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Verbal Number in the Uncu Language (Kordofan Nubian)

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1. Introduction

The Uncu Language is part of the Nubian language family in the Eastern Sudanic branch of Nilo-Saharan. It is part of the Kordofan Nubian language continuum along with Abu Jinuk, Kasha, Kaakmbee (Karko), Kujuria, Fanda, Wali, Kwashi (Kudur), Warkimbee (Dilling), Dabri, Dabatna, Kadaru, Taglennaa (Kururu), and Dair. The Uncu Language is spoken in a number of villages in the area between Dilling and Kadugli in the Nuba Mountains of South Kordofan, Sudan. The language itself seems to have two major speech varieties that roughly correspond to the clans of Nama, Ninya, Terda, and Katang in the east and Moriny, Sigida, and Kurgul in the west. The data for this paper were gathered from speakers of Moriny (henceforth, *M*) and Nama (henceforth, *N*), with special thanks to Widaa Suleman [*M*] and Abdulbagi Daida [*N*].[1]

The aim of this paper is to describe the different ways of marking verbal number in the Uncu language. I have divided the paper into two sections: participant number and event number. The number of the object or subject of a verb determines participant number. Event number is determined by the frequency or repetition of an event. In the following sections I will discuss how each of these types of plurality are used and marked on the verb. The nature of number marking on verbs is such that there are nuances in meaning due to

1   Abbreviations: * – ungrammatical; 1PL, 2PL, 3PL – 1st, 2nd, 3rd person plural; 1SG, 2SG, 3SG – 1st, 2nd, 3rd person singular; CONJ – conjunction; COP – copula; DIM – diminutive; DSC – different subject converb; FOC – focus; FUT – future tense; GEN – genitive case marker; IMP – imperative; INS – instrumental case marker; INTR – intransitive; LOC – locative case marker; NEG – negation; NMZ – nominalizing suffix; NMZA – nominalizing agent suffix; ACC – accusative case marker; O – object; PAST – past tense; PL – (nominal) plural; PLR – plurative: plural object with transitive verb, plural subject with intransitive verb; POSS – genitive linker; PRES – present tense; PSSC – purposive same subject converb; REP – plural action; S – subject; SG – (nominal) singular; SNG – singulative: singular object with transitive verb, singular subject with intransitive verb; SSC – same subject converb; TR – transitive;

the inherent semantics and temporal structure of the verb which can be lost in glossing. For this reason I have included speaker comments in this paper to clarify how certain verb forms would be used in normal speech.

2. Participant number

2.1 Description of different devices of marking participant number on the verb

In most cases when the object of a transitive verb is plural, the extension –er[2] is added to the root of the verb before the person/tense inflection markers, as shown below for the verb 'to open.'

1   kītú   kūj–ōóŋ
[M]   door.SG   open-PAST.2SG
      "You (SG) opened a door."

2   kītú   kūj–ūúŋ
[M]   door.SG   open-PAST.2PL
      "You (PL) opened a door."

3   kīní   kūj–ēr–ōóŋ
[M]   door.PL   open-PLR-PAST.2SG
      "You (SG) opened doors."

4   kīní   kūj–ēr–ūúŋ
[M]   door.PL   open-PLR-PAST.2PL
      "You (PL) opened doors."

The same -er extension is usually added to the root of intransitive verbs when the subject is plural.

5   ŋāj–ōóŋ
[M]   walk-PAST.2SG
      "You (SG) walked."

6   ŋāj–ēr–ūúŋ
[M]   walk-PLR-PAST.2PL
      "You (PL) walked."

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2   Here and throughout this paper I do not write the -ATR mid vowels [ɛ] and [ɔ] since they are phonologically conditioned allophones of [e] and [o] which occur only through ATR harmony if the word contains a +ATR high vowel, that is [i] or [u]. The plural extension then could have either a +ATR or -ATR vowel depending on the ATR of the root to which it is being attached.

The chart below shows the usual imperative[3] paradigm for transitive and intransitive verbs with the -er extension appearing for plural objects of transitive verbs and plural subjects of intransitive verbs.

S	O	'blow'	'burn'
SG	SG	úúb–í	wàʃ–í
PL	SG	úúb–é	wàʃ–é
SG	PL	úúb–ér–í	wàʃ–èr–í
PL	PL	úúb–ér–é	wàʃ–èr–é

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S	'walk'	'urinate'	'laugh'
SG	ŋāj–í	ōrk–î	ḍìṭ–í
PL	ŋāj–ēr–é	ōrk–ér–è	ḍìṭ–èr–é

Some transitive and intransitive verbs have a suppletive form which is used in cases of participant number rather than the -er extension. Usually the suppletive form has a -k or -ʃ extension or involves a change in vowel quality. Note that in the case of 'sell' and 'be heavy' the suppletion is tone.

