

8.

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Every two days

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One puzzling aspect of the quantifier *every* is that it can appear with a plural noun only when a cardinal or *few* is present.

- (1) Every {day / *days}
- (2) Every {two / three / few} days

Moreover, *every two N* contrasts with *any/no two N* in that *N* must be an object which can find a place along a spatial or temporal sequence. Thus (3) is good, but (4) and (5) -- where the desired meaning should be “every (possible) pair of days/houses/numbers” -- is very marginal. The problem is that days/houses/numbers are not linearly ordered.

- (3) Every three {days / hours / miles / margheritas}, John drinks a bloody Mary.
- (4) a. I could mark {?? every / any} two days in the calendar.
b. {??Every / Any / No} two houses are identical.
- (5) {*Every / Any / No} two winning numbers would give you a lot of money
(cannot mean “every combination of two winning numbers...”)

A largely overlapping restriction is that, even with nouns like *days*, the *every+Card+N* construction is marginal as an argument (even with measure verbs: ?? *He counted/measured every two days*). All well-formed occurrences are frequency adjuncts.

Kayne (2002) accounts for the contrast (1)/(2) by proposing that cardinals/*few* may be followed by the abstract word NUMBER, which is (optionally) singular. *Every* would agree with NUMBER and not with the plural *days*. This idea however doesn't explain the meaning restrictions noted in (4/5). An alternative in the same spirit is that *2 days* in *every 2 days* is a measure phrase (MP) measuring an abstract singular noun like TIME or LENGTH; it is this noun which agrees with *every*.

- (6) a. Every [_{MP} 2 days] TIME
b. Every [_{MP} three miles] LENGTH

The apparent head of the construction only provides a unit of measure for a (context-

tually defined) linear sequence. A formal semantic representation should aim to capture a meaning along these lines:

- (7) Every [two miles] LENGTH = λE [For all P such that P is the endpoint of a two-mile segment along a certain path, E is an event and E happens at P]

This approach immediately derives **Every days* (MPs need numerals), (5) (winning numbers cannot measure anything), and (8) (units of measure must be identical).

- (8) **Every two different days*

References

Kayne, R. (2002) "On the syntax of quantity," ms. New York University.