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Pilar Valenzuela

Chapman University, valenzuela@chapman.edu

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ARGUMENT ENCODING AND PRAGMATIC MARKING OF THE TRANSITIVE SUBJECT IN SHIWILU (KAWAPANAN)¹

PILAR M. VALENZUELA

CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

Shiwilu (a.k.a. Jebero) is a nearly extinct Kawapanan language from Peruvian Amazonia. The goal of this article is twofold. First, it investigates the obligatory cross-referencing of arguments in the complex Shiwilu verb. This system is predominantly nominative-accusative, with the caveat that main clause object markers coincide with those conveying subject in one type of clause involving nominal predicates, as well as subject and object of dependent clauses.

Second, this article provides a first analysis of the enclitic *=ler*, which may attach to transitive subjects and thus exhibits an ergative-like distribution. Unlike the situation in languages with syntacticized ergative systems, omission of *=ler* does not yield ungrammatical utterances; however, transitive clauses displaying a *=ler*-marked subject NP are not unusual either. It is argued that *=ler* has discriminatory and discourse-pragmatic functions, and is comparable to instances of “optional” or pragmatic marking of the ergative/agentive in other languages.

[KEYWORDS: Shiwilu/Jebero, Kawapanan/Cahuapanan, alignment, optional ergative/agentive marking, pragmatic ergative/agentive marking]

1. Introduction. Shiwilu (a.k.a. Jebero) is one of the two extant members of the little-known Kawapanan family. Most of its speakers live in and around the village of Jeberos (Province of Alto Amazonas, Department of Loreto, Peru), at approximately 5 degrees of south latitude and 76 degrees of west longitude. Unlike its vital sister language Shawi, Shiwilu is on the verge of extinction. According to an informal assessment carried out in 2010

¹ Alternative terminology or orthography referring to the same language (family) includes: Jebero, Xebero, Chebero, Xihuila, and Cahuapanan (Gordon 2005). Additionally, the term Shawi is used to designate Shiwilu’s only extant sister language, which is commonly known as Chayahuita in the literature. The terms Shiwilu and Shawi have been adopted here since they are preferred by native speakers.

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with the help of Mr. Meneleo Careajano (my main language consultant), there may be about 30 remaining fluent speakers, all elderly adults and competent in the regional dialect of Spanish. None of those residing in Jeberos has completed elementary school. There is also a group of passive speakers in their 40s or older. Young people and children speak Spanish exclusively (Valenzuela 2010).

This article investigates the verbal cross-referencing system as well as the functions of the enclitic =*ler* in Shiwilu. The remainder of **1** provides information on the few efforts to describe and document the language; salient features of its grammar can be observed throughout the rest of the article. Section **2** analyzes argument encoding in the verb, which is accomplished through portmanteau suffixes that also convey tense–aspect–mood. It is shown that the cross-referential system operates on a dominantly nominative–accusative basis. A feature of Kawapanan languages is the formal similarity between the encoding of O^2 in main clauses and that of S_o in one type of intransitive clause involving a nominal predicate. At first glance this may lead one to entertain the possibility of an active–inactive arrangement (see n. 6). However, I argue in **2.3** that such an analysis is not adequate, especially because the markers in question indicate S/A/O in certain dependent clauses also. Section **3** introduces the enclitic =*ler* (which formally resembles the instrumental case marker =*lek*). It shows that =*ler* occurs on noun phrases in A function only and therefore exhibits an ergative-like distribution. However, presence/absence of =*ler* cannot be accounted for by resorting to the inherent meaning of the NPs or certain morphosyntactic contexts, as is the case in languages with syntactic ergative systems. Instead, I claim that =*ler* is governed by pragmatic factors, in addition to discriminating A from O in potentially ambiguous contexts. Though the status of =*ler* as a case marker is problematic, it might be useful to compare the Shiwilu data to instances of “optional” or pragmatic marking of the ergative/agentive in other languages of the world (**3.3**). Finally, **4** summarizes the main findings of the study and raises questions for further research.

1.1. Documentation of Shiwilu. Shiwilu remains poorly documented; no survey grammar or dictionary exists. Until very recently, the only trained linguist who had collected primary data was John Bendor-Samuel; he carried out fieldwork in 1955–56. There are earlier publications containing word lists, occasionally accompanied by grammar information (e.g., Tessmann

² Following Dixon (1979; 1994), the symbols S, A, and O are employed in this article. S refers to the single argument of an intransitive verb. With transitives, the assignment of A and O relations depends on the prototypical meaning of the verb. A refers to the most agentive-like argument, while O refers to the most patient-like counterpart. S_a and S_o designate the single arguments of active and inactive intransitive verbs, respectively; this distinction will prove to be irrelevant for the constructions under study (see **2.3**).

1930 and Rivet and Tastevin 1931). According to Bendor-Samuel (1961:8), the quality of these materials is not reliable.³

In 1958, Bendor-Samuel completed a doctoral thesis entitled “The Structure and Function of the Verbal Piece in the Jebero Language” (1981 [1958]). This seminal work, henceforth “B-S,” contains a description of the sound system, a detailed analysis of the verb, and four annotated texts. An abridgement of Bendor-Samuel’s thesis was published in *Word* in 1961. The grammar information in Wise (1999) is based on Bendor-Samuel’s thesis, while the observations and examples in Adelaar (2004:448–49) originate from Bendor-Samuel and Rivet and Tastevin (1931). In addition, members of the Summer Institute of Linguistics have published (comparative) lists of words and phrases (Fabre 2005).

After several decades without any study of Shiwilu, the past few years have seen a renewed interest by linguists (Valenzuela 2008; 2010).

2. Argument encoding in the verb. The Shiwilu verb is complex and exhibits various finite and subordinate paradigms; the latter may be marked for switch-reference. Minimally, a verb consists of a root followed by an inflectional portmanteau suffix, encoding tense–aspect–mood (henceforth TAM) and either S or A > O (i.e., a transitive relationship with the first term as A and the second term as O); in ditransitive verbs such as ‘give’, the recipient rather than the patient is encoded as O. Common in the verb are stem-forming prefixes (roughly indicating the manner in which an action is performed), compounding and serialization, noun and classifier incorporation, directionals, and applicatives. Shiwilu verbs are basically intransitive or transitive; additional derivation or use of a lexically distinct verb is required to express the predicate equivalent with a different transitivity value: *du*- ‘sit’ > *a’-du*- ‘seat’; *ukun*- ‘hand (intr.)’ > *a’-ukun*- ‘hang (tr.)’; *panka*- ‘rub somebody/something’ > *in-panka*- ‘rub oneself’; *sekki-tu* ‘hide something’ > *in-sekki-tu* ‘hide oneself’; *lli*- ‘see’ > *lli-tu* ‘appear’; *dinlu*- ‘spit’ > *dinlu-tu* ‘spit on something/somebody’; *chimin*- ‘die’, *di-tu* ‘kill/cut’. Some verbs may take an additional argument, which is marked by the comitative/instrumental =*lek* or the locative =*ki*.

2.1. Clauses with one cross-referenced argument. The Shiwilu person system is of the “minimal/augmented” type (Cysouw 2003), with first-person inclusive vs. exclusive distinction in the singular and plural. Alternatively, it can be said that Shiwilu distinguishes singular, dual, and plural numbers in the first person. Table 1 presents personal pronouns, possessives,

³ For example, none of these sources register the voiceless glottal stop, which is pervasive in Shiwilu and has phonological status: [lala] ‘hole’ vs. [laʔlaʔ] ‘language’, [k^wa] ‘I’ vs. [k^waʔ] ‘chosna (kinkajou)’, [ðukər] ‘moon’ vs. [ðuʔkər] ‘sit down’.