S	O	'sell'	'eat'
SG	SG	ʃàn–í	kōl–í
PL	SG	ʃàn–é	kōl–é
SG	PL	ʃàn–î	kàm–î
PL	PL	ʃàn–ê	kàm–ê

S	'perspire'	'disappear'	'be heavy'
SG	ùr–î	kwàb–î	ṭìl–í
PL	ùrk–ê	kwàkk–ê	ṭìl–ê

There are some verb cases where the -er extension is used for all numbers of subjects and objects such as those below.

S	O	'breastfeed'	'deceive'
SG	SG	ūl–ér–ì	kàʃ–èr–î
PL	SG	ūl–ér–è	kàʃ–èr–ê
SG	PL	ūl–ér–ì	kàʃ–èr–î
PL	PL	ūl–ér–è	kàʃ–èr–ê

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3   I have chosen to compare verbs in the imperative form since it has simple, clear morphology and makes it easy to highlight the extension. The extension is present however in all tense and aspectual forms of the verb.

Table 6. INTR verbs with -er extension for SG+PL S

S	'bark'	'swim'	'stutter'
SG	bōg–ér–ì	òbùk–ér–ì	tùrm–èr–í
PL	bōg–ér–è	òbùk–ér–è	tùrm–èr–é

One's first instinct would be to look for a semantic motivation within this group. Many of the intransitive verbs in this category have an event-internal plurality (e.g. to stutter, to bark, to cough, to trot, to swim), which could hint toward an explanation for their morphologically marked plurality. Other verbs however are harder to explain (e.g. to stretch, to pray, to wait). Similarly within the transitive verbs, as one would expect, many of the verbs that fall into this category are verbs that always require a plural object (e.g. to build with branches, to add, to collect, to join, to winnow) but there are also many cases that are not easily explained (e.g. to sharpen, to curse, to choke, to name).

Finally there are very few verbs where the form for plural objects is the same as for singular objects and there is no -er extension.

Table 7. TR verbs with same form for SG+PL O

S	O	'grind'	'fight'
SG	SG	kàrî	ūjî
PL	SG	kàrê	ūjê
SG	PL	kàrî	ūjî
PL	PL	kàrê	ūjê

I think the verbs in this category are all inherently plural, much like the suppletive plural forms I discussed above in table 3, and therefore do not require any additional plural marking. Most of these verbs would usually have a plural object and indeed for many of these verbs it is ungrammatical to use a singular object (e.g. 'to collect,' 'to sow,' 'to scoop out,' 'to sing,' 'to grind') though this does not apply to all of them (e.g. 'to take smth off,' 'to let smth remain,' 'to fight').

> SPEAKER COMMENT: You can say 'sing songs' but you can't say 'sing something.' You can say 'sing these' but you can't say 'sing this.'

It is interesting to note that the -er extension may also have other uses beyond marking participant number. For example, the -er extension is also used to construct the passive and antipassive which are morphologically identical and semantically distinguished by context.

s	o	'cook (porridge)'	'shave'	'sew'	'grind'	'eat'
SG	SG	màrt–î	kāɲ–í	ɖūj–î	kār–î	kōl–í
PL	SG	màrt–ê	kāɲ–é	ɖūj–ê	kār–ê	kōl–é
SG	PL	màrt–èr–î	kāɲ–ēr–í	ɖūj–ér–ì	kār–î	kàm–î
PL	PL	màrt–èr–ê	kāɲ–ēr–é	ɖūj–ér–è	kār–ê	kàm–ê
SG	–	màrt–ér–ì	kāɲ–ēr–í	ɖūj–ér–ì	kār–ér–ì	kām–ér–ì
PL	–	màrt–ér–è	kāɲ–ēr–é	ɖūj–ér–è	kār–ér–è	kām–ér–è

Table 8. TR verbs with -er extension for PL O & (anti-)passive forms

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ǐ[4]	wăl	kàl=gì	màrt–èé	7
1SG	yesterday	porridge=ACC	cook-PAST.1SG	[M]

"I cooked porridge yesterday."

ǐ	wăl	kàlì	órà	màrt–ér–èé	8
1SG	yesterday	porridge.PL	two	cook-PLR-PAST.1SG	[M]

"I cooked two porridges yesterday."

ǐ	wăl	màrt–ér–èé	9
1SG	yesterday	cook-PLR-PAST.1sg	[M]

"I cooked yesterday."

ì	ōrtí	kāɲ–ūr–é	10
1SG	sheep.SG	shave-SNG-PRES.1SG	[M]

"I am shaving the sheep."

ì	ōrtíl	kāɲ–ēr–é	11
1SG	sheep.PL	shave-PLR-PRES.1SG	[M]

"I am shaving sheep (PL)."

