

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

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In this talk, I address the role of proper names in the first position (N1) of noun-noun compound (NCC) 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 η , 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.

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

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

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

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