

## **Da: the Navajo Distributive Plural Preverb**

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### **1. Introduction.**

This chapter consists of essays and brief commentaries on the Navajo distributive plural preverb *da* written by Navajo educators who took the course on Linguistic Theory and Research at the 1999 Navajo Language Academy Linguistics Workshop held at Rehoboth, New Mexico. Research on the distributive plural preverb was one of several projects undertaken by participants in the course. The general purpose of the research course was to create a situation in which speakers of Navajo could come face-to-face with a linguistic problem in the language and to engage in the work of linguistic inquiry to the extent possible in the context of a summer course. The papers and brief comments included in this chapter concern the preverb *da*, known as the “distributive plural” prefix. This element belongs to the so-called “disjunct” system in the Navajo verb word, occupying position III in the Young and Morgan prefix template (Young and Morgan, 1987).

The problem that interested us in relation to the preverb *da* had to do with the label “distributive” traditionally attached to it. What does this mean? One possibility that we have entertained is that *da* is simply a plural, imposing a plural interpretation upon the event denoted by a verb in which it appears. If this is true, then *da* need not actually be distributive. And the most common and straightforward uses of this preverb are consistent with the idea that it is simply a plural, and that it is not necessarily distributive.

The verb forms in (1) below exemplify the simplest paradigm in relation to the category of number. The verb stem in this case is number-neutral; number is represented in the prefix system. In (1a) the subject is explicitly singular by virtue of the fact the *ashkii* is singular. The verb is not marked plural and is therefore compatible with the singular subject. In (1b), the subject is nonsingular (dual or plural). The verb is not marked plural and, in this arrangement, the subject is normally taken to be dual. In (1c), with *da* in its designated preverbal position within the verb word, the subject is understood as plural (three or more). Ordinarily, there is no implication of distributivity; that is, there is no requirement that the boys are working independently, or separately, in any sense. The verb form in that sentence is not *inconsistent* with distributivity, of course, but it is not necessarily distributive. This is rather standard behavior for the *da*-plural in this simple paradigm.

- (1) a. Ashkii naalnish.  
 boy (sg) work  
 'The boy is working.'
- b. Ashiiké naalnish.  
 boy (nonsg) work  
 'The boys (dual) are working.'
- c. Ashiiké ndaalnish.  
 boy (nonsg) *da*-work  
 'The boys (plural).'

In intransitive sentences, like these, *da* is construed with the subject, understandably. This is generally true of transitives as well (unless some factor makes this impossible). In (2), for example, the verb contains *da* (modified to *-de-* as a result of a regular phonological process). The nouns are number-neutral, belonging to the overwhelming majority of Navajo nouns which do not inflect for nonsingular number. In this sentence, the subject which is readily (and for some speakers, preferably) interpreted as plural. The object could also be plural, but this is not forced by the presence of *da*.

- (2) Akafii béégashii nídeis'ah.  
 cowboy cow *da*-skinned  
 'The cowboys skinned the cow(s).'

Young and Morgan (1987:63) report that sentences of this type can also be understood as having a singular subject and plural object, *the cowboy skinned the cows*. The plural object interpretation emerges very clearly in cases where the subject is explicitly singular, as in (3), with a first person singular subject co-occurring with the plural preverb *da*:

- (3) Béégashii nidaséł'ah.  
 cow *da*-I-skinned  
 'I skinned the cows.'

If *da* is not expressly distributive, where does the distributive interpretation come from? Evidently, a plural in Navajo can be interpreted as a collective of entities, without reference to distribution in space, as a scattering of entities, so to speak, spatially dispersed, or an organized array of entities in relation to other entities (as, for example, birds each sitting on a separate fence post, children in pairs each pair sitting on a separate horse, and so on). This is why the verb of (1c), *ndaalnish* 'they are working', can be understood as involving plural actors (denoted by the subject) working together in a group confined to a limited area, or it can be understood as involving plural actors separated and distributed over an area less confined.

The distributive interpretation comes out most clearly when *da* interacts with explicit number specification within the same verb word, e.g., where the verb stem is specified for number. For example, in her examination of sentences involving the notion 'lie down' (also discussed in Young and Morgan, 1987:63),

## The Plural Preverb

Helen Yazzie found that of the Navajo speakers she interviewed seven understood the following sentence (1. (2) in her essay) as meaning that two people lay down, each under his or her own tree, i.e., one person per tree:

- (4) Nídíshchíí' yiyaadi dancetzǫ́.  
pine-tree under-it *da*-lay-down (sg)  
'They (each, singularly) lay down under a pine tree.'

Interestingly, this expresses the prototypical distributive sense, but it is in defiance of the expected plurality of *da*. The verb is inherently singular, hence the distributive interpretation (of individuated singles) is virtually obligatory. H. Yazzie reports further that three speakers gave the interpretation according to which one person lay down under one pine tree. This is surprising but not unprecedented, and it represents a finding which needs to be studied further. In any event, in the first interpretation, the distributive force of *da* is preeminent, eclipsing the plural force.

In the following sentence, also from H. Yazzie's work (1. (4)), the verb stem is explicitly dual in number, and the preverb *da* appears in the verb word as well:

- (5) Nídíshchíí' yiyaadi dancetzhtéézh.  
pine-tree under-it *da*-lay-down (du)  
'They (dual) lay down under a pine tree (or pine trees).'

Six speakers gave an interpretation according to which each of two pairs lay down under two separate pine trees; and three gave an interpretation according to which two separate pairs of people lay down under one pine tree. Again, these are distributive interpretations (and again, plural number seems to be forfeited to distributivity).

In the following, also from H. Yazzie, the verb stem is plural. The effect of *da* in this form is not univocal. The distributive interpretation is certainly possible, but the group reading is also present:

- (6) Nídíshchíí' yiyaadi dancetzjhéé'.  
pine-tree under-it *da*-lay-down (pl)  
'They (plural) lay down under a pine tree (or pine trees).'

