

LSA.376: Countmass

Overlapping topics:

basic count/mass assignment; conversion; double assignment
collectives
zero plurals
anarthrism

[! marks the two crucial items; read the Language Log piece first]

1. overview:

! 2001 Stanford SemFest paper “Counting Chad”:

<http://www-csli.stanford.edu/~zwicky/CountingChad.pdf>

specifically about plant names:

<http://www-csli.stanford.edu/~zwicky/plants.pdf>

2. plural, mass, collective:

! AZ, 12/8/06: Plural, mass, collective:

<http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/language-log/archives/003879.html>

3. conversion [included file]:

.....

1. figurative uses:

1.1. C > M for a thing or things transformed (actually or imaginatively) into stuff (the “universal grinder”): The child took the flower and smashed it into pulp, and soon the table was covered with tulip.

[from grinder.exx.doc:]

From: joelcw@babel.ling.upenn.edu

Subject: universal grinder

Date: September 22, 2006 9:15:50 AM PDT

To: zwicky@csli.stanford.edu

just read an awesome universal grinder sentence, and I thought of you:

"Biological 'success' simply means something like: there are many more pounds of dog in the world than there are pounds of wolf."

As this book was discussing the relative adaptability of dogs vs. wolves, the sentence was surprisingly natural in context. The source is:

Coppinger, Raymond and Lorna Coppinger. 2001. *Dogs: a new understanding of canine origin, behavior, and evolution*. University of Chicago Press. p.22.

1.2. C > M for an assemblage of things presenting themselves en masse: We rounded a corner in the Dutch countryside and were confronted with a huge expanse of tulip.

[from mass.exx.doc:]

When huge deposits of ruby and sapphire were found several years ago, Cushman was one of the first dealers to venture into the often violent mining towns.

(Burkhard Bulger, “The Path of Stone”, the *New Yorker* 10/2/06, p. 68)

And, Wankel noted, there were poppy fields within sight of Munib’s palace.

“We’re not able to destroy all the poppy—that’s not the point. What we’re trying to do is lend an element of threat and risk to the farmers’ calculations, so they won’t plant next year,” Wankel said later.

(Jon Lee Anderson, “The Taliban’s Opium War”, *New Yorker* 7/9&16/07, p. 62)

1.3. metonymy taking M > C: [one restaurant server to another] There are two spaghetthis and two lasagnas sitting at table 4.

2. conventionalized conversions:

2.1. C > M for reference to the type: There are many species of tulip.

2.2. M > C for reference to different varieties or subtypes: There are many lavenders growing in my garden.

2.3. M > C for reference to servings: I drank three Tsing Taos.

2.4. various conventionalized metonymies taking C > M, e.g.

2.4.1. “meat conversion”, taking a C noun denoting a creature to a M noun denoting the meat of that creature: That’s a chicken; we had chicken for dinner.

2.4.2. “substance conversion”, taking a C noun denoting an individual to a M noun denoting a generic substance or totality, in construction with a quantity determiner:

That’s a lot of horse.

That’s less house than I was expecting.

That’s not much computer for the dollar.

That’s more elephant than we can handle.

2.4.3. "sex-part conversion", taking a C noun denoting a sexual part to a M noun denoting this part as a generalized object of lust:

I'm looking for some cunt/pussy/cock/dick/ass.

.....

4. zero plural [included files]

misc. exx.

1. D. T. Max, *The Family That Couldn't Sleep* (Random House, 2006), p. 206:

... carnivores, among them bear and hyena, were abundant in the area.

2. *militia* 'militias'

Only after such a peace agreement SLM and the Government together could turn against these militia.

www.janpronk.nl/index139.html

militia 'militia men'

"It was attacked by two militia. The patrol immediately responded with fire, killing both militia," he told reporters.

www.genocidewatch.org/CongoJune15TwoMilitia.htm

3. *croissant* and other food items

From: zwicky@csl.Stanford.EDU
Subject: "croissant" as a zero plural
Date: September 10, 2006 10:04:22 AM PDT
To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

david denison writes to inquire about bill poser's use of "croissant" in his latest Language Log posting:

>At the grocery store today I bought some croissant. They have two kinds: regular and "multigrain". The funny thing is, they don't label the bin with the regular croissant "regular croissant" or just "croissant": they label them "fresh croissant". The implicature is that multigrain croissant are not fresh. If I were the storekeeper, I don't think I'd want to suggest that.
(<http://itre.cis.upenn.edu/~myl/language-log/archives/003564.html>)<

"they label them..." and "... multigrain croissant are not fresh" make it clear that bill is using "croissant" as a zero plural (rather than a mass noun, a hypothesis that would have been consistent with the earlier "some croissant" and "the regular croissant"). whether zero plural or mass noun, these uses struck denison's british ears as odd; for him "croissant" is just a regular

count noun, with the plural "croissants". for me too. and the OED's citations have it as a regular count noun; most of the cites are for "croissants", in fact.

but there are a fair number of zero-plural webhits, like:

