

Chapter 10

Why traces of the feminine survive where they do, in Oslo and Istria: How to circumvent some “troubles with lexemes”

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The paper examines a surprising parallel in the development of the feminine gender in Oslo Norwegian on the one hand and Istro-Romanian (spoken in Croatia) on the other. In both cases, the feminine gender is lost on all ‘normal’ gender markers, but a trace of the feminine remains on the definite suffix, which is the ‘last redoubt’ of the feminine gender. An attempt is made to link this development to a slightly modified version of the Agreement Hierarchy. It is suggested that the Hierarchy may be linked to grammaticalisation, and that we should not draw too strict lines between different kinds of agreement.

1 The main point

The starting-point for what follows is a parallel between Norwegian as spoken in Oslo, Norway, and Istro-Romanian, as spoken on the Istrian peninsula in Croatia. In both cases, feminine agreement is reduced, diachronically, and in both cases, traces of the feminine remain longer in one specific place, namely word-internally, than elsewhere. Why would there be such a parallel? I suggest an account which involves a modified version of Corbett’s (1979, 2006) Agreement Hierarchy. In brief, the ‘definite article’, when it is a suffix, has a different status than other elements that signal gender. Furthermore, Furthermore, an examination of the hierarchy reveals that it may be ‘anchored’ in the workings of diachrony and psycholinguistics.



2 The empirical background

2.1 Oslo

In the Oslo dialect of Norwegian, a change has taken place. A century ago, this dialect had three genders (in the singular, like German).¹ Compare (1):

- (1) Three genders in Oslo dialect ca. 1900; examples in Norwegian Bokmål orthography.
- a. en liten gutt, en fin gutt, denne gutten, ikke noen gutt
a.M little.M boy, a.M fine.MF boy, this.MF boy.DEF.SG.{M}, not any.M boy
 - b. en liten stol, en fin stol, denne stolen, ikke noen stol
a.M little.M chair, a.M fine.MF chair, this.MF chair.DEF.SG.{M}, not any.M chair
 - c. ei lita jente, ei fin jente, denne jenta, ikke noa jente
a.F little.F girl, a.F fine.MF girl, this.MF girl.DEF.SG.{F}, not any.F girl
 - d. ei lita jakke, ei fin jakke, denne jakka, ikke noa jakke
a.F little.F jacket, a.F fine.MF jacket, this.MF jacket.DEF.SG.{F}, not any.F jacket
 - e. et lite barn, et fint barn, dette barnet, ikke noe barn
a.N little.N child, a.N fine.N child, this.N child.DEF.SG{N}, not any.N child
 - f. et lite hus, et fint hus, dette huset, ikke noe hus
a.N small.N house, a.N fine.N house, this.N house.DEF.SG{N}, not any.N house

There is clear evidence for three genders, masculine (1a,1b), feminine (1c,1d) and neuter (1e,1f). The formal differentiation between the masculine and the feminine is not so clearly marked as that of both of them in opposition to the neuter. The masculine–feminine distinction is not realised on all associated words, but it is realised on some very central determiners and a few highly frequent adjectives, such as the adjective *liten* ‘small’, which is overdifferentiated; showing ‘too many’ contrasts (cf. Corbett 2007). By contrast, the adjective *fin* ‘fine’ is ‘regular’, showing only the opposition neuter vs. non-neuter, in the same way as the proximal determiner *denne*.² In such cases, I have assigned the value ‘mf’.

The status of the suffix in the definite singular of nouns is intriguing (see e.g. Enger & Corbett 2012 and Section 3.2.3 below). Genders are defined as classes of nouns reflected in the behaviour of associated words (Corbett 1991). Suffixes do not count as ‘associated words’; and yet, in the nouns in (1), the suffixes are in a strict 1:1 relation with the gender exponents. If a noun takes *-a* in the definite singular (e.g. *jente* ‘girl’), it will invariably also take *ei* ‘a.F’, *lita* ‘little.F’, *noa* ‘any.F’ and other ‘associated words’ expected from a feminine: if it takes *-en* in the definite singular, it will also take *en* ‘a.M’, *liten* ‘small.M’,

¹The following draws on Larsen (1907) and Lødrup (2011) in particular; but cf. also Enger (2004a,c) and Opsahl (2009).

²There are also adjectives in which the gender distinction does not show at all, e.g. *rosa* ‘pink’, *gammaldags* ‘old-fashioned’.

noen ‘any.M’, as expected from a masculine. This is the background for the use of curly brackets in (1).

In Oslo these days, there is no longer any evidence from ‘associated words’ in favour of a separate feminine gender. In other words, the feminine agreement has been ousted by the old masculine. The old suffix *-a*, by contrast, is retained. The system, at least for most of the speakers, is as described in (2):

- (2) Two genders in recent Oslo dialect (compare example 1; again, examples given in Bokmål)
- a. en liten gutt, en fin gutt, denne gutten, ikke noen gutt
a.M small.M boy, a.M fine.M boy, this.M boy.DEF.SG.{M} not any.M boy
 - b. en liten stol, en fin stol, denne stolen, ikke noen stol
a.M small.M chair, a.M fine.M chair, this.M chair.DEF.SG.{M} not any.M chair
 - c. en liten jente, en fin jente, denne jenta, ikke noen jente
a.M small.M girl, a.M fine.M girl, this.M girl.DEF.SG.{?} not any.M girl
 - d. en liten jakke, en fin jakke, denne jakka, ikke noen jakke
a.M small.M jacket, a.M fine jacket, this.M jacket.DEF.SG.{?} not any.M jacket
 - e. et lite barn, et fint barn, dette barnet, ikke noe barn
a.N small.N child, a.N fine.N child, this.N child.DEF.SG.{N} not any.N child
 - f. et lite hus, et fint hus, dette huset, ikke noe hus
a.N small.N house, a.N fine.N house, this.NEUT house.DEF.SG.{N} not any.N house

The usual interpretation of the data in (2), as indicated by the glossing, is that the old feminine is no longer a separate gender in the Oslo dialect, ‘merely’ an inflection class (Lødrup 2011, cf. also Enger 2004a,c and many others).³ The definite singular suffix *-a* might seem ‘the last redoubt’ of the old feminine, cf. (2c-d), and some would like to analyse it as a gender marker (cf. Section 3.2.3 below); that is the reason for using “{?”.

