

Beginnings in North Sámi*

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In North Sámi, inceptives can be formed with the inceptive verb *álgit*, with the morphologically bound form *-goabtit*, or by changing the theme vowel of the base verb. The syntactic properties of these inceptives indicate that *-goabtit* is an auxiliary, and so is *álgit* when it takes a verbal complement. These inceptive auxiliaries are located below tense, and also below obligatory and permissive modals, conditional mood, negation, and the head encoding progressive aspect, while they are located above causative, passive and frequentative aspect.

The position of inceptive auxiliaries in North Sámi is not in accordance with neither of the two positions for inceptives suggested by Cinque (2006), since on Cinque's proposal, inceptives that are below modals should also be below the causative and the passive. The North Sámi inceptives *álgit* and *-goabtit* are also problematic for Fukuda (2008), since they are located higher than any of the two inceptive positions identified by him. The inceptives involving change of theme vowels could however be associated with Fukuda's higher inceptive position, since they take VP as their complement.

Notably, *álgit* can also appear with only nominal dependents, and I argue that it is then the main verb of the clause.

Keywords: *Inceptive, North Sámi, nominal complement, auxiliary, main verb*

1 Introduction

Verbs that refer to the beginning of an event, also called inceptive verbs, like *begin* and *start*, have attracted attention within the generative paradigm at least since the seventies, being discussed in works like Perlmutter (1970), Newmeyer (1975), Emonds (1976) and Freed (1979). More recently, they have been addressed e.g. by Cinque (2006) and Fukuda (2008).

In this paper, I present three different inceptives in North Sámi. The aim of the presentation is first and foremost to show how much expressions of inceptive aspect can vary within one single language, but in addition, I also compare my findings to the proposals of Cinque (2006) and Fukuda (2008), in order to see if the patterns found in North Sámi are compatible with any of these two approaches.

The first North Sámi inceptive to be addressed is the verb *álgit* 'begin', which can take a verbal or a nominal complement. I conclude that when *álgit* takes a verbal complement, it is an auxiliary located in the functional domain of the clause. Its position is however somewhat different from the positions for inceptives proposed by Cinque (2006) and Fukuda (2008). When *álgit* appears with a nominal complement, on the other hand, it is the main verb of the construction.

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The second North Sámi inceptive I deal with is the auxiliary verbal suffix *-goabtit*, which can only take verbal complements. It turns out that the syntax of *-goabtit* is similar to the syntax of *álgit* with a verbal complement.

Finally, I discuss a type of inceptive marking that consists of changing the theme vowel of the base verb. This inceptive, which I call “low inceptive”, only applies to stative or processual verbs that have no external argument, and I conclude that low inceptives take VP as their complement.

Before launching into the discussion of North Sámi inceptives I will present briefly the North Sámi language, as well as the relevant aspects of the proposals of Cinque (2006) and Fukuda (2008).

2 A brief sketch of North Sámi and its inceptives

North Sámi is the northernmost of all Sámi varieties (see e.g. Toivonen & Nelson 2007), and it also is the variety that has the largest number of speakers – the estimate given in Lewis (2009) is 20,700. It is widely used in literature, education, and in written and spoken media. Practically all speakers are bilingual, with Norwegian or Swedish as their second language, or, for a minority of the speakers, with Finnish as their second language.

The basic word order in North Sámi is SVO, with S Aux OV as an alternative to S Aux VO. The finite verb agrees in person and number (singular, dual, or plural) with the subject, and pro-drop is possible. There is also a range of non-finite verb forms, which appear as complements to verbs or as nominals or modifiers of nominals. Seven cases are being used productively in the present-day language: nominative, accusative, genitive, illative, locative, comitative and essive (see Sammallahti (1998)).

Like its more well-known relative Finnish, North Sámi has an extremely rich array of derivational suffixes, in the verbal as well as in the nominal domain. Concerning verbs, a change of argument structure or of aspectual properties will be accompanied with a modification of the morphological form of the verb. Ambiguous forms like English *sink*, which can be transitive or intransitive, or *cough*, which can be durative or semelfactive, are not found in North Sámi. Instead, we find pairs like the intransitive *vuodjut* ‘sink’ versus the transitive/causative *vuodjudit* ‘sink’, and the durative *gossat* ‘cough’ versus the semelfactive *gossádit* ‘cough once’. In both cases, the direction of derivation is clearly visible, unlike in English, where the relation between verbs in different uses is more opaque.

The passive in North Sámi is also a suffix, and as seen in (1b), it precedes the suffix that marks tense and subject agreement. I take the passive to be encoded in a Voice head which is located above the head that introduces the external argument, i.e. the head commonly referred to as *v* (see e.g. Kratzer (1996)).¹

¹ The majority of the North Sámi examples presented in this paper are found in the corpus at Sámi Giellatekno at the University of Tromsø (see giellatekno.uit.no). Some of them are slightly adjusted. The following abbreviations are used in the glosses: ABE=abessive, ABS=absolutive, ACC=accusative, ADJ= adjective, ADV=adverbial, CAUS=causative, COM=comitative, COMP= comparative, COND=conditional, CONT=continuative,

- (1) a. *Elle loga-i reivve.*
 Elle.NOM read-PAST.3SG letter.ACC
 ‘Elle read a/the letter.’
- b. *Reive lobkko-juvvu-i jitnosit buobkaide.*
 letter.SG.NOM read-PASS-PAST.3SG aloud all.PL.ILL
 ‘The letter was read aloud to everyone.’

The causative in North Sámi is dealt with in much detail in Julien (1996) and Vinka (2002). Here it will suffice to note that just like the passive, the causative is marked by suffixes, which I take to represent syntactic heads. Moreover, verbs with and without external arguments can be causativised, as illustrated in (2).

- (2) a. *Árbevieru sábtá heive-b-it boabtte-áigái.*
 tradition.ACC can.PRES.3SG suit-CAUS-INF coming-time.ILL
 ‘One can adjust the tradition to the future.’
- b. *Lea boastut bora-b-it bohcco bearehaga.*
 is wrong eat-CAUS-INF reindeer.ACC excessively
 ‘It is wrong to feed the reindeer excessively.’
- c. *Ábčči bora-b-a mánnái láibbi.*
 father.NOM eat-CAUS-PRES.3SG child.ILL bread.ACC
 ‘(The) father makes the child eat bread/feeds bread to the child.’

Causative verbs can be passivised, as demonstrated in (3). I take this to mean that a Voice head can appear above the causative head:

- (3) a. *Karate-graderen lea mánáide heive-b-uvvo-n.*
 karate-grading is children.ILL suit-CAUS-PASS-PTC
 ‘The karate grading is adjusted to children.’
- b. *Bobccuide bora-b-uvvo-jit parasihhta-dálkeasat.*
 reindeer.PL.ILL eat-CAUS-PASS-PRES.3PL parasite-medicine.PL.NOM
 ‘Parasite medicine is fed to the reindeer.’

As for the inceptive, the linguistic representation of the beginning of an event, there are several ways of expressing this in North Sámi. One possibility is to use the verb *álgit* ‘begin’, as in (4), and another is the inceptive suffix *-goahtit*, as in (5) (*álgit* and *-goahtit* are the infinitive forms).

- (4) *Mánná álggii čierrut.*
 child.SG.NOM begin.PAST.3SG cry.INF
 ‘The child began to cry.’

ERG=ergative, ESS=essive, FREQ= frequentative, GEN=genitive, ILL=illative, IMP= imperative, INC=inceptive, IND=indicative, INF=infinitive, INS=instrumental, INTR=intransitive, LOC= locative, MASC=masculine, NEG=negation, NOM=nominative, PASS= passive, PERF=perfective, PL=plural, POSS=possessive, PRES=present, PROG=progressive, PRT=particle, PTC= past participle, SG=singular.

- (5) *Mánná čierru-god̄ii.*
 child.SG.NOM cry-begin.PAST.3SG
 ‘The child began to cry.’

Yet another option is to use the inceptive derivation seen for example in *čirrot* ‘begin to cry’, from *čierrut* ‘cry’, which primarily consists of a change of theme vowel (other stem changes follow from this). An example with the inceptive verb *čirrot* ‘begin to cry’ is shown in (6). The verb form *čirru* can be compared to the past third person singular of *čierrut* ‘cry’, which is *čierui*.

- (6) *Mánná čirru.*
 child.SG.NOM cry.INCEP.PAST.3SG
 ‘The child began to cry.’

Because of its structural and morphological proximity to the verbal root, I will use the term “low inceptive” for inceptives of this type.

In this paper, I will not so much be concerned with the choice between the three North Sámi inceptives as with their syntactic properties. Since it turns out that the North Sámi inceptives do not have identical syntactic properties, they can help us improve our understanding of the syntax of inceptives more generally.