1. Croissant are an * institution " , and while I ' m at it " savoury croissant " don ' t exist , worse than ... Croissant are a breakfast food and are sweet

www.thesinner.net/messageboard-viewthread.php?thread=22097&page=1

2. you have to watch out when the almond croissant are heavily coated with confectioner's sugar-
- a sure Red Flag. ...

www.yelp.com/biz/ri7UUYmx21AgSpRsf4-9QA?rpp=20&sort_by=relevance_desc&start=20

3. The only minor criticism I can make is that the croissant are often baked a tad too long, till quite dark: still they're flakey and buttery as they should ...

ilforno.typepad.com/il_forno/2004/02/bakeries_local_.html

anybody know anything about this usage? in particular, about its distribution? i'm interested in the distribution because this might be a variant that has spread in a more-or-less random way from person to person (an "ice plant" variable, in the terminology i'm currently using -- after the choice between "ice plant" as a count noun and "ice plant" as a mass noun, which seems to be determined in this person-to-person fashion; which way you go probably depends on which version you heard, or at least noticed, first).

arnold, who's still getting used to "the Sierra" as a zero plural (though this is by far the prevalent usage in these parts), as in:

The Sierra are also a tourist and recreational destination: hiking, camping, skiing, boating and fishing are all popular pastimes in the valleys, rivers, ...

forestethics.org/article.php?list=type&type=35

From: wjposer@ldc.upenn.edu

Subject: Re: "croissant" as a zero plural

Date: September 10, 2006 10:49:37 AM PDT

To: ADS-L@listserv.uga.edu, zwicky@csli.stanford.edu

Cc: d.denison@man.ac.uk, wjposer@ldc.upenn.edu

Yes, I think that for me "croissant" is a zero plural. For people who have a regular plural, is the plural morpheme pronounced? Perhaps the influence of French makes me unwilling to produce a phonological distinction between the singular and plural.

From: david.denison@manchester.ac.uk

Subject: Re: "croissant" as a zero plural

Date: September 10, 2006 10:59:05 AM PDT

To: wjposer@ldc.upenn.edu

Cc: zwicky@csli.stanford.edu

On 10 Sep 2006 at 13:49, William J Poser wrote:

>Yes, I think that for me "croissant" is a zero plural...

Good Q about the plural. In my original msg to Arnold, I said "for me it's a regular count noun, even if there's a bit of uncertainty about the pronunciation, though not the spelling, of the plural". I'm honestly not sure whether I pronounce the s or not: I'm inconsistent, but probably more yes than no. It may be relevant too that in BrE the stress is on the first syllable and the second syllable is nasalised and with silent t in pseudo-French style, whereas I seem to remember that in the US the stress is on the second syllable - though I can't remember whether you pronounce the t.

From: douglas@NB.NET
Subject: Re: "croissant" as a zero plural
Date: September 10, 2006 2:22:11 PM PDT
To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

david denison writes to inquire about bill poser's use of "croissant" in his latest Language Log posting:

One possibility is that "croissant" is viewed as an adjective or attributive. "Croissant" means "crescent", and refers more-or-less to what is/was conventionally called a crescent roll, so it would not be unreasonable (whether 'correct' or not) to take "croissant" as short for "croissant roll" or equivalent.

I do not use a zero plural for "croissant" myself. OTOH, I tend to say "crescent roll" instead ('correctly' or not): /krw/ just doesn't come so easily to my English-speaking mouth.

For comparison: "Danish" is perceived as short for "Danish pastry", which I believe is why it often has a zero plural, e.g., "Try these cheese Danish!" ... which I suppose I would prefer to "Try these cheese Danishes!".

(Another possibility which might be considered: "croissant" is perceived as 'foreign', with the default pluralization of 'foreign' words being taken as zero, perhaps by analogy with East Asian things such as "gyoza".)

-- Doug Wilson

From: bgzimmer@BABEL.LING.UPENN.EDU
Subject: Re: "croissant" as a zero plural
Date: September 10, 2006 7:24:16 PM PDT
To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

On 9/10/06, Douglas G. Wilson <douglas@nb.net> wrote:

>(Another possibility which might be considered:...

I would guess that plural "croissant" is merely a quasi-Gallic pronunciation spelling for "croissants", since the final -s isn't pronounced in French. Are there other examples of unpronounced French -s being rendered as zero pluralization in written English?

From: zwicky@csl.stanford.edu
Subject: Re: "croissant" as a zero plural
Date: September 11, 2006 9:36:29 AM PDT
To: david.denison@manchester.ac.uk
Cc: wjposer@ldc.upenn.edu

On Sep 10, 2006, at 10:59 AM, David Denison wrote:

>On 10 Sep 2006 at 13:49, William J Poser wrote:

>>Yes, I think that for me "croissant" is a zero plural...

others have now made this suggestion on ADS-L. so you're borrowing the french phonology, but not the french spelling; instead, you're adapting the english spelling to your english pronunciation. any other examples of this?