TABLE 1
PERSONAL PRONOUNS, POSSESSIVES, AND MAIN S/A MARKERS

	1 Personal Pronouns	2 Possessives	3 S/A of Verbs with One Overt Argument, Nonfuture	4 S/A of Verbs with One Overt Argument, Future
1SG	<i>kwa</i>	<i>-wek</i>	<i>-lek</i>	<i>-echek</i>
1SG.I	(<i>kenmu'</i>)	<i>-mapu'</i>	<i>-lek</i>	<i>-ater</i>
2SG	<i>kenma</i>	<i>-pen</i>	<i>-la</i>	<i>-echu</i>
3SG	<i>nana</i>	<i>-nen</i>	<i>-lli</i>	<i>-echun</i> (<i>-echu</i>)
1PL.E	<i>kuda</i>	<i>-widek</i>	<i>-llidek</i>	<i>-echidek</i>
1PL.I	<i>kenmu'wa'</i>	<i>-mapu'wa'</i>	<i>-lekwa'</i>	<i>-aterwa'</i>
2PL	<i>kenmama'</i>	<i>-penma'</i>	<i>-lama'</i>	<i>-echuma'</i>
3PL	<i>nawa'</i>	<i>-nenna'</i>	<i>-llina'</i>	<i>-echuna'</i>

and S/A markers occurring in finite verbs with a single cross-referenced argument, both in the future and nonfuture tenses.⁴

With one seeming exception (discussed in 2.2), the suffixes in columns 3 and 4 of table 1 convey the S/A arguments of finite predicates with a single cross-referenced argument, whether active or inactive, intransitive or transitive. Examples (1)–(8) illustrate the first- and third-person singular markers of column 3; these correspond to the nonfuture tense, the one most

⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, the data throughout this paper have been obtained via my original fieldwork with different native speakers and later confirmed by Mr Meneleo Careajano. The data in tables 1–7 were first taken from B-S and then checked in the field; in the few cases where there is a discrepancy, the data from the speakers I consulted appear in parentheses. The transcription, given in a practical orthography, largely follows the analysis of the sound system in B-S, except for the lack of distinction between [n] and [ŋ] (which I consider noncontrastive); glottalization on /k/ in coda position is only indicated when necessary to preserve the syllable structure (example 40). The symbol <e> stands for a half-close, central-back, unrounded vowel. As for the consonants, <d> stands for a dento-alveolar approximant, <ll> for /k/, <ñ> for /p/, <ch> for /tʃ/, and <'> for /ʔ/. Stress is not phonological. The accent falls on the first syllable of disyllabic words but on the second syllable of words with three or more syllables; addition of certain affixes results in some modifications (B-S:35–36, 73–74 and Wise 1999:313).

The following glosses are used in the interlinear examples and tables: 1PL.E first-person plural exclusive, 1PL.I first-person plural inclusive, 1SG first-person singular, 1SG.I first-person singular inclusive, 2PL second-person plural, 2SG second-person singular, 3PL third-person plural, 3SG third-person singular, ABL ablative, AGTVZ agentivizer, ALL allative, APPL applicative, ASSOC associative, BEN benefactive, CAUS causative, CONT continuative, DIR directional, DS different subject, DUR durative, EMPH emphatic, FRUST frustrative, HAB habitual, HSY hearsay, LOC locative, NEG negative, nFUT nonfuture, OBJ object, POS possessive, PRED predicative, PTCP participle, REL relative, REP repetitive, SIMIL similitive, SS same subject, SUB subordinator, VM valency modifier.

commonly used in the language (for sentences involving the second person, see examples 21 and 35*b*):

Inactive Intransitive Verbs

- (1) *Nanek anu'-lek.*
 there fall-nFUT.1SG
 'There (is where) I fell'.
- (2) *Nana wila du'-apa-lli musen=kek.*
 that boy sit-CONT-nFUT.3SG high.up=LOC
 'The boy is sitting high up'.

Active Intransitive Verbs

- (3) *Nanek=la yunsu'-lek Yurimawek.*
 there=ABL go.out-nFUT.1SG Yurimaguas:ALL
 'Then I left for Yurimaguas'.
- (4) *Dañir chi'yek-lli*
 Daniel escape-nFUT.3SG
 'Daniel escaped'.

In clauses involving transitive verbs without object marking, the O corresponds to the third-person singular (as it is subsequently shown that third-person plural O is obligatorily marked; see below). The object may be made explicit through an NP (see examples 6*b*–8).

Transitive Verbs without Object Marking

- (5) *Di'-tu-lek.*
 kill/cut-VM-nFUT.1SG
 'I killed/cut (him/her/it)'.
- (6*a*) *Nana pamu'-lli.*
 3SG wash-nFUT.3SG
 '(S)he washed (him/her/it)'.
- (6*b*) *Nana pamu'-lli ukta.*
 3SG wash-nFUT.3SG pot
 '(S)he washed the pot'.

When the O is a third-person plural instead of a singular, the morpheme *-dek* must be added to the verb. However, while S/A suffixes occur in verb-final position and thus subsequent to the negative marker, *-dek* precedes the negative (B-S:104):

- (7) . . . *wila-wek-lusa'*=*pa* *ma'sha*.
 . . . boy-1SG.POS-PL=perhaps NEG

a'-lek-dek-i'n-[l]ek.

CAUS-ask-3PL.OBJ-NEG-nFUT.1SG

' . . . since I did not teach my children (to speak Shiwilu)'.

In clauses involving ditransitive verbs, only agent and recipient are cross-referenced in the verb (see also examples 15–18). Again, the third person remains unmarked:

- (8) *Chuchu enka'-lek Kanuta*.
 meat give-nFUT.1SG Carlota

'I gave meat to Carlota'.

In conclusion, in the Shiwilu verb S and A are encoded in the same way; the distinctions between active vs. inactive or transitive vs. intransitive verbs are not reflected. The S/A markers illustrated so far are also found on predicates modified by reflexive–reciprocal, causative, and applicative affixes (constructions involving the causative and applicatives are offered in 35*b*–38). In addition, it has been shown that at least third-person O arguments are encoded differently from S/A. While third-person singular O is not marked, *-dek* must be added when the number is plural. The latter not only differs in form from the S/A suffix *-llina'* (nFUT.3PL) but also occupies a different position in the verb. Therefore, provisionally, it can be concluded that argument marking in the verb follows a nominative–accusative configuration. In the discussion of the Shiwilu verb below, the term “subject” refers to the conflation of S/A, while “object” refers to O.

2.2. Clauses involving nominal predicates. In 2.1 I stated that, with one apparent exception, the markers in columns 3 and 4 of table 1 correspond to the subjects of finite predicates with one cross-referenced argument; this possible exception is found in one type of nominal predicate construction. Following Bendor-Samuel, in Shiwilu a nominal predicate may consist of (a) an NP followed by a predicative suffix, (b) a construction involving an NP and the copula verb *nuka'*-, or (c) a construction that combines the two previous patterns (B-S:48). Table 2 presents the Shiwilu predicative suffixes that attach to nominals as well as the copular verb *nuka'*-; examples (9)–(11) illustrate the three alternate patterns.

Pattern A: [NP + predicative suffix]

- (9a) *Taserpi-ku*.
 old-PRED.1SG

'I am an old man'.

TABLE 2
 PREDICATIVE SUFFIXES AND THE COPULAR VERB *nuka'*-

	Predicative Suffixes (B-S:143)	Copular Verb <i>nuka'</i> - (B-S:126)
1SG	- <i>ku</i>	<i>nuka'</i> - <i>ka</i>
1SG.I	- <i>kenmu'</i>	<i>nuka'</i> - <i>ka</i>
2SG	- <i>ken</i>	<i>nuka'</i> - <i>ma</i>
3SG	- \emptyset	<i>nuka'</i> - <i>a</i>
1PL.E	- <i>kudek</i>	<i>nuka'</i> - <i>kudek</i>
1PL.I	- <i>kenmu'wa'</i>	<i>nuka'</i> - <i>kawa'</i>
2PL	- <i>kenma'</i>	<i>nuka'</i> - <i>mama'</i>
3PL	- <i>lusa'</i> (B-S)	<i>nukerka</i>
	- \emptyset - <i>lusa'</i> (Valenzuela)	

(9b) *Shiwilu-kenmu'wa'*.
 Shiwilu-PRED.1PL.I
 'We are Shiwilu'.

