OCCASIONAL PAPERS ON LINGUISTICS
Number 16

Papers from the
American Indian Languages Conferences
Held at
the University of California, Santa Cruz
July and August 1991

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Library of Congress Catalog Number
91-067228
Subject and Inverse in Kutenai

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1. Introduction. A number of American Indian languages possess two ways to express semantically transitive clauses with two participants, the two constructions differing as to which of the two participants possesses a grammatical status which may or may not be that of subject, but which is clearly in some sense primary in a way that subjects are. Examples of pairs of sentences from a number of such languages are given in (1) to (5).\(^1\)

(1) Ojibwa (Rhodes 1976: 202)

a. aw nini w-gi:-wa:bm-a:n niw kwe:w-an
   that man 3-PAST-see-DIRECT,ANIM,OBV that,OBV woman-OBV
   The man saw the woman.

b. aw kwe: w-gi:-wa:bm-igo:n niw ninw-an
   that woman 3-PAST-see-INVERSE,ANIM,OBV that,OBV man-OBV
   The woman was seen by the man.

(2) Cree (Dahlstrom 1986: 52-53)

a. wa-pam-e-w see-DIRECT-3
   he [proximate] sees him [obviative]

b. wa-pamik
   /wa-pam-ekw-w/
   see-INVERSE-3
   he [obviative] sees him [proximate]

\(^1\) The abbreviations used in glosses in this paper include the following. (Entries in parentheses are used only in the non-Kutenai examples in (1) to (5).)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(A, B) (see footnote 2)</th>
<th>OBJ</th>
<th>object</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(ANIM) animate</td>
<td>OBV</td>
<td>obviative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASP aspect</td>
<td>PTCL</td>
<td>particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(CL) classifier</td>
<td>PL</td>
<td>plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FUT future</td>
<td>POSS</td>
<td>possessive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HABIT habitual</td>
<td>PRED</td>
<td>predicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMP imperative</td>
<td>(PRES)</td>
<td>present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIC indicative</td>
<td>SG</td>
<td>singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IO indirect object</td>
<td>SUBOR</td>
<td>subordinate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIL (see the appendix)</td>
<td>(THM)</td>
<td>thematic prefix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEG negative</td>
<td>TRANS</td>
<td>transitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOM nominalization</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>third person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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(3) Koyukon Athapaskan (Thompson 1989: 5)

a. John yi-nee-l'aa
   3,OBJ-THM-CL-see
   John is looking at him/her. [direct]

b. John bi-nee-l'aa
   3,OBJ-THM-CL-see
   John is looking at him/her. [inverse]

(4) Cherokee (Cook 1979: 171-172, cited by Scancarelli 1986: 81)2

a. Ca:ni a:-ko:hwthiha Cirmi
   John 3SG,A-see,PRES Jim
   John sees Jim. [direct]

b. Ca:ni u:-ko:hwthiha Cirmi
   John 3SG,B-see,PRES Jim
   John is seen by Jim. [inverse]

(5) Nootka (Whistler 1985: 228)

a. cúqši-pé:nta Bill ?u-yuq John
   spear-PAST-INDIC,3 Bill OBJ John
   Bill speared John.

b. cúqši-pé:nta t-ilta John ?uxʷit Bill
   spear-PASSIVE-PAST-INDIC,3 John by Bill
   John was speared by Bill.

For a number of these languages, there is debate in the literature as to whether or not the two constructions should be considered instances of a contrast between active and passive, and whether the participant bearing primary status should be considered a subject or not. In Algonquian languages, for example, where the two constructions are traditionally called direct and inverse, both positions have been taken on the question, at least for different languages. Rhodes (1976) argues that the inverse construction in the Ojibwa example in (1b) is a passive structure and that the noun phrase that is the object in (1a) is the grammatical subject in (1b). Conversely, Dahlstrom (1986) argues that the inverse construction in Cree, as in (2b), is not a passive and that (2a) and (2b) do not differ in their grammatical relations.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss a similar contrast in Kutenai, a language generally viewed as a language isolate that is spoken in southeastern British Columbia, northern Idaho, and northwestern Montana. The pair of sentences in (6) illustrate the contrast.3

2 The abbreviations ‘A’ and ‘B’ in (4) stand for two sets of pronominal prefixes that occur on verbs in Cherokee. With intransitive verbs, the contrast between the A set and the B set partly corresponds to the contrast between agents and patients, but is much more complicated.

3 The examples cited in this paper are of four types and are annotated accordingly. Some of the examples are from texts, either ones published in Boas (1918) or ones collected by Lawrence Morgan and transcribed and translated by Elizabeth Gravelle. Examples from texts of the latter category are identified by tape number. The examples from these texts are annotated accordingly. The remaining three types of examples cited are ones produced in elicitation (marked E), ones presented for judgment (marked J), and a few simples ones constructed by
I will use the terms *notional subject* and *notional object* to refer to the two participants in transitive clauses, these terms being understood to be tied to the semantic relationship of the participant to the verb, independent of its grammatical properties. Thus *titqat* ‘man’ is notional subject in both (6a) and (6b), while *palkiy* ‘woman’ is notional object. The two sentences in (6) differ in that the notional object *palkiy* ‘woman’ bears a suffix -s in (6a) but not in (6b) while the notional subject *titqat* ‘man’ bears this suffix in (6b) but not in (6a). This suffix is glossed ‘obv’ for ‘obviative’, following the terminology of Garvin (1948, 1958) and similar terminology for an analogous category in Algonquian languages. I will refer to a third person nominal that is not obviative, like *titqat* ‘man’ in (6a) and *palkiy* ‘woman’ in (6b), as *proximate*, again following Algonquian terminology. The distribution of proximate and obviative in Kutenai can only be understood from a discourse perspective and is rather similar to the analogous distribution in Algonquian languages (cf. Dahlstrom 1986, Goddard 1990). Namely, the referent of a proximate nominal is, loosely speaking, the more topical or central participant in the surrounding discourse, while the obviative nominal is less topical and less central. A more detailed account of the use of proximate versus obviative in discourse awaits a study of text materials (though see Garvin 1958), and I will not discuss the discourse significance of the contrast in this paper, though I will observe a number of properties that manifest themselves at the sentence level.

The two sentences in (6) differ, not only in the distribution of the obviative suffix but also in the presence of a suffix -aps in (6b) which is absent in (6a). The function of this suffix can be characterized, at least in the majority of its uses, as that of indicating that the proximate participant is the notional object and that the obviative nominal is the notional subject, the reverse of what is found in sentences like (6a) in which this suffix is absent. Again following terminology from Algonquian, I will refer to (6a) as a *direct* clause, and to (6b) as an *inverse* clause. The question being addressed by this paper can now be formulated more precisely: is the inverse construction a kind of passive? Is the notional object in an inverse clause the grammatical subject, or is it the grammatical object, as it is in the corresponding direct clause? And is the notional subject in an inverse clause the grammatical subject, as it is in the corresponding direct clause, or is it something else? Or equivalently, do direct and inverse clauses differ in their grammatical relations, or is the assignment of grammatical relations the same in the two kinds of clauses, with the only difference being one of the assignment of proximate and obviative? I will argue in this paper that the inverse construction in Kutenai is a kind of passive construction, that

...
direct and inverse clauses do differ in their assignment of grammatical relations, and that the notional object is the grammatical subject in an inverse clause.\footnote{The thesis of this paper is consistent with the position of Garvin (1948, 1958), who describes what I am calling the inverse construction as a passive. Lawrence Morgan (1991) and Rude (1990) have both questioned analysing this construction as a passive.}

The two sentences in (6) also differ in their word order but this is not a crucial difference. While Kutenai allows some freedom of order, the language is verb-initial in the sense that nominals normally follow the verb and the most common order in direct clauses is VOS. SVO and VSO order are also found in texts. The majority of examples with lexical subject and object cited below are SVO, but this is only because this is the most common order given in elicited data, presumably because of the SVO order in the English sentences given for translation. In elicited data, VOS order is occasionally used and the order V-NP is more commonly given in elicited data for clauses containing a single lexical nominal, regardless of the status of the nominal. A more careful study of the distribution of different orders, both in direct and inverse clauses, both in terms of the frequency of different orders and the discourse factors governing their distribution, awaits further study. The examples in (7), however, illustrate some of the different orders found in texts for clauses in which both the notional subject and the notional object are lexical.\footnote{Except for some examples from texts in Boas (1918) cited later in the paper, the examples cited from texts come from a body of texts collected by Lawrence Morgan and transcribed and translated by Elizabeth Gravelle, a native speaker of Kutenai. These texts are identified by tape number and story number within the tape, with line number in the transcribed version. These stories, with story-teller, and informal title for story are as follows. (Rosalie McCoy, Anne Pierre, and Abraham Shottanana were monolingual speakers of Kutenai.)}

\begin{tabular}{ll}
Tape 20, story 2 & Catherine Gravelle (Tobacco Plains) \ 
Tape 21, story 1 & Rosalie McCoy (Tobacco Plains) \ 
Tape 71, story 2 & Anne Pierre (Tobacco Plains) \ 
Tape 71, story 1 & Anne Pierre (Tobacco Plains) \ 
Tape 126, side A & Moses Joseph (Lower Kutenai) \ 
Tape 126, side B & Moses Joseph (Lower Kutenai) \ 
Tape NS7, story 1 & Anne Pierre (Tobacco Plains) \ 
Tape NS21, story 3 & Abraham Shottanana (Tobacco Plains) \ 
Tape NS21, story 5 & Abraham Shottanana (Tobacco Plains) \ 
\end{tabular}

\begin{tabular}{ll}
& Chickadee, Frog, Wolf, and Elk \ 
& Fool Hen, Hawk, and Weasel \ 
& Monster With Seven Heads \ 
& Coyote and the Maidens \ 
& Coyote and Fox \ 
& Frog and Turtle \ 
& About Coyote and Qu'ap\'ul\'ik' \ 
& Story about man who might have been whitehead \ 
& True story, referring to Blackfeet and Akmu \ 
\end{tabular}

The texts from Boas (1918) from which examples are cited are as follows:

\begin{tabular}{ll}
Boas Text 9 & Paul (Upper Kutenai, lived near St. Eugène Mission) \ 
Boas Text 23 & Paul \ 
Boas Text 32 & Angi McLaughlin (Lower Kutenai) \ 
Boas Text 48 & Mission Joe and Felix Andrew (Upper Kutenai) \ 
\end{tabular}

\begin{tabular}{ll}
& Coyote and Star \ 
& The Frenchman and His Daughters \ 
& Chimplunk and Owl \ 
& The Animals and the Sun \ 
\end{tabular}

\footnote{The Kutenai forms cited in this paper are more abstract in one respect than what I assume to be the surface phonemic representation. Namely, verb forms, like the first word in (7a), which begin with either the prefix \textit{n-} 'PRED' or the prefix \textit{k-} 'SUBOR' and which precede a verb stem beginning with \textit{n} are actually pronounced with an initial \textit{n}- or \textit{k}. I.e. the forms cited undergo a coalescence rule whereby the \textit{n-} or \textit{k-} combines with the \textit{n} to form a glottalized \textit{n} or \textit{k}. The forms are cited in this pre-coalescence fashion because of difficulty placing the hyphen between the prefix and the verb stem.}
Frog made jerky. (Tape 20, story 2, line 89)

Then Eagle went in search of pine pitch. (Tape 21, story 1, line 70)

Now Coyote was already married to one of the chief's daughters. (Tape 21, story 1, line 177)

2. Subject and Object. The notions of subject and object are most clearly reflected in the verb morphology in Kutenai. Subjects are characterized by a set of morphemes, some of which are either proclitics or prefixes and some of which are suffixes. The ones which are proclitics or prefixes I will represent here as separate words, following the practice of Gravalle and Morgan (1979) rather than that of Garvin (1948), who treats them as prefixes, though I do not know of any convincing evidence at this time for choosing between these two approaches. The forms in (8) illustrate these subject morphemes.

(8) a. 
I talked. (E)

b. 
We talked. (E)

c. 
You (sg.) talked. (E)

d. 
You (pl.) talked. (E)

*hu* in (8a) and (8b) indicates a first person subject, regardless of number, while *hin* in (8c) and (8d) indicates a second person subject, again regardless of number. First and second person plural are indicated by the use of the suffixes -(n)ala(?) and -kil respectively, as in (8b) and (8d). The same morphemes occur with transitive verbs with a third person object, as in (9).

(9) a. 
I saw him/her/it/them. (E)
b. hu wu·kat·ala?·ni
   1,SUBJ see·1PL,SUBJ·INDIC
   We saw him/her/it/them. (E)

c. hin wu·kat·i
   2,SUBJ see·INDIC
   You (sg.) saw him/her/it/them. (E)

d. hin wu·kat·kil·ni
   2,SUBJ see·2PL·INDIC
   You (pl.) saw him/her/it/them. (E)

A different set of morphemes is used to indicate first and second person objects, illustrated in (10).

