

The interaction of gender marking and perspective-taking in German¹

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Abstract. This paper addresses a phenomenon regarding the interaction of perspective-taking with morphosyntactic gender that to the best of our knowledge has not been discussed in previous literature. In *Free Indirect Discourse* (FID), a vivid style of reported speech and thought, we observe a strong preference for a *de se* pronoun, i.e. a pronoun that refers to an individual whose thoughts or utterances are represented, to match the gender identity / biological sex (by default) of that individual rather than the morphosyntactic / grammatical gender of the DP functioning as its immediate antecedent in discourse. We propose that the preference for semantic agreement in FID is due to the interplay of three factors: First, in FID the gender features of pronouns are interpreted with respect to the protagonist's rather than the narrator's context. Second, the introduction of a protagonist's context leads to a strong preference for pronouns referring to that protagonist to project interpretable gender features matching their gender identity / biological sex. Third, the overtly realized grammatical gender features of a pronoun, in contrast with lexical nouns, have to agree with the interpretable gender features.

Keywords: free indirect discourse, perspective-taking, gender, pronouns.

1. Introduction

This paper deals with a phenomenon regarding the interaction of perspective-taking with morphosyntactic gender that to the best of our knowledge has not been discussed in previous literature on the topic. In *Free Indirect Discourse* (FID), there is a strong preference for a *de se* pronoun, i.e. a pronoun that refers to an individual whose thoughts or utterances are represented, to match the social gender identity/biological sex (henceforth: *referential gender*) of that individual rather than the *grammatical gender* of the DP functioning as its immediate antecedent in discourse. Of course, for this phenomenon to be observed, a language must exhibit so-called *hybrid nouns*, in which the grammatical gender is distinguished from its referential gender and both types of gender are available for morphosyntactic agreement relations, sometimes simultaneously (Corbett 1991). Perhaps the most well-known and widely discussed case of gender mismatch in hybrid nouns in German is *Mädchen* ('girl'), a noun which refers to female individuals, but whose grammatical gender is neuter. In addition, there are cases of unspecified referential gender, e.g., nouns such as (*die*) *Person* ('person') or (*der*) *Mensch* ('human being'), whose morphosyntactic gender is female or male, respectively, but which can be used to refer to female as well as male individuals.

The analysis that we will develop in this paper relies on the following two sets of core assumptions, each of which is rooted in established literature. First, we adopt a layered approach to agreement with DPs, in which nouns and pronouns have an *optional layer* where referential gender is encoded in addition to an *obligatory layer* where grammatical gender is

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encoded (cf. Panagiotidis 2019 and Trutkowski & Weiß 2023). Second, we adopt a dual context approach to FID, in which two contexts are simultaneously active: the narrator’s context, C_U , and a protagonist’s context, C_T (Doron 1991; Schlenker 2004; Sharvit 2008; Eckardt 2014, among others). In particular, we adopt a version of the dual context approach where person features of pronouns are interpreted with respect to the narrator’s context, but gender (and number) features are interpreted with respect to the protagonist’s context (Delfitto et al. 2016). These approaches are summarized in turn in the following sections.

The central observation of this paper concerns self-ascribing *de se* pronouns, i.e., pronouns referring to the protagonist or attitude holder of the report, that corefer with hybrid nouns in FID reports. We find a strong bias for *de se* pronouns to agree with the referential gender of the hybrid noun antecedent, instead of grammatical gender. We argue that the gender features of *de se* pronouns in FID cannot remain uninterpreted, i.e. taken to simply agree with the grammatical gender of their most recent antecedent, as is possible outside of FID. Rather, they must be interpreted with respect to the protagonist’s context, as to be compatible with the attitude holder’s self-concept. Therefore, FID is strongly biased towards pronouns referring to the perspective-taker encoding the latter’s referential gender rather than the grammatical gender of its (most recent) antecedent.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. In Section 2.1 we provide background on hybrid nouns and pronominal agreement in German, and in Section 2.2 on FID. The data that are crucial for our analysis are discussed in Section 3.1, and the analysis itself is presented in Section 3.2. Related issues regarding the gender features of pronouns referring to the attitude holder in Standard indirect discourse (SID) are discussed in Section 3.3 and 3.4. Section 4 summarizes the paper and discusses some open questions and directions for future research.

2. Background

2.1. Hybrid nouns and pronominal agreement

Nouns and pronouns are marked with certain features (person, number, gender) that enter into agreement relations with other elements in the structure. Across languages, noun classes are assigned according to semantic factors of the referent, such as animacy, humanness, and/or social gender or biological sex, but may also be entirely arbitrary (e.g., Corbett 1991 and Kramer 2020 for review). Grammatical gender refers to the inflectional class to which a nominal belongs.

In German, nouns are obligatorily assigned one of the following types of grammatical gender: *feminine* [+fem, -masc], *masculine* [-fem, +masc] and *neuter* [-fem, -masc]. Grammatical gender is not visible on nouns themselves, but on determiners and adjectives they are combined with in the formation of DPs. Crucially, grammatical gender does not always correspond to referential gender: social gender in the case of humans, and to biological sex in the case of animals. This distinction is perhaps most obvious for nouns denoting (sets of) inanimate objects, which are not always marked for neuter (as one would expect given their being inanimate and hence neither male nor female by definition), but for feminine as well as masculine gender: (*der*) *Löffel* (*masc*) (‘the spoon’), (*die*) *Brücke* (*fem*) (‘the bridge’), (*der*) *Stuhl* (*masc*) (‘the chair’) and (*die*) *Tür* (*fem*) (‘the door’). We assume that no speaker of German considers spoons and chairs to be male and bridges and doors to be female in any meaningful sense, and so, in these cases, morphosyntactic gender features are not interpretable.

