

The prominence of proper names in the extended animacy hierarchy

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The extended animacy hierarchy is a prominence scale that captures the cross-linguistic patterns of plural marking, split ergative systems, differential object marking, etc. In this implicational scale, proper names occupy an intermediate position between pronouns and common nouns with human referents, as shown in (1).

(1) Extended Animacy Hierarchy (Croft 2003: 130)

first/second person pronouns > third person pronoun > proper names > human
common noun > non-human animate common noun > inanimate common noun

In this talk, we will examine the patterns of prominence lending features of proper names in Romance languages with respect to Differential Object Marking (DOM), which is viewed as a prominence dependent operation. The purpose of this talk is two-fold. First, we will test the predictive value of proper names in Galician, Portuguese, Asturian, Spanish, Catalan, Corsican, Sardinian, Sicilian, Neapolitan, and Romanian. Contrary to Helmbrecht *et al.* (2008), who suggest removing proper names from typological generalizations, we provide synchronic and diachronic evidence that shows that Differential Object Marking is in line with the extended animacy hierarchy. For example, in Allerese and Roussillon Catalan, there is a split between differentially marked first/second person pronouns and unmarked third person pronoun. In Central Catalan we find DOM with strong pronouns regardless of person. In Corsican, Galician, and Portuguese DOM occurs with pronouns and proper names but not with common nouns. In Asturian, Romanian, Sardinian, Sicilian, and Spanish there is DOM with strong pronouns, proper names, and definite human nouns. However, definite human nouns are optionally marked in Asturian, Neapolitan, Sardinian, Sicilian, and Neapolitan while they are obligatorily marked in Romanian and Spanish, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: DOM according to the extended animacy hierarchy in Romance languages

Language	1./2. personal pronoun	3. personal pronoun	Proper names	NPs (definite and human)
French, Italian	–	–	–	–
Allerese, Roussillon Catalan	+	–	–	–
Central Catalan	+	+	–	–
Corsican, Galician, Portuguese	+	+	+	–
Asturian, Neapolitan, Sardinian, Sicilian	+	+	+	±
Spanish, Romanian	+	+	+	+

Crucially, we find examples that run counter to the implicational hierarchy. This is the case in Old Sardinian, where proper names are differentially marked as opposed to pronouns (see Putzu 2008: 415–416 for details). In this respect, we will argue that the exceptions found are scarce and hence do not invalidate the prominence lending features of the extended animacy hierarchy.

And second, we will introduce a fined-grained classification of proper names based on animacy and agentivity, which includes deity names, personal names, kinship names, animal names, and place names. It will be shown that this classification contributes to a better understanding of the patterns of DOM expansion and retraction, especially in languages such as Corsican, where the cut-off point is between proper names and common nouns.

References

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