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Argument Structure and Antipassivization in Inuit*

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1 Introduction

This paper examines some seemingly disparate uses of the morpheme *-si* in two very closely related Inuit (Eskimo) languages: Inuktitut (spoken in Northeastern Canada) and West Greendlandic. I will use the term "Inuit" to refer to both West Greenlandic and Inuktitut as they pattern together.

The morpheme *-si* is traditionally associated with antipassive morphology, although it also appears in several other environments that do not, at first, seem related to antipassivization. I will show that there are actually systematic patterns underlying the distribution of *-si*, indicating that the uses of of the morpheme in question are not as disparate as initial observations have assumed. I will discuss the implications of these patterns for a theory of the morphosyntax of antipassivization.

Antipassivization is canonically a valency-changing operation that intransitivizes a transitive verb by "demoting" the direct object to an oblique Case or omitting it altogether. In Inuit, the antipassive is marked by a suffix which has

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several allomorphs. Many researchers claim that the specific allomorph which appears is lexically governed to some extent, and is at least partially abitrary or idiosyncratic, and not necessarily conditioned by phonological or other factors. Johnson (1980) and Bittner (1987) argue that the different antipassive morphemes are not allomorphs, but actually are used in different discourse contexts. The most common overt antipassive marker is *-si*, the one that we will focus on in this paper.

2 The Data

In this paper I will investigate examples in Inuktitut and West Greenlandic of *-si* appearing in places that are unexpected given the standard function and distribution of antipassive morphology. The data to be examined are mostly from naturally-occurring Inuktitut texts in Kalmár (1979b) and from Fortescue's (1984) grammar of West Greenlandic. The original source is cited with each example, along with a notation indicating the language of the example, either West Greenlandic (WG) or Inuktitut (I).[1]

2.1 Prototypical Antipassivization

Before examining the examples of *-si* that would unexpected if one assumed that it was antipassive morphology; I will review what canonical antipassivization looks like. In order to do that, we will first digress briefly to illustrate basic clause structure in Inuit.

2.1.1 Ergativity

Inuit is an ergative language, with canonical SOV word order. Verbs agree with the person and number of the subject and, where relevant, the object. This agreement surfaces as a verbal suffix which is usually described as fusing together subject agreement, object agreement and morpheme mood morphology. [2]

[1] The examples are in the maximum amount of detail allowed by the original source. The following abbreviations and notational conventions are used: ABS=Absolutive Case, ANTIPASS=Antipassive Suffix (may or may not be canonical case of antipassivization), CAUS=Causative, CONJ=Conjunction, CONN=Connective, FREQ=Frequentative, ICM=Incontemporative Mood, IND=Indicative Mood, MOD=Modalis(Instrumental) Case, PART=Participle, {1,2,3}{S,PL}=Subject person & number agreement, {1,2,3}{S,PL}/{1,2,3}{S,PL}=Subject/Object person & number agreement.

[2] There is not agreement in the literature about this, a separate morpheme indicating modality can probably be separated and Kalmár (1979b) argues that the agreement morpheme can be decomposed still further to include explicit information about the number of arguments the verb agrees with. The

The examples in (1) and (2) illustrate sentences with basic intransitive and transitive/ergative verbs respectively.

(1) Jaani tikittuq

Jaani tikit -juq
Johnny(ABS) arrive -PAR,3s
'Johnny arrived.' I (Allen 1994: 15)

(2) arnaup qimiq takuvaa

arnaq -up qimiq taku -vaa
woman -ERG dog(ABS) see -IND,3s/3s
'A/the woman saw the dog' I (Kalmár 1979b: 87)

2.1.2 Antipassivization

The sentence in (3) is an example of *-si* being used in its standard object-demoting antipassive use. Antipassivization here involves the subject occurring in Absolutive Case, the object either not realized or realized in an oblique Case, *-si* suffixed to the verb, and subject agreement morphology on the verb.

