

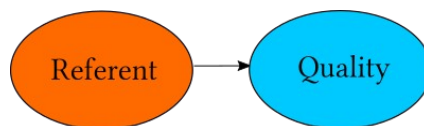
# Describing Things

In the previous lesson, we learned about the basic Quality Structure, in which we assign Qualities to various Referents.

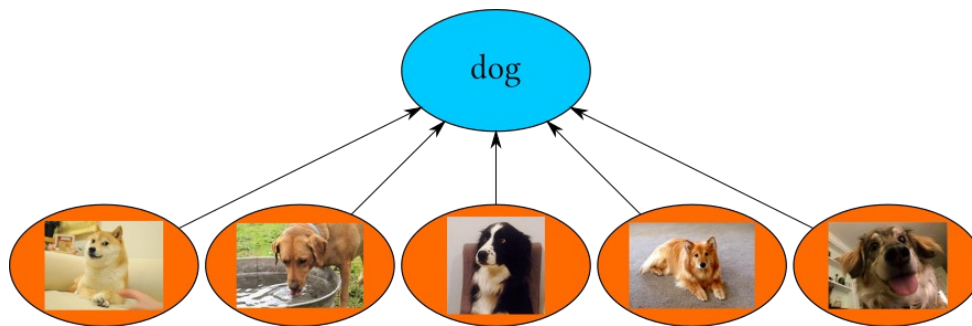
But what does any particular Quality actually mean? How does anything mean anything? To answer that, we need to understand how Qualities actually work.

## The Meaning of a Quality

A Quality, at its core, is simply something we can attach to a Referent.

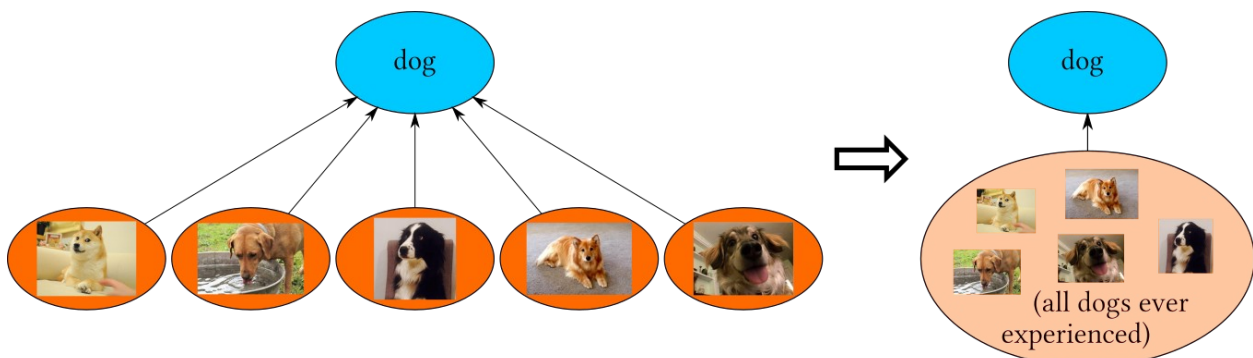


When we attach the same Quality to multiple Referents, we can create a meaning for it.



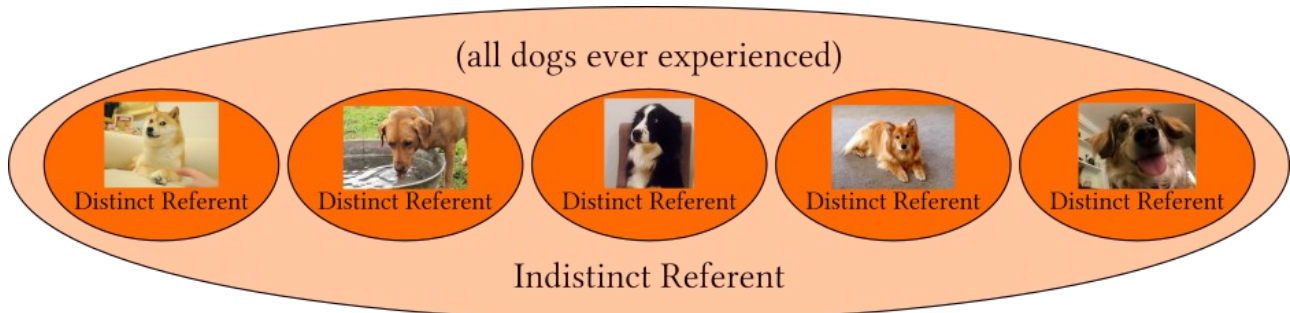
Here, the meaning of the “dog” Quality is created by looking at everything with the “dog” Quality. This “Meaning through Grouping” is consistent with how we all learned about this Quality as infants. Some adult would point at different pictures of dogs and say “That’s a dog, and that’s a dog,” and so on. Then they would point at things that were not dogs and say “Is this a dog? NooOOoo (shakes head), it’s a cat.”

So when we assign a Quality to something, we are really just putting that thing into a group with other things that we feel are similar in some way. This group of Referents can then be imagined together as a single Referent, which “creates” the Quality.



