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Die Capital – der Astra – das Adler

The emergence of a classifier system for proper names in German

Damaris Nübling

German proper names can be divided into two large classes, i.e. one with and one without an obligatory definite article. It will be shown that this article is part of a classifier system, which provides semantic information about the referent. Furthermore, the inherited three-gender system in combination with the presence or absence of the article is used to create a new system of six proper name classes. This paper deals with a diachronic change where so-called junk is transferred into a new classifier system arguing for a case of exaptation with respect to the article and for a case of degrammaticalization with respect to gender. This development towards a classifier system has occurred rather recently. Its consolidation can be observed in Present-Day German and creates a high amount of variation.

Keywords: proper names, classifiers, definite article, onymic article, exaptation, degrammaticalization, language change, typological change, German

Introduction

German proper names show a special behavior with regard to gender and the definite article. *Luxemburg* denotes a country and its capital, *die Luxemburg* probably a ship, *der Luxemburg* a car, and *das Luxemburg* a hotel or a restaurant. The combination of definite article and gender provides specific information about the denoted object. This does not apply to common nouns. Contrary to proper names, the definite article in front of common nouns marks definiteness and is opposed to other determiners. This does not hold for proper names which are inherently definite. The article adopted another function which is the topic of this paper. It describes the recent development of an onymic classification system and first presents a survey of the situation in Present-Day German (Section 1). Section 2 describes the origin

and function of onymic gender and of the originally definite article in front of proper names, which will be called “onymic article”. Here, a distinction will be made between names without onymic articles (2.1), personal names, which currently are on their way to adopt onymic articles (2.2), and names, which obligatorily take onymic articles (2.3). Section 3 argues for the currently developing classifier system as a result of reanalysis. Gender and the former definite article are collaborating closely and cannot be separated (Section 3.1). With respect to the article, it will be argued to classify this historical change as a kind of exaptation (Section 3.2) and with respect to gender as a case of degrammaticalization (Section 3.3). A summary draws some conclusions (Section 4).

1. The system of German proper name classes

In May 2013 the German newspaper “Frankfurter Rundschau” published an article about a newly founded journal called *die Capital* starting with:

Schön sieht sie aus, die neue Capital, man kann es nicht anders sagen. Und, ja, es heißt ‘die’ Capital, nicht ‘das’ – behauptet Gruner + Jahr.

[It looks really nice, the_{fem.} new Capital, you cannot express it differently. And, yes, it is ‘the_{fem.}’ Capital, not ‘the_{neut.}’ – states Gruner + Jahr (the publisher)].

In this case, the feminine gender of the journal differs from the neuter of the homophonous common German noun (*das*) *Kapital* ‘capital’. The publishers feel the gender change needs a special comment. As a group, the proper names of journals and newspapers are currently developing a name class of their own.

The vast majority of names are former common nouns. When those start to be used as names, they often preserve their old, inherent lexical gender. This still holds for the journal *der SPIEGEL* (m.), derived from *Spiegel* (m.) ‘mirror’, as well as *der FOCUS* (m.). As both examples show these names also adopt a fixed definite article. In the case of *die BILD* (f.), however, Germany’s most famous yellow press newspaper derived from *das Bild* (n.) ‘picture’, a gender shift from neuter to feminine has already occurred. This new onymic feminine gender can be explained by the feminine noun *die Zeitschrift* ‘journal’ or *die Zeitung* ‘newspaper’, which often, at least in the beginning, co-occur with the name and can later be omitted: *die Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (f.) > *die Frankfurter Allgemeine* (f.).¹ The name of the newspaper retains its feminine gender although *die Frankfurter Allgemeine* has lost its former head noun. In the case of *die Capital* (f.) onymic feminine gender was

1. At present, the same phenomenon occurs with desert names, e.g. *die Wüste Gobi* > *die Gobi* (f.) (see Nübling 2015: 313).

applied from the beginning without the help of the overt noun base *Zeitschrift* (f.) as part of its name. The former neuter of the noun *Kapital* was immediately overridden during its transfer to a name for a newspaper. Until this day, in Present-Day German not every member of this name class has adopted the feminine (see *der SPIEGEL*, *der FOCUS*, *der PLAYBOY*, *das HANDELSBLATT* with masculine or neuter gender). Among these exceptions, there is some variation:

“Die Focus ist ja schon längere Zeit für unwahre [...] Berichterstattung bekannt” (www.focus.de; 11.12.15) [The_{fem.} Focus is for some time famous for its untrue [...] reporting];

“Die Playboy ist wirklich gut mit den heißen Mädels!” (www.presseplus.de/Playboy-Abo; 11.12.15) [The_{fem.} Playboy is really good with its hot girls!]

Names of journals, which are not derived from common nouns immediately take the feminine: *die Hörzu* (lit. < ‘listen up’), *die Bravo* (‘bravo’), *die Für Sie* (‘for you’).

This paper deals with name classes, which functionalized gender in combination with the presence or absence of the definite (henceforth onymic) article as a noun classifier. If we combine +/– article with three genders we get six different name classes. To put the rule to the test: One and the same invented name, e.g. *Sponz*, can be related to specific name classes although *Sponz* does not have any denotation in German. Table 1 illustrates how this cross classification works. Every cell constitutes a linguistic proper name class, which is usually filled with different objects, i.e. there is no one-to-one relation between linguistic class and object.