3 Theoretical background

Although inceptives have been addressed in numerous works over the years, the proposals that will be presented here are those that my own investigation is most directly related to, namely, the relatively recent Cinque (2006) and Fukuda (2008).

3.1 Cinque (2006)

Cinque (2006) takes as his starting point the so-called cartographic approach to clause structure (see e.g. Cinque & Rizzi (2008)), and assumes that aspectual verbs like *begin* and *stop*, and their counterparts in other languages, represent functional heads located somewhere in the functional domain of the clause. More specifically, he claims that there is a higher and a lower position for inceptives. This claim builds on Italian data like the following. In (7), the verb *cominciare* ‘begin’ embeds a passivised verb (from Cinque (2006:72)). This means, on Cinque’s interpretation, that below *cominciare* there is a Voice head, where the passive is encoded. The lower verb *infliggere* raises to the Voice head and gets passive morphology, but crucially, the inceptive *cominciare* is not affected.

- (7) *Gli cominciarono ad essere inflitte delle punizioni.*
 to.him began to be inflicted of.the punishments
 ‘Punishments began to be inflicted on him.’

Now in (8) we see an example of the so-called long passive, found in Italian and many other Romance languages (from Cinque (2006:70)). Here the passive morphology applies to the inceptive verb, while the lower verb is unaffected.

- (8) *Furono iniziate/?cominciate a costruire solo due case.*
 were begun to build only two houses
 ‘Only two houses were begun being built.’

This means, according to Cinque, that in this case the inceptive verb is located lower than the Voice head.

As evidence that it is the inceptive verb that can appear in different positions, while the position of the Voice head is fixed, Cinque points to the observation that there is a semantic difference between an inceptive verb that embeds a passive verb and an inceptive verb that is itself passivised. The latter can only mark the beginning of a bounded process at its natural starting point, as in (8), whereas an inceptive that embeds a passive can mark the beginning of a bounded or unbounded process at an arbitrary point, as in (7). However, as demonstrated in (9), an inceptive marking the beginning of an unbounded process cannot be passivised (Cinque (2006:70)).

- (9) **Furono iniziate/cominciate a costruire case.*
 were begun to build houses

Cinque’s conclusion is that there are two positions for inceptives in Italian clauses, one above and one below Voice, and these two positions correlate with different semantic properties, as described.

Cinque (2006) also gives a more detailed account of the relative order of a great number of mood and aspect markers. This account is partly based on data from Cinque (1999), where the relative order of many markers was established, but more data is added in Cinque (2006). The ordering of a selection of markers that are of particular relevance for the present discussion is shown in (10). This ordering is taken from Cinque (2006), page 93, with the addition of data from pages 76 (the position of the causative) and 175 (the positions of tense and modals). Triple dots indicate where I have left out markers that are not relevant for the present discussion.

- (10) ... $T_{\text{past}} > \dots T_{\text{anterior}} > \dots \text{Mod}_{\text{aletic}} > \dots \text{Asp}_{\text{frequentative(i)}} >$
 $\text{Mod}_{\text{volition}} > \dots \text{Asp}_{\text{progressive}} > \dots \text{Asp}_{\text{inceptive(i)}} > \text{Mod}_{\text{obligation}} >$
 $\text{Mod}_{\text{ability}} > \dots \text{Mod}_{\text{permission}} > \dots \text{Voice} > \dots \text{Causative} > \dots$
 $\text{Asp}_{\text{inceptive(ii)}} > \text{Asp}_{\text{completive(ii)}} > \text{Asp}_{\text{repetitive(ii)}} > \text{Asp}_{\text{frequentative(ii)}} \dots$

We see that the high inceptive is below volitional modality and progressive aspect, but above modal markers of obligation, ability and permission. It is also above Voice, as already mentioned. Between Voice and the low inceptive is the causative head, and below the low inceptive are found markers of completive, repetitive and frequentative aspect. However, on p. 175–176 in Cinque (2006) we find a

hierarchy which is partly in conflict with the one presented on p. 93 in Cinque (2006), since on p. 175–176, the lower inceptive is only followed by the lower position for completive aspect. In any case, Cinque assumes that the clausal structure is basically the same in all languages, and it follows that the proposed ordering should be found in all languages.

Furthermore, Cinque (2006) suggests that aspectual verbs never take nominal complements, although they sometimes seemingly do so. Two relevant examples, from Cinque (2006:35), are given in (11).

- (11) a. *Maria ha cominciato il romanzo.*
 Maria has begun the novel
 ‘Maria has begun the novel.’
 b. *Il concerto sta cominciando.*
 the concert is beginning
 ‘The concert is beginning.’

In (11a), *cominciare* ‘begin’ appears to behave syntactically as an ordinary transitive main verb, taking a nominal subject and a nominal object, whereas in (11b), it takes a single argument that becomes the surface subject. Cinque nevertheless assumes, with reference to Pustejovsky (1995) and Jackendoff (1997), that in both cases, there is an abstract, phonologically empty lexical verb present below the aspectual verb, so that *cominciare* is a purely functional verb, i.e. an auxiliary, also in these constructions.

3.2 Fukuda (2008)

Fukuda (2008), focusing on English, starts by pointing out that aspectual verbs, like *begin*, *continue*, and *finish*, are non-thematic. He refers to Newmeyer (1975) and Brinton (1988), who showed that a verb that embeds an aspectual verb will impose its own selectional restrictions on the complement of the aspectual verb. Their examples are repeated in (12) below (from Fukuda (2008:13); originally from Newmeyer (1975:33–34) and Brinton 1988:65)).

- (12) a. *John asked him to listen/ #hear.*
 b. *John began to listen/ hear.*
 c. *John asked him to begin.*
 d. *John asked him to begin to listen/ #hear.*

In (12a), we see that *ask* can embed *listen* but not *hear*. *Begin*, by contrast, is compatible with both verbs, as shown in (12b). (12c) serves to demonstrate that *begin* can be embedded under *ask*, while in (12d), we see that in that case, the complement of *begin* must meet the selectional restrictions of *ask*. In other words, the pattern in (12) indicates that *begin* is a non-thematic verb.

Fukuda argues, though, that it is not a raising verb. He observes that while raising verbs are normally believed to embed a TP, the complement of *begin* is smaller. As (13) shows, the complement of *begin* is not allowed to be marked for

grammatical aspect, although grammatical aspect is generally assumed to be located below tense in the syntactic structure.

- (13) a. **He began [being running down the road].*
 b. **He began [to have finished his homework].*

Fukuda concludes that aspectual verbs represent functional heads that are located lower than grammatical aspect in the clausal structure. More specifically, he proposes that they can be located either between *v* and VP or immediately above *v*P. An aspectual verb in the higher position, above *v*P, takes an infinitival complement, while an aspectual verb in the lower position, between *v* and VP, takes a gerundive complement. Thus, the infinitive corresponds to *v*P whereas the gerund corresponds to VP.

Fukuda presents several arguments in support of his proposal, one of them being that adverbials in infinitival complements of aspectual verbs can be ambiguous between a speaker-oriented reading and a manner reading, while adverbials in gerundive complements only allow the manner reading. This is illustrated in (14) (from Fukuda (2008:16)).

- (14) a. ...*everyone around me grew quiet as I began stupidly to say what I really think.*
 b. ...*everyone around me grew quiet as I began stupidly saying what I really think.*

In (14a), *stupidly* can get either of the two readings, but in (14b), it gets the manner reading. Since the speaker-oriented reading is generally associated with a relatively high syntactic position, whereas the manner reading is generally associated with a relatively low syntactic position, Fukuda concludes that the infinitival complement is structurally larger than the gerundive complement; more specifically, that the former is a *v*P while the latter is a VP.

The aspectual verb *finish*, which only takes a gerundive complement, can be passivised if the object of the lower verb undergoes a change of state, as in (15) (from Fukuda (2008:20)).

- (15) *These cakes were finished baking.*

Assuming that the passive is encoded in *v*, Fukuda concludes that aspectual verbs with gerundive complements are situated below *v*, i.e. they have VP as their complement, while aspectual verbs with infinitival complements have *v*P as their complement.

3.3 Comparing Cinque (2006) and Fukuda (2008)

It is clear from the preceding brief presentation that both Cinque (2006) and Fukuda (2008) take there to be two positions for inceptives in the clausal hierarchical structure. The main difference between the two approaches is that whereas Cinque locates the higher as well as the lower inceptive in the functional domain, that is, above the *v*P domain, there being positions for other aspectual

markers between the lower inceptive and the vP, Fukuda places both markers low down, with the higher one immediately above vP and the lower one inside vP. On both approaches, one position for inceptives is above the head that encodes passive, while the other position for inceptives is below this head. Cinque and Fukuda differ, however, when it comes to the position of the passive. Cinque takes passive to be encoded in a Voice head which is located higher than some of the aspectual markers, while Fukuda takes passive to be encoded in v.

