

Call for papers:

Morphosyntax of Proper Names – A typological perspective

ALT 11

Session organizer: Johannes Helmbrecht & Christian Rapold & Corinna Handschuh
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Description of the theme:

Proper names (PN) are presumably a universal class of expressions which prototypically comprise anthroponyms and toponyms. There is a long standing tradition of scientific research of PNs particularly in philosophy and onomastics. Philosophers have mostly been interested in PNs as referential expressions and in the nature of this kind of reference vis-à-vis definite descriptions. On the other hand, onomastics as a sub-discipline of linguistics has mostly been interested in the etymology of PN and the implications for historical linguistics and the historical reconstruction of languages.

General linguistics and in particular linguistic typology has almost completely neglected the study of PNs. Exceptions are the recent publications by Van Langendonck 2007 und Anderson 2004, 2007. These studies are, however, limited with regard to the range of typological data. Only a few mostly European languages are investigated and compared in these studies. There is no systematic comparative study of the internal and external morphosyntax of PNs based on a broad set of typological data. Three levels of syntactic complexity have to be discerned.

- i. Languages may have lexicalized proprial lemmas, i.e. PN as items of the lexicon. This is the standard case in European languages. However, there are studies that show that this is not necessarily so, for instance in Bantu languages (cf. Van de Velde 2009).
- ii. PN are the heads of proper name phrases (PNP), i.e. referential expressions that correspond to NPs. There is no systematic research on the typological variation with regard to the kinds of determiners and modifiers a proper name phrase may consist of.
- iii. On the clause level, PNPs may fill different argument slots of the verb (S/A/P/D/T). However, there is no systematic investigation of the question whether PNPs are case-marked or pronominally indexed in the same way, as lexical NPs are. Many languages show differences with regard to case-marking and indexing of PNs. This is, for instance, the case in many Austronesian languages, but can be found also in so-called split-ergative languages (cf. Helmbrecht et al. 2013).

Although anthroponyms and toponyms are prototypical classes of PNs, they are so different in functional and formal respects that they are better treated separately. The planned theme session on the "Morphosyntax of proper names – a typological perspective" therefore focuses on the grammatical properties of anthroponyms.

Proposals are invited for this theme session that explore specifically the formal differences PNs have compared to common nouns on the three levels of complexity in samples of different languages. Areal as well as synchronic and diachronic typological studies are welcome. Proposals that investigate interesting properties of PNs vis-à-vis common nouns and pronouns in individual lesser known languages are welcome, too. Proposals that deal with more theoretical questions such as the question of the status of PNs as a separate class of parts of speech or as a subclass of common nouns, or contributions that try to explain the formal differences functionally are invited too.

Please submit short abstracts (500 words) to:
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preferably as pdfs by e-mail no later than November 20, 2014.

References:

- Anderson, John M. 2004. On the grammatical status of names. In: *Language* 80:435-474.
- Anderson, John M. 2007. *The grammar of names*. Oxford University Press.
- Helmbrecht, Johannes & Lukas Denk & Sarah Thanner & Ilenia Tonetti 2013.
Morphosyntactic coding of proper names and its implications for the Animacy Hierarchy.
(Paper presented at the bi-annual conference of the Association for Linguistic Typology
(ALT 10) in Leipzig, August 2013) University of Regensburg: manuscript (submitted).
- Van Langendonck, Willy 2007. *Theory and Typology of Proper Names*. Berlin/NY: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Van de Velde, Mark 2009. Agreement as a grammatical criterion for Proper Name status in Kurundi. In: *Onoma* 44: 219-241.

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