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Between feminine and neuter, between semantic and pragmatic gender: hybrid names in German dialects and in Luxembourgish

Abstract: In German dialects and in Luxembourgish, female first names often occur in the neuter: *das* [N] *Ingrid*. Whereas in Luxembourgish, every female first name is bound to neuter, other dialects exhibit hybrid names, i.e. article and personal pronoun differ in gender. This is considered to be the pre-stage of the fixed neuter. In systems with hybrid names, speakers can choose the onomastic gender, thereby following pragmatic factors: The neuter is used for young females, relatives and friends, whereas the feminine denotes adult women of respect with high social status. Although the neuter is unmarked, it results from the former sexist concept "Woman's place in man's world is at home".

1 Introduction

Proper names, e.g. *Schmidt*, *Germany*, *Paris*, *Elbe*, refer to exactly one object and have no lexical meaning (Werner 1974, Leys 1989). In German, not only common nouns but also proper names have a gender.

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|-----|---|------------|-------------------|--------------|------------|---------------|---------------------|
| (1) | • | <i>Die</i> | <i>überfüllte</i> | <i>Elbe</i> | <i>mit</i> | <i>ihren</i> | <i>Nebenflüssen</i> |
| | | ART.SG.F | overcrowded | Elbe [F] | with | Poss-F | confluences |
| | | | | | | | |
| (2) | | <i>Das</i> | <i>alte</i> | <i>Paris</i> | <i>mit</i> | <i>seinen</i> | <i>Gebäuden</i> |
| | | ART.SG.N | old | Paris [N] | with | Poss-N | buildings |

As proper names are free of semantic content, they display purely referential gender. This means that the referent has to be known: the majority of rivers (at least in German-speaking areas) are feminine (see 1), and towns are neuter

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(see 2).¹ Articles, adjectives, possessive, relative and personal pronouns are the most important targets which agree with the name as controller. Thus, the speaker has to know the concrete referent in order to assign the correct gender to the proper name. One and the same (invented) proper name such as *Pruvera* does not contain any lexical meaning or any information about the referent. *Pruvera* per se is gender- and meaningless. If *Pruvera* refers to an individual ship, to a river or to an airplane, it would be referred to by using feminine gender expressed on the article (*die Pruvera*) or other targets, if it refers to a car, it becomes masculine (*der Pruvera*), and if it refers to a restaurant, a hotel or a town, neuter gender is assigned (*das Pruvera*). Applied to family names, *Schmidt* per se is genderless. If the referent is female, we speak of *Frau Schmidt* or *die Schmidt* [F], if it is male, of *Herr Schmidt* or *der Schmidt* [M]. Thus, with the gender of proper names not being generally inherent, gender assignment is driven by the referent (Köpcke & Zubin 2005b, 2009, Fahlbusch & Nübling 2014).

First names are an exception: They are the only type of name which in many cultures convey one piece of information, the sex of the referent: *Susanne* 'female', *Klaus* 'male'. In German, there are two separate inventories of female and male names belonging to the feminine and masculine gender class. Unisex names (such as *Kim*, *Eike*) are very seldom and on their own they are not accepted by German administration offices (more precisely: if they are chosen, they must be followed by a second sex-specific name). This semantic information is sometimes expressed by a suffix, e.g. *Claudius* – male, *Claudia* – female; usually, only the female version is marked: *Christian* – male, *Christiane*, *Christina* – female. In most cases, however, the referent's sex is not formally indicated. It has to be known by heart, e.g. *Doris* – female, *Boris* – male (for details see Nübling et al. 2012). In either case, there is a strict semantic gender assignment rule: words denoting female humans, be it proper names or common nouns, always take feminine gender, those denoting male humans take masculine gender (the so-called "natural gender principle"). The targets always agree in gender, see (3a, b) and (4a, b), where the targets are underlined and the controllers printed in bold.

- (3) a. die **schlaue** **Susanne**
ART.SG.F clever Susanne [F] [female first name]
- b. die **schlaue** **Frau**
ART.SG.F clever woman [F] [common noun]

¹ The notion of referential gender is best described by Dahl (2000) although without reference to proper names.

- (4) a. der **schlaue** **Klaus**
ART.SG.M clever Klaus [M] [male first name]
- b. der **schlaue** **Mann**
ART.SG.M clever man [M] [common noun]

The famous exceptions of the "natural gender principle" among common nouns are hybrid nouns such as *Weib* [N] 'hag' and *Mädchen* [N] 'girl' (see Section 2.1).

In many German dialects and in Luxembourgish, there are some remarkable and yet unexplored cases of gender assignment of personal names including some interesting forms of hybrid names. *Ingrid* is an exclusively female name and should trigger feminine agreement on the targets, as in (5) below. Although personal names do not take definite articles in standard German, many German dialects and spoken German in Central and Southern Germany do (see Bellmann 1990: 257–293, Nübling et al. 2012: 122–126). They usually take the feminine article, see (5) (targets underlined).

- (5) German: die **Ingrid**; eine **kluge** **Ingrid**; sie
ART.SG.F Ingrid; ART.SG.F intelligent-F Ingrid; PRON-F

Luxembourgish linguistically belongs to the West Moselle-Franconian dialect area and has developed into a standard language since 1984. Here, female first names always trigger neuter gender on the targets (see 6). This rule is grammaticalised to a considerable degree. Usually in Luxembourgish as well as in German the natural gender principle applies: common nouns referring to animates take feminine or masculine gender, respectively. In the case of female first names, however, the targets show neuter gender:

- (6) Lux. d' [N] **Ingrid** [female]; eist [N] **Ingrid**; hatt [female]
ART.SG.N Ingrid [female]; POSS-1PL.N Ingrid; PRON-3SG.N [female]

Exactly the same system holds for some German dialects, e.g. for the West Central dialect of Saarbrücken.

Other German dialects also use neuter articles in front of female first names but the pronouns may appear in the feminine (see 7), or they use feminine articles with neuter pronouns (see 8). Note that these first names do not occur in the diminutive, i.e. the occurrence of neuter gender targets is not motivated morphologically.

- (7) Swiss German: s [N] *Ingrid* – si [F]
 ART.SG.N *Ingrid* – PRON-3SG.F
- (8) Low Alemannic: d [F] *Ingrid* – äs [N]
 ART.SG.F *Ingrid* – PRON-3SG.N

However, speakers have the choice between different pronouns, i.e. Swiss German speakers may also use neuter pronouns while Low Alemannic speakers may use female ones. This depends on pragmatic factors, i.e. the relation between speaker and the female referent. Decisive factors are social distance, respect, familiarity, kinship, age distance, sympathy, etc. We therefore speak of pragmatic gender assignment. It must be clearly distinguished from semantic gender, which can be derived from the lexical meaning of the noun.



Figure 1: Distribution of neuter female first names in the area of the *Atlas of Colloquial German (AdA)*

In March 2013, the digital *Atlas of Colloquial German (AdA)* (see Elspaß & Möller 2003ff.) published a new map showing the distribution of neuter female first names in colloquial (regional) German in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland (Figure 1). These varieties must not be confused with rural dialects, in which neuter first names are more common especially among speakers of the older generation. Additionally, dialect data show that the area of these names is much broader. Figure 1 only charts the gender of the definite article, i.e. it does not provide any information about the distribution of the pronouns. The black symbols (triangles

and circles) show the area of interest: The use of the neuter article with female names is a clear and rather restricted Western phenomenon. It ranges from areas of Low German dialects (from North Hessian and Riparian, the dialect around Cologne) along the Rhine river up to the South until Switzerland.

This article argues for a pragmatic origin of these onomastic genders. Today they reflect the speaker's social or emotional relation to the referent. This relation may be positive, neutral, or negative. We provide evidence against a strict correlation of semantic downgrading, as it holds for neuter gender common nouns such as *Weib* [N] 'hag', *Luder* [N] 'loose woman', *Reff* [N] 'skinny old woman' described by Köpcke & Zubin (2005a). Although the history of the neutralisation of female names so far is completely unexplored, the original concept behind it may be the concept of women as little girls. It is not by chance that common nouns for girls (e.g. *Mädchen* [N]) take neuter gender, but those for boys (e.g. *Junge* [M]) masculine gender.