Ten speakers said that the sentence could mean that three people lay down under a single pine tree (nondistributive), while seven interpreted it to mean that each of three individuals lay down under a separate pine tree (distributive). If the distributive reading is simply possible, and not inevitable in cases like this, then plural verbs with *da* have much the same range of interpretations as plural verbs without *da*. Thus the following sentences with plural verb (from H. Yazzie's work) has both the expected group (nondistributive) reading and the distributive reading as well, according to some of the speakers consulted by H. Yazzie:

- (7) Nídíshchíí' yiyaadi neezjhéé'.  
pine-tree under-it lay-down (pl)  
'They (plural) lay down under a pine tree (or pine trees).'

Eight speakers permitted the interpretation according to which four or more people lay down under one pine tree (nondistributive). But six people believed that the sentence could mean that three individual persons lay down separately under one tree, i.e., one tree per person, this being the distributive reading.

This possibility is noted in other contributors to this chapter. Thus, for example, Roseann Willink notes that the following verb form is consistent with three situations (8a-c), described in Navajo in her original essay:

- (8) Da'íínílbqas.  
'We (several) are driving (a vehicle) along.'
- a. Diné tált'éego dóó bi'aan chidí bił yilwołgo t'áá' áłahjí.  
'Three or more people are being conveyed together by (one) car.'
- b. Diné tált'éego ał'ąą chidí bił deiįjeehgo.  
'Three people are conveyed separately, each in a separate car.'
- c. Diné naakidilt'éego chidí naakigo éí doodago tált'éego chidí bił deiįjeehgo.  
'Two or three people are being conveyed by two cars, two (or three) in each car.'

The six pieces in this chapter include two essays in English, by Helen Yazzie and Regina Yazzie. These were composed in English and report research done with other Navajo speakers on the meanings of the preverb *da* in sentences cited in Young and Morgan (1978:62-4). Their results confirm the fact that *da* has a distributive interpretation under certain conditions. R. Yazzie notes, however, general hesitation in relation to the verb form *dasé'ą* 'place entity in some location' in which the preverb *da* appears together with the singular stem -'ą. She reports that her speakers dissected this form to show that it is, at the very least, difficult and internally contradictory.

The remaining contributions, of various lengths, were presented primarily in Navajo and normally took the form of comments on the meanings of example sentences with and without *da*. Roseann Willink considers the verbs of vehicular travel, most of which involve singular and nonsingular verbs of motion (i.e., 'run') together and arguments corresponding to the traveler(s) realized as objects of the commitative postposition *-ł*, giving forms which mean, literally, 'run with X', where X is the traveler. We translate these as 'X is conveyed by vehicle.' The same translation is used for the verbs of travel by animal in the note by Jefferson Clauschee who shows that the verb forms *nihit ch'éldloozh* and *nihit ch'ídaashdloozh* 'we were conveyed (through the canyon) by horse', the first without *da* (hence dual number), the second with *da* (hence plural), are not distinct in terms of distributivity—both permit group as well as distributive meanings.

The piece by Caroline Bemore examines the handling verb *-'áát* (progressive) 'handle, be at rest (solid roundish object)'. Her observations are

## The Plural Preverb

consistent with those of the other Navajo speakers represented here to the effect that in nonsingular verbs, *da* is possibly, but not necessarily, distributive. The same can be said of Peggy Rafelito's reexamination of the verbs of reclining which reinforce this point as well.

The picture which emerges is this. The preverb *da* is an adverbial element which imposes a plural interpretation on elements of the "event structure" defined by a verb. Typically, it seeks to "pluralize" an argument of the verb, typically a direct argument (subject or object). Where the verb is itself plural, or where it is number-neutral, *da* will preferably pluralize the subject, as long as there is no conflict (i.e., an explicitly singular subject will not be pluralized). The object can likewise always be pluralized, evidently, as long as no conflict arises. Where the verb is explicitly dual or singular, as in *danceztí* 'they lay down (singular stem)' the pluralizing effect of *da*, for those speakers who allow it, is achieved by splitting the eventuality along some dimension, distinct from the arguments themselves, e.g., along the dimension of place, or location—e.g., *danceztí* 'they lay down individually, each in a separate place (as under a separate pine tree).'

The data which emerge in this chapter raise a number of questions which will require further investigation. Of particular interest are judgments which attribute a cardinality to *da* which is less than plural. The interpretation according to which *danceztí* is singular has been mentioned; this may, on investigation, be a highly contextual interpretation, rather than a counterexample to the generally accepted plurality of *da*. More interesting, perhaps, are the cases in which speakers permit what appears to be a dual interpretation, as the main interpretation registered by H. Yazzies' for her sentence (2) involving the verb form just mentioned *nídíshchíí' yíyaadi danceztí* (*da* with singular stem), interpreted by seven speakers as meaning that two individuals lay down each under a separate tree. This dual interpretation is reported independently by Peggy Rafelito, in section 6 below, calling into question the inherent plurality of *da*. In the simple paradigm presented in (1), which exemplifies the vast majority of actual cases, *da* is universally plural, so far as we know. This is probably because those cases *da* is opposed paradigmatically to the dual. Misuse of *da* as a dual would, in those simple cases, constitute a true mistake. In certain more complex situations, represented by word internal disparity in number categories (i.e., singular and nonsingular in the same word), it could easily be the case that *da* is simply nonsingular, permitting the dual interpretation.

But these are matters for future research. The purpose of this chapter is to present work by Navajo speakers who are new to linguistics and who will, in most cases, return to Navajo Language Academy workshops and do further work on research projects they have started. [-K.H., ed.]

### **2. The meanings of different uses of *da*. By Helen Yellowman Yazzie, University of New Mexico.**

As part of my research in examining the prefix *da* in the verb word, I have chosen to look at six example sentences. I observe first the position in which *da* appears in the verb word. The prefix *da* is part of the disjunct system. That is, it

precedes prefixes of Young and Morgan's position IV, object prefixes, the leftmost position in the conjunct system. Most often the *da* can be observed as a distributive plural. The theory is that *da* has an influence on the interpretation of other parts of the sentence. A direct object in a transitive verb may be influenced, as may other relevant nouns in the sentence. I think it is possible that certain words have more weight or focus, affecting the semantics of Navajo sentences.

