13

Argument dereferentialization in Lakota

REGINA PUSTET AND DAVID S. ROOD

13.1 Semantic alignment and pragmatic perspective

Typological research has revealed that many languages are equipped with some means of suppressing core arguments of transitive clauses (Keenan 1985). The structural devices used for this purpose include impersonalization strategies, such as the agent-suppressing *they* impersonal in English examples like *they told me*, where there is no specific referent for the agent (*they*) in the universe of discourse. The sole function of impersonals is that of backgrounding the transitive agent with respect to discourse saliency. Lakota has a rich repertory of such backgrounding constructions, which are used with both transitive and intransitive base verbs. Some of these have not yet been described in great detail.

However, argument suppression does not involve only backgrounding: many languages have structural devices for moving arguments out of a less discourse-salient into a more discourse-salient position, a process which is referred to as foregrounding. The most discourse-salient position in a clause is often associated with notions such as subject, topic, or focus, depending on the language studied and the choice of terminology. Argument suppression may also occur as a consequence of shifting a non-foregrounded argument into foregrounded position, since the original foregrounded argument loses this position.

Languages with semantic alignment such as Lakota (Siouan language family, Central North America) have been said to lack morphosyntactic devices which serve the purpose of foregrounding (Foley and Van Valin 1984: 155–9, Hopper and Thompson 1980: 280, Keenan 1985: 243–45). Put differently, foregrounding does not exist in such languages, at least not to the extent that the expression of grounding relations is mandatory in each clause (e.g. Foley and Van Valin 1984, Van Valin 2001, 1980). Constructions which fulfil this function are,

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in particular, passives and antipassives.[1] These constructions reverse the status of arguments regarding grounding as compared to the situation holding in the transitive base clause. If cases serve as markers for foregrounding in a nominative-accusative or ergative language, the cases which fulfil this function are the nominative and the absolutive respectively (e.g. Van Valin 1980: 322). These cases are pragmatically meaningful in that they convey the notion of foregrounded status. Argument marking in semantic alignment languages has been interpreted as being geared towards the expression of semantic roles only; pragmatic roles are thought to be irrelevant in such systems (e.g. Foley and Van Valin 1984). The very fact that semantic alignment languages do not have unified coding for the argument of intransitive clauses is one of the strongest arguments in favour of the assumption that case marking in these languages is exclusively role-sensitive, at least in those semantic alignment languages in which the varying coding formats for intransitive subjects can be semantically aligned with case role marking in transitive clauses. Lakota is an example of a language which shows such alignment in terms of a semantic parameter that is best, though not entirely uncontroversially, described as agency (Mithun 1991: 514–18, Pustet 2002). Alignment splits can, however, also occur along the lines of semantic and/or grammatical categories such as tense, aspect, and subordination vs. non-subordination.

In languages in which the notion of foregrounding is not part of the conceptual 'load' conveyed by basic transitive clauses, the alternation between the two expression formats for a single event exemplified by the English active vs. passive examples (1) and (2) cannot be expected to exist because there is no need to shift pragmatic perspective (similarly, cf. Van Valin 1980: 324–5).

(1) The raccoon chased the dog. (2) The dog was chased by the raccoon.

In the extant documentations of Lakota, either no mention is made of a passive (Boas and Deloria 1941, Buechel 1939), or else Lakota is explicitly said to lack a passive or similar construction by means of which examples like (2) can be translated directly from English (Van Valin 1985: 368). However, recent fieldwork has revealed that Lakota is in fact equipped with a passive-like construction which is functionally equivalent to the English passive, although the construction has some characteristics which set it apart from the 'classical' agent-demoting and simultaneously patient-promoting passives discussed in the typological literature (e.g. Keenan 1985, Shibatani 1985, 1988b, Siewierska 1984). This construction might be a new development which has been triggered by prolonged contact with English. At least, it has not been documented in the existing descriptions of Lakota.

[1] Other grammatical devices which express foregrounding include inverse constructions in obviation systems and Philippines-style focus systems.

13.2 The data

Core case relations are not morphologically marked on Lakota NPs. Obliques are coded by case-marking suffixes or postpositions. Lakota exhibits a complex system of person-marking affixes on the predicate: intransitive 'subject', transitive agent and patient, and, at least in specific semantic and syntactic constellations, benefactives, possessors, and other oblique roles are cross-referenced by person markers on the predicate. With few exceptions, such as the monomorphemic 3rd person plural patient affix *wicha-*, these markers are composed of two parts: a number-insensitive person marker and a number marker. To a large extent, the person-marking paradigms for transitive agent and patient are morphologically distinct. Singular number is not marked overtly,[2] while plurality is expressed by means of the suffix *-pi*. This number-marking system is used with both transitive agents and transitive patients. Intransitive arguments are coded by means of these sets of markers as well (see Table 13.1). The clause in (3) illustrates the usage of Lakota person/number markers in transitive predicates; in this case, the person markers appear as infixes to the root *naȟ'ų́* 'to hear':

(3) *Na-má-ya-ȟ'ų-pi.*
STEM-1SG.PAT-2AGT-hear-PL.AGT
'You guys hear me.'

13.2.1 *Agent suppression*

Lakota has an impersonalizing construction which serves to suppress reference to the agent of transitive events. This construction is homonymous with the coding format for 3rd person plural agent, which involves a zero agent marker and the plural suffix *-pi*:

(4) *ṡų́ka ki na-má-Ø-ȟ'ų-pi.*
dog DEF STEM-1SG.PAT-3AGT-hear-PL
'The dogs hear me.'

The impersonalizing *-pi*-construction is glossed by means of the acronym AGIPS ('agent impersonalizer'):

(5) *Hená ų́ waṡtų́kala káǧa-**pi.***
those with dried corn make-**AGIPS**
'With these (things) dried corn was made.'

(6) *Mary Light e-má-ciya-**pi.***
Mary Light STEM-1SG.PAT-say TO-**AGIPS**
'I am called/my name is Mary Light.'

[2] Number marking is implicitly present in certain portmanteau morphemes such as *ma-* '1st person singular patient' (cf. (3)).