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Concerning nouns with human referents, in contrast, there is a strong tendency for morphosyntactic gender to match referential gender, in line with Kramer's (2020) claim that morphosyntactic gender is always assigned to at least a subset of a language's nouns on the basis of semantic criteria. It is therefore no coincidence that, for instance, *Frau* ('woman'), *Schwester* ('sister') and *Mutter* ('mother') are marked as feminine, while *Mann* ('man'), *Bruder* ('brother') and *Vater* ('father') are marked as masculine.

There are, however, exceptions called *hybrid noun*, in which mismatch is either unavoidable or at least possible. One example already discussed is (*das*) *Mädchen* ('girl'), which is grammatically neuter, but denotes female individuals. Other examples include (*die*) *Person* ('the person') and (*der*) *Mensch* ('the human being'), which are grammatically female and male, respectively, but which can denote both female and male individuals. Hybrid nouns also apply to animal kinds such as (*der*) *Hund* ('the dog') and (*die*) *Katze* ('the cat'), which are grammatically male and female, respectively, but likewise can denote individuals with either male or female referential gender. Hybrid nouns are no peculiarity of German, but are found in many other languages such as Dutch, Spanish, French, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, among many others. For example, a well-studied case is a small class of Russian nouns that include *vrač* ('doctor'). Though masculine by default, *vrač* can also refer to feminine individuals, in which case it agrees with feminine marked adjectives (*xorošaja* 'good').

- (1) Ona xoroš-ij/aja vrač
She good-MASC/FEM doctor
She is a good doctor.
(Corbett 1991, p. 238)

In German, determiners and relative pronouns must agree with morphosyntactic gender of the noun that they combine with. As *Mädchen* ('girl') is grammatically neuter, it agrees with the neuter forms of the definite determiner and relative pronoun (*das*), despite referring to an individual with female referential gender.

- (2) Paul kennt das/*die Mädchen, das^{??}die im fünften Stock wohnt.
*Paul knows the_{neut}/*the_{fem} girl who_{neut}/^{??}who_{fem} lives on the fifth floor.*

Pronouns, in contrast, may in principle agree either with the morphosyntactic gender of the antecedent noun (neuter, in the case below: *Es*) or with its referential gender (the feminine 3P pronoun *Sie*)².

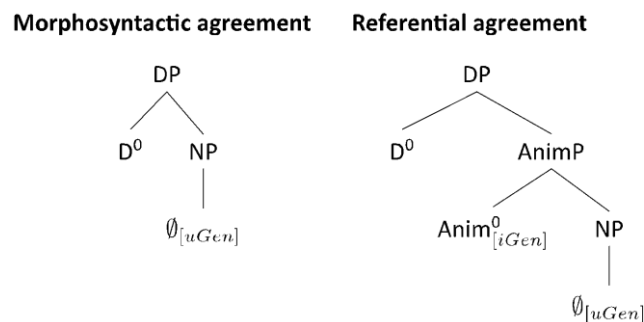
- (3) Das Mädchen betrat den Raum. Es/Sie trug einen roten Mantel.
The girl entered the room. It/She wore a red coat.

² The preferred choice of pronouns across sentences has been well studied. For instance, it is well known that factors such as linear distance (Thurmaier 2006, Panther 2009) and the importance of social gender identity or biological sex in the context favor referential agreement (Hübner 2021). However, we will leave discussion of these factors aside.

We now turn to how the pronouns agree in gender with their antecedents. Following similar claims in Panagiotidis (2019) and Trutkowski & Weiß (2023), we make two key assumptions regarding hybrid nouns (see also Mathushanksy 2013 and others for related proposals). First, nouns denoting inanimate entities project only a functional layer, encoding uninterpretable gender [*uGen*]. Second, nouns denoting animate entities project an additional functional layer Animate Phrase (*AnimP*), encoding interpretable referential gender [*iGen*]. Only grammatical features are required. For pronouns we additionally assume that the NP is phonologically null and the respective feature bundle is spelled out on the head of the DP, which is overt (cf. Panagiotidis 2019). While uninterpretable gender features [*uGen*] are obligatory for pronouns, too, interpretable features [*iGen*] are possible only with animate referents, and are generally (i.e. even in cases where a pronoun refers to an animate entity) optional. Crucially, in the case of pronouns, *uGen* and *iGen* must match, i.e. there are no hybrid pronouns. Given the absence of lexical content in pronouns, we assume this to be a rather natural assumption.

Now recall that in the general case, grammatical and referential features, i.e. [*uGen*] and [*iGen*], match in the NP. For this case we assume that the empty NP of the pronoun and the NP of its antecedent DP have parallel functional structures, and therefore parallel feature specifications.

However, in the case of hybrid nouns, grammatical and referential gender do not match. For this case, we assume there to be two possible resolutions. The first possibility is that the pronoun matches the grammatical gender of the antecedent DP. It projects neither an *AnimP* nor its associated referential gender features, so that the value assigned to the variable introduced by pronoun is unrestricted (or underdetermined) with respect to referential gender. The second possibility is that the pronoun projects a referential gender feature with *AnimP*, in which the gender feature is interpreted, and the pronoun must reflect the referential gender of its antecedent. The first option results in morphosyntactic agreement, the second in referential agreement. The two options are shown schematically below:



We will return to a more detailed discussion of the two resolution options in Section 3.2, first introducing the data that are our main concern in this paper. The data indicate that referential agreement is obligatory (or at least very strongly preferred) in cases where the pronoun occurs in a sentence that is interpreted as FID from the perspective of the antecedent’s referent. But first, we will give some background on FID in the following section.

