ICEBERG SEMANTICS FOR COUNT NOUNS AND MASS NOUNS: THE EVIDENCE FROM PORTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Portions - like *two portions of soup* – are a puzzle: they are mass stuff – *soup* –, but count – *two*.
　　Link-style Boolean semantics for nouns (here called *mountain semantics*) analyzes the oppositions *mass-count* and *singular-plural* in terms of the notion of **atomicity**: counting is in terms of atoms, singular individuals.   Mountain semantics can deal with portions, but at a cost of great complexity, involving a lot of shifting to funny atoms. (This was a price I was willing to pay in earlier work.)
　　Iceberg semantics replaces the notion of atomicity by the notion of **disjointness**: nouns are interpreted as **icebergs,** pairs of a **body** (a set) and a **base** (also a set) which generates the body.   For count nouns, the base is a **disjoint** set, in terms of which the elements in the body are counted.
　　In this framework, *mass* and *count* are different perspectives on the same stuff (different bases for the same body). This framework provides a setting for a compositional theory of mass and count (applying to nouns, NPs, and DPs) which incorporates all the advantages of mountain semantics, but does away with the extreme body-sorting and body-gridding that atomicity entails, and thereby allows much more simple and elegant analyses of mass-count interactions. For instance, portions can be mass stuff generated by a count base.

The bulk of the talk gives an Iceberg semantic analysis for English and Dutch **measure phrases,** like *three **liters** of wine*. and **classifier phrases,** like *three **bottles** of wine*.   We will come across measure interpretations of classifiers, classifier interpretations of measures, and different types of classifier interpretation: container interpretations, contents interpretations, and – indeed – portion interpretations.
　　Following Susan Rothstein's work, I will argue that classifier interpretations (including portion interpretations) are **count** and that measure interpretations are **mass.**
　　It will be shown that this fact follows, given certain details of the analysis, from the very basic architecture of Iceberg semantics.