Pattern B: [NP] + [copula verb *nuka'*-]

(10a) *Taserpi nuka'-ka*
 old be-PRED.nFUT.1SG
 'I am an old man'. (B-S:126)

(10b) *Shiwilu nuka'-kawa'*.
 Shiwilu be-PRED.nFUT.PL.I
 'We are Shiwilu'.

Pattern C: [NP + predicative suffix] + [copula verb *nuka'*-]

(11a) *Taserpi-ku nuka'-ka*.
 old-PRED.1SG be-PRED.nFUT.1SG
 'I am an old man'.

(11b) *Shiwilu-kenmu'wa' nuka'-kawa'*.
 Shiwilu-PRED.1PL.I be-PRED.nFUT.1PL.I
 'We are Shiwilu'.

In discussing text excerpts involving the third pattern, language consultants somewhat modified their Spanish translations to indicate a pragmatic nuance. Example (12) opens an autobiographical narrative where the speaker introduces herself as an "authentic" Shiwilu woman, even though she had not lived in the village of Jeberos since she was ten years old and currently lives

in the neighboring city of Yurimaguas. Her intention might have been to establish the legitimacy of her ethnic identity:

- (12) *Kwa Shiwilu-lun-ku nuka'-ka.*
 1SG Shiwilu-FEMALE-PRED.1SG be-1SG

‘I am an **authentic** Shiwilu woman’. (*‘Yo soy jeberina auténtica’.*)
 [my emphasis]

The interpretation of Pattern C as playing a pragmatically marked function is compatible with Bendor-Samuel’s observation regarding its relatively low frequency of use (B-S:48).

2.3. Clauses with two cross-referenced arguments. When the verb is transitive and O is not a third person, both arguments are obligatorily encoded through one of various portmanteau suffixes. These morphemes exhibit different degrees of fusion and convey TAM, A, and O.⁵ The finite markers corresponding to the nonfuture and future paradigms are given in tables 3 and 4, respectively. Vertically listed persons refer to A, while horizontally listed ones correspond to O; i.e., *-llen* in table 3, for example, indicates a first- or third-person singular participant acting on a second-person singular (1SG/3SG > 2SG).

The following sentences illustrate the suffixes in table 3. Examples (13), (15), (17), (19), and (20) were taken from narrative texts. With minor differences (in parentheses), the data corroborate the descriptions provided by Bendor-Samuel about 50 years ago. (14), (16), and (18) were obtained through elicitation and are included to further illustrate the system.

-llun 3SG > 1SG

- (13) *Iskun duker a’ñ-a’seku awa-wek*
 nine month have-DUR:1SG.DS mother-1SG.POS

chimin-lapi-llun, amisha-wek
 die-LEAVE-3SG>1SG grandmother-1SG.POS

tek-susu-llun.
 CAUS-grow.up-3SG>1SG

‘When I was nine months old my mother died leaving me alone,
 and I was raised by my grandmother’.

⁵ According to Bendor-Samuel, clauses involving verbs with two cross-referenced arguments have alternative expressions whereby the verb encodes A only, while O is conveyed by an NP (B-S:114). However, the speakers I consulted did not produce or accept this possibility.

TABLE 3
NONFUTURE A > O VERBAL MARKERS (B-S:115)

	1SG O	1SG I O	2SG O	1PL E O	1PL I O	2PL O
1SG A			<i>-llen</i>			<i>-llenma'</i>
2SG A	<i>-lilu</i> (-lun)			<i>-llunkudek</i> (-llunde)		
3SG A	<i>-lilu</i> (-lun)	<i>-llenmu'</i>	<i>-llen</i>	<i>-llunkudek</i> (-llunde)	<i>-llenmu'wa'</i>	<i>-llenma'</i>
1PL E A			<i>-lliden</i>			<i>-llidenma'</i> (-lillenma')
2PL A	<i>-lamau'ku</i> (-lama' u'ku)		<i>-lamau'kudek</i>			
3PL A	<i>-lilinerku</i>	<i>-lilinerkenmu'</i>	<i>-lilinerken</i>	<i>-lilinerkudek</i>	<i>-lilinerkenmu'wa'</i>	<i>-lilinerkenma'</i>

TABLE 4
FUTURE A > O VERBAL MARKERS (B-S:115)

	1SG O	1SG I O	2SG O	1PL E O	1PL I O	2PL O
1SG A			<i>-erken</i>			<i>-erkenma'</i>
2SG A	<i>-echunku</i>			<i>-echunkudek</i>		
3SG A	<i>-echunku</i>	<i>-echunmu'</i>	<i>-echen</i>	<i>-echunkudek</i>	<i>-echunmu'wa'</i>	<i>-echenma'</i>
1PL E A			<i>-echiden</i>			<i>-echidenma'</i>
2PL A	<i>-echumau'ku</i>			<i>-echumau'kudek</i>		
3PL A	<i>-echunerku</i>	<i>-echunerkenmu'</i>	<i>-echunerken</i>	<i>-echunerkudek</i>	<i>-echunerkenmu'wa'</i>	<i>-echunerkenma'</i>

-*llen* 1SG > 2SG

- (14) *Kwa tek-susu-llen.*
 1SG CAUS-grow.up-1SG>2SG
 'I raised you'.

-*llinerku* 3PL > 1SG

- (15) *Nawa' enka'-pa-llinerku ka'-a'kasu'...*
 3PL give-CONT-nFUT.3PL>1SG eat-REL.1SG
 'They give me my food...'

-*llenma'* 1SG > 2PL

- (16) *Kwa enka'-pa-llenma' ka'-a'mamasu'.*
 1SG give-CONT-1SG>2PL eat-REL.2PL
 'I give you (plural) your food'.

-*llinerkudek* 3PL > 1PL.E

- (17) *Pu'yek aperku-tu-llinerkudek. Samer*
 fishing not.share-VM-nFUT.3PL>1PL.E fish
map-a'sekudek dinsulu-llinerkudek.
 catch:DUR.1PL.E.DS chase.away-nFUT.3PL>1PL.E
 'They did not share the fishing with us. When we were fishing they chased us away'.

-*llidek* 1PL.E > 3PL

- (18) *Kuda=ler aperku-tu-dek-llidek pu'yek.*
 1PL.E=ler not.share-VM-3PL.OBJ-1PL.E>3PL fishing
 'We (exclusive) did not share the fishing with them'.

-*lama'u'ku* 2PL > 1SG

- (19) *Ma'ki'na kenmama' lumer-lama'u'ku?*
 why 2PL laugh.at-nFUT.2PL>1SG
 'Why did you (plural) laugh at me?'

-*llundek* 3SG > 1PL.E

- (20) *Kuda=i'na ma'sha musu'-kankan-wa-pa-i'n-llundek*
 1PL.E=but NEG good-liver-HAVE-CONT-NEG-nFUT.3>1PL.E
a'pinta' tata-wek.
 more father-1SG.POS

'But my father did not love us anymore'.