2 Different kinds of hybrid nouns and names in German and Luxembourgish

2.1 Hybrid common nouns

The German hybrid nouns *Weib* [N] 'hag' and *Mädchen* [N] 'girl' are often discussed in linguistic literature. Both denote females but are grammatically neuter (lexical neuter gender assignment in *Weib*, morphological neuter gender assignment in *Mädchen* due to the diminutive suffix although *Mad-* does not exist as a free lexeme).² Within the narrow domain of the NP, the targets show neuter gender agreement: *das* [ART.N] *Weib*, *das* [ART.N] *Mädchen*. Outside the NP there is a conflict between formal (grammatical) and semantic (conceptual) agreement.³ This is observable on targets in some syntactic distance to the controller as, e.g., relative pronouns and, more frequently, personal pronouns:

2 As **Mad-* does not exist, some linguists argue for lexical gender assignment of *Mädchen*. This depends on the interpretation of the word as a diminutive or not. In my opinion, the diminutive is still very obvious due to the regular suffix *-chen* (see Dahl 2000 for a similar approach).

3 Even though some linguists often replace semantic or conceptual agreement by pragmatic agreement, we avoid the latter term because we define it in a different, narrower sense. Semantic or conceptual gender means that the sex is already included in the meaning of the word. This is not the case with pragmatic (and referential) gender (for more details, see Section 4).

- (9) *Das Weib / Das Mädchen [...]. Sie ist hier.*
 ART.SG.N hag / ART.SG.N girl [...]. PRON-3SG.F is here.
 'The hag / The girl [...]. She is here.'

The longer the distance to the controller, the more targets follow semantic gender agreement. These correlations have been attested for in several languages (Agreement Hierarchy, Corbett 1991, 225–260, Corbett 2006, 214–218). The distance between controller and target can be defined syntactically (structurally) or simply by the number of words between them. Corbett (1979) defines it syntactically, Panther (2009) and Köpcke et al. (2010) provide arguments for both: If controller and target are in different syntactic domains (being defined by the same vs. different phrasal nodes), the probability of semantic agreement rises ("Syntactic Domain Principle"). In addition, the degree of syntactic embeddedness ("Principle of Syntactic Embeddedness") is relevant. Apart from that, they argue for the "Linear Distance Principle" by simply counting the words between controller and target (based on Köpcke & Zubin 2009): If there is no word between *Mädchen* and the relative pronoun, there is only 6.7% semantic (or conceptual) agreement, but if there are five words in between it rises to 40% (see also Zubin & Köpcke 2009, Köpcke et al. 2010). Therefore, the terms "close" and "distant agreement" were added in Figure 1. This corresponds to Germ. *Nahkongruenz* and *Fernkongruenz* used by Oelkers (1996) and Thurmair (2006). Finally, the grammatical function (e.g. referent-tracking) of the target has some influence on the type of agreement. Figure 1 shows the Agreement Hierarchy based on Corbett (1979, 1991) and adapted to German. German, for example, does not have agreement of the predicate except for some predicate nominals such as in (9):

- (9) *Sie ist Student / Studentin*
 She [F/female] is student [M] / student [F]
 'She is a student'

Here the feminine *in*-formations are more common. This does not mean that masculine nouns are impossible (for more details, see Köpcke et al. 2010: 180–181, Jobin 2004, Schröter et al. 2012). The position of the possessive pronoun on this scale varies depending on its distance to the controller: If it is located in a PP directly attributed to the NP with the controller, grammatical agreement is more probable, see (10).

- (10) *das Mädchen mit seinem Hund*
 ART-N girl[N] with Poss[N]-[M] dog[M]
 'the girl with her dog'

If it occurs in the next sentence, semantic agreement is more probable (see 11).

- (11) *Das Mädchen [...]. Ihr Hund bellt.*
 ART-N girl [...]. POSS[F]-[M] dog [M] bark-3SG
 'The girl [...]. Her dog barks.'

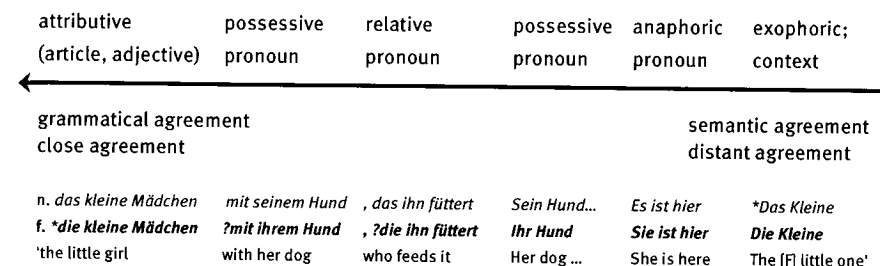


Figure 2: The Agreement Hierarchy adapted to German (controller: *Mädchen* [N], female)

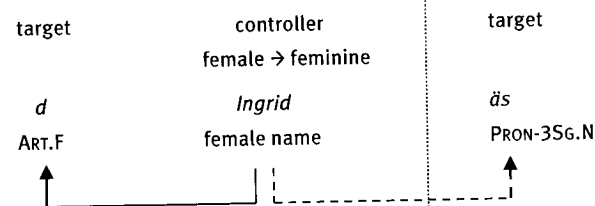
For Köpcke et al. (2010: 179) this scale from grammatical to conceptual agreement is purely descriptive. They expand it by adding the following four conceptual-pragmatic functions in order to provide some explanatory power: *attributive*, *modifying*, *predicating*, *referent-tracking*: "The more referential the target, the more likely conceptual agreement will occur" (Köpcke et al. 2010: 180).⁴ As we will see, hybrid names behave in a more intricate way and it is far from clear what conceptual agreement would be in their case. Pragmatic variables concerning the relation between referent and speaker such as age distance and familiarity have to be taken into account.

2.2 Hybrid proper names

In German dialects, names denoting females usually take feminine gender and those denoting males take masculine gender, i.e. they follow the same "natural gender principle" as standard German. If names occur in the diminutive they become neuter for morphological reasons. There are, however, some interesting

⁴ Fleischer (2012) analyses the behaviour of hybrid *wib/Weib* 'woman, wife' (nowadays only in derogative meaning) from a historical perspective (based on texts from the 9th to the 20th century). In late Old High German (Notker) and in Middle High German, semantic agreement ("constructio ad sensum") was more common especially in relative and personal pronouns, which later went over to grammatical agreement ("constructio ad formam").

a) Feminine determiner and neuter pronoun



b) Neuter determiner and feminine pronoun

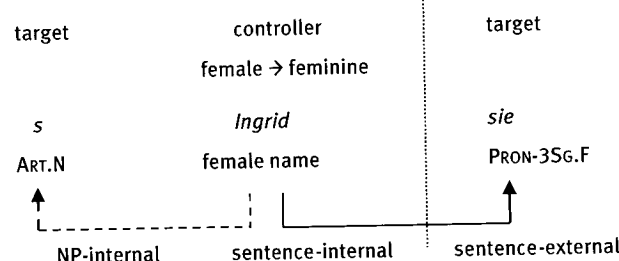


Figure 3: Different types of hybrid female names.

Solid lines: agreement; dashed lines: agreement mismatch

deviations from these principles, which are illustrated in Figure 3. The spellings are slightly dialectalised.

These two types of hybrid names differ with respect to neuter gender on the targets: in a) only the article (which means the domain within the NP and the same sentence) is affected, in b) it is the personal pronoun (sentence-external). If the article is neuter, other NP- and sentence-internal targets such as the adjective, a possessive or a relative pronoun display the same behaviour (12):

- (12) *s Ingrid mit sinem Hund*
 ART[N] Ingrid with Poss[N]-[M] dog[M]
 'Ingrid with her dog'

The same holds for feminine articles. The gender break seems to occur at the beginning of the next sentence, starting with the anaphoric pronoun. Anaphoric pronouns are highly referential and therefore open for conceptual agreement being driven by pragmatics: Here, the relation between speaker and referent is expressed. Figure 2 is a simplified illustration as article and pronoun may also agree. The speaker has the choice. It basically depends on pragmatic factors.

While one and the same article can be followed by two pronominal genders, the inverse case seems to be impossible: Until now, no dialect has been described, which allows for the choice of two genders on the article but is restricted to only one pronominal gender.

