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21 MAI 2025
14H
EN LIGNE

CONSTRUCTIONS BINOMINALES EN *OF* ET MÉTAPHORE

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Mercredi 21 Mai 2025 | 14H00

Lien de connexion : https://univ-grenoble-alpes-fr.zoom.us/j/96022965560?pwd=jOKK9UYAgt5EEkP64F52n6QWljMZ6Z.1
ID de réunion: 960 2296 5560
Code secret: 336764

14H00-14H30

Pierre Cotte (Sorbonne Université)
Quelles métaphores dans les structures binominales en *of* ?

14H30-15H00

Agnieszka Latos (SWPS University) & Valentina Benigni (Roma Tre University)
Metaphorical binominal constructions in the domain of nature

15H00-15H30

Marie Turlais (Sorbonne Université)
Is metaphor the monarch of literary devices? Stylistic and cognitive metaphors at play in *N of N* structures such as *the queen of pop*

PAUSE

15H45-16H15

Chad Howe (University of Georgia, U.S.A)
Binominal evaluative markers in Spanish and Portuguese

16H15-16H45

Isa Hendrikx (Université de Liège), Valentina Piunno (University of Bergamo) & Kristel Van Goethem (F.R.S.-FNRS & Université Catholique de Louvain)
A gem of a construction. Productivity and semantic coherence of the Evaluative Binominal Construction in Dutch, English, French and Italian

16H45-17H15

Mihaela Tănase-Dogaru (University of Bucarest)
The curious case of N1 *(of)* Proper N2: evaluation vs complex proper names

PIERRE COTTE (SORBONNE UNIVERSITÉ)

QUELLES MÉTAPHORES DANS LES STRUCTURES BINOMINALES EN *OF* ?

Il n'y a pas de métaphore sans contexte et une structure syntaxique nominale peut constituer une partie de ce contexte. Cependant la métaphore n'a pas de syntaxe spécifique, comme montre Tamba-Mecz (1981) pour le français. En anglais elle est exprimée par une structure binominale en *of* ou par d'autres, sans avoir, de beaucoup, l'exclusivité d'aucune. Le SN *an army of robots* peut désigner : 1) Dans un monde fictif un ensemble de forces militaires (une armée) qui serait composé exclusivement d'entités appelées robots habituellement dans ce monde. 2) Dans un monde non nécessairement fictif une armée dont les humains (les soldats) la composant sont comparés péjorativement à de simples machines (robots). 3) Dans une entreprise ou une administration un 'parc' (un grand nombre) de robots (au sens habituel) donnant l'impression de former une armée. Malgré un contexte de science fiction la première interprétation n'est pas métaphorique, *army* et *robots* étant les noms habituels de choses du monde fictif de référence. Les deux autres interprétations sont métaphoriques. En 2) *robots* métaphorise *soldiers* ; en 3) *army* métaphorise *large number* ou *fleet*. La métaphore porte librement sur N2 ou sur N1 et le terme métaphorisant (*robots*, *army*) est superposé au terme métaphorisé préconstruit (*soldiers*, *large number*) qui est occulté, comme dans d'autres structures, avec les effets expressifs habituels. Métaphore ou pas, la séquence binominale garde sa structure et elle signifie une relation de composition entre un ensemble référé dans la tête de la structure et ses éléments référés dans le SPrep dépendant. Sémantiquement *of* contribue logiquement à cette relation plutôt qu'à la métaphore facultative, tout en étant compatible avec elle.

La structure binominale qualificative en *of*, illustrée par *a wow of a show/a Christmas*, ou *a powerhouse of a man*, contient aussi une métaphore, mais au lieu de la cantonner à N1 ou à N2, elle la développe en signifiant explicitement les métaphorisés (*a show, a Christmas, a man*). Cela n'affaiblit pas la métaphore, mais au contraire révèle sa dynamique : l'inversion de hiérarchie qui place la catégorie qualificative au-dessus de la catégorie courante identifiant le référent, que la structure conserve et explicite dans sa strate inférieure (Cotte 1985). Ici on peut supposer que *of* a une fonction dans la reconstruction et dans l'expression de la métaphore.

Une communication est proposée sur les fonctionnements de *of* dans la relation de composition et dans la dernière métaphore évoquée. Quels sont-ils et ont-ils une base commune ? Par ailleurs la préposition *of* a une valeur spatiale de provenance ou d'éloignement d'un point de départ, jugée primitive, qui est en partie encore celle de *off* ; et il est admis que cette valeur est la source métaphorique des emplois non spatiaux de la préposition (OED). Cette première métaphore alimente-t-elle encore les emplois soumis à l'étude ? Comment ?

