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THE LAKHOTA DEFINITE ARTICLES AND TOPIC MARKING*

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Abstract: This paper presents evidence that the definite articles *kʔu* and *kʔi* in Lakhotia are more adequately described as topic discontinuity and default markers, respectively. Using Givón's referential distance measure (1983), I show that *kʔi* is the default article, used when topic/participant continuity must be preserved. In the narrative studied here, the average referential distance for *kʔi*-marked nouns was much shorter than that for *kʔu*-marked nouns, showing that *kʔu* marks a shift to a previously established topic/participant. I show that we must take all aspects of discourse continuity into account when assessing the topicality of any character: the overall theme, the main action in the discourse at that point, and the agency of the participants.

Introduction

This paper attempts to describe and explain the conditions for use of the two definite articles in Lakhotia, *kʔi* and *kʔu*. It is a preliminary study in that only one aspect of the usage of these articles is explored, that is, their relationship to topic marking and reference tracking. Boas & Deloria (1941:133) simply state that *kʔu* is used for 'previously referred to or already known' referents and *kʔi* elsewhere. The actual distribution of *kʔi* and *kʔu*, however, does not always follow these simple guidelines. *kʔi* is often used even when a referent has been mentioned previously, which suggests that while previous mention (or cultural knowledge) is necessary for the use of *kʔu*, it is not sufficient (Rood 1984). The question, then, is why is *kʔu* sometimes used for previously mentioned referents, and sometimes not?

One function of articles is to help trace entities through a discourse and preserve identity (DuBois 1980). DuBois showed how, through the use of indefinite, definite, and demonstrative articles, a speaker of English marks information as given or new, as identifiable or nonreferential, and so on. Since Lakhotia grammar provides two separate definite articles, each might then have a different functional role much like English *the* and *that*. Rood (1984) noted that in Lakhotia only one NP per clause can be marked with *kʔu* while several can be marked with *kʔi*, and suggested that perhaps the *kʔu* marker was related to topic marking. That is the line of inquiry pursued in this paper.

* An earlier version of this paper was originally delivered at the 1998 Siouan and Caddoan Languages Conference held at Indiana University.

Background and methodology

In a spoken narrative, reference to a specific entity can be done variously with nouns, pronouns, modifying adjectives, and zero anaphora, assuming of course that the language provides these means. Lakhota rarely uses pronouns, and in place of modifying adjectives has instead what might be more properly called modifying nouns and verbs. Person is marked on verbs; however, third singular is \emptyset , which for non-native speakers sometimes leads to ambiguity (though less often for native speakers). Also, when nouns are used, they are nearly always accompanied by an article: *wą*, the indefinite article, translated as English *a*; *k̄i* or *k̄iʔu*, translated *the* and *the-past*, respectively. Given, then, that there are two possible ways to mark a lexical noun already introduced in the discourse, it seems possible that the articles *k̄i* and *k̄iʔu* might play a part in maintaining the continuity of a narrative; namely, by alerting the hearer to breaks in what Givón (1983) identified as the three major aspects of discourse continuity: thematic continuity, action continuity, and topic/participant continuity.

What I do in this paper is trace the activities of the three main characters through one Lakhota narrative, 'Double-Face Tricks the Girl,' Deloria (1932: 46-50) to try to determine whether a different article is systematically used as the participants, action, or overall theme of the story changes; in other words, since it occurs in fewer environments, is *k̄iʔu* is a kind of topic shift¹ marker? To do this, I use Givón's referential distance, or look-back measure, as a quantitative tool. This measures the number of clauses since the referent last appeared as a semantic argument² of a predicate; it is a fairly simple, but demonstrably powerful measure (see papers in Givón 1983). I argue below, however, that what is additionally important for Lakhota topic marking is the importance of the different referents or topics at particular places in the narrative. This is, as Givón (1983:12) notes, 'not yet possible to quantify rigorously...in spite of [its] undeniable importance.'³ I will nonetheless attempt to provide some argumentation in support of 'certain participants' importance to the story at hand.

