The Grammatical Dual in Yakima Ichishkíin and Other Languages

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In a language's grammar system, there are many complex ways to keep track of referent identities and convey information about each of them within the discourse provided. Two of the most important markers on any referent tell the listener how many there are and how they are being used in the sentence. These may include affixes on nouns, changes in the verbal morphology of the phrase, or specific syntactic placements of specific topics for specific interpretations. While both give important information to the listener about the topics at hand, the latter often is encoded more flexibly within a language in order to preserve the proper count and proportion of the discourse. Most languages have categories for singular and plural referents, but some have a more specific in-between category: the dual (referring to two referents in one grouping). The specificity of this encoding is curious, particularly because this is a more uncommon language feature in the modern world. This study aims to look at possible existences and uses of the dual number primarily in Ichishkíin, with mentions of history and presence in other spoken and signed languages, including English, proto-Germanic languages, Classical and Pre-Classical Arabic, Inuktitut (dialects of the Inuit), and American Sign Language (ASL).

The SIL Glossary (n.d.) defines different grammatical number cases as expressing specific count designations in different forms. These numbers can involve noun and pronoun case morphology as well as verbal agreement morphology and markings, as needed within a language. They identify four major cases of number groupings: singular (1), dual (2), trial (3), and plural (definition dependent on the language in question). The latter may be defined as "more than one," "more than two," or "more than three," depending on the extent of their options available linguistically. The universal set of numbers include the singular and the plural, and may extend beyond those two as appropriate. Some languages may be more easily designated as having a "singular" category and a "not-singular" category, to more fully explain the definition

of plural in that particular context. Others have a specific "general" number, akin to "a few", with no real numerical definition to that grouping. Many also have a type of referent mention that does not classify it with a number, referring instead to a theoretical instance of the referent that does not try to call any specific physical instance to mind. Often, as the speaker gets more specific, the markers derive from this general instance to include the further detail (Corbett, 2000). As languages naturally change, these particulars may or may not survive due to usage and relevancy in the new context of the speech community.

Dialects of Standard American English (SAE) do not have an explicitly special handling of the grammatical dual number, instead seeming to group it into the general "plural" category. Colloquially, most speakers would just add the number of the referenced party into the sentence to modify the already-present noun phrase: "you two", "us four", "them three". From my L1-speaking mouth, it seems to get a little tricky with the 1st and 3rd persons, as those constructions don't roll off the tongue as easily as the 2nd person constructions. With the 1st person dual, it might be focused into simply "we" or "us", perhaps assuming either that the listener will be able to perceive the number of people being referenced or that the listener does not need to know how many people are involved to understand the discourse. The same reasoning may apply to the 3rd person cases, except for the possibility that it may not be as necessary for the listener to know exactly how many people are in the third party in order to understand the conversation. The 2nd person does not seem to have explicit rules about incorporating numbers into its noun phrases, but that may change provided more explicit research. With respect to noun morphology, the plural morpheme *-s* absorbs all numbers equally, relying on a number modifier in the noun phrase in order to make the distinction between different number cases of the referent. It is based on the presence of that morpheme that speakers know to change other parts of the phrase,

including any description roots and verbal inflectional morphology. The lack of a dual marker does not seem to hurt SAE, as it is happy to add more description words to express the proper amount of detail.

