Pseudo-Argument Affixes in Iwaidja and Ilgar: A Case of Deponent Subject and Object Agreement*

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1. Introduction

DEPONENCY, IN THE EXTENDED SENSE in which it is used in this volume, is the mismatch between the expected and actual function of a morphological form or paradigm. In this paper I describe a particular type of deponency found in several languages of the Iwaidjan family (Northern Australia) that involves pseudo-argument affixes on the verb. These appear at first glance to be subject or object pronominal prefixes, with forms and positional possibilities appropriate to well-behaved members of the subject/object/tense prefixal paradigm. However, they do not in fact mark arguments at all (at least synchronically), and instead have various non-argument functions. These range from derivation-like alterations of the basic verb meaning to a semantically empty conjugation-like marker, which effectively functions as part of a

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discontinuous lexical stem with the verb root. We have here, then, a case of deponent argument agreement by means of verbal prefixes: either the argument which this morphology leads you to expect does not exist at all, or it is something else. Both synchronically and diachronically, there is a continuum strung out from canonical argument uses to clear cases of deponent pseudo-arguments. A main goal of this paper will be to map out the various points along this spectrum, firstly because it can assist us in sharpening our definitions and our descriptive treatment of languages with the phenomenon, and second because it can help us to establish how pseudo-argument agreement can evolve by the gradual lexicalization of agreement affixes on the basis of prototypical features of arguments used with particular senses of the verb.

I will focus on two closely related languages, Iwaidja (Iw) and Ilgar/Garig (Ilg). These languages share around eighty per cent vocabulary, and would be considered sister dialects by many criteria, but a series of changes to the prefix paradigms which has resulted in initial mutation in Iwaidja and the selection of different subsets of an original five-gender system by the two languages (Ilgar basically retaining the old masculine and feminine, and Iwaidja jettisoning these but retaining the old ‘miscellaneous’ gender), has produced sufficient formal differences that non-bilingual speakers claim the two varieties are not mutually comprehensible. Iwaidja still has around one hundred and fifty speakers, and is still being transmitted to children in some families, whereas the last speaker of Ilgar passed away in 2003.

Iwaidja and Ilgar are in turn rather closely related to Mawng (plus the extinct and barely known Manangkari), which adjoined them to the east along the Arnhem Land coast and on Goulburn Island; this whole grouping (known as Iwaidjic) are about as closely related as the Romance languages. Mawng (Capell and Hinch 1970)—with around two hundred speakers—retains the proto-Iwaidjic five-gender system (Evans 1998), and because of its conservatism is helpful in understanding the phenomenon to be discussed in this paper. Singer (2006, 2007) contains a detailed description of related structures in Mawng; see Evans (2000) for a general survey of the family.

Several other languages—Wurrugu, Marrku, and Amurdak—have also been classified traditionally as members of the Iwaidjan group. However, their relationship to the Iwaidjic languages is much more distant, the level of

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1 Throughout this paper I will use ‘Ilgar’ to cover two almost identical varieties, Ilgar and Garig—the former traditionally spoken on the islands to the east of Croker Island, and the latter on the mainland around Port Essington. My own work has primarily been on Ilgar, though I have also gone through the extant materials on Garig and, with only one exception to be mentioned below, both exhibit identical behaviour with respect to deponent argument agreement.
description is basic at best, and they do not show obvious evidence of pseudo-argument marking, so they will not be discussed here.

The genetic relations between all these languages are summarized in Figure 1.

2. Introductory Remarks: Standard Use of Argument Agreement

Iwaidja and Ilgar are head-marking languages whose verbs employ suffixes for tense/aspect/mood marking, and prefixes for subject, object, direction, and some tense/mood categories (basically irrealis/future vs unmarked, with distinct imperative forms as well for a few person values). In this article we are exclusively concerned with the prefixing system of the verbal morphology.

Abstracting away from those morphological elements that are irrelevant to the argument, the verb structure in Iwaidja and Ilgar is basically as in (1); I use the pipe sign (|) to indicate that two or more inflectional categories have a range of formal realizations, with respect to both order and fusion, according to the precise combination of values involved.

(1) Intransitives: Subject(|Future) — V
  Transitives: Subject|Object(|Future) — V

(2) and (3) illustrate intransitive verbs in Ilgar and Iwaidja respectively. Note that 3rd person singular forms, in Iwaidja, undergo initial mutation, caused by the (underlying) 3rd singular prefix conventionally represented as K-, which hardens any following nasals and glides to the corresponding stop but does not itself surface as a segment. Note also that it is possible, and
indeed normal, to omit free NP arguments, since the requisite information is supplied by the verbal prefixes.\(^2\)

\[(2a)\] \textit{nga-wani} (2b) \textit{ang-bani} (2c) \textit{yi-wani}

Ilg 1SG.S-sit(NPST) 2SG.S-sit(NPST) 3SG.S-sit(NPST)

‘I am sitting.’ ‘You are sitting.’ ‘He is sitting.’

\[(3a)\] \textit{nga-wani} (3b) \textit{ang-bani} (3c) \textit{bani K-wani}

Iw 1SG.S-sit(NPST) 2SG.S-sit(NPST) 3SG.S-sit(NPST)

‘I am sitting.’ ‘You are sitting.’ ‘He is sitting.’

(4) and (5) illustrate transitive verbs.

\[(4a)\] \textit{a-yun-dalkun} (4b) \textit{ngan-bu-
\textit{ldalkun}} (4c) \textit{ngan-b-ana-
\textit{ldalkun}}

Ilg 1SG.A-3F.SG.
OBJ-cut(NPST) A-cut(NPST) A-FUT-cut(NPST)

‘I am cutting them.’ ‘They are cutting me.’ ‘They will cut me.’

\[(5a)\] \textit{a-yun-dalkun} (5b) \textit{ngan-bu-
\textit{ldalkun}} (5c) \textit{ngan-d-a-
\textit{ldalkun}}

Iw 1SG.A-3PL.OBJ-
\textit{cut}(NPST) 1SG.OBJ-3 A-
\textit{cut}(NPST) 1SG.OBJ-3A-
FUT-
\textit{cut}(NPST)

‘I am cutting them.’ ‘(S)he/they are cutting me.’ ‘(S)he/they will cut me.’

Syntactically, free NPs can be freely omitted, as illustrated here, and the order of major constituents when they do occur is quite free, apart from in a few specialized constructions such as reciprocals where a number of postverbal elements must occur in fixed order. Outside the pronominal agreement system it is difficult to find tests which unambiguously identify grammatical relations: there is no affixation for case, no infinitives or other forms giving evidence of control or deletion, and no evidence for syntactic pivots in complex sentences, since relative clauses are simply formed as headless relatives off any argument, and the equivalents of complement and adverbial clauses are simply fully inflected verbs strung together as appropriate.