Another interesting thing is the effect that *da* can have on a singular verb stem. Does the *da* always work as the distributive plural? To attempt to find answers I have undertaken this research. Consider the following examples (the English is left purposefully vague for the present; the *da*-prefix is set off with a hyphen in the Navajo verb):

- (1) Nídíshchíí' yiyaadi neeztǫ́.  
pine-tree under-it he-lay-down (singular stem)  
'He lay down under a pine tree.'
- (2) Nídíshchíí' yiyaadi da-neeztǫ́.  
pine-tree under-it they-lay-down (singular stem)  
'They lay down under a pine tree.'
- (3) Nídíshchíí' yiyaadi neezhtéézh.  
pine-tree under-it they-lay-down (dual stem)  
'They lay down under a pine tree.'
- (4) Nídíshchíí' yiyaadi da-neeztéézh.  
pine-tree under-it they-lay-down (dual stem)  
'They lay down under a pine tree.'
- (5) Nídíshchíí' yiyaadi neezhjíéé'.  
pine-tree under-it they-lay-down (plural stem)  
'They lay down under a pine tree.'
- (6) Nídíshchíí' yiyaadi da-neezhjíéé'.  
pine-tree under-it they-lay-down (plural stem)  
'They lay down under a pine tree.'

These sentences are slightly modified from forms cited in Young and Morgan (1987:63); in that work the postposition *-yaadi* 'under' is affixed directly to the noun. When I hear these sentences, I first of all would like to change the *yaadi* to *yi-yaadi* 'under it' because it's more appropriate. In relation to the research at hand, I asked the Diné people in the community of Gallup, New Mexico, what the sentences mean to them. Personally, I view the verb stem to define the number of people in the scene described. The pine trees are not the main points of concern.

Similarly, one speaker (Delphine Tsinaajinnie, of Rock Point, Arizona) stated that the noun word *nídíshchíí'* gives the location of the happening. If the expression were *nídíshchíí' tahdi*, then it would put the location *among* plural

## The Plural Preverb

pine trees. Only if the location is specified is it assumed that there is a singular pine tree involved.

The purpose of doing some field work was to get an objective view of the meanings. After all, the Diné people ultimately possess the Diné language. Therefore, the answers should come from them. I integrate my field data into my discussion. Based on this data I am able to see what meanings are true and, by the same token, to look at the significance of the distributive plural *da*. I used line drawings in working with speakers, to help them in visualizing situations which might reflect the meanings of the sentences used in the study. These were presented to speakers, who were to choose the most appropriate for each sentence. They are described verbally in what follows.

There are multiple options for each Navajo sentence. Although in some instances no one thought that a certain picture would be acceptable to fit the Navajo sentence, and I recorded it as such. I tried to include all information possible. The illustrations are indicated by sentence number and letter—such as (3b) or (4c)—the number referring to the sentence, retaining the numbering already given above, while the letter refers to the illustration. The latter is not actually given, but its image is expressed in the report of the judgment given, e.g., “one person lay down under one pine tree,” corresponding to a picture depicting just that.

At this point I would like to present Navajo speakers’ understanding of the sentences, beginning with (1), the Navajo version of which is repeated here.

- (1) Nídíshchíí’ yiyaadi neeztí.

The speakers’ judgments are as follows (in all cases, the subject could have been an animal as well as a person): (a) eight speakers thought that the meaning is portrayed as one person who lay down under one pine tree; (b) no one thought the meaning was portrayed as two people who lay down under two pine trees; (c) six speakers thought that the meaning is portrayed as one person who lay down under two pine trees; (d) six speakers thought that the meaning is portrayed as one person who lay down under three pine trees; (e) no one thought the meaning was portrayed as three people who lay down under one pine tree.

Notice that the verb has the singular stem *-tí*. This makes it clear that there is only one person or animal involved. It is accepted by the majority that as long as there is one person (or animal) involved, there may be any number of trees present. I turn now to a more complex and problematic example.

- (2) Nídíshchíí’ yiyaadi daneeztí.

Results of inquiry: (a) seven speakers thought the meaning was portrayed as two people who separately lay down under their own tree, making there be one pine tree per person; (b) three speakers thought that the meaning is portrayed as one person who lay down under one pine tree: \*(c) two speakers thought that the meaning is portrayed as one person who lay down under two pine trees; \*(d) two speakers thought that the meaning is portrayed as one person who lay down under three pine trees; \*(e) two speakers thought that the meaning is portrayed as three people who lay down under one pine tree.

Sentence (2) has three healthy meanings. There were also three weak meanings which were obtained. The majority of the people understood the sentences to correspond to (2a), where under each of two or more trees, one person or animal lay down. So there would be the same number of trees associated with the same number of persons, but they have to be in single pairs (person-tree pairs). The next meaning, (2b), was understood to mean that there is one pine tree where one person had lay down. I had three other cases in which acceptance was weak, hence the asterisk assigned to them. Thus just two speakers said that (2c) means that one person lay down under two pine trees. A couple of people thought that (2d) would also be okay to say if you meant there were three trees and one person lay down under them. And in (2e) there is one tree and three or more people lay down kind of close to each other. There were also quite a few people who thought that sentence (2) could not be understood because it was wrong for some reason, due to the verb word (with a singular stem and plural prefix).

The verb stem of (1) and (2) is the same, i.e., *-tí* 'lie down, lay (singular)'. The distributive plural *da* appears in (2), giving *danceztí*. This form means that individual persons or animals lay down, one separate from another, independently; and the action is complete (since the verb is in the perfective). It can thus be observed that there has to be at least one person associated with one tree. In this associated fashion, there may be more sets added to make one tree with one person plus one more tree with one more person. The idea that this word *danceztí* is itself not a meaningful word, because it doesn't make sense alone, was also prevalent in the field research.

