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Editorial

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Bionomina, a forum for the discussion of nomenclatural and terminological issues in biology

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> "*No one wants to alter the language of common sense, any more than we wish to give up talking of the sun rising and setting. But astronomers find a different language better, and I contend that a different language is better in philosophy. (...) I conclude that common sense, whether correct or incorrect in the use of words, does not know in the least what words are. I wish I could believe that this conclusion would render it speechless.*"
>
> Bertrand Russell 1953: 306–307

Introduction

Science is an encounter between reality and language. It is based on objects and facts, apprehended through observation and experimentation, and on descriptive, predictive and explanatory concepts, models and theories, expressed through language. Accurate, unambiguous and universal communication is crucial for science to operate and develop. As well stated by clear-sighted scientists and historians of science like Ernst Mayr, an important, although often underrated, ground of disagreement, or of false agreement, among scientists, is the terminology they use. Not rarely, different colleagues or schools of thought erroneously think they disagree (or agree), simply because they use different terms for the same concept, or the same term for different concepts. Therefore scientific terms, i.e., simple *words*, play a crucial role in the scientific activity.

This is particularly true of biology, particularly of the fields that deal with the comparative and evolutionary aspects of this discipline (systematics, including phylogenetics, taxonomy and nomenclature, as well as comparative anatomy, ethology, ecology, biogeography, etc.). These disciplines have witnessed, especially in the last half-century, an unparalleled increase of technical terms designating particular concepts.