassive clauses in (7),³ the agents are in absolutive case and the patient is in a case which I will call here the MIK-case.⁴

In recent years, a number of proposals have been put forward to explain the fact that (6a) and (7a) exist as alternants of each other. It has been hypothesized that a semantic feature exists which distinguishes in particular the absolutive patient *angut* 'man' in (6a) from the MIK-case patient *anguti-mik* 'man' in (7a). Thus Bittner (1994) proposes that, in some cases, the patient must have wide scope with respect to the verb, and that the absolutive position affords this scope. Similarly, Manga (1996) proposes that when the patient is specific, this argument must move to a higher position (absolutive) within the sentence. While neither of these proposals involves a hierarchy, it is clear that both proposals involve a mapping of the more marked alternant, specific/wide-scope to the highest position in the tree. Thus one might propose that hierarchies such as one of those in (8) underlie the mapping.

(8) Mapping to highest structural position on the tree

wide scope > narrow scope (based on Bittner 1994)

OR

specific > non-specific (based on Manga 1996)

According to this admittedly hypothetical approach, the non-specific and narrow scope versions of the patient (examples in 7) do not participate in this mapping due to their lower ranking on the hierarchy. In these cases the agent or subject wins the competition for highest ranked position by default, since it is higher on the independent Relational Hierarchy (see Croft 1990).

At this point I will leave aside the pursuit of an analysis of ergative/absolutive vs. antipassive based on hierarchies, and will turn instead

³ Note that in the antipassive construction in (7a) there is no explicit antipassive morphology, while in (7b) there is. See Spreng (2002) for an explanation of this difference.

⁴ The terms in the literature for this case are variously: modalis; accusative; instrumental, etc. I prefer the neutral MIK case, since its identity is what is at issue.

to the approach I advocate here, that of examining these constructions through issues of structural/substantive complexity. I will return to the issue of hierarchies in section 5.

3. A COMPARATIVE APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF THESE ISSUES

As we have seen in section 2, there exists in Inuktitut an ergative split such that there are two competing 'transitive' constructions, the ergative clause, as in (6a) and the 'antipassive' clause, as in (7a). Here I put these terms in quotation marks to signal that these labels are to be used only as names to help us differentiate between the two constructions. What the true difference between them is the question at hand. In recent work (Johns 1999a, 2001), I have argued that dialects of Inuktitut vary in the status of these clauses within the grammar. We can say that Labrador Inuktitut, an eastern dialect, is becoming less ergative, i.e., the construction in (6a) is not as central (i.e., so more marked) than it is in western dialects. Reversing this perspective, we can also say that Labrador Inuktitut is becoming more nominative-accusative than in western dialects. What this entails is that the construction in (7a) is more central (or unmarked) within the Labrador grammar such that it is almost, if not completely equivalent to, an accusative construction. As mentioned above, the construction in (7a) resembles the familiar transitive found in nominative-accusative languages, since the case on the agent is identical to that of the subject of intransitive clauses (as in 6b), and there is a marked case on the patient.

Dialects of Inuktitut are closely related but nevertheless do differ, both in phonology and syntax (Dorais 1990). In general the western dialects are more conservative, with eastern dialects showing a greater degree of innovation. My current understanding of the differences between western and eastern dialects is that the MIK-case varies in its status within the case system across dialects. To generalise: it is a full oblique case in western dialects of Inuktitut; it is similar to a partitive case in Central dialects; and it has become essentially an accusative case marker in Labrador Inuktitut. The spread is shown in (9).

(9)	Western	>	Central	>	Labrador
	-mił		oblique case		non-specific accusative
	(strongly ergative)		(ergative)		(weakly ergative)

Thus, according to the claim here, the syntactic status of the 'antipassive' clause, which features the MIK-case, is slightly different across dialects.

Evidence from western dialects that the MIK-case is no every-day accusative marker is that it is restricted from attaching to object names which refer. In fieldwork in the Inuvialuit dialect (or Siglit as it is often called), the use of a MIK-case on a referring name was not possible, as shown by the example in (10a). The only possible interpretation for (10a) was that the name was a property of some kind, as illustrated by the gloss. As we see in (10b), an example from the same dialect from Lowe (1985), a name is only found with a MIK-case where the name is a property, not the denoting expression. The reference of 'him' is established via the 3rd person patient agreement on the verb.⁵

- (10) a. ?Alana-**mik** Inuvialuktun (Western)
 Alana-MIK
 'someone dressed up as Alana'
- b. Uvvayua-**mik** atchiq-paung? (Lowe 1985)
 Uvvayua-MIK call-INTERR.3S/3S
 'did he call him Uvvayuaq?'
- (11) akla-**mik** taku-yuaq (Lowe 1985)
 grizzly.bear-MIK see-INTR.DECLAR.3S
 'he saw a grizzly bear'

The example in (11) shows that antipassive clauses are possible with MIK objects which are not names.