In (3), the verb has the dual stem *-téézh*. When there are no complicating factors, it is clear that there are two people involved.

(3) Nídíshchí' yiyaadi neezhtéézh.

Results: (a) nine people thought that the meaning is portrayed as two people who lay down under one pine tree; (b) five people thought that the meaning is portrayed as two people who lay down under three pine trees; (c) no one understood the sentences as meaning that one person lay down under two pine trees; (d) no one thought that the meaning of one person who lay down under three pine trees was understood; (e) no one understood the sentence as meaning that three people lay down under one pine tree.

This sentence seemed to be plainly understood, without question. In (3a), there are two people who lay down under the pine tree, and in (3b), there is still a pair of people but under three or more trees. My own understanding is also that, yes, two people lay down in pairs, but it could also be in separate pairs.

In (4) below, the distributive plural *da* is now prefixed to the verb. The dual stem *-téézh* is still at the end of the verb word. So now, although the dual stem says it is dual, the *da* makes it plural, three or more. In fact, the *da* and the dual stem mean that there are plural dual pairs. They can be in pairs but in a group as a whole. They can be in smaller groups collectively but as a whole.

(4) Nídíshchí' yiyaadi dancezhtéézh.

## The Plural Preverb

Results: (a) six people thought that the meaning was portrayed as two people who lay down under one pine tree; (b) six people thought that the meaning was portrayed as two pairs of people who lay down under one pine tree each; (c) ten people thought that the meaning was portrayed as a pair of people who lay under either two pine trees or three pine trees (alternatives); (d) three people thought that the meaning was portrayed as two distinct pairs of people who lay down under one pine tree; ?\*(e) one person thought that the meaning was portrayed as three people who lay down under two pine trees.

Five ideas are perceived by people that I interviewed. One of these takes (4a) to mean that two people lay down under one pine tree; they lay down close to each other, or they may not have lain close to each other. Another accepted the meaning given in (4b), where a pair of people lay down in pairs under each of two trees. In (4d) two pairs, or more, have lain down under one tree. And in (4e), three people lay down under two pine trees; one person thought this was a possible meaning. No one thought the meaning was portrayed as three people who lay down under three pine trees. And no one thought the meaning was portrayed as one person who lay down under three pine trees.

(5) Nídíshchíí' yiyaadi neezhjáéé'.

Results: (a) nine people thought that the meaning was portrayed as three people who lay down under one pine tree; (b) eight people thought that the meaning was portrayed as four people who lay down under one pine tree; (c) eight people thought that the meaning was portrayed as whole bunch of people (around a dozen) who lay down under a pine tree; (d) six people thought the meaning was portrayed as three individual persons who lay down under one tree each, one tree per person; (e) one person thought the meaning was portrayed as two people who lay down under one pine tree; (f) no one thought the meaning was portrayed as one person who lay down under two pine trees; (g) no one thought the meaning was portrayed as two people who lay down under two pine trees; (h) no one thought the meaning was portrayed as one person who lay down under four pine trees.

There are a lot of settings possible in (5a). As long as there are three or more people that have lain down under a pine tree, it is accepted. There may be whole herd of deer that has lain down under a pine tree, or under several pine trees also. The sentence could also mean (5b), with many under one tree, or even where each person lay down under separate trees such as one person per tree. In (5c) many lay down collectively under a pine tree, but it could have been many trees. The picture in (5d) has three people individually lying down under each of three pine trees. No one thought the meaning of (5) was portrayed as one person or two persons lying down under one, two, or any other number of pine trees.

My own understanding of (5) is that three or more people lay down collectively, in pairs close by each other, scatteredly in pairs, or as one collection but spread out with some space in between them; they may have lain down right next to each other, or they may have lain down in scattered fashion where they could be seen. There is no *da* prefix in this form, but there is a new stem. The *-jáéé'* stem is plural. The meaning is clearly that there are three or more people or animals collectively or separately scattered. Or they may in fact be in pairs again, but plural.

(6) Nídíshchíí' yiyaadi daneezhjéé'.

Results: (a) ten people thought that the sentence could mean that three people lay down under one pine tree; (b) eight people thought that the sentence could mean that a bunch of people (say nine) lay down under a whole bunch (nine, ten) of pine trees; (c) seven people thought that the meaning was portrayed as four people who lay down under one pine tree; (d) seven people thought that the meaning was portrayed as three individuals lying down each under a separate pine tree; (e) six people thought that the meaning was portrayed as three sets, such that the first set consisted of two people who lay down under one pine tree, and the second consisted of one person who lay down under another pine tree, and the third set under the last pine tree contained no member; (f) one person thought that the meaning was portrayed as two people who were lying down under two pine trees.

No one thought the meaning was one person lying down under four pine trees, or one person lying down under two pine trees, nor did anyone think that the sentence meant that two people lay down under one pine tree.

The following understandings were compiled, among others. It can be observed in (6a) that three or more people lay down under a pine tree. It can also be observed that in (6b) three or more people lay down under two or more pine trees. In the actual drawing used in the research, the people and trees are surrounded by a fence. One interviewee thought the fence would portray the meaning more appropriately. Six speakers thought that the meaning represented by (6c), with one empty set, could be thought of as involving three sets as three sets, even though one of the sets is empty.

I myself understand this sentence as meaning that three or more people or animals lay down in pairs collectively or in groups, or in a scattered distribution.

In conclusion, the significance of *da* is the distributive plural effect it has on the objects and nouns in the sentence. The prefix *da* may have influence on one item or each member as collective group members, three plus members or as a whole collective group. There must be at least two each, but there can be more than two. There also can be three or more in a group.

