Toward a semantics for personal name blends

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The phenomenon

(1) **Brangelina** are true globetrotters, but have settled down in the vineyards of France, where they got married last year. (iWeb)
   Brad (Pitt) & Angelina (Jolie)

(2) **Steinmerkel** spricht über Kredite für den Mittelstand. (DeReKo)
   ‘Steinmerkel talks about loans for medium-sized businesses.’
   (Frank-Walter) Steinmeier & (Angela) Merkel

- Blends made up from (at least) two personal names
- Some shortening of the base words
- Single phonological word template

Arndt -Lappe & Plag 2013; Beliaeva 2019
The phenomenon

- Little known about semantics of **personal name blends** – usually not distinguished from lexical blends

- Meaning of lexical blends is usually identified with the meaning of copulative compounds
  1. celesbian $\rightarrow$ celebrity + lesbian (additive; cf. *singer-songwriter*)
  2. chofa $\rightarrow$ chair + sofa (compromise; cf. *northeast*)

- *Brangelina* etc. “denote a group of individuals” (Renner 2015: 127); are “nicknames” (Mattiello 2017: 57)

  Fleischer & Barz 2012; Bauer 2008; Bauer, Lieber & Plag 2013
Why at the event semantics workshop?

- Frequently, personal name blends are eventive

1. Michonne never gained anything from the Richonne ship... (iWeb)

2. Aniston also confirmed [...] “that Brangelina happened behind her back.” (iWeb)

3. Frankreichs neuer Präsident setzt auf „Mercron“, die deutsch-französische Freundschaft als Motor für die EU und die Welt.
   
   ‘France’s new president believes in “Mercron”, the Franco-German friendship as the engine for the EU and the world.’

- Blends often serve as premodifiers for eventive nouns as in (1)
- Also denote (abstract) eventualities such as romantic relationships in (2) or friendships as in (3) on their own
Goals and challenges

- Typology of semantic types of personal name blends

- Show semantic relatedness of some of these types (incl. eventive ones), polysemy, and high degree of context-/world knowledge dependence

- Assumption that names have no semantics – complex blends, however, do

- Build on previous studies that made use of social ontologies and suggest a frame semantic analysis for some of the semantic types
The data base

Sources:
- German/English data from Twitter, iWeb, DeReKo, message boards

Methods:
- Initial list of well-known celebrity blends
- Extended through surveys in online message boards and corpora

Data:
- 1468 types – 2909 tokens
Typology of readings

Headed blends

(1) ...you really think that they can just get goons from the streets [...] to shout MESSI-DONA for them and Messi would just score many goals... (iWeb)

(2) Out there, they hailed each other. “I always call him ‘Maradonny’,” Nouri said. “At first I didn’t know he was that technically skilled... (guardian.co.uk)

- Not frequent
- Always similative --> ‘Messi is like Maradona in some respect’
- Head placement variable
- Common semantization pattern (cf. to out-Merkel s.o., merkelisieren, Merkel one’s way into sth.)
Typology of readings

**Non-headed additive**  (both from iWeb)

(1) And so Richonne has emerged as the core couple -- the patriarch and matriarch of Alexandria.

(2) Novak had serve issues that year and Fedal really weren't his problem in slams.

- ~collection of individuals
- Non-headed / exocentric
- Either plural or singular agreement (like many group nouns, e.g. *couple, police* etc.)
Typology of readings

Non-headed abstract event (both from iWeb)

(1) **Richonne** is a freaking love story by the book!

(2) This is what the [...] wounded Federer fans miss about each re-enactment of this rivalry. # The foremost point to remember about Fedal and the two men at the heart of it is that in 2003, mens tennis was not in a very good place.

- Abstract events: romance and rivalry, respectively
- Non-headed / exocentric
- Always singular agreement
Typology of readings

Non-headed single event

(1) No, you're NOT a bad tennis fan if you didn't want **Fedal** to **happen**. [...] Similarly, the magnitude of *Sundays occasion* doesn't mean that one can't want a *Nadal-Djokovic Roland Garros final* just as much. (iWeb)

- Not very frequent
- Concrete event – (1) refers to a single match, not the abstract rivalry
Typology of readings

Metaphorical, semanticized

(1) The 3.5mm headphone port and the Lightning jack are the **Brangelina of smartphone components**. It seems like everyday there is a new rumor of their split in the upcoming iPhone 7... (iWeb)

- Not very frequent
- Typically realized as *of*-PP with target domain as complement (or genitives in German)
- Reliant on entrenched characteristics of source domain blend
Typology of readings

**Claim:**
- All non-headed types are semantically related
- Either rely or build on each other semantically/conceptually
- Representation of complex frame in combination with a social ontology captures possible readings
Fedal as case study

