# LETTERS TO *LANGUAGE*

*Language* accepts letters from readers that briefly and succinctly respond to or comment upon either material published previously in the journal or issues deemed of importance to the field. The editor reserves the right to edit letters as needed. Brief replies from relevant parties are included as warranted.

**Names and bibliographic practice**

October 1, 2008

To the Editor:

Not all linguists have a special interest in onomastics, but we all use our colleagues' names in our publications. By current conventions, this crucially involves dividing a name into surname and given name, and this division is not always straightforward. For example, should the recent *Language* article by Sarah Bunin Benor and Roger Levy be cited as 'Benor & Levy 2006', or as 'Bunin Benor & Levy 2006'? It seems to me that scientific publications should provide this information, so that readers are not forced to look for clues elsewhere (e.g. the author's website, the name-giving conventions of the culture from which the author comes, etc.). In the past, journals such as *Language* have withheld this information, apparently because it was assumed that readers can infer it. And indeed, for simple English names like *Richard Hudson*, this inference is easy, even for readers who are not well-versed in Anglo culture. But other naming systems create problems:

(a) Tripartite names (and names with even more components) are not uncommon, especially in Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking regions (e.g. *Carmen Torres Manrique*, *Rafael Tomás Las Heras*, *Zenaida Guadalupe Mínguez*, *Francisco de Assis Rocha Neves*, *César Augusto Melo e Silva*).

(b) Some languages have minor name components that are often spelled with lower case and ignored in alphabetization (e.g. *Raoul de la Grasserie, Henk van Riemsdijk*). Confusingly, the conventions may be different in closely related languages (Spanish and Italian) or countries (Belgium and the Netherlands).

(c) In different languages, the normal order of surname and given name is different: While most European languages usually have the order 'given name - surname', the order 'surname - given name' is normal in Chinese, Korean, Hungarian, and elsewhere.

(d) In some naming systems, the surname is much more informative than the given name, so that abbreviating the given name does not lead to much information loss (e.g. Russian, where a relatively small number of given names is in use). But in other systems, the information value of the name components is the reverse (e.g. in Korean, where some surnames are extremely frequent, and given names are extremely diverse).

The diversity of naming systems will become more of an issue in an increasingly interconnected world, where it simply cannot be assumed that the division of names and the correct identification of surnames and given names can be inferred on the basis of one's cultural knowledge. The issues identified above could be remedied by adopting the following conventions in bibliographical references:

(i) Given names are never abbreviated.

(ii) Author names are always written in the order 'surname - given name', and separated by a comma, even when the name is not first in a list. Thus, not only *Foley, William A.,* but also *Foley, William A. & Van Valin, Robert D.* (rather than *Foley, William A. & Robert D. Van Valin*, where the parsing of the second name may be unclear).

(iii) Names are always parsed exhaustively into surname and given name, ignoring any local conventions that assign special status to minor name components. This requires *van Riemsdijk, Henk*, and *van Riemsdijk 1978*, not *Riemsdijk, Henk van* (with Dutch-style alphabetization despite the fact that *van* is usually considered a surname component), or *Van Riemsdijk 1978* (with Dutch-style capitalization in the absence of the given name). Likewise, English minor name components such as *Jr.* are not given special treatment.

(iv) To allow readers to put the surname and the given name in the right order, two different boundary symbols are used: the comma for names that should appear in the order 'given name - surname', and some other symbol (such as the dash) for names that should appear in the order 'surname - given name' (e.g. *Liu - Danqing, Zhang - Min, Nguyên - Dình-Hoà*).

(v) All publications should indicate the way in which they should be cited at the bottom of the first page.

At present, *Language* and many other linguistics publications practice (i), and the current unified style sheet for linguistics (see www.lsadc.org/info/style-sheet.cfm) does not abbreviate given names either. But the practice



https://doi.org/10.1353/lan.0.0077 Published online by Cambridge University Press

is still widespread in linguistics (and apparently even more widespread outside linguistics). Some journals also practice (v), but *Language* is not among them yet. The unified style sheet adopts a conservative approach to (iii), thus presupposing cultural knowledge that I feel cannot be assumed. Finally, (iv) is a very innovative proposal that I do not expect to be implemented soon (and one could argue that knowing the usual order of surname and given name is not really important, at least not from the point of view of managing references to authors' works).

