

The Expression of Genericity in English and Brazilian Portuguese: An Experimental Investigation

Tania Ionin, Silvina Montrul, and H elade Santos
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

1. Introduction

There has been much semantic literature on the distribution of NP/DP forms in different generic environments. The difference between genericity expression in English and in various Romance languages (notably French, Italian and Spanish) have been addressed by Vergnaud and Zubizarreta (1992), Krifka et al. (1995), Chierchia (1998), Longobardi (2001), and Dayal (2004), among many others. The expression of genericity in Brazilian Portuguese (BrP), which differs both from other Romance languages and from English, has been examined by Schmitt and Munn (1999, 2002), Munn and Schmitt (2005), and M uller (2002, 2003). At the same time, there is disagreement in the literature – especially that on BrP – concerning the availability of generic readings to different NP/DP types. Given the subtlety of some of the judgments, and the disagreements in the literature, it is important to test the judgments of linguistically naive native speakers using controlled experimental methodologies.

The study reported in this paper has two goals. The broader goal is to experimentally test the availability of generic and kind interpretations of different NP types in both English and BrP. The more specific goal is to test the theoretical proposal of Dayal (2004), which makes testable predictions for the distribution of generic NP forms cross-linguistically.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. The expression of genericity in English

In English, three NP types can be used with generic interpretations: definite singulars ((1a)), indefinite singulars ((1b)), and bare plurals ((1e)). Definite plurals lack generic readings: the only reading available to (1d) is that some salient hummingbirds (e.g., the ones in our garden) are birds; unlike (1e), (1d) cannot be a statement about hummingbirds in general. Finally, bare singular count nouns ((1c)) are ungrammatical in English, with any interpretation.

- (1) a. The hummingbird is a bird. [definite singular]
b. A hummingbird is a bird. [indefinite singular]
c. *Hummingbird is a bird. [bare singular]
d. #The hummingbirds are birds. [definite plural]
e. Hummingbirds are birds. [bare plural]

While generic readings are available to (1a-b,e), they result from more than one semantic mechanism. As discussed in Krifka et al. (1995), there are two types of genericity. First, there is genericity at the NP/DP level: some NPs/DPs can denote kinds, as evidenced by their compatibility with kind predicates such as *be extinct* or *be widespread*. As shown in (2), kind readings are available to definite singulars and bare plurals, but not to indefinite singulars. Second, there is genericity at the

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sentence level: generic or *characterizing* sentences express generalizations, and the generic force is due to a sentence-level generic operator (see Krifka et al. 1995 for a review of the literature on the semantics of the generic operator). As shown in (3), all three NP types can occur in generic sentences; while indefinite singulars cannot denote kinds on their own ((2b)), they obtain generic readings in characterizing sentences ((3b), as well as (1b)), through binding by the generic operator.

- (2) NP-level genericity:
- a. The dodo bird is extinct. [definite singular]
 - b. #A dodo bird is extinct. [indefinite singular]
 - c. Dodo birds are extinct. [bare plural]
- (3) sentence-level genericity:
- a. The brown bear is (typically) dangerous. [definite singular]
 - b. A brown bear is (typically) dangerous. [indefinite singular]
 - c. Brown bears are (typically) dangerous. [bare plural]

While it is generally agreed that both definite singulars and bare plurals in English have kind readings ((2a,c)), there is much debate about their precise semantics. In the case of bare plurals, proponents of the Ambiguity Approach (Krifka 1988, Wilkinson 1991, Diesing 1992, among others), working in the framework of Heim (1982), treat bare plurals as ambiguous between kind readings (manifested in (2c)) and indefinite readings. On their indefinite readings, bare plurals behave just like indefinite singulars and can be bound by a generic operator (so that (3c) is derived just like (3b)) as well as occur in episodic sentences. In contrast, proponents of the Kind approach (Carlson 1977, Chierchia 1998, Dayal 2004) treat bare plurals as unambiguously kind-denoting, and propose that in sentences like (3c), the generic operator quantifies over instances of the kind.