In Yakima Ichishkíin, the grammatical dual emerges in the specific contexts of noun case markers and pronoun/demonstrative morphology. Ichishkíin is part of the Sahaptian language family spoken in the Pacific Northwest among American Indian tribes living around the Columbia River Plateau. There are several different languages and many dialects underneath those, spanning the Nez Perce, Yakama, Warms Springs, and Umatilla regions. The regular coding for verbal agreement, however, does not make this dual distinction. 1st and 2nd person intransitive subjects use enclitics to encode participants (*=nash*, 1Sg; *=natash*, 1Pl.Exclusive; *=na*, 1Pl.Inclusive; *=nam*, 2Sg; *=pam*, 2Pl), while 3rd person subjects are marked with verbal prefixes (*i-*, 3Sg; *pa-*, 3Pl), all making a simple distinction between single party and multiple parties. The dual begins to emerge in the case markers indicating grammatical number in both nominative and accusative forms for human/specific animate referents. Single referents do not receive a nominative suffix indicating multiplicity, but the dual receives *-in* to mark its status (e.g. *áyat* [woman] becomes *áyatin* [two women]) while the plural (here defined as "3 or more") receives a *-ma* marker (e.g. *áyat* becomes *áyatma* [women]). Jansen (2010) notes that the dual *-in* is also the same morpheme as the associative and 3>3 Transitive Inverse noun case marker morphemes. Inanimate nouns and most animals do not receive these number markers, either instead relying on stated numbers or noun reduplication in order to convey the multiplicity of the referent (e.g. *áchaash* [eyes] becomes *áchaashachaash* [eyes]). The dual and plural case markers also are present and morphologically productive in the respective 3rd person accusative case markers, with the singular receiving *-nan*, the dual *-inan*, and the plural *-maman*. These affix

markers appear to be more present and common in general use, as their basic functionality is more foundational to grammar and the morphology of nouns in the frame of the phrases.

In addition to the enclitics and affixes that mark the person referent to complete the verb phrase, Ichishkíin also has a system of independent personal pronouns and demonstratives that also have forms for the dual alongside the singular and plural. Jansen (2010) writes that these pronouns are optional, as the verbal agreement morphology and enclitics preserve the base meaning already, but can help clear away referent misunderstanding and establish a more formal tone within the language. There are singular, dual, and plural forms for each of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd persons in the three grammatical cases, namely the nominative, accusative, and genitive. One example is the 1st person genitive set: *inmí* [my], *napwiinanmí* [our (du.)], and *niimí* [our (pl.)]. Looking at the full set of these pronouns, the dual appears to be a blending of the phonemes from the singular and plural forms of the pronouns, while also being the lengthiest of them all. In addition to these pronouns, the demonstratives *ích* [this] and *íkw'ak* [that] both have a similar set of forms, with grammatical number groups in each of the three relevant grammatical cases, namely the absolutive, accusative, and genitive. The absolutive "that" set, for example, includes *íkw'ak* [that (sg.)], *kwíyin* [that (animate, du.)], and *íkwmak* [that (animate, pl.)]. The three sets of forms for both of these demonstratives also carry over to their combination of the other noun case markers (e.g. benefactive, allative, dative, ablative, locative, and instrumental) (Beavert, 2009). Curiously, the other ergative cases for these pronouns and demonstratives, including the inverse and obviate cases, do not have dual or plural, instead opting for just a singular designation. These words, however, do not seem to be currently well-known among language learners, and I cannot find a substantive number of dual pronouns and mentions in the few texts I personally have worked with in order to analyze their existence.

Other languages use the dual similarly, but each with some different history. Classical Arabic has used it seriously as a suffix in both number and case morphology, with varying uses depending on the dialect being studied. It has two groupings of allomorphs: one for the nominative case and another for both the accusative and genitive cases (al-Sharkawi, 2015). While each language in the larger family is consistent within their own tradition, there are commonalities between the base allomorphs used to mark the grammatical number. Research has been difficult on it, however, because the morpheme may shift phonologically or morphologically depending on the placement of its attached word within the larger sentence. al-Sharkawi (2015) hypothesizes that the gradual loss of the dual markers in some dialects may be due to the phonological rules which allow for the morpheme to exist in some contexts and force it to abbreviate or eliminate itself in order to streamline the utterance's phonetic properties. This phenomenon of declining case has only limited study in al-Sharkawi (2015), but looks promising in understandings of Classical and Standard Arabic and how they both differentiate between numbers of referents.