2.2. Free Indirect Discourse

Free Indirect Discourse (FID) is a vivid form of narrative report. Although it is often found in literature (Banfield 1982), it is also observed in everyday speech (Fludernik 1992) and newspaper reports (Redeker 1996). It is used to adopt or more directly depict the perspective of an attitude holder, while retaining elements of speech or thought report. No single construction unambiguously identifies a report as an instance of FID; rather, multiple cues serve to indicate FID reports. Cues include *macro* or *discourse* level information, such as the beliefs and dispositions of the narrator and protagonist, and *micro* or *morphemic* cues, such as tense or mood morphemes, perspectively rich terms (e.g., epithets, speaker-oriented adverbs, subjective predicates, and particles) and specific constructions (e.g., questions and exclamations); see Eckardt (2014), among others for a list of potential cues.

FID is distinguished from Standard indirect discourse (SID) and Direct discourse (DD) in numerous ways. The set of sentences in (4) from Sharvit (2008) illustrates the point:

- (4) a. DD: As he looked at my picture, John thought: “Yes, I want to marry her today.”
 b. SID: As he looked at my picture, John thought that **he** wanted to marry **me** that day.
 c. FID: John looked at my picture. Yes(, he thought,) **he** wanted to marry **me** today.

Intuitively, FID shares features of DD and SID. In FID and DD, the time referred to by the adverb *today* is located within the content of John’s thought. However, in FID and SID, pronouns and tenses are anchored to the narrator, where the third person pronoun *he* self-refers to John and the past tense is used to refer to John’s current thought, unlike in DD.

While FID has long been of interest to narratologists and literary scholars (e.g., Fleischman 1990), since the pioneering work of Banfield (1982), it has more recently received attention in formal semantics (see Delfitto et al. 2016 for review) and experimental linguistics (Harris 2012, 2021; Kaiser, 2015). Among the various accounts of FID, most follow Doron (1991) and assume that there are separate contexts corresponding to the narrator and the attitude holder, the context of utterance and the context of thought, respectively (Schlenker 2004; Sharvit 2008; Eckardt 2014; but see Maier 2015 for a different view on which FID is a special, highly conventionalized form of mixed quotation). In dual context approaches, the *context of utterance* (C_U) corresponds to the context of the narrator or the speaker, whereas the *context of thought* (C_T) represents the context of the attitude holder, whose speech or thought is being expressed in the report. The central claim is that pronouns and tenses are resolved to the context of utterance, while other perspectival elements, including deictics (e.g., temporal adverbs like *now*, *yesterday*, and locational adverbs like *here*) and demonstratives, are resolved to the context of thought.

For example, in (5), the pronoun *he* refers to John in the third person through the narrator’s context, rather than via the first person, as would be expected if the form of the pronoun were determined via the context of thought. Similarly, the choice of past tense *was* in (5) seems to reflect not the time of the protagonist’s inner speech, but rather an alternative time span located outside of his present. In contrast, other context-sensitive terms intuitively reflect the point of view of the protagonist: *now* is cotemporaneous with John’s thought, *tomorrow* refers to the day after the thought, and the judgments conveyed by the speaker oriented adverb *thankfully* and the predicate of personal taste *horrid* each reflect John’s viewpoint, not the narrator’s.

- (5) Thankfully_{CT} he_{CU} was_{CU} now_{CT} leaving tomorrow_{CT} and would never speak to that horrid_{CT} person again, thought John.

However, the *gender* of a pronoun appears to agree with the perspective of the protagonist. Taking a case discussed by Doron (1991) and Schlenker (2004), the masculine gender on the pronoun *he* agrees with the content of Mary's thought in (6a), even if the narrator knows that Mary has mistakenly identified Robin as male. In fact, using the feminine gender *she* appears to be illicit in this context (6b).

- (6) Context: Mary wrongly believed that Robin was male. In fact, Robin was a woman.
 a. Where was he this morning, for instance? (Mary wondered.)
 b. #Where was she this morning, for instance? (Mary wondered.)

Apparently, grammatical features of pronouns are sensitive to different contexts, as well. Only person features are resolved within the narrator's context of utterance; the grammatical gender of the pronouns is instead subject to the protagonist's context of thought.

Accounts of mistaken gender in pronouns range widely, from hidden definite descriptions (Schlenker 2004) to deleted features (Sharvit 2008). Rather than detail the approaches, we now turn to a discussion of the resolution options of pronouns in FID whose antecedents are hybrid DPs referring to the protagonists whose thoughts are rendered.

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3.1. The crucial data

Consider the contrast between (7a), on the one hand, and (7b-c), on the other, regarding the acceptability of the neuter possessive pronoun *seinen* ('its') as opposed to the female possessive pronoun *ihren* ('she'), interpreted as co-referential with the individual introduced by the proper name Maria in the opening sentence and picked up by the definite DP *das Mädchen* ('the girl'). The crucial sentences are underlined and the pronouns of interest are marked in bold.

- (7) a. **FID context.** Maria war völlig fertig von der Fahrt auf dem stürmischen Meer. Das elegant gekleidete Mädchen stieg mit wackligen Beinen aus dem Boot. **Wahnsinn, der Boden schwankte wie verrückt unter ??seinen/ihren** Füßen! Zum Glück dauerte die Illusion nur einen Augenblick.

Maria was totally exhausted from the trip on the stormy sea. The elegantly dressed girl stepped out of the boat with shaky legs. Gosh, the ground was shaking like mad beneath ??its/her feet like mad! Luckily, the illusion lasted only a moment.

b. **SID context.** Maria war völlig fertig von der Fahrt auf dem stürmischen Meer. Das elegant gekleidete Mädchen stieg mit wackligen Beinen aus dem Boot und dachte für einen Augenblick, dass der Boden unter **seinen/ihren** Füßen schwanken würde. Zum Glück dauerte die Illusion nur einen Augenblick.

