

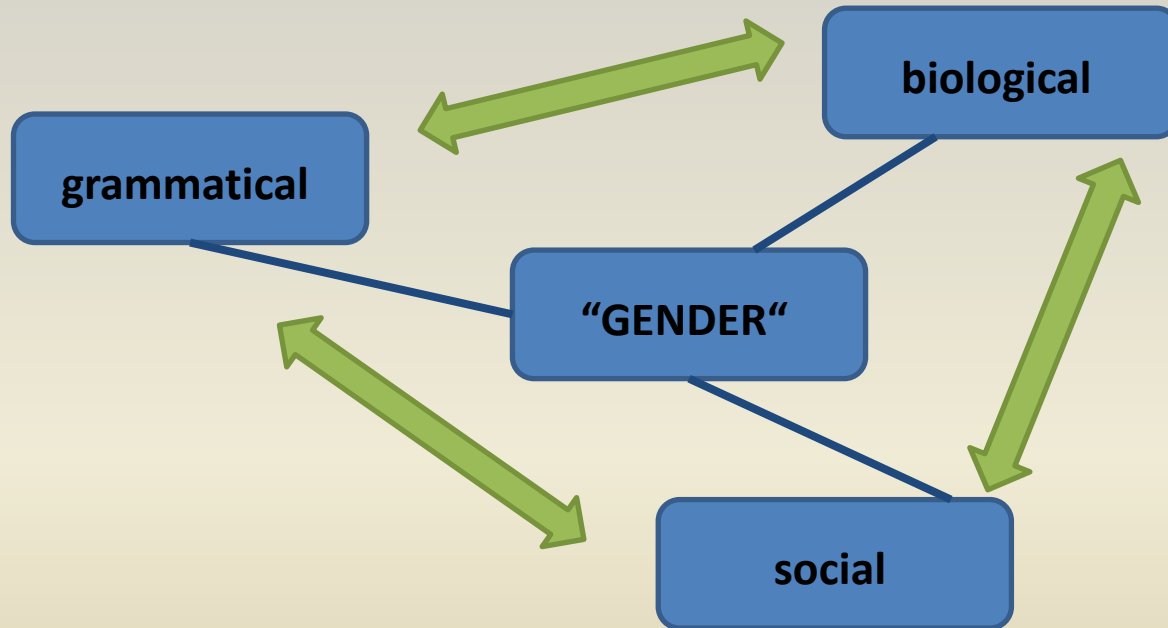
# Between “Biology“ and Grammar: Gender in German

Martina Werner, Stuttgart

[martina.werner@ling.uni-stuttgart.de](mailto:martina.werner@ling.uni-stuttgart.de)



# What is gender?



# “Biology” & “Gender”

Conflated terminology, also in linguistics about “gender”.

In this talk:

**genus**

gramm. gender

*Buch* (NTR), *Tür* (FEM)



**sexus**

“natural” gender

(> motion)

*Ärzt-in* (FEM)

# “Biology” & “Gender”

Conflated terminology, also in linguistics about “gender”.

In this talk:

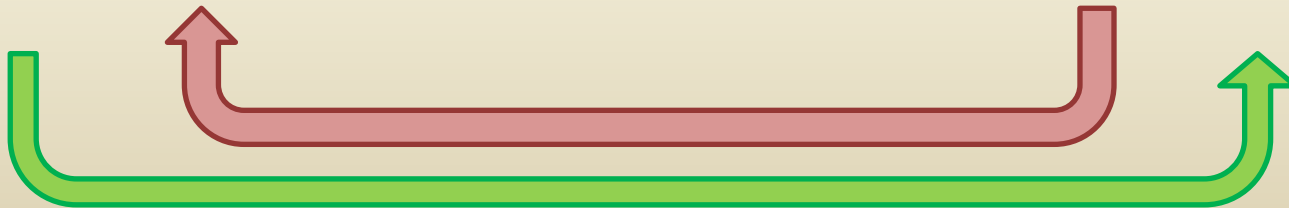
**genus**

gramm. gender



**sexus**

“natural” gender  
(> motion)



# Where is genus?

- Genus as a grammatical category should influence any noun. However, this is not the case:
- German:
  - 3 genders: F, M, N
  - each noun belongs to one gender:  
*Lampe* (F), *Tisch* (M), *Bett* (N) → **inherent genus**  
→ **lexicalized**
- Nouns **genus-marked** (Wegener 2000) by suffixes:  
→ **grammaticalized**
  - M: *Lingu-ist*, *Bohr-er* ‘drill’, *Ausrutsch-er* ‘slip’
  - F: *Linguist-in* ‘female linguist’, *Klug-heit* ‘wisdom’
  - N: *Alter-tum* ‘antiquity’, *Finster-nis* ‘eclipse’

↗ Wegener, Heide (2000): German gender in children's second language acquisition. In: UNTERBECK, Barbara, RISSANEN, Matti (eds.): *Gender in Grammar and Cognition*, 511–544

↗ Werner, Martina (2012): *Genus, Derivation und Quantifikation*. Berlin / Boston: de Gruyter.