TABLE 5
 PREDICATIVE SUFFIXES ON NPS AND O MARKERS

	Predicative Suffixes (B-S:143)	O Markers
1SG	<i>-ku</i>	<i>-u, un, -ku</i>
1SG.I	<i>-kenmu'</i>	<i>-enmu', -kenmu'</i>
2SG	<i>-ken</i>	<i>-en, -ken</i>
3SG	<i>-∅</i>	<i>-∅</i>
1PL.E	<i>-kudek</i>	<i>-kudek, -dek</i>
1PL.I	<i>-kenmu'wa'</i>	<i>-enmu'wa', -kenmu'wa'</i>
2PL	<i>-kenma'</i>	<i>-enma, -enma', -kenma'</i>
3PL	<i>-lusa' (B-S)</i>	<i>-dek . . . -∅</i>
	<i>-∅-lusa' (Valenzuela)</i>	

The markers in tables 3 and 4 result from the combination of different morphemes. Since they exhibit varying degrees of fusion, synchronically it might be best to view them as portmanteau morphemes that provide different kinds of information simultaneously. However, given the moderate degree of grammaticalization that these markers have undergone, it is possible to establish the order in which the information is given: TAM-A-O. In addition, one can hypothesize the forms that the previous independent morphemes might have presented (B-S:106–22). For example, comparing the paradigms in table 3 to those in column 3 of table 1 we can infer that the segment /l/ indicates nonfuture (and maybe some other kind of aspect–mood). This lateral segment becomes palatalized before the high front vowel /i/ in S/A suffixes, and before high and mid vowels /i, ə, u/ in A > O markers. Also, if we compare the markers in tables 3 and 4 in a vertical fashion, the forms of the O markers can be posited; these appear in boldface. Interestingly, the O forms are essentially the same as the predicative suffixes introduced in 2.2 (B-S:143). This is shown in table 5.

Given the significant similarity between the paradigms in table 5, one might wonder whether some kind of active–inactive configuration exists in Shiwilu.⁶ In the remainder of this section I argue against this hypothesis. First, the predicative paradigm does not extend to other types of intransitive clauses. This means that the group of “inactive predicates” would be extremely restricted and would not resemble the equivalent category in languages with a typical active–inactive alignment (Mithun 1991). Moreover, as shown in (21) and (22), other expressions where nominals function as

⁶ Based on equivalent data, Barraza (2005*b*) raised the possibility of analyzing the Shawi system as following an active–inactive alignment since the single arguments of the nominal predicates (i.e., S_O) are encoded in the same way as O (the sister languages differ in the degree of grammaticalization of the verbal markers, which is relatively more advanced in Shiwilu). Wise (1999:320) refers to a similar system in the languages of the Zaparoan family.

predicates do not make use of predicative suffixes but instead employ the same subject markers found on verbs (2.1):

- (21) *Kenma ñiñi'-pen-pu-la.*
 2SG dog-MALE-SIMIL-IFUT.2SG
 'You are like a dog (i.e., good hunter).'
- (22) *Ipa'la Arkichu sada-lli.*
 now Arquímedes wife-nFUT.3SG
 'Arquímedes got married today'.

Second, as described in 2.2, NPs marked by predicative suffixes may co-occur with the copula verb *nuka'* 'be'. This fact, illustrated in (11) and (12), suggests that the function of the predicative suffixes is less verbalizing than if this combination was not allowed. Example (11a) is repeated here as (23) for convenience:

- (23) *Taserpi-ku nuka'-ka.*
 old-PRED.1SG be-PRED.nFUT.1SG
 'I am an old man'.

In addition, as shown in (10), it is possible to obtain a predicative expression by using the verb *nuka'*-, without resorting to a predicative suffix.

There is another piece of evidence that suggests that expressions involving NPs marked by predicative suffixes do not behave like verbs—namely, their inability to take verbal affixes. Also, in this respect the constructions at hand differ from intransitive verbs and other nominals functioning as predicates. For example, in (21) and (22), *ñiñi'-pen* 'male dog' and *sada-* 'wife' bear the same S/A suffixes found on verbs. Bendor-Samuel calls attention to this combinatorial restriction, noting that predicative suffixes "resemble verb forms in function, however, morphologically these forms are **like nominals** not verbs" (B-S:143 [my emphasis]). Moreover, the predicative suffix corresponding to the third-person plural includes the morpheme *-lusa'*, which indicates plurality on nominals (7, 42, 44, and 49).

Finally, there is an indisputable argument against the active–inactive hypothesis. O markers of finite clauses not only resemble predicative suffixes (which signal intransitive and inactive subjects, by definition) but also the markers corresponding to S/A/O arguments in several nonfinite paradigms such as "intermittent action, conditional, subjunctive, durative, and participle" (B-S:107–8, 115–16). Table 6 shows the similarity between the O markers of finite clauses/predicative suffixes and the S/A markers found on several nonfinite clauses. Table 7 presents the A > O markers of durative clauses and shows that O markers also share the same or very similar forms.

TABLE 6
O MARKERS AND S/A MARKERS OF NONFINITE PREDICATES

	O Nonfuture,		S/A	S/A	S/A	S/A	S/A	S/A	S/A
	Predicative Suffixes	Intermittent Action	Durative	Subjunctive	Conditional	Participle			
1SG	-ku	-seku	-a'seku	-ateku	-nanseku	-anu			
1SG.1	-kenmu'	-sik	-a'sik	-atek	-nansu'	-ak			
2SG	-ken	-sin	-a'sin	-achin	-nansin	-an			
3SG	-∅	-su'	-sik	-achi	-su'	-an			
1PL.E	-kudek	-sekudek	-a'sekudek	-atekudek	-nanseku	-amudek			
1PL.1	-kenmu'wa'	-sikwa'	-a'sikwa'	-atekwa'	-nansu'wa'	-akwa'			
2PL	-kenma(')	-sinma'	-a'sinma'	-achinna'	-nansinna'	-anna'			
3PL	-∅	-a'ser	-a'ser	-achina'	-nanta'ser	-anna(')			

TABLE 7
A > O MARKERS OF DURATIVE CLAUSES (B-S:115)

	1SG O	1SG.1 O	2SG O	1PL.E O	1PL.1 O	2PL O
1SG A			-a'sekun			-a'sekunma'
2SG A	-a'sinku			-a'sinkudek		
3SG A	-a'sinku	-a'sinmu'	-a'sikin	-a'sinkudek	-a'sinmu'wa'	-a'sikinma'
1PL.E A			-a'sekuden			-a'sekudenma'
2PL A	-a'sinmau'ku			-a'sinmau'kudek		
3PL A	-a'serku	-a'serkenmu'	-a'serken	-a'serkudek	-a'serkenmu'wa'	-a'serkenma'

In (24) and (25), *-ku* and *-kudek* function as S/A indicators corresponding to the first singular and first plural exclusive persons of durative predicates, respectively (the durative also encodes different subject). While in (24) the durative ending attaches to a transitive verb, in (25) its host is an inactive intransitive. Note also that in (25) the same form encodes S in the dependent clause but O in the main clause:

- (24) *Lauk-a'seku* *asu'* *katu'ta* *samer=i'la*
 open-DUR1SG.DS this two fish=same

dekwa'-ku' *la'la'-wek=kek.*
 introduce-IMPER.2PL mouth-1SG.POS=LOC

‘When I open (it), introduce the two fish into my mouth’.

- (25) *Wichi'-a'sekudek* *peklu'-llinerkudek.*
 sleep-DUR.1PL.E.DS call-nFUT.3PL>1PL.E

‘When we were sleeping, they called us’.

For further illustration, recall (17), where *-a'sekudek* attaches to a transitive verb. (17) also presents the form *-kudek* marking O in finite clauses but A in the dependent clause.

In conclusion, though predicative suffixes and O markers are almost identical, the fact that these same forms indicate both S/A and O in various transitivity–semantic types of dependent verbs excludes the possibility of an active–inactive analysis for Shiwilu. Instead, it can be said that the markers in tables 6 and 7 are found in expressions that are less finite or less verbal than those bearing markers from the future and nonfuture paradigms (table 1). Therefore, in Shiwilu, O markers significantly resemble S/A/O markers of less finite or less verbal expressions. Interestingly, these bound person forms are almost identical to the independent personal pronouns listed in table 1, which reveals a relatively recent grammaticalization process, in comparison to that of S/A in main predicates.

3. Argument encoding in the noun phrase and the morpheme =*ler*.

While the verbal cross-referencing of arguments was treated in 2 above, this section deals with the nominal domain. I show that NPs in A function may be marked differently from their S and O counterparts, and therefore Shiwilu exhibits an ergative-like configuration. Section 3.2 offers preliminary observations of its text occurrences, suggesting that its distribution relies on discourse-pragmatics and the need to disambiguate A from O functions.