*Da* was quite cooperative in my Navajo example sentences. The effect of the *da* was clearly distributive plurality. With the *daneeztí* being the exception, most of the verb words were comprehensible. The conflict of *daneeztí* is within the verb itself. The verb contains the *da*, which pluralizes and the *-tí* stem that indicates singularity. The verb stem won the tug of war, as is reflected in the data compiled. The ultimate determinant was the stem: *-tí* singular, *-teezh* dual, and *-jéé'* plural in three.

This research was exciting and motivating. I appreciated the Navajo people I interviewed. It was interesting to see them become interested in the meaning of the Navajo language. I feel fortunate to have been a participant in the 1999 summer workshop sponsored by the Navajo Language Academy. I feel that I can go back to my school and teach the students with more depth. The experience in my research has opened new avenues for me. I plan to start a

## The Plural Preverb

newsletter with my students to involve the parents and the community. I hope to instill in them the importance of keeping current in the Navajo language research.

### 3. The significance of *da* in Navajo verb morphology. By Regina Yazzie, University of New Mexico.

The *da*-preverb sometimes appears in the verb word. According to Faltz (1998), if the subject of the verb is a group of three or more persons or things, then the *da*-prefix is put into the verb in addition to the appropriate dual-plural subject prefix. This holds true for all verb modes. There needs to be three or more subjects for *da* to work.

The *da*-preverb is semantically straightforward when it appears in a verb word in which the subject prefix is clearly nonsingular (i.e., dual-plural), as in the following forms of the verb -'á 'put, set (round object)', cited here in the perfective aspect: *dasit'*á 'we put it'; *dasoo'*á 'you (plural) put it'; *deiz'*á 'they put it (third person)'; *dajiz'*á 'they put it (fourth person)'.

This paper looks at *da* as it occurs in the verb words of (1-4) below in order to understand its significance, or meaning. The following examples are taken from sentences cited by Young and Morgan (1987:63) in their discussion of the distributive plural preverb:

- (1) Látsíní bikáa'gi dootł'izhii dah sé'á  
bracelet on-it turquoise up I-set-it-singular-entity  
'I set raised turquoise on top of the bracelet.'
- (2) Látsíní bikáa'gi dootł'izhii dah dasé'á.  
bracelet on-it turquoise up *da*-I-set-singular-entity  
(a) 'I set many raised turquoise on top of the bracelet.'  
(b) 'I set many raised turquoise on top of many bracelets.'
- (3) Látsíní bikáa'gi dootł'izhii dah sénil.  
bracelet on-it turquoise up I-set-plural-entities  
'I set raised turquoise on top of the bracelet.'
- (4) Látsíní bikáa'gi dootł'izhii dah dasénil.  
bracelet on-it turquoise up *da*-I-set-plural-entities  
(a) I set many raised turquoise on top of the bracelet.  
(b) I set many raised turquoise on top of many bracelets.

Does *da* have an influence on the interpretation of 'the bracelets'? Can *da* distributive pluralize the turquoise (stones) and the bracelets? How does the verb stem come into play? Considering the fact that the subject prefix and the verb stem are involved, how do they interact with the preverb *da*? How heavy an influence is each of these factors? What relation does *da* have to the agreement morphology? The influence of *da* in this case is not very clear and needs more discussion.

I began my research by inferring my own meaning of the sentences. It became apparent that by looking at the meanings of the various sentences, it can become confusing. I decided to consult various linguists and did some field work. I asked various fluent Navajo speakers of their opinions. I was able to verify what I had hypothesized, but not completely. There were some modifications that were realized. I was able to ask Navajos who were reared in Tsaile, Fort Wingate, and in the Gallup, Crownpoint, Tuba City, Montezuma Creek, Rock Point, Vander Wagon, and Cameron areas.

The verb word *sé'á* was clearly seen by all the interviewees as the first person singular verb referring to putting turquoise on a single bracelet. Some people accepted the meaning to also convey that one turquoise stone is set on each of plural bracelets. This idea was not as apparent right off hand, it took some thought and hesitation before accepting it.

The concept of the verb itself, in the first person singular form, was difficult for some speakers. Contextually, it is possible in the example sentences that *I* am the silversmith designing the turquoise bracelet, or the reader may think, "I am the silversmith and I set it in the past, e.g., yesterday." I must say everyone questioned the verb form. It caused a lot of confusion. People wanted to change the verb to the intransitive stative (neuter) verb *si'á* 'it sits'. There are numerous ways to express the English verbs *put* and *set* in the Navajo language. This was continuously an apparent problem when I was gathering interview data. Individuals would give preference to how they would convey the meaning of the sentence and more specifically the verb word *sé'á*.

The verb word *dasé'á* presented multiple problems in the perception of its meaning. Again, interviewees felt compelled to change the word or to fix it. Some people came right out and said it is not a word. The justification they gave me for this was that the stem *-'á* means singularity with no exception. Some individuals went further to educate me as if I were in a classroom and totally did not know my heritage language. This is how strong the feedback was that I received while doing this fieldwork. Based on this, *da* seemed to be ineffective in this case, or at least there were some doubts about the influence of *da*.

The other verb base or form *sénil* was clearly accepted more easily by the Navajo interviewees. It can be observed that the stem *-nil* has replaced the stem *-á*. The stem *-nil* is a plural stem; it carries the meaning of togetherness. Usually, *-nil* is appropriate for pencils or tent poles, objects that are narrow and long. In contrast, the stem of *sé'á* would be used in the context of referring to a bulky item.

It was accepted that the turquoise may be set in scattered pairs, or in collective groups/bunches, The turquoise stones can be two, or three or more on one bracelet. However, there may not be more bracelets than two. This is because the *-nil* stem is dual. It is not understood by the interviewees where one turquoise stone is on top of two or more bracelets. Most of the interviewees did not accept this as a meaning for the sentence. This may be due to the dual *-nil* stem where it does not coincide with a singular turquoise stone. There were one or two interviewees that thought this might be acceptable.