There are, however, several regular patterns of transitive alternation which can be most simply characterized in terms of argument alternations: passives and mediopassives, which involve the substitution of an intransitive for a transitive prefix frame and the concomitant promotion of object to subject, and causatives, which involve the substitution of a transitive for an

\(^2\) The following practical orthography is used (note that there is no phonemic voicing contrast): \(j = /c/, ng = /h/, rn = /h/, ny = /l/, rt = /l/, rl = /l/, rd = /l/, ld = /l/, r = /l/, rr = /l/, h = /u/\). K represents a hardening morphophoneme surfacing in various ways (Iwaidja only), and :: represents prosodic lengthening to show duration (see example (29)).

\(^3\) In Iwaidja some combinations do not distinguish third singular from third plural (historically, they have generalized the plural form); these will be glossed simply as ‘3’.
intransitive prefix frame, the demotion of intransitive subject to object, and the introduction of the causer as a transitive subject. The reciprocal construction, as well, can most simply be characterized in terms of subject and object slots: reciprocal constructions normally take the form ‘A-B-V and B.in.turn’ (where A is subject, and B is object). Though this originated as a truncated biclausal construction (A Ved B, and then B in turn . . .) it has been grammaticalized in all the Iwaidjan languages to the status of a single clause, as shown by the placement of certain postverbal elements (such as theme NPs of ditransitives) after the ‘B.in.turn’ component (Evans et al. in prep.). It is convenient to characterize all these alternations in terms of the grammatical relations of subject and object, but this is by no means the only viable analysis, and it is not difficult to get Role and Reference Grammar-style analyses in terms of direct projection of macro-roles like actor and undergoer on to the relevant prefixal slots. In this paper, however, I shall follow the more conventional path of referring to subject and object roles, for simplicity of exposition.4

2.1. Morphological realization of subject and object prefixes

Since part of our argument turns on identifying deponent subject and object prefixes, it is worth saying a little more about the morphology of this system. Intransitives are straightforward, as illustrated in (2) and (3) above: the subject pronominal prefix is followed, where applicable, by the future prefix. (Things get slightly more complex when the 3-way directional contrast—neutral, towards, and away—gets factored in, since there are a number of portmanteau and suppletive forms. We need not consider these here.)

Transitives are more complicated, because of the existence of competing ordering principles and a number of less than transparent forms for certain combinations. Where both subject and object are third person, the object is ordered before the subject, with the future prefix between them if present (6c, 7c).

(6a) yi-nga-ldalkun
Ilg 3.M.SG.OBJ.3F.SG.A-cut(NPST)
‘She is cutting him/it.’
(6b) yi-ni-ldalkun
3.M.SG.OBJ.3F.SG.A-cut(NPST)
‘He is cutting him/it.’

4 As the reader will realize as the paper unfolds, the existence of deponent argument agreement creates problems for the identification of subjects and objects with certain verbs, precisely because of the lack of independent tests (outside the prefixing system) for these argument roles. However, alternative analyses (e.g. in terms of macro-roles) will face exactly the same sorts of problems—the phenomena here would simply become cases of e.g. ‘deponent undergoer agreement’ rather than ‘deponent object agreement’.
(6c) *y-ana-nga-ldalkun*

3M.SG.OBJ-FUT-3F.SG.A-cut(NPST)

‘She will cut it.’

(7a) *ka-ldalkun* (7b) *ri-ldalkun*

Iw *K-nga-ldalkun* *K-i-ldalkun*

3C.SG.OBJ-3F.SG.A-cut(NPST) 3C.SG.OBJ-3M.SG.A-cut(NPST)

‘She is cutting him/it.’ ‘He is cutting him/it.’

(7c) *banangaldalkun*

3C.SG.OBJ-FUT-3F.SG.A-cut(NPST)

‘She will cut it.’

Where one argument is a speech act participant (henceforth SAP, i.e. 1st or 2nd), and the other is not (3rd person), the SAP occurs first. The future marker always follows the first pronominal prefix, but may precede or follow the second prefix according to the form involved ((4), (5), (8), (9)).

(8a) *a-ny-jalkun* (8b) *ngan-nga-ldalkun* (8c) *ngan-bana-nga-ldalkun*

Ilg 1 SG.A-3F.SG. 1 SG.OBJ-3F.SG. 1 SG.OBJ-FUT-3F.SG.

OBJ-cut(NPST) A-cut(NPST) A-cut(NPST)

‘I am cutting her.’ ‘She is cutting me.’ ‘She will cut me.’

(9a) *aralkun* (9b) *abanaldalkun*

Iw *a-K-ldalkun* *a-K-mana-ldalkun*

1 SG.A-3C.SG. 1 SG.A-3C.SG.

OBJ-cut(NPST) OBJ-FUT-cut(NPST)

‘I am cutting him/her.’ ‘I will cut him/her.’

Where both subject and object are SAPs, a portmanteau is employed, as is common in many languages (cf Heath 1991, 1998) and it is not possible to identify an ordering.

Turning to the forms of the prefixes, no single account can be given that works across the whole paradigm. Some exponents add -(V)n to the S-form (intransitive form) or A-form to give the corresponding O-form, e.g. *nga-* ‘1SG.S’ > *ngan-* ‘1SG.OBJ’, *a-* ‘3PL.S’ > *an-* ‘3PL.OBJ’, *ku-* ‘2SG.A’ > *kun-* ‘2SG.OBJ’, *kurr-* ‘2PL.S/A’ > *kurrun-* ‘2PL.OBJ’. For some there is a suppletive relationship between A and S/OBJ forms, e.g. Ilg *ni-* ‘3SG.M.A’ but *i-* ‘3SG.M.S/OBJ’, *nga-* ‘3SG.F.A’ but *iny-* ‘3SG.F.S/OBJ’, Ilgar and Iwaidja *bu-* ~ *wu-* ‘3PL.A’ vs *a-* ‘3PL.S’ vs *an-* ‘3PL.OBJ’. As the above forms indicate, some person/number/gender combinations distinguish all three core functions (A, S, and OBJ), some oppose S/OBJ to A, and some oppose A/S to OBJ. The net effect of all these irregularities is that attempts to give regular rules for the formation of the prefix combinations only go a fraction of
the way to accounting for the forms by regular rule, and a word-and-paradigm approach is the most appropriate model to follow.

Of the two languages we are focusing on here, Ilgar is both more transparent and closer to the proto-Iwaidjic system (though Mawng is closer still). Iwaidja has innovated by:

(i) generalizing the ‘miscellaneous’ gender prefix aK- to cover most third person singular values, then undergoing morphophonological changes that eliminate the initial a- everywhere except before monosyllabic roots (of which there are only a handful), and realizing K- as the hardening of following consonantal segments (nasals and semivowels to corresponding stops, and lateral flap ld to retroflex glide r) and as w before a

(ii) losing the masculine and feminine prefixes almost everywhere (replaced by the generalized aK- ) except for the specific combination 3SG>3SG: cf ri- ‘3M>3SG’ and ka- (< K-nga-) ‘3F > 3SG’.

