

Functional projections and language contact: the case of plural marking of Spanish nouns in Yucatec Maya

Rodrigo Gutiérrez-Bravo & Melanie Uth

(El Colegio de México & Universität zu Köln)

In this paper we present an analysis of two cross linguistically different plural markers that coexist in Yucatec Maya (a Mayan language from Mexico) as a result of language contact with Spanish. Plural marking in Yucatec is optional (1), and as shown in Butler (2013) and Butler *et al.* (2014), following Wiltschko (2008), the original plural marker of Yucatec, the suffix *-o'ob* (see (6)) is an adjunct modifier of DP.

- (1) *ka'a túul nukuch tso'*
two CLF big turkey
'two big turkeys' (NM-38)

Nouns borrowed from Spanish, however, exhibit a puzzling behavior. In many cases plural marking on these nouns is equally optional, as in (2), but our results from a corpus study show that Spanish nouns preceded by a Spanish numeral always show the Spanish plural suffix *-s*, as in (3).

- (2) *Óox p'éel candado yaan-ø-i'*
Three CLF padlock EX-ABS.3SG-LOC
'It had three padlocks.' (NM,2mfAC,26)

- (3) *jach diez metro-s wal-e'*
very ten meter-PL perhaps-CL
'at most perhaps ten meters.' (NM,3bmMCP,48)

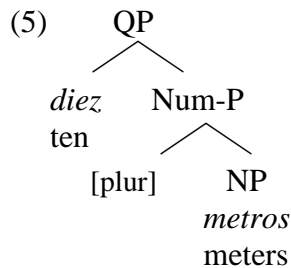
This is also observed in an alternative construction in Yucatec in which a possessed numeral classifier introduces the Spanish noun, as in (4).

- (4) *Cinco u túul-ul señora-s ts'-u k'uch-ul-o'ob-i'*
five ERG.3 CLF-SUF lady-PL TRM-ERG.3 arrive-IND-PL-LOC
'Five ladies had already arrived.' (NM-273)

Crucially, this distinction is categorical in the presence of a Spanish numeral, but not in its absence: when the Spanish numeral is absent, the presence of the Spanish plural suffix *-s* is not obligatory, as in (2). This shows that the obligatory nature of plural marking in (3) cannot simply be the result of the fact that plural morphology is obligatory in Spanish. We develop an analysis of these data based on Wiltschko (2008) and Kim *et al.* (2017). Wiltschko (2008) proposes that crosslinguistically there are two different kinds of plural marking. In English, where plural marking is obligatory, it is the result of the presence of a Number Phrase (Num-P) above the *nP* headed by a [plural] feature (see also Mathieu 2013). In languages where plural marking is optional (for instance, Halkomelem), the plural marker is just an adjunct feature that adjoins to the N-projection, possibly without any categorial properties of its own. The two plural markers are independent from one another (one is the result of lexical selection, the other one is just adjunction), so in principle it should be possible to find both of them simultaneously in the same language. This indeed has recently been shown to be the case in Blackfoot in Kim *et al.* (2017). We suggest that Yucatec instantiates a similar kind of language, with the difference that one of the two plural markers originates from language contact.

To account for the Yucatec data, we propose an analysis where Spanish numerals have

kept their original selectional properties, even after having been long borrowed by Yucatec. These numerals c-select a Num-P, as they do in Spanish, and so plural marking becomes obligatory, i.e. (3).



Yucatec numerals and other functional heads in the nominal domain, however, lack this lexical property: in Yucatec [plural] is an adjunct and not the head feature of a complement that can be selected for. As such, Num-P is not selected by any head in the nominal domain, and in this way the non-obligatory nature of plural marking in (2), even in the presence of a Yucatec numeral, is accounted for. Our analysis also provides specific and concrete evidence that morphological plural marking in Spanish depends exclusively on a functional head distinct from *n/N*, which in turn supports the proposal in Wiltschko (2008) that nouns are not lexically specified for [number], *contra* Chierchia (1998).

We further show that Yucatec fulfills an important prediction that follows from Wiltschko's analysis: since the two different plural features are formally different (one is a head, the other one is just an adjunct), in principle it should be possible for a noun to simultaneously display them both. In contrast to Blackfoot, this is indeed attested in Yucatec, where Spanish loanwords can simultaneously show the plural suffix of Spanish and the plural suffix of Yucatec.

- (6) ... *ayik'al le u abuelo-s-o'ob*, ...
 ... rich DET his grandparent-PL-PL
 '...his grandparents were rich ...' (NM,2mfAC,24)

We conclude by briefly discussing another theoretically relevant property observed in these data, namely, that the split behavior displayed by the Spanish plural suffix *-s* (recall that it is optional if a Spanish numeral is not present) shows that the feature [plural] is not inherently specified to be a head or an adjunct: instead, it acquires such a specification in a given syntactic configuration like the one in (5). In other words, in our analysis the difference between languages where plural marking on nouns is obligatory or optional (i.e. two different kinds of plural) ultimately reduces to whether some functional head within the *nP* selects the feature [plural], as in Spanish or English, or not, as in Yucatec.

Abbreviations: ABS: absolutive, CL: clitic, CLF: classifier, DET: determiner, ERG: ergative, EX: existential, IND: indicative, LOC: locative, PL: plural, SG: singular, SUF: suffix, TRM: terminative.

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