Table 1. The invented name *Sponz* and its associations with different objects depending on +/– article and gender

	Neuter	Feminine	Masculine
+ article	<i>das Sponz:</i> → restaurant → hotel → beer → further objects	<i>die Sponz:</i> → river → ship, airplane → journal → further objects	<i>der Sponz:</i> → mountain → car → further objects
– article	<i>Ø Sponz:</i> → town → country → continent	<i>Ø Sponz:</i> [→ woman] ↑	<i>Ø Sponz:</i> [→ man] ↑

“↑”: these members are shifting to the class above

The context helps the language user to determine whether the expression in the first cell, *das Sponz*, will be perceived as a restaurant, a hotel or a beer. The same

holds for the other expressions. The name classes unaccompanied by an article in the second row are more complicated: in these cases, gender hardly becomes visible due to the absence of the most important gender target, the article. This could be the reason why they often tend to be neuter. Due to this ambiguity, names of women and men, which clearly belong to the feminine or masculine class respectively, are moving to the article cells above (therefore in brackets): First names as well as family names tend to be used with article presumably because gender, which in these cases directly correlates with the sex of the name bearer is made visible on the article. If we know that *Merkel* mostly refers to a female chancellor the article can be omitted. However, if the person that is being named is unfamiliar, in German it is impossible to deduce gender from family names only. To avoid these kinds of ambiguities, many cultures have two different name inventories, one designated for females and another one designated for males, e.g. *Mary* etc. vs. *William* etc. We will come back to this issue later.

Most important is the fact that these genders of names are **referential genders**, as gender can only be assigned if we know the object (or person), which the name denotes. If the language user does not know the referent, the name is genderless. This separates proper names from common nouns. Their gender usually is assigned **lexically** (we have to learn it by heart) or **semantically**, i.e. the meaning of the word leads to a fixed gender: nouns for females are feminine (*die Mutter, Tochter, Frau, Nonne* ‘mother, daughter, woman, nun’ (f.)), nouns for males are masculine (*der Vater, Sohn, Mann, Mönch* ‘father, son, man, monk’ (m.)). Nouns for fruit are feminine: *die Banane, Mango, Ananas* etc. ‘banana, mango, pineapple etc.’ (f.) (exceptions: *der Apfel* ‘apple’, *der Pfirsich* ‘peach’). Aside from the animate nouns, the semantic principle is not very strong in German. If a noun is morphologically complex, the last morpheme determines the gender (**morphological gender assignment**): diminutives ending in *-chen* or *-lein* are always neuter, (agent) nouns ending in *-er* and *ling* are masculine, and nouns ending in *-heit*, *-ung*, or *-schaft* are feminine. In these cases, gender can be deduced from the form. It is highly debated to which amount gender is based on semantics and form and to which degree it is purely arbitrary (Köpcke/Zubin 1984, 1996, 2009).

As can be seen by the various cases of variation the onymic classification system seems to be emerging and developing in Present-Day German. This has been shown by the example of the journal respectively newspaper name class turning into the onymic [+article & feminine]-class.

2. Origin and function of onymic gender and the onymic article

Most German grammars take it for granted that names usually do not take a definite article and therefore perceive names with article as exceptions. However, a closer look at the broad variety of name classes reveals the contrary: Most names are preceded by a fixed article. As names are always inherently definite, the function of this article cannot be to mark definiteness. We therefore speak of an **onymic article**, which occurs obligatorily, i.e. which can be considered to be a part of the name. Only if the name of an object is asked for, this article can be omitted: *Wie heißt dieser Fluss? – Ø Rhein* ‘What’s the name of this river? – Ø Rhein’. Proper names with onymic articles do not share all grammatical properties of articles in combination with common nouns. For instance, the onymic article is not integrated in the common article paradigm. Different articles such as the indefinite article or demonstratives usually do not occur with names but if they do they show different, mostly pragmatic functions. Thus, the statement *Ein William hat vorhin angerufen* ‘A William called a short while ago’, signals that the speaker (and/or the hearer) does not know William (for further functions see Kolde 1995). These onymic articles essentially are noun classifiers.

2.1 Names without onymic articles

In the following section, only few name classes occurring without an article will be enumerated. Additionally, explanation about their grammatical gender and some diachronic information is provided.

Names of towns

Names of towns are always neuter and do not take an article: *Mainz, Paris, Amsterdam, New York*. Germans often are not able to tell their gender because it is mostly invisible: As gender usually cannot be deduced from the form of a noun (or a name), we rely on gender targets such as articles, adjectives and pronouns. Proper names, at least names not referring to people, are less pronominalized than common nouns (see Dahl 2008). As proper names are inherently definite they are usually unaccompanied by adjectives; there is no need for further determination by restrictive attributes. It is exclusively nonrestrictive adjectives that can precede them, and when they occur, a so-called syntactic article has to be added as the left part of a framing construction: *das mittelalterliche Mainz* ‘the_{neut.} medieval Mainz’. The same holds for postponed entities: *das Mainz des Mittelalters* ‘the_{neut.} Mainz of the Middle Ages’. Only in these instances gender becomes visible, however this syntactic article is obligatory and cannot be considered a real onymic article.

Therefore it will not be discussed any further. Common nouns, which develop to names of towns lose their original lexical gender and adopt the neuter, e.g. *die*_{fem.} *Burg* ‘the_{fem.} castle’, but *das*_{neut.} *schöne Freiburg* ‘the_{neut.} beautiful Freiburg (a town)’; *der*_{masc.} *Berg* ‘the_{masc.} mountain’, but *das*_{neut.} *schöne Heidelberg* ‘the_{neut.} beautiful Heidelberg (a town)’. Thus, the head right principle valid for other German compounds is overruled.

Names of countries

The same holds for the names of countries (*Dänemark*_{neut.} ‘Denmark’, *Polen*_{neut.} ‘Poland’) and names of continents (*Asien*_{neut.} ‘Asia’, *Europa*_{neut.} ‘Europe’): They do not take an article and are always neuter.