ì	kāɲ–ēr–é	12
1SG	shave-PLR-PRES.1SG	[M]

"I am shaving / I am being shaved."

This is not however exactly the same as the object plural/subject plural form of the verb, and, as you can see above with the verb 'to cook,' the antipassive form often has a different tone pattern than the plural form. Nonetheless it is interesting that these extensions have the same form and that this extension is used for the antipassive and passive even in cases where it is not used to construct the plural participant form as is the case with 'to sow' in examples 13–15

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4   The 1sg pronoun has a rising tone when followed by a low tone and a low tone when followed by a high or mid tone.

below. For the moment this is just an observation which calls for a more in-depth study in the future.

13
[M]

ǐ	wăl	wìì=gì	tír–èé
1SG	yesterday	sorghum.PL=ACC	SOW-PAST.1SG

"I sowed sorghum yesterday."

14
[M]

ǐ	wăl	tír–èr–èé
1SG	yesterday	SOW-PLR-PAST.1SG

"I sowed yesterday."

15
[M]

wìì	wàl	tír–èr–àáŋ
sorghum.PL	yesterday	SOW-PLR-PAST.3PL

"The sorghum [seeds] were sown yesterday."

Uncunwee also has a very productive system of forming causative/inchoative verbs from nouns and adjectives using -ŋ and these verbs always take the -er extension regardless of the number of their subject or object. For example from the adjective 'red' (SG: kélè, PL: kǐlé) one can build the following verbs.

Table 9. Causative verbs from adjective with -er extension

S	O	'make something red'
SG	SG	kélé–ŋ–ér–ì
PL	SG	kélé–ŋ–ér–è
SG	PL	kǐlé–ŋ–ér–ì
PL	PL	kǐlé–ŋ–ér–è

Table 10. Inchoative verbs from adjective with -er extension

S	'become red (e.g. to blush)'
SG	kélé–ŋ–ér–ì
PL	kǐlé–ŋ–ér–è

2.2 Description of how participant number marking is used

In the following examples the verbs 'to eat' and 'to run' are used to demonstrate how plural participant marking is used with transitive and intransitive verbs. Both of these verbs have suppletive roots for plural participants rather than using the -er extension.

The verb 'to eat' has the root kol for singular participants and the suppletive root kam for plural participants.

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[N]

yě	kùkúr=gì	kōl–ēé
1SG	chicken=ACC	eat.SNG-PAST.1SG

"I ate a chicken."

yě	kùkúr–ì=gì		kàm–èé	17
1SG	chicken-PL=ACC		eat.PLR-PAST.1SG	[N]

"I ate chickens."

If the object is unspecified then the antipassive construction uses the plural root kam in combination with the plural participant extension.

yě	wǎl		kàm–ér–èé	18
1SG	yesterday		eat.PLR-PLR-PAST.1SG	[N]

"I ate yesterday."

If the number of chickens is specified the plural form of 'to eat' is still used.

yě	kùkúr–ì	órà=gì	kàm–èé	19
1SG	chicken-PL	two=ACC	eat.PLR-PAST.1SG	[N]

"I ate two chickens."

If the subject is plural and the object is singular 'to eat' does not take a plural root.

ǎĭ	kùkúr=gì		kōl–ōó	20
1PL	chicken=ACC		eat.SNG-PAST.1PL	[N]

"We ate a chicken."

ǎĭ	kùkúr–ì=gì		kàm–òó	21
1PL	chicken-PL=ACC		eat.PLR-PAST.1PL	[N]

"We ate chickens."

If the object is plural via a conjunction the plural root kam is used.

yě	kùkúr–ôŋ	ōgūd–óŋ=gì	kàm–èé	22
1SG	chicken-CONJ	goat-CONJ=ACC	eat.PLR-PAST.1SG	[N]

"I ate a chicken and a goat."

The intransitive verb 'to run' has the root ɖʊrʃ for singular participants and the suppletive root ɖwarʃ for plural participants.

ĭ	wàl		ɖúrʃ–èé	23
1SG	yesterday		run.SNG -PAST.1SG	[M]

"I ran yesterday."

24   aĭ   wàl   dwārʃ-óó
[M]   1PL   yesterday   run.PLR-PAST.1PL
       "We ran yesterday."

Even if the adverbs 'a lot' or 'twice' are included, if the subject is singular the singular form of 'to run' is still used.

25   ĭ   wàl   ŋúr-kò   dúrʃ-èé
[M]   1SG   yesterday   big-INS[5]   run.SNG-PAST.1SG
       "I ran a lot yesterday."

26   ĭ   wàl   órà-kò   dúrʃ-èé
[M]   1SG   yesterday   two-INS   run.SNG-PAST.1SG
       "I ran twice yesterday."

