

The “Dummy” Plural Marker in Korean: Its Semantic Contribution

Korean plural marker *tul* appears in two distinct usages. It can occur as typical plural morpheme, immediately following a (pro)noun (underlined in (1) and below). Or it can be optionally attached to other categories including adverbial, verbal, or prepositional phrases (boldfaced in (1) and below). The former is called “intrinsic *tul*” and the latter “extrinsic *tul*.”

- (1) Haksayng-tul-i sensayngnim-kkey(-**tu**l) yelsimhi(-**tu**l) cilmwun-ul(-**tu**l)
 student-PL-Nom teacher-Dat(-PL) intently(-PL) question-Acc(-PL)
 kyosil-eyse(-**tu**l) ha-ko(-**tu**l) iss-ta(-**tu**l).
 classroom-in(-PL) do-Comp(-PL) be-Dec

‘The students are asking a question to the teacher intently in the classroom.’

Extrinsic *tul* has a number of peculiar properties. First, it carries a distributive sense. (2a) can mean either that each of the two students submitted his/her own paper, or that the two submitted one coauthored paper. By contrast, (2b) can only mean the former:

- (2) a. Twu-myeng-uy haksayng-tul-i peyipe-lul ceychwulha-ess-ta.
 two-CL-Poss student-PL-Nom paper-Acc submit-PST-Dec
 ‘Two students submitted a paper.’
 b. Twu-myeng-uy haksayng-tul-i peyipe-lul-**tu**l ceychwulha-ess-ta.
 two-CL-Poss student-PL-Nom paper-Acc-PL submit-PST-Dec
 ‘Two students submitted a paper (each).’

Furthermore, extrinsic *tul* appears to violate compositionality: although it attaches to any category, regardless of semantic type (as shown in (1)), it always serves as a pluralizer for the subject of a sentence, not indicating the plurality on its adjacent element. Lastly, extrinsic *tul* must be placed in a position c-commanded by the plural argument, as illustrated in (3), within the same clause (4).

- (3) Wuli sensayngnim-un yenkusil-ey(-***tu**l) keysi-ta(-***tu**l).
 our teacher-Top office-in(-PL) be-Dec(-PL)
 ‘Our teacher is in the office.’

- (4) a. Yecaay-tul-i [nay-ka pan-eyse-***tu**l ceil-***tu**l calsayngkyessta-ko] malha-n-ta.
 girl-PL-Nom I-Nom class-in-PL most-PL handsome-Comp say-Pres-Dec
 ‘The girls say that I am the most handsome in the class.’
 b. Na-nun [ni-tul-i chakhata-ko] encena-***tu**l mit-koiss-ta.
 I-Top you-PL-Nom good-Comp always-PL believe-Prog-Dec
 ‘I always believe that you (pl.) are good.’

Focusing on distributivity and compositionality, I attempt to analyze the properties of extrinsic *tul* within event semantics, according to which sentences express event quantifications. Distributivity with extrinsic *tul* is not always strong enough to cancel out the collective reading, as in (5). Indeed (6) is even ungrammatical when it is interpreted distributively.

(5) Haksayng-tul-i piano-lul-**tu**l omki-ess-ta.
student-PL-Nom piano-Acc-PL carry-PST-Dec
'The students carried a piano.'

(6) Cheli-wa Sumi-nun ecey kongwon-eyse-**tu**l manna-ess-ta.
Cheli-and Sumi-Top yesterday park-in-PL meet-PST-Dec
'Cheli and Sumi met in the park yesterday.'

I propose that there are two different kinds of plurality: "individual plurality" vs. "event plurality," and that it is event plurality that induces the distributive reading. The sentences in (5)-(6) exemplify event plurality. Hence, the extrinsic plural marker can be used, and becomes associated with the event operator. In (5) we have some variations depending on situation. That is, we can think of a situation where one or more than one students carry a piano, which is a many-to-one mapping. Or we can think of a situation where one student carries one piano, which is a one-to-one mapping. Or we can think of a situation where all the students carry one piano at a time, which is an every-to-one mapping. Whatever situation it is, we must have a plurality of sub-events, producing the distributive reading. Meanwhile, we can obtain the collective reading in a situation where there are more than one subject individual involved in a sub-event of carrying a piano, which is called "individual plurality." Therefore, the sentence in (5) turns out to be ambiguous between distributive and collective. In (6) we have one event, i.e., a meeting of Cheli and Sumi. This event can further be divided into two sub-events, that is, Cheli's meeting with Sumi and Sumi's meeting with Cheli. Since the verb *meet* is reciprocal in meaning, it is not unnatural to posit these two sub-events. These two sub-events produce the distributive reading.

Selected references

- Chung, Daeho. 2003. Dummy *-Tul* in Gapping Construction. *Proceedings of the Korean Generative Grammar Circle, Spring 2003*. pp. 75-83.
- Kim, Chonghyuck and Satoshi Tomioka. 2005. Extrinsic Plurality in Korean. A Paper presented in the 15th Japanese/Korean Linguistics Conference at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.