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THE SEMANTICS OF EVENT PLURALITY IN TURKISH

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Özet: Çoğulluğun adların yanı sıra eylemlerle ilişkisi olduğu, kimi dillerde çoğul anlamın aktarımının eylem yapılarına eklenen çoğulluk ekleriyle yapıldığı alanyazınında tanımlanmıştır. Bu yazıda, eylem çoğulluğunun Türkçede nasıl belirtildiği, olası biçimsel gerçekleşmelerin neler olabileceği, farklı çoğul biçimlerin birbirinden farklı anlam özelliklerini nasıl betimlediği tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: *olay yapısı, eylem niceleme, çoğulluk.*

Abstract*:* Plurality as encoded by verbal constituents is argued to be expressing finer semantic distinctions. such semantic categories are identified relatively early by a number of linguists and has been analyzed in detail in various studies. The current study determines the formal means of pluractionality in Turkish and semantic distinctions that these different structures commonly express.

Keywords: *event structure, verbal plurality, pluractionality.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the early 1920s, independently of each other, two prominent linguists, Jespersen in Europe, and Boas in America, observed the same phenomena: for Jespersen (1924:210), 'the plural of the verbal idea' (*verba tantum pluralia*) is to be distinguished from the plural of the nominals; and, for Boas (1911), different verbal stems for singular and plural are not related to the number of their nominal arguments. Following these early observations, the latter studies on verbal plurality focus more on its semantics rather than its grammar as plurality in the verbal domain displays wide range of meanings compared to plurality in the nominal domain. In the European tradition, Dressler (1968) and Xrakovskij (1997), among others, study verbal plurality within the general category of number and propose detailed classifications for its various semantic functions. Studies on American Indian languages also analyse verbal plurality in terms of their quantificational semantics (Cusic 1981; Durie 1986; Mithun 1988). Emphasis on semantics produces two different approaches (Dolinina (1999): the pro-*aspect* view maintains that aspectual features of the verb are influenced by quantification, yielding classes like iterative, frequantative, and continuative. The pro-*number* view, on the other hand, argues that quantification is a semantico-logical parameter and it is independent of other parameters[1]. More recently, Newman (1990:53) uses the term *pluractionality* to refer to verbal plurality observed mainly in African languages, and he notes that "the essential semantic characterization of such verbs is almost always plurality or multiplicity of the verb's action."

In this study, we will present a descriptive account of verbal plurality in Turkish and will focus on the emerging semantic classes. Our analysis will contrast two forms of verbal plurality in Turkish: (i) morphological verbal plurality, commonly marked by complex derivational suffixes

1. Lasersohn (1995:241) proposes a general formula for the semantics of verbal plurality, noting that it cannot capture the variety of meanings expressed cross-linguistically. Tatevosov (2004) presents an analysis of Chuvash *-kala* mainly adopting scalar semantic approach. Aksan and Aksan (2006) also analyses a similar data from the perspective of scalar semantics.

that include *-ala* and *-akla*[2], and (ii) syntactic verbal plurality, commonly expressed by the postverbal construction, -ıp dur-[3]. This type of construction is mainly studied with respect to its aspectual semantics, encoding meanings like frequency, duration, and degree of accomplishment, and functioning more like adverbials, modifying the meaning of the basic actional phrase (Johanson 2000:55). Adopting a pro-number view, we will argue that the postverbal construction under analysis conveys additional quantificational meanings.

In the first section of this paper, we will introduce parameters of verbal plurality as defined in Cusic (1981). In the second section, we will present Turkish data and we will distinguish between morphological and postverbal pluralities in terms of quantificational type they encode.