(7) *'Táku e-ní-ciya-**pi** só?' eyá yų́khą́*
what STEM-2PAT-say TO-**AGIPS** QS say then
*'Ų́žížitka e-má-ciya-**pi** k'ų,' eyá kéye.*
rose STEM-1SG.PAT-say TO-**AGIPS** ASS say QUOT
' "What is your name?" he said. It (the bush) replied: "My name is rose." '

This construction is analogous to the impersonalizing *they* construction in English, as in (8),

(8) **They** sent him home.

which is semantically equivalent to the agentless passive in *he was sent home*.

The following examples clearly indicate that the element *-pi*, when used in an agent-suppressing function, does *not* convey the notion of plurality. The first group of examples features the verb *thų́* 'to give birth to', which, ontologically speaking, admits only one agent per instantiation in reality. The agent in question is the mother giving birth. Nevertheless, in examples (9)–(11), the verb *thų́* 'to give birth to' carries the element *-pi*, which, in these cases, must be regarded as an agent impersonalizer:

(9) *Wicháša wą chį́cá wą kíci-thų-**pi.***
man IDF.SG child IDF.SG 3SG.POSS-give birth to-**AGIPS**
'A man's son was born.' (Deloria 1932: 106)

(10) *Lakhóta ki lé pte-sá wą thų́-**pi** cha*
Indian DEF this buffalo-white IDF.SG give birth to-**AGIPS** QL
w-Ø-íyuškį-pi.
NSP.PAT-3AGT-happy-PL.AGT
'The Indians celebrate the birth of a white buffalo/that a white buffalo was born.'

(11) *Waníkiya Thų́-**pi** Ąpétu*
Saviour (Jesus) give birth to-**AGIPS** day
'The Saviour's Birthday', i.e. Christmas.

Examples (12) to (14) also validate the hypothesis that the impersonalizing *-pi* lacks number marking function. In these cases, the discourse context implies a singular referent for the semantic agent of the *-pi*-construction.

Context: the injured person had been hit by a rock thrown by a dwarf-like being.

(12) *Ihíhąni yų́khą́ héchel hú él aphá-**pi** hé héchel yazą́ kéye.*
in the morning then so leg at hit-**AGIPS** that so hurt QUOT
'In the morning the spot where he had been hit hurt.'

TABLE 13.1. Basic transitive and intransitive person-marking paradigms

(a) Active intransitive person affixes

Person	SG	DU	PL
1	*wa*-X[a]	*ɥ(k)*-X	*ɥ(k)*-X-*pi*
2	*ya*-X	–	*ya*-X-*pi*
3	Ø-X	–	Ø-X-*pi*

(b) Stative intransitive person affixes

Person	SG	DU	PL
1	*ma*-X	*ɥ(k)*-X	*ɥ(k)*-X-*pi*
2	*ni*-X	–	*ni*-X-*pi*
3	Ø-X	–	Ø-X-*pi*

(c) Transitive person affixes

	1SG.AGT	2SG.AGT	3SG.AGT	DU.AGT	1PL.AGT	2PL.AGT	3PL.AGT
1SG.PAT	[coded by separate reflexive paradigm]	*ma-ya-X*	*ma-X*	–	–	*ma-ya*-X-*pi*	*ma*-X-*pi*
2SG.PAT	*chi-X*	[coded by separate reflexive paradigm]	*ni-X*	*ɥ-ni-X*	*ɥ-ni*-X-*pi*	–	*ni*-X-*pi*

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3SG.PAT	*wa-X*	*ya-X*	[coded by separate reflexive paradigm]	*ų(k)-X*	*ų(k)*-X-*pi*	*ya*-X-*pi*	Ø-X-*pi*
DU.PAT	–	–	*ų(k)*-X-*pi*	[coded by separate reflexive paradigm]	–	–	*ų(k)*-X-*pi*
1PL.PAT	–	*ų-ya*-X-*pi*	*ų(k)*-X-*pi*	–	[coded by separate reflexive paradigm]	*ų-ya*-X-*pi*	*ų(k)*-X-*pi*
2PL.PAT	*chi*-X-*pi*	–	*ni*-X-*pi*	*ų(k)-ni*-X-*pi*	*ų(k)-ni*-X-*pi*	[coded by separate reflexive paradigm]	*ni*-X-*pi*
3PL.PAT	*wicha-wa-X*	*wicha-ya-X*	*wicha-X*	*wich(a)-'ų(k)-X*	*wich(a)-'ų(k)*-X-*pi*	*wicha-ya*-X-*pi*	[coded by separate reflexive paradigm]

[a] X symbolizes the position of the verb stem when the person affixes function as prefixes (rather than as infixes, which is also possible).

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Context: the boy's mother is the only person pulling out prairie turnips here.

(13) *Yų́khą́ hokšíla ki léchel iníhą̀ni lé thį́psila yużų́-**pi***
then boy DEF here nevertheless this prairie turnip pull up-**AGIPS**

cha oȟlóka cha ektá-šna éyokas'į-hą šḱhé.
QL hole QL at-HAB look at-PROG QUOT

'The boy, nevertheless, kept peeping through the holes left by the pulled-out prairie turnips.'

Context: the person asking for a story was a single person, namely Regina Pustet.

(14) *Héchel ą́pétu ki lé él wó'oyaka wą́ží oyág-ma-ši-**pi**.*
so day DEF this on story IDF.SG tell-1SG.PAT-ask-**AGIPS**
'Today I was asked to tell a story.'

Another group of examples which prove that *-pi* has the potential of suppressing agents by dereferentializing them is characterized by the fact that in the surrounding discourse context, an argument which qualifies as a filler for the semantic agent slot in the *pi*-construction cannot be identified. Where *-pi*-constructions occur at the beginning of narratives, particularly good examples for such configurations appear. Examples (15)–(17) each constitute the opening sentence in the narratives they are taken from.

(15) *Tókhi lé waníyetu tópa sece cha héȟą́ni lé*
about this year four maybe QL at that time this

*kį́yékhiyapi o'ínažį hécha cha hé líla thą́ka káġa-**pi**.*
airport such QL that INTENS big make-**AGIPS**

'About four years ago an airport was built, a very big one.'

(16) *Ho hehą́l tókheškhe pápa káġa-**pi** ki hé oblákį́-kte.*
well then how dried meat make-**AGIPS** DEF that tell.1SG.AGT-FUT
'Next I will tell about how jerky was made.'

(17) *Lehą́l wagmíza skuyá ki hé ų́ tókheškhe iȟ'ą́-**pi** ki*
now corn sweet DEF that with how boil.VT-**AGIPS** LK

hé oblákį́-kte.
that tell.1SG.AGT-FUT

'Now I will tell about how people cooked with sweet corn.'

