

(Un)marked Gender in German

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 - Semantic markedness
 - Morphological markedness
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- 5 What is unmarked in German?
- 6 Literature

Markedness and Gender

Basic assumption about markedness

'The general meaning of a marked category states the presence of a certain property A; the general meaning of the corresponding unmarked category states nothing about the presence of A and is used chiefly but not exclusively to indicate the absence of A.'

Jakobson 1984: 47

Universal assumption about markedness

'In all languages that distinguish a masculine from a feminine gender, the masculine gender is less marked.'

Sauerland 2008: 58

Gender in German

- I want to focus on the interaction of interpretable and grammatical gender in the following
- interpretable gender can be seen for three classes of nouns:
 - (1) human denoting nouns:
Arbeiter 'worker' – *Arbeiter-in* 'female worker'
 - (2) animal denoting nouns:
Katze 'cat' – *Kat-er* 'male cat'
 - (3) kinship terms:
Kind 'child' – *Tochter* 'daughter' – *Sohn* 'son'
- while the assumption of masculine as the category seems to hold true for human denoting nouns, (2) and (3) already show two unexpected situations

How to test for unmarked categories

- there are several tests to find out what the marked category is on different levels
- semantic tests (mainly based on Sauerland 2008)
- morphological tests (mainly based on Greenberg 1980)
- do all of the (or at least most of the tests) yield the same results?

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Semantic markedness: Quantification

Quantification

If referents of all genders are referred to in a quantification context a switch towards the unmarked gender should be possible in the following sentences.

- (4) Kein Kind glaubt, dass *er/*sie/es überfordert wird.
no child believes that *he/*she/it overchallenged is
'No child believes that is is overchallenged.'
(Sauerland 2008: 79)
- (5) Jedes Mitglied will, dass man *ihn/*sie/es in Ruhe lässt.
Every member wants that one *him/*her/it in peace leaves
'Every member wants to be left in peace.'
(Sauerland 2008: 79)

Quantification: Animal nouns

- (6) Jede Katze will, dass man *ihn/*es/sie streichelt.
 every cat.F wants that one *him/*it/her pets
 'Every cat wants to be pet.'
- (7) Jedes Schwein will, dass man *ihn/es/*sie füttert.
 every pig.N wants that one *him/it/*her feeds.
 'Every pig wants to be fed.'
- (8) Jeder Hund will, dass man ihn/*es/*sie lobt.
 every dog.M wants that one him/*it/*her praises.
 'Every dog wants to be praised.'

Semantic markedness: Emergence after blocking

Emergence after blocking

If the marked form is blocked the unmarked form should emerge.

A standard example for this is the use of plural in English:

(9) Somebody called, but I don't know what they wanted.

Emergence after blocking

- (10) Ein Arzt hat angerufen, ich weiß nicht, was er/*sie/*es
 one doctor.M have called I know not what he/*she/*it
 wollte.
 wanted.
 'One doctor has called, I don't know, what they wanted.'
- (11) Ein Kind hat angerufen, ich weiß nicht was *er/*sie/es wollte.
 one child.N have called I know not what *he/*she/it wanted
 'One child has called, I don't know, what they wanted.'
- (12) Peter bekommt eine neue Katze, er weiß noch nicht wie
 Peter gets one new cat.F he know yet not how
 *er/*sie/*es heißt.
 *he/*she/*it is.called
 'Peter is getting a new cat, he doesn't know yet, what it is called.'

Semantic markedness: Resolution/dominance

Resolution rules

...specify which gender is chosen for agreement when agreeing with a conjoined noun phrase consisting of nouns of different genders. The chosen form should be the unmarked one.

- corbett (1991) claims this test to be only possible for two-gender languages
- for most German nouns with social gender or biological sex two plural forms are possible: a masculine and a feminine form
⇒ the desired two-gender situation can be looked at with plural forms

Resolution/dominance: Human denoting nouns and kinship terms

- (13) Hans und Anna sind gute *Studentinnen/Studenten.
 Hans.M and Anna.F are good *students.F/students(.M)
 'Hans and Anna are good students.'
- (14) Marie und Franz sind gute *Töchter/*Söhne/Kinder.
 Marie.F and Franz.M are good *daughters/*sons/children
 'Marie and Franz are good children.'
- (15) Hanna und Peter sind gute *Tanten/*Onkel.
 Hanna.F and Peter.M are good *aunts/*uncles
 Intended: 'Hanna and Peter are good aunts and uncles.'

Resolution/dominance: Animal nouns

- (16) Minka und Felix sind sehr schlaue Katze-n/*Kat-er.
 Minka.F and Felix.M are very smart cat.F-PL/*cat.M-PL
 'Minka and Felix are very smart cats'
- (17) Bello und Bella sind sehr dumme Hund-e/*Hünd-inn-en.
 Bello.M and Bella.F are very stupid dog.M-PL/*dog-F-PL
 'Bello and Bella are very stupid dogs'
- (18) Bruno und Isolde sind sehr hungrige **Schwein-e**/*Säu-e/*Eber-ø.
 Bruno.M and Isolde.F are very hungry **pig.N-PL**/*pig.F-PL/pig.M-PL
 'Bruno and Isolde are very hungry pigs.'