With a coordinated subject the plural root of 'to run' is still used.

27   ĭ   tòndú-ôŋ   dwārʃ-óó
[M]   1SG   boy-CONJ   run.PLR-PAST.1PL
       "The boy and I ran."

28   ʃíkìté-ôŋ   ʃántù-ôŋ   dwārʃ-ááŋ
[M]   shikite-CONJ   shantu-CONJ   run.PLR-PAST.3PL
       "Shikite and Shantu ran."

It is interesting to note that even when the verb 'to run' is in a context where it is not inflected for person or tense, as is the case for the converbs below, it still selects a different root for 'to run' depending on the number of the subject.

29   ĭ   wăl   dúrʃ-ù-ʃìì   wār-ēé
[M]   1SG   yesterday   run.SNG-SNG-PSSC   want-PAST.1SG
       "I wanted to run yesterday."

30   aĭ   wăl   dwārʃ-ú-ʃìì[6]   wār-ōó
[M]   1PL   yesterday   run.PLR-SNG-PSSC   want-PAST.1PL
       "We wanted to run yesterday."

31   ĭ   dùrʃ-í   ōgúd=dí   tīgg-úr-èé
[M]   1SG   run.SNG-SSC   goat=ACC   stop-SNG-PAST.1SG
       "I ran and stopped the goat."

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5   The instrumental case marker is also used to encode adverbs and simultaneous events, as seen in exx. 35 and 37.

6   Note that here since there is a suppletive root for the plural subject it is not necessary to mark this plurality twice in the language and therefore the singular form of the verbal extension is used.

| aǐ | dwārʃ–í | ōgúd=dí | tīgg–úr–òó | 32 |
| 1PL | run.PLR-SSC | goat=ACC | stop-SNG-PAST.1PL | [M] |

"We ran and stopped the goat."

3. Event number (iterative, habitual, frequentative, etc.)

3.1 Description of different methods of marking event number on the verb
In the previous section I have discussed number marking on verbs, which is determined by the number of the subject or object of that verb. Additionally, approximately 15% of the verbs that I have collected have a special derivational habitual/frequentative/iterative form. Take for example the verb 'to puncture' which has the simplex root ʃerg and the repeated event root ʃerk.

Simplex verb with a singular object

| ǐ | ḍòtù=gì | ʃērg–ēé | 33 |
| 1SG | watermelon=ACC | puncture-PAST.1SG | [M] |

"I stabbed the watermelon."

Simplex verb with a plural object

| ǐ | ùljé | òná | ʃērg–ēr–ēé | 34 |
| 1SG | ear.PL | 1SG.GEN | puncture-PLR-PAST.1SG | [M] |

"I pierced my ears."

Repeated event verb with a singular object

| ǐ | kūmé=nàá | ūrtál=gí | wār–í–kò | 35 |
| 1SG | rat=GEN | exit-hole=ACC | search-SSC-INS | [M] |

| tób=gí | ʃērk–éé | | |
| ground=ACC | puncture.REP-PAST.1SG | | |

"Searching for the rat exit-hole I poked the ground repeatedly."

Repeated event verb with a plural object

| ǐ | kēlé=gí | kìŋ–é–ʃíí | 36 |
| 1SG | tatoo.NMZ=ACC | make-PLR-PSSC | [M] |

| īdānú | ʃērk–ér–èé | |
| person.PL | puncture.REP-PLR-PAST.1SG | |

"To make tattoos I cut people repeatedly."

There is not one specific extension that is always used to construct the repeated event form of a verb but there are a few endings that commonly occur. Some common extensions are -k, -ʃ which, as shown in tables 3–4, are also commonly found in suppletive plural participant forms.

Table 11. Verbs with plural event extension -ʃ

s	o	'circumcise'	'circumcise (repeatedly)'
SG	SG	bìr–í	bìr–ʃ–î
PL	SG	bìr–é	bìr–ʃ–ê
SG	PL	bìr–èr–í	bìr–ʃ–ér–ì
PL	PL	bìr–èr–é	bìr–ʃ–ér–è

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Table 12. Verbs with plural event extension -k

s	o	'give birth'	'give birth (repeatedly)'
SG	SG	īr–í	īr–k–î
PL	SG	īr–é	īr–k–ê
SG	PL	īr–ēr–í	īr–k–ér–ì
PL	PL	īr–ēr–í	īr–k–ér–è

Table 13. Verbs with plural event extension -k

s	o	'pinch'	'pinch (repeatedly)'
SG	SG	ʃùn–ìØ–î	ʃūn–ūk–î[7]
PL	SG	ʃùn–ùg–ê	ʃūn–ūk–ê
SG	PL	ʃùn–èØ–èr–î	ʃūn–ūk–ér–ì
PL	PL	ʃùn–èØ–èr–ê	ʃūn–ūk–ér–è

In addition it is very common for repeated event forms to be constructed with the extension -ṭ + ug or by reduplicating part of the simplex verb followed by the extension -ug. For some speakers the intervocalic /g/ is deleted resulting in a long vowel. This is a common phonological process in the Uncu language that is also found in other contexts.

