

## When the Picasso painting isn't Picasso's painting: A semantics for proper names in compound structures in English.

Jesse Harris, UCLA Linguistics, [jharris@humnet.ucla.edu](mailto:jharris@humnet.ucla.edu)

In this talk, I address the role of proper names in the first position (N1) of noun-noun compound (NNC) constructions, e.g., *the Picasso painting* or *every Chomsky talk*, in comparison to possessive constructions, e.g., *Picasso's painting* or *every one of Chomsky's talks*. While possessives impose a vaguely specified possession relation, the range of possible relations between N1 and N2 in NNCs is much wider. For example, *the Picasso painting* has interpretations ranging from origin (*Picasso made the painting*), to resemblance (*the painting resembles Picasso or his style*), to benefactive (*the painting was made for Picasso*), to selection (*Picasso selected the painting*), only some of which overlap with those available in possessives.

I argue for a compositional mechanism that links the nominals in NNCs via a contextually constrained relation  $R_n$ , similar to previous type-shifting accounts of the possessive that introduce a distinct relation  $R_p$  (e.g., Barker 1991). The formal analysis of NNCs posits a type-shifting mechanism  $\eta$ , which lifts the denotation of a property-denoting noun  $\langle s, et \rangle$  to a complex type that takes another property-denoting noun as its argument and returns a complex noun of the same property type.

$$(1) \quad \llbracket \eta \rrbracket = \underbrace{\lambda P_{\langle s, et \rangle}}_{\text{N1 arg}} \cdot \underbrace{\lambda Q_{\langle s, et \rangle}}_{\text{N2 arg}} \cdot \lambda s. \lambda y. \exists z. [ z = \underbrace{\iota x. P(x)(s)}_{\text{\textcircled{1} Entity } z \text{ identified with individual satisfying property of N1}} \wedge \underbrace{Q(y)(s)}_{\text{\textcircled{2} Property of N2}} \wedge \underbrace{R_n(y)(z)(s)}_{\text{\textcircled{3} Introduction of contextual relation between } y \text{ and } z} ]$$

I assume that a property denotation for proper names is available in at least the N1 position. For concreteness, I adopt a simplified version of a metalinguistic approach (Burge 1973; Matushansky 2008; Bach 2015, for a few variants) in which a name identifies the referent of that name via the bearer relation  $\mathcal{B}$  (2a). The composition of our example is shown in (2b-c), resulting in a property.

- (2)    a.  $\llbracket \text{Picasso} \rrbracket = \lambda s. \lambda x. \mathcal{B}(x)(\text{Picasso}^\neg)(s)$ , i.e., set of entities bearing the name *Picasso* in  $s$ .
- b.  $\llbracket \eta \text{ Picasso} \rrbracket = \lambda Q_{\langle s, et \rangle}. \lambda s. \lambda y. \exists z. [ z = \iota x. \mathcal{B}(x)(\text{Picasso}^\neg)(s) \wedge Q(y)(s) \wedge R_n(y)(z)(s) ]$
- c.  $\llbracket (\eta \text{ Picasso}) \text{ painting} \rrbracket = \lambda s. \lambda y. \exists z. [ z = \iota x. \mathcal{B}(x)(\text{Picasso}^\neg)(s) \wedge \text{painting}(y)(s) \wedge R_n(y)(z)(s) ]$

A number of additional facets of the proposal are explored. First, only the formation of endocentric compounds is permitted by the composition; exocentric compounds like *pickpocket* are correctly excluded. Second, proper names in NNCs can be modified by adjectives, as in *the old Picasso painting* (3). Although adjectival modification of the head noun (N2) is preferred, (3) is ambiguous. The second reading can be encouraged with an adjective that only modifies animates, e.g., *white-haired*.

- (3)    a. ✓ the [old [Picasso painting]] / a'. # the [white-haired [Picasso painting]]
- b. ✓ the [[old Picasso] painting] / b'. ✓ the [[white-haired Picasso] painting]

Third, the relation  $R_n$  apparently cannot vary its senses for a single NNC, suggesting that the contextual relation is fixed once established within a particular compound.

- (4)    I saw two Picasso paintings. One was from his Blue period and the other was painted ...
- a. ✓ in his Pink period. / b. # as an homage to the great master.

Finally, treating a proper name as a property in N1 position allows for a uniform analysis of NNCs, in which compounds without proper names (*tree painting* or *pencil problem*) have similar kinds of interpretations available. Differences between NNCs with and without proper names arise primarily from pragmatics and world knowledge. The talk concludes with a discussion of how the relations supporting NNCs ( $R_n$ ) and possessives ( $R_p$ ) are pragmatically determined and how they differ from more constrained, nominal appositive uses of proper names (*the painter Picasso*).

## References

Bach, K. (2015). The predicate view of proper names. *Philosophy Compass*, 10(11):772–784.

Barker, C. (1991). *Possessive descriptions*. University of California, Santa Cruz.

Burge, T. (1973). Reference and proper names. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 70(14):425–439.

Jackendoff, R. (2009). Compounding in the parallel architecture and conceptual semantics. In Lieber, R. and Stekauer, P., editors, *The Oxford handbook of compounding*, pages 105–128. Oxford University Press.

Matushansky, O. (2008). On the linguistic complexity of proper names. *Linguistics and philosophy*, 31(5):573–627.