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Maria was totally exhausted from the trip on the stormy sea. The elegantly dressed girl stepped out of the boat with shaky legs and thought for a moment that the ground was shaking beneath its/her feet. Luckily, the illusion lasted only a moment.

c. **Neutral narration context.** Maria war völlig fertig von der Fahrt auf dem stürmischen Meer. Das elegant gekleidete Mädchen stieg mit wackligen Beinen aus dem Boot. Der Bootssteg schwankte wegen des Wellengangs heftig unter seinen/ihren Füßen. Zum Glück beruhigte sich das Meer nach wenigen Sekunden wieder.

Maria was totally exhausted from the trip on the stormy sea. The elegantly dressed girl stepped out of the boat with shaky legs. Due to the heavy sea, the boat bridge was shaking heavily beneath its/her feet. Luckily, the sea calmed down again after a few seconds.

Although the feminine pronoun *ihren* ('her') may well be preferred for most speakers in all three conditions, the neuter pronoun *seinen* ('its') is clearly acceptable in (7b) and (7c). In (7a), in contrast, it is very awkward. Intuitively, the neuter pronoun conveying grammatical agreement seems to be incompatible with construing the sentence as FID, in which Maria's inner thought is rendered from her own perspective. At the same time, a non-FID construal is clearly not viable, as there are many cues pointing towards an FID interpretation. First, the final sentence makes clear that the shaking of the ground is not really happening in the story worlds, preventing an interpretation on which the content of the sentence is attributed to the narrator rather than Maria. Second, the expressive elements *Wahnsinn* ('Gosh') and *wie verrückt* ('like mad') are much more naturally understood as portraying Maria's emotional state, rather than the narrator's.

The unacceptability of the neuter pronoun in (7a) is particularly striking in light of the fact that the second conjunct of the second sentence in (7b) renders exactly the same thought of Maria. Indeed, the only difference between (7a) and (7b) is that (7b) is an instance of SID rather than FID, and, yet, the pronoun can agree with either referential or grammatical gender in (7b). This example shows that a pronoun referring to protagonist whose thoughts are rendered does not automatically have to agree with the referential gender rather than the grammatical gender of the antecedent DP.

Finally, the acceptability of the neuter pronoun in (7c) is expected, since the sentence containing it is most naturally interpreted as neutral narration, and, as we have seen in (3) above, pronouns may in principle agree with the referential as well as the grammatical gender of their antecedent. Note that there is no relevant difference regarding the distance between pronoun and antecedent in the three conditions, i.e. the contrast between (7a), on the one hand, and (7b) and (7c), on the other, cannot plausibly be attributed to the pronoun being too far removed from the antecedent in (7a) as opposed to (7b) and (7c).

One might be concerned that the noun *Mädchen* ('girl') is rather special in that its grammatical gender is neuter, but it nonetheless denotes human beings with female social gender. In order to determine whether the contrast between the conditions in (7a-c) exemplifies a general pattern, we consider the contrast between (8a), on the one hand, and (8b-c), on the other. Just like in (7a-c), a female protagonist is introduced by a proper name (*Frida*) in the opening sentence and then picked up by a definite DP with a hybrid noun whose grammatical gender is neuter (*Ferkel*, 'pig'). Again, in the first case (8a), the sentence containing the self-ascribing pronoun is an instance of FID, reporting a thought of Frida the pig. In (8b), the critical sentence is an instance of SID reporting the same thought, and in (8c) it is an instance of neutral narration. The contrasts are the same as in (7a-c): In the FID condition, only the pronoun

matching the antecedent’s referential gender is acceptable, while in the other two conditions the pronoun matching the antecedent’s grammatical gender is acceptable as well (although there may well be a general preference for the pronoun matching the referential gender across all three conditions).

- (8) a. **FID context.** Frieda grunzte triumphierend. Das tatendurstige Ferkel rannte schnaufend durchs Unterholz. Oh je, was war das für ein Ungeheuer, das mit seiner schreckliche Klaue nach ??**ihm/ihr** griff? Zum Glück war es in Wirklichkeit nur ein harmloser Zweig.
*Frieda grunted triumphantly. The piglet that was burning for action ran through the underbrush panting. Huh, what kind of monster was trying to grab ??**it/her** with his horrible claw? Luckily, it was actually just a harmless twig.*
- b. **SID context.** Frieda grunzte triumphierend. Das tatendurstige Ferkel rannte schnaufend durchs Unterholz und dachte für einen Augenblick, dass eine Klaue nach **ihm/ihr** greifen würde. Zum Glück war es in Wirklichkeit nur ein harmloser Zweig.
*Frieda grunted triumphantly. The piglet that was burning for action ran through the underbrush panting and thought for a moment that a frightening claw was trying to grab **it/her**. Luckily, it was actually just a harmless twig.*
- c. **Neutral narrative context.** Frieda grunzte triumphierend. Das tatendurstige Ferkel rannte schnaufend durchs Unterholz. Dabei schlug **ihm/ihr** ein scharfer Gegenstand mit großer Wucht gegen die Flanke. Zum Glück war es nur ein harmloser Zweig.
*Frieda grunted triumphantly. The piglet that was burning for action ran through the underbrush panting. A sharp object struck against **its/her** flank. Luckily, it was actually just a harmless twig.*

The data discussed in this section show a crucial asymmetry. In FID, on the one hand, only pronouns matching the referential gender of the protagonist whose thoughts (or utterances) are reported are acceptable. In SID and in neutral narration, on the other, either pronouns matching the protagonist’s referential gender and pronouns matching the grammatical gender of the antecedent DP are acceptable. In Section 3.2 we will propose an analysis accounting for this contrast.