(10) a. wu·kat·ap·ni
   see·1SG,OBJ·INDIC
   He/she/it/they saw me. (E)

b. wu·kat·awas·ni
   see·1PL·INDIC
   He/she/it/they saw us. (E)

c. wu·kat·is·ni
   see·2,OBJ·INDIC
   He/she/it/they saw you (sg.). (E)

d. wu·kat·is·kil·ni
   see·2,OBJ·2PL·INDIC
   He/she/it/they saw you (pl.). (E)

Except for the suffix -kil, which is used to indicate a second plural subject or object, the object suffixes in (10) are distinct from the subject morphemes in (8) and (9): -ap indicates a first person singular object, -awas a first person plural object, and -is a second person object (either singular or plural).

When both subject and object are non-third person, the morphemes of (8) to (10) combine, as shown in (11).

(11) a. hu wu·kat·is·ni
   1,SUBJ see·2,OBJ·INDIC
   I saw you (sg.). (E)

b. hu wu·kat·is·kil·ni
   1,SUBJ see·2,OBJ·2PL·INDIC
   I saw you (pl.). (E)

c. hu wu·kat·awas·ni
   1,SUBJ see·1PL,2·INDIC
   We saw you (sg. or pl.). (E)

d. hin wu·kat·ap·ni
   2,SUBJ see·1SG,OBJ·INDIC
   You (sg.) saw me. (E)
e. hin  wu-kat-awas-ni
   2,SUBJ see-IPL-INDIC
   You (sg./pl.) saw us. (E)

f. hin  wu-kat-ap-kil-ni
   2,SUBJ see-1SG,OBJ-2PL-INDIC
   You (pl.) saw me. (E)

Except for the forms in (11c) and (11e), in which one of the two participants is first person plural, the forms in (11) are predictable from those in (8) to (10). Both (11c) and (11e) involve the suffix -awas, which occurs in (10b) above as an indicator of a first person plural object. The only fact about (11e) that is at all unexpected is the absence of the second person plural suffix -kil. The form in (11) that is least expected is the one in (11c), with -awas, which otherwise indicates a first person plural object, but is here indicating a first person plural subject. Nor does (11c) contain any morpheme that otherwise indicates second person or second person plural.

Except for the anomalies in (11c) and (11e), however, the verbal paradigms in Kutenai exhibit fairly straightforward indications of first and second person subject and object. However, third person is, with one exception to be noted below, never indicated on the verb in Kutenai, either with subjects or with objects. This is shown for third person objects in (9) above and for third person subjects in (10), as well as by the examples in (12).

(12) a. exa-ni.
    talk-INDIC
    He/she/it/they talked. (E)

b. wu-kat-i.
    see-INDIC
    He/she/it/they [prox] saw him/her/it/Them [obv]. (E)

c. wu-kat-aps-i.
    see-INVERSE-INDIC
    He/she/it/Them [obv] saw him/her/it/Them [prox] (E)

Unlike some languages in which the inverse construction interacts with a person hierarchy, what I am calling the inverse construction in Kutenai is restricted to transitive clauses in which both participants are third person. As a result, although the verbal morphemes in (8) to (11) provide a clear diagnostic for subjects and objects in clauses containing a first or second person participant, the absence of any indication on the verb of subject and object for third person means that these morphemes provide no basis for determining the status of subject and object in inverse clauses. In section 4 below, however, I will discuss situations in which the verb is inflected for a third person obviative subject.

It should be noted that although there is a question of whether the inverse construction is a passive, there is a separate construction in Kutenai which is uncontroversially a passive construction, a morphologically intransitive construction involving a distinct suffix -il, as in (13).

(13) a. hu  wu-kat-il-ni
    1,SUBJ see-PASSIVE-INDIC
    I was seen. (E)

b. hin  wu-kat-il-ni
    2,SUBJ see-PASSIVE-INDIC
    You (sg.) were seen. (E)

c. wu-kat-il-ni
Unlike the inverse construction, the it-passive can occur with first or second person participants, as in (13a) and (13b). But also unlike the inverse construction, the notional subject is never expressed in the it-passive.

3. Proximate and Obviative. Before discussing the evidence that inverse clauses are passive, it is worth summarizing some basic facts about the distribution of proximate and obviative. First, it is noted above that the proximate:obviative contrast is essentially a discourse-based contrast, the proximate element being the more topical. One manifestation of this at the clause-level is that the choice between direct and inverse is predictable if the two participants are human, and one of them is pronominal, the other lexical: namely, the pronominal participant (which is not realized overtly) must be interpreted as proximate and the lexical participant must be obviative. Thus, if the notional subject is lexical and the notional object is pronominal, the inverse construction is strongly preferred, as indicated in (14).\footnote{As pointed out to me by Lawrence Morgan, (14a) is acceptable on a reading ‘Mary saw it’. (14a) is judged out of context to be unacceptable on a reading ‘Mary saw him’, though I am aware of a few text examples that are analogous to (14a). As discussed below, the choice of proximate and obviative is also sensitive to the humanness of the participants: it is not possible for the proximate to be nonhuman and the obviative human, regardless of the properties of the two participants in the immediate discourse context.}

\begin{align*}
(14) & \quad \text{a. } ??\text{wu-kat-i mali} \\
& \quad \text{see-PASSIVE-INDIC Mary} \\
& \quad \text{Mary [prox] saw him [obv]. (J)} \\
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
(14) & \quad \text{b. } \text{wu-kat-aps-i mali-s} \\
& \quad \text{see-PASSIVE-INDIC Mary-OBV} \\
& \quad \text{Mary [obv] saw him [prox]. (or He was seen by Mary) (J)}
\end{align*}

Conversely when the notional subject is pronominal and the notional object is lexical, the inverse construction is strongly dispreferred, as shown in (15).\footnote{Lawrence Morgan has pointed out to me that (15b) is probably acceptable on a reading ‘It saw Mary’, where the notional subject is nonhuman animate, but this needs to be checked.}

\begin{align*}
(15) & \quad \text{a. } \text{wu-kat-i mali-s} \\
& \quad \text{see-PASSIVE-INDIC Mary-OBV} \\
& \quad \text{He [prox] saw Mary [obv]. (A)} \\
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
(15) & \quad \text{b. } ??\text{wu-kat-aps-i mali} \\
& \quad \text{see-PASSIVE-INDIC Mary} \\
& \quad \text{He [obv] saw Mary [prox]. (or Mary was seen by him.) (J)}
\end{align*}

While these constraints manifest themselves at the sentence level, they are presumably best understood, not as facts to be expressed in the syntax of Kutenai, but rather as side effects of the discourse grammar of the language, which specifies (among other things) the rules or principles governing the choice of proximate versus obviative: since the principles governing the use of pronouns entails that the referents of pronominal participants be more central in the preceding
discourse than the referents of lexical participants, it apparently follows that (14a) and (15b) would rarely if ever have an appropriate discourse context.\(^9\)

