

Integrating discourse-based knowledge into the meaning of name-based word formation.

The case of proper name conversion

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Starting from the definition of word formation construction as form-meaning pairs, this contribution investigates how their meaning can be modelled within the construction grammar approach to word formation (cf. Booij 2010; Sag et al. 2012).

In contrast to concrete nouns with a fully developed lexical semantics, proper names pose a challenge for word formation theory because they are semantically empty and therefore comprise different aspects of extralinguistic knowledge instead of lexical meaning (Hansack 2004). As contextual referents or unique identifiers, they strongly relate to the speaker's positive or negative attitude toward name bearers and also culture-specific knowledge about him/her (Nübling et al. 2015: 34). However, it is an open question how these evaluative and discourse-based aspects can be integrated into less productive name-based word formation patterns and how they interact in different proper names.

In this contribution, we use conversion of proper names in German and Spanish as a testbed to explore how discourse-specific aspects result in interpretations similar to adjectival readings in specific word formation constructions – in particular the construction [*X + copula verb + intensifier + proper name*]:

- (1) German: *Portugal ist mir zu sehr Ronaldo.* Mein WM-Favorit ist Brasilien. (DeReKo)
'Portugal is too much Ronaldo for me. My World Cup favourite is Brazil.'
- (2) Spanish: *Como madre soy muy Merkel* (La Razón)
'As a mother, I'm very Merkel'

As in (1) and (2), names whose prototypical function is reference, function as adjectives (Watanabe 2016: 40, Lauwers 2014: 218, 2020) by being placed in the adverbial degree construction (Frazer-McKee 2020), a position they should never occupy. Importantly, the conversion of proper names goes hand in hand with their metonymic use specified by the relation GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC (see González-García 2014: 282, González-García 2020: 159). Thus, only some parts of extralinguistic knowledge are relevant for the meaning of converted names. In this contribution, we argue that this is discourse specific and refers to context and culture specific knowledge as well as to attitudes toward the name bearers (Frazer-McKee 2020: 232). However, it remains unclear whether and how discourse-based knowledge varies across languages and how this variation affects the evaluation of name bearers.

Similar interpretations can be achieved via a combination with a bare noun:

- (3) German: *Ich bin so Straße.* Ich kiffe, seit ich 14 bin. (Nala Urkid 2022)
'I am so street. I smoke dope since I'm 14.'
- (4) French: *C'est très théâtre,* c'est-à-dire très faux. (Lauwers 2018)
'This is very theatre, that is to say, very fake.'

However, the conversion of the noun as in (3) and (4) introduces a scale of comparison to a behaviour deviating from average expectations, including the speaker's attitude towards the situation. Still, the noun frame contains a subset of semantic features that evoke the intended meaning. Proper names differ from common nouns in that they lack a lexical frame (cf. Agolli 2023, Allan 2024, Soames 2002). Therefore, contextual information about the referent is necessary to provide features for a proper interpretation of the construction.

Based on a dataset of 400 occurrences for German and Spanish from social media (X/Twitter) and blogs (DWDS) we hypothesize that the conversion of proper names in both languages bear similar pragmatic functions (e.g. evaluation) but that types differ depending on extralinguistic

properties. We provide a corpus-based taxonomy of evaluation types and argue that this kind of pragmatic knowledge should be integrated into the semantic properties of converted names.

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