3.2. The analysis

3.2.1. The basic ingredients

To summarize the background discussed above, the assumptions on which our analysis is based fall into two groups: analyses of (i) gender features on nouns and pronouns, and (ii) FID. Regarding the morphosyntax of gender features and agreement, we assume a dual layer approach to (hybrid) nouns in which two sets of features project from NP in separate layers: obligatory but uninterpretable gender features for grammatical agreement, as well as interpretable gender features associated with an optional *AnimP*, available only for NPs denoting animate entities (Panagiotidis 2019; Trutkowski & Weiß 2023). Hybrid nouns demonstrate that referential gender features encoded in *AnimP* do not have to match the

grammatical gender for lexical nouns, resulting in mixed patterns of agreement. While we assume that pronouns may also optionally encode two layers of features, we propose that interpretable gender features projected in *AnimP* and the uninterpretable grammatical gender features have to match (i.e. there are no hybrid pronouns). In addition, we will adopt a relatively standard approach to the interpretation of pronouns, for which interpretable features are presupposed, but uninterpretable features are not (e.g., Cooper 1983; Sudo 2012, among many others).

Regarding FID, we adopt a dual context approach, in which FID introduces a protagonist's context of thought C_T as well as the narrator's context of utterance C_U (Doron 1991; Schlenker 2004; Sharvit 2004; Eckardt 2014, among others). We further assume that gender (and number) features of pronouns are interpreted with respect to C_T , while person features are interpreted with respect to C_U (Delfitto et al. 2016; see also Stokke 2020), an assumption based on early examples like (6) discussed already in Doron (1991) and Schlenker (2004).

(9) **Empirical generalizations:** (i) Referential agreement with pronouns referring to the protagonist (*de se* pronouns) is strongly preferred, if not required, in FID contexts (7a), whereas (ii) pronouns may agree in either referential or grammatical gender in SID contexts (7b).

Our account makes the following proposal (10) in order to account for the generalization in (9):

(10) **Primary proposal:** FID invokes a perspective which is anchored to the self-reflexive perspective of the protagonist in the context of thought C_T .

Assuming that self-reflexive thought requires consciousness, a *de se* interpretation of any pronoun referring to the protagonist is required; thus, pronouns with an *AnimP* are strongly preferred, if not required, in FID contexts. As *AnimP* projects interpretable features, these features are evaluated (as presuppositions) within the context that is associated with the protagonist's perspective, namely C_T .

With respect to hybrid nouns, this means that only *de se* pronouns which use referential agreement are permitted in FID contexts, i.e., the first half of the empirical generalization above (9.i). Again, the basic argument here is that FID invokes a perspective shift, in which expressions are evaluated with respect to a context that supports the protagonist's own self-concept. As such contexts require an *AnimP*, the interpretable gender features of the pronoun must also cohere with their self-concept; otherwise, a presupposition clash between the pronoun and that self-concept would result. More simply put: as a representation of a protagonist's state of consciousness, interpretable features associated with pronouns must represent that protagonist's view of their own gender, as a natural consequence.

In the following section, we concentrate on accounting for (9.i), reserving speculation on the reason why both referential and grammatical agreement with pronouns might be possible in SID (9.ii) for a later section. We first turn to an illustration of the claim that FID obligatorily supports *de se* pronouns.

3.2.2. The obligatoriness of *de se* in FID

While SID allows *de re* as well as *de se* readings of pronouns referring to the perspective taker, FID only allows *de se* readings (Delfitto et al. 2016, Charnavel 2019). To illustrate, consider

the contrast between (11a) and (11b): (11a) has a true reading, since Claudine thinks of the person that is in fact identical to herself that she is brilliant, although she does not realize this. Consequently, the thought reported by (11a) on its true reading cannot have been ‘I am brilliant’, which corresponds to the *de se* reading, but only ‘She is brilliant’. This is the *de re* reading of (11a). The FID report in (11b), in contrast, is distinctly awkward; it seems to be impossible to report a thought via FID in which the respective protagonist does not recognize herself and consequently uses a third rather than a first person pronoun for self-reference.

- (11) Claudine was listening to a radio interview that she had given many years ago and that she had completely forgotten. She was so drunk that she did not recognize her own voice, but she was very impressed by the interviewee’s responses.
- a. Claudine_i thought that she_i was brilliant.
 - b. #Damn, she_i was brilliant, Claudine_i thought.

Since, as we have already argued above, the referential gender of a person is a crucial part of their self-concept, it is plausible to assume that the referential gender of a pronoun must be represented correctly in the context of thought C_T . Consequently, projecting *AnimP* with the a referential gender specification for the pronoun referring to the attitude holder would be required for FID.

For SID, in contrast, one could assume that projecting *AnimP* is optional, since the respective thought does not have to be interpreted *de se*. Consequently, the respective LF as well as the semantic representation it gives rise to would simply be ambiguous with respect to the *de se/de re* distinction, in keeping with much prior literature. At the end of the paper, we return to this issue and discuss the viability of an alternative analysis, in which *de se* construals would be necessarily associated with referential gender.

3.2.3. A sketch of the analysis

Let us now see in detail how the assumptions outlined in section 3.2.1 account for the contrasts introduced in Section 3.1. Consider again the two variants of (7a), repeated here as (12).

- (12) **FID context.** Maria war völlig fertig von der Fahrt auf dem stürmischen Meer. Das elegant gekleidete Mädchen stieg mit wackligen Beinen aus dem Boot. Wahnsinn, der Boden schwankte wie verrückt unter ??seinen/ihren Füßen! Zum Glück dauerte die Illusion nur einen Augenblick.
- Maria was totally exhausted from the trip on the stormy sea. The elegantly dressed girl stepped out of the boat with shaky legs. Gosh, the ground was shaking like mad beneath ??its/her feet like mad! Luckily, the illusion lasted only a moment.*

On its most plausible reading, the third sentence in (7a)/(12) is an expression of the protagonist Maria’s thought rendered in FID. Consequently, it is interpreted not only with respect to the narrator’s C_U , but also with respect to Maria’s C_T . Let us start with the variant containing the neuter pronoun *seinen* (‘its’). Since the only sensible reading is the one on which it is resolved to Maria, *AnimP* is necessarily projected in the pronoun, in keeping with the perspective shift associated with FID. As *AnimP* includes referential and hence interpretable gender features, the pronoun has the denotation in (13):

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- (13) $[[\text{seinen}_i]]^{g, C_U, C_T} = g(i)$ iff $g(i)$ is distinct from $\text{author}(C_U)$ and $\text{addressee}(C_U)$ and neither female nor male in the world of C_T .