Finally, a third type has to be taken into account: The obligatory use of neuter targets. Here, the natural gender principle is completely inexistent. This stage is supposed to be a later one, where the feminine choice has been given up (for more details, see Figure 8 in Section 4). Thus, a sort of (re-)grammaticalisation of gender assignment must have taken place: a (presumably) former pragmatic neuter gender has been firmly bound to female first names. As a consequence, a dehybridisation must have taken place: All targets appear in the neuter i.e. there is no gender mismatch anymore – most of all in connection with the sex of the female name. This system holds for Luxembourgish and some German dialects, e.g. Ripuarian and the Central German dialect of Saarbrücken.

c) Neuter determiner and pronoun

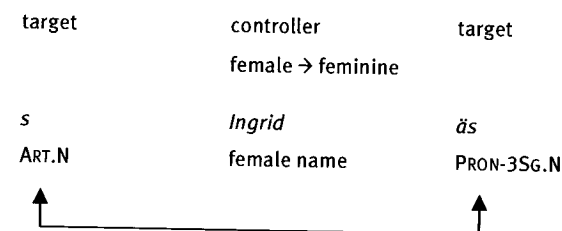


Figure 4: Neuter female first names

In some Alemannic dialects, there are two distinct options: Either neuter article + neuter pronoun or feminine article + feminine pronoun, i.e. hybrids are absent. Pragmatics is responsible for the selection of gender. We will start with Swiss German dialects (Alemannic); then, we will turn to some preliminary research findings of the behaviour of neuter personal names in a Rhine-Franconian and a Ripuarian dialect. Afterwards, we will take a look at the most grammaticalised system of Luxembourgish.

2.2.1 Swiss German dialects

In Swiss German, pragmatics plays an important role for gender assignment: social variables such as the age of the female referent, the age distance between

speaker and referent, the degree of respect and affectivity towards the named person decide the choice of the gender. In the following, we provide some observations in Swiss German grammars and refer to the only linguistic articles on this topic, i.e. Christen (1998) and Nübling et al. (2013).

Some dialect grammars mention the fact that females are often treated and “seen” as neuters, as for example the *Berndeutsche Syntax* (‘Bernese Syntax’) of Hodler (1969): In Bernese German (having a fair amount of internal variation) male first names remain in the masculine even with (usually neuter) diminutive suffixes (underlined): *dr* [M] *Hansli*, *Peterli*, *Micheli*.⁵ The same holds true for kinship terms as forms of address or of reference for relatives. These refer to exactly one person und therefore count as names: *dr* [M] *Vatti*, *Pappi*, *Papali*, *Buebi* ‘the [M] dad, daddy, boy’ (Duden-Grammatik 2009: 299, Nübling et al. 2012: 52). Only if small boys are designated by such diminutive names can the name switch into the neuter. In sharp contrast, Hodler (1969: 17) writes with regard to female names: “Weibliche Eigennamen, ob in diminuiert oder nichtdiminuiert Form, sind immer Neutra” [Female proper names be they diminutives or not are always neuters]: *Ds* [N] *Anni* [...], *Rosa*, *Lysebet*, *Melanie*; the same applies to kinship terms with onomastic status: *ds* [N] *Müetti*, *Mammi*, *Mammali*, *Tanti*, *Gotti* [‘the [N] mum, mommy, aunty, godmother’]. Interestingly, he also mentions two originally diminutive suffixes, *-ə* and *-lə*. Today they express a crude character of the referent and demand the feminine gender: *d* [F] *Lyse*, *Rosle*, *Vrenle*. Here, the feminine gender is the marked one (negative connotation) and only applies if the named female is seen as coarse. Neuter female names are the unmarked case; they exclusively require neuter targets including personal pronouns. Thus, they correspond to system c) in Figure 2. Marti (1985: 81) adds that recent developments tend to favour the feminine gender (which is influenced by standard German) especially if the female first name is accompanied by the family name: “*ds Rita*, aber *d Rita Häberli*, *ds Ruth*, aber *d Ruth Schneider*” [‘the [N] Rita, but the [F] Rita Häberli, the [N] Ruth, but the [F] Ruth Schneider’].⁶ In addition, female persons of high respect (“ausgesprochene Respektspersonen”) get the feminine: *d Anna* ‘the [F] Anna’ (Marti 1985: 81).

We conclude: Male names always take masculine gender; the natural gender even dominates the morphologically motivated neuter gender of diminutive suf-

fixes (except for small boys). Only very marked female names are feminine and denote respect. Unmarked female first names are always neuter, be they in the diminutive or not. Here, an originally pragmatic gender assignment must have been grammaticalised. Thus, the status of the natural (or semantic) gender is completely different: It is ranked highest in male names und lowest in female names.

Bernese (as well as other Swiss German dialects) even developed a specific acc.sg.-form of the animate personal pronoun, *ins* (mostly written <ihns>), see (13):

- (13) *Si hei ihns Barbara touft*
 PRON-3PL have-3PL PRON-AKK.SG.M.N Barbara baptise-PTCP.PST
 ‘They baptised her Barbara’ (Marti 1985: 222).⁷

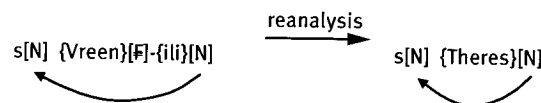
Hodler (1969: 190) states:

Als persönlichen Akkusativ hat man die Form *ins*, is neu gebildet. ‘So ame tolle Wyb sy Ma cha si ... uf ihs verlah’ [...].

[The form *ins*, is has been newly generated as a personal accusative: ‘the husband of such a fantastic wife [...] can rely on her [M.N]].

Hodler (1969) also observes that even animals may be assigned this pronoun. Bernese *ins* must go back to the combination of the regular (animate) masc.acc.sg.-form *in* + the neuter ending *-s*. The inanimate neuter gender acc.sg. pronoun is *es*, ‘s and thus completely distinct. The same holds true for the nom.sg.: *äs* (with a very long and open vowel) stands for neuter gender females, short and reduced *es*, ‘s for other neuter gender nouns.

Some Swiss German grammars (e.g. Weber 1987: 121) suggest that frequent diminutives are the historical reason for the neuter gender of women’s names. The neuter of the diminutive suffix as head of the word formation was transferred to the whole name and reanalysed as a new (onomastic) gender:



Thus, gender was detached from morphology and integrated into the name itself. This implies that names of females occur (or occurred) extremely often in

⁵ Only in the Bernese Oberland, diminutive male names are assigned neuter gender: *ds* [N] *Christi*, *Ueli*.

⁶ Interestingly, Marti (1985:75) mentions in another context the traditional order of 1. family name + 2. first name; here female names remain neuter: *ds* [N] *Gummer Eisi* ‘the [N] Gummer (family name) Eisi’ (first name <Elisabeth). In this construction, the first name functions as head of the compound.

⁷ A lot of examples can be found in the digital Swiss German dictionary “Schweizerisches Idiotikon” (www.idiotikon.ch); cf. Schweizerdeutsches Wörterbuch (I: 295).

the diminutive in contrast to those of males. This hypothesis still remains to be examined. However, as we saw, male names are resistant to neutralisation when occurring in the diminutive (see dotted arrow below). Here, the semantic gender dominates from the beginning. It cannot be overruled by morphology.

*s[N] {Hans}{~~M~~}-{eli}[N] but: de[M] {Hans}{M}-{eli}[N] / de[M] {Hans}{M}

Another interesting fact is mentioned by several Swiss German grammars (Hodler 1969: 17–18, Weber 1987: 121, Fischer 1999: 204): the diminutive *s Fröili* [N] remains neuter in the meaning of ‘miss, spinster’ (compare Germ. *das Fräulein* [N]) but if it designates a (female) ‘teacher, mistress, landlady’, i.e. a (qualified) adult woman with high social status then it moves into the feminine: *d Fröili* [F]. In Bernese, even *Fröülein* in front of a family name becomes feminine: *d Fröülein Herder* ‘the [F] Ms Herder’. As soon as respect, esteem or some social distance comes into play, neuter gender is overruled. This hardly applies to standard German *Fräulein*, which used to be neuter (today, it is most commonly used to call on to a waitress).⁸

Christen (1998) observes that the occurrence of the distant family name of females does not oppress neuter gender assignment, e.g. *s Rita Acherma* ‘the [N] Rita Acherma’. Here, neither the family name *Acherma* nor the high age of the female inhibit neuter gender assignment. Christen provides an overview of different onomastic genders in Swiss German dialects on different targets (Figure 5).

