REGULATIONS ON USE

Stephen C. Levinson and Asifa Majid

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Background
The field manuals were originally intended as working documents for internal use only. They were supplemented by verbal instructions and additional guidelines in many cases. If you have questions about using the materials, or comments on the viability in various field situations, feel free to get in touch with the authors.

Contact
Email us via library@mpi.nl
Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics
P.O. Box 310, 6500 AH, Nijmegen, The Netherlands

RECIPROCAL CONSTRUCTIONS AND SITUATION TYPE

Nicholas Evans[*], Stephen C. Levinson, Nick J. Enfield, Alice Gaby[*] & Asifa Majid[1]

[*] University of Melbourne

Project	Event representation
Task	Linguistic elicitation tool comprising of video clips, as visual stimuli to elicit verbal descriptions
Goal of subproject	To investigate how a range of reciprocal and reciprocal-like events are, and can be, described across a range of languages, in order to determine, for each language, how far reciprocal-coding constructions extend out to various conditions which relax one or more characteristics that canonically call for reciprocal encoding – symmetry, simultaneity, and two participants.

Background[2]

Expressions like 'John and Mary embraced (each other)' represent complex situations where *symmetry* entails that each participant plays each of the two semantic roles (John embraced Mary, and Mary embraced John).

Reciprocal constructions are specialised for the description of such *symmetric situation types*; cross-linguistically a wide range of strategies are used including *plural subjects with reciprocal interpretation* (they kissed), reciprocal quantifying binomials (they kissed **each other**), reciprocal pronouns, whether affixed or cliticised (French *ils* **se** *sont embrassés*), verbal affixes (Bininj Gun-wok *bene-bunjhme**rrinj***), special reciprocal auxiliaries (Nyulnyul *karrjikarrj ..-**barnj*** [swear .. EXCHANGE] 'swear at one another'), serialization or compounding with another verb, e.g. 'meet' (Japanese *tasuke-**au*** [help-meet] 'help each other'), or adverbs like 'mutually' or 'back and forth'. Or one may simply make use of implicature, e.g. to pick out a reciprocal reading from others available with general object pronouns (Sa *ir-ben-ir* 'they shoot them / each other / themselves) or from plural subjects (English *they disagreed* (+> 'with each other'; but could be 'with someone else'). Or symmetric situations may simply be described by spelling out the component sub-events 'he hit her, and she hit him (back/in return)'.

Most languages have more than one *constructional means* available for encoding reciprocity, with the choice determined by a range of semantic and syntactic factors. One strand of this task is to investigate how these **constructional alternatives** depend on the situation

type of the stimulus, by providing a set of stimuli that can be used to directly elicit a range of reciprocal constructions in the target language.

In our initial example, the reciprocating sub-events are *simultaneous* (John embraces Mary at the same time as she embraces him), there are just *two participants* (John and Mary), and there is *reciprocity saturation* (what John does to Mary, she does to him). Such situations define the *canonical reciprocal scenario.*

In most – perhaps all – languages, the coding strategies used for describing these canonical reciprocal scenarios get extended to a range of less prototypical scenarios as well, which can be arranged along the three main dimensions of *temporal organization, cardinality*, and *reciprocant (reciprocity) saturation*, with a fourth and more subtle dimension of *component symmetry*. A main focus of this task is on permuting these dimensions so as to see how far the primary reciprocal coding strategies get extended in individual languages, whether there exist dedicated alternatives for dealing with certain combinations (e.g. dual vs plural reciprocals, or simultaneous vs sequential reciprocals, or a special construction for 'chained' or 'pairwise' situations), and whether cross-linguistically robust generalizations can be formulated that predict the patterns of extension that are found.

The typology of reciprocal semantics: a three-dimensional view
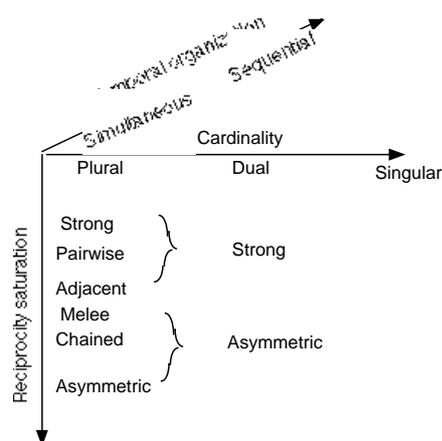
Logical dimensions of reciprocity (excluding component symmetry)

Varying the parameter of **temporal organization**, the reciprocation may be sequential rather than simultaneous (*they massaged each other in front of the fire*); some languages distinguish these constructionally.

