

Valency alternations and paradigm augmentation in Seri

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Background on Seri

- Seri is spoken in northwest Mexico, in two villages on the coast: *Haxöl Iihom*/El Desemboque and *Socaaix*/Punta Chueca



Figure: The Seri region in Mexico (Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.)

- Isolate, approx. 900 speakers (Ethnologue 2007 estimate)

Complex morphology

- Verbs typically have up to four forms

(1)	FORM A	FORM B	FORM C	FORM D	GLOSS
	-ahit	-ahit- im	-aait- oj	-aaitolca	'eat'
	-apot	-apot- im	-apt	-apot- am	'pay'
	-aasp- oj	-aasipl	-atoosipl- oj	-atoosipl- oj	'write'
	-azazin- ot	-azazjc	-azazj- oj	-azazjc	'weave'

- As far as we know, inflectional classes are not predictable:
 - High degree of paradigmatic variety: the 952 verbs in Moser & Marlett's dictionary (2010) fall into at least 255 classes just according to the suffix behavior of these four paradigmatic cells (Baerman 2016)
 - High degree of allomorphy
- Despite the unpredictability of the morphology, the same syntactico-semantic distinctions are encoded across verbs

At most 4 verbs forms

- Most verbs express a four-way distinction (Moser, 1961; Moser and Marlett, 2010; Marlett, 2016; Baerman, 2016)

- (2) a. Moxima sahmees hizcoi ih-yo-**ohit**. Form A
yesterday orange DEM.PL 1SG-RLS.YO-eat
Yesterday, I ate these oranges.
- b. Moxima sahmees hizcoi ih-yo-**ohitim**. Form B
yesterday orange DEM.PL 1SG-RLS.YO-eat
Yesterday, I ate these oranges (over time).
- c.* Moxima sahmees hizcoi ih-yo-**iitoj**. Form C
- d.* Moxima sahmees hizcoi ih-yo-**iitolca**. Form D

[EDSEI14OCT2018DRPM]

At most 4 verbs forms

- Most verbs can express a four-way distinction (Moser, 1961; Moser and Marlett, 2010; Marlett, 2016; Baerman, 2016)

(3) a. Moxima sahmees hizcoi ha-yo-**iitoj**.
yesterday orange DEM.PL 1PL-RLS.YO-eat

Form C

Yesterday, we ate these oranges.

b. Moxima sahmees hizcoi ha-yo-**iitolca**.
yesterday orange DEM.PL 1PL-RLS.YO-eat

Form D

Yesterday, we ate these oranges (over time).

c. *Moxima sahmees hizcoi ha-yo-**ohit**.

Form A

d. *Moxima sahmees hizcoi ha-yo-**ohitim**.

Form B

[EDSEI14OCT2018DRPM]

Two bivalent categories

- The forms have been analyzed as encoding two meaningful categories (Moser, 1961; Moser and Marlett, 2010; Marlett, 2016)
 - subject number [singular, plural]
 - verbal number [MULT] (see Cabredo Hofherr et al. 2018 for a recent discussion of the verbal number category)

	SG	SG, MULT	PL	PL, MULT
'eat'	-ahit	-ahitim	-aaitoj	-aaitolca

MULT-forms are pluractional forms

- MULT-forms require a context with multiple events (see Cabredo Hofherr et al. 2018 for more arguments)
 - In a context with one (sub-)event, these forms are judged false
- (4) Yesterday I was really hungry but my sister gave me a very small orange. I ate it in one bite (without separating the segments). Talking about this orange, I say:

Moxima sahmees hipquij ih-yo-**ohit** / #ih-yo-**ohitim**.

yesterday orange DEM.SG 1SG-RLS.YO-eat 1SG-RLS.YO-eat.MULT

Yesterday, I ate this orange. [EDSEIFLD3POST]

MULT-forms are pluractional forms

- MULT-forms require a context with multiple events (see Cabredo Hofherr et al. 2018 for more arguments)
- In a context with multiple (sub-)events, these forms are judged true

