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Mass nouns, plurals, and mass plurals: on the Russian suffix -ĭj

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The denotation of mass nouns

Landman 1989, 1991: mass nouns have no minimal parts
Landman 2011: their minimal parts are overlapping

Sutton & Filip 2021:

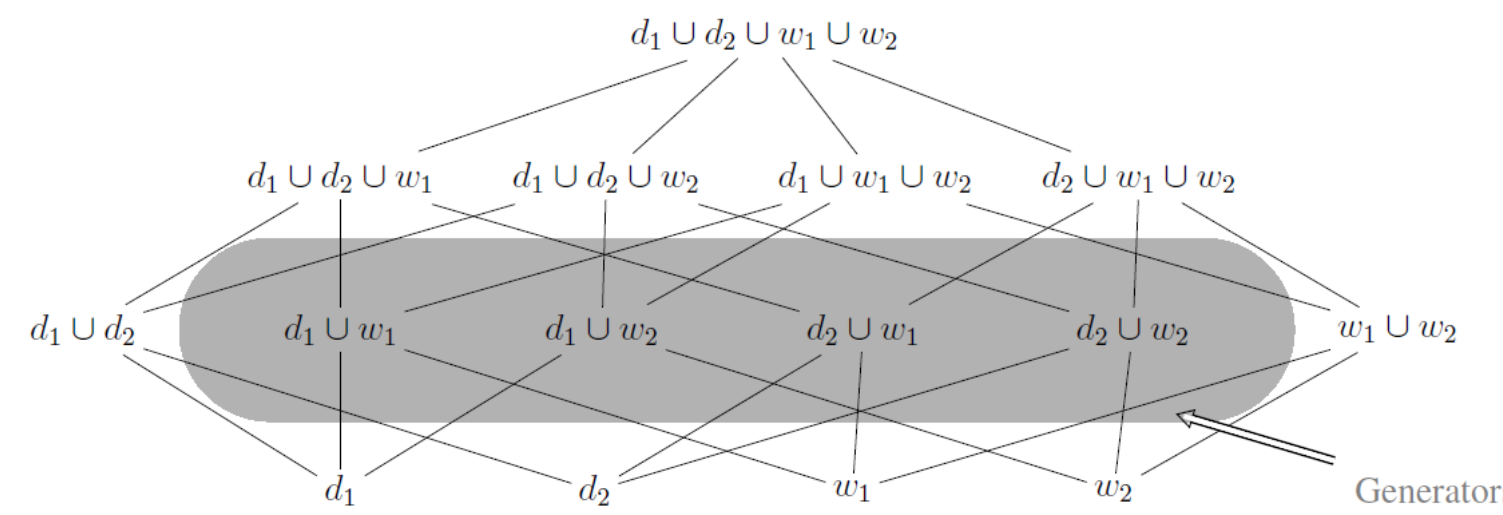


Figure 1: Generators and minimal elements for *mud*

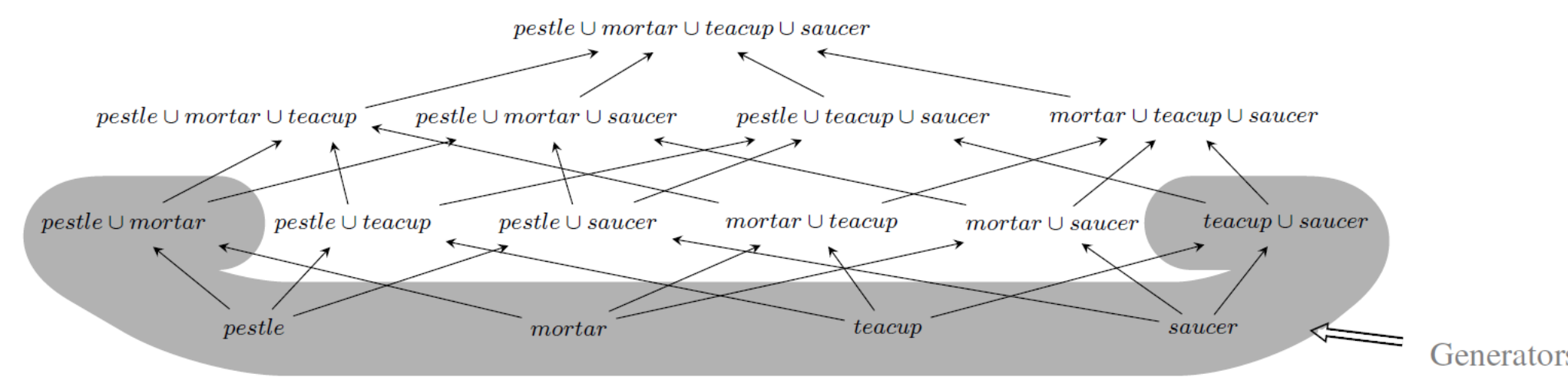


Figure 2: Generators for *kitchenware*

Chierchia 1998, 2010: their minimal parts are too vague to permit counting

Neat mass vs. plural encoding

Neat mass nouns and plurals share the same concept space, both intra-linguistically and cross-linguistically:

- (1) a. *meubilair* 'furniture' (Dutch)
b. *meubel* 'a piece of furniture.SG', *meubels* 'furniture.PL' [Landman 2011]
- (2) a. *linsen* 'lentils.PL' (German), *lentils* (English)