Since the world of C_T is the world of Maria's perspective and all interpretable features in FID are evaluated with respect to C_T , the individual assigned to the index i has to be neither male nor female according to Maria. Consequently, assigning Maria to i would lead to a presupposition failure, since Maria presumably is female according to her self-concept. Without another sensible resolution option for i , no well-formed, sensible and coherent interpretation of the FID report is available.

We now turn to the variant of (12) with the female pronoun *ihren* ('her'). The denotation of the pronoun is given in (14). Unlike the neuter pronoun, there is no presupposition clash; all of the presuppositions associated with the pronoun are satisfied in C_U and C_T . Maria can thus be assigned to the index i and the relevant sentence is interpreted as shown in strongly simplified form in (15).

- (14) $[[\text{ihren}_i]]^{g, C_U, C_T} = g(i)$ iff $g(i)$ is distinct from $\text{author}(C_U)$ and $\text{addressee}(C_U)$ and female in the world of C_T .

- (15) $[[\text{Wahnsinn, der Boden schwankte wie verrückt unter ihren Füßen!}]]^{g, C_U, C_T} =$
 $\lambda w . \exists e[\text{shake}(e)(w) \wedge \text{Theme}(e, \text{ground})(w) \wedge \text{beneath}(e, \text{maria's feet})(w)$
 $\wedge \tau(e) < \text{time}(C_U)]$

Recall that we are assuming that FID contexts require an AnimP on *de se* pronouns and that only *de se* pronouns are available when the protagonist refers to themselves. That is, *seinen* in (13) is interpreted as the variant with interpretable features, thus producing a presupposition clash. As we will discuss in the following section, pronouns with grammatical agreement are available in SID reports, and may also have a *de se* interpretation.

3.3. Pronouns in SID reports

Although our focus thus far has centered on FID reports, we have also presented examples of SID in which pronouns that agree with a hybrid noun in referential or grammatical gender are possible. In this section, we address an alternative account in which choice of pronoun form diagnosis the *de re* / *de se* construal. Under this alternative, (i) referential gender would necessarily associate with *de se* interpretations, whereas (ii) grammatical gender would necessarily associate with *de re* interpretations.

Appealing as such a direct one-to-one correspondence might be, the central problem is that it is not supported empirically. The complement clauses in SID reports (7b) and (8b), repeated here as (16a) and (16b), respectively, are plausibly interpreted *de se*, i.e. as reporting a first-person thought that either Maria or Frieda has about herself, irrespective of whether the pronouns referring to them are marked for neuter or female gender.

- (16) a. Maria war völlig fertig von der Fahrt auf dem stürmischen Meer. Das elegant gekleidete Mädchen stieg mit wackligen Beinen aus dem Boot und dachte für einen Augenblick, dass der Boden unter seinen/ihren Füßen schwanken würde. Zum Glück dauerte die Illusion nur einen Augenblick.

*Maria was totally exhausted from the trip on the stormy sea. The elegantly dressed girl stepped out of the boat with shaky legs and thought for a moment that the ground was shaking beneath **its/her** feet. Luckily, the illusion lasted only a moment.*

b. Frieda grunzte triumphierend. Das tatendurstige Ferkel rannte schnaufend durchs Unterholz und dachte für einen Augenblick, dass eine Klaue nach **ihm/ihr** greifen würde. Zum Glück war es in Wirklichkeit nur ein harmloser Zweig.

*Frieda grunted triumphantly. The piglet that was burning for action ran through the underbrush panting and thought for a moment that a frightening claw was trying to grab **it/her**. Luckily, it was actually just a harmless twig.*

One possible response is that SID is, in some way, underspecified with respect to *de re / de se* status. However, there is now an additional conceptual problem with such a response. Percus and Sauerland (2003) argue convincingly that distinct LFs give rise to *de se* readings rather than underspecified LFs that are compatible with *de se* as well as *de re* readings. Consider the scenario described in (17a):

- (17) a. A group of drunken election candidates watching campaign speeches on television do not recognize themselves in the broadcast. John, the only confident one, thinks “I’ll win,” but does not recognize himself in the broadcast. Bill and Sam, both depressive, think “I’ll lose” but are impressed by the speeches that happen to be their own and are sure “that candidate” will win. Peter, also depressive, happens to be impressed not by his own speech but by John’s.
(Percus and Sauerland 2003: 7, ex. (18))
b. Only John thinks that he will win the election.

The only reading on which (17b) is true with respect to the scenario in (17a) is a specific *de se* reading. While it is true that John is the only one who thinks ‘I will win the election’, it is clearly not true that John is the only x such that x thinks that x will win the election: The property $\lambda x. x$ thinks that x will win the election applies to Bill and Sam, too, since they both in effect have the thought (about themselves) that they will win the election. The same holds for a more sophisticated analysis on which the *de se* reading is a special case of the mechanism that account for *de re* readings.

On this alternative, the complement clause of *thinks* in (17b) has the denotation in (18a): the function from individuals x to functions from possible worlds w to truth values that yield the value *true* if there is some acquaintance relation R that x bears uniquely to x such that for all pairs of worlds w' and individuals y such that w' is compatible with what x believes in w , and y is indistinguishable from x in w' , x wins the election in w' .