# Distinct & Indistinct Referents

When a **Referent** represents *something* with a particular **Quality**, it is **Distinct**. When a **Referent** represents *everything* with a particular **Quality**, it is **Indistinct**.



There is a common tendency across languages to use the same term for *a few things* that have a particular **Quality**, that we also use for *everything* that has that **Quality**.

Ex. I have dogs.

<-- **Distinct Referent**

Ex. I like dogs.

<-- **Indistinct Referent**

In the first example, “dogs” refers to “several dogs” (a **Distinct Referent**). In the second example, “dogs” refers to “dogs in general” (an **Indistinct Referent**).

**Distinct** is not the same as **Specific**, which is a separate term we will learn later.

Ex. I want dogs.

<-- **Distinct**, but not **Specific**

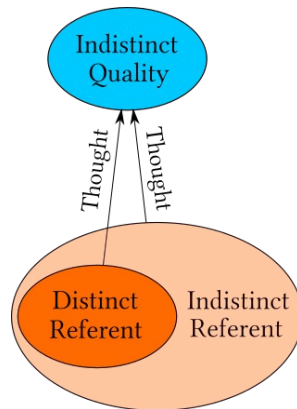
Here we are probably referring to non-specific dogs (unless you already have some specific dogs in mind). But we are *not* saying we want *everything* with the “dog” **Quality**, which is what an **Indistinct Referent** represents. We just want several dogs. When we are talking about *something* with a **Quality**, but *without* speaking *generally* about *everything* with the **Quality**, we are talking about a **Distinct Referent**, regardless of whether we have any specific examples in mind.

Of course, a person’s perception of dogs will be based on all the dogs that person has ever experienced. This will be different from all the dogs *another* person has ever experienced, giving each person a slightly different understanding of the “dog” **Quality**.

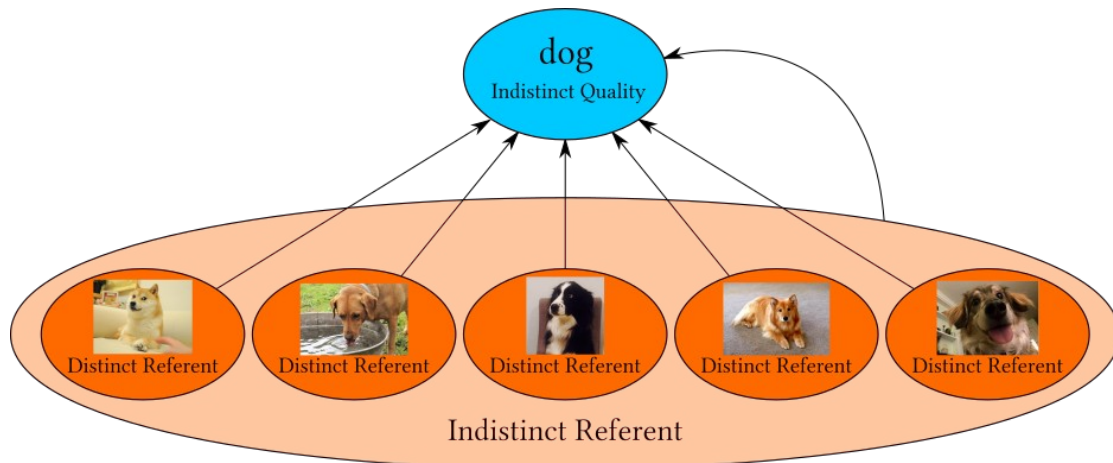
We can refer to a particular person’s version of an **Indistinct Referent** (i.e. “all dogs of my experience”) as a **Personal Referent**. The theoretical “objective” version of an **Indistinct Referent** (i.e. “all dogs in existence”) can be called the **Objective Referent**.

# Indistinct Qualities

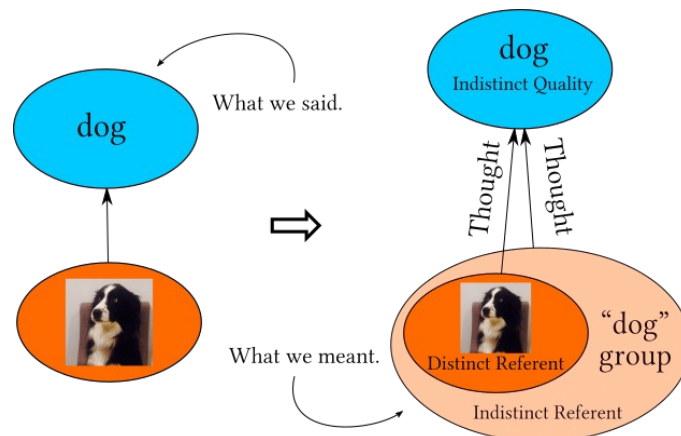
A Quality that marks a **Distinct Referent** as part of an **Indistinct Referent** can be called an **Indistinct Quality**.



For instance, assigning the “dog” Quality connects *one* thing with the “dog” Quality to *everything* with the “dog” Quality.

