



Grammatical gender in Heritage Argentine Danish: Stability and less variation (and a bit of change)

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Background and purpose

Morpho-syntactic change in gender assignment and gender agreement in Argentine Danish

Purpose

- to document degree and direction of change in this unknown variety of Danish
- suggest perspectives as to why this degree and this direction for this particular situation of language contact

Approach

Quantitative: tendencies in rather large data set (20.500 tokens)



Our hypotheses

- 1) Argentine Danish gender complies largely with Denmark Danish
- 2) the definite suffix will show target-like realizations
- 3) we expect over-generalization of common gender (for neuter nouns) = most common gender
- 4) complex NPs produce more deviation

North American Norwegian (and North American Swedish)

Rødvand (2017), Londahl & Westergaard (2016), Johannessen & Larsson (2015)

- European Norwegian 3-gender assignment and Swedish 2-gender system is fairly stable, in particular the postnominal suffix
- over-generalization of the masculine (Norw) and common gender (Swedish) (=most common genders);
- variation particularly in complex NPs (=gender agreement) and in pronouns (Rødvand 2017)



The Argentine Danes



Eldorado, Misiones

small settlement
13 speakers remaining in 2014
overall lesser Danish competence

Buenos Aires

enormous city
Danish church, Danish clubs, but
not so dense networks
ca. 25 remaining speakers in 2014–
2015

The Danes' Triangle

dense networks, Danish clubs
many speakers, ca. 120 recorded in
2014–2015

Mainland Danish gender system

two genders: common gender (-n) and neuter gender (-t)

gender marking only in singular

free morpheme	
indefinite article	en skole (a school), et hus (a house)
demonstrative pronoun and definite article	den skole (this school) det hus (this house)
+ many attributive adjectives	<i>en stor</i> Ø skole (a big school) <i>et stor-t</i> hus (a big house)
possessive pronoun	<i>min/din/sin</i> skole (my/your/his/her) <i>mit/dit/sit</i> hus
bound morpheme	
definite article (postnominal suffix)	<i>skol-en</i> (school-the) <i>hus-et</i> (house-the)



Spanish gender system

two genders: Masculine (o) and feminine (a)

gender marking in singular and plural

free morpheme	
indefinite article	<i>un autobús, unos autobúses</i> (coach-masc) <i>una escuela, unas escuelas</i> (school-fem)
demonstrative pronoun definite article	<i>la escuela, las escuelas</i> (school) <i>el autobús, los autobúses</i> (bus)
+ many attributive adjectives	<i>una(s)/las otra(s) escuela(s)</i> (other school-fem) <i>un(os)/los otro(s) autobús(es)</i> (other coach-masc)
possessive pronoun	postnominal (<i>el autobús mio, la escuela tuya</i>)

bound morpheme	
definite article (postnominal affix)	-



Spanish-Danish gender system

Similarities	Differences
2 genders	
gender marking in attributive adjectives	
gender marking in singular <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • indefinite article • definite article/demonstrative 	
	Spanish: gender also marked in plural
	Danish: postnominal affix expressing gender and definiteness (-en or -et)



1. Quantitative analysis



Data basis for the investigation

‘Corpus of South American Danish’(CoSAmDa)

115 speakers, 931.919 tokens

Subset for the gender analysis

- 90 speakers from Buenos Aires, Eldorado and the Pampa settlements
- ca. 20.500 tokens of gender marking (postnominal suffix, free determiners with/without attributive adjectives)



Results I: Grammatical gender in Argentine Danish

	unlike DK-Danish		like DK-Danish		total	
postnominal suffix	85	1.2%	7.291	98.8%	7.376	100%
poss. pronoun	84	2.2%	3.694	97.8%	3.778	100%
indefinite article	428	6.4%	6.237	93.6%	6.665	100%
demon. pronoun	175	6.7%	2.454	93.3%	2.629	100%
Total	772	3.8%	19.676	96.2%	20.448	100%



Neuter is vulnerable, common gender is overgeneralized

	Common gender		Neuter gender		total
	unlike DK-Danish	like DK-Danish	unlike DK-Danish	like DK-Danish	
defsuff	9 (0.2%)	5191	76 (3.5%)	2100	7376
posspr	18 (0.5%)	3392	66 (17.9%)	302	3778
indef	51 (1.1%)	4560	377 (22.5%)	1677	6665
dem	19 (1.2%)	1608	156 (15.6%)	846	2629
total	97 (0.7%)	14751	675 (12.1%)	4925	20448



Factors that we considered in the analysis

Social factors

- a) age (45-102)
- b) biological gender
- c) place (= amount of speakers, density of networks)
- d) immigrant generation

Linguistic factors (Lohndal & Westergaard 2016; Larsson & Johannessen 2015, Rødvand 2017)

- a) free morpheme vs. bound morpheme
- b) free morpheme: article, demonstrative or possessive pronoun?
- c) DK Danish gender: common vs. neuter
- d) simple or complex NP?
- e) if complex: number of attributive elements?



