

Review by Corinna Handschuh

Does the paper make a novel contribution to the understanding of the topic under investigation? [max 250 words]*

The paper investigates the morphosyntactic behaviour of (human) unique nouns, first in a small selection of languages from all over the world, and afterwards in the Romance languages, as exemplified by 14th-Century Spanish, Old French, Romanian and Balearic Catalan. It demonstrates that human unique nouns often deviate from the morphosyntactic pattern exhibited by sortal nouns, and that moreover these deviations often mirror the behaviour of personal names. This parallel between the two classes of nominals is argued to be motivated by their semantic similarities using the classification of nouns by Löbner (1985) into sortal, relational, functional, and individual nouns. Additionally, animacy effects are demonstrated to be operating.

One feature setting the paper apart from most of the previous literature is that the approach takes several different constructions into account in the discussion of the Romance languages (and, also in the typologically oriented section), namely, Differential Object Marking (DOM), possessive phrases, article drop, and distribution of article forms. The author convincingly argues that there is a uniform motivation for phenomena that might previously have been considered mere grammatical idiosyncrasies of the individual languages.

In two instances, DOM in 14th-Century Spanish and possessive phrases in Old French, the paper demonstrates that there is a clear pattern and semantic motivation behind a phenomenon that has been previously treated as random variation. It thus furthers our understanding of these constructions.

Additionally, the paper offers some new insights for the study of the grammatical behaviour of proper names and related concepts.

Is the empirical content of the paper sound (i.e. the data are collected and presented properly, the experiments are well designed, the statistics is well done, the examples contain no spelling mistakes, etc)? [max 400 words]*

The empirical basis of the paper appears to be sound. However, the level of detail varies between the discussion of different languages. Less detailed accounts are acceptable for the section treating other language families, since the focus of the paper (and, also the journal) is on Romance. The part on Romanian, however, feels rushed and slightly superficial. If this discussion could be extended, the Romance section would feel more balanced.

Footnote 3 mentions that only selected nouns have been analysed for the data on 14th-century Spanish DOM. It would be helpful to have more details on the selection of nouns. For instance, does the selection consist only of the items listed in Table 2, or are these only exemplary for the findings? On which basis have the nouns used in the analysis been selected? While almost all lexical items in Table 2 show a neat division into unique noun = DOM vs. non-unique noun = no DOM, there is one exception, namely <mujer>. This item is claimed to be generally unmarked in the text, while the table shows that out of its two occurrences it exhibits/lacks DOM in one instance each. This mixed behaviour could be rooted in the polysemy of the item which (at least in present Spanish) can mean both 'woman' and 'wife', and thus can be both a functional and sortal noun. Whether this theory holds, should be checked with the original text. If indeed the presence/absence of DOM correlates which this functional/sortal noun polysemy, this would make the argument presented in the paper even stronger.

The data on Old French possessive constructions exhibits a less clear-cut – while still convincing – picture than 14th-century Spanish. While functional nouns show a clear tendency to pattern with personal names in their preference for zero-marking, the data exhibits quite a bit of variation within this group in two respects. First, while all other functional nouns prefer the zero-marked possessive construction with almost 80%, one item, namely <ma mère>, exhibits a division between zero- and prepositional marking closer to a 50-50 distribution (58/42). And second, among the functional nouns the preferred preposition differs, while <roi> is far more likely to select <à> in the prepositional construction, all other functional nouns occur with <de> predominantly. While such variation between items is to be expected in corpus data, it should be addressed (or, even better, accounted for) in some form.

Is the argument coherent and sound, with no major flaws and/or shortcomings, within the context of the theoretical assumptions made by the author? [max 500 words] *

The central idea of the paper is that human unique (including functional nouns) often pattern with personal names in their morphosyntactic behaviour because all these types of nouns share the semantic feature of uniqueness setting them apart from sortal nouns. The data presented provide various examples that illustrate this shared grammatical behaviour, and, also one language, Balearic Catalan, where unique nouns differ from both sortal nouns and personal names in the form of their article. This latter case is no contradiction to the proposed explanation of the other phenomena, since there are other semantic features setting apart human unique nouns and personal names. Thus the argumentation of the paper is in general coherent and sound.

While Löbner (1985)'s semantic types of nouns are generally well presented, the examples for relational nouns given on page 2 (<husband>, <wife>) should be replaced with items that have non-unique referents (e.g.: <brother>, <sister>). While <wife> is contrasted with <woman> by Löbner (1985: 292) to illustrate the initial distinction between relational and non-relational nouns, when discussing the subdivision of the former class into functional and relational nouns, he clearly states that <wife> belong to the functional class (p. 294). Also, I could not help but notice that one of Löbner's four types of nouns does not play any role in the analysis. Is the omission of relational nouns in the data-oriented sections an accident, or is there any motivation for it (e.g. lack of suitable items in the sources)? Whatever the reason, this should be addressed somewhere, if only to state that this type of noun will not feature in the remainder of the paper. One would assume, if the assumption of the paper is correct, that this class patterns with sortal nouns in the constructions discussed.