Male names:	article + name	→	pronoun
simplex form:	<i>de Hans</i> [M]	→	<i>er</i> [M]
diminutive:	<i>de Hansli</i> [M]	→	<i>er</i> [M]
Female names:			
simplex form:	<i>d Anna</i> [F]	→	<i>si</i> [F]
	<i>s Anna</i> [N]	→	<i>es</i> [N]
	<i>s Anna</i> [N]	→	<i>si</i> [F]
diminutive:	<i>s Anneli</i> [N]	→	<i>es</i> [N]
	<i>s Anneli</i> [N]	→	<i>si</i> [F]

Figure 5: Personal names and gender in some Swiss German dialects based on Christen (1998: 272). Bold: Hybrid names (Type b)

Thus, sex and gender disagree only in female names. If there is a gender conflict between article and pronoun, it is rather the pronoun that obeys the natural gender than the article (this corresponds to Type b) in Figure 3) due to the higher degree of referentiality of pronouns, as Christen (1998) supposes. The combination **d* [F] *Anna* → *es* [N] seems to be unattested in Swiss German; however, this combination (belonging to Type a) in Figure 3) holds true for Low Alemannic near Freiburg im Breisgau (see Figure 6, data are based on own fieldwork) as well as for West Central German dialects (see Table 1 and Bellmann 1990: 192). Once again, social and emotional factors govern the pronominal gender assignment: In Low Alemannic, the familiar *du*-address demands neuter gender: *ääs*, the formal *ihr*-address feminine gender: *si*.⁹

Male names:	article + name	→	pronoun
simplex form:	<i>de Peter</i> [M]	→	<i>er</i> [M]
	<i>de Peterle</i> [M]	→	<i>er</i> [M]: young, juvenile, adult, old
	<i>s Peterle</i> [N]	→	<i>es</i> [N]: small boy, very familiar
Female names:			
simplex form:	<i>d Anna</i> [F]	→	<i>ääs</i> [N]: familiar address
	<i>d Anna</i> [F]	→	<i>si</i> [F]: formal address, foreigners, pers. of respect
diminutive:	<i>s Anneli</i> [N]	→	<i>es</i> [N]

Figure 6: Personal names and gender in Low Alemannic near Freiburg (Denzlingen). Bold: Hybrid names (Type a)

Christen (1998) observes that gender agreement mismatching with sex has recently disappeared more and more, starting in urban areas, probably due to language contact with standard German. The map in Figure 1 confirms this observation, where the respective symbols for neuter articles are scarce in the Swiss area; according to information elicited from the younger (internet using) generation, the phenomenon is hardly visible any more. She also argues that the high degree of familiarity or even intimacy to which these neuter names are bound disappears, as many women now are living in towns. Here, the hypocoristic, private

⁹ As already mentioned, some Alemannic dialects use the nom.sg. pronoun *ääs* with stressed and lengthened [æ:] exclusively for female first names (see also Bellmann 1990: 192).

⁸ For some exceptions from this rule, see Fleischer (2012: 176–177).

connotation seems to be inappropriate. In urban contexts neuter names can be misinterpreted as depreciatory, degrading and disrespectful.

A completely different and rather symmetrical system has been described for remote Highest Alemannic dialects (e.g. Wallis in the south-west of Switzerland) and linguistic enclaves (in the Aosta Valley in Italy, southern part of the Alps). Here diminution is very frequent with male as well as female names. The names (with as well as without diminution) of both sexes are neuters. Even the pronoun, which is regularly used for both sexes is neuter. Here, combinations like *ds* [N] *Hans* / *ds* [N] *Hansi* – *äs* [N] are common (the same holds for female names). Zürrer (1999) points out that the choice of the pronominal gender highly depends on the social and emotional distance of the speaker towards the person referred to: high distance favours sex-specific genders, low distance the neuter (for both sexes, respectively). The reference to persons of respect or the older generation generally inhibits the use of neuter forms. For further details, see Christen (1998: 276–279) and Zürrer (1999: 244–256).

2.2.2 The Rhine-Franconian (Type a) and Ripuarian dialect (Type b)

In 2012, two MA theses explored the systems of a Rhine Franconian (Langenlonsheim) and a Ripuarian dialect (Linz am Rhein) using different research methods: a questionnaire, the analysis of free conversation and the description of a cartoon (see Busley 2012, Drenda 2012). The most important results are summarised in Table 1. Up until now, they must be understood as tendencies (for more details, see Nübling et al. 2013).

The investigated phenomena can be subdivided into three main topics: No. 1–2 concern the agreement with full (underived) female first names, No. 3–6 with male and female names in the diminutive; No. 7–10 ask for onomastically used terms of female kinship terms, which can be followed by the first name (*Tante Käthe*). All neuter gender values are bold and those reaching at least 90% are highlighted by shaded cells.

There are considerable differences between Rhine-Franconian and Ripuarian: The first dialect represents partly type a) (feminine article + neuter pronoun; see No. 1 in Table 1), which explains the higher values for neuter gender pronouns (No. 2), whereas Ripuarian mainly belongs to Type c) (both targets are neuter). Ripuarian generally tends to use more neuter targets than Rhine-Franconian. Female and male names in the diminutive take neuter targets both within and outside the NP (No. 3–5). However, male diminutive names on the one hand take neuter articles, on the other hand the majority regains their natural masculine gender agreement on the pronouns (No. 6) – in sharp contrast to female dimin-

Table 1: Some tendencies of hybrid names in Rhine-Franconian and Ripuarian (based on Drenda 2012 and Busley 2012)

Phenomenon	Rhine-Franconian	Ripuarian
1 NP-internal agreement (article) with female names as controller (no diminutives); “als ... schöne Elisabeth hier war” [‘when ... beautiful Elisabeth was here’]	13% N 87% F (n = 280)	100% N (n = 234)
2 NP-external agreement (anaphoric personal pronoun) with female names	17% N 83% F (n = 195)	90% N 10% F (n = 109)
3 NP-internal agreement (article) with diminutive female names as controller (<i>Lieschen</i>)	100% N (n = 33)	100% N (n = 33)
4 NP-internal agreement (article) with diminutive male names as controller (<i>Hänschen</i>)	100% N (n = 33)	94% N 6% masc (n = 31)
5 NP-external agreement (personal pronoun) with diminutive female names as controller	100% N (n = 30)	94% N 6% fem (n = 18)
6 NP-external agreement (personal pronoun) with diminutive male names as controller	[22% N 78% M] (n = 9)	[17% N 83% M] (n = 12)
7 NP-internal agreement (article) with female onomastic kinship term + first name (<i>Tante Käthe</i> ‘aunt K.’)	2% N 98% F (n = 124)	23% N 77% F (n = 22)
8 NP-external agreement (personal pronoun) with female onomastic kinship term (+ first name)	3% N 97% F (n = 29)	81% N 19% F (n = 48)
9 NP-external agreement with female onomastic kinship term (+ first name): older relatives	100% F (n = 24)	18% N 82% F (n = 14)
10 NP-external agreement with female onomastic kinship term (+ first name): same age and younger relatives	78% N 22% F (n = 90)	82% N 18% F (n = 44)

Bold: Targets disagreeing with the sex of the named person; square brackets: only few data

utive names, which remain neuter (No. 5). Rows No. 7 and 8 show the gender of female kinship terms, which are mostly combined with proper names (*Tante Käthe*, *Oma Elisabeth*, *Mama*). They predominantly belong to the feminine class looking at the article (No. 7); in Ripuarian, 23% belong to the neuter class.

However taking anaphoric pronouns into consideration, they shift to the neuter in 81% of all cases, see (14):

- | | | |
|------|---|---|
| (14) | <i>die Tante Käthe – es</i>
ART.F aunt[F] Käthe – PRON.3SG.N
‘Aunt Käthe – she’ | <i>die Mama – es</i>
ART.F Mum – PRON.3SG.N
‘Mum – she’ |
|------|---|---|

Bellmann (1990: 192) observes for Stolberg/Harz in Sachsen-Anhalt:¹⁰

- (15) *Die Tante kommt heute nicht. Es ist krank.*
 ART.F aunt[F] come-3SG today not. PRON-3SG.N be-3SG sick.
 ‘The aunt does not come today. She is sick.’