b. *lešta* 'lentils.SG' (Bulgarian); *čočka* 'lentils.SG' (Czech) [Sutton and Filip 2021]

Morphological plurality and mass

Both neat and mess mass nouns can be *pluralia tantum*:

- (3) a. clothes, furnishings, groceries
b. arrears, suds [Acquaviva 2004]

Conversely, *pluralia tantum* can be count:

- (4) a. *sani* 'sleigh.PL', *devčata* 'girls' (Russian)
b. dv-oje sanej
two-COLL sleigh.GEN
'two sleighs'

Neat mass nouns and counting

Mass nouns cannot be counted (unless their denotation is changed):

- (5) a. # five rices, *three pees
b. two beers
c. *five luggages, *three [snail] mails

Even when mass nouns denote concepts that have well-defined (minimal) units, like *mail* or *luggage* (neat mass nouns), they still cannot be counted

Cardinals as multipliers

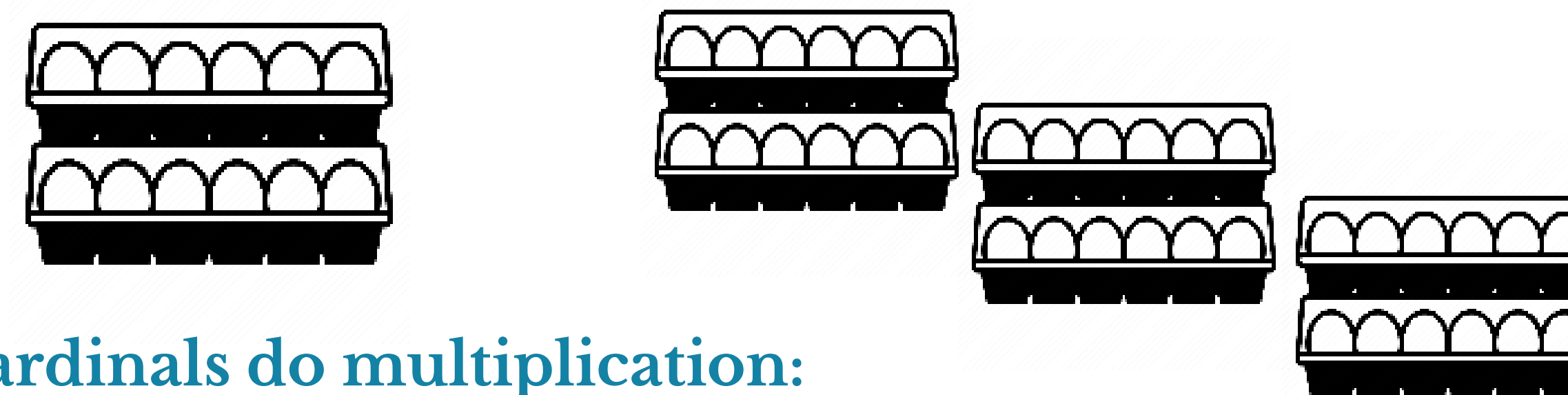
Neat mass nouns are a problem for the **predicate-based view of cardinals** (Landman 2003), i.e., only if cardinals combine with a plural:

- (6) a. $\llbracket \text{two hundred} \rrbracket = \lambda x \in D_e . |x| = 200$
b. $\llbracket 200 \rrbracket (\llbracket \text{books} \rrbracket) = \lambda x \in D_e . |x| = 200 \ \& \ * \text{book} (x)$

(6a) is predicted to be applicable to neat mass nouns

Alternative: Ionin and Matushansky 2006, 2018:
cardinals combine with singulars rather than plurals and necessarily with atomic predicates

- (7) a. dozen eggs
b. three dozen eggs



Cardinals do multiplication:

- (8) $\llbracket \text{three} \rrbracket = \lambda P \in D_{\langle e, t \rangle} : AT(P) . \lambda x \in D_e . \exists S \in D_{\langle e, t \rangle} [\Pi(S)(x) \ \& \ |S| = 3 \ \& \ \forall s \in S P(s)]$

Π means 'partition'

AT(P) is true iff $\forall x [P(x) \rightarrow \neg \exists y [P(y) \ \& \ y <_i x]]$

If cardinals require atomic predicates, they cannot take mass nouns as input (either neat or mess)

Pluralization of a mass noun would be vacuous

The cross-linguistic variation between plural and mass encoding for granular and aggregate concepts follows from semantic identity of plurals and neat mass

Russian derived mass nouns

Novel evidence: the Russian suffix -ĭj-:
semi-productive for [+animate] bases (pejorative for [+human] bases, natural for disliked animals)

- (9) animate neat mass
 - a. *duračjō* 'fools' (cf. *durák* 'fool')
 - b. *vorjō* 'thieves' (cf. *vor* 'thief')
 - c. *voronjō* 'ravens, crows' (*vóron* 'raven', *voróna* 'crow')
 - d. *komarjō* 'mosquitos' (*komár* 'mosquito')
 - e. *otrěbjē* 'trash (arch.), rabble' (cranberry root)
- (10) inanimate neat mass
 - a. *dubjō* 'cudgels' (cf. *dubína* 'cudgel')
 - b. *višenje* 'cherries, cherry trees' (*višnja* 'cherry')
 - c. *beljō* 'linen, underwear' (from *belij* 'white')
 - d. *rvanjō* 'tatters' (from *rvánij* 'torn')
- (11) inanimate mess mass
 - a. *starjō* 'old stuff' (cf. *stárjij* 'old')
 - b. *korjō* 'bark stripped from trees' (cf. *korá* 'bark')
 - c. *smoljō* 'resinous firewood' (cf. *smolá* 'resin')

Mess mass nouns arise from mass or adjectival bases

The atoms of count bases are preserved:

- (12) Ti – duračjo.
you.SG [are] fool.ĪJ
You're a fool.

The suffix creates cumulative reference (the lattice structure)

Atoms come from the base stem

So how does -ĭj- differ from Link's (1983) *-operator?

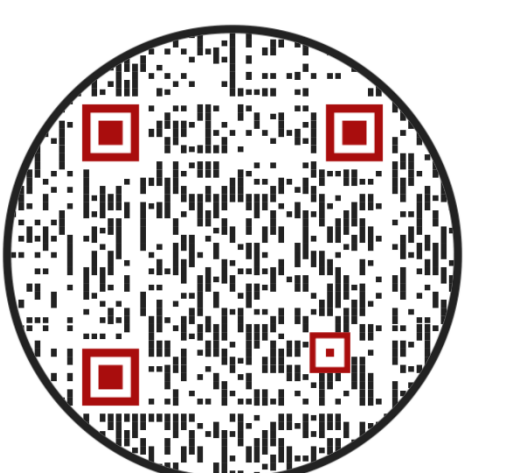
Suffix -ĭj- in plurals

Some 40 nouns require -ĭj- to form plurals:

- (13) a. brat 'brother' → brát-j-a 'brother-ĪJ-PL'
b. kriló 'wing' → kril-j-a 'wing-ĪJ-PL'

These are real plurals: they can be counted

Hence the suffix there is **semantically null**
As maybe in the plurale tantum *loxmótja* 'rags'



For the discussion and references