In the case of definite singular generics ((2a), (3a)), there is general agreement that they are in some way distinct from “regular” definites, which occur in anaphoric and other non-generic environments (see Ojeda 1991, Chierchia 1998, Dayal 2004 for different semantic analyses). Vergnaud and Zubizarreta (1992) noted that English definite singular generics are subject to a ‘species’ restriction (this has also been termed a ‘well-defined kind’ restriction by Krifka et al. 1995). While a definite singular generic is fully compatible with a species name like *brown bear* ((3a)), it is not compatible with a non-species / non-well-defined kind like *angry bear*, hence the infelicity of (4a). There is no such restriction on indefinite singulars (4b) or bare plurals (4c). As noted by Dayal (2004), the ‘well-defined kind’ restriction on definite singular generics is largely pragmatic, and the kind reading even of non-well-defined kinds can be coerced, given the right context.

- (4) sentence-level genericity with a non-well-defined kind
- a. #The angry bear is (typically) dangerous. [definite singular]
 - b. An angry bear is (typically) dangerous. [indefinite singular]
 - c. Angry bears are (typically) dangerous. [bare plural]

2.2. The expression of genericity in Brazilian Portuguese

It is well-known that English differs from most Romance languages in its expression of genericity with plural NPs. While English allows generic/kind readings for bare plurals ((1e)) and disallows them for definite plurals ((1d)), the opposite is true for French, Spanish and Italian. In these languages, generic/kind readings are expressed by definite plurals, while bare plurals lack generic readings (in French and Spanish, bare plurals are generally ungrammatical in preverbal position; in Italian, they are possible with existential readings; see Chierchia 1998). BrP is unique in that it expresses generic readings with both bare plurals (like English) and definite plurals (like other Romance languages). Furthermore, it allows generic readings for all three types of singular expressions – definite, indefinite, and bare. This is shown in (5), which is the BrP translation of (1).

- (5) a. O beija-flor é uma ave. [definite singular]
 b. Um beija flor é uma ave. [indefinite singular]

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------|-------------------|
| c. | Beija-flor é ave. | [bare singular] |
| d. | Os beija-flores são aves. | [definite plural] |
| e. | Beija-flores são aves. | [bare plural] |

While there is general agreement in the literature that indefinite singulars in BrP ((5b)), like those in English ((1b)), obtain generic readings through a sentence-level generic operator, there is less agreement on the source of genericity with the other NP types. For example, Müller (2002) argues that BrP definite singulars ((5a)) and definite plurals ((5d)) can denote kinds (and hence appear with predicates such as *be extinct*, cf. (2)), but that bare singulars ((5c)) and bare plurals ((5e)) lack kind readings. In contrast, Schmitt and Munn (1999, 2002) provide examples indicating that kind readings are available to both bare and definite NP types in BP.

A further question is which NP forms are subject to the ‘well-defined-kind’ restriction. Vergnaud and Zubizarreta (1992) argue that this restriction is specific to English definite singulars ((4a)), but does not affect definite singular generics in Romance languages such as French. Dayal (2004) disagrees, and suggests that this restriction is a property of definite singular generics cross-linguistically. Finally, Müller (2002) indicates that both definite singular and definite plural kind terms in BrP are affected by this restriction.

2.3. Semantic framework: Chierchia (1998), Dayal (2004)

For the purposes of this paper, we adopt the semantic framework of Chierchia (1998) and Dayal (2004), with the inventory of semantic operators from Partee (1987). The two operators relevant for our discussion are the extensional iota operator, ι , and its intensional counterpart, \cap . As shown in (6a), ι maps properties to the maximal individual satisfying that property; this is the semantics of canonical definiteness. As shown in (6b), \cap maps properties to functions from situations to the maximal entity that satisfies that property in that situation; this is the semantics of kind-formation.

- (6) a. $\iota: \lambda P \iota x [P_s(x)]$
 b. $\cap: \lambda P \lambda s \iota x [P_s(x)]$

Both operations can in principle apply either overtly (via an overt determiner) or covertly (to a bare NP). According to the *Blocking Principle* proposed by Chierchia (1998), if a language has an overt determiner that lexicalizes a particular operation, this blocks the covert application of this operation. Thus, in English, the definite determiner *the* encodes the ι operator; application of the *Blocking Principle* ensures that bare NPs in English lack definite readings. The \cap is not lexicalized in English, so definite plurals lack kind readings ((1d)); \cap applies covertly, which is why bare plurals can have kind readings, as in (1e) and (2c). In contrast, languages like French and Spanish lexicalize both ι and \cap , with the result that definite plurals have both definite and kind readings, and bare plurals lack both. However, this approach cannot capture the facts of BrP, in which both bare and definite plurals have kind readings ((5d-e)).