Further, *-pi* must be interpreted as dereferentializing in contexts in which the implied agent is semantically generalized to the effect that no particular extralinguistic entities are referred to:

(18) *Tukté'el makhóche wą él wígli yąké hątąhą hé táku kihą wąyąka-**pi***
wherever land IDF.SG in oil sit if that things DEF see-**AGIPS**
škhé.
QUOT
'Wherever there is mineral oil in the ground something like that can be observed.'

An additional question that arises in the attempt to determine the exact functional scope of impersonalizing-*pi* concerns the syntactic argument structure imposed by this construction. As stated above, impersonalizing *-pi* is homonymous with the marking format for 3rd person plural agent, in which the 3rd person is expressed by a zero affix. Would it be appropriate to analyse an impersonalizing *-pi*-construction as more 'abstract' in function than the homonymous plural agent form of a verb, i.e. as a separate valence-reducing construction that eliminates the transitive agent phrase? This would imply that a predicate containing impersonalizing *-pi* is intransitive: only the patient would then be present at the structural level. Unfortunately, an unequivocal answer to this question cannot be provided at this point because, due to the fact that in Lakota transitive agents are always zero-marked in the 3rd person, the clause given in examples (19) and (20) can be analysed in two ways, i.e. either as lacking an agent or as containing an agent:

(19) *Thaló ki hé Ø-kablá-pi.*
meat DEF that 3SG.PAT-slice-**AGIPS**
'The meat was sliced.'

(20) *Thaló ki hé **Ø**-Ø-kablá-pi.*
meat DEF that **3AGT**-3SG.PAT-slice-**AGIPS**
'People sliced the meat.'

In some languages, passives (and, presumably, antipassives as well) can be used with intransitive base verbs. For instance, some German intransitives, such as *lachen* 'to laugh', can be passivized. The result is complete suppression of arguments at the semantic level by default, since in a structurally intransitive verb there is only one argument that lends itself to suppression. In syntactic terms, this construction is still intransitive since the subject slot is filled with the dummy argument *es* 'it':

(21) *Es wird ge-lach-t.*
it 3SG.PRES.PASS.AUX PPP-laugh-PST
'There is laughing going on.'

The Lakota *-pi*-impersonal is used with intransitive base verbs as well; however, dummy insertion as in German or other modifications of the valence frame of the respective verbs do not take place.

(22) *Éyaš lehą́n héchų s'e wachí-**pi**.*
but now that way dance-AGIPS
'But today **people** dance like this.'

(23) *Hená é cha ų́* chethí-***pi**.*
those IP QL with build a fire-AGIPS
'With these things **people** started a fire.'

(24) *Lé ų́, wahį́kpe na itázipa ki lená ų́, wayé yá-**pi**.*
this with, arrow and bow DEF these with, hunt go-AGIPS
'With this, with these arrows and bows, **people** went hunting.'

(25) *Lená léchų-**pi** chą́-šna hená ų́ akísni-**pi**.*
these do this-AGIPS then-HAB those because of recover-AGIPS
'Whenever **people** do that **they** get well from it.'

13.2.2 *Patient suppression*

In Lakota, transitive patients can be 'blotted out' in ways analogous to transitive agent suppression by means of the *-pi*-construction. Several predicate affixes fulfil this function: *wa-* 'inanimate patient dereferentializer', *taku-* 'inanimate patient dereferentializer', and *wicha-* 'animate patient dereferentializer'.

13.2.2.1 *wa- 'inanimate patient dereferentializer'* Using the most neutral formulation possible, the basic function of *wa-* consists in blocking the patient slot in transitive verbs for transitive patient markers. Such constructions can be translated into English by simply omitting the patient if the English verb in question allows this, as in the case of the transitive base verb *yútA* 'to eat (something)':

(26) ***Wa**-yáta-pi-kte.*
PATIPS-eat.2AGT-PL-FUT
'You guys will eat.'

As with impersonal *-pi*, the *wa*-construction might be interpreted in two ways: *wa-* either eliminates an argument slot, this time the transitive patient slot, or fills it. In the former case, detransitivization takes place, and the construction could be analysed as an antipassive; in the latter case, a translation like 'non-specific patient', 'things', 'stuff' would be appropriate. In the absence of additional structural clues supporting one of these interpretations, it is hard to decide which one is more adequate.

Unlike *-pi*, *wa-* may appear more than once in a given predicate:

(27) ***Wa-w**-ó-Ø-kiya-pi.*
PATIPS-PATIPS-STEM-3AGT-help-PL
'They helped (various people with various things).'

Usually, *wa-* serves to suppress reference to inanimate entities. However, there are occasional examples in which the argument in question must be interpreted as animate. Thus, in (27), there are two patient slots: one indicates the beneficiary of the act of helping, the other indicates the argument expressed by means of the preposition *with* in the English translation 'to help with'. From a semantic point of view, the beneficiary in (27) must be animate.

Additional examples of *wa-* referring to animate arguments include:

(28) ***Wa***-*Ø-kté-pi.*
PATIPS-3AGT-kill-PL
'They killed.'

The patient of an act of killing is necessarily animate.

(29) *John Jack* ***wa***-*'íwaho-Ø-Ø-ye.*
John Jack **PATIPS**-remind-3SG.AGT-3SG.PAT-STEM
'John reminds people of Jack.'

The native speaker who provided this example remarked that it implies people in general as cognitive recipients of the act of reminding.

Wa- may occur with intransitive base verbs, but such combinations are not very productive; presumably, they are lexicalized remnants of a historical stage in which *wa-* was used more widely with intransitives. Only stative intransitives (lexemes denoting property concepts and material entities) have been found in combination with *wa-*. Examples include:

(30) *wa-thó* 'grass, green grass, leaves, garden'
WA-green/blue

(31) *wa-są́* 'faded things'
WA-faded

(32) *wa-cík'ala* 'small things'
WA-small

(33) *wa-ką́* 'elders'
WA-old

(34) *wa-há* 'hides (PL noun)'
WA-hide

(35) *wa-hį́-ṡma* 'furs'
WA-fur-deep

(36) *wa-ṡį́* 'fat (noun)'
WA-fat (noun)

(37) *wa-mní-tu* 'whale, shark, octopus, sea lion, seal, any large ocean animal'
WA-water-LOC

(38) *wa-hú-topa* 'quadruped'
WA-leg-four

13.2.2.2 *takú- 'inanimate patient dereferentializer'* Like *wa-*, *takú-* suppresses specification of transitive patients. The argument in question is, without exception, inanimate. It seems safe to assume that *takú-* ultimately derives from the indefinite-interrogative pronoun *táku* 'things, something, what'.[3] Elicitation

[3] *-takú* is probably a shortened form of *takúku* '(all kinds of) things'. This element in turn derives from a reduplicated form of *táku* 'things, something'. The stress shift involved is idiosyncratic; at least it cannot be explained in terms of rules of Lakota phonology.

shows that *takú-* can be substituted for patient-suppressing *wa-* in almost any case, although *takú-* is by far less frequent than *wa-* in discourse.

