

## RECIPROCAL AND DEPATIENTIVES IN TO'ABA'ITA

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### 1. INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

It is well known that there is an affinity between reflexives and reciprocals: in many languages the constructions that serve these two functions are historically related and may even be identical. Of the two functions, it is the reflexive one that has received considerably more attention in cross-linguistic, typological studies. When reciprocals are discussed in such works, it is usually in the context of reflexives (see, for example, Geniušienė 1987 and Kemmer 1988 and references therein). Reflexives are usually taken as primary, and reciprocals as secondary; the latter develop from the former, not vice versa. There is another sense in which the reflexive function is sometimes considered primary over the reciprocal function: reflexives are or are assumed to be the source of considerably more functional extensions than are reciprocals.

One of the purposes of the present study is to point out another aspect of the affinity between reflexives and reciprocals, and in so doing contradict the view that certain functions necessarily derive from the reflexive rather than the reciprocal function.<sup>2</sup> I will pay particular attention to the way in which the functional extension under discussion is motivated by the source, in this case the reciprocal, function.

The other main purpose of this study is an investigation of the nature of the function of the construction in question: is its function primarily syntactic, or is it primarily semantic/pragmatic, the syntactic properties being merely a reflection of the semantics/pragmatics? I will argue for the latter view.

The data for this study come from To'aba'ita, an Austronesian language spoken on Malaita Island in the south-east Solomon Islands.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>It is with great pleasure that I dedicate this paper to George Grace. It was George, who (with Andrew Pawley) introduced me to Oceanic linguistics by inviting me (then a beginning doctoral student) to do fieldwork in Papua New Guinea. George was also my dissertation supervisor, and I could not have wished for a better one. His work both in Oceanic and in general linguistics has been a great inspiration to me.

I am grateful to Robert Blust for comments on an earlier version of this paper, in particular for those concerning the Proto Oceanic reciprocal prefix(es).

<sup>2</sup>It is, of course, possible that those functions have neither a reflexive nor a reciprocal but some other source.

<sup>3</sup>I am grateful to Lawrence Foanaota and Ruel Riianoa, my principal To'aba'ita consultants, for the data.

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## 2. RECIPROCAL

To'aba'ita has several strategies to encode reciprocal situations. One of these consists in adding the prefix *kwai-* and, under some conditions, the suffix *-i* to the verb. The exact conditions governing the use of the suffix are not relevant here; suffice it to say that the suffix is not used if its presence would result in a new stress pattern in the verb. I will refer to this construction as the '*kwai* construction'; both the prefix and the suffix will be glossed 'R'.<sup>4</sup> The *kwai* construction is exemplified in (1):

- (1) *Roo wela kero kwai-kwa'e-i.*  
 two child they.DU R-hit-R  
 The two children hit each other.

Clauses that contain the *kwai* construction are syntactically intransitive: there is no direct object. Importantly for our present purposes, the *kwai* construction has other functions besides encoding reciprocal situations; one of these will be discussed in detail later.

Another way to encode reciprocal situations is by means of an independent personal pronoun in object position, coreferential with the subject. This 'simple pronominal construction' is exemplified in (2):

- (2) *Keero'a keko thatham keero'a...*  
 they.DU they.DU like them.DU  
 They liked each other...

The same construction is also used to encode reflexive situations; thus, out of context, (2) could also mean 'They liked themselves'. Furthermore, in (2) the object pronoun need not be bound by the subject: 'They<sub>i</sub> liked them<sub>j</sub> ...'.

Another alternative is to use an independent personal pronoun in object position as above, followed by the reciprocal marker *kwailiu*. *Kwailiu* consists of the prefix *kwai-* and *liu*, which otherwise means 'walk, take a walk, walk about'. The pronoun-plus-*kwailiu* construction is exemplified in (3):

- (3) *Roo wela kera fa'ama'u keero'a kwailiu.*  
 two child they frighten them.DU RECIP  
 The two children frightened each other.

*Kwailiu* has some other functions besides marking reciprocity. It is used with the meanings of 'back and forth' (see (4)), 'all over the place' (5), and 'respective(ly)' (6):

- (4) *'Osi liiliu kwailiu.*  
 you.SG.NEG walk.RED back and forth  
 Stop walking back and forth! / Stop hanging around!
- (5) *'Osi 'uu kwailiu 'ana tafu 'ena.*  
 you.SG.NEG throw all.over.the place with rubbish that  
 Stop throwing the rubbish all over the place!