The restriction against the use of MIK with names in the antipassive clause is discussed quite lucidly in Manning (1996, 94-96). He reports that the restriction holds for Kalaallisut (p.c. Michael Fortescue to Manning)⁶, Inupiaq (p.c. Maclean to Manning), and is considered grammatical but odd in central arctic dialects (Johnson 1980).

Nevertheless, in Labrador Inuttut this restriction on names and MIK is absent, as can be seen in the antipassive examples below from Labrador Inuttut.

⁵ Another example from Lowe (1985) might also be interpreted as a counterexample to the restriction of names as objects.

(i) Ilruq niuvvaavi-lia-rami Uvvayua-mik uqaqsiq-tuaq
 Ilruq(ABS) store-travel-when.3R Uvvayua-MIK interpret-INTR.DECLAR.3S
 'when Ilruq went to the store, she used Uvvayuaq as an interpreter'

Here the MIK-case is found on an instrumental. See below for further discussion.

⁶ In fact, the insight related to Manning by Michael Fortescue is quite profound. This is that the MIK-case can be definite only when the grammar of the construction leaves no other choice. This can happen in some relative clauses and ditransitive constructions where there is a competing object.

- (12) a. Margarita Kuinatsa-i-juk Ritsatimik
 Ma:garita.ABS tickle-AP-INTR.PART.3S Richard-MIK
 'Ma:garita is tickling Richard'
- b. Siv uli-lau-kKuk O'Brieni-mik (KI Magazine Fall 1999, 6)
 leac -D.PST-IND.3S O'Brieni-MIK
 tak ɹ-ti-tlu-gu Kima-tau-sima-ju-mik
 see-DR-CONJ-3S abandon-PASS-PERF-INTR.PART.-MOD
 'he led O'Brien, showing him the abandoned site' [translation modified]

The example in (12a) was elicited, while the example in (12b) is from the Labrador magazine *KI*. While the latter in all probability is a translation from the accompanying English text, the fact is that it might have been an ergative clause. Finally, we see in (13) an example from the Rigolet dialect, a minority dialect within Labrador Inuttut with its own distinctive properties.

- (13) Nancy angka-li-mmat Rigolet (Labrador)
 Nancy-ABS home-PROG-BECAUSE.3S
 akli-gulak iksiva-juk Kaksi-tâ-gula-ngmi,
 black.bear-dear-ABS sitting-INTR.PART.3S hillock-get-dear-LOC.S
 iksiva-ju Kaksi-tâ-gula-ngmi
 sitting-INTR.PART hillock-get-dear-LOC.S
 Nancy-mi tautuk-tuk.
 Nancy-MOD.S look.at-INTR.PART.3S
 '... if Nancy was coming home, the young black bear would be sitting on a
 little hill, sitting on the little hill, watching Nancy'

This example was taken from an oral text, so translation from English is not an issue. Here we see that the name of the author's daughter Nancy is in the MIK-case (elided here to *-mi*, a common phonological effect in many dialects). Interestingly, this example contradicts a claim by Kalmar (1979) that the MIK-case is used to introduce new entities. We can see quite clearly that Nancy had already been introduced in the previous sentence, and thus the author knew that the listener to the story was familiar with Nancy. In fact Nancy was actually in the house as the story was told. Finally, (14) shows an example of a name from the North Baffin data in Manga (1996), thus attesting to the fact that this restriction has already been 'relaxed' in this dialect.

- (14) Jaani-mik ikaju-qqau-junga
 Johnny-MIK help-past-INTR.PART.1S
 'I helped Johnny'

In summary the restriction on names in the antipassive has changed across dialects. This allows us to hypothesize that the properties associated

with the MIK-case have also changed. Such a change conforms with the general impression which I have had for some time, which is that the antipassive/accusative construction is used more in Labrador Inuttut than in other dialects. Johns (1999a) proposes that a decrease in syntactic restrictions will correspond to an increase in the use of a particular construction within a language variety. This shown in (15).

(15) Frequency Inferential Principle (Johns 1999a)

Increased Restriction(s) \rightarrow Decline ($X_n \rightarrow X_{n-m}$)

Decreased Restriction(s) \rightarrow Incline ($X_n \rightarrow X_{n+m}$)

where m can be any number greater than 0

Thus if there are fewer restrictions on the antipassive/accusative construction, we expect to find more examples. Johns (2001) addresses this prediction by making a first attempt at the statistics of the construction in terms of usage. The percentage of MIK tokens found in a story from each of five dialects is shown in (16) where the dialects are displayed west to east.

(16) Percentage of MIK tokens per dialect text (Johns 2001)

	S	A	Q	M	L
MIK total	27	1	10	41	20
word total	291	63	180	1,301	409
% MIK	9.28	0	5.5	3.1	4.9

S = Siglit; A=Ahiarmiut; Q=Qairnirmiut; M= Mittimatalik; L=Labrador

According to (15), we expect to see that Labrador Inuttut has a higher percentage of MIK tokens than other dialects, but as can be seen, this is not the case. Instead there are actually more MIK tokens in Siglit, the most western dialect of the group.

