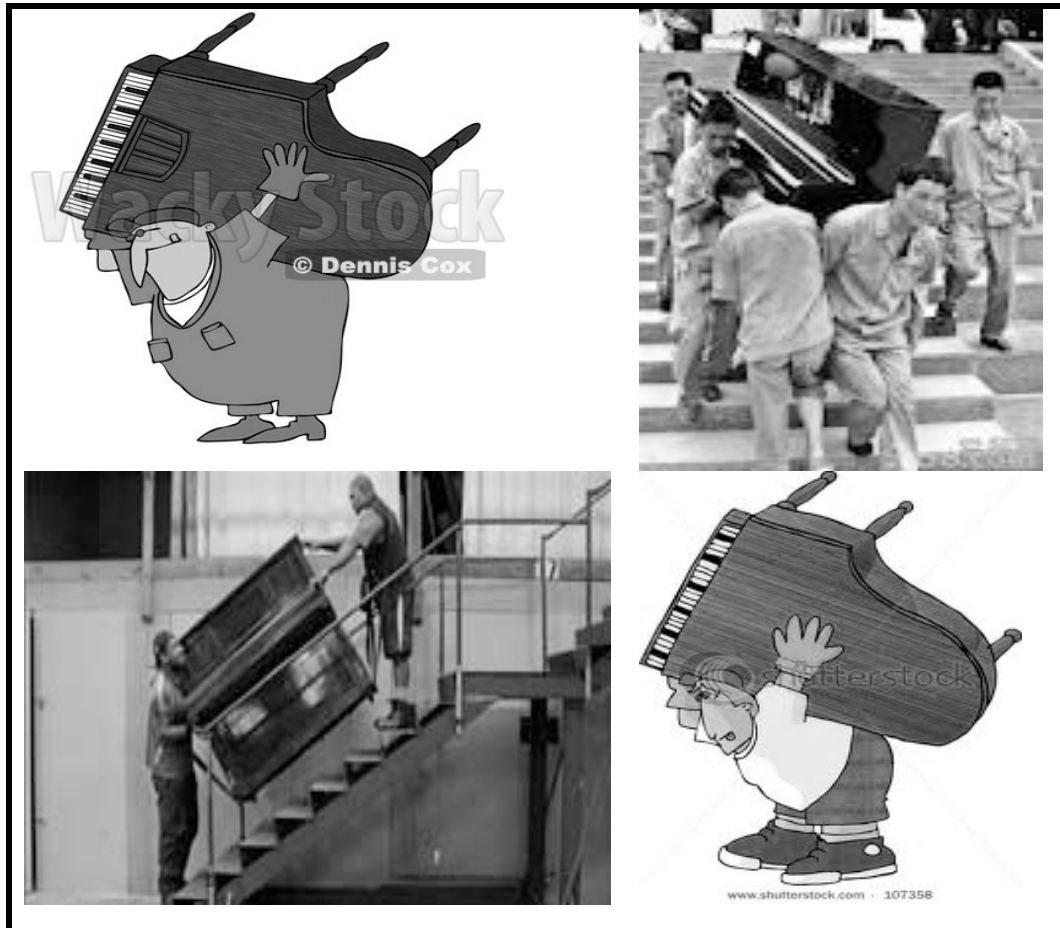


# Distributivity, Pluractionality, and Reciprocity Across Languages

## Topics in Semantics: Syllabus



Linguistics 753  
Tuesday, Thursday 11:15 – 12:45  
Room: Herter 214  
Course Instructor: Seth Cable

Course Website:  
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### 1. General Overview

This seminar will explore the syntax and semantics of three interrelated phenomena across languages: distributive marking, pluractionality, and reciprocal constructions. Besides investigating these three phenomena separately, we will also examine constructions that appear to lie at their intersections, such as adnominal pluractional operators, distributive numerals, and pluractional adverbs. Enrolled students will be required to make two in-class presentations and to write a final paper.

## 2. Overview of Topics

In English, unmarked sentences like (1b) can – with much contextual support – receive a ‘distributive reading’, whereby they are true in scenarios like (1a). However, while unmarked predicates can be understood ‘distributively’, speakers generally prefer to overtly mark distributive predication, either through marking the subject of predication (1c), marking the predicate (1d), marking an argument internal to the predicate (1e), or a complex adverbial (1f).