(39) ***Takú**-bluṡtą.*
PATIPS-1SG.AGT.finish
'I finished things.'

(40) ***Takú**-Ø-ka-bleca-pi.*
PATIPS-3AGT-INSTR-broken-PL
'They broke (many) things.'

(41) ***Takú**-wa-kayeǧe.*
PATIPS-1SG.AGT-SEW
'I sew.'

(42) ***Takú**-Ø-naȟ'ų-pi.*
PATIPS-3AGT-hear-PL.AGT
'They heard things.'

(43) *Lél **takú**-cho-wa-k'į.*
here PATIPS-STEM-1SG.AGT-roast
'I'm roasting things here.'

13.2.2.3 *wichá- 'animate patient dereferentializer'* Evidence from Lakota discourse suggests that the regular 3rd person plural animate patient marker *wichá-* can be used non-referentially as well, and thus may serve to suppress reference to animate patients in transitive clauses, just as *wa-* suppresses reference to inanimate patients. For instance, *wichá-* may appear at the beginning of stories at a point at which no argument that qualifies as coreferential with the semantic patient of a *wichá-*construction can be identified, as in (44):

(44) *Yųkhą ehąni Iktómi kákhena yá-hą kéye. Yųkhą*
then long ago Iktomi about go-PROG QUOT then
ųgnáhelakha tuktél lową́-pi na wachí-pi cha
suddenly somewhere sing-AGIPS and dance-AGIPS SO
*na-**wícha**-ȟ'ų kéye cha.*
STEM-**PATIPS**-hear QUOT QL
'A long time ago Iktomi was travelling around. Suddenly he heard **people** singing and dancing somewhere.'

(Note that *lową́-pi* and *wachí-pi*, glossed as 'singing' and 'dancing', are additional examples of the intransitive use of impersonal *-pi*.)

Similarly, in (45), *wichá-* in *wichá-khuwa-pi* 'they chased people' does not refer to specific people, but rather, to people in general. The same applies to *wichá-* in *e-**wícha**-kiya-pi* 'they called them'.

(45) *Ehąni hél wanáǧi eyá wiwíla wicháṡa e-**wícha**-kiya-pi*
long ago there spirit LK spring man STEM-**PATIPS**-call-AGIPS
*cha héchacha hená eyáṡna Ø-**wichá**-khuwa-pi.*
QL that kind those always 3AGT-**PATIPS**-chase-PL.AGT
'Long ago spirits called "spring men" sometimes chased **people.**'

In the excerpt from a recipe for a toothache remedy given in (46), *wicha-* in *ó-wicha-kiye* 'it helps' denotes people in general. The preceding context does

not contain any referentially specific 3rd person plural arguments which can be interpreted as coreferential with *wicha-* in this case.

(46) *Hé ųgnáš hí yazą́-pi hą́tąhą hé*
that maybe tooth ache-AGIPS when that
i-y-ó-gnaka-pi-kte, pus-yá-kel, hą́tąhą hé
mouth-EI-LOC-place-AGIPS-FUT dry-ADV-kind of when that
*ó-**wicha**-kiye.*
STEM-**PATIPS**-help.VT
'When people maybe have a toothache, they put it in their mouth, dried as it is. It helps (people).'

13.2.3 *More details on the usage of argument-suppressing -pi and wa-*

By and large, argument-suppressing *-pi, wa-*, *takú-* and *wichá-* seem to target core arguments only, i.e. transitive agents and patients, respectively, and intransitive 'subjects'. There are, however, occasional exceptions to this rule.

Agent-suppressing *-pi* may cooccur with patient-suppressing *wa-* or *wichá-* in a single verb form:

(47) ***Wa**-yátką-**pi** ki líla ṡ'ag-yáhą íyąke.*
PATIPS-drink-**AGIPS** DEF INTENS strong-ADV run
'Drinking is going on very strongly.'

(48) *Cha **wa**-glúżaża-**pi** na'íš nųwą́-pi ki,*
QL **PATIPS**-POSS.wash-**AGIPS** and bathe-AGIPS DEF
hená nakú́ líla wówasukiye óta.
those also INTENS rule many
'For doing laundry and taking baths there also were lots of rules.'

(49) *Ąpétu iyóhila owáchekiye ki lená wa-ká-ȟla-pi na*
day each church DEF these NSP.PAT-INSTR-ring-AGIPS and
*hená **wichá**-ȟa-**pi**.*
those **PATIPS**-bury-**AGIPS**
'Every day the church bells rang, and people were buried/there were funerals.'

In many cases, such combinations result in a concept that is translated by an English noun:

(50) ***wa**-khálya-**pi*** (prounounced: *wa-khála-pi*)
PATIPS-heat.V-**AGIPS**
'coffee'

(51) ***wa**-káġa-**pi***
PATIPS-make-**AGIPS**
'statue'

(52) ***wa**-ȟ'áyethų-**pi***
PATIPS-decorate-**AGIPS**
'decorations'

Table 13.2. Summary of argument-suppressing constructions in Lakota

	Coding format for AG	Coding format for PAT
-pi- 'agent dereferentializer'	–	Same as in active transitive clause
wa- 'inanimate patient dereferentializer'	Same as in active transitive clause	–
takú- 'inanimate patient dereferentializer'	Same as in active transitive clause	–
wichá- 'animate patient dereferentializer'	Same as in active transitive clause	–

13.2.4 *Interim summary: lack of promotion of constituents in argument-suppressing constructions*

None of the numerous argument-suppressing constructions dealt with so far has a characteristic that is often felt to be essential for the functional definition of passive or antipassive: the syntactic promotion of an argument. In the English passive, for instance, the basic transitive patient (*the boy* in (53) and (54)) is promoted to the status of subject, a position occupied by the agent in the corresponding active clause:

Active:

(53) The teacher sent the boy home.