The verb form *dasénil* can be understood as referring to the situation in which there are three or more turquoise stones on one bracelet. Also, it could be understood as referring to the situation in which the turquoise stones in numbers

## The Plural Preverb

of three or more are on three or more bracelets. According to the interviewees, this is all that can be derived.

The *da* distributive plural seemed to be ineffective in the case of *dasé'á* (i.e., with singular stem). I say this because whether *da* is there or not, the *-'á* has the property of singularity. Similarly, the stem *-nil* has the property of plurality. One or two interviewees thought it was consistent with their familiarity with rules of linguistics regarding the *da* distributive plural.

To address the agreement problem, I will look at the subject prefixes and the verb paradigms of verb word containing the stems *-'á* and *-nil*. The following paradigms show the first, second, third, and fourth person forms of these verbs in the s-perfective (cf., Young and Morgan, 1987; Faltz, 1998):

(5)		Sing	Dual Pl	Distributive Plural
	1	sé'á	sii'á	dasiit'á
	2	síní'á	soo'á	dasoo'á
	3	yiz'á		deiz'á
	4	jiz'á		dajis'á

Notice that the form *sé'á* is in the same form as in my example sentences—so it shouldn't cause confusion. However, the *dasé'á* does not appear in the paradigm as given. But the form *dasiit'á* does appear. The preverb *da* is grammatical in the distributive plural column for all the persons (1, 2, 3, 4).

Of course, a rule of morphophonology changes the *da* to [de] in the word *deiz'á*, but the preverb *da* is perfectly compatible with the (nonsingular) subjects in the forms labeled “distributive plural.” But *dasé'á* involves a conflict of singular and plural.

The verb stem *-nil* in the perfective form also has its own verb paradigm. The same sets of subject prefixes can be used in this case also. Once again my information was obtained from Faltz (1998) and Young and Morgan (1987):

(6)		Sing	Dual Plural	
		Distributive Plural		
	1	sénil	sii'nil	dasii'nil
	2	síníil	soonil	dasoonil
	3	yínil		deinil
	4	jínil		dajinil

Once again, the first person singular *sénil* is correct, the singular agreement morphology corresponding to the subject, the stem to the object. The form *dasénil* needs to also be corrected to *dasii'nil*. This really was an issue for the interviewees, and myself as the researcher. The *-nil* stem was easily accepted as being dual or dual-plural. Therefore, there wasn't a problem there. But *dasénil* involves a distributive plural with a singular subject.

The morphology of the verb word determines the influence of the rest of the sentence. The verb word can also be considered as the foundation of the sentence. This is why it would be important to take a look at the phrases found in the sentences. I look at the sentence with the verb form *sé'á*. Other elements in that clause include the postpositional phrase *látsíní bikáa'gi* ‘on top of the

bracelet'. It is predicated of the nominal *doot'izhii* 'turquoise', which functions as the direct object of the transitive verb. Finally, a particle also appears, i.e., the word *dah* 'up, at an elevation'. The particle *dah* is regarded by Young and Morgan (1987) as a separate word. There was some discussion among my consultants as to how to view the element *dah* and the relation between that particle and the verb word. One interviewee noted that the *dah* serves similarly to the "helping verb or adverb" of English. It is worth mentioning here that *dah* was understandably confusing for most interviewees and for the researcher. It became a nuisance. There was always confusion between the *dah* and the *da*. But in the context *dah sé'á*, the particle means 'up or elevated'.

Concerning the nouns, *látsíní* and *doot'izhii*, it is very important to understand that they can be interpreted as singular or plural in meaning. The only way to specifically clarify this verbally would be to say *ashdla' látsíní* 'five bracelets' or *díí' látsíní* 'four bracelets', or some such thing. The verb stem can also indicate number in regard to the nouns. Now a specific number is given to the bracelets, but not the turquoise stones. Quantifiers may be used also.

Within the verb word, if *da* appears, being a disjunct prefix, it must precede the conjunct prefixes of *sé'á*, giving *dasé'á*. As mentioned earlier, when the form *dasé'á* is used, there are some problems. The main problem in the verb word is that the morphemes do not agree, they conflict. Therefore, it is not a well formed sentence. Essentially, this verb word is really not a word commonly used by the Navajos. Navajos will usually use words more respective of the situation. It seems to me that when something is actually possible to do, then it can be described in the Navajo language in some way. There has to be a meaning attached to the entire verb word. This is where the problems exist.

I thought it was interesting that the interviewees wanted to correct or change either the verb word or the sentence. Each time I listened to the interviewee, I was able to note the other options that interviewees preferred; the major change was to shift from the s-perfective active ('put, set') to the s-perfective neuter ('be in position'):

- (7) Látsíní bikáa'gi doot'izhii dah si'á.  
'There is a turquoise on top of the bracelet.'
- (8) Látsíní bikáa'gi doot'izhii dah dasi'á (= daaz'á).  
'There is a turquoise on top of each of 3 or more bracelets.'
- (9) Látsíní bikáa'gi doot'izhii dah naaz'á.  
'There are turquoise in various locations on the bracelet.'
- (10) Látsíní bikáa'gi doot'izhii dah danaaz'á (= ndaaz'á).  
'There are turquoise on each of several bracelets.'
- (11) Látsíní bikáa'gi doot'izhii dah sinil.  
'There are several turquoise on the bracelet.'
- (12) Látsíní bikáa'gi doot'izhii dah dasinil.  
'There are several turquoise on each of several bracelets.'

## The Plural Preverb

Each word that makes up each sentence in all the cases has some characteristic property that plays out in different ways. For example, *da* was always viewed as having the function of the distributive plural. But in some cases, it has no effect. I believe the cases where it does not have an effect are due to the defiant stems in the plural form or in the singular form.

In conclusion, this was only a preliminary research project. There is room for more research and field work. I have multiple directions in which to take my research now. I believe my interviewing method can be used in a different approach in which three or four sentences could include the verb word being studied so a better contextual meaning can be derived by the interviewee. The cumbersome *dah* can be eliminated to clear up some questions and confusion. There is also more literature available now to help in further research on this topic.

