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Genericity in second and third language acquisition
An overview of the ADIM project (WP4)

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AcqVA
Acquisition Variation Attrition

Generic meanings (Krifka & Gernster 1987, Krifka et al. 1995)

Kind reference

- Genericity comes from the DP

- D-generics

- Abstracting away from particular objects

extinct

Characterizing reference

- Genericity comes from the whole sentence

- Characterizing statement

- I-generics

- Abstracting away from particular events

have a mane

Genericity: a brief overview

- Expression of genericity is universal
- No language has a specific linguistic marker for marking genericity
- Languages use readily available forms that also have other meanings
- The difference between existential and generic meaning is disambiguiated by context

- Genericity is different from quantified NPs

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Genericity marking

- Complexity of mapping between formal and semantic cues

- Forms for existential meanings are also used to denote generic meanings

- Complexity within languages and between languages

- Morphosyntactic cues, pragmatic cues, and world knowledge
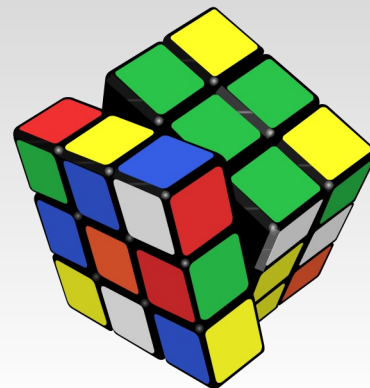
Genericity as the default? (Gelman & Raman, 2003)

- Marked more by the absence of markers than by their presence
- Many devices available within languages to mark that something is specific, that locate the NP in an identifiable context
- Generics are not pinned down to a context

Form and generic meaning (in English)

Kind reference

The dodo is extinct.

A dodo is extinct.

*Dodo is extinct.

Dodos are extinct.

#The dodos are extinct.

Characterizing reference

The lion has a mane.

A lion has a mane.

*Lion has a mane.

Lions have a mane.

#The lions have a mane.

Other meanings

Definite singular   Anaphoric/unique (*The dog* in the kitchen is cute.)

Indefinite singular   Non-specific indefinite (*Everyone likes a cookie*.)
Specific indefinite (*A dog* is sitting next to you.)

Bare plural/mass   Non-specific indefinite (*Everyone likes cookies*.)
Specific indefinite (*Brown dogs* are on the lawn.)

Influence on the L2 and L3

- Acquisition of generics: the task is not simply to acquire a particular form.

- Evidence that mapping of previously acquired languages can influence the mapping on the additional languages (Barton 2015, Kupisch 2012).

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Potential factors affecting acqusition

- Types of expression: functional morphology or context
- How many meanings are expressed in one form
- Frequency of the form–meaning mapping in the input to learners
- Dialectal differences
- Age
- Previous language experience

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The ADIM project

- Testing genericity in L3 acquisition
- Participants

Adults	Adolescents
L1 Polish	L1 Polish-Norwegian
L2 English	L3 English
L3 Norwegian	

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Availability of forms (concrete nouns)

	Def Sg	Indef Sg	Bare Sg	Bare Pl	Def Pl
POL	X	✓	✓	✓	X
ENG	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
NOR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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		Def. sg	Indef. sg	Bare sg	Bare pl	Def. Pl
Existential	Polish		√	√	√	
	English	√	√		√	√
	Norwegian	√	√	≈	X	√
Characterising	Polish		X	√	√	
	English	√	√		√	X
	Norwegian	√	√	√	√	?
Summary		POL≠ENG =NOR	POL≠ENG= NOR	POL=NOR ≠ENG	POL=NOR =ENG	
Kind	Polish		X	√	√	
	English	√	X		√	X
	Norwegian	√	X	X	√	√
Summary		POL≠ENG =NOR	POL=NOR= ENG	POL≠ENG ≠NOR	POL=NOR =ENG	POL≠ENG≠ NOR

		Def. sg	Indef. sg	Bare sg	Bare pl	Def. Pl
Existential	Polish		√	√	√	
	English	√	√		√	√
	Norwegian	√	√	≈	X	√
Characterising	Polish		X	√	√	
	English	√	√		√	X
	Norwegian	√	√	√	√	?
Summary		POL≠ENG=NOR	POL≠ENG=NOR	POL=NOR≠ENG	POL=NOR=ENG	
Kind	Polish		X	√	√	
	English	√	X		√	X
	Norwegian	√	X	X	√	√
Summary		POL≠ENG=NOR	POL=NOR=ENG	POL≠ENG≠NOR	POL=NOR=ENG	POL≠ENG≠NOR

