

Coercion interpretations of numerical NPs with mass nouns

Hana Filip
Heinrich Heine University, Düsseldorf

joint work with Peter Sutton
UPF Barcelona

As is well-known, mass nouns cannot be directly counted: #*two wines*. There is a type mismatch between a cardinal numerical like *two* when it is directly combined with a common mass noun like *wine*. How is this type mismatch resolved, if at all? Consider the following examples:

Context: Wine and glasses whose volume provides the measure for the wine

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| (1) | John carried two wines to the table. | CONTAINER |
| (2) | Phil drank two wines . | PORTION |
| (3) | # There are about two wines left in the bottle. | # MEASURE |

In (1), *two wines* is most naturally interpreted as meaning 'two glasses containing wine', i.e., the counting is based on actual glasses (**containers**) that are present in the context and that contain wine, because the main verb *carried* lexically selects solid objects for its DO argument denotation. In (2), *two wines* is understood as 'two **portions** of wine that fills/ would fill some glass twice'; the counting is here based on portions of wine (potentially) filling some contextually given glass, because the main verb *drink* selects liquids for its DO argument denotation. The implicit glass is some context-determined particular glass or some contextually understood prototypical-sized glass, but the wine need not have been the contents of any actual glass. In contrast, (3) is infelicitous, because *two wines* would have to mean something like 'a **measure** of wine to the amount of two glassfuls', but this interpretation is not (easily) available.

This raises the question: Why should the measure interpretation for numerical NPs like *two wines* be either hard to get or not available in some contexts at all? This is puzzling for at least two reasons. Cognitively speaking, in a context where some glass can be picked out as a unit of measure, we can easily imagine a situation in which (1c) would be felicitous, we can easily figure out the intended meaning of 'wine to the amount of two glassfuls'. Nonetheless, most speakers judge (1c) as odd or unacceptable. Linguistically speaking, the oddity of (1c) seems to be contrary to what would seem to be predicted by most analyses of counting and measuring phrases, and how meaning-shifting operations work in the face of type mismatches.

I will provide an analysis that is inspired by the analyses of the pseudo-partitive phrase and container nouns in Khizman et al. (2015); Landman (2016); Partee and Borschev (2012), and in particular by Landman's Iceberg Semantics (2011). One of the key explanatory ingredients is the notion of the dot type (in the sense of Pustejovsky 1993, 1995). The formal implementation rests on mereological enrichments of TTR (Type Theory with Records) (i.a. Cooper 2012), and on the analysis of the mass/count distinction and pseudo-partitives in Sutton and Filip (2016, 2017a) and Filip and Sutton (2017).