(5) Yesterday I was really hungry and my sister gave me a very big orange. I ate it in parts (segment per segment). Talking about this orange, I say:

Moxima sahmees hipquij ih-yo-**ohit** / ih-yo-**ohitim**.

yesterday orange DEM.SG 1SG-RLS.YO-eat 1SG-RLS.YO-eat.MULT

Yesterday, I ate this orange. SC on non-MULT form: not false but could be more specific [EDSEIFLD3POST]

Forms don't index object number

- Each of the four forms is compatible with singular and plural objects (given the right context)

- (6) a. Moxima sahmees hizcoi / hipquij ih-yo-**ohit**. SG
 yesterday orange DEM.PL DEM.SG 1SG-RLS.YO-eat
Yesterday, I ate these oranges / this orange.
- b. Moxima sahmees hizcoi / hipquij ih-yo-**ohitim**. SG, MULT
 yesterday orange DEM.PL DEM.SG 1SG-RLS.YO-eat
Yesterday, I ate these oranges / this orange (over time).
 [EDSEI14OCT2018DRPM2]

Forms don't index object number

- Each of the four forms is compatible with singular and plural objects (given the right context)

- (7) a. Moxima sahmees hizcoi / hipquij ha-yo-**iitoj**. PL
 yesterday orange DEM.PL DEM.SG 1PL-RLS.YO-eat
Yesterday, we ate these oranges / this orange.
- b. Moxima sahmees hizcoi / hipquij ha-yo-**iitolca**. PL, MULT
 yesterday orange DEM.PL DEM.SG 1PL-RLS.YO-eat
Yesterday, we ate these oranges / this orange (over time).
 [EDSEI14OCT2018DRPM2]

Forms don't index object number

- The phrases *sahmees hizcoi* 'these oranges' and *sahmees hipquij* 'this orange' do trigger subject number agreement

(8) These oranges are big.

a. Sahmees hizcoi
orange DEM.PL

y-aacöl

RLS.YO-big.PL

b. *Sahmees hizcoi
orange DEM.PL

y-aacoj

RLS.YO-big

(9) This orange is big

a. *Sahmees hipquij
orange DEM.SG

y-aacöl

RLS.YO-big.PL

b. Sahmees hipquij
orange DEM.SG

y-aacoj

RLS.YO-big

[EDSEI14OCT2018DRPM]

Summary

- Each of the four forms can be characterized in terms of two features
 - the bivalent SUBJECT NUMBER: [SG] or [PL]
 - the monovalent EVENT NUMBER: [MULT]

		event #	
			MULT
subject #	SG	-ahit	-ahitim
	PL	-aaitoj	-aaitolca

Fifth forms

- Some verbs have **a fifth form!**

- (10) a. Marta quih xicacaziil coi iyocaaij. Form A
 Marta DEF child.PL DEF.PL 3;3.RLS.YO.CAUS.spin
Marta spun the children.
- b. Marta quih xicacaziil coi iyocaailim. Form B
 Marta DEF child.PL DEF.PL 3;3.RLS.YO.CAUS.spin.MULT
Marta spun the children (one-by-one or several times together).
- c. Marta quih xicacaziil coi **iyocaailc.** Form ?
 Marta DEF child.PL DEF.PL 3;3.RLS.YO.CAUS.spin
Marta spun the children.
 [EDSEI28ABR2018DRPM, EDSEI14OCT2018DRPM2]

Causativization creates a new form

- There are two verbs that mean 'spin' in Seri:
 - an intransitive one (intr)
 - a transitive one (tr) derived via **causativization** from the intransitive

	SG	PL
'spin (intr)'	-oaaij, -oaailim	-oaailc, -aailam
'spin (tr)'	-caaij, -caailim, -caailc	-caailcoj, (-caailam)

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- The base **-aailc** is found in the paradigm of the 2 verbs: the intransitive *spin* and its derived causative *spin*

Causativization creates a new form

- Seri productively derives causative verbs from intransitive verbs via prefixation of an allomorph of **-ac**:
-*oaaij* 'spin (intr)' → -***caaij*** 'spin (tr)'

Question

If we've settled on 4 distinctions in the verbal stems, what is the 5th form -***caailc***?

		event number		
			MULT	
sbj n	SG	- <i>caaij</i>	- <i>caailim</i>	- <i>caailc</i>
	PL	- <i>caailcoj</i>	- <i>caailam</i>	

Object plurality

- The **fifth form** is not acceptable with singular objects

(11) a. Marta quih quisiil quih iyocaij.

