

THE TYPOLOGY OF SINGULATIVES

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INDIVIDUATION IN THE GRAMMAR: SINGULATIVES AT THE INTERSECTION OF MORPHOLOGY AND SEMANTICS



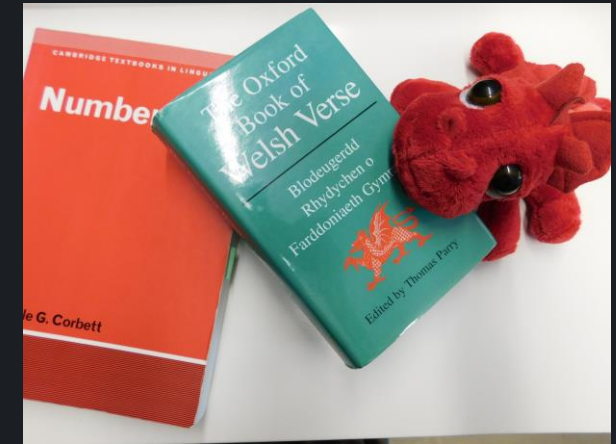
Silva Nurmio

- Celtic (Indo-European)
- typology



Rahel T. Dires

- Cushitic (Afro-Asiatic)



Blodyn

- office manager

<https://blogs.helsinki.fi/singulatives/>



IT STARTED WITH WELSH

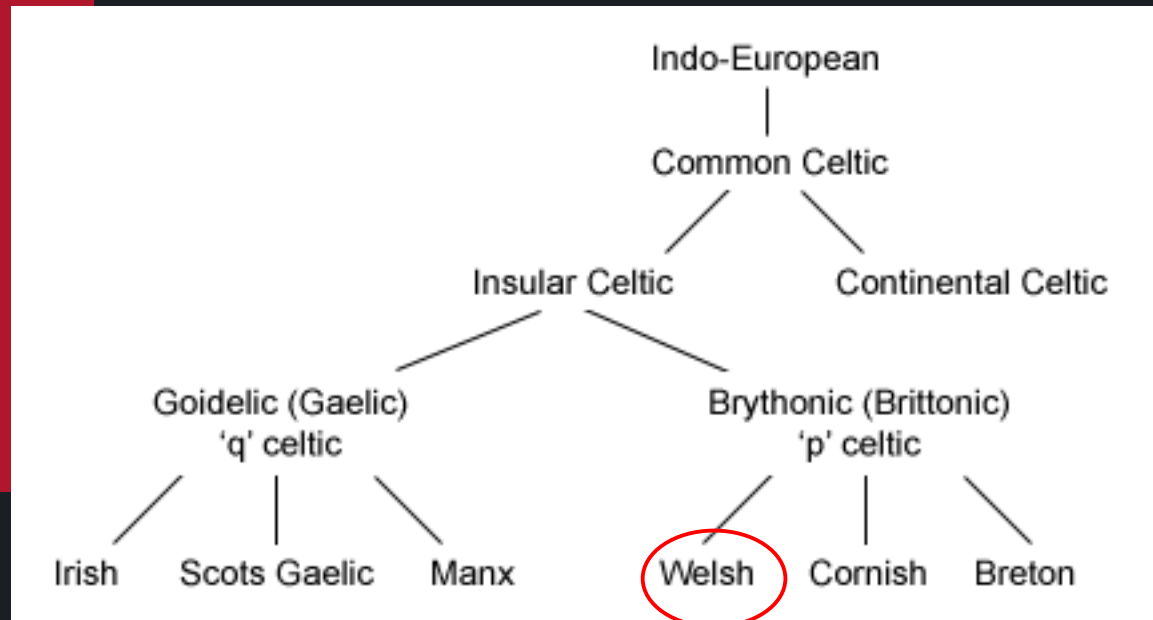


Grammatical Number in Welsh: Diachrony and Typology

Silva Nurmio

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WHAT ARE SINGULATIVES?

WELSH (INDO-EUROPEAN, NURMIO 2019)

- the basic number distinction is unmarked singular/marked plural

cadair 'chair' pl. **cadeir-iau**

a small group of nouns have an unmarked plural and a marked singulative, e.g.

and the same marker is used for units of mass nouns:



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- and the same marker is used for units of mass nouns:

tywod 'sand', **sgt. tywod-yn** 'a grain of sand'



'SINGULATIVE'

Johann Kaspar Zeuss. 1853. *Grammatica Celtica*



GRAMMATICA CELTICA.