<sup>4</sup>The other abbreviations used in glossing the examples are: ART – article, ATTR – attributive, CLASS – classifier, CONTR – contrastive, DU – dual, I – inclusive, INT – intensifier, NEG – negative, NOM – nominaliser, PL – plural, RECIP – reciprocal, RED – reduplication, REL – relative-clause marker, SG – singular. Note that the plural forms of the subject markers are often used instead of the expected dual ones. The subject markers also encode tense or sequentiality; these are not indicated here.

- (6) *Kera oli kwai'liu.*

they return respectively

They went back to their places (each person going back to his/her own place).

There is one more way in which reciprocal situations can be encoded, and that is by means of separate clauses:

- (7) *Thaari 'eri ka thatham-i-a tha wela 'eri ma wela 'eri*  
 girl that she like-him ART child that and child that

*mena ka thatham-i-a la'u bo'o thaari 'eri.*

CONTR he like-her also INT girl that

The girl liked the boy (lit. child), and the boy, too, liked the girl.

Sentence (7) is taken from a text. The situation encoded in (7) is encoded twice more in subsequent sentences, where two of the other reciprocal strategies previously demonstrated are employed:

- (8)=(2) *Keero'a keko thatham-i keero'a...*  
 they.DU they.DU like them.DU  
 They liked each other...

- (9) *Keko thatham-i keero'a kwai'liu.*  
 they.DU like them.DU RECIP  
 They liked each other.

In the discussion that follows, I will disregard encoding of reciprocal situations by means of separate clauses and will concentrate on the other three strategies.

The three monoclausal reciprocal constructions are different from each other in terms of their weight, where 'weight' refers both to the number of elements in the construction and to the lexical status of the elements. The more elements in a construction, the heavier the construction; and lexically independent elements are heavier than affixes. (The concept of 'weight' subsumes what Haiman 1983 refers to as 'linguistic separateness', in this case the distinction between bound morphemes and separate words: see also Kemmer 1988 for the notion of 'weight'.) Thus the *kwai* construction is the lightest: although it uses two elements, the two elements form one ambifix, and furthermore one of them (the suffix *-i*) is not always present. The construction that uses pronouns in object position and the reciprocal marker *kwai'liu* is the heaviest: it uses two elements, both of which are separate lexemes. The construction with pronouns in object position but without *kwai'liu* is of medium weight: it uses only one element, which, unlike *kwai-i...* (*-i*), is a separate lexeme.

As examples (8) and (9) demonstrate, one and the same reciprocal situation can be encoded in different ways. In (10a-c) below, all three strategies are used to encode the same basic kind of situation (two participants standing in the same relation to each other):<sup>5</sup>

- (10) a. *Roo wela kera 'ui keero'a kwai'liu 'ana fau.*  
 two child they pelt them.DU RECIP with stone  
 b. *Roo wela kera 'ui keero'a 'ana fau.*

<sup>5</sup>For the notion of reciprocal (and other kinds of) situations as consisting of relations see Lichtenberk (1985).

c. *Roo wela kera kwai-'ui-i 'ana fau.*

R-pelt-R

The two children threw stones at each other.

To say that all three strategies may be used to encode one and the same situation or the same basic kind of situation is not to say that they are fully synonymous and freely interchangeable; in fact they are not. The pronoun-plus-*kwailiu* construction has several uses. One of its functions is to make it explicit that the relations that make up a reciprocal situation are sequential rather than simultaneous (see examples (11) and (13) below). (Recall that *kwailiu* is also used to mean 'back and forth', which meaning is highly consistent with sequentiality of the relations in a reciprocal situation.) This sequential-marking function is applicable in (10a) above, but not in (9). The pronoun-plus-*kwailiu* construction is also used to emphasise the reciprocity of the relations in a situation; thus in (9) it emphasises that the liking was mutual. Notice that in the text, sentence (9) is the last in a sequence of three encodings of the situation. The multiple mentions, the use of *la'u* 'also' and the intensifier *bo'o* in the first mention (example (7)), and the use of *kwailiu* in the last mention (example (9)) all serve to emphasise the reciprocal nature of the situation. The pronoun-plus-*kwailiu* construction also serves to disambiguate reciprocals from reflexives and, in the case of third-person participants, from disjoint reference; as pointed out above, out of context, sentence (2) is three-way ambiguous. Finally, the construction is also used in cases where the *kwai* construction is not available (see example (18) below).

