Nominal possession and pluractionality in Seri

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Cmiique iitom / Seri (isolate)

- Seri is spoken in Sonora, Mexico in two villages: *Haxöl Iihom / El Desemboque* and *Socaaix / Punta Chueca*

- It is spoken by approximately 900 speakers (Ethnologue 2007)
- It has a rich system of number distinctions in verbs, with morphological and functional parallels in nouns

Parallels between nouns and verbs

This language marks several number distinctions in both its nouns and verbs

We show that one such distinction---pluractionality---is found in both nouns and verbs.

Roadmap

1. Verbs
2. Nouns
3. Transcategorial pluractionality
4. Typological parallels
5. Conclusion

VERBS

Seri verbs

- Number distinctions in verbs; see Marlett (1988, 2016) and Moser & Marlett (2010)

  - Subject number
    - Singular
    - Plural

  - Event number
    - Neutral
    - Pluractional
      - Multiple; see Cabredo Hofherr, Pasquereau, O'Meara (2018)
      - Distributional; see Pasquereau and Cabredo Hofherr (2020)

  > **Pluractionality** (Newman 1980, 2012; Cabredo Hofherr & Laca 2012)
  > The marking on verbs of event plurality.

5

Seri verbs: subject number

- Singular subject

  Moxima   sahmees   hizcoi   h-yoohit.
  yesterday   orange   DEM.PL   1SG-RLS.YO.eat
  'Yesterday I ate these oranges.'

  Moxima   sahmees   hizcoi   h-yoohitim.
  yesterday   orange   DEM.PL   1SG-RLS.YO.eat.MULT
  'Yesterday I ate these oranges (over time).'

  * **Moxima   sahmees   hizcoi   h-yoiitoj.**
  yesterday   orange   DEM.PL   1SG-RLS.YO.eat.PL
  Int. 'Yesterday I ate these oranges.'

  * **Moxima   sahmees   hizcoi   h-yoiitolca.**
  yesterday   orange   DEM.PL   1SG-RLS.YO.eat.PL.MULT
  Int. 'Yesterday I ate these oranges (over time).'

6

Seri verbs: subject number

• Plural subject

* **Moxima   sahmees hizcoi   ha-yoohit.**
yesterday   orange   DEM.PL   1PL-RLS.YO.eat
Int. 'Yesterday we ate these oranges.'

* **Moxima   sahmees hizcoi   ha-yoohitim.**
yesterday   orange   DEM.PL   1PL-RLS.YO.eat.MULT
Int. 'Yesterday we ate these oranges (over time).'

Moxima   sahmees   hizcoi   ha-yoiitoj.
yesterday   orange   DEM.PL   1PL-RLS.YO.eat.PL
'Yesterday we ate these oranges.'

Moxima   sahmees   hizcoi   ha-yoiitolca.
yesterday   orange   DEM.PL   1PL-RLS.YO.eat.PL.MULT
'Yesterday we ate these oranges (over time).'

7

Seri verbs: event number

• Neutral form is underspecified

Juan quih xiica an iqueaacalca   coi   hant   iyootox.
Juan   DEF   suitcases   DEF.PL   down   3>3.RLYO.extend
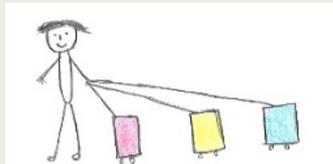'Juan dragged the suitcases.'

Context 1: true
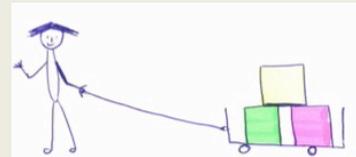Distribution over times: ✓
Distribution over spaces: ?

Context 2: true
Distribution over times: ✗
Distribution over spaces: ✓

Context 3: true
Distribution over times: ✗
Distribution over spaces: ✗

8

4

Seri verbs: event number

- Neutral form is underspecified

Juan   quih   xiica an iqueaacalca
Juan   DEF   suitcases
coi   hant   iyootox.
DEF.PL   down   3>3.RLYO.extend
'Juan dragged the suitcases.'

Context 1: true
Distribution over times: ✓
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Seri verbs: event number

- Neutral form is underspecified

Juan   quih   xiica an iqueaacalca
Juan   DEF   suitcases
coi   hant   iyootox.
DEF.PL   down   3>3.RLYO.extend
'Juan dragged the suitcases.'

