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Between Cooperative and Plural: Kirghiz type “Cooperative suffixes” in modern literary Uyghur

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In Kirghiz, the Turkic Cooperative suffix regularly functions as a Plural morpheme in the third person. Similar uses are also found in neighboring languages, one of which is Uyghur. Although these usages are recorded in native publications, they are rarely mentioned in Western ones. This contribution aims at pointing out the range of uses of the Cooperative suffix in Standard Uyghur. It shows that this morpheme displays functions resembling those in Kirghiz, albeit in a less regularized way.

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1. Introduction

It is a well-known fact among Turcologists that the Cooperative Suffix (*V*)*š* regularly functions as a third person plural marker in the standard Kirghiz verb paradigms, though with approximately the same restrictions on obligatoriness as *IEr* in Turkish (e.g. Imart 1981: 803-807, 2196-2198). Western Turcology largely seems to assume tacitly that this phenomenon is restricted to Kirghiz (e.g. Johanson 1998: 43; Kirchner 1998: 349). Nonetheless, it is a recorded fact that the same pattern can be recognized in some variety or other of at least Kazakh (e.g. Begaliyev & Sawranbaev 1944: 102; *Qazaq tili encyklopediyya*: 121), Uzbek (e.g. Reshetov & Shoabdurahmonov 1978: 152-157; Muhamadjonov 1983: 116-118) and Uyghur (e.g. Kaydarov et al. 1966: 207-209), but this fact is rarely formulated in the literature, and we cannot always be sure from the data presented about the exact use of the items in question. Still, Omeljan Pritsak in his highly dialect-oriented description of modern Uyghur (1959) observes that “Im Neuuigurischen gebraucht man oft für den Plural des Verbuns simplex den reziproken Stamm (vgl. das Kirgisische)” [In modern Uyghur, the reciprocal stem is often used for the plural of the simple verb (cf. Kirghiz)] (1959: 553). In standard Uzbek, plural-like uses of the Cooperative suffix do occur at least in certain types of texts, as the following examples¹ from the *Afandi latifalari* (1989) show:

¹ I use here the new Uzbek orthography for transcription.

- (1) *Xotin, tanish mullavachchalar kelishdi,*
 wife acquainted son of a mulla:P come:COOP.PAST.3
oshni katta qil.
 meal:ACC big make:IMP.2s
 ‘Dear wife, some acquainted students have arrived, prepare an ample meal!’ (p. 14)
- (2) *Afandidan odamlar: “Siz kattami, akangiz kattami?”*
 efendi:ABL man:P You big:Q brother:POSS.2s big:Q
deb so’rashdi.
 QUOT ask:COOP.PAST.3
 ‘The people asked the Efendi: Which one is elder, you or your brother?’ (p. 55)
- (3) *Dengizdagi baliqlar sasib qolmasin*
 sea:LOC.REL fish:P smell:CV ACTION:NEG.IMP.3
deb tuzlab qo’yishgan.
 QUOT salt:CV ACTION:COOP.POST.3
 ‘They salted the sea, so that the fishes in it might not smell.’ (p. 69)

This article does not deal with the situation in *dialects* of Central Asian Turkic. It is concerned with the functional distribution of the Cooperative suffix in modern written standard Uyghur and aims at showing that the “Kirghiz type” of plural marking observed by Pritsak for the dialects also diffuses into written standard Uyghur as an optional marker for plurality.

2. The “official” situation in standard Uyghur

As opposed to Uzbek, standard Uyghur lacks a third person plural marking device of the type **keldiler* ‘they came’. The form *keldi* is normally used for both third person singular and plural. As modern Uyghur more regularly than many other Turkic languages indicates the subject of a sentence overtly (cf. Uyg. *u keldi* vs. Turkish *?o geldi* ‘s/he came’), ambiguities rarely occur. Still, the distinctiveness gap between [±PLUR] for the third person in the verb paradigms leaves a blank for semantic extension of the original Cooperative suffix (uyg. *ömlük deriye*, literally ‘communion degree’). The Uyghurs themselves are usually quite conscious of some surplus semantics of this suffix in addition to simple cooperative meaning.² For example, the entry *ömlük deriye* in the large six-volume Uyghur dictionary UTIL defines this item as “a unit that indicates that a grammatical subject consisting of two or more human beings performs the main action directed against or rivaling one another, and that the main action is performed by a grammatical subject consisting of two or more human

² Even the grammatical term hints at this fact.

beings. As, e.g., ‘they went’, ‘they worked’” (UTIL, 5: 855).³ The latter part of the definition indeed comes very close to the notion ‘plural’, although the exact meaning of the examples given cannot be assessed due to the lack of situational context. Strikingly enough, ‘classical’ cooperative verbs like *riqabetleş-* ‘to compete’ and *sözleş-* ‘to talk’ are not even mentioned in the examples. We will now cast a look on how the suffix *(V)ş* is actually employed in modern Uyghur literary texts.

