

# The syntactical behaviour of personal names

**Corinna Handschuh** (Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel)

Proper names and common nouns show a number of differences in their grammatical behavior. Though individual languages vary greatly with respect to how visible these differences are ranging from distinct forms of the article in a number of Austronesian languages (Lynch et al. 2011:37) to a preference for the pre-nominal position as possessors in German the evidence for a special grammatical status of names has become too numerous for linguists to further treat them as just “some type of noun”. Personal names, as the prototypical name type, are the class of names that deviates the most from common nouns (Anderson 2003:365, 373; Van Langendonck & Van de Velde 2016:33). Thus, this paper concentrates on personal names, yet pointing out interesting contrast with other types.

Presumably, every area of grammar exhibits some distinct behavior between personal names and common nouns in some language. This paper will illustrate this for the domain of noun phrase syntax. Names show a tendency to exhibit restrictions on their ability to co-occur with modifiers in a number of languages. Another pattern, very prominent at least in the Austronesian languages, is that names seldom occur as NP-heads but are rather used in apposition to common nouns serving as the head of the phrase instead. I will present data from a crosslinguistic survey of the grammatical properties of personal names and illustrate the different syntactic patterns found in the languages of the world. More specifically, the types of nominal modifiers that can or cannot occur with personal names in individual languages as well as the distribution of names as heads versus non-heads (e.g. in apposition to the head) of a noun phrase will be illustrated.

## References

- Anderson, John. 2003. On the structure of names. *Folia Linguistica* 37(3–4). 347–398.
- Lynch, John, Malcom Ross & Terry Crowley (eds.). 2011. *The Oceanic languages*. London: Routledge.
- Van Langendonck, Willy & Mark Van de Velde. 2016. Names and grammar. In Carole Hough & Daria Izdebska (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of names and naming*, 17–38. Oxford: Oxford University Press.