# Where is genus?

- Genus as a grammatical category should influence any noun. However, this is not the case:
- German:
  - 3 genders: F, M, N
  - each noun belongs to one gender:  
*Lampe* (F), *Tisch* (M), *Bett* (N) → **inherent genus**  
→ **lexicalized**

- Nouns **genus-marked** (Wegener 2000) by suffixes:  
→ **grammaticalized**

M: *Lingu-ist*, *Bohr-er* 'drill', *Ausrutsch-er* 'slip'

F: *Linguist-in* 'female linguist', *Klug-heit* 'wisdom'

N: *Alter-tum* 'antiquity', *Finster-nis* 'eclipse'

↗ Wegener, Heide (2000): German gender in children's second language acquisition. In: UNTERBECK, Barbara, RISSANEN, Matti (eds.): *Gender in Grammar and Cognition*, 511–544

↗ Werner, Martina (2012): *Genus, Derivation und Quantifikation*. Berlin / Boston: de Gruyter.

# Facts about suffixed nouns

- Consider markedness for genus:

**F after M:**      *Linguist-ik* (F) – *Linguist* (M)

**F before M:**    *Mathemat-ik* (F) – *Mathemat-ik-er*

- markedness for sexus:

the feminine sexus is formally based on the masculine, not vice versa:

*Lingu-ist-in*, *Mathemat-ik-er-in* // \**Mathematik-in-er*, \**Lingu-in-ist*

- From a formal and diachronical point of view, masc. N with suffixes do not directly signify male sex, cf.:

*Fernseh-er*; *Fäustling*

“nomen instrumenti“

*Lehr-er*; *Ankömm-ling*

“nomen agentis“

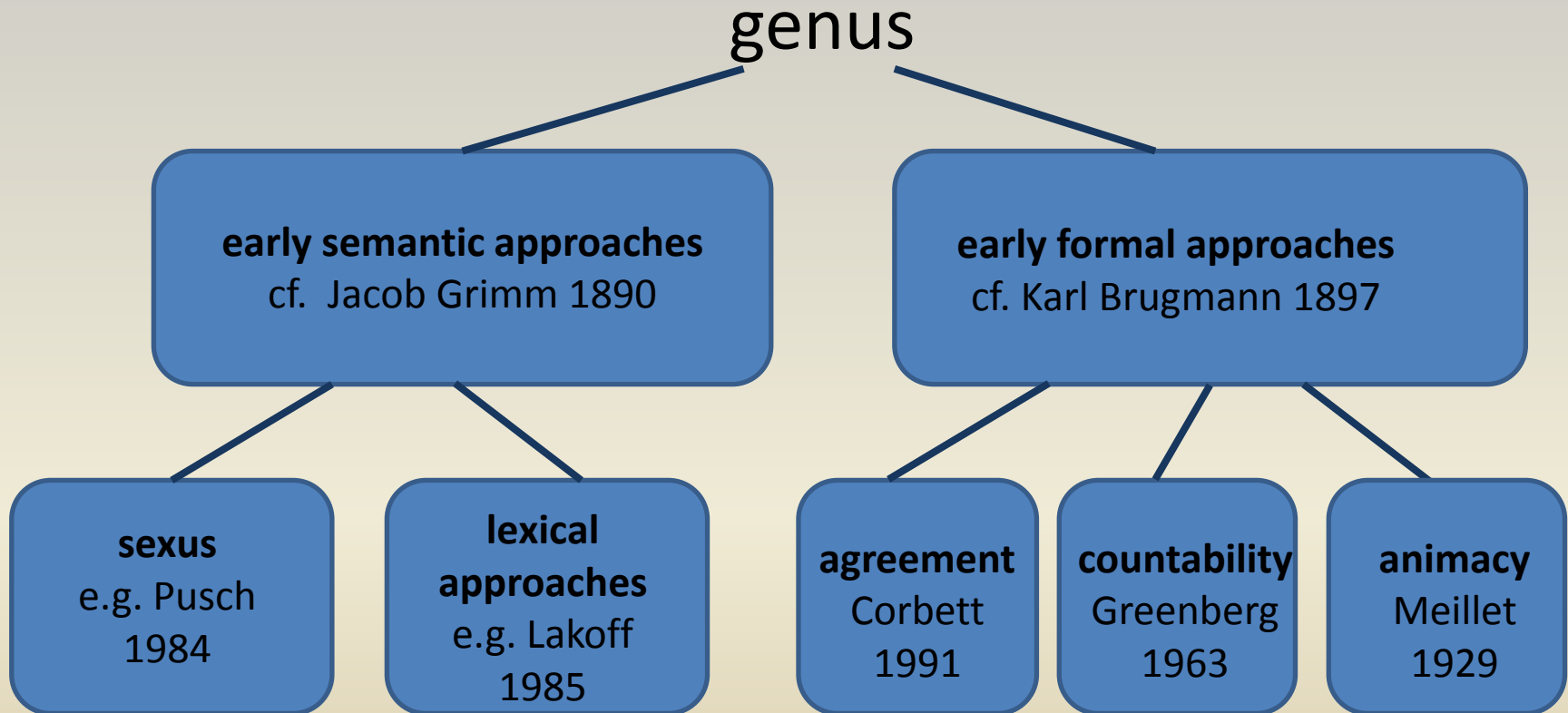
*Ausrutsch-er*; *Bück-ling*

“nomen acti“

➔ Where is the similarity between all of these Ns???

➔ Do all of the semantic features [– male sex], [– animacy], [– person], [– thing], ...fail?

