Referential hereditary last names as presupposition triggers

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In philosophy and in linguistics, whether one follows a predicative or a referential approach, the semantics of last names and of first names are often conflated. Both types of names seem to contribute the same type of meaning: that of an individual, (1a-b). However, as first discussed by Boër (1975) and as illustrated in (2a-b), predicative uses of first names and last names yield different interpretations. Last names used predicatively refer to the property of belonging to a family with a given name; while the most salient interpretation of first names used predicatively is either a metalinguistic interpretation (e.g., g(1) is named "James") or a metaphorical one (e.g., g(1) shares one or more salient characteristics associated with people named "James" or a salient James). It is interesting to note that the interpretation pattern of last names is replicated with a quasi-name like *dad*, (1c) and (2c). The quasi-name *dad* can be used as a name, (1c) (leaving aside indexical constraints) and its predicative use refers not to a metalinguistic or metaphorical property but to the property of dadhood, (2c).

(1) a. James is here. b. Smith is here. c. Dad is here.

(2) a. He$_1$ is a James. b. He$_1$ is a Smith. c. He$_1$ is a dad.

It should also be noted that the members of a family are not just the individuals bearing this family's name, as shown by the truth of (3). Predicative uses of last names concern family membership rather than the bearing of a name and should not be conceived as metaphorical uses of last names.

(3) Waldo Cox (my gardener) is a Romanov. Boër (1975: 390)
(An exciting fact revealed by recent historical investigations.)

Further proof that family membership plays a role in the meaning of last names comes from the coordination of full names in English. The factorization of a last name such as the one in (4) implies that the referents denoted by the subject belong to the same family rather than just share the same last name.

(4) Stella (Choy) and Lynn Choy cooked dinner for friends.

The contrast between the referential and predicative uses of names (cf. (1a-b) vs. (2a-b)) has been discussed by Fara (2015) and Jeshion (2015a, 2015b), with the conclusion that last names used referentially are homophones with, and not – syntactically or semantically – derived from, the same last names used predicatively. Jeshion (2015b) argues that the link between the two uses can be attributed to deferred reference. However, influenced by the resemblance between last names and quasi-names like *dad*, I propose an alternative – predicativist – analysis where referential last names are presupposition triggers and where the link between last names used referentially and last names used predicatively is compositional. Moreover, based on data from Korean, I propose to treat the meaning of family membership associated with predicative last names as itself derived compositionally. This follows Ballarin (2019) which states that the most basic meaning of a last name is that of a family entity and that predicative uses of last names in English could be argued to include a silent *member of* predicate in their LF. Korean seems to express this predicate overtly through a suffix meaning "descendant", *-ssi* in (5). (Note the Eastern order of the full name.)

(5) 안 소민 은 **안** **씨** 예요.
Ahn Somin eun **Ahn** **-ssi** -yeyo.
LN FN TOP **LN** **SUFF** DECL
'Ahn Somin is an Ahn.' or 'Ahn Somin is of the Ahn family.'

My analysis of referential last names is inspired by Muñoz (2019) and his treatment of quasi-names. In a nutshell, Muñoz' proposal is that to be called "dad" presupposes being a dad. This means that referential uses of quasi-names are only felicitous if they entail the predicative use. I argue that last names conform to the same pattern: to be called "Smith" presupposes belonging to the Smith family. To implement this idea, I propose that referential last names are derived from their predicative counterparts using a new kind of type-shifter. This type-shifter, in (6c), turns the content of the predicative last name, in (6b), into a presupposition and leads to the metalinguistic predicate in (6d). The meaning in (6d) can then combine with a silent determiner (and with a rigidifying element, which I abstract away from here) to allow last names to refer to individuals, (6e).

(6) **Family names characterize sets of families with a given names**

a. ⟦Smith⟧ = λx_e: *x* is a family. *x* is named /smɪθ/
Family membership is compositional ("Smith" in "He is a Smith.")

b. ⟦~~belongs-to~~ ~~the~~ Smith⟧ = λx_e. *x* belongs to the unique salient family named /smɪθ/
Type-shifter to transform family membership predicates into name predicates

c. ⟦O⟧ = $\lambda f_{<e,t>}$. λx_e: $f(x) = 1$. *x* bears the last name associated with *f*
Lexical entry of a last name used as a name predicate

d ⟦O ~~belongs-to~~ ~~the~~ Smith ⟧ = λx_e: ⟦Smith⟧$(x) = 1$. *x* bears the last name /smɪθ/
Last names are also names of individuals ("Smith" in "Smith is here.")

e. ⟦~~The~~ O ~~belongs-to~~ ~~the~~ Smith⟧ = the unique individual who bears the last name /smɪθ/; only defined if this individual belongs to the unique salient family named /smɪθ/

As I will show in the talk, the treatment of referential uses of last names as presupposition triggers is confirmed by the presupposition tests (Karttunen 1973), in (7) (leaving aside the existence presuppositions contributed by *the*):

(7) a. ~~the~~ James Smith is not bald. **Negation**
⇒ The unique individual who bears the first name /d͡ʒeɪmz/ and who bears the last name /smɪθ/ is part of the family named /smɪθ/. **– hole**

b. ~~the~~ Mary believes that ~~the~~ James Smith is bald. (but ~~the~~ James is actually not part of the Smith family.) ***To believe***
– plug
⇏ The unique individual […] is part of the family named /smɪθ/.

c. If every famous linguist is bald, then ~~the~~ James Smith is bald. ***If…then***
⇒ The unique individual […] is part of the family named /smɪθ/. **– hole**

d. If ~~the~~ David Smith is ~~the~~ James' brother, then the latter is ~~the~~ James Smith. ***If…then***
⇏ The unique individual […] is part of the family named /smɪθ/. **– plug**

Reference

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