(iii) generalizing the 3PL.A form to 3A in all but the 3SG>3SG combinations. Thus the form nganbu- ~ ngandu-, which in Ilgar is restricted to 3PL.A>1SG combinations (and can be segmented as nga-n-bu [1SG-OBJ-3PL.A]) has been generalized in Iwaidja to cover all combinations of 3rd person acting on 1SG, i.e. ‘he, she or they > me’; similar remarks apply to all other 3rd person A forms except where 3SG > 3SG.

2.2. Diachronic background

Looking further back in time (see Evans 1998 for fuller arguments), proto-Iwaidjic had a productive five–gender system, still preserved in Mawng: masculine (m), feminine (f), vegetable (v), neuter (n), and miscellaneous (mis). This original system is shown in the central two columns of Table 1. (The alternate forms iny-/nga- and yi-/ni- represent suppletive pairs, with the former used for OBJ and S, and the latter for A).

The vegetable class includes trees, plants (and parts thereof), as well as bush and wood; the neuter class includes places, country, cultural manifestations (ceremonies, languages, etc.—all linked to place), and water—indeed, Singer (2007) labels this the ‘land and liquids’ gender in Mawng.

Iwaidja and Ilgar have each simplified this system in different ways: the Ilgar system is shown on the left, and the Iwaidja system on the right.

In Ilgar/Garig the miscellaneous gender is lost completely, the masculine is generalized as the default, and only the masculine and feminine are possible with all verbs. In Iwaidja, by contrast, the miscellaneous gender has been generalized as the default ‘common’ gender (abbreviated as ‘C’). The
masculine and feminine only survive in the subject of 3SG>3SG combinations. In both languages, the vegetable and neuter prefixes, for both object and intransitive subject, survive in restricted contexts, and morphologically behave exactly like the other gender prefixes in terms of their behaviour within prefixal combinations, such as their positioning with respect to other argument prefixes and the prefixing marking future/irrealis. A subset of these give the primary situations where deponent argument agreement occurs (to be discussed in §3). To continue our preliminaries, however, and before passing to deponent agreement, we need to examine some other cases where their use can be treated as genuine gender agreement, albeit with a restricted set of verbs: their choice contrasts with that of the productive gender markers, and can be motivated by the semantics of the appropriate referent (§2.3). With yet other verbs, they can likewise be treated as a type of gender agreement, but where the verb is not attested with any other agreement marker (§2.4).

### 2.3. Restricted gender contrasts in third person OBJ and S

In both Iwaidja and Ilgar, a restricted set of verbs permits some of the ancestral gender contrasts. Note that, since in Iwaidja and Ilgar this type of gender agreement is only found on verbs (not within the NP on modifiers, for example), there is no independent method of determining the semantics of these genders, meaning that we are using gender in a rather archaicizing sense from a language-internal perspective, though in Mawng gender can be deter-
mined in a more straightforward manner through agreement within the NP as manifested on determiners and adjectives.

First consider an Iwaidja example, the verb *ngibungku* which normally means ‘name OBJ, call OBJ by name, call name of OBJ’. This verb can be used with a neuter O prefix to mean ‘call the name of (a country or place)’, as in (10). This example can be viewed as a restricted type of gender agreement with the object ‘country’; that ‘country’ is the object is shown by the fact that the verb exhibits partial right-reduplication caused by the fact that its object is plural. (Note, though, that since this is a non-human referent, plurality is not shown in the relevant pronominal prefix).

(10)  *Jumung janad kunak k-ardbirrun wardyad*  
Iw 3SG.OBL 3SG country 3SG>3SG.C-throw(NPST) stone
amu-ngibungku-ku kunak.
3PL>3SG.C-name-ITERATIVE(NPST) country

‘The custodian of the country throws stones and calls out the name of the sites.’

Other examples of this sort of agreement are:

(a) the Iwaidja and Ilgar verb *wurrun*, which means ‘know, recognize’ when used with a human object (in the masculine, feminine or plural as appropriate), but which means ‘know (a fact, or language)’ when used with neuter agreement; recall that the semantic domain of the neuter includes all cultural manifestations associated with place, including languages and systems of knowledge.

(b) the Iwaidja and Ilgar verb *artudban* ‘abandon, leave’, which when used with neuter agreement means ‘leave a place’—used with standard masculine, feminine, common or plural agreement it would mean e.g. ‘leave (a person)’.

(c) the Iwaidja and Garig verb *lda* ‘eat’, which when used with neuter agreement means ‘drink’; recall that ‘water’ belongs to the ‘neuter’ class.

The reason for the caveat ‘restricted type of gender agreement’ given above is that not all verbs with neuter objects will display such agreement—it is restricted to just some verbs. It may also happen that a given verb will display such agreement with one gender, but not another. The verb *ayan* ‘see’, for example, may (though need not) employ neuter agreement in the context of looking at the ground or a place (e.g. Ilgar *angbayan malalkuj* [3PL>3SG.N-see.NPST island] ‘they are looking around the islands’ (again, since the object is non-human, its plural status is not signalled by the pronominal agreement system). But we have no examples of it being used
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with vegetable agreement when looking at a tree or plant, for example. Likewise there are no examples of *artudban* or *lda* being employed with vegetable agreement, in contexts like leaving a tree behind, or chewing grass.

Let us turn now to two Ilgar examples in slightly more detail, one with *ldi* ‘stand, be (of vertical object)’ and one with *wildimbin* ‘dry, dry up’.

*Ldi* can be used, with masculine prefix *yi-* of any masculine subject, but also of typical ‘vegetable class’ entities like trees, plants, e.g. *yildi kujali* ‘there is a tree’. However, this verb may also take the vegetable prefix *ma-* when its subject is a tree, bush, or shrub, as in (11). It may also take the neuter prefix (in its allomorph *an-*) in the fixed expression illustrated in (12), when talking about old customs or practices.

(11)  
\[ ma-ldi \quad raka \quad arlirr \]
\[ Ilg \quad 3SG.V.S-stand(NPST) \quad DEM \quad tree \]
‘There is a tree there.’

(12)  
\[ wularrud \quad an-di \]
\[ Ilg \quad before \quad 3SG.N.S-stand \]
‘as it was in the old days’

*Wildimbin*, used with a human subject, means ‘dry oneself, get dry’ (13). But it may be used of a piece of landscape to mean ‘get dry, dry up’, in which case it takes a neuter prefix (14). This can be regarded as neuter agreement with its intransitive subject, a noun denoting part of the landscape.6

(13)  
\[ nga-wildimbi-ny \]
\[ Ilg \quad 1SG.S-get.dry-PST \]
‘I dried myself, got dry.’

(14)  
\[ raka \quad kabal \quad ang-bildimbi-ny \]
\[ Ilg \quad DEM \quad floodplain \quad 3SG.N.S-dry-PSTS \]
‘The floodplain has dried up.’