>Good Q about the plural...

what i say, and mostly (i think) hear, is: stress on the second syllable, t pronounced, no (frenchy) w in the first syllable, schwa in the first syllable. AHD4 and NOAD2 list both -nt and (frenchy) nasalized vowel pronunciations, but both with second-syllable stress. they differ, though, in how the krwa- is handled: AHD4 has krwa- for the more french version, kr@- for the more nativized version, while NOAD2 has k(r)wa- for both versions. AHD4 lists the more french version first; NOAD2 has them in the other order. obviously, there's a lot of variation; i have even heard the ash vowel in the second syllable (in combination with -nt, of course).

OED lists only the nasalized-vowel + krwa- version, but with the stress shifted to the first syllable, as british speakers are wont to do with french borrowings.

john algeo's new British or American English? has just arrived (i mean just -- minutes ago), but has no story about "croissant", either its count/mass status or its pronunciation.

From: zwicky@csl.Stanford.EDU
Subject: Re: "croissant" as a zero plural
Date: September 11, 2006 9:45:56 AM PDT
To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

On Sep 10, 2006, at 7:24 PM, Ben Zimmer wrote:

>I would guess that plural "croissant" is merely a quasi-Gallic...

this is what bill poser himself has now suggested (in e-mail), and i asked that same question in response: "so you're borrowing the french phonology, but not the french spelling; instead, you're adapting the english spelling to your english pronunciation. any other examples of this?"

david denison says he varies as to the pronunciation of the final s, though he thinks he pronounces it more often than not.

meanwhile, an exchange between david and me on the pronunciation of "croissant" (the singular)... [above]

From: zwicky@csl.Stanford.EDU
Subject: Re: "croissant" as a zero plural
Date: September 11, 2006 10:07:23 AM PDT
To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

On Sep 10, 2006, at 2:22 PM, Douglas G. Wilson wrote:

>*One* possibility is that "croissant" is viewed as an adjective ...

i think that "crescent" in "crescent roll" is still a noun, referring to the shape. that is, "crescent roll" is a noun-noun compound (with the characteristic forestress of such compounds).

the OED has "crescent", referring to the roll of bread, from 1886, and "crescent roll" from 1899. it has no cites of "croissant roll", though you can google up a few hundred hits (compared to tens of thousands for "crescent roll").

it would be hard to say whether "crescent" is a short form of "crescent roll", or whether "crescent roll" is an expansion of "crescent". for "croissant", it looks pretty clear that "croissant roll" is, historically, an expansion (fostered by "crescent roll"), though some people might now be viewing things the other way.

>... For comparison: "Danish" is perceived as short for...

well, "Danish" is, historically, a shortening of "Danish pastry". and "Danish" is in fact, an adjective here (and the combination has the characteristic afterstress of adjective + noun combinations).

From: chris@LASCRIBE.NET
Subject: Re: "croissant" as a zero plural
Date: September 11, 2006 10:51:09 AM PDT
To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

Arnold M. Zwicky wrote:

>this is what bill poser himself has now suggested...

Very naively, I'd have guessed something along these lines, too. A little searching turns up similar zero-plurals for *_baguette_*, *_hors d'oeuvre_* (frankly, it's an achievement to get the spelling approximately right, nevermind the plural), *_idee fixe_* and *_enfant terrible_*. In all cases of noun compounds, the question of where to attach the plural S is by no means trivial anyway, even for native speakers of French. Nothing for *_aperitif_* (with its last letter that's pronounced), and *_femme fatale_* is too often apprehended in the singular, or as the title of something. In *_baguette_* there may be an influence from the mass noun *_bread_*.

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Hors d'oeuvre are much the same as appetizers inasmuch as they are small and savory dishes, but are generally served as a selection with wine or cocktails away from the dinner table, either somewhat before a dinner, or often as the only foods served at an afternoon party that does not include dinner. Hors d'oeuvre are more related to the Spanish Tapas than to traditional formal dining procedures. The appetizers here also make excellent hors d'oeuvre or Tapas.

<http://www.premiersystems.com/recipes/appetizers/index.html>

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THEY MAY BE small - no more than a bite or two, in most cases - but hors d'oeuvre are big news for special events.

http://specialevents.com/caterers/events_hot_hors_doeuvre/

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I live in Marseilles and baguette are considered as much a part of Parisian everyday life as the Eiffel Tower. Notwithstanding, at six o'clock in the morning, at noon, at four PM - you can't help seeing people carrying baguettes fresh from bakeries, many tearing a piece off and eating as they rush to their meals, many biting right from the tow foot long crusty loafs.

[note the variation; either this is inconsistent, or suggests some difference, influence of the mass noun etc.]

<http://frenchcuisine.lifetips.com/faq/117775/0/whate-is-baguette/index.html>

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The baguette are very cheap (200 XPF), and incredibly good.

<http://www.world66.com/australiaandpacific/frenchpolynesia/moorea>

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The great European composers Hindemith, Dvorak and Schoenberg were the enfant terrible of their time.

<http://www.riversideparramatta.com.au/content/files/84/Winter05.pdf>

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Pole Beans are the "enfant terrible" of the vegetable garden. Gorgeous flowers, excellent climber and fence covering, good fruit to eat but they simply can't get along with each other.