Therefore, based on measures of referential distance (Givón 1983:13) and my own assessment of thematic importance based on the overall plot of the narrative, I propose that in Lakhota, *k̄iʔu* is used to mark a shift of topic to a character who gains center stage after a long period of absence from the action, with *k̄i* as the default definite article used with lexical nouns.

The Data. The Lakhota narratives used as data were collected and translated by Ella Deloria (1932). They are divided into numbered sections; each number corresponds to no less, but frequently more, than one English sentence. I use her numbering system to help show the distribution of the articles throughout one narrative, 'Double-Face Tricks the Girl.' The translations given with the passages in the body of the paper are Deloria's as well (except as noted). The referential distance was computed on the clauses as hand marked by the author, not by line number.

Tracking the Main Participants Through the Narrative

The main participants in ‘Double-Face Tricks the Girl’ are a young man, the Double-Face, a young woman, and a beaver. First, a short summary of the story events will be helpful.

A young woman, who has formerly rejected all suitors, is finally courted and won by a young man. She plans to steal away with him, unbeknownst to her parents. He comes for her, under cover of night, and calls for her by their pre-arranged signal. She happily goes off with him, bringing along her pet beaver. On their journey, however, she discovers that he is actually not her beloved, but rather a monster known as the Double-Face. He forces her to journey with him to his home, but once there he falls asleep, and the young woman escapes with her pet. On the way back to her village, she and the beaver reach a lake they cannot cross, but the beaver builds a bridge across it. The Double-Face pursues them to the lake, but he cannot easily cross the bridge, which is very narrow. As he carefully makes his way across, the beaver dismantles the bridge from the other side, causing the Double-Face to fall in the lake and drown. The young woman returns safely to her village and marries the young man whom the Double-Face had pretended to be, and the beaver lives out his life in the village as one of its most respected members.

References to the beaver are almost exclusively done with *kʔu* after the first mention. Although this distribution supports Boas and Deloria’s (1941) claim that previous mention is necessary and sufficient for the use of *kʔu*, I show that it supports my hypothesis as well.

Tracking the use of *kʔi* and *kʔu* with respect to the young man and the Double-Face is difficult since the Double-Face impersonates the young man, and it is difficult to know whether the reference is actually to the young man that the maiden agreed to marry, or to the Double-Face. I believe, however, that this indeterminacy actually plays a part in which article is used. I explain this in more detail below.

Reference to the young woman with a lexical noun occurs only three times, and follows what DuBois (1980) described as the most typical pattern for English (assuming *that* used as an article is equivalent to *kʔu*): *wq* (indefinite *a*), *kʔi* (definite *the*), *kʔu* (definite/previous mention *the/that*).

Table 1 shows the line numbers and articles used to reference these three characters.

<i>khoškalaka</i> ‘young man’/ <i>anuk ite</i> ‘Double-Face’		<i>čhapala</i> ‘beaver’		<i>wikhoškalaka</i> ‘young woman’	
Line	Article	Line	Article	Line	Article
2	<i>wą</i>	6	<i>wą</i>	1	<i>wą</i>
6	<i>kḷ</i>	18	<i>kḷu</i>	8	<i>kḷ</i>
7	<i>kḷ</i>	19	<i>kḷu</i>	22	<i>kḷu</i>
8	<i>kḷ</i>	21	<i>kḷu</i>		
11	<i>wą</i> ⁴ and <i>čḷu</i>	22	<i>kḷ</i>		
13	<i>kḷ</i>	24	<i>kḷu</i>		
17	<i>kḷ</i>				
20	<i>kḷu</i> ⁵				
23	<i>kḷu</i>				

Table 1: Articles used by line number

Courtship and Departure: Lines (1)-(8). The main human characters are introduced in the opening lines of the narrative. Both are marked as indefinite, with *wą*:

- (1) *el wikhoškalaka wą wiyą wašte čha lila waštekilapi*
 there young woman a woman good such very they-her-their own-regarded good
 (loved her)
 ‘there lived a girl who was very beautiful and greatly loved’

- (2) *yukhą uḡ.ną khoškalaka wą tokhiyataḡą lila wašte*
 and then unexpectedly young man a from some place very good
čha ahioyuspa
 such coming he paid her court

‘Then one day a young man from somewhere else came to pay her court; he was very handsome.’