4 The inceptive verb *álgit* ‘begin’

As we have already seen, one way of expressing the beginning of an event in North Sámi is with the inceptive verb *álgit* ‘begin’. I will now first take a brief look at the behaviour of *álgit* in combination with verb phrases of different types. After that, I try to identify the position of *álgit* when it has a verbal complement. This use of *álgit* is then compared to cases where *álgit* takes only nominal dependents. The conclusion is that when *álgit* takes a verbal complement, it is located relatively high up in the functional domain, in other words, it is an auxiliary, but when it appears with only nominal dependents, it is the main verb of the construction.

In the last part of this section, I address a construction where *álgit* combines with a nominative subject and with another nominal phrase carrying illative case. It turns out that this construction provides further evidence that *álgit* is the main verb when it appears with only nominal dependents.

4.1 *Álgit* ‘begin’ with verbal complements

The North Sámi inceptive verb *álgit* ‘begin’ can take verbs of many types as its complement. Below, the complements of *álgit* in (16) and (17) are transitive verbs, in (18) it is an agentive intransitive verb, in (19), it is a unaccusative verb, and in (20), a stative psych verb.

- (16) *Elle álggii barggu ohcat Norrgas.*
 Elle begin.PAST.3SG work.ACC look.for.INF Norway.LOC
 ‘Elle began looking for work in Norway.’

- (17) *Dál leat nuorat álgán mobil-telefuvnmaid*
 now are young.PL.NOM begin.PTC mobile-phone.PL.ACC
geavahit.
 use.INF
 ‘Now young people have started to use mobile phones.’

- (18) *Álggii munnje savkalit.*
 begin.PAST.3SG me.ILL whisper.INF
 ‘S/he began whispering to me.’

- (19) *Reantu álga loktanit.*
 interest.rate.NOM begin.PRES.3SG rise.INF
 ‘The interest rate begins to rise.’
- (20) *De son álggi birbmadit liikot vivva-s-is.*
 then s/he begin.PAST.3SG intensely like.INF son.in.law-ILL-POSS.3SG
 ‘Then she took to liking her son-in-law very much.’

It also seems clear that *álgit* ‘begin’ is a non-thematic verb, just as Fukuda (2006) argues for its English counterpart *begin*. The surface subject of *álgit* is the logical subject of the complement of *álgit*, and when the complement does not have a subject, as in the case of *sevnjodit* ‘get dark’, which belongs to the class of atmospheric or weather verbs, the construction as a whole will not have any overt subject either, as shown in (21).

- (21) *Lei juo álgán sevnjodit.*
 was already begin.PTC get.dark.INF
 ‘It had already begun to get dark.’

This indicates that *álgit* is theta transparent – it does not assign any theta roles and is not an argument taker, as long as it takes a verbal complement.

Further, one can note that when *álgit* combines with a verb phrase representing a non-punctual eventuality (an activity, an accomplishment, or a state), the inceptive verb marks the onset of a single event. The onset itself can be conceived of as punctual (perhaps the most natural interpretation of (16) and (18) above), or as gradual (for example in (20)). This is in line with the observation in Smith (1991) that inceptive verbs can form derived achievements (instantaneous onsets) or derived accomplishments (gradual onsets).

When *álgit* combines with a verb phrase denoting a punctual event, on the other hand, it triggers a non-punctual reading of the base event. More specifically, the reading that a punctual event gets under *álgit* can be habitual or iterative, as in (22), which does not report one single losing event but rather a series of such events:

- (22) *Mis ledje sávzzat álgán massit*
 us.LOC be.PAST.3PL sheep.PL.NOM begin.PTC lose.INF
lábbáid.
 lamb.PL.ACC
 ‘Our sheep had begun losing their lambs.’

The iterative reading of the base event in (22) is a consequence of the plurality of the object *lábbáid* ‘lambs’. In the absence of plurality, the base event can be conceived of as stretched out in time, i.e. as a process. This is illustrated in (23), where the coming of water is likely to be going on for some time:

- (23) Čábcí maid álggi boahhtit.
 water.NOM also begin.PAST.3SG come.INF
 ‘Water also began to come.’

The conceptual manipulation of punctual verbs under inceptives is however not particular to North Sámi. It is probably a property of inceptives in general, since inceptives marks onsets, and in order to have an onset that can be discerned from the event as a whole the event must have temporal extent. Exactly the same phenomenon is seen for example in English, as shown in (24)–(26):

- (24) *I found this in a book of film criticism on Woody Allen.*
 (25) *I began to find islands of ease within the chaos of my life.*
 (26) *When I began to find my roots, I was absolutely convinced that “my family’s file” was out there somewhere.*

The verb *find*, normally denoting an achievement, as in (24), is forced into a non-punctual reading when it appears in the complement of *begin*. In (25), which contains a plural object, *find* gets an iterative reading, but in (26), where the plural object refers to a coherent whole, most natural interpretation appears to be one where the finding of roots is a process that goes on for some time.²

4.2 The position of *álgit* ‘begin’ with verbal complements

I will now go on to investigate in some detail the syntactic position of *álgit* when it takes a verbal complement. Firstly, many of the examples in 4.1 showed that *álgit* must be situated lower in the syntactic structure than the head encoding past tense, since it can be inflected for past tense, and also for present tense, which can be seen as the realisation of [–past]. If the past participle represents anterior tense, then *álgit* is below the head T_{anterior} as well. In addition, the examples below show that *álgit* follows after modal verbs, like the obligational *fertet* ‘must’ in (27) and the permissive *sáhttit* ‘can’ in (28).³ In (29) we see that *álgit* cannot precede *fertet* or *sáhttit*. Hence, it seems clear that *álgit* is situated below these markers of root modality.

- (27) Giddat ferte álgit ráhkkanit bivdui.
 spring.ADV must.3SG begin.INF prepare.INF hunt.ILL
 ‘In spring one must begin to prepare for the hunt.’
- (28) Juohkebaš sáhttá álgit taksiin vuodjit.
 everyone.NOM can.3SG begin.INF taxi.COM drive.INF
 ‘Everyone can/may start driving a taxi.’

² The effect of plural objects is also noted by Rochette (1999), who refers to it with the term *multiplexing*, borrowed from Lamiroy (1987).

³ *Sáhttit* expresses permission or circumstantial possibility. Ability, or dispositional possibility, is expressed with the auxiliary *máhttit* (see also Magga (1982)).

- (29) **Son álgá* *fertet/sábttit* *dabkat dan.*
 s/hebegin.PRES.3SG must.INF/can.INF do.INF that.ACC

Moreover, *álgit* is situated below the head that encodes conditional mood, since the conditional mood marker, which is a verbal suffix in North Sámi, can be suffixed to *álgit*:

- (30) *Mii sáva-šeimmet abte dát joavku álggá-šii fas*
 we wish-COND.1PL that this group.NOM begin-COND.3SG again
čuojabit.
 play.INF
 ‘We would wish that this group would begin to play again.’

To this can be added the example in (31), which shows that *álgit* is located below the sentential negation. An example of the opposite order, with *álgit* above negation, cannot be given, since the sentential negation is an auxiliary which is always located higher than all other verbs, and it does not have non-finite forms.

- (31) *Mii eat luobte šat sutnje, jus ii álgge*
 we NEG.1PL trust any.more 3SG.ILL if NEG.3SG begin
gulaballat earáiguin.
 communicate.INF other.PL.COM
 ‘We don’t trust her anymore if she does not begin to communicate with others.’

Similarly, it can be shown that *álgit* is below the marker of progressive aspect, since *álgit* can appear with a progressive suffix, the progressive then taking scope over the inceptive, as in (32a). Having the progressive on the lower verb instead is ungrammatical, as shown in (32b).

- (32) a. *Lean odne álgi-min fárret.*
 am today begin-PROG move.INF
 ‘Today I am beginning to move (house).’
 b. **Odne álggán fárre-min.*
 Today begin.PRES.1SG move-PROG

The complement of *álgit* can however be a verb marked for frequentative aspect, as shown in (33). It follows that below *álgit* there is a position for frequentative markers.

- (33) *De fábkkestağa álgá Biera jeara-halla-t*
 then suddenly begin.PRES.3SG Biera ask-FREQ-INF
eatni-s.
 mother-POSS.3SG
 ‘Then suddenly Biera begins to ask his mother over and over.’

Turning now to *álgit* co-occurring with passive and causative, we see in (34a) that *álgit* can take a passive verb as its complement, but it cannot itself be passivised, as shown in (34b) and (34c).⁴

- (34) a. *Lullisámegiella álgá gullot ja oidnot eanet.*
 South.Sámi begins hear.PASS and see.PASS more
 ‘South Sámi begins to be seen and heard more.’
- b. **Lullisámegiella álgo-juvvo gullat.*
 South Sámi begin-PASS.PRES.3SG hear.INF
- c. **Vísti álgo-juvvu-i buksset.*
 house.NOM begin-PASS-PAST.3SG build.INF

The verb phrase *buksset visti* ‘build a/the house’ denotes a bounded process, just like the complement of *inziare* in (8). Hence, if *álgit* could occur at all in the lower inceptive position that Cinque (2006) identified in Italian, (34c) should be a case in point. The ungrammaticality of (34c) indicates that there is no Voice head over *álgit*.