The BrP facts can be more successfully captured on Dayal’s (2004) account. Adopting Chierchia’s overall framework, Dayal further proposes that ι is central to definiteness, while \cap is peripheral. The result is that any language with definite articles must lexicalize ι , whereas it may or may not lexicalize \cap ; furthermore, on this account, the *Blocking Principle* must apply to ι , but does not necessarily apply to \cap . Dayal thus predicts three different options for the interpretation of plural NPs. First, there is the “English” option, in which ι is lexicalized and \cap is not, so that bare plurals have kind readings while definite plurals have definite readings. Second, there is the “Romance” option, exhibited by French, Italian and Spanish: both ι and \cap are lexicalized, and the *Blocking Principle* applies to both, so that definite plurals have both definite and kind readings, while bare plurals have neither. The third option is one that, according to Dayal, is exhibited by (some dialects of) German (data from Krifka et al. 1995): both ι and \cap are lexicalized, but the *Blocking Principle* applies only to ι . The result is that definite plurals have both definite readings (via ι) and kind readings (via \cap), but kind readings are also allowed for bare plurals: since the *Blocking Principle* does not affect \cap , this operation can apply either overtly (to definite plurals) or covertly (to bare plurals). While Dayal does not discuss the distribution

of plural NPs in BrP, it is nicely captured by the “German” option; Dayal’s proposal explains why both definite and bare plurals in BrP have generic readings ((5d-e)) (consistent with Dayal’s proposal, bare plurals in BrP, as in English, lack definite readings).

Finally, Dayal’s proposal makes specific predictions for the distribution of definite singular generics. Dayal argues that definite singular generics are semantically distinct from (either bare or definite) plural generics: while plural generics are derived by \cap , Dayal proposes that definite singular generics are derived by ι applied to a taxonomic NP. For example, a definite singular NP like *the hummingbird* can mean either “the unique individual hummingbird” (non-taxonomic reading), or “the unique taxonomic entity hummingbird” (taxonomic reading, as in (1a)). In contrast, a plural generic like *hummingbirds* in (1e) means, roughly, “the kind whose members have the property of being hummingbirds”. Dayal provides empirical support for this proposal by showing that (i) quantification over members of the kind is available to plural but not singular generics; and (ii) NPs have taxonomic readings independently of the determiner that they combine with (cf. *The (kind of) lion is extinct, A (kind of) lion is extinct, Every (kind of) lion is extinct, Two (kinds of) lions are extinct* – Dayal 2004, p. 243). Dayal further suggests that the ‘well-defined kind’ restriction on definite singular generics ((4a)) is a pragmatic consequence of definite singular generics denoting taxonomic entities: brown bears are taxonomic entities, but angry bears are not.

2.4. Predictions of Dayal’s (2004) account for genericity in Brazilian Portuguese

Dayal’s proposal makes several important predictions. In this section, we spell out the relevant predictions of Dayal’s account, and apply these predictions to BrP.

Prediction 1: Definiteness marking is obligatory with singular generics. On Dayal’s account, definite singular generics are derived by the ι operator; therefore, every language which has definite articles (and hence lexicalizes ι) is predicted to have definite singular generics. The facts of English are consistent with this: English lexicalizes ι , and hence has both non-generic definites and definite singular generics (1a); since it does not lexicalize \cap , it does not have definite plural generics (1d). Applied to BrP, this proposal predicts that kind (taxonomic) readings of singular NPs in BrP should be obligatorily expressed via the definite article, as in (5a); bare singular kind terms should be ungrammatical. This is because definite singular kind terms are derived by ι , and the *Blocking Principle* obligatorily applies to ι , blocking the kind readings of bare singulars. To the extent that BrP bare singulars can have generic readings (5c), these are indefinite readings, with the generic force coming from a sentence-level generic operator: it is predicted that BrP bare singulars should be ungrammatical with kind predicates such as *be extinct*, as in (2), where the generic reading is coming from the NP level rather than the sentence level.

Prediction 2: Definiteness marking may be optional with plural generics. In the case of plurals, however, definiteness marking may be optional: since kind-reference with plurals is derived via \cap , and since the *Blocking Principle* does not have to apply to \cap , both definite and bare plurals in BP may express kind readings, and be compatible with kind predicates. Thus, BrP is predicted to pattern like German (Krifka et al. 1995), with obligatory definiteness marking for singular kind terms, but optional definiteness marking for plural kind terms.