AGNIESZKA LATOS (SWPS UNIVERSITY) &
VALENTINA BENIGNI (ROMA TRE UNIVERSITY)

METAPHORICAL BINOMINAL CONSTRUCTIONS IN THE DOMAIN OF NATURE

The present study aims at providing an overview and a basic theoretical frame for the research on constructions consisting of two nominal constituents – N1 and N2 – which are held together by an underspecified relation (Pepper 2022) and form a larger conceptual unit such as the expressions illustrated in (1a-d):

(1) a.En. *a tide of criticism*
b.It. *una montagna di debiti* 'a mountain of debts'
c.Ru. *grad voprosov* 'a hail of questions'
d.Pl. *morze rąk* 'a sea of arms'

The binominals under examination display quite peculiar syntactic and semantic properties. N1, lexical word denoting a natural phenomenon (i.e. TIDE, MOUNTAIN, RAIN, SEA), assumes a functional role within the construction, namely it serves as the syntactic head of the binominal. At the same time, N1 constitutes the source domain for semantic properties such as SHAPE/ARRANGEMENT [1b, 1d], QUANTITY [1a-1d] or MOVEMENT [1a, 1c and 1d]) which are metaphorically mapped onto N2. Being the semantic head of the construction, N2 designates the referent of the binominal. In view of that, the binominal a tide of criticism in [1a] denotes 'a large or overwhelming amount of CRITICISM'.

Such constructions have received quite different treatments in the literature depending on whether the focus is placed on N1 function with respect to N2 or on the meaning of the whole binominal. Some researchers define such constructions as complex nominal determinants and propose to treat them as idiomatic expressions (Gross 1985). Others examine the process of nominal modification from the quantification perspective and tend to classify N1 as a measure/quantity expression (e.g. Greenberg (1977): unit counter; Lehrer (1986): measure phrase; Croft (1994): measure term; Aikhenvald (2000); quantifier or quantifying expression; Brems (2003): measure noun; Prandi e De Santis (2006): quantity expression; Necker e Mirto (2007); Mirto (2013): quantifier). Finally, some scholars problematize the 'polyfunctional' nature of N1 and, therefore, they propose to treat N1 as a functional element carrying a classifying-like function (see Taylor 2002, Allan 1977: classifier, Lehrer 1986: classifier constructions, Xiao 2008: classifiers, Zhang 2017: quasi-numeral classifiers). This view, arisen from the comparison with classifier languages such as Chinese or Japanese, broadens the quantification perspective as it suggests that the process of nominal determination consists, as illustrated above, in the attribution to the entity denoted by N2 of various semantic - which are not limited to QUANTITY - such as SHAPE, SIZE, ARRANGEMENT and actional traits such as DURATIVITY, FREQUENCY, INTENSITY or ITERATIVITY.

Adopting a multifunctional perspective to the study of binominal [N1 of N2] constructions and a 'classifier-like' approach towards N1s (see Benigni & Latos 2023, Lacroce 2023, Benigni & Latos 2024), our intent is to develop a functional-cognitive frame which enables to describe and explain crucial mechanisms underlying the emergence and functioning of such compound nominal expressions. Though our focus is on Slavic languages (mainly Polish and Russian), we also rely on the comparison with Romance (mainly Italian) and Germanic (mainly English) languages in which the dependency relationship between N1 and N2 is realized by different syntactic means.

In particular, the following aspects will be discussed in detail: (i) the process of metaphorization and semantic mapping of quantifying and/or qualifying traits from N1 to N2 within the binominal, (ii) the co-semiosis between N1 and N2 in the construction of complex binominal meaning/interpretation, (iii) the semantic versatility of the binominal in use.

MARIE TURLAIS (SORBONNE UNIVERSITÉ)

IS METAPHOR THE MONARCH OF LITERARY DEVICES? STYLISTIC AND COGNITIVE METAPHORS AT PLAY IN *N OF N* STRUCTURES SUCH AS *THE QUEEN OF POP*

The proposed presentation will focus on sequences such as *king of boxing*, *queen of pop*, etc, that correspond to *N of N* constructions in which the first noun refers to a human being using a term denoting a status in the nobility, and the second noun refers to a socio-professional domain. This corpus-based study was led on Sketch Engine, with the initial query [queen] + "of" + (determiner) + noun, and subsequent queries were formed with other N1s including *king*, *prince*, *princess*, *monarch*, *sovereign*, *emperor*, *empress*, *baron*, *duke*, *countess*, *knight*. Domains denoted by N2 are numerous; some domains can be combined in N of N constructions with most of the selected N1s (in particular, culture, entertainment, sports and technology are widespread domains in this study), whereas others seem to occur only with specific N1s (finance, for instance, is a favoured domain in combination with the N1 baron).