In earlier stages of German, country names took an article and different genders as the German linguist Hermann Paul states:

Früher sagte man auch *das Deutschland*. Jetzt haben die Bezeichnungen mit *-land* wie die mit *-reich* ganz den Charakter von Eigennamen angenommen, so auch *Dänemark*, nachdem es zur Bezeichnung eines *Staats* geworden ist [...].

(Paul 1917 [1968], Vol. 2, Part III, p. 162)

[In the past Germany was referred to as *the*_{neut.} *Germany*. Now, the designations with *land*_{neut.} ‘country’ as well as with *reich*_{neut.} ‘empire’ completely adopted the function of proper names; the same holds for *Denmark* after having developed to a denomination of a state.]

Formerly, *Denmark* had feminine gender (*die Dänemark*) due to the German head noun *-mark* (f.) ‘march’.

Today, there are only few exceptions from the principle of zero article: *die Schweiz* (f.), ‘Switzerland’, *die Mongolei* (f.) ‘Mongolia’, *die Türkei* (f.) ‘Turkey’, *der Sudan* (m.) ‘Sudan’, *der Irak* (m.) ‘Iraq’. These names originate from names of geographical areas or regions, which differ grammatically from country names by usually taking the article and belonging to one of three genders (see the last row No. 18 in Table 2 in Section 2.3). Names of geographical areas do not form a linguistic proper name class of their own although individual expressions such as *die Uckermark* (f.), *das Allgäu* (n.), *der Sundgau* (m.) are names; the difference is that they are not organized in a proper name class with one fixed referential gender (see Figure 2 in Section 2.3). This is due to the fact that geographical areas constitute objects with fuzzy boundaries and those cannot be identified easily. When geographical areas become countries or states they get highly relevant political frontiers, which can even be guarded. Objects with sharp contours often are assigned names belonging to a specific linguistic proper name class. This correlation between properties of objects and the probability of their names to be organized in linguistic name classes corresponds to the principle of onymic iconism described in Fahlbusch/Nübling (2014: 258).

Thus, we can conclude that if a country name is non-neuter, it takes the onymic article, possibly because otherwise gender would not be visible. Over time, names of countries (or states) tend to drop their former article and they enter the neuter gender class. Currently state names such as *Sudan*, *Kosovo*, *Iran*, *Irak* are undergoing this change (more details in Fahlbusch/Nübling 2014, Nübling 2015). Neuter gender and not placing an article in front of them is already official recommended by the Federal Foreign Office.

Interestingly, some country names occur in the plural because they originally denoted a union of smaller parts (provinces or states): *die USA* ‘USA’, *die Niederlande* ‘the Netherlands’. Here, the article prevents an indefinite reading. In German (as well as in English), plural nouns without article are indefinite (c.f. *die Kinder* [definite] ‘the children’ vs. *Ø Kinder* [indefinite] ‘children’). However, as these former collective entities are perceived as common countries nowadays, *die USA* as well as *die Niederlande* often occur in the singular, which can be observed looking at the inflection of the verb (*Die USA_{fem.} ist_{sg.} ein beliebtes Reiseziel* ‘The USA_{fem.} is_{sg.} a popular destination’) or on the adjective (*(d-ie_{fem.sg.} reich-e_{fem.sg.} USA* ‘the_{fem.sg.} rich_{fem.sg.} USA’; see Fahlbusch/Nübling 2014 for more details). Here, the former plural enters the feminine class because the onymic feminine article *die* has the same form as the plural article.

2.2 Personal names on their way to adopt onymic articles

As already mentioned, the occurrence of an article in front of personal names is rather instable. In Standard German, personal first names occur without article (*Maria*, *Martin*), and similarly in newspapers family names can occur without articles as well (*Merkel ist Bundeskanzlerin* ‘Merkel is chancellor’, *Kohl ist im Ruhestand* ‘Kohl is retired’). If the person behind the name is known, articles are not necessary. Otherwise, the sex indicating first name or address forms such as *Frau* ‘Mrs’, *Herr* ‘Mr’ are added. With respect to first names, there is however a strong tendency in spoken German to use them with article while there are considerable differences between southern and northern areas (Nübling et al. 2015: 123–128, Schmuck/Szczepaniak 2014, Werth 2014, Schmuck in this volume). In southern dialects (Austria, Switzerland, South and Central Germany), the article is obligatory, even if people is introducing themselves: *Hallo, ich bin die Sabine* ‘Hello, I am the_{fem.} Sabine’. In the northern part of Germany, the article is not completely absent but quite rare. Here it fulfills pragmatic functions. The development of the onymic article is the result of a long grammaticalization process, which is described in Schmuck/Szczepaniak (2014) and Schmuck in this volume.

2.3 Names with onymic articles (and their history)

Table 2. Proper name classes, their gender and article behavior (according to Fahlbusch/Nübling 2014: 252)

Names of ...		Fem.	Masc.	Neut.	obligatory article?
1	Deserts	++			yes
2	Motorbikes	++			yes
3	Airplanes	++			yes
4	Ships	++			yes
5	Towns			++	no
6	Countries			++	no
7	Continents			++	no
8	Banks and insurances	++			yes
9	Rivers	++	+(+)		yes
10	Islands	(+)	(+)	++	partly
11	Mountains	+	> ++	+	yes
12	Cars	(+)	++	(+)	yes
13	Hotels	+	+	> ++	yes
14	Restaurants		+	> ++	yes
15	Companies	++	(+)	(+)	predominantly
16	Buildings	+	+	+	yes
17	Streets	+	+	+	yes
18	Geographical areas	+	+	+	partly

“++”: one stable gender; “> ++”: shifting to one stable gender; “+(+)”: one stable gender with some exceptions; “+”: names of this class may occur in this gender; “(+)”: names of this class rarely occur in this gender

In this section, the German name system will be explained except that of personal names. Table 2 provides 18 name classes and describes their morpho-syntactic behavior. The groups 1 to 8 comprise classes with fixed gender, i.e. these names are fully proprialized. This means that they have exclusively one stable gender (indicated by “++”) and that they show referential gender assignment. The second group comprising the items no. 9 to 15 is on its way to becoming prototypical proper names (indicated by “>”). In this group, some names still preserve their inherited gender of the former common noun they originated from. The third group 16 to 18 continues the old inherited morpho-lexical gender and represents the first stage of proper names. These three sections can be interpreted as different diachronic stages, which are illustrated in Figure 1 and later in Figure 2. Figure 1 is based on Fraurud (2000) who investigates the gender of Swedish proper names.