Table 14. Verbs with plural event extension -ṭ + -ug

s	o	'destroy'	'destroy (repeatedly)'
SG	SG	ɖwāj–í	ɖwàj–ìṭ–ùg–í ~ ɖwàj–ìṭ–ìØ–í[8]
PL	SG	ɖwāj–é	ɖwàj–ìṭ–ùg–é ~ ɖwàj–ìṭ–èØ–é
SG	PL	ɖwāj–ēr–í	ɖwàj–ìṭ–ùg–èr–í ~ ɖwàj–ìṭ–èØ–èr–í
PL	PL	ɖwāj–ēr–é	ɖwàj–ìṭ–ùg–èr–é ~ ɖwàj–ìṭ–èØ–èr–é

Table 15. Verbs with plural event reduplication + extension -ug

s	o	'weave'	'weave (repeatedly)'
SG	SG	ʃàrt–î	ʃàrt–àrt–ùg–î ~ ʃàrt–àrt–ìØ–î
PL	SG	ʃàrt–ê	ʃàrt–àrt–ùg–ê ~ ʃàrt–àrt–èØ–ê
SG	PL	ʃàrt–ér–ì	ʃàrt–àrt–ùg–ér–ì ~ ʃàrt–àrt–èØ–ér–ì
PL	PL	ʃàrt–ér–è	ʃàrt–àrt–ùg–ér–è ~ ʃàrt–àrt–èØ–ér–è

As is shown in the examples above, the repeated event form of a verb can also take the extension -er for plural objects that I discussed in

7   Here the extension -k fuses with the final /g/ of the simplex root.
8   Sometimes there is an epenthetic vowel before the verbal extension to avoid a consonant cluster which is not permitted in the language, as is the case here.

the previous section of this paper. For intransitive verbs it is almost always the case that the -er extension will be present both for singular and plural subjects of repeated event verbs.

S	'perspire'	'perspire (repeatedly)'
SG	ùr–î	úr–úk–k–ér–í[9]
PL	ùr–k–ê	úr–úk–k–ér–é

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For transitive verbs, on the other hand, a larger proportion of the repeated event verbs will use the same form for plural objects that they use for singular objects and do not add the -er extension, as is the case with the verb 'to wind rope' below.

S	O	'wind rope'	'wind rope (repeatedly)'
SG	SG	kàràbb–î	kārb–ārb–ūg–í ~ kārb–ārb–īØ–í
PL	SG	kàràbb–ê	kārb–ārb–ūg–é ~ kārb–ārb–īØ–é
SG	PL	kàràbb–ér–ì	kārb–ārb–ūg–í ~ kārb–ārb–īØ–í
PL	PL	kàràbb–ér–è	kārb–ārb–ūg–é ~ kārb–ārb–īØ–é

Table 17. TR plural event verb without -er extension

For verbs with both a transitive and intransitive form it is common that in the repeated event paradigm the -er extension will mark the intransitive verb.

S	O	'take smth down'	'take smth down (repeatedly)'
SG	SG	ʃúʃ–íØ–írì	ʃūj–ūg–g–í
PL	SG	ʃúʃ–úØ–úrè	ʃūj–ūg–g–é
SG	PL	ʃúʃ–éØ–érì	ʃūj–ūg–g–í
PL	PL	ʃúʃ–éØ–érè	ʃūj–ūg–g–é

Table 18. TR plural event verb without -er extension

S	'go down self'	'go down self (repeatedly)'
SG	ʃùʃ–ìrí	ʃūj–ūg–g–ēr–í
PL	ʃúʃ–úrê	ʃūj–ūg–g–ēr–é

Table 19. INTR plural event verb with -er extension

In many cases when the simplex verb has a suppletive plural participant root, the repeated event form of the verb is built from this suppletive root. For example with the verb 'to shoot' below both the plural participant and the repeated event verb form have the -c extension and they are only distinguished by tone.

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9 This is probably underlyingly ur–ur–k–er–i with the reduplicated r assimilating and becoming a geminate k in the surface form.

Table 20. TR verb
with plural event
extension based
on plural object
extension

S	O	'shoot'	'shoot (repeatedly)'
SG	SG	jìl–í	jīl–c–î
PL	SG	jìl–é	jīl–c–ê
SG	PL	jìl–c–î	jīl–c–ér–ì
PL	PL	jìl–c–ê	jīl–c–ér–è

In the case of the verb 'to understand' the -ʃ extension appears first for plural objects of the simplex verb and then is reduplicated to form the repeated verb.