A development from gender to inflection class is far from unique; such developments have been referred to as grammaticalisation (cf. Lehmann 1982, 2016, Wurzel 1986). The old feminine is changing into an inflection class also in some other Norwegian dialects, such as Tromsø (Westergaard & Rodina 2015, 2016), and it is absent also in some contact varieties in the North (Conzett et al. 2011). Essentially the same development is found in the Jämtland dialect in Sweden (Van Epps & Carling 2017).^{4,5}

³There is considerable discussion about whether to take pronouns into consideration for the purposes of gender agreement. At this stage, they are left out, for expository reasons (but cf. Section 4.2 below).

⁴On the whole, it is pointless to debate whether dialects in Scandinavia are dialects of one or the other language, since Scandinavia generally counts as one dialect continuum. The point of interest is the parallel between Jämtland and Oslo.

⁵A next step after the system shown in (2) is that also the old *-a* suffix is lost. In that way, old masculines and old feminines become indistinguishable. This is found with some Oslo speakers, who will say *en liten jakke, jakken*, just like *en liten gutt, gutten*. (Essentially the same system is found in “standard” Swedish and Danish.)

2.2 Istro-Romanian

We now turn to Istro-Romanian, which is “spoken in some localities in north-eastern Istria (Croatia) to the south of Mt Učka, and in the town of Žejane to its north. Its speakers probably descend from pastoral communities originally resident in Bosnia, Serbia, and Croatia in the late Middle Ages, who settled in Istria from about the fifteenth century. The language’s place of origin, and whether it originally broke away from varieties spoken in the Romanian lands, or from those spoken in the Balkans, or represents dialect mixing, remain controversial. There are today perhaps 200-250 speakers in Croatia, mainly elderly and all bilingual in Croatian” (Maiden 2016b: 91).

The number of genders in Istro-Romanian might be disputed. The system used to be essentially the same as that of Romanian, and the number of genders in Romanian has been much disputed (cf. Corbett 1991, Maiden 2016a,d, Loporcaro 2016). Besides the masculine and the feminine, which are uncontroversial, there is also, at least according to Corbett (1991) and Loporcaro (2016), a third gender. This gender has been referred to as ‘neuter’ and as ‘genus alternans’. This gender has practically no morphology of its own, as Table 1 shows.

Table 1: Romanian gender.

Singular	Plural	
<i>trandafir</i> frumos	<i>trandafiri</i> <i>frumoși</i>	(beautiful rose, M)
<i>casa</i> <i>frumoasă</i>	<i>case</i> <i>frumoase</i>	(beautiful house, F)
<i>palton</i> frumos	<i>paltoane</i> <i>frumoase</i>	(beautiful coat, N)
Singular with definite article	Plural with definite article	
<i>pom</i> - <i>pomul</i>	(tree - the tree, M)	<i>pomii</i> (the trees)
<i>cutie</i> - <i>cutia</i>	(box - the box, F)	<i>cutiile</i> (the boxes)
<i>loc</i> - <i>locul</i>	(place - the place, N)	<i>locurile</i> (the places)

The ‘neuter’ patterns with the masculine in the singular, with the feminine in the plural. Thus, it alternates between the two, hence the label *genus alternans*. In Table 1, some endings have been boldfaced so as to show this. According to Martin Maiden (personal communication, and 2016c), in Istro-Romanian, while the masculine and the feminine happily persist,

The plural endings which originally selected feminine gender (alternating with masculine singulars) have lost the alternating gender and the relevant nouns have become masculine in singular and plural alike, *except* that they may continue to have a *distinctively feminine* definite article (suffixed, as in Norwegian) ... this could indicate that the definite article is in a rather different category from other agreeing elements, at least when it is enclitic to the noun (Martin Maiden, e-mail).

The different status of the ‘definite article’, when it is ‘inside’ the noun (word-internal), is indeed a central theme of this paper.

2.3 Clitic or suffix?

It is necessary to address the status of the ‘definite article’, in both Istro-Romanian and Norwegian. Traditional wisdom has it that the Romanian ‘definite article’ is a clitic, but Ledgeway (2016a,b) has argued that it is not a syntactic ‘head’ at all, but rather a piece of inflectional morphology, expressing definiteness. Apparently, the Romanian definite article shows many of the characteristics of inflection, such as fusion, obligatoriness, defectiveness and erratic allomorphy. This conclusion carries over to Istro-Romanian.