This has been quite an experience in waking up to language, to the meaning of language from all view points, and to the manner in which it encompasses the world. I had a very interesting summer learning experience. I thank all those that contributed in conversation, teaching, written material, and just being here and bringing valuable experience and outlook on my heritage Navajo language.

### **4. *Da* in verbs of conveyance. By Roseann Willink, University of New Mexico.**

The verb in most of the examples used here is in the Progressive Mode, which can be defined as follows: Ájít'ínígíí t'áá náás áhooníłgo. 'Causing something to be move along forward.'

- (1) 'Eesbąs.  
'I am driving along.'

T'ááłá'í diné ha'át'íshíí bijáád/bikee' názbąsgo yoołbąsgo, e.g. Toohgóó 'cesbąs. 'One person driving some sort of (single) wheeled vehicle along.' E.g., I am driving to Shiprock.'

- (2) 'Iilbąs.  
'We (two) are driving along.'

Diné naakigo ha'át'íshíí bijáád/bikee' názbąsgo yoołbąsgo. Toohgóó 'illbąs. 'Two people driving some sort of (single) wheeled vehicle along.' E.g., We are driving to Shiprock.'

- (3) Da'íniilbąs.  
'We (several) are driving along.'

Diné táł'éego t'ááłá'í nítínigo ha'at'íshíí bikee'/bijáád názbąsgo yoołbąsgo éí doodago t'ááłá'í nítínigo bikee' názbąsígíí bił yilwołgo. E.g., Chidí bił yilwołgo/deiłbąsgo. 'Three individuals driving some sort of wheeled vehicle

along or individuals being conveyed by a wheeled vehicle.’ E.g., they are conveyed by a car, or they drive a car.’ There are three cases:

- a. Diné tált’éego dóó bi’aan chidí bił yilwołgo t’áá’ áfahjí.  
‘Three or more people are being conveyed together by one car.’
- b. Diné tált’éego ał’ąą chidí bił deiíjechgo.  
‘Three people are being conveyed separately, each by a separate car.’
- c. Diné naakidilt’éego chidí naakigo éí doodago tált’éego chidí bił deiíjechgo.  
‘Two or three people are being conveyed by two cars, two (or three) in each car.’

- (4) Shił’ oolwoł.  
‘I am conveyed along by a vehicle in motion.’

Diné t’ááłá’ígo ha’át’íshíí bijáád/bikee’ názbąsgo yołbąsgo. E.g. Toohgóó shił’ oolwoł. ‘One person is driving one wheeled vehicle along.’ E.g. ‘I am going to Shiprock (conveyed by vehicle).’

- (5) Nihit’ oolwoł.  
‘We are conveyed along by a vehicle in motion.’

Diné naakidilt’éego ha’át’íshíí bijáád/bikee’ názbąsgo yołbąsgo. E.g. Toohgóó nihit’ oolwoł. ‘Two persons are driving (one) wheeled vehicle along.’ E.g. ‘We are going to Shiprock (conveyed by vehicle).’

- (6) Nihit da’íjech.  
‘We (three persons) are conveyed along, each in a separate vehicle.’

Diné tált’éego dóó bi’aan ha’át’íshíí bijáád/bikee’ názbąsgo bił deiíjech. E.g. Toohgóó nihit da’íjech. ‘Three or more people are being conveyed by (separate) wheeled vehicles.’ E.g. ‘We are going to Shiprock (by vehicle).’

- (7) Shił yílwod.  
‘I arrived conveyed by a vehicle.’

Diné t’ááłá’ígo ha’át’íshíí bijáád/bikee’ názbąsgo bił yílwodgo. E.g. Toohdi chidí shił yílwod. ‘One person arriving by vehicle. E.g. ‘I arrived in Shiprock by vehicle.’

- (8) Nihit yílwod.  
‘We arrived by vehicle.’

Diné naakidilt’éego ha’át’íshíí bikee’/bijáád názbąsgo bił yílwodgo. ‘Two people arriving in (one) vehicle.’

## The Plural Preverb

- (9) Nihit deifwod.  
'We arrived each in a separate vehicle.'

Diné tált'éego ha'át'íshíí bijáád/bikee' názbąsgo bił deifwod. 'It (vehicle) arrived with us, three people each person in a separate car.' E.g. Toohdí chidí nihit deifwod/yíwod. 'We arrived in Shiprock (each in a different car).'

- (10) Nihit yilwoł.  
'We are conveyed by vehicle.'

Diné tált'éego ha'át'íshíí bijáád/bikee' názbąsgo bił yilwołgo. E.g. Toohgóó chidí nihit yilwoł. 'Three people are conveyed by wheeled vehicle, one vehicle with four passengers.' E.g. 'We are going by car to Shiprock.'

- (11) Nihit deifjech.  
'We are conveyed by vehicle.'

Diné tált'éego dóó bi'aan ha'át'íshíí bikee'bijáád názbąsgo bił deifjechgo. T'áá sáhí tált'éego chidí t'áá bił deifjechgo éí doodago naaki chidí bił deifjechgo, etc. 'Three or more people are conveyed by wheeled vehicle. Three cars individually convey them (one person per car), or else two cars convey them (two persons per car).'

- (12) Nihit da'íjech.  
'We are conveyed (by vehicle).'

T'áá'í'í diné chidí táá bił deifjechgo éí doodago naakida, tááda diné chidí bił deifjechgo. 'One person is conveyed in each of three cars, or two persons in two (or three persons in three cars).'

- (13) Nihit nidaaswod.  
'We were conveyed there and back by vehicle.'

Diné tált'éego dóó bi'aan chidí t'áá'í'í bił nidaaswodgo. E.g. Toohgóó chidí nihit nidaaswod. 'Three or more persons went and returned by vehicle.' E.g. 'We went to Shiprock and back (one car with four passengers, for example).'

- (14) Nihit ndahaswod.  
'We were conveyed in stages (stopping en route).'