Prediction 3: The ‘well-defined kind’ restriction applies to definite singular generics only. On Dayal’s account, the ‘well-defined kind’ restriction is a pragmatic consequence of the taxonomic readings of definite singular kind terms. This restriction is predicted to hold for definite singular generics cross-linguistically, in BrP as well as in English. In contrast, this restriction is predicted *not* to hold for plural generics, whether bare or definite, in any language; plural kind terms are derived by \cap , which can apply to any NP, not just taxonomic NPs.

The relevant points of Dayal’s proposal are summarized in Table 1.

3. Experimental study

The goal of our study was to empirically test the predictions of Dayal’s proposal for English and Brazilian Portuguese. We did so by comparing native speakers’ judgments of the five NP types exemplified in (1) and (5) in two different contexts: a context of kind-reference, in which the NP

appears with a kind predicate, as in (2); and a context of sentence-level genericity with a non-well-defined kind, as in (4).

Table 1. Summary of Dayal's proposal, for languages with definite articles.

	canonical, non-generic definites	singular kind terms	plural kind terms
Derived by	the ι operation	the ι operation applied to a taxonomic NP	the \cap operation
Definiteness marking?	obligatory	obligatory	varies by language: can be obligatory (Spanish), optional (Brazilian Portuguese), or obligatorily absent (English)
Subject to the 'well-defined kind' restriction?	n/a	yes	no

3.1. Methods

We tested the predictions of Dayal's proposal via a written Acceptability Judgment Task (AJT) with contexts. Two version of the AJT were created, one in English and the other in BrP. Both versions were placed on the internet using the survey gizmo tool. The English AJT was completed by 22 native English speakers (mean age = 26, range = 19 to 56), who were tested in Illinois.¹ The BrP AJT was completed by 19 native speakers of BP (mean age = 20, range 18 to 33), tested in Brazil. All participants were college-educated, and most were college students at the time of the study.

The AJT consisted of 40 items (20 test items and 20 fillers), and each item was a paragraph-long story followed five different target sentences. The participants were asked to rate each sentence for its (un)acceptability in the context of the story, using a scale from 1 (unacceptable) to 4 (acceptable). The participants were explicitly instructed that they did not have to rank the sentences, and could give the same rating to two or more sentences. For the test items, the five sentences were identical except for the form of the subject NP (and the corresponding agreement on the verb), as in (1) and (5). The fillers tested differences of tense and aspectual interpretation. The 20 target items were broken down into five categories of four items each; we discuss two of the categories here: NP-level genericity, and sentence-level genericity. Of the remaining three categories, two tested NPs in anaphoric definite contexts, and one tested mass nouns. Participants performed as expected in these categories (e.g., in the anaphoric definite categories, both English and BrP participants rated definite NPs high and bare NPs low).

The category of NP-level genericity is exemplified in (7) for English, and in (8) for BrP (a direct translation of (7)). In this category, the subject NP is followed by a kind predicate. The sentences prefaced with a \surd are predicted to be rated high, on the basis of the predictions in Section 2.4, and those with a # are predicted to be rated low. As shown in (7)-(8), we predict definite singulars and bare plurals to be rated high in this context in both languages; in BrP, definite plurals should also be rated high, in contrast to bare singulars, which are predicted to be rated low, like indefinite singulars.

- (7) *NP-level genericity (kind-reference)*: I really like going to the zoo. Unfortunately, there are many animals that can't be found in a zoo, or anywhere else. It's very sad. For example...
- \surd The dodo bird is extinct. [definite singular]
 - #A dodo bird is extinct. [indefinite singular]
 - #Dodo bird is extinct. [bare singular]
 - #The dodo birds are extinct. [definite plural]
 - \surd Dodo birds are extinct. [bare plural]

¹ The English participants were originally tested as the native control group for a study of genericity in the second language acquisition of English (see Ionin, Montrul, Kim and Philippov, under review; Ionin, Montrul and Crivos, under review), and completed two other tasks after the AJT; the BrP speakers completed the AJT only.