In some cases the selection of restricted gender prefixes is accompanied by a certain amount of semantic specialization. Consider the verb *wun* ‘hit’ in Iwaidja. With a ‘common gender’ object prefix—or with a first, second, or third plural object—it simply means ‘hit’ (15). With a vegetable object prefix it means ‘hit, chop (tree, vegetation, log)’ (16), while with a neuter object prefix it means ‘dig a hole in ground (e.g. for burying, or cooking), make an impression on the ground (e.g. by leaving tracks)’ (17).

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6 A rather similar example, again from Ilgar, is the verb *ldaharryu* ‘to have or be a hole’; this may take the neuter prefix when referring to a well or other water-bearing ‘hole’ in the landscape, as in *ardbarak andaharryu* ‘there is a well (there)’ (*ardbarak* = ‘well”).
2.4. Metaphoric coercion with particular objects

In all the above cases we do not need to modify our characterization of verb-meaning when the neuter or vegetable prefix is used—we are simply specifying that a particular sort of object is involved. On the other hand, there are some verbs where the verbal meaning is metaphorically coerced when a vegetable or neuter object is involved. Consider the verb *mang* ‘grasp’: when used with neuter object agreement this means ‘understand’ (i.e. ‘grasp an idea or thoughts’), extending the notion of ‘grasping’ to ‘understanding’ just as in English, but in this case only when a neuter object prefix is present.

As a second illustration, consider the verb —*unma* ‘count’. When used with a neuter object, it means ‘tell’ (19). Though semantically comparable pairs

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7 The segmentability of this word is arguable — see discussion in §3.2 below.
8 With a further extension possible when the word *kuwa* ‘true’ is added after the predicate: *ang-ku-mang kuwa* (Iw) or *a-ni-mang kuwa* (Ilg), lit. ‘he-N-holds/grasps true’, means ‘he believes it’, i.e. ‘he holds it (as) true’.
9 This verb may also be used intransitively, with the meaning ‘try’.
in European languages like zählen/erzählen, contare/raccontare and so forth suggest this is a sort of derivational relationship, the Iwaidja version could still be treated as a sort of gender agreement, with the object NP yiwarruj ‘story’ in (19) motivating the choice of neuter.

(19) Kayirrk barda ang-man-umma nuwung
    Iw now here 1SG.A>3SG.N.OBJ-FUT-tell(NPST) 2SG.OBL
    badba yiwarruj artbung.
other story different
‘Now I’m going to tell you a different story.’

2.5. Restricted-gender verbs

Verbs in the last section occur with a contrasting set of argument prefixes, ranging over several genders. Some verbs, however, are only attested with a vegetable or neuter prefix. Usually this prefix is in the object slot (more rarely, in the S slot), though there are a couple of meteorological and tidal verbs with both A and OBJ fixed, and some ‘experiencer object’ verbs with A fixed (Evans 2004). However, since the gender can be motivated on semantic grounds, we assume this is a genuine argument with selectional restrictions.

Some examples are the Iwaidja verbs ldijbun (neuter OBJ) ‘collect water’ (20), marrun (vegetable OBJ), ‘eat (food)’ (21), Ilgar yawun (neuter OBJ) ‘dig (ground)’ (22), and urrun (vegetable OBJ) ‘burn off (bush)’ (23a,b).

(20) ang-bu-ldijbun
    Iw 3SG.N.OBJ-3A-collect.water(NPST)
    ‘He/she/they collect water.’

(21) mam-bu-marrun
    Iw 3SG.V.OB-3A-eat(NPST)
    ‘He/she/they eat (food).’

(22) ang-bu-yawun
    Ilg 3SG.N.OBJ-3PL.A-dig(NPST)
    ‘They are digging (the ground).’

(23a) ma-n-urrun  (23b) ma-ng-urrun
    Ilg 3SG.V.OBJ-3SG.M.A-make.fire(NPST) 3SG.V.OBJ-3SG.F.A-make.fire
    ‘He’s burning off (the bush).’
    (NPST)
    ‘She’s burning off
    (the bush).’

A further example is Ilgar murrung ‘make fire signal by burning grass’.

Some restricted-gender verbs participate in argument-structure alternations: used with a vegetable-gender (intransitive) subject they have a mediopassive/stative reading, while used transitively with a vegetable-gender
object they have active/causative reading. An example is the verb
\textit{ma . . . irkurang} 'close', which must always have a vegetable-gender absolutive argument, but which may either be used intransitively (24a) or transitively (24b); similar patterns are found with its antonym \textit{ma . . . adbunugu} 'be open (intr. with vegetable subject); open (tr. with vegetable object)'. Such alternations parallel the intransitive / causative alternations found with many verbs without any gender restrictions, such as \textit{malkba} 'come out (v.i.); take out (v.t.)'.

(24a) \textit{store m-irkura-ng} \quad (24b) \textit{store ma-n-irkura-ng}

\begin{tabular}{ll}
Iw & 3SG.V.S-close-PST & 3SG.V.OBJ-3SG.M.A-close-PST \\
\end{tabular}

\begin{tabular}{ll}
‘The shop is closed.’ & ‘He has closed the store.’
\end{tabular}

(25a) \textit{yi-malkba-ny} \quad (25b) \textit{yi-ni-malkba-ny}

\begin{tabular}{ll}
Ilg & 3SG.S-come.out-PST & 3SG.M.OBJ-3SG.M.A-take.out-PST \\
\end{tabular}

\begin{tabular}{ll}
‘He/it came out.’ & ‘He took him/it out.’
\end{tabular}

To the extent that the motivation for gender choice becomes unclear (or that it is hard to gloss the root) such cases shade into a 'conjugational' type of pseudo-argument use (see below). An example is (26)—can we rationalize the choice of F.A as referring to ‘sea’ or ‘tide’, and of V.O as referring to the shoreline, or perhaps the seaweed, in which case we could treat it as a very restricted type of subject and object agreement (as suggested by the first gloss given under the example), or should we simply treat it as a verb with two deponent prefixes (as suggested by the second gloss)? Without independent attestation of the verb root it is difficult to prove exactly what are the individual contributions of the root and the affixes, so I analyse examples like this as belonging to the conjugational type.

(26) \textit{Ma-na-nga-yambu-ng kuburr.}

\begin{tabular}{ll}
Iw & 3SG.V.PBJ-FUT-3SG.F.A-tide.exceed-NPST & tomorrow \\
\end{tabular}

\begin{tabular}{ll}
be.king.tide \\
\end{tabular}

‘It will be a king tide tomorrow.’

In fact, a general problem with all restricted-gender verbs is to show, in a non-circular way, that the gender is motivated by the subject/object, since, as seen above, the languages do not provide other evidence for agreement with these genders outside the system under consideration.