But even with these measures, point (d) would not be fully addressed. A reference such as *Li 2001* or *Kim 1999* is extremely uninformative (somewhat like *Bob 2002* instead of *Dixon 2002*, or *David 1995* instead of *Pesetsky 1995*). One rule that I could imagine would be to use both surnames and given names when the surname is monosyllabic and the given name has not more than two syllables. This would address the issue of Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese names (e.g. *Kim Wan-jin 1996*, *Kim Yu-pom 2001*, *Zhang Min 2003*, *Nguyên Dình-Hoà 1997*).

The issues discussed here concern all fields of science, not just linguistics. But since linguists are more aware of onomastic issues than are scholars in other fields, we can be expected to take the lead in addressing the issues (and why not through a flagship like *Language*?).

MARTIN HASPELMATH
[haspelmath@eva.mpg.de]

*Editor's reply*: There are some very good points here, and onomastics in general as an area of concern certainly falls within our scope, both in a practical sense (as here regarding bibliography and index listings) and a theoretical sense (note recent *Language* papers such as John Anderson's 'On the grammatical status of names' in *Language* 80.3 (2004) or Richard Coates's 'Properhood' in *Language* 82.2 (2006)). However, it is not clear to me that there is a ready editorial solution that the journal can provide. We do try to give useful information in bibliographic references, and the author's name is certainly such a useful bit. But we can only work with information we have or can find, and clear indications of the proper parsing of a name or of an author's prevailing cultural (ethnic and/or national?) onomastic norms are not always available. Imposing a uniform template on names would surely violate some authors' sense of how their own names should be treated, but trying to adhere to preferences that can vary from locale to locale and even from person to person is problematic too. An editor's life is not an easy one! Still, this letter raises many issues that are well worth our while to ponder, and I hope the discussion continues to a point where some consensus about best practices can emerge.

**More on names, rather on A name**

October 7, 2008

To the Editor:

Quis custodiet custodes? (as Elwyn Brooks White might have asked). In last issue's note from the historian of linguistics Julia S. Falk about the spelling of J No Period Milton Cowan's initial initial, could she possibly have spelled Charles Francis Hockett's middle initial as ⟨A.⟩?

PETER T. DANIELS
[grammatim@verizon.net]

*Editor's reply*: It is time for me to 'fess up and come clean. No, a learned scholar of the history of the field like Dr. Falk could hardly have made such an error. It was, in fact, entirely my own, totally inadvertent, and thoroughly careless error, the result of inattentive transposing of her email letter into print form. Thanks for pointing this out and giving me the opportunity to absolve her of any blame in this matter. (See the official correction on p. 685.)

**Are you a *pisces*? Fossils and historical linguistics**

October 24, 2008

To the Editor:

Our colleagues the palaeontologists are celebrating a gratifying new discovery—an inspiring fossil excavated in 2004, reported first in April 2006 in the journal *Nature* and the *New York Times*, studied in Chicago (by Neil H. Shubin at the University of Chicago and the Field Museum and Bob Masek), in Philadelphia (by Ted Daeschler, with Jason Downs, and by C. Frederick Mullison, all of the Academy of Natural Sciences), and in Cambridge (by Farish Jenkins, Jr., at Harvard University) for over a year since then, and the subject of a follow-up piece in the *New York Times* on October 16, 2008, based on an article published the following Thursday in *Nature*. The fossil creature, Tiktaalik roseae, a nine-foot-long fishlike assemblage with four leggy limbs nicknamed a 'fishapod', Devonian in Age, stretched out in warmish 375-million BC shallow waters between strolls on what is now Ellesmere Island in Nunavut, Canada, in the tropics 700 miles north of the Arctic Circle. The *Times* has a touching obit photo of the craggy head of my distinguished 'grandpa', but now to the serious details of his active and productive business career,

https://doi.org/10.1353/lan.0.0077 Published online by Cambridge University Press

which has been carefully observed and meticulously documented. I cite now from the core observations in the *Times*'s own words:

'Our work demonstrates that the head of these animals was becoming more solidly constructed and, at the same time, more mobile with respect to the body across this transition,' Dr. Daeschler said . . . Tiktaalik was 'still on the fish [who have no neck] end of things, but it neatly fills a morphological gap and helps to resolve the relative timing of this complex transition.' . . . [B]ut 'we see a mobile neck developing for the first time in Tiktaalik . . . for an animal whose body is relatively fixed, as on the bottom of shallow water . . . a flexible neck is important.'