That MIK tokens should appear more in the dialects where the antipassive is more restricted may be partially explained by the fact that the decision was made to count MIK tokens, rather than all instances of the antipassive construction containing MIK. Why might case token count differ from construction count? The answer to this lies in the fact that the MIK-case in fact has a distribution apart from the antipassive construction. Aside from the antipassive, the MIK case is found on a) patients in double object constructions, b) external modifiers of incorporated nouns, and, c) in some western dialects, on oblique instrumentals. In counting case tokens, I had expected that the extension of the MIK-case to names would result in an

strumental is not marked with the MIK-case but with another oblique case MUT. MUT is termed the allative (also terminalis, etc.), and is also found on goals.

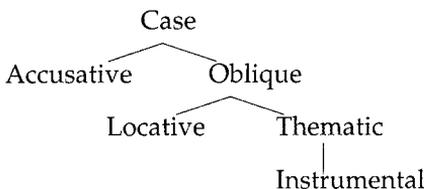
In summary, there is reason to believe not only that the status of the antipassive clause is different within the overall grammars of western vs. eastern dialects, but that a correlate of this difference is that the MIK-case varies also. Since this case marker is a central characteristic of the antipassive clause, we can focus our attention on how it changes across dialects. The most striking difference across dialects is whether or not the MIK-case can be used as the instrumental case.

4. TOWARDS A PROPOSAL

As discussed in section 1, the claim here is not that the empirical import of hierarchies is of doubt, rather that the basis of this import lies in differences of structural complexity rather than a set of relations between properties. The hierarchy as an entity does not exist any more than the fact that the relation $9 > 2$ does not exist, but instead derives from the properties of both 9 and 2, i.e., assumes that 9 subsumes 2 in a fixed manner. Thus the differences between the MIK-case from one dialect to another reflect not a reranking or recategorization of MIK in terms of some hierarchy, but instead reflect the fact that it has undergone some structural change, similar to a sound change, e.g., devoicing. From this perspective, let us examine one approach which purports to allow us to describe case change in terms of structural change.

Assuming that the higher members of hierarchies reflect more structural complexity, we see that the case structure proposed in Bejar and Hall (1999) shows that the more marked case, the instrumental involves more structure than that of the accusative.

(20) Bejar and Hall (1999)



The analysis shown in (20) was designed to explain some instances of synchronic case syncretism but clearly, it can be used for case change as well. In particular, a desirable consequence of the structure in (20) is that if

a case has oblique structure, then it is distinct from an accusative case. On the other hand, if some other case were to exist which did not have oblique structure, then it could potentially be mistaken for, or alternate as, accusative case.⁸

MIK seems to lie somewhere between oblique and accusative. A natural conjecture at this point is that MIK is some sort of partitive case, and Kiparsky (1998) explores the partitive as a hybrid of structural and semantic case. Indeed MIK is frequently found in constructions where a partitive case might be expected, even in eastern dialects. Consider the example from the eastern Rigolet dialect in (21).

- (21) Mir nguto-tima-gi-Katta-sunga niKi-nik. Rigolet
 tire-^{PERF}-again-often-^{CONTEMP}.1S food-MIK.PL
 'I used to get tired of the food'

niKik 'food' here is clearly not a canonical object in the sense that it is affected, nor does it seem to be restricted to a particular set of food, e.g., that food on the table, but instead is a set of food circumstances, possibly involving the same kind of food. The quantitative and aspectual nature of the object positions of course well-known. It is also of interest that antipassive and aspect have been linked, as MIK is associated with antipassive (see Spreng 2002 for arguments against antipassive as aspect). Kiparsky argues that the partitive case in modern Finnish results from a process of grammaticalization from a local case marker meaning 'from' to a partitive marker,⁹ and subsequently to a general unboundedness marker which can express the unboundedness of either an NP or a verb.

- (22) Balto-Finnic *-ta* 'from' -> partitive -> unbounded aspect

Inuktitut dialects are clearly participating in this grammaticalizing process from lexical to accusative case. However I believe that a binary contrast between lexical and structural case is too simple.

Ritter and Rosen (2001) show that accusative case and agreement always involves an interpretive property, with a wide range of semantic effects crosslinguistically. I interpret this to mean that accusative case is never purely structural like nominative case, and that it always has some interpretive property(ies). By definition then, accusative case will always carry

⁸ A problem for the approach taken here is Kalaallisut, which has MIK as instrumental case, but also is claimed to have MIK as an accusative case (c.f. Bok-Bernema 1991). I have no explanation for this at present.

⁹ The French morpheme *de* serves both functions.

some interpretive property, whether it be specificity, definiteness, etc. In terms of structural complexity then, accusative case is simply 'lighter' (less complex) than other non-nominative cases.

