A CROSS LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTION OF PLURACTIONALITY
AS AN INTERNAL TEMPORAL COMPONENT OF EVENTS

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Abstract

The locus of Pluractionality within Event semantics is still equivocal. This paper aims to project Pluractionality – or the multiplicity of events – as a sub-component of Event Aspect in its own right, within a cross-linguistic context. For the purposes of this paper, the analytical description presented takes a functional approach to Pluractionality, pursuing the definition of its meanings, its classification that suits cross-linguistic studies, identification of the forms that encode its different types, supported with an extensive list of examples category-wise. Cross-linguistic descriptions of events find utility, among others, in translationally relevant studies including those dealing with the annotation of bilingual parallel and comparative corpora (Cyrus, 2006; Rabadan, 2006).

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1. Introduction

Verbs denote Events, a semantic category that is meant to denote an extralingual reality. Though the entire meaning of an event may not be exclusively realized by the Verb that represents it, the event meaning or semantic content is anchored in the Verb that is the predicator of a clause (Verspoor and Sauter, 2000; Verspoor, Dirven and Radden, 2004).

An event's semantics has two dimensions (Levin, 2009, 2015). One is related to its specific referential meaning that distinguishes it from other members in the category. This is contiguous with the lexical meaning of its Verb but not coterminous with it. The other dimension is common to and shared by events as a category. For example, the occurrence time of an event with respect to that of another event, its duration, its depiction as a part or whole, the certainty or otherwise of its occurrence, the energy involved in it are some of the components that make up the latter dimension. These are contiguous with the grammatical meaning of its Verb but not coterminous with it and are designated as functional semantic components of events in this study.

The scheme envisaged in this paper for the analytical description of overall functional meanings signified by the aspect of an event, designated as the Internal Temporal Constituency (for example, Comrie, 1976; Smith, 1991), is three-fold. First is the event's *Aktionsart*, or aspectual class, as to whether it is a state, process or transition. Second is the Viewpoint Aspect that denotes if an event is expressed as viewed externally and holistic, or from inside and consisting of parts. Third is the multiplicity of an event, which could be single-layered or dual-layered.

An event could be actualized just once on only one occasion or multiple times. The former is designated as Semelfactive (Declerck, 2006) and seen as single-layered. While the events actualizing multiple times are viewed as dual-layered or Pluractional, consisting of a hyper-situation and sub-situations respectively. Pluractionality can be broadly grouped into three types, namely Event-Internal Pluractionality, Event-External Pluractionality, and a combination of both (Bertinetto and Lenci, 2012).

The languages across which the analytical description of Pluractionality is presented are English and Tamil. Thus this paper aims to enable the development of a suitable form-versus-function

framework for comparative analyses of event meanings denoted by Verbs across languages, as done here for English and Tamil.

2. Literature Review

Along with *Aktionsart* and Viewpoint aspect, Pluractionality has also been identified by aspectologists as denoting aspectual meaning (Dressler, 1968; Cusic, 1981; Xrakovskij, 1997; Declerck, 2006; Cabredo Hofherr and Laca, 2010: Bertinetto and Lenci, 2012). Xrakovskij (1997) has observed that plurality and duration are strictly related (however, stating this in the context of event-internal pluractionality). Pluractionality denotes event multiplicity, i.e. the events actualize multiple times and have a hyper-situation and sub-situations (Declerck, 2006).

Despite a wide agreement about the Pluractionality being an aspect, there are three views with respect to locating it within the matrix of the Internal Temporal Constituency. One view is simply unspecified; the second view places it as a subtype of *Aktionsart* (Dressler, 1968; Cusic, 1981; Xrakovskij, 1997), while the third view suggests a third category for it to distinguish it from the other two aspect sub-components discussed above (Cabredo Hofherr and Laca, 2010).

It was Newman (1980) who introduced the term Pluractionality, whose scope was later widened to study a variety of phenomena by Dressier (1968), Cusic (1981), and Xrakovskij (1997) among others. Newman described it as follows:

> "...the essential semantic characteristics of such verbs [pluractionals] is almost always plurality or multiplicity of the verb's action" (Newman, 1990, p.43)... [and covered] "multiple, iterative, frequentative, distributive, or extensive action" (Newman, 2000, p.423).

While the above listing is not exhaustive, it serves to point out the wide range of phenomena that this the general category of pluractionality comprises.

From the event-aspect perspective there have been at least three major classification schemes, that of Dressler, Cusic, and Xrakovskij.