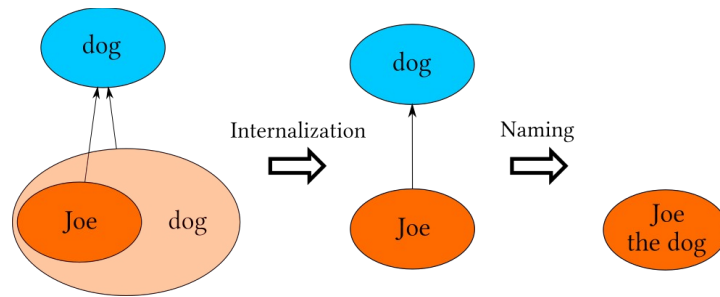


All Qualities show a relationship between multiple **Referents**. Without this relationship, a Quality has no meaning. In the previous lesson, when we showed a **Referent** taking a Quality, we were not showing the **Indistinct Referent** that Quality named.

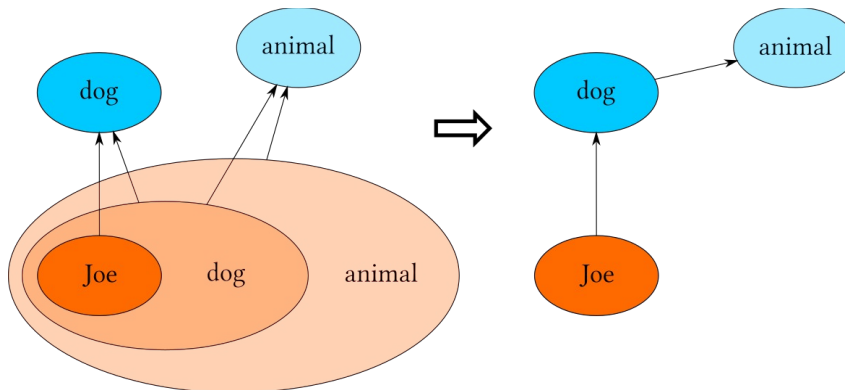


We can omit the **Indistinct Referent** here because we are treating it as synonymous with the **Indistinct Quality** it “creates”. This is another kind of **Absorption** called **Internalizing**.

**Internalizing** is different from the **Naming** we learned last chapter. In one a **Referent** becomes part of a **Quality**, while in the other a **Quality** becomes part of a **Referent**.



**Internalizing** is useful because it allows us to assign **Qualities** directly to other **Qualities**.



By the way, the “animal” **Quality** bubble is light blue here to signify that, in addition to being an **Indefinite Quality** of all dogs, it is a **Defining Quality** of the “dog” group. We will cover **Defining Qualities** in greater detail in Lesson 5.

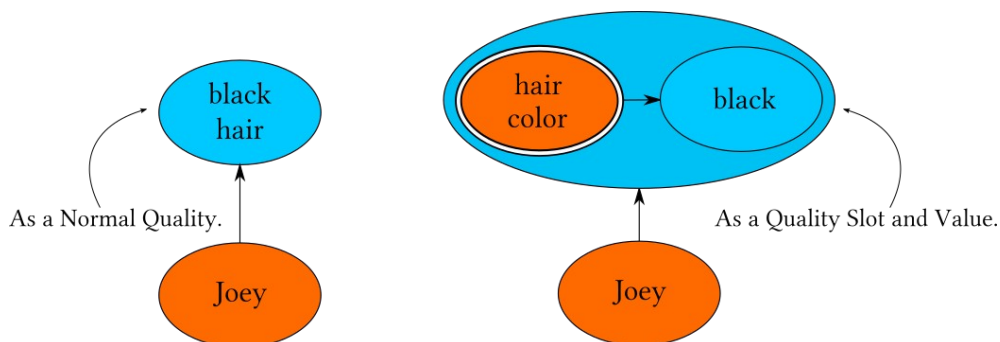
## Quality Slots

Before we go on, we should take a moment talk about **Quality Slots**. A **Quality Slot** is simply a **Quality** that holds a **Value**, which is another **Quality**. For instance, the **Value** “six feet tall” fills the “size” **Quality Slot**. When we need to talk about a **Quality** without saying what it is, we can use the **Quality Slot** instead.

Ex. What is your eye color? <-- **Quality Slot**

Ex. My eyes are blue. <-- **Value**

This can be easily expressed as a **Composite Quality**, if desired.

