ZAKI

**Overall**: This manuscript is fascinating, and the work is quite elegant. I think you do a remarkable job in many places explaining concepts that were utterly foreign to me before, but in a way that’s intuitive and accessible. However, there were other sections that lost me, and I think would lose other readers not steeped in this particular approach. If you’d like to broaden readership of this work (or make it maximally clear to even a narrow audience), I have 3 main suggestions. First, there are several times in which you begin a section with a highly abstract description, and later provide concrete examples. Flipping that order would aid the flow of the narrative and help introduce readers to real world concepts prior to hitting them with jargon. Second, I think some of the introductions / discussions to the specific experiments could be fleshed out to include more theory / bring the reader back to the broad concepts with which you’re working (see my comments on pgs. 10-11 especially). Third, and related to suggestion 2, I think it would be fun and broaden the interest value of the paper to insert some (even speculative) language about *why* particular properties change the way readers work with and understand generics (see my comments on pg. 15 especially).

Since you sent a PDF, my comments are below instead of in track changes, denoted by page number.

**Abstract**: The abstract starts with a clear description of the phenomenon, but in my opinion moves a tad quickly to terminology that is quite subfield specific (beginning with “scalar”). This continues throughout (e.g., “generic truth conditions”) in a way that will likely lose more general readers. If you want to broaden your audience, I think there are lots of opportunities to use simpler language. One key phrase where this applies is the description of your model, beginning “wherein the truth condition threshold is underspecified…” As far as I can tell, this means that the language itself does not specify the “truth condition threshold” (a phrase I still don’t understand), but the context in which it is said does. If that’s the case, language like that could help a *lot*.

**1**: Very nice opening graf. You set up a real world puzzle here about how strange and arbitrary seeming the use of generics are.

**1**: Second sentence of the second graf, beginning with “we propose,” like the abstract, could be stated using more everyday language to broaden readership. Language and context, e.g., could be used first, then pragmatics and semantics could be defined explicitly, or some combination.

**2:** When describing the RSA model, it could be helpful to walk through its steps as you do (prior beliefs, conversational pragmatics) using an example, such as “tall.” You did this in class and it worked nicely. You could then move to unpacking a similar example for a particular generic (I’d suggest the WNV case).

**2**: CBG’s use of danger as a manipulation is interesting, but the reader is left wondering why it’s important.

**2**: Again, gender specific generics are interesting, but you should tell us why.

**2**: Nice description of pragmatics and the RSA in the last full graf on this page. Wondering if this could be integrated into your descriptions above. There’s lots of terminological work here that the reader could have used before.

**3**: Ok, so my understanding of this is that speakers who use generics in some way communicate information about the threshold above which they think a statement becomes informative (e.g., 10%), and the listener gathers that information actively. If that’s the case, I think the reader could use at least some language like this onto which they can grab.

**4**: This section is great. The birds / gender / eggs example helps unpack the meaning of pragmatics / information offered by generics in conjunction with a prior threshold (animals are generally 50% female but typically don’t lay eggs). I keep wondering as I read whether these examples could be put up front in more plain English, followed by the more formal descriptions you lead with now.

**4**: The WNV section feels tacked on and could be expanded.

**5**: Small: “also retains this symmetry as well” is redundant.

**5**: The asymmetry is cool / interesting / well explained here: people accept generics as true in a wide range of cases, but believe generics to imply that all / almost all of a target (e.g., animal) carry a particular property.

**5-6**: The dangerous example is fleshed out nicely here, but again I’m left wondering if it would have helped to set the stage for this up front. When you initially mentioned danger as a moderator in describing past work, it was unclear; the text here opens it up. When that’s the case, it’s often worth moving some explanation up to earlier in the narrative.

**6-7**: Nice replication!

**8**: Figure 4 is quite helpful in clarifying the asymmetry as well.

**9**: The hyperprior over prevalence is nicely explained, but I think it could be fleshed out even more given how critical it is. It didn’t come together for me until you specifically described the order of dangerous > non-dangerous, etc.

**10-11**: The introduction to Expt 2 seems a bit too sparse. Why is it so difficult to gather beliefs about domains? Why is this an important question? Why do you think the ways you attempted this constitute a good start? The answer to these qs likely seem obvious to you, but I think they will not be to a naïve reader.

**11**: This methods section feels difficult to parse. I see that Ps made judgments about inferred prevalence of traits, but this seems to have more to do with hyperpriors than with endorsement of a generic statement.

**12**: Passive voice does not work well in the first sentence of the results here, IMO.

**13**: Again I find myself wanting more clarity from the intro to Expt 3. Perhaps an example of an accidental prior, and what you’d expect from it, might help.

