# Generics, Habituals, and Iteratives

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p0020 Like iteratives, generics and habituals may be morphologically marked, normally by an inflectional affix 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 a member of the aspectual system, though this morphological marking is in addition to the variety of means lexically available (e.g., "tends to," "has a habit of") and is a component of meaning of most frequency adverbs such as usually, often, or always. Payne

is often implicit in the linguistic form, which is a dyadic relation between the interpretations of two constituents partitioned from the sentence it is operating on, a "restrictor" and a "matrix" or "nuclear scope," in keeping with the most commonly accepted semantic analysis of quantification. As this dyadic operator is focus-sensitive, generic sentences can be ambiguous, according to which constituent meaning is assigned to the restrictor and matrix. For example, Milsark (1974) notes the ambiguity of the sentence Typhoons arise in this part of the Pacific. As discussed in Carlson (1989), if the subject noun phrase typhoons is understood as the restrictor, and the predicate of the sentence is understood as the matrix, then the interpretation assigned is akin to asserting that generally speaking, if something is a typhoon, it then arises in this part of the Pacific ocean (and not elsewhere). If, on the other hand, in this part of the Pacific is assigned to the restrictor, then the resulting interpretation is that, in this part of the Pacific, there arise typhoons (from time to time), and perhaps elsewhere as well. Word order in English and other languages can affect how the sentence is partitioned by this and other focus-sensitive operators (Diesing (1992) discusses German (Standard German) at some length). For instance, the English sentence In this part of the Pacific arise typhoons has only the latter of the two readings.

p0050    Krifka et al. (1995) describe the generic operator as a "default quantifier" in order to account for exceptionality and intensionality. Other researchers take a different approach, such as modifying possible worlds to enrich the interpretive structure with a notion of "normality" or "prototypicality" (e.g., Eckhardt, 2000; Heyer, 1987). The basic idea here is that one can reduce the generic operator to a universal statement relativized only to the most typical or normal individuals of the domain, or to "normal worlds." Cohen (1999) suggests that the generic operator is a quantificational operator similar in contents to "most," though relativized to a partition of individuals and situations that is pragmatically driven, and not determined by the focus structure of the sentence. For instance, in asserting that mammals bear live young, one is partitioning the set of mammals by gender and age, as only mature (fertile) females have such capability. Meanings of habituals and generics are often expressed in Artificial Intelligence and Computer Science by way of default reasoning systems and non-monotonic logics. Such systems are designed to draw logical conclusions in the face of absence of information. According to this understanding then, a generic or habitual is information assumed to hold for any given relevant instance, unless specific information is given otherwise.

AU:6

S a : Aspect and aktionsart (00261); Event-based semantics (01037); Generic Reference (00274); Extensionality and Intensionality (01039); Quantifiers, The semantics of (01116).

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## Abstract:

Generics, habituals, and iteratives all have something to do with the notion of event repetition. However, iteratives expressly state repetition of events, whereas generics and habituals designate generalizations over repeated events. Though not adhered to uniformly, a 'habitual' sentence makes a generalization over repeated events with subject noun phrases denoting individuals or groups of individuals, whereas a ''generic'' sentence has a subject that denotes a type of thing. Generics and habituals are distinguished from iteratives in several ways, among them that the former sentences are stative, whereas the latter are nonstative. Generics and habituals introduce intensionality. Generics and habituals are also focus-sensitive.

## Biography:

Greg Carlson (M.A. University of Iowa, 1974; Ph.D. University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 1977) has been at the University of Rochester in Rochester, New York, since 1987, where he is Professor of Linguistics, Philosophy, and