Álgit can also embed a causative verb, as in (35). The base verb in *borabit* ‘feed’ is *borrat* ‘eat’, which has an external agent argument and consequently must be taken to project a vP. The causative in *borabit* must accordingly be encoded in a syntactic head which is situated above the head that introduces the external argument, i.e. above v. As for *álgit*, it must be located even higher than the causative.

- (35) *Elle álggii bora-b-it guliid.*
 Elle begin.PAST.3SG eat-CAUS-INF fish.PL.ACC
 ‘Elle began to feed the fish.’

But notably, *álgit* itself cannot be causativised when it has an infinitival complement. Thus, starting from a construction like (36a) one cannot add a causative and get (36b):

- (36) a. *Sii álge beivehit boazo-logu.*
 they begin.PAST.3PL adjust.INF reindeer-number.ACC
 ‘They began to adjust the number of reindeer.’
- b. **Eiseválddit álgga-bedje sin beivehit*
 authority.PL.NOM begin-CAUS.PAST.3PL them adjust.INF
boazo-logu.
 reindeer-number.ACC
 Intended meaning: ‘The authorities made them begin to adjust the number of reindeer.’

⁴ An anonymous reviewer suggests that the reason why *álgit* does not passivise is that it is a raising verb. However, raising verbs sometimes allow passivisation, as in the long passives discussed in Wurmbbrand (2003). Hence, there is no reason to assume a priori that *álgit* does not passivise.

This is consistent with *álgit* with a verbal complement being located higher up in the functional domain than the causative.

The properties of *álgit* ‘begin’ as seen in this section leads to the following conclusions. When *álgit* has a verbal complement, it is an auxiliary located below past tense, below obligational and permissive modals, below conditional mood, below negation, and below the head encoding progressive aspect. It is however above the heads encoding passive, causative and frequentative aspect.

The position we have identified for *álgit* is not in agreement with the proposals of Cinque (2006) or Fukuda (2008). The fact that *álgit* is lower than obligational and permissive modals suggests that it might be in the lower inceptive position identified by Cinque. However, it should then also be below the causative and passive markers, while the opposite is the case. Furthermore, Cinque takes both positions for inceptives to be below the progressive, but *álgit* is situated higher than the progressive, as we have seen. As for the conditional mood, it is not included in Cinque’s hierarchies, but from what is said in Cinque (1999:79) it appears that the conditional can be associated with the alethic modal head, which is located higher than both positions for inceptives. The position of *álgit* relative to the conditional marker is then in accordance with Cinque’s proposal.⁵

The possibility of having frequentative aspect in the complement of *álgit* is also in accordance with the hierarchy shown on p. 93 in Cinque (2006), if we assume that the frequentative marker is then in the lower position for frequentatives. It is not, however, in accordance with the hierarchy shown on p. 175-175 in Cinque (2006), where the lower inceptive is only followed by a position for completive aspect.

Fukuda (2008) proposes, on the other hand, that inceptives can have vP or VP as their complement. Since *álgit* can embed a passive, its complement cannot be just VP – it must be vP (recall that Fukuda takes the passive to be encoded in v). Still, the fact that *álgit* also can embed causative and frequentative does not seem to be compatible with Fukuda’s proposal. An aspectual projection inside vP has been proposed, e.g. by Travis (1992), but then this projection is connected to the lexical aspect of the verb, and not to aspectual meanings taking scope over the base verb, like the frequentative in (33).⁶

⁵ It can also be shown that the conditional marker is located higher than modal verbs encoding obligation. The ordering shown in (i) fits the hierarchy given in (10) if the modal verb *fertet* ‘must’ represents the Mod_{obligation} head while the conditional suffix corresponds to Mod_{alethic}.

(i) *Dál fertet-šii juoga dabkk-o-t.*
 now must-COND.3SG something.NOM do-PASS-INF
 ‘Now something ought to be done.’

⁶ An anonymous reviewer suggests that the marker of frequentative aspect is inside vP in West Greenlandic, since it is closer to the root than transitivity morphology. However, the examples given by van Geenhoven (2005), which is the work that the reviewer refers to, or other works on West Greenlandic that I have consulted, do not show that the frequentative marker is inside vP. Consider the following example, from van Geenhoven (2005:110):

4.3 The position of *álgit* ‘begin’ with nominal dependents

Just like inceptive verbs in many other languages, the North Sámi *álgit* does not obligatorily take a verbal complement. It can also appear with only nominal dependents. One possibility is that it takes a subject which represents either an event or an object with serial properties or spatial extent (another possibility will be discussed in the next subsection). In these cases, *álgit* makes reference to the initial boundary of its subject, as shown in the following examples, where the subject of *álgit* is an event in (37), an object with serial properties in (38), and an object with spatial extent in (39). Note that the subject is then the only argument in the clause.

- (37) *Oaggun-gihvu álggii diibmu ovttas.*
 fishing-competition.NOM begin.PAST.3SG hour one.LOC
 ‘The fishing competition began at one o’clock.’

- (38) *Geavaheaddje-namma ferte álgit smávva bustávain.*
 user-name.NOM must.3SG begin.INF small letter.SG.COM
 ‘The user name must begin with a small letter.’

- (39) *Guivvi bálggis álgá Suttjesjogas.*
 Guivi.GEN path.NOM begin.PRES.3SG Suttjesjohka.LOC
 ‘The path to Guivi begins at Suttjesjohka.’

Now whereas *álgit* cannot be causativised when it takes a verbal

-
- (i) *Qaartartu-t sivisuu-mik qaar-qattaar-put.*
 bomb-ABS.PL lengthy-INS explode-again&again-IND.[-tr].3PL
 ‘Bombs exploded again and again for a long time.’

Here we see that the frequentative marker *-qattaar-* is closer to the root than the suffix *-put*. However, although *-put* reflects the fact that the verb is intransitive, I do not believe it should be identified with *v* or other heads that manipulate transitivity. In (ii), an example taken from Bittner (1987:215), we see that the antipassive suffix *-nnig-*, which prevents the verb from having an accusative object, is closer to the verb than the aspect marker *-qqig-*, while the aspect marker in its turn is closer to the verb than the suffix *-puq*, which is the singular counterpart of *-put*.

- (ii) *Ilinniartitsisu-mik uqaluqatigi-nnig-qqig-puq*
 teacher-INS talk.with-AP-again-INTR.IND.3SG
 ‘He talked again with teacher.’

The antipassive marker must presumably represent an element inside *vP*, since it interferes with the realisation of arguments, but there is no evidence that *-puq* is also inside *vP*. On the contrary, since it reflects the mood of the clause, it is probably situated much higher up, and the same goes for *-put* in (i). In short, *-put* and *-puq* are subject agreement markers. When the verb is transitive, markers showing agreement with subject and object are used instead, but it does not follow that any of these agreement markers in themselves manipulate transitivity (see e.g. Fortescue 1984:288–289). Hence, the reviewer’s suggestion does not go through.

complement, as demonstrated in (36), causativisation may well apply to *álgit* in nominal contexts. The causative of *álgit* is *álggabít*, a transitive inceptive verb which makes reference to the initial boundary of its grammatical object, and takes a subject that has the thematic role of agent/causer. Two examples are shown in (40) and (41):⁷

- (40) *Eiseválddit* *álgga-b-edje* *boaz̥o-logu*
 authority.PL.NOM begin-CAUS-PAST.3PL reindeer-number.GEN
beivebeami.
 adjustment.ACC

‘The authorities initiated the adjustment of the number of reindeer.’

- (41) *Australia* *oaiveministtar* *lea* *álgga-b-an*
 Australia.GEN prime.minister.NOM is begin-CAUS-PTC
guorahallama.
 investigation.ACC

‘Australia’s prime minister has started an investigation.’

Note that (40) differs minimally from the ungrammatical (36b), where we have the infinitive *beivebit* ‘adjust’ instead of the nominalisation *beivebeapmi* ‘adjustment’. Hence, the category of the complement of *álgit* makes the whole difference.

The possibility of causativising *álgit* when it appears in a nominal context suggests that *álgit* in these cases is located lower down in the clause than *álgit* with a verbal complement. Furthermore, the causative *álggabít* can be passivised, as shown in (42).

- (42) *Kursa* *álgga-b-uvvo* *ibttin*
 course.NOM begin-CAUS-PASS.PRES.3SG tomorrow
Guovdageainnus.
 Guovdageaidnu.LOC

‘The course is being started tomorrow in Guovdageaidnu.’

