

Preliminaries

- We use generic sentences to talk about general habits, tendencies, kinds.
 - 1) Dogs are mammals.
 - 2) A soccer player makes lots of money.
 - 3) Mary smokes cigarettes after dinner.
 - 4) This printer prints 1000 pages per minute.
 - 5) The giant panda is an endangered species.
 - 6) Dinosaurs are extinct

- At least some of the sentences above are used to convey generalizations about particular individuals or particular situations:
 - 7) Dogs are mammals
(generalization over individuals. Cf. with *Fido is a mammal*)
 - 8) A soccer player makes lots of money.
(generalization over individuals. Cf. with *Ronaldo makes lots of money*)
 - 9) Mary smokes cigarettes in class.
(generalization over situations. Cf. with *Yesterday, Mary smoked a cigarette in class.*)

- Sentences like (7) – (9) seem to have a function similar to sentences containing nominal or adverbial quantifiers. For instance:
 - 10) All dogs are mammals.
 - 11) Every soccer player makes lots of money.
 - 12) Mary always/usually smokes cigarettes in class.

- Thus, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that sentences like (7) – (9) contain a covert quantifier. Roughly:
 - 13) a) Q_x (x is a dog) (x is a mammal)
true iff d-many dogs are mammals

 - b) Q_x (x is a soccer player) (x makes lots of money)
true iff d-many soccer players makes lots of money.

 - c) Q_s (s contains Mary and s is an in-class situation) (Mary smokes cigarettes in s)
true iff d-many in-class situations (of what size??) s that contain Mary are situations in which Mary smokes cigarettes.

- But how many is d-many?
- 14) Dogs are mammals
- 15) Birds fly
- 16) Mammals bear live young
- 17) Spaniards eat blood sausage.
- 18) Primary school teachers are female. (Cohen 2002)
- 19) People are over three years old. (Cohen 2002)

Sentences (14)-(17) are all true. But what makes them true? (14) holds for all dogs, (15) for most birds, (16) for most female mammals (probably less than half the total numbers of mammals), and (17) for (perhaps) few Spaniards. On the other hand, (18) holds for most primary school teachers, and (19) for most people, and, yet, (18) and (19) are false.

- 20) Mary smokes
- 21) This printer prints 1000 pages per minute.

It seems that for (20) to be true Mary has to have smoked on at least a few occasions. However, (21) can be judged to be true even if the printer is brand-new and hasn't been used yet.

The quantificational hypothesis must face the difficult task of reconciling our intuitions about sentences like (14)-(21) with the proposal that all of these sentences contain the same null quantifier.

- There are generic sentences that definitely cannot be given a quantificational account. They don't express generalizations about particular entities.
- 22) The giant panda is an endangered species.
- 23) Dinosaurs are extinct
- 24) Palm trees are widespread

[Suppose that we represented (22) as $Q_x (x \text{ is a giant panda}) (x \text{ is an endangered species})$. What would the quantifier have to be?]

- Cases like (22) – (23) are usually considered to be cases of kind-predication (see Krifka et. al. 1995 and references therein)
- 25) a) Endangered-species (Giant Panda)
b) Extinct (Dinosaur)
d) Widespread (Palm trees)

- So we have two types of genericity.

Type 1: kind-predication

Type 2: generalizations over particular individuals or situations.

- Only Type 2 is potentially amenable to a quantificational account.

- A lot of the literature on generics is devoted to questions such as:
 - Can any generic sentences be given a quantificational analysis?
 - If so,
 - What range of data can the quantificational analysis cover?
 - What is the semantics of the generic quantifier? How can the quantifier be defined in a way that accounts for the diversity or readings that we have seen in (14)-(21)?
- We will start to approach these questions by studying the proposal in Carlson 1977.
- On to the next handout....