# Lexicalization processes of nouns in Romance languages – the case of mass superordinates

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Mass superordinates such as *clothing*, *clothes* and *furniture* can be regularly observed in languages with an obligatory singular/plural distinction. These nouns tend to appear above the so-called basic level (see Rosch et al. 1976 for the cognitive criteria) and they show peculiar semantic properties – while in many respects they have typical mass noun characteristics, they refer to discrete individuals (see Chierchia 2010). Furthermore these nouns often have pluralia-tantum variants (see Alexiadou 2011) as well as count equivalents – both within one linguistic system as well as cross-linguistically (see Mihatsch 2007 for French and Spanish compared with other Romance as well as Germanic languages, see Kleiber 2014 for French):

> "What makes fake mass nouns interesting is that they constitute a fairly recurrent type of non canonical mass nouns, and yet they are subject to micro-variation among closely related languages." (Chierchia 2010: 110f.)

In my talk I will analyse these variants – mass superordinates, plural mass nouns on superordinate level as well as count superordinates – and I will argue that in most cases the apparently unsystematic synchronic variants arise from partly unidirectional diachronic changes which form regular patterns. I will describe the semantic and morphosyntactic properties of these categories and I will show plausible points of transition between the distinct types. In particular I will demonstrate that most superordinates derive from result nominals which in turn may become (count) collective nouns, some of which become mass superordinates. Some of these mass superordinates can further evolve into count superordinates via an intermediate step as pluralia-tantum nouns.

The analysis will be based on the empirical results of my own studies, lexicographical data, recent synchronic analyses and the discussion of diagnostic contexts of Romance and Germanic nouns.

Since the observed changes involve a loss of context-dependent (often stage-level) semantic information and an increase in individual-level properties the discussed path of change seems to be a good example for a lexicalization process. However, I will also show that the resulting count superordinates remain rather instable plural-dominant nouns on the borderline between inflectional and lexical plural (cf. Acquaviva 2008).

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