2. PARAMETERS OF VERBAL PLURALITY

Cusic (1981), following Dressler's classification, takes verbal plurality primarily as a semantic category, and argues that it should be construed broadly to include the multiplicity of actions, events, occurrences, occasions with the addition of "whatever indicates extensions or increase, whether in time or space, of actions or states of affairs" (1981:64). So construed, plurality of events does not express plurality

2 Both affixes are generally defined as compound suffixes in which *–la* is added to the respective verb base. Banguoğlu (1956) discusses additional affixes and argues that *-iştir* and *-ala* are the most productive suffixes of iteration. In his analysis, they are synonyms and express the same sense in all contexts of occurrence, and are commonly affixed to the same verb roots (e.g. *serp-iştir* / *serp-ele* 'sprinkle'). *-akla* is a 'variant' of *-ala* with a deletion of velar plosive. They are synonyms as well and are affixed to identical verb roots, as in *dur-akla*/*dur-ala*, 'hesitate'. Tietze (2000) defines two functions for *-iştir*: *iterativum* and *intensivum*. For *-akla*, he claims that the compound affix is made up of a verbalizer *-la* and a preceding deverbal verb suffix, *-ak*. *-akla* has two functions, *iterativus* and *intensification*, and *-ala* functions to derive *verbum diminutivum*, is a function of iterativum. He indicates that *-işle* also derives *verbum diminutivum* by iterativum. Turkish allows all these affixes on the same verb root: *dürt-ükle, dürt-üşle, dürt-ele, dürt-üştür*, with very slight differences in meaning.

3. Csató (2001) and Kornfilt (2004) provide a detailed description of this construction.

as ordinarily understood but it conveys a wide range of plural meanings. Meanings and sub-meanings are defined by means of four parameters:

1. the event ratio parameter

2. the relative measure parameter

3. the connectedness parameter

4. the distribution parameter

The event ratio parameter distinguishes between *internal* and *external* plurality; the relative measure parameter relates event plurality to *general plural functions*; the connectedness parameter links event plurality with *mass/count distinction*, and the distribution parameter associates event plurality with *temporal* and *spatial* extensions as well as to number in associated noun phrases. Each of these parameters captures different dimensions of implicit quantificational relationships of the pluralized events and they are not completely distinct but are closely related.

The event ratio parameter identifies two major types of verbal plurality as *repetitive* and *repeated* actions. A repetitive action encodes an event-internal plurality, or phase repetition in which the conceived units of action are confined to a single occasion and to a single event on that occasion.

(1) The mouse nibbled the cheese. (plurality IN event – internal plurality)

Event-internal plurality is mass-like since the number of repetitions are large or uncountable.

A repeated action, on the other hand, encodes an event-external plurality in which the units of action are potentially but not necessarily distributed over occasions. Repeated actions combine together the event-external/occasion-internal and event-external/occasion-external plurality, as in (2) and (3) below:

(2) The mouse bit the cheese again and again.
(plurality OF event – external plurality)

(3) The mouse bit the cheese again and again on Thursday.
(plurality IN and OF event)

The cross-classification of repetitive/repeated distinction with the relative measure parameter defines two major classes. Repetition may derive two opposing quantitative notions simultaneously: increase and decrease. Repeated actions also derive two measure concepts: small or precise count and large or indeterminate count.

The connectedness parameter concerns the relative prominence of bounds at phase and event levels. Its relation to repetitive and repeated events suggests that repetitive events are continuous or connected since they represent single events, while repeated events are commonly discontinuous.

The distribution parameter is associated with the general idea of distribution which refers to separation of action from action, object from object, and the like, in time or space. Its relation to the event ratio parameter is a representation of distribution in time.

3. PARAMETERS OF VERBAL PLURALITY IN TURKISH

3.1. THE EVENT RATIO PARAMETER

Both morphological and postverbal event pluralities in Turkish are repeated actions. They do not refer to phase repetition and they mark plural events on a single occasion, expressing an event-external repeated action.

Single event

(4) *Ali* *Hasan-ı* *dürt-tü*.
Ali-NOM Hasan-ACC prod-PAST-3SG
'Ali prodded Hasan.' (once)

Micro events of the same type repeated

(5) *Ali* *Hasan-ı* *dürt-ükle-di*.
Ali-NOM Hasan-ACC prod-VPL-PAST-3SG
'Ali prodded Hasan repeatedly.' (once or multiple times)

Sequence of identical events repeated

(6) *Ali* *Hasan-ı* *dürt-üp dur-du*.
Ali-NOM Hasan-ACC prod-CV- stand-PAST-3SG
'Ali kept on prodding Hasan.' (prolonged/continuous)

The derived verbs are interminatives, and they denote a series of (micro)actions, regularly repeated after relatively short intervals and they are identical to themselves throughout the entire period of their performance. From the pragmatic point of view, the intervals are assessed as short and approximately equal (Xrakovskij 1997).