Dressler's (1968) basis of distinction is distributive vs. non-distributive plurality. He goes on to describe his semantic field of Pluractionality as consisting of four modes of action, namely the iterative, the distributive, the continuative and the intensive. Each of these have multiple subtypes denoting pluractional meanings that add up to twenty one.

Cusic (1981) bases his distinction on event-internal vs. event-external plurality and attributes event multiplicity arising out of three distributions, namely plural times, plural spatial locations and plural participants, with the last two also possessing temporal implications. He lists sixteen

pluractional meanings with these. Cusic (1981) also uses four parameters as four ways of viewing this bifurcation. They are (i) The Event Ratio Parameter; (ii) The Relative Measure Parameter; (iii) The Connectedness Parameter; and (iv) The Distributive Parameter.

Xrakovskij (1997) bases Pluractionality distinction on terminal vs. non-terminal, and includes Multiplicative and Distributive in the former, and Iterative in the latter. Xrakovskij (1997) sees it as Quantitative Aspectuality, with a model of composition for the quantitative aspectualityconsisting of three semantic attributes that are logically independent, namely multiplicity, duration and intensity.

There are other ways of subdividing Pluractionality, and in many cases the same subtypes are designated by different terms by the linguists. When the pluractional sub-situations occur at a single occasion, they are termed as micro-events, and those actualizing in multiple occasions are macro-events (Cusic, 1981, Bertinetto and Lenci, 2012). Micro events occur for event-internal pluractionality and are further subdivided on the frequency scale, as **frequentative** (Dressler, 1968; Bybee et al.) or saepitive (Xrakovskij, 1997), **raritive** (Xrakovskij, 1997) or **discontinuative** (Dressler, 1968), and ultimately **potentiality** – known as **capacitative** by Shluinsky (2009). The last only refers to the predisposition for pluractionality rather than its actualization.

Event-External Pluractionality is grouped into Iteratives and Gnomic Imperfectives, with only some of the types of the latter included. The Iteratives are macro-events of particular actualizations and are subdivided along the frequency scale too, but as **frequentative**, **raritive** and **capacitative**. The pluractional Gnomic Imperfectives are macro-events that have a characterizing property to them and three types have been identified, namely the **Habitual**, **Attitudinal** and **Potential** (Capacitative) (Bertinetto and Lenci, 2012).

There is a special subtype of pluractionality known as **reduplicativity**. Here the event is repeated exactly twice. Moreover, it frequently implies a kind of reverse action – termed as reversative by Dressler (1968). It is observed to occur especially with movement Verbs and many languages have reduplicative morphemes to denote it.

An adapted version of the graphical representation of the areas of overlap between Pluractionality and Gnomic Imperfectives given by Bertinetto and Lenci (2012) is presented below, with habituals, attitudinals and potentials included.
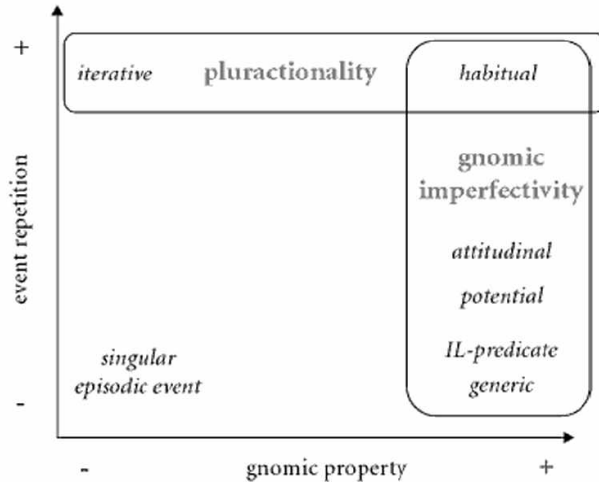
Fig.1 Domains of Pluractionality and Gnomic Imperfectives Bertinetto and Lenci (2012)

This study mainly adopts the scheme of Cusic (1981), reconciling his two classifications from two different perspectives, and supported by the elaboration in Bertinetto and Lenci (2012).

3. Annotation Method for Tamil Examples

The CT – non-English – examples in this article are annotated using Leipzig Glossing Rules. These are interlinear morpheme-by-morpheme glossing conventions meant to provide information on meanings and grammatical properties of individual words as well as its parts. It helps linguists consistently use glossing notation conventions. Leipzig Glossing Rules provide ten rules and sub-rules within them in such a way that the linguists can be flexible about the degree of details in applying them as suits their purposes. Clearly, its purpose is not to present an analysis in a certain method, but to present relevant information in a structured way for support and easier presentation of the analysis (Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology [MPIEA], 2008).

The convention requires to state an example being interlinearly glossed in three rows or lines, with the first row stating the non-English example in italics and the second providing a word-to-word translation with grammatical category notations for the word and the morphemes within them as appropriate for the purposes of the material being written. The words in the first and the second rows are vertically aligned with wider inter-word spaces to accommodate such alignment. In the third row, a paraphrased English version of the sentence is provided with regular interword spaces and without vertical alignment with the above rows (MPIEA, 2008).

In this study, the grammatical information of a word considered default in the text is not generally glossed if not required to be stated explicitly, to limit the line length and avoid overflow of the gloss to a next line. For example, the singular (SG) for a noun is not stated and

the nominative case (NOM) for an initial noun – generally a Subject – is not stated, unless otherwise required to be labeled explicitly.

The notations to represent morphosyntactic categories are provided in small caps. The Verbs are labeled for the tense and PNG suffix as available besides any auxiliaries or clitics. The pronouns and the nouns – including named entities – are labeled for case, and the nouns are provided number labels too, both as required. Also, where needed, labeling is provided to designate adjectives, adverbs, pronoun types and even determiners.

4. Pluractionality: Definition and Classification

When the events are actualized multiple times, they are viewed as dual-layered or Pluractional, consisting of a hyper-situation and sub-situations respectively. Pluractionality can be broadly grouped into three types, namely Event-Internal Pluractionality, Event-External Pluractionality, and a combination of both (Bertinetto and Lenci, 2012).

Event-Internal Pluractionality or the Multiplicative (Shluinsky, 2009) refers to a mono-occasional repetition as in *Yesterday at 5 o'clock John knocked insistently at the door*. Here, the multiple sub-situations occur within a hyper-situation on a single occasion. This type of sub-situations are also designated as Micro-events by some aspectologists (for example, Bertinetto and Lenci, 2012).

In the Event-External Pluractionality, on the other hand, the hyper-situation is comprised of multiple sub-situations spanning over a longer duration that cannot be described as mono-occasional. According to Bertinetto and Lenci (2012), they are comprised of a whole series of singular Macro-events to form a pluractional event. For instance, *John swam daily in the lake*.

The occurrence of a combination of the above two types is also not ruled out, and constitutes the third type as in *John knocked daily at Anne's door*. This type can be characterized as a form of double pluractionality.

An alternative scheme was proposed by Cusic (1981), according to which an event's plurality can occur in three ways as follows.

    a. Plurality **in** events

(1a) The mouse nibbled and nibbled the cheese.

    b. Plurality **of** events

(1b) The mouse bit the cheese again and again.

    c. Plurality **in and of** events

(1c) The mouse was always nibbling at the cheese.

Further elucidating his classification, Cusic (1981) uses triple parameters of Occasion, Situation (or event) and Phasality as the distinguishing criteria for these categories. The following example is given to differentiate between occasions and situations.

(2) The salesman rang the doorbell twice. It could be:
        a. On two separate occasions he rang the bell once. OR
        b. On one occasion he rang the bell two times.

The Phasality, signaling connectedness, is the parameter that helps determine the continuativity of an event. Therefore, in (a) the plurality is **internal to an event and internal to a single occasion**, consisting of internal phases. Cusic (1981) has identified the nature of phasality for this as **repetitive action**. These are units of action, such as those denoted by flutter, wiggle and tickle, conceived of as confined to a single occasion and to a single event on that occasion. But,the plurality is **external to an event but internal to an occasion** if a single bounded event (internally plural or not) is repeated on a single occasion as in (b). While, the plurality is **external to an event and external to occasion** if a single bounded event is repeated on several occasions as in (b). For the last two types, the nature of the phasality is identified as **repeated action**. These are units of action potentially distributable, though not necessarily distributed, over multiple occasions.

Reconciling the above two classification schemes, we have the following:
i) Event-Internal Pluractionality
      i.a   Plurality **in** events (repetitive) – Type I
      i.b   Mono-occasional Plurality **of** events (repeated) – Type II
ii) Event-External Pluractionality
      ii.a   Multi-occasional Plurality **of** events (repeated)
iii) Combination Pluractionality
      iii.a   Plurality **in and of** events (repeated)

Table-1 : Basic Classification of Pluractionality

Pluractionality Type	Plural Situation	Occasion	Phasality
Event-Internal Type I	micro-events	mono	repetitive
Event-Internal Type II	micro-events	mono	repeated
Event-External	macro-events	multi	repeated
Combination	macro+micro-events	multi+mono	repeated+repetitive

Frequency scale is yet another parameter to subdivide Pluractionality, although its application to the above four types may not be symmetric. The subtypes arising out of this are frequentative, raritive and capacitative, the last being the least degree in the frequency scale.

Event-External Pluractionality is further grouped into Iteratives and Gnomic Imperfectives (Bertinetto and Lenci, 2012). Iteratives are plural macro-events of specific/particular actualizations, and are subdivided along the frequency scale as frequentative, raritive and capacitative. The Gnomic Imperfectives are pluractional macro-events that have a characterizing property to it. Bertinetto and Lenci (2012) has identified at least three types in this category that are pluractional, namely Habitual, Attitudinal and Potential (Capacitative). However, not all classes of Gnomics qualify as pluractional. For example, Generics such as ***Dogs have four legs***, and Individual Level (IL) Predicates as in ***Elina is Finnish*** clearly do not fall within the scope of pluractionality.

5. Encoding Forms in English and Tamil

The formal devices that encode pluractionality are wide-ranged. Both in English and Tamil they include among others the lexical semantics of the Verb, its interaction with grammatical markers, especially the default progressive marker, adverbials – largely temporal – periphrastic expressions, interaction among one or more of these, and even sentential pragmatic inference (Bertinetto and Lenci, 2012; Lehman, 1993).

The interaction of the progressive marker – *-ing* in English and *-konT* in Tamil – with transition Verbs to produce pluractionality is a well-known phenomenon. (Declerck, 2006). The lexical semantics of the transition Verb conveys punctual meaning. When the progressive marker – *-ing* in English and *-konT* in Tamil – which is usually applied to 'capture a middle slice' of a durative event, is applied to punctual events, it results in a contradiction of terms. The only way to resolve this contradiction is to attribute pluractional meaning to the event. The simple present form *-kiR* could also mark progressive and thus capable of encoding pluractionality in the present time zone. The examples below illustrate this phenomenon.

(3a) Peter <u>kicked</u> the ball.
(3b) Peter <u>was kicking</u> his friend.

(4a) *maalaajaaTiyai<u>uTaittaaL</u>*.
    Mala-NOM jar-ACC   break-PST.3SGF
    Mala broke the jar.

(4b) *maalaameesaiyai<u>uTaittukkonTiruntaaL</u>*.
    Mala-NOM table-ACC break-PST.PROG.3SGF

Mala was breaking the table.

(4c) *maalaameesaiyaiuTaikkiraaL*.

   Mala-NOM   table-ACC   break-PRS.3SGF

   Mala is breaking the table.

Table-2: Temporal adverbial types encoding Pluractionality (Bertinetto and Lenci, 2012)

Pluractional Adverbial Type	Forms in English	Forms in Tamil
Cyclicity adverbials	every five minutes, annually, every Sunday, always at noon	pirativeLLi. vaarandtooRum, aindtunimiTattukkuorumuRai
Frequency adverbials	whenever, always, rarely, sometimes, occasionally, often	eppootum, eppootaavatu, aTikkaTi, -pootellaam, toTarndtu
Habituality adverbials	usually, habitually, commonly, consistently	vazakkamaaka, vaaTikkayaaka, saataaranamaaka
Reiteration adverbials	thrice, seven times, several times	irumuRai, palamuRai, eNNaRRataTavai

6. Examples for Pluractionality Types

This section provides lists of examples for each type of Pluractionality in the classification scheme elaborated in the section

6.1 Event-Internal Repetitive – English Examples

(5a) The pigeon fluttered its wings for a second.

(5b) This engine vibrates. (capacitative)

(5c) The rioters were breaking the parked vehicles.

6.2 Event-Internal Repetitive – Tamil Examples

(6a) *anta   vaNNamayamaanapamparamaindtunimiTamsuRRiyatu*.

   that   colorful   top   five   minute   spun-PST.3SG

   The colorful top spinned for five minutes.

(6b) *niyoosilaandturasikarkaLkutuukalamaakakkutittanar*.

   New Zealand-GEN   fan-PL   excitement-ADV   jump-PST.3PL

   New Zealand fans shouted in excitement.

(6c) *kurangkumarakkiLaiyiltuuriaaTiyatu*.

   monkey   tree-branch-LOC   swing-PST.3SG

The monkey swung from the tree branch.

In the above set, examples (5a), (5b), (6b) and (6c) have the pluractionality encoded by the Verb's lexical semantics, while in (5c) it is denoted by the interaction of the Verb's lexical semantics with the progressive marker. In (6a), it is marked by the interaction of the Verb's lexical semantics and the reiteration adverbial.

6.3 Event-Internal Repeating – English Examples
(7a) Ramesh <u>hammered</u> the nail <u>into</u> the wall.
(7b) The delivery boy <u>rang</u> the doorbell <u>over and over again</u>.

6.4 Event-Internal Repeating – Tamil Examples
(8a) *tapaaluuziyar<u>iraNTumuRai</u>katavait<u>taTTinaar</u>*.
    postal   employee two   time-ADV door-ACC knock-PST.3SG
    The postman knocked on the door twice.

(8b) *pooliiSkaararkaLtiruTanai<u>utaiutaiyenRu</u>utaittanar*.
    cop-PL   thief-ACC kick-REDP   kick-PST.3PL
    The cops were incessantly kicking the thief.

In the above set of examples, both (7a) and (8b) mark pluractionality using the lexical semantics, one with a phrasal Verb and the other with a reduplicative form of the Verb respectively. Examples (7b) and (8a) use the interaction of frequency and reiteration adverbials respectively with the Verb's lexical semantics to encode pluractionality.

6.5 Event-External Iteratives – English Examples
(9a) The disputing parties <u>had three rounds of talks</u>.
(9b) Maria <u>addressed incessant</u> questions to the policeman.
(9c) The specialist <u>visited</u> the clinic every Sunday.

6.6 Event-External Iteratives – Tamil Examples
(10a) *avanpayaNam<u>pookumpoo</u>tellaamennaiyumazaippaan*.
    he-NOM trip   go-PTCP whenever   me-ACC.COM invite-FUT.3SGM
    He invites me too whenever he goes on a trip.

(10b) *ndaan<u>muunRutaTavai</u>indtakkooyilukkup<u>pooyirukkiReen</u>*.
    I-NOM three   time-ADV this   temple-DAT   visit-PST.PRF.1SG
    I have visited this temple thrice.

(10c) *indtauuril<u>aaNTutooRum</u>vaNikakkaNkaaTsi<u>naTakkiRatu</u>*.

this   town-LOC annually   trade   fair   happen-PRS.3SG
Trade fairs are held annually in this town.

For the Event-External Iteratives illustrated above, almost all of the examples encode pluractionality using the interaction of temporal adverbials. Examples (9a) and (10b) use reiteration adverbials, while (9c) and (10c) use cyclicity adverbials. In (10a), the frequency adverbial is used for this purpose. Example (9b) stands out from the rest by encoding pluractionality with a non-adverbial argument of the Verb, the object.

6.7 Event-External Gnomic Imperfectives – English Examples
(11a) The king <u>would</u> easily <u>get angry</u> with his ministers. (habitual)
(11b) Anne and Lisa <u>wrote letters to each other</u>. (attitudinal)
(11c) During summer they <u>used to have</u> pistachio milk in the morning. (attitudinal)
(11d) The sun <u>rises</u> early in Kolkata. (habitual)
(11e) Maryam <u>speaks</u> Arabic. (potential)

6.8 Event-External Gnomic Imperfectives – Tamil Examples
(12a) *jeyaa<u>suruTTuppiTippaaL</u>*. (attitudinal)
    Jaya-NOM cigar   smoke-FUT.3SGF
    Jaya smokes cigars.

(12b) *keeraLaaviljuunmaatam<u>mazaipeyyum</u>*. (habitual)
    Kerala-LOC June month   rain-FUT.3SG
    It rains in June in Kerala.

(12c) *veyilkaalattil<u>tinamumndaanniissalaTikkasselveen</u>*. (attitudinal)
    summer-LOC   daily   I-NOM swim-INF   go-FUT.1SG
    I go swimming every day during summer.

(12d) *kalaiyarasi<u>aindtumozikaLilpeesuvaaL</u>*. (potential)
    Kalaiarasi-NOM five   language-PL.LOC speak-FUT.3SGF
    Kalaiarasi speaks five languages.