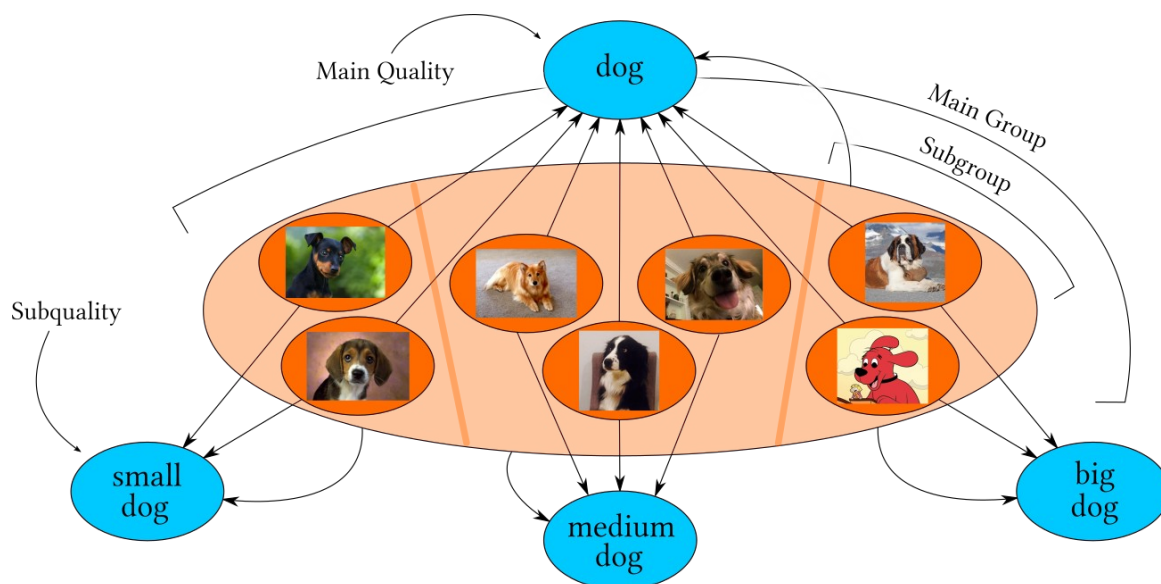


Together, the **Quality Slot** and **Value** (hair color/black) can be called a “**Slot/Value Pair**”.

## Subgroups & Subqualities

There are some Qualities that work by breaking another Quality into smaller groups. For instance, take the Qualities “big” and “small”. How big is “big”, and how small is “small”? Obviously this depends on what we are describing. If a “big” dog is smaller than a “small” horse, then what do “big” and “small” really mean?

Well, “a big dog” is something that is big, *for a dog*. Just as the “dog” Quality is based on all the dogs we have seen in our lives, the “big dog” Quality is based on the “big” portion of that same group. The “big” and “small” Qualities then work by breaking the Indistinct Referent of another Quality into Subgroups, based on their “size” Quality.



The Naming Qualities of these Subgroups (“big dogs”, “small dogs”, etc.) can be called Subgrouping Qualities, or Subqualities. The Indistinct Referent and Indistinct Quality we are dividing up can be called the Main Group and Main Quality, respectively.

Exactly *which* Subquality we assign is determined by a Deciding Quality, which can be imagined either as a Quality Slot or as a Slot/Value Pair. That way, we can say that the Deciding Quality is “size”, or “size/24 inches from ground to shoulder”, or “size/up to my knee”, or whatever. Everyone measures size intuitively in a different way.

When we talk about a Subquality, we are usually talking about a Complete Subquality, which is a Subquality whose meaning is *completed* by some Main Quality. If we want to talk about the Subquality *without* any Main Quality to complete its meaning (like “big” by itself), we can use the General or “Naked” Subquality.

Ex. I like big dogs.

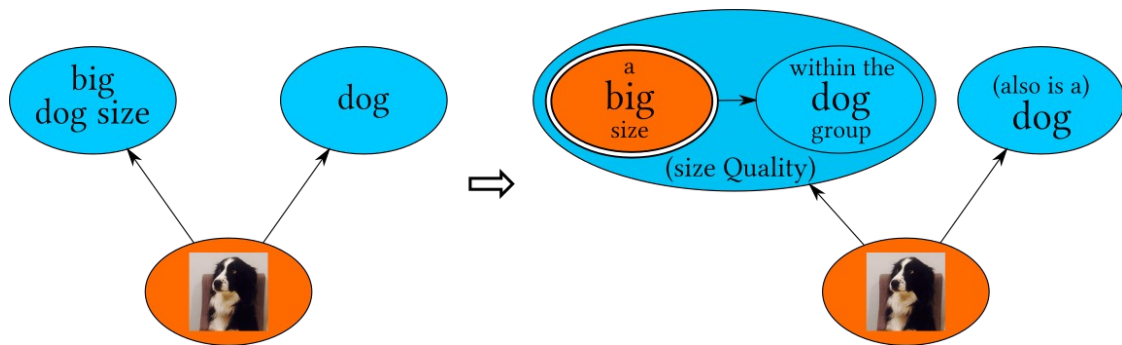
<-- Complete Subquality (Completed by “dogs”.)

Ex. I like big things.

<-- General Subquality (The grammar is the same, but “things” is too general to complete anything.)

**Naked Subqualities** rely on a **Main Quality** to complete their meaning. For example, in “It is big,” the word “big” is meaningless on its own. Only when we learn what “it” is, can “big” actually tell us anything useful. So we could say that “big” does not apply *directly* to “it”. Instead, we must *combine* “big” with (for instance) “dog” to make a **third Quality**, the **Complete Subquality** “big dog size”. It is *this Quality* that we apply to “it”.