The morphologically simple *álgit*, on the other hand, is no more passivisable when it has only nominal dependents than when it has a verbal complement. The reason is that *álgit* does not have an external argument, so that the conditions for passivisation are not met. Only when an external argument has been introduced by the causative can a Voice head with the feature [passive] be added to the derivation.⁸

⁷ An anonymous reviewer points out that a morphologically well-behaved causative of *álgit* would be **álggibít*, a form that does not exist. However, it holds in general, and also for North Sámi, that causativisation at the verb phrase level tends to show morphological irregularities (see Vinka 2002, Julien 2007).

⁸ Passives of *álgit*, without the causative affix, can also be found. One example from the Giellatekno corpus is shown in (i).

The facts that we have seen so far suggest that *álgit* in nominal contexts is located lower down in the clausal structure than *álgit* with verbal complements. But recall that it has been argued, as noted e.g. in Cinque (2006), that when inceptives appear to take nominal complements, they actually select an abstract verbal complement. In other words, they are auxiliaries whether or not the main verb is visible.

On this point, Cinque refers to Pustejovsky (1995) and Jackendoff (1997). Both Pustejovsky (1995: 199) and Jackendoff (1997:60) discuss constructions like (43):

(43) *Mary began the novel.*

In this case, they argue, *begin* requires an event to be associated with its complement. Hence, we are forced to add to the interpretation of (43) an activity involving the nominal phrase in object position, in this particular case prototypically one of reading or writing.⁹

Notably, Pustejovsky (1995:201) also addresses the constructions exemplified in (44). In (44a), *begin* has an event-denoting nominal as its only argument, and Pustejovsky sees it as an unaccusative verb here. That is, *the movie* is the internal argument of the verb, and it is promoted to surface subject because there is no other candidate.

(44) a. *The movie began.*
 b. *Mary began the movie.*

The example in (44b) is the causative counterpart of (44a). An external argument bearing the causer role has been added, so that the internal argument can stay in object position.

While there might be an unexpressed event involved in (43), or, in the terms of Cinque (2006), a phonologically empty main verb, I do not see the necessity of postulating an unexpressed verb in (44ab). Since the event is encoded in the

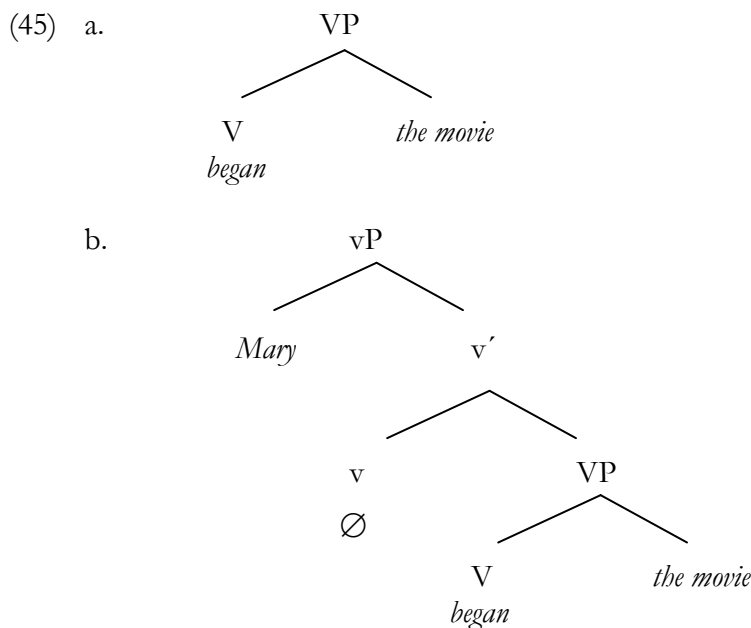
(i) *Mánáid-valáštallan-skuvla* *Karášjogas* *álgjo-juvvo.*
 children-sport-school.NOM Karášjohka.LOC begin-PASS.PRES.3SG
 ‘A sport school for children is started in Karášjohka.’

The native speakers that I have consulted nevertheless find passivisation of *álgit* ungrammatical (cf. 34bc). Most likely, examples like (i) are influenced by Norwegian, where the inceptive verbs *begynne* ‘begin’ and *starte* ‘start’ can be intransitive or transitive and allow passivisation.

⁹ Rochette (1999) suggests that in constructions like (43), the surface subject and the surface object originate in a small clause structure embedded under the inceptive verb. This is meant to be consistent with the idea that inceptive verbs (and other aspectual verbs) are always raising predicates, and to capture the intuition that the surface subject is also the semantic subject of the implicit process associated with the object. However, a problem for Rochette’s analysis is that the inceptive in (43) can be passivised: *The novel was begun by Mary*. Normally, only external arguments can be demoted in passivisation. Hence, it is possible that there is an unexpressed lower verb in (43) as well as in the passive version; the latter then corresponding to *The novel was begun to be read by Mary*.

nominal, the interpretation does not require an activity to be added. Hence, I would suggest that *begin* is actually the main verb here. Since the referent of *the movie* has an initial boundary, this noun can be selected as the argument of *begin*, as indicated in (45a). This argument will later raise to become the surface subject.¹⁰

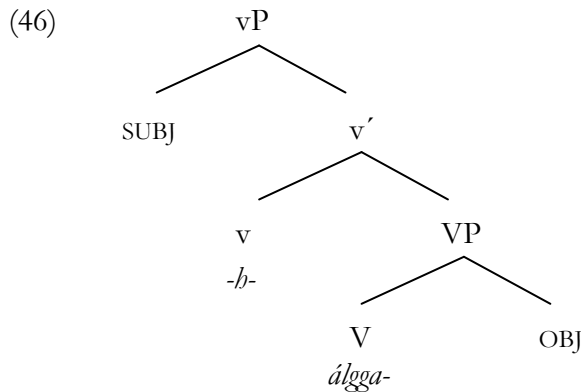
In (44b), the verb phrase must include a head that introduces an external argument, i.e. a *v* head. But as indicated in (45b), this *v* head does not have any phonological realisation of its own, so that the transitive verb *begin* is morphologically identical to intransitive *begin*. Hence, what we see here is an example of the causative/inchoative alternation which is also seen with many other English verbs.



The North Sámi verb *álgit* ‘begin’ differs from English *begin* in one respect: the morphologically simple verb *álgit* does not take an external argument. As pointed out in the brief sketch of North Sámi given in section 2, this language does not have verbs that are ambiguously transitive or intransitive. Instead, the addition of an external argument to an intransitive verb will be accompanied by the addition of a suffix. This also holds for *álgit*, as we have just seen.

My proposal is that when *álgit* appears with only a nominal argument, and no verbal complement, as in (37)–(39), it represents a V head, just like *begin* in (44a). The syntactic structure of the verb *álggahit*, on the other hand, is as shown in (46), with the root *álgga-* representing the V head and the causative suffix *-h-* representing the *v* head (tense and agreement are encoded in heads situated higher up and not shown here).

¹⁰ Rochette (1999) also suggests that event-denoting nominals can be subjects of aspectual verbs. However, she does not say anything more explicit about the overall syntax of the construction.



There are however cases in North Sámi where there might be an unexpressed verb in the complement of *álgit* after all. An example is given in (47).

- (47) *Olbmot leat álgán fas šibihii-guin.*
 people.NOM be.PAST.3PL begin.PTC again cattle-PL.COM
 ‘People have started with cattle again.’

Here we also have *álgit* with no visible verbal complement. But since neither the subject nor the comitative phrase refers to entities that provide an onset that the inceptive could be connected to, we are forced to add to the interpretation some activity involving cattle (such as ‘work’). This might mean that there is a phonologically empty verb present in this clause. I am thus not arguing that inceptive verbs never can have phonologically empty verbal complements; my point is only that they can also appear without any verbal complements.

To sum up, we have seen that there are cases where the reasons for postulating an empty verb in the complement of an inceptive verb is not very strong. On the contrary, in North Sámi we see that *álgit* with an event-denoting nominal argument is syntactically different from *álgit* with a verbal complement. While *álgit* with a verbal complement is situated higher up in the clause structure than the causative, *álgit* in nominal contexts is situated lower, so that it allows causativisation and also passivisation, and I have argued that it is then the main verb.

This means that the proposals of Cinque (2006) and Fukuda (2008) that clauses have two positions for inceptives finds some support in North Sámi. But whereas Cinque and Fukuda take both high and low inceptives to appear with verbal complements, we are led to conclude here that higher inceptives have verbal complements, while inceptives with only nominal dependents are located in a lower position.

4.4 *Álgit* with illative complements

The verb *álgit* ‘begin’ in North Sámi can also appear in a syntactic frame that is different from what we saw in the preceding section. It is possible for *álgit* to combine with a nominative subject and with another nominal phrase marked with

illative case. Examples of this construction are shown in (48), (49) and (50).

