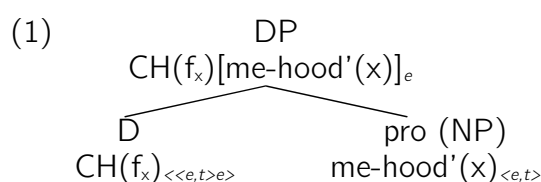


# Inuktitut, choice functions, and the theory of minimal pronouns

A consequence, albeit one that remains not explicitly stated, of the analysis presented in Branigan and Wharram (2019) is that any nominal in Inuktitut – including proper names – not receiving a weak indefinite reading must be receiving its interpretation via combination with a (phonetically-null indefinite) determiner which denotes a choice function variable which is left free, its interpretation being contextually determined (Kratzer 1998a). This research considers a range of ‘binding’ facts in, primarily, Labrador Inuttut, the dialect of Inuktitut spoken in the present-day territory of Nunatsiavut, pursuing the idea that personal pronouns in the language are built in the same way. That is, I propose those personal pronouns canonically understood as indexicals, e.g., *I*, *we*, *you*, etc. are better understood as something along the lines of *a particular instance of ‘me-hood’*, *a particular instance of ‘us-hood’*, *a particular instance of ‘you-hood’*, etc.:



I demonstrate that certain observed facts around what has been referred to as (what is really two distinctive patterns of) 'non-canonical switch reference' in Inuktitut (Pittman 2005) and related languages (Woodbury 1982; Finer 1984), together with a theory of *minimal pronouns* (Kratzer 1998b; 2009; von Stechow 2003a; 2003b; among others), fall directly out of this approach. The sentences in (2) through (5) illustrate some of the relevant anaphora observed in embedded clauses marked with conditional mood (similar facts hold in embedded clauses marked with frequentative, dubitative, and causal mood).

- (2) a. Upalu-niat-tut    pisu-gutik.  
be.late-NFUT-PART.[-TR].3PL.ABS walk-COND.[-TR].4PL.ABS  
'They<sub>1</sub>'ll be late if they<sub>1</sub> walk'
- b. Upalu-niat-tut    pisu-ppata.  
be.late-NFUT-PART.[-TR].3PL.ABS walk-COND.[-TR].3PL.ABS  
'They<sub>1</sub>'ll be late if they<sub>2/\*1</sub> walk'

The so-called fourth person agreement found on the embedded clause in (2a) forces an apparent coreferential interpretation between the subjects of the embedded and matrix clauses, but the sentences in (3) show this to be an inaccurate characterisation.

- (3) a. Upalu-niat-tut    pisu-guni.  
be.late-NFUT-PART.[-TR].3PL.ABS walk-COND.[-TR].4SG.ABS  
'They'll be late if (s)he walks' ((s)he must be one of them)
- b. Upalu-niat-tut    pisu-ppat.  
be.late-NFUT-PART.[-TR].3PL.ABS walk-COND.[-TR].3SG.ABS  
'They'll be late if (s)he walks' ((s)he is not one of them)

That is, the relationship between the subject of the embedded clause and the subject of

the matrix clause is one of, more or less (to be explained!), a subset relation. (4a) is judged to be compatible with a situation where either one or both of Hulda and Peter is/are not included in the group that will (potentially) be late, while (4b) is judged compatible with a situation where both Hulda and Peter are included within that group (and non-felicitous otherwise). (DL = dual)

- (4) a. Upalu-niat-tut    Hulda    Piita-lu                      pisu-ppaanik.  
be.late-NFUT-PART.[–TR].3PL.ABS H.(ABS) P.(ABS)-CONJ walk-COND.[–TR].3DL.ABS  
‘They’ll be late if Hulda and Peter walk’
- b. Upalu-niat-tut    Hulda    Piita-lu                      pisu-gutik.  
be.late-NFUT-PART.[–TR].3PL.ABS H.(ABS) P.(ABS)-CONJ walk-COND.[–TR].4DL.ABS  
‘They’ll be late if Hulda and Peter walk’

Likewise, (5) is judged by speakers as ungrammatical.

- (5) \*Upalu-niat-tuk                               pisu-gutik.  
be.late-NFUT-PART.[-TR].3SABS      walk-COND.[-TR].4DL/PL.ABS  
'(S)he'll be late if they walk'  
(cf. ✓ Upalu-niat-tuk pisu-ppata / be.late-NFUT-PART.[-TR].3SG.ABS walk-COND.[-TR].3PL.ABS)

It is argued that the 4<sup>th</sup> person agreement signals that the agreeing (local) nominal (whether this a personal pronoun or a full DP is shown to be irrelevant) must combine with a choice function-denoting indefinite determiner identical in value to the one that combines with its binder. The ‘subset’ facts exemplified above are shown to follow from Kratzer’s (2003) response, which comes in the form of story of what I will simply call here the ‘post-funeral tradition in Mindelheim’, to a concern raised in Matthewson (1998), whereby we have to take seriously the distinction between having a particular choice function in mind and having a particular individual in mind.

A preliminary sketch of where bound variable pronoun readings are available in Inuttut, and where they are not, will also be provided.

**References:** [Branigan, Phil, and Douglas Wharram. 2019. A syntax for semantic incorporation: generating low-scope indefinite objects in Inuktitut. *Glossa: A journal of general linguistics* 4.] [Finer, Daniel L. 1984. *The formal grammar of switch-reference*. PhD dissertation, University of Massachusetts (Amherst).] [Kratzer, Angelika. 1998a. Scope or Pseudoscope? Are there Wide-Scope Indefinites? In *Events and Grammar*, 163–196. Studies in Linguistics and Philosophy. Springer, Dordrecht.] [Kratzer, Angelika. 1998b. More structural analogies between pronoun and tenses. In *Salt VIII*.] [Kratzer, Angelika. 2003. A note on choice functions in context. Ms. University of Massachusetts (Amherst).] [Kratzer, Angelika. 2009. Making a Pronoun: Fake Indexicals as Windows into the Properties of Pronouns. *Linguistic Inquiry* 40: 187–237.] [Matthewson, Lisa. 1998. On the interpretation of wide-scope indefinites. *Natural Language Semantics* 7: 79–134.] [Pittman, Christine M. 2005. Non-canonical switch-reference in Inuktitut. In *Actes du congrès annuel de l'Association canadienne de linguistique 2005/ Proceedings of the 2005 annual conference of the Canadian Linguistic Association*.] [Stechow, Arnim von. 2003a. Feature deletion under semantic binding: tense, person, and mood under verbal quantifiers. *Proceedings of NELS* 33: 379.] [Stechow, Arnim von. 2003b. Postscript to “Feature deletion under semantic binding”: A note on Kratzer (1998). University of Tübingen.] [Woodbury, Anthony C. 1982. *Switch reference, Syntactic organization, and rhetorical structure in Central Yup'ik Eskimo*. 98. Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.]