The Norwegian ‘definite article’ has traditionally been analysed as a suffix, but some would analyse it as a clitic (e.g. Lahiri et al. 2005). However, Lødrup (2016) presents good arguments for the traditional suffix analysis (cf. also Faarlund 2009): There are unexpected ‘gaps’ in the inflection in the indefinite singular. Nouns that do not have to take a definiteness suffix, even when they quite clearly occur in the definite, and these nouns do not form a natural class. Consider first (4a,b):

- (3) Gutten er i byen og sjekker kneet
 Boy.DEF.SG.{M} is in town-DEF.SG.{M} and checks knee-DEF.SG.{N}
 ‘The boy is in town getting his knee checked’

A corresponding sentence without the definiteness suffixes, as in (4), would be strange:

- (4) *Gutt er i by og sjekker kne

Intriguingly, if the words for ‘boy’, ‘town’ and ‘knee’ are replaced with the words for ‘dean [of a faculty at a university]’, ‘city centre’ and ‘larynx’, grammaticality judgments would be the opposite, as (4c,d) show:

- (5) a. Dekanus_ er i sentrum_ og sjekker larynks_
 Dean is in centre checking larynx
 ‘The dean is in the [city] centre getting his larynx checked’
 b. *Dekanusen er i sentrumet og sjekker larynksen
 Dean.DEF.SG.{M} is in centre.DEF.SG.{N} checking larynx.DEF.SG.{M}

Thus, there are ‘gaps’ in the marking of definiteness, and that does not square with clitic status. Some (mainly learned) nouns denoting (mainly) people and body parts do not take the definite article – but these nouns do not make up a natural class, as Lødrup (2016) shows. In other words, not all learned nouns behave like *dekanus*, *sentrum*, *larynx*, and not all nouns that can behave like *dekanus* are learned, Latinate nouns. Compare (6):

- (6) a. Dekanus har foreslått at ...
 ‘Dean has suggested that ...’

- b. * Diakon/ Diakonen har foreslått
‘Deacon has suggested’
- c. * Leder/ Lederen har foreslått
‘Chief has suggested’
- d. Avdelingsleder/Avdelingslederen har foreslått
‘Head of section has suggested’

The noun *diakon* ‘deacon’ is a clear loan, but it behaves like *gutt* ‘boy’ and not like *dekanus* ‘dean’, cf. (6b). Conversely, there is nothing Latinate over the word *avdelingsleder* ‘head of section’, which still can behave like *dekanus*, cf. (6d) (and contrasts intriguingly with the simplex *leder*, cf. (6c)).

One might add other arguments for taking the ‘article’ as a suffix, including the observation that the ‘definite article’ is restricted to one word-class, and that it cannot be skipped on co-ordinated nouns, cf. (7a), thus differing from the ‘possessive’ -s, usually considered a clitic, cf. (7b):

- (7) a. gutten og faren – not *gutt og faren
‘the boy and the father’
- b. fars og mors – far og mors
‘father’s and mother’s’

Also, at least for some Oslo speakers, the stem vowel of the one noun ‘mother’, *mor* is changed from the indefinite /mu:r/ to the definite /mura/, and that is unexpected under a clitic analysis, whereas inflectional suffixes can induce irregularity.⁶

2.4 Parallels in support

The diachronic parallel between Oslo and Istria is interesting. In both cases, a ‘word-internal’ element is where traces of the feminine stay on the longest. In Oslo, *-a* lingers on as a suffix long after agreeing words such as *lita* ‘little.F’, *noa* ‘some.F’ and even *ei* ‘a.F’ have been lost. In Istria, the suffix is the last relic of the old genus alternans. The parallel is close enough to warrant further examination, and the reason is probably structural; contact can safely be ruled out. Some other innovations in Scandinavian may be noted in support.

2.4.1 Danish

For a couple of centuries, Standard Danish has had a two-gender system, with an opposition between masculine (or common gender, a merger of the former feminine and masculine) and neuter (cf. Section 2 and Footnote 5). Historically speaking, the Danish

⁶Some readers may wonder if the change in stem vowel quantity for ‘mother’ might be some kind of compensatory lengthening, which might be analysed as phonologically rather than morphologically triggered. This seems unlikely, as the example is isolated.

system has influenced the Oslo development, although the change in Oslo is probably not due to contact only (Enger 2004c).

In current Danish, the mass nouns *vodka* ‘vodka’, *cement* ‘cement’ are usually masculine (as are their cognates in Norwegian). However, alongside the expected masculine determiner *den*, as in *den vodka* ‘the.M vodka’, *den cement* ‘the.M concrete’, Danish also allows for *det vodka* ‘the.N vodka’, *det cement* ‘the.N concrete’ with neuter agreement on the attributive determiner. These nouns thus allow for alternative agreement patterns; they have become hybrids, in Corbett’s (1991, 2006) terminology. The neuter agreement in *det vodka*, *det cement* has been called semantic agreement (Hansen & Heltoft 2011: 232, Enger 2013).⁷

On this point, Danish goes further than its Scandinavian sister languages/dialects (cf. also Josefsson 2014b). Danish, Norwegian and Swedish allow ‘pancake sentences’, in which there is neuter agreement on the predicative adjective, even if the subject appears to have another feature. Consider example (8):

- (8) *Vodka* (det) er godt
Vodka(m) (it.NEUT) is good.NEUT.SG

At least according to one analysis (e.g. Enger 2004b, Wechsler 2013, Haugen & Enger forthcoming), pancake sentences can be considered semantic (or ‘referential’) agreement.⁸

The same nouns, e.g. *vodka*, *sement* (Norwegian spelling)/ *cement* (Swedish and Danish spelling) can take a neuter pronoun in Swedish, Norwegian and Danish, and they can take a predicative adjective in the neuter, as in (8). However, Swedish and Norwegian do not allow **det vodka*; in other words, they do not allow semantic agreement inside the NP in such examples. Danish allows *det vodka* ‘that.NEUT vodka’, *det cement* ‘that.NEUT concrete’ with semantic agreement, but even in Danish, only *cementen* ‘concrete.DEF.SG{M}’, *vodkaen* ‘vodka.DEF.SG{M}’ with the suffix associated with the masculine is accepted. In other words, also in Danish, **cementet*, **vodkaet* is ruled out; the possibility of semantic agreement (neuter) found on the attributive determiner has not (yet?) spread to the suffix. Thus, the suffix is again more resistant against diachronic change than other, more word-like elements.