(3) Jaaku ujaqqamik tigusivuq

Jaaku (ujarak -mik) tigu -si -vuq
Jaaku (stone -MOD,SG) took -ANTIPASS -IND,3s
'Jacob took (a stone).' WG (Bittner 1987: 194)

2.2 Non-typical Use of Antipassive Morphology

There are also many examples of the morpheme *-si* occurring in cases that do not resemble antipassivization. These unusual cases are grouped descriptively, and discussed below.

complicated morphophonology of the language makes it very difficult here, and in many other cases, to determine where exactly morpheme boundaries should be drawn. Here, I will adopt the conservative approach and treat the modality/agreement suffix as one fused morpheme since it is not critical for the main issues to be discussed.

2.2.1 Intransitive Verbs

There are examples of what appears to be the antipassive morpheme -*si* suffixed to intransitive verbs (as in (4), (5), (6) and (7)). This is clearly unexpected given the nature of antipassivization.

(4)
iqlaq -si -kallak -pak -łunga
laugh -ANTIPASS -suddenly -FREQ -ICM,1s ...
'I'd suddenly have to laugh, ...'
I (Kalmár, 1979b:127)

(5)
qilalukka -nik pui -si -vuq
whale -MOD,PL come up to surface -ANTIPASS -IND,3s
'There appeared whales on the surface (of the sea)'
WG (Bittner 1988 as cited in Bok-Bennema 1991: 263)

(6) natsiqannaavaa
natsiq anna -i -vaa
ringed seal(ABS) get away -ANTIPASS -IND,3s/3s
'The ringed seal got away from him' WG (Fortescue 1984: 269)

(7)
ammalu tuavirnaq -tuqaa -si -kaatla -k -pat
CONN -emergency -there is -ANTIPASS -suddenly -REL -3s
'And when all of a sudden there is an emergency...'
I (Kalmár 1979b: 116)

(8) Taania -p qajar -taa -ni asiru -i -vaa
Taania -ERG kayak -new -his break -ANTIPASS -IND,3s/3s
'Taania had his new kayak destroyed (unintentionally).'
(i.e. Taania's kayak broke on him) WG (Fortescue 1984: 269)

2.2.2 Antipassivization and Inceptive Aspect

There are also many examples of -*si* which I will argue are cases of it is being used to convey aspectual information (as in (4), (7), (9) and (10)).

In this use, the verb is often modified by 'suddenly'. This use is found with both transitive and intransitive verbs and sometimes corresponds (in terms of argument structure and Case) to a standard antipassive and sometimes does not.

(9)

jo	qukiq	-si	-ju	-kulu	-u	-tainna	-r
Joe(ABS)	shoot	-ANTIPASS	-PART,3s	-DIM	-BE	-suddenly	-REL

-mat
-3,CONJ

'All of a sudden Joe fired, and ...' I (Kalmár 1979b: 130)

(10)

utuqaat
the old couple
aliikkutaSSaraluwatik
those who should have been an entertainment for them
taSSaŋŋannaq aniSigamikkik
suddenly when they had them go out for them

'When they had the bad luck that those who should have been an entertainment for them suddenly went out.'

WG (Bugge & Lynge 1934 as cited in Bergsland 1955: 109)

2.2.3 Adversative/Malefactive Use

The example in (12) illustrates another use of the antipassive morpheme, one that Fortescue (1984) calls a highly lexicalized "detrimental use" (p. 269). In these cases, *-si* occurs suffixed to a transitive verb, and the subject is a patient instead of an agent.

(11)

qajar	-taa	-va	asirur	-sima	-vuq
kayak	-new	-his(ABS)	break	-PERF	-IND,3s

'His new kayak has been destroyed (broke).'

WG (Fortescue 1984: 269)

(12)

Taania	-p	qajar	-taa	-ni	asiru	-i	-vaa
Taania	-ERG	kayak	-new	-his	break	-ANTIPASS	-IND,3s/3s

'Taania had his new kayak destroyed (unintentionally).'

WG (Fortescue 1984: 269)

The construction shown in (12) is similar to the Japanese adversative passive (discussed in Kubo (1990) and Kuno (1973) among others), an example of which is given in (13).[3]

[3] See also McGinnis (this volume) for work on a similar construction in Georgian.

(13) Term paper -o Jiro -ga kyoju -ni nakus -rare -ta
term paper -ACC Jiro -NOM professor -DAT lose -PASS -PAST
'Jiro had a professor lose a term paper on him.'

(Kubo 1990: 28)

2.3 Towards an Analysis

Given this pattern, one possibility would be to say that the uses of *-si* which do not correspond to the standard properties of the antipassive are evidence for accidental homophony, i. e., the existence of at least one other morpheme which has the same phonological form as that of *-si* but which is unrelated to antipassivization. The other, more interesting possibility is that *-si* is present in the seemingly disparate cases for the same reason(s).

I will argue that is possible to collapse, at least partially, the uses of *-si*. The seemingly disparate uses of *-si* then, are not purely cases of homophony. I will argue that *-si* has one occurrence that is related to aspect, and one occurrence that is related to argument structure. I will not further collapse these two types of *-si* although I will point out some reasons for thinking that such a further unification of the uses of *-si* is indeed possible.

3 Antipassive Morphology and Verb Classes

We will see that the Inuktitut and West Greenlandic data indicate that antipassive morphology can be used to mark inceptive aspect. However, there are cases of non-canonical uses of antipassive morphology that do not seem related to this aspectual use.

I will argue that we can get insight into these cases by examining the properties of the verb roots to which *-si* attaches, instead just focusing on the morpheme *-si* itself and the nature of antipassivization.

Specifically, if we look at the way that verb roots pattern based on what happens when the object argument is not realized, we can gain some insight into some of the functions of *-si*.

3.1 Likely Reflexives

In Inuit, it is sometimes possible to make a transitive verb get a reflexive interpretation by omitting the object and using only subject agreement morphology on the verb. No overt reflexive marker is needed. An example of this is shown in (14).[4]

(14) kapivunga

kapi -vunga
stab -IND,1s
'I stab myself' I (Kalmár 1979b: 17)

Compare (14) with the corresponding canonical antipassive given in (15).

(15) kapisivunga

kapi -si -vunga
stab -ANTIPASS -IND,1s
'I stab something/someone' I (Kalmár 1979b: 18)

So the example in (14) has the same Case and agreement pattern as an antipassivized transitive verb, but there is no overt antipassive morphology.

3.2 Not-So-Likely Reflexives

In other cases, using the Case and agreement patterns found with antipassivized verbs, without using antipassive morphology, results in a non-reflexive intransitivized interpretation of the sentence. An example of this is shown in (16).

(16)

arnaq miqsuq -tuq
woman(ABS) sew -PART,3s
'The woman sews.' I (Bok-Bennema 1991: 47)

[4] It may be the case that there is additional morphology which indicates whether the verb is getting its transitive interpretation or not and this morphology is obscured by (morpho)-phonological process or is analysed as part of the fused mood and agreement morpheme (see Kalmár (1979b), Allen (1994) for discussion). There is a lot of discussion on this matter in the literature, and the situation is not at all clear.

The similarity of this intransitive variant of these verbs to the antipassive has been noted, leading to this type of sentence being analysed as having a null antipassive (Woodbury (1977), Jensen and Johns (1989), Allen (1994)). The verbs meaning 'sing', 'eat', 'chew' and 'bite' and are in this class also (Allen (1994) and Bok-Bennema (1991)). Bok-Bennema (1991) calls these verbs "ambiguous" because they can be used either transitively or intransitively.

So, perhaps this pattern can give us some hints about some of the remaining cases of non-canonical antipassivization. I propose that it is the class of verbs which are not likely to be used reflexively which allow the "null antipassive" to be used. Although, the interpretation that results when the object is omitted is certainly antipassive-like, I propose that these are not actually cases of antipassivization with a zero morpheme, but are cases of optional object argument verbs which do not have the object argument realized. This is like the case of English 'sing', 'eat', etc. These contrast with verbs such as 'wash' and 'floss' in English which get a reflexive interpretation when there is no overt object argument.

For the class of verbs which are more likely to get a reflexive interpretation when they are used without an overt object, overt antipassivization must be used to get an antipassive interpretation. This means that *-si* is used when a non-reflexive, antipassive interpretation is the desired interpretation.

