

Plurality

Instructor: **Kurt Erbach**
Time: Friday, 14:30 - 16:00
Place: Building , Room

Office: Building 23.32, Room 02.22
Office hours: Friday, 9:00 – 12:00, 16:00 – 17:00; or by appointment
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the grammatical and semantic phenomena tied to plurality. Plurality is an integral component of countability, which is a cross-categorical notion that is indirectly reflected in the syntax and semantics of various expressions of quantity and number. In English, for instance, count, but not mass, nouns, are straightforwardly used in count cardinal constructions with numbers and plural morphology: *three apples* vs. *#three rice(s)*. However, given sufficient context, these constructions are sometimes felicitous with mass nouns; *Penny-Markt carries three rices, basmati, Milchreis, and parboild*. Other examples of plural mass nouns are more difficult to account for—e.g. *A handful of other hardy souls brave the knife-cold waters of the Gulf of Alaska to snorkel*. Our main focus in this class is the role that plurality plays in the mass/count distinction such as with semantic shifts, and also collective & distributive predication. This course will introduce participants to the body of work that model plurality and its peripheral notions. We will review classic analyses like mereology/lattice theory, as well as recent analyses relying on mereotopology, vagueness, gradience, overlap, context-sensitivity, that have all begun to emerge as recurrent themes in countability research across domains. This course seeks to complement *Zählen und Messen* taught by Frau. Dr. Hana Filip (Do. 14:30).

Note: The class will be conducted in English (see below “LANGUAGE”).

LEARNING GOALS

- Understand theoretical and empirical methods of linguistic analysis
- Develop skills in reading primary scientific research literature
- Develop skills in scientific writing
- Develop skills in academic discourse

PREREQUISITES

Introduction to Semantics & Pragmatics, Syntax & Morphology, Logic.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS (*Beteiligungsnachweis and Abschlussprüfung*)

Active Participation (BN) will be based on write-ups of assigned readings. You must turn in 10 “satisfactory” write-ups (✓+, ✓, or ✓-). The feedback on your write-ups will be: “✓+” (exceptional), “✓” (good work) and “✓-” (do better next time, just about squeezing through), and “unsatisfactory”. Attendance is not required.

Write-ups (in English or German). Each assigned reading (see the **COURSE SYLLABUS** below) should be read before the class when it will be discussed. To this goal, you will receive it by email one week before the paper is to be discussed. For each class you will also prepare a short write-up (1-2 pages) of the paper to be discussed. Write-ups should include either (i) answers to the questions given at the end of the previous lecture, or (ii) a discussion of questions that arose while reading and your independent research attempting to answer these questions. The write-ups should be submitted in class or by email by 10:30 on the day the paper is discussed. Late write-ups will not be accepted.

Abschlussprüfung (AP): In order to qualify for the AP in this class, you must meet the Active Participation requirements and write a final paper at the end of the term (more instructions provided towards the end of the term).

You are highly encouraged to apply for the AP since most of the work that you do for the BN will count towards the AP. You can apply for the AP using the appropriate form for your course of study. The forms are available in the linguistics department office, and you can turn in your completed form there.

LANGUAGE

The lecturing will be in English, because nearly all the relevant research is published in English. **You will NOT be penalized for any mistakes having to do with English grammar; you will be graded purely on content.**

COMMON COURTESY

Turn off cellular phones and other electronic devices during class, do not send and receive text messages during class. You may use a laptop or tablet to take notes.

COURSE SYLLABUS

(subject to change)

- Week 1: April 21**
Introduction
- Week 2: April 28**
Pelletier 1975
- Week 3: May 5**
Link 1983
- Week 4: May 12**
Tsoulas 2006
- Week 5:** May 17, George Tsoulas at SemPrE, 12:30 in 23.32.02.63
May 19
Gillon 1987
- Week 6: May 26 (No class the day before)**
Schwarzschild 1996, chapters 1. 3. 8
- Week 7: June 2**
Landman 2000
- Week 8: June 9**
Sharifan & Lofti 2003
- Week 9: June 16 (No class the day before)**
Yi 2005
- Week 10: June 23**
Yi 2006
- Week 11: June 30**
Oliver & Smiley 2006
- Week 12: July 7**
Alexiadou 2011
- Week 13: July 14**
Moltmann 2016
- Week 14: July 21 (ESSLI)**
TBD
- Week 15: July 28**
Sutton & Filip 2017
Guest lecture, Herr. Dr. Peter Sutton

REFERENCES

- [Alexiadou, A. \(2011\). Plural mass nouns and the morpho-syntax of number. In Proceedings of the 28th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics \(pp. 33-41\). Somerville, MA: Cascadia Proceedings Project.](#)
- [Gillon, B. \(1987\). 'The Readings of Plural Noun Phrases in English'. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 10, 199-219.](#)
- Landman, F. (2000). "Scha's Theory of Plurality". Events and Plurality. Kluwer: Deventer.
- Link, G. (1983). The logical analysis of plurals and mass terms. Meaning, Use, and Interpretation of Language. de Gruyter.
- Moltmann, F. (2016). Plural Reference and Reference to a Plurality. Linguistic Facts and Semantic Analyses. In Carrara, M., Moltmann, F., & Arapinis, A. (Eds). Unity and Plurality: Logic, Philosophy, and Linguistics. Oxford University Press.
- Oliver, A. / T. Smiley (2006). 'A Modest Logic of Plurals'. *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 35, 317-348
- Pelletier, F. J. (1975). Non-singular reference: some preliminaries. In Mass terms: Some philosophical problems (pp. 1-14). Springer Netherlands.
- [Schwarzschild, R. \(1996\). *Pluralities*. Kluwer, Dordrecht.](#)
- Sharifan, F. & Ahmad R. L. (2003). "Rices" and "waters". The mass-count distinction in Modern Persian. *Anthropological Linguistics* 45: 226-244.
- Sutton, P. & Filip, H. (2017). Mass-to-count coercion in 'granular' nouns. Coercion Across Linguistic Fields Workshop. 39th Annual Conference on the German Linguistic Society. Saarbrücken, Germany.
- Tsoulas, G. (2006). Plurality of mass nouns and the grammar of number. *Generative Linguistics in the Old World*.
- Yi, B.-Y. (2005). 'The Logic and Meaning of Plurals. Part I'. *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 34, 459-506.
- Yi, B.-Y. (2006). 'The Logic and Meaning of Plurals. Part II'. *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 35, 239-288.