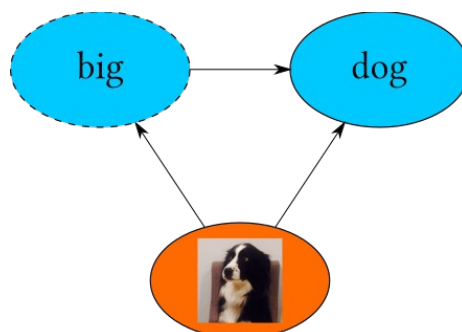
So how can we diagram this? Well, one way we could do it is express “big dog size” as a **Composite Quality**. The “big” **Quality** concerns size, so it makes sense for “big” to be the **Focus** of our **Composite** “size” **Quality**. And since “dog” completes the meaning of “big”, it makes sense to have “dog” as a **Quality** of the “big” **Referent**.



However, diagramming it this way presents several problems.

1. It isn't simple, intuitive, or elegant enough.
2. The “dog” **Quality** appears twice. This seems unnecessary.
3. Even though **Subqualities** cannot stand on their own, they still feel like they can be applied to a **Referent** directly.

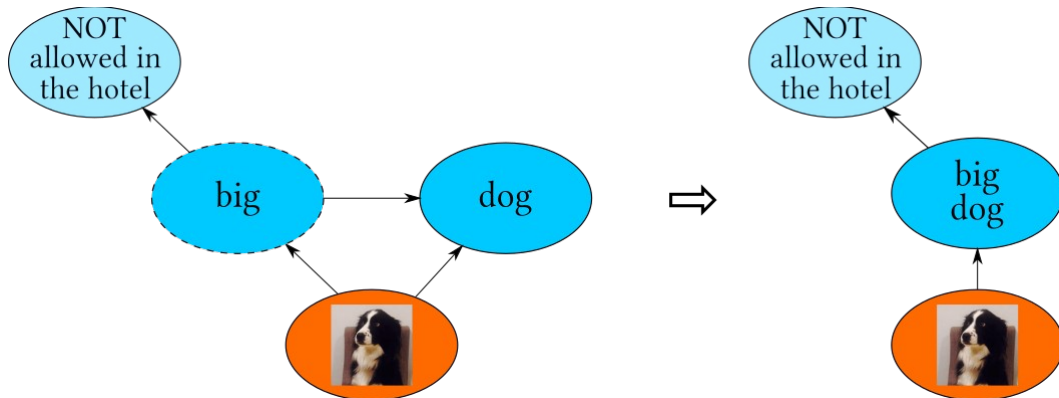
Since a **Subquality** is dependent on a **Quality** that, by definition, the **Referent** has also, why don't we just show both **Qualities** and then connect them?



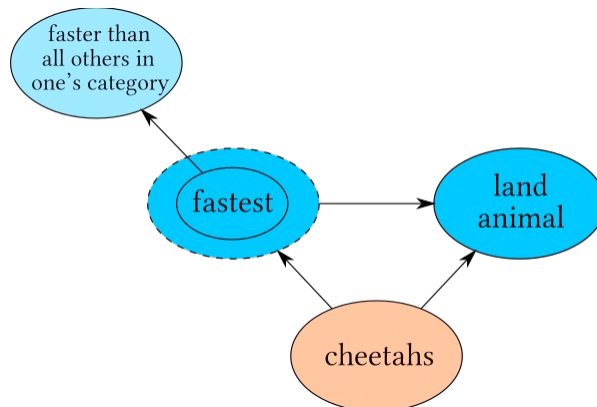
And there we go. This shows “dog” as both a **Quality** of the **Referent**, *and* as a **Quality** of the “big” **Subquality**. At the same time, the **Subquality** is shown applying directly to the **Referent**, but also requiring the “dog” **Quality** to complete its meaning. Nice, huh?

So whenever you see a dotted bubble in my **Quality Diagrams**, that means it's a **Subquality**. To fully understand the **Subquality**, you need to look for the **Main Quality** that completes its meaning. (Look for the arrow pointing *away* from the dotted bubble.)

Again, a **Subquality** has no meaning unless it is combined with a **Main Quality**. Since this is the case, any **Quality** we assign to a **Subquality** in our diagrams will, by default, apply to the “**Complete Subquality**”, which is the **Subquality** and **Main Quality** together.



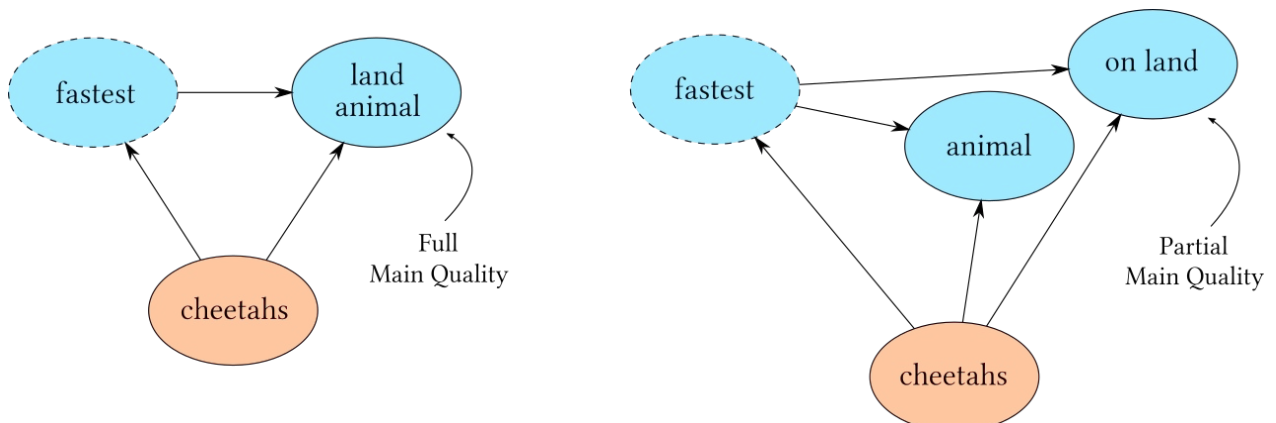
If we want to define the “**Naked Subquality**”, we can diagram it with an “inner bubble”.