### 3. Pseudo-Argument Uses of Agreement

All examples so far can be assimilated to more or less standard uses of agreement, sometimes with slight idiomaticity or coercion of verb meaning by the nature of its absolutive argument. In other words, in all cases discussed so far,
we can plausibly postulate an argument which is represented by the relevant pronominal prefix, and whose ontological characteristics are those we would expect from the relevant gender. We now pass to pseudo-argument uses of the same prefixes, in which there is no evidence that there is a corresponding argument of the verb. In some cases, the existence of contrasting pairs of verbs differing just in the presence of a required agreement pattern makes it possible to identify a semantic contribution made by the pseudo-argument (e.g. ‘with respect to a place’); I shall term these ‘derivational uses’. In other cases, the verb root is only attested with the relevant pseudo-argument, and the lack of any contrast makes it impossible to identify a semantic contribution by the prefix: I shall term such cases ‘conjugational’ since the choice of prefix is automatically selected for by the verb root, without any detectable semantic contribution.\textsuperscript{10} Table 2 summarizes the spectrum along which the various types of argument use are strung out.

We now pass to a more detailed discussion of the derivational and conjugational uses. I consider both the derivational and conjugational uses to be deponent, in the sense that each uses a form whose expected function is argument agreement for another function—derivational in the first case, conjugational in the second.

Derivational type: Here deponent-agreeing verbs form pairs with corresponding ordinary verbs whose argument prefixes behave canonically. The deponent prefix occupies one of the argument prefix positions, and adds a specifiable meaning (e.g. ‘with respect to place, country’), but there is no evidence for an argument of appropriate gender being present.

Replacive type: Here the ordinary verb is transitive; its object slot is filled in the deponent verb by a pseudo-object use of the vegetable or neuter prefix. The ‘displaced’ original object, however, does not stop being the syntactic object: it may appear as a cardinal free pronoun\textsuperscript{11} directly after the verb, and it may trigger the iterative reduplication found with plural objects. Consider the two regular Ilgar transitive verbs \textit{ldakinun} ‘ask’ and \textit{ldangan} ‘send, cause, allow’. Each of these has a corresponding deponent-object verb where the object slot is filled by a neuter prefix, and in each case the added meaning is

\textsuperscript{10} Obviously such analytic decisions are always provisional, particularly given our incomplete knowledge of the languages concerned: the discovery of the same verb with a different affix could shift our analysis of a given case from conjugational to derivational. Likewise, a more explicit understanding of the semantic contributions made by pseudo-argument prefixes might allow us to state the meaning of the verb root, in ‘conjugational’ uses, by subtracting the semantics contributed by the pseudo-argument prefix.

\textsuperscript{11} There are three free pronoun series in Ilgar and Iwaidja: a cardinal series, used for subject, object, and possessive functions, an oblique series, used for indirect objects and beneficiaries, and a contrastive subject series. The possibility of being represented by a cardinal pronoun is a good test for distinguishing object from indirect object status.
Table 2. Cline of uses of ma- and ang- prefixes in Iwaidja and Ilgar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Subtype</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>True argument use</td>
<td></td>
<td>Prefix indexes a bona fide syntactic argument, in terms of which the overall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>meaning can be clearly formulated, and which can be detected by such tests as</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>argument structure alternations (§2.5) or use of iterative reduplication for multiple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canonical</td>
<td>Semantic effects of gender agreement are completely compositional</td>
<td>§2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Idiomatic coercion of meaning</td>
<td>Metaphorical or other semantic extension coerced by meaning of object associated with gender marked by prefix</td>
<td>§2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restricted gender</td>
<td>Verb is only attested with one gender value for S or O (in one case both A an O)</td>
<td>§2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derivational</td>
<td></td>
<td>Prefix adds some semantic specification (e.g. ‘with respect to a place’) without any</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Replacive</td>
<td>Agnate verb is transitive; pseudo-argument affix fills the object slot and the displaced</td>
<td>§3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Additive</td>
<td>Agnate verb is intransitive; pseudo-argument affix fills the object slot without any syntactic argument being added</td>
<td>§3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjugational</td>
<td></td>
<td>No agnate verb without a pseudo-argument, so it is impossible to identify the separate semantic or syntactic contribution of the root and affix. These verbs behave as if the deponent agreement prefix is an arbitrary conjugation marker</td>
<td>§4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘with respect to country’: ang . . . ldakinun (N.OBJ) ‘ask (owner of clan estate) about where to go, inquire as to where one should go’, ang . . . ldangan (N.OBJ) ‘(clan owner) give (person asking) permission to be on his country, lit. ‘send (person asking) to (clan) country’.

Example (27), involving the first of these verbs, shows how a cardinal free pronoun can be employed to represent the person asked, even though the prefixal object slot has been filled with a neuter prefix.

(27) ang-bu-ldakinu-ng nuyi / ngabi
     Ilg 3SG.N.OBJ-3PL.A-ask-PST you me
        ‘They asked you/me where to go.’
Example (28), involving the second of them, shows how the number of the displaced object may also be indexed by iterative reduplication of the root, which is normally reserved for marking plurality of absolutive arguments (cf. (10) above for a reduplication where it is the number of the neuter object argument that is represented).

\[(28)\]
\[
anildangakan \quad raka
\]
\[
Ilg \quad ang-mi-ldanga-ka-n \quad raka
\]
\[3SG.N.OBJ-3SG.M.A-send-ITER-NPST \quad DEM\]

‘He gives those several permission to be on his country.’

Additive type: Here the verb root is normally intransitive. The addition of a pseudo-object prefix is accompanied by addition of a specified meaning (e.g. ‘w.r.t. ground’), but without any syntactic consequences such as the addition of a further argument. An example is the intransitive Iwaidja verb \(naka\) ‘go (dual)’: when a neuter object prefix is added the resultant verb \(ang \ldots naka\) means ‘search the ground (dual) as when going for yams to dig up’.

4. Conjugational Types

Here the verb root cannot occur without the relevant vegetable or neuter prefix, which thus forms a sort of prefixal conjugation. There is no ‘syntactically active’ argument corresponding to the morphological slot. Although it may be possible to find some weak semantic motivation for the presence of prefix, the verb does not co-occur with any external NP, which gives plausibility to postulating an argument with semantics appropriate to the deponent prefix.

Consider the verb \(ang \ldots marrajba\) ‘walk, go for a walk’, found in both Ilgar and Iwaidja, which takes a neuter object prefix (29). It is not implausible to relate this to the fact that walking occurs on ground or tracks, so that the meaning ‘with respect to a place’, found in some derivational uses (§3) may be postulated, and perhaps this verb once had an argument structure that reflected this more directly, e.g. ‘walk a path’ or ‘pace the ground’. Synchronically, however, such arguments do not appear,

\[12\] There is one example, in Ilgar, where it appears that a true object (albeit collocationally restricted) has been added along with the pronominal prefix. This involves the verb \(min\), an intransitive verb meaning ‘say; do’. If this verb is used with a transitive prefix combination including a vegetable object marker, plus the fixed object NP \(raka mali\) ‘that idea, those thoughts’, this means ‘to agree, to be of like mind’, as in

\[(F1)\]
\[
Ngabi \quad nga-waharl \quad a-ny-bana-mi-n \quad raka \quad mali.
\]
\[1SG \quad 1SG-head \quad 1SG.A-3SG.V.OBJ-FUT-say-NPST \quad that \quad idea\]

‘I agree with that, I am of like mind with that idea.’
nor is there any corresponding verb without the deponent object prefix which would allow us to state the meaning of the root independently of this particular combination—this is the crucial difference from the derivational types discussed in section 3.