3. Towards the notion of plural: Examples of *(V)ş* in Uyghur

The specter of meanings covered by Uyghur *(V)ş* comprises a semantic continuum from reciprocal in its most restricted form to general plural.⁴ This continuum can be roughly divided into four sub-fields:

1. Restricted Cooperative (reciprocal): An action performed mutually.
2. Cooperative Proper: A coordinated action performed interdependently, but not necessarily mutually or reciprocally.
3. Cooperative Plural (Open Cooperativeness): An action performed jointly, but partly independently, not necessarily coordinated.
4. Genuine Plural: An action performed totally independently, no notion of cooperativeness at all.

1 and 2 are considered the common Turkic core meanings of the cooperative suffix *Iş*,⁵ whereas 3 and 4 are excentric in that they are not typical for large parts of the Turkic world and represent a diachronic extension of the core meanings. Naturally, the cooperative core meanings are fully covered by the Uyghur item as in all other Turkic languages.

Sub-meaning 1: Restricted Cooperativeness (Reciprocal)

The Restricted Cooperative sub-meaning frequently occurs in verbs like *riqabetleş-* ‘to compete’, *sözleş-* ‘to talk’, *muñdaş-* ‘to chat’, *uruş-* ‘to beat one another’, *öltürüş-* ‘to kill one another’, *öpüş-* ‘to kiss one another’, etc. Quite a few combinations like these can be considered lexicalized; still *(V)ş* is fully productive in this sub-meaning, and in futile contexts verbs can be freely reciprocalized with this suffix.

As the reciprocal meaning of *(V)ş* is common place in Turkic, one example for this use will suffice:

³ *İkkidin artuq ademdin terkip tapqan gramatik igriniñ esliyi heriketni bir-birige qaritip yaki musabiqilişip elip bərişini ve esliyi heriketniñ ikkidin artuq ademdin terkip tapqan gramatik ige teripidin orunlinişiñi bildüridiyan derije. Mesilen, bərişti, işlişip berdi ge oxşaş.*

⁴ In certain lexemes, *Iş*—usually in the combined denominal verb suffix *IEş*—seems to reflect other meanings that do not require more than one participant. This combination frequently conveys a meaning of self-centred processual development, e.g. *jiddiyleş-* ‘to become earnest’, *xitaylaş-* ‘to Sinisize oneself’. A related but slightly different example is *yéqinlaş-* ‘to approach’. This use, which can be considered common Turkic, will not be dealt with in this essay.

⁵ Cf. e.g. Erdal 1991: 578-583.

- (4) *Avazıñiz biz bilen qalidu, siz*
 voice:POSS.2S we with remain:[-PAST].3S you
ketsıñizmu biz siz bilen
 go:COND.2S.EMP we you with
sözlişiverimiz.
 talk:COOP.ACTION:[-PAST].1P
 ‘Your voice will remain with us; even if you go we will talk to you.’ (Sabir, Qerzdar: 204)

Sub-meaning 2: Cooperative Proper

This shade of meaning, encountered frequently in Turkic, also occurs both in lexicalized combinations and productively, e.g. *qatnaş-* ‘to participate’, *jidelleş-* ‘to revolt’, *üğiniş-* ‘to learn collectively’, *oquş-* ‘to read/study collectively’. Although Cooperative Proper is a regular pattern in Turkic, the two examples given here represent a rather atypical use as they exceed the use encountered e.g. in Turkish:

- (5) *Qalyan gep-sözlerni keyin deyişermiz.*
 remain:VA speech-word:P.ACC later say:COOP.MOD.1P
 ‘We will discuss the rest later.’ (Asim, Yiylima insan: 60)
- (6) *Eger u yerge bərişni xalimisañ,*
 if DET place:DAT go:VN:ACC want:NEG.COND.2S
hazırqi ornuñda işlevêrisen,
 now:REL place:POSS.2S.LOC work:ACTION:[-PAST].2S
sénin telipini keyin oylišimiz.
 you:GEN claim:POSS.2S.ACC later think:COOP:[-PAST].1P
 ‘If you do not want to go there, simply work at your present place; we will consider your claim later.’ (Asim, Yiylima insan: 365)

Attention has to be paid with respect to the verb *oylaş-*, which can carry two meanings:

1. Cooperative of *oyla-* ‘to think’ and 2. lexicalized verb *oylaş-* ‘to think’. Example 6 is thus a case of ambiguity.

Sub-meaning 3: Cooperative Plural (Open Cooperativeness)

The following examples represent cases where an action is performed together but at least partly independently and not clearly coordinated:

- (7) *[Harvikeşler]niñ beziliri nahayiti muñluq avazda*
 cart driver:P.GEN some:P.POSS.3 extremely mournful voice:LOC
naxşa éytša beziliri çüje
 song sing:COND.3 some:P.POSS.3 chick

<i>xorazniņ</i>	<i>avazidek</i>	<i>inčike</i>	<i>avazda</i>
cock:GEN	voice:POSS.3.EQU	shrill	voice:LOC
<i>naxša</i>	<i>ėytišatti.</i>		
song	sing:COOP.INTRA ^{LF} .PAST.3		

‘While some of the cart drivers were singing in a very sad voice, others were singing in a shrill, chicken-like voice.’ (Asim, *Yıylima insan*: 32)

- (8) *Köpçilik* *sizniņ* *mu'ellim* *bolıanliqıñizni*
 majority you:GEN teacher be:VN.POSS.2s.ACC
hörmet qilišti.
 credit:COOP.3
 ‘The majority credited you with the fact that you are a teacher.’ (Sabir, *Qerzdar*: 79)

- (9) *Başqıarmu* *hezretke* *egışip* *başlırini*
 other:P.too excellency:DAT according to head:POSS.3p.ACC
sel-pel *ėgip* *hörmet* *bildürüšti.*
 slightly bow:CV esteem display:COOP.PAST.3
 ‘Also the others showed their respect by slightly bowing their heads according to his excellency.’ (Ilyas, *Ėyir tiniqlar*: 51)

Note that in this example the participants do not pay respect reciprocally, rather a group of people bows to one person of high esteem.

- (10) *Zakirniņ* *ayiniliri* *uni* *Zakir* *gilem* *dep*
 Zakir:GEN friend:P.POSS.3 PPR:ACC Zakir carpet QUOT
atišatti.
 name:COOP.INTRA^{LF}.PAST.3
 ‘Zakir’s friends called him Zakir Carpet.’ (Asim, *Yıylima insan*: 1)

- (11) *Kečte* *iščılar* *bazarya* *yiñilip* *tamaq*
 night:LOC worker:P market:DAT assemble:CV food
yėyišti.
 eat:COOP.PAST
Tamaqtin *kėyin* *iščılar* *özlıriniņ*
 meal:ABL after worker:P RFL:P.POSS.3.GEN
aram *alidiyan* *orniya* *kėtišti.*
 rest take:VA place:POSS.3.DAT go:COOP.PAST
 ‘At night, the workers assembled in the market and had their meal. After the meal, they went to their resting places.’ (Asim, *Yıylima insan*: 61)

While the first action (*yėyišti*) could well be interpreted as a cooperative action of type 2 (not as type 1 Restricted Cooperativeness though, as the workers do not eat one another), action 2 (*kėtišti*) clearly is an example of Open Cooperativeness, as everybody goes to his individual resting place. This action is thus performed individually, though not totally independently.

- (12) *Ular qaqaqlišip külüšti.*
 PPR:P make ha ha:COOP.CV laugh:COOP.PAST.3
 ‘They laughed heartily.’ (Sabir, Qerzdar: 176)

The persons do not laugh at one another, but they laugh together.