In sequences such as *queen of pop* or *king of boxing*, two types of metaphoric operations are working jointly. First, there is a stylistic metaphor, as defined by Goatly (2007: 11; among many others): an object or concept A (the target) is expressed through terms usually denoting another object or concept B (the source), thus establishing – or using established – implicit similarities or analogies (the grounds). In this case, the socio-professional domain denoted by N2, the target domain, is (implicitly) represented as a monarchy or as a nobility hierarchy of some sort, allowing for the metaphorical use of the individual words king, queen, duke, etc (the source domain of nobility).

Yet, on top of this first metaphoric operation, these various N1s referring to higher positions in the social organisation are used to indicate something other than political power or social prestige: they denote quality, overall worth, and/or other kinds of domination (through money or ownership, for instance). This web of grounds for the stylistic metaphor highlights the existence of a cognitive metaphor, as defined by Lakoff & Johnson (1980: 4): we actually conceive of the target domain as a source domain, and act accordingly. In the case of this study, high status is equalled to quality, worth and/or domination. Goatly (2007: 35-40) discusses the association of quantity/size and quality/worth to show that cognitive metaphors lead us to directly associate and equate these concepts.

This presentation aims at discussing the two aspects of the metaphoric operation at play in these sequences and relying on the *N of N* structure. On the one hand, we will see that the cognitive association between high status and quality leads to a hyperbolic use of N1s, where individuals are construed as the best in their domain. In that respect, we will briefly discuss the (rather common) use of *king of N* to denote objects, rather than human beings, leading to another form of metaphor (*the king of oils* to refer to sesame oil, for instance). We will focus on the various target domains (the socio-professional areas) expressed by N2s that can trigger this kind of representation and cognitive metaphors.

Yet, this part of the study shows that the cognitive metaphor alone cannot explain the variety and repartition of N1s that one encounters in the corpus: it is relevant and crucial to discuss the individual terms that appear in these metaphoric constructions. We will thus show that specific socio-professional domains expressed by N2s favour different N1s, and thus different types of positive evaluations. For instance, while queen and king are the most productive N1s in our database, and denote the topmost position that only one person can have, other nouns such as *prince* and *princess* indicate the high quality of the referent, among other individuals of equal worth. We will thus highlight semantic specificities of the various nouns in the data, including the use of metonymy in N2s (*king of the court* to refer to tennis players; *prince of the pulpit* to refer to a pastor), the frequent modification of some N1s (*the crown / clown prince of N*, for instance), and the discrepancy between singular and plural in N1s (for instance, *baron* in the singular form occurs in only 15% of *the baron(s) of N* sequences; while *king* can be equally used in the singular or plural form).

The fact that the choice of N1s can be dependent on the type of socio-professional domains they are associated with will finally lead us to discuss the role of the N of N construction. This construction signals that both nouns are distinguished from each other, and are relatively autonomous (which allows for the metaphor to occur), yet they are put together, combined or associated (Cotte, 1983: 95-113) in a single complex noun phrase, creating the image of a singular (although complex) entity (Langacker, 1991: 17). Syntactically speaking, N1 is the head of these constructions (Quirk, 1985:1276), yet in terms of meaning, N2s is essential, not only because it is the target, the domain that the speaker actually wants to discuss, but also because it triggers the kind of label(s) that can be used for N1 (for instance, the area of haute cuisine only yields metaphoric associations with *king*). To conclude, we will briefly discuss the existence of comparable compound nouns (*boxing king*, *pop queen*), a structure that is even more restricted in terms of the available socio-professional domains.

CHAD HOWE (UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA, U.S.A)

BINOMINAL EVALUATIVE MARKERS IN SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE

This study examines structural and semantic variation exhibited by binominal constructions in Spanish and Portuguese, schematized as NP1 + *de* + NP2. Like English *a lot of* + NP2, the Spanish and Portuguese constructions (Sp.) *un montón* / (Pt.) *monte de* 'a heap of ' and (Sps) *un pedazo de* 'a piece of' / (Pt.) *uma puta de* 'a hell [lit. bitch] of' have diverged from their original literal meanings and have come to be used as quantifiers (as with *un montón de secretos* 'a lot of secrets') or evaluative meaning (as in *uma puta de uma cerveja* 'a hell of a beer') (Traugott 2008, Verveckken & Cornillie 2012, Delbecque & Verveckken 2014, Foltran & Nóbrega 2016). In addition to the metaphoric change, these structures undergo further morphosyntactic reanalysis, resulting in patterns not typically attested in the grammar. Using data from two large corpora of web-scraped data, Corpus do Português (CdP, Davies and Ferreira 2016-) and Corpus del Español (CdE, Davies 2016-), this analysis focuses on two such trends attested with *pedazo/puta de*, (i) the occurrence of Spanish *pedazo* as a bare noun (exemplified in 1) and (ii) non-canonical gender with determiners (shown in 2 and 3).

