Sexless animates? Gender agreement with fixed gender nouns in German and French

Westveer, T.J.T.; Sleeman, A.P.; Aboh, E.O.

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.
2. Sleeman & Ihannes’s analysis for French

Sleeman & Ihannes (2016) distinguish grammatical and semantic gender:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Grammatical gender</th>
<th>Semantic gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OBJECTIVE</td>
<td>DP</td>
<td>Functional projection Gender Phrase [GendP] only present for animate nouns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>DP</td>
<td>With class B/C: yes with class D: no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What gender?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class D</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun</td>
<td>DP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He/She/It</td>
<td>DP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interpretable?

- No
- With class B/C: yes
- With class D: no

For the gender mismatch in superlative partitive constructions:

(i) Das/Der/Die älteste der Kinder ist Paul/Marie.
   the.N/M/F. oldest of the child.N.PL is Paul/Mary
   - German neuter
   - Grammatical agreement

(ii) ??Die/Der jüngste der Waisen ist Paul.
   the.F/M. youngest of the orphan.F.PL is Paul
   - German feminine
   - Semantic agreement

(iii) La/Le plus jeune de ces sentinelles est Paul.
   the.F/M. most young of these guard.F.PL is Paul
   - French feminine
   - Grammatical agreement

Interim conclusion:

- Sleeman & Ihannes’s analysis can explain difference between class B/C and class D nouns in French
- But what about semantic agreement with German masculine/feminine class D nouns?

6. A slightly different approach

Assumption: all nouns are marked for grammatical gender, but not all to the same degree of specification

- Class D nouns marked for specific grammatical gender (M, F, IN) in the lexicon
- Class B/C nouns marked for hybrid grammatical gender (M/F), not specified as either masculine or feminine yet

Comparison with Dutch gender system:

- Originally three genders: masculine & feminine & neuter
- Conflation of masculine and feminine: M = F = common
- Now two genders: common & neuter

Adapted from: Hanra, Harley & Ritter (2002)

HYBRID GENDER = COMMON GENDER

Supporting evidence:

- The use of neuter in the inner DP is ungrammatical when the inner DP is masculine/feminine
  - "Das.N/Die.F/Der.M jüngste der Lehrer.C.PL ...
   The youngest of the teachers...
  - "Das.N jüngste der anwesenden Personen.F.PL ...
   The youngest of the persons present...

7. Conclusion & outlook

- Grammatical agreement with German neutral and French class D nouns
- Semantic agreement with German masculine/feminine class D nouns
- Semantic agreement with French and German class B/C nouns
- We propose a gender feature hierarchy to account for those patterns

Unsolved issue: Why is the agreement competition possible between German masculine/feminine class D nouns, but not/less so with similar French nouns?

Is gender to be understood as a continuum?

Would be difficult to interpret in a formal sense...