

On the semantic properties of mass and count nouns in Guajajára (Tenetehára)

Pilar Chamorro | University of Georgia

Fábio Bonfim Duarte | Federal University of Minas Gerais

In this paper we show that Guajajára has grammaticalized the distinction between mass and count nouns, but that the coding of this distinction is different from the systems of coding in classifier languages, number-marking languages, and number-neutral languages (**Chierchia 1998a, 1998b, 2010; Wilhelm 2008**). As a result, we conclude that Guajajára presents a challenge to the tripartite classification of languages proposed in Chierchia's work, since Guajajára number marking is non-inflectional and optional when plural is already expressed by other quantificational expressions. Furthermore, in Guajajára notional mass nouns can pluralize and directly combine with numerals without the mediation of container or measure constructions in contexts where conventional and non-conventional container and units of measurement are implied. This last observation suggests that coercion is not a mechanism that operates in this language.

Keywords: mass nouns, count nouns, plurality, Guajajara, Tupi-Guarani

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Abbreviations

References

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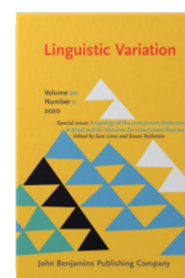
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