The *kwai* construction is normally used when the relations that make up a reciprocal situation are simultaneous or when their temporal configuration is irrelevant. This construction presents reciprocal situations as undifferentiated wholes, de-emphasising the existence of two (or more) separate relations within them and the separateness of the core participants. The core participants are conceptualised as members of the same set; they are encoded only once, in subject position (the construction is syntactically intransitive). The following examples serve to contrast the pronoun-plus-*kwailiu* and the *kwai* constructions. In (11), the preferred interpretation is sequential: first A helped B, and then B helped A:

(11) *Kera 'adomi keero'a kwailiu.*

they help them.DU RECIP

They helped each other.

On the other hand, the normal interpretation of (12) is that the activities are more-or-less simultaneous, overlapping; in fact the sentence encodes a joint activity:

(12) *Kulu kwai-'adomi 'ana na'are-laa.*

we.I R-help with cook-NOM

Let's do the cooking together. (Let's help each other with the cooking.)

In (12) it is not the case that both/all the persons will necessarily cook the same food at the same time and for the same period of time, rather that they will cooperate in preparing a meal: one may cook the rice, another may make the tea, etc. In fact, *kwai-'adomi* is normally used to mean 'cooperate', that is, 'help each other at (more or less) the same time'.

Compare also the next two examples. In the first one, the preferred interpretation is sequential:

- (13) *Roo wane kero thaungi keero'a kwailiu.*  
 two man they.DU hit them.DU RECIP  
 The two men hit each other. (First A hit B, then B hit A.)

On the other hand, in (14) the likely sequentiality of the individual events of punching is de-emphasised:

- (14) *Roo wane kero kwai-kumu-i.*  
 two man they.DU R-punch-R  
 The two men fought, exchanged blows.

Although, in principle at least, it is possible for the two men to have (always) punched each other simultaneously, a more natural interpretation of (14) is that there was a series of blows from both sides, the blows from the two directions interspersed with each other. The precise temporal configuration of the events is irrelevant; the situation is presented as an undifferentiated whole.

The third construction, with a personal pronoun but without *kwailiu*, lies in its use between the other two. Like the pronoun-plus-*kwailiu* strategy, the simple pronominal construction foregrounds the fact that there are two (or more) participants that play pairs of roles that stand in a mirror-image relation to each other, such as Agent and Patient. Second, like the pronoun-plus-*kwailiu* construction, the simple pronominal construction is used where the *kwai* construction is not available (see examples (17) and (19) below). On the other hand, like the *kwai* construction the simple pronominal construction is not used where sequentiality of the relations within a reciprocal situation is to be expressed or highlighted. All other things being equal (barring severe ambiguity and lexically-determined unavailability), it is the simple pronominal construction or the *kwai* construction that is used to encode reciprocal situations in which the relations are necessarily reciprocal, as in (15) and (16), taken from a text and referring to the same situation:

- (15) ...*keki toda keero'a...*  
 they meet them.DU  
 ...they will meet ...  
 (16) ...*keki kwai-toda-i...*  
 they R -meet-R  
 ...they will meet ...

There are two other factors affecting the choice of a reciprocal construction, both of them having to do with the unavailability of the *kwai* construction. The *kwai* construction cannot be used when the source (i.e. non-reciprocal) verb requires an oblique rather than a direct object. In that case, one of the two pronominal strategies is required, with the pronoun as the object of the preposition:

- (17) *Roo kini kera mui uri keero'a.*  
 two woman they smile at them.DU  
 The two women smiled at each other.

Finally, there are also lexical restrictions on the use of the *kwai* strategy. This construction is not available with all the verbs that would otherwise be eligible. For example:

- (18) *Kera {lukata'i keero'a kwailiu/\*kwai-lukata'i.}*  
 they leave.for good them.DU RECIP R-leave.for good  
 They left each other for good. (Used to mean, they got divorced.)

- (19) *Roo wane kero* {*labata'i keero'a/\*kwai-labata'i.*}  
 two man they.DU harm them.DU R-harm  
 The two men harm each other.

The forms *kwai-lukata'i* and *kwai-labata'i* are possible, but they are not normally used to encode reciprocal situations. Other uses of the *kwai* construction, one of them in particular, will be discussed in section 3.

