

Course description: Plurals, Pluralities and Quantification

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General subject matter Semantics

Level Advanced (in the sense that participants must be familiar with the contents of Heim & Kratzer 1998)

Duration 10 days

Topic This course discusses the relation between what seem to be two types of denotation: Those of plurals (including morphological plurals, such as *the dogs* and *and*-coordinations with individual-denoting conjuncts, such as *John and Mary*), and those of QPs – DPs that have traditionally been treated as quantificational, i.e. *every cat, some boy, all dogs* etc.

At first sight, the two types of denotations seem to differ, as plurals and QPs diverge in their behavior in several respects, for instance w.r.t. scope-taking or polarity in the context of negation. However, it has been noted that this semantic classification is not as stable as it might seem: Sometimes QPs exhibit semantic features we normally attribute to plurals, and *vice versa*. This gives rise to a number of questions, some of which are listed below.

- a. Which of the semantic features that seem typical for plurals do we find for QPs, and *vice versa*? Do these features come in clusters?
- b. Which other factors have an impact on when a QP may exhibit semantic “plural”-features? For instance, is there an intrinsic connection to number morphology? Does the choice of predicate matter? Is the syntactic position of the expression of any relevance? Does topic-focus structure play a role?
- c. What are the semantic features of “mixed cases”, i.e. cases where we seem to find both a plural and quantificational component, such as partitives and floating quantification?
- d. Is any of the existing theories on either plurals or quantification able to capture the empirical situation?

The course is structured as follows.

The first week will provide the background: We discuss the empirical reasons that could lead one to assume a principled difference between the denotations of plurals and quantificational DPs. We then address standard plural semantics and the question of how the various semantic phenomena that seem to be connected to plural expressions have been accounted for.

The second week will concentrate on the questions raised above. We will be discussing both theoretical and recent experimental literature that relates to them; however, as several of the questions have

not received a satisfactory answer (to my knowledge), the approach here will be very hands-on: We will try to find data that could help us to answer these questions and attempt to set up queries that will allow us to investigate the situation in other languages (in particular via community-based data-bases such as the SSWL-database (<http://sswl.railsplayground.net/>)).