**14**: This finding is very cool!

**15**: In response to your q: I think you can highlight again the reasons *why* you think biological priors are privileged in people’s lay theory. I think you could also do this more in setting up Expt 3. It’s super interesting that we treat these categories so differently, and I think worth discussing more of the potential reasons for this effect at both ends of the study.

More generally, I think it could be really cool to integrate more info / theory from other sub disciplines to broaden the connectivity of your approach. For instance, the dangerous hyperprior is consistent with people attending more to negative / salient events in their environment. I know here you concentrate more on the model than on the specifics of why someone would infer prevalence in a particular way for a particular case, but I think digging into (even in just a few sentences) why particular features should affect judgment in the way they do could be fun / increase the interest value of the manuscript.

**16**: Is there a null result for the test between distinct v dangerous properties? That seems key to the theoretical prediction you set up above. In general I think there could be more “connective tissue”

**18**: At the top of the discussion, I again feel like you could widen your potential readership by inserting more plain English descriptions of the phenomenon prior to jumping into descriptions of your formal model, etc.

**20**: Tessler last sentences are great.

**MORELLI**

* This paper test and examines an incredibly difficult and complicated topic and provides some very interesting insights into generic language. I liked the organization and structure of the paper and felt it built logically and felt unified and coherent.
* My main suggestion would be to move some of your key points in the discussion sections of each experiment and the general discussion into the introduction. You have some great nuggets in there that would be great to highlight at the start of the paper. For example, in the general discussion, you state: ““Generics are ubiquitous in natural language. It might seem paradoxical, then, that the semantics of generic statements are underspecified. Why should vague language get so much usage? One possibility is apparent in the lifted variable RSA model: generic language provides interlocutors with the flexibility to convey rich meanings, which are easily understood in context. Generics are vague, but predictable and useful.” I loved this very simple and elegant description and think it would be great to sprinkle into the introduction.
* Related to my previous point, it would be nice to highlight why you think it is so important to model and understand this process. It is interesting, but how will this affect the reader’s own life and experiences? Could you provide an example of individuals that can’t do this and therefore have difficulty understanding or communicating with others? I think sometimes we take this process for granted, so an example of when it breaks down might demonstrate how important this process is!
* I am less familiar with the audience at Journal of Cognitive Science, but I found it difficult to follow a lot of the terms and jargon in the paper. It would be helpful to remove the less necessary jargon and spend some time defining the key terms for your model.
* I really enjoyed your examples and think you could add even more to help the reader follow your more complicated modeling. So, you could continue to draw on the same example even when discussing the results.
* In your intro, you describe each question you will test, but I think you could add more about why it’s critical. For example, you could transport this idea from your experiment discussion to the general intro: “We have seen thus far how a model that takes into account not only the prevalence of a particular property within a category but also crucially across categories can explain the flexibility in truth conditions of a number of different types of properties. We have also seen how bimodal “biological” priors can lead to near-universal implications for generic statements. In the experiments that follow, we explore cases where these effects break down.” This statements
* Another thing you could do is to put some of the more intense details about the model in an appendix or supplementary materials. This could help the average focus on the really critical details and the more sophisticated reader could seek out the details if they want to.

WEISZ

Overall: your explanations in your experiments are very clear, but some of the initial theoretical explanations could be cleaned up. In general there’s a lot of jargon in here that’s new for me. If everyone reading CogSci knows these terms then there is no need for elaboration, but otherwise it would be helpful for n00bs like me to get quick definitions for terms like property, kind, and truth conditions, which have everyday meaning but likely imply something specific here.

**Abstract, Intro, and Section 1**

Not sure if there’s a way around this, but there’s a lot of jargon in in the abstract. I know you’ll define the terms later but I’m wondering if there’s a way to cut this down. Maybe instead of mentioning the traditional scalar account to later contrast with your model, you could just dive in to explaining your model? There’s a period missing in the abstract ( “theoretical importance We”)

I think you can improve the flow in the intro. A few ideas:

“You might use a construction similar to the one from Simple Wikipedia above”. Tell us why one might use this type of construction, and let that definition serve as an introduction to the more abstract concepts you’re about to unload in the subsequent paragraph. You also could maybe roll the first two paragraphs into one. I think you can scrap the sentence “few would argue with the truth…” which breaks up the momentum a bit for me, and then combine paragraphs one and two:

* Imagine talking to a 3 yo
* Oxygen is hard to explain
* You might use a construction like the one from Simple Wikipedia, which conveys a generalization about a category

After 25 years of speaking I apparently haven’t yet mastered the nuances of the English language, but I want to have one more sentence after your last sentence “Some animals breathe oxygen” implies something quite different (Degen, 2015).” What are the conventional boundaries of “some”? Give us a few more words here explaining exactly what is different.