In a cross-linguistic investigation of the encoding of reciprocal (and other types of) situations, Kemmer (1988) introduces the notion of 'relative elaboration of events' that make up reciprocal (and other) situations. The degree of relative elaboration of events is a consequence of two factors: what Kemmer calls 'the distinguishability of participants' and 'the distinguishability of events'. The higher the distinguishability of the participants and/or the events, the higher the degree of elaboration. The notion of 'the distinguishability of participants' is related to what Langacker refers to as '(non-) distinctness of arguments' (Langacker and Munro 1975; Langacker 1976; see also section 4 below) and to what Hopper and Thompson (1980) refer to (following Timberlake 1975) as 'individuation of participants'. (For an application of the notion of 'individuation of participants' to reciprocal and some other types of situations see Lichtenberk 1985.) Haiman (1983) speaks of 'conceptual independence', which subsumes both distinguishability of participants and distinguishability of events. I will use the following terms to refer to these two concepts: 'the (degree of) distinctness of participants' and 'the (degree of) distinctness of relations'. Thus in a reciprocal situation, such as that encoded in 'John and Bill hit each other', the participants are less distinct from each other than they are in a simple transitive situation, such as that encoded in 'John hit Bill'. In the transitive situation, the two participants play different roles (Agent and Patient, respectively), whereas in the reciprocal situation they play identical pairs of roles (Agent-Patient). The notion of 'degree of distinctness of participants' is applicable even within reciprocal situations themselves. Arguably, the two participants in 'The two pieces of paper stuck together' (which in some languages would be encoded by means of a reciprocal construction) are less distinct from each other than the two participants in 'John and Bill hit each other'. As far as the degree of distinctness of relations is concerned, two like relations, such as those in 'John and Bill hit each other', are less distinct from each other than two unlike relations, such as those in 'John kicked Bill, and (then) Bill punched John'. In fact, it is because the relations in a reciprocal situation can be considered to be identical (apart from their directionality) that they can be encoded jointly by means of a single verbal form. The notion of 'degree of distinctness of relations' also is applicable within reciprocals. The relations that make up a reciprocal situation are less distinct from each other if they are simultaneous than if they were sequential. Furthermore, even relations that are not simultaneous can sometimes be conceptualised as non-distinct, with the overall situation treated as an undifferentiated whole. For example, in a situation describable by 'They conversed' (which in some languages requires a reciprocal construction) the individual events are more likely to be sequential (possibly with some overlap) rather than fully simultaneous; nevertheless, the overall situation is conceptualised as unary. The temporal configuration of the individual events is of no consequence (see also example (14) above). The notions of 'degree of distinctness of participants' and 'degree of distinctness of relations' will be relevant in the discussion of the functional extension of one of the To'aba'ita reciprocal constructions in section 4.

Together, the degree of distinctness of participants and the degree of distinctness of relations determine what, following Kemmer (1988), I will refer to as 'the (degree of) elaboration of

situations'.<sup>6</sup> By 'the degree of elaboration of situations' I mean the degree to which situations are both conceptualised and encoded as being comprised of distinct elements, that is, the participants and the relations among the participants. Any situation can be conceptualised and encoded in more than one way, paying more or less attention to detail, such as the internal structure of the situation. The degree of elaboration of a reciprocal situation is a direct consequence of the degree of distinctness of the relations comprising the situation and the degree of distinctness of the participants involved: the higher the degree of distinctness of the participants and/or the relations, the higher the degree of elaboration of the overall situation.

Following the work of Haiman (1983), Kemmer argues that if a language has more than one construction to encode certain kinds of situations (reciprocals among them) where constructions are of unequal weight, the uses of the constructions are motivated iconically, and she makes the following generalisation: "the extent of surface marking [i.e. the weight – FL] mirrors the conceptual dimension of degree of elaboration of events" (Kemmer 1988:165). With respect to reciprocals, Kemmer (pp.147-148) makes the following claim: in languages with light and heavy reciprocal constructions, "light reciprocal marking is strongly associated with simultaneity, while heavy reciprocal markers are temporally indifferent".