- (13) *Ular [...] hemrahi bilen muñdaşqač çaykilarğa bolka, mēve čēčip, çaykilarniñ ozuq üçün qilyan küreş’lirini tamaşa qilişidiken.*
 PPR:P companion:POSS.3 with chat:CV gull:P.DAT
 roll fruit share:CV gull:P.GEN fodder for
 make:VA fight:P.POSS.3.ACC watch:COOP.[–PAST].3.IND
 ‘They chat with their companions, feed the gulls on rolls and fruit, and watch the gulls’ fighting for the feed.’ (Sabir, Qerzdar: 183)

- (14) *Ular meniñ tonušturuşumni aňlap tolimu xoşal bolušti.*
 PPR:P I:GEN introduction:POSS.1S.ACC hear:CV very glad
 become:COOP.PAST.3
 ‘When I introduced myself, they became very happy.’ (Sabir, Qerzdar: 205)

- (15) *U bu geplerni qilip qaqaqlap küldi, bizmu külüштуq.*
 PPR DET speech:P.ACC make:CV make ha ha:CV
 laugh:PAST.3 we:too laugh:COOP.PAST.1P
 ‘Speaking like that he laughed heartily, and we laughed, too.’ (Sabir, Qerzdar: 216)

Sub-meaning 4: Genuine Plural

In these examples the action is performed by more than one person, and clearly totally independently, possibly even not synchronically:

- (16) *Pakar édirliq qaptalliriya jaylaşqan bu*
 low hill:DNN slope:P.POSS.3.DAT be situated:VA DET
šeher yolliri qışliq pelto, ötük,
 city road:P.POSS.3 winter:DNN coat boot
qulaqça kiyişken ademliri bilen bizge
 fur hat wear:COOP.VA man:P.POSS.3 with we:DAT
yéyi tuyuldi.
 new feel:PASS.PAST.3
 ‘These city roads on the slopes of low hills with its people who had put on winter coats, boots and fur hats felt new for us.’ (Sabir, Qerzdar: 131)

The action of putting on clothes is performed totally independently and without any temporal coincidence.

- (17) *Yillar ötti, şəherdin kömürge çıqқан*
 year:P pass:PAST.3 town:ABL coal:DAT come out:VA
harvikeşler yəni hökümet qurulğanlıqı,
 cart driver:P new government establish:PASS.VN.POSS.3
kompartiye heqqide yəni xeverlerni sözlep
 communist party about new news:P.ACC tell:CV
yürüşti.
 march:COOP.PAST.3
 ‘Years passed, and the cart drivers coming from the city for coal brought fresh news about the formation of a new government and the communist party.’
 (Asim, Yiylima insan: 62)
- (18) *Qışlıq kiyim kiygen ademler aldirışip*
 winter:DNN clothes put on:VA man:P hurry:COOP.CV
yürüşmekte.
 march:COOP.INTRA^{HF}.3
 ‘People wearing winter clothes were running in haste.’ (Sabir, Qerzdar: 132)
- (19) *Yol četidiki bendiqlerde olturuşqan*
 way outside:POSS.3.LOC.REL bench:P.LOC sit:COOP.VA
adamlarni tamşa qilip mañmaqñimen.
 man:P.ACC watch:CV go:INTRA^{HF}.1S
 ‘I am traveling ahead, watching people sitting on benches on the roadside.’
 (Sabir, Qerzdar: 138)
- (20) *Napolé'on ve Gitler armiyisi [...] muşu*
 Napoleon and Hitler army:POSS.3 DET
yerlerde özliriniñ miñliyan
 place:P.LOC RFL:P.POSS.3.GEN thousand:DNV.VA
jesetlirini qaldurup, haryın, alağzade,
 corpse:P.POSS.3.ACC bury:CV fatigued frightened
vehime içide öz xoşayınlirini
 fear inside:POSS.3.LOC RFL leader:P.POSS.3.ACC
qarışip yerbke qarap
 curse:COOP.CV west:DAT look:CV
qéčişqan.
 flee:COOP.POST.3
 ‘Napoleon’s and Hitler’s armies buried their thousands of corpses right here and fled fatigued, in fright and fear to the west, cursing their leaders.’
 (Sabir, Qerzdar: 144)

Here, two totally independent actions are referred to.

- (21) *Ular* *mèni* *öylirige* *teklip qilišti.*
 PPR:P I:ACC house:P.POSS.3.DAT invite:COOP.PAST.3
 ‘They invited me to their homes.’ (Sabir, Qerzdar: 153)

4. Conclusion and prospects

Standard Uyghur, like many Central Asian Turkic varieties, lacks a genuine third person plural marker in the verb conjugation paradigm. To fill the morphological gap, the semantics of the original cooperative suffix has been considerably extended, such that *(V)š* synchronically covers the whole semantic field from the most restricted cooperativeness as represented by the Reciprocal to the most general, individual plural.