# What is grammatical gender?

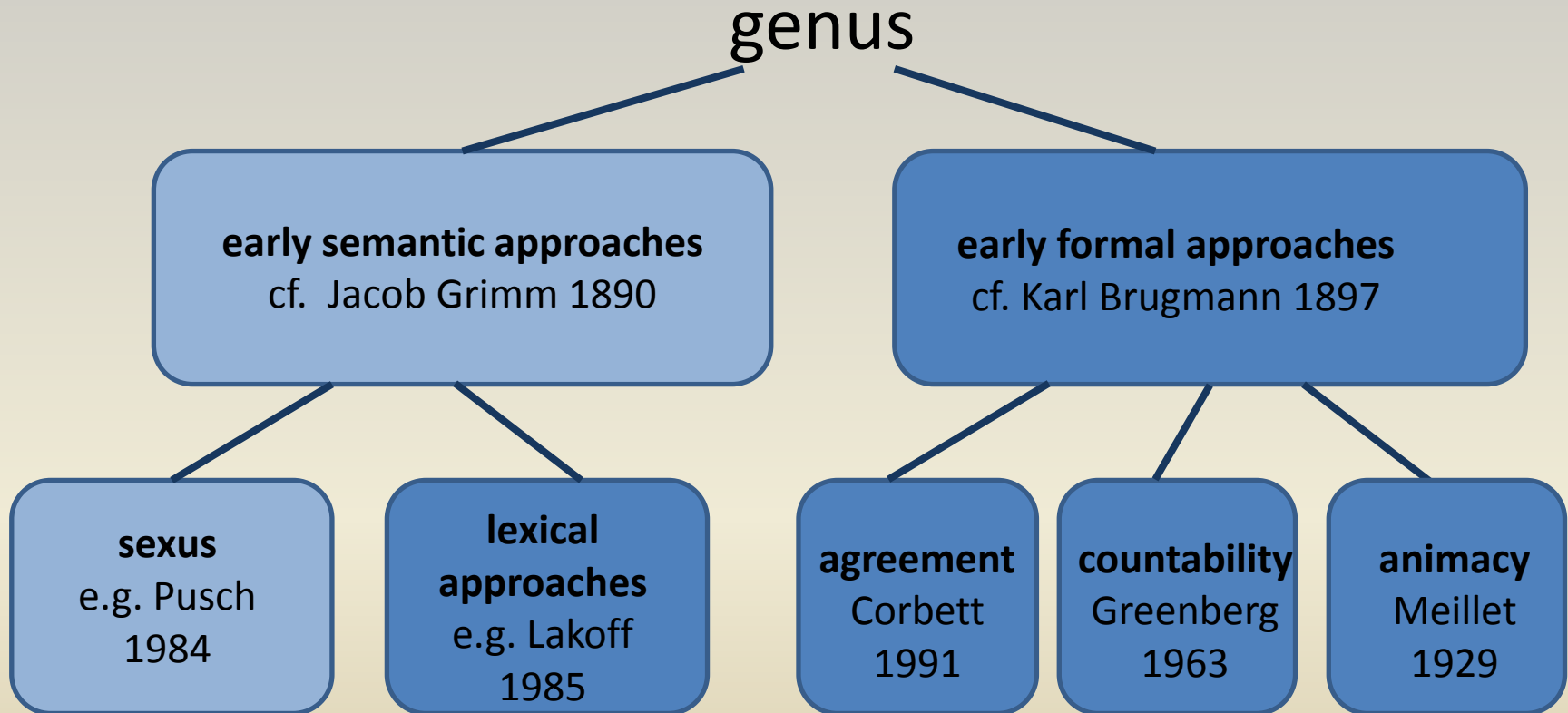


↗ Weber, Doris (2001): Genus. Zur Funktion einer Nominalategorie exemplarisch dargestellt am Deutschen. Frankfurt: Lang.

↗ Sieburg, Heinz (ed.) (1997): Sprache – Genus/Sexus. Frankfurt: Lang.



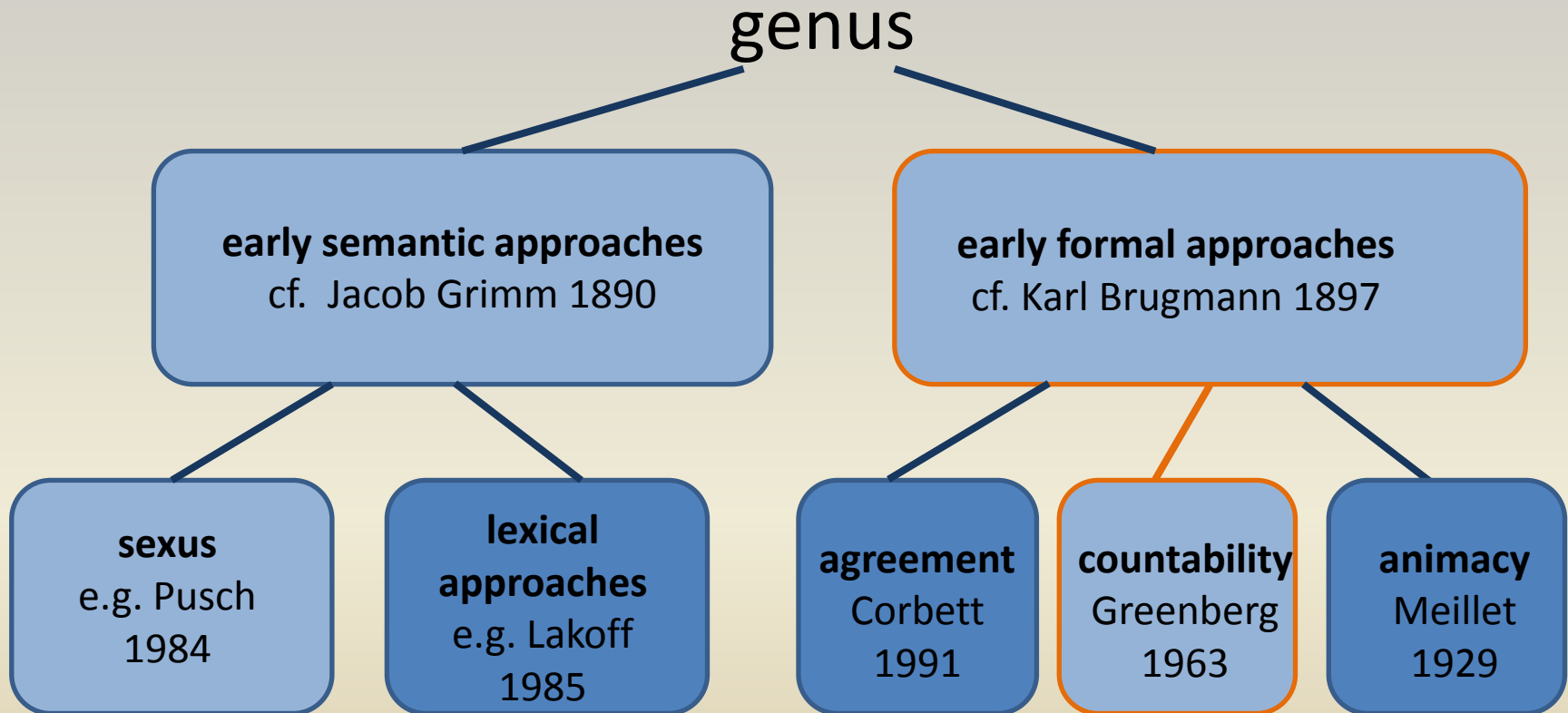
# What is grammatical gender?