The To'aba'ita reciprocals fit the principle of iconic motivation rather well although there are some complications. All other things being equal, the lightest strategy (the *kwai* construction) is used for low degrees of elaboration: the relations as well as the participants are of a low degree of distinctness (the relations are simultaneous or their temporal configuration is irrelevant to the situation as a whole, and the core participants are treated as members of the same set). All other things being equal, the heaviest strategy (a pronoun in object position plus *kwailiu*) is used for high degrees of elaboration: the relations as well as the participants are distinct (the relations are sequential, and/or the reciprocity of the relations, that is, the existence of two relations, is made prominent, and so is the existence of the two participants each playing a pair of roles vis-a-vis each other). The medium-heavy strategy (an object pronoun alone, without *kwailiu*) is used for intermediate degrees of elaboration: the relations are not distinct but the participants are.

According to Kemmer, light reciprocal marking is associated with simultaneity while heavy reciprocal marking is temporally indifferent. However, in To'aba'ita, it is the two lightest strategies that are unmarked in terms of the temporal configurations of the constituent relations, while the heaviest strategy is marked, being associated with sequentiality. (The association of the heaviest strategy with sequentiality is not absolute because the construction has other functions: emphasis, disambiguation, and cases where the *kwai* construction is not available.) It remains to be seen whether Kemmer's strong generalisation can be upheld with To'aba'ita as an exception or whether the generalisation needs to be weakened to a negative one: no language with more than one reciprocal strategy of unequal weight consistently uses the heavier construction to encode simultaneity and the lighter construction to encode sequentiality.

The pronoun-plus-*kwailiu* strategy is more recent than the *kwai* strategy: it is found only in relatively close relatives of To'aba'ita, whereas the *kwai* construction is reconstructible at least as far back as Proto Oceanic (see section 4). It is conceivable that as the *kwai* construction began to acquire other functions (see section 3), a new reciprocal-marking strategy developed (a process called 'layering' by Hopper 1988). Although relevant historical evidence is lacking, it is likely that the

<sup>6</sup>Kemmer uses the term 'relative elaboration of events', but it is the elaboration of whole situations rather than that of the events internal to situations that is relevant here.

reciprocal function of *kwailiu* is an extension from the meaning 'back and forth' (see example (4) above), in which case the initial association of *kwailiu* with sequentiality would have been only natural.

### 3. DEPATIENTIVES

Besides encoding reciprocal situations, the *kwai* construction is used with other functions. One of these is the formation of what, following Kemmer (1988), one may refer to as the 'middle voice'. The middle-voice function is or at least appears to be lexically rather restricted, and at present no generalisations are possible. Following are a few examples of middle-voice verbs: *kwai-thathai* 'be ready (to do something)', cf. *thathai* 'make something ready'; *kwai-lukata'i* 'be close to death', cf. *lukata'i* 'leave somebody for good'; *kwai-kulufa'i* 'be infirm, walk with difficulty (of old people)', also 'be overcast (of weather)', cf. *kulufa'i* 'hang (vtr.)'; *kwai-liu* 'walk all over the place', also used as a reciprocal marker, and to mean 'back and forth', '(do something) all over the place', and 'respective(ly)', cf. *liu* 'walk, take a walk, walk about'. Kemmer suggests that cases where reciprocals give rise to the middle are not common (most frequently it is reflexives that give rise to the middle); To'aba'ita appears to be one such language.

The *kwai* construction has another non-reciprocal function, and it is this function I will focus on in the remainder of this paper. I will refer to this use of the *kwai* construction as 'depatientive'. In the depatientive function, the construction takes as its input a transitive verb, and the output is a syntactically intransitive verb. The subject of the derived verb corresponds to the subject of the source verb, but there is no direct object corresponding to the direct object of the source verb. For example:

- (20) *Oomea 'eri 'e kwai-fa'ama'u-i 'asiana'a.*  
 enemy that he R-frighten-R very  
 The enemy is very frightening.

Compare:

- (21) *'Osi faafa'ama'u-a wela 'ena.*  
 you.SG.NEG frighten.RED-him child that  
 Stop frightening the child!

(*Fa'ama'u* 'frighten' consists of *ma'u* 'be frightened' and the causative prefix *fa'a-* (reduplicated in (21).)

*Kwai-fa'ama'u-i* is used depatientively, but not reciprocally:

- (22) *Roo wela kera {fa'ama'u keero'a kwailiu/\*kwai-fa'ama'u-i.}*  
 two child they frighten them.DU RECIP R-frighten-R  
 The two children frighten each other.