E MONUMENTIS VETUSTIS
TAM HIBERNICAE LINGVAE
QUAM BRITANNICAE
DIALECTI CAMBRICAE CORNICAE ARMORICAE
NEC NON E GALLICAE PRISCAE RELIQUIIS

CONSTRUXIT

J. C. ZEUSS

PHILOS. DR. HISTOR. PROF.

VOLUMEN PRIMUM.

LIPSIAE

W. WEIDMANNOS.

MDCCLIII.

Formae collectivae et singulativae.

Peculiariora sunt eo, quod pluralis significationem non formam prae se ferunt, britannica substantiva collectiva, quibus opposita sunt singulativa, ut velim appellare, et substantiva numeri dualis.

NUMBER MARKING IN CUSHITIC: AN EXAMPLE

- SIDAAMA (AFRO-ASIATIC; ETHIOPIA) (KAWACHI 2007)

general	singulative	plural	gloss
sina	sin-čo	sin-na	branch
atara	atar-čo	-	pea
mine	-	min-na	house
-	kin-čo	kin-na	stone, rock



Cushitic languages



CONTEXT

- the singulative is often stated to be a **rare** category or somehow 'peculiar' (Zeuss) compared to singular-plural marking
- but there has never been a cross-linguistic study or a full data collection of the phenomenon
- variety of terms used for describing singulatives means they can be hard to find in language descriptions

WORKING DEFINITION

- **the singulative is a category that denotes at least 'one' or 'a/one unit' formed by adding a marker to a non-unit denoting base**
 - bases= base must be attested on its own (e.g. unmarked plural, mass noun)
 - markers= bound forms (excludes 'unitizers' like *grain of sand*)



DATA BY MACROAREA

Africa	Eurasia	North America	Papunesia
Afro-Asiatic: 37	Chukotko-Kamchatkan: 1	Algic: 2	Austronesian: 4
Atlantic-Congo: 9	Uralic: 4	Kiowa-Tanoan: 4	Border family (Papua New Guinea): 1
Dajuic: 1	Sino-Tibetan: 1	Maipurean (Arawakan): 2	
Gur: 1	Burushaski (isol.)	Uto-Aztekan: 1	
Kadugli-Krongo: 1	Indo-European: 10	South America	
Maban: 3		Boran: 1	
Nilotic: 8		Chibchan: 1	
Omotic: 1		Witotoan: 1	
Surmic: 4			



DISTRIBUTION OF SINGULATIVES



Language sample: 29 Cushitic languages

Cushitic languages	ISO 639.3	Glottocode
ʿAfar (Qafar)	aar	afar1241
Alagwa	wbj	alag1248
Arbore	arv	arbo1245
Bayso (Baiso)	bsw	bais1246
Beja	bej	beja1238
Bilin (Bilen)	byn	bili1260
Burji (Burġi, Bembala, Daashi)	bji	burj1242
Burunge	bds	buru1320
†Dahalo	dal	daha1245
Dhaasanac (Dasenech, Daasanach, Dhaasanach, Marille, Gallab, Dama...)	dsh	daas1238
Dirasha (Dirayta, Gidole)	gdl	dira1242
†Elmolo (El Molo)	elo	elmo1238
Gawwada (Dullay, Gollango, Ale-Gawwada)	gwd	gaww1239
Gedeʿo (Gedeo, Derasa, Darasa)	drs	gede1246
Gorwaa (Gorowa)	gow	goro1270

Cushitic languages	ISO 639.3	Glottocode
Hadiyya (Hadiyyisa)	hdy	hadi1240
Iraqw	irk	iraq1241
K'abeena (Alaba, Halaba, Qebena, Wanbasana)	alw	alab1254
Kambaata	ktb	kamb1316
K'emant (Qimant, Kemant)	ahg	qima1242
Konso	kxc	kons1243
Oromo (Borana dialect, Boraana, Borana-Arsi-Guji Oromo)	gax	bora1271
Saho	ssy	saho1246
Sidamo (Sidaama, Sidaamu, Sidamu)	sid	sida1246
Somali	som	soma1255
Somali (Central Somali dialects)	ymm	maay1238
Ts'amakko (Tsamai, S'amai, Tamaha, Bago)	tsb	tsam1247
Xamtanga (Khamtanga, Khamir, Khamta, Agawinya)	xan	xamt1239
†Yaaku	muu	yaak1241

OUR PROJECT:
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

MORPHOLOGY

SEMANTICS,
USAGE AND
LINGUISTIC
THEORY

DIACHRONY



RESEARCH QUESTIONS: 1

Morphology

- What are the possible base forms for singulatives cross-linguistically?
- What kind of markers are used? Do they have other functions apart from the singulative?
- What kinds of grammatical number systems do singulatives occur in?



