

**Paucity: where is the upper bound?
(joint work with Paul Marty, ZAS)**

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Paucals have been treated as a number category alongside singular-dual-plural (e.g. Corbett 2001, Harbour 2014), but one whose exact properties are still poorly understood – they rarely show bona-fide agreement on verbs/adjectives, and they seem to involve the notion of an 'upper bound' (e.g. 6 or Miller's magical number seven), even though no other natural language number category involves an upper bound. Rather than postulating yet another feature to handle paucals, we raise the possibility of a distinction between morphosemantics and morphopragmatics, and propose that the upper-bound readings of paucals come from pragmatics, but that their semantics is 'at least two'. In order to show how this can be plausible we present a case study of the English quantifier *a couple*, and demonstrate experimentally that it patterns differently from expressions like *between two and six*, and that in such experiments, speakers allow it to felicitously refer to quantities as high as twelve (similar possibilities are likely for German *ein paar*). This opens the possibility for an analysis of paucals quite generally as lacking a semantically defined upper-bound, and in turn invites a re-examination of the role of pragmatics in the contributing to the use and meaning of inflectional categories – acknowledging, importantly, that there remains a great deal to be done.