Context 2: true
Distribution over times: ✗
Distribution over spaces: ✓

10

Seri verbs: event number

- Neutral form is underspecified

Juan   quih   xiica an iqueaacalca
Juan   DEF   suitcases
coi   hant   iyootox.
DEF.PL   down   3>3.RLYO.extend
'Juan dragged the suitcases.'

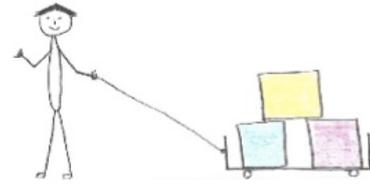Context 3: true
Distribution over times: ✗
Distribution over spaces: ✗

11

Seri verbs: multiple

- Multiple form requires multiple events which are, at least, distributed over times

Juan   quih   xiica an iqueaacalca   coi   hant   iyootoxim.
Juan   DEF   suitcases   DEF.PL   down   3>3.RLYO.extend.MULT
'Juan dragged the suitcases.'

Context 1: true
Distribution over times: ✓
Distribution over spaces: ?

Context 2: false
Distribution over times: ✗
Distribution over spaces: ✓

Context 3: false
Distribution over times: ✗
Distribution over spaces: ✗

12

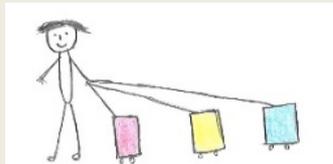## Seri verbs: distributional

- Distribution form requires multiple events which are, at least, distributed over spaces

Juan   quih   xiica an iqueaacalca   coi   hant   iyootyax.
Juan   DEF   suitcases   DEF.PL   down   3>3.RLYO.extend.DIST
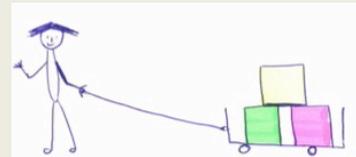'Juan dragged the suitcases.'

Context 1: true

Distribution over times: ✓
Distribution over spaces: ?

Context 2: true

Distribution over times: ✗
Distribution over spaces: ✓

Context 3: false

Distribution over times: ✗
Distribution over spaces: ✗

13
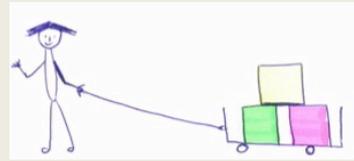
Seri verbs

- Two cross-classifying features
  - Subject number [singular, plural]
  - Event number [neutral, multiple, distributional]

- In principle, 6 cells but in actuality, if there is a separate distributional form, it is in the singular subject paradigm

'drag'		event number	
	NEUTRAL	PLURACTIONAL	
		MULTIPLE	DISTRIBUTIONAL
singular	**hant iyootox**	**hant iyootoxim**	**hant iyootyax**
plural	**hant iyootyajc**	**hant iyootyaxlca**	

(subject number)

14

7

Disclaimer: no one-to-one mapping ! (Baerman 2016)

SG NEUTRAL	SG MULT	SG DIST	PL NEUTRAL	PL MULT	
-taxnij	**-taxanl**		**-taxnal-ca**	**-taxnal-coj**	'scold'
-atox	**-atoxim**	**-atyax**	**-atyaj-c**	**-atyax-lca**	'stretch'
-tahoiij		**-tahoiil-c**	**-tahoiil-coj**		'make tubular'
-tzam	**-tzam-tim**	**-tzamlqu-im**	**-tzamlc-am**		'corner, attack'
-tanamj	**-tanaml-c**		**-anaml-coj**	**-anaml-cam**	'hurry'
-tazaain-im	**-tazaiin-im**		**-azaail-cam**	**-azaiil-cam**	'anchor'
-tpoc	**-tpoct-im**		**-tpocl-im**	**-tpocal-am**	'fall'
-tpazj-c	**-tpaxlax**		**-tpazlax**	**-tpazlax-lca**	'be scattered'
-tineezil-ca	**-tineezil-im**		**-tineezil-coj**	**-tineezil-am**	'be raspy'

-tim ▢   **-c** ▢   **-ca** ▢   **-lca** ▢   **-coj** ▢   **-tam** ▢   **-cam** ▢

All the plural suffixes in the verb system (except three) are also found in the nominal system.