Diné tált'éego t'áá'í'í nítínigo chidí bił nidaaswodgo dóó bił nidaastłahgo. 'Three individuals are conveyed, each in a separate vehicle, and the vehicle stopped with them at a certain point.' E.g. Toohdí chidí nihit ndahaswod. E.g. 'We went by car to Shiprock, stopping at a certain point.'

- (15) Nihit ahi'noolchéét.  
'We are conveyed dual.'

Diné tált'éego dóo bi'aan éí doodago diné naakidilt'éego chidí t'áa naakihí bił ahi'noolchééłgo. 'Three or more people, or else two people, are conveyed in two cars.' E.g. Chidí nihił ahi'noolchééłgo. E.g. 'We are conveyed by car (for example, two cars with two persons each).' E.g. Chidí nihił da'ahinoolchééł. 'We are conveyed by car (two cars with two persons each)'.

- (16) Nihit'áanálwo'.  
'We are conveyed back and forth (once) in a vehicle.'

Diné naaki dóo bi'aan chidí t'ááł'í bił'áanálwo'go. 'Two or more people being conveyed back and forth (once) in one car.'

- (17) Shił'áanálwo'.  
'I am conveyed back and forth (once) in a vehicle.'

Diné t'ááł'í chidí t'ááł'í bił'áanálwo'go. 'One person is conveyed back and forth (once) in one car.'

- (18) Nihit'áanáajah.  
'We are being conveyed back and forth by vehicle.'

Diné la'í t'áa' dóo bi'aan chidí t'áa' bił'áanáajahgo. 'Many persons, three or more, are being conveyed back and forth in three cars (one person, or more, in each car).'

### 5. A carrying verb. By Caroline Bemore, Window Rock, Arizona.

Há'át'ísh jinígo kójíní łeh? 'What does it mean when one says the following?'

- (1) Tóshjech yish'ááł. (first person singular, singular stem)  
'I am carrying a barrel.'

T'áa sáhi shí tóshjech t'áa ł'á'igo yish'ááł. 'I alone am carrying one barrel.' Tóshjech t'áa ł'á'í hála' bee joo'áałgo 'éí doodaii' chidí bee joo'áałgo dó' kójíní łeh. 'One says this when one carries one barrel by hands or also when one carries it in a vehicle.'

- (2) Tóshjech yit'ááł. (first person nonsingular, singular stem)  
'We are carrying a barrel'

Ndiniilt'éego tóshjech t'ááł'a'igo yit'ááł. 'Two of us are carrying one barrel.' Tóshjech t'áa ł'á'igo 'alts'áá'yínítą'go yit'ááł. 'We are holding the barrel on each side and carrying it.' Ndiniilt'éego tóshjech t'áa ł'á'igo t'áa 'alts'ísígí chidí bee yit'ááł. 'Two of us are carrying one small barrel in a truck (the barrel is smaller than a full load).' Tsinaabaqas bee shíł'áadó' t'áa 'áko. 'A wagon would also be appropriate.' Saad t'áa ł'á'í dah shijaa'ígí bee 'ééhozin 'áadó'. Ndiniilt'éego 'áł'ąą tóshjech yit'ááł, Ken ł'a' yoo'ááł dóo shí dó' ł'a' yish'ááł. A

## The Plural Preverb

sentence also illustrates (the use). Two of us are separately carrying a barrel, Ken is carrying one and I am also carrying one.

- (3) Tóshjeech deínít'aah. (1st nonsingular, da-plural, singular stem)  
'We are carrying a barrel.'

Baa nídlá'ígo tóshjeech t'áá ʔ'a'í 'aʔs'áá' deínítá'go deínít'aah. 'Many of us are holding on to the opposite sides of the barrel and carrying it.' Tániilt'é 'éí doodaii' bilááh 'ánílt'e'go tóshjeech t'áá ʔ'a'í t'áá 'aʔs'íísígíí chidí bee deínít'aah. 'Three or more of us are carrying one small barrel in a truck.' Saad t'áá ʔ'a'í dah shijaa'ígíí bee 'énaáhódzin 'áá'ó'. Another example. Tániilt'éego dóó bilááh 'ánílt'e'go 'aʔ'áá tóshjeech deínít'aah. 'Three or more of us separately carry a barrel.' T'áá'á'í níitínigo tóshjeech t'áá ʔ'a'í nihik'ch ní'áago deínít'aah. 'Each one of us is carrying a barrel individually.'

### 6. A riding verb. By Jefferson Clauschee, Kayenta, Arizona.

Ch'éldloozh.

'It trotted out (a quadruped, as horse)'

Ch'ídaashdloozh.

'They trotted out (quadruped, as horses)'

- (1) 'Adáá'áá' ʔíí' bikooh góyaa nihit ch'éldloozh.  
'Yesterday a horse conveyed us through the canyon.'
- a. Naaki ndiniilt'éego ʔíí' 'aʔ'áá nihit ch'éldloozh.  
'Two of us were conveyed separately through the canyon, by different horses.'
- b. T'áá ánídla ʔíí' bikáá' siikéego nihit ch'éldloozh.  
'We were both sitting on the horse and were conveyed through the canyon.'
- (2) Naakiiskánídáá' ʔíí' bikooh góyaa nihit ch'ídaashdloozh.  
'Two days ago a horse conveyed us (da-plural) through the canyon.'
- a. Tániilt'éego ʔíí' t'áá'á'ígíí nihik'ch ní'ínigo bikooh góyaa nihit ch'éldloozh. (we each had a horse)  
'Three of us were conveyed through the canyon separately (each on his own horse).'



## The Plural Preverb

T'áá iidáá' áhoot'iidgo, tázhjilt'éego t'áá ał'áago tsinyaagi  
jineezhjee'go, doodaii' tázhjilt'éego t'áá łahjı' jineezhjee'go.  
'It happened already, three lay down separately under pine trees, or  
three lay down together.'

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