

On the relationship between grammatical and natural gender. The phenomenon of hybrid nouns

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When we talk about gender biases or other gender-related topics, we often focus on gender-fair language; e.g., promoting equality by using language that is inclusive of all genders. In my talk, I want to shed light on the question of gender from a slightly different perspective: hybrid nouns and their agreement.

The specialty of hybrid nouns is their different agreement according to certain features of the agreement target. They result from a conflict within in the gender assignment system. For example, the German noun *Mädchen* (semi-transparent diminutive for denoting a girl) is grammatical neuter but it refers to a female person. Therefore, you can refer to *Mädchen* with a neuter (*es*) but also with a feminine pronoun (*sie*).

There are different factors that influence the agreement pattern, such as the linear distance between noun and pronoun, and the type of agreement target. So far, there have only been a few studies on the influence of possible non-grammatical factors, such as the age of the referent or other semantic or pragmatic factors. Nevertheless, those factors seem to play a crucial role. In this paper, I elaborate on those factors and present the results of different studies concerning the agreement of hybrid nouns to emphasize the semantic aspects of gender agreement.

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