

Last names with the definite in Uruguayan and Mexican Spanish

Introduction: the Hispanic literature (Saab and Lo Guercio, 2020, Saab, 2021, among others) has attested the use of the feminine definite article with last names of famous actresses, as (1). Nonetheless, they have argued that the combination of the masculine article with a last name is incompatible, even if they are famous, as (2).

1. La Legrand, la Loren, La Callas (Saab, 2201, ft te 2)
2. #El de Niro, #el Alcón, #el Mastroiani (Saab, 2021, footnote 2)

Our goals: i) to show (with examples taken from Twitter) that in Uruguayan (US) and Mexican Spanish (MS) the combination of the definite article does not have a restriction in relation to gender and last names as (3 to 5), ii) to present particular effects in relation to shortening last names in Mexican Spanish, and iii) to defend that the said combination comes with additional meaning.

3. El Ojeda es un fake. (<https://x.com/Goicoydiezmas/status/1855593815920304401>)
'The Ojeda is a fake.' (US)
4. Deberían formar una nueva nación, Ortega, Canel, Maduro y el lópez' (<https://x.com/DesdeBarandilla/status/1860116212099035201>)
'They should for a new nation, Ortega, Canel, Maduro and the López' (MS)
5. El México de Lafourcade vs el México de la Downs. (<https://x.com/PinedayAguilar/status/1853981630374740264>)
'The México of Lafourcade vs the Mexico of the Downs' (MS)

Working Hypothesis 1: the use of last names gives rise to a conversational implicature of social distance and (perhaps) unfamiliarity. When a speaker utters (6) she implicates that she is not familiar with Downs. Note, however, that the communicated (Grice, 1975) meaning is easily cancelable in (7).

6. Ahí viene Downs, solo la conozco de nombre
'There comes Downs, I only know her by name'
7. Ahí viene Downs, mi mejor amiga.
'There comes Downs, my best friend.'

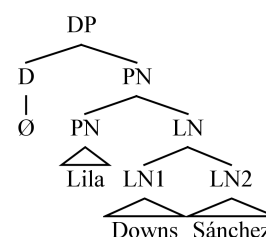
Working Hypothesis 2: the definite article introduces a familiarity effect (inspired in Heim 1982), that can be analyzed as a conversational implicature (Horn and Abbott, 2012, Hawkins, 1991). Thus, when it combines with the last name, it cancels the social distance effect, in (8-9):

8. #Ahí viene la Downs, solo la conozco de nombre
'#There comes the Downs, I only know her by name'
9. Ahí viene la Downs, mi mejor amiga.
'There comes the Downs, my best friend'

Working Hypothesis 3: both the feminine and masculine definite article can combine with last names, as shown in several examples, and it can have a negative meaning, as in (3), and a positive meaning, as (10).

10. ¡Qué hombre el Orsi!
(<https://x.com/22rrocio/status/1859305951326765467>)
'What a man the Orsi!' (US)

A syntactic-semantic explanation for WH1: proper names (which include first and last names) have a complex syntax, as in fig. 1, where LN1 (last name1) and LN2 (last name 2) form a



constituent which is the complement of the FN (first name). Both LN1 and LN2 can be elided, and FN as well. The FN is type *e*, and LN are of type $\langle e, e \rangle$, that is they take a name and make it a more specific name. Then, they combine with the FN, and we have a type *e* proper name (PN) which will move to an empty D (we follow Longobardi, 1994 here). We assume that at FF the speaker omits the FN, and uses the LN, thus giving us a conversational implicature of nonfamiliarity (because the PN is not there).

A semantic-pragmatic explanation of WH2 and WH3: proper names are in the upper right part of the scale of uniqueness (Ortmann, 2014, Bernstein, Ordóñez, and Roca, 2019), and can only appear with definite articles in Spanish once it has evolved (diachronically) into a point where it can be used to redundantly display unambiguous reference, and has the type $\langle e, e \rangle$ (see Ortmann, 2014). Thus, our definite article is a true expletive that may appear in D. It does not provide the PN with definiteness or uniqueness, since they are already of type *e*. The use of the said definite article (even if it is not the substantive one as in Longobardi, 1994) gives rise to a conversational implicature of familiarity (Hawkins, 1991).

The familiarity implicature competes with the social distance implicature that arises with the use of the last name. In the said competition, the use of the definite article (the marked option) occurs because the speaker intends to mean something that cannot be meant with the use of the bare LN (Leonetti, 2022, 54). Given the two alternatives, the use of the article allows the speaker to express familiarity with the entity that's being referred to with the last name. With this, we explain the effects in (8) and (9). We do not, however, explain (3), (4), and (10). They involve negative and positive values which we think can be explained cognitively: once the speaker knows the person she is referring to, if she has a negative attitude in that moment she will use it pejoratively, and if she has a positive attitude in the moment of the utterance she will use it positively. Lastly, (4) has a clear pejorative meaning that arises due to the omission of the LN2 of López Obrador (México's ex-president). The fact that the speaker chooses to use *López* connects that use with background information (being a common LN, a working class LN, etc.) that allows them both to conclude that what is relevant for the communication is that the speaker does not like López Obrador (Sperber and Wilson, 2006)

References Bernstein, Judy B., Francisco Ordóñez & Francesc Roca. 2019. On the emergence of personal articles in the history of catalan. In Miriam Bouzouita, et al (eds.), *Cycles in language change*, 88–108. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press./Grice, H. P. (1975). *Logic and conversation*. *Syntax and semantics*, 3, 43-58/Hawkins, John A. 1991. On (in)definite articles: implicatures and (un)grammaticality prediction. *Journal of Linguistics* 27, 405-442./ Heim, I. R. (1982). *The semantics of definite and indefinite noun phrases*. University of Massachusetts Amherst./Horn, L. R., & Abbott, B. (2012). \langle the, a \rangle : (In) definiteness and implicature. *Reference and Referring*, p. 325./Leonetti, M. (2022). Sobre los mecanismos de competición: doi: <https://doi.org/10.31810/rsel.52.2.3>. *Revista Española De Lingüística*, 52(2), 47-84./Ortmann, Albert. 2014. Definite marker asymmetries and concept types. In Thomas Gamerschlag, Doris Gerlans, Rainer Osswald & Wiebke Petersen (eds.), *Frames and concept types*, 293–321. Berlin: Springer./ Saab, A. L. (2021). A short note on honorifics and personal articles in Spanish and Catalan and its consequences for the theory of proper names. *Isogloss: Open Journal of Romance Linguistics*, (7), 20./Saab, A., & Lo Guercio, N. (2020). No name: The alloosemy view. *Studia Linguistica*, 74(1), 60-97./Wilson, D. and Sperber, D. (2006). *Relevance Theory*. In *The Handbook of Pragmatics* (eds L.R. Horn and G. Ward).