- (48) *Lean álgán iežan-ovddidan-kursii.*
 be.PAST.1SG begin.PTC self-development-course.ILL
 ‘I have started (attending) a self-development course.’
- (49) *Mun várra álggán boažo-dollui.*
 I maybe begin.PRES.1SG reindeer-husbandry.ILL
 ‘Maybe I will go into reindeer husbandry.’
- (50) *Ránnjá-gánda ii lean vel álgán*
 neighbour-boy.NOM NEG.3SG be.PAST yet begin.PTC
skuvlii.
 school.ILL
 ‘The boy next door had not started school yet.’

Here the main verb properties of *álgit* are even more evident, since the illative case appears to be dependent on *álgit*. Compare (50), where *skuvla* ‘school’ has illative case, to (51), where the verb *vázziit* ‘go’ is inserted between *álgit* and *skuvla*, and *skuvla* has the accusative case marking that it normally has in the collocation *vázziit skuvlla* ‘go to school’.

- (51) *Mun álgen vázziit skuvlla 1946:as.*
 I begin.PAST.1SG go.INF school.ACC 1946-LOC
 ‘I started going to school in 1946.’

Hence, if there is an abstract, phonologically empty verb following *álgit* in (48), (49) and (50), that verb cannot be *vázziit* or any other verb taking an accusative object.

My claim is therefore that there is no phonologically empty verb present in the structure. Instead, the illative marking of the nominals in these clauses is selected by *álgit*. To see this, we first need to take a look at the North Sámi illative case more generally.

In North Sámi, the illative is the case that expresses the goal of motion, as in (52) and (53):¹¹

- (52) *Joavvna viegai skuvlii.*
 Joavvna run.PAST.3SG school.ILL
 ‘Joavvna ran to school.’
- (53) *Dán gova áiggun henget seaidnái.*
 this.ACC picture.ACC want.PRES.1SG hang.INF wall.ILL
 ‘I want to hang this picture on the wall.’

¹¹ The North Sámi illative is also the case for indirect objects and for causees in causatives formed from transitive verbs (see Julien (1996)). These uses are however not of relevance here.

In addition, it is used in constructions like (54), where the verb does not denote motion but instead a change of state; the illative then expressing the position of the subject after the change of state.

- (54) *Olmmái beavvanii etnui.*
 man.NOM drown.PAST.3SG river.ILL
 ‘The man drowned in the river.’

If we now go back to (48)–(50), we see that *álgit* here also denotes a change of state, and the noun marked with illative represents the position of the subject after the change of state – as a participant in the course, as a practitioner of reindeer husbandry, or as a child attending school. Hence, it appears that the illative case depends on the verb *álgit* here, just like it depends on the verb *beavvanit* ‘drown’ in (54).

One might want to suggest instead that there is a phonologically empty verb present in (48)–(50) after all, and that this verb, and not *álgit*, selects illative case on the following nominal. This verb would then have to be one referring to movement or change of state, in order to select for illative. But if we consider the semantics of the examples in (48)–(50), which all involve *álgit* followed by a nominal phrase carrying illative case, it seems clear that postulating a phonologically empty verb embedded under *álgit* is not motivated. If a phonologically empty verb is present in these examples, it should be either a stative, copula-like verb, or one denoting activity, rather than a verb denoting movement or change of state. However, copulas and activity verbs do not select for illative case. Moreover, the semantics of these sentences can be explained without reference to any phonologically empty verb. In each sentence, we get the interpretation that the subject undergoes a transition and thereby ends up in the position that the illative phrase refers to. If we take *álgit* to represent the transition, the meaning of the construction as a whole can be accounted for. Hence, I see no convincing argument against taking *álgit* to be the main verb.

5 Inceptives in *-goahitit*

I will now turn to the suffix *-goahitit*, which adds inceptive meaning to its base verb.¹² One example was given in (5), and another one follows here:

- (55) *Sii leat bukse-goahitá-n hotealla.*
 they are build-INC-PTC hotel.ACC
 ‘They have started to build a/the hotel.’

¹² This suffix is sometimes taken to include an initial fricative (see e.g. Sammallahti (1977) and Szabó (1987)), since when the derivation base is an odd-syllabled verb, an *-s* appears in front of *-goahitit*, as in *muitaliŋgoahitit* ‘begin to tell’, from *muitalit* ‘tell’ (an illustration of the importance of syllable numbers in North Sámi morphology). For the present purpose I will nevertheless refer to the inceptive suffix as *-goahitit*.

Except for the fact that it is a bound form morphologically, *-goabtit* shares many properties of ordinary disyllabic verbs. It is inflected in the same way as disyllabic verbs of the *-it* conjugation class. We see this in (56), where some forms from the paradigm of *-goabtit* are given alongside the corresponding forms of *boabtit* ‘come’.¹³

(56) Partial paradigms of *boabtit* ‘come’ and *-goabtit*

INFINITIVE	<i>boabtit</i>	<i>-goabtit</i>
PRESENT 1SG	<i>boadán</i>	<i>-goadán</i>
PRESENT 3SG	<i>boabta</i>	<i>-goabta</i>
PAST 1SG	<i>bobten</i>	<i>-gobten</i>
PAST 3SG	<i>bođii</i>	<i>-gođii</i>

Another property that sets *-goabtit* apart from most verbal derivational suffixes is the possibility of conjunction reduction, noted by Ylikoski (2009:124) and illustrated by him with the following example:

- (57) *De neavvni válddi dulka daid nieiddaid movt*
 then advice.PAST.3SG bailiff.GEN interpreter those girls.ACC how
galget čohkkát geresis, goppas geres hállaniš-
 shall.3PL sit.INF sledge.LOC to.which.direction sledge lean-
ja šleađgasiš-goabta, doppil galget eret hállet
 and rock-INC.PRES.3SG in.that.direction shall.3PL away bend.INF
geresa.
 sledge.ACC

‘Then the bailiff’s interpreter gave those girls advice on how to sit in the sledge, that when the sledge begins to lean and rock in one direction, they must bend the sledge away from that direction.’

A closer inspection of the syntactic properties of *-goabtit* suggests that it is very similar to auxiliary *álgit*. The main differences between *álgit* and *-goabtit* is, firstly, that *-goabtit* always has a verbal complement, and secondly, that *-goabtit* attracts the head of its complement and combines with it morphologically. To illustrate this I will start from one of the examples given earlier of *álgit* with a nominal complement, namely (50), where we have *álgán skuvlii* ‘started school’. If we instead have the root *skuvl-* ‘school’ as the complement of *-goabtit*, it will necessarily get a verbal interpretation, as indicated in (63):

¹³ The alternation between *-bt-* and *-đ-* in the consonant centre is an example of the grade alternation that pervades the inflectional morphology of North Sámi.

- (58) *Julgaštus ávžžuba universitehtaid skuvle-goabti-t*
 manifesto.NOM encourage.PRES.3SG university.PL.ACC school-INC-INF
priváhta fitnodagaid.
 private company.PL.ACC
 ‘The manifesto encourages universities to start schooling private companies.’

I take this to mean that *-goabtit* can never be a main verb. It can only represent an inceptive head found in the functional part of the clause. In other words, *-goabtit* is always an aspectual auxiliary.

Apart from this difference, *-goabtit* is like *álgit* in its ability to combine with verbs of many types. We have already seen *-goabtit* with intransitive verbs in (5) and (62), with transitive verbs in (60) and (63), and below, I add examples showing *-goabtit* with an agentive intransitive verb in (64), with an unaccusative verb in (65), and with a stative verb in (66).

- (59) *Dál lea áigi barga-goabti-t.*
 now is time work-INC-INF
 ‘Now it’s time to start working.’
- (60) *Sáme-kultuvra lea rievda-goahhá-n.*
 sámi-culture.NOM is change-INC-PTC
 ‘The Sámi culture has begun to change.’
- (61) *Muhtun vuovde-rádje-lagežat leat sulastahhti-goahhá-n*
 some forest-limit-mountain.birch.PL.NOM are resemble-INC-PTC
eppel-muoraid.
 apple-tree.PL.ACC
 ‘Some mountain birches near the forest limit have begun to resemble apple trees.’

The above examples already suggest that *-goabtit* is a non-thematic verb, just like *álgit* in its auxiliary function. The thematic transparency of *-goabtit* is seen even clearer in (62), where *-goabtit* has combined with the verb *muohhtit*, which means ‘snow’ and does not take any arguments. Notably, the combination of *muohhtit* and *-goabtit* does not have any arguments either. This shows that *-goabtit* does not take any arguments of its own, and in particular no subject.

- (62) *Muhtimat illudit go muohhti-goahhá.*
 some.PL.NOM rejoice.PRES.3PL when snow-INC.PRES.3SG
 ‘Some are happy when it starts snowing.’