Bases in Cushitic

Generic/ Transnumeral

'species of tree'	
Generic	<i>gänji</i>
Singulative	<i>gänji-ra</i>
Plural	<i>gänji-t</i>

Bilin (Appleyard 2007:487)

Unmarked plural/ 'Collective'

'rib'	
Unmarked plural	<i>Ginaʔaa</i>
Singulative	<i>Ginaʔ-itta</i>

Konso (Orkaydo 2013:88)

Mass noun

'bark'	
Mass noun	<i>omol-á</i>
Singulative	<i>omol-chú</i>

Kambaata (Treis 2014:8)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS: 2

Semantics, usage and linguistic theory

- To what extent does singulative morphology interact with semantics?
- How are singulatives used by speakers and what semantic, cognitive or social factors condition different usage patterns?



SEMANTICS

- the same semantic categories crop up cross-linguistically: animals and insects that occur in groups, foodstuffs, granular aggregates..
- is this about **usage frequency**? E.g. mice may be referred to in the plural more commonly than in the singular (Haspelmath & Karjus 2017)
- or does **semantics** and the **ontological status** of the referents also matter?
- Grimm's (2018) scale of individuation
liquids/substances < granular aggregates < collective aggregates < individuals
- each level is relevant to number marking in some (though not all) languages

mice, flies..

RESEARCH QUESTIONS: 3

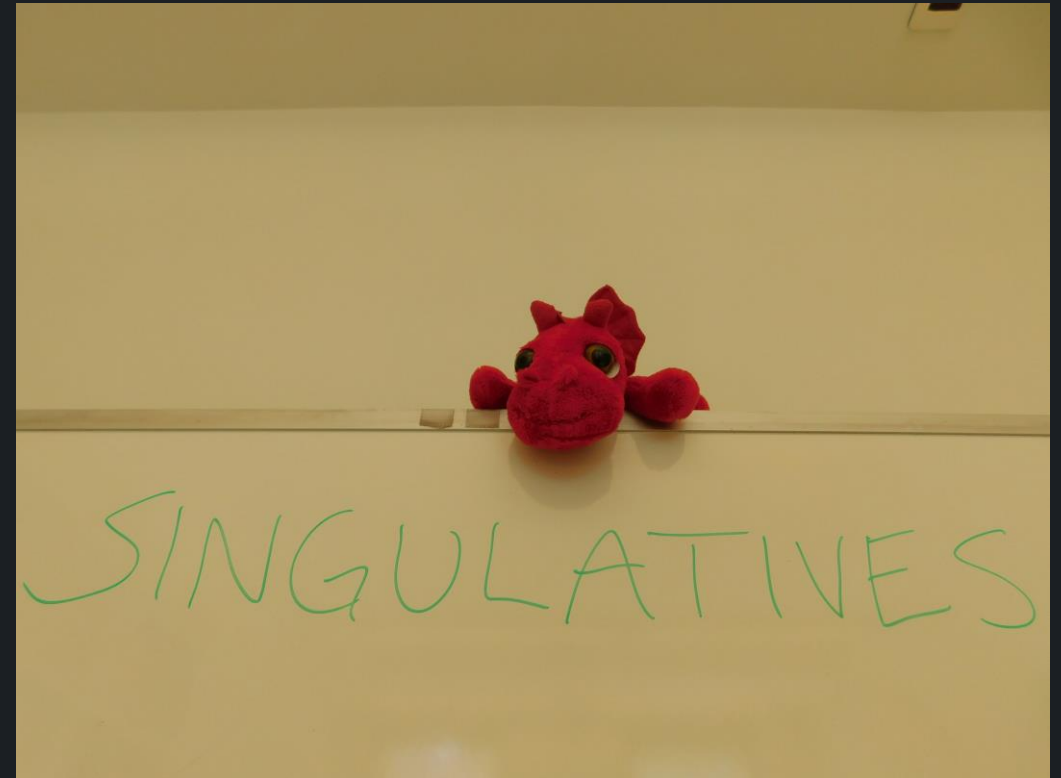
Diachrony

- How does singulative marking arise in different languages and families?
- What are the most common pathways of development and change?



THANK
YOU!

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