Rows Nr. 9 und 10 in Table 1 provide evidence for the impact of age in both dialects: terms for younger relatives more frequently become neuter than those for older ones. All in all, there are different pragmatic factors for neuter gender (age, respect, familiarity, kinship – corresponding with the informal *du*-address –, and popularity) whose impact on triggering neuter gender differs from dialect to dialect and which still have to be investigated in depth. Thus, a lot of research is necessary. There is not much time left, as in many dialects the younger generations already tend to give up neuter gender on female names.

To sum up, it is evident that neuter gender assignment is the unmarked case: “Das heißt, für Eschwege zeigt ES [...] keine Wertungskonnotation” [This means, in Eschwege [Northern Hesse] IT [N] [...] does not show any evaluative connotation] (Bellmann 1990: 192). If it does have evaluative connotations these clearly correlate with positive attitudes of the speaker towards the denoted person: familiarity, estimation, sympathy and cordiality (Bellmann 1990: 194 adds expressivity). Thus, Christen (1998: 280) concludes for Swiss German: “[N]eutrales Genus ist nicht a priori negativ” [neuter gender is not a priori negative].

2.2.3 The Luxembourgish system (Type c)

Luxembourgish constitutes the most grammaticalised system and clearly represents Type c) in Figure 4: Female first names¹¹ – in sharp contrast to male ones – always take neuter targets:

En luxembourgeois, les noms de femmes, en effet, sont du neutre (on dit *eist Alice/äert Justine, d’Catherine Deneuve*) et c’est aussi le pronom neutre qui est employé pour désigner des femmes que l’on tutoie ou qui sont citées sans qualification, ni titre qui imposerait le féminin. (Schanen & Zimmer 2006:27)

[In Luxembourgish, the names of women in fact are neuter (it is said *our* [N] *Alice/your* [N] *Justine, the* [N] *Catherine Deneuve*) and it also is a neuter gender pronoun, which is used to refer to women who are addressed informally or designated neither with a term of qualification nor a title, which would require the feminine.]

Thus, Luxembourgish female first names are principally neuter and not hybrid anymore. A former pragmatic neuter gender, which must have alternated with feminine forms was connected with female first names and thus grammaticalised.¹² More precisely: Since the refunctionalisation of gender as pragmatic evaluation of a personal relation is a form of de-grammaticalisation, the subsequent coupling of neuter + first name and feminine + surname constitutes a re-grammaticalisation.

Schanen & Zimmer (2006) also mention the informal address with *du*, which usually (but not obligatorily) accompanies the use of first names: *Alice – du* (informal *you*) vs. *Madame Breckler – dir* (≈ German *Sie*: formal *you*). Only in very specific and highly marked contexts – e.g. when somebody talks about an older lady using her first name although not knowing her well – the first name takes the feminine pronoun *si*. As soon as the family name and especially titles (e.g.

¹¹ Even the names of female dogs take neuter targets, as the following (internet) example of the cataphoric pronoun *hatt* and the neuter possessive *eist* [N] ‘our’ proves: “Ech hun seit 5 Joer e Galgo aus Spunien, hatt war an engem desolaten Zoustand wei mir eis’t Aisha kritt hunn.” [For five years I have had a Galgo [M] from Spain, it (*hatt*) was in a very desperate condition when we got our [N] Aisha (female name)]. – Thanks to Peter Gilles for this information.

¹² A similar strong connection between the type of name and its gender assignment is described by Steitz (1981: 81) for the West Central German dialect of Saarbrücken: “Männliche Vor- und Zunamen haben den männlichen Artikel. [...] Weibliche Vornamen haben den sächlichen Artikel. [...] Weibliche Zunamen haben den weiblichen Artikel” [Male first and family names take the masculine article. [...] Female first names take the neuter article. [...] Female family names take the feminine article.]. This seems to be a very simple and quite considerably grammaticalised system.

¹⁰ This region is not represented in the map of Figure 1. This is most likely due to the online survey over-representing the younger generation and reflecting rather regional language than dialects.

Madame ‘Ms.’, *Joffer*, *Mademoiselle* ‘Miss’) or other signs of (occupational) qualification occur, the neuter gender is “switched off” and replaced by the feminine:

An anere Aussoe gëtt den Neutrum vun de Fraennimm ausgeschalt an dacks doduerch ‘verweiblecht’, datt am Kontext feminine Determinatiounen derbäi gesat ginn: *D’Gewënnerin Joëlle Daubenfeld, d’Reiderin Isabelle Constantini, [...] d’Joffer/d’Madame Leguil* gi kloer mat *si* an net mat *hatt* pronominaliséiert. (Schanen 2013)

[In other expressions the neuter is switched off by the feminine and sometimes ‘effeminated’ by addition of feminine adjuncts: *The winner* [F] *Joëlle Daubenfeld*, *the rider* [F] *Isabelle Constantini*, [...], *Ms/Mrs* [F] *Leguil* clearly is pronominalised with *si* [F] and not with *hatt* [N].]

Gender conflicts emerge if the (neuter) first name is followed by the (feminine) family name, e.g. *d’Claudine Moulin*. Here, pragmatics determines the choice of gender. The co-occurrence of the family name does not automatically inhibit the neuter if the woman is very popular as in the case of actresses, singers, and sportswomen (*d’Catherine Deneuve* – *hatt*, *d’Carla Bruni* – *hatt*) who, by the way, nobody would address informally. High popularity reduces the social distance of the speaker to the referent. If, however, the woman owns a high social status, if e.g. a stateswoman or a professor is designated, the feminine gender is used (e.g. *d’Astrid Lulling* [a stateswoman] – *si* [F], *d’Claudine Moulin* [a professor] – *si* [F]).¹³ According to Schanen (2013), a low degree of social distance or rather a high degree of familiarity is the most important trigger for neuter gender. Again, pragmatics decides these cases of gender conflict.

The above examples with the syncretic definite article *d’* are in need of a brief explanation: The Luxembourgish definite article system exhibits a high amount of syncretism, especially between feminine and neuter forms in the nom./acc. (see Table 2).

Table 2: The definite article system in Luxembourgish

Number	Case	Gender		
		F	N	M
Sg.	nom. = acc.	d'		de(n)
	dat.	der	dem	
Pl.	nom. = acc.	d'		
	dat.	de(n)		

¹³ Thanks to Claudine Moulin and Peter Gilles for many useful comments.

Therefore, only an adjective (*mäi léift Catherine* ‘my dear [N] Catherine’) or a possessive article (*eist Catherine* ‘our [N] Catherine’) clearly reveals the underlying neuter.

In a Luxembourgish novel, “Feierlöscher” ‘fire-extinguisher’ (Naskandy 2010)¹⁴, this pragmatically driven reference to females in neuter and feminine gender is very evident: If the female person is ranked equally or lower in relation to the narrator, the neuter is used, if she is ranked higher, she takes the feminine. Thus, *meng* [F] *Mamm* [F] ‘my mum’ is pronominalised by *si* [F] ‘she’ and takes a feminine possessive article. The female boss of the narrator, *Claudia Dormann*, initially triggers feminine gender agreement. Later, when they get better acquainted, the family name is dropped and the nominal gender (on the article) switches to neuter, whereas the pronoun remains in the feminine:

Mam (N.DAT.SG) *Claudia* huet mech weider näischt verbonne wéi d’Amaryllis. Reng berufflech si mir distant mateneen ëmgaang, sachlech a präzis. *Si* (F.NOM.SG) huet ni vill Wieder verluer.

[lit.: With the [N] *Claudia* I was only connected by the amaryllis [a plant – DN]. On an exclusively professional level we interacted in a reserved manner, to the point and respectfully with each other. She [F] never lost many words.]

Thus, the (directly preceding) article of the first name *Claudia* [N] agrees in the neuter, whereas the distant pronoun *si* [F] ‘she’ pragmatically reflects the still existing social distance between speaker and referent. Here, it is the speaker who defines this relation and chooses the appropriate gender. It is evident that the personal pronoun represents a lot more than only an agreement target: Pronouns have a high degree of referentiality and are used as independent pragmatic markers (see Section 2.1.).

