

Book notices: *Review of Lexical plurals*

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Lexical plurals: A morphosemantic approach. By Paolo Acquaviva. (Oxford studies in theoretical linguistics 20.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Pp. xii, 295. ISBN 9780199534227. \$45 (Hb).

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This book investigates whether the plural forms of *brains* (e.g. *She's got the brains in the family.*) and *works* (e.g. *The works of my watch were all gummed up.*) are inflectional forms of the singular brain and work. It seems that the answer is anything but obvious. What follows is a proposal of a universal basis for examining linguistic number.

In Part 1, entitled 'A typology of lexical plurals', Paolo Acquaviva reviews general properties of lexical plurals. A distinguishes lexical plurals from inflectional plurals in Ch. 2, 'Varieties of non-inflectional plurals' (11–48). First, he outlines three things lexical plurals are not: irregular plurals (e.g. *children*), semantically irregular plurals, (e.g. *brothers* or *brethren*), and pluralia tantum (i.e. words that exist only in the plural, such as *clothes*). The author further notes that lexical, as opposed to inflectional, plurals in general lack obligatoriness, generality, determinism, and semantic opacity. In Ch. 3, 'Plurals and morphological lexicality' (49–78), he argues that number is an inherent, and not context-determined, characteristic of every number-inflected noun. That is, number is a gradient rather than absolute phenomenon because some plurals are more lexicalized than others. Ch. 4, 'The meaning of lexical plurality' (79–120), discusses the semantic property of lexical plurals. A cites the existence of *singularia tantum* and *pluralia tantum* forms to show that nouns often do not have the full range of the number values made available by the grammar.

Part 2, 'Four case studies', examines exceptional plural marking in four languages: Italian, Irish, Arabic, and Breton. In Ch. 5, 'Italian irregular plurals in -a' (123–61), A analyzes the case of plural -a as opposed to -i marking in Italian. For example, the singular *osso* 'bone' has two plural forms: *ossi* 'bones (disconnected)' and *ossa* 'bones (whole/connected)'. In this case, it seems as though the -i plural means the object should be viewed as independent components whereas the -a plural, an idiosyncratic lexical plural, functions as a collective plural. Ch. 6, 'Irish counting plurals' (162–94), focuses on plural nouns that are used after numbers three to ten. In Ch. 7, 'Arabic broken plurals' (195–233), A concludes that while somehow lexical due to their unpredictability, broken plurals are entirely within the inflectional number system. Ch. 8, 'The system of Breton plural nouns' (234–65), examines the inflectional and derivational plurals in Breton which may share the same morphological realization (235). One important conclusion of this work is that in many cases, '...stem-internal plurality has a privileged relation with non-canonical readings that are sensitive to the meaning of the lexical base' (269).

Lexical plurals is a deep, systematic, and thorough treatment of plural marking in languages. It is refreshingly free of cumbersome formalisms and provides plenty of relevant data. Following A's approach, some significant parts of linguistic number will be non-deterministic and will fall into multiple linguistic categories (i.e. lexical, morphological, or syntactic), possibly creating a new sub-area of morphology. His results should certainly be incorporated into future works on morphology and number. This rich resource will be of particular interest to anyone working on linguistic number, while also being an exemplary model of carefully constructed and persuasive linguistic argument.