- (18) a. $\lambda x. \lambda w.$ there is some acquaintance relation R that x bears uniquely to x in w such that, for all $\langle y, w' \rangle$ in $\text{DOX}_{x,w}$, the individual that y bears R to in w' wins the election in w' .
b. $\lambda x. \lambda w.$ For all $\langle y, w' \rangle$ in $\text{DOX}_{x,w}$, y wins the election in w' .

Here, the *de se* reading is derived if R is the identity relation, i.e. it comes about as a special case of the *de re* interpretation. As Percus & Sauerland (2003) observe, the problem is that it also does not derive the reading on which (17b) is true since for each of the election candidates

x in (17a) there is a suitable acquaintance relation R such that the semantic object in (18a) applies to x : For John, it is the identity relation. For Bill, it might be the relation that he bears to the first candidate that he hears (assuming that he is in fact the first candidate that he hears). For Sam, it might be the relation that he bears to the second candidate he hears (assuming that he is in fact the second candidate that he hears). In order to derive the specific *de se* reading on which (17b) is true, a semantic object like the one in (18b) (cf. Lewis 1979 and Chierchia 1989) is needed, since John is indeed the only one to which (18b) truthfully applies, i.e. the only individual x for which it is true that x self-ascribes the property of winning the election.

We have constructed the scenario in (19a) which is parallel to the (17a), but whose subject is a hybrid noun, to determine if the pronoun in the embedded clause agrees with either the grammatical (*es*) or referential (*sie*) gender associated with the hybrid noun subject (*Mädchen*). As predicted, sentences (19b-c) also have a true reading in this scenario, paralleling the judgments associated with (17b).

- (19) a. A group of drunken girls is listening to recordings of their own voices singing their favourite song at a party. The girl with the blond hair, the only confident one, thinks, ‘I have a beautiful voice’, but does not recognize her own voice. The girl with the black hair and the girl with the brown hair, both depressive, think ‘I have a terrible voice’, but are impressed by the voices that happen to be their own and think ‘That voice sounds beautiful’. The girl with the red hair, also depressive, happens to be impressed not by her own voice, but by the voice of the girl with the blond hair.
 b-c. (Nur) das blonde Mädchen denkt, dass **sie/es** eine schöne Stimme hat.
 (Only) the blond girl thinks that **she/it** has a beautiful voice.

The example above shows that there is no inherent connection between a pronoun’s gender agreeing with the referential gender of its binder in SID and the availability of a *de se* reading for the pronoun. Rather, the availability of a *de se* reading is independent of whether the pronoun agrees with the grammatical or the referential gender of the DP denoting the attitude holder. In terms of the dual layer approach to gender features, a pronoun does not need to project *AnimP* to generate a *de se* reading.

While there is evidence against the idea that pronoun types are semantically associated with a particular reading, this does not necessarily mean that the choice is pragmatically innocent in SID reports. In the next section, we speculate on the possible pragmatic impact of selecting one pronominal form over another.

3.4. Pragmatic impact of pronoun choice

In the case of SID with a hybrid noun that refers to an attitude holder, both types of agreement on a pronoun are possible, each permitting either *de se* or *de se* construals. We have argued that FID mandates a form of perspective shifting in which interpretable content, including the presuppositions associated with pronouns, is interpreted with respect to the (centered) world associated with the protagonist’s viewpoint. In contrast, SID does not specify a viewpoint and it is in fact often semantically underdetermined whether the narrator or speaker shares the assessment of the clause (as with *epistemic parenthetical* verbs, e.g. Urmson 1952, Simons 2007, among others). However, we have observed, in both informal judgments and a formal pilot experiment, that comprehenders prefer referential gender across the board, even with SID and neutral narration. Although the bias towards referential gender may be due to a global

reorganization of the language (see Audring 2006 for discussion of Dutch), we speculate that the choice of pronoun permits a subtle inference, and is thus not pragmatically innocent.

To take example (19b-c) above for illustration, either referential or grammatical agreement is possible. By hypothesis, referential agreement requires that the pronoun project *AnimP*, whereas grammatical agreement does not. The interpretable features in *AnimP* ensure that the attitude holder has the requisites for conscious, self-reflexive thought. While grammatical agreement does not entail that the attitude holder is incapable of self-reflexive thought, it does not ensure that they are portrayed as being fully capable of such thought, either. In other words, the use of grammatical agreement for such pronouns allows the possibility in which the speaker or narrator portrays the mental state of the attitude holder as, in a sense, less than fully conscious. We might then explain the general preference for referential pronouns as a preference to avoid being associated with a potentially charged inference. If so, speakers might be guarding against pragmatic leakage in a fashion reminiscent of Harris & Potts's (2009) broadly game-theoretic explanation for why epithets tend to be speaker oriented: speakers understand that the listener might associate the not-at-issue content of epithets, e.g. *the bastard* or *the jerk*, with the speaker, instead of the attitude holder, unless sufficient evidence is provided on their behalf. Speakers are liable, as it were, for the negative attitude associated with the epithet and must provide sufficient clues for a non-speaker interpretation.

As argued by Harris & Potts (2009), nothing in this line of reasoning is specifically limited to attitude reports. And there is certainly anecdotal evidence that the use of grammatical gender, when referential gender is also a possibility, invites an inference that the speaker holds the referent in some level of disdain. Example (20) illustrates the case with pets. The sentence contains a definite DP with the noun *Hund* ('dog'), whose grammatical gender is masculine, though the name *Amy* makes it clear that the dog is biologically female:

- (20) Amy, der Hund, wird unruhig. Sie/Er will spazieren gehen.
Amy, the dog, is getting anxious. She/He wants to go for a walk.

The intuition is subtle but clear. Using a feminine pronoun *Sie* ('she') that agrees with the biological gender of the referent conveys warmth towards the dog, but using a masculine pronoun *er* ('him') that agrees with the grammatical gender conveys apathy or disdain, or at least a less-than-human status.