<http://www.simplegiftsfarm.com/vegetablegardeningguide.html>

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Any indication that either of these two *idee fixe* are questioned, limited, or wrong sends them off into a foaming-at-the-mouth hissy fit -- in an understated British kind of way.

<http://www.eurotrib.com/story/2006/2/11/12336/1731#19>

From: wjposer@ldc.upenn.edu

Subject: Re: "croissant" as a zero plural

Date: September 11, 2006 11:29:07 PM PDT
To: david.denison@manchester.ac.uk, zwicky@csl.stanford.edu
Cc: wjposer@ldc.upenn.edu

A parallel case might be "merguez". Do you know what I mean? They're spicy sausages that North Africans sell in France. (Well, they probably sell them in North Africa too but I don't know for sure.) I don't know any word for these other than the French one, I would treat "merguez" as a zero plural. In French the plural has a final <s>, but that looks funny to me in English unless I treat the word as totally unassimilated and quote it: "merguezes".

From: chris@LASCRIBE.NET
Subject: Like croissant, like quiche, focaccia and ciabatta
Date: September 12, 2006 11:17:37 AM PDT
To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

Sorry for opening a new thread, but I don't have Arnold Zwicky's original message where I am right now.

Over lunch, a few more zero-plural foreign-import food nouns (the nouns, mostly; more than the food) occurred to me ...

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I think my quiche are pretty good, but the best I have ever tasted and would love to be able to duplicate, are served at the Hotel Del Coronado in San Diego. Coming in as a close second are the quiche served at the Ritz-Carlton in Laguna Niguel at their wonderful brunch on Saturday and Sunday. They are light, almost like a soufflé in texture and the crust is always crisp, never soggy.

<http://forums.egullet.org/index.php?showtopic=73788&hl=>

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These mini Quiche are easy to make and can be made ahead and re- heated or served at room temperature.

<http://www.thatsmyhome.com/mainstreetdeli/miniquich.htm>

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Our quiche are hand made from the finest ingredients available to ensure excellent quality.

<http://www.mondofoods.co.uk/home.htm>

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Before baking, focaccia are pricked with a fork or other tined utensil so that air bubbles and pockets don't form.

[note that in this text, this is most often "focaccia bread" or "focaccia dough", ie the word is employed as a noun modifier]

<http://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art38220.asp>

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Our Ciabatta are handmade from certified organic ingredients by a local artisan bakery.

<http://www.dancingbean.ca/menu.html>

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Many more cites from cafe and bakery sites.

From: zwicky@csl.Stanford.EDU
Subject: Re: Like croissant, like quiche, focaccia and ciabatta
Date: September 13, 2006 3:18:29 PM PDT
To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

On Sep 12, 2006, at 11:17 AM, Chris F Waigl wrote:

>OVer lunch, a few more zero-plural foreign-import food nouns...

moving to the east, just found:

Cons: The two schwarma with extra chilli sauce which seemed like such a great idea at 4am, seem like an error of judgment at 9am!

www.harbus.org/media/paper343/news/2004/10/12/Sports/The-Five.Files-750512.shtml

From: wjposer
Re: "croissant" as a zero plural
Date: September 13, 2006 3:58:35 PM PDT
To: zwicky@csl.stanford.edu

Thank you for reminding me of this. It occurs to me that you hang out with the right sort of people perhaps to answer something that has been bugging me for years. In the US, one almost invariably sees "gyros", with various pronunciations as you mention. That is, of course, the Greek word for what in Turkish is called doner. In Western Canada one always sees doner, almost never gyros. This is true even in restaurants run by Greeks. The term has become sufficiently familiar that one even sees it spelled "donair".

In other parts of Canada my impression is that gyros is more commonly used but that doner is still much more common than in the US. As far as I can tell this is not due to there being a lot of Turks in Western Canada and few Greeks. So, why does "doner" dominate in Western Canada?

From: zwicky@csl.stanford.edu
Subject: Re: "croissant" as a zero plural
Date: September 13, 2006 5:26:19 PM PDT
To: wjposer@ldc.upenn.edu

On Sep 13, 2006, at 3:58 PM, you wrote:

>... In the US, one almost invariably sees "gyros"...

news to me, alas. i have no hypothesis.

and now i see that "doner" is hardly ever used as a zero plural on the web: "two doners" or (most likely) "two doner kebabs/kebaps", but not "two doner". well, in writing about german-speaking lands, sometimes "döner" as a plural.

>In other parts of Canada my impression is that gyros...

damn! i missed my chance to do research in vancouver last summer. i guess i'll just have to go back.

From: chris@LASCRIBE.NET
Subject: Re: Like croissant, like quiche, focaccia and ciabatta
Date: September 14, 2006 1:12:48 PM PDT
To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

Arnold Zwicky moved east with "shawrama" (I don't recall which spelling he used):

But you don't even have to go that far. My country of origin will do:

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To give some actual numbers I just paid: two of us spent 20 CHF on three beers in a local bar, 230 CHF on a nice meal for two with wine, and 40 CHF for two bratwurst and three beers in a bar.

