

## WHAT'S IN A NAME? PALMYR, Paris, June 1-2, 2007

An injured man dials 911 for help.

**Man:** Operator, operator, call me an ambulance!

**Operator:** Okay, sir, you're an ambulance.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

What is the syntax of proper names?

- If proper names are directly referring **rigid designators** (Kripke 1980), or **indexicals** (Recanati 1997, Pelczar and Rainsbury 1998), they are syntactically simplex
- If they are **definite descriptions** Frege 1983, Russell 1911, Searle 1958, Kneale 1962, Burge 1973, Katz 1977, 1990, 1994, Geurts 1997, Elbourne 2002, Liu 2004, etc.); they may be simplex or complex.

Proposal: cross-linguistic syntax of naming constructions as in (1) shows that **proper names are essentially predicates, whose contents mention the name itself**. In argument positions proper names become **indexical** due to their **complex argument structure**

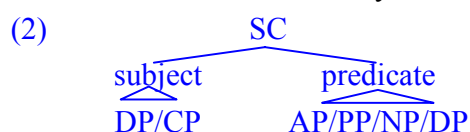
- (1) a. **Arthur** was named the king of all England. argument  
b. The king of all England was named **Arthur**. predicate

#### 1.1. The structure of the argument

- (i) Cross-linguistic evidence demonstrates that **verbs of naming can** (maybe must) **take a small clause complement**
- (ii) This means that proper names can enter syntax as **predicates**
- (iii) In argument positions they are generally **definite descriptions**
- (iv) The **indexicality of the proper names** (*rigidity*, according to Kripke 1980) **can be compositionally derived** from their semantics in naming constructions

#### 1.2. Small clauses

A small clause is a minimal syntactic structure with non-verbal predication (Stowell 1981):



- (3) a. Alice became [<sub>SC</sub> t<sub>i</sub> president/the head of the association]. NP/DP predicate  
b. This proposition is/seems [<sub>SC</sub> t<sub>i</sub> preposterous/out of the question]. AP/PP predicate  
c. [<sub>CP</sub> That Jessie should fight] **was considered** [<sub>CP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> obvious]. CP subject/ECM verb

Cross-linguistically, the nominal predicate of a small clause can be bare, as in (3a), may require a copular particle, or show special case-marking (case-agreement, predicate case).

### 2. CROSS-LINGUISTIC SYNTAX OF NAMING

Proposal: **verbs of naming take a small clause complement** and can assign case to its subject (**ECM**, or Exceptional case-marking). This will also dispose of the hypothesis that proper names in examples like (1b) involve **mention** rather than **use**.



Cross-linguistically, the naming construction consistently displays the properties of an ECM verb combined with a small clause complement.

## 2.1. Copular particles and copulas

Welsh small clauses obligatorily involve the copular particle *yn* (Bowers 1993, Rouveret 1994, 1996, Zaring 1996, among others):

- (5) a. Mae Siôn \*(yn) ddedwydd. Rouveret 1996:128  
 is Siôn PRT happy  
*Siôn is happy.*
- b. Y mae Siôn yn feddyg.  
 PRT is Siôn PRT doctor  
*Siôn is a doctor.*

Proper names in naming constructions in Welsh appear with the copular particle:

- (6) Enwyd ef yn Siôn ar ôl ei dad. Welsh (Alain Rouveret, p.c.)  
 name-PASS he PRT Siôn after hisfather  
*He is named Siôn after his father.*

In Korean, the naming construction actually requires an overt verb *be*.

## 2.2. Bare definites

In languages where proper names in argument positions appear with definite articles, they don't do so with verbs of naming:

- (7) a. Ich habe den Karl gesehen. Bavarian German (Nina Rothmayr, p.c.)  
 I have the-ACC Karl seen  
*I have seen Karl.*
- b. Ich habe ihn (\*den) Karl genannt.  
 I have him-ACC the-ACC Karl called  
*I called him Karl.*

The appearance of the definite article with modification shows that the constraint is not purely syntactic:

- c. Die Polly wird \*(die) neue Mary Poppins genannt. ✓ for some speakers  
 the Polly was the new Mary Poppins called  
*Polly was called the new Mary Poppins.*

Same holds for Albanian, Greek, European Portuguese, Tagalog, Catalan, colloquial Icelandic, Northern Norwegian and Northern Swedish and the Uto-Aztecan language Pima.