(1) Novak had serve issues that year and Fedal really weren't his problem in slams.
   --> ADDITIVE (sum of X and Y)

(2) This is what [...] the wounded Federer fans miss about each re-enactment of this rivalry. The foremost point to remember about Fedal and the two men at the heart of it is that in 2003, mens tennis was not in a very good place.
   --> ABSTRACT EVENT (rivalry)

(3) No, you're NOT a bad tennis fan if you didn't want Fedal to happen. [...] Similarly, the magnitude of Sundays occasion doesn't mean that one cant want a Nadal-Djokovic Roland Garros final just as much.
   --> SINGLE EVENT (match)
Modeling: Frame semantics

- A frame is a recursive attribute–value structure (Barsalou 1992; Löbner 2014; Petersen 2007)
- Attributes are unique to the attribute holder and take a single value at one point in time
Social ontology

- Social ontology captures social entities
  - institutions, roles, functions, social actions (e.g. voting, marrying, teaching)

- Social ontology rooted in a physical or basic ontology (of basic entities)

- These two ontological layers are related systematically

- Social entities are “created” via social acts --> given certain circumstances (acts), basic entities count as social entities

Searle 1995; Löbner/Anderson 2018; Anderson 2018
Social ontology

- **IMPL**
  - Social entities are implemented by more basic entities (e.g. bill of money by scrap of paper)

- **C-CONST**
  - Basic entities c-constitute social entities: Searle’s \(<X \text{ counts as } Y \text{ under circumstances } Z>\) relation

Searle 1995; Löbner/Anderson 2018; Anderson 2018
Social ontology

General application to personal name blends

![Diagram of social ontology](image-url)
Capturing the additive reading

(1) Novak had serve issues that year and Fedal really weren’t his problem in slams. (iWeb)
Rivalries and matches – abstract and single events
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\[
\left( e_s \left[ \text{\textit{compete} \& \text{\textit{repeated_event}}} \right. \right. \\
\left. \left. \text{\textit{COMPETITION} ATP-tour} \right) \right], \ e_s \left[ \text{\textit{agent}} \right. \right. \\
\left. \left. \text{\textit{co-agent}} \right) \right], \ c-\text{const} \left( \left[ 2,4 \right] \right) \left( \left[ 3,5 \right] \right) \left( \left[ 6,1 \right] \right)_{\text{under}0} \]

\[
\text{REF} \left\{ 1,6,7,10 \right\} \]

\[
\text{rivalry}_s \left[ X_s \left[ 4 \right] \bigoplus Y_s \left[ 5 \right] \right] \]

\[
\text{IMPL} \left[ X_s \left[ 4 \right] \right] \left[ \text{IMPL} \left[ 2 \right] \left[ \text{\textit{person}}_b \left[ \text{NAME} \ \text{Federer} \right] \right] \right] \]

\[
\text{IMPL} \left[ Y_s \left[ 5 \right] \right] \left[ \text{IMPL} \left[ 3 \right] \left[ \text{\textit{person}}_b \left[ \text{NAME} \ \text{Nadal} \right] \right] \right] \]
Lexeme formation rule for ascriptive blends

- Lexical rules operating on and manipulating base structures (Andreou 2017; Bonami & Crysmann 2016; Koenig 1999)
- Descriptive rules: generalization over attestations and in consequence the lexicon
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- Lexical rules operating on and manipulating base structures (Andreou 2017; Bonami & Crysmann 2016; Koenig 1999)

- Descriptive rules: generalization over attestations and in consequence the lexicon
Summary & conclusion

- Personal name blends highly context-/world knowledge dependent
- Still, different readings connected in systematic, underspecified ways

- Social ontology and relation to basic ontology (or between types) allows for capturing ascriptive process crucial for interpretation
- Relation between a collection of individuals and status ascribed to them on basis of underlying social acts

- Seems that not very many ascriptive types possible
- Co-participation or symmetric relationship between predicate of social act and blend constituents necessary
THANK YOU!

Anderson, C. Of old couples and important committees: accessing members of groups using modifiers. *Bridging Formal and Conceptual Semantics 2018 (BRIDGE-18)* workshop pre-proceedings


Bonami & Crysmann 2016


Similative blends

(1) Seither nennt ihn das Satireblatt «Sarkoléon». [...] Beide sind klein gewachsen [...] und beide sind gesellschaftliche Parvenus, Anhänger der «Meritokratie»... (DeReKo)

‘Since that time the satirical magazine has called him “Sarkoléon”. Both are short in stature and both are parvenus, adherents of “meritocracy”.’
Similative blends