The contrast between light and less light elements is found in verbal elements as well. Johns (1999b, 2002) argues that noun incorporating verbs in Inuktitut are all both semantically and structurally light in this sense. A number of these verbs from the Mittimatalik dialect of are shown in (23).

- (23) a. -qaq- 'have'
 b. -u- 'be'
 c. -tur- 'eat/drink'
 d. -iruti- 'lack'
 e. -nnguq- 'become' etc.

Returning to the issue of lightness and case, let us examine the case system as a whole. Inuktitut has eight cases, as shown in (24).

(24) Case system in Inuktitut (all dialects)

absolutive:	∅
relative:	up
MIK:	mik
locative:	mi
allative:	mut
ablative:	mit
similaris:	tut
vialis:	kkut

A number of the cases have multiple useages. For example, while the general sense of the allative case *-mut* is 'towards,' it is also used as the case on the agent in a passive construction in some dialects.¹⁰ Other dialects use *-mit*, which generally means 'from'. Thus, as in many languages, a number of cases have both lexical and grammaticalized usages.

The distribution of the MIK-case across dialects presents a number of problems for a structural analysis of case. First we have to explain why in-

¹⁰ As mentioned above, it can also be found as instrumental in some dialects. Whether any correlation exists between its use on the passive by-phrase and instrumental remains to be determined.

strumental comes to be associated with something of a partitive interpretation. Secondly, we have to explain how this same case which becomes disassociated from instrumental also becomes less restricted regarding names. The case structure in (20) will have to be refined.

Koenig and Davis (2001) propose a restructuring of our understanding of lexical items, positing that lexical items have both lexical and modal subparts. The latter is termed sublexical modality, and consists of operators such as negation, irrealis, etc. which serve to modify the core meaning. Their argument is primarily based on the lexical semantics of verbs, but they also extend it to prepositions. From this we can extend the idea to case as well. A very preliminary analysis along these lines is proposed below, combining elements of Ritter and Rosen (2001) with Bejar and Hall (1999). Note first of all, that in the case structure in (20), proposed by Bejar and Hall, accusative forms a unique element within the structure since it alone does not appear to have dependents. A related property to note is that it is labelled as a specific case, while the other cases contain organizing nodes, e.g., thematic. Let us instead consider there to be an organizing node in the position of accusative case, and let us call it little k . We can consider k to be similar to little v or D in the current syntactic literature, in that it is independent of the lexical nature of the case system, and is similar to a functional category. Let us also replace the organizing label oblique with the organizing label root (see recent work on verbs Harley 2001). As a consequence of these assumptions, accusative case structure can be illustrated as in (25).

(25) k
[OP]

The OP indicates the set of interpretive features which may appear in k . Crucially little k is not sufficient to license an NP on its own but is a conduit for a lexical governor, i.e., a higher verb. When a quantifier is OP, the interpretation is partitive. In this manner little k parallels the sublexical modal component proposed by Koenig and Davis (2001), allowing semantic operators but no lexical content. In (26) we see a yet more elaborate case.

(26) k
 k LEX
[OP]

The structure in (26) represents a case which consists of little k and a minimal lexical organizing node. The presence of a lexical organizing node

entails that the case can license an NP without requiring a syntactic relation to any other lexical element (unlike the situation above). Of course, thematic connections with other elements may still be possible, or even necessary. If there is a quantifier in OP, we once again have a partitive interpretation; however in this latter instance the presence of LEX is sufficient to license the NP on its own. This contrasts with the partitive in (25), where a partitive interpretation can occur but the NP needs further licensing from an independent root. If there is no operator in little *k*, then the case in (26) is interpreted as a pure comitative, i.e., association. One of the names for the MIK-case in the literature is comitative, which entails that the NP be somehow 'accompanying' some argument in the event. If it accompanies the agent, it is an instrument. Where does this 'accompanying' interpretation come from? If LEX creates a syntactically independent structure, why should the case still require some other NP? While LEX provides independent syntax, it does not contain any semantics, so the NP contained within it does not have thematic status within the utterance. In other words, while its structure allows the nominal to be independent, its structure is not robust enough for any thematic interpretation.

Based on these distinctions, western dialects (Inuvialuktun) have the structure in (26) where 'instrumental' or comitative alternates with the partitive, i.e., the MIK-case is found in both uses, while in Labrador and eastern Canadian dialects of Inuktitut, the MIK-case has the structure in (25), where there is no instrumental usage, however MIK alternates between a partitive and accusative reading. The fact that each structure has two possible interpretations is not surprising, although it requires further investigation. Johns (2001) proposes that alternations are the source of grammatical change, in effect synchronic grammaticalization similar to that proposed in Roberts and Roussou (1999).

While I do not intend to present a theory of case here, a preliminary analysis suggests that a structural account of case, based on the varying structural complexity of cases is a useful means of understanding case changes where the same case form assumes different values.