3.1. The morpheme =*ler*. In Shiwilu, intransitive subjects (active and inactive), as well as agents and patients of highly transitive clauses, may occur

unmarked. However, it is not necessary to dig very deep into the grammar of Shiwilu to come upon NPs bearing the morpheme =*ler*. Bendor-Samuel observes that the nominal functioning as “subject” can potentially be marked by =*ler* and therefore calls it a “subject indicator.”⁷ He refers to the discriminatory function of this morpheme, which “distinguishes the nominal(s) which function(s) as the head of the nominal piece from all other nominals which may be found in the sentence” (B-S:44–45). Finally, Bendor-Samuel states that =*ler* occurs “with certain nominals” only, but he does not elaborate on its distributional restrictions. Given that the systematic discussion on ergative systems becomes generalized only during the 1970s (e.g., Silverstein 1976, Comrie 1978, Dixon 1979, and Plank 1979), verb valency is understandably overlooked in Bendor-Samuel’s analysis. However, this is a key criterion since, as argued below, =*ler* occurs after A arguments.

As illustrated in (26), A and O arguments may occur unmarked in Shiwilu (recall also 6*b*, 7, 8, and 13, among others):

- (26) *Kishu ka’-lli nana isha.*
 Jesús eat-nFUT.3SG that *paujil*
 ‘Jesús ate the *paujil* (a species of curassow)’.

In (26), both A and O are third-person singular participants. In these instances, the interpretation of syntactic roles is achieved by resorting to animacy, context, or constituent order (see below). But even when the identity of agent and patient is clear, it is possible for NPs in A function to bear the marker =*ler*:

- (27) *Kishu=ler ka’-lli nana isha.*
 Jesús=*ler* eat-nFUT.3SG that *paujil*
 ‘Jesús ate the *paujil*’.

The presence of =*ler* may be attested even when O is not overtly indicated. (29) illustrates the discriminatory function of =*ler*. A speaker was asked to provide the Shiwilu equivalent of ‘The puppy bit the little child, and the little child bit the puppy’. The aim of the question was to create a situation where both participants would have roughly the same probabilities to play the A or O roles. In her first attempt, the language consultant offered:

- (28) *Ñiñi’-wawa kitek-lli wila-wawa. . . .*
 dog-baby bite-nFUT.3SG child-baby
 ‘puppy bit little child. . .’.

⁷ Probably following B-S, Hart adopts the term “subject indicator” to describe the cognate morpheme *-ri* in Shawi (1988:286–87). See also n. 16.

But after hesitating briefly, she corrected herself and proposed the following alternative:

- (29) *Ñiñi'-wawa=ler kitek-lli nana wila-wawa, nana*
 dog-baby=*ler* bite-nFUT.3SG that child-baby that
wila=ler=unta' nana ñiñi'-wawa kitek-lli.
 child=*ler*=REP that dog-baby bite-nFUT.3SG

'The puppy bit the little child, and the little child bit the puppy too'.

Similar examples are also found in spontaneous texts (see 49).

In elicitation, speakers also employ =*ler* when O precedes A in the clause. All other things being equal, in a transitive sentence with two expressed arguments, the first is read as A and the second one as O. When this order is altered, use of =*ler* was judged mandatory:

- (30) *Ipullitu(=ler) di'-tu-lli Pulu.*
 Hipólito(=*ler*) kill/cut-VM-nFUT.3SG Pablo

'Hipólito killed/cut Pablo'.

- (31) *Ipullitu di'-tu-lli Pulu=ler.*
 Hipólito kill/cut-VM-nFUT.3SG Pablo=*ler*

'Pablo killed/cut Hipólito'. / *'Hipólito killed/cut Pablo'.

The same utterances were checked with two other speakers, who insisted on adding =*ler* to the A argument, either in (31) only or in both (30) and (31).

The following sentences, obtained from a different collaborator, corroborate the observations above with respect to the use of =*ler*. This time the speaker expressed the equivalent of 'Meneleo kissed Emérita's hand'. The context is a type of Shiwilu ceremony whereby a woman and a man kiss each other's hands in turn, while pronouncing a special discourse. The speaker's first alternative is given in (32):⁸

⁸ The incorporation of a noun in the verb does not result in detransitivization of the clause. Consider (i) below, where incorporation of *sada* does not preclude the use of the A > O suffix -*llen*. The verb root is the intransitive *luwer*- 'know of/about', which becomes transitive after suffixation of -*tu*.

- (i) *ya-luwer-sada-tu-llen*
 DES-know-wife-VM-1SG>2SG

'I want to meet your wife'

The verb *mucha*'- is a Quechua borrowing introduced by missionaries.

- (32) *Miñiku=ler Imicha musha'-itekla-lli.*
 Meneleo=*ler* Emérita kiss-hand-nFUT.3SG
 'Meneleo kissed Emerita's hand'.

As a second alternative, the speaker accepted a version of (32) without =*ler*. As expected, the change in constituent order resulted in a different interpretation:

- (33) *Imicha Miñiku musha'-itekla-lli.*
 Emérita Meneleo kiss-hand-nFUT.3SG
 'Emérita kissed Meneleo's hand'.

As in (31), attaching =*ler* to an NP forces its reading as A, regardless of constituent order:

- (34) *Imicha Miñiku=ler musha'-itekla-lli.*
 Emérita Meneleo=*ler* kiss-hand-nFUT.3SG
 'Meneleo kissed Emerita's hand'. / *'Emerita kissed Meneleo's hand'.

In addition to animacy and constituent-order considerations, =*ler* seems to be favored by the co-occurrence of valence-increasing affixes like causative and applicatives:

- (35a) *Kapiser wiwer-lli.*
 clothes wet-nFUT.3SG
 'The clothes are wet'.
- (35b) *Kenma=ler a'-wiwer-la?*
 2SG=*ler* CAUS-wet-nFUT.2SG
 'Did you make it wet?'

(35b) also shows that =*ler* may be found in an interrogative expression. In (36), =*ler* occurs in a construction involving a causativized verb, marked by a future suffix:

- (36) *Kanuta=ler a'-tuluner-echu Kullushek.*
 Carlota=*ler* CAUS-sing-FUT.3SG Cruz
 'Carlota is going to make Cruz sing/is going to ask Cruz to sing'.

(37) and (38) show the presence of =*ler* in clauses with applicativized verbs:

- (37) *Wallinchi=ler saki'-tu-lli Kishu.*
 Valentín=*ler* work:BEN-VM-nFUT.3SG Jesús
 'Valentín worked for Jesús'.

- (38) *Kishu ek-lansa'-pa-lli Pulu=ler.*
 Jesús ASSOC-dance-CONT-nFUT.3SG Pablo=*ler*

‘Pablo asked Jesús to dance (and both are dancing)’.

Note that in (38) *=ler* occurs in a clause with continuative (therefore, imperfective) aspect; below *=ler* is found in a negative clause:

- (39) *Supaj=ler ekpa-i'ñi.*
 devil=*ler* carry-NEG:nFUT.3SG

‘The devil did not take him’. (B-S:161)⁹

In addition to being attested in perfective and imperfective, nonfuture and future, affirmative and negative, declarative and interrogative clauses, *=ler* is found all along the Nominal Hierarchy (Dixon 1994). It may mark any personal pronoun (18, 35*b*, 47, and 48) as well as proper and common nouns, including inanimates. Below, *=ler* occurs after transitive subjects whose referents are a natural force and a fruit, i.e., referents that lack important agent properties such as volition or inner movement. Also, note that the verb in (40) is marked by the frustrative *-win*, which indicates that the event was not completed:

- (40) *Wekila=ler=ima di'-tu-wiñi inchilala=k*
 thunder=*ler*=HSY kill-VM-FRUST:nFUT.3SG path=LOC
wek'-apincha'-sik.
 come-CONT:VEN-DUR.3SG.DS

‘The thunder almost killed him on the path, when he was coming’. (B-S:54)

- (41) *Tanku=ler=unta' a'-ikillu'-lli Kanuta.*
 banana=*ler*=REP CAUS-ache:stomach-nFUT.3SG Carlota

‘And the banana caused Carlota a stomachache (probably it wasn’t ripe enough)’.