Table 21. TR verb
with plural event
extension based
on reduplication
of plural object
extension

S	O	'understand'	'understand (repeatedly)'
SG	SG	ìr–èrî	īr–ʃ–īʃ–īØ–í
PL	SG	ìr–èrê	īr–ʃ–īʃ–ēØ–é
SG	PL	ìr–ʃ–î	īr–ʃ–īʃ–īØ–í
PL	PL	ìr–ʃ–ê	īr–ʃ–īʃ–ēØ–é

Similarly for the intransitive verb 'to sleep' the -k extension appears first for plural subjects of the simplex verb and then in the repeated event verb form.

Table 22. INTR
verb with plural
event extension
based on plural
object extension

S	'sleep'	'sleep (repeatedly)'
SG	jèr–î	jēr–ēk–ēr–í
PL	jèr–k–ê	jēr–ēk–ēr–é

In fact, for nearly every intransitive verbs which has a repeated event form, the corresponding simplex verb has a suppletive plural participant form. In the case of the verb 'to steal' there is a suppletive tone pattern for plural objects of the simplex verb, which is then found again in the repeated event verb form.

Table 21. TR verb
with plural event
extension based
on plural object
tone

S	O	'steal'	'steal (repeatedly)'
SG	SG	bòrg–í	bòrk–î[10]
PL	SG	bòrg–é	bòrk–ê
SG	PL	bòrg–î	bòrk–î
PL	PL	bòrg–ê	bòrk–ê

All of this suggests that there is some relationship between the two number marking systems since the extensions look similar and both have a number marking function.

3.2 Description of how event number marking is used

The non-repeated form, or simplex verb is not exclusively used for single events. The examples below show that one can say I missed

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10   Here the extension -k fuses with the final /g/ of the simplex root.

the hare(s) once, twice, three times, or again and again all using the non-habitual form of 'to miss.'

yě	ūdúlán-nú=gì (órà-kò, tójùk-kò, kúɲàŋkúɲàŋ)	37
1SG	hare-DIM=ACC (two-INS, three-INS, again and again)	[N]
ábìj-èé		
miss-PAST.1PL		
"I missed the hare (twice, three times, again and again)."		

yě	ūdílí-ní=gì (órà-kò, tójùk-kò, kúɲàŋkúɲàŋ)	38
1SG	hare.PL-DIM.PL=ACC (two-INS, three-INS, again and again)	[N]
àbìj-èé[11]		
miss.PLR-PAST.1PL		
"I missed the hares (twice, three times, again and again)."		

With the habitual form of 'miss' one is able to use the adverb 'again and again' but definite counting adverbs like twice or three times are not permitted.

yě	ūdúlán-nú=gì (*órà-kò, *tójùk-kò, kúɲàŋkúɲàŋ)	39
1SG	hare.SG-DIM.SG=ACC (*two-INS, *three-INS, again and again)	[N]
ābīcc-éé		
miss.REP-PAST.1PL		
"I missed the hare repeatedly."		

yě	ūdílí-ní-gì (*órà-kò, *tójùk-kò, kúɲàŋkúɲàŋ)	40
1SG	hare.pl-dim.pl=acc (*two-INS, *two-INS, again and again)	[N]
ābīcc-ér-ēē[12]		
miss.REP-PLR-PAST.1PL		
"I missed the hares repeatedly."		

SPEAKER COMMENT: Maybe there is one rabbit that is always deceiving you. Maybe you are able to shoot other animals but rabbits have always gotten away.

On the other hand the adverb booŋ,[13] meaning something like 'usually,' can only be used grammatically with the repeated event form of a verb and not with the simplex form.

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11 Note the tone change on the verb is due to a suppletive plural participant form.
12 Note that in addition to being a habitual form there is also an -er plural participant extension because of the plural hares.
13 booŋ = ba + oŋ where ba is something like 'just' and oŋ is an adverbializer.

41   bólí   bóòŋ=gí   īlí=gí
[M]   dog.PL   usually=FOC   woman.PL=ACC
āʃ-êŋ[14]
bite.REP-PRES.3PL
"Dogs usually bite women."

42   kwàlà   bólí   īlí=g
[M]   EXC   dog.PL woman.PL=ACC
āj-êŋ
bite-PRES.3PL
"Look! The dogs are biting the women!"

If a verb does not have a special repeated event form then when that event is done repeatedly the repeated event is expressed by the simplex form of the verb. For example the verb 'to harvest' does not have a designated repeated event form. In examples 43–6 one can see the simplex forms for a singular or a plural subject. Finally in example 47 in a repeated event construction with the 'usually' adverb the same simplex form of the verb 'to harvest' is used.

