

## On feminization and in-/deflection

Natalie Verelst (Freie Universität Berlin)

German famously differs from Modern Dutch and English as regards gender morphology. A higher number of genders corresponds with what Nübling & Kempf (2020: 106) call “nominal complexity,” as exemplified by the German three-way gender system. Dutch retains two genders but shares with English the diachronic loss of a nominal masculine/feminine distinction. In my presentation, I want to show that this gender distinction through nominal inflection is, diachronically and at least micro-typologically, accompanied by the consistent use of feminizing morphology (e.g., *Autor-in*) in the appropriate semantic contexts, which in turn inhibits a gender-neutral reading of masculine bases (e.g., *Autor*). German morphosyntax reflects this semantic principle to the extent that syntactic agreement between a feminized personal noun and its non-human antecedent is common whenever the antecedent is metaphorically personified (1) (cf. Szczepaniak 2013) – and this syntactic-agreement principle is already clearly visible in earlier stages of German. Middle Dutch, with a still intact inflectional system, behaved quite German-like (2):

- (1) Seit Rousseaus “Brief an d’Alembert”, worin **die Bühne<sub>F</sub>** als **Verderberin<sub>F</sub>** der Sitten angeprangert worden war, [...].

Safranski, R., *Schiller* (2004: 197)

- (2) ende **enicheyt<sub>F</sub>** en wert niet diueers ghemaect dan om der materien want si een **ophoutster<sub>F</sub>** is van hem allen als gheseyt wort

Anglicus, B. *Propr.* (1485)

Middle Dutch also makes use of double forms instead of one generic form to denote mixed-gender groups:

- (3) hoe rolant ende olivier ende alle vangaerde de passagien wonnen die seer sterckelijck beset waren met **ruesen<sub>M</sub>** ende **ruesinnen<sub>F</sub>**

Unknown, *Ronc.* (ca. 1520)

Semantic properties ([+human], [+female]) thus trigger morphological feminization (cf. sex-based gender system, Corbett 2013). As can be expected from its advanced stage of deflection, in Modern Dutch the situation is quite different: lacking nominal inflection, feminization becomes optional in most cases. Lastly, as in Modern German, *-in* seems to have been the most productive feminizing suffix in Middle Dutch, before receiving “fatal” competition from *-ster*. As will be shown, these suffixes possess different morphological properties. *-in* mainly occurs in contexts where the masculine base is gender-specific (e.g., *koning* > *koning-in*). Hence, contexts where *-in* occurs often do not allow for gender-neutral interpretations. These three factors will be discussed and will be shown to contribute to a more gender-specific reading of German and Middle Dutch (as compared to Modern Dutch or English) personal nouns, when the required gender morphology remained available.

Anglicus, Bartholomeus. 1485. *Van den proprieteyten der dingen* (Middle Dutch translation).

Corbett, Greville. 2013. Sex-based and Non-sex-based Gender Systems. In Dryer, Matthew & Martin Haspelmath (eds.), *The World Atlas of Language Structures Online*. Leipzig: Max Planck Institute. (Available online at <http://wals.info/chapter/31>, Accessed on 2021-11-19).

*Droefliken strijt van Roncevale*. 1510-1630. Antwerpen.

- Nübling, Damaris & Luise Kempf. 2020. Grammaticalization in the Germanic Languages. In Bisang, Walter & Andrej Malchukov (eds.), *Grammaticalization Scenarios from Europe and Asia*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter. 105-164.
- Safranski, Rüdiger. 2004. *Friedrich Schiller*. München/Wien: Carl Hanser.
- Szczepaniak, Renata. 2013. Grammatikalisierung in der Sackgasse. Wandelt sich das Movierungssuffix *-in* zum Kongruenzmarker? In *Jahrbuch für germanistische Sprachgeschichte* 4(1), 222-235.