If names are used predicatively here, this is an **obvious analogue of bare predicate definites** in (8) discussed by Stowell 1989:

- (8) a. The queen appointed her lover treasurer of the realm.  
 b. Anne's death made George (the) king of England.

NB: see also the indefinite article drop with nominal predicates in French (Kupferman 1979, Pollock 1983, Boone 1987, Longobardi 1994, Chierchia 1998, Roy 2001, etc.), Dutch (de Swart, Winter and Zwarts 2005) and German.

### 2.3. Case-marking

The strongest argument for a small clause analysis of verbs of naming is given by languages with morphological case-marking. The **case on the proper name is predicative**.

#### 2.3.1. Dedicated predicate case

In some languages, predicates are systematically marked with a particular morphological case (or cases). In (Syrian) Arabic, the predicate case is **accusative** (data from Nisrine Al-Zahre, p.c.):

- (9) Salma iṭabarat walad-a-ha wazir-an ECM  
 Salma consider-PRF child-ACC-her minister-ACC  
*Salma considered her child to be a minister.*
- (10) a. salma ṡayyanat walad-a-ha wazir-an nomination  
 salma nominate.CAUS-PRF child-ACC-her minister-ACC  
*Salma nominated her child to be a minister.*
- b. walad-u-ha ṡuyyna wazir-an  
 child-NOM-her nominate.PASS-PRF minister-ACC  
*Her child was nominated to be a minister.*

In naming constructions, the proper name is marked accusative:

- (11) a. salma laqqabat walad-a-ha ṡaliy-an naming  
 salma nickname.CAUS-PRF child-ACC-her Ali-ACC  
*Salma nicknamed her child Ali.*
- b. walad-u-ha luqqiba ṡaliy-an  
 child-NOM-her nickname.PASS-PRF Ali-ACC  
*Her child was nicknamed Ali.*

Similar effects obtain in Hungarian and Finnish, as well as in Russian.

#### 2.3.2. Case-agreement

Some languages exhibit **case-agreement: the case on the small clause predicate is the same as that on the small clause subject**. Such is the case in Latin:

- (12) a. Ciceronem clarum habent. small clause  
 Cicero-ACC famous-ACC consider/hold  
*They consider Cicero famous.*
- b. Cicero clarus habetur. passive  
 Cicero-NOM famous-NOM consider/hold-PASS  
*Cicero is considered famous.*

**Case-agreement** is a characteristic property of small clauses

NB: It also occurs in Japanese and Korean with inalienable possession. This might be relevant: Massam 1985 and following her Cho 1998 argue that Korean inalienable possession involves ECM.

The fact that case agreement also happens with naming constructions shows that verbs of naming take a small clause complement:

- (13) a. *Filium meum Lucium voco.* verb of naming  
           son-ACC my-ACC Lucius-ACC call-1SG  
           *I call my son Lucius.*
- b. *Meus filius vocatur Lucius* passive  
           my-NOM son-NOM call-PASS-3SG Lucius-NOM  
           *My son is called Lucius.*

The same effects obtain in Albanian, Icelandic, and Modern Greek.

## 2.4. Summary

Verbs of naming take a SC complement:

- The definite article on the predicate proper name is dropped in naming constructions
- Case-marking of the proper name is that of a predicate (dedicated predicative case or case-agreement)
- Proper names can appear in other predicate positions

By Occam's razor names in argument positions have to incorporate the meaning that names have in predicate position, just like definite argument DPs incorporate the meaning of corresponding NP predicates. The meaning that we will give for predicate proper names will also allow us to account for modified and complex proper names in a way parallel to modification inside DPs.

## 3. ANALYSIS

First attempt:

- (14) a.  $\llbracket \text{cat} \rrbracket = \lambda x . x \text{ is a cat}$   
       b.  $\llbracket \text{Cate} \rrbracket = \lambda x . x \text{ is a Cate}$

This is not good enough:

- (15) a. #The happy parents made their daughter Alice.  
       b. #She was Beth Clark.