Simplex verb with singular object

43   ĭ   wăl   kàtù   bārʃ-ēé
[M]   1SG yesterday   field   harvest-PAST.1SG
"I harvested a field yesterday."

Simplex verb with plural object

44   ĭ   wăl   kànì órà   bārʃ-ēr-ēé
[M]   1SG yesterday   field.PL two   harvest-PLR-PAST.1SG
"I harvested two fields yesterday."

Simplex verb in antipassive form

45   ĭ   wăl   bārʃ-ēr-ēé
[M]   1SG yesterday   harvest-PLR-PAST.1SG
"I harvested yesterday."

Non-repeated event construction

46   ĭ   kàtù   bètàŋ   bārʃ-ēé
[M]   1SG field   once   harvest-PAST.1SG
"I harvested the field once."

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14 It would be ungrammatical to use the simplex form āj-êŋ.

Repeated event construction

ì	bóòŋ=gí	tómmólí	kàtù	bārʃ–ēé	47
1SG	usually=ACC	harvest-season	field	harvest-PAST.1SG	[M]

"I usually harvested the field in the harvesting season."

The type of repetition described by the repeated event form varies depending on the inherent semantics and temporal structure of the verb and the context in which it is used which is shown in the follwing examples 48–66. First in examples 48–56 I have given some cases in which, when the repeated event verb is used, it has an iterative meaning.

yè	bírg–ùr–è		48
1SG	turn-SNG-PRES.1SG		[N]

"I am turning around."

yè	bīrgīrg–ēr–é		49
1SG	turn.REP-PLR-PRES.1SG		[N]

"I am turning around and around and around (iterative)."

kēlé=gí	bêrbêr=ŏŋ	īrʃīʃ–íí	50
write.NMZ=ACC	oneone=ADV	understand.REP-IMP.2SG	[M]

"Understand what is written one piece at a time (iterative)."

nò	íd	òrí=gì	ʃūrd–úŋ	51
this	person	rope=ACC	pull-PRES.3SG	[M]

"This person is pulling a rope."

nò	íd	òrí=gì	ʃūrt–ûŋ	52
this	person	rope=ACC	pull.REP-PRES.3SG	[M]

"This person is pulling and pulling a rope (iterative)."

SPEAKER COMMENT: If you were talking about pulling a bucket from a well you would use the repeated event verb form because you have to pull again and again (iteratively) to raise the bucket.

ì	īɲíír	ójà–ŋàl=gì	táɲɲ–úúr–èé	53
1SG	today	oja-POSS.porridge=ACC	taste-SNG-PAST.1SG	[M]

"Today I tasted Oja's porridge."

ì	īɲíír	ʃùlú=r	kàlí	54
1SG	today	festival=LOC	porridge.PL	[M]
ìnjírì=gì	táɲɲ–éér–èé		
many=ACC	taste-PLR-PAST.1SG		

"Today I tasted many porridges at the festival."

55   ì   īɲíír   ŋàlè   ŋáítú   ŋél–cìí
[M]   1SG   today   dough   bitterness   see-PSSC
       kàl=lì   tāɲīk–éé
       porridge=ACC   taste.REP-PAST.1SG
       "Today I tasted the porridge repeatedly to check the bitterness of
       the dough (iterative)."

56   ì   īɲíír   ʃùlú=r   kàlí   ìɲírì=gì
[M]   1SG   today   festival=LOC   porridge   many=ACC
       tāɲīk–ér–èé   kàl   kéŋ   ŋál–cìí
       taste.REP-PLR-PAST.1SG   porridge   good   see-PSSC
       "Today at the festival I tasted many porridges repeatedly to find the
       best one (iterative)."

Examples 53-56 show the four-way contrast between participant number and event number. In 53 the participant and event are both singular; one porridge is tasted once. In 54 the porridges are plural but the event remains singular since each porridge is only tasted once. In 55 the porridge is singular but since it is tasted repeatedly the plural event extension is used. Finally in 56 many porridges are being tasted repeatedly and therefore both the plural participant and the plural event extensions are used together.

At other times the repeated event verb form can have a habitual meaning as it is in examples 57–62.

57   ì   jīr–ūr–é
[M]   1SG   sleep-SNG-PRES.1SG
       "I am sleeping."

58   kwálél   tâ–né   ì   jērēk–ēr–é
[M]   night   come-DSC.3SG   1SG   sleep.REP-PLR-PRES.1SG
       "Whenever the night comes I sleep (habitual)."