At this stage, a caveat is in order. I have used the terms ‘pronoun’ and ‘determiner’, but words that can be used pronominally in Norwegian can typically also be used as determiners, compare, for example the two uses of *det* in (9):

- (9) a. *Hva synes du om det huset?*
 What think.PRS you of that.NEUT house.DEF.SG{NEUT}?
 ‘What do you think of that house?’

⁷The terms ‘hybrid noun’ and ‘semantic agreement’ and ‘referential agreement’ have been debated (cf. Dahl 1999, Corbett 2006), but for present purposes, we may set this aside.

⁸For further discussion of pancake sentences, see e.g. Corbett & Fedden (2016), Enger (2013), Josefsson (2009, 2014a), Haugen & Enger (2014).

- b. Det er fint
It.NEUT be.PRS fine.NEUT
'It is fine'

Thus, it is far from obvious that there is a categorical split between pronouns and determiners (Kristoffersen 2000, Halmøy 2016: 162-3 *et passim*, see also Hansen & Heltoft 2011: 183 for Danish), and in this paper, the terms 'pronoun' and 'determiner' refer to use only.

2.4.2 A peripheral change in (some) Norwegian Bokmål

Norwegian Bokmål presents many examples of a slightly different, but related kind (see also Enger & Corbett 2012, Enger 2015). Here, a new semantically motivated feminine gender agreement is found, formerly not available, as in the examples in (10a, 10b) (from the web):

- (10) a. Ei god venn som alltid er der
a.F good friend who always is there.
'a good friend who is always there'
b. B. har fått ei lærer som ...og hun ...
B. has got a.F teacher who ...and she ...
'B. has got a teacher who ... and she ...'

The nouns *venn* 'friend', *lærer* 'teacher' are masculines in traditional three-gender systems, so one would expect the determiner *en*. Since the masculine is ousting the feminine, in many dialects (cf. Section 2 above), one would not expect the opposite to happen as well; it is strange to see the feminine *ei* spread. So a natural reaction may be to dismiss examples such as (10a, 10b) as wrong.

However, data like these do occur, if not terribly frequently (even in the speech of some, although I have only anecdotal evidence on this point), and the examples are not random. They relate to nouns denoting humans, and whenever the feminine is employed, it refers to females. The data therefore deserve to be taken seriously, and their immediate interest is that while the article/determiner can be changed, from *en venn* to *ei venn*, from *en lærer* to *ei lærer*, the suffix is not changed accordingly. The same two authors that produced *ei venn* and *ei lærer*, write *vennen* 'friend.DEF.SG.{M}', *læreren* 'teacher.DEF.SG.{M}' (and not **venna*, **lærera*) respectively, even if reference clearly is made to a woman. (See further Section 4.1 below.)

So even if these nouns change the attributive determiner *en* to *ei*, they do not change the suffix *-en* to *-a*. Again, the suffix is more resistant towards change than the other elements, which, unlike the suffix, are independent words.

3 Suggested analysis

3.1 The original Agreement Hierarchy

The similarities surveyed in Section 2 are probably not accidental, and one way ahead is to relate them to the Agreement Hierarchy (Corbett 1979, 2006). This hierarchy involves four ‘pegs’ for four different kinds of agreement controllers, as shown in Figure 1.

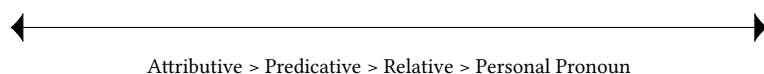


Figure 1: The Agreement Hierarchy.

Corbett (2006: 207) says that for “any controller that permits alternative agreements, as we move rightwards along the Agreement Hierarchy, the likelihood of agreement with greater semantic justification will increase monotonically”. In other words: The possibility for semantic agreement will increase towards the right; if possible on the predicative, it will be possible on the personal pronoun too, but not necessarily the other way around. A case in point is the agreement patterns noted for some Scandinavian mass nouns (Section 2.4). Given that Danish allows semantic agreement on the attributive determiner (*det vodka*), semantic agreement is expected also on the predicative. In standard Swedish, semantic agreement is possible on the predicative; so, semantic agreement is expected also on personal pronouns, but it is no problem that semantic agreement is outlawed on the determiner.

While Corbett’s hierarchy was originally formulated as a synchronic constraint, it “can easily be adapted to the diachronic perspective, predicting gender exponents to begin and/or complete the transition from lexical [syntactic] to referential [semantic] assignment the earlier, the further they are located on the right of the implicational hierarchy”, as noted by Dolberg (2014: 55).

3.2 The revised Agreement Hierarchy

3.2.1 Suggestion and background

The suggestion now is to modify the hierarchy, at least for some purposes, by expanding it with an additional position or ‘peg’, which is ‘word-internal’, cf. Figure 2.

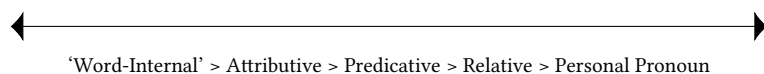


Figure 2: Modified Agreement Hierarchy.

The idea is that the Agreement Hierarchy has to do with ‘tightness’ of grammatical relations, and thus with grammaticalisation, and that grammatical relations generally are tighter inside the word than inside the phrase, and tighter inside the phrase than

outside it, – and across clauses weaker still. The idea that the Agreement Hierarchy may have to do with grammaticalisation is far from original (cf. Lehmann 1982, 2016), but it has not received quite the attention it merits (though see Jobin 2004).