15

NOUNS

16

Seri nouns

- Nouns employ largely the same system of plural markers as verbs. But with most nouns they just mean 'plural', without any of the further nuances found with verbs

SINGULAR		PLURAL	
hehe	'plant'	**hehet**	'plants'
noosi	'mourning dove'	**noosilc**	'mourning doves'
hapxa	'cottontail rabbit'	**hapxalc**	'cottontail rabbits'
haaho	'road'	**haaholcam**	'roads'

17

Seri nouns

- So-called possessed nouns have a plural form that indicates plurality of
  - the possessor, and/or
  - the possessum

SINGULAR		PLURAL	
yaaco	'her house'	**yaacöt**	'her houses; their house(s)'
itrooqui	'her car'	**itrooquij**	'her cars; their car(s)'
azaac	'her older sister'	**azaacla**	'her older sisters; their older sister(s)'
isla	'her ear'	**isloj**	'her ears; their ear(s)'

- Singular means possessor and possessum are singular
- Plural means at least possessor or possessum is plural

18

Seri nouns

- Some possessed nouns have another plural form that indicates plurality of the possessed item with a singular possessor

SG POSSESSOR				PL POSSESSOR	
SG POSSESSUM		PL POSSESSUM			
isc	'her louse'	**isjc**	'her lice'	**isjoj**	'their louse/lice'
ito	'her eye'	**itoj**	'her eyes'	**itolcoj**	'their eye(s)'
iztim	'her hipbone'	**iztaj**	'her hipbones'	**iztalca**	'their hipbone(s)'
inaail	'her skin'	**inaailc**	'her skins'	**inaaaj**	'their skin(s)'

For a more detailed description see Moser & Moser (1976), Marlett (1981, 1990)

19

TRANSCATEGORIAL PLURACTIONALITY

20

Analytic proposal

Claims

- pluractionality is not limited to verbs (Pasquereau 2019, 2021; Henderson, Pasquereau, Powell 2021)

- so-called "singular possessor plural possessum forms" are in fact **singular possessor pluractional forms**

	Sg subject/possessor		Pl subject/possessor
	neutral	pluractional	
'burn'	**quitaj**	**quitalc**	**quitalcoj**
'3poss.uncle'	**amahaj**	**amahalc**	**amahalcoj**

Analytic proposal

So-called "singular possessor plural possessum forms" are in fact **singular possessor pluractional forms**

Intuitively, pluractionality requires a plurality of pairings :

- between eventualities of V-ing and participants, times, spaces, etc

Singular subject pluractional verb form

Siimet   quih   tazo   yita-lc.

bread   DET   one   burn-PLUR

One bread is cooked (has burnt spots here and there).

Various states of being burnt are individuated via being paired with parts of the bread.

burning ———————— $part_a$ of $bread_1$
burning ———————— $part_b$ of $bread_1$
burning ———————— $part_c$ of $bread_1$

Analytic proposal

So-called "singular possessor plural possessum forms" are in fact **singular possessor pluractional forms**

Intuitively, pluractionality requires a plurality of pairings :

- between possessum and possessor (more technically, between states of having a possessum and possessor)

Singular possessor: my uncles

Himaha-lc	coi	cacöla	iha.
1POSS.uncle-PLUR	DEF.PL	SBJ.NMLZ.be_tall.PL	DCL

My uncles are tall.

If possessor is singular, the only way to have more than one pairing is to have more than one possessum

$uncle_1$
$uncle_2$ ——— me
$uncle_3$
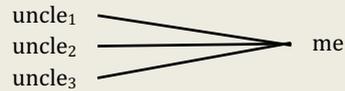
Argument 1

So-called "singular possessor plural possessum" forms can be used in cases where the possessum is not plural, but can be conceptualized as "distributed".

Singular possessor: my oesophagus

Ihyam-coj	quih	xojizi.
1POSS.oesophagus-PLUR	DEF	EMPH.ache

My oesophagus hurts all over.

