

## Expressing a multiplicity of events in Macuxi

Gregory Antono  
University of Toronto

The present ongoing study investigates how a multiplicity of events, also referred to as pluractionality or verbal plurality, is expressed in Macuxi (ISO 639-1: mbc; Cariban), a South American indigenous language spoken in Brazil, Guyana and Venezuela. Cross-linguistically, the multiplicity of an action can be expressed by means of pluractional specialized morphemes affixed on verbs and adverbs (Lasersohn 1995), or reduplication (Wood 2007). Previous work on Macuxi (Carson 1981; Abbott 1991) claimed that the iterative suffix *-pîti*, as in (1), indicates a repetition of actions. In this literature, verbal reduplication (2) is mentioned but scarcely described, and is associated with the interpretation of multiple events.

- |     |                           |     |                           |          |               |
|-----|---------------------------|-----|---------------------------|----------|---------------|
| (1) | ø-esenupa- <b>pîti-pî</b> | (2) | anî- <b>patî-patî</b>     | João-ya  | tuuke-teeka   |
|     | 1SG-study-ITER-PST        |     | pro- <b>hit~hit</b>       | Joao-ERG | often         |
|     | ‘I study and study’       |     | ‘Who has hit João often?’ |          | (Carson 1981) |

The present work is concerned with the following research questions: (1) *What are the verbs that allow reduplication?* (2) *Is there an impact of aktionsart (lexical aspect)?* (3) *What is the function of reduplication in the language?*

**Methods** Data was elicited from two native speakers of Macuxi in Boa Vista, Roraima, Brazil. 3 separate tasks were implemented. Grammaticality judgment tasks were conducted to test for an impact of *aktionsart*. Classes of verbs were divided into each category of lexical aspect: *activity*, *accomplishment*, *achievement*, *semelfactives* and *states*. Truth value judgment tasks incorporated narratives and pictures with overarching contexts to test whether the consultants accepted reduplicated verbs or the *-pîti* in these scenarios. Two variables were manipulated: (a) Singular or plural subject and (b) Single or multiple events. Lastly, felicity judgment tasks were conducted. Consultants were presented with two sentences: one containing a reduplicated verb and another containing the iterative morpheme, in a given context. They were then asked which of the two constructions sounded more appropriate. 42 verbs were tested in total. Fieldwork data is also supplemented with data from existing Macuxi narratives, including *Kaikusiyamî*’, *Wairayamî*’ *moropai Maikanyamî*’(2011), as well as *Lendas Macuxís* (1951).

**Results** The data elicited with Macuxi speakers suggests that there is an impact of *aktionsart*: activity and semelfactive verbs are more likely to accept reduplication than other classes of verbs. Reduplication (3) typically encodes intensity of events, and does not appear to be directly linked to a cardinality of events, only marginally encoding multiple events. This interpretation associated with reduplication was not previously described in the literature of the language. The *-pîti* suffix (4), does encode a multiplicity or cardinality of events – one of which is habituality.

- |     |   |                          |              |     |   |                      |              |
|-----|---|--------------------------|--------------|-----|---|----------------------|--------------|
| (3) | Urisan-yamî   | <b>eka’temî~eka’temî</b> | iwei kaisirî | (4) | Urisan-yamî   | <b>eka’temî-pîti</b> | iwei kaisirî |
|     | Girl-PL   | <b>run~run</b>           | every day    |     | Girl-PL   | <b>run-ITER</b>      | every day    |
|     | The girls run every day (with a focus on the intensity of the running; not habitual). |                          |              |     | The girls run every day. (focus on habitual action) |                      |              |

The present findings complement the typological work of Mattioli (2019), who posits that pluractional constructions across Cariban languages share similar semantic functions. Indeed, the Macuxi *-pîti* morpheme matches that of similar constructions in Carib (*-poty*), Akawaio (*-pödi*)

and Panare (-*pëti*). Beyond the works of Müller and Sanchez-Mendes (2008), Salanova (2011) and Lima (2017), few studies on pluractionality in Brazilian indigenous languages have been done. Based on original fieldwork data, supplemented by textual data from existing narratives, this work would be the first thorough description and analysis of pluractionality in Macuxi.

### **Glossing abbreviations**

PST	Past
ITER	Iterative
ERG	Ergative

### **References**

- Abbott, M. (1991). Macushi. In *Handbook of Amazonian Languages*, vol 3. p23-160.
- Carson, Neusa M. 1981. Phonology and morphosyntax of Macuxi (Carib). University of Kansas. Doctoral dissertation
- Cusic, David Dowell. 1981. Verbal Plurality and Aspect. Ph.D. thesis, Stanford University.
- Lasersohn, Peter. 1995. Plurality, conjunction and events. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Lima, Suzi. 2017. On the acquisition of distributivity in Yudja. *Revista de Estudos da Linguagem*, Belo Horizonte, v.25, n.3, p. 1613-1646.
- MacDonell, Ronaldo B. 2011. *Kaikusiyamî', Wairayamî' moropai Maikanyamî' (Onças, antas e raposas / Jaguars, tapirs and foxes): Mitos do povo makuxi registrados pelo monge beneditino Dom Alcuíno Meyer entre 1926 e 1948.*
- Mattiola, Simone (2019) *Typology of Pluractional Constructions in the Languages of the World*. Volume 125 of *Typological Studies in Language*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Mayer, R. 1951. Lendas Macuxis. *Journal De La Société Des Américanistes*, 40, nouvelle sÉrie, 67-87. Online.
- Müller, A. & Mendes-Sanchez, L. 2008. "Pluractionality in Karitiana". In: Grønn, Atle (ed.): *Proceedings of SuB12*, Oslo: ILOS (ISBN 978-82-92800-00-3), 442–454.
- Salanova, Andrés Pablo. 2011. Reduplication and verbal number in Mëbengokre. *Reduplication in Indigenous Languages of South America*, ed. Gale Goodwin Gómez and Hein van der Voort, pp. 247–72. Leiden: Brill.
- Wood, Esther Jane. 2007. The semantic typology of pluractionality. PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley.