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## On the Development of Grammatical Number

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The present study examines the evolution of the dual grammatical number in the Pama-Nyungan language family by examining its relation with cardinal numerals and the relative stability of the dual form in the family. Almost all languages offer resources for distinguishing reference to one entity (singular) from more than one entity (plural), with some languages further grammaticalizing the exact reference to two (dual) and three (trial) entities. Research on grammatical number marking shows that dual and trial markers have evolved from cardinal numbers two and three respectively (Aikhenvald, 2018, Corbett, 2000), highlighting the crucial role of counting and/or cardinality in the grammaticalization of number. Considering that all languages have cardinal numerals, it seems crucial to investigate *why* only some cultures have developed and/or maintained dual grammatical number. The centrality of counting in expressing quantity underpins the decades-old question of whether the count-mass distinction is based on iconicity or arbitrariness. In their synchronic study, Haspelmath and Karjus (2017) observed that the form asymmetry – marking number for forms which denote a single entity and not marking for forms denoting multiplex entity – is influenced by the economy of expression by which more frequently used forms are simplified. Grimm (2018), who examines different shades of individuation of entities – singular, plural, collective, explains the nuances of individuation and number marking, theorizing their iconic basis. These two synchronic studies highlight usage-based constraint on the grammaticalization of number. While synchronic studies offer an explanatory account for the development of grammatical number, diachronic studies that consider the role of shared descent in the development of grammatical number are scant. The study first explores the distribution of dual marking in 2,300+ languages from the *Grambank database*. It proceeds with a Bayesian phylogenetic analysis of dual marking in the Pama-Nyungan language family. The results shed light on evolutionary processes underlying number grammaticalisation, including their rate of stability in the language family.

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