Lines (6) through (8) contain three more references to the man using *kḷ*; however, in (10) we learn that this is not actually the young man the maiden wanted to marry, but rather it is the Double-Face.

- (6) *ną khoškalaka kḷ thilazata phamahel ichoma nązi*
 and young man the behind the house head-inside wearing his blanket he stood

‘and there stood the young man behind the tipi, his blanket pulled up over his head’

- (7) *yŭkhq wichaša kŭ ho iwanŭwŭkta che ...*
 and then man the 'now I shall swim across ...'

'and then the man said, "I will swim across..."'

- (8) *k'eyaš wikhoškalaka kŭ echŭ chŭšni*
 but young woman the to do it she was not willing

yŭkhq hechena wichaša kŭ lila chqze nq el iyotaka
 and then at once man the very angry and 'There sit...'

'she didn't care to do that, and immediately he became very angry, saying "Do it..."'

- (10) *le anyk ite ewichakiyapi kŭ hecha*
 this on both sides face they are called the that sort

'This man was what is known as Double-Face.'

In (6), (7), and (8) we see *kŭ* used with lexical nouns that reference the main character of the young suitor, who is actually being impersonated by the Double-Face. Since there are no regularly employed pronouns in Lakhota (Rood & Taylor 1996), I propose that *kŭ*-marked nouns fulfill the purpose of continuing reference when a lexical noun is employed.

Compounding the issue, however, is the fact that the entity referenced by *khoškalaka kŭ* and *wichaša kŭ* is NOT the *khoškalaka wq* introduced in (2) – it is the Double-Face. It may be that using *kŭ* in these clauses tips off the listener that there is no true previously mentioned status. That is to say, *kŭ* might mark definite coreferentiality with the original young man, which is in fact not the case.

The overall theme of this story concerns what happens to the woman and what she does (with the help of the beaver) to escape the Double-Face. Her activities figure heavily in the beginning of the narrative: by the time of her second lexical mention in (8), she has been the agent of 14 of the last 18 3SG-marked verbs. This suggests that she is quite identifiable as the topic of the story, making the use of *kŭ* unnecessary.

To sum up my explanation for the use of *kj* in (6) - (8), in spite of the prior mention, I propose that since there has not been any major change of theme, action, or important participants, there is no reason to use *kʔu*. Since the entity being referenced with *khoʂkalaka* and *wiĉhasa* has remained constant, in spite of the impersonation, the use of *kj* preserves topic continuity, while the use of *kʔu* would indicate that the listener should look somewhere other than the immediately preceding narrative to identify the referents.

Let us now also look at the referential distance (RD) measures for the characters in this part of the story. Table 2 is based on Table 1, with referential distance measures added. Measures for the first section of the narrative are boxed.

<i>khoʂkalaka</i> 'young man'			<i>ĉhapala</i> 'beaver'			<i>wikhoʂkalaka</i> 'young woman'		
Line	Article	RD	Line	Article	RD	Line	Article	RD
(2)	wə	-				(1)	wə	-
(6)	kj	4	(6)	wə	-			
(7)	kj	1						
(8)	kj	2				(8)	kj	1
(10)	ĉʔu ⁶	4						
(13)	kj	1						
(17)	kj	4	(18)	kʔu	20			
			(19)	kʔu	6			
(20)	kʔu ⁷	12	(21)	kʔu	9			
			(22)	kj	4	(22)	kʔu	9
(23)	kʔu	20	(24)	kʔu	7			

Table 2: Referential distance measures for the three main characters

The boxed area of Table 2 shows that the first several mentions of the young man and young woman characters show referential distances of four or fewer clauses. As stated in Givón (1983: 11), 'The shorter is the gap of absence, the easier is topic identification.' If topic identification here is easy, then, it seems logical that the coding device chosen would be the unmarked one, reserving the marked morpheme for situations where topic identification is more difficult. These lexical nouns all occur with *kj*, supporting my hypothesis that *kj* is the unmarked, default definite article.