One of the most intriguing findings, scientists said, was the reduction in size of a bony element that, in fish, links the braincase, palate and gills and is associated with underwater feeding and respiration. In more primitive fish, the bony part of what is called the hyomandibula is large and shaped like a boomerang. In this fossil species, the bone was greatly reduced, no bigger than a human thumb . . . [T]he specimen's loss of rigid gill-covering bones . . . apparently allowed for increased neck mobility . . . the hyomandibula gradually lost its original functions and, in time, gained a role in hearing. In humans, as in other mammals, the hyomandibula, or stapes, is one of the tiny bones in the middle ear.

'The new study reminds us that the gradual transition from aquatic to terrestrial lifestyles required much more than the evolution of limbs.'

See how repeatedly functionalism asserts itself—a Darwinian aspect to the process. Note too the multiple steps to the whole process —never just one leap.

Let us linguists join our colleagues in celebrating their splendid discovery, as we should have done but did not do two decades or so ago when they discovered analytically what they call(ed) CLADISTICS, and thereby joined theoretical collaboration with our analytic ancestors beginning with Franz Bopp (1791–1867), August Pott (1802–1887), and the Grimm brothers (Jakob, 1785–1863, and Wilhelm, 1786–1859) with Rasmus Rask (1787–1832), starting in 1816 with principled methods for identifying familial linguistic relationship (*Stammbaumtheorie*): that is, κλάδος 'young branch, shoot' leads to *Wurzel*.

Exactly, in the way now described for *hyomandibula* > aural *stapes* (going step-by-step—*stapes* by the way is Neo-Latin (seventeenth century) based on Italian *staffa* 'stirrup', presumably from Germanic), our linguistic ALLOPHONES become DISTINCTIVE FEATURES or PHONEMES (sometimes new CLUSTERS), as seen by August Leskien (his 1876 'Ausnahmslosigkeit der Lautgesetze' in his doctoral dissertation[1]), and step-by-step by Karl Verner (1846–1896) in his Law (c. 1890, seen in *death*, *seethe*, *was*, *raise*, *lose* vs. *dead*, *sodden*, *were*, *rear* (a child), *for-lorn*). And so, the retroflexes of Sanskrit arose from pure Indo-European (E. P. Hamp, *JAOS* 116.719–23, 1996) by exploiting Brownian movement in the shallow waters of Dravidian land. The regularities of Jernej Kopitar's (1780–1844) AREAL (or Sprachbund) linguistics are confirmed formally by Leskien's *Regelmässigkeiten*.

As physics (and chemistry) may be called the Queen of natural science, presently the Queen of human science is historical linguistics.

ERIC P. HAMP
University of Chicago

Note

[1] Supplemented by Baudouin de Courtenay with Kruszewski. It is hard here (recalling names from before our lifetime) to omit mention of the section on *phonologie historique* in *Études phonologiques dédiées à la mémoire de M. le Prince Trubetzkoy* (University of Alabama Press 1964 (with preface), a reprint of *Travaux du Cercle Linguistique de Prague* 8 (1939, Praha).

*Editor's reply*: It is hard for me to take issue with a letter that concludes with a sentiment so close to my own, about the importance of historical linguistics! I thank Professor Hamp for his characteristically learned musings; connecting a fossil fish with Verner's Law might be a daunting task for some, but the connection is compellingly made.

## CORRECTION

In Julia S. Falk's letter in the September issue of *Language* ('What's in a name? Plenty!', *Language* 84.3.469, 2008), Charles Hockett's middle initial was erroneously given as 'A.' instead of the correct 'F.'. (See for details Peter Daniels's 'Letter to *Language*' (December 2008, *Language* 84.4.684)).

https://doi.org/10.1353/lan.0.0077 Published online by Cambridge University Press