- (8) *NP-level genericity (kind-reference)*: Eu gosto muito de ir ao zoológico. Infelizmente, há vários animais que nós não vemos mais no zoológico ou em nenhum outro lugar. É muito triste! Por exemplo...
- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| a. | √O pássaro dodô está extinto. | [definite singular] |
| b. | #Um pássaro dodô está extinto. | [indefinite singular] |
| c. | #Pássaro dodô está extinto. | [bare singular] |
| d. | √Os pássaros dodô estão extintos. | [definite plural] |
| e. | √Pássaros dodô estão extintos. | [bare plural] |

The category of sentence-level genericity is exemplified in (9) for English and in (10) for BrP (a translation of (9)). In this category, the subject NP denotes a non-well-defined kind (e.g., ‘green lamp’) and occurs in a characterizing sentence. As shown by the √ and # marks, indefinite singulars and bare plurals are predicted to be rated high in both languages. In BrP, definite plurals and bare singulars are also predicted to be rated high, since both allow generic readings in this language. Definite singulars are predicted to be rated low in both English and BP, because of the ‘well-defined-kind’ restriction.

- (9) *sentence-level genericity (with non-well-defined kind)*: My brother has been in a bad mood lately. And no wonder: his apartment is so uncomfortable, it must be very depressing to live there. And he has a very dim and unpleasant overhead light. I told him he should buy a new lamp, something pleasant. For example, I know that...
- | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| a. | #The green lamp is very relaxing. | [definite singular] |
| b. | √A green lamp is very relaxing. | [indefinite singular] |
| c. | #Green lamp is very relaxing. | [bare singular] |
| d. | #The green lamps are very relaxing. | [definite plural] |
| e. | √Green lamps are very relaxing. | [bare plural] |
- (10) *Sentence-level genericity (with non-well-defined kind)*: O meu irmão tem estado de mal humor ultimamente. Não sem motivo: o apartamento dele é muito desconfortável e deve ser muito deprimente morar lá. E ele tem um lustre com uma luz muito fraca e desagradável. Eu disse a ele que ele deveria comprar uma luminária nova: alguma coisa agradável. Por exemplo, eu sei que...
- | | | |
|----|---|-----------------------|
| a. | #A luminária verde é muito relaxante. | [definite singular] |
| b. | √Uma luminária verde é muito relaxante. | [indefinite singular] |
| c. | √Luminária verde é muito relaxante. | [bare singular] |
| d. | √As luminárias verdes são muito relaxantes. | [definite plural] |
| e. | √Luminárias verdes são muito relaxantes. | [bare plural] |

3.2. Results

The results of the AJT are given in Figure 1 for the NP-level genericity category ((7)-(8)) and in Figure 2 for the sentence-level genericity category ((9)-(10)). The figures report the mean ratings for the five sentence types in each category, and the error bars indicate standard deviations. As shown by the figures, in both languages, and in both categories, those sentences that were predicted to be acceptable (as indicated by the √ sign in (7)-(10)) received ratings of 3.0 or more on a scale from 1 to 4, while those sentences predicted to be unacceptable (as indicated by the # sign) received ratings below 2.5 (the midpoint of the scale). Thus, the numerical results largely support our predictions. The predictions are also supported by the statistical analysis.

Turning first to the category of NP-level genericity (Figure 1), we find that in English, the two sentence types predicted to be acceptable – definite singulars and bare plurals – were rated significantly higher than the other three sentence types.²

² We conducted a repeated measures ANOVA on each language-category combination, with sentence type as the within-subjects category, with 5 levels; as each ANOVA yielded a highly significant effect of sentence type, we conducted post-hoc Bonferroni comparisons between each pair of sentence types, within each category. All

Figure 1. Mean ratings in the NP-level genericity category, by category ((7)-(8)).