Interestingly, Luxembourgish even developed a special pronoun, which indicates that the system must be quite old: Female first names are pronominalised with *hatt* (see Table 3). Schanen & Zimmer (2006) describe this system as follows:

Le luxembourgeois a la particularité de distinguer une 3^e personne féminin personnelle pour ‘femme vouvoyée’ (*si/si/hir/hirer*) et une pour ‘femme tutoyée ou traitée avec familiarité’ (*hatt/hatt/him/senger*). Le pronom familier *hatt* peut bien sûr se réduire à *et*: *D’Chantal ass do; hatt/et ass do*; Chantal est là; elle est là. Mais cet *et* ne peut être remplacé par *dat* qui représente, lui, une 3^e personne impersonnelle: *dat war et! C’était ça! n’équivaut pas en situation à: Hatt war et! c’était elle! (femme tutoyée)*. (Schanen & Zimmer 2006:87)

[Luxembourgish has the peculiarity of differentiating a personal 3rd ps. feminine for ‘woman addressed formally’ (*si/si/hir/hirer*) and another one for ‘woman addressed informally or

¹⁴ Thanks to Christine Breckler, Université du Luxembourg, for this information.

treated with familiarity' (*hatt/hatt/him/senger*). The familiar pronoun *hatt* can be reduced to *et*: *D'Chantal ass do; hatt/et ass do*; Chantal is here; she is here. But this *et* cannot be replaced by *dat*, which represents an impersonal 3rd ps.: *dat war et!* This was it! does not correspond to: *Hatt war et!* She [N] was it! (woman with informal address).

Table 3: The personal pronouns of 3rd ps. in Luxembourgish

number	case	stressed (full) form				unstressed (clitic) form			
		gender				gender			
		F	N		M	F	N		M
sg.	nom. = acc.	si	hatt (female first names)	dat	hie(n)	se	et (female first names + all N)	't	(h)e(n)
	dat.	hir	him (female first names + all N/M)			er	em (female first names + all N/M)		
pl.	nom. = acc.	si				se			
	dat.	hinne(n)				e(n)			

Historically *hatt* developed from Central Franconian **hit* (without consonant shift), composed of the Germanic pronominal stem **hi-* and the neuter 3rd sg. personal pronoun **it* (Krahe & Meid 1969: 56–57). Today, it is a grammatically neuter pronoun exclusively referring to (names of) girls as well as familiar women and strictly co-occurring with neuter determinants in the NP. In Table 2, *hatt* is subordinated to the neuter (as it also is done by most Luxembourgish grammars); it is a pronoun bearing a conflict concerning the decision between female sex and neuter gender including the pragmatic function described above. Neuter common nouns only take *dat* as pronoun. Unstressed *et* replaces both full forms, *dat* and *hatt*. However, the clitic *'t*, which is even more reduced, only refers to neuter common nouns and the grammatical subject 'it'. The dative forms *him* and (unstressed) *em* apply to all neuters (including first names) and masculines. All feminine nouns (including family names of women) are pronominalised with *si* 'she' (unstressed *se*): *d'Madame Wirtgen* [F] – *si* [F]; *d'Scheier* [F] – *si* [F]; lit.: 'the Ms Wirtgen [F] – she [F]; the barn [F] – it [F]'. Thus, a new paradigm slot was developed exclusively for the pronominalisation of neuter female first names. Only the neuter common nouns Lux. *Meedchen* [N] 'girl' and *Framënsch* [F] 'hag' take *hatt* as pronoun. *Hatt* may also be used exophorically, i.e. with direct (deictic) reference to a girl without having mentioned her before.

As a result of pragmatic gender assignment, one and the same female can be referred to by feminine and by neuter gender targets depending on the speaker's relation towards her.¹⁵ As already mentioned, there are sometimes conflicts or overlaps if first name (triggering *hatt*) and family name (triggering *si*) are combined. Schanen (2013) describes the following case:

Och am öffentliche Krees sinn dës Pronomen am Neutrum geleeft. Op RTL.lu 11/01/2013 z.B. war Rieds vun der Gewënnerin vun der Expo Generate Art, dem Joëlle Daubenfeld, *dat* (Neutrum) vun der Journalistin am Reportage mat *si* anaphoriséiert gouf (*D'Joëlle oelle huet 29 Joer ... Si moolt*), vum Jury awer mat *hatt* (*D'Joëlle ... well hatt sicht säi Wee*). *Si* anaphoriséiert d'Fra, *hatt* markéiert de Neutrum vum Fraennumm.

[Also in public circles these neuter gender pronouns are common. On RTL.lu 11/01/2013 for example the winner of the Expo Generate Art, Joëlle Daubenfeld, was mentioned who (neuter) was pronominalised with *si* [F] in the report of the journalist (*Joëlle is 29 years old ... She paints*), but the jury used *hatt* [N] (*Joëlle ... because "it" (hatt) looks for "its" (säi) way*). *Si* refers to the woman, *hatt* marks the neuter of the female name.]

On the whole, the use of hybrid *hatt* is bound to female (intimate) first names. Sometimes, even the additional (distant) family name may occur without triggering female agreement if the female with that name is very popular, even though nobody would address her informally: *d'Joëlle Daubenfeld* – *hatt* [N] (she is a famous artist). Here, the speaker's emotional relation towards the named female is decisive. Figure 7 provides a brief graphical summary of the Luxembourgish system.

reference to females:	neuter	feminine
first name	obligatory: <i>d' [N] / eist [N] Joëlle – hatt [N]</i>	
first name + surname	conflict: pragmatics decides (familiarity, respect, sympathy, popularity ...) <i>d' [N] / eist [N] Joëlle Breckler – hatt [N] / si [F]</i>	
(title +) surname		obligatory: <i>d' [F] / eis [F] Mme Breckler – si [F]</i>

Figure 7: The connection of first name + neuter and surname + feminine in Luxembourgish

¹⁵ Conversely, this does not mean that one and the same speaker has the choice of two genders to refer to one and the same female.

3 Neuter-gender downgrading human nominals in German (Köpcke & Zubin 2005a)

Köpcke & Zubin (2005a) focus on common nouns, which denote a female person but don't follow the semantic principle of natural gender. Most of these nouns take neuter gender, as mentioned in Section 2.1.: Germ. *Mädchen* 'girl' and *Weib* 'hag' are the most famous examples but there are more as, e.g., *das* [N] *Mensch* (literally 'human') for a 'loose, useless woman', *das* [N] *Luder* (originally 'bait') for a 'loose woman', *das* [N] *Aas* (originally 'rotting body'), today 'nasty woman' and *das* [N] *Reff* (originally 'skeleton') 'skinny old woman' (Köpcke & Zubin 2003: 153). All these terms are pejorative. The historical core probably was *das Weib* and *das Mensch*, which already existed in Early New High German: "This small cluster was characterised by semantic/pragmatic downgrading on the one hand and neut-gender on the other" (154) – and afterwards became productive, especially in the 19th and 20th century, ending up in about 100 contemporary neuter gender human nominals. Up until today, this hybrid group is growing, for example through English loans, which are classified as neuter: *das* [N] *Bunny*, *Groupie*, *Model*, *Pin-up*.

According to Köpcke & Zubin (2005a), the metaphoric sources behind these derogative neuters are animals (*bunny* < 'little rabbit', *Schaf* < 'sheep'), shapes (*Klappergestell* < 'flimsy rack'), metonymies such as *Frauenzimmer* 'dame, wench' < 'woman's room', *Callgirl*, *Ding* < 'thing', *Ekel* < 'disgust', *Miststück* < 'piece of dung', *Loch* < 'hole' and a lot of diminutives; their neuter gender is morphologically generated and diminishes the denoted concept: *Hausmütterchen* < 'little housemother', *Entlein* < 'duckling', *Schneewittchen* 'little Snow White'. These processes as a whole are based on a perspectival metonymy, which assigns culturally formed connotations such as (sexual) innocence, social naiveté, dependence, village life, often clear disapproval, disgust, contempt and the conceptualisation of the female as a visual object (*Model*, *Pin-up*, *Ding* < 'thing', *Weibsstück* < 'piece of woman'). Thus, these neuters are marked as deviant, whereas feminine gender female nominals are unmarked and express (sexual) experience, social maturity, independence, city life, cf. *die* [F] *Frau* 'woman', *die* [F] *Dame* 'lady'. Even the pronominal reference to these hybrid nouns with *es* [N] vs. *sie* [F] represents these (d)evaluations. Köpcke & Zubin (2003: 161) conclude that "in German society [...] men are monovalent (they have one status: male) while women are bivalent: they are female, and they have specially marked perspectival values".