Referential Distance as a Necessary Condition for *kʔu*. At line (11), we find *kʔu* with a referential distance of only four clauses, the same as several *kʔi*-marked nouns. This usage occurs when the young woman discovers that the man she has been traveling with is not her beloved.

- (11) *khoʃkalaka wə waʃtelake čʔu⁸ ehək'u he le*
 young man a she loved the-past it appeared that one this
- eʃni kʔi nakeš hehəl slolyi*
 it was not the at last then she knew

‘Now she knew that this was not that handsome young man she loved’

I believe that the proper English translation of this relative clause is ‘the young man that she had loved.’ *wə* appears because in Lakshota, the heads of relative clauses are always indefinite (Rood & Taylor 1996). The *kʔu*, in addition to marking the relative clause, refers back to the previously mentioned young man (line (2)). The fact that this person is not the woman’s beloved young man is intended to be a surprising element in the story – or as surprising as it can be, given that these tales are well-known throughout the community (Deloria 1932: IX). Until this point, the story has ostensibly been about a young woman eloping with her beloved. Now, however, it becomes a story about a woman trapped by a horrible monster. This would, I believe, qualify as a break in all three of the major aspects of discourse continuity identified in Givón (1983): thematic, action, and topics/participants continuity. The thematic discontinuity is described above; the action discontinuity is that instead of traveling willingly, the woman is now being forced to accompany the Double-Face; topic/participant discontinuity occurs because the man is now known by all not to be the suitor, but the Double-Face. Therefore, I contend that in spite of the low referential distance evidenced by this instance of *kʔu*, it is still marking discontinuity (and doing double duty as the relative clause marker, although such a marker is not required in Lakshota).

It is necessary to explain the occurrence of *kʔu* with such a low referential distance because the average referential distance for nouns marked with *kʔu* is 10.9, while that of *kʔi*-marked nouns is only 2.4. It is interesting to note, however, that both the smallest and the largest referential distances occur with a *kʔu*-marked relative clause. Because of this, I computed average referential distances both with and without the relative clauses. The results appear in Table 3.

Average RD including <i>kʔu</i> -marked relative clauses	<i>kʔi</i> 2.41	<i>kʔu</i> 10.88
Range	1-4	4-20
Average RD excluding <i>kʔu</i> -marked relative clauses	2.41	10.50
Range	1-4	6-20

Table 3: Difference in average referential distance for *kʔi*- and *kʔu*-marked nouns

As we can see, the difference in average referential distance when excluding the relative clauses is not noteworthy. What is overwhelmingly apparent, however, is the difference between the average referential distances for *kʔi*-marked and *kʔu*-marked nouns. As might be expected, the *kʔu*-marked nouns show a greater range of referential distances, from six to the maximum of twenty, even using the more conservative figures obtained by excluding the relative clauses. I propose that this is the case because the use of *kʔu* is a stylistic choice left up to the speaker, given that certain necessary conditions are met. At least one of these necessary conditions appears to be a relatively long time since last mention, as measured by referential distance.

Kidnapped by the Monster: Lines (12)-(17). In (13), *wičhaša kʔi* is again used to refer to the Double-Face.

- (12) *iyuweñ khinazipi ... yʔkha el khipi*
 across arriving they stopped ... and so there they arrived home

‘they stood on the farther shore now... and they arrived at his home’⁹

- (13) *yʔkha hecheg.lala wichaša kʔi - mañwa yelo. che heyomicile ye mistimikte -eya*
 then instantly man the ‘I am sleepy. So hunt lice for me, I will sleep’ he said

‘Right away the man said, “I’m sleepy. So put me to sleep by hunting lice in my hair.”’

By now, we know what the Double-Face is, and we know he has taken the young woman prisoner. In lines (11) and (12), the only lexical noun that appears is *khoškalaka wq* (11), discussed in the previous section. In (12), the verbs are marked for plural (*-pi*), ‘they stopped’ and

(19) *hečena* *čhapala* *kʔu* *he* *khoḥa* *chayaksaksa*
 immediately little beaver the-past that meantime cutting trees with his mouth

iyak̄i *na* *cheyakthupi* *wə* *ithap* *kañ*
 he ran and bridge a promptly making he completed

‘Immediately, the little beaver ran about, cutting down trees with his teeth, and in no time at all he had a bridge finished...’

