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1. Episodic versus generic or habitual sentences

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| (1) Mary ate oatmeal for breakfast <i>this morning</i> . | EPISODIC SINGULAR |
| (2) Mary <i>eats</i> oatmeal for breakfast. | GENERIC/HABITUAL |
| (3) Mary and George ate oatmeal for breakfast. | EPISODIC ITERATIVE |
| (4) Each student in the class handed in a completed assignment. | EPISODIC ITERATIVE |
| (5) Every day <i>last week</i> , Mary ate lunch at a restaurant. | EPISODIC ITERATIVE |

EPISODIC sentences

—express information about particular events (1)

—includes examples where a plurality of individuals or events occurs: (3-5) exemplify sentences which are episodic but whose truth-values depend upon multiple occurrences of particular events

GENERIC OR HABITUAL sentences

—express regularities about the world which constitute generalizations over events and activities

(2)

—the truth of (2) does not depend on Mary eating oatmeal for breakfast at any particular time and place, but instead it is the regularity of occurrence that is asserted, and the truth conditions of the sentence are tied to that regularity.

2. 'Iteratives and habituals are NOT the same thing'

2.1 Iteratives

See Comrie (1976) p. 27 for extended comments on the use of the term 'iterative' in Slavonic linguistics, also Filip and Carlson (1997).

Iteratives are a subclass of aspectual operators, and do not produce generic or habitual sentences but rather are episodic in nature.

Payne (1997): "Iterative aspect is when a punctual event takes place several times in succession." (p. 39)

An iterative operator generates a series of events of the same type, which occur in a sequence (i.e. not simultaneously) and are intuitively connected with one another in time (i.e. not spaced "too far" apart).

Examples:

—semelfactive verbs like *cough* or *flap (a wing)*;

John coughed can be understood as saying that he coughed once, or in a series, repetitively;

—some languages mark iteratives morphologically: e.g., by an inflectional affix on the verb; reduplication, as in Quileute (Native American language in western Washington state, in the United States, see Greenberg et. al. (1978)).

—Iteratives, *when specifically marked*, also lend themselves to additional implications:

intensity and/or prolongation. In English, *John coughed and coughed* is iterative in interpretation and also implies that he coughed each time with intensity and/or that he coughed for a prolonged period, possibly also implying that the intensity or prolongation are inappropriate, or a sign that something is wrong. These implications, however, are not a part of iterativity per se, but an additional, associated meaning above and beyond.

—the PROGRESSIVE often implies iteration (i.e., with base verbs that are thought of as describing short or punctual events). In *The bird is flapping its wings* the most natural interpretation is that there is a series of wing flappings (though an extended single flap might also be described in this way). Iteratives are not the same as progressive and other ‘continuous’ constructions, having different and distinguishable semantic contents.

2.2. Habituals and generics

- do not denote a connected series of events, even though intuitively repetitiveness is involved
- Terminology is not entirely standardized:
 - one also finds the terms “customary”, “usitative”, “nomic”, and “frequentitive” applied to generics and habituals, though occasionally with more specialized meanings.
 - The term “generic” predominates in the formal semantics literature;
 - “habitual” appears most dominant in the more descriptive literature;
 - Some reserve the term “generic” for habitual sentences with subject noun phrases that have generic (kind reference) rather than specific reference, though this is not standard practice.
 - The term “habitual” itself is potentially misleading. Lyons (1977) notes that, “The term ‘habitual’ is hallowed by usage; but it is something of a misnomer in that much of what linguists bring within its scope would not generally be thought of as being a matter of habit” (p. 716):

- (6) Glass breaks easily. (a disposition)
- (7) Bishops move diagonally. (a rule of a game)
- (8) Robert works for the government. (an occupation)
- (9) Soap is used to remove dirt. (a function)
- (10) A wise man listens more than he speaks (a moral injunction)

- Generics and habituals may be morphologically marked,
 - normally by an inflectional affix (as in Slavic languages or Swahili) or a free form in the verb’s “auxiliary” complex, though also through a wide variety of other formal means.
 - Habitual markers are typically classified as members of the aspectual system (but Filip and Carlson 1997 argue against this view),
 - In languages that have such habitual markers, in addition to this morphological marking, they also have a variety of lexical means available (e.g. “tends to”, “has a habit of”, etc.), and habituality/genericity is a component of meaning of most frequency adverbs such as *usually*, *often* or *always*.

- (11) É-du-a mçli. Ewe cited in Payne (1997)
3sg-eat-HAB rice
‘S/he eats rice.’

- Examples of habitual/generic markers (see e.g., Dahl 1985):
 - Guarani (indigenous language spoken in South America's interior (Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia),
 - Georgian (Caucasian language family),

- Kammu (Austroasiatic language spoken in Thailand, Northern Laos),
- Czech (West Slavic),
- Akan (Niger Kongo language family spoken in Ghana),
- Wolof (Senegal, Gambia, and Mauritania, and the native language of the Wolof people),
- Swahili (or Kiswahili is a Bantu language; Niger Kongo language family; spoken in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Comoros),

Swahili: verbal prefix *hu-* (Dahl 1985)

a. Wanawake wa-na-fanya kazi ya kuchokoa pwesa.

