

## Regulative Generics in English and Bulgarian

This paper examines English and Bulgarian regulative generics, which express rules used to affect addressees' behavior (i.e. telling them how things ought to be) as in (1), rather than presenting descriptive generalizations (i.e. making claims about the way things are) as in (2). Regulative generics have long been recognized as a class (Burton-Roberts 1977, Cohen 2001), but it is less clear how generics come to have this use. To what extent is their form determined by their semantic value, and to what extent does it depend upon particular grammatical properties of a given language? We argue that number plays an essential role in regulative generics, with all such being singular cross-linguistically. However, whether and how (in)definiteness figures into regulatives depends on the particular grammatical properties of a language.

English regulative generics involve indefinite and singular (I-S) subjects due to their "exceptionless" status. English makes a distinction, not available in all languages, between "exceptionless" I-S generics as in (2a) and "characterizing" I-P (indefinite plural) generics as in (2b). The former are understood as being true of every atom and the latter as admitting exceptions. Thus, in English, regulatives as in (1) which express rules that normalize every atom's behavior, are typically expressed by I-S exceptionless generics.

- (1) A Boy Scout is not selfish.  
 (2) a. A mosquito is an insect/ #carries malaria. (I-S exceptionless generic)  
 b. Mosquitos are insects/ carry malaria. (I-P characterizing generic)

Examining regulative generics in Bulgarian, we find that (in)definiteness is not the consistent identifier of regulatives, but that number is. In contrast with English, all Bulgarian generics always display definiteness (3) and the language does not make a distinction between exceptionless and characterizing generics.

- (3) a. Komar-*ət* e nasekomo/ prenasja maraija (D-S)  
 mosquito-the is an.insect/ carries malaria  
 'The mosquito is an insect/ carries malaria.'  
 b. Komari-te sa nasekomi/prenasjat malarija (D-P)  
 mosquitos-the are insects/ carry malaria  
 'The mosquitos are insects/ carry malaria.'

In the expression of generics, Bulgarian allows definiteness to be expressed on the predicate, when the predicate takes the form of a participial phrase. In (4a), definiteness consists of a definite determiner *-iyat* affixed to the participle *roden*, and in (4b), we see definiteness expressed in the form of a deictic determiner *tozi*. Here again, the generic subject may be a bare singular or plural. Definite determiners may accompany the subject nominals in (4). However, in these cases the definite determiner serves to indicate contrastive focus (5).

- (4) a. Evrein e/sa roden-**ijat**/ rodeni-**te** ot Evrejska majka  
 Jew is/are born-**the** to Jewish mother  
 b. Evrein e/sa **tozi/tezi** roden/rodeni ot Evrejska majka  
 Jew is/are **this** born to Jewish mother  
 'A Jew is/are (one who is) born to a Jewish mother.'/ 'Jews are (those who are) born to a Jewish mother.'
- (5) a. Evrein-**ət**/Evrei-**te** e/sa roden-**ijat**/ rodeni-**te** ot Evrejska majka  
 Jew is/are born-**the** to Jewish mother  
 b. Evrein-**ət**/Evrei-**te** e/sa **tozi/tezi** roden/rodeni ot Evrejska majka  
 Jew is/are **this** born to Jewish mother  
 'A Jew (as opposed to others) is (one who is) born to a Jewish mother.'/ 'Jews (as opposed to others) are (those who are) born to a Jewish mother.'

Finally, in Bulgarian the regulative meaning is expressed only through the contrast induced by singular definite marking, (6). The indefinites are ruled out (7), and the plural definite indicates a characterizing generic (8).

- (6) Bojskaut-**ət**      ne ləže  
 boy.scout-**the**    not lie  
 ‘A boy scout does not lie.’
- (7) \*Bojskaut/Bojskauti    ne ləže/ləžat  
 boy.scout/boy.scouts    not lie  
 (‘A boy scout does not lie.’/ ‘Boy scouts do not lie.’)
- (8) Bojskauti-**te**      ne ləžat  
 boy.scouts            not lie  
 ‘Boy scouts (in general) do not lie.’

The singular feature of a regulative arises in the context of its normally being used to address an individual. In English, I-S generics’ exceptionless property frames regulative use (i.e. “you are an exception to the generic property ascribed to all atoms of your kind, and you should stop”). Bulgarian utilizes the contrastive properties of the definite determiner to frame regulative use (i.e. “you contrast with other atoms of your kind with regard to this property, and you shouldn’t”).

In Cohen (2001), regulative expressions are denoted through the application of a rule. More precisely, a regulative generic is used to make the assertion that a rule (headed by the ‘!’ operator) is “in-effect” (i.e. is the current norm). In order to account for the differences between English and Bulgarian, we depart from Cohen and propose that each rule contains an additional operator that determines the scope or force of the rule.

In the case of English, the regulative stipulation is that there be no exceptions, and the most felicitous form for expressing this involves the use of the indefinite and the insertion of a universal quantification operator  $\forall$ . Thus, any arbitrarily selected entity (as expressed by indefiniteness) must satisfy the conditional inside the rule (which utilizes the universal operator), as shown in (1’).

- (1’) IN-EFFECT (!  $(\forall \mathbf{x})$  (boy-scout(x)  $\Rightarrow$   $\neg$ (selfish(x)))

For Bulgarian, the regulative stipulation points to the undesired contrast between the addressee and the prescribed behavior. As Bulgarian does not distinguish between exceptionless and characterizing generics, with all generics tolerating some exceptions, the English model of interaction between indefiniteness and universal quantification does not work. Thus, instead of a universal quantifier interacting with indefiniteness, a covert **Gen** operator (which, unlike the universal quantifier, tolerates exceptions) interacts with contrastive focus (which in and of itself requires definiteness) to denote regulative force, as shown in (1’').

- (1’’) IN-EFFECT (! (**Gen x**) (bojskaut(x)  $\Rightarrow$   $\neg$ (ləže(x)))

From our comparison of regulatives in two languages, we find some properties (singular) to be attributable to their semantic/pragmatic function, while other properties (the use of (in)definiteness and discourse markers) to depend upon language-particular semantic distinctions and the morphological categories available to mark these.

#### REFERENCES

- Burton-Roberts, N. (1977). “Generic Sentences and Analyticity.” *Studies in Language*, 1: 155-196.  
 Cohen, A. (2001). “On the Generic Use of Indefinite Singulars.” *Journal of Semantics*, 18: 183-209.