↗ Weber, Doris (2001): Genus. Zur Funktion einer Nominalategorie exemplarisch dargestellt am Deutschen. Frankfurt: Lang.

↗ Sieburg, Heinz (ed.) (1997): Sprache – Genus/Sexus. Frankfurt: Lang.

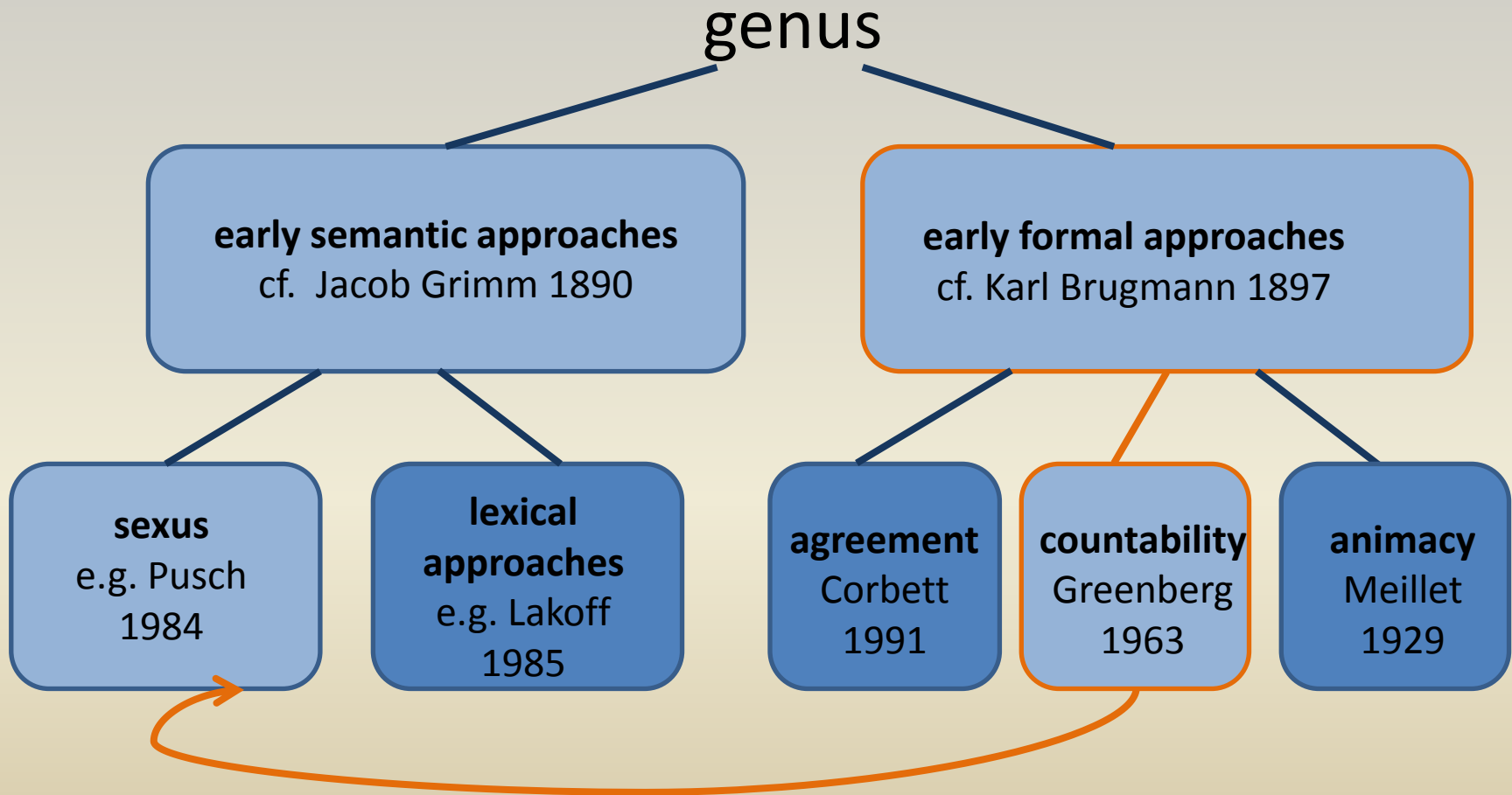
# What is grammatical gender?



