Countability Distinctions without Linguistic Cues

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Background on Quantity Judgments (Barner & Snedeker 2005)

Who has more NOUN?
Count Nouns - Apple
Aggregate Nouns - Furniture
Mass nouns - Ketchup

Quantity Judgments as a diagnostic for noun semantics?
• Barner & Snedeker (2005): Yes

Count Nouns - Apple
Aggregate Nouns - Furniture
Mass nouns - Ketchup

⇒ But not all languages show this pattern (Yudja, Lima 2014)!

Research Goal: To investigate the role played by morphosyntactic cues to atomicity in quantity judgment tasks.

Why?

Who has more PL-good milk? vs. Who has more good milk?
Cardinality Judgment vs. Volume Judgment

Who has more? (Scontras et al. 2017)
Count Nouns → More Volume Judgments
Mass Nouns → More Cardinality Judgments

Why French? The morphosyntactic cues to atomicity are not always perceptible in the auditory signal.

panda
[p˜ada]

Experiment 1 (n=90; 40 items, 10 fillers)

Goal: To extend Scontras & al. (2017) to every type of English nouns and to set a baseline for Experiment 2 in French.

Who has more books? vs. Who has more?
NOUN NO NOUN

Behavior less categorical in NO NOUN Condition (consistent with Scontras et al. 2017)

Experiment 2 (n=61; 40 items, 10 fillers)

Goal: To investigate the role played by morphosyntactic cues to atomicity in French.

Do cues to atomicity affect quantity judgments?
• YES → French ≥ English
• NO → French ≠ English

Regarde, il y a des livres sur la table. Qui en a le plus? CUES
‘Look, there are some books on the table. Who has more?’

Regarde ce qu’il y a sur la table. Qui a le plus de livres? NO CUES
‘Look what is on the table. Who has more books?’

Morphosyntactic cues to atomicity do not influence quantity judgments in French.


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