Finally, *=ler* is not properly a suffix (see B-S:44–45) but an enclitic postposition that attaches to the last word of the NP in A function:

⁹ This sentence was originally taken from B-S and later checked with a native speaker. The free translation is based on the native speaker’s interpretation. Also, my collaborator produced a glottal stop before the negative, i.e., *ekpa'-i'ñi*. It is plausible to interpret the stem as consisting of the root *pa'-* ‘go’ to which the associative applicative *ek-* has been prefixed.

- (42) *Ala'lu'sa'* [*katu'ta'* *wila-lun-lusa'* *katu'ta'*
 one.day two child-FEMALE-PL two
yuyu'wa-lusa']=*ler* *kaper'-anna'* *lumer-llina'*.
 boy-PL=*ler* meet-PTCP.3PL:SS laugh.at-nFUT.3PL

'One day, two girls and two boys finding it (on the way) laughed at it'.

- (43) [*Ku'aper aperku'-tek*]=*ler* *a'-u-i'ñi*.
 woman not.share-HAB.AGTVZ=*ler* CAUS-drink-NEG:nFUT.3SG

'The stingy woman did not offer him anything to drink'.

In sum, NPs in A function are treated differently from their S/O counterparts, in that only the former can host the morpheme =*ler*.¹⁰ The latter is found in various types of transitive clauses, even in the absence of key agentive characteristics or other factors that may diminish the transitivity of the clause (Hopper and Thompson 1980 and Givón 1984). Therefore, it can be concluded that =*ler* exhibits an ergative-like distribution. However, the absence of =*ler* does not generally result in the agrammaticality of the utterance (cf. 30 and 33). In elicitation, speakers may use =*ler* to distinguish A from O, especially when two third-person participants are involved, and O precedes A in the utterance.

Finally, =*ler* is not used when the object is a first or a second person. That is, employing =*ler* in (13)–(17) or (19) and (20) would yield ungrammatical expressions, while =*ler* is actually attested in (18). This restriction could be interpreted as a kind of hierarchical arrangement opposing speech-act participants to third person. Alternatively, it could be said that in constructions where the O is a speech-act participant, argument cross-referencing in the verb would render the marking of A redundant. Since the distribution of =*ler* in elicited environments might be quite different from its use in spontaneous text, 3.2 offers a first account of its occurrences in narratives.

3.2. The functions of =*ler* in narrative texts: a first analysis. This section examines the text distribution of =*ler* based on a corpus of 14 narratives, five taken from B-S and nine collected by me. The length of the texts varies significantly (from approximately 25 to 385 clauses); ten are told in third

¹⁰To confirm this analysis, I offered a language consultant alternative expressions for (1)–(8) and several other clauses. Without exception, those containing =*ler*-marked NPs in S function were rejected, while =*ler*-marked NPs in A function were judged grammatical. Reversing the A vs. O role of participants with clearly differentiated social status did not have any effect on the use of =*ler* (Dixon 1994:222–23, Duranti 1990, and Foley 1986:108).

TABLE 8
OCCURRENCES OF *=ler* IN THE CORPUS

	Number of Narratives	Occurrences of <i>=ler</i>	
Third person	10	42	91.3%
First person	4	4	8.7%
Total	14	46	100.0%

TABLE 9
SEMANTIC FEATURES OF *=ler*-MARKED ENTITIES

Human(ized)	37	80.4%
Animals	8	17.4%
Motorized canoe	1	2.2%

person and four in first. Third-person narratives include traditional and non-traditional stories and the description of a character. First-person narratives consist of three autobiographical accounts and an instance of procedural speech (where first-person singular is used as equivalent to the Spanish impersonal *se*).

The corpus (see table 8) contains 46 occurrences of *=ler* (distributed in a total of approximately 1,400 clauses).¹¹ A first observation is that *=ler* is much more frequent in third-person narratives than in those told in the first person (42 times, as opposed to only four). However, third-person narratives include several instances of direct quotations, which may also exhibit *=ler*, especially marking the first-person singular pronoun (see 47 and 48); *=ler* was completely absent in two of the three first-person autobiographical texts.

As for the semantic features of the entities marked by *=ler*, 37 or 80.4% are human or humanized participants, eight are animals (fish, whale [twice], snake, jaguar [three times], dog), and one instance corresponds to an inanimate with inherent movement, a motorized canoe. This distribution coincides with the kinds of entities most likely to play the semantic role of agent (see table 9).

¹¹ Though at first glance the text frequency of *=ler* may seem quite low, A arguments expressed through overt NPs are not numerous. For instance, in one of the texts a man narrates how a fellow Shiwilu killed a jaguar. The text consists of 33 clauses out of which 21 are transitive. Only 12 transitive clauses present an overt NP in A function, five of them marked by *=ler*. The speaker makes use of several devices to track the discourse participants, in addition to resorting to *=ler*: verb cross-referencing, switch-reference, constituent order, verbal semantics (e.g., *di'*- 'kill/cut' refers to an action by a person, whereas *laki'*- 'kill/bite' refers to an action by the jaguar), and discourse context (i.e., the anecdote is about the fellow Shiwilu and not the jaguar, and thus the protagonist does not receive *=ler* marking).

TABLE 10
FUNCTIONS OF =*ler* IN NARRATIVES

First Mention of Participant	Reactivation after Four or More Clauses	Contrastive Focus	Discriminatory Function
16	6	14 (6 direct speech)	10 (+7)
35.8%	13%	30.4%	21.7% (37%)

When the verbs involved in constructions exhibiting =*ler* marking are examined, the transitivity requirement is confirmed. In 41 instances the verbs are clearly transitive. The remaining five are an elliptical transitive verb, three transitive bases modified by the desiderative and thus lower in transitivity though not necessarily intransitive (as shown in n. 8, desiderative clauses may take A > O marking), and an intransitive verb that immediately follows the =*ler*-marked agent. This latter instance, given as (44), is the only potential counterexample to the generalization that =*ler* marks A arguments only in the corpus. (44) is a complex sentence composed of two dependent clauses and one main clause. The main subject (i.e., the chief's assistants) occurs sentence-initially and is separated from the main verb by two embedded clauses, the first one of which is intransitive. Even though the main subject is immediately followed by an intransitive clause, it is plausible to interpret this NP as the subject of the whole sentence, whose main verb is transitive.

(44) *Wala'wan-lusa'=ler* [*pa'-an*]. (INTR)
assistant-PL=*ler* go-PTCP.2/3SG:SS

[*samenñenna' siwetchu-dek'-an*], (TR)
fish:3PL.POS take.away-3PL.OBJ-PTCP.2/3SG:SS

“...” *itu-dek-llini'ma*. (TR)

“...” say-3PL.OBJ-nFUT.3PL:HSY

‘The (chief's) assistants going (to see the children) and taking their fish away, told them. . .’.

In conclusion, both in elicitation and in spontaneous contexts, =*ler* is found on transitive subjects (almost) exclusively.

An analysis of the discourse contexts in which =*ler* occurs reveals that the functions that favor its use are the first mention of an entity in discourse, contrastive focus,¹² discrimination of A versus O in potentially ambiguous contexts, and reactivation of a participant after an absence of four or more clauses. The distribution of these functions is shown in table 10.

¹² Contrastive (or identificational) focus can be defined as the exhaustive subset of the set of contextually given elements for which the predicate holds (Kiss 1998:245).