The beaver is a new participant in the action at this point, since he has played no active role in the story before now. From here on, however, he and his actions become pivotal. He builds the bridge which the woman needs to cross the lake and escape the Double-Face, and his dismantling of the bridge causes the Double-Face to fall to his death (in line (21), discussed below). Thus, I argue that he is an important character. In addition, in spite of the fact that *čhapala kʔu* occurs in both of the lines numbered (18) and (19), remember that Deloria’s numbering system is not based on either clauses or sentences. As seen in Table 4, the referential distance for *čhapala kʔu* in (19) is six clauses.

	Line	Article	Referential distance
Beaver	(18)	<i>kʔu</i>	20
	(19)	<i>kʔu</i>	6
	(21)	<i>kʔu</i>	9
Double-Face	(20)	<i>kʔu</i>	12

Table 4: Referential distances in lines (18)-(21)

By line (20), the young woman and the beaver have made their escape, but suddenly the Double-Face (*kʔu*) reappears, coming after them.

(20) *tuwa* *lazataḥa* *pəpə* *u* *chəke* *ekta* *etuwə* *yukha*
 someone from behind shouting he was coming so towards she looked and lo

anuk *ite* *kʔu* *he* *e*
 on both sides face the-past that one it was

‘someone came shouting from the rear and it was the Double-Face who came along,’

In spite of the fact that all the previous lexical mentions of the Double-Face have been done with *kj*, here the use of *kʔu* is not only justified, but necessary. Here, the action of the story shifts from ‘the young woman escaping’ to ‘the Double-Face chasing the young woman.’ This dramatic action discontinuity signals a topic shift and is explicitly marked by *kʔu*. From Table 4 we can see that the Double-Face has not figured in the action for some time; the referential distance is twelve clauses.

The final line of this section of the narrative dealing with the escape and the death of the Double-Face is (21). This excerpt is longer than the others since it contains the denouement of the story.

- (21) *nə* *iš* *eya* *wana* *cheyakthupi* *kʔu* *he* *aliwachj* *k'eyaš* *lila*
 and he too now bridge the-past that to step on-he tried but very
ocik'ayela *kj* *u* *iwqyak* *hʔahiya* *u* *chake* *khohq*
 narrow the on account of carefully slowly he came so meantime
chapala *kʔu* *he* *thahenatahq* *g.lužužu* *ayi* *na* *chokaya*
 little beaver the-past that one from this side taking apart his own he went and midway
u *hcehqal* *okapsakya* *chake* *m.ni* *t'a*
 he was coming just then he caused it to break in so water he died

‘He stopped at the shore, and then he too tried to walk on the bridge, but because it was very narrow he had to walk very slowly, picking his way with care; so the beaver meantime started to undo the bridge at his end. When the Double-Face was halfway across, it broke down, dropping the man into the midst of the lake where he drowned.’

One interesting thing about this part of the story is that the *kʔu*-marked character switches rapidly. First, we have *anuk ite kʔu* (20); then *cheyakthupi kʔu* and *chapala kʔu* (21), then *wikhoškalaka kʔu* ahead in (22). *chapala kʔu* in (21) is a topic shift from the narrowness of the bridge, which is slowing the Double-Face down, to the beaver. This shift is very important, since the beaver is now shown to be the agent of the Double-Face’s destruction. It is the beaver’s action of taking apart the bridge (*glužužu*, ‘taking apart his own’) that kills Double-Face.

The bridge itself occurs here with *kʔu* because it is, for a brief moment, a very important ‘character’ in the narrative. The beaver builds the bridge so the woman can continue her escape over the lake. Because the bridge is very narrow, however, the Double-Face cannot easily walk across it. The extra time that it takes the Double-Face to pick his way across gives the beaver time to dismantle the bridge. As the instrument of the monster’s destruction, I believe it is safe to say

that the bridge is an important character. Furthermore, the bridge has a referential distance of six clauses.

The Homecoming: Lines (22)–(24). In (22), the beaver appears as *čhapala kḷ*, while the young woman is marked with *kḷ*.