[writer from Chicago, IL]

<http://www.amazon.com/Living-Working-Switzerland-Tenth-Survival/dp/190113024X>

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At Westmeat's factory, the cooking is very carefully managed. Once the bratwurst have been filled with the raw mixture, they are left for a short time to allow the flavours to mature. They are then coddled in barely simmering water for about 20 minutes until the internal temperature of each sausage reaches 71C, which ensures that no bacteria survive. The bratwurst are then vacuum-packed, which gives a refrigerated shelf life of six weeks. Once opened, they should be eaten within two days and stored in the refrigerator. Although it is safe to eat them cold, the delicate flavour is enhanced when they are gently grilled, barbecued or fried until lightly browned and hot right through.

http://www.listener.co.nz/issue/3426/columnists/5281/with_added_spice.html

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They're eaten mostly in Bavaria and are often used to define Germany's north- south divide -- sometimes called the "white sausage equator." But recently a Berlin butcher's Weisswurst were voted the best in country, shaming Bavarians beyond belief.

[I grew up _just_ south of the Weißwurstäquator.]

<http://service.spiegel.de/cache/international/0,1518,412793,00.html>

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Bratwurst is a compound German word - brat means fry, wurst means sausage. Bratwurst is pronounced with a short A (rhymes with "lot"). A Madison TV station runs a promotion called "Take your brat to work today." They're talking about bratwurst, not children.

In Wisconsin, bratwurst are served virtually everywhere during "grilling season" which generally runs from May through September. They are served at a myriad of outdoor events, as well as in nearly every Wisconsin backyard.

<http://www.bratwurstpages.com/brats.html>

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Bratwurst are cooked on a griddle ("brat" means fried or roasted), but most German sausages are boiled, like the classic New York street-vendor hot dog.

[The same article has "wursts" repeatedly.]

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?sec=travel&res=9D01EED61F31F93AA35755C0A9629C8B63>

=====

I listed the last two quotes because they repeat an oft-heard false etymology -- or at least, only partially correct etymology. It is true that braten means "fry", but the Brat- in Bratwurst actually refers to minced pork, called Brat or Brät regionally.

And for dessert ...

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Meringue taste like the kiss of an angel

http://www.kriyayoga.com/love_blog/post.php/467

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Each meringue have their own unique properties and as will seen, there is really no such thing as one meringue that fits all!

[oops?]

<http://www.hub-uk.com/tallyrecip02/recipe0087.htm>

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Pavlova are best stored at room temperature, chilling them will cause the sugar to sweat out of them.

<http://www.hub-uk.com/tallyrecip03/recipe0146.htm>

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I like the space, but the food was super bland. I was excited to have an alternative to Squat and Gobble, but it just was not up to it. The crepe are thinner than Squat's, which I like, but the crepe I had filled with avocado, tomato, cheese, salsa, onions, and mushrooms somehow had no flavor. Plus, my plate was piled with salad green, many of which were old and rotting. If I ended up there again I would try a sweet crepe, perhaps they are better.

[Ok, these are savory ones.]

<http://sfsurvey.com/rd.asp?r=850>

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Also cites for pita, pl., and lots more.

5. cites for *Danish*

Danish/danish

a. "two Danish and" 10/23/06

After fortifying myself with **two Danish and** some orange juice, I went for a walk.
whaven33884.blogspot.com/2006/10/day-two-or-walkabout.html

read the review from the owner, we only have **two danish and** 2 cups of juice and some fruit for our breakfast during our stay.

www.tripadvisor.com/ShowTopic-g60607-i1026-k190706-Lotus_Garden_Cottages_Bed_and_Breakfast-Volcano_Island...

But you've had **two Danish and** you've a dinner date in Paris; an experienced traveller doesn't worry. Then you enter the Tunnel.

www.metropoleparis.com/1996/60226001/tunnel.html

I was happy with a daily dose of **two danish and** a cup of coffee-the perfect excuse to satisfy my sugar cravings!

community.iexplore.com/planning/journalEntryAccommodation.asp?JournalID=41574&EntryID=17470&n=Mas...

here was plenty of food for everyone, and the prices were low! **Two Danish and** a coffee for \$1.50, you certainly can't beat that!

www.wtsn.binghamton.edu/bara/BARA_Facts_archive/bf2002%20may.pdf

"**Two Danish and** a Kosher Rye, please." Mrs. Stein checked her coin purse for exact change. Sadie and Pearl chose struedel and Challah.

www2.selu.edu/orgs/CreativeWriting/otl/98/otl989.html

b. "two Danishes" 10/23/06

The owner's lounge has a quick breakfast of **two danishes** or muffins and a drink for \$4.
www.igougo.com/travelcontent/journalEntryLodging.aspx?businessCardID=189040

I still feel like a zombie, but I have a feeling that after eating the **two danishes** from Tim Hortons, I would feel more like a human.

www.wannabegirl.org/2005/07/

It all began with **two danishes**, two latte's and one great idea...