There is also cross-linguistic support for the idea that the object-suppressing functions of antipassivization and reflexivization are closely connected.

3.2.1 Cross-Linguistic Connections between Reflexive and Object-Suppression

There are cross-linguistic connections between reflexivization and object-suppression. One example can be seen with the case of the Lithuanian 'Absolutive' Reflexive construction (from Geniušiene (1987)). The example in (17a) shows a Lithuanian sentence with a transitive verb. The example in (17b) shows the Lithuanian 'Absolutive' Reflexive construction. This is a case of reflexive morphology on a transitive verb resulting in an object-suppressing habitual reading. The example in (18) shows the typical reflexivizing use of this same reflexive morphology which appeared in the object-suppressing habitual reading in (17b).

(17) a. Berniuk-as muša vaik-us
boy-NOM beats child-ACC/PL
'The boy beats children.'

b. Berniuk-as muša-si
boy-NOM beats-REFL
'The boy fights (is pugnacious)'

(18) Av-ys bado-si
sheep-NOM-PL butt-REFL
'Sheep butt', 'Sheep are butting one another'

This type of formation is lexically limited. The verbs that can be used in this construction are verbs that are unlikely to be used with a reflexive interpretation; *fight*, *curse*, *tease*, *pester*, *pinch*, etc.

Similarly, Russian also has reflexive morphology which can be used with verbs that get a non-reflexive interpretation. When the reflexive morphology is used with these verbs, the interpretation is one of an object-suppression, habitual reading. This is shown with the examples in (19) and (20) below. The example in (19a) shows a regular transitive verb. The examples in (19b) shows that -*sja* is basic reflexive morphology. The example in (20) shows the reflexive morphology being used to give an object-suppression habitual reading of a transitive verb.

(19) a. Ona odevaet kuklu
she dresses doll
'She dresses the doll.'

b. Ona odevaet-sja
She dresses-REFL
'She dresses herself.'

(20) Sobaka kusaet-sja
The dog bites-REFL
'The dog bites (habitually).'

So the Lithuanian and Russian cases are parallel to the Inuit case in that reflexive morphology (-*si* in Lithuanian, -*sja* in Russian, and ø in Inuit) can be used to give a non-reflexive object suppression reading in cases where the verb is not likely to have a reflexive interpretation.

3.2.2 Summary: Antipassive and Reflexive

Inuit transitive verbs can be grouped on whether they are likely to be reflexivized or not. Dropping the object of the verbs that are likely to be reflexivized results in a reflexive interpretation, but -*si* can be used to force the non-reflexive object-suppression reading (antipassive or habitual). There is cross-linguistic support for this connection between the use of a reflexive configuration with certain verbs and a non-reflexive object-suppression meaning.

3.3 Transitivity Alternation Verbs and Deagentivizing

Transitivity Alternation verbs provide further support for the idea that dividing verbs into classes based on their behavior when the object argument is omitted will help with the seemingly disparate uses of antipassive morphology in Inuit.

Transitivity Alternation verbs are verbs like ‘break’ which can be either intransitive or transitive. The intransitive form has only one argument, the internal one, and an anticausative interpretation. The transitive form is a regular transitive.

In Inuit, omitting an argument and using the case and agreement patterns of the antipassive with a transitivity alternation verb, such as ‘break’, does not result in an antipassive interpretation as it does for the “unlikely reflexivizers”, nor in a reflexive intrepretation as it does for the “likely reflexivizers”.

But, this makes sense given the fact that the object-dropped, intransitive form of the verb is the anticausative form, as can be seen in (21).

(21) qajar -taa -va asirur -sima -vuq
kayak -new -his(ABS) break -PERF -IND,3s
‘His new kayak has been destroyed (broke).’
WG (Fortescue 1984: 269)

In this case, then addition of the antipassive morpheme seems not to intransitivize the verb (the Case and agreement pattern is that of a transitive), but to contribute to the meaning by deagentivizing the subject, i.e. making the subject an experiencer, not a causer.