(29) barda jarr-ung-marrajba
    and.then away:1PL.A-3SG.N.OBJ-walk(NPST) jarr-ara
    away:1PL.S-go(NPST)

    ngarr-ara-:: ngarr-ung-marrajba ngarru-rtaya-n
    1EXCL.PL.S-go-CONT 1EXCL.PL.A-3SG.N.1EXCL.PL>3SG.
    OBJ-walk(NPST) C-see-NPST

w-arndi
3SG.C.S-be.high(NPST)

‘And then we go on walking, we walk along and see it up there.’
(Pym and Larrimore 1979: 221)

Just as with other uses of the vegetable and neuter prefixes, the ‘conjugational’ deponent morpheme may or may not directly adjoin the root—this depends on the particular subject/object combination involved. In (29), for example, the particular subject/object combination (first person acting on third) means that the deponent object morpheme, which counts as third person, is placed last in the sequence ngarr-ung (or ‘away’ form jarrung) and hence adjoins the root. If this were put into the future it would be separated from the root by the prefix -mana: ngarrungmanamarrajba ‘we will walk’ (the deponent object prefix and root are in bold). And if the subject is third person, then the usual ordering rules (§2.1 above) place the object before the subject: ‘he/she/they walk’ is thus ang...marrajba, where ang is the exponent of the third person neuter object slot in this combination, and its future form is angkanamarrajba. These are all general positional properties of object prefixes, as outlined in section 2, and I simply mention them here to stress that the different syntactic status of pseudo-argument prefixes, in respect to regular argument prefixes, does not lead to any difference in how they are realized morphologically.

There are a large number of conjugational uses of deponent object prefixes. Some examples with neuter objects are ang...muldirran ‘reverse, go back’ (Ilg), ang...urtbulang ‘pour out on ground’ (Ilg, Iw), ang...maranga ‘go round in a circle’ (Iw), ang...ldaharrun ‘tell lies’ (Ilg, Iw). In all of these cases there is no candidate syntactic object.

13 The ku in angku is an allomorph of the regular 3plA prefix bu: a rule of ‘peripheral dissimilation’ in pronominal prefixes means that peripherals (b, k, ng and m, i.e. non coronals) dissimilate in place before peripheral initial roots (like marrajba)—ironically in this case by assimilating in place to the preceding nasal.
There are also a large number of meteorological expressions of this type, many involving conjugationally specified prefixes for both subject and object. Some examples from Ilgar are *manildijarrngani* ‘sheet lightning lighting up sky’ (*man-i- ‘3SG.M>3SG.V’), *mangundularniny* ‘(there be) a thundcrack’ (*mang(a)- ‘3SG.F>3SG.V’), and *mangildabarrjin* ‘(there be) a rainbow extending down to the ground or sea’ (*mang(a)-, again ‘3SG.F>3SG.V’); see also the ‘high tide’ example in section 2.5 above. All these examples, of course, have a somewhat different status owing to both the subject and the object prefix being fixed.

In the case of vegetable prefixes with conjugational *ma* verbs, the situation is somewhat different, since all relevant verbs allow an NP to occur with them which can plausibly be regarded as the syntactic object of the verb—either of the restricted-gender type (e.g. *ma...adbungku* ‘open’ and *ma...irrkurang* ‘close’, discussed above, and *ma...arrun* ‘eat’ and *ma...wirlmanbun* ‘smoke, suck’), or of a replacive type, as with *ma...wurrurtban* ‘lead on a rope’, where the vegetable object prefix is presumably motivated by the plant status of ‘rope’ (woven from bark) while the displaced object is the animal being led.

The reader will have noticed that in all of the above examples it is a deponent object prefix that is involved (with additional specification of transitive subject for some of the meteorological expressions). In fact it is difficult to find clear examples of intransitive deponent argument affixes used conjugationally, because it is then hard to establish that the relevant initial sequence (*m(a)...* for the vegetable gender, *ang...* for the neuter) is in fact a prefix rather than simply part of the root of an invariant word. This is because, unlike with the transitives, we do not have a whole paradigm of forms that we can use to establish the free combinability of the pseudo-argument prefix. If there is a transitivity alternation (as in the ‘open’ and ‘close’ verbs discussed in §2.5) then I have analysed it as a ‘restricted-gender’ verb, though by arguing that this is not in fact a matter of gender such cases could be reassigned to the conjugational type. If there are corresponding verbs without one of these prefixes (as in the example *angbildimbiny* ‘dry up (of land)’ discussed in §2), this will either be a case of gender agreement, or conceivably of derivational use (though I have no examples).

Nonetheless, there are some prima facie cases of intransitive conjugational uses. One is the Ilgar word *maldarradban* ‘(tree) rub boughs together; sound thereof’, which appears to be a verb conjugationally required to contain a vegetable intransitive subject. A second is the Iwaidja verb *malda-jarnarri* ‘writhing snake track, writhe leaving track in grass’, which was exemplified in (16). This looks like a verb with a conjugationally specified vegetable prefix *ma-*, but since it does not occur with any other prefix we cannot eliminate the possibility that it is (at least synchronically) simply an unin-
flecting nominal word that happens to begin with ma-. A third example is the Iwaidja word angmarranguldin ‘(place, time, wind, or weather) hold special memories, invoke special feelings’, which appears to contain a conjugationally specified neuter prefix.\(^\text{14}\) Again, the absence of any other form with which the root recombines means we cannot eliminate the alternative analysis that it is simply an uninflecting nominal word (possibly deverbal in origin) which happens to begin with the sequence ang-.\(^\text{15}\)

A theoretically possible test, which would clinch the prefixal status of ma- and ang- in such cases is to see whether they are capable of taking the relevant future form (e.g. angmanamarranguldin). For Ilgar, unfortunately, it is too late to gather new data on this, and for Iwaidja we have not succeeded in confirming the availability of future forms with these verbs, but it is too early to say whether this is a categorical impossibility or simply reflects our failure so far to set up an appropriate context. For the moment, then, we need to express some reservations about whether there is any deponent intransitive subject agreement.