(12e) <u>*pulipultiNNumaa?*</u> (habitual)
    tiger   grass eat-FUT.Q
    Would a tiger eat grass?

Many of the above Gnomic examples exhibiting pluractionality resort to the predominant forms that express the characterizing property in English and Tamil, namely the simple present and the simple future respectively. However, other forms are used too, as in (11b) and (12d) where it is

the pragmatic inference from the entire sentence that signals pluractionality. Example (11a) uses an auxiliary Verb, (11c) a periphrastic expression '*used to*', and (12c) a cyclicity adverbial.

6.9 Combination – English and Tamil Examples

(13a) The town bus <u>used to pass through</u> the park <u>a dozen times a day</u>. (attitudinal+iterative)
(13b) <u>Everytime</u> the patient <u>hears</u> the ambulance siren she <u>shakes</u>. (habitual+repetitive)

(14a) *potuvaakandaamorundaaLaikkumummuRaisaappiTukiRoom*.
   usually   we-INCL   one   day-DAT   thrice   eat-PRS.1PL
   We usually eat thrice a day. (attitudinal+iterative)

(14b) *entaattaakuzungkikkuzungkissirippaar*. (habitual+repetitive)
   my grandfather jerk-ADV.REDP   laugh-FUT.3SG
   My grandfather jerks when laughing.

Each of the examples provided above for the Combination category denotes a double pluractionality and as such use two sets of forms to encode each layer of pluractionality. The examples (13a) and (14a) both use an adverbial that is a combination of reiteration and cyclical for one layer, along with a periphrastic expression and habitual adverbial respectively for the other. Example (13b) uses a grammatical marker – the simple present – and a frequency adverbial. Example (14b) makes use of a reduplicative form of the Verb's lexical semantics in the simple future to encode both the layers of pluractionality.

6.10 Participant and Spatial Plurality

Plurality of events also arise based on two other perspectives. Though not temporally pivotal, they are still temporally relevant. One is known as **Distributive Pluractionality** where multiple participants are involved in the actualization of the event, with its counterpart being **Non-distributive Pluractionality** for the same participant (Dressler, 1968). The other perspective pertains to spatial multiplicity. When the actualizing plural events occur simultaneously at different points of space, they are known as **Dispersive**, while the ones occurring successively are **Ambulative** (Dressler, 1968).

English Examples for Participant and Spatial Plurality

(15a) Xavier and Martha each baked a cake. (Distributive)
(15b) Xavier baked two eggs. (Non-distributive)

(16a) Each branch of the company hosted the Christmas party at 10 PM. (Dispersive)
(16b) Simon planted trees in different places. (Ambulative)

Tamil Examples for Participant and Spatial Plurality

(17a) *samapantiyilsakalarumamarndtuuNtanar*. (Distributive)
    community-feast-LOC all-COM   sit-INF   eat-PST.3PL
    Everyone sat together and ate.

(17b) *ndeeTrukaruNankaalaiyilummaalaiyilumndeessalaTikkassenRaan*.
    yesterday Karunan morning-COM evening-COM swim-INF   go-PST.3SGM
    Karunan went to swim both in the morning and evening yesterday. (Non-distributive)

(18a) *irurayilkaLumpattumaNikkuvandtuseerum*. (Dispersive)
    two train-PL.COM ten   time-DAT reach-FUT.3N
    Both the trains will reach at 10 o'clock.

(18b) *avaLpazangkalaiovvanRaakaovvorupayyilumeTuttuvaittaaL*.
    she-NOM fruit-PL.ACC one-by-one each   bag-LOC.COM take-INF place-PST.3SGF
    She placed the fruits one by one in each bag. (Ambulative)

7. Conclusion

The types and classification laid out here are not exhaustive. Many further sub-categories such as subject- and object-plurality under distributive (Dressler, 1968), as well as more divisional criteria such as intensity (Xrakovskij, 1997) among others have been proposed, as discussed in greater detail in the literature review section 2 above.

Nevertheless, the analytical description of Pluractionality with a survey of its many types and subtypes helps demonstrate that its classification is taxonomical as well as reinforce the case for its status as a separate subcomponent of Event Aspect as suggested by Cabredo Hofherr and Laca (2010), at least for purposes of its cross-linguistic treatments. This in turn enables the development of a suitable form-versus-function framework for comparative analyses of event meanings denoted by Verbs across languages, as done here for English and Tamil.

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