Distance-Distributivity in Albanian: the distributive marker \textit{nga}

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1. Introduction to the properties of \textit{nga}

The preposition \textit{nga} always takes an NP complement in nominative case. Çeliku et al. (2004:242-243) summarize most of the properties of \textit{nga} in Albanian:

- to show direction, orientation, origin

\begin{enumerate}
  \item (a) Doli \textit{nga} shkolla
came out-3\textsuperscript{rd} sg \textit{nga} school-the-nom
'He / She came out of school.'

  \item (b) Jam \textit{nga} Parisi-nom
am from Paris
'I am from Paris'
\end{enumerate}

- It is also used to mark the cause of some psychological state of affairs:

\begin{enumerate}
  \item (a) Dridhesha \textit{nga} të ftohtë
shiver-imp \textit{nga} coldness-neutral
'I shivered out of coldness.'

  \item (b) Qante \textit{nga} lumturia-nom
cry-imp \textit{nga} happiness
He / She was crying out of happiness.'
\end{enumerate}

- It shows some limitation:

\begin{enumerate}
  \item (a) E \textit{njoha} \textit{nga} zëri
acc-cl know-aor \textit{nga} voice-the-nom
'I recognized him by his voice'
\end{enumerate}
(b) I nga jante babait nga pamja
dat-cl resemble-3sg father-dat nga appearance-nom
'He / She resembled his father'

• It marks the whole out of which a part was separated:

(4)  
(a) Njëra nga vajzat mbaroi shkollën e lartë
one nga girls-the-nom graduate-aor school-the high-of
'One of the girls graduated from high school'

(b) Disa nga marinarët nuk zbritën në port
some nga marins-the-nom neg descend in port
'Some of the marines did not come down to the port'

• It marks the agent or the cause of an action in passive constructions:

(5)  
(a) Hekurudha u ndërtua nga / prej të rinjtë /-ve
railway-the nact build-aor nga youth-the-nom / abl.
'The railway was constructed by the young men'

(b) Dhoma ishte ndriçuar nga një dritë e fortë
room-the was lit nga one light-nom strong-gen
'The room was lit by a strong light'

• It also marks a time period:

(6)  
(a) Nga fundi i majit vjen një delegacion parlamentar
nga end-nom may-gen arrive-3sg one delegation parliamentary
'A parliamentary delegation will be coming by the end of may'

(b) Mund të shkoj në Itali nga vera
can-I subj go in Italy nga summer-nom.
'I can go to Italy by the summer'

• It shows comparison:

(7)  
Doli më i zoti nga unë
show-3sg more powerful nga I-nom.
'He turned out to be stronger than me'
• It is used as a distributive marker when it is attached to a numeral:

\[(8)\] (a) Donin tê pinin nga një gotë
\[\text{want-3pl subj drink-3pl DIST one glass}\]
'They wanted to drink a glass each'

(b) Hanin çdo ditë nga një bukë
\[\text{eat-3pl-imp every day DIST one bread}\]
'Everyday, they used to eat one bread each'

(c) Tri fitueset u shpërblyen me nga një bursë
\[\text{three-fem winners-fem. NACT award-aor with DIST one scholarship}\]
The three winners were awarded with one scholarship each'

**Conclusion:** There are two nga in Albanian: (a) preposition nga and (b) co-distributive marker nga

The preposition nga takes an NP complement in nominative case and can be interchangeable with the preposition prej 'from' which takes NP complements in ablative case. On the other hand, distributive nga takes an NP complement in accusative case and it can occur with another preposition, namely, me 'with' as in (8c). These indicate that nga in (8a-c) cannot be treated as a preposition.
2. The co-distributive marker *nga* in Albanian

The co-distributive marker *nga* shows similar properties to binominal *each* and reduplicated numerals in some languages or to the distributive marker *cîte* in Romanian. As is known, plain numerals usually give rise to cumulative and collective readings. However, in some cases they may allow distributive readings as well. Numerals with the morpheme *nga* can only give rise to distributive readings:

(9) (a) Fëmijët ndërtuan dy kështjella në rërë (cumulative / collective)

children-the build-aor two castles in sand

'The children built two sandy castles'

(b) Fëmijët ndërtuan nga dy kështjella në rërë (distributive only)

children-the build-aor DIST two castles in sand

'The children built two sandy castles each'

The sentence in (9a) means the children acted together such that only two sandy castles were built in total. The sentence in (9b) means each child acted individually such that each of the children built his own two sandy castles.