5. Conclusion; Pseudo-Arguments and the Typology of Deponency

As indicated on the Deponency Project data-base, pseudo-arguments of the type discussed here can clearly be fitted into a typology of extended deponency: the formal subsystem involved is that of verbal agreement affixes, the expected function of the affixal material is the encoding of subject and/or object arguments of the verb, while its actual function is either to add some derivational

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\(^\text{14}\) Although this verb is often translated into English using expressions like ‘I remember’, the Iwaidja structure contains no overt expression—either in the verbal agreement system, or in a free pronoun—corresponding to the ‘rememberer’. Consider the following two examples given to me by Joy Williams (in February 2006) to illustrate its use: ardaka angmarranguldin maldun arardan [lit. ‘hey, ang-marranguldin, the wind has come up’] which she translated freely as ‘the wind changed and it makes me remember’, and ardaka angmarranguldin jumung, ngabi jawirna [lit. ‘hey, angmarranguldin to her, my friend’], which she translated as ‘I remember my friend, when she was here with me’. These examples suggest that angmarranguldin is best translated as ‘(something about the current environment or atmosphere) evoke memories’, with the identity of the rememberer being filled in pragmatically (and normally interpreted as first person).

\(^\text{15}\) In this and other examples there are various phonotactic and other phonological characteristics which point to the verbal analysis, including the fact that the post-ma or post-ang element begins with one of a circumscribed set of phonemes which may begin bound roots, that most end with a nasal (e.g. -n) characteristic of inflected verbs, and that stress is appropriately placed (e.g. primary stress on the putative root-initial in angmarranguldin). However, since these would all also be true of deverbal nouns they do not constitute decisive evidence.
meaning to the verb, or merely to function as a sort of conjugational marker required by some verbs.

5.1. Review of the cline from regular argument coding to deponent argument agreement

As we have seen, the forms surveyed in this paper may, with some verbs, mark regular argument functions. The regular argument agreement functions of the vegetable and neuter prefixes remain clearly productive in Mawng, which still has a fully-functioning five-gender system. In Iwaidja and Ilgar, by contrast, there are just a few verbs for which it is possible to contrast the use of the vegetable and/or neuter prefixes with prefixes indicating other genders (masculine and feminine in Ilgar, common in Iwaidja). These prefixes simply reflect properties of the relevant argument, e.g. that it is a plant or tree for the vegetable class, or is a place, water, or place-linked cultural phenomenon in the case of the neuter (§2.3). For this small number of verbs it is possible to analyse these prefixes as archaic residues of a once-productive five-gender system.

With other verbs one can still identify a basic agreement function, but with one of two types of deviation. First (§2.4), there may be some semantic specialization, attributable to semantic coercion (such as metaphor) arising from properties of the gender-specified argument—for example, taking ‘grasp’ in the metaphorical sense familiar from English ‘grasp an idea’ when it has a neuter object. Second (§2.5), there may be every appearance, from the semantics of the verb, its argument, and of the gender involved, that the affix represents a genuine argument, but the absence of any structural contrast with another gender value combined with the same verb makes this impossible to prove. Though I take both these deviations to fall within the ‘regular range’ of agreement phenomena as they occur cross-linguistically, they sow the seeds for the particular pathway that led to the development of deponent argument agreement.

The further detachment of these affixes from agreement functions, in the case of other verbs, appears to have been promoted by two developments.

Firstly, a suite of subtle lexical shifts appears to have favoured a more holophrastic interpretation of the combination of verb stem plus agreement affix. These semantic shifts would originally have been analysable as coercion of the verb stem’s meaning to accommodate the semantic modifications necessitated by the involvement of arguments stereotypically associated with particular genders—a semantic shift rather similar to that found with certain types of noun-incorporation (and, significantly, primarily associated with arguments in absolutive roles). We can infer from the high frequency of such phrasal argument-gender + verb combinations in Mawng, which still has a
productive five-gender system, that this development was not contingent on the simplification or loss of the gender system, though it is not outrageous to suggest that the larger the number of verbs for which such phrasal interpretations became normal the less ‘agreement-like’ the functioning of these affixes would have become.

The second development, then, is one we can observe in Ilgar and Iwaidja: the system of gender agreement was weakened and (in Iwaidja) almost lost entirely, with different genders winning out in the two languages: masculine and feminine in Ilgar, and ‘miscellaneous’ in Iwaidja. This decline of agreement occurred throughout the system: gender agreement in demonstratives (productive and normal in Mawng) has been lost in both Ilgar and Iwaidja; gender agreement in adjectives barely hangs on in Ilgar (now restricted to masculine vs feminine) and disappears completely in Iwaidja, and gender agreement on verbs becomes restricted in both Ilgar and Iwaidja. Once the vegetable and neuter argument affixes on verbs were no longer embedded in an integrated system of gender agreement functioning both within NPs and between NP arguments and verbs, one option would have been to jettison them entirely (as happened—with a couple of exceptions—with the masculine and feminine in Iwaidja, and across the board with the miscellaneous in Ilgar), so that they simply vanished from the verbal morphology. But the vegetable and neuter affixes were rehired rather than fired—or at least were handed a radically revised job description, in the form of the derivational and conjugational functions outlined in sections 3 and 4.

It is interesting to ask how far our treatment would be different if the argument-like uses described in section 2 were to vanish from these languages—not an implausible outcome, given the small number of verbs involved in these more argument-like uses. We could no longer say that they ever have an argument-coding function, and in this sense their ‘expected function’ would no longer be that of encoding arguments at all. However, it would still be the case that they occur in the argument slots of the subject/object paradigms of these languages, and exhibit positional and formal features in common with other argument-coding affixes. In that sense they would still be a type of deponent agreement, though a less clear case. Should the languages then undergo a further formal or positional disassociation between the (originally) vegetable and neuter prefixes and the affixes coding other person and number values—something which would not be outrageous, given that different morpheme orderings are involved with speech act participants—there would then no longer be any reason to consider them part of the agreement system at all, and they would simply become discontinuous elements of the verb stem, with a derivational or conjugational function.
5.2. Other languages with comparable phenomena

The Iwaidjan languages are not alone in attesting deponent agreement.

To begin with their immediate region, a very similar phenomenon is found in another non-Pama-Nyungan language, Gaagudju (Harvey 2002: 339–49), spoken just to the south of the Iwaidjan languages though only distantly related to them. Gaagudju has a very similar phenomenon which Harvey labels ‘lexicalised cross-reference patterns’, by which particular verbs have gender-specific direct object prefixes. In some cases it is possible to motivate the choice by cognate-object or stereotypical body-part nouns which may combine with the verb, e.g. the vegetable gender mabalaabala ‘corroboree, song’ in the case of the verb barlabu which obligatorily takes a vegetable object, and the vegetable-gender magaarnamu ‘throat’ with the verbs bagarra ‘choke’ and its synonym molgarra, both of which have deponent vegetable-gender objects. But in other cases no such nominal can be found. Examples of other verbs with deponent vegetable-gender prefixes are barlabu ‘sing’ (deponent vegetable object prefix), woreenjngu ‘whistle’ and barnarrega ‘slide, slip’. Deponent neuter object prefixes are found with balabu ‘talk’, galamarrwa ‘be jealous’, gardaba ‘look for’ (deponent neuter object prefix), gabanjma ‘go first’, gabalarbaru ‘shine (of sun and moon), gardamala ‘rub oneself’, djarrobarroma ‘smoke’ and mawaala ‘breed, give birth to, lay’. Many of these verbs can then add an indirect object clitic to index the person who is the goal of communication. There are also three intransitive verbs with lexically specified gender: gardawidji ‘break (intr.)’ (neuter), gabarrnggi ‘become daylight’ (neuter) and marlammagi ‘become night’ (vegetable); Harvey points out that the latter two are typically subjectless verbs cross-linguistically.