www.themotherstore.co.nz

I was on my way to Naperville one Saturday morning and I stopped and picked up **two Danishes** for Dad and took them to his apartment.

ethmar.com/marlana/articles/2000/08/12/on_turning_40_someday

... to slip out of their coil so that the danish behind the one you are purchasing slips out, and you get **two danishes**, but you've only paid for one.

www.manatheater.com/archive/05feb.htm

Coffee and **two danishes** (McKinnon's bakery makes such good danishes you can't help but eat two, fortunately they're smallish).

my.opera.com/hungryghost/blog/index.dml/tag/dibbles

5. anarthrism: various complex cases [included file]

From: cdoyle@UGA.EDU

Subject: Prom time

Date: May 2, 2006 8:00:51 AM PDT

To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

Used to be, high-school kids would "attend the prom." Now, however, they simply "attend prom."

I wonder just when (and why) "prom" became a "non-count" noun, or--like "table" and "hospital"--with the definite article deletable (or insertable) depending on the dialect and the context.

From: zwicky@csl.stanford.edu

Subject: Re: Prom time

Date: May 2, 2006 9:27:23 AM PDT

To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

On May 2, 2006, at 8:00 AM, Charles Doyle wrote [above]:...

i suspect it's neither; "prom" here doesn't take any of the modifiers of mass nouns, and it doesn't require some particular preposition(s), the way anarthrous nouns do. instead, i think it's a pseudo-proper noun; nouns denoting specific events can sometimes be used this way:

Graduation/Commencement starts at noon.

though there are all sorts of complicating details: for instance,

Prom starts at 8 p.m.

is pretty odd for me, but

Prom is the crowning event of the school year for many seniors.

is fine. and some nouns resolutely denote types, not tokens:

Party starts at 8 p.m.

is just impossible for me, except as a casual-speech variant with omitted definite article, even when context makes it clear that some specific party is referred to.

as far as i can see, CGEL doesn't cover this -- at least, not in the section on uses of bare NPs.

From: laurence.horn@YALE.EDU

Subject: Re: Prom time

Date: May 2, 2006 10:02:14 AM PDT

To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

At 9:27 AM -0700 5/2/06, Arnold M. Zwicky wrote [above]:...

"Homecoming" works this way too--wonder if that's the sponsor for the shift in "prom".
Any more, homecoming is sort of a partial-dress rehearsal for prom in the high schools.

From: cdoyle@UGA.EDU
Subject: Re: Prom time
Date: May 2, 2006 10:14:58 AM PDT
To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

Although HOMECOMING usually denotes a series of occasions (parade, pep rally, football game, dance, etc.)--whereas (as Arnold remarks) PROM refers to a "specific event" (thence some of its oddity to superannuated ears).

From: laurence.horn@YALE.EDU
Subject: Re: Prom time
Date: May 2, 2006 11:14:01 AM PDT
To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

At 3:14 PM -0200 5/2/06, Charles Doyle wrote [above]:...

Not at my kids' high school, or I imagine a lot of others. "Homecoming" as in "attend Homecoming", "who are you going to Homecoming with?", etc. (with a capital, since it is a name), refers to a dance. There's a homecoming game as well, but Homecoming is a specific event, like prom (or is that Prom?).

From: juengling_fritz@SALKEIZ.K12.OR.US
Subject: Re: Prom time
Date: May 2, 2006 3:27:02 PM PDT
To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

I think I'll weigh in on this one. I have kids who have been doing the prom thing for several years now. Prom is no longer (at least here in Salem, Oregon) a specific event. Long gone are the days when you and your date MAYBE went to dinner and then to the big dance. It's a day-long series of events. The question "Who are you going to prom with?" no longer has any meaning. All the kids form groups, so the question is now "Who's in your group?" My son's group had 24, yes, 24 people in it. All the boys got together several weeks before the 'event' and planned what they were going to do. It was like watching a Senate debate. They started out with a trip to the Oregon Garden, had a picnic, went sightseeing in an old town, had a mass dinner, and then there's the pictures. My goodness. What ever happened to mom snapping a few shots with the family Kodak? Oh no, you have to get every possible combination. Each boy with his date, all the boys together, all the girls together, all the boys on one side with all the girls on the other side. And on and on and on. It's enough to make a sane man go mad. Then they somehow make it to the dance. Many kids then do after-dance activities (I won't even mention some of them), like the pancake breakfast. This could literally go on for nearly 24 hours. That's what 'prom' is now, at least here.

From: laurence.horn@YALE.EDU
Subject: "go to prom" goes national
Date: May 26, 2006 6:33:55 AM PDT
To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

From the season finale of "Grey's Anatomy" (ABC-TV)...

The speaker is a 17-year-old girl and ovarian cancer survivor, niece of one of the head doctors on the show, who was brought into the hospital when she passed out while having sex after her senior prom, explaining why she hadn't let anyone know about the severe pains she'd been experiencing for a month prior to the event:

"I wanted to go to prom, I didn't want to be the girl with cancer again."

The medical staff concentrated on her cancer, leaving her anarthrous condition untreated.