*nga* can only be attached to numerals that mark NPs in direct object position. There are some other cases where distributive marker *nga* can occur with NPs in subject position. Distributive marker *nga* cannot modify bare nouns (10a) or some other cardinality predicates as in (10b).

(10) (a) *Fëmijët ndërtuan nga kështjella në rërë

children-the build-aor DIST castle-BP in sand

*Intended:* 'The children build castles each'

(b) *Fëmijët ndërtuan nga shumë kështjella në rërë

children-the build DIST many castles in sand

*Intended:* 'The children built many sandy castles each'
2.1 Distribution of co-distributive marker *nga*

There are four types of constructions with *nga* that need to be treated separately:

*nga*+numeral+bare plural in direct object position
*nga*+numeral+bare plural in subject position
*nga*+numeral+bare plural as complements of the preposition *me* 'with'
*nga*+numeral+indefinite adverb *herë* 'time'

### 2.1.1 The possible licensors of nga-marked DPs in direct object position

- a plural DP in subject position
  
  (11) Ata ndezën nga një cigare
       they light-aor DIST one cigarette
       'They lit one cigarette each'

- a plural DP in indirect object position
  
  (12) Beni u dha fëmijëve nga një lule
       Ben-the cl-dat give-aor children-the-dat DIST one flower
       'Ben gave the children one flower each'

- a temporal PP can license nga-marked NPs
  
  (13) Beni lexon nga 30 faqe në ditë
       Ben-the read-pre DIST 30pages in day
       Intended: 'Everyday, Ben reads thirty pages.'

- a locative PP with an overt quantifier
  
  (14) Beni kërkonte nga një libër në secilin raft
       Ben-the look for-imp DIST one book in each shelf
       Intended: 'Ben looked for a different book in each shelf'
• Set quantification over time can license nga-marked NPs

(15) Çdo mëngjes, ajo lexon nga dhjetë vargje biblike 
every morning, she read-pre DIST ten verses biblical

Intended: Every morning, she reads ten different biblical verses.'

• Reduplicated adverbials can also license nga-marked NPs

(16) (a) Ai blenë mot për mot nga një kopsht. 
he buy-3sg year per year DIST one garden

'Year after year he buys a garden'

(b) Ai bën ditë për ditë nga një derë të re. 
he does day per day DIST one door new

'He constructs a new door day after day'

• Neither cyclic adverbs nor frequency adverbs can license nga-marked NPs:

(17) (a) *Ajo lexon nga një libër për Krishtlindje 
she reads DIST one book per Christmas

'She reads a book on every Christmas'

(b) *Ai lexon nga një libër të marteve 
he reads DIST one book tuesdays

'He reads a book on every Tuesday'

(c) *Ajo lexon shpeshherë / ndonjëherë / nga një libër 
she read often / sometimes DIST one book

Intended: 'She often / sometimes reads a different book.'

• Quantifier phrases can also license nga-marked NPs

(18) (a) Shumica e fëmijëve morën nga dy dhurata 
most children-gen receive-aor DIST two gifts

'Most of the children received two gifts each'

(b) Shumë fëmijë / prej fëmijëve morën nga dy dhurata 
many children / children-abl receive-aor DIST two gifts

Many children / of the children received two gifts each'
Some definite DPs headed by collective numerals can also license nga-marked NPs:

(19) (a) Të dymbëdhjetë djemtë morën nga një vajzë të bukur
dhë u kthyen në vendet e tyre.
'Very twelve boys got married to a beautiful woman each and returned to their places'

(b) Të katër fëmijët ndërtuan nga dy kështjella në rërë.
'Four children build two sand castles each'

2.1.2 Nga-marked NPs in subject position

In lack of direct objects, nga+numeral can mark the DP subject only when they are in the scope of the universal quantifier çdo 'every'. Thus quantification over space and time in (24a-b) enables nga to distribute the share over each set.

(20) (a) Në çdo zyrë punonin nga tre punëtorë.
In every office work-imp DIST three workers
'Three workers were working in every office'

(a') Nga tre punëtorë punonin në çdo zyrë.
DIST three workers work-imp in every office
'Three workers were working in every office.'
The example in (24c) is intended to show that the only objects can be dependent on subjects in Albanian. Thus, (24c') can never be felicitous in a distributive reading since subjects cannot be in the scope of objects.