Multi-factorial mixed-effect regression analysis; simplified

	Effect	Estimate	Pr(> z)
DK Danish neuter gender	high	-8.641	<2e-16***
Complexity: simple (= no attribut.)	some	0.63	9.67e-08***
Place: Eldorado	some	-0.884	0.042526*
Age	no effect	0.002	0.881026
DK Danish neuter gender + Age	a little	0.063	1.65e-08***

Dependent factor: CorrectGender [no; yes]

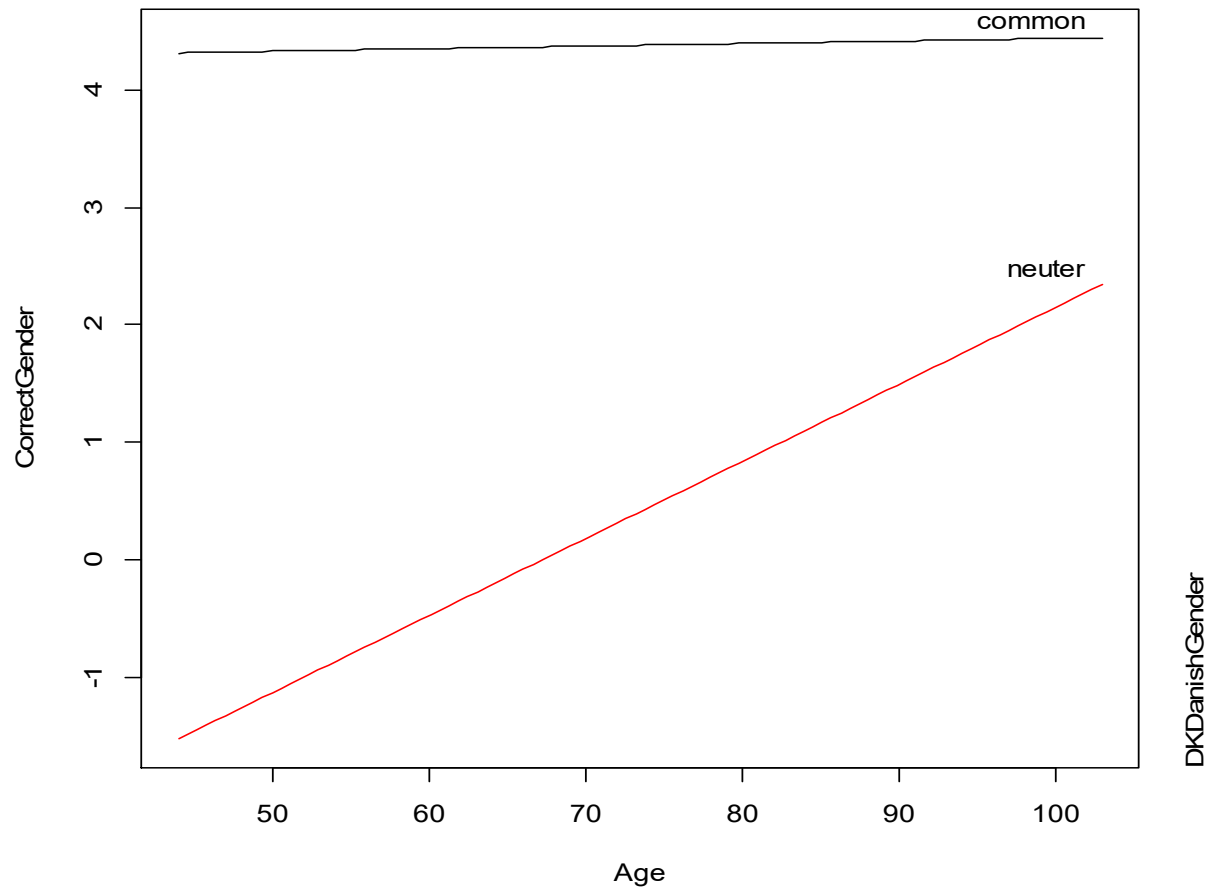
Observations n=13,072

Random factors:

- Speaker (n=90)
- NP head-noun (n=1,532)



Interaction: Denmark Danish neuter gender + Age



2. How about gender agreement?

May be observed

if DET(gen I) + ATTR(gen I) + NOUN(gen?)
= gender shift?