Mountain names are a good example for the proprialization process. They are on their way to develop a fixed gender, the masculine. The first diachronic layer (No. 3) constitutes names, which still are transparent, i.e. are obviously based on

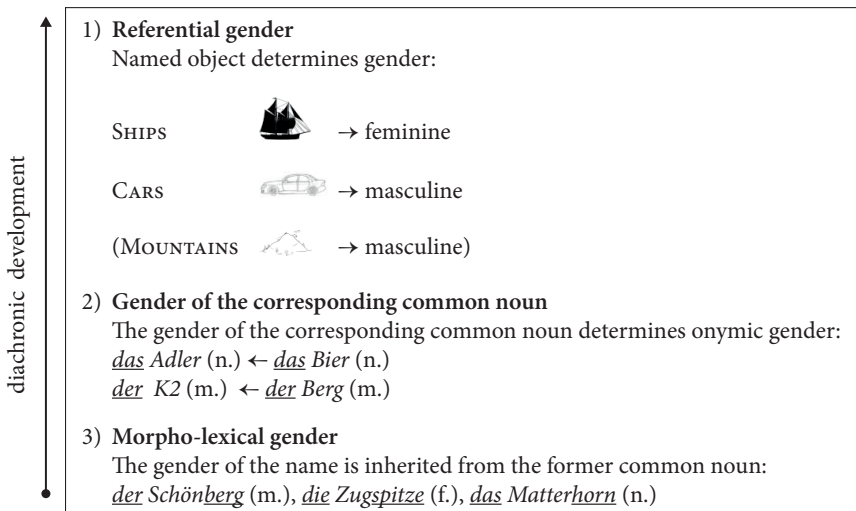


Figure 1. The diachronic path to referential proper name gender

common nouns and retain the gender of their original head. Many names even contain *berg* ‘mountain’ as last constituent (*der Feldberg*, *der Silberberg*, *der Schönberg*) or similar expressions such as *die Zugspitze*_{fem.} (< *Spitze*_{fem.} ‘top’), *das Matterhorn*_{neut.} (< *Horn*_{neut.} ‘horn’). The gender assignment of this group historically corresponds to the first stage (Principle No. 3 in Figure 1 and Figure 2) and they constitute the overwhelming majority. Although clearly being names, they initially inherit the old common noun gender.

At a later stage, this original gender can be overruled by the gender of the corresponding common noun, in this case: *der Berg* (m.) ‘mountain’ (Principle No. 2). This becomes evident even when looking at foreign and opaque mountain names such as *der Kilimandscharo*, *der Belchen*, *der K2* where the masculine is the productive default gender. Most likely this gender has been derived from the common noun gender of *Berg* (m.). Former feminine names turning into masculine names and temporarily producing gender variants provide additional evidence: *die Annapurna*_{fem.} > *der Annapurna*_{masc.}, *die Rigi*_{fem.} > *der Rigi*_{masc.}. Even syntagmatic names such as *der Schauinsland* (m.) (*Land* is neuter) take masculine gender. If transparent and opaque names without the component *-berg* productively adopt masculine gender, it must be assumed that they follow referential gender assignment (Principle No. 1 in Figure 1 and 2). However, as mountain names and the common noun *Berg* do not differ in gender the status cannot ultimately be decided (hence the brackets in Figure 1). The referential gender of a proper name class does not necessarily need to diverge from the gender of the corresponding common noun to be regarded as fully proprialized. As mountain names still cover the whole

range from morpho-lexical to referential gender (see also the first box in Figure 2), as yet they do not constitute a clear-cut name class, i.e. they are not yet fully proprialized. The arrows in Figure 1 and Figure 2 indicate the direction of change: Names usually start at stage No. 3 and – if they are in the process of integration into a name class – undergo proprialization resulting in one fixed gender which may follow Principle No. 2 or No. 1.

Sometimes, however, name classes adopt a gender, which corresponds neither to a common noun for the respective class of objects (Principle No. 2) nor to the morpho-lexical gender of the former common noun (Principle No. 3). In these cases, a purely referential gender is at work, which is exclusively determined by the named object (Principle No. 1). This holds for German ship names, which always take feminine gender (*die Bismarck*, *die Kaiser Wilhelm*, *die Albatros*) in contrast to the common noun *das Schiff* (n.) or *das Boot* (n.), both with neuter gender (the feminine onymic gender was apparently borrowed from Greek and transferred to German via English).²

The same holds for car names, which take always masculine gender (*der Arena*, *der Mercedes*, *der Astra*, *der TT*) in opposition to the neuter of the common noun *das Auto* (n.) ‘car’ (Köpcke/Zubin 2005). As Fahlbusch/Nübling (2016) demonstrate, the former common noun for ‘car’ was *der Wagen* (m.) (at the end of the 19th and in the beginning of the 20th century). Later, *Auto* (n.) (a French loan word) replaced *Wagen* (m.) as the unmarked common noun. However, by that time *Wagen*’s masculine gender had already evolved as the default gender for car names. Today, the masculine gender clearly constitutes a referential gender.

