

Workshop on Number Systems in Grammar — what to investigate

Please introduce the language — where spoken and by how many people; typological profile; open and closed word classes; transitivity classes; phonological system, etc. Section numbers in the text below refer to the relevant sections of the Position paper.

I The expression of number.

Examine where number systems appear in the grammar — on free and bound pronouns, on demonstratives, on interrogatives/ indefinites, in an NP, and/or in a verb. Is number marking covert (expressed on the head noun within an NP) or covert (expressed through agreement only)? Within a number system, 'singular' is generally the functionally unmarked term, but other possibilities do occur. What is the unmarked number in the language?

II. The meanings of number (A-P in §2).

The reference of each term in a number system must be ascertained. Some terms may have absolute reference (for instance, 'trial' always refers to three participants) and others relative reference ('paucal' indicates a smallish number greater than two, relative to 'plural' which relates to a biggish number greater than two).

Does the language have any of the systems A-K? Are there any special forms for collective (L), distributive (M), associative (N), or similitive (O)?

III. Are there any special distinctions in personal pronouns (§3)? These may include inclusive/exclusive distinctions, a minimal-augmented system, and perhaps more.

IV. How is number marked on verbs (if it is)? Languages may employ bound pronouns, or a special number marking affix; or 'pluractional' forms (which can be expressed via reduplication). See §4.

How does verbal number interrelate with transitivity of verbs? If there is a special number marker on verbs, does it refer to the number of A, S, or O? Does the language have any verbs with suppletive number forms? If so, they need to be listed exhaustively.

If the language has pluractional verbal forms, what meanings do they cover — multiple participants (A, S, O), intensity of action or state, multiplicity of actions or state, distributed actions or states?

V. Does the language have number agreement? Is agreement obligatory within a noun phrase and on the predicate? Is it shown on every word of an NP, or just on one component? (See §5).

In some languages, collective nouns require plural agreement; in others they are always singular. What number agreement form is chosen for nouns with collective reference, for mass nouns, and also for associative and similitive plural forms? What number agreement forms are required by number words? In some languages, like in English, number words occur with plural forms of nouns; in others, such as Hungarian, they occur with singular; in yet others, there are special counting forms.

VI. Does number interact with other grammatical categories of nouns and verbs? For instance, in many languages fewer genders are distinguished for non-singular numbers than for singular (§5.2).

VII. Are there any instances of double marking of number, both on the head noun and on agreeing constituents? (§5.2.).

VIII. Is number in the language obligatory or optional? (§§5.3-4)

A number system applying to nouns may be optional, and is likely to be shown by segmentable affixes or by clitics. The bare stem of a noun will then be neutral with respect to number — as in Turkish, where *kiz* is 'any number of girls (can be one or more than one)'. When number specification is obligatory, it is generally shown by an inflectional system, which may combine specification of number with other grammatical information (for instance, person, case, tense, aspect, voice). If number is obligatory for some nouns only, does the expression of nouns correlate with the hierarchy in (46) in §5.4.1?

Are there any minor numbers — like the residual dual in Hebrew and Maltese? Are there any forms with defective number values — e.g. nouns which only exist in a plural form (*pluralia tantum*), in a singular form (*singularia tantum*), or in a dual form (*dualia tantum*)?

IX. Does the expression of number correlate with the categorization of nouns — for instance, does the division of nouns into mass and count correlate with the expression of number? Do ways of forming number account for a division of nouns into semantically-based classes? (§6).

X. Some languages have one number system throughout the grammar or there could be several systems — for instance, one system in nouns, and another one in pronouns. If this is the case, could you focus on how this works? (§8).

XI. Does number correlate with politeness and the expression of respect? (§9).

XII. Do you have any idea about the origins of the grammatical number system(s) in the language? Can any effects of contact-induced changes be discerned? (§11).

In addition, it may be useful to briefly summarise the expression of number through other, not strictly grammatical means — quantifiers, number words, or classifiers whose meaning may relate to quantity and groups.

Note on terminology. 'Number systems' is used to refer to number in grammar. Lexical items referring to number ('one', 'two', 'three', etc.) are best referred to as 'number words', rather than 'numerals' or 'numbers'.