Gender marking in NPs containing attributive adjectives

Agreement like Denmark Danish: 1041 (88%)

DET_[comm] + ADJ_[comm] + N_[comm] 770 (65%)

DET_[neut] + ADJ_[neut] + N_[neut] 271 (23%)

Mixed agreement: 59 (4.9%)

DET_[comm] + ADJ_[neut] + N_[comm] 7 (0.6%)

DET_[comm] + ADJ_[neut] + N_[neut] 7 (0.6%)

DET_[neut] + ADJ_[comm] + N_[comm] 5 (0.4%)

DET_[neut] + ADJ_[comm] + N_[neut] 40 (3.3%)

'New' agreement: 88 (7.4%)

DET_[neut] + ADJ_[neut] + N_[comm] 8 (0.7%)

DET_[comm] + ADJ_[comm] + N_[neut] 80 (6.7%)

"if you are to
choose wrong
gender marking,
then you'll choose
common gender
instead of neuter"

= statistically VERY
significant



Summing up

- Argentine Danish gender marking complies to a great extent with the Denmark Danish gender system
- gender-marking on **free morphemes** is less stable than gender-marking on the bound morpheme
- change very clearly goes in the direction of an **over-generalization of common gender-marking**
- place-factor: **Eldorado speakers** show more non-target instances than other speakers
- **complexity matters** to some extent:
 - NPs with attributive adjectives > more deviation
 - complexity in itself, not length between DET and N
- age-factor: **older speakers** are (a little bit) better than younger speakers as regards gender-marking on neuter nouns
- **NO effect:** kind of determiner, biological gender, ‘immigrant generation’ and ‘degree of complexity’



3. Conclusions and perspectives



Hypotheses revisited

- 1) Argentine Danish gender complies largely with Denmark Danish
- 2) the definite suffix will show target-like realizations
- 3) we expect over-generalization of common gender (for neuter nouns) = most common gender
- 4) Complex NPs produce most deviations



Grammatical gender in Heritage Argentine Danish: Stability and variation (and a bit of change)

Stability

- overall stability of Argentine Danish gender: 96.2% 'correct' gender
- due to typological similarity, 2-gender-system?
- due to linguistic fluency among elder speakers on the Pampa?



Grammatical gender in Heritage Argentine Danish: Stability and variation (and a bit of change)

Variation: in total 3.8% deviation, but 12% in neuter nouns

- younger speakers and also speakers from Eldorado lead on in this development = Age and Place (=network, language competence) matters
- overgeneralization of common gender free morphemes
 - frequency and entrenchment (central nouns, animates)
 - similarity to Spanish? *en – un, una*
- bound morpheme (definite suffix) very stable:
 - learned and processed as a chunk rather than two morphemes?
 - no one-to-one-competition from a Spanish pattern, but Spanish has suffixal gender-marking (-a, -o)
 - > pattern is known, but the content (gender vs. gender + definiteness) is different
- complexity matters in itself, i.e. complex NP vs. simple NP, not amount of material between determiner and head noun



Grammatical gender in Heritage Argentine Danish: Stability and variation (and a bit of change)

(A little bit of) **change for good**

- 7.4% of NPs containing attributive adjectives show consistent shift in gender-marking, again towards common gender

Conclusion

Argentine Danish gender system does not show a consistent gender shift, but it is characterized by overgeneralization of common gender in gender marking free morphemes, but also by stability of the postnominal suffix.

Quite the same picture as for North American Norwegian and Swedish, but even more overall stability.



Perspectives

Lexical aspect: which noun types are affected by variation?

Intra-speaker variation?

More gender agreement?

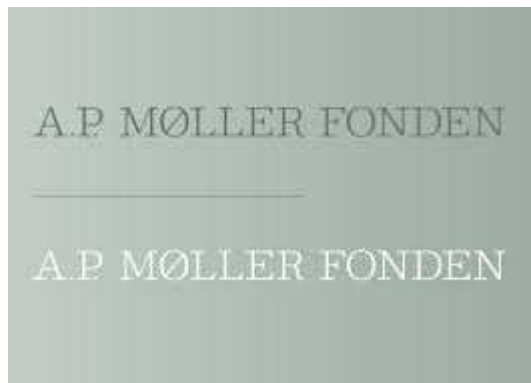
- anaphoric use (enourmous amount of data)
- predicative agreement (tricky because of phonetic reduction tendency)



Thank you for listening!

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