Form A

Marta DEF child DEF 3;3.RLS.YO.CAUS.spin

Marta spun the child.

b. Marta quih quisiil quih iyocailim.

Form B

Marta DEF child DEF 3;3.RLS.YO.CAUS.spin.MULT

Marta spun the child several times.

c. *Marta quih quisiil quih **iyocailc**.

Form ?

Marta DEF child DEF 3;3.RLS.YO.CAUS.spin

[EDSEI28ABR2018DRPM, EDSEI14OCT2018DRPM2]

Object plurality

- A number of verbs have **a fifth form** that marks that its object is plural
- These verbs are all causatives that are derived from intransitives

	SG	SG, MULT	SG, PL. OBJ.	PL	PL, MULT
'spin (intr)'	-oaaij	-oaailim		-o aaile	-aailam
'spin (tr)'	-caaij	-caailim	-c aaile	-caailcoj	(-caailam)

- The respective paradigms of the derived and base verbs are similar but not identical
- Plural object forms are not found in non-derived verbs

Object plurality

	SG	SG, MULT	SG, PL. OBJ	PL	PL, MULT
'spin (intr)'	-oaaij		-oaailim	oaailc	-aailam
'spin (tr)'	-caaij	-caailim	- caailc	- caailc oj	(-caailam)

- Two regularities

- the singular subject plural object **base** of the causative verb is identical to the plural subject **base** of the source intransitive verb

(12) a. **The children spun around.**

intransitive

b. Marta **made the children spin around.**

causative

- the plural subject -form of the derived causative verb is

derived via suffixation

from the plural subject form of the source intransitive verb

Object plurality

- No matter what the morphology of the intransitive plural subject form is, this is the one that the causative uses to make the plural object form

	SG	SG, MULT	SG, PL. OBJ	PL	PL, MULT
'burn (intr)'		-anoj		- anoloj	
'burn (tr)'	-acaanoj	-acaanolim	- acaanoloj	-acaanol	-acaanolam

- The derivation of plural object forms is one place where morphological systematicity seems to be emerging in the verbal paradigms of Seri verb stems!

Summary

- Some derived causatives in Seri have an additional stem form expressing plural object number agreement
- The *object number* category is opportunistic : it is the result of the exploitation of a possibility made independently available by a regular operation of the grammatical system of Seri, the causative derivation
- There is no basis for extending that new category across the system because the morphological source of that category is provided by the causative derivation itself

Conclusion

- Two types of verbal plurality are found in the verbal system of Seri:
 - marking of event plurality (system-wide)
 - number agreement with the plural object (in causatives)
- Seri ‘harnesses’ the causative valency-changing derivation to promote a latent distinction (which is overt in certain languages)
- It is possible that further grammaticalization (whose first stage would be the attribution of the plural object meaning to a specific exponent) will expand this category to non-derived verbs (not only causatives)

Questions

- Are the fifth forms also MULT-forms or are they neutral?
- In causatives, how productive is the derivation of fifth forms?
- Verbs derived from some kinship nouns have a form that marks that the *patient* is plural. How similar is this to fifth forms?

¡Haxahtiipe!

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List of abbreviations

ABS	absolute	MULT	multiple
ART	article	NMLZ	nominalizer
AW	away	OBJ	object
CAUS	causative	PASS	passive
DEF	definite	PL	plural
DEM	demonstrative	POS	possessive
FLX	flexible	RLS	realis
FOC	focus	SG	singular
INDEF	indefinite	SUJ	subject
INF	infinitive	TRNS	transitive
INTR	intransitive	UNSPEC	unspecified
IO	indirect object		