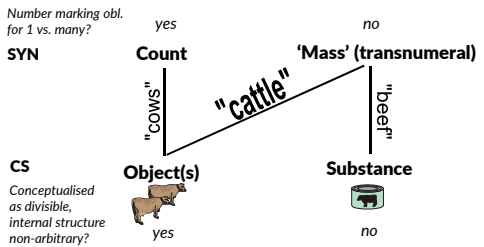


A cross-linguistic mass default for object-denoting nouns?

Findings from a multilingual Berlin market

Heike Wiese

Correlation of morphosyntactic and conceptual distinctions



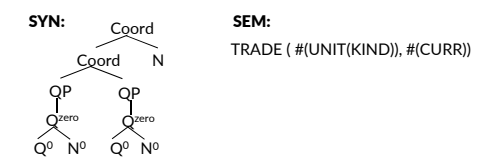
Morphosyntactic 'mass' vs. 'count' distinctions do not primarily hold at the level of languages, but of nouns or noun classes. 'Mass' nouns can refer to objects as well as substances.

A cross-linguistic blueprint: Patterns at a Berlin street market

PROD-KIND	PRICE #(CURRENCY)	< > PROD-QUANT #(UNIT)	PROD-KIND
	1 Euro	(1) Stück	
	5 Stück	23 Euro	
Brokkoli	2 Stück	1,50	
	2 Stück	1,50	Brokkoli
Mango	Schale	1 (Euro)	
	Kiste	3 (Euro)	Mango
	2 Schale	3 (Euro)	Cherimoya

- main order variable (coordination pattern)
- "1", "Euro" optional
- slots are open for elements from different languages

transnumeral 'mass' behavior of KIND expression with UNIT as classifier



Implications

Cross-linguistic primacy of transnumeral behaviour

Denotations of object-denoting nouns are similar across 'mass' and 'count' (and thus also across languages), making them open for variation and change.

Cross-linguistic and contact-linguistic evidence suggests that

Transnumeral ('mass') behaviour is the default for nouns denoting countable objects



Object-denoting 'mass' nouns are available cross-linguistically

- regular option in 'classifier languages' (e.g., Mandarin; but also Persian, Turkish, ...)
- additional option in non-classifier languages with dominantly count nouns (English, German, ...)

Object-denoting 'mass' nouns are available in synchronic and diachronic variation

- Old Persian → Modern Persian
- Standard German – Bavarian German

Sarah kauft Gemüse.
Sarah buys vegetable
Sarah kauft 3 Gmias.
Sarah buys a vegetable

} 'Sarah buys (some) vegetables.'



The Maybachufer market in Berlin

- highly multilingual practices
- majority language German, heritage languages Turkish, Arabic, Kurdish, ... international language English
- tourists' languages Spanish, Hebrew, ...

→ 'Multilingual Mixed Market Jargon'

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