

Pluractionality in ʔayʔajuθəm (Comox-Sliammon)

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ʔayʔajuθəm, an endangered Central Salish language, is interesting from a typological perspective in having multiple types of pluractionality. Of the forty-seven languages Wood (2007) surveys, only six had more than two pluractional morphemes. We analyse three types of pluractionality in ʔayʔajuθəm. Reduplication (CVC and V) marks event-external pluractionality, while pluractionality marked by ablaut is often event-internal.

Event-External Pluractionality: CVC reduplication marks event-external pluractionality, where events must be distributed in both space and time. While the absolutive argument of a transitive verb is often plural, multiple participants are not sufficient for the use of plural reduplication on a verbal predicate.

(1) a. *Context: What if I was going to lock the doors before leaving the house?*

lik•likl-it=t⁰əm tə=ʔiman
PL•lock-CTR=1S.SBJ.FUT DET=door
'I locked the doors.'

b. *Context: I press a button on my keys to lock all the doors of my car.*

{#lik•likl-it/likl-it}=č tə=ʔiman
{#PL•lock-CTR/lock-CTR}=1S.SBJ DET=door
'I locked the doors.'

V reduplication marks event-external pluractionality with events that are distributed in time but need not be distributed in space. For example, the repeated closing of the same window in (2) is restricted spatially to a single location, but necessarily involves temporally distributed events.

(2) a. t<i?>i<t>q-t-as

close<PL><DIM>-CTR-3ERG

He is repeatedly closing it (the window).

Event-Internal Pluractionality: Plural ablaut frequently refers to multiple actions applying to a single object, as shown in (3).

(3) a. čət-t=čx^w b. čat-at=čx^w
 cut-ctr=2S.SBJ cut-CTR=2S.SBJ
 'Cut it (once).' 'Cut it up.'

Having multiple actions affecting a single absolutive argument is a diagnostic for event-internal pluractionality (see e.g. diagnostics in Wood 2007). The pluractionality associated with the ablaut form seems to be less restrictive than with CVC reduplication, however, since it also allows event external readings with multiple absolutive participants.

Discussion: Besides being typologically interesting for having multiple types of pluractionality, ʔayʔajuθəm brings up interesting questions about how we expect multiple types of pluractionality to be distributed in a language. The different forms expressing pluractionality do not neatly divide into distinct subtypes, since the ablaut pluractionality can be used with event external interpretations, raising questions about how languages with multiple types of pluractionality divide up the semantic space.

References

Wood, Ellen. 2007. The semantic typology of pluractionals. Doctoral dissertation, UC Berkeley.