

Referential hereditary last names as presupposition triggers

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Hereditary last names used predicatively and referentially seem to pattern more like quasi-name (e.g., "dad") than like first names. This provides motivation to treat the semantics of hereditary last names like the semantics of quasi-names. Following Muñoz' (2019) treatment of quasi-names, I propose that referential uses of hereditary last names are only felicitous if they entail their predicative counterparts, making referential uses of last names presupposition triggers. This means, for example, that to be called "Smith" presupposes belonging to the Smith family. The presupposition triggered by referential last names behaves as expected with the presupposition tests (Karttunen 1973) and I provide additional experimental support to the thesis that the family membership introduced by referential last names is non-at-issue. In my proposal, the link between referential uses and predicative uses of last names is taken to be compositional and derived from a type-shifter which applies to the latter to give rise to the former. Furthermore, motivated by Ballarin (2019) and cross-linguistic data from Korean, I suggest that even the meaning of predicative last names is compositional and derived from family entities and a "belong-to" predicate. This predicate is silent in English but overt in Korean. My proposal on the semantics of last names completes the discussion started by Boër (1975) and carried on by Fara (2015), Jeshion (2015a, 2015b) and Matushansky (2015), which looked at the contrast between last names used predicatively and last names used referentially. My presentation will be guided by key examples which target the different aspects mentioned above.