(45) is the first sentence of a narrative entitled “Marciel and the Cocama Woman.” While one of the protagonists (the Cocama woman) is introduced in S role, a second entity (the motorized canoe) is introduced as A. The motorized canoe is important in the story since it transports Marciel, the main character. Obviously, the motorized canoe qualifies as an unexpected agent. While *pa’*- ‘go’ is intransitive, *pa’-wa-tu* is transitive.¹³

(45) *Napi’=ima ala’sa’ shaya’ kukama’-luima,*
 long.ago=HSY one woman Cocama-FEMALE:HSY

Tandik ña-pa-sik=ima,
 Marañón.River:LOC exist-CONT-DUR.3SG.DS=HSY

pa’-wa-tu-lli ala’sa’ wapur=ler.
 go-APPL.toward-VM-nFUT.3SG one motorized.canoe=*ler*

‘Long ago a boat went towards a woman, a Cocama woman, when she was living on the Marañón’. (B-S:162)

In examining (45), one may entertain the possibility that =*ler* is triggered by the OVA order. Nevertheless, there are various counterexamples to this hypothesis. (46) is the beginning of a narrative about a man who fought against a jaguar. After summarizing the anecdote in (46*a*), in (46*b*) the speaker departs from the narrative to provide the protagonist’s name. In (46*c*) the speaker returns to the narrative and introduces the jaguar in A function; this participant receives =*ler* marking in spite of the fact that it precedes its object NP:

(46*a*) *Napi’ ala’sa’ iyalli’ Shiwilu=k amana’=lek*
 long.ago one man Jeberos=LOC jaguar-COM

i(n)-denma-lli.
 REC-fight-nFUT.3SG

‘Long ago, a man in Jeberos fought with a jaguar’.

(46*b*) *Nana iyalli’ itu-lek, Luis Inuma.*
 that man speak.of-nFUT.1SG Luis Inuma.

‘That man I’m talking about is Luis Inuma’.

¹³ Addition of the applicative *-wa* to an intransitive root adds a second participant in whose direction the subject moves. As is also the case with some other applicatives, *-wa* requires the presence of the valency modifier *-t(u)*. Other similar instances are *pa’-wa-tu-wiñidin* [go-wa-VM-FRUST:1PL.E>2SG] ‘we went to you in vain’ and *wek-wa-t-erken* [come-wa-VM-FUT.1SG>2SG] ‘I will come to you’ (B-S:161). See also example (50).

- (46c) *Pampatek-lu'dunsa=k . . . tampu'-nen*
 pasture-LAND-edge=LOC shelter-3SG.POS
ña-pa-sik, nanek=la' amana'=ler
 exist-CONT-DUR.3SG.DS there=ABL jaguar=ler
pilli'-tu-nta'-lli kusheñen.
 seize-VM-come/go-nFUT.3SG pig:3SG.POS

'On the edge of the pasture . . . , where his shelter was located, from there a jaguar seized his pig'. (B-S, personal communication, 2009)

Therefore, the introduction of a discourse entity for the first time is a context that strongly favors the presence of =*ler* (35.8%).¹⁴ As discussed in 3.3, McGregor (1998) proposes that optional ergative marking in Gooniyandi narratives might indicate that an agent is unexpected. If we apply this proposal to the Shiwilu corpus, the instances of first mention and reactivation of a discourse participant can be grouped together, thus accounting for 48.8% of the uses of =*ler*.

Indicating contrastive focus is also a significant function of =*ler* in the corpus (30.4%). Almost half of these cases were attested when departing from narrated speech (i.e., direct quotations and an instance where the narrator addressed the hearer directly using the second person). This function is illustrated in (47) and (48), taken from a Shiwilu version of "The North Wind and the Sun" story. The Wind and the Sun compete to see who is the strongest; as a man wrapped in a cloak appears, the Wind and the Sun agree that the first one to make the man take off his cloak will win the competition:

- (47) "*Ipia'la kwa=ler a'-pida-t-echek nana idimuna-nen,*"
 now 1SG=*ler* CAUS-take.off-FUT.1SG that cloak-3SG.POS
tu-llima Tanluwa.
 say-3SG:HSY Wind

"Now, I am going to make him take off his cloak," said the Wind'.

- (48) "*Enta'ina a'-pida-t-(k)er. Innich-impu'-pachen kwa=ler*
 let's see CAUS-take.off-VM-IMP can-NEG-SUB 1SG=*ler*
a'ka a'-pida-t-echek" tu-llima Kekki.
 indeed CAUS-take.off-VM-FUT.1SG say-3SG:HSY Sun

"Prove it, make him take it off. And if you can't I will make him take it off," said the Sun'.

¹⁴The introduction of new discourse participants in A function and the use of =*ler* marking in this context have implications for the "Preferred-Argument Structure" hypothesis proposed by Du Bois (1987a; 1987b). This is discussed in McGregor (1989; 1998).

Comparable examples where the ergative indicates “contrastive emphasis” are offered in Tournadre (1991).

Finally, discriminating A from O (or reference tracking) in potentially ambiguous contexts is also very important in narratives; in ten instances =*ler* has been attested serving this function exclusively. However, it is not unusual for =*ler* to perform what seem to be two different functions simultaneously. Thus, in another seven cases the same =*ler*-marked NP introduces or reactivates a participant (this is why the numbers 10 (+7) appear under “discriminatory function” in table 10). If all the instances where the discriminatory function can be invoked are considered, its percentage would reach 37%; i.e., it is the most frequent function of all. (49) illustrates the introduction of two new discourse participants, the chief and the chief’s assistants, in two adjacent sentences. These are clearly unexpected agents; however, the discriminatory function can also be invoked since both transitive sentences involve third-person A and O participants. Note that although the subject in the second sentence is plural, the presence of *-lusa’* on the coreferential NP renders the expression of plurality in the verb unnecessary.

- (49) *Nu’sui’ma pa’-apan ala’lu’sa’ wa’an=ler*
 and.SO:HSY go-CONT:PTCP.2/3SG:SS once chief=*ler*
a’-peklu’-tu-lli. Wintu-nta’-llima
 CAUS-call-VM-nFUT.3SG tell-REP-nFUT.3SG:HSY
wala’wan-lusa’=ler. . . .
 assistant-PL=*ler*

‘And so, coming one day the chief (of Jeberos)_i had him_j called.
 Then, the (chief’s) assistants_k went to tell him_j. . .’.

Though the first finite verb in (49) is causativized, =*ler* could be added to the A argument even if *peklu’-* lacked valence-increasing marking (Meneleo Careajano, personal communication, 2007; see also 50). Finally, example (50), taken from the same text as (46), illustrates an instance of discriminatory function of two already introduced and recently mentioned participants. In this episode, the man chases the jaguar together with his dogs (see n. 11):

- (50) *Nana ñiñi’=ler dunwer-sik, ipa’linchi*
 that dog=*ler* follow-DUR.3SG.DS then
tekka’-wa-tu-lli nana amana’=ler.
 run-APP.toward-VM-nFUT.3SG that jaguar=*ler*

‘The dog(s) followed (the jaguar), then the jaguar ran toward it/them’.

In sum, this section has shown that the distribution of *=ler* is associated with discourse-pragmatic factors (unexpected agents and contrastive focus regarding the identity of the agent), as well as the need to distinguish A from O in potentially ambiguous contexts. Particularly interesting is the ease with which new participants are introduced in A function by making use of *=ler*.

3.3. Pragmatic marking of the ergative/agentive cross-linguistically.

For the purpose of this article, the languages that show pragmatic or “optional” marking of the transitive subject are divided in two major groups: languages with ergative–absolutive syntax, where the marker in question corresponds to the ergative case, and languages without ergative–absolutive syntax. With respect to the former category, it is not rare to find languages where marking of the ergative tends to be used when it is not possible to unambiguously identify A from O through grammatical or semantic means (Dixon 1994:58–59). However, ergative inflection may be co-conditioned by pragmatic factors. Probably, the most detailed discussions on this topic involve Aboriginal Australian languages (Gaby 2008).

