

Don't Call Me a Predicativist

According to predicativism, the semantic value of the name 'Mary' is the property *being called Mary* (Sloat 1969, Burge 1973, Fara 2015). Evidence for predicativism comes from sentences in which proper names appear in syntactic positions commonly occupied by common nouns (e. g. 'Some Marys are nice'). In addition to that, some proponents of predicativism argue that naming constructions like (1)

- (1) Her daughter is called Mary.

provide further evidence for their view (Fara 2011, Matushansky 2008). In this presentation, I argue that naming constructions do not provide evidence for predicativism and propose a non-predicativist semantics for such expressions. The presentation is structured as follows.

In the first part, I present (i) Matushansky's arguments for the claim that the syntactic position occupied by proper names in naming constructions (henceforth *the appellation position*) corresponds to the predicate component of a small clause and (ii) her semantics for naming constructions. On her view, 'Mary' is a two-place predicate that denotes a relation between objects and relations between objects and the phonological string /mɛri/:

- (2) $\llbracket \text{Mary} \rrbracket = \lambda x. \lambda R. R(x)(/mɛri/)$

The semantic value of 'Mary' combines with the semantic value of 'her daughter' and that of 'called' to obtain the following truth-conditions for (1):

- (3) $\llbracket (1) \rrbracket = 1$ iff $\exists R(\text{call}(R) \wedge R(h)(/mɛri/))$

According to (3), (1) is true just in case there is a calling relation that obtains between her daughter and the phonological string /mɛri/.

In the second part, I propose an objection against Matushansky's semantics. I start by arguing that a successful account of naming constructions should also cover sentences like (4):

- (4) Those particles are called quarks.

I then show that Matushansky's proposal fails to satisfy this requirement.

In the last part, I propose a new semantics for naming constructions. First, I argue that the problem with Matushansky's semantics lies in her assumption that naming constructions contain *uses* of proper names (and not *mentions*). Then, I propose that the appellation position is occupied by a quoted expression alongside an unpronounced morpheme, which combines with the semantic value of the quoted expression to generate the function described in (2). The compositional process then continues as in Matushansky's original proposal and (1) is assigned the truth-conditions in (3). The new semantics covers cases like (4), is consistent with the syntactic evidence presented by Matushansky and is also motivated by the analysis of other constructions involving small clauses.

References

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