As mentioned in section 2, there is a form *kwai-labata'i*, which is not normally used with a reciprocal function; instead, it is used depatientively:

- (23) *Roo wane kero kwai-labata'i.*  
 two man they.DU R-harm  
 The two men harm (people) (e.g. by stealing from them or by performing harmful magic on them).  
 Not: \*The two men harm each other. (See example (19).)

Also:

- (24) *si doo ki sui bana n-e kwai-labata'i.*  
 CLASS thing PL all REL-it R-harm  
 all the harmful things, all the things that harm

Compare:

- (25) *'Aburu na'i labata'i koro 'asiana'a.*  
 giant this harm us.I.DU very  
 The giant harms us greatly.

Further examples of the depatientive use of the *kwai* construction:

- (26) *Wane 'e kwai-ilamata'i.*  
 man he R-hate  
 The man hates people/everybody/everything. / The man is a hater.

Compare:

- (27) *Wane na'i 'e ilamata'i nau.*  
 man this he hate me  
 This man hates me.
- (28) *wane ni kwai-fa'amaruki*  
 man ATTR R-save/revive  
 Saviour ('man' who saves people/lives)

Compare:

- (29) *...ka fa'amaruki nia bia roo wela nia ki.*  
 it save/revive her and two child her PL  
 ...and it saved her and her two children.

Notice that while in the reciprocal construction the subject cannot be (semantically) singular (it takes at least two participants to act on each other), in the depatientive construction there is no prohibition against singular subjects.

Clauses with the depatientive construction are syntactically intransitive; there is no direct object. At the same time, such clauses are transitive semantically. Although no patient/direct object is expressed, there is always one implied. The implied patient is general, non-specific; the event encoded by the verb is directed not at a specific participant but at any and all of a certain kind.

One might want to suggest that in the depatientive function the *kwai* construction functions as an intransitiviser. It is true that the construction is used with transitive sources and that the output is intransitive, but this can hardly be its (real) function. Grammars exist to enable their users to encode meanings, not to instantiate formal properties and relations. To a significant degree, the properties of grammars are motivated by semantic and/or pragmatic factors. With certain (originally) transitive verbs, if the patient is of low salience, it is backgrounded, made non-prominent through not being encoded at all. The formally intransitive nature of clauses with the depatientive construction is a consequence of the semantics/pragmatics of the situations encoded.

## 4. THE RECIPROCAL-DEPATIENTIVE CONNECTION

What I call the 'depatientive' construction is far from rare in the languages of the world. For example, Geniušienė (1987) mentions parallel constructions as existing in a number of geographically as well as genetically diverse languages. She terms such verbs 'absolute reflexive verbs'. Geniušienė's study takes as its point of departure (true) reflexives and then investigates the extension of (originally) reflexive markers into other functional domains, reciprocal and absolute-reflexive/depatientive among them. In several places in her study, Geniušienė mentions the coexistence of the reciprocal and the depatientive functions, both marked in the same way. Where the same construction is (or used to be) also used to mark reflexive situations, Geniušienė assumes that the reciprocal and the depatientive functions are independent extensions (directly or indirectly) from the reflexive function. She does mention that in (some) Turkic languages one and the same marker is used to encode reciprocal and depatientive situations, plus some others, but not reflexive situations. She assumes that the depatientive function is an extension from the reciprocal function.

The situation in To'aba'ita is comparable to that in the Turkic languages. The *kwai* construction has a reciprocal and a depatientive function but not a reflexive function, and, as far as one can tell, it did not have a reflexive function when the depatientive function developed (see below). Since it is possible for the reciprocal and the depatientive functions to develop one from the other in the Turkic languages and in To'aba'ita (and its close relatives), it is not impossible for similar developments to have occurred in languages where the same construction also has (or used to have) a reflexive function.

Geniušienė (1987:138) suggests that the reciprocal-depatientive polysemy is "determined by the fact that the meaning and diathesis of ... [the source verbs - FL] ... allows for a change in two ways" from an earlier reflexive source, but she does not say what the relevant factors might be. Without wishing to deny the relevance of verb meanings to functional extensions of grammatical elements, I suggest that what is more important is the similarity between the internal structures of the two types of situation encoded by the construction, as conceptualised by language users. If two types of situation are similar in some relevant respects, it is possible for a construction originally used to encode only one situation type to be extended to encode the other as well.