In a study of the distribution of “optional” ergative marking in Gooniyandi, McGregor (1989, 1998) proposes that the function of the ergative is to foreground the agentivity of a discourse entity. In narratives, the ergative might indicate that an agent is unexpected (i.e., different from the main protagonist of the relevant episode); in direct speech, it might be used to clarify the identity of the agent in potentially ambiguous contexts. Conversely, ergative marking is disfavored when the agent is expected or its identity is not at issue. Warrwa, another Australian language studied by McGregor (2006), is more complex in that it presents a four-way distinction: an elided subject NP, an unmarked subject NP, a subject NP marked with an ordinary ergative, and a subject marked by the focal ergative. In a third Australian language, Kuuk Thaayorre, ergative marking is also determined by both syntactic and pragmatic factors. In addition to conveying ergative case relation, the presence of the ergative morpheme in an intransitive clause indicates that the subject referent is “unexpected,” while its absence from a transitive clause signals that the subject referent is “expected” (Gaby 2008). Gaby’s notion of expectedness is different from McGregor’s: it includes not only the preceding discourse but also the interlocutors’ world knowledge.

The reanalysis of ergative case markers for pragmatic uses has been attributed to language attrition or intense contact in Jingulu (Pensalfini 1999) and the emergent mixed languages Gurindji Kriol and Light Warlpiri (Meakins and O’Shannessy 2004; see also Frank’s suggestion with regard to the Ika ergative in n. 15). However, this analysis does not seem accurate for Kuuk Thaayorre, where the feature in question is found in old texts and in the speech of people who were raised monolingual. Another interesting

observation is that focal ergative marking is favored on subject participants higher on the animacy hierarchy in Warrwa (and Shiwilu), but on less animate participants in Kuuk Thaayorre, Gurindji Kriol, and Light Warlpiri (Gaby 2008 and Meakins and O'Shannessy 2004). In Gooniyandi, Warrwa, Kuuk Thaayorre, and Gurindji Kriol, ergative marking may occur in certain intransitive clauses. Pragmatic or "optional" marking of the ergative has also been discussed for languages of the Tibeto-Burman (Tournadre 1991 and LaPolla 1995, among others) and Chibchan (García-Miguel 1999, Quesada 1999; 2000, and Frank 1990) families, though not all of the individual languages exhibit ergative syntax.

A few languages of Amazonia can be grouped under the second category. For example, Tariana (Northern Arawak, Vaupés region) has an "ergative" case marker which occurs on focalized NPs in A function (Aikhenvald 1994). Use of this superficially ergative pattern seems to be rare and apparently does not involve pronouns. The corresponding morpheme is considered an "ergative" case marker by Aikhenvald since it is formally identical to the instrumental and cannot co-occur with *-nuku*, a morpheme restricted to topicalized, definite nonsubject constituents.

Although the basic alignment system of Shiwilu is nominative–accusative (2), transitive subject NPs contrast with their S/O counterparts in that only the former may be marked by *=ler*. This morpheme disambiguates A from O in 3 > 3 noncoreferential situations; however, there are also instances where usage of *=ler* seems redundant given that the identity of core arguments can be inferred from verb cross-referencing, switch-reference, constituent order, or verbal semantics. Apart from the superficially ergative distribution of *=ler*, there is no evidence of an ergative syntactic category in Shiwilu. In spite of this, it is worth drawing attention to the form similarity between *=ler* and the instrumental/comitative *=lek* (46a). Recall that Aikhenvald (1994) resorts to a similar argument for the existence of an ergative case marker in Tariana, given that ergative and instrumental case markers are formally related or the same in several languages of the world (Dixon 1994:57).

Though using the term "ergative" to refer to Shiwilu *=ler* is admittedly questionable (see Valenzuela 2008), this choice highlights the important fact that *=ler* is restricted to A arguments and suggests the possibility of an ongoing change of *=ler* into/from an ergative case marker.¹⁵ Alternatively, *=ler* could be labeled "agentive" following, for example, Coupe's (2007:154–65) description of core grammatical marking in the Tibeto-Burman language Mongsén (see also LaPolla 1995). However, Mongsén and Shiwilu differ in one key aspect. While in Mongsén it is not uncommon for S arguments to carry agentive marking to indicate control and personal choice, *=ler* is not found in intransitive, single argument clauses, even when the S participant

displays agentive characteristics. Conversely, *=ler* is attested on transitive subject NPs playing nonagentive functions such as experiencer (with verbs of perception), stimulus/cause (41), force (40), and instrument/means (45). A third possibility is to interpret *=ler* as a “nominative” marker; its absence on S arguments would be accounted for by the fact that there tends to be greater potential for ambiguity in clauses with multiple arguments. However, use of this term does not help us understand the nature and workings of *=ler*; it disregards its robust ergative-like distribution as well as its discourse-pragmatic functions and does not allude to a possible diachronic relationship with the ergative case.

Apparently, Shiwilu shares the feature under examination with its sister language Shawi, where the cognate morpheme *-ri* is used instead.¹⁶ Intriguingly, Zaparoan languages have also been reported to have a morpheme *-ri* found primarily on transitive subjects; according to Wise (1999:320), this may be indicative that Zaparoan languages are “partially ergative.” Finally, in Cholón, a neighboring language now extinct, the multifunctional marker *tu-p* described as conveying “agent”/“focus”/“source” may work in a similar fashion (Alexander-Bakkerus 2005:146–47). These Amazonian languages exhibit nominative–accusative alignment, and their corresponding ergative-like morphemes are not described as case markers, or their status as such is problematic.

4. Conclusions. The encoding of core arguments in Shiwilu is achieved through the following strategies: verbal cross-referencing, constituent order, and the postposition *=ler*. Verbal cross-referencing is obligatory and fixed; constituent order is flexible, though A generally precedes O; and activation of *=ler* is triggered by the need to disambiguate A from O as well as discourse-pragmatic motivations.

¹⁵ LaPolla (1995:190, 214–16) views “nonsystemic” and “systemic” ergativity in Tibeto-Burman languages as two points on a continuum and refers to a unidirectional movement toward increasing grammaticalization of the ergative. By contrast, in his study of Ika (Chibchan, Colombia), Frank concludes that optional marking of transitive NPs through *-se?* “may be a remnant of what was formerly an essentially ergative system” (1990:9). Like Shiwilu, Ika has nominative–accusative alignment; however, *-se?* is described as an ergative case marker, possibly based on the fact that Chibchan languages are basically ergative. The reanalysis of a morpheme signaling pragmatic status as ergative case seems to be much more common than the reverse change (Claire Bowern, personal communication, 2009).

¹⁶ Hart (1988:286–87) states that the “subject indicator” *-ri* in Shawi is used to distinguish the subject (from other arguments) or to mark emphasis; all of her illustrative examples involve transitive verbs. Barraza (2005a) refers to *-ri* as a “topicalizer” but points out that it occurs with (bi)transitive verbs only.

Cross-referencing verbal suffixes follow a nominative–accusative organization. In addition, it has been shown that main-clause object markers resemble those indicating subject and object in less finite, less verbal expressions. The similarity of these bound forms to the independent personal pronouns suggests that their grammaticalization might be a relatively recent innovation in Kawapanan.

As for its independent expression of clausal arguments, Shiwilu exhibits an ergative-like characteristic in that the morpheme =*ler* may attach to NPs in A function only. This article has provided a first analysis of the factors that contribute to the use of =*ler*: discrimination of A against O participants, and certain discourse-pragmatic functions. A detailed account of =*ler* based on a much larger corpus remains to be undertaken. Such an investigation would not only contribute to the description of Kawapanan but could also shed more light on the ways ergative systems develop and change. Finally, it has been noted that Shiwilu shares this characteristic with its sister language Shawi and other genetically unrelated languages of the region. An important question to be addressed in future research is whether selective marking of transitive subject NPs may constitute an areal feature.¹⁷

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¹⁷ This hypothesis was first suggested to me by Willem Adelaar.

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