Note that both direct and inverse are possible when both participants are pronominal, as illustrated in (12b) and (12c) above, as well as the following examples from texts.\(^{10}\)

(16) a. tax-s qaki-l-ni.
    thus-OBV say-TRANS-INDIC
    This he [prox] told them [obv]. (Tape 71, story 2, line 50)

b. qak-l-aps-i...
    say-TRANS-REVERSE-INDIC
    He [obv] told her [prox] ... (Tape 71, story 1, line 174)

c. n-?up-il-ni.
    PRED-die-TRANS-INDIC
    He [prox] killed it [obv]. (Tape 126, side A, line 70)

d. qa ?upx-naps-i.
    NEG see-REVERSE-INDIC
    They [obv] didn’t see him [prox]. (Tape 71, story 1, line 57)

(16a) and (16c) are direct, with proximate notional subject and obviative notional object; (16b) and (16d) are inverse, with proximate notional object and obviative notional subject.

The second observation to be made about obviatives is that the proximate:obviative contrast in general involves third person participants only.\(^{11}\) Thus contrast (17a), in which the object nu?kiy ‘rock’ is obviative, with (17b), in which it is proximate.

(17) a. mafi wu-kat-i nu?kiy-s
    Mary see-INDIC rock-OBV
    Mary saw a rock. (E)

b. hu wu-kat-i nu?kiy
    1,OBJ see-INDIC rock
    I saw a rock. (E)

The general principle is that there can be at most one proximate per sentence. Sentences with no proximates are of two sorts. One is sentences with no third person participants, only first or second person participants. The second is sentences containing third person participants which are all obviative. Sentences of the latter sort arise only in discourse contexts in which the sentence lacks a reference to the primary participant in the surrounding discourse. Examples of

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\(^9\) A weakness in this argument is that it predicts that sentences in which the proximate participant is lexical and the obviative participant pronominal should never arise. However, outside the context of the two participants in transitive clauses, there are examples in my data that violate this principle, where one of the two participants is an oblique or in a different clause. (23c) below illustrates this possibility, where the proximate participant is lexical, the subject of the main clause, and the obviative participant is pronominal, the subject of a subordinate clause.

\(^{10}\) The inverse suffix -aps takes the form -naps in (16d). This suffix, like a number of other suffixes in Kutenai, including the so-called indicative suffix -(n)d, exhibits an alternation between two forms, one beginning with an n, the other without the n. The alternation is morphologically conditioned by the preceding morpheme.

\(^{11}\) There is a construction discussed briefly in an appendix to this paper which Garvin (1948, 1958) analyses as involving first and second person obviatives.
sentences of this type are discussed in section 4 below. Apart from such contexts, in sentences containing one or more third person participants exactly one of those participants will be proximate, and all others will be obviative. Since (17a) contains two third person participants, one must be proximate, the other obviative. But since (17b) contains only one third person participant, that participant is proximate.12

Obviative marking is not restricted to notional subjects and objects, but can occur on other participants as well. The examples in (18) involve intransitive clauses with a proximate third person subject and an obviative oblique, a locative in (18a) and a temporal in (18b).

    there die-INDIC mountain-OBV
    [prox] died on the mountain [obv]. (E)

b. n?-up-ni walkwa-s
    PRED-die-INDIC yesterday-OBV
    [prox] died yesterday [obv]. (E)

    tree-OBV there fly.up.onto-INDIC bird
    A bird [prox] flew up and landed in a tree [obv]. (Tape 21, story 1, line 175)

The example in (19) involves a transitive clause with a first person subject, a proximate third person object, and an obviative third person locative.

    1,SUBJ there shoot-INDIC elk mountain-OBV
    I shot (and killed) an elk [prox] on the mountain [obv]. (E)

The examples in (20) involve three third person participants, a proximate subject and two obviative nonsubjects.

(20) a. ma:hi n-amat-i?ke-i kikli-s misal-s
    Mary PRED-give-IO-INDIC food-OBV Mike-OBV
    Mary [prox] gave Mike [obv] the food [obv]. (E)

b. pikak-s skil xunakin-i nu?kiy-s watak
    already-OBV COMPL put.in.fire-INDIC rock-OBV frog
    Frog [prox] had already [obv] placed a rock [obv] in the fire.
    (Tape 20, story 2, line 112)

(21) involves the inverse of a ditransitive verb: the notional indirect object is proximate, while the notional subject, the notional direct object, and the adverbial taxa ‘thus’ are all obviative.

12 (17b) would also be acceptable with the notional object obviative, as in (i).

(i) hu wu-kat-?i?il-ni nu?kiy-s
    1 see-MIL-INDIC rock-OBV
    I saw a rock. (A)

(i) is a constructed example, analogous to (40) below. The function of the suffix -mil glossed ‘MIL’ is discussed briefly in the appendix to this paper. As discussed in the appendix, a sentence like (i) could be used in a context in which some third person participant other than the speaker and the rock is the primary participant in the surrounding discourse.
(21) nupika-s taxa-s si? hamat-ike-aps-i ni?-s kqat taxaʔkin-s
spirit-OBV thus-OBV ASP give-IO-REVERSE-INDIC the-OBV horse-OBV
It was the spirit Nupika [obv] who gave him [prox] the horse [obv].
(or He [prox] was given the horse [obv] by Nupika [obv])
(Tape NS21, story 3, line 41)

4. Obviative Subjects. The examples discussed so far do not involve any verbal affixes indicating third person participants. There is one situation, however, in which the verb does register a third person subject, and that is when the subject is obviative. This possibility can arise in a number of different situations. The simplest of these is a sentence which does not refer to the central participant in the surrounding discourse and which therefore lacks a proximate participant. Because this situation is highly discourse dependent, such sentences rarely arise in elicitation, but they are common in texts. (22) is a sentence from a section of text in which there are five consecutive sentences in which all participants are obviative, in which there is no reference to the character which is the central character in the surrounding text.

(22) watak-s la-tiqanmitak-s-i
frog-OBV busy.do.something-OBV,SUBJ-INDIC
Frog [obv] was busy doing something. (Tape 20, story 2, clause 107)

The sole participant in (22), watak ‘frog’, bears the obviative suffix -s, and the verb also bears a similar suffix -s, indicating that its subject is obviative.

The obviative subject suffix also occurs in subordinate clauses in which the subject is an obviative third person distinct from the proximate third person subject in the main clause, as in (23).