In summary, the proposal here is that the ergative/absolutive drift to nominative/accusative in eastern dialects of Inuktitut is crucially tied to the reduction in complexity of the *-mik* case morpheme. Whether this change is a trigger or a consequence remains for future research.

5. CONCLUSION

I have argued that the drift towards nominative-accusative typology for Labrador Inuttit has crucially involved a change in the MIK-case from a genuinely independent oblique case to one which works along with the verb in the licensing of the NP object. At this point, one might argue that the structures proposed here are simply a notational variant of the observations captured by case hierarchies. In some general sense this is true, but a closer examination shows that a structure-based account is more constrained, and therefore more explanatory than any possible hierarchical account.¹¹ Elements within any one hierarchy are usually macro bundles of features. The notion of hierarchy does not naturally lead to decomposition of these bundles (see however Silverstein 1976). In contrast, the structure-based account forces an examination of detailed relations between elements. Variations across dialects or through time can be explained through simplification of structural complexity or markedness reduction. In a hierarchical account, such changes take place through extrinsic, not intrinsic, processes. Finally a structure-based account explains the limitations on the range and nature of elements within any one set of grammatical components. As primitives, the elements within a hierarchy would seem to be potentially infinite and not necessarily related to one another. A microstructural approach is able to show that these elements are sometimes compositional, and therefore limited and related to one another. Substantive properties and markedness fall out naturally in this approach.

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¹¹ Although hierarchies can be restricted. See, for example, Harmonic Alignment, discussed in Aissen 2000.

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KEQ NIT MEHSI LIWIHTOMON? WHY DO YOU SAY IT THAT WAY? USING LINGUISTIC KNOWLEDGE IN NATIVE LANGUAGE CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT

Incorporating linguistic knowledge into native language curriculum is essential if learners are to find their way into the language's structure, patterns, and ways of constructing meanings and expressing ideas. For example, Passamaquoddy-Maliseet, like other North American native languages, forms words and sentences and construes relationships among people and between people and the environment in unique ways. If learners are to speak Passamaquoddy-Maliseet like first-language speakers, they must understand and be able to adopt strategies and attitudes appropriate to the language. In addition, subtleties of tone and meaning must be mastered. Teachers must accept these challenges with a sense of playful good humour, by helping learners think carefully about phrasing, sentence structure, and the organization of utterances.

1. INTRODUCTION

From time to time, when I hear native youth speak of their wish to re-establish the continuity of their culture and history, they will say—poignantly—'I don't speak my language'. That is, I don't know the language of my ancestors and this is painful for me: it is an essential part of my particular native culture and therefore of my identity.

The illustrative examples in this paper are taken from Passamaquoddy-Maliseet, the language of the aboriginal people of the St. Croix and St. John River valleys in Maine and New Brunswick (the principal studies of the language are LeSourd 1993, Sherwood 1986, Teeter 1971). Today there are fewer than 500 fluent speakers, and virtually all are 50 years of age or older (Leavitt 1997). By the 1970s it was evident that the younger generation no longer were speaking the language and had lost much of the practical and intellectual knowledge of their grandparents—not just names of places and plant and animal species, but also broader aspects of oral history and tradition, including awareness of the events of the recent past. More important perhaps, they had lost the ability to speak to their grandparents 'on the same wavelength', as one speaker noted, that is, the ability to think about the world in the same way. Since that time numerous Passamaquoddy-

Maliseet educators have made efforts to teach the language to children and adult learners.

Why learn to speak a native language today? Is it the only way of getting to the heart of the culture, the only way of seeing oneself as a truly complete person? Certainly the native student will answer these questions differently from the non-native, both aware of the particular socio-political, emotional, familial, and historical implications of their desire to speak the language. But in setting out to learn a native language both native and non-native students wish to know how to express themselves from the particular point of view of the language and from inside the knowledge and experiences which give it life. The decision to become a speaker may have a number of motives, some personal and others professional.

2. LEARNING LINGUISTIC STRUCTURES

Those working in a native language education setting, in whatever capacity, need consciously to know at least something of the structure of the language and the world view it expresses. Students, once launched into understanding and speaking it, will become intrigued with the language's capacity to specify, within a single word, a broad range of concrete and context-dependent meanings as well as shades of attitude and opinion. At the same time, they quickly discover that speakers, however fluent, cannot explain the inner workings of the language: they have not studied it and they are neither accustomed nor inclined to analyse it.

Nevertheless, with teachers' and other speakers' help, students acquire an initial vocabulary and a sketchy sense of the syntax. Soon they are surprised when their literal translations into the native language founder (see example 8 below), and they get their first hints of a sense of physical and social space unknown to them in English or French: how people situate themselves in relation to the physical space and the community of people around them. The language offers a glimpse into the nature of a particular native identity.