Referring again to Table 2 with the group of names (No. 9–15) in the process of a fixated referential gender assignment, the plus signs in brackets indicate the gender that is overridden: In the long term, names of rivers and companies tend to take feminine gender, names of mountains and cars masculine gender, and names of islands, hotels and restaurants shift to neuter gender. The last group in Table 2, No. 16–18, which in reality is much bigger, consists of the most recent layer of names, i.e. those which still preserve the gender of their common noun source. These are names of buildings, streets and geographical areas. Examples for names of geographical areas were provided in Section 2.1. As already mentioned their names lose the article and adopt neuter gender if these geographical areas become political units (countries, states). This is indicated by the boxes at the very bottom of Figure 2.

2. In many languages (English, Dutch, Swedish) the feminine singular pronoun is used to refer to ships, as in *she* (i.e. the ship) *set sail*.

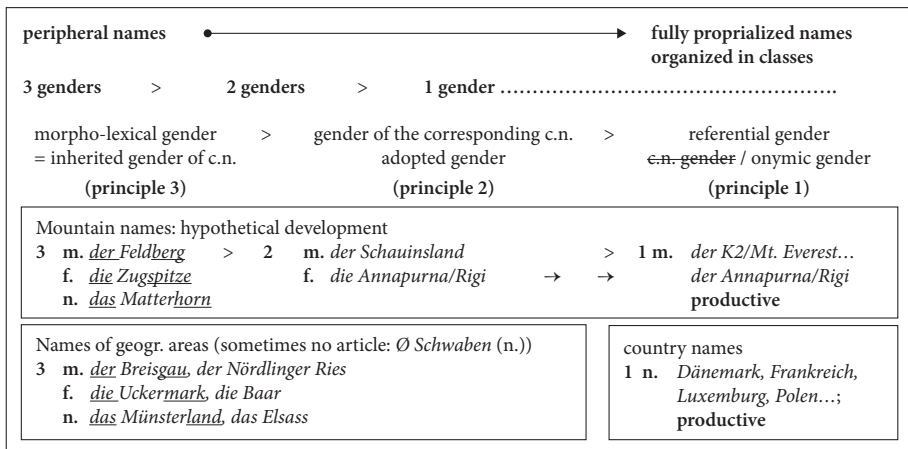


Figure 2. The development of onymic gender: Increasing referentiality of gender assignment and reduction to one specific gender
“c.n.”: common noun; “>” shift to/ develops into; “→” analogical transition to

2.4 Das Adler: Genesis of a beer brand’s name via a gender shift



Figure 3. The genesis of a neuter beer gender: *Das Adler*³

3. I am very grateful to Claudia Geisler from the Binding Brauerei AG in Frankfurt for the permission to use this picture of the advertisement in the present paper.

Finally, we take a look at the emergence of a fixed gender associated with a certain beer brand. The advertisement in Figure 3 for the beer brand *Adler*, lit. ‘eagle’ shows an interesting gender shift from the old masculine common noun *der Adler* (m.) to the new neuter proper name *das Adler* (n.). It depicts a landing eagle with a bottle of beer named “Binding – Adler” (*Binding* is the company name of the brewery) in its claws. This depiction is headed by “Das_{neut.} Adler ist gelandet” [The_{neut.} Eagle has landed]. Thus the advertisement is a pun relating to the opposition of the original common noun’s gender (*der Adler*_{masc.}) and the proper name’s referential gender commonly used for beer brands (*das Bier*_{neut.}). Other beer brand’s names take neuter gender as well, e.g. *das Paulaner*, *das König*, *das Licher*. As the common noun *beer* is still in the mind of the speaker, the beer brand name adopts the gender of the original noun. This represents stage 2 in Figure 1.

3. The current classifier system as a result of exaptation

3.1 +/- Article & gender as noun classifiers

Some onomasts, e.g. Leys (1967), Kalverkämper (1978), Van Langendonck (2007) and Van Langendonck/Van de Velde (2009) discovered that onymic articles must have a classificatory function. Thus, Leys (1967: 23) writes:

Im Deutschen kann *Steinbach* nicht der Name eines Gewässers sein, wohl aber der Name einer Person oder Siedlung; umgekehrt kann *der Steinbach* nicht der Name einer Siedlung sein, wohl aber der Name eines Gewässers oder einer Person.

[In German, *Steinbach* [used without an article – DN] cannot be the name of a water body but it can well be the name of a person or a settlement; on the other hand, *der Steinbach* cannot be the name of a settlement, but it can well be one for a water body or that of a person.]

Kalverkämper (1978) describes this more explicitly by emphasizing that the onymic article keeps apart different classes of names. He therefore refuses to speak of a weak deictic element and rather argues for a so-called “automatisierten prädeterminierenden Namenklassen-Index” (189), i.e. for an ‘automated pre-determinative name class index’, including the zero index. He establishes the following dichotomy:

- a. definite article + proper name → element of name class A
- b. zero article + proper name → element of name class B.

However, these investigations missed out on the relevance of gender in combination with the presence or absence of the article. They therefore only arrived at a simple two-class system. But if we bring together the grammatical behavior of highly

developed proper names, this results in a six-class system, illustrated in Table 3, which is an abstraction of Table 1 (in Section 1).