- (22) *hechena wikhoškalaka kḷ chapala kḷ alokiksoḷi nḷ*
 immediately young woman the-past beaver the she took her own up in her arms and
lila ḷyḷk eceku nḷ thiweg.na g.licu
 very running that way always-she came and into camp she came back

‘At once the young girl took her pet in her arms and ran hard all the way homeward and soon she entered the camp, to safety...’

Although the young woman has not been mentioned for awhile, she is now again the topic of the narrative – what she does now that the Double-Face is dead is again what the story is ‘about.’ The action of the narrative had been tightly focused on the event of the Double-Face trying to cross the bridge. The last inclusion of the woman in the action was in line (20), when she looked back and saw the Double-Face coming as she was crossing the bridge the beaver had built across the lake – a referential distance of nine clauses. *kḷ* is used to focus attention back onto the young woman and what she is going to do now.

The beaver, on the other hand, appears also in this line. His referential distance is only four clauses, however, which in this narrative appears to be the upper bound for *kḷ*-marked nouns. However, only one noun per clause is allowed to be *kḷ*-marked (Rood 1984).

The final mention of the young man appears in a relative clause in (23).

- (23) *khoškalaka wḷ anḷk ite kḷ eekyze čḷu he*
 young man a on both sides face the to be-he pretended the-past that one
yuonihayḷ kḷupi chḷke ḷiḷ.nayḷ
 with due ceremony they gave to him so she took him for a husband

‘...the right young man for whom the Double-Face substituted himself was told he might marry the girl; so it happened.’

I believe the best translation of this clause is ‘the young man whom the Double-Face had pretended to be.’ The *čḷu* here closes the relative clause, adds the element of past action (Rood &

Taylor 1996; Rood p.c.) and ultimately references the young man. *khoškalaka* appears with *wq* because it is the head of the relative clause, as explained above. *kj* marks *anuk ite* because the topic shift is not to the Double-Face, but to the (original) young man who is now to be given in marriage to the young woman. This young man was first referenced back in (2), although I am unsure how many of the mentions since then have been truly to him, or to the Double-Face. In any case, the young man meets the criteria for *kʔy* here: he is previously mentioned, has a referential distance of 20+ clauses, and the narrative now concerns how he has finally managed to marry the young woman.

The final appearance of the beaver in the story is again marked with *kʔy*.

(24) *chapala kʔy he theħhilapi nq taya yuhapila*
 little beaver the-past that one he was loved and comfortably they kept the little one

chake wichothe kj he ataya el waykaicʔilala
 so tribal camp the that entire in he regarded himself as a privileged little dweller

‘The little beaver was so well-loved and well-treated in that camp that he came finally to consider himself the most privileged citizen in the entire tribe.’

The beaver here has a referential distance of seven clauses. Since this is also the final line of the narrative, it is difficult to argue for any kind of discontinuity, although the story has not previously concerned itself in any way with the beaver’s social standing or happiness.

Previously Mentioned *kj*-marked Nouns

The bulk of this paper has dealt with the tracing of three main characters through a narrative, and attempting to explain how their changing importance to the story is marked for the hearer by use or non-use of *kʔy*. Although I have attempted to explain why *kʔy* need not be used in every case where the referent is previously mentioned, there are some slightly puzzling instances of the use of *kj* with referents that are quite clearly previously mentioned, some of which also have high referential distances. In lines (14) to (17), *iya* ‘stones’ and *phehj* ‘hair’ are each mentioned twice, yet always marked with *kj*. This difference can be accounted for in the following way.

The mentions of the hair and stones occur after the woman realizes she has been duped by the Double-Face. She is afraid of him, and when he orders her to hunt lice for him she obeys. She discovers he has small toads in his hair instead of lice, and she kills them by smashing them between two stones she finds lying nearby. The Double-Face quickly falls asleep, and the woman takes his hair and ties it to several different tipi-poles so she can make her escape.

The stones are only introduced to explain how she killed the toads, and are not in any way I can see central to the story. I believe this is why their second mention is not marked with *kʔu*. Additionally, the referential distance is only one clause. There ought to be no difficulty in identifying which stones are under discussion. Most nouns in Lakota need to have an article accompanying them, and I have provided evidence that *kʔi* is the unmarked form of the definite article.

