**HYPOTHESES**

**Hypothesis 1:** Children will differentiate between bare noun phrases and demonstrative noun phrases with respect to generic interpretations.

**Hypothesis 2:** If genericity is dependent on plurality (e.g. Chercheu, 1998; Dayal 2004) then bare singulars should elicit fewer generic responses than bare plurals.

**Hypothesis 3:** If the generic bias is due to natural kinds, children should have fewer generic interpretations with non-natural kinds.

**EXPERIMENT 1**

We conducted the English experiment to compare the results with the Russian experiment. The English experiment replicates Perez-Leroux et al. 2004 but with an extra character in the pictures.

**METHODS**

- 22 children recruited from preschools in Michigan (younger: mean age 3:11, SD=2:10; and older: mean age 6:6, SD=1:8) and 25 adults from Michigan State University as a control group participated in Experiment 1.
- Participants received a set of eight stories describing atypical members of a kind, randomly mixed with 9 fillers. Each story was accompanied by a picture.

**RESULTS**

- The prompts contained either bare nouns or demonstrative noun phrases.
- Target responses to different conditions included: Do these zebras have spots? (No determiner and non-canonical); Do these zebras have stripes? (No determiner and non-canonical); Do these zebras have spots? (Yes/no and canonical); Do these zebras have stripes? (Yes/no and canonical).
- The proportion of generic responses to the bare plurals was higher for the English-speaking children than for the Russian-speaking children (64% younger and 82% older) while adults almost never give generic responses to the definite noun phrases.
- Both children and adults gave a higher proportion of non-generic responses to bare noun phrases by children (60% younger and 65% older) compared to adults (8%). The fact that adults appear to not always give generic responses simply reflects different world knowledge, not lack of generic readings per se.

**EXPERIMENT 2**

Since the Russian bare nominal is ambiguous between a definite and a kind, will this affect children’s interpretations on the same task?

**METHODS**

- 20 children recruited from the preschool in Tula, Russia (younger: mean age 3:2, SD=1:20; and older: mean age 5:3, SD=1:8) and 8 adults from Tula State Pedagogical University as a control group participated in Experiment 2.
- The design of the experiment was the same as in Experiment 1.
- The prompts contained either bare nouns or demonstrative noun phrases.
- Target responses to different conditions included: Does this zebra have stripes? (No determiner and non-canonical); Do these zebras have stripes? (No determiner and non-canonical); Does this zebra have spots? (Yes/no and canonical); Do these zebras have spots? (Yes/no and canonical).

**RESULTS**

- ANOVA showed a significant effect of group (F[2,41]=16.56, p<.001) and group by determiner interaction (F[2,41]=4.477, p=.012).
- Children in both groups gave a higher proportion of non-target generic responses to demonstrative noun phrases. The Russian error by adult was small.
- Although the bare plural is ambiguous between a generic and a non-generic reading, adults overwhelmingly preferred the generic interpretation, especially when the question was delayed. Only the younger children seem to allow both readings, and then only in the immediate context.

**CONCLUSIONS**

- The results of the study indicate that Russian children have a generic bias in their interpretations of bare nominals in this task just like English-speaking children.
- The type of genericity does not affect the comprehension.
- Importantly, contra Dayal 2004, who argued that bare singulars in Russian are never generic, children and adults have no problem assigning generic readings to the bare singular.
- It remains to be explained the high proportion of generics with the demonstrative. We speculate that perhaps the imperative markers are for both children and adults a more important cue to generic reference than the demonstrative itself.