New speakers begin to enjoy the sense of play they hear in the speech of teachers and elders, who normally invent words as they talk, simply to be precise, or perhaps to insinuate something or make a story more humorous. Eloquent storytellers squeeze yet more meaning into a word by adding or changing a root or inflectional ending. For example, in (1) a husband has used the masculine root *-ape-* to give a bite to his complaint about his wife. In (2) the absentative case, required by the situation (in which Rac-

coon's mittens have been eaten by some fisher kits while he was asleep), also gives a tone of grievance to the question.

- (1) Etuci-moc-ape-w-it nt-ehpit-em.¹
 very-bad-male-verb-AI.3.CONJUNCT² 1-woman-POSS
 'my wife is an ugly fellow'
- (2) Tan nil muwinewiyey-ak n-mulcess-okk?³
 where I/me of.bearskin-PL 1-mitten-PL.ABS
 'where are my bearskin mittens [that were here before]?'

Even at the earliest stages, new speakers begin to create their own words. The use of preverbs and their corresponding initial roots is perhaps the most productive of the processes for qualifying the meaning of a verb (Leavitt 1985). In general, preverbs have the full range of adverbial, adjectival, and prepositional meanings. In (3), (4), and (5), the speaker's interest is in specifying spatial and temporal aspects.

- (3) a. naci (preverb) 'going there or coming here'
 b. naciwitmi 'I'm going to church (going to pray with others)'
 c. natam 'I'm going fishing [there]'
 d. natoness 'I'm going to dig clams'
 e. naciwicuhkemin 'come help me'
 f. naciphin 'come get me [here]'
 g. natewestuwamin 'come talk to me'
- (4) a. api (preverb) 'back from having gone elsewhere'
 b. ntapiwitimi 'I'm back from church'
 c. ntapam 'I'm back from having dug clams'
 d. ntaponess 'I'm back from digging clams'

1 Unless otherwise noted, the examples here were spoken or reported by Pas-samaquoddy-Maliseet speakers David Francis, Wayne Newell, Elizabeth Newell, Joseph Nicholas, Imelda Perley, Mary Ellen Stevens.

2 Abbreviations used include: 0 third person inanimate; 1 first person; 1.2 first person subject with second person object; 2 second person; 2.1 second person subject with first person object; 22.3 second person plural subject with third person animate singular object; 3 third person animate; 3D three-dimensional; A animate; ABS absentative; AI animate intransitive verb; BENEF benefactive; CONJ conjunct mode; II inanimate intransitive verb; IMPER imperative mode; INDEF indefinite (grammatical person and number not specified); PL plural; POSS possessed; PROG progressive; REFL reflexive; SG singular; SUBJ subject; TA transitive animate verb; TI transitive inanimate verb.

3 This sentence appears in Lewis Mitchell's transcription of the traditional story *Espons* (Raccoon), as published in Prince (1921).

- (5) a. motə (preverb) 'heard but not seen'
 b. motəntu 's/he is heard singing (but not seen)'
 c. motəmiye 's/he is heard praying'
 d. metəssik 'change (coins—what is heard moving)'

By mastering such subtleties as they continue to acquire new vocabulary, beginners enter a community of speakers who truly think of the world and talk about it in another way. This is true for both native and non-native learners.

3. GETTING LINGUISTIC INPUT

If they are working in a school setting or in another context where the native language is an object of study, teachers must ask themselves how to help new speakers, including children, acquire the ability to create their own words and sentences. It is only by having some understanding of the grammar of the language, whether conscious or not, that new speakers can communicate effectively. Today, however, in many First Nations communities the native language is seldom used in public or even private forums, and consequently there is no longer the wealth of repeated examples which would allow children to infer such features as the various plural endings or the uses of the verb modes.⁴ For example, the conjunct mode is not only used in relative clauses and certain questions, but in many verbs indicates a commentary on the part of the speaker, as in (6). The verb *liku* denotes someone's physical appearance—as in *ansa liku mihtaqsol* 'he looks like his father'. Its meaning changes in the conjunct.

- (6) a. liku (independent indicative) 's/he looks thus (appearance)'
 b. elikit (conjunct) 's/he is ugly (literally, how s/he looks)'
 c. elalokittiyekit (with expletive) 's/he is ugly as hell'
 d. elikossit (with diminutive) 'she is cute' (*'he is cute')
 e. elalokittiyekossit (with expletive and diminutive) 'she is cuter than hell' (*'he...')

Beginning speakers' careful study of conversation, stories, songs, and oral history becomes fascinating to them in its own right. Useful structures and patterns emerge: verbs and nouns built from the vast set of endlessly re-combining roots; grammatical genders, animate and inanimate; forms

⁴ Leavitt (1996) summarizes the uses of the various verb modes; see also LeSourd (1993), Sherwood (1986), Teeter (1971).

for singular, dual, and plural number; separate sets of positive and negative verb inflections; phonological and prosodic changes;⁵ and an economy of expression unrivalled by the most succinct English. Example (7) is a typical sentence and the first line of a story. The alternative verbs in (7b) through (7e) are but a small fraction of the possible new words a speaker might create by changing the body-part classifier. In (7f) a shape classifier, *-ahq-* 'stick-like', is also incorporated into the verb; others may be used, too, according to the body-part specified.