The Cooperative shows a high affinity towards plurality by nature, as cooperative actions are rarely performed by a single actor. In search of a way to mark verbs for plurality in a certain language, broadening the semantic specter of the Cooperative suffix is quite a logical choice. As the Cooperative is actually just a special case of the notion “plural”, we need not be astonished at this type of semantic extension. It should be noted, though, that the function of the Turkic Plural is not just to designate plurality but also to individualize (cf. Johanson 1991). Cooperativeness being a rather homogeneous notion—and thus quite contrary to individuality—the development from Cooperative to Plural is therefore a remarkably large step. *(V)š* items of the Kirghiz type therefore cover a semantic field larger than superficial consideration might suggest.

As example 15 shows, this use of *(V)š* is not restricted to the third person, so that Pritsak’s observation for the dialects that the use of *(V)š* as a plural marker partly extends to the first and second person plural can also be applied to the written standard language. Combinations with the first and second person are much less frequent, though. This may be due to the economic imperative to avoid redundancy.

As examples 9, 16, 18, 19 show, *(V)š* can also pluralize non-final verbs, which is in many cases impossible with the other verbal plural marker *IEr*. *(V)š* therefore offers a highly flexible applicability. The distribution of the Turkish Plural, for example, appears to be more restricted.

From examples 7, 13, 14, 20, on the other hand, it becomes obvious that the scope of *(V)š*- plurals may extend to non-final predicates, as is the case with *IEr*- plurals, too.

As shown so far, the meaning of *(V)š* in Uyghur represents a continuum between Restricted Cooperativeness (reciprocal) and Genuine Plural. It is a continuum of decreasing strictness with respect to cooperativeness and comprises both more homogeneous and more individual notions. The unit does not have several meanings: All shades of meaning are derivable from one basic meaning (*Grundbedeutung*). The Open Cooperative and Plural sub-meanings represent a semantic and functional extension derived from the Cooperative core meaning.

Clearly, this article raises more questions than it answers. I am not able to present a frequency analysis here about the presence or absence of *(V)š* in third person plu-

rals, nor am I able to comment on whether the distribution of (*V*)*š*-plurals varies according to the specific dialectal background of the writers. From my reading I get the impression that the use for third person plural is very common, whereas it is quite exceptional in the other persons. But what exactly is the distribution of (*V*)*š*-plurals? What characterizes the combinability with different TAM-markers? In how far does the functional extension of (*V*)*š* provoke disambiguation strategies for the Cooperative Proper domain? I am also not totally sure yet whether the (*V*)*š*-plural is restricted to human beings. Most desirable would be research on the areal distribution of (*V*)*š*-plurals in the Central Asian Turkic dialects in order to establish isoglosses. It is obvious that useful results can only be achieved through extensive fieldwork with rather substantial text corpuses.

What I hope to have shown is that Kirghiz-style plurals are well represented in Uyghur, too, although not necessarily recognized as such by Uyghur and non-Uyghur grammarians. Taking into consideration that in Kazakh and Uzbek dialects—at least partly even in standard Uzbek—similar tendencies can be found, we conclude that it is a widely spread plural marking type in Central Asian Turkic, which accidentally has only become fully standardized in Kirghiz.

Glosses

ABL	ablative	LOC	locative
ACC	accusative	MOD	modal unit
ACTION	actionality operator	NEG	negation
COOP	cooperative	NP	noun proper
CV	converb	P	plural
DAT	dative	PASS	passive
DEM	demonstrative pronoun	PAST	past
DET	determinator	POSS	possessive
DNN	denominal noun	POST	postterminal
DNV	denominal verb	PPR	third person personal pronoun
DVN	deverbal noun	Q	question
DVV	deverbal verb	QUOT	quotation particle
EMP	emphasis	REL	relational particle
EQU	equative	RFL	reflexive pronoun
GEN	genitive	S	singular
HF	high focal	VA	verbal adjective, participle
IMP	imperative	VN	verbal noun
IND	indirective	1	first person
INTRA	intraterminal	2	second person
LF	low focal	3	third person

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