
Morphosemantic mismatch with plural (on the basis of German)

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Plural marking of singular nouns like *Kartoffel-n* ‘potatoe-*s*’ has been argued to indicate their **countability**: the plural denotes the set of sums of atoms (Link 1983). Atoms in the denotation of count plurals are accessible to individuating quantifiers and numerals (*einzelne* / *zwei Kartoffel-n* ‘individual / two potatoes’). This paper focuses on a non-canonical use of the plural, a **non-countable plural**, which can be identified in measuring constructions such as *a kilo of*, which are typical for mass nouns such as *Butter* ‘butter’ (*ein Kilo Butter*). Interestingly, pluralized singular nouns such as *Kartoffeln* ‘potatoes’ can occur in such constructions (*ein Kilo Kartoffeln*) and receive **mass semantics** (Rothstein 2011): in this case, the plural is interpreted as a quantity of non-individuated objects that occur together in a great proximity in one space. This differs from the interpretation of the count plural as a sum of fully individuated atoms which may be scattered over different spaces. The non-countable plural thus shows a **form-meaning mismatch**.

It can be shown that the non-countable plural can occur in other typical “mass” contexts such as (i) classifier constructions (*drei Stück {Obst / Zwiebeln}*) ‘three fruits / onions’, and (ii) combinations with mass quantifiers such as uninflected *viel* ‘much’, *wenig* ‘a little’ and *etwas* ‘some’. Crucially, the interpretation of plural in such contexts differs from the ordinary count plural, e.g., the distributive anaphor *einen nach dem anderen* ‘one by one’, which requires strong access to units in the plurality (de Vries 2020), is less acceptable in such combinations.

I will account for the difference between the countable and non-countable plural in a fine-grained nominal structure in (1), assuming that the count plural, as an individuated plurality, realizes the plural feature in Num^o after division / individuation has taken place in Div^o (Mathieu 2014). I will analyze non-countable plural as a conceptual, but grammatically non-individuated plurality. Speaking in mereo-topological terms (Grimm 2012, Wągiel 2018), it denotes a **cluster** as a structured configuration of atoms that occupy the same region of space. This clustered plural can be analyzed as an exponent of little n^o, similarly to other idiosyncratic types of plurals (Acquaviva 2019, Alexiadou 2011, Dali & Mathieu 2021, Mathieu 2014).

(1) [NumP [Num' Num^o [DivP [Div' Div^o [nP [n' n^o [√ [√]]]]]]]]]

References: • Acquaviva, P. (2008). *Lexical plurals*. • Alexiadou, A. (2011). *Plural mass nouns and the morpho-syntax of number*. • Dali, M. & É. Mathieu (2021). *A theory of distributed number*. • Grimm, S. (2012). *Number and individuation*. PhD thesis • Wągiel, M. 2018. *Subatomic Quantification*. PhD thesis.