If possessor is singular, the only way to have more than one pairing is to have more than one possessum

$part_a$ of $oesophagus_1$
$part_b$ of $oesophagus_1$ ——— me
$part_c$ of $oesophagus_1$
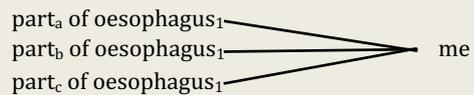
Argument 2

So-called "singular possessor plural possessum" stems correspond to singular subject pluractional forms via verbalization, even when the meanings have become unrelatable.

possessor/subject	possessum	noun	verb	event #
singular	singular	**inaail** 'his skin'	**iyinaail** 'has X empty'	neut
	plural	**inaailc** 'his skins'	**iyinaailc** 'has Xs empty'	dist
plural	singular	**inaaaj** 'their skin(s)'	**iyinaaaj** 'have X empty'	neut
	plural			

Pluractionality expresses distribution of possession

TYPOLOGY

26

ǂHoan (Kx'a)

Prefix **kí-**

- Used with verbs as obligatory accompaniment of the pluractional suffixes -**ǁqo** and -**ču**.

> **Nǀnobo-nǁgà"e**   **'a**   **kyà"o**
> N.   PROG   go
> 'Nǀnobo-nǁgà"e is going."

> **Jefo**   **'a**   **kí-kyà"o-ǁqò**
> J.   PROG   PLUR-go-SEQ
> 'Jeff is walking around.'

> **Jefo**   **kí-ǁq'ao-ču-'a**   **ɬàmk̀ǒe**
> J.   PLUR-stab-REP-PFV   person
> 'Jeff stabbed the person repeatedly.'

(Collins 1998, 2001; Collins & Gruber 2014)

ǂHoan (Kx'a)

Prefix **kí-**

- Used with predicate adjectives and a few intransitive verbs to mark distribution over a plural subject.

> **ǁkà'a-qà**   **kí-kǔru**
> thing-P L   PLUR-hot
> 'The things are hot.'

> **čòǒ!ka'e**   **ki-ǁkà'-'a**   **kì**   **!kôa**   **na**
> people   PLUR-sit-PFV   LINKER   room   in
> 'The people are sitting in the room.'

(Collins 1998, 2001; Collins & Gruber 2014)

ɬHoan (Kx'a)

Prefix **kí-**

- With inalienably possessed nouns, it marks that a plurality of items are possessed. Used in conjunction with noun plural suffixes **-qà** and **-nǀne**.

ɬ'àmkǒe	!kôa		ɬ'àmkǒe	kí-!kôa-qà
person	house		person	PLUR-house-PL
'the person's house'			'the person's houses'	

- Prefix **kí-** on possessed nouns is sensitive to the number of possession relationships as opposed to the number of possessed items per se.

hǐ-sì	ɬhà"ma	hǐ-sì	ɬhà"ma-nǀne	kí-!ka'a	ɬhǐ-ǀkà'a	kí-ɬhà"ma(-nǀne)
bird-DIM	wing	bird-DIM	wing-PL	PLUR-red	bird-DIM.PL	PLUR-wing(-PL)
'The bird's wing'		'The bird's wings are red'			'the birds' wings'	

- 'Wings' are plural for the purposes of suffixation and adjective agreement, but they're possessed a pair at a time.

(Collins 1998, 2001; Collins & Gruber 2014)

Nisgha (Tsimshian)

- "Distributive" prefix **qa-** is used with both verbs and nouns.
- Possessed nouns mark number of both possessor and possessum.
- Prefix **qa-** can be added to specify distribution of possession.

ʔús-iṁ
dog-1PL
'our dog'

ʔas~ʔús-iṁ
PL~dog-1PL
'our dogs'   (one household)

qa-ʔas~ʔús-iṁ
DISTR-PL~dog-1PL
'our dogs'   (several housholds, one or more dog per household)

(Tarpent 1986)

CONCLUSION

31

Main points

In Seri (and perhaps other languages), the same morpheme "pluractionality" combines with both verbs and nouns
- Same exponent on both nouns and verbs
- Same meaning (distribution) with both nouns and verbs

Pluractionality on verbs requires a plurality of event(ualitie)s which, depending on the language, can be individuated by a number of parameters like event participants

In such languages, event plurality therefore entails participant plurality

Similarly pluractionality on possessive nouns in Seri and perhaps other languages can entail a plurality of possessum

¡Haa xah tiipe!