

The expression of number

The postposed definite article has various morphophonologically determined variants: after any vowel except *i*, *kii* becomes *hii*, and after any vowel *tii* becomes *dii*. Given this, in the examples above the article used for the masculine plural might be considered the same as that for the feminine singular, while that for the feminine plural is the same as that for the masculine singular. The basic forms are as in table 5.16. Here masculine singular and feminine plural are the same (as are femi-

Table 5.16 *The definite article in Somali (basic forms)*

	singular	plural
masculine	kii	tii
feminine	tii	kii

nine singular and masculine plural); of course, the case would be more convincing if these basic forms were not subject to variation. While table 5.16 suggests a clear and surprising picture, things are actually more complicated. First, Somali has polarity only in noun-phrase-internal agreement. Examples (36)–(39) show that the verbal agreement forms are different: there the plural for both genders is the same as the masculine singular. And second, not all nouns fall into the pattern shown in (36)–(39). Some masculine nouns form their plural by partial reduplication and take the same article in the singular and the plural, for example *nin-kii* ‘the man’, *niman-kii* ‘the men’. Thus not all targets show polarity, nor are all nouns included in the polarity system. (Conversely, a small number of nouns is exceptional in taking polarity type agreements for predicate agreement too: see Hetzron 1972, Zwicky and Pullum 1983.) The importance of polarity should not be overrated, as Speiser warned (1938).

Inverse number and the special case of polarity are surprising and interesting phenomena. However, they are interesting only as means of expression. They do not add to the semantic possibilities of number systems.

start here 5.6 Minimal-augmented systems

In descriptions of certain languages of the Philippines, starting from Thomas (1955) on Ilocano, there was a perception that the data did not fit well into conventional accounts of person and number. Conklin (1962: 134–6) proposed a different analysis for Hanunóo, which also proved applicable to various languages of Arnhem Land in Australia. We shall follow the account of one of the latter, namely Rembarrnga, as described in McKay (1978, 1979). First consider the Rembarrnga forms given in table 5.17 (McKay 1978: 28). This analysis captures the facts, but it seems unsatisfactory: first the paradigm looks disjointed, and

Table 5.17 *Rembarrnga dative pronoun forms: traditional categories*

	singular	dual	trial	plural
1 inclusive	—	yukkɯ	ngakorrb barrah	ngakorɯ
1 exclusive	ngɯnɯ	yarr barrah		yarrɯ
2	kɯ	nakorb barrah		nakorrɯ
3 masculine	nawɯ	} barr barrah		barrɯ
3 feminine	ngadɯ			

second there is a marker *-bbarrah*, marked in bold in table 5.17, which appears in an odd selection of cells. If we try to characterize *-bbarrah* in absolute terms, we find no solution: in one instance it is used of three individuals, in other instances it is for two. But if we treat it (and the entire system) in relative terms (Evans §7.1.1 in forthcoming) then a more elegant picture emerges. The form *-bbarrah* is used when there is one entity more than the logical minimum. For most cells that view makes no difference. However, for the first person inclusive, the logical minimum is two (otherwise it would not be inclusive). Thus *yukkɯ* is a minimal form (we can label it 1/2 to suggest it represents another person value) and *ngakorrbbarrah* is used where there is one more than that minimum, that is, three. We redraw the paradigm from this relative perspective (McKay 1978: 28) in table 5.18. This is a more satisfy-

Table 5.18 *Rembarrnga dative pronoun forms: minimal-augmented analysis*

	minimal	unit augmented	augmented
1	ngɯnɯ	yarr barrah	yarrɯ
1/2	yukkɯ	ngakorrb barrah	ngakorɯ
2	kɯ	nakorb barrah	nakorrɯ
3 masc	nawɯ	} barr barrah	barrɯ
3 fem	ngadɯ		

ing analysis. We have forms for the minimal number of the pronoun, for one more than that (the unit augmented form) and and for more than that again (augmented). The simplest system of this type would have just minimal and augmented. In such systems, with only two number values, the difference from conventional systems is in one form only. We see this clearly by comparing Ilocano

Table 5.19 *Traditional analysis of Ilocano pronominal forms*

	singular	dual	plural
1 exclusive	-ko		-mi
1 inclusive		-ta	-tayo
2	-mo		-yo
3	-na		-da

analysed in the two different ways. In the traditional analysis (table 5.19) there is just one dual form; from our discussion in §4.1, if there is an additional number value in one place only, the first person is exactly the place in which we would expect to find it.