Although there are examples where the proper name functions as a predicate with the verbs *be*, *make* and *become*, they seem to be an exception rather than the rule:

- (16) Born [PRO **Charles Lutwidge Dodgson**], the man who would become **Lewis Carroll** was an eccentric and an eclectic.

We need a proper name small clause to be compatible with a naming verb but not with a regular (semi-)copula, except under some discourse conditions (still to be defined). Hence, suppose that proper name predicates contain an argument slot for the **naming convention**:

- (17)  $\llbracket \text{Alice} \rrbracket = \lambda x \in D_e . \lambda R . x \text{ is a referent of } [\text{æ}l\text{ɪ}s] \text{ by virtue of the naming convention } R$

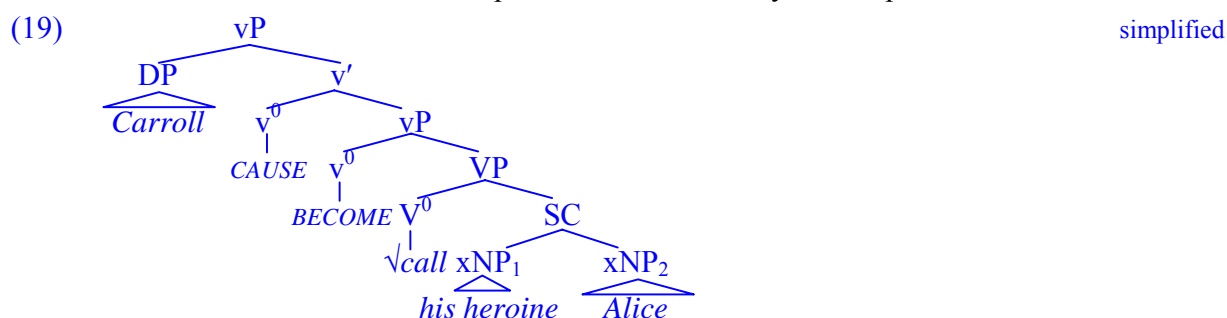
The contents of the name quote the (phonology of) the name itself. This is essential, since proper names are not amenable to substitution in naming constructions (Sylvain Bromberger, p.c.).

### 3.1. Predicate proper names

Our target interpretation is:

(18)  $\llbracket \text{Alice is nicknamed Al} \rrbracket \approx \text{Alice is a referent of } [\text{æl}] \text{ by virtue of } \textit{nicknaming}$

The naming verb (or actually, its root) becomes **an argument of the proper name small clause**, even if the small clause with the name predicate is structurally its complement.



The role of the verbal root in (19) is to introduce existential quantification over a naming relation and to restrict it. The verbal root functions as a modifier/restrictor on this quantification (cf. Hale and Keyser 1993 and Harley 2003):

(20)  $\llbracket [_{VP} \sqrt{\text{call}} [\text{his heroine Alice}]] \rrbracket = 1$  if there exists a naming convention  $R$  such that  $R$  is a calling relation and his heroine is the referent of  $[\text{æl}is]$  by virtue of  $R$

Thus naming verbs resemble intensional verbs: while the latter introduce restricted quantification over possible worlds, the former restrict and quantify over naming relations.

Existential quantification (rather than a universal or an iota operator) over naming relations does not exclude the existence of other naming relations:

(21) Her parents called her Elisabeth, but everyone calls her Libby.

To account for the fact that naming small clauses can appear with non-naming verbs we suggest that the argument slot of a naming relation can be saturated by a free variable made available by the context. Something similar happens in argument positions.

### 3.2. Argument proper names

If proper names are predicates in the naming construction, then we must assume they are definite descriptions in argument positions. This is nothing new (see e.g. Geurts 1997 for a long list of syntactic and semantic arguments, among which are **the explicit/overt definite article** in some languages (see above) and with some proper names like *the Pacific* (Strawson 1950, Burge 1973, Geurts 1997, Elbourne 2002, and Borer 2005), and the existence of **bound variable uses** (Geurts 1997), **generic uses** (Geurts 1997) and **E-type uses** (Elbourne 2002) of proper names.

But: **rigidity** (Kripke 1980):

(22) Mary considers Peter to be a fool.