Further afield, a wide range of other languages appear to exhibit similar phenomena. A full typological survey would be rewarding, but for the moment I just mention a few examples to illustrate the geographical spread of deponent argument agreement. Beginning with Northern Asia, the Yeniseian language Ket (Vajda 2001, 2003, MS) employs fixed forms in subject/object agreement positions as a component of stem creation, though the phenomenon in Ket is rendered more complex by the interaction of what I have been calling deponent argument agreement with the large array of different argument-agreement positions (probably originally reflecting a large set of distinct argument arrays associated with different thematic role sets). Moving to North America, rather similar phenomena are found in a number

16 Harvey employs a Roman numbering system to identify genders, but the semantic content is essentially similar to that I have been using for Iwaidja and Ilgar: his III = vegetable, and his IV = neuter.
of Athabaskan languages,\textsuperscript{17} e.g. Tolowa Athabaskan (Givón and Bommelyn 2000), and may in some cases be a diachronic source for the ‘discontinuous stems’ for which Athabaskan languages are notorious.

In Africa, Ewe employs a ‘redundant object’ marker with some verbs—“Redundant” because unlike other objects it has not been possible to establish that it operates as a complement in clause structure; “Object” because in all respects it is phonologically identical with the third person singular object of the pronoun’ (Ansre 1966: 71).

And in the Papuan language Nimboran (Anceaux 1965: 186, 202, 218; see also Inkelas (1993) and Baerman (2005)) there is ‘spurious masculine object marking’, tangled up with certain forms of the directional-locational suffixes, with a number of verbs, including ‘dream’, ‘bring’, and the iterative forms of ‘hear’ and ‘laugh’ (interestingly, several of these involve €-roots). This ‘spurious masculine object marking’ is a further specific case of the ‘pseudo-argument agreement’ discussed in the present paper.

The extended deponency website refers to a number of other languages with the phenomenon: these include Amele, Basque, Belhare, Cree, Kiowa, and Tiwi; Takelma (Sapir 1922) could be added. The lack of terminological integration across descriptive traditions has impeded recognition of parallel phenomena cross-linguistically, and it is likely that deponent argument agreement is much commoner than we thought.

In closing, it is worth mentioning three other related phenomena and the sometimes tricky issue of how to delineate them from pseudo-argument agreement.

To begin with, there are obvious parallels with dummy subjects and so-called expletive objects in such familiar English examples as it is raining, beat it! and, in Australian English, he carked it (= he died). The most obvious difference, of course, is that here the phenomenon is syntactic rather than morphological, but aside from this there are many parallels, in particular the lack of any referential or anaphoric potential for the it pronoun (*Beat what? *He carked what?).

Secondly, there are even closer similarities to expletive-style feminine object clitics in languages like Italian, which again have no referential or anaphorical possibilities. These always co-occur with the reflexive clitic se, and form a tight semantic grouping referring to rather negative emotions or behaviours. Illustrative examples are rider-se-la [laugh-REFL-3SG.F.OBJ] ‘be secretly happy at someone else’s misfortune, feel Schadenfreude’, prender-sela ‘take offence’ (homophonous with the compositional interpretation

\textsuperscript{17} It has sometimes been proposed, not implausibly, that Athabaskan languages (more specifically, the Na-Dene family) are related to Yeniseian at some deep level (see e.g. Vajda 2005). This is irrelevant to the present argument.
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'take it [fem.] for him/herself'), cavarsela 'get off/out of a situation, rid oneself (of something)'. Some examples involve conjunction of two such verbs—e.g. se la suona e se la canta [REFL 3F.OBJ sounds and REFL 3F.OBJ sings] '(s)he makes up his/her own song (without reference to reality)’—and in at least one there is an object complement which agrees in gender with the expletive object: se la vede brutta [REFL 3F.OBJ sees ugly(F)] ' (s)he is in a dangerous situation’. Apart from the fact that we are dealing here with an object clitic rather than an affix, the differences between this and the types of deponent argument agreement described in the body of this paper are minimal, and suggest it may be profitable to widen the definition so that it does not necessarily involve strictly bound morphology.

Finally, and as briefly mentioned in section 5.1, there are clear analogies between pseudo-argument agreement and certain types of lexicalized incorporation. If we pass from Iwaidja and Ilgar to the polysynthetic Gunwinyguan languages a couple of hundred kilometres to the south, many verbs with deponent absolute agreement are rendered with incorporated objects of a broadly generic kind, as in Bininj Gun-wok (Evans 2003) where verbs like bolk-nan [place-see] ‘look at country’, dulk-di [tree-stand] ‘there be a tree’ and bo-ngun [liquid-eat] ‘drink’ are the translation equivalents of Iwaidja ang...aya [3SG.N.OBJ...see], Ilgar ma...ldi [3SG.V.S...stand] and Iwaidja and Garig18 ang...lda [3SG.N.OBJ...eat] respectively. Apart from the fact that we are dealing in the one case with pronominal gender agreement, and in the other with noun incorporation,19 the main difference is the size and semantics of the choice-set: with gender in the Iwaidja family, we are dealing with a five-way contrast, while with incorporated nouns in Bininj Gun-wok there is a choice of some fifty-seven generic terms (Evans 2003: 333). This makes the semantic contribution of the deponent argument prefixes rather less precise than is the case with incorporated nominals, although the gender system gets some semantic mileage from the existence of polysemically linked foci (e.g. for the neuter the three foci of place, water, and place-based cultural phenomena such as ideas and ceremonies). In both cases, though, we have the gradual semantic melding of the contributions of the predicate-denoting element (the stem) and the morphological means of denoting one of the arguments (either by incorporated nominal, or by gender agreement prefix).

Unlike some other types of deponency, which still remain puzzling in terms of their motivation and the evolutionary pathways that engender them,

18 Ilgar has a different form for this verb, one of the few dialectal differences between Ilgar and Garig.
19 Though many commentators have pointed out the functional parallels between incorporated nouns and pronominal affixes, including Mithun (1984), Baker (1995), and Evans (1997).
deponent argument agreement is reasonably comprehensible. It originates
from the fact that—in contradistinction to our idealized logic-based models
in which the ontology of predicates and their arguments are completely
orthogonal—there is often a correlation in the real world between event-
types and the entities that are stereotypically involved in them. From this it is
not a long step to the use of entity-denoting expressions (including bound
agreement morphology) as shorthand for semantically modifying the expres-
sions for the events themselves, and perhaps eventually being absorbed into
a discontinuous event-denoting expression in which their original role in
agreeing with particular arguments is no longer discernible.

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