When suggesting the hierarchy, Corbett (1979: 217) noted that it did not match then-current syntactic frameworks too well, and suggested that it was an “independent feature of natural languages”. Nearly forty years later, this suggestion seems less appealing. As Dolberg (2014: 58) notes, from a diachronic perspective, Corbett’s Agreement Hierarchy “is to be credited with being of remarkable predictive accuracy, yet it does not yield much in the way of explanatory power: even though it reliably tells us what to expect to happen in the exponents of changing gender systems, it provides little information regarding why this is so.”

It would if the Agreement Hierarchy could be grounded in something else. In recent years, many linguists have come to see constraints “not so much as constraints on possible synchronic grammars [than, HOE] as constraints on diachronic developments” (Timberlake 2003: 194, cf. also e.g. Evans & Levinson 2009). On such a view, at least some of the explanatory burden is shifted from synchrony towards diachrony.

According to Lehmann (1982, 2015 and elsewhere), there is a unidirectional movement from semantic agreement towards syntactic agreement, but not vice versa. In other words, what starts out as semantic agreement may become ‘syntacticised’ and less meaningful; changes in the other direction should not occur. Becoming somehow ‘semantically reduced’ is a standard criterion for grammaticalisation, another is becoming more obligatory. Both criteria would seem to hold for ‘syntactic’ agreement compared to semantic; Wechsler (2009) even prefers the term ‘grammatical’ agreement. This fits with the broad picture of grammaticalisation; it is largely unidirectional. On the assumption that diachronic tendencies motivate the Agreement Hierarchy, the hierarchy can be related to a larger framework, viz. that of grammaticalisation.

3.2.2 Objection I: motivating the fifth peg

The fifth peg may seem like cheating, for two reasons. Firstly, ‘word-internal (or noun-internal) agreement’ is a controversial notion.⁹ The other ‘pegs’ are syntactic heads; the suffix in Norwegian is morphology (cf. Section 2.3), and the idea of ‘morphology-free syntax’ is well-established (Zwicky 1992, Corbett 2014). Secondly, merely positing a fifth peg does not automatically solve the problem; the new peg does require some kind of motivation. As the Agreement Hierarchy has already been linked to grammaticalisation (Section 3.2.1), the latter problem will be discussed first.

There are different versions around of the Agreement Hierarchy. Köpcke et al. (2010) try to make their version less system-internal and more functional. In the words of Dolberg (2014: 18), they “assign pragmatic functions to the syntactic categories identified by Corbett, resulting in this altered agreement hierarchy: specifying – modifying – predicating – referent-tracking”. Dolberg (2014: 58) argues that it makes sense to consider this version of the hierarchy together with Corbett’s original:

⁹While Stolz (2007) argues at length in favour of the notion of word-internal agreement, the point I am trying to make here is orthogonal to his.

[M]otivating this expected pathway of referential agreement encroaching into (predominantly) lexical gender systems is comparably straightforward in the functional version of the Agreement Hierarchy [Köpcke et al. 2010], simply by taking recourse to the basic surmise that changes will occur generally first in those areas, in which the change is most conducive and/or least detrimental to language use. Thus, the underlying assumption of the functional version of the Agreement Hierarchy is that personal pronouns changing to referential gender yield the largest gain in freeing cognitive capacity, as their lexical gender needs no longer be remembered over comparably long stretches of discourse, because the appropriate pronoun form is now simply being derived from attributes of the referent, or, more precisely, the interlocutor's mental representation thereof, which needs to be kept in working memory anyway. This putative gain then gradually diminishes the further one moves to the left in the Hierarchy. (Dolberg 2014: 58)

Relating the Agreement Hierarchy to grammaticalisation (cf. Section 3.2.1) means relating it to the 'tightness' of grammatical relations; one of Lehmann's (2015: 131) 'parameters' of grammaticalisation is bondedness or 'tightness': "The cohesion of a sign with other signs in a syntagm will be called its bondedness; this is the degree to which it depends on, or attaches to, such other signs." Lehmann (2015: 157) says the syntagmatic cohesion or bondedness of a sign "is the intimacy with which it is connected with another sign to which it bears a syntagmatic relation".

The relation between a noun and an attributive adjective is tighter, more "intimate", than that between a noun and a predicative adjective, which is in turn tighter than that between a noun and a pronoun. Elements in attributive position are inside the noun phrase, and the syntax of the phrase is, as a rule, tighter than that of the clause and sentence. The relation between a pronoun and its antecedent is typically 'loose', compared with that of determiner to noun, hence, semantic agreement is more characteristic of pronouns. A related 'parameter' for Lehmann (2015: 131) is that of syntagmatic variability; the possibility of 'shifting around' a sign in its construction. This also fits with the Agreement Hierarchy, and the relation between noun and suffix is tighter than any of the relations in Corbett's original hierarchy. The suffix has to occur immediately to the right of the noun stem; nothing else can intervene.