Passive:

(54) The boy was sent home (by the teacher).

Pronominal arguments provide a clearer example for promotion of patients in passive clauses, since in this case the accusative case marking of the patient of the active clause changes to nominative in the passive:

(55) She sent him home. (56) He was sent home by her.

Although, just like standard passives and antipassives, the above Lakota constructions serve to either remove or neutralize—depending on the interpretation—one of the basic transitive arguments, the syntactic status of the remaining argument remains unchanged. Table 13.2 summarizes the properties of the above Lakota constructions in this regard. The respective case-marking formats for the residual argument in argument-suppressing constructions—the agent in patient-suppressing constructions and the patient in agent-suppressing constructions—are in any case identical to the case marking that the latter arguments exhibit in the corresponding active transitive base clauses. Analogous structures are documented for passives in languages like Mojave (Langacker and Munro 1975: 810) and Welsh (Comrie 1977: 55).

On these grounds, it seems safe to conclude that, as stated in works like Foley and Van Valin (1984) or Van Valin (2001), Lakota is a role-dominated language, in which case marking is exclusively dictated by semantic content rather than by the need to shift case markers to serve the function of coding pragmatic roles, such as that of a foregrounded participant. This assumption, however, which has for a long time defined the approach taken to Lakota in this respect (e.g. Foley and Van Valin 1984, Van Valin 1980, 1985, 2001, Van Valin and Foley 1980), is called into question by the data presented in section 13.2.5.

13.2.5 *Agent suppression plus overt agent NP: a 'foregrounding passive'?*

Recent language data reveal that Lakota is also equipped with a construction which is functionally equivalent to an English passive in which both agent and patient are overtly expressed. Just like the agent-dereferentializing *-pi*-impersonal dealt with in section 13.2.1, this construction is based on the element *-pi*:

(57) *Wicháša ki mathó Ø-kté-**pi**.*
man DEF bear 3SG.PAT-kill-**PASS**?
'The man was killed by the/a bear/bears.'

13.2.5.1 *General structure of the pi-passive* In order to bring out the peculiarities of this construction, it is necessary first to discuss some general facts about argument marking in Lakota. Full NPs in core argument function are never case-marked. Word order can be taken as an indicator of agent vs. patient role in transitive clauses in which both agent and patient figure as full NPs: usually, the AGT precedes the PAT, as in (58), although occasionally the reverse is true, as in (59). Left-dislocation of the patient phrase in this example codes contrastive focus.

(58) *Sú́ka hé igmúthąka hé theb-Ø-Ø-yé.*
dog that mountain lion that STEM-3SG.AGT-3SG.PAT-eat up
'The dog ate the mountain lion.'

(59) *Sú́ka hé igmúthąka hé theb-Ø-Ø-yé.*
dog that mountain lion that STEM-3SG.AGT-3SG.PAT-eat up
'The mountain lion ate the dog.'

In Lakota, there is an elaborate system of determiners which includes several types of article conveying the basic distinction of definite vs. indefinite, and three types of demonstrative. At least with animate full NPs, marking by means of one or more of these types of determiner is mandatory in virtually all contexts. There are three marking formats:

(a) Article only:

(60) *wicháša ki/wą*
man DEF/IDF.SG
'the/a man'

(b) Demonstrative only—the demonstrative obligatorily follows the lexical head in this case:

(61) *wicháša hé*
man that
'that man'

(c) Article plus demonstrative—here the demonstrative may either precede or follow the lexical head plus article complex:

(62) *hé wicháša ki*
that man DEF
'that man'

(63) *wicháša ki hé*
man DEF that
'that man'

One of the few contexts in which an animate NP may lack determiners is when it is used in a non-specific, non-referential, sometimes generic sense, like *ithúkala* 'mice' in (64):

(64) *Igmú ki ithúkala wichá-yuta-pi.*
cat DEF mouse 3PL.PAT-3AGT.eat-PL.AGT
'Cats eat mice.'

Given these facts, the construction exemplified by (57), in which the animate agent NP *mathó* 'bear(s)' follows the patient NP and lacks determiners, can be dealt with without positing a special, possibly passive-like, construction type. On the assumption that *mathó* 'bear(s)' designates the species in general rather than an individual bear or individual bears, and that *-pi* is a 3rd person plural marker which is coreferential with the agent *mathó* 'bear(s)', and also with a 3rd person agent marker Ø- which is attached to the verb, example (57), repeated here for convenience, can be translated by 'Bears killed this man'.

(65) *Wicháša ki mathó Ø-Ø-kté-pi.*
man DEF bears 3AGT-3SG.PAT-kill-PL.AGT
'Bears killed the man.'

As a matter of fact, however, there are three additional translations for the agent NP in example (57)/(65): 'the bear', 'a bear', and 'the bears'. These possibilities defy the rules for determiner use in canonical transitive and intransitive clauses in Lakota; in all three cases, the animacy of the agent NP requires the presence of determiners. What is more, the singular translations 'the bear' and 'a bear' are not compatible with the element *-pi* if the latter is analysed as a regular plural marker. As a number marker, in any case, *-pi* requires a plural interpretation. So the hypothesis that (57)/(65) represents a regular active transitive clause in which *-pi* fulfils the function of plural agent marking, rather than that of coding a passive-like structure, is not tenable. The numerous examples given in section 13.2.1 also show that impersonalizing *-pi* does not mark number. Interpreting *-pi* as an impersonalizing, passive-like marker in example (57)/(65) solves

the problems which arise when singular translations are given for the agent NP *mathó* 'bear(s)'.

Confronting a Lakota native speaker with English passive clauses containing an agent has so far produced only the construction exemplified by (57)/(65) in translation: the patient, rather than the agent, is clause-initial; the agent does not combine with determiners; and the agent phrase is not restricted in terms of number, i.e. can be given either a singular or a plural reading.

Similarly, in example (66), *-pi* must be analysed as a passive rather than as a plural agent marker.

(66) *Igmúthąka hé šų́ka theb-Ø-yá-pi.*
mountain lion that dog STEM-3SG.PAT-eat up-PASS
'That mountain lion was eaten by dogs/a dog/the dog.'