One minor terminological issue should be considered. The author mostly speaks of personal names and compares (human) unique nouns to them. Sometimes, however, the term proper name is used, seemingly to mean the same. The class of proper names comprises much more than only personal names (e.g. place names, product names etc.) and it has been demonstrated that different classes of names can exhibit different morphosyntactic patterns (e.g. with respect to article use). This internal variation between name classes should be addressed at some point, in particular in view of the situation in Romanian, where human unique nouns only pattern with a (arguably marginal) subclass of names (i.e. kinship names), yet they are broadly generalized to pattern like personal names.

Are there any relevant scholarly works that have been overlooked by the author? If the answer is YES, please provide the full references.*

Summaries of recent work on the special grammatical properties of proper names can be found in the following two papers. The discussion of the extension and boundaries of the name category discussed in the second paper appears to be particularly relevant for the reviewed paper, since it discusses an additional lexical domain that shares grammatical properties with proper names:

* Schlücker, Barbara & Ackermann, Tanja. 2017. The morphosyntax of proper names: An overview. *Folia Linguistica* 51(2). 309-339.

* Handschuh, Corinna & Dammal, Antje. 2019. Introduction: Grammar of names and grammar out of names. *Language Typology and Universals* 72(4). 453-465.

Morphosyntactic differences within the category of names (between person and place names in particular) are the subject of the following papers. This situation might be analysed as a mirror image of the differences between animate/human and inanimate/non-human unique nouns presented in the reviewed paper:

* Stolz, Thomas, Levkovych, Nataliya & Urdze, Aina. 2017a. When zero is just enough ... In support of a Special Toponymic Grammar in Maltese. *Folia Linguistica* 51(2). 453-482.

* -- . 2017b. Die Grammatik der Toponyme als typologisches Forschungsfeld: Eine Pilotstudie. In: Johannes Helmbrecht, Damaris Nübling & Barbara Schlücker (eds.) *Namengrammatik*. 121-146. Hamburg: Buske.

* --. 2018. La morfosintassi dei toponimi in prospettiva tipologica. In Giuseppe Brincat & Sandro Caruana (eds.), *Tipologia e 'dintorni': il metodo tipologico alla intersezione di piani d'analisi*, 307-324. Roma: Bulzoni.

An additional paper, which might be worth considering for the discussion of the Catalan data, is the following. It is only concerned with the "article personal" and "article salat" and does not consider the "article literari" most relevant for the reviewed paper, however, the data on celestial objects discussed on pages 197 f. could be of interest:

* Caro Reina, Javier. 2014. The grammaticalization of the terms of address en and na as onymic markers in Catalan. In: Friedhelm Debus, Rita Heuser & Damaris Nübling (eds.) *Linguistic der Familiennamen*. 175-204. Hildesheim: Olms.

Have you seen this paper, its content, the proposed analysis, or the conclusions published in other venues? [If your answer is YES, please add the relevant reference.]*

No.

If you accept the paper with minor revisions, please list the revisions you would advice (you are not required to proofread the paper) [max 500 words]

The analysis of the item <mujer> in Table 2 and the relating discussion as well as the examples used to illustrate relational nouns (Section 1) should be revised according to the above comments. In addition, the section on Romanian and the conclusion should be extended.

For the section on Romanian, the term “kinship name” should be elaborated on. I suppose this term refers to special kinship terms like 'mum, dad' that share properties with names, but more explanation of which items belong to this class in Romanian would be useful here. Especially, since given names do not share the special grammatical properties of human unique nouns and kinship names, the conclusion that human unique nouns behave like names in Romanian needs a more elaborate explanation. In relation to this, the treatment of proper names as a monolithic category within the entire paper should be relativised and the internal structure and grammatical variation within this category should be mentioned.

The conclusion consists only of a summary of the findings within the Romance languages. The following questions should be addressed in addition: How does the situation in Romance compare to the data from other languages presented in Section 2? What are the implications for our understanding of (and future research on) (human) unique nouns? It would also be interesting to relate the findings of the paper to the recent literature on special morphosyntactic properties of proper nouns (see the section on “other relevant literature”).

In some parts of the paper, references to the works of other authors are made more sparingly than what I would call good academic practice. This impression struck me particularly in Section 2, where, for instance, data from the two Austronesian languages Balantak and Vitu are discussed, and only at the very beginning references for both languages are provided in bulk. I would recommend adding a reference every time primary data from one of the sources is cited at least.

The numbering of the sections and references throughout the paper should be checked carefully (cf. the following lists, which may not be complete).

Cited works missing from the references: Gräf 1905 (page 2); Leonetti 1999 (page 2); Ortiz Ciscomani 2006 (page 2); Ortmann 2014 (page 3); Nichols & Bickel 2013 (page 8)

Mismatching references: “Szczepaniak 2011” (page 3) vs. “Szczepaniak 2009” (references); “Lockwood 1977” (page 3) vs. “Lockwood 2002” (references); “Pope 1948” (page 9) vs. “Pop 1948” (references); “Gardiner 1940 (page 11) vs “Gardiner 1954” (references)