Semantic markedness: Ambiguity

The unmarked term

...is expressing both a generic category and the specific opposite of the marked member

Specific vs. generic use:

(19) Der Patient braucht Sauerstoff.
 the patient.M needs Oxygen
 'The patient needs oxygen.'

(20) Braucht der Patient oder die Patient-in Sauerstoff?
 needs the patient.M or the patient-F oxygen?
 'Does the female or the male patient need oxygen?'

Ambiguity: Animals and Kinshipterms

- (21) Anna bekomm-t ein Kind. Einen Sohn oder eine Tochter?
 Anna gets a child.N. A Son or a daughter?
 'Anna is having a child. A son or a daughter?'
- (22) Der Hund muss gefüttert werden. Der Hund oder die Hünd-in?
 the dog.M must feed be. The dog.M or the dog-F?
 'The dog must be fed. The male dog or the female dog?'
- (23) Das Pferd muss gefüttert werden. *Das Pferd oder die Stute/der
 the horse.N must feed be. *the horse or the horse.F/the
 Hengst?
 horse.M?
 'The horse must be fed. Intended: The male or the female horse?'

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Zero expression of the unmarked category

The marked category

...is marked by an overt affix, while the unmarked category has no such affix, but a zero in that position.

- (24) Arbeiter – Arbeiter-in – Arzt – Ärzt-in
worker.M – worker-F – doctor – doctor-F
- (25) Mutter – Vater – Kind – Tochter – Sohn
mother – father – child – daughter – son

Zero expression: Animal nouns

- (26) Katze – Kat-er
cat.F – cat-M
- (27) Hund – Hünd-in
dog.M – dog-F
- (28) Huhn – Henne – Hahn
chicken.N – chicken.F – chicken.M
- (29) Pferd – Stute – Hengst
horse – horse.F – horse.M

Syncretization

The category

...showing the most syncretism in its paradigm should be the unmarked one

- I counted syncretisms for pronouns, nouns and adjectives
- definite pronouns:
feminine/neuter > masculine
- indefinite pronouns and personal pronouns:
feminine > neuter > masculine
- nouns:
feminine > masculine/neuter
- adjectives:
masculine/feminine/neuter

Contextual neutralization

The unmarked category appears

...if the opposition between two or more categories is suppressed

- German plural is supposed to have no gender
- the form that is used for the (supposedly) generic plural should be the unmarked form
- human nouns: masculine
- kinship terms: only pluralized neuter words are able to derive a gender-unspecific reading
(compare: *Mütter* 'mothers' and *Kinder* 'children')
- animals: no the decision, all 3 grammatical genders can be used for deriving the unspecific plural

Morphological irregularities

Marked forms

...show a lesser degree of morphological irregularities. The gender category with the most irregularities should be the unmarked one.

- I looked at the exceptions Duden lists for plural forms of nouns
- Out of 21 exceptions 10 were bound to certain gender categories
- feminine: 3 exceptions
- masculine: 1 exceptions
- neuter: 6 exceptions

Frequency

The most frequent category

...should be the unmarked category

- There are a lot of different ways to count those frequencies
- I decided to only look at animate nouns
- Krifka (2009) gives the following distribution for these:
 - masculine: 69%
 - feminine: 16%
 - neuter: 9%

Results

		Human nouns	Kinship terms	Animal nouns
semantic	Quantification	neuter	neuter	NA
	Emergence after blocking	grammatical gender	grammatical gender	grammatical gender
	Resolution	SG: NA PL: maculine	SG: neuter PL: neuter	SG: NA PL: NA
	Ambiguous status of the unmarked member	masculine	NA	maculine/feminine
morphological	Zero expression of the unmarked category	masculine	grammatical gender	grammatical gender
	Syncretization	feminine > neuter > masculine		
	Contextual neutralization	masculine	neuter	grammatical gender
	Morphological irregularities	neuter		
	Defectivation	grammatical gender		
	Frequency	Animate nouns: neuter > feminine > masculine		

A lot of tests... and no result?