59   ṭǒ   gīrgūlú=gí   à   ṭì–mà?
[M]   3SG   money=ACC   2SG.ACC   give-INT.PAST.3SG
       "Did he give you money?"

60   ṭǒ   gīrgūlú=gí   à=g   ák–kà?
[M]   3SG   money=ACC   2sg=ACC   give.REP-INT.PAST.3SG
       "Did he give you money often (habitual)?"

61   kīní   kūj–ēr–ōóŋ
[N]   door.PL   open-PLR-PAST.2SG
       "You (SG) opened doors."

kīní   kūjūrg–ōóŋ   62
door.PL   open.REP-PAST.2SG   [N]
"You (SG) opened doors (habitual."

SPEAKER COMMENT: You would use the repeated event form if, for
example, you were a doorman in the past and it was your job to
open the door(s).

For certain verbs the repeated event form could have either a ha-
bitual or an iterative meaning depending on the context.

ǐ   àkòdú=r   āk–ēé   63
1SG   chair=LOC   sit-PAST.1SG   [M]
"I was sitting on the chair."

ǐ   àkòdú=r   ākākk–ēr–ēé   64
1SG   chair=LOC   sit.REP-PLR-PAST.1SG   [M]
"I was sitting on the chair (repeatedly)."

SPEAKER COMMENT: You would use the repeated event form for
example if the seat was very uncomfortable for some reason so you
kept getting up and then sitting on it again or if you were old and
carried a seat around with you so that you could always sit on it
after walking a short while.

I also have one example where the repeated event form of the verb
can also suggest a distribution in space.

ǐ   wàl   índù   dīīl–ēr–ēé   65
1SG   yesterday   person.PL   gather-PLR-PAST.1SG   [M]
"I gathered (the) people yesterday."

ǐ   wàl   índù   dííltùg–èé   66
1SG   yesterday   person.PL   gather.REP-PAST.1SG   [M]
"I gathered (the) people yesterday (repeatedly, or from many differ-
ent locations)."

SPEAKER COMMENT: I would use the repeated event form for ex-
ample if I was going to have a meeting and I told people to come at
10am, and then the meeting was canceled and I told them to come at
1 and then the meeting was canceled again and I asked them to come
at 5. Or I could also use the repeated event form if one person was in
Cairo and another person was in Khartoum and another person was
in Angarko and I had to go from place to place to collect them.

If a verb does have a derived repeated event form then the verbal noun corresponding to that verb is usually based on the root of the repeated event verb form, not the simplex verb form. For example looking at the verb 'to jump' examples 67 and 68 show the simplex root and 69 and 70 show the root for repeated events which is then again used in example 71 as the root of the verbal noun.

67   ì   târ–èé
[M]   1SG jump-PAST.1SG
    "I jumped (once, twice, a lot)."

68   aì   tār–óó[15]
[M]   1PL jump-PAST.1PL
    "We jumped (once, twice, a lot)."

69   ì   ʈāāʈ–ér–èé
[M]   1SG jump.REP-PAST.1SG
    "I jumped (repeatedly)."

70   aì   ʈāāʈ–ér–òó
[M]   1PL jump.REP-PAST.1PL
    "We jumped (repeatedly)."

71   ʈāāʈ–é   kéŋ–gíŋ
[M]   jump-NMZ   good-COP.PRES.3SG
    "Jumping is fun (in general)."

SPEAKER COMMENT: In the case of we jumped repeatedly, if we each jumped once you could not use the repeated event verb form, you can only use this if we both jumped many times.

Similarly, agents are often formed from the repeated event verb root rather than the simplex root.

72   aĭ   wàl   bōr–ōó
[M]   1PL yesterday   migrate-PAST.1PL
    "We migrated yesterday."

73   aì   bíl   bóʈʈ–èr–òó
[M]   1PL past   migrate.REP-PLR-PAST.1PL
    "We migrated in the past (habitual)."

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15 Suppletive plural subject tone.

bòʈʈ–ààr 74
migrate-NMZA [M]
"A nomad or a migrant."

4. Conclusion

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In conclusion, I have shown in this paper that in the Uncu language there are various ways of marking participant number and event number on a verb. The number of the object or subject of a verb determines participant number. Participant number is usually marked with the extension -er and occasionally with a suppletive root for transitive verbs with a plural object or intransitive verbs with a plural subject. Event number is determined by the frequency or repetition of an event and it is typically used when the speaker wants to express that a certain action is performed iteratively or habitually. Event plurality is marked by many different extensions (-ʈ, -ug, -k, -ʃ, -c) and partial reduplication of the root. The plural event form is incompatible with discreet adverbs like "twice" or "three times" but instead is used with adverbs like "again and again" or "usually." These two number marking systems for participant number and event number can be used in combination allowing speakers to precisely illustrate many different plurality scenarios.