This fits with the suggestions made by Köpcke et al. (2010) and Dolberg (2014). Pronouns are unlikely to be 'stored' in the mental lexicon together with their controlling noun, and this opens for semantic agreement. By contrast, it seems likely that suffixes are stored with their controller, as some idioms show. Two set phrases in Norwegian are *få sparken* 'get the sack, be fired' and *gi sparken* 'sack, fire'. The verbs *få* and *gi* mean 'get, receive' and 'give' respectively, and they are both very general and frequent, but the noun *sparken* only rarely occurs outside these two idioms; it is difficult to ascribe a meaning to *sparken* in isolation. There is no indefinite singular; there are no plurals. Even if the suffix indicates a masculine noun, there is no noun phrase **en spark*.¹⁰ If the whole *få sparken* were stored, that would weaken the case for saying that only stem and

¹⁰Strictly speaking, there is a noun *en spark* 'kicksled, spark', but it is a homonym, synchronically.

suffix are stored together, but *sparken* can marginally be found on its own, cf. examples from the web in (11):

- (11) Examples of *sparken* without *få*:
- a. *Facebook betyr ikke sparken* ‘Facebook does not [have to] mean the sack’
 - b. *dermed ble det sparken* ‘lit. thereby became it sack; so I was sacked’

Similar examples include *snurten*, which it hardly makes sense to translate in isolation; it is mostly known from the idiom *se ikke snurten av* ‘not see anything/the least bit of’. This noun does occur marginally in some other contexts, though, even without negation, cf. (12), again, examples are taken from the web:

- (12) Examples of *snurten* without *ikke* (and without *av*):
- a. *aldri sett snurten av* ‘never seen anything of’
 - b. *uten å se snurten til* ‘without seeing anything of’
 - c. *... kan man skimte snurten av peisen* ‘... can one spot a little of the fireplace’

Scandinavian diachrony presents at least one example where the definite singular suffix has become part of the stem. This is the noun meaning ‘world’. Swedish has *värld*, Danish has *verden* (cf. def. sg. *världen* vs. *verdenen*). The Danish cognate is an innovation; the old def.sg. suffix has become part of the stem. Pragmatically, this makes sense; for most speakers, there is only one world (at least most of the time). Istro-Romanian also presents examples where the plural ‘definite article’ has become lexicalised (Maiden 2016c). It is difficult to think of an example where the pronoun would merge with the stem in the same way, also because pronouns do not typically occur next to a noun (as they occur ‘instead of a noun’).

It is more difficult to come up with examples in which the determiner must be stored than where the suffix must, but there are some. The phrase *ikke det spøtt* means ‘not the least’, and one might expect the noun *spøtt* to inflect as a regular neuter would. Yet at least in my Norwegian, there is no definite singular form, nor any plurals. For *spøtt*, then, it seems the determiner is stored with the noun.¹¹ An obvious question is if *ikke* ‘not’ also has to be stored, but *aldri sett det spøtt* ‘never seen no nothing’ shows it does not have to.

It probably does not happen often that the pronoun is stored together with the noun; this probably happens more often with the determiner. It seems even more likely that suffixes be stored with the corresponding noun (also because suffixes are ‘salient’, cf. Section 3.2.3 below).¹²

In Section 3.2.1, we considered an argument in favour of seeing the Agreement Hierarchy in terms of grammaticalisation having to do with ‘semantic reduction’. According to

¹¹Admittedly, dictionaries also mention *et spøtt*. But that is unknown to many speakers, and dictionaries tend to strive for completeness, sometimes at the expense of actual usage.

¹²The suggestion that determiner or affix may be stored together with the noun does not exclude the idea that generalisations may be made over the gender or inflection class of a noun (cf. e.g. Conzett 2006).

Heine (2003: 583), semantic reduction is the central factor behind grammaticalisation. It is helpful to think of semantic reduction in terms of reduction of uncertainty (entropy). The less surprising X is, the less is its information value. Consider now the examples in (13):

(13) Pronoun and determiner in use

- a. Bilen står framfor huset. Den er faktisk
 Car.DEF.SG.{M} is (lit. stands) in front of house.DEF.SG.{N}. It.M is actually
 rosa.
 pink.
 ‘The car is in front of the house. It – i.e. the car – is actually pink.’
- b. Bilen står framfor huset. Det er faktisk
 Car.DEF.SG.{M} is (lit. stands) in front of house.DEF.SG.{N}. It.N is actually
 rosa.
 pink.
 ‘The car is in front of the house. It – i.e. the house – is actually pink.’
- c. Den bilen som står framfor huset, er
 The.{M} car.DEF.SG.M that is (lit. stands) in front of house.DEF.SG.{N} is
 faktisk rosa.
 actually pink

Recall from Section 2.4.1 that Norwegian pronouns can typically also be used as determiners. In (13a, 13b), *den* contrasts with *det*. In (13c), *den* does not contrast with *det*, since **det bilen* is ungrammatical. In other words, the first *den* tells us the speaker is talking about the car, the last *den* merely tells us that a masculine or feminine will follow (and that it is a definite, specific example). Thus, the information value of *den* is higher when used pronominally than when used determinatively. Another argument in the same direction would be that the first (personal pronoun) *den* can be stressed, but the last (determiner) *den* cannot. This indicates that in general, the attributive determiner has a lower information value than the personal pronouns. The suffix has an even lower information value than the determiner (cf. Dahl 2015: 123). (Recall that the suffix is also even more ‘bonded’, which is one of Lehmann’s 2015: 131 parameters for grammaticalisation.)

