

Semantics for Counting and Measuring

The use of numerals in counting differs quite dramatically across languages. Some languages grammaticalize a contrast between count nouns (*three cats*; *three books*) and ‘non-count’ or mass nouns (*milk*; *mud*), marking this distinction in different ways. Others use a system of numeral classifiers, while yet others use a combination of both. This book draws attention to the contrast between counting and measuring, and shows that it is central to our understanding of how we use numerical expressions, classifiers and count nouns in different languages. It reviews some of the more recent major linguistic results in the semantics of numerals, counting and measuring and theories of the mass/count distinction, and presents the author’s new research on the topic. The book draws heavily on crosslinguistic research, and presents in-depth case studies of the mass/count distinction and counting and measuring in a number of typologically unrelated languages. It also includes chapters on classifier constructions and on adjectival uses of measure phrases.

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A quantity therefore is called a multitude if it is countable
and it is called a magnitude if it is measurable.

Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 13.1020a10

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Acknowledgements

This book explores the interplay between theoretical and crosslinguistic semantics. I first thought of writing this book in 2010, but of course the work that made it possible to think up the project had started long before that.

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Linguistics Workshop in Curitiba in 2008, which is where I first met Roberta. In 2012, Angelika Kratzer suggested that I invite Suzi Lima to give a colloquium in Israel, so that she and I could talk about Yudja, and we have been talking ever since. Vladimir Borshev, Hana Filip and Barbara Partee found ways to come regularly to Israel and take part in the (no-budget) annual workshops that I have organized since 2010 at Bar-Ilan, where they, my students, my Israeli colleagues and I have been able to discuss, among other things, many of the issues raised in this book. In December 2015, Bridget, Fred, Keren, Suzi and I gave a joint paper at the Amsterdam Colloquium. Work on that paper was a lot of fun, and it clarified many issues, making me rewrite Chapters 8 and 9 of the book. Jurgis Šķilters asked me to co-direct the 11th Symposium of Cognition, Logic and Communication and accompanying Winter School at the University of Latvia, in December of 2015, and the topic we chose was ‘Number: Cognitive, Semantic and Crosslinguistic Approaches’. The event took place just before I sat down to do the final revisions on the book, and I cannot imagine a better preparation for the revision process. Jurgis, together with Hana Filip, Scott Grimm, Dan Hyde, Fred Landman and Suzi Lima, as well as the other participants, created an atmosphere of intense intellectual interaction which both broadened my perspective on the whole topic, and allowed me to focus on the particular area covered in this book.

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Living with Fred has created a synergy between the professional and the personal that has grounded this project. We have been talking about count and mass, measuring and counting, and, of course, about glasses of wine, for many, many years. We don't agree about everything, but many of the ideas in the book are ideas we have developed together or in parallel; some of them are as much his as mine. All the analyses have grown, developed and been sharpened and polished through discussions with him (including the parts he disagrees with). He read, criticized and commented on the entire manuscript and it is immeasurably better for it. Thanking him, which I do, is thanking him for a partnership and a life-style of which this book is only one element.

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Ronya (the cat) has also been there, on my lap and on the keyboard (in fact, she is here as I type this). She has put in many typos, deleted several sections and been thoroughly involved in the whole process.

Forty years ago, I was interviewed by the late Sybil Wolfram for a place at Lady Margaret Hall to read Philosophy. At the interview, she asked me how many things there were in her study. Later, as her student, I reminded her of this, and she apologized for 'asking me something so difficult at an interview'. But I didn't think she needed to apologize. I had been incredibly happy to find out that someone else was interested in what counted as 'one', and very excited to be able to talk about it.

I still feel that way.

Abbreviations

±C	±Count
±M	±Measure
2	second person
3	third person
ACC	accusative
ATT	attributive
AUX	auxiliary
CI	classifier
COMP	comparative
COP	copula
CS	construct state form
CSP	construct state phrase
DEF	definite
F	feminine
FG	free genitive
GEN	genitive
IMPFV	imperfective
INDEF	indefinite
INST	instrumental
M	masculine
MOD	modifier
NOM	nominative
NU	natural unit
OBJ	object
PART	sentence-final particle
PFV	perfective marker
PL	plural
PRS	present
PST	past
RED	reduplication
SG	singular