2.1.3 Nga-marked NPs as complements of the preposition me 'with'

- Plural DP in direct object position with transitive verbs

(21) (a) Këtë vit i kemi përkrahur 100 fermerë me nga një.
   this year cl-dat have support-aor 100 farmers with DIST one
   tractor
   'This year we have supported a hundred farmers with one tractor each'

- Plural DPs in subject position with mediopassive verbs

(b) Ata duhet të shoqërohen secili me nga një dëshmitar
   they must subj accompany-mpass each with DIST one witness
   'They must be accompanied with one witness each'
Passive sentence with nga-marked NP

(c) Të dy këta lojtarë janë dënuar me nga një pagë

'Both of these players are punished with a salary each'

2.1.4 The licensors of nga+numeral+indefinite adverbial herë 'time'

Another interesting construction concerns the indefinite adverbial herë 'time' as in the following examples:

- a plural DP in direct object position

  (22) Ai i shiste shtëpitë nga dy herë
       he cl-dat sell-imp houses-the DIST two time
       'He used to sell each of the houses twice'

- a plural DP in subject position

  (23) Ata kërcyen nga tre herë.
       they jump DIST three time
       'They each jumped three times / thrice'

- a temporall PP can also be a licensor

  (24) Kjo kompani do të fluturojë nga dy herë në javë.
       this company will subj fly DIST two time in week
       'This company will be flying twice a week'

3. Distributive nga and Binominal each

We extend the comparison to binominal each. We compare their distributive keys:

(a) Studentët lexuan nga dy libra
    Students-the read DIST two books

(b) The students read two books each.
In (25a/b) the sorting keys for *nga* and binominal *each*, respectively, are the NPs in Subject positions whereas in (26a/b) the sorting keys occupy the indirect object position.

There are differences concerning the range of sorting keys in both languages.

The universal quantifier *çdo* 'every' quantifies over time and *nga* distributes the share over sets of time. The example in (27b) shows that *nga* can distribute the share over quantification over time by reduplicated adverbials. Following Zimmerman (2002), Champillon (2012) and Dotlacil (2012), Cable (2012) proposes that binominal each constructions must involve a null pronoun. I assume that in Albanian, *secili* 'each' can have the very same sorting keys as binominal *each* does.

The null pronoun in binominal *each* constructions is supposed to restrict the distribution of the share either over the NP in subject position or over the NP in indirect object position. The example in (28a) shows that *secili* 'each' imposes the distribution over the nominative NP in subject position. Similarly, (28b) shows that *secilit* 'each' carries the dative case and therefore the distribution of the share is imposed over the dative DP in indirect object position.
4. Semantic Incorporation in Albanian

The INs always receive narrow scope. Both sentences in (29) have the following interpretation: *as for cats, each child has seen five, and not: *as for cats, they are five such that each child has seen them.*

(29)  

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{(29)} & \quad \text{a} \quad \text{Katzen} & \text{hat} & \text{jedes} & \text{Kind} & \text{fünf} & \text{gesehen} \\
& \quad \text{cats} & \text{has} & \text{each} & \text{child} & \text{five} & \text{seen} \\
& \quad \text{'Every child has seen five cats'} & \text{(Van Geenhoven 1996:143)} \\
\text{b} & \quad \text{Fëmijët} & \text{kanë} & \text{parë} & \text{nga} & \text{pesë} & \text{mace}. \\
& \quad \text{children-the} & \text{have} & \text{seen} & \text{DIST} & \text{five} & \text{cats} \\
& \quad \text{'The children have seen five cats each'} \\
\end{align*} \]

Secondly, Van Geenhoven (1996) shows that no partitive reading is available with INs. Partitive readings are also impossible with *nga*-marked NPs in Albanian:

(30)  

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{(30)} & \quad \text{a} \quad \text{Ata} & \text{do} & \text{hanë} & \text{nga} & \text{dy} & \text{vezë} \\
& \quad \text{they} & \text{will} & \text{eat} & \text{DIST} & \text{two} & \text{eggs} \\
& \quad \text{'They will eat two eggs each'} \\
\text{b} & \quad \text{*Ata} & \text{do} & \text{hanë} & \text{nga} & \text{dy} & \text{prej} & \text{gjashtë} & \text{vezëve} \\
& \quad \text{they} & \text{will} & \text{eat} & \text{DIST} & \text{two} & \text{out of six} & \text{eggs} \\
& \quad \text{'They will each eat two out of six eggs.'}
\end{align*} \]

Third, as Van Geenhoven (1996) shows, INs cannot be used as anaphoric expressions in West Greenlandic. *Nga*-marked NPs can be used as anaphoric expressions only in the case of ellipsis. The N of the phrase *nga+numeral+N* has to be elided. In this case, *secili* 'each' which marks the subject,
shows morphological agreement with the verb and can never be elided.

(31) a Higuain dhe Ronaldo shënuan katër gola, nga dy secili.
Higuain and Ronaldo mark-aor four goals DIST two each

'Higuain and Ronaldo marked four goals, two goals each.'