Table 3. The six-class system of German proper names

	Neuter	Feminine	Masculine
+ article	1	2	3
– article	4	5	6

As already mentioned, the definite article is the most relevant gender marker. In Section 2 we enumerated the most important name classes without article and came to the conclusion that all of them are neuter and thus belong to class 4. Class 5 and class 6 pose the problem of how to mark feminine and masculine gender without the presence of an article. As the only members of these two classes, we identified first names of women (class 5) and men (class 6). Since there is a rather strict correlation of sex and gender, female and male names are subject to an inherent system of self-classification: They mark sex and at the same time gender on the name body itself. In German, there are some thousand names for women and men, respectively. The German *Lexikon der Vornamen* ‘Lexicon of first names’ of KOHLHEIM/KOHLHEIM (2013) lists 8.000 different first names.⁴ Nearly 100% are used exclusively for one of the sexes (unisex names are very rare in Germany) meaning that every first name is sex and gender definite. Many names mark these categories explicitly for instance by using specific endings such as *a* and *e* for females (*Martin-a*, *Christian-e*) and final *o* or consonants for males (*Heik-o*, *Christian*). The inherent sex of other names has to be learned by rote, e.g. *Doris* and *Almut* for females and *Boris* and *Helmut* for males. This inherent classification system (indicated by the thick borders in Table 4) allows for omitting the article. As mentioned in Section 2.2, there is an isogloss dividing the North and the South of Germany concerning the use of a definite article in front of first names. All in all, there is a long diachronic development to use the onymic article with personal names (see Bellmann 1990, Glaser 2008, Schmuck/Szczepaniak 2014 and Schmuck in this volume). Thus, classes 5 and 6 are gradually turning into classes 2 and 3 (indicated by the arrows in Table 4): Ø *Doris* (f.) > *die* (f.) *Doris* (class 5 > class 2), Ø *Boris* (m.) > *der* (m.) *Boris* (class 6 > class 3). Furthermore, unusualness of anaphoric pronouns following proper names mentioned above does not hold for personal names: As they denote animate objects, personal names are often pronominalized by possessive, relative and anaphoric pronouns, which make their inherent gender highly visible.

4. Earlier, these name lexicons spatially separated female from male names. Now, they appear together in alphabetic lists whereby the male names are printed in black and the female names in red.

Table 4. Class 5 and 6 containing first names without overt classifiers but with inherent (covert) class membership

	Neuter	Feminine	Masculine
+ article	Class 1 <i>das</i> -class	Class 2 <i>die</i> -class	Class 3 <i>der</i> -class
– article	Class 4 Ø-class (n.)	Class 5 ↑ Ø-class (f.)	Class 6 ↑ Ø-class (m.)
		marking of the class on the name itself: "self-classification" applies to fe/male first names	

"↑": female and male first names tend to adopt the article and shift to Class 2 and 3

3.2 Exaptation of the article to a classifier: A side road

Before analyzing the grammatical status of the onymic article and onymic gender, the notion of exaptation will shortly be defined providing once again the well-known definitions of Roger Lass (1990, 1997) and those of other linguists (Norde/Trousdale 2016). Exaptation is a sort of reanalysis based on linguistic material, which already has been or is in the process of becoming defunctionalized. Roger Lass calls this material “junk”: “This morphology is now, functionally speaking, junk” (Lass 1990:81); in this context, Norde/Trousdale (2016: 164) criticize the inadequateness of the term “junk morphology” as a morpheme defined as the smallest meaningful unit implies a functional load. Later, the notion of junk was given up because it is difficult to decide whether some material has a function or not (perhaps, it is a function which as yet we are unaware of) and because it is simply unnecessary to insist on the condition that it needs to have a function (see Simon 2010). Even in evolutionary biology, from which the term *exaptation* has been borrowed, the former function may be still co-present as the example of the feathers show: Originally exclusively protecting the bird from the cold, feathers were first re-utilized for catching insects (van de Velde/Norde 2016: 4) and later for flying. Nevertheless, until this day, feathers serve thermo-regulation. Therefore, Simon (2010) and Szczepaniak (2016) distinguish between junk and non-junk exaptation. The crucial point is that this allegedly useless material is reused and reinterpreted: a new function arises from an old form. Thus, exaptation implies a functional renovation or innovation. Lass (1997) calls it “conceptual invention”

(319) although the examples he provides do not meet this claim (Simon 2010:48). Nevertheless, the fact that the new function is not present in the linguistic system of that language yet should be decisive. A good example is the emergence of the German honorific pronoun as a formal address *Sie* 'you (polite form)' from the personal pronoun 3rd ps.pl. *sie* 'they'. We therefore follow the short formula in Simon (2010:52): ALTE FORM > NEUE FUNKTION 'OLD FORM > NEW FUNCTION'. It is argued that the definite article in combination with gender is becoming a classifier. This is a case of exaptation.

With respect to the article, it is a well-known fact that it originated from a demonstrative, which underwent semantic weakening and eventually developed to a definite article (Himmelfmann 1997, 2001, Lehmann 1995, Heine/Kuteva 2002, Szczepaniak 2011, Schmuck in this volume). During this grammaticalization process, pragmatic definiteness was reinterpreted as semantic definiteness. Later the article in front of unique expressions such as *die Sonne* 'the sun', *der Mond* 'the moon', *der Himmel* 'the heaven' even lost definiteness by turning into an expletive article. Unique expressions are similar to proper names because these also exclusively refer to one entity, whereas the expletive article still precedes nouns (and names) for singular objects. It is therefore redundant. The generic article is non-referential and does not refer to objects anymore. In these cases, characteristics of the whole class are referred to (*Der Hund stammt vom Wolf ab* 'Dogs stem from wolves'). It will be therefore followed Szczepaniak (2011: 78) and her sequence of steps in the development. The final stage before complete loss is the article used purely as a noun marker (this stage is described for German dialects, see Eroms 1989 for Bavarian). However, the development to a classifier, which provides specific information about the named object ('beer', 'river', 'country', 'ship') constitutes a side road of the unidirectional grammaticalization path illustrated in Figure 4.