Again, testing the hypothesis that *-pi* is a plural agent marker, *igmúthąka hé* 'that mountain lion' cannot be interpreted as coreferential with the potential plural agent marker *-pi* because the phrase is unequivocally marked as singular by means of the demonstrative *hé* 'that', whose plural form is *hená* 'those'. This leaves *šų́ka* 'dog(s)' as the default agent. And since *šų́ka* 'dog(s)' can be translated as a singular in example (66), it must be concluded that, at least with singular interpretations of this NP, *-pi* codes an impersonal or passive rather than a plural agent. The same is true for examples (67) and (68):

(67) *Wicháša hé mathó Ø-khuwá-pi.*
man that bear 3SG.PAT-chase-PASS
'That man was chased by bears/a bear/the bear(s).'

(68) *Hokšíla hé wichį́cala a-Ø-phá-pi.*
boy that girl STEM-3SG.PAT-hit-PASS
'That boy was hit by girls/a girl/the girl(s).'

Given the above facts, there is only one possible alternative to assigning passive-like status to the *-pi*-construction in examples like (57)/(65): the agent NP can, at least theoretically, be analysed as an incorporated noun. In such a scenario, the *pi*-clauses in question must be considered intransitive at the structural level. The agent has been absorbed by the verb, and has therefore been removed from the valence frame of the verb. However, the incorporation hypothesis has to be rejected. First, transitive agents are not usually incorporated into the verb in Lakota, although this rare construction is documented in examples such as (69):

(69) *Iyáyį na wąyą́ka yé, táku šųg-Ø-wáphapha-pi.*
go and see IMP something dog-3AGT-bark at-PL.AGT
'Go and look, dogs are barking at something'.

More importantly, however, the agent in *-pi*-constructions does not behave like an incorporated noun in that it does not exhibit the stress pattern associated with

noun incorporation, which is most clearly observable when monosyllabic nouns are involved. These lose stress completely when incorporated, like *pté* 'buffaloes' in the following example. In configurations like (70), stress will invariably fall on the first syllable of the verb, regardless of whether this syllable is stressed in the base verb or not:

(70) *Pte-Ø-kté-pi.*
buffalo-3AGT-kill-PL.AGT
'They killed buffaloes.'

In the *pi*-clause (71), *pté* 'buffalo(es)' figures as a non-incorporated noun which carries independent stress:

(71) *Wicháša ki hé pté paslóhąhą Ø-iȟpéya-pi.*
man DEF that buffalo knock down 3SG.PAT-throw-PASS
'That man was pushed/knocked down by buffaloes/a buffalo/the buffalo(es).'

The stress pattern in (71) cannot be altered to produce the stress pattern characteristic for noun incorporation—i.e. removing stress from *pté* 'buffalo(es)' produces an ungrammatical example:

(72) **Wicháša ki hé pte-páslohąhą Ø-iȟpéya-pi.*
man DEF that buffalo-knock down 3SG.PAT-throw-PASS

13.2.5.2 *Usage of the pi-passive* Another issue that needs to be addressed in the context of putative passive constructions concerns the properties of the verbs eligible for passivization with respect to degrees of semantic transitivity according to Hopper and Thompson (1980). As a cross-linguistic rule of thumb, high-transitivity clauses lend themselves to passivization most readily (Hopper and Thompson 1980: 292–3). As a matter of fact, the examples given so far almost exclusively contain verbs which are high in Hopper and Thompson's transitivity parameters (kinesis, agency, telicity, volitionality, and affectedness of the object): *kté* 'to kill', *aphá* 'to hit', *thebyá* 'to eat, devour', and *paslóhąhą iȟpéya* 'to push/knock down'. The only verb in the above examples that can be regarded as lower in semantic transitivity is *khuwá* 'to chase'. Below, more examples with both high- and lower-transitivity verbs are given:

High transitivity:

(73) *Ṡiná ki hé wichícala Ø-káġa-pi.*
blanket DEF that girl 3SG.PAT-make-PASS
'That blanket was made by girls/a girl/the girl(s).'

(74) *Joe wíyą ektá Ø-áya-pi.*
Joe woman there 3SG.PAT-take to-PASS
'Joe was taken there by women/a woman/the woman/the women.'

(75) *Wicháša hé mathó Ø-yaȟtáka-pi/yubláza-pi/ksúyeya-pi.*
man that bear 3SG.PAT-bite-PASS/tear apart-PASS/hurt-PASS
'That man was bitten/torn apart/hurt by bears/a bear/the bear(s).'

The following examples with low-transitivity verbs are not grammatical:

(76) **Wicháša hé mathó Ø-wąyáka-pi.*
man that bear 3SG.PAT-see-PASS
'That man was seen by bears/a bear/the bear.'

(77) **Wicháša hé mathó na-Ø-hʼú-pi.*
man that bear STEM-3SG.PAT-see-PASS
'That man was heard by bears/a bear/the bear.'

There is a tendency of admitting the *-pi*-passive preferably with high-transitivity verbs. This observation is in line with the behaviour of passive constructions at the cross-linguistic level.

Evidence of the use of the *-pi*-passive in contexts involving other types of argument, such as non-3rd person patients, is at best shaky. The same speaker provided diverging grammaticality judgements on the following two examples, which share the same basic structural profile. In (78), a singular translation, 'a/the bear'—which, according to what has been said above, is the main clue to analysing the *-pi*-construction as passive-like—is possible, whereas in (79) the singular translation 'a/the girl' is ungrammatical.

(78) *Mathó ni-yúblaza-pi.*
bear 2SG.PAT-tear apart-PASS
'You were torn apart by bears/a bear/the bear(s).'

(79) *Wichícala a-má-pha-pi.*
girl STEM-1SG.PAT-hit-PASS?
'Girls hit me.'

The *pi*-passive can be used with both animate and inanimate agents. Examples with inanimate agents are given in (80) and (81):

(80) *Mathó ki íyą Ø-kaʼá-pi.*
bear DEF rock 3SG.PAT-kill-PASS
'The bear was killed by a/the rock/rocks.'

(81) *Thípi ki thatéthąka Ø-ihágya-pi.*
house DEF hurricane 3SG.PAT-destroy-PASS
'The house was destroyed by a/the hurricane.'

