Separating Syntactic and Semantic Scope:
An Argument from Distributive Pluractionality and Dependent Numerals
Robert Henderson ~ rmh@ucsc.edu

This talk investigates the interaction between the distributive dependencies introduced by the pluractional morphology in (1-b), and reduplicated numerals like (2), which seem to require that they covary under an operator.

(1)  
  a. X-e’-in-q’etej  ri  ak’wal-a’.  
      CP-A3p-E1s-hug the child-PL  
      I hugged the children.
  b. X-e’-in-q’ete-la’  ri  ak’wal-a’.  
      CP-A3p-E1s-hug-PDIST the child-PL  
      I hugged the children individually.

(2)  
      always  CP-E1s-touch three.three tortilla  
      I always touch three tortillas (only narrow scope for three).
      CP-E1s-touch three.three tortilla  
      I touched groups of three tortillas.

The puzzle is that while plain numerals cannot covary with respect to the distributive dependencies introduced by the pluractionality operator (3), reduplicated numerals are licensed (4).

(3)  
    X-in-chap-ala’  oxi’  wäy.  
    CP-A1s-touch-PDIST three tortilla  
    I touched three tortillas individually repeatedly.
    Crucially, there can be no more than three tortillas.

(4)  
    X-in-chap-ala’ oxox  wäy.  
    CP-A1s-touch-PDIST three.three tortilla  
    I touched groups of three tortillas individually.
    Crucially, there are many groups of three tortillas.

We propose that pluractional distributive dependencies are not created by a standard distributive quantifier over events, but by structuring a theta-role function so that atomic events have only atomic participants. Then, if reduplicated numerals denote sets of groups of a certain cardinality and contribute a condition that each atomic group be determined relative to an event, the scopeless pluractional distributivity will license dependent numerals along with more familiar quantifiers. The important result is that reduplicated numerals are an example of a linguistic expression sensitive to semantic dependencies not necessarily generated by an operator taking wide syntactic scope. The conclusion is that we need to slightly separate syntactic and semantic notions of scope.