There is less constraint on types of verbs that appear in postverbal construction to express plurality of events. The event is formed by successive repetitions of the same action, not necessarily regularly repeated. The performance of series of identical actions extends over different periods and thus exceeds the conventional standard, becoming unlimited in duration. From the pragmatic point of view, the intervals are not conceived as approximately equal, neither are their durations.

3.2. THE RELATIVE MEASURE PARAMETER

The relative measure parameter reveals two contradictory types of quantificational meanings associated with verbal plurality. With respect to *size of units, degree of effort, appropriateness, production of result,* and *time* verbal plurals may either express increase or decrease. In Turkish, these sub-meanings expressed by verbal plurality is limited to morphologically derived structures.

Decrease in size of unit gives a diminutive meaning, as in (7) below:

(7) *Bisküvi-ler-i* *kır-ıkla-yın.*
Biscuit-PL-ACC break-VPL-IMP
'Crumble the biscuits.'

The other derived verbs that fall in this class include, *it-ele-mek*, *it-ekle-mek* 'to push repeatedly'; *did-ikle-mek* 'to pick repeatedly'.

Decrease in amount of effort exerted in the performance of the action gives a tentative meaning. The action is carried out half-heartedly with less effort than expected:

(8) *Herkes* *ağz-ın-da* *birşey-ler* *gev-eli-yor.*
Everbody-NOM mouth-POSS3SG-LOC something-PL mumble-VPL-PROG3SG
'Everybody mumbles something in his mouth.'

Savs-akla-mak, 'to disregard'; *say-ıkla-mak* 'to rave' are the other derived verbs that encode tentative meaning.

Incassative meaning is signalled when there is a decrease in aim; the agent simply does not attempt to do anything purposefully, or performs the action aimlessly. The action is simply undirected:

(9) *Bütün gün* *boş boş* *gez-ele-di.*
All day empty empty wander-VPL-PAST-3SG
'He wandered all day (long) aimlessly.'

Pineklemek 'to sit idly'; *dur-ala-mak* 'to hesitate'; *dur-akla-mak* 'to pause'; *çiz-ikle-mek* 'to sketch' are the verbs conveying incassative meaning in Turkish[4].

When increase rather than decrease is in question with respect to the relative measures listed above, we observe more varied meanings in morphologically encoded verbal plurality.

Increase in effort denotes intensive meaning with verb roots like, *ov-ala-mak* 'to rub forcefully; *kov-ala-mak* 'to pursue incessantly'; *silk-ele-mek* 'to shake off'.

4 *Conative* meaning is commonly denoted by *-iştir* and *-işle* derivations.

(10) *Lavabo-yu iyi-ce ov-ala-dı.*
Sink-ACC good-ADV rub-VPL-PAST-3SG
'(He) scrubbed the sink thoroughly/effortfully.'

Augmentative reading is associated with increase in size or quantity, and the data below exemplifies the paradox noted previously. The repeated action, from the perspective taken, may come to express an increase in the outcome or product of the performance, or may equally refer to a process in which there is a decrease in the size or quantity of the unit involved. Thus, the events described by the verbs *kır-ıkla-mak* 'to break into pieces' and *did-ikle-mek* 'to pick repeatedly' denote an increase in the number of parts as the same action repeated over the unit in question. They also indicate a decrease in the amount or size of the same unit which undergoes a change in its structural unity:

(11) *Tavuğ-u küçük parça-lar halinde did-ikle-yin.*
Chicken-ACC small part-PL in the state of pick-VPL-IMP
'Cut up the chicken into tiny pieces.'

When there is an increase in the amount of energy exerted in the action, we have the excessive reading. Verbs in this class commonly derive from onomatopoeic roots in Turkish: *pat-akla-mak, hırp-ala-mak, tep-ele-mek* 'to hit severely, to rough up, to beat repeatedly':

(12) *Polis öğrenci-ler-i hırp-ala-dı.*
Police-NOM student-PL-ACC beat-VPL-PAST-3PL
'Police beat the students repeatedly.'