Acceptability of inanimate agents in *pi*-passives provides an additional criterion by means of which this construction can be set apart from its putative historical source, the plural marker *-pi*, since the semantic scope of the latter is limited to the

coding of animate arguments only. Because of its incompatibility with inanimate agents, *-pi* cannot be interpreted as a plural agent marker in examples like (80) and (81). Thus, in these cases, *-pi* must be considered a passive marker. For further hints that the Lakota *-pi*-construction is a passive, see Rood and Taylor (1996: 464).

13.2.5.3 *The* pi*-passive in historical perspective* The *pi*-passive can be viewed as an innovative construction that has been formed in response to the influence of English syntax on Lakota. At least, the existing descriptions of the language do not include any data on passive-like constructions in which the agent can be overtly expressed, as is the case in the examples given above.

This hypothetical course of events would accord with similar developments in other languages (cf. Heine and Kuteva 2002: 235–7): that a morpheme which indicates agent or subject plurality develops into an impersonal, then into a passive with the agent unmarked, and ultimately to a construction which allows an overtly specified but pragmatically backgrounded agent. However, data from the closely related Siouan language Omaha make a different approach to the historical source of the *pi*-passive appear at least equally feasible. There is reason to hypothesize that the original (and still basic) meaning of the morpheme is 'marked (unexpected) focus', and that it has retained that meaning in the impersonals and passives we find in both Lakota and Omaha today. In addition, it has evolved from that meaning to indicate subject plural and, at least in Omaha, subject focus. The evidence for this proposal stems from comparing the morpheme's Lakota distribution with that of a related morpheme in Omaha.

As described in Eschenberg (2005), Omaha also exhibits multiple functions for the cognates of the Lakota *pi*-morpheme. Like Lakota, it can mark either plural agents or impersonal constructions that translate into English most comfortably as passives. In addition, however, in Omaha the morpheme is used to indicate that the subject of a verb (either transitive agent or the only argument of an intransitive) is 'on stage', i.e. an important character in the narrative at that point in the story. The so-called 'plural' morpheme thus occurs with either singular or plural subjects when they are prominent. This is reminiscent of the proximate/obviative distinction found in Algonquian languages, but it is also different because more than one NP at a time may be 'proximate' in Omaha. Whereas the object is focused by the morpheme that marks 3rd person plural in the passive/impersonal construction in both languages, this Omaha development uses that same morphology to focus on subjects.

Since the morphemes in the two languages are phonologically cognate, it seems safe to assume that their ancestor in the proto-language from which they stem had a meaning which could evolve into agent plural marking, as well as into both agent or subject focus and object focus, and that it might have any one of these functions as its starting point. If, as is usually assumed, that starting point is plurality of subject, the path to the Lakota situation is easy to imagine, as stated above. But how does one go from plural agent to focused agent? Eschenberg proposes that

the development path is plural subject > object focus > backgrounded subject > subject focus, but the last step in this progression is not an evolutionary one; it is rather a complete reversal of functions. Such a development does not seem likely without considerable intermediation of some sort.

Starting with the idea that this morpheme meant 'marked focus', however, we can describe non-contradictory evolutionary paths leading to all the modern functions. One must first accept the idea that the neutral or unmarked focus in a transitive clause is on the agent or subject; we think that is well established and will not take the space to defend the claim here. If that is accepted, the existence of a morpheme to reverse the natural or expected focus placement becomes plausible, and we have the impersonal and passive meaning as the fundamental one for that morpheme. Positing a 'marked focus' meaning for that morpheme implies that its presence will signal either agent suppression or object prominence, i.e. the meanings we now see in impersonals or passives. Next, 'marked focus' could well come to mean 'defocus the expected focus'. If agents are defocused by default by the presence of a focus marker on non-agents, the identity of the agent might become so blurred and irrelevant—as in English impersonal *they*—that the 'marked focus' marker is reanalysed as plural agent. Next, 'plural agent' becomes 'plural subject', and we have accounted for everything except the Omaha subject focus construction. That would seem to be an extension in another direction from the original 'marked focus' meaning; one would go from 'marked focus' to simply 'focus' for the intransitives, and then to 'focused participant' for transitive agents. Plurality in this scenario is not on the path to the focus constructions, but a separate development, and there is no need to introduce and then erase the concept of number in the meaning of the morpheme.

If any reader has doubts about whether this proposal for the proto-morpheme and its development is realistic, please note the following. The Caddoan language Wichita, spoken in Oklahoma (also a semantic alignment language), has a morpheme with precisely these properties. The pronoun *-iy-* means fundamentally 'focus on 3rd person patient'. It is used for the singular subject of stative verbs (other persons use morphemes identical with those for transitive objects), for the subject of any verb if the object is the main character in the discourse, and as one of two ways of marking the plural agent of active and transitive verbs. This pronoun cannot occur in the same verb with any other pronoun (so it cannot be used to mark the object of a verb with a 1st or 2nd person subject), and it cannot be marked for number except in the stative verbs, where patient plural morphemes may be used with it. That the meaning 'focus on the patient' is the basic one is indicated by the way it interacts (or not) with other pluralizing morphemes, and by the fact that transitive verbs with this pronoun are ambiguous: they may have a plural agent, or they may have the meaning of 'agent is unimportant'. Thus, *t-iy-ka?acs*, for example, means either 'They are eating it' or 'S/He is being eaten' (idiomatic for 'S/He has cancer'); contrast *t-i-ka?acs* 'S/He is eating it'. In paradigm or list elicitation, fluent speakers often glossed this pronoun as 3rd person to 3rd person,

with the agent rendered 'the other guy' or 'somebody', or with contrastive stress on the 'him' of a 'He is verbing HIM' translation. Here is a clear case of a patient-focus morpheme being extended to cover the 3rd person plural agent function. We propose that something similar happened in the history of Siouan.

To sum up, if the focus-marking function of the Omaha cognate of Lakota *-pi* 'plural, passive, impersonal' can be proved to date back to Proto-Siouan times or at least a remote stage in the development of Siouan languages, it can be concluded that the *-pi*-passive in Lakota might not be an innovative but instead a quite ancient construction. Thus, the possibility arises that in Siouan, which has had a semantic alignment system for as far back as we can reconstruct such things, that split has coexisted with a passive or at least passive-like construction for a very long time.