It may be worth noting that a similar inference pattern can be found even in languages without systematic gender marking. In English, it is possible to use a pronoun that is marked for referential gender or a neuter pronoun in a context like (21).

- (21) Amy, the dog, is getting anxious. She/It wants to go for a walk.

As before, the use of the neuter pronoun, especially when one knows what biological sex the pet is, conveys a subtle yet systematic point of view of mild degradation and disdain (perhaps for the specific dog or for dogs in general).

And as tenuous as such a line of argumentation may appear, it does predict that the choice of whether to use referential or grammatical agreement with a pronoun should be modulated by the extent to which the narrator emphasizes with the protagonist. Intuitively, the greater the evidence that the narrator or speaker regards the attitude holder in SID contexts with empathy, the more likely they will be to use referential agreement, given an option. A detailed

exploration of such an pragmatic impact is beyond the scope of the present paper and must be delayed for another occasion.

4. Summary of proposal and further issues

In this paper, we have proposed an analysis for a phenomenon that to the best of our knowledge has not been discussed in the semantic literature on perspective taking before. In FID reports, there is a strong tendency for *de se* pronouns to agree with referential gender and not grammatical gender of the (most recent) antecedent DP referring to the protagonist whose thoughts are rendered. In contrast, both options are available in neutral narration and SID reports (although referential agreement may be preferred in general).

Our account combines a particular version of the dual context approach, in which the person features of pronouns are interpreted with respect to C_U , while their gender features are interpreted with respect to C_T (Defilto 2016), with a natural extension of the dual layer analysis of nouns (Panagiotidis 2019, Trukowski & Weiß 2023) to pronouns. On this extension, pronouns again optionally project *AnimP* with interpretable gender features, but referential and grammatical gender features have to agree (unlike the case of lexical nouns).

We have combined these assumptions with the assumption that the introduction of C_T invokes a perspective which is anchored to the self-reflexive perspective of the protagonist in the context of thought C_T . Since that self-reflexive thought requires consciousness, a *de se* interpretation of any pronoun referring to the protagonist is required, and thus pronouns with an *AnimP* projection are strongly preferred, if not required, in FID contexts. As *AnimP* projects interpretable features, these features are evaluated (as presuppositions) within the context that is associated with the protagonist’s perspective, namely C_T . Concerning SID, in contrast, we have assumed that since it does not involve the introduction of an attitude holder’s context, *AnimP* does not have to be projected, and so the pronoun’s gender features may remain uninterpreted, agreeing with the grammatical gender of the DP denoting the attitude holder (although there may be pragmatic reasons to prefer entailment agreement in SID, as we have seen in Section 3.4). Our main claims in this paper are summarized in the table below, in which the combination of grammatical agreement with a *de se* pronoun in FID (the cell marked in gray) is ruled out.

Agreement on pronoun	Aspect	Standard Indirect Discourse (SID)	Free Indirect Discourse (FID)
Grammatical agreement	<i>Features</i>	Uninterpretable features only	Would contribute uninterpretable features only
	<i>Presupposition</i>	No presupposition	Would not have presupposition
	<i>Availability</i>	Available with multiple acquaintance relations	Unavailable as perspective shift requires <i>AnimP</i>
Referential agreement	<i>Features</i>	Contributes interpretable features via <i>AnimP</i>	Contributes interpretable features via <i>AnimP</i>

	<i>Presupposition</i>	Presupposition of pronoun	Presupposition of pronoun interpreted in C_T
	<i>Availability</i>	Available with multiple acquaintance relations	Available only with perspective of protagonist

We conclude this paper by briefly mentioning two related issues that we leave to future research. First, in SID reports whose subject is a quantificational DP, at least for some speakers (including the first author) there is a clear preference for pronouns whose gender agrees with the grammatical rather than the referential gender of the subject DP, as shown in (22a-b), irrespective of whether the pronoun receives a *de se* or a *de re* reading.

- (22) a-b. Kein Mädchen glaubt, dass es/[?]sie eine schöne Stimme hat.
No girl believes that it/she has a beautiful voice.

This contrast raises a number of intriguing questions regarding the interaction of syntactic binding, the transmission of referential as opposed to grammatical gender features, and the mechanisms by which *de se* and *de re* readings of pronouns come about.

The second issue concerns a different kind of perspective-taking, dubbed *Viewpoint Shifting* (VS) in Hinterwimmer (2017) and *Protagonist Projection* (VS) in Stokke (2013, 2021) and Abrusán (2021), which involves *perceptions* rather than conscious thoughts of protagonists. There is preliminary evidence from a pilot study that this form of perspective-taking is also sensitive to the distinction between (i) pronouns that agree with the referential and (ii) pronouns that agree with the grammatical gender of the antecedent. Consider the variant of (7a) in (23):

- (23) Maria war völlig fertig von der Fahrt auf dem stürmischen Meer. Das elegant gekleidete Mädchen stieg mit wackligen Beinen aus dem Boot. Der Boden schwankte heftig unter ??seinen/ihren Füßen. Zum Glück auerte die Illusion nur einen Augenblick.
Maria was totally exhausted from the trip on the stormy sea. The elegantly dressed girl stepped out of the boat with shaky legs. The ground was shaking heavily beneath her/its feet. Luckily, the illusion lasted only a moment.

As the final sentence makes clear, the third sentence does not describe an event that is happening in the story, but rather an illusionary perception of Maria. Although the effect is not quite as strong as in FID, such a reading is more difficult to get if the pronoun agrees with the grammatical than when it agrees with the referential gender of the most recent DP referring to the perspective taker. In future research, we are planning to pursue the question of whether (and if, how) our analysis of the preference for referential pronominal agreement in FID can be adapted to account for a similar, but slightly weaker preference in other forms of perspective-shifting, such as VS/PP.

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