

A Six-Language Quantitative and Qualitative Comparison of Non-Bare Proper Names
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This paper is a qualitative and quantitative analysis of forms/uses of non-bare Proper Names (PN) in Dutch (D), English (E), French (F), Greek (G), Hmong (H), and Polish (P), focusing on two workshop themes: (a) What categories can accompany proper names in natural language? (b) What is the meaning contribution of these categories? How does it combine with that of proper names? The quantitative portion compares the frequencies of the relevant categories, including definite (DA) and indefinite articles (IA); distal and proximate demonstratives (DEM); quantifiers, equivalents in each language of non-quantificational *one* and *some*, *said*; and *a certain*; DEM + N of a PN; DEM + N + PN; and DEM + PN + N, possessives, plus adjectival modifiers and restrictive relative clauses. These data comprise all instances of the phenomena from 3 Hmong novels (all which were available to me) and 10 novels from each of the other languages, reported as % normed for total number of words in the novels. Not all the languages include all these types, and those including the same ones can differ in their frequencies and functions.

The qualitative analysis is based on all relevant examples in (a) 10 full novels for each language original, representing subgenre, author gender and ethnic diversity, and geographical variety and (b) published professional translations of one or more originals from each language translated into the other languages when available. In addition, non-quantified data were gleaned from (c) electronic corpora; (d) TV speech for D, E, F, G, P; (e) hand recorded spontaneous speech for E, F, G; (f) newspapers, magazines, blogs, internet comments, etc. informally encountered, and (g) solicited judgments of native speakers.

The language selection reflects the need for discourse analysis in order to examine the phenomena in depth, which required choosing languages I could read, with consultation with native speakers. They represent 5 Indo-European languages and one non-IE, Hmong. Also, the languages differ in their determiner categories and determiner + PN behavior in context. A brief sample: (a) P and H do not have articles at all but are unrelated and typologically very different; (b) only H has an obligatory noun classifier system; (c) G is the only language which uses articles obligatorily with PN in reference to persons in many contexts; (d) F and D have mostly archaic, regional use of the definite article with PN, and with some marked variation, e.g. in F for a person noted as the epitome of a category; (e) E only allows *the* with PN when used with a plural PN (e.g. the Smiths), and with *the* pronounced with a tense high front vowel to mark a referent as the “genuine” well-known person of that name (similar to F), and in rare cases, in an affectionately playful way marking the referent as different from others, or else in a very negative tone (distancing). In very rare cases, English even uses the French feminine singular definite article *la* to indicate a woman distinguished negatively for her sexy and entitled behavior. However, if an adjectival modifier or restrictive relative clause occurs with the PN, then a DA or IA, is very frequent in D, F, E. In contrast, G requires the definite article with demonstratives (e.g. *afto to N* (this the N ‘this N)), and F does not generally distinguish proximate vs distal demonstratives without the marked addition of an additional morpheme. Of special interest is that these languages show a spread of conceptually related but varied expressions of attitude, information status, and focus in their non-bare PN constructions; e.g. E, F and D all have both IA + PN and “*a certain PN*” to introduce a new referent, but the latter has a stronger particularizing/focusing sense in E than in D and F. In these, the construction is frequently translated professionally into English with the IA. In P, the uses of *pewien* ‘certain’ and “*jakaś* ‘some’(non-quantificational) also serve related but distinct functions. One example is:

1. ...jakaś pani Skapska...(P, novel)
some Mrs. Skapska

[There was] a Mrs. Skapska [there].’

In contrast, E *some* is very unlikely to occur as a determiner for an otherwise bare singular PN. If it did occur, it would sound extremely demeaning. Thus distinguishing the fine points of crosslinguistic difference in such closely related constructions requires detailed study of the semantics of the words in relation to their semantic fields, with consideration of their collocations, in each language on its own.

Also interesting is the use of a possessive with a PN. This is frequent in Greek in both direct address and reference to others to indicate closeness, or a warm, friendly attitude, e.g. as with *mas* ‘our’ in 1 from an email to me by a Greek native speaker (here transliterated):

- 2 i xristina mas ðiskolevete na kani to mathima tin paraskevi
the Kristina our has-difficulty to do the lesson the Friday.

‘It will be difficult for Kristina to come to the lesson on Friday.’

In American English, possessive + PN is infrequent, and used mainly for identificational purposes (e.g. “my Paul” to refer to one’s husband vs. another’s husband named Paul), and more rarely in direct address in intimate situations. (cf. Rybarczyk (2015) on Polish).

Another attitudinal example is the distancing effect of the distal demonstrative, a metaphorical extension widely discussed. It frequently conveys a negative sense in English, as in (3), as a metaphorical extension of its more literal use, but it can also be used in a positive sense of distancing if the referent is held out as a praiseworthy example apart from other people. This shows that the very concept of distance can have different realizations, some of which may differ across languages; e.g., in Hmong (4), the distal DEM with a PN is very negative and insulting. 5 and 6 show a related type, the use of a DEM with ADJ N *of* PN.

3. That Victor! If he doesn’t straighten up... (E, novel)
4. Rose ntawd...(Rose that ‘that Rose’) (H, elicited)
5. ce damné imbécile d’Enrico...(DEM damned imbecile of E) ‘that damn imbecile E’ (F, translated novel)
6. die trut van een Dorien Jager (D, novel) (that bitch of a Dorien Jager)

Seemingly paradoxically, the use of the proximate demonstrative with a PN also has a distancing tone in that it is a marked form which depersonalizes the referent, but on the information status level, it signals that a referent is relatively new to the discourse, as in 7:

7. I don’t know this Charlotte Hayes. (E, spontaneous speech; pointing to a brochure.)

.....The above is just a small sample of the data and concepts considered. This two-pronged analysis has consequences for research on the nature of PN ranging from that of Frege (1892) to Anderson (2007), Matushansky. (e.g. 2006, 2008, 2014, 2015), McKinsey 2010, Fara (2015), Camacho 2019, Lee 2020, and Agolli 2023, among others. The lexical semantics of the individual determiners and modifiers used with PN and their behavior in discourse in each language suggest that the PN category is best analyzed in terms of a prototype. I will also show that this treatment of non-bare PN has consequences for treatments of forms of NP reference in general. Thus a straightforward hierarchy of NP forms such as in Ariel (1998) misses important semantic and pragmatic conditions bearing on the choice of NP forms for referring in actual contexts. Finally, I argue that although some or all of the languages investigated here use non-bare PN in some language specific ways, they are linked in having conceptually similar purposes involving point of view (including attitude, information status, and focus). (See, e.g., Anderson 2009; Riddle 2010, 2014, 2024; Kleiber 1992, 2005, 2006; Gary-Prieur 1994, Schnedecker 2005, 2009, Rybarczyk 2015). The level of markedness, the specifics of the component lexical semantics, and the type of metaphorical extension in each language work together to produce interconnected particularities in non-bare PN cross-linguistically.