In ASL, the grammatical numbers are grouped slightly differently than spoken languages. Hahn (2006) writes that the plural versus non-plural distinction puts a dual number marker on the non-plural side alongside the singular. The signed language includes number-incorporated pronoun signs (e.g. "TWO-OF-US") into the syntax and regular hierarchy of the referents. Analysis of fluent signers has shown that the person resolution number shows easier for object-marked referents compared to subject-agreement referents. These referents follow the same hierarchy of person marking as the rest of the language, with 1st person at the top, 2nd in the middle, and 3rd as least prominent, with some research arguing that the 2nd and 3rd person markers should be grouped into their own category as "non-1st person," due to the ease of

accessibility to the signer (Hahn, 2006). They also note that the dual number reference has its own incorporated handshape that is modified from the simple "TWO" handshape, combining the pointing reference marker and the number into a unique dual identifier. This inclusion shows that the grammatical number can hold greater relevance and meaning in this language context.

Other indigenous, non-Indo-European languages preserve a dual marker within their grammar system. The larger Eskimo-Aleut language family has many languages that still have the number present, but some have lost it. Alorut and Johns (2016) note that many eastern Canadian Inuktitut dialects still preserve the dual markings, but there is still confusion in the research about when they are optional versus obligatory to include in phrases, with the influence of English present in the speech community. They write that the inclusion of the numbering may change the orthography and phonetic composition of the words, due to phonological vowel shifting and shortening. In some cases, they observe that the inflection may not be necessary when the meaning is still present through more overt numbering, suggesting that the markers may be used to indicate a less ambiguous dual or plural designation. The dual marker is obligatory in some dialects, but not with nouns that naturally occur in pairs, like hands (Alorut & Johns, 2016). They do admit that naturalistic observation of the use of the dual markers is difficult to acquire, but that there are strategies to see how speakers actually use it. There is a worry about the influence of English on how speakers approach their phrase constructions, perhaps to worry more about a direct translation than a linguistically appropriate one.

Not all languages are able to hold onto more meaningful forms of more detailed grammatical numbers like the dual. Howe (2013) tells of the history of many Germanic languages and possible causes for their losing of the dual markers and forms of their pronouns. They describe how the early languages originally had dual forms, but phonological reduction and

morphological streamlining to reduce formal ambiguity within the interpretation of speech. A desire to maintain a simpler number system was coupled with the desire to use a more honorific case marker in agreement morphology. The original plural forms were often then pushed into the honorific status and were replaced by the dual forms, which experienced an expansion of type of reference coverage. This shift moved languages from singular/dual/plural systems to singular/non-singular systems. While these forms are thought to be related as versions of short and long forms of pronouns, their general homonymy has helped them become lost in the newer forms of the languages. Howe (2013) notes that the dual forms that were originally in West-Saxon and Old English were used commonly until functional mergers between regional languages caused them to not survive into Northumbrian (late 10th century) and Middle English (14th century), respectively. While there may still be evidence of these former forms, the grammatical change within these ancestor languages have unintentionally erased the modern and future usage of specific, possibly more radical forms.

In our multilingual world, the decision to preserve these dual forms requires a consideration of the values of translation and the rights of a language. As English continues becoming a more common language, the effort to continue using non-English languages requires some intention regarding the switching and translating between languages. While it may be more convenient for speakers to use only English, other languages will have meanings and structures that English does not and vice-versa. The point is to not try to draw equivalence between all languages and decide they are interchangeable; there is a context for everything and they need to be respected because of this. In an ideal world, there would be time and energy to honor these different pieces and languages by affording them the space they need. The translation effort requires similar intentionality: many direct translations will not be possible and will instead some

imagination and cultural understanding to realistically transfer information and meaning from one language into another. While the sentiment to have perfectly understandable content in all languages is admirable, that goal can cause one to lose track of exploring the interplay between languages and the differences between them that are exposed through the comparison through translation. There are specific frames of reference and importance that are preserved in each language which are important and crucial to approaching the world through that particular language.

There are many different types of devices to help languages keep track of referents and properties concerning them. The grammatical number case is incredibly important both for discourse and noun and verbal morphology reasons. While the singular and plural groupings are the most common, the dual grouping exists in many languages and allows for a different degree of detail to be expressed on a grammatical level of analysis. The inclusion of this dual is often via noun case marker affixes and different forms of personal pronouns. These forms push these languages in different directions than English, which should be celebrated and taught.

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