Now the question arises whether the hybrid names, too, are subject to these negative perspectivations and evaluations. Actually it would not be surprising if not only these neuter common nouns for women but even more so their cor-

responding proper names behaved similarly because they refer to the same referents. However, this question must be negated. As we saw in Section 2.2., the connotations of hybrid first names are rather different: they are either completely unmarked, and if they are connoted at all, they express affection and sympathy. If we can address beloved grandmothers and mothers with neuter names, it cannot be sexual innocence, which is expressed here nor social naiveté or disrespect towards them. Only some relation to 'village life' could be established, which results from the fact that the use of neuter names disappears in towns.

Nonetheless, this striking ambivalence between neuter common nouns and neuter proper names seems to represent the two sides of the same coin: the marginalisation of the woman as the second sex. Here, the article "How pervasive are sexist ideologies in grammar" by Nessel (2001) provides a convincing explanation. Nessel analyses a special declension class in Russian and starts from the observation that the so-called *a*-class (which contains feminine and masculine nouns) includes firstly hypocoristic (nick) names and address nouns of (predominantly) females and males (e.g. 'daddy', 'mummy', 'aunty', 'darling'), secondly common nouns for women (such as 'lady', 'maiden', 'woman', 'widow'), and thirdly marginal groups of people, which are mostly seen as negative or socially marginal (such as 'drunkard', 'murderer', 'grumbler', 'miser'), in short: "persons who stand out from the multitude" (Nessel 2001: 214). He labels these groups with the terms [FAMILIARITY] and [MARGINALITY] and groups them together to the [NON-PROTOTYPICALITY] schema, which emphasises the "otherness". As many nouns and names for females are included in this class, he concludes that this declension class reflects sexist ideology. It mirrors the male view on women as the marked case, the second sex, which oscillates between the well-known dualism of "Madonna and the whore". Returning to our question of neuter nouns and names, the first group corresponds to the projection of the "woman as whore", whereas the second one reflects the "woman as Madonna".¹⁶ Even though the second "myth" (Nessel 2001) sounds positive, it also constitutes sexism if we translate it into "Women's place in man's world is at home" (Nessel 2001: 220). This idea will be explored further in the next section.

¹⁶ Until now, we did not mention neuter gender family names of women, such as *das* [N] *Merkel*. This occurs surprisingly often on certain dubious websites, which are outright misogynic. Here, even the femaleness of Angela Merkel is doubted. All in all, neuter family names evoke completely different connotations than first names. This topic is examined in Nübling (2014).

4 Assumptions on the diachronic development of hybrid and neuter female names

If we look at the common denominator of all neuter onomastic references on females, be it marked on the article or on the pronoun, it is young girls, which are always included. They have to be considered the core area of all the other connotations. There are at least two implicative scales:

- a) **Relatives:** Starting from the concept of a young relative (daughter, granddaughter), it must have been extended to (names of) girls of the same generation (sisters, cousins), then to female relatives of the next (mothers, aunts) and the next but one generation (grandmothers).
- b) **Friends:** Small girls are mostly intimates; this second concept was extended to older (female) intimates such as friends, popular persons, celebrities – and finally to all females, which are addressed and referred to by their intimate first name (coinciding with the informal treatment by *du*).

Up until to this point, “woman’s place in man’s world is at home” (Neset 2001: 220). The female belongs to the private sphere and is under (male) control. Beyond these limits are adult women of respect and/or high social status, which belong to the public sphere: These women are assigned feminine gender. They constitute a marked group and represent the minority. Even if their first names may be neuter within the NP, the pronoun at the latest designates their natural and pragmatic gender, which is in opposition to the neuter. In other words: Those women, which enter and share the prestigious sphere of male life and therefore have to be taken seriously, follow the natural gender principle. They are not under social control anymore and therefore considered “dangerous”, as competitors. In short: They left their home. In some dialects (like Bernese), where neuter female names are the unmarked case, antipathy and disgust is expressed just by using the feminine even if the name is in the diminutive. All in all, titles of respect or profession (together with formal *Sie*-address) as well as sometimes only family names are the most reliable triggers for feminine gender. On the other side of the spectrum, a male can only appear in the neuter if he is a small child, i.e. not adult, even not adolescent – and if his name contains a diminutive suffix. This is a completely different situation. Thus, we can conclude that the sex-gender-principle holds for animates on the top of the animacy hierarchy which are maximally human, adult, agentive and referential. Here, men always follow the natural gender principle, as we saw even if their names are in the diminutive, which otherwise assigns neuter gender without exception. Women, however, even are stigmatised in some dialects by appearing in the feminine; they are put in some distance to the

society. Thus, the unmarked gender for females is the neuter, which typically is the gender for inanimates (Dahl 2000: 103). Inanimates are objects unable to act, to decide and to have an impact on the world. They usually occur in the semantic role of the patient. Dahl (2000: 105) speaks of “downgrading” when animates get the “wrong” gender (e.g. humans, which are called *it*) and “upgrading” when inanimates get non-neuter gender (as, e.g., ships and countries in English, which are feminine). Not surprisingly, there are some parallel cases in other languages. Corbett (1991) describes Polish dialects,

where nouns denoting girls and unmarried women (irrespective of age), and including hypocoristics, are of neuter gender [...]. Neuter agreements are employed when unmarried women are addressed, and they use them for self-reference [...]. In a smaller area [...], instead of the neuter the masculine is used [...]. In both types of dialect, the feminine is used for married women. [...] The change from neuter or masculine to feminine for a particular woman occurs immediately after the church wedding ceremony (Corbett 1991: 100–101).

Here, the male perspective (whether the female still is available or not) is obvious. Married women are not available anymore. Approximately the same perspective is reflected in the neuter female names. As Corbett shows, gender deviation can be used to classify women. In this context, the following questions of Dahl (2000: 102) are of importance:

The pervasiveness of sex as gender criterion is striking. There are many possible ways of classifying animates, in particular human beings, that might be used as a basis for gender, such as social status, ethnic origin, profession, age, hair color, etc., but none of them except perhaps age seems to play any important role in gender assignment.

In view of German dialects and Luxembourgish, we can assume: Social status, profession and the age of females are indeed relevant criteria for the choice of the feminine vs. the neuter.

The source of the neuter gender assignment of female first names most probably originates from very frequently occurring onomastic diminutions, which up until today are characteristic for many dialects, especially when referring to children. Several dialect grammars state that these diminutives continue to be used when the children grow up. It still remains to be investigated whether there is a gender difference in this practice (which must be assumed) or whether the diminutives of the male names serve but tend to move from neuter to masculine gender. However, in the case of Luxembourgish, which has one of the most consistent systems, the explanation relying on the diminutive is problematic because proper names are rarely put in the diminutive in contrast to common nouns, which often take diminutive suffixes. Moreover, Luxembourgish diminutives do

not shift to the neuter, as they always inherit the gender of the base noun, e.g. Lux. *de Hond* [M] 'the dog [M]' – *de Hëndchen* [M] 'the small dog [M]' (in contrast to *das Hündchen* [N] in German). Since the Luxembourgish name system and its gender assignment is quite considerably grammaticalised, these onomastic word formations might have been common in former times; this, however, is highly speculative. Written Luxembourgish records of the past centuries do not exist.

Another explanation could be that the hybrid nouns *Mädchen* and *Weib* (which in many dialects still is the unmarked term for 'woman') formed the pattern for the hybrid names of Type b) (see also Bellmann 1990: 192). In this scenario, analogy would be the underlying diachronic mechanism. This second explanation does not exclude the first one.

	ARTICLE	FIRST NAME	PRONOUN	ASSIGNMENT	IDIOM
1.	feminine [neuter]	– diminution + diminution	feminine neuter	semantic (sex/gender) formal: morphological]	NHG
2.	feminine neuter [neuter]	– diminution – diminution + diminution	feminine neuter neuter	pragmatic pragmatic formal: morphological]	Alem.
3a.	feminin [neuter]	– diminution + diminution	neuter / feminine neuter	sem. + pragm. (Type a) formal: morphological]	Rhine-Franc., Alem.
or:					
3b.	neuter [neuter]	– diminution + diminution	neuter / feminine neuter	sem. + pragm. (Type b) formal: morphological]	Alem.
4.	neuter [neuter]	– diminution + diminution	neuter neuter	semantic (≠sex/gender!) fem. first names! (Type c) formal: morphological]	Ripuarian Lux.