- (7) a. Kis k-nomiy-awa amucalu etoli-koss-iqe-n-s-it?
 already 2-see.TA-22.3 fly PROG-wash-eye/face-with.hand-REFL-3.CONJ
 'have you ever seen a fly washing its face?'
- b. ...etoli·koss·iptine·nsit '...washing its hands'
- c. ...etoli·koss·ihtone·nsit '...washing its nose'
- d. ...etoli·koss·ilqe·nsit '...washing its armpits'
- e. ...etoli·koss·atpe·nsit '...washing its hair (literally, top of head)'
- f. ...etoli·koss·ahq·iskipe·nsit '...washing its neck'

4. ATTAINING NATIVE FLUENCY

As they set overall goals of instruction, develop curriculum, and design specific lessons and materials—in consultation and collaboration with fluent speakers—those who have become conscious of the structure of the language must ensure that their work remains grounded in the actual, used language of the community, while at the same time maintaining high standards of 'acceptability' in the materials and curriculum they develop. To this end they must carefully define terms like expertise and identify experts—significant challenges for native educators—and they must help the fluent speakers they work with discover language properties.

Especially important in building the connections between language and culture is the ability to say things in a Passamaquoddy-Maliseet way. This is one of the new speaker's goals. A broad vocabulary is not sufficient, since, as may be seen in all the examples above, sentences are not normally translated word for word from English into the native language. In (8a),⁶ a beginning speaker has attempted to translate 'It is dark in the cellar'. The fluent native speaker would formulate the idea quite differently, as shown in (8b). Further examples are shown in (9), where a perfectly good Pas-

⁵ See LeSourd (1993) for a full discussion.

⁶ Thanks to Philip LeSourd, of Indiana University, for examples (8a) and (8b).

samaquoddy-Maliseet word has been supplanted—in many younger speakers' usage—by an anglicized version using separate verb and noun. Sentence (10) shows another typical pattern in contemporary or newly learned Passamaquoddy-Maliseet, the nominalization of a meaning normally expressed with a verb.

- (8) a. Eci-ɔisk-iya-k lahkəp-ok.
 very dark-be/become.II-0SG.CONJ cellar-LOC
 'the cellar is very dark' (anglicized)
- b. Eci-ɔisk-alok-ahte-k eməhkew.
 very dark-hollow-be.thus.II-0SG.CONJ below
 'the cellar is very dark' (idiomatic)
- (9) N-k ɔsinuhk-an n-ipit.—N-ipit-in.
 1-be.sick.AI-1SG.subordinative 1-tooth — 1-tooth-suffer.AI⁷
 'I have a sore tooth' (anglicized—idiomatic)
- (10) sakomawi-pom-k-akon—sakomaw-k-an
 chief-along-dance.AI-NOMINALIZER—chief-dance.AI-INDEF.SUBJ
 'chief's dance' (anglicized—idiomatic)

Such nuances are important in new speakers' development of skill and fluency and in their reconceptualizing or reorienting their identity. As speakers position themselves in the Passamaquoddy-Maliseet world, they acquire the links to space and time, family and society that are characteristic of the active and intimate participation that the language expresses. As an example, in English it is possible to talk of the world 'objectively', without relying upon a personal perspective; in Passamaquoddy-Maliseet it is unusual to express such an impersonal point of view. New speakers of the language need to know that their personal space is both the basis of all the physical and social space they talk about and part of the same continuum.

The examples in (11) show the dependent noun system of Passamaquoddy-Maliseet, which includes all kinship and body-part terms, as well as a small number of personal items. New and younger speakers often deduce a neutral (i.e., not possessed) form unacceptable to most fluent speakers, who would use a verb participle to express such an idea, as in *wemih-taqsit* 'the Son'—literally, 'the one who has a father'.⁸

⁷ Here, as in all AI verbs, independent indicative, the first-person singular ending is null.

⁸ From the widely used translation of the Sign of the Cross: 'In the name of the Father, the Son...' This word could also mean 'daughter' or 'child'.

- (11) a. nuhkomoss 'my grandmother' (*uhkomoss 'a grandmother')
 b. nmihtaqs 'my father' (*mihtaqs 'a father')
 c. nsisoq 'my eye' (*sisoq 'an eye')
 d. npihtin 'my hand' (*pihtin 'a hand')
 e. ntemis 'my dog' (*temis 'a dog'; olomuss 'a dog')
 f. ntul 'my boat, my canoe' (*tul 'a boat'; tuloq 'a boat', oqiton 'a canoe')

The examples in (12) through (15) hint at the large number of speaker-referenced spatial attributes ascribed to motion, extension, and orientation in the physical environment. These are commonly used figuratively as well, as in the final example in (12) and in (13); and they are also used with reference to time: *weckuwikotok* 'in the coming year' and *elomikotok* 'as the year goes along [from now on]'.⁹ Spatial and temporal distinctions were also noted in (3) through (5), above.