Cusic (1981) argues two other sub-meanings within the relative measure parameter with respect to increase in production of result and in time. Cumulative refers to a process in which repetition of the action leads to a result, for example, repeatedly performing an activity until something is produced. It appears that this type of meaning is best expressed in Turkish through various verbal reduplicative constructions rather than the morphological or postverbal verbal plurality. Durative-continuative, on the other hand, is designated by both morphological and postverbal structures. In this sub-meaning, the successive repetitions are no longer individuated constituents of the event but the action is perceived rather as a continuous action. Increased quantity of action

increases the time the action occupies.

3.3. THE CONNECTEDNESS PARAMETER

The connectedness parameter does not provide categories of meaning but rather measures out the degree of connectedness, and places the classes provided by relative measure parameter along a scale of continuum. Other than cumulative and durative–continuative readings, all classes of meanings defined by the relative measure parameter are neutral with respect to the degree of connectedness. While both morphological and postverbal pluralities designate durative-continuative meaning, it seems that morphological verbal plurality is relatively less connected. This type of distinction observed among the types of verbal plurality points to a similarity among verbal and nominal domains. In other words, mass/count distinction that applies in the nominal domain also applies in the verbal one. The perspective provided by the connectedness parameter helps distinguish two means of plurality markers in terms of the interpretation of event pluralisation: the less connected morphological verbal plurality yields a count interpretation of plurality, whereas the product of pluralisation in postverbal plurality yields a mass interpretation. One form of evidence that supports this conclusion comes from their compatibility with explicit mention of number of repetitions. While the cardinal numbers can count the repetitions relatively freely with morphological markers of verbal plurality, they cannot co-occur with the postverbal plurality:

(13) *Tuna masa-yı üç kez it-ekle-di*.
Tuna-NOM masa-ACC three times push-VPL-PAST-3SG-
'Tuna pushed the table three times.'

(14) * *Tuna masa-yı üç kez it-ip dur-du*.
Tuna-NOM masa-ACC three times push-CV stand-PAST-3SG
'Tuna kept on pushing the table three times.'

3.4. THE DISTRIBUTION PARAMETER

The distribution parameter is relatively broadly construed in Cusic's system. In his terms, the parameter refers simply to separation of actors, objects, or properties in time, in space or in terms of some property. The plurality encoded in the verbal structures is redivided into bounded units by this parameter, as it assigns them to their respective temporal or spatial loci. In Turkish, as in many other languages, both subject and object distributivity are manifested through the plurality marker on the arguments of the verb rather than on the verb itself. The verbal plurality described in this study has little or no relevance to the distributivity as such. However, in accordance with the pluralized event theory (Ojeda 1998), it indicates that verbal pluralisation is the pluralisation of the event argument. This also denotes that an event argument is present in the argument structure as proposed by various approaches in event semantics.

A summary of the meanings encoded by the verbal plurality markers as they are identified by the parameters is as follows:

Parameters	*Morphological verbal plurality* (-ala/-akla) (micro) action 1, 2, 3 … n	*Postverbal verbal plurality* (-ıp dur-) ACTION 1, 2, 3, … n
The event ratio parameter	Event-external, single occasion	Event-external, single occasion
The relative measure parameter	*Decrease* • diminutive • tentative • incassative *Increase* • intensive • augmentative • excessive • durative - continuative	*Decrease* N/A *Increase* • durative-continuative
The connectedness parameter	Precise count	Imprecise count

4. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have discussed two types of verbal plurality in Turkish. The quantitative ideas of the relative measure parameter provide a wide

range of meanings associated with the verbal plurals, and most of the cross-linguistically attested meanings of plurality are also found in Turkish. The degree of connectedness of the repeated events further helps to determine the general type of plurality encoded in the verbal plurals. In this sense, the more connected syntactic type signals an imprecise count whereas the less connected morphological type signals a precise count. The remaining suffixes of verbal plurality and other productive syntactic means of encoding plurality in the verbal domain (e.g., reduplication) are the topics for further reseach.

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Abbreviations: ACC-accusative; ADV-adverbializer; CV-converb; IMP-imperative; LOC-locative; N/A-non-applicable; NOM-nominative; PL-plural; POSS-possessive; PROG-progressive; VPL-verbal plural; 3SG-third person singular; 3PL-third person plural.