

Title: Universal Mass/Count structures and their consequences for number marking.

Abstract. DP structure, number marking, and the morphosyntax of the mass/count distinction appears to be subject to a great deal of variation. Language systems like English with clear evidence of two classes of nouns, those that allow direct combination with numerals and those that don't, are by now fairly well combed through. As are languages that *disallow* direct combinations of numerals with *any* noun, namely generalized classifier languages (Mandarin, Japanese, etc.). Finally, there are languages that *do allow* free combination of numerals with *any* N, whether conceptually mass or count, like Nez Perce, Yudja, Indonesian, ... which have also been well documented at this point. This variation has given rise to theories of the mass/count contrast where the link between the pre-linguistic/cognitive basis of the distinction and its grammatical manifestations is weakened to the point of disappearance: basically any 'concept' can have a mass or a count grammatical representation (cf. e.g. Chierchia 1998, Borer 2005, Rothstein 2010, Landman 2011, a.o.). I am going to argue that this relativistic position is not supported by the available evidence: All of the languages mentioned above retain essentially the *same* notion of countability. I will, accordingly, propose an approach consistent with the thesis that the mass/count contrast rests on an underlyingly universal structure with an invariant link to the pre-linguistic notion of '(Spelke-)object' vs. 'substance'. To use one of Chomsky's favorite metaphors, if Martians were exposed to Italian, Mandarin and Yudja, they would conclude that speakers of all these languages count things the same way, modulo minor phonological differences.