Notice how the “cheetah” **Referent** points to the outer, dotted bubble; as it is taking the **Complete** version of the **Subquality**. The **Defining Quality**, on the other hand, comes from the inner, solid bubble; since it defines the **General** version of the **Subquality**.

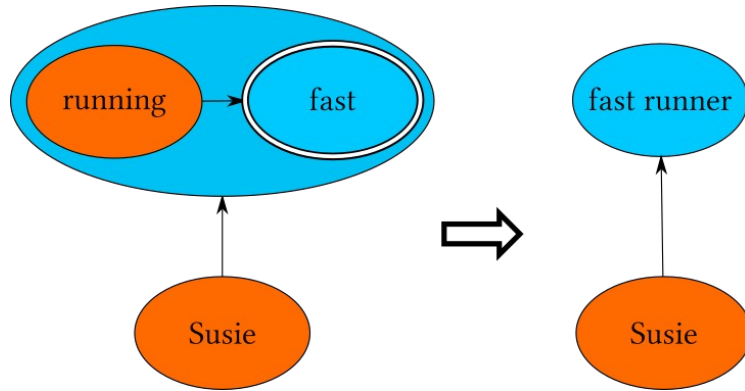
A **Main Quality** may have multiple components, which can be divided up as **Partial Main Qualities**, or combined into a single **Full Main Quality**. If we say that the **Subquality** has “multiple **Main Qualities**”, this just means the **Full Main Quality** is being divided up.

Ex. The cheetah is the fastest land animal.

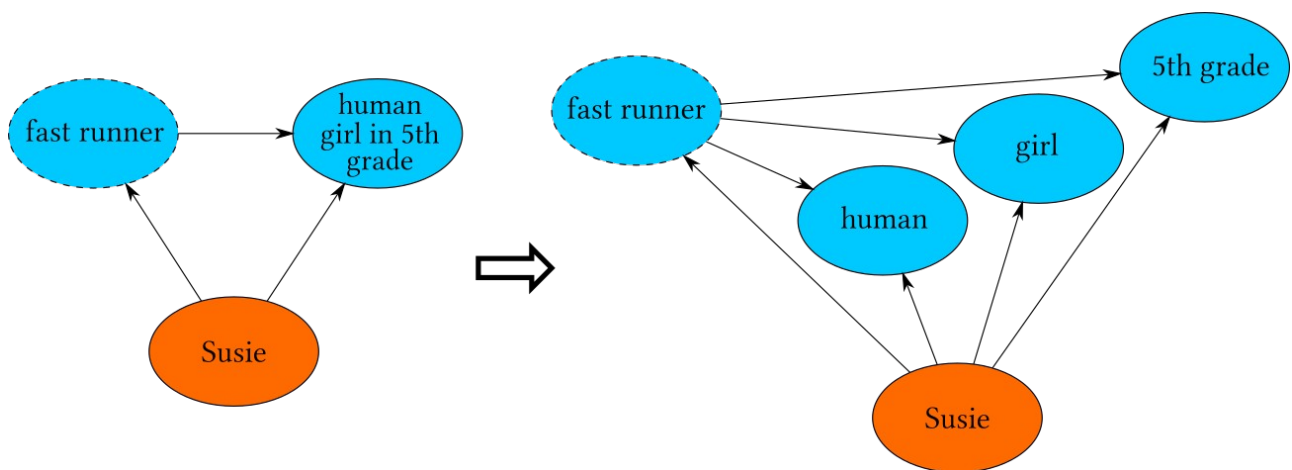


# Implicit Qualities

Sometimes the **Subgroups** are not explicit. For instance, in “Susie is a fast runner”, it is not clear what the **Subgroups** are. Who or what are we comparing Susie’s speed to? Are we comparing her to other human girls of the same age? Or are we comparing Susie’s speed *now* to Susie’s speed a few months ago?



This diagram, just like the sentence, doesn’t account for the fact that “fast” is a **Subgrouping Quality**. It is said in a way to mean she is fast compared to other people, not compared to an earlier version of herself...but what other people? We just *assumed* that Susie was a human, and a girl, and we even ignored her age. So “Susie is a fast runner” *really* meant that *of the group* “human girls of Susie’s age”, Susie is in the “fast runner” **Subgroup**.