We can then account for the “detrimental” or deagentivizing uses of the antipassive morpheme -*si*.

(22) Taania -p qajar -taa -ni asiru -i -vaa
Taania -ERG kayak -new -his break -ANTIPASS -IND,3s/3s
‘Taania had his new kayak destroyed (unintentionally).’
(i.e. Taania’s new kayak broke on him) WG (Fortescue 1984: 269)

We can include in this use of the antipassive morpheme -*si*, the example in (6), repeated here as (23).

(23) natsiqannaavaa

natsiq anna -i -vaa
ringed seal(ABS) get away -ANTIPASS -IND,3s/3s
'The ringed seal got away from him.'
(i.e. 'He had the ringed seal get away from him.')
WG (Fortescue 1984: 269)

There is another example of what seems to be the antipassive morpheme serving to deagentivize the subject, or indicate that the subject is not in control of the action. This is the case in (4), repeated here as (24)

Interestingly, this example also has an inceptive aspect meaning.

(24)

iqlaq -si -kallak -pak -ɫunga
laugh -ANTIPASS -suddenly -FREQ -ICM,1s ...
'I'd suddenly have to laugh, ...' I (Kalmár 1979b: 112)

Although the example in (24) is an unergative and not a transitivity alternation verb as are the other deagentivized cases in (22) and (23), the fact that these two classes of verbs pattern together may not be unexpected.

For example in work on Salish by Demirdache (1996), unergatives and certain transitives pattern together to get a meaning where the subject is deagentivized with the addition of an "out of control" morpheme.

3.4 Summary: Antipassive and Deagentivization of the Subject

When the antipassive morpheme -*si* is added to transitivity alternation verbs and unergative verbs, it does not result in a reading in which the object is "demoted", but one in which the subject is deagentivized.

4 Antipassivization and Aspect

The antipassive morpheme -*si* can be used to mark aspectual information, even in the absence of the object-demotion that is typical of the antipassive. The particular aspectual interpretation that -*si* contributes is to make the verb describe the *inception* of the action.

Some examples of this inceptive use of -*si* are given in (25) to (27) below.

This connection between *-si* and inceptive aspect, combined with the fact that in these particular cases, *-si* often co-occurs with an adverbial meaning 'suddenly', ties in with the observation in Dowty (1986) that adverbs such as 'suddenly' have a pragmatic effect that induces an inceptive interpretation on states.[5]

(25)

iqlaq	-si	-kallak	-pak	-łunga	
laugh	-ANTIPASS	-suddenly	-FREQ	-ICM,1s	...

'I'd suddenly have to laugh, ...' I (Kalmár 1979b: 112)

(26)

ammalu	tuavirnaq	-tuqaa	-si	-kaatla	-k	-pat
CONN	-emergency	-there is	-ANTIPASS	-suddenly	-REL	-3s

'And when all of a sudden there is an emergency...'

I (Kalmár 1979b: 116)

(27)

jo	qukiq	-si	-ju	-kulu	-u	-tainna	-r
Joe(ABS)	shoot	-ANTIPASS	-PART,3s	-DIM	-BE	-suddenly	-REL

-mat
-3,CONJ

'All of a sudden Joe fired, and ...' I (Kalmár 1979b: 114)

The link between voice and aspect in West Greenlandic has been discussed in Bittner (1987), although I argue that the relationship is somewhat different than the one that she posits. What I propose here, however, is not necessarily incompatible with Bittner's (1987) analysis.

The connection between voice and aspect in other languages has also been discussed. I now turn to some of these cases.

4.1 Cross-Linguistic Connections between Voice and Aspect

There is also cross-linguistic support for the relationship between voice and aspect. I will now examine some of the patterns seen in other languages, and see how this compares to the Inuit situation.

[5] In order to better understand the connection between *-si* and inceptive aspect, more data are needed. For example, it is not clear what the relationship between *-si* and the adverbial meaning 'suddenly' is. What would happen to the meaning of the sentences in (25) through (27) if one or the other of *-si* or the 'suddenly' adverbial were removed?