13.3 Theoretical discussion of the data

One of the basic tenets of Role and Reference Grammar (e.g. Foley and Van Valin 1984, Van Valin 1985, 2001) is the postulate of a typological distinction between role-dominated and reference-dominated languages. This dichotomization evolves around the ways in which the syntax of individual languages is organized; the notion of 'pivot', which describes an argument type that controls clause-internal as well as clause-external syntax in a given language, is a central component of this approach.

> Languages in which discourse factors are syntacticized in clause-internal grammar, i.e. languages with a PrP [= pragmatic pivot, R.P. & D.R.], are termed *reference-dominated languages*, and languages which do not have this syntacticization, i.e. languages with a SmP [= semantic pivot, R.P. & D.R.] only or no pivots at all, are labeled *role-dominated languages*. (Foley and Van Valin 1984: 123)

In the Role and Reference Grammar framework, Lakota has been identified as a role-dominated language. Grammatical constructions whose occurrence is intimately connected with pivot use are passives and antipassives. Traditional Indo-European-style passives are said to fulfil two pragmatic functions, foregrounding and backgrounding.

> Passives which serve to remove the actor from the core of the clause are *backgrounding passives*, whereas those which function to permit a non-actor to occur as PrP are *foregrounding passives*. Foregrounding passives are normally found in languages which have PrPs, i.e. in languages in which the choice of pivot is governed by discourse facts . . . Backgrounding passives, on the other hand, are not so constrained and occur in both reference-dominated and role-dominated languages. (Foley and Van Valin 1984: 168)

Backgrounding functions to impose a structurally as well as pragmatically peripheral status on an argument—in the case of the passive, on the agent/actor. The backgrounded argument is either demoted to an oblique or eliminated from

the clause; either way, the pragmatic salience of its referent is reduced or lost. Foregrounding, on the other hand, elevates an originally less salient participant to a position of greater salience. A frequent structural correlate of this process is promotion, i.e. a shift from a syntactically less central to a more central case, such as from accusative to nominative in accusative systems, when patients/undergoers are to be coded. In a German passive clause, for instance, the original patient/undergoer, marked by the accusative in the active clause, receives nominative case marking. Thus, the nominative case in German can be interpreted as indicating pragmatic salience or foregrounded status.

Van Valin (1985: 368) argues that '[t]here is no Indo-European-style passive construction in Lakhota; that is, there is no construction in which the U [= undergoer, R.P. & D.R.] appears as the derived subject of a detransitivized verb with the A [= actor, R.P. & D.R.] either in an oblique phrase or deleted'.

According to Van Valin (p. 368), the closest equivalent to a passive in Lakota is the agent-suppressing impersonal construction dealt with in section 13.2.1. For the purpose of illustration, example (19) is repeated here for convenience:

(82) *Thaló ki hé Ø-kablá-pi.*
meat DEF that 3SG.PAT-slice-AGIPS
'The meat was sliced.'

Van Valin (1985: 368) analyses this construction as containing an explicit agent/actor specification by means of the element *-pi*; in section 13.2.1, this element was shown to occur in contexts in which such an interpretation does not apply. Rather, an interpretation as a more 'abstract' passive or, at least, impersonal marker, which lacks reference to any of the arguments involved, is in order in such cases.

To further evaluate the structural make-up and function of the Lakota passive with overt agent, as exemplified by (57)/(65), it is worth dealing in more detail with the syntactic and pragmatic status of the agent/actor and patient/undergoer. The question about potential foregrounding processes is particularly relevant here.

It is difficult to elucidate further the pragmatic status of the agent in examples like (57)/(65), repeated here for convenience:

(83) *Wicháša ki mathó Ø-kté-**pi.***
man DEF bear 3SG.PAT-kill-**PASS**
'The man was killed by the/a bear/bears.'

The agent phrase *mathó* 'the/a bear/bears' is not case-marked; although lack of case marking in Lakota is a feature common to valence-bound or core arguments, not every argument that is not valence-bound is case-marked in this language. Thus, absence of case marking does not provide further clues regarding the pragmatic status of the agent in *-pi-*'passives'.

The structural criterion of word order sheds more light on this issue, supporting the hypothesis that the patient is foregrounded in examples like (83). The

word order 'patient preceding agent' in constructions of this type appears to be irreversible. And there is, in fact, some evidence that clause-initial position of nominal arguments is linked with high discourse salience in Lakota. Basically, word order (SOV) is utilized for the coding of case relations in Lakota. However, word order becomes available as a device for expressing pragmatic categories, such as foregrounded status, in cases in which the context or the semantic profile of the NPs themselves removes any ambiguity regarding the referential identity of the agent and the patient in a transitive clause. Thus, in (84), the patient NP *lé wichó'oyake ki* 'this story' must be interpreted as more salient than the agent NP *atéwaye kiha̧* 'my father'.

(84) *Lé wichó'oyake ki lé até-wa-ye kiha̧ o-má-ki-yake.*
this story DEF this father-1SG.AGT-have as DEF STEM-1SG-BEN-tell
'This story was told to me by my father.'

If word order is indicative of foregrounding in Lakota, then the patient, which in putative passive constructions like (83) invariably precedes the agent, can be interpreted as foregrounded.

Aside from the observation that Lakota speakers regularly and spontaneously translate the *-pi*-construction by an English passive, another argument in favour of the hypothesis that the Lakota passive functions to foreground the patient can be derived from the very fact that this construction exists. It has often been claimed that case marking in semantic alignment languages is exclusively sensitive to role semantics—pragmatic categories such as topicality, focus, or foreground status are not seen as components of the functional load of the marking formats for arguments in such languages, insofar as basic grammaticalized marking formats are concerned. It goes without saying that any language, including semantic alignment languages, should be equipped with structural devices for marking certain pragmatic concepts, such as topic or focus, via left dislocation and other techniques, which can be used in an ad hoc manner when expression of such concepts is desired. The assumption that pragmatic categories 'do not matter' in the argument-marking system of the semantic alignment language Lakota begs the question of why Lakota is equipped with the *-pi*-construction exemplified by (83), whose expressive value with respect to role semantics is equivalent to that of a canonical active transitive clause because in both cases, both the agent and the patient are present. Of course, synonymy exists at all levels of language organization, and presumably in syntax as well, so that there may be constructions which are identical or at least quasi-identical with regard to meaning and syntactic function. Nevertheless, it appears counterintuitive to claim that there is absolutely no difference in meaning between a *-pi*-passive with an overtly expressed agent phrase and the corresponding active transitive construction.