Varying the parameter of **cardinality** away from the canonical value of two, more than two participants may be involved, e.g. *the people in the pub started punching one another*. Once the cardinality exceeds two, we can have various patterns of *reciprocant saturation*: are all conceivable pairings played out (each brawler punches each other brawler – strong reciprocals), are they arrayed in a unidirectional chain (*the graduates followed each other onto the stage*), or pairwise (*everyone at the party was married to each other*), or concentrically (*the teacher and her pupils glared at one another*), or adjacently (*the kids sat next to each other along the bench*), or in a 'mêlée' like *the starving dogs ate one another*, in which at least one dog does not eat and

at least one is not eaten. Various other subtypes can be distinguished that we do not list here.

It is also possible that, in situations of 'foreshadowed reciprocity' or those in which the focus is on just one participant, reciprocal constructions can be used even though only one participant is overtly present, as in 'he gave [each.other]' (i.e. gave, in expectation of return), or 'he fought.each.other' for 'he was in a fight'.

Component symmetry concerns the degree to which every subevent of a macro-event is symmetrically mirrored between participants. For example, though both are involved in physical fighting, one may be the original instigator, so that the 'intentional instigation' and/or 'first blow' subevents are not symmetric though the ensuing phase is: many languages use alternate constructions here of the type 'John is fighting-each-other with Mary'. Many apparently asymmetrical events permitting reciprocal encoding – such as the use of something like 'the woman and the thief are chasing each other' for 'the woman is chasing the thief' – exhibit symmetry for some components (here mutual monitoring of route and speed) but not others ('following' vs 'leading' location). The dimension of component symmetry appears to be the most important one in producing lexically specific effects, where some relational expressions but not others allow reciprocal coding despite the other dimensions remaining constant.

Research questions
This task focuses on the encoding of a range of typically transitive situation types that, in at least some languages, are encoded by the same constructions as are used for symmetric predicates. The specific questions are:

(a)   What semantic distinctions do languages constructionally distinguish in the range of event types outlined above?

(b)   How far do languages extend the constructions used for canonical reciprocals (dual symmetric simultaneous situations) into other situation types? Are there cross-linguistically robust principles for how various situation types in this domain are grouped?

(c)   Where languages have several encoding strategies, are there predictable divisions of labour between them? E.g. is it always the case that relatively 'light constructions' (e.g. plural subject constructions like *they kissed* instead of binomial quantifiers like *they kissed* **each other**, or reflexive/reciprocal clitics in *ils* **se** *sont rasés* as opposed to quantifiers in *ils* **se** *sont* **rasés l'un l'autre**) are favoured for symmetric, simultaneous, dual situations? Is the use of implicature over other means likewise preferred for canonical reciprocal scenarios? And is it always the case that the further events deviate from the canonical reciprocal scenario, the more likely that full description gets preferred to specialised constructional encoding?

Task

The task is designed to obtain descriptions of a range of scenes depicted in short video clips. We would expect most scenes to be describable by reciprocal constructions in at least some languages; there are also a few non-reciprocal controls. Some scenes are 'natural' and some less so; this is deliberate, since though languages are streamlined to describe stereotyped situations, they must in principle be able to describe anything. The scenes are designed to include permutations of the parameters outlined in §2, with some additional variation in the event types involved.

Consultants

The sole requirement is that consultants should be fluent speakers of the target language, though for practical reasons their eyesight needs to be good enough to see the clips. According to the setting and the investigator the task can be run monolingually in the target language, or bilingually with the target language and a contact language.

The full exploration of the stimulus set takes around 2-6 hours per consultant. Ideally the task will be run for four different consultants, but for some languages or settings it may only be possible to run it for a single speaker.

Stimuli

The stimuli comprise 64 video clips. In the "Event Representation" folder, you will find a "Reciprocals films" subfolder. In this are two further folders "Reciprocals full set" (64 scenes) and "Reciprocals small set" (15 scenes).

Procedure

Because it is time consuming to run through all the clips, we recommend an initial pilot run over a smaller set of 15 of the clips (go to "Reciprocals small set"), to scope out which dimensions of contrast operate in the language, and what the main encoding strategies are.

