Redundancy in nominal plural marking

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Linguistic analysis often departs from the idea that language users try to communicate efficiently, finding a balance between expressivity, clearness, and robustness of their message on the one hand, and conciseness, economy, and transparency on the other. Instances of redundancy, common in all languages, are therefore usually explained by pointing at speakers' desire to be clear and understood. A question that has long been overlooked in research into communicative efficiency is whether languages differ in the extent to which they allow for redundancy. Leufkens (2020) finds that there are cross-linguistic differences in the occurrence of different types of concord, suggesting that some grammars are more lenient towards redundancy than others. However, the fact that a grammar allows for redundant expression of information does not entail that users of that grammar make use of that option. This leads to the following research question: are there cross-linguistic differences in the degree to which language users avoid or employ redundancy?

Plural concord The RQ is answered by means of a multi-method case study into plural concord: the phenomenon where nominal plural marking is combined with a >1 numeral, resulting in the redundant expression of plurality. In some languages, the nominal plural marker is optional in such a context. For example, in (1), the Turkish plural suffix *-lAr* is omitted in the presence of the numeral (Göksel & Kerslake 2005:148).

(1) üç   çocuk
    3   child
    'three children'

Corpus study First, I will present a corpus study in which I explore whether three languages vary in the extent to which they allow redundant plural marking. The three languages, Estonian, Hungarian, and Turkish, all exhibit optional plural concord. Comparable texts in the three languages are selected from corpora annotated according to the Universal Dependencies framework[1]. The proportion of redundantly marked plural nouns in the total set of numeral-noun constructions is measured per text, per corpus and per language. Appropriate statistical tests will show whether there are significant cross-linguistic differences in the amount of redundancy in languages with the same grammatical set-up.

Interviews As a follow-up on the corpus study, speakers of Estonian, Hungarian and Turkish are asked for their reasons to either omit or express plurality. Thus, it will be investigated to what extent redundancy is consciously avoided or deliberately employed, and, again, whether there are cross-linguistic differences in this respect.

References
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Göksel, Aslı & Celia Kerslake. 2005. *Turkish: a comprehensive grammar* (Routledge Comprehensive Grammars). London: Routledge.

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[1] https://universaldependencies.org/