
The first name/last name asymmetry explored experimentally.

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Abstract

First names and last names behave differently in coordination contexts thus hinting at syntactic and/or semantic differences between the two (e.g., Andrew Lewis and Patrick Lewis vs. ?William Burns and William Anderson). Assuming a predicative analysis, my aims are to understand the differences between these types of names and to explain them in the semantics. Inspired by Muñoz (2019), I propose that bearing a surname presupposes belonging to a family so named. Experimental investigation shows that surnames' contribution is indeed linked with a family membership meaning. It also suggests that surnames behave like modifiers in full name DPs.

Keywords: proper names, DP coordination, experimental semantics, predicativism

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