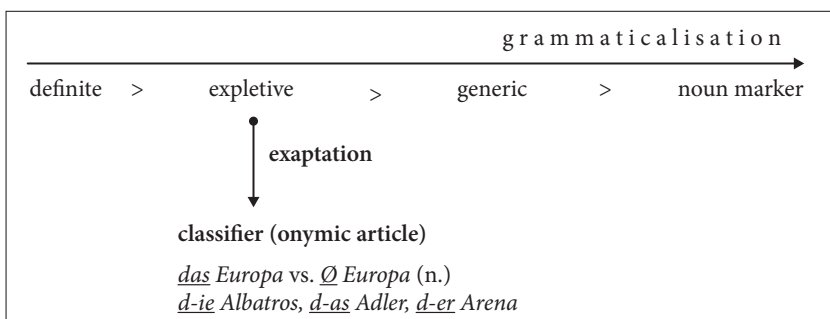


Figure 4. The onymic article as a classifier: Exaptation

Whether the onymic article really developed from the expletive article has not been proven yet. Nevertheless, Schmuck/Szczepaniak (2014: 134) who investigate the diachronic emergence of the onymic article in front of personal names assume the same: the expletive article is the predecessor of the generic article. However, as they exclusively focus on personal names, they have not considered the classificatory function of these articles as such.

Most important is the fact that both, the presence and the absence of the article, have a classifying function. One and the same word with one and the same gender may exclusively be distinguished by the occurrence or non-occurrence of the onymic article: *das Europa* (n.) denotes a hotel, a restaurant or a beer, whereas *Ø Europa* (n.) always denotes a continent.

The combination of +/- article with three genders leads to the system of six classes. As already mentioned, German gender is most in need of the use of the article in order to become visible (other gender markers such as adjectives are less reliable due to many syncretisms and their optional status). Thus, there are oppositions such as *d-ie Albatros* (→ ship, river etc.), *d-as Adler* (→ beer, restaurant, hotel etc.) and *d-er Arena* (→ car, mountain etc.). Therefore, the onymic article *d-* is able to mark three classes. As these options show, there are many more than only six different proper name classes.

3.3 Strengthening of gender to a classifier: A case of degrammaticalization

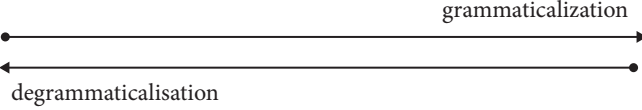
Only focusing on grammatical gender, we are confronted with a case of degrammaticalization in the sense of a refunctionalization. The gender of common nouns follows complex assignment principles. It does not classify semantically in a systematic way except for common nouns referring to humans and higher animals, which exhibit a clear correlation between sex and gender. In most cases, however, the person's sex is inherent in the lexeme, i.e. gender is not necessary to distinguish between females and males (this is also true for English without nominal gender: expressions like *queen*, *king*, *sister*, *father* already contain the information of the referent's sex, gender is not needed). Thus, gender in German agrees with the sex of the referent but it is not necessary to mark sex.⁵ The most important function of gender is a syntactic one: Gender is needed to form the framing constructions of German NPs (see RONNEBERGER-SIBOLD 2010a, 2010b, in this volume). In sum, nominal gender does not have a strong connection to semantic classification.

This is in opposition to onymic gender: Here, gender (in combination with +/- article) provides important and specific information about the denoted object,

5. Only nominalized participles and adjectives express sex via gender: *die/der Angestellte* 'the employee' (f./m.), *die/der Behinderte* 'the disabled' (f./m.), *die/der Arbeitslose* 'the jobless' (f./m.).

which usually is the task of classifiers. Noun classifiers as another type of nominal classification usually consist of meaningful and mostly independent items, which developed from lexical elements and occur next to the noun without showing agreement. They are “selected largely according to semantic criteria” (Corbett 1991: 137). So, one and the same noun may be accompanied by different classifiers.

Unfortunately, we do not know the original function of gender when it was a full grammatical category and could be used to form real paradigms. Different accounts have been put forward which are summarized in Nübling (2015). There is evidence that gender had a quantifying or a classifying function, connected to animacy. Today, it represents the last stage of an originally grammatical category, which is now completely bleached out. It has arrived at the stage of form without (semantic) function, representing the final stage of a long grammaticalization process (see the first arrow in Figure 5). In the case of the proper name gender, this form (which can be called “junk”) was restrengthened, refunctionalized and refilled with information probably similar to the original one (in Figure 5 the second arrow to the left). As Grinevald (2002) shows, gender systems may be the residues of older classifier systems. She presents a simplified list of criteria (p. 260) to distinguish between gender and classifiers. If we mirror the most important differences between classifiers and gender, we may arrive at an abstraction such as shown in Figure 5.



	classifiers (and onymic gender)		gender/noun classes
1	semantically classifying	←	not semantically classifying (empty, arbitrary)
2	do not classify all nouns	←	classify all nouns
3	larger number of classes	←	small number of classes
4	open systems	?	closed systems
5	not fused with other grammatical categories	←	fused with other grammatical categories
6	not marked on N itself	←	can be marked on N
7	no agreement	?	agreement
8	N can be assigned to several classes	←	N is assigned to one class
9	speaker variation	←	no speaker variation

Figure 5. (De-)Grammaticalization of gender and classifiers (according to Grinevald 2002: 260)

Usually, the grammaticalization perspective from left to right is investigated: Lexical units such as measure terms or class-terms (Engl. *a piece of information*, *a loaf of bread*) may grammaticalize into nominal classifiers by undergoing some typical processes characterized by phenomena such as loss of phonological and semantic weight. This can lead to a generalized use of the classifier (more nouns are classified than in the beginning, and nouns may belong to different classes) and eventually result in an arbitrary classification system such as the category of gender (more information in Aikhenvald 2000, Bisang 2002, Grinevald 2000, 2002, Kilarski 2013, 2014, Senft 2000).