Moreover, *-goabtit* is like *álgit* in triggering a non-punctual reading of its complement. Thus, the base event gets an iterative reading in (63) and a process reading in (64):

- (63) *1800-logu loahpa-geahčen Avviljoga guovlluin*
 1800-number.GEN end-towards Avviljohka.GEN district.PL.LOC
gávdna-gobte golli.
 find-INC.PAST.3PL gold.ACC
 ‘Towards the end of the 1800’s they started to find gold in the district of Avviljohka.’
- (64) *Pragmáhtalaš girjjálašvuođa oaidnu dál lea vuoiti-goabta-n*
 pragmatic literature.GEN view.NOM now is win-INC-PTC
formalalašvuođa badjel.
 formalism.GEN over
 ‘A pragmatic view of literature has now begun to win over formalism.’

Concerning the position of *-goabtit* in the clause structure, we have already seen that it can be inflected for past and present tense, and also carry past participial marking. Consequently, *-goabtit* must be situated below the heads encoding past and anterior tense. Further, the examples in (65)–(68) show that *-goabtit* is situated below obligatory permissive modals, below the conditional mood, and also below the progressive:

- (65) a. *Searvi ferte čuovvu-goabti-t*
 organisation.NOM must.PRES.3SG follow-INC-INF
Máze ovdamearkka.
 Máze.GEN example.ACC
 ‘The organisation must begin to follow the example from Máze.’
- b. **Son ferte-goabta dabkat dan.*
 s/he must-INC.PRES.3SG do.INF that.ACC
- (66) a. *Stáhtat eai sáhte ávkkástalla-goabtit daid*
 state.PL.NOM NEG.3PL can exploit-INC-INF those.ACC
resurssaid
 resources.ACC
 ‘States cannot start exploiting those resources.’
- b. **Sii eai sáhte-goade dabkat dan.*
 they NEG.3PL can-INC do.INF that.ACC
- (67) a. *Dalle jáhkán Kárašjohka*
 then think.PRES.1SG Kárašjohka.NOM
beaggi-goadašii gubkelabbui.
 be.known-INC-COND.3SG further
 ‘I think that Kárašjohka would then begin to be more widely known.’
- b. **Dat beakkáš-goabta gubkelabbui.*
 it be.known-COND-INC-PRES.3SG further

- (68) a. *Son lea muobta-kino rábkadiš-goabti-min.*¹⁴
 s/he is snow-cinema.ACC prepare-INC-PROG
 ‘S/he is beginning to prepare a snow cinema.’
- b. **Son leabket-goabta muobta-kino rábkadea-min.*
 s/he be-INC.PRES.3SG snow-cinema.ACC prepare-PROG

But just like *álgit*, *-goabtit* can embed frequentative verbs, as in (69):

- (69) *Olbmot leat jeara-halla-goabta-n goas sin CD-skearru*
 people.NOM are ask-FREQ-INC-PTC when their CD-record.NOM
ilbmá.
 comes.out
 ‘People have begun to ask when their CD-record will be released.’

The complement of *-goabtit* can also be a passive verb, as in (70), whereas passivisation of *-goabtit* is ungrammatical, as indicated in (71):

- (70) *Unnitloguid jietna gull-o-goabta buorebut.*
 minority.PL.GEN voice.NOM hear-PASS-INC.PRES.3SG better
 ‘The voice of the minorities begin to be heard better.’
- (71) **Jietna/jiena gulla-gohtto-juvvu-i.*
 voice.NOM/voice.ACC hear-INC-PASS-PAST.3SG

This shows that just like auxiliary *álgit*, *-goabtit* is situated higher than the Voice head. From the following examples we see that *-goabtit* is also higher than the causative, since the complement of *-goabtit* can be a causativised verb, as in (72) and (73), whereas causativising *-goabtit* is ungrammatical, as illustrated in (74):

- (72) *Sii oahpa-biš-gobte bártni čuojahit.*
 they learn-CAUS-INC.PAST.3PL son.ACC play.INF
 ‘They started to teach their son to play (an instrument).’
- (73) *Rieban duoldda-biš-gođii biergo-gievnni.*
 fox.NOM boil-CAUS-INC.PAST.3SG meat-pot.ACC
 ‘The fox started to get the meat pot to boil.’
- (74) **Rieban duolda-goađi-b-ii biergo-gievnni.*
 fox.NOM boil-INC-CAUS-PAST.3SG meat-pot.ACC
 Intended meaning: ‘The fox made the meat pot begin to boil.’

Together, what we have seen of *-goabtit* so far indicates that it is in the same position as *álgit*, when *álgit* has a verbal complement. In other words, in a North Sámi

¹⁴ The *-š* in *rábkadiš-* is not a conditional marker, it is just a consequence of adding *-goabtit* to an odd-syllabled verb (see fn. 12).

clause there appears to be a position for inceptive aspectual auxiliaries somewhere in the middle of the functional domain of the clause, and *-goabttit* as well as *álgit* can appear in that position.

6 Low inceptives

We will now turn to a class of North Sámi inceptives that differ from *álgit* and *-goabttit*, discussed in the preceding sections. From some North Sámi verbs one can derive an inceptive verb by changing the theme vowel of the base verb. For reasons that will be made clear, I call these inceptives “low inceptives”. The derivation of low inceptives is lexically restricted, so that it does not apply freely to any verb. The verbs that allow the formation of low inceptives are all atelic; they denote either states or activities, and they do not take external arguments. Below, I will first deal with low inceptives formed from stative verbs, and then with low inceptives formed from activity verbs.

6.1 Low inceptives from stative verbs

In (75) I present some examples of low inceptives derived from stative verbs¹⁵:

(75) a.	<i>ballat</i> ‘fear’	>	<i>ballát</i> ‘begin to fear, become afraid’
b.	<i>bivvat</i> ‘keep warm’	>	<i>bivvát</i> ‘get warm’
c.	<i>diehtit</i> ‘know (that)’	>	<i>diehttát</i> ‘get to know’
d.	<i>goallut</i> ‘feel cold’	>	<i>goallát</i> ‘begin to feel cold’
e.	<i>gobcit</i> ‘be awake’	>	<i>gobccát</i> ‘wake up’
f.	<i>máhttit</i> ‘know (how)’	>	<i>máhttát</i> ‘learn, begin to know’

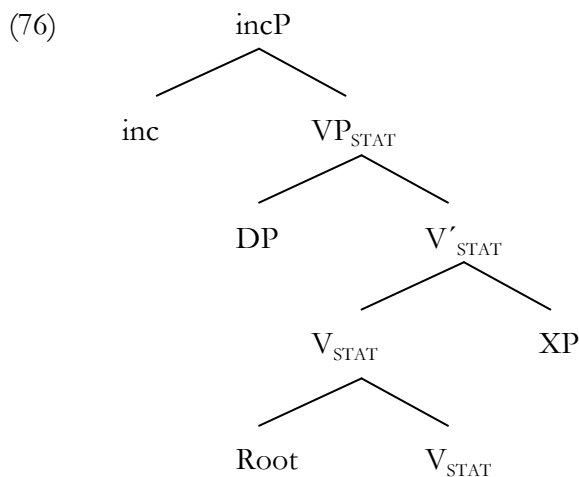
In these verb forms, the final *-t* is the infinitival marker. Hence, the verbal stem is what precedes the *-t*, and as we see, what distinguishes the base verbs, i.e. the verbs in the left hand column, from the derived inceptive verbs, in the right hand column, is the stemfinal vowel, i.e. the theme vowel.

While the base verbs in (75), which are all stative, show variation in their theme vowels, the derived inceptive verbs all have *-á-* as their theme vowel. This does not mean, though, that *-á-* can generally be characterised as a marker of inceptive. The theme vowel *-á-* also appears in non-derived stative verbs, such as *čohkkát* ‘sit’ and *veallát* ‘lie’, as well as in derived stative verbs, such as *vielgát* ‘look white or pale’, from the adjective *vielgat* ‘white’, and also in some non-inceptive non-stative verbs, such as *cummát* ‘kiss’ and *gurrpát* ‘tie together in a bundle’. In none of these verbs can the *-á-* be taken to represent inceptive. It is only in combinations like those in (75), where the *-á-* replaces the theme vowel in a stative base verb, that it represents inceptive aspect.

¹⁵ Verbs that refer to events of entering into a state are usually called inchoatives. However, since this paper compares different expressions of beginnings of states and events, I follow Smith (1991:77) and use the term *inceptive* for all of them.

An important fact concerning theme vowels in North Sámi is that they are not only found in verbs. They are also found in nouns and adjectives; that is, in all words belonging to the main lexical categories. Moreover, words based on the same root but belonging to different categories will have different theme vowels. For example, the verb *ballat* ‘fear’ in (75a) is based on the same root as the noun *ballu* ‘fear’, but has a different theme vowel. Hence, it appears that the theme vowels represent elements that specify the lexical category, thereby determining whether the root will appear in a nominal, verbal or adjectival context. But note that the theme vowel *-a-* is not restricted to verbs, and *-u-* does not only appear in nouns – cf. e.g. the verb *goallut* in (75d). Rather, there is variation in theme vowels in all lexical categories. The fact that the inchoative derivations in (75) are marked by changes in the theme vowels suggests that these derivations take place very low down in the verbal projection.