To explore these structures, we extracted tokens from the CdE and the CdP, specifically targeting the strings *pedazo de* from Spanish and *puta de* from Portuguese. Tokens whose structure was ambiguous were excluded from the analysis, resulting in a total of 2,476 tokens. This sample included tokens both with and without a determiner, shown in (2) and (1) respectively. In addition to the evaluative meaning of *pedazo de/puta de*, roughly 11% represented the literal meaning of *pedazo/puta*. Of evaluative cases of Spanish *pedazo de*, the majority (62%) occurred without a determiner. This group included both cases for which a bare noun would be otherwise unexpected (as in 1) and more canonical bare noun contexts, shown in (4). Of the remaining cases with an overt determiner, two groups were distinguished: those with a masculine noun filling the NP2 slot (which occurred categorically with a masculine determiner for *pedazo*) and those with a feminine NP2. Regarding the latter group, 72% occurred with a feminine determiner preceding *pedazo*. The reverse was observed with Portuguese *puta de*. Moreover, the sample included *pedazo de* and *puta de* in cases like (5) and (6) in which both the determiner and the NP2 were plural.

Additional quantitative analysis of tokens with a feminine (for Spanish), masculine (for Portuguese), or plural NP2 revealed that, in addition to the high rate of 'non-canonical' determiner agreement (65%; as in examples 2, 5, and 6), the type of the determiner with the NP1 was also revealed to have a significant effect, with demonstratives favoring the non-canonical pattern. This type of quasi-agreement is almost completely absent from traditional corpora of oral Spanish and Portuguese, though we argue that it is analogous to cases observed with *buen*, as in *Una buen ración de vegetales en cada comida es indispensable* 'A good portion of vegetables in each meal is indispensable' (Davies 2016; oral). Two main observations are drawn from this analysis. First, the development of metaphorical meaning is frequently accompanied by structural variation, potentially indicating the degree to which the construction has grammaticalized. Second, language use in digital media, already viewed by many sociolinguists as a source for the expression of affective content (see, among others, Bamman et al. 2014), should also be viewed as a vector for structural and semantic shift.

Examples

(1) *Qué pedazo de gol se hizo Raúl Aguirre* (CdE)
'[that was] a hell-of-a goal that Raúl Aguirre scored'

(2) *vas a ser una PEDAZO de mama* (CdE)
'you're going to be a hell-of-a mother'

(3) *Me deu um puta de um susto* (CdP)
'[that] gave me a hell-of-a scare'

(4) *Qué pedazo de película es Gloria* (CdE)
'What a hell-of-a movie Gloria is'

(5) *Un besazo a todas y a tí por esas pedazo de fotos que haces* (CdE)
'A big kiss to everyone and to you for these [hell-of-a] photos that you took'

(6) *Eles importaram uns puta aviões.* (Portuguese, Foltran & Nóbrega 2016:325)
'They imported some damn airplanes.'

ISA HENDRIKX (UNIVERSITÉ DE LIÈGE), VALENTINA PIUNNO (UNIVERSITY OF BERGAMO) & KRISTEL VAN GOETHEM (F.R.S.-FNRS & UNIVERSITÉ CATHOLIQUE DE LOUVAIN)

A GEM OF A CONSTRUCTION. PRODUCTIVITY AND SEMANTIC COHERENCE OF THE EVALUATIVE BINOMINAL CONSTRUCTION IN DUTCH, ENGLISH, FRENCH AND ITALIAN

This study investigates the Evaluative Binominal Construction (EBC) (e.g., *a hell of a day*), represented as the constructional schema [DET1 N1 PREP DET2 N2], which connects an N1 expressing an evaluative quality and an N2 indicating the entity to which the quality is attributed.

The EBC has already been studied in several languages such as English (Aarts, 1994, 1998; ten Wolde, 2023), Dutch (Verhagen, 2005; Van Goethem, 2023) and French (Larrivée, 1994), but cross-linguistic studies (e.g., Piunno, in press) are scarce and often not corpus-based (e.g., Foolen, 2004).