In the Mayan language Tzutujil, there is a ‘completive passive’ which emphasizes the result and the termination of the activity and a ‘simple passive’ which “simply defines and describes the activity” (Dayley (1985) as cited in Dixon 1994: 148)

In Russian, “reflexive” morphology can used for passivization, but only in the imperfective (Geniušiene (1987)).[6]

(28) a. Sosed stroit dom
neighbor-NOM builds house-ACC
‘The neighbor is building a house.’

b. Dom stroit -sja sosed -om
house-NOM builds -REFL neighbor -INS/SG
‘The house is (being) built by a neighbor.’

The Lithuanian ‘Absolutive’ Reflexive construction discussed in §3.2.1 above also shows a link between aspect and voice, as I argue there is in Inuit. This configuration is incompatible with perfectivizing morphology as the examples in (29) show. This gives us another link between aspect and voice, as I will argue there is in Inuit.

(29) a. Šu-o ap- kandžio-j-o vaik-us
dog-NOM PERF bite-PAST-3 child-ACC/PL
‘The dog bit the children.’

b. * Šu-o ap- si kandžio-j-o.
dog-NOM PERF REFL bite-PAST-3
‘The dog bit.’

So, it appears that in Lithuanian, the ‘Absolutive’ Reflexive contruction with -*si* gets a non-episodic, habitual reading. It is this not surprising that this construction is then incompatible with perfective morphology.

5 Sketching a Unified Analysis of -*si*

All of the different uses of -*si* might be unified on an account in which the -*si* is a morpheme used when there is an argument that is not realized with a DP/NP (including *pro*), i.e. where an A-position is unoccupied. It is not absolutely clear where this is true with any such configuration, or only those in which movement has taken place.

[6] I thank Roumi Izvorski for help with the Russian data in this paper.

In the canonical antipassive case, -*si* is the object argument, which could move and incorporates with the verb (as in Baker 1988). The likely-reflexive cases would then work the same way, i.e. They are just basic antipassivizaton.

In the deagentivizing or adversative instances in which -*si* appears, the cases/roles assigned to the arguments are different. On an analysis of these constructions such as Kubo (1990), the subject is base-generated as a dative, and so -*si* is filling in for the subject instead of the object, and does not get incorporated.

Of course, this is just an outline of such an analysis and further work is needed to flesh out the details and answer questions such as why it is -*si* that is used and not, for example, the passive. It does however point out a possible way in which the seemingly disparate cases of -*si* can be unified and shown to not merely be accidental homophony.

6 Conclusions

There is reason to believe that the seemingly disparate uses of -*si* are not all cases of accidental homophony.

The antipassive morpheme -*si* can contribute an inceptive aspect meaning. The other meanings can be grouped by dividing the verb stems to which -*si* attaches into classes depending on the patterns seen when the object argument of the verb is not realized.

If the default interpretation of the verb when the object is not realized is a reflexive one, the addition of -*si* can rule out the reflexive reading resulting in a "demoted" object antipassive reading. If the verb is not likely to get a reflexive interpretation when used without an object, i.e. if it is an optional argument verb, a similar interpretation is possible without -*si*. In the case of transitivity alternation or unergative verbs, when the default interpretation of the unrealized object/intransitive case is an anticausative or spontaneous reading, addition of -*si* deagentivizes the subject. There is cross-linguistic support for these patterns.

It may be possible to unify at least the argument structure-related uses of -*si* on an analysis in which -*si* fills in for an unoccupied argument position.

7 Remaining Issues

This paper, while not providing a full analysis of these difficult facts, has attempted to make some progress in that direction, to carve up the data in a way that may help to shed some light on the matter and to indicate some directions for possibly fruitful future research. Some open questions have been brought up throughout the paper, and there are also others; What exactly are the syntactic structures of these constructions with -*si*? How does the fact that there are other allomorphs of -*si* used for antipassivization bear on the question of whether the different uses of -*si* are accidental homophony or not? How do the other allomorphs fit into the picture? Can the inceptive aspectual use of -*si* be related to the argument structure cases, perhaps the deagentivizing/adversative cases?

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