Table 5.20 *Minimal-augmented analysis of Ilocano pronominal forms*

	minimal	augmented
1	-ko	-mi
1/2	-ta	-tayo
2	-mo	-yo
3	-na	-da

On the other hand, though the evidence is not as convincing as in Rembarrnga, there are grounds for favouring the minimal-augmented account for Ilocano given in table 5.20. The main difference is in the status accorded to *-ta*. The possible ambiguity of the first person inclusive dual or 1/2 minimal form in such cases is discussed in an interesting exchange (Greenberg 1988, McGregor 1989, Greenberg 1989, McKay 1990). Besides being found in Hanunóo as noted earlier, and other languages of the Philippines, minimal-augmented systems have been identified in various languages of Arnhem Land, starting with Burrara (Burera) (Glasgow 1964);³⁰ others are listed

³⁰ It is important to note how similarly these number systems behave to those we have seen before. Thus Gurr-goni is one of the four Manigrida group languages (the others are Burrara, as just mentioned, Nakkara and Ndjébbana), all of which have systems similar to that of Rembarrnga. In Gurr-goni the number distinctions are available only for reference to humans and higher animates (as in the systems discussed in chapter 2). Furthermore, in the third person the minimal form is unmarked even for reference to humans. However, if an augmented form is used, it must be the appropriate one. In other words, the minimal form acts rather like a general number form (partially similar to Kaytetye, §2.3.3); the choice is minimal/general or number-specific: if the latter is chosen it must be the appropriate form, that is, unit augmented versus augmented is not a facultative choice in Gurr-goni. The information on Gurr-goni is from Rebecca Green (personal communication).

in McKay (1978: 29). Following from these alternative analyses, the essential point is that minimal-augmented systems represent an alternative way of organizing the morphology of person and number. They do not give additional semantic distinctions in number. This is why we consider them here as an alternative means of expression, and not as a set of additional number values.³¹ **stop here**

5.7 ‘Constructed’ numbers

Constructed numbers appear where there is a mismatch between number marking of different elements which produces additional number values. Consider the following data from the Uto-Aztecan language Hopi (Hale 1997: 74). The pronominal and verbal forms each make a two-way distinction:

(40) Pam wari
that.SG run.PERFV.SG
‘He/she ran’

(41) Puma yùutu
that.PL run.PERFV.PL
‘They (plural) ran’

However there is a third possibility:

(42) Puma wari
that.PL run.PERFV.SG
‘They (two) ran’

The combination of plural pronoun and singular verb gives a dual (‘they two ran’). This dual is ‘constructed’ from the number on the pronoun and that on the verb; we have a singular–dual–plural system, ‘constructed’ from the two parts. If we retain notional labels, then we could say that the pronoun distinguishes singular from dual/plural while the verb distinguishes singular/dual from plural. It must be stressed, however, that this is only a part of the system: animate nouns in Hopi have a straightforward singular–dual–plural system, indicated by three distinct markers.

Now consider Zuni, a language isolate with some 8,000 speakers in north-west New Mexico (data from Lynn Nichols, personal communications). No pronoun is found in the third person, and there is a dual marker available. The verb has a marker for the plural (as in (47) below), otherwise it takes no number marker.

³¹ Similarly, the ‘quasi-duals’ of Bantu represent interesting combinations of person, but do not extend the semantic possibilities of number; for the complex system of Ngyembɔɔn-Bamileke, a Grassfield Bantu language of Cameroon, see S. C. Anderson (1985); for consideration of other complex systems using the ‘augmented’ notion see Noyer (1997: 148–54).