In Julien (2007) I proposed that stative verbs like *ballat* are formed by combining the root with a stative verbaliser, and that the derived inceptives are the result of adding an inceptive head on top of the stative projection. I will adopt this analysis also here, with some minor modifications, and propose that the inceptive verbs in (75) involve the syntactic structure shown in (76).



The theme vowel of the base verb corresponds to V_{STAT} . The theme vowel of the derived verb is either the result of the spellout of the inceptive head overriding the spellout of V_{STAT} , or else the theme vowel of the derived inceptive verbs could be seen as the realisation of $inc+V_{STAT}$ in combination. For reasons of space, I will not go into a detailed discussion of the potentially relevant morphological mechanisms here. I will only point out that *álgit* (and all other verbs) is also made up of a root plus a verbaliser, so that the head denoted as V in (46) is in reality more complex than shown there.

Going back now to (76), DP is the subject of the stative base verb, and it becomes the surface subject of the construction as a whole. Some of the base verbs also take a second argument in addition to the subject, an argument representing the target of emotion or the subject matter of a psychological predicate. I take this argument to be a complement of V, and I represent it as XP

in (76). This argument is retained in the derived inchoative, as shown for *ballat* ‘fear’ and *ballát* ‘begin to fear’ in (77) and (78).

(77) *Son ballá boabtte-áiggis.*
 s/he fear.PRES.3SG coming-time.LOC
 ‘She fears the future.’

(78) *Bobccot hakset ja ball-á-jit hájas.*
 reindeer.PL.NOM smell.PRES.3PL and fear-INC-PRES.3PL smell.LOC
 ‘The reindeer smell (it) and got frightened by the smell.’

As a final point we can note that unlike the base verbs, the derived inchoative verbs in (75) are dynamic. This is illustrated in (79) and (80):

(79) *Mun árvidan ahte geatki ballái*
 I understand.PRES.1SG that wolverine.NOM fear-INC.PAST.3SG
go gulai skobtera.
 when hear.PAST.3SG snowmobile.ACC
 ‘I understand that the wolverine got scared when it heard the snowmobile.’

(80) *Mun in diehtán das in maidege*
 I NEG.1SG know.PAST it.LOC NEG.1SG anything.ACC
vuobččan, muhto de fábkkestaga dieht-á-jin.
 at.first but then suddenly know-INC-PAST.1SG
 ‘I didn’t know anything about it at first, but then suddenly I got to know.’

Hence, the inceptive head adds dynamicity to the projection, encoding a transition that is the starting point of the state.

6.2 Low inceptives from activity verbs

While (76) showed inceptive verbs derived from statives, I present in (81) some examples of low inceptives derived from activity verbs:

- | | | | |
|---------|------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| (81) a. | <i>buollat</i> ‘burn (intr)’ | > | <i>buollát</i> ‘begin to burn’ |
| b. | <i>jobtit</i> ‘travel’ | > | <i>jobttát</i> ‘begin to travel’ |
| c. | <i>vardit</i> ‘bleed’ | > | <i>vardát</i> ‘begin to bleed’ |
| d. | <i>doarrut</i> ‘fight’ | > | <i>doarrát</i> ‘begin to fight’ |
| e. | <i>duoldat</i> ‘boil (intr)’ | > | <i>duldet</i> ‘begin to boil’ |
| f. | <i>čierrut</i> ‘cry’ | > | <i>čirrot</i> ‘begin to cry’ |

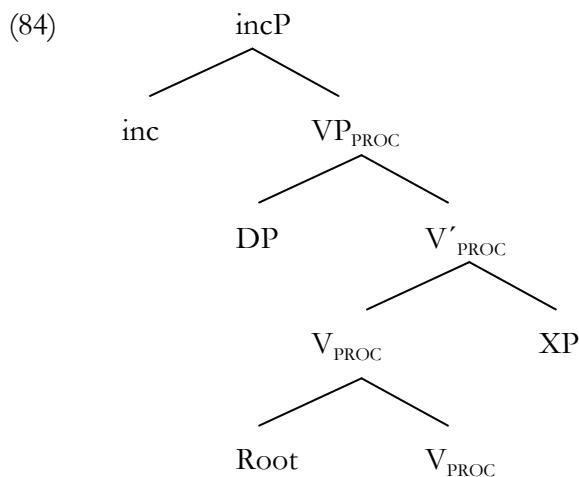
As we see, just like in (75) the overt manifestation of the derivations in (81) is the change of theme vowel, which means that here too we have examples of low inceptives, with the inceptive added close to the verbal root.¹⁶

While the base verbs in (81) all denote unbounded processes, the corresponding inceptives are bounded, denoting a change from no activity to activity. The contrasting aspectual properties are shown in (82) and (83). The main verb in (82) is the activity verb *duoldat* ‘boil’, and it combines with a time span adverbial, whereas *duldii* in (83) is a past tense form of the inchoative verb *duldet* ‘begin to boil’, and it combines with a time frame adverbial.

- (82) *Divtte smávvát duoldat sulli 20 minuhta.*
 let.IMP little.ADV boil.INF around 20 minute.ACC
 ‘Let simmer for around 20 minutes.’

- (83) *Gáffe duldii 5 minuhtas.*
 coffee.NOM boil.INC.PAST.3SG 5 minute.LOC
 ‘The coffee started to boil in 5 minutes.’

I propose that the inceptive verbs in (80) involve a syntactic structure which is very similar to the structure shown in (76), except that the stative verbaliser is replaced by a processual one, as shown in (84). Here too the inceptive takes as its complement a projection that does not contain an external argument. That is, the complement of the inceptive head is a VP which encodes an (unbounded) activity. The boundedness of the derived inceptive verbs is a consequence of the inceptive head encoding a transition.



Concerning the realisation of the structure in (84), we see in (81) that there is variation not only in the theme vowels of the base verbs, but also in the theme vowels of the derived verbs. The choice of theme vowel depends on the choice of

¹⁶ The monophthongisation that we see in the roots in (81e) and (81f) is a phonological consequence of the change of theme vowel.

root, in the base verbs as well as in the inceptive verbs. Moreover, it is not possible to infer from the theme vowel in the base verb what the vowel will be in the inceptive – compare (81a) and (81e). That is, when it comes to phonological realisation, the combinations of root and theme vowel must all be listed in the lexicon and then matched with the combination of root and V_{PROC} (for the base verbs) or the combination of root, V_{PROC} and *inc* (for the derived verbs).

6.3 Concluding low inceptives

We have seen that the low inceptive in North Sámi applies very low down in the verbal projection, taking the VP as its complement. In this respect, it fits the analysis of inceptives with gerundive complements in Fukuda (2008), which are also taken to embed VPs. However, objections can be raised against Fukuda's analysis, since both gerundive and infinitival complements to inceptives can contain a passive:

- (85) a. *Ranch style houses began being built in the 1920s.*
 b. *Gothic churches began to be built in the late twelfth century.*

This suggests that the gerundive complement is larger than VP after all, and that English does not have inceptives that are situated in a similarly low position as the low inceptives in North Sámi.

7 Conclusions

We have seen in this paper that there are differences as well as similarities between the three inceptives in North Sámi. The inceptive verb *álgit* 'begin' can be an auxiliary, situated relatively high up in the functional domain and taking a verbal complement.

When *álgit* appears with only nominal dependents, on the other hand, it is the main verb of the construction. As for the inceptive *-goabtit*, it is similar to auxiliary *álgit*, except that *-goabtit* is a bound form morphologically.

The position of *-goabtit* and of auxiliary *álgit* is in line with the general idea in Cinque (2006), since they are located in the functional domain of the clause, both preceded and followed by other markers. However, the precise details of the position of *-goabtit* and of auxiliary *álgit* is not in accordance with Cinque's proposal. It is also clear that these two North Sámi inceptives are in a higher position than what Fukuda (2008) proposes for English aspectual verbs and for aspectual verbs in general.

Concerning *álgit* in nominal contexts, however, I have argued that it is the main verb, and not an auxiliary at all. Hence, although it is then positioned very low down in the verbal projection, proposals concerning the position of inceptive markers are not relevant for these cases. My analysis goes against the suggestion in Cinque (2006) that inceptive verbs always have verbal complements, whether or not the lower verbs are phonologically realised.

The low inceptives, manifested as alternations of theme vowels, are different from *-goabtit* and from all occurrences of *álgit*. The low inceptives can be derived from processual or stative intransitive verbs, and I have suggested that the base verb represents either a stative verbaliser or a corresponding processual head, and that the inceptive is the result of adding an inceptive head over the base VP.

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