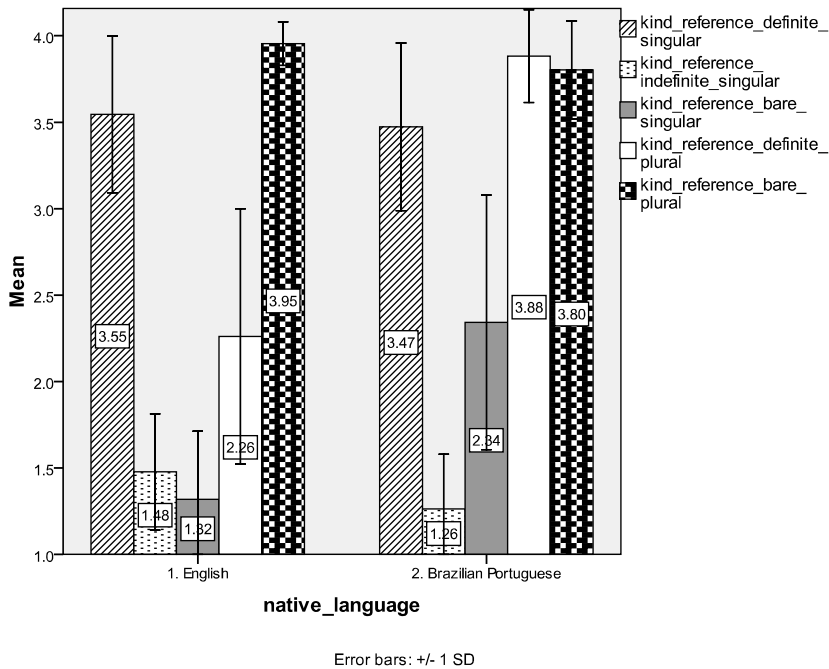
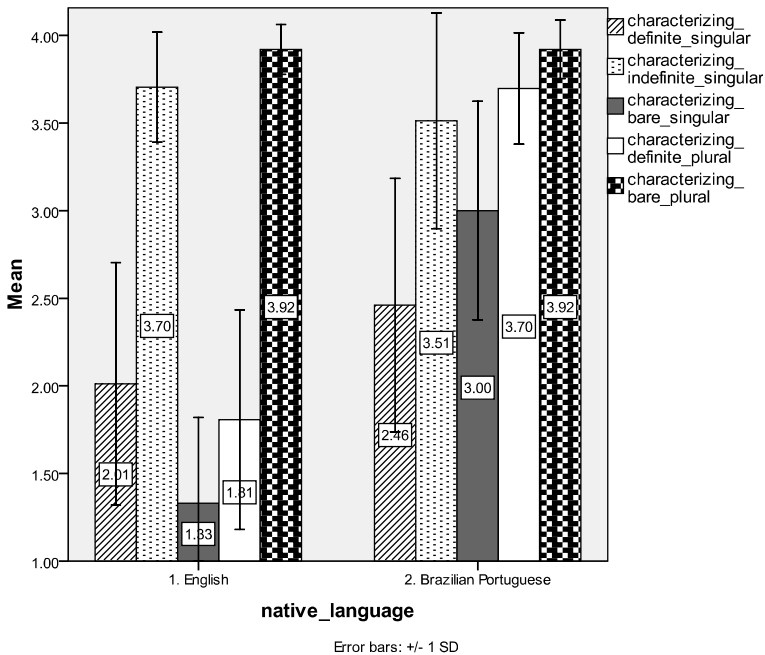


Figure 2. Mean ratings in the sentence-level genericity, by category ((9)-(10)).



significant results reported here are significant at the alpha level of .05, with a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons. For reasons of space and readability, we do not report the results of every pairwise comparison (across the two languages and the two categories, there were 40 such pairwise comparisons), but focus on those that directly test our predictions, i.e., on the comparisons between those sentences that we predicted to be acceptable and those that we predicted to be unacceptable.

Similarly, in BrP, the three sentence types predicted to be acceptable with kind-reference – definite singulars, definite plurals, and bare plurals – were rated significantly higher than the other two sentence types. In both languages, definite singulars were rated lower than plurals (this difference reached significance for the definite singular / bare plural comparison in English, and for the definite singular / definite plural comparison in BrP), which indicates that plurals are the preferred way of talking about kinds. However, importantly for our purposes, definite singulars were still rated numerically and statistically higher than the other categories of singulars.

In the category of sentence-level genericity (Figure 2), for English, the two sentence types predicted to be acceptable – indefinite singulars and bare plurals – were rated significantly higher than the other three sentence types; indefinite singulars were rated marginally lower than bare plurals ($p=.058$), but still much higher than all the other categories. In BrP, all four sentence types predicted to be rated high – indefinite and bare singulars, definite and bare plurals – were rated significantly higher than definite singulars, the only category predicted to be affected by the ‘well-defined kind’ restriction. At the same time, bare singulars were rated significantly lower than both bare plurals and definite plurals (but no differently from indefinite singulars).