- the tests derived a really mixed picture: there is not one unmarked category across all nouns
- but there were tendencies:
 - neuter seemed to be unmarked in a lot of contexts
 - grammatical gender seemed to be unmarked in comparison to interpretable gender
- based on these tendencies I want to propose a markedness scale that makes use of the assumption of gender being located on little n

Really Short introduction to little n

Following i.a. Kramer (2015) I want to assume the following:

- Gender is located on a head called little n which merges with the root of a noun
- There are different flavours of little n deriving interpretable and uninterpretable gender features
- There are licensing conditions making sure which root can combine with which flavour of little n

The flavours of little *n* for German

- *n i* [+FEM] (licensing interpretable feminine nouns)
- *n i* [-FEM] (licensing interpretable masculine nouns)
- *n u* [+FEM] (licensing uninterpretable feminine nouns)
- *n u* [-FEM] (licensing uninterpretable masculine nouns)
- *n* (licensing underspecified/neuter nouns)

Who gets what?

human nouns can be licensed under:

- $n\ i$ [+FEM] (e.g. *Schülerin* 'female student')
- $n\ i$ [-FEM] (e.g. *Schüler* 'male student')
- $n\ u$ [-FEM] (e.g. *Schüler* 'student')

kinship terms can be licensed under:

- $n\ i$ [+FEM] (e.g. *Schwester* 'sister')
- $n\ i$ [-FEM] (e.g. *Bruder* 'brother')
- n (e.g. *Kind* 'child')

Who gets what? (Animals)

animal nouns can be licensed under:

- $n\ i$ [+FEM] (e.g. *Hündin* 'female dog'; *Katze* 'female cat')
- $n\ i$ [-FEM] (e.g. *Kater* 'male cat'; *Hund* 'male dog')
- $n\ u$ [+FEM] (e.g. *Katze* 'cat')
- $n\ u$ [-FEM] (e.g. *Hund* 'dog')
- n (e.g. *Schwein* 'pig')

A markedness scale for German

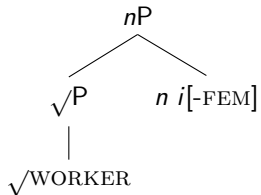
Markedness across all flavours of *n*

<i>n i</i> [+FEM] / <i>n i</i> [-FEM]	>	<i>n u</i> [+FEM] / <i>n u</i> [-FEM]	>	<i>n</i>
interpretable female / male		uninterpretable feminine / masculine		grammatically neuter

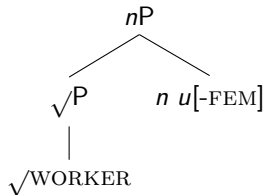
- masculine and feminine are not more or less marked
- interpretable and uninterpretable are
- under which flavours of *n* each root can be licensed decides what is the least marked version

Example: Human nouns

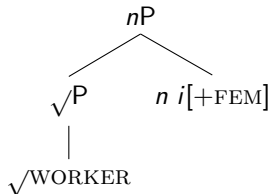
(30) *Arbeiter* 'male worker'



(32) *Arbeiter* 'male worker'

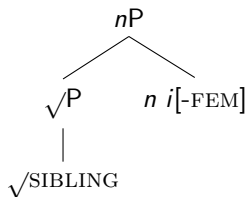


(31) *Arbeiterin* 'female worker'

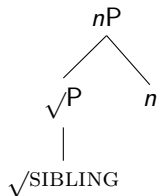


Example: Kinship terms

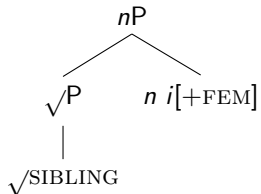
(34) *Bruder* 'brother'



(36) *?Geschwister* 'sibling'



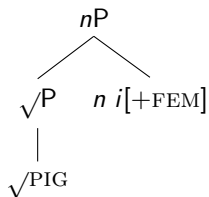
(35) *Schwester* 'female worker'



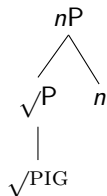
Example: Animal nouns

- All animal nouns should be licensed under $n\ i\ [+FEM]$ and $n\ i\ [-FEM]$
- additionally they can either be licensed under $n\ u\ [+FEM]$, $n\ u\ [-FEM]$ or plain n

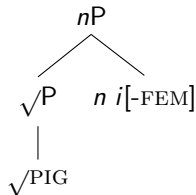
(38) *Sau* 'female pig'



(39) *Schwein* 'pig'



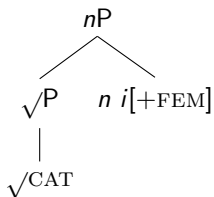
(40) *Eber* 'male pig'



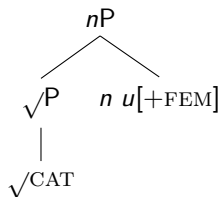
Example: Animal nouns

- All animal nouns should be licensed under $n\ i$ [+FEM] and $n\ i$ [-FEM]
- additionally they can either be licensed under $n\ u$ [+FEM], $n\ u$ [-FEM] or plain n

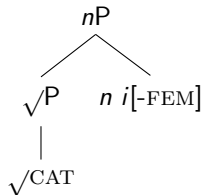
(41) *Katze* 'female cat'



(42) *Katze* 'cat'



(43) *Kater* 'male cat'



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