Figure 8: Hypothetical diachronic development of different (dis)agreement types

As regards the diachronic development of the different agreement scenarios, we can hypothesise that in the beginning the speaker's choice between feminine and neuter was restricted to the form of the name (No 1 in Figure 8): {– diminutive} → feminine, {+ diminutive} → neuter. This holds for standard German. In a second step, the neuter gender of the frequently used diminutives (or the common nouns *Mädchen* [N], *Weib* [N], *Mensch* [N] and so on) was transferred to the full name in

order that the speaker got the pragmatically driven choice between two genders (No 2). However, there are no overlaps between both genders, i.e. no hybrid cases. In Stage No 3, one gender was generalised for the NP, whereas the pronoun still marked (and marks) the pragmatic relation between speaker and referent. Our dialects containing hybrid names are situated here. No 3 in Figure 8 represents Type a) und b). However, it is quite possible, that Type 3a) directly emerged from Stage 1 by preserving the sex-agreeing feminine within the NP but by developing two pronominal (pragmatic) genders. No 4 can be considered the last step in which the Luxembourgish and Ripuarian situation with the connection of female first names + neuter on all targets is reached, the former hybridity has been de-hybridised. Here, pragmatic gender developed into semantic gender, as it directly depends on the choice of the name: first name → neuter vs. family name → feminine.

What we can exclude so far is the existence of two genders on the article and only one on the pronoun. Pronouns are highly suitable for the expression of pragmatic gender and therefore do not only replace the NP.

5 Conclusion: semantic vs. referential vs. pragmatic gender

We can conclude that there is a pragmatic gender for female first names. Corbett (1991) divides the gender assignment rules for nouns in general into 1) formal and 2) semantic ones (see Figure 9).

- 1) Formal assignment means that phonological or morphological properties of the noun trigger a certain gender as, e.g., the diminutive suffixes *-chen* and *-lein*, which are always neuter. Another hard formal rule is final *-a* in first names, which in more than 99% triggers feminine gender (*Martina* → F). Names ending in a consonant have a likelihood of about 80% to be a boy's name (Oelkers 2003). Common nouns containing stressed [et] predominantly take neuter gender (*Bett* [N] 'bed'), those starting with [kn]- are often masculine (*Knopf* [M] 'button'); for details, see Köpcke/Zubin (1984, 1996).
- 2) Semantic assignment means that the lexical meaning of the noun determines gender, e.g. common nouns or names for females, which are feminine (*Frau* [F] 'woman', *Tante* [F] 'aunt' or *Doris* F, *Almut* F) and for males, which are masculine (*Mann* [M] 'man', *Onkel* [M] 'uncle' or *Boris* [M], *Helmut* [M]). Another semantic principle concerns fruits, which take feminine gender.

There are, however, more levels determining gender. In the beginning, we mentioned the

- 3) **referential gender**, which is driven by the referent itself, cf. *Opfer* [N] 'victim' or *Kind* [N] 'child', which are neuters and not sex-specific. Only the context displays the real sex, which then leads to feminine or masculine pronouns (see Dahl 2000). The same holds for family names: only the knowledge of the denoted person determines whether we use feminine or masculine articles and pronouns: *die* [F] *Altmann* – *sie* [F], *der* [M] *Altmann* – *er* [M]. The same holds for special name classes such as ships and airplanes, which get feminine gender, or towns and hotels, which are neuter. The name itself does not contain gender (see Fahlbusch & Nübling 2014).

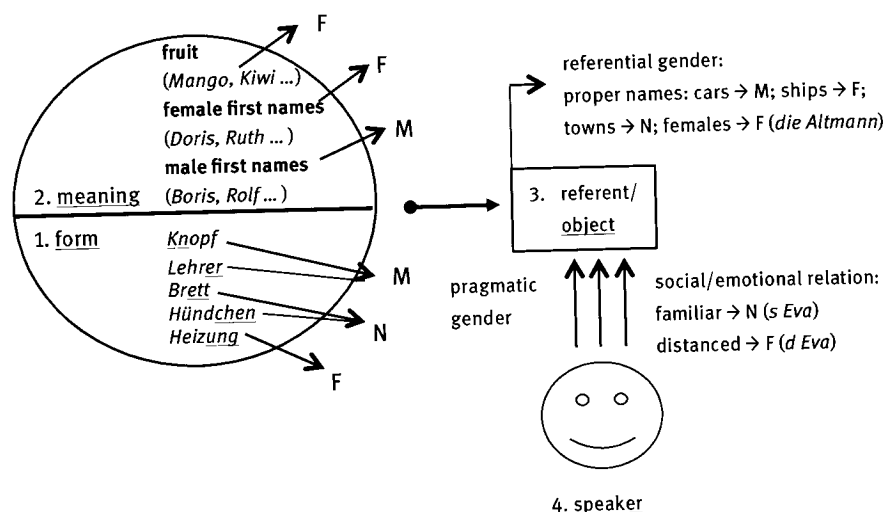


Figure 9: Illustration of four different gender assignment levels (except lexical gender)

- 4) **Pragmatic gender**: In the case of neuter targets (articles and/or pronouns) of female names, gender mainly depends on the speaker's attitude towards the referent be it socially or emotionally. In some dialects, age, marital status and popularity are additional factors. The pragmatic nature of gender assignment permits one and the same referent (*Eva*) to be referred to as being feminine or neuter depending on what the speaker wishes to express. This pragmatic gender is strongest, which means that it overrules any other type of gender. In the case of Luxembourgish, where every female first name is neuter a re-

grammaticalisation has taken place; this means that a former pragmatic gender developed into a new form of semantic gender.

In Figure 9, lexical gender was omitted. It is most complex because it cannot be derived from either formal or from semantic properties, neither from the referent nor considering pragmatic factors. It must be learned by rote. According to Köpcke & Zubin (1996), only a minority of German nouns have lexical gender. Often-cited examples are *Gabel* [F] 'fork', *Löffel* [M] 'spoon', and *Messer* [N] 'knife'.

As the pragmatic gender leads to a real choice and a new function of gender, it constitutes a case of de-grammaticalisation. Today, most dialects abandon the onomastic neuter and adopt the standard German system. It is therefore important to investigate thoroughly the dialectal systems in order to be able to document and to fully understand neuter and hybrid female first names.

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Volume 287

Agreement from a Diachronic Perspective

edited by

Jürg Fleischer

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**DE GRUYTER
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Editors' preface

The present volume originates from an international workshop on "Agreement from a diachronic perspective" co-organized by the editors at Marburg University, October 4–5, 2012. It took place in the context of our joint research project "Diachrone Entwicklung von Kongruenzsystemen in vier flektierenden indogermanischen Sprachen", funded by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (RI 1730/4, April 2011–March 2014). In the project, together with our colleague Erich Poppe, we conducted diachronic corpus studies in well-attested Indo-European languages (namely Hittite, Ancient Greek, German, and Welsh), and interpreted the findings from a typological perspective in order to establish generalizations of change in agreement systems. The workshop, which was organized as part of the project, proved to be extremely stimulating with its lively discussions between linguists of various different fields of expertise. The present volume collects a selection of thoroughly reworked papers presented at that occasion, and it is our hope that the contents of the present volume will enhance our understanding of the diachrony of agreement systems and provide a useful point of reference for future studies on this both fascinating and intricate field of research. The papers reflect a broad range of research specialties, and they demonstrate the innovative impact of studies in diachronic typology.

We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge our debt of gratitude to a number of people and institutions: first, we would like to thank the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* for funding our research project, which included generous financial support for the workshop. Marburg University provided the institutional frame both for our research project and the workshop. Magnus Breder Birkenes and Florian Sommer did a great job in helping us organize the workshop and commenting upon papers. Thanks to their valuable editorial assistance, a speedy publication of the present volume was possible.

Our sincere thanks are given to the participants of the workshop, listeners and speakers, and once again, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the contributors who provided us not only with their important contributions but also submitted to the tight schedule of publication.

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