- (1) a. *Scenario:* Dave caught three fish. Frank also caught three (other) fish.  
 b. Two boys caught three fish.  
 c. **Each** of (the) two boys caught three fish.  
 d. Two boys **each** caught three fish.  
 e. Two boys caught three fish **each**.  
 f. Two boys caught fish **in threes**.

While English can (to varying degrees) express distributive predication in each of these ways, languages differ as to which of these strategies are possible or preferred. Furthermore, in many languages, the expression of distributivity overlaps with the more general category of ‘pluractionality’, or ‘event plurality’. In the Tlingit language, for example, the sentence in (2a) could describe the scenario in (1a), but could also describe the ‘pluractional’ scenario in (2b).

- (2) a. A kaa yátx’i **nás’gigáa** xáat has aawashaat.  
 my male children **three.DIST** fish they.caught  
 (i) *My sons each caught three fish.* (ii) *My sons caught three fish each time.*
- b. *Scenario:*  
 My two sons Dave and Frank went fishing several times last week. Each time, they (together) caught a total of three fish.

Similarly, in Kaqchikel (Mayan), the unmarked sentence in (3a) can receive either a ‘collective’ (3ai) or a ‘distributive’ reading (3aii). To overtly mark the distributive reading, speakers do not employ any of the strategies in (1c-f), but instead add a certain suffix to the verb (3b). As shown in (3c), this suffix otherwise functions as a marker of pluractionality.

- (3) a. X-e’-in-q’etej ri ak’wala’.  
 PERF-3plO-1sS-hug the children  
 (i) *I hugged the children (all at the same time)*  
 (ii) *I hugged each of the children (individually)* (Henderson 2011: 221)
- b. X-e’-in-q’ete-**la’** ri ak’wala’.  
 PERF-3plO-1sS-hug-**PLURAC** the children  
*I hugged each of the children (individually)* (Henderson 2011: 221)
- c. X-in-kan-**ala’** jun wuj  
 PERF-1sS-search-**PLURAC** a book  
*I looked for a book (several times).* (Henderson 2011: 219)

This special relationship between distributivity and pluractionality also reveals itself in the form and meaning of reciprocal constructions. In languages like English, reciprocal constructions seem to incorporate a distributive marker overtly (3a). In many other languages, however, reciprocal marking seems to incorporate a more general marker of pluractionality. In the Cuzco Quechua reciprocal construction below, the verb is marked with the suffix *na*, which is more generally a pluractional marker in the language (Faller 2007).

- (3) a. The boys saw **each** other.
- b. Hayt'a-**na**-ku-n-ku  
kick-**PLURAC**-REFL-3-PL  
*They kick each other* (Faller 2007).

This seminar will explore and ultimately clarify the underlying semantic relationships between distributivity, pluractionality and reciprocity. Through readings of recent cross-linguistic semantic and syntactic research on these phenomena, we will explore such questions as:

- What, exactly, are the structures and meanings of the various distributive-marking strategies in (1), and how do they relate to one another?
- What role does pluractional marking play in the expression of distributivity across languages, and are there underlying correlates in the distributive constructions of languages like English?
- What, exactly, are the structures and meanings of so-called 'distributive numerals' such as the Tlingit numeral *nás'gigáa* 'three.DIST' in (2a), and how do they relate to (i) pluractional adverbials such as English *in threes*, and (ii) so-called 'binominal each' in English sentences like (1e).
- What, exactly, is the syntax and semantics of reciprocal constructions in languages like English? What role does pluractional marking play in the expression of reciprocity in languages like Quechua? Are these two 'strategies' entirely distinct from one another, or is there a deeper unity underlying their surface differences?

Along the way, we will also explore various related issues, such as the semantics of English *all* and *each*, the semantics of Mandarin *dou*, the coercion of achievements into 'repetitive' activities, the nature of 'binominal *each*' in English, the nature of pluractional adverbs like *piece by piece*, the existence of adnominal pluractional markers such as 'the **occasional** soldier', and the typology of reciprocal constructions.

**Note:** Students who are interested in auditing the seminar are strongly encouraged to officially register as auditors. This will provide the registrar's office with an accurate indication of the expected size of (and interest in) the class.