(23) a. qakiʔ?-ni kʔumaʔ-s ni?-s palkiy-s
say-INDIC SUBOR-laugh-OBV,SUBJ the-OBV woman-OBV
He [prox] said that the woman [obv] laughed. (E)

b. qakiʔ?-ni k-sahan-s,...
say-INDIC SUBOR-bad-OBV,SUBJ
He [prox] said that it [obv] was bad. (Tape 20, story 2, line 24)

c. taxa-s qakiʔ?-ni nasuʔkin k-txaʔ mitxa-l-is
then-OBV say-INDIC chief SUBOR-FUT shoot-PASSIVE-OBV,SUBJ
Then the chief [prox] said that it [obv] was to be shot. (Tape 21, story 1, line 173)

These examples contrast with those in (24), where the subordinate verb does not bear the obviative subject suffix. Contrast (23a) (with an obviative subject in the subordinate clause) with the similar example in (24a), in which the subject of the main clause is first person so that the subject of the subordinate clause can be proximate, and with (24b) or (24c), in which the subordinate verb lacks the obviative subject suffix and is interpreted as having the same subject as the main clause.

(24) a. hu qakiʔ?-ni kʔumaʔ ni?-palkiy
I,SUBJ say-INDIC SUBOR-laugh the woman
I said that the woman [prox] laughed. (J)

b. qakiʔ?-ni kʔumaʔ
say-INDIC SUBOR-laugh
Hei [prox] said that hei [prox] laughed. (J)
c. taxa-s qalwi-y-ni k-exal ?ik
   thus-OBV think-INDIC SUBOR-FUT eat
   He [prox] thought he [prox] was going to eat it [obv]. (Tape 20, story 2, line 97)

A third situation in which obviative subjects can arise is with nouns possessed by third persons. Compare (25a) and (25b).

(25) a. n?uwi-ni xα?eïn
   PRED-bark-INDIC dog
   The dog [prox] barked. (E)

b. n?uwi-s-i xalçin-?is
   PRED-bark-OBV,SUBJ-INDIC dog-3.POSS
   His [prox] dog [obv] barked. (E)

c. ?at e?iyaxa-ku?-s-i  swin-?is-ç
   HABIT go.fetch.water-OBV,SUBJ-INDIC daughter-3,POSS-and
   His [prox] daughter [obv] would go for water and ... (Tape 21, story 1, line 167)

The first two sentences in (25) differ in two ways. First, the subject in (25b) bears a third person possessive suffix. And second, the verb in (25b) bears the obviative subject suffix. The possessed noun in possessive constructions is always obviative, although this is obscured by the fact that the possessed noun does not bear the obviative suffix (except as noted below). This is perhaps more clearly illustrated by the contrast in (26).

(26) a. mañi wu-kaï-i xα?eïn-s
   Mary see-INDIC dog-OBV
   Mary [prox] saw a dog [obv]. (E)

b. mañi wu-kaï-i xalçin-?is
   Mary see-INDIC dog-3,POSS
   Mary [prox] saw her [prox] dog [obv]. (E)

The notional object in (26a) bears the obviative suffix, as we would expect in a direct clause. But this suffix is absent in (26b), where the possessive suffix occurs instead. One might think that the absence of obviative marking in (25b) and (26b) is somehow to be explained phonologically (since both the obviative and third person possessive suffixes involve an /s/) or morphologically (perhaps they both occur in the same morphological slot). However, third person possessive and obviative marking can cooccur, as in (27).

(27) a. misal wu-kaï-i xalçin-?is-ïs
   Mike see-INDIC dog-3,POSS-OBV
   Mike [prox] saw her [obv] dog [obv]. (E)

b. qaki?-ni k-sahan-s-si, k-?up-l-aps mañ-ïs-ïs.
   say-INDIC SUBOR-bad-OBV,SUBJ SUBOR-hurt-TRANS-REVERSE bone-3,POSS-OBV
   He [prox] said that it [obv] was bad, that its [obv] bones [obv] hurt him [prox].
   (Tape 20, story 2, lines 24-25)

13 The absence of the glottal stop between the a and the i in the noun for 'dog' in (25b) (in contrast to the form in (25a)) is due to a phonological rule deleting glottal stops in certain contexts.
c. taxa-s ³apid³ukin-i  ni?-s  ?aquna¯-is-is
    then-OBV all remove-INDIC the-OBV tooth-3,POSS-OBV
Then he [prox] pulled out all its [obv] teeth [obv]. (Tape NS7, story 1, line 98)

In these examples, the noun bearing the third person possessive suffix also bears the obviative suffix, unlike the examples in (25b), (25c), and (26b), in which the possessed noun does not occur with the obviative suffix. (26b) and (27a) represent a minimal pair in this regard. The reason that the possessed noun bears the obviative suffix in (27a) but not in (26b) is that the possessor in (26b) is the same as the proximate participant mali 'Mary', while in (27a) it is not (the subject misaf 'Mike' clearly being distinct from the possessor, as indicated by the use of 'her' in the English gloss). We can account for these examples by saying that possessed nouns are not marked for their own obviativeness but rather for the obviativeness of the possessor. Thus xalaetin?-is 'dog-3.POSS' in (26b) is (syntactically) obviative, but is not marked obviative because its possessor is proximate. And xalaetin?-is is 'dog-3.POSS-OBV' in (27a) occurs with obviative marking, not because it is itself obviative (although it is), but because its possessor is obviative.

The examples in (28), with a full possessor, provide further support for this.14

(28) a. hu  wu-kat-mi³n³ni  xalaetin?-is  mali
    1,SUBJ see-MIL-INDIC dog-3,POSS Mary
    I saw Mary's [prox] dog [obv]. (J)

b. misaf  wu-kat-i  xalaetin?-is-is  mali-s
    Mike see-INDIC dog-3,POSS-OBV Mary-OBV
    Mike [prox] saw Mary's [obv] dog [obv]. (J)

c. taxa-s  skinku³  pi³ak-s  sakil  saltit-ni  k?-u³i?-s
    now-OBV coyote already-OBV asp married-INDIC SUBOR-one-OBV,SUBJ
    swin?-is-is  nasu³kin-s
    daughter-3,POSS-OBV chief-OBV

Now Coyote [prox] was already married to one of the chief's [obv]
dughters [obv]. (Tape 21, story 1, line 177)

In (28a), the possessor mali 'Mary' is proximate, while in (28b) it is obviative, the presence of the obviative suffix on mali-s 'Mary-OBV' in (28b) providing clear evidence of this. And going along with this difference in whether the possessor bears the obviative suffix is the presence versus absence of the obviative suffix on the possessed noun. In short, with possessed nouns, the presence of the obviative suffix varies with the obviativeness of the possessor, rather than the obviativeness of the possessed noun. However, whether or not a noun possessed by a third person is marked as being obviative, it is apparently obviative syntactically. The presence of the obviative subject suffix on the verb in (25b), despite the absence of obviative marking on the subject noun, is thus explained: although xalaetin?-is 'dog-3,POSS' is not marked as obviative, this is only because its possessor is proximate. And here the choice of which participant is obviative is apparently syntactic (as in Algonquian languages; cf. Dahlstrom 1986: 115 regarding similar facts in Cree).