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Kind	Polish		X	√	√	
	English	√	X		√	X
	Norwegian	√	X	X	√	√
Summary		POL≠ENG =NOR	POL=NO R=ENG	POL≠ENG ≠NOR	POL=NOR= ENG	POL≠EN G≠NOR

Science and Technology

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Characterising	Polish		X	√	√	
	English	√	√		√	X
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Kind	Polish		X	√	√	
	English	√	X		√	X
	Norwegian	√	X	X	√	√
Summary		POL≠ENG =NOR	POL=NO R=ENG	POL≠ENG ≠NOR	POL=NOR= ENG	POL≠EN G≠NOR

Example of Def plural ENG ≠ NOR

(1) Dodoene   er utryddet.   Kind reading

     dinosaur-DEF.PL are extinct

(2)   Sebraene   har striper.   Characterizing reading

     zebra-DEF.PL   have stripes

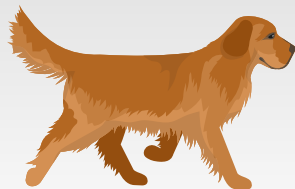(3)   #The dodos are extinct.   NO kind reference

(4) The zebras have stripes.   Only episodic

Bare singulars ENG ≠ NOR

(5) Det er sunt å ha
hund/*hunden/?en hund/
hunder/*hundene

'It is healthy to have *(a) dog.'

- (Almost) only appear in object position, or underlying objects, not Agents.
- A restricted set of verbs (*have* verbs)
- Type denoting

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Possible additional noun type

- Abstract singulars (*childhood*-type nouns)
- English: bare nouns have a generic reading
- Polish: bare (no articles), and ambiguous between definite and generic
- Norwegian: generic with a Def. sg, but the bare sg may also be acceptable

Dzieciństwo jest magiczne/Barndommen er magisk/Childhood is magical

Bare sg   Def sg   Bare sg

Predictions

	L3 Nor		L3 Eng	
	Kind	Char	Kind	Char
Def. sg	(+)ENG	(+)ENG	(+)NOR	(+)NOR
Indef. sg	(+)ENG (–)POL	(+)ENG (+)POL	(+)NOR (–)POL	(+)NOR (+)POL
Bare sg	(–)POL	(+)POL	(–)NOR (–)POL	(–)NOR (–)POL
Bare pl	(+)ENG (+)POL	(+)ENG (+)POL	(+)ENG (+)POL	(+)ENG (+)POL
Def. pl	(–)ENG	(–)ENG	(–)NOR	(–)NOR

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The experiment

- Online testing
- 3 separate tasks: AJT for singulars, AJT for plurals, and a production task
- AJT as a forced choice task
- We will measure response accuracy and RTs

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Example

I går lærte jeg at mange dyrearter på jorda er utrydda. For eksempel er det slik at...

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dodoen er utryddet
(the dodo)

en dodo er utryddet
(a dodo)

Production task

- Participants must complete an unfinished answer on the basis of a question, an image-pair and a given word. (Miller 2016, Boglioni 2022)

    In the world, there are many animals that have horns (but many others don't).

SWALLOW

What animals have horns?
_____ have horns.
Expected answer: **Goats**
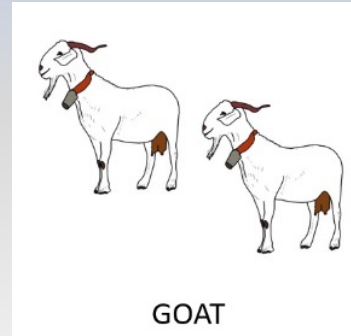
GOAT

Fillers

- **Definiteness** fillers for AJT on singulars
- **Existential** fillers for AJT on plurals

Mary has two dogs and a cat.

Yesterday the cat… ✔️   ❌ Yesterday a cat…

(Ionin & Montrul, 2010)

Fillers

- Definiteness fillers for AJT on singulars
- **Existential** fillers for AJT on plurals

Story11
In our zoo, we have two very unusual tigers. Most tigers eat meat all the time. But our two tigers are vegetarian: They love to eat carrots, and they hate meat.

Tigers like meat.
TRUE   FALSE

(Ionin & Montrul, 2010)

Tigers like carrots. ❌

The tigers like carrots. ✅

Thank you for listening.
Comments and questions?

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