### 3. Outline of Topics and Papers by Approximate Date (Extremely Tentative)

- Jan. 24      Syllabus and Background Discussion  
                 Kratzer 2008 (“On the Plurality of Verbs”)
- Unit 1:      “All” and Related Stuff
- Jan. 26      Brisson 2003 (“Plurals, *All* and the Nonuniformity of Collective Precication”)
- Jan. 31      Lin 1998 (“Distributivity in Chinese and its Implications”)  
                 Chen 2005 (“*Dou* (Dis)harmony in Chinese”)
- Unit 2:      Pluractionality
- Feb. 2      Lasersohn 1995 (“Pluractional Markers”)
- Feb. 7      van Geenhoven 2004 (“*For*-Adverbials, Frequentive Aspect, and Pluractionality”)
- Feb. 9      Yu 2003 (“Pluractionality in Chechen”)  
                 Haji-Abdolhosseini *et al.* 2002 (“Number and Events: Verbal Reduplication in  
                 Niuean”)  
                 Thompson 2009 (“On Verbal Number in Upriver Halkomelem”)
- Unit 3:      Adnominal Pluractional Markers
- Feb. 16      Krifka 1990 (“Four Thousand Ships Passed Through the Lock”)  
                 Barker 1999 (“Individuation and Quantification”) [30:4]  
                 Doetjes & Honcoop 1997 (“The Semantics of Event-Related Readings”)
- Feb. 21      Zimmermann 2003 (“Pluractionality and Complex Quantifier Formation”)
- Unit 4:      Distributive Numerals
- Feb. 23      Gil 1982 (“Distributive Numerals”)
- Feb. 28      Oh 2005 (“Plurality Markers Across Languages”)
- Mar. 1      Balusu 2006 (“Distributive Reduplication in Telugu”)  
                 Matthewson 2000 (“On Distributivity and Pluractionality”)  
                 Müller & Negrão 2009 (“On Distributivity in Karitiana”)
- Mar. 6      Farkas 1997 (“Dependent Indefinites”)
- Mar. 8      Zimmermann 2002 (“Boys Buying Two Sausages *Each*”)
- Mar. 13      Henderson 2011 (“Pluractional Distributivity and Dependence”)

Unit 5: Pluractional Adverbs

Mar. 15 Beck & von Stechow 2007 (“Pluractional Adverbials”)

Mar. 27 Beck 2010 (“Pluractional Comparisons”)

Mar. 29 Distributive Numerals in Tlingit

Unit 6: Reciprocals and Pluractionality

Apr. 3 Heim et al. 1991 (“Reciprocity and Plurality”)

Apr. 5 Dalrymple *et al.* 1998 (“Reciprocal Expressions and the Concept of Reciprocity”)

Apr. 10 Beck 2001 (“Reciprocals are Definites”)

Apr. 12 Dalrymple *et al.* 1994 (“Semantic Similarities and Syntactic Contrasts between  
Chichewa and English Reciprocals”)  
Evans 2008 (“Reciprocal Constructions: Towards a Structural Typology”)

Apr. 19 Davies 2000 (“Events in Madurese Reciprocals”)  
Faller 2007 (“The Ingredients of Reciprocity in Cuzco Quechua”)  
Keenan & Razafimamonjy 2004 (“Reciprocals in Malagasy”)

Apr. 24 Nishigauchi 1992 (“Syntax of Reciprocals in Japanese”)

#### 4. Course Requirements

Students will be required to write a final paper for the course. The general topic of the final paper should be declared to me by March 29<sup>th</sup>. The paper itself will be due on May 11<sup>th</sup>.

In addition to this, students will be required to make two presentations in class. The first, which will take place some time after February 23<sup>rd</sup>, will discuss a major reading (or a collection of smaller readings); students should declare their choice of paper(s) by February 9<sup>th</sup>. The second presentation will take place on either April 26<sup>th</sup> or May 1<sup>st</sup>, and will present the student’s research for their final paper.

#### 5. Various Dates of Interest

Feb. 9 Paper for first presentation must be declared

**Feb. 23 First student presentations begin**

Mar. 17 – Mar. 25 Spring Break

**Mar. 29 Topic for final paper must be declared**

Mar. 17 NO CLASS (Monday Schedule)

**Mar. 26, May 1 Final presentations**

**May 11 Final Papers Due**

May 15 Final Grades Due