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## **Generic Quantification, Blocking Principle and Lexical-Semantic Classes**

An important task for the study of the syntax and semantics of generic quantification is to describe which noun phrase types can be used in different syntactic positions in characterizing sentences. In my paper, I will present questionnaire data for a number of Dutch dialects.

Attention will be drawn to some contrasts between Standard Dutch and dialects of Dutch. One relevant difference is illustrated in (1a), where a (kind-referential) definite plural is used in subject position. In Standard Dutch, sentences such as (1a) are claimed to be well-formed under characterizing interpretations (Ter Meulen 1995: 356), but most of the dialect speakers participating in my study find (1a) unacceptable.

- (1) a. De mollen zijn blind.  
the moles are blind  
b. Mollen zijn blind  
moles are blind

The ill-formedness of (1a) is relevant from the perspective of the Blocking Principle proposed by Chierchia (1998: 360). This principle states that type-shifting is blocked if a language can achieve the same effect by overt means. A concrete prediction of this principle is that sentences such as (1b) are grammatical in the relevant dialects: we expect it to be possible for the noun phrase *mollen* to refer to a kind, because the same effect cannot be achieved by overt means, as is illustrated in (1a). This prediction is borne out.

An important point in my paper is that in many cases the well-formedness of characterizing sentences depends on the lexical-semantic class of the (count) noun. An example of this is that in a number of the dialects in which (1a) is unacceptable, sentences such as (2a), in which a nationality name is used, are well-formed. I will argue that this is a problem for principles like Chierchia's Blocking Principle.

- (2) a. De Chinezen eten met twee stokjes.  
the chinese eat with two sticks-DIM  
b. Chinezen eten met twee stokjes  
chinese eat with two sticks-DIM

A more plausible conclusion is that the difference in acceptability between (1) and (2) is based on purely language/dialect-specific selectional restrictions of (kind-

referential) definite articles. This position seems to be more in line with Longobardi (1994: 633-634). In my paper, I will discuss some more questionnaire-based results in support of this conclusion.

## References

Chierchia, Gennaro. 1998. 'Reference to Kinds across Languages.' *Natural Language Semantics* 6: 339-405.

Longobardi, Giuseppe. 1994 'Reference and Proper Names: a Theory of N-Movement in Syntax and Logical Form.' *Linguistic Inquiry* 25: 609-665.

Ter Meulen, Alice . 1995. 'Semantic Constraints on Type-Shifting Anaphora.' In: Gregory N. Carlson and Francis Jeffrey Pelletier (eds.) *The Generic Book*. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press. 339-357.