From: cdoyle@UGA.EDU
Subject: Re: "Do you do Taco Hell?" / "bus" as non-count n.
Date: December 8, 2006 5:21:58 AM PST
To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

And we discussed the uncounting of "prom" a few months ago.

I used to suppose that a similar development (if it is a development) was more advanced in British English--and among Americans affecting British manners: "at table," "in hospital," "at university," etc. But, of course, we normal folks say "in bed," "at school," "go to college."...

----- Original message -----

Date: Thu, 7 Dec 2006 17:22:15 -0800
From: Jonathan Lighter <wuxxmupp2000@YAHOO.COM>
Subject: "Do you do Taco Hell?" / "bus" as non-count n.
To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

I was sitting just in front of a pair of college kids on a bus on Nov. 21. One was from a California college. She asked her friend, "Do you do Taco Hell?" Of course this meant "Do you patronize Taco Bell restaurants?" Tens of thousands of RG's for "Taco Hell."

Perhaps of greater interest was the question, "So am I going to spend \$100 this weekend riding bus?"

"Bus" as a non-count n.? This is strange to me. And yet my neighbor in grad school one year (1977-78) used to reminisce about "driving truck" in Ohio, and in Tennessee I was once asked, "Do you ever ride bike ?"

In all three cases the speakers (white) showed no other indication of "final cluster reduction." So I believe something is going on with certain vehicular idioms, something that, fortunately, has passed me by.

From: zwicky@csli.Stanford.EDU
Subject: Re: "Do you do Taco Hell?" / "bus" as non-count n.
Date: December 8, 2006 6:57:38 AM PST
To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

On Dec 8, 2006, at 5:21 AM, Charlie Doyle wrote:

>And we discussed the uncounting of "prom" a few months ago.

i argued at the time that this was not a mass use of "prom" (and some other nouns), but a use as a pseudo-proper name.

>I used to suppose that a similar development...

these are standardly treated not as mass uses, but as merely anarthrous uses of count nouns with non-specific reference (arthrous in the american version "Kim is in the hospital" and the like).

"ride bus", "drive truck", and "ride bike" are still another type of case, and i'm not sure at the moment what the right thing to say about them is, though my first guess was that they're related in some way to object-incorporating compounds like "bus-riding", "truck-driving" (and "truck-driver"), etc.; the idea would be that "ride bus" arises from interpreting "bus-riding" as the "-ing" form of a verb "bus-ride" (N+V), which in turn can be seen as a compound version of the syntactic V+Object combination "ride bus". if something like this is right, "bus" (etc.) are just count nouns in their bare form, as is standard in N+X compounds (even when the N is understood as having plural semantics, as in "bird house" 'house for birds' etc.).

From: db.list@PMPKN.NET
Subject: Re: "Do you do Taco Hell?" / "bus" as non-count n.
Date: December 9, 2006 5:17:50 AM PST
To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

From: "Arnold M. Zwicky" <zwicky@CSLI.STANFORD.EDU>

>"ride bus", "drive truck", and "ride bike" are still another type of case...

With my standard disclaimer that I Am Admittedly Clueless When It Comes To Syntactic Analysis, i'm a ride bus/bike/truck[/and even occasionally car!] speaker, and i've always thought

that "ride bus" was a compound word. For one thing (re-insert disclaimer here), i can't think of a sentence containing "ride X" where you could insert a word between the two parts of the construction.

From: laurence.horn@YALE.EDU
Subject: Re: "Do you do Taco Hell?" / "bus" as non-count n.
Date: December 9, 2006 12:32:08 PM PST
To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

At 8:17 AM -0500 12/9/06, David Bowie wrote:

>With my standard disclaimer that I Am Admittedly Clueless When It Comes To Syntactic Analysis,...

That would also be true if it's an incorporation. The analysis as a compound is somewhat thrown into doubt by the stress pattern and the headedness--"ride bus" is not a kind of bus (compare: "That was a long bus ride", which is a kind of ride and which is stressed on the first element. I think "I ride bus" is a variant on "I bus(-)ride", where the latter is stressed on the first element and is a verb (and resists interruption). If "ride bus" were a true compound verb, you'd expect the past tense to be "I ride-bussed", as in "I stir-fried the veggies". And it's certainly not a compound noun. I think it's a weird verb phrase, to introduce a technical term.

From: zwicky@csl.stanford.edu
Subject: Re: "Do you do Taco Hell?" / "bus" as non-count n.
Date: December 16, 2006 9:21:02 AM PST
To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

On Dec 9, 2006, at 5:17 AM, David Bowie wrote:

>With my standard disclaimer...

this would be an unusual type of compound for english -- V+N (rather than N+V as in "babysit"), with accent on the second element (rather than the first), and with the first element (rather than the second) serving as head (past "rode bus", not "ride bused"). it looks just like a verb plus its object, but in an idiomatic (and considerably frozen) combination.