The first objective of our study is to fill this gap by providing a corpus-based constructionist analysis of the EBC, including four languages (English, Dutch, French and Italian), and by analyzing the main cross-linguistic similarities and differences between the EBC in the languages under study. Additionally, this case study seeks to re-examine Barðdal's (2008) hypothesis of an inverse correlation between productivity and semantic coherence.

Our data are taken from the TenTen corpus family on SketchEngine (Kilgarriff et al., 2004; Jakubíček et al., 2013). The top 10 EBC patterns per language are examined in terms of formal properties, productivity and semantic specialization, based on corpus samples of 100 relevant occurrences per pattern (i.e., datasets of 1000 occurrences per language).

Preliminary results reveal subtle cross-linguistic differences between the four languages. For instance, on the formal level we find a wide variation in DET1 position in Germanic (e.g., ENG *a/that/my hell of a house*) but a preference for a demonstrative in Romance (e.g. IT *quel capolavoro di film* 'that masterpiece of a film'). As regards semantic specialization, the constructional semantics is mainly positive in Dutch (ameliorative or augmentative) (e.g., *een pracht van een kerstkaart* 'a beauty of a Christmas card'; *een joekel van een auto* 'a whopper of a car'), mixed positive/negative in English (e.g., *a gem of a book*; *a hell of a stink*), and mainly pejorative in Romance (e.g., *la putain de patrie* 'that fucking fatherland').

With respect to the relation between productivity and semantic coherence, an inverse correlation is often confirmed: while some subpatterns are flexible as they combine high productivity and low semantic coherence (e.g., DU [*een pracht van een* N] 'a beauty of a N'), others form more fixed schemas which relate low productivity scores to high semantic coherence (e.g. ENG [*a whale of a* CONCEPT]. However, we also find several exceptions to this tendency which combine high productivity and high semantic coherence (e.g., IT [*quel genio di* PERSON] 'that genius of a PERSON', FR [*ce con de* PERSON] 'that idiot of a PERSON'), indicating that semantically constrained constructions may still display a high degree of productivity.

MIHAELA TĂNASE-DOGARU (UNIVERSITY OF BUCAREST)

THE CURIOUS CASE OF N1 *(OF)* PROPER N2: EVALUATION VS COMPLEX PROPER NAMES

The main focus of the paper is illustrated in the pair of examples in (1-2):

(1) *Nu ai noștri au pierdut, ci* ***teroristul ăsta de*** *Nadal a câștigat.*
not Gen ours have lost, but terrorist.DEF this of Nadal has won
'It's not that our team has lost, but that the phenomenal Nadal has won'

(2) ***Teroristul Carlos*** *Șacalul a fost condamnat.*
Terrorist.DEF Carlos Jackal.DEF has been convicted.
'The terrorist Carlos the Jackal has been convicted.'

Although evaluative binominal constructions have been extensively analyzed for Romanian (see, for instance, Tănase-Dogaru 2011, 2012, 2013), such contrasts have neither been identified nor discussed. The paper claims that in cases such as (1) N1 performs an evaluative function, giving rise to a 'standard' binominal qualitative construction, in the sense that certain features are transferred from the domain of N1 onto the domain of N2, the resulting interpretation being "Nadal is an extremely good tennis player." In contrast, in cases such as (2), the absence of the functional element *de* gives rise to a complex proper name interpretation, where N1 names or labels the entity denoted by N2, in a fashion similar to constructions such as *the planet Venus* or *der Stadt Wien* (van Riemsdijk 1998, Cornilescu 2007, Tănase-Dogaru 2013, 2024). A further contrasting pair is exemplified in (3-4):

(3) *Pare că* ***legionarul de Georgescu*** *nu prea agreează ideea.*
Seems that Guardist.DEF of Georgescu not too approves idea
It seems that the Guardist of a Georgescu does not really approve of the idea'

(4) ***Legionarul Sechila****, săltat de la Aeroportul Otopeni, încerca să plece din țară*
Guardist.DEF Sechila, busted of at Airport.DEF Otopeni, try.IMPF to leave from country
'The Guardist Sechila, busted at Otopeni Airport, was trying to leave the country.'

As in the previous pair of examples, in (3) features pertaining to N1 are transferred onto the referent of N2, such as a propensity for entertaining fascist ideas, while in (4), the phrase '*legionarul Sechila* / Guardist.DEF Sechila' is a complex proper name, in the sense that the individual named Sechila is known to have Guardist / fascist sympathies.

The paper proposes to analyze the role of the functional element *de* as a signal of the 'comparative' interpretation (Doetjes and Rooryck 2003). The analysis unfolds at the syntax-semantics/pragmatics interface and assumes a uniform syntactic treatment of the two types of constructions, where the *de* is either silent or overt.

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