In the following, classifiers and onymic gender are compared. It will be investigated in which respect we are dealing with a case of degrammaticalization.

1. The first and most important criterion for classifiers fully applies in that onymic gender allows for a semantic (more precisely a referential) classification (*der Corona* → car vs. *die Corona* → ship vs. *das Corona* → beer) in contrast to the gender of common nouns; in the case of inanimate nouns, gender does not provide much information about the concept of the noun (e.g. *der Löffel* (m.) 'spoon' – *das Messer* (n.) 'knife' – *die Gabel* (f.) 'fork'). In the case of animate nouns gender is associated with sex. However, there are only few nouns marking sex solely by a certain gender: *der* (m.) *Kranke* versus *die* (f.) *Kranke* 'the (m.) sick (man) versus the (f.) sick (woman)'. A referent's sex is mostly lexically expressed and does hardly rely on gender alone.
2. Indeed, obligatorily all common nouns have a gender. However, the case of onymic gender is different in that not every name has a referential gender. As we saw in Section 2.3, many names inherit the morpho-lexical gender of their former common noun and therefore are not integrated in the classifier system.
3. In combination with the article, names fall into six different classes whereas common nouns only distinguish between three genders. Thus, we have twice as much proper name classes than common noun genders.
4. Open classifier systems are usually young systems that are still 'under construction'. They are evolving via grammaticalization from lexical units. From a degrammaticalization perspective it cannot be expected that new lexical sources will arise. Therefore, the onymic classifier system is not open or productive anymore. Nevertheless, due to the interaction with the article, it is bigger than the three gender system of common nouns (see No. 3).
5. Usually, gender is fused with other grammatical categories such as case, number and (in)definiteness (German does not have any mono-functional gender marker). In contrast, the overt onymic classifiers *der/die/das* are only fused with case but not with number (proper names usually only occur in the singular) and not with (in)definiteness because names are inherently definite (and do not take a real article). Therefore, the onymic article is not an ordinary article, it is a

classifier. Even originally collective names, which took the plural article, are re-analysed as feminine singular forms: *die*_{pl.} USA > *die*_{sg.fem.} USA (see Section 2.1).

6. Only when nominal gender is assigned morphologically (or phonologically), it is marked on the noun itself (for instance, the suffixes *-ung*, *-heit*, *-schaft* or *-in* denote feminine gender). By contrast, classifiers usually do not fuse with the name itself:

These classifiers [noun classifiers] are realized as free morphemes standing in a noun phrase, next to the noun or within the boundaries of the noun phrase with other determiners of the noun. (Grinevald (2000: 64)

They are preposed and other syntactic elements such as adjectives may be placed between the article and the noun (which is rather rare). Only the gender of the members of classes 5 and 6 (female and male first names) can be marked on the name itself.

7. Nominal gender is usually tightly connected to agreement; agreement is even a condition for gender. If classifiers degrammatize from gender, we cannot expect that agreement is completely given up. Thus, onymic gender is marked on adjectives and pronouns as well. However, as proper names (aside from personal names) are rarely pronominalized, there are not many opportunities for marking agreement. For example, the neuter Ø *Köln* (a German town) is usually replaced by local adverbs (*da*, *dort* 'here, there') or by renominalizations (*die Stadt* 'the city' or even by *Köln*). The pronoun *es* 'it' is hardly used to refer to *Köln* (see Dahl 2008). As proper names are rarely modified by adjectives either, there are not many opportunities for a name to agree with other gender markers – in contrast to common nouns.
8. It was repeatedly shown that one and the same name (e.g. *Corona*) can belong to different classes. This is impossible for common nouns: Every noun has a fixed gender.⁶
9. Due to (8), speakers can vary the onymic gender (with functional consequences). This is not possible in the case of common nouns. Thus, the onymic gender of name classes constitutes a true paradigm in contrast to the gender of common nouns.

If we summarize the right-to-left movements in Figure 5, it is justified to state that onymic gender constitutes a case of degrammatization. In the framework of Norde (2009) who differentiates between (a) *degrammation*, (b) *deinflectionalization* and (c) *debonding*, the processes described above belong to case (a). The development from gender to classifiers is a case of *degrammation* (or primary

6. Only new loan words may temporarily have two genders. In the long run the speech community chooses one gender.

degrammaticalization), “whereby a gram in a specific context gains in autonomy or substance on more than one linguistic level (semantics, morphology, syntax, or phonology)” (Norde 2009: 120). Here, several linguistic levels are affected. First of all, the onymic classifier has gained semantic substance by indicating special classes of objects. An originally empty category has been refilled (resemanticized). Furthermore, the classifier, which developed from the former definite article, constitutes a full morpheme with considerable phonological substance (aside from zero classifiers). The classifier cannot be replaced by the indefinite article and occurs obligatorily. Thus, a new paradigm also including zero morphemes has arisen. Possibly, this even marks the emergence of a new word class. To date no classifier system has been described for German.

4. Summary

A closer look at the thus far rather neglected nominal class of proper names reveals that their apparent articles actually form a complex system of classifiers. In these cases, the former definite article including the zero article in combination with gender leads to a six class system providing referential information about the classes of objects the named entities belong to. This is an on-going process, i.e. a typological innovation is currently emerging in German. This explains the high amount of variation and ambiguous cases: Some proper name classes are already fully established (names of towns, ships, countries), others are still on the way (names of rivers, mountains, cars). The linguistic features of a proper name class are a fixed gender and the presence or absence of a fixed preposed onymic “article”. Probably, this classifier system will be further strengthened in the future. Regarding the former definite article, an exaptation has taken place whereas regarding gender, a case of degrammaticalization has occurred.

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