As far as one can tell from the comparative evidence, the reciprocal-depatientive polysemy of the *kwai* construction is the result of an extension from the reciprocal to the depatientive function. Pawley (1973) has reconstructed a reciprocal prefix *\*paRi-* for Proto Oceanic, and Blust (forthcoming and pers. comm.) has reconstructed *\*paRi-* for Proto Austronesian as a 'prefix of reciprocal or collective action'. Pawley suggests that besides *\*paRi-* a doublet form *\*pai-* is to be reconstructed for Proto Oceanic (see also Ross 1988); on the other hand, Blust argues that the witnesses suggesting Proto Oceanic *\*pai-* are in fact reflexes of *\*paRi-* that have undergone irregular loss of the *R* (grammatical morphemes being prone to sporadic reduction). Whatever the case may be, there is evidence that Proto Oceanic reciprocal marking consisted not only of *\*paRi-/pai-* but, at least in some cases, also of a suffix *\*-i* (Pawley 1973). (For example, Manam has a suffix *-i* used together with the reciprocal prefix *e-* (a reflex of *\*paRi-/pai-*) to encode those reciprocal situations where there is 'transfer of an activity' between the participants (Lichtenberk 1983:211): *e-boabu-i* '(briefly) embrace each other', but *e-boabu* 'clasp each other'.) In the To'aba'ita *kwai* construction, the suffix *-i* reflects the Proto Oceanic suffix *\*-i*. However, the etymology of the prefix *kwai-* is less clear. The prefix exhibits some formal irregularities vis-a-vis the Proto Oceanic form(s): rather than *kwai-*, the expected form is *\*\*fali-* (from *\*paRi-*) or *\*\*fai-* (from *\*pai-*). The same irregular forms are also

found in close relatives of To'aba'ita, for example, Lau, Kwaio and Kwara'ae.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, some slightly more distant relatives of these languages have reflexes both of the *\*paRi-* type and of the *pai-* type, for example, Arosi *hari-* and *hai-* (Fox 1978), and Nggela *vari-*, *vei-* and even *vaivari-* (Fox 1955).<sup>8</sup> Whatever the exact historical development of To'aba'ita *kwai-* may have been, given the fact that Proto Oceanic had a reciprocal construction of the form *\*paRi-/pai-...-i* and that the To'aba'ita reciprocal construction has the (basic) form *kwai-...-i* one can be fairly certain that the To'aba'ita construction does continue the Proto Oceanic construction(s).

There is abundant evidence for positing a reciprocal-marking function for Proto Oceanic *\*paRi-/pai-...-i* but no evidence for assuming a reflexive-marking function. Oceanic cognates of the *kwai* construction with the depatientive function are found in languages closely related to To'aba'ita, such as Kwara'ae (Deck 1934), Kwaio (Keesing 1985) and most likely Lau (Fox 1974), and also in Fijian, a member of a different primary subgroup of Oceanic (Schütz 1985). The reciprocal function of the reflexes of the Proto Oceanic construction(s) is much more widely distributed in the family than the depatientive function; in fact, in every language that has a reflex the construction has a reciprocal function and perhaps some others, but not necessarily a depatientive function. The evidence then points to the following conclusions: the depatientive function is a later, post-Proto-Oceanic development; its presence in different first-order subgroups of Oceanic is due to independent developments; and at the time when the reciprocal-to-depatientive extension took place, the construction(s) did not have a reflexive function. I am not suggesting that the extension necessarily took place in To'aba'ita. The same extension is also found in close relatives of To'aba'ita; interestingly, those languages also use cognates of To'aba'ita *kwailiu* with a reciprocal function. Even though the possibility of independent developments cannot be discounted, it is quite likely that the extension of the *kwai* construction into the depatientive function as well as the extension of *kwailiu* (from 'back and forth') into the reciprocal function took place at a pre-To'aba'ita stage. Here I am interested not in determining when the depatientive extension took place, but in the nature of the extension, in the factors that motivate it, which, one can assume, would not have been appreciably different no matter when the extension took place. Finally, the main thrust of the argument developed in what follows (that the reciprocal-depatientive polysemy is due to similarity between the two types of situation) would not be in any serious sense invalidated if it should turn out that it was the depatientive function that was historically primary: if A is similar to B, then B is similar to A.