3.2.3 Objection II: Agreement between parts of words?

Patching suffixes on to the Agreement Hierarchy may seem a bad idea on theoretical grounds; this might at first glance seem tantamount to denying the claim that syntax is morphology-free (Zwicky 1992, Corbett 2014: 38f). This is a large issue which cannot be discussed in detail here, but the lexeme, the line between syntax and morphology, has not been handed down on tablets of stone; there are ‘troubles with lexemes’, as argued by Fradin & Kerleroux (2003), Haspelmath (2011) and many others. A very influential

adherent of lexeme-based models, Matthews (1991: 100), even says “it is often the mark of a genuine unit, like the lexeme, that we have trouble with it!”¹³

There has been some debate over whether the Norwegian definite singular suffix should be taken as a marker of gender or of inflection class (cf. 2.1), and this also relates to the problem of the delimitation morphology–syntax. Åfarli & Lohndal (2015) argue that the suffix *-a* should count as a marker of gender (and not ‘only’ of inflection class), also in the recent Oslo system described in example 2. Åfarli & Lohndal are not worried about violating lexicalist doctrines, and that is surely fair enough, given their theoretical stand; yet it remains too open, in my view, what the consequences will be: many things normally not included as ‘gender’ will then have to fall under that label (many inflection classes, for instance). From the opposite side of the spectrum, Lødrup (2011) squarely rejects analysing *-a* as a gender marker, as it is not an ‘associated word’. An in-between course is suggested by Enger (2004a), who discusses a system like that in example (1):

If genders are defined only on the basis of word-external agreement, it seems dubious to treat the definite singular suffix as an exponent of gender. However, one may wonder if there is any reason for speakers not to consider the definite singular suffix a gender marker, given that the correlation with gender is perfect. In other words, it seems perverse to deny that the definite singular suffix is an exponent of gender, **when there is one and only one definite singular suffix associated with each gender** [emphasis added here]. [...] even if what determines gender contrasts is what patterns show up on the target (and not on the controller), affix contrasts that show up on the controller and that correspond to gender contrasts on targets have to be considered markers of gender as well. (Enger 2004a: 65)

This means taking the definite sg. suffix as an exponent of gender in the classical Oslo dialect (1), but not in the present-day one (2), since the suffix did correlate with gender then, but does not do so now. A possible defence of taking *some* suffixes into consideration is that agreement evidence is less salient; considering agreement evidence requires more subtle reasoning (cf. also Carstairs-McCarthy 1994: 766).¹⁴ There is interesting psycholinguistic evidence that Norwegian children acquire the suffixes for the definite singular much earlier than the gender in agreeing words (e.g. Westergaard & Rodina 2015, 2016).

However, once the Agreement Hierarchy is seen as a product of other factors, it may become a bit less pressing whether, say, in an example such as *gutten min* ‘boy.DEF.SG{M} my.M’, the relation between *gutt* ‘boy’ and *min* ‘my’ and that between *gutt* and *-en* should both be subsumed under ‘agreement’. Corbett (e.g. 2006) has presented strong arguments

¹³Maiden (2016d) argues, on the basis of an impressive set of data taken from dialects and diachrony, that Romanian “nouns showing *genus alternans* are not a class defined by the agreement behaviour of associated words, but a class the agreement behaviour of whose associated words is dictated by inflexional morphology [boldface mine, HOE]”. The implications are intriguing. Yet Maiden’s analysis has also been criticised (by Loporcaro 2016). Anyway, the subject of ‘morphology-free syntax’ is too large for this paper.

¹⁴Wurzel (1986) even suggested that, in general, exponents on the word itself should count.

in favour of including pronouns under the label of agreement: There are important similarities between pronouns and other elements in the hierarchy, so that drawing a line at any one specific point at the hierarchy will entail an arbitrary choice and the loss of worthwhile generalisations. By the same token, I suggest there are some worthwhile generalisations to be made by including *some* suffixes under the scope of the Agreement Hierarchy. Theories should be about opening doors, not about closing them. The only reason not to include these suffixes would be substantial empirical evidence showing that they behave very differently from the predictions of the hierarchy.¹⁵

In *gutten min*, both *min* and *-en* convey information about *gutt*. The notion of ‘intra-morphological meaning’ can be useful and productive here (e.g. Carstairs-McCarthy 1994, Maiden 2005, Enger 2004a); the notion that an element of a word may ‘signal’ say, a particular property of the stem. In (1), *-a* has intra-morphological meaning, signalling the noun’s inflection class and its gender. This does not mean that *-a* is an ‘associated word’, only that it gives information about gender. In (2), *-a* also carries intra-morphological meaning, but now signalling inflection class only, because there is now no gender agreement related to it.

4 The danger of drawing too sharp lines

4.1 Automatisation

Lehmann (1982) drew a sharp line between NP-internal and NP-external agreement. One of Corbett’s (2006) arguments against this is that there can be referential/semantic agreement also inside the NP, and Danish *det vodka* and Norwegian *ei lærer* (cf. Section 2.4) support Corbett’s view. Perhaps paradoxically, if Lehmann is right in arguing that agreement has to do with grammaticalisation (cf. Section 3.2.1), then it is to be expected that Corbett should be right in not drawing a sharp line. Grammaticalisation tends to be a gradual affair; I see no reason why it should come to a complete halt exactly at the NP.

As noted, a development from (feminine) gender to inflection class may be described as grammaticalisation (cf. Section 2). Grammaticalisation may in turn be related to automatisation, according to Lehmann (2016).¹⁶ He sees inflectional classes as more ‘automatised’ than genders, and he says one almost has to be a linguist to wilfully produce the wrong allophone of a phoneme or to choose the wrong inflectional suffix. Pronominal gender is at the other end of the spectrum. It is for pronouns that there is most ‘leeway’. They are the least ‘automatised’. This perspective fits the one adopted here.

However, under certain circumstances, even inflection class suffixes can be manipulated consciously, and not only by linguists. When looking for examples like *ei lærer* (Section 2.4.2, Enger 2015), I found (in a net forum for ‘nurse jokes’) *ei söt sykepleier* ‘a.F

¹⁵Thanks to Florian Dolberg for pointing this out to me.