3.3. Discussion

We now revisit the predictions in section 2.4, and find that they were largely supported. In line with Prediction 1, we found that definiteness marking with kind terms is obligatory: in the context of NP-level genericity ((7)-(8)), both English and BrP speakers rated definite singulars high and bare singulars low. While this is hardly surprising for English – in which bare singulars are ungrammatical with any reading – it is quite interesting to find that this held for BP as well. In contrast, BrP speakers rated bare singulars relatively high (on a par with indefinite singulars) in the context of sentence-level genericity ((10)). Thus, while bare singulars with generic readings are grammatical for BrP speakers, they appear to obtain generic force from a sentence-level operator, much like indefinite singulars; in contrast, definite singulars in BrP, as in English, can denote kinds at the NP-level.

Prediction 2 was fully supported: definiteness marking was found to be completely optional for BrP plurals, with bare and definite plurals being rated equally high not just in the context of sentence-level genericity ((10)) but also with kind-reference ((8)). BrP is clearly different from English, in which definite plurals were found to be unacceptable in both contexts, unlike bare plurals.

Prediction 3 also received support. The ‘well-defined kind’ restriction was attested for definite singulars in both English and BrP: definite singulars were rated high with NP-level genericity ((7)-(8)) but low with non-well-defined kinds ((9)-(10)). This finding indicates that the ‘well-defined kind’ restriction on definite singulars is not specific to English. In contrast, plural generics in both languages (bare plurals in English, bare and definite plurals in BP) were unaffected by this restriction, as predicted.

The overall findings are quite consistent with the account of Dayal (2004). We found evidence that singular kind terms are obligatorily definite, and subject to the ‘well-defined kind’ restriction, while plural kind terms can be either bare or definite, and are not subject to this restriction. This is accounted for on Dayal’s proposal that (i) singular generics are derived by the ι operator applied to a taxonomic NP; (ii) plural generics are derived by the \cap operator; and (iii) the *Blocking Principle* necessarily applies to ι but does not have to apply to \cap .

There may, of course, well be other ways of accounting for our findings. In particular, while the findings concerning the ‘well-defined kind’ restriction and the behavior of plural generics are very robust, the interpretation of our findings with BrP bare singulars is more subject to debate. While we predicted BrP bare singulars to be rated high in the category of sentence-level genericity ((10)), their rating (mean=3.0) was lower than that of plural and indefinite singular NPs in this category. As has been noted in the literature on BrP, and as also confirmed by the judgments of the third author (a native speaker of BrP), bare singulars are largely a feature of the spoken, informal register and are not as acceptable in formal writing. Given the written format of the AJT, this may account for why bare singulars were rated low overall; the fact that the context of NP-level genericity is particularly formal (discussing kinds being extinct, widespread, etc.) may account for the low ratings of bare singulars in

this category.³ If formality rather than semantics is responsible for these low ratings, then we do not have clear support for Prediction 1 (in contrast, Predictions 2 and 3 are strongly supported). This is an issue that requires further investigation, e.g., through auditory presentation of the AJT and/or through use of less formal contexts.

4. Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight the importance of experimentally testing predictions of semantic theories. Our findings provide evidence bearing on such questions as whether kind terms are subject to the ‘well-defined kind’ restriction, and whether singular and plural kind terms exhibit different properties; the results furthermore provide support for a particular theoretical account of genericity, Dayal (2004). More work remains to be done, in particular with regard to testing the distribution of BrP bare singulars (as discussed above), as well as the expression of genericity in other environments (e.g., in object rather than subject position), and in other languages. We hope that the present paper is the first step in the experimental investigation of the expression of genericity cross-linguistically.

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³ Another possibility was suggested by Cristina Schmitt (p.c.), who pointed out that bare singulars are dispreferred in episodic sentences, including those with the copula *estar* (Schmitt and Munn 1999, 2002), and that the target sentence in the sample kind-reference context ((8)) contains *estar*. We checked into this possibility, and we note that (8) was the only item which had *estar* in the target sentences; all other items, in both the NP-level and the sentence-level genericity categories, had either the copula *ser* or (in one case) a lexical verb. The bare singular sentences with *ser* vs. *estar* in the NP-level genericity category were rated similarly.

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