**Generics in Proportion**

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Generics have proved resistant to semantic theorizing. This is mainly because generics can be used to express propositions with radically different quantificational forces. We will call it *The Positive Data*. Nguyen (2019) argues that only his radically pragmatic account and Sterken's (2015) indexical account are compatible with the positive data. However, their accounts seem to have difficulty explaining what we call *the Negative Data*.

| | **The Positive Data**[1] | **The Negative Data**[2] |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | [A few] mosquitoes transmit malaria. | [#The] mosquitoes transmit malaria. |
| 2 | [Many] barns are red. | [#Not many] barns are red. |
| 3 | [All] prime numbers are odd. | [#Not all] prime numbers are odd. |
| 4 | [Under normal circumstances, almost all] ravens are black. | [#At least five] ravens [in the zoo] are black. |
| 5 | [By definition, all] round squares are round. | [#By definition, no] squares are round. |

The negative data shows that not all quantificational forces are compatible with generics. Nguyen's and Sterken's accounts are flexible enough to accommodate the variety data but are not constrained enough to explain the negative data. We would like to do better.

Any empirically adequate account of generics must account for the positive data and the negative data. We propose a semantics for generics that accomplishes this. We appeal to an adverb of quantification Gen that can freely quantify over either individuals or situations:

**Preliminary Definition of Gen**

$[\![\text{GEN}]\!]^c = \lambda F_{<\varepsilon,t>}.\ \lambda G_{<\varepsilon,t>}.\ \frac{\#F\&G}{\#F} \geq \theta_c$, where $0 < \theta_c \leq 1$.

Here, "ε" is a neutral semantic type for either "e" (= the semantic type for entities/individuals) or "s" (= the semantic type for situations). On our account, Gen is like a proportional quantifier such as "many," "most," etc. $\theta_c$ is contextually determined. This semantics can account for the positive data and the negative data as well as—once slightly revised—difficult data concerning conjunction and alternative sensitivity. The details are beyond the scope of this short abstract. But if we are right, our approach has significant explanatory power.

| | **Data Point 1 (Alternative Sensitivity)** | **Data Point 2 (Conjunction)** |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Lions have manes. (T)<br>#Lions are male. | Elephants live in Africa. (T)<br>Elephants live in Asia. (T)<br>⇒ Elephants live in Africa and in Asia. (T) |
| 2 | Lions give birth to live young. (T)<br>#Lions are female. | Sea turtles die young. (T)<br>Sea turtles live long. (T)<br>⇒ #Sea turtles die young and live long. |

The alternative sensitivity data suggests that a generics "Fs G" is true only if Fs are especially likely to G, relative to some comparison class. The conjunction data suggests that (i) "Fs G" and "Fs H" sometimes jointly entail "Fs G and H" and that (ii) sometimes "Fs G" and "Fs H" do not jointly entail "Fs G and H."

**References**

Nguyen, A. 2019. The radical account of bare plural generics. *Philosophical Studies* (Online First).
Sterken, R. 2015. Generics in context. *Philosophers' Imprint* 15: 1–30.

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[1] Only the unbracketed material is overtly pronounced. The bracketed material indicates the quantificational force of what is asserted.
[2] The "#" indicates that the depicted reading is unavailable. For example, (1*) reports that one cannot utter "mosquitoes transmit malaria" to non-figuratively mean that *few mosquitos transmit malaria*.