Neither is the Double-Face's hair itself central to the action of the story. The Double-Face himself is an important character, but in spite of the fact that the woman was able to buy some time for her escape by tying his hair to the tipi-poles, no mention at all is made of how the Double-Face freed himself and caught up to her. The second occurrence of *phehʔi kʔi*, however, does have a referential distance of nine clauses, suggesting that *kʔu* might have been used here.

The final problem concerns the use of *hʔake kʔi*, 'parents', in (23). The woman's parents were first introduced in line (4); they have a referential distance of over 20 clauses. Again, however, I would argue that they are not important to the story at hand. Givón (1983) also points out that certain topics are always available to speakers, and gives kinship terms as one example. It might thus be possible to say that the young woman's parents need not receive any kind of special marking even when they re-enter the narrative after a long absence, because every character is naturally expected to have parents.

'What one observes about these permanently-filed topics and their discourse behavior is that they are much less predictable than other definite topics in terms of their position within the thematic paragraph. They thus often constitute exceptions to the text measurements that reveal the rules which govern the discourse distribution of topics that are not filed as permanently and as uniquely.' (Givón 1983:10)

Conclusion and Directions for Further Research

In this paper, I have presented evidence that the definite articles *kʔu* and *kʔi* in Lakota are more adequately described as topic discontinuity and default markers, respectively. I contend that *kʔi* is the default article, used when thematic, action, and topic/participant continuity is to be preserved. In the narrative studied here, the average referential distances for the two definite articles turned out to be quite striking: 2.4 for *kʔi*-marked nouns; 10.8 for *kʔu*-marked nouns. Thus *kʔu* is used to mark a shift to a previously established topic/participant, and also seems to have (at least) the following two conditions for use: 1) A referential distance that is relatively great; and 2) the noun receiving the *kʔu*-marking must play an important role in the story at that point. I have shown that we must take all aspects of discourse continuity into account when assessing the

'importance' of any character: the overall theme of the discourse, the main action in the discourse at that point, and the appearance and agency of the participants.

When studying reference, especially in spoken narrative, we must take the intentions and knowledge of the speaker into account. The speaker, in turn, takes the knowledge and expectations of the listener into account when introducing and continuing reference to actors and events. Speakers have a limited number of grammatical means at their disposal with which to accomplish this, and in spoken narrative, they must also contend with the limited working memory of their listeners. If the language provides a means, it seems likely that speakers would exploit these means to more clearly mark the actors and events in a story in order to reduce the load on the hearer.

A speaker must decide what a listener knows and remembers at any given point in a story, and make referential choices based on this decision. The fact that it is ultimately the speaker who chooses the form to use introduces a further element of indeterminacy into topic marking research. It may be that *kʔu* is never required, only that sometimes its use can ease comprehension. The methodology used in this study is currently being applied to other Lakhota narratives because I believe that finding the conditions on *kʔu*'s felicitous use, if not its mandatory use, is a worthwhile endeavor.

NOTES

¹ Although what I propose as a function of *kʔu* is similar to a switch-reference device, I concur with the arguments presented in Dahlstrom (1984) against using this term: namely, that switch-reference is canonically concerned with verbal morphology, and additionally, that in Lakhota the use of these markers appears to be optional, which is not the case in other switch-reference systems.

² It need not be overtly present; Lakhota, for example, has no morpheme marking third-person singular on verbs, but being the agent or patient of a verb would still count as being its semantic argument.

³ In spite of this being a nearly 20-year-old quote, I know of no measures proposing to "rigorously quantify" this kind of information.

⁴ In line 10 it is discovered that this is the Double-Face, not the young man.

⁵ This is when *anyk ite* is used.

⁶ In line 10 it is discovered that this is the Double-Face, not the young man. *čʔu* is a phonologically conditioned variant of *kʔu*

⁷ This is when *anyk ite* is used.

⁸ $\check{c}ʔy$ is the palatalized form of $kʔy$, which appears because of the preceding front, ablauted vowel *e*.

⁹ The second phrase is my translation.

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