- a.  $\Rightarrow$  The individual called Peter in  $w_0$  is a fool in Mary's belief-worlds.
- b.  $\nRightarrow$  The individual called Peter in Mary's belief-worlds (who might be John in  $w_0$ ) is a fool in Mary's belief-worlds.

Proposal: proper names contain an indexical:

- (i) Burge 1973 argues that the meaning of proper names contains a demonstrative (*that Alice*), while Larson and Segal 1995 propose that the null *that* is present in syntax. See Elbourne 2002 for arguments against this view.
- (ii) Lerner and Zimmermann 1984, 1991 and Haas-Spohn 1995 make reference to the *usage that is salient in the context*; Recanati 1997 and Pelczar and Rainsbury 1998 propose the indexical of *the naming convention in force between the speaker and the hearer* (which we will make use of, too).
- (iii) Liu 2004 makes use of *the relevant linguistic community*.

In all these approaches proper names refer to one individual due to the hidden definite article (overt in many languages) or the demonstrative. This also makes them compatible with there being more than one person with a particular name in the same way definite descriptions are (as long as we consider only the universe of the discourse).

My contribution as I see it is to provide independent evidence for a definite description analysis with a “quotation” predicate and make it follow from compositionality:

(23)  $\llbracket \text{the Alice} \rrbracket = \lambda x . x \text{ is a referent of } [\text{ælis}] \text{ by virtue of the naming convention in force between the speaker and the hearer}$

NB: See Matushansky 2006 for some discussion of the syntax of definiteness in proper names

Note that the naming convention in force between the speaker and the hearer is not the one used with non-naming verbs. Rather, the conversational environment seems to define a local naming convention (default name, marriage, *nom de plume*, and maybe more):

- (15) a. #The happy parents made their daughter Alice.  
b. #She was Beth Clark.

The only environments where such examples are felicitous are when the linguistic context makes clear the relevant naming conventions.

To summarize, **argument proper names can be treated as definite descriptions** (hence the definite article in many languages). Their **indexicality** comes from the indexical of **the naming convention between the speaker and the hearer** (which probably can be related to **language**) and its violations due to general contextual availability of other naming conventions

### 3.3. Intensionality

In argument proper names, the argument slot of the naming convention is saturated by a free variable. This ensures that normally, the naming convention involved has the widest scope.

If a proper name is a normal predicate, the question arises how it behaves in intensional contexts.

Possibility 1: The sample lexical entry for a proper name in (17) is **fully extensional**. *Alice* refers to the same individual (or maybe set of individuals) in all possible worlds. (Obviously, the name of the individual(s) in question need not be *Alice* in all possible worlds.)

Possibility 2: A proper name predicate has an argument slot for a possible world argument, but in argument positions it must be **saturated** by  $w_{@}$  or combined with Kaplan's *Dthat* (Kaplan 1979). The effect is the same, but achieved in a less elegant way.

Possibility 3: A proper name predicate behaves like any other predicate: it has a possible world argument slot and can be read **de re or de dicto**. The truth-conditions are indistinguishable, since the default naming convention between the speaker and the hearer is an **indexical**.

NB: At the moment, I'm most inclined to the last strategy, but perhaps it is merely a trick rendered possible by the choice of words (by virtue of the naming convention in force between the speaker and the hearer). Otherwise, the first strategy seems preferable.

**Temporal modification** (Paul 1994, Gärtner 2004) suggests that proper names are intensional:

- (24) a. **The Paris of the forties** was not a nice place to live in.  
b. I will finally see **the Paris of my dreams!**

However, modification does not happen at the level of the proper name predicate: (24a) does not imply that the city has changed its name. Instead, modification picks out a spatio-temporal slice of the relevant individual, as confirmed by other, clearly intersective uses of such modification:

- (25) **the Paris of the Three Musketeers**

Further confirmation of this intuition comes from the fact that common nouns permit temporal modification only if interpreted as kinds (cf. Kripke 1980):

- (26) a. **\*The boy of my childhood** is now a professor.  
b. **The human of that era** was not yet fully bipedal.

However the interpretation of (26) is obtained, the same strategy will work for (24).