➤ Weber, Doris (2001): Genus. Zur Funktion einer Nominalategorie exemplarisch dargestellt am Deutschen. Frankfurt: Lang.

➤ Sieburg, Heinz (ed.) (1997): Sprache – Genus/Sexus. Frankfurt: Lang.

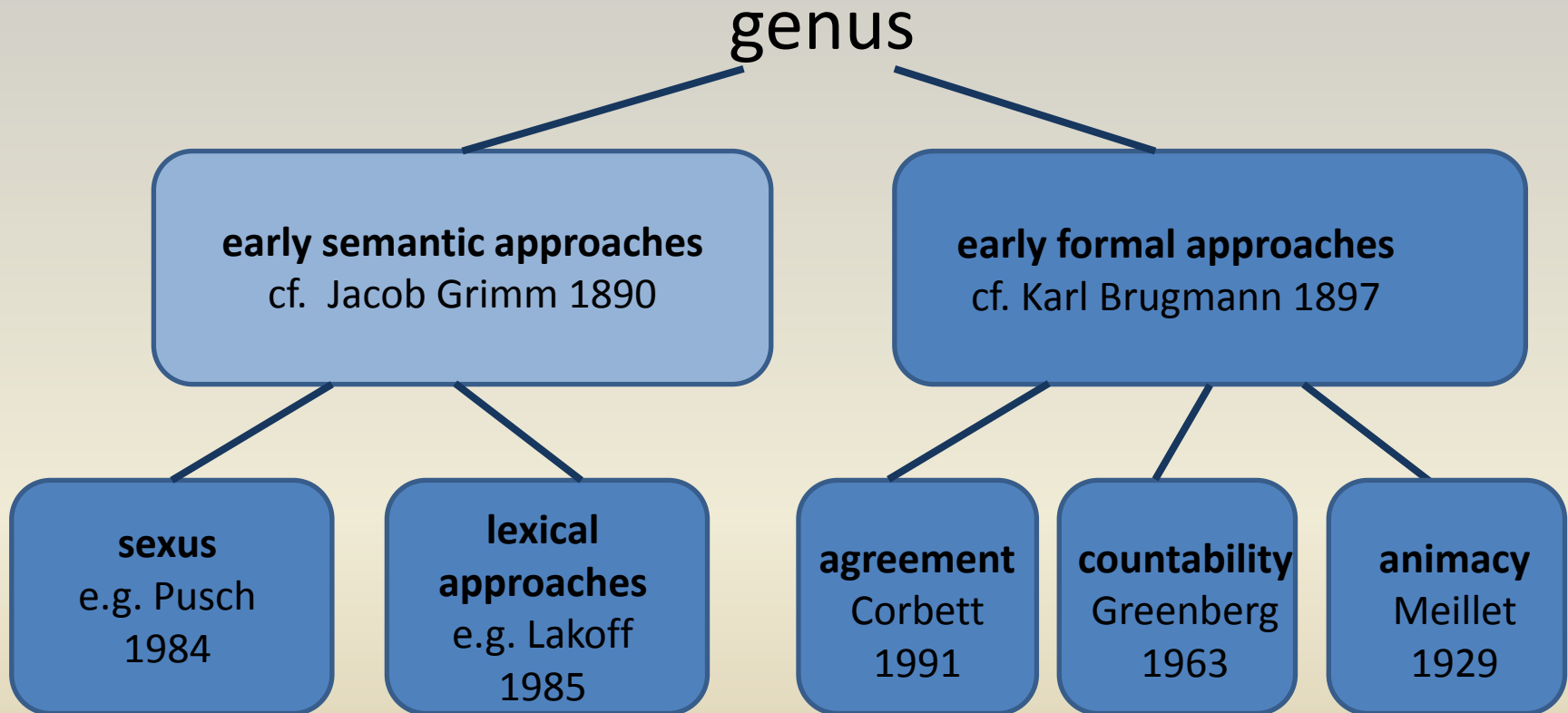
# What is grammatical gender?



↗ Weber, Doris (2001): Genus. Zur Funktion einer Nominalategorie exemplarisch dargestellt am Deutschen