- (12) a. akuwi (preverb) 'moving or extending out of view'
 b. akuwuhse 's/he walks out of view'
 c. akuwahte 'it extends out of sight'
 d. akuwolamson 'the wind is blocked from here'
 e. akuwitungom 's/he tries to escape notice'
- (13) a. sakhi (preverb) 'moving or extending into view'
 b. sakuhse 's/he walks into view'
 c. sakhahte 'it extends into view'
 d. sakholamson 'the wind comes out toward here'
 e. sakhitungom 's/he makes h/ presence known'
- (14) a. ckuwi (preverb) 'toward here'
 b. ckuwuhse 's/he walks toward here'
 c. ckuwolamson 'the wind blows toward here'
 d. ckuhqepu 's/he sits facing toward here'
- (15) a. olomi (preverb) 'away from here'
 b. olomuhse 's/he walks away from here'
 c. olomolamson 'the wind blows away from here'
 d. olomuhqepu 's/he sits facing away from here'

5. ACQUIRING HUMOUR

Few aspects of language reveal a people's linguistic resourcefulness more than their humour, which calls for just the right word or turn of phrase. New speakers wish to be able to make and appreciate jokes and in-

⁹ These verb II conjunct forms used the changed forms of *ckuwi* and *olomi*, respectively.

situations. These skills are especially useful in the friendly but pointed teasing favoured as social discipline, the kind of teasing that keeps people in balance with their family and community. In fact, in general, speakers prefer jokes and humorous stories in which the protagonists are known to them; until recently, one seldom heard stories with anonymous or archetypal characters.

During a conference I once attended with two colleagues who were speakers of Passamaquoddy-Maliseet, we spent an evening at a pub with some of the other participants, who began after a while to sing. Soon their songs turned off-colour, eventually becoming more and more explicit. Finally, one of my colleagues hissed through her teeth, 'That's it! I've had enough of this kind of talk. We're leaving'. When we were outside, I said, amazed, 'But you talk that way all the time!' 'Yes', she agreed, 'but that's about people I know'. Her sense of humour, much like her sense of social space, was personally centred.

In (16) and (17) are two jokes based on linguistic ambiguity. The first story, which goes back to the mid-1900s, tells of a particular woman who asks a friend to buy some underwear for her when she goes to town. The cooperative errand-runner misunderstands and asks the clerk for a pistol. The sentence in (17) was spoken by a man contemplating a child's portrait printed on the front of a woman's sweatshirt—much to the woman's delight. This was the same woman, by the way, who was disgusted by the raunchy songs.

- (16) a. Nat onuhm-uw-in elam-sew-i.
 go.tl ere-buy.TI-BENEF-2.1.IMPER inside-wear-1.CONJ
 'go buy me some underwear'
- b. Nat onuhm-uw-in lam-sew-ey.
 go.tl ere-buy.TI-BENEF-2.1.IMPER inside-wear-ADJECTIVAL.NOUN
 'go buy me a pistol'¹⁰
- (17) Etut-apsk-onuw-at wot pilsqehsis.
 very 3D.round-cheek-3.CONJ this.A girl
 'this girl has very big cheeks'

Sometimes the humorous turn of phrase relies on a change of tone much like that found in (6), above. In (18) *-alokittiye-* is inserted into a TA verb meaning 'I am making use of you'. This then becomes a strong accusation, no longer just a statement of fact.

¹⁰ Pistols being commonly carried inside one's clothing.

- (18) Kt-ol-alokittiye-wehkuh-ul!
 2-thus-EXPLETIVE-use.TA-1.2
 'what the hell would I want with you?'

6. CONCLUSION

If teaching a native language as a second language in a school setting is to meet students' needs, it must help them first of all gain continuity of experience with their fluent elders. In this way language-based aspects of culture can be maintained intact, avoiding to some extent the gaps in identity and self-knowledge which currently exist between one generation and the next. Learners will also acquire a new understanding of the past and the future and their place in the continuum of time.

In practical terms, learning to speak requires students to enter the existing forums in which the language is used. They need strategies for making sense—out of what they hear and in what they say—in a broad range of situations, as well as strategies for inventing their own words and experimenting. They must learn what to know and whom to ask, how to solicit feedback and what to do with it. They need to know how to take advantage of the knowledge of speakers and linguists, and of the invaluable data to be found in texts, dictionaries, recordings, and translations.

With a strong linguistic component in the native language program, learners will be able to listen knowledgeably and speak with confidence. Even competent speakers will enrich their language and become more eloquent. Teachers who attend to linguistic features of the language will be able to help everyone move toward a more authentic fluency as they learn. Then, when they say, 'I speak my language', they will mean this in the full sense of the words.

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