### 3.4. Decomposition of the predicate proper name

In Georgian, the syntax of naming involves a ditransitive verb

In small clauses, the predicate either bears adverbial case or agrees in case with the subject (Lea Nash, p.c.):

- (27) a. sasmelma nino geniosi gaxada. Georgian  
drink-ERG Nina(ABS) genius(ABS) turn-AOR  
*The drink made Nina a genius.*  
b. Meri prezident-ad aarčies  
meri(NOM) president-ADV elect-3PL-AOR  
*They elected Mary president.*

However, with naming verbs, the proper name is marked with the objective case (absolutive or accusative) and its bearer is marked dative:

- (28) a. man kališvils meri jaarkua  
he-ERG daughter-DAT Mary-ABS name-3-AOR  
*He named his daughter Mary.*  
b. is kališvils meri-s jaarkmeus  
he-NOM daughter-DAT Mary-OBJ name-3-FUT  
*He will name his daughter Mary.*  
c. mis kališvils meri erkva  
he-NOM daughter-DAT Mary-NOM name-3-PASS  
*His daughter is named Mary.*

This means that in some languages proper names can be treated as direct objects and have one of the possible argument types ⟨e⟩ or ⟨⟨e, t⟩, t⟩. The most natural meaning for a proper name in such a language would be the actual quotation, i.e., the phonology of the name (“mention”, as opposed to “use”).

This analysis is supported by the fact that in Hindi (Anoop Mahajan and Rajesh Bhatt, p.c.), the naming construction appears to involve (semantic) incorporation of the common noun *name*:

- It can be argued that the semantic incorporation of Hindi becomes a true syntactic incorporation in Georgian.

That names can now be treated as definite descriptions (cf. Frege 1983, Russell 1911, Searle 1958, Kneale 1962, Burge 1973, Katz 1977, 1990, 1994 in philosophy, Geurts 1997 and Elbourne 2002 in linguistics) *and* as indexicals allows us to provide **compositional semantics for complex and modified proper names**.

(30) a.  $\llbracket \text{the Miss Alice Liddell} \rrbracket \approx 1x . x \text{ is a miss AND } x \text{ is a referent of } [\text{æ}l\text{ɪ}s] \text{ by virtue of the naming convention in force between the speaker and the hearer AND } x \text{ is a referent of } [\text{lɪ}ð\text{l}] \text{ by virtue of the naming convention in force between the speaker}_c \text{ and the hearer}_c$

b.  $\llbracket \text{the famous detective Sherlock Holmes} \rrbracket \approx 1x . x \text{ is famous AND } x \text{ is a detective AND } x \text{ is a referent of } [\text{ʃ} \text{ɛ} . \text{l} \text{ɔ} \text{k}] \text{ by virtue of the naming convention in force between the speaker and the hearer AND } x \text{ is a referent of } [\text{h} \text{ɔ}^u \text{l} \text{m} \text{z}] \text{ by virtue of the naming convention in force between the speaker and the hearer}$

## 4.2. Modification

(31)   a.     the older Miss Challoner                          there are two people named Miss Challoner  
       b.     Richard the Lionhearted                      there is more than one king named Richard

- ### 4.3. Other determiners

(33) a. There are relatively few Alfreds in Princeton. Burge 1973  
b. Some Alfreds are crazy; some are sane.

The proper name NP in the subject can be paraphrased as “people named Alfred”. This reading is fully expected on our semantics for predicate proper names.

Quantifiers and demonstratives are also possible:

- (34) a. ...but no Catherine could I detect, far or near. Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*  
b. There's a Mr. Smith to see you, sir.  
c. This Rover of yours has overturned the garbage again!

We set aside here what Gary-Prieur 1991, 1994 calls the *metaphoric* use of the proper name:

- (35) a. She is a veritable Mary Poppins.

## 5. SUMMARY

If proper names are predicates that contain an argument slot for the naming convention, we can deal with

- **argument** proper names: they are (usually) definite descriptions (hence the article in many languages)
- **indexicality** of proper names, coming from the indexical of **the naming convention between the speaker and the hearer**, and its violations due to general contextual availability of other naming conventions
- **complex** and **modified** proper names: they are composed just like other DPs
- **quantified and indefinite** proper names: an NP can combine with any determiner

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