Title: Size matters: Towards a syntactic decomposition of countability
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SIZE MATTERS: TOWARDS A SYNTACTIC DECOMPOSITION OF COUNTABILITY

1. Summary: This paper contributes to our understanding of countability in two ways. First, I derive the various mass and count readings from the interaction between two syntactic features, viz. [Div] (which creates individual items, cf. Borer 2005) and [Size] (which assigns size). Second, I show how crosslinguistic variation in the expression of countability can be reduced to whether [Div] and [Size] each head their own projection or are combined on a single syntactic head (cf. Thrainsson 1996, Bobaljik & Thraínsson 1998, Giorgi & Pianesi 1997 on the IP-domain).

2. Background: the mass-count distinction: Borer (2005) proposes that the default reading for all nouns is mass. She argues that functional projections can be added to the NP to add semantic features to the noun. In particular, she assumes a functional projection DivP that is realized as number marking and that hosts the feature [Div]. This feature serves to divide the mass stuff into countable units. Its presence causes count readings, its absence results in mass readings.

3. The problem and proposal: different types of count reading: Languages distinguish not only between mass (1) and count (2) readings, but also between two different types of count readings, in particular between the kind reading (3) and the unit reading (4). Moreover, in Dutch the diminutive suffix distinguishes between these two readings (5-6) (cf. Borer 2005:92n6, Wiltschko 2007). To derive these readings and to account for the occurrence of the diminutive in Dutch count unit readings, I propose that [Div] alone fails to distinguish between mass and count. More specifically, I assume that countability arises through the interaction between two syntactic features. The first one is [Div], which divides stuff into individual items, and the second one [Size], which assigns size to units. The presence of [Div] can be detected by the possibility of adding numerals and plural marking to a noun, while the possibility of adding a diminutive is an indication of the presence of [Size]

4. Fleshing out the analysis: the interaction between [Div] and [Size] in Dutch:

a) **neither [Div] nor [Size]:** the absence of both features yields canonical mass readings (7). The noun is interpreted as having no size and hence does not combine with a diminutive (8). Plural marking is also impossible (9), indicating the absence of [Div].

b) **only [Div]:** the presence of [Div] in the absence of [Size] yields a kind reading of mass nouns (10). The noun is countable, and as a result, it allows for numerals and plural marking (10). As it has no size, though, it is incompatible with the diminutive suffix (11).

c) **both [Div] and [Size]:** the presence of both [Div] and [Size] yields count unit readings, which can combine with numerals and plural marking (12). Furthermore, since they also have size, they can be combined with the diminutive (13).

d) **only [Size]:** the fourth logical possibility is the presence of [Size] in the absence of [Div]. I claim that this does not exist, as everything that has size is also a unit and is therefore countable by definition.

5. Cross-linguistic variation: the heads that host [Div] and [Size]: I propose that the features [Div] and [Size] are present in all languages, but that the syntactic heads hosting these features can collapse into one. Put differently, languages can have either a split or an unsplit Size/DivP. I follow Borer (2005) in taking plural marking to be the realization of [Div] in non-classifier languages. I further propose that the diminutive is the overt realization of [Size]. In Dutch plural count unit readings the diminutive and plural marking can cooccur (13). I will take the presence of these two separate morphemes as positive morphological evidence for a split structure (17) (cf. Thrainsson 1996, Bobaljik & Thraínsson 1998 on the IP-domain). In German, on the other hand, the diminutive and plural marking are in complementary distribution (14-16). I take this as evidence that [Div] and [Size] are realized on one single head in German. This analysis accounts for the fact that the German diminutive is ambiguous between a singular and plural reading (14): the diminutive hosts [Size] and this feature implies the presence of number (cf. supra), but its value (sg/pl) remains un(der)specified (18). Furthermore, the plural is ambiguous between a unit and a kind reading (15), as [Div] may cooccur with [Size], yielding a unit reading (19), or it may not, yielding a kind reading (20). Time permitting, I will also discuss the ambiguity of English count readings (*beers* 'kinds of beer/glasses of beers') that pattern with German and the Yiddish diminutives that pattern with Dutch, despite their morphological complexity.

(1) I ate chocolate.
(2) I saw the three dogs of the neighbor.
(3) These are two different chocolates: a white one and a dark one.
(4) Grandma gave me two chocolates: one for me and one for my sister.

(5)	Ik bestudeerde twee chocolades	(6)	Ik at twee chocola-tje-s
	I studied two chocolates		I ate two chocolate-dim-pl
	'I studied two kinds of chocolate'		'I ate two pieces of chocolate'
	#'I studied two pieces of chocolate.'		#'I ate two kinds of chocolate.'

a) neither [Div] nor [Size]:

(7)	Ik at chocolade.	(8)	*Ik at chocolaatje.	(9)	#Ik at chocolades.
	I ate chocolate.		I ate chocolate-dim		I ate chocolate-pl
	'I ate chocolate.'				(disallowed under a mass reading)

b) only [Div]:

(10)	Ik bestudeerde drie chocolades.	(11)	# Ik bestudeerde drie chocola-tje-s.
	I studied three chocolates.		I studied three chocolate-dim-pl
	'I studied three kinds of chocolate.'		(disallowed under a kind reading)

c) both [Div] and [Size]:

(12)	Mijn moeder heeft twee honden.	(13)	Oma gaf me twee chocola-tje-s.
	my mother has two dog-pl		grandma gave me two chocolate-dim-pl
	My mother has two dogs.'		'Grandma gave me two pieces of chocolate.'

(14) bier-chen
beer-dim
sg: 'a glass of beer'
pl: 'glasses of beer'

(15) Bier-e
beer-pl
kind: 'kinds of beer'
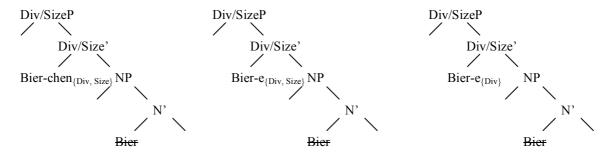unit: 'glasses of beer'

(16)*Bier-chen-s
beer-dim-pl

(17) **Split structure**

(18) **Unsplit structure: unit reading**

(19) **Unsplit structure: unit reading**

(20) **Unsplit structure: kind reading**

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