In (31a) above, the antecedent *gola 'goals' is a bare plural. Not only is the bare plural *goals elided but also the verb *shënuan 'marked'. Indeed the elliptical construction is V+N unit. For sake of clarification, I will treat the elliptical construction separately in the primed examples below:

a' nga dy gola shënoi secili
dist two goals mark-aor-3sg each

'each marked two goals'

b secili shënoi nga dy gola
each mark-aor-3sg dist two goals

'each marked two goals'

b' *nga dy gola secili shënoi
dist two goals each mark-aor-3sg

'each marked two goals'

b'' *secili nga dy gola shënoi
each dist two goals mark-aor-3sg

There are two arguments in favor of incorporation with respected to the example in (?):

(a) The ellipted material includes the V+N as a syntactic unit. As Mithun (1984) argues incorporation involves a V and a N that are combined to form an intransitive predicate denoting a unitary concept.

(b) The ungrammaticality of sentences in (b') and (b'') shows that you cannot insert the agent *secili 'each' between the V and the *nga-Ns. Neither can you move the *nga-N to a preverbal position as in (b'').

12
Van Geenhoven (1996) has also shown that incorporated nouns can occur in existential constructions. *Nga*-marked NPs can also occur in existential constructions. The example in (32a-b) shows that nga-marked NPs in existential constructions are licensed by the universal quantifier çdo 'every'.

\[(32)\]
\[\begin{align*}
a & \quad \text{Në çdo dhomë kishte nga dy photografi} \\
& \quad \text{in every room there-were DIST two photos} \\
& \quad \text{'There were two (different) photos in each room'} \\
\end{align*}\]

\[\text{b} \quad *\text{Në dhomë kishte nga dy fotografi} \\
\quad \text{in room there-were DIST two photos} \\
\quad \text{'There were two (different) photos in the room.'}\]

Mathieu (2004b) argues that a number of languages contain a construction in which a V and its direct object are simply juxtaposed to form an especially tight bond. In Albanian, the V and N remain separate phonologically and morphologically, but the N loses its syntactic status as an argument of the sentence, and the V * nga*-NP unit functions as an intransitive predicate. Evidence for this comes from the impossibility of clitic-doubling and passivization of sentences with * nga*-marked NPs in direct object position.

\[(33)\]
\[\begin{align*}
a & \quad \text{Fëmijët sollën nga dy dhurata} \\
& \quad \text{children-the bring-aor DIST two gifts} \\
& \quad \text{'The children brought two gifts each.'} \\
\end{align*}\]

\[\text{b} \quad *\text{Fëmijët i sollën nga dy dhurata} \\
\quad \text{children-the cl-acc bring-aor DIST two gifts} \\
\quad \text{'Children brought two gifts each'}\]

\[\text{c} \quad *\text{Nga dy dhurata u sollën prej fëmijëve} \\
\quad \text{DIST two gifts NACT bring-aor from children-abl}\]
'Two gifts were brought by each of the children.'

Psychological predicates can take nga-NP complements

(34) \[ \text{Fëmijët urrejnë nga dy mësues} \]
children-the hate-3pl DIST two teachers

'The children hate two teachers each'

Nga-marked NPs can be modified

(35) \[ \text{Ata morën nga një vashë të bukur} \]
they took DIST one girl beautiful

'They each got married to a beautiful woman'

Nga-marked NPs are not discourse opaque

(36) \[ \text{Ata morën nga një vashë të bukur.} \]
they-masc took DIST one girl beautiful

\[ \text{Ato vinin nga i njëjti qytet.} \]
they-fem come from same city

'They each got married to a beautiful woman. They (women) came from the same city'

• A short comparison with *combien* constructions in French

(37) (a) \[ \text{Combien as-tu lu de livres?} \]
have many have-you read of books

'How many books have you read?'

(b) \[ \text{Nga sa libra lexuan ata} \]
DIST how many books read-aor-3pl they

'How many books have they read?'

(37a-b) show that the noun has to adjacent to the verb. The nga-marked NP has moved to the left
periphery and the subject to the right periphery. Adjacency has been taken as another argument in favour of incorporation.

5. Conclusion:

- There are two nga in Albanian: (a) preposition nga and (b) co-distributive marker nga
- Contrary to binominal each, nga marks only the share, thus being less constraint than each
- Nga-marked NPs show similarities to split-topics in German and French
- Ellipsis with nga-marked NPs, lack of passivization and the impossibility of clitic-doubling seem to point in the direction of Semantic Incorporation.

References