From: zwicky@csl.stanford.edu
Subject: Re: "Do you do Taco Hell?" / "bus" as non-count n.
Date: December 16, 2006 9:01:55 AM PST
To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

On Dec 9, 2006, at 11:54 AM, Charlie Doyle wrote:

>Re. "bus":

>And then we have such "non-count" uses as "go (travel) by bus (car/train/boat/plane/mule/foot)." Or "jump ship" (though I reckon that's pretty much just an idiom now).<

i'm not sure that it's right to see "bus" in "travel by bus" etc. as non-count. i'm more inclined to say that these are idiomatic uses of nouns in their bare forms, and to suggest that we shouldn't have to assign the nouns *in these idioms* to either C or M.

that might also be the thing to say about the nouns in prepositional location idioms like "at/to/in school".

there are, by the way, a huge number of idioms like "jump ship": "give chase", "take charge", "take part", "set sail" etc. (alongside idioms with articles in them, like "take a gander" and "take the fall").

bare nouns appear productively in several places in english grammar, for example as the first N in N+N compounds: "bird sanctuary" has what looks like a singular C noun "bird" as its first element, but it's understood as a plural ('sanctuary for birds') and doesn't have the determiners that are normally required by singular C words. the thing to say about this is that "bird" in "bird sanctuary" is indeed a C noun, but that it's in its bare form. (M nouns can also occur as the first elements of compounds, as in "sand castle" -- also in their bare forms, but these look like ordinary singulars at first glance.)

moving from the morphology-syntax boundary land to just plain syntax: there are several contexts in which bare NPs can occur. some of these have the NPs integrated into the syntax of sentences --

Famous linguist that I am,... [fronted predicative]

Kim is chair of the committee. [predicative in predicate]

Distinguished linguist Joan Bresnan will speak. [adnominal modifier]

but most are isolated, syntactically and prosodically:

vocative: Hey, lady, you dropped your piano.

epithet: Idiot! You've ruined the whole thing!

hot news exclamative: Distinguished linguist! Just to your left!

some further details available at:

<http://www-csli.stanford.edu/~zwicky/isolated.hnd.pdf>

if particular constructions can require bare nominals, then we'd expect idioms to be able to do the same. but in idioms it can be hard to tell whether you're looking at a C or M noun, and maybe there's no need to decide.

there are, of course, ways to convert C to M (and vice versa), sometimes even in idiomatic expressions. example:

"cock"/"dick"/"pussy" in

I really need cock/dick/pussy.

these can be seen to be M uses of normally C nouns, since they occur with characteristic M determiners:

I wasn't getting much cock/dick/pussy.

>By the way, Arnold: Despite my most ardent effort, I'm not wholly persuaded that "prom" (as in "Who are you taking to prom?" or "I wish our schools had prom on different nights") functions like a proper noun,<

i didn't say that "prom" etc. *were* proper nouns, only that they were in some way like them; that's why i called them "pseudo-proper nouns". what they share with proper nouns is their determiner syntax. you might think of them as being like mass nouns (since they refer to extents, and are singular), but they don't occur with mass determiners:

*Much prom was boring. 'Much of prom was boring'
and this is true of event-denoting proper nouns as well:

*Much Christmas was boring. 'Much of Christmas was boring'
they can of course occur with count determiners, but then we're probably looking at the ordinary count common nouns "prom" etc.

>unless we regard "proper noun" in a way that includes such words (as they occur in certain phrases) as "(back from) vacation" or "(on) leave" or "(at) rest"--which I suppose is possible: a special, nonroutine time or occasion.<

i don't know what to say about "at rest", which is fixed in form. but "vacation" and "leave" have uses outside the prepositional idioms, uses that suggest these are like "prom" etc.:

Vacation lasts only two weeks and is over before you know it.

Leave lasts only until Sunday.

similarly, "nap" and various other event nouns:

Nap will be in ten minutes.

>Until pretty recently, "He's on break now" sounded odd to me. And there's the unAmerican "Where did you go for holiday?"<

i'm fine with "break", and it's like "nap" for me:

Break will be in ten minutes.

but "holiday" doesn't work for me at all like "vacation":

*Holiday lasts only two weeks and is over before you know it.

suggesting that "on holiday" is just another prepositional idiom with the bare form of a noun in it.

From: RonButters@AOL.COM

Subject: "bus" as non-count n.

Date: December 16, 2006 9:18:21 AM PST

To: ADS-L@LISTSERV.UGA.EDU

In a message dated 12/16/06 12:02:47 PM, zwicky@CSLI.STANFORD.EDU writes:

>i'm not sure that it's right to see "bus" in "travel by bus" etc. as non-count...

Note that the situation is even more complex, in that one must say also "I take _the_ train/bus/boat/subway/etc." Cf. "I go on _the_ train." That is, the use of the article depends entirely on the verb, which indicates that we are dealing with idioms here, right?

Zwicky:

>i'm fine with "break", and it's like "nap" for me:
Break will be in ten minutes.<

But one can also say:

He's on his break now.
My break will be in ten minutes.

Not so sure about:

?He's taking his nap now.
?I'll have my nap in ten minutes.

Though my problem with the "nap" examples may be pragmatic.