

Generics

I. Introduction

- A. Present distinction between generic and non-generic sentences
 - 1. Important to note that the same sentence may be ambiguous between a generic and non-generic interpretation.
- B. Difficulty in providing formal semantic characterization of genericity
- C. Gelman and Raman's three-way understanding of generic interpretation:
 - 1. Morphosyntactic cues
 - a) Subject NP type (bare plurals, (in)definite singulars)
 - b) Tense and aspect
 - 2. Pragmatic cues
 - 3. World knowledge
- D. Present study is mainly concerned with subject NP type and pragmatic cues, particularly whether there is an available referent for the subject NP in the context.
 - 1. Possibly also look at tense and real-world plausibility?
 - 2. We do look at animacy, which can be construed as a type of world knowledge that influences
- E. Present study examines these effects with naturalistic examples generated by study participants.
 - 1. Are there assumptions about generics that are implicit in previous studies of generics that we are avoiding by having participants produce their own sentences?
- F. How much should we highlight the idea that failure to refer is a cue to genericity? If we frame things in terms of the three types of factors that influence generic interpretation, then the failure of reference is only one of these three factors.
- G. Any previous studies of adults?

II. Experiment 1

- A. Collect naturalistic examples from participants
- B. Examine effect of NP type and animacy on genericity ratings
- C. What should we say about genericity ratings of definite plurals?
 - 1. Definite plurals are generally considered to necessarily have non-generic readings in

III. Experiment 2

- A. Experiment 2A
 - 1. Same as Experiment 1, but now with pictures to measure effect of referent in context
- B. Experiment 2B
 - 1. Asking people to interpret with pictures to measure effect of referent in context

IV. Experiment 3

- A. Purpose is to look at ambiguous sentences, where effect of context should be magnified.

V. General Discussion

- A. Main points from introduction
- B. Competing interpretations for subject NP: generic vs. non-generic. Non-generic interpretation is more likely if there is something that it could refer to in context.
- C. Definite plurals?