But it was so natural for us to infer these **Qualities** from context, despite them not being stated, that I think we need to be flexible in how we diagram them. These “flexible qualities”, which are generally assumed across languages, can be called **Implicit Qualities**.

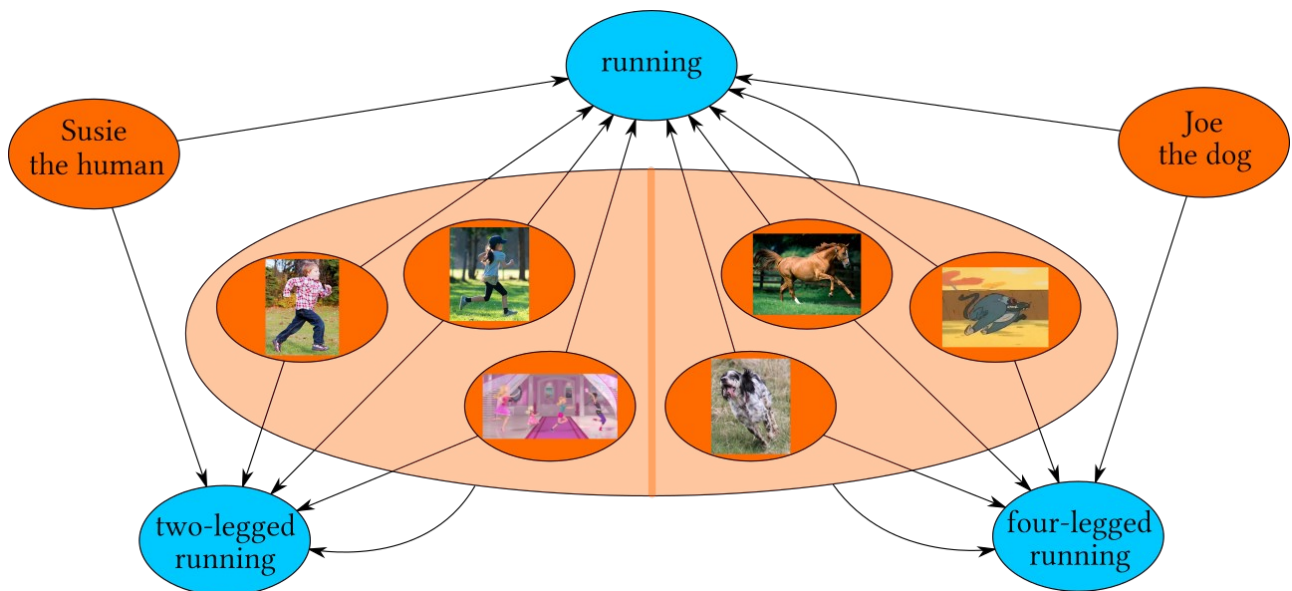
Of course we can never know if speakers of *all* languages would assume these **Qualities**, but if native speakers of both the student’s native language *and* the student’s target language generally assume a **Quality**, it is functionally an **Implicit Quality**.



# Relative & Nonrelative Subqualities

Both Subgroups and Subqualities can be Relative or Nonrelative. We have already seen some Relative Subqualities, like *big*, *small*, *fast* and *slow*. These are Relative because their meaning is related to a scale that can be greater or lesser. A Nonrelative Subquality is one that divides the Main Quality in a way that *cannot* be put on any kind of scale.

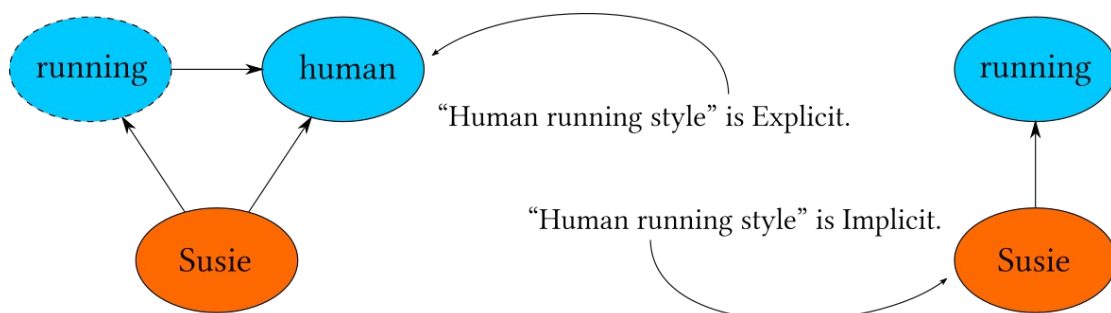
For instance, the action of running on *two* legs is completely different from the action of running on *four* legs. Therefore we could say that “running” is a Main Quality that can be divided into two Subqualities (two-legged or four-legged), based on a Deciding Quality of what species one is.



Here we see that, while Susie and Joe can both be given the “running” Quality, we would have to give them different Subqualities.

This is *not* the same “running” as in “Your refrigerator is running.” That is a wholly different definition of “running”, which just happens to use the same word.

Nonrelative Subqualities like this are often so intuitive, we don’t even notice when they are expressed Implicitly. After all, if I said Susie was running, and you knew Susie was a human, you would be quite surprised if you were to see her “running” on all fours.



