

# Distributive plurality in Nivkh

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The paper examines various semantic types of distributive constructions (hereafter, DC) and the means of expression of distributive plurality in Nivkh (Paleosiberian, isolate), a moribund language spoken in the Far East of Russia.

Nivkh is a nominative polysynthetic head-marking SOV language. Currently, its noun and verb morphology distinguishes two numbers, i.e. unmarked singular and plural with the suffix *-kun/-γun/-gun/-xun*. A finite verb optionally agrees with the subject in number. Sentences with regular plural forms may have only collective interpretation, while grammatical marking of other types of plurality, i.e. multiplicative, iterative, distributive etc. in most cases involve reduplication of at least one lexical element of a construction, cf. (Gruzdeva 1997).

The semantic representation of a prototypical DC may be specified as follows: (i) a predicate has a set of variables (= argument/adjunct) with the same semantic role; (ii) a predicate is distributed over variables comprising a set, (iii) a predicate is universally quantified, cf. (Birjulin 2003: 797–798). It is theoretically possible to distinguish as many semantic types of DC as there are different arguments or adjuncts, because any of them can in principle be variable, cf. (Dressler 1968: 26–27, Xrakovskij 1997a: 37).

Depending on which of the participants becomes variable, the following five DC types can be identified in Nivkh: (i) Actor (= Agent/Experiencer) DC, cf. (1), (ii) Undergoer (= Patient/Theme) DC, cf. (2), (iii) Instrumental DC, cf. (3), (iv) Partitive DC, cf. (4), (v) Locative DC, cf. (5). The last type may be further divided into the following subtypes: (a) Ambulative DC (= movement through a set of spatial points), (b) Diversative DC (= movement from one central point toward different points or directions), (c) Cislocative DC (= movement from different points or directions toward one central point), and (d) Dispersive DC (= action realized in different parts of spatially extended objects or substances), cf. (6).

The components of the distributive semantic representation are coded by morphological and lexical-syntactic means in different types of Nivkh DC as follows.

In Actor and Undergoer DC, the plurality of variables is principally marked by the plural forms of corresponding nouns, whereas the distribution of a predicate over its variables is designated by reduplication of a verb stem, cf. (1–2). Moreover, a DC may comprise a distributive adverbial which tends to be optional for Actor DC and obligatory for Undergoer DC. An adverbial is typically derived by reduplication of a numeral with the corresponding classifier, cf. *ñā-n+ñā-n* ‘one after another (about non-human animates) in (1), and *ñē-nŋ+ñē-nŋ* ‘one after another (about humans)’ in (7). The reduplicated numeral may attach the derivational adverbial suffix *-guř*, cf. *ñā-qr+ñā-qr-guř* ‘one after another (about objects of different forms)’ in (2).

In Instrumental and Locative DC, both plurality of variables and predicate distribution are denoted by reduplication of the corresponding noun, whereas the verb stem does not reduplicate, cf. (3) and (5). Furthermore, Locative DC may also have another structure, which comprises a finite verb with a reduplicated stem and a locative distributive adverbial(s) derived by reduplication of the stem, containing the deictic root *hu-*, and the corresponding case marker, cf. *huz+huz-ux* ‘in different places’ in (6).

Partitive DC allows only one grammatical way for marking distributive plurality, i.e. reduplication of a finite verb stem, cf. (4).

The universal quantification of a predicate is often emphasized in all types of DC by the universal quantifier *sik* ‘all’ and the completive verbal suffix *-kar/-χar-*, cf. (1) and (6), or the completive suffix alone, cf. (4).

A predicate may have several sets of variables and be distributed over each of them, cf. the notions of *distributive-key* and *distributive-share* in (Gil 1995). Such polydistributive constructions are marked in Nivkh by different ways, depending on the semantic type of distribution, cf. Actor & Instrumental DC in (7).

- (1) *Keχ-xun*      *sik*      *ñā-n+ñā-n*      *pui+vui-t*      *p'řā-βar-d-γun.*  
 sea.gull-PL      all      one-CL:NON.HUM+one-CL:NON.HUM      fly+fly-CONV:MAN:3PL      come-COMPL-IND-PL  
 'The sea-gulls came flying one after another.'
- (2) *Əmk*      *ñirŋ-gun*      *ñā-qr+ñā-qr-guř*      *zu+zu-d.*  
 mother      cup-PL      one-CL:GEN+one-CL:GEN-DER:ADV      wash+wash-IND  
 'Mother washes the cups one after another.'
- (3) *Imŋ*      *p'-aq+f-aq-xir*      *pəγz-đ.*  
 they      REFL-hat+REFL-hat-INSTR      throw-IND  
 'They threw their hats (one after another).' (Panfilov 1962: 97)
- (4) *Pil-kař*      *ř'o*      *k'e-roχ*      *juγ-ř*      *vaχř+vaχř-u-βar-d.*  
 be.big-INTNS      fish      net-DAT      get-caught-CONV:MAN:3SG      tear.up+tear.up-TRANS-COMPL-IND  
 'Being caught, the big fish tore up the whole net.'
- (5) *Tolvət-ŋan*      *q'otr*      *eri+eri-in*      *ř'o—ŋəŋ-r*      *iñ-ra...*  
 summer-CONV:WHEN      bear      river+river-LOC      fish—look.fo-CONV:MAN:3SG      eat-COORD:3SG  
 'In summer, looking for fish in (different) rivers, a bear eats...' (Panfilov 1962: 97)
- (6) *Mif*      *huz+huz-ux*      *sik*      *pət+vət-χar-d.*  
 earth      point+point-ABL      all      crack+crack-COMPL-IND  
 'The whole earth cracked in different places.'
- (7) *Əzŋ-gun*      *ñe-nŋ+ñe-nŋ*      *pəřk*      *p'-mu+p'-mu-γiř*      *vi-d-γun.*  
 host-PL      one-CL:HUM+one-CL:HUM      only      REFL-boat+REFL-boat-INSTR      go-IND-PL  
 'The hosts went away one after another, each by his own boat.'

## References

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