The basic factor that motivates the extension from the reciprocal to the depatientive function is the relatively low degree of elaboration of situations due to the low degrees of distinctness of both the relations and of the participants. Crucially, there are similarities between the two situation types with respect to the specifics in which they are of low elaboration. (The notion of 'relative elaboration of situations' is so general that there must presumably be fairly specific similarities between two situation types for a functional extension to take place. A priori it seems unlikely that a functional

<sup>7</sup>There is one further irregularity found in connection with the prefix *kwai-*. The prefix (in To'aba'ita and the other close relatives) has a doublet *wai-*, which is used in reciprocal (and certain other) kinship terms, for example, To'aba'ita *waithaulana* 'people of same sex married to siblings' (e.g. two men married to sisters). *kw* reflects earlier (Proto-Central-North-Malaitan) *w* (Lichtenberk 1988). For whatever reason, the prefix *\*wai-* did not undergo the *w*-to-*kw* change in its kinship function.

<sup>8</sup>The multiple reflexes need not be (fully) synonymous. Thus, according to Fox (1978:184), Arosi "*hai* differs from *hari* in that the former usually shows mutual assisting or conflicting action and *hari* merely combined action, but there are exceptions in both cases".

extension would take place if the specific factors responsible for a low degree of elaboration in two situation types were completely different from each other.)

There are a number of factors relevant to the degree of distinctness of the relations in situations encoded by reciprocals and depatientives. Two relations that are of the same type (two events of kicking) are less distinct from each other than two different relations (one event of kicking and one of feeding). A relation occurring only once is more distinct, more prominent than any of a number of what can be considered to be the same relations occurring simultaneously or in (close) sequence. And, all other things being equal, relations occurring simultaneously or those whose exact temporal configuration vis-a-vis each other is irrelevant also are relatively non-distinct.

As far as participants are concerned, two participants are less distinct from each other if they play identical roles or sets of roles in the relations they are involved in than if their roles were different. Secondly, two participants are relatively non-distinct by virtue of suppression of their ultimate distinctness. This view of relative non-distinctness of participants is based on Langacker's notion of 'non-distinct arguments' (Langacker and Munro 1975; Langacker 1976). In Langacker's framework, if the referent of an underlying argument is not overtly specified, that argument is non-distinct from another, specified argument. One need not subscribe to Langacker's fairly abstract syntactic analysis to be able to adopt his insight concerning non-distinctness; secondly, in my approach, it is better to speak of relative (non-)distinctness of participants rather than arguments. Two participants one or both of which are of low salience in a given situation are less distinct from each other than they would be if both were highly salient.

In reciprocal situations encoded by the *kwai* construction, the participants are of a low degree of distinctness from each other: both (all) the participants play identical pairs roles; in fact, they are conceptualised as members of the same set (they are encoded only once). The relations are identical (apart from their directionality), and temporally they are non-distinct. The overall situation is conceptualised as an undifferentiated whole.

With depatientives, although the two core participants are involved in the relations in different roles, one of the participants is of low salience, which makes the two relatively non-distinct from each other. The relations that make up the situations encoded by the depatientive construction are general, habitual rather than specific; the construction expresses a characteristic relation of the subject participant toward any and all entities of a certain kind ('hater', 'saviour', 'harmer' etc.) Thus in this kind of situation complex, there are multiple relations, which by virtue of the low salience of one of the participants are relatively non-distinct from each other (all events of, for example, 'harming' are on a par, regardless of the exact identity of the participants they are directed at). The depatientive construction encodes general, habitual situations, where the temporal configuration of the internal relations is of no consequence. The relations are temporally non-distinct from each other; the whole situation complex is treated as an undifferentiated whole. It is these specific similarities between the two types of situation that underlie and motivate the rise of the reciprocal-depatientive polysemy.

In the depatientive construction, the focus is on the subject participant. The salience of the other participant is very low; in essence, that participant is part of the background. This is reflected in the structure of the clause: the non-salient participant is not encoded at all; the clause is syntactically intransitive. The depatientive construction is motivated iconically: lack of salience results in lack of overt encoding.

Of course, to say that a reciprocal-depatientive polysemy is natural because it is motivated is not to say that it is necessary. After all, there are many languages in which the two types of situation do not

receive the same, or historically related, marking. Nevertheless, as a growing number of cross-linguistic, typological studies have demonstrated, motivation is an important factor in the shape of the grammars of individual languages, and as such it is a crucial concept for our understanding of grammar. The intransitivising property of the *kwai* construction both in the reciprocal and in the depatientive functions is not an arbitrary formal property; it is a consequence of the use of the construction to encode certain types of situation.

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