# ~~~ Review ~~~

Today we learned the following terms:

**Meaning through Grouping** (aka **Creating a Meaning by Grouping**) ~ The concept by which the meaning of a **Quality** is created by the group of all things with that **Quality**.

**Distinct Referent** ~ An **Idea** that represents *something* with a particular **Quality**.

**Indistinct Referent** ~ An **Idea** that represents *everything* with a particular **Quality**.

**Indistinct Quality** ~ Connects a **Distinct Referent** to an **Indistinct Referent**, so we may describe things by putting them into groups.

**Personal Referent** ~ An **Indistinct Referent** based on all the **Distinct Referents** with that **Quality** ever experienced by a particular person.

**Objective Referent** ~ An **Indistinct Referent** based on all the **Distinct Referents** with that **Quality** in existence. This usually cannot be known by any individual person, but it exists as a theoretical standard to reach for.

**Internalizing** ~ A type of **Absorption** where an **Indistinct Quality** becomes synonymous with (i.e. **Absorbs**) the **Indistinct Referent** it creates.

**Quality Slot** ~ A **Quality** that acts as a range of possible **Qualities**. (e.g. “eye color”)

**Quality Value** ~ A **Quality** that selects one of the possible **Qualities** of a **Quality Slot**. (e.g. “blue”)

**Slot/Value Pair** ~ The combination of **Quality Slot** and **Quality Value**. (“eye color/blue”)

**Subgroup** ~ A division of an **Indistinct Referent** (the **Main Group**) that is based on some other **Quality**. For example, the “big” division of the “dog” **Indistinct Referent**.

Subgroups can also act as their own, independent **Indistinct Referent**.

**Subgrouping Quality** (aka **Subquality**) ~ The **Naming Quality** of a **Subgroup**. Derives its meaning from a part of the **Indistinct Referent** of some **Main Quality**.

**Main Group** ~ The **Indistinct Referent** being divided into **Subgroups** by a **Subquality**.

**Main Quality** ~ The **Indistinct Quality** being divided into **Subqualities**.

**Deciding Quality** ~ The **Slot/Value Pair** that decides which of the possible **Subqualities** apply to a **Referent** with a particular **Main Quality**.

**Normal Referent** ~ Any **Referent** that is not a **Subgroup**.

**Normal Quality** ~ Any **Quality** that is not a **Subquality**.

**Partial Main Quality** ~ When a **Main Group** has multiple **Naming Qualities**, a **Partial Main Quality** is one of these. (eg. “girls” and “in her grade”)

**Full Main Quality** ~ When a **Main Group** has multiple **Naming Qualities**, a **Full Main Quality** is the combination of all of them together. (eg. “girls in her grade”)

**Complete Subquality** ~ A **Subquality** in combination with the **Main Quality** that completes its meaning.

**Naked Subquality** (aka **General Subquality**) ~ A **Subquality** without any **Main Quality** to complete its meaning. Useful when we want to define a word like “big” or “small”.

**Implicit Quality** ~ A **Main Quality** that is not mentioned directly.

**Relative Subquality** ~ A **Subquality** that divides a **Main Quality** based on the *level or amount* of a **Deciding Quality's Value**. (eg. “big” or “small”)

**Nonrelative Subquality** ~ A **Subquality** that divides a **Main Quality** based on a **Deciding Quality** that cannot be regarded in terms of *level or amount*. (eg. “two-legged” vs “four-legged” versions of running)

We also encountered, but did not explain in detail: **Specific** and **Defining Quality**. I will properly define these terms in a later lesson.



Today, we learned about how **Qualities** get their meaning. Basically, they use a concept I call “**Creating a Meaning by Grouping**” or “**Meaning through Grouping**”, which means the **Quality** is created from, *and creates*, the group of *everything with that Quality*.

The “fundamental” **Quality** is the **Indistinct Quality**, which marks a **Distinct Referent** as part of an **Indistinct Referent**. (An **Indistinct Quality** can also place an **Indistinct Referent** inside a larger **Indistinct Referent**. Since this helps us define the **Qualities** of those **Referents**, we can also call it a **Defining Quality**.)

We also learned about a second kind of **Absorption**, called **Internalizing**. **Internalizing Absorbs** an **Indistinct Referent** into its **Naming Quality**, while **Naming** (the first kind of **Absorption** we learned) **Absorbs** an **Indistinct Quality** into the **Referent** it **Names**.

There are some **Qualities** that work by breaking another **Quality** into smaller **Subgroups**. These are called **Subgrouping Qualities**, or **Subqualities**.

Sometimes the **Subgroups** are not explicit. These “flexible qualities”, which are generally assumed across languages, can be called **Implicit Qualities**. For instance, if I say “Susie is fast,” I really mean she is fast within the group of “human girls her age.” She is obviously *not* fast when compared with a professional athlete, deer, or race car.

We also learned the difference between **Relative Subqualities** (fast, large, etc.) and **Nonrelative Subqualities** (two-legged running, four-legged running, etc.).

In the next lesson, we will learn how to show relationships between different things.