And then I follow you until “flexible truth conditions can be derived”. By this, do you mean that listeners can flexibly update their thresholds based on inferences from situational cues?

**Section 1.1**

I really like your use of the speaker/listener example to unpack your formula, and think you could feature this more throughout the paper. I think you have another really nice example waiting to be made even nicer in the paragraph starting with “A natural foil”. If I’m following you, you’re saying that truth of a generic statement is evaluated based on the exemplar’s relation to an inferred comparison group. Birds, (unlike other animals) lay eggs. This is true because when compared to other animals (our inferred comparison group) birds do lay more eggs. When you say birds are female, we have the same expectation for a feature distinguishing birds from other animals. But wait! It isn’t a distinguishing feature. So therefore the generic “Birds are female” is false. I think you could make this clearer by mentioning the nature of the listener’s expectations. That seems to be the important point that isn’t being explicitly made.

There’s a sentence, “(i.e. after ruling out everything below 10%, the most probably prevalence will be 50%)”. Might you mean most “probable prevalence”?

**Experimental Methods**

These were the clearest parts of the paper for me. It wasn’t clear what a truth condition was until we get down here, and I think there’s space for you to explain it earlier on. But again, if this is in the vocabulary of your journal consumers then don't need more.

The passage: The prevalence scores from each task were entered into a linear mixed model with a by-participant random effect of intercept; the fixed effects were property-type, task, and their interaction. Our results replicated the asymmetry finding of CBG that the generic statement was interpreted as having a higher prevalence than its truth conditions entail (i.e. main effect of task; β = 28.8; *SE* = 4.3; *t* = 6.6; *p* < 0.001; see Fig. 3, right). In the original study, this asymmetry was not observed for sentences using the quantifier “most”; however, we did not replicate this effect here.

Not sure if this is just a feature of the journal, but your readers might want a few words on your replications/nonreplications

In section 3.1, “For instance, when you know that a particular property is rare, a different prior distribution of that property over kinds (i.e. a different prevalence prior) is called to mind, than if the property is common.” I think this sentence (and others like it) explaining abstract ideas could be followed by a concrete example of the phenomenon you describe.

In section 3.2,It might be nice for you to give another concrete example down in section 3.2 too, “Our case is not so opaque… 0% of the kind have the property.” You might make it even less opaque with an example of inferences people draw from generic statements ☺ What about translating these findings back into language you used earlier?

**General Results & Discussion:**

I think this would improve clarity for all of your results if you interpret your data in terms of your central problem. What does each of your findings mean in terms of listeners’ tendencies to draw certain inferences? Zoom out at the end and reconnect your findings back to your initial questions.

Cool stuff MHT!

Kenthirarajah

Great paper! The ideas in this paper are very complex - at the very least, difficult to explain. You must have a very large working memory capacity to think and write about this topic ☺

Abstract:

This may likely be because I am not in your field, but I had to read the abstract several times to follow even some of it ☹ It’s not to say it’s poorly written but it’s written at a very high level, the ideas are very complex and it felt very cognitively taxing. But because you are constrained by brevity in an abstract, it may be difficult to explain terms to make it less cognitively taxing.

I would avoid use abbreviations in the abstract, e.g., Expt. But that convention may be allowed for the type of journal you are writing to.

One way to cut down the abstract, and thus leaving more words to explain complex topics, is to move the synopsis of Cimpian et al.’s work into the lit review section of the introduction.

Main paper:

Perhaps it’s the topic, but again I felt like each sentence contained several field-specific words that I wasn’t familiar with, making it difficult to follow. Was “truth conditions” defined at some point or is it a colloquial use of the meaning?

You might try putting CBG’s quote on pg 2 in your own words. I think you can be more profound than them, Michael ☺

On page 2 of your introduction, I like your use of the two styles of in-text citations as Bem discusses. It really does make a difference, I think!

Sometimes terms are used that are not explained. An example is “prevalence priors” or “soft-max decision rule.” But maybe these are basic terms in your field that everyone knows…

On page 4, you alternate between the two notations; Cimpian et al. 2010 and CBG. That led me to think perhaps they were publications by the same authors from different years when in fact I believe they reference the same paper.

I like the future directions section! It’s broad and relatable to many.

In certain places, more details would be useful. For example, on pg. 19, you wrote “like the one presented by Kao et al. (2014).” I couldn’t find the place in the paper where Kao’s model was explained.