¹⁶There are many suggestions in the literature that are similar to that of Lehmann. Boye & Harder (2012) relate grammaticalisation to ‘backgrounding’; automatisation and backgrounding are related. Bybee (2003) relates grammaticalisation to ‘chunking’; her explanation of this concept makes it quite clear that automation is relevant here too. Haiman (1994) links grammaticalisation to ritualization and repetition. Lehmann (2016) does not address the relation between his suggestion and these others.

cute.MF nurse'. Now, in Norwegian Bokmål, *en søt sykepleier* 'a.M cute.MF nurse', with masculine determiner *en*, is the only conventional choice. In writing *ei søt sykepleier*, the author emphasises that the nurse is a woman. Another author on the same net forum reacted to the wording in an interesting way. Rather than criticise the choice of *ei* directly, he lists a part of the paradigm, the way it is taught to school-children, and then comments (my translation and editing) in (14):

- (14) *ei sykepleier, sykepleiera?*
'Where did you learn your Norwegian?'

This is an argument *ad absurdum*: if you say A (*ei sykepleier*), then B (*sykepleiera*) follows, and given that B (*sykepleiera*) is absurd, A (*ei sykepleier*) must be rejected. For present purposes, the point of interest is B: Using the old feminine suffix is apparently even worse than the use of feminine determiner. In short, even if the suffix is extremely automatised, it can be manipulated and changed.

4.2 Pronouns

4.2.1 A problem for the present approach?

Lehmann (1982, 2016) is not the only linguist who has wished to draw a sharp line between NP-internal agreement and pronominal agreement. So far, pronouns have been kept out of the picture, but they are worth including. In the Oslo dialect today, there are four pronouns. Consider (15).

- (15) Pronouns in the current Oslo dialect
- gutten.M* (the boy) – *han* 'he'
 - jenta.{?}* (the girl) – *hun* 'she'
 - låven.M* (the barn) / *jakka.{?}* (the jacket) – *den* 'it.NON-NEUT'
 - barnet.N* (the child) – *det* 'it.NEUT'

The choice of pronoun relates to animacy. The pronouns *han*, *hun* are used with animates (males and females respectively), *den*, *det* with non-animates (*den* with non-neuters, *det* with neuters). Animacy does not generally play a role for gender agreement inside the NP in Scandinavian (though cf. Enger 2013: 286–289). Pronoun agreement and noun-phrase-internal agreement thus follow partly different rules in this system, as in Danish and Swedish. Therefore, some conclude that pronouns are not subject to gender agreement (e.g. Josefsson 2009, 2014a). An alternative view is that pronouns should be included under gender (e.g. Corbett 2006, Enger 2013, Dolberg 2014, Haugen & Enger 2014, Van Epps & Carling 2017).

Once pronouns are taken into account, it may seem that the modified Agreement Hierarchy gets into trouble: It might seem as if the feminine in Oslo now is retained in the very extremes of the hierarchy, viz. the pronominal peg and the suffix peg, and not

in-between. On closer inspection, however, this is not so. As noted, the Agreement Hierarchy predicts that a new gender system, if semantically based, will start from the right end of the hierarchy and the old system will stay on the longest at the very left end. The word *hun* in (13) indicates a human – or a higher animal – of female sex. That is not the intra-morphological meaning of *-a* (cf. Section 3.2.3). While the intra-morphological meaning of *-a* can be roughly given as ‘the stem to my left belongs to a particular inflection class, including words as *jakke* ‘jacket’ and many others’, the meaning of *hun* is roughly ‘the noun to my left denotes a person of female sex’.¹⁷

4.2.2 A problem for another approach

In their Swedish grammar, Holmes & Hinchliffe (2013: 4) say that “Nouns ending in *-a* [in the indefinite sg., thus ending in *-an* in the definite sg., HOE] which denote animals are often treated as feminine irrespective of their true gender [i.e. biological sex, HOE]: *råtten – hon* the rat – she, *åsnan – hon* the donkey – she”.

This observation is interesting, as it represents a problem for an important approach to Scandinavian gender. According to Josefsson (2009: 40, 2014a), lexical gender, which is found within the DP, does not carry any meaning. By contrast, gender is a meaningful category in the pronominal domain. Thus, Josefsson’s approach implies a sharp boundary between pronominal agreement, which is meaningful, and DP-internal agreement, which is not. However, if we wish to explain why Swedish *råtten* ‘the rat’ and *åsnan* ‘the donkey’ are more often referred to with *hon* than, say, *musen* ‘the mouse’ and *hästen* ‘the horse’, we are stuck with the fact that the former end in *-a* in the indefinite singular [*råtta*, *åсна*], the latter do not [*mus*, *häst*]. Yet ‘ending in an *-a* in the indefinite singular’ is hardly a meaningful property. (See Haugen & Enger forthcoming, for a summary of other arguments against Josefsson’s approach, and further references.)

5 Conclusions

I have pointed out a parallel between Oslo Norwegian and Istro-Romanian. In both cases, the ‘last redoubt’ of the old feminine is a suffix on the noun. The parallel is not coincidental; there are other Scandinavian examples (cf. Section 2.4) indicating that the noun’s suffix is more ‘resistant’ towards change than are ‘associated words’. The difference can relate to a somewhat modified version of the Agreement Hierarchy (Corbett 1979, 2006, Köpcke et al. 2010), in which an extra ‘peg’ is added for the suffix. This modification is in line with the spirit of Fradin & Kerleroux (2003); they also note ‘troubles with lexemes’, but they do not use those problems as arguments against the lexeme as such. Rather than getting stuck in such problems, we may, for example, utilise the handy concept of intra-morphological meaning (Section 3.2.3). Following Lehmann (1982), I have argued that relating the Agreement Hierarchy to grammaticalisation may be useful, at least for some purposes.

¹⁷The example also illustrates ‘semantic reduction’, cf. Section 3.2.2.

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