14 The function of the suffix -mil on the verb in (28a) is a complex issue which I will address only very briefly in this paper, in an appendix. Garvin (1948, 1958) describes it as indicating obviative for first or second person.
5. **Obviative Subjects in Inverse Clauses.** The obviative subject suffix on verbs provides us with a test for determining the status of the two participants in inverse clauses. In all other cases, the obviative subject suffix occurs on the verb whenever the subject is obviative. This is true for the intransitive subjects in (22) to (25) above, as well as the transitive subjects in the following examples.

(29) a. **wu-kat-ap-is-ni** ma-?is
    **see-ISG,OBJ-OBV,SUBJ-INDIC mother-3,POSS**
    His [prox] mother [obv] saw me. (E)

    b. mali ma-?is **wu-kat-s-i** misa?l-s
    **Mary mother-3,POSS see-OBV,SUBJ-INDIC Mike-OBV**
    Mary’s [prox] mother [obv] saw Mike [obv]. (E)

    c. ... ?at la-?kin-s-i qapsin-s
    **HABIT bring.back-OBV,SUBJ-INDIC something-OBV**
    (His [prox] daughter would go for water and when she returned, she [obv]
    always brought something [obv]. (Tape 21, story 1, line 168)

In both (29a) and (29b), the subject is possessed by a third person participant and thus is obviative, triggering obviative subject marking on the verb. In (29c), the subject is the daughter of the proximate participant in the preceding text and continues as obviative in the clause quoted. However, in inverse clauses in which the notional subject is obviative and the notional object proximate, as in (30), the verb does not bear the obviative subject suffix.

(30) misa?l **wu-kat-aps-i** mali-s
    **Mike see-INVERSE-INDIC Mary-OBV**
    Mike [prox] was seen by Mary [obv]. (J)

If the notional subject, *mali* ‘Mary’, were the grammatical subject in (30), then we would expect to find obviative subject marking on the verb, since it is obviative. But we do not. That constitutes an argument that the notional subject is not the grammatical subject in (30). Further evidence that the notional object is the grammatical subject in inverse clauses is provided by inverse clauses in which the notional object is obviative. Since the notional subject is always obviative in inverse clauses, this situation arises only when both participants are obviative, as in (31).

(31) ma-?is misa?l **wu-kat-aps-ì-s-ni** mali-s
    **mother-3,POSS Mike see-INVERSE-OBV,SUBJ-INDIC Mary-OBV**
    Mary [obv] saw Mike’s [prox] mother [obv].
    (or Mike’s mother was seen by Mary.) (E)

There are three participants in (31): the possessor participant, *misi?l* ‘Mike’ is proximate while the two other participants, the notional subject and object, are both obviative.\(^{15}\) Crucially, the verb in (31) bears the obviative subject suffix. That fact in itself does not tell us which of the notional

\[^{15}\text{An alternative way to express the meaning of (31) would be to make the notional subject *mali* ‘Mary’ proximate and the possessor *misi?l* ‘Mike’ obviative. But since the direct is obligatory and the inverse impossible when the notional subject is proximate and the notional object obviative, the clause would be direct, as in (i).}^\]

(31i) mali **wu-kat-i ma-?is-is** misa?l-s
    **Mary see-INDIC mother-3,POSS-OBV Mike-OBV**
    Mary [prox] saw Mike’s [obv] mother [obv]. (E)
subject and object in (31) is grammatical subject, since both are obviative, but since inverse clauses in which the notional object is proximate, like (30), lack the obviative subject suffix, it must be the notional object rather than the notional subject that is triggering the obviative subject marking on the verb. In other words, since the notional subject is obviative in both (30) and (31), while the notional object is obviative only in (31), and since the verb bears obviative subject marking only in (31), it must be the proximate versus obviative status of the notional object in (30) and (31) that is determining whether or not the verb bears the obviative subject suffix. So it must be the notional object rather than the notional subject that is the grammatical subject in inverse clauses, and hence the inverse is a kind of passive.  

Clauses in which both the notional subject and the notional object are obviative are not common in texts, since they arise only when both are distinct from the primary participant in the surrounding discourse. Note that such clauses may be direct, as in (29b), or inverse, as in (31). In the first 33 pages of texts in Boas (1918), I am aware of 7 instances of clauses in which both notional subject and object are obviative. Of these, 5 are direct and 2 are inverse. The examples in (32) illustrate each of these two types.

(32) a. n-ʔu'p'xə-ne. 1kə'm-u?-s n-ʔi'k-s-e. a'mak-s ...
   PRED-see-INDIC child-OBV PRED-eat-OBV,SUBJ-INDIC earth-OBV
   He [prox] saw a child [obv] eating earth [obv]. (Boas Text 9, p. 17, line 9)
   b. qa-e'ixə-naps-i's-ne. k.la'wla-s
   NEG-bite-INVERSE-OBV,SUBJ-INDIC grizzly.bear-OBV
   Grizzly Bear [obv] had not bitten her [obv].
   (or She had not been bitten by Grizzly Bear.) (Boas Text 23, p. 36, line 5)

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16 Morgan (1991) provides an alternative analysis of the inverse suffix under which the analysis of this paper does not go through. The analysis in this paper follows Boas (1927), Garvin (1948), and Mast (1988) in treating the inverse suffix -aps as a single morpheme. Morgan treats -aps as a sequence of two morphemes, -ap, which he refers to as the higher ranking object suffix, essentially equivalent to calling it an inverse marker, followed by -s, the obviative subject marker. Hence under his analysis (30) does contain the obviative subject marker, consistent with the position that the notional subject in an inverse clause is also grammatical subject and that inverse clauses do not involve a change in grammatical relations. Morgan’s analysis of forms like those in (31) in which the verb occurs with -apse is that they contain two occurrences of the suffix -i, the second one corresponding to the -s in forms with just -aps, indicating that the (notional) subject is obviative and the first one with the different function that it ‘modifies’ the suffix -ap, indicating that that object in these clauses is obviative as well as the subject. I find this analysis improbably abstract in a number of ways. First, though not fatal to the analysis, the suffix -sap would always be followed by the obviative suffix -s. Whenever such an analysis is posited, the question arises what would lead speakers to segment the sequence in that way. Under Morgan’s analysis, the suffix -sap is like English cran- in cranberry, except in two ways. First, -sp is followed by a single segment -s, unlike the longer sequence -berry in cranberry. Second, in the forms with -apse, what would be the first occurrence of the obviative suffix -s would have a very different function from its function in any other verb forms in the language, since only there would it be indicating the obviativeness of something other than a subject. But since this use of -s on Morgan’s analysis is always preceded by -ap, and since -ap on his analysis is always followed by the suffix -s, both components of -apse on his analysis are somewhat analogous to English cran-. His analysis is to be compared with the far simpler and less abstract one assumed here (and by Boas, Garvin, and Mast), based on sets of forms like the following:

- wuuktur-i
- wuuktur-s-i
- wuuktur-aps-i
- wuuktur-aps-is-ni

see-INDIC see-OBV,SUBJ-INDIC see-INVERSE-INDIC see-INVERSE-OBV,SUBJ-INDIC

(The alternations -s - -is and -i - -ni are otherwise well-attested in the language, and must be taken care of under any account of these forms.) While it seems possible that -aps was historically a sequence of two morphemes, it seems unlikely that speakers of the modern language would analysis it that way.

17 The examples from Boas are cited in his orthography.
In (32a), both participants of the complement clause are obviative, distinct from the proximate subject of the main clause. In (32b), the second participant (glossed 'her') refers to the daughter of the primary character in the surrounding text, so again both participants are obviative.

More common are clauses like those cited earlier in the paper in which one of the participants is proximate, the other obviative. In such clauses, the subject is proximate and the other participant is obviative. Furthermore, for such clauses the choice between the direct construction and the inverse construction falls out of the factors determining the choice of proximate versus obviative: if the notional subject is proximate, then the direct construction is used, but if the notional object is proximate, then the inverse construction is used. But for clauses like those in (29b), (31) and (32), in which both participants are obviative, clearly other factors must be playing a role in determining the choice.

One factor that seems to play a role in the choice, independent of obviation, is the animacy or humanness of the participants. In the following example, in which the notional subject is nonhuman and the notional object human, the direct construction, given in (33a), is judged odd and the inverse construction, given in (33b), is preferred.

(33) a. ??xa?k?i?n n-?i'x-ni pa?k?i?y-s
dog PRED-bite-INDIC woman-OBV
A dog [prox] bit a woman [obv]. (J)

b. pa?k?i? y n-?i'x-naps-i xa?k?i?n-s
woman PRED-bite-VERSE-INDIC dog-OBV
A dog [obv] bit a woman [prox]. (or A woman was bitten by a dog.) (E)

Given the English sentence 'A dog bit a woman' out of context to translate into Kutenai, my consultant responded with the inverse sentence in (33b). She described the direct version in (33a) as 'sounding like English' and has commented on similar examples as sounding odd because 'people are more important than animals'. There are two possible analyses by which one could account for the oddity of examples like (33a). One possibility is that the relative animacy or humanness plays a role in the choice of proximate versus obviative: according to this approach, if one participant is human and the other nonhuman, the human participant must be the proximate and the nonhuman participant the obviative. A second possibility is that the relative humanness governs the choice of what is subject: according to this approach, if one participant is human and the other nonhuman, the human participant must be subject. Both analyses would account equally well for the contrast in (33), since in these examples the subject is proximate and the nonsubject is obviative.

The two analyses make different predictions, however, for clauses like those in (29b), (31) and (32), in which both participants are obviative. The analysis that links the animacy contrast to the choice of subject predicts that the same contrast as that found in (33) should be found in clauses in which both participants are obviative. The analysis that links the animacy contrast to the choice of proximate predicts that animacy should play no role in the choice between direct and inverse when both participants are obviative. The evidence supports the first of these two analyses: (34a) is judged odd compared to (34b) in precisely the same way that (33a) is judged odd relative to (33b).

(34) a. ??mis?at qa?k?-ni xa?k?i?n-s k-?i'xa-s mal?-s
Mike say-INDIC dog-OBV SUBOR-bite-OBV,SUBJ Mary-OBV
Mike [prox] said that the dog [obv] bit Mary [obv]. (J)

b. mis?at qa?k?-ni mal?-s k-?i'x-naps-is xa?k?i?n-s
Mike say-INDIC Mary-OBV SUBOR-bite-VERSE-OBV,SUBJ dog-OBV
Mike [prox] said that the dog [obv] bit Mary [obv].
(or Mike said that Mary was bitten by the dog) (J)
Since both participants of the subordinate clause are obviative in both examples in (34), the difference cannot be due to which participant is obviative, but rather must arise from the fact that xa?lei 'dog' is subject in (34a) while mali 'Mary' is subject in (34b). In other words, the examples in (34) show that animacy is relevant to the choice of subject, not to the choice of proximate. The examples in Boas' texts are consistent with this. Both of the instances of double obviative inverse clauses in the section of Boas' texts surveyed involve a nonhuman notional subject acting on a human notional object, as in (32b). In the five double obviative direct clauses, the notional subject is either equal to or higher than the notional object in animacy.

6. The Notional Subject in Inverse Clauses. The evidence in the preceding section argues that the inverse construction in Kutenai is a kind of passive, in that the notional subject is the grammatical subject. But this leaves unaddressed the question of the status of the notional subject in inverse clauses, except that it is not the grammatical subject. Passive constructions in other languages generally involve detransitivization, or at least a decrease in valence from the corresponding active clause. It is far from clear, however, that the inverse construction in Kutenai is in any way intransitive. The question is whether the notional subject in an inverse clause is like an oblique (or a chômeur in Relational Grammar) or whether it is still a syntactic argument of the verb, and thus somewhat analogous to an object. Under the former possibility, the inverse would be a conventional passive. Under the latter possibility, the inverse would involve a kind of subject-object reversal, something that Perlmuter and Rhodes (1988) have proposed for inverse clauses in Ojibwa. In Ojibwa, however, the transitive nature of inverse clauses is unquestionable; what is a matter of debate is whether they involve a change in grammatical relations. For Kutenai, the evidence presented here points more unequivocally to the conclusion that inverse clauses do involve a change in grammatical relations. What is less clear is whether they are transitive.