In the full version ("Reciprocals full set"), which not all researchers will opt to pursue, you should administer all 64 clips. Ideally you should use different speakers for the full set than for the pilot run, though this is not always practical.

It is more important to get well-explored data rather than to rush through the task and get bored responses.

For each clip, you should do the following

(a)   *show the clip* The consultant may ask you clarifying questions, e.g. 'is that a man or a woman?' and it's worth clarifying these before the next step.

(b)   *initial description* Ask the consultant to describe what they have seen, through a neutral instruction like 'what happened?' or 'tell me what happened'. Where possible it is also useful to get the consultant to repeat their description in the contact language, as a double check to what lies behind their wording.

(c)   *reciprocal check* A consultant may give you a rather detailed description that does not overtly contain a reciprocal expression (e.g. 'the man is following the woman, who is following the girl'). This is interesting, but does not inform us whether an appropriate

reciprocal expression *can* be used. You should therefore follow up their initial description, where necessary, with a more focussed question like 'can you say: 'they are following each other' (or whatever you consider the most likely candidate given your knowledge of how reciprocals work in the language). To avoid 'gratuitous concurrence' – which could simply mean 'yes, I'll allow YOU to say that' – you should ask the consultant to repeat this alternative for clear recording.

(d)   *probing* You may wish to follow up with further questions, e.g. 'could you also say X'? or 'could X also mean Y'? These are extremely valuable (e.g. in working out if a particular construction entails or merely implicates a reciprocal interpretation, for example by seeing whether a sentence like 'they're fighting', offered as a description of two people fighting each other, can also be used of two people fighting a third person), but because the questions will lead off in different directions in different languages we leave these to the flair of the investigator rather than second-guessing them here.

You should record the whole set of responses, minimally through transcription, normally with audio-recording, and ideally with video-recording (e.g. accompanying gestures may be important to distinguish some subtypes). For each response, you should record the identifier of the clip, and for each speaker you should record full meta-data (speaker details, language, setting).

Other data which it would be helpful to note, though it may not come up directly from the stimulus set, is what other functions the relevant constructions have in the language, e.g. reflexives, 'random' or 'back and forth' motion, 'sociative' construction like 'do together', iterated or distributive meanings, 'substitutives' (do instead of X) and so forth. A questionnaire that can be used to check for these various patterns of constructional polysemy will be made available by late June 2004 at the following address: http://www.linguistics.unimelb.edu.au/research/projects/reciprocals/index.html.

Analysis
For a given language, the above procedure will generate triplets of (a) stimulus events (b) speakers, and (c) descriptions, both volunteered (the first description given) and checked (i.e. agreements to possible descriptions suggested by the investigator).

The primary goal is to extract from this data a characterisation of

(i)   the possible semantic range of the various reciprocal expressions in the language (e.g. which event types call forth the 'simultaneous dual reciprocal' construction? 'which 'chaining' situations can be described by (which) reciprocal expressions?)

(ii)   preferred descriptions – e.g. some 'prototypical' situations may be immediately described by reciprocal expressions, while others may be initially be described in some other way, but during the *reciprocal check* phase the consultant will (or will not) agree that they could be described by a reciprocal expression

(iii)   when the relevant expressions entail, and when they merely implicate, reciprocal interpretations. The initial data for this should be obtained in the *probing* phase, though in subsequent analysis it is useful to search other textual material for the language for comparison, as well as other descriptions from the set.

Data to be used for full comparative purposes will be based on (i) a transcript of the task, (ii) a list of reciprocal constructions, (iii) a spreadsheet (for each speaker) detailing for each stimulus clip their first response, and the grammaticality or otherwise of any alternative constructions investigated during the 'reciprocal check' phrase.

Outcome

Cross-linguistic pooling of the above data will be used to

(a)   outline the possibility space for how languages encode symmetric and related situations, and for which semantic distinctions they encode distinctly within this space

(b)   test whether there are universals of semantic extension between types of reciprocal situation

(c)   test whether there are cross-linguistic generalizations regarding which choices (e.g. light vs heavy reciprocals, entailing vs implicating constructions) get used for which situations

Additional 'unexpected' data is also extremely important: it may well happen that in the course of administering this task you find out other things about the language.

A variety of publication outcomes are envisaged, ranging from enriched descriptions of reciprocals in reference grammars, internal field reports, journal articles spelling out interesting findings in particular languages, and at least one overview paper synthesizing the results.