

## Mass/Count Variation: Objects and the Grammar of Countability

Hana Filip (University of Düsseldorf)  
joint work with Peter Sutton (University of Potsdam)

One type of mass/count variation is variation with respect to how concepts/properties are lexicalized as count or mass cross- and intralinguistically. For instance, the property LENTIL is lexicalized as the count noun *lentil* in English, but as the mass noun *čočka* ('lentil', mass) in Czech. Even if we restrict our attention to properties of concrete entities, the properties that display this sort of variation form a highly heterogenous class, including, for instance, BEAN, CABBAGE, CARPET, FENCE, FURNITURE, JEWELLERY, PASTA, and SHRUB. Based on recent work with Peter Sutton, I present data that suggests a tight connection between this class of properties and those that underpin nouns, the lexicalizations of which have non-canonical grammatical reflexes for their countability class. For instance, the count noun *fence* does not pattern with canonical count nouns like *car* in that *fence* can be a bare singular 'downstairs' NP in a pseudopartitive construction as in (1). Also, the mass noun *pasta* does not pattern with canonical mass nouns like *oil* in that it can be combined with stubbornly distributive predicates such as *small* as in (2).

- (1) Alex walked past 10 metres of {fence, #car}.
- (2) Use small {pasta, #oil} to make this dish.

As well as giving a brief overview of our semantic analysis of the mass/count distinction, the main goal of this talk is to present a constraint-based account that can predict for which properties we should expect to find variation in their mass/count lexicalization patterns. I also present the results of an exploratory corpus study that further outlines how this system of constraints can be used to produce an ordering on properties in terms of their likelihood of being lexicalized as mass crosslinguistically.