The absence of clear evidence that inverse clauses are intransitive might constitute an argument that they are transitive. However none of the tests that I am aware of at this time for distinguishing objects from obliques are applicable to inverse clauses. For example, the first and second person object affixes on verbs are not relevant to inverse clauses, since inverse clauses always involve third person participants. Similarly both the il-passive and the inverse construction itself are tests for object, since both involve 'promotion' of an object to subject, but there are presumably independent reasons why such rules cannot apply to inverse clauses, the same reasons why languages rarely allow passivization of passive clauses. In many languages, the detransitivization involved with passives is reflected by the use of prepositions or postpositions with the notional subject. But Kutenai does not employ adpositions, and oblique nominalizers are like objects in form, taking at most obviative marking, as illustrated by the examples in (18) and (19). Hence none of the obvious tests for objecthood or transitivity provide evidence bearing on the question of whether inverse clauses in Kutenai are transitive.

One property of the inverse construction in Kutenai which makes it quite unlike passive in most languages is that it requires a notional subject, even one that is not realized phonologically. In the absence of an overt notional subject, an inverse clause is assigned an interpretation whereby the notional subject is interpreted anaphorically, as referring to something recoverable in the immediately preceding discourse context, though something distinct from the referent of the proximate participant. This is illustrated by the following examples from texts.

(35) a. qalwi'y-ne k-tsaxal-t'i p-l-aps.
think-INDIC SUBOR-FUT-die-TRANS- INVERSE
He [prox] thought that he [obv] would kill him [prox],
(or He [prox] thought that he [prox] would be killed by him [obv].)
(Boas Text 32, p. 46, line 28)

b. pal mat-aps-i.
PTCL leave behind INVERSE-INDIC
He [obv] outran him [prox]. (Tape 126, side B, line 13)
The proximate participant in (35a) (a chipmunk) is proximate in the preceding clause. The obviative participant is referred to three clauses back, but it is an owl which the chipmunk is talking to, and thus quite recoverable in the context. Similarly, the proximate participant in (35b) is referred to in the preceding clause, while the obviative participant is referred to three clauses back.

This property of allowing a phonologically null notional subject that is interpreted anaphorically is not one shared by the notional subject in passive clauses in other languages: at most, the notional subject will occasionally be recoverable by inference. In Kutenai, an inverse clause lacking an overt notional subject is apparently always interpreted anaphorically. Since this is generally a property associated with syntactic arguments of the verb, this property of inverse clauses provides a possible argument that they are transitive.

On the other hand, the language has a distinct passive construction that is used when the notional subject is to be interpreted as indefinite and unspecified, namely the il-construction. Contrast (36a) with (35a) above. (35a) uses the inverse construction while (36a) uses the il-passive. (35a) is interpreted as having an anaphoric notional subject, something referred to in the immediately preceding text. (36a) is interpreted as having an indefinite and unspecified notional subject.

(36) a. qalwiy-ni k-pxal ?up-il-il.  
think-INDIC SUBOR-FUT die-TRANS-PASSIVE  
He [prox] thought that he [prox] would be killed. (J)  

name-PASSIVE-INDIC  
He was called Akmu. (Tape NS21, story 5, line 19)

The existence of a passive construction that is used when the notional subject is indefinite and unspecified might be taken as an explanation of why the notional subject is always interpreted anaphorically in inverse clauses when it is not present phonologically. Despite this, the Kutenai inverse is still unlike passive in other languages in even allowing an anaphorically interpreted null participant. But I will leave unanswered the question of the status of the notional subject in inverse clauses.

7. Conclusion. The construction in Kutenai that I have referred to here as an inverse construction is a kind of passive in the sense that there is evidence that the notional object in inverse clauses is the grammatical subject. The evidence that I have provided for this is based on the fact that the notional object triggers obviative subject agreement in inverse clauses in which both participants are obviative. The conclusion that the inverse involves a change in grammatical relations remains somewhat tentative, however, in the absence of further arguments. The current evidence is also indeterminate with respect to the question of whether inverse clauses are transitive or not. These two observations point to the need for further research on these questions.

Appendix: The Suffix -mil and Nonthird Person Obviation

My claim that the obviative:proximate contrast involves only third persons deserves at least brief comment since it contradicts the claims of Garvin (1948, 1958), who analyses the suffix -mil in examples like those in (37) as indicating a first or second person obviative.

(37) a. hu wu-kat-mil-ni xalein-?is misål  
1,SUBJ see-MIL-INDIC dog-3,POSS Mike  
I saw Mike's [prox] dog [obv]. (E)
I will leave the function of this suffix largely unaddressed in this paper, partly because I am undecided at this time what the proper analysis of it is and partly because it does not interact with the inverse construction, the primary focus of this paper. Garvin himself notes that what he describes as nonthird person obviative operates rather differently from third person obviation.

It should be noted that the presence of the suffix -mil on the verb in the examples in (37) is linked to the fact that the object is obviative. If the object were proximate, as in (38), then -mil is not used.

(38) hu̱ wu-kat-i xaʔlein
    l,SUBJ see-INDIC dog
   I saw a dog [prox]. (E)

Note that (37) without -mil is unacceptable, as shown in (39a), and (38) with -mil is unacceptable, as shown in (39b).

(39) a. *hu̱ wu-kat-i xaʔleinʔis misát
    l,SUBJ see-INDIC dog-3.POSS Mike
   I saw Mike’s [prox] dog [obv]. (J)

b. *hu̱ wu-kat-mil-ni xaʔlein
   l,SUBJ see-MIL-INDIC dog
   I saw a dog [prox]. (J)

It should be clear that one cannot consider -mil to be indicating a nonthird person obviative in (37) in the sense that nonthird person participants compete for proximate status with third person participants the way third person participants compete with each other. If that were the case, then (38) would contain two proximate nominals, the first person participant (since the verb does not occur with -mil) and the dog. Nor would we be able to account for the unacceptability of (39b). One way to account for the distribution of -mil in these examples would be to say that -mil indicates a nonthird person subject and an obviative object. That it is the obviativeness of the third person object, rather than of the nonthird person subject, that is apparently crucial to the use of -mil is indicated by the following example, in which the object is obviative.

(40) hu̱ wu-kat-mil-ni xaʔlein-s
   l,SUBJ see-MIL-INDIC dog-OBV
   I saw a dog [obv]. (J)

Contrast (40) with the unacceptable (39b), the sole difference being that the object is obviative in (40). (40) is an example of a sentence without a proximate and would only occur in a discourse context in which the proximate nominal in the surrounding discourse was not mentioned in this particular sentence. When asked whether (40) was grammatical, my consultant responded affirmatively, saying one might use it in a story if one were saying that one saw a dog, but ‘he’ didn’t, the implication being that one could use (40) in a discourse context in which one was talking about someone else not mentioned in this particular sentence.

The examples cited here do not cover the range of situations in which -mil is or can be used, nor have I addressed the specific account of -mil proposed by Garvin (1958) (which is consistent with the examples cited here). A complete account of this suffix requires further study.
References


