

Title: Underspecification and the mass count distinction
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The paper presents an analysis of the mass count distinction in terms of underspecification. It will also discuss how this approach differs from others. However, in view of the brief time allotted, only two alternative analyses, which are similar to the analysis presented here, will be discussed, namely the one found in Pelletier (2012) and another in Rothstein (2017). (For discussion of other approaches, including that of Link (1983), Krifka (1992) and Chierchia (1996, 1998, 2010), see Gillon (2012) and Rothstein (2017 ch. 4).)

The analysis presented here holds that count nouns are specified for an atomic denotation, but that mass nouns are unspecified as to whether or not their denotations are atomic. Thus, on the one hand, one's specific lexical knowledge of a mass noun such as *furniture* guarantees that one knows its denotation to be atomic; otherwise, how is it that when we count furniture to effect comparisons involving such things. On the other hand, one's specific lexical knowledge of *water* leaves it open; otherwise, how could one possibly debate in a language with mass nouns whether or not their denotation is that of continuous matter, as held by Aristotle, or is that of atoms, as held by Democritus.

The essence of the treatment presented is that English mass and count noun phrases differ only minimally grammatically. The basis for the difference is ascribed to a difference in the features $\pm\text{CT}$, which serve the morpho-syntactic function of determining the available options for the assignment of grammatical number, itself restricting the occurrence of the features $\pm\text{PL}$. $+\text{CT}$ places no restriction on the available options, while $-\text{CT}$, in the unmarked case, restricts the available options to $-\text{PL}$. They also serve the semantic function of determining the sort of denotation which can be associated with demonstrative noun phrases and quantified noun phrases. The feature $-\text{CT}$ requires that the associated denotation be the set whose sole member is the sum of which the noun phrase (in the case of demonstrative NPs), or noun (in the case of quantified NPs), is true; while the feature $+\text{CT}$ requires that the associated denotation be the set whose members are all and only

those atoms of which the noun phrase (in the case of DNPs), or noun (in the case of QNPs), is true. At the same time, neither mass NPs nor count NPs which are arguments of a predicate have their predicate evaluated with respect to their denotations. Rather the predicate is evaluated with respect to a set of sums constructed from the denotation of the noun phrase which is an argument of the predicate.

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