Proper proprial articles and their look-alikes: Towards a cross-linguistic stock-taking

Thomas Stolz & Nataliya Levkovych (University of Bremen/Germany)

This talk is intended as trigger for future typologically-minded cross-linguistic research on those elements which are frequently (but inconsistently) labelled **proprial articles** (PAs) in the extant literature. To this end, some basic notional clarifications are called for because there is as yet no generally accepted unitary definition of PA. Kokkelmans (2018: 66) for instance, claims that the term "refers to a definite article or a personal pronoun used with a family word or a personal name, denoting an animate being (person or animal) and functioning as a name." The possibility of employing the definite article not only with common nouns but also with personal names can be observed throughout the Germanic phylum, cf. (1).

(1)   Luxembourgish [Indo-European, Germanic]
(a)   DA + common noun (Schanen/Zimmer 2012: 363)
       *[**Den** Zuech] huet   Verspéidung*
       [**DEF** train]   have:3SG delay
       '[**The** train] is late.'

(b)   DA + personal name (Schanen/Zimmer 2012: 105)
       *[**Den** Néckel]   huet   [**den** Emil] ugeruff.*
       [**DEF** Nicolas] have:3SG [**DEF** Emil] PART:call
       '[Nicolas] has phoned [Emil].'

In contrast, Muñoz (2019: 62) assumes that "[a] number of languages have an article of a special form that occurs adjacent to names, called the proprial article." With reference to Māori, Muñoz (2019: 62–63) emphasizes that the PA is distinct from the definite article and that it is "highly selective with its complements, occurring grammatically with names to the exclusion of other nouns." The two definitions capture different situations because according to Kokkelmans's opinion, the PA does not necessarily have to be formally distinct from **definite articles** (DAs) that are compatible with common nouns whereas the definition given by Muñoz requires the PA to formally differ from the DA. The Austronesian macrophylum provides ample evidence for the distinction of common articles (= DA) and PAs (Lynch/Ross/Crowley 2011: 38). However, some of the languages differentiate further by way of using different PAs for personal names and place names (Stolz/Levkovych 2022: 258) as is the case e.g. in Chamorro, cf. (2).

(2)   Chamorro [Austronesian, Western Malayo-Polynesian]
(a)   DA + common noun (Chung 2020: 213)
       Ma-yamak   [i   batalan]   [ni   napu]
       PASS-break [**DEF**.DIR plank]   [**DEF**.OBL wave]
       '[**The** plank] was broken [by **the** waves].' [original translation]

(b)   PA_ANTH + personal name (Chung 2020: 211)
       K<in>assi [si   Kindu']   [as   Kika'].
       <PASS>tease [**ANTH**.DIR Kindu']   [**ANTH**.OBL Kika']
       '[Kindu'] was teased [by Kika'].' [original translation]

(c)   PA_TOPO + place name (Chung 2020: 98)
       S<um>å~saga   si   Rosa-n   che'lu-hu   gi-[(i)ya   Tini'an].
       <NPL>PROG~live ANTH.DIR Rosa-LK sibling-1SG in-[**TOPO** Tini'an]
       'My sister Rosa is living on [Tinian].' [original translation]

It is doubtful that the extended functional domain of the DA in (1) falls under the same rubric as the formal distinction of the DA for common nouns and different PAs for personal names and place names in (2). Becker (2021: 41) excludes PAs from the category of articles because "they mark other lexical properties of the referent […] besides their syntactic function as determiner."

For Philippine languages, Himmelmann (2011: 145) speaks of personal name markers and non-personal name markers and emphasizes that their paradigms are differently organized. Similarly, DA, PA_{ANTH}, and PA_{TOPO} display markedly different morphosyntactic properties in Chamorro (Stolz/Levkovych 2024). Accordingly, the question arises whether we compare like with like when we subsume all these categories under one and the same heading. We argue that only cases like (2) are proper instances of PAs whereas those which fit the description of (1) are best classified as cases of the extended use of DAs. Since in previous comparative studies (e.g. Handschuh 2017, Salaberri 2020, Stolz/Levkovych 2022) the two scenarios have been lumped together, there is an urgent need to disentangle them again to the benefit of the research programme dedicated to the morphosyntactic typology of names (Stolz/Nintemann 2024). Attention will also be paid to the reasons why DAs are sometimes considered to be PAs in the dedicated literature. The talk marks the first step in this direction by way of comparing data from Chamorro, Kaqchikel, Luxembourgish, and Romanian.

Abbreviations

1/2/3 = 1st/2nd/3rd person, ANTH = anthroponym (aka personal name), DA = definite article, DEF = definite, DIR = direct, LK = linker, NPL = non-plural, OBL = oblique, PA = proprial article, PART = participle, PASS = passive, PROG = progressive, SG = singular, TOPO = toponym (aka place name)

References

Becker, Laura. 2021. *Articles in the world's languages*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter.

Chung, Sandra. 2020. *Chamorro grammar*. Santa Cruz: University of California.

Handschuh, Corinna. 2017. Nominal category marking on personal names: a typological study of case and definiteness. *Folia Linguistica* 51 (2), 483-504.

Himmelmann, Nikolaus P. 2011. The Austronesian languages of Asia and Madagascar: typological characteristics. In Alexander Adelaar & Nikolaus P. Himmelmann (eds.), *The Austronesian languages of Asia and Madagascar*, 110-181. London, New York: Routledge.

Kokkelmans, Joachim. 2018. Elvis Presley, God and Jane: the Germanic proprial article in a comparative perspective. *Working Papers in Scandinavian Syntax* 100, 64-98.

Lynch, John & Malcolm Ross & Terry Crowley. 2011. *The Oceanic languages*. London, New York: Routledge.

Muñoz, Patrick. 2019. The proprial article and the semantics of names. *Semantics & Pragmatics* 12, 1-36.

Schanen, François & Jacqui Zimmer. 2012. *Lëtzebuergesch grammaire / grammaire luxembourgeoise*. Esch-sur-Alzette: Schortgen.

Salaberri, Iker. 2020. Variable D-marking on proper naming expressions: a typological study. *Folia Linguistica* 54 (3), 551-585.

Stolz, Thomas & Nataliya Levkovych. 2022. On Special Onymic Grammar (SOG): Definiteness markers in Fijian and selected Austronesian languages. In Javier Caro Reina & Johannes Helmbrecht (eds.), *Proper Names versus Common Nouns*, 237–264: De Gruyter.

Stolz, Thomas & Nataliya Levkovych. 2024. Grammatical name marking in Chamorro. *STUF – Language Typology and Universals* 77(4), 417–465.

Stolz, Thomas & Julia Nintemann. 2024. *Special onymic grammar in typological perspective. Cross-linguistic data, recurrent patterns, functional explanations*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.