(i) 'The women are catching squid.'

(ii) 'The women catch squid.'

b. Wanawake **hu-**fanya kazi ya kuchokoa pwesa.

women **GEN-**do work of catching squid

'The women (generally) do the work of catching squid.'

- Guyanese English,
- Tamazight (Berber languages North Africa),
- Awa (Papua New Guinea),
- Zapotec (indigenous language spoken in Mexico),
- Navajo (Athabaskan language of Na-Dené stock spoken in the southwestern United States), etc.

- Properties of habitual/generic morphological markers:

FORMAL

—Habitual/generic morphological markers cooccur with predicates classified as EVENTS and PROCESSES, but not, in general, with STATIVE predicates (see Comrie 1976; Mourelatos 1978/81; Bach 1981, 1986; Parsons 1990); i.e., they interact with the EVENTUALITY DESCRIPTION type of their base predicates, or with their ASPECTUAL CLASS (in the sense of Dowty 1979).

—Most commonly, in languages which have specific morphological expression of habituality, one can also express habituality via a REGULAR (USUALLY TENSED) FORM, i.e., interaction with TENSE;

—often these forms are in the IMPERFECTIVE ASPECT if the language makes an imperfective/perfective distinction (GRAMMATICAL ASPECT),

—though also very commonly in the maximally unmarked tensed forms of the language, see Dahl's (1995) *minimal marking tendency for genericity* (Filip 2009, 2011 argues against Dahl's generalization).

—Specialized remote past tense forms are common, functioning like English *used to*.

—Formal distinctions not associated with the auxiliary and inflectional system of the verb also may be reflective of a habitual/episodic distinction, some examples:

- the *wa/ga* distinction in Japanese (roughly, *wa* 'familiarity', topic marker; *ga* subject marker)
- the *når/da* 'when' distinction in Scandinavian (*da* similar to episodic *when*-clauses in English, and clauses introduced by *når*, corresponding to all other uses of *when*-clauses in English),
- the *ser/estar* distinction in Spanish.

SEMANTIC

—differences are occasionally noted in languages which have a marked and an unmarked expression of habituality, but to date little research has been conducted on this question;

—While on occasion iterative forms and habitual forms are identical, this is not indicative of any special semantic connection as more commonly languages use syncretic future forms, progressives, and imperfectives to express habituality, among a wide variety of other possibilities.

3. The semantics of genericity/habituality

- Generics and habituals are **ASPECTUALLY STATIVE** (though derived from a nonstative), or at least shares major properties with other statives:
 - in a narrative discourse a generic sentence does not ‘move’ the time forward, as do events and processes, but rather, like other instances of statives, appears to provide **BACKGROUND OR SETTING** information.
 - have the **SUBINTERVAL PROPERTY** (Bennett and Partee 1972; Dowty, 1979). That is, if a habitual is true for a period of time, it is also true for any smaller interval within that same period of time, no matter how short.
- Generics and habituals also have an **INTENSIONAL** component of meaning lacking in episodics (Dahl 1985). This intensionality may be observed, in part, in the “non-accidental” understanding of generics and habituals. This is the notion that the varying events generalized over are a part of a larger generalization, and not some happenstance (Pelletier and Schubert, 1989). For example, imagine you encounter some very, very small town in which all residents, entirely unbeknownst to one another, chew (only) sugarless gum. It could be sheer happenstance, but if one accepts the following as true:

(12) Residents of this town chew sugarless gum

- i. one commits to the notion that this is not sheer happenstance, but that there is some underlying cause or causes of this particular behavior (e.g. the town dentist instructs people to avoid sugared gum; it is the only brand the local store carries, etc.).
 - ii. The particular cause or causes need not be specifically identified, but it does give rise to the *counterfactual implication* that if a person were to become a town resident, he or she too would likely chew sugarless gum, too, as a result of becoming a town resident, even if they had not done so before.
- Being generalizations, generics and habituals also have the property of **TOLERATING EXCEPTIONS**. The initial instinct is to treat generics and habituals as *universally quantified* sentences. However, if you learn that Elena eats oatmeal for breakfast, she need not eat oatmeal at every breakfast. Or, the commonly found example *Birds fly* is tolerant of exceptional penguins, ostriches and other flightless birds. The limits of this exceptionality has proven extremely difficult to quantify—how long must Elena go without eating oatmeal for breakfast before the generalization no longer holds? How many flightless birds need there be in order for *Birds fly* no longer to be thought true?
 - While some quantitative understanding of exceptionality plays a role, most researchers agree that generics and habituals require an additional component of meaning, or a different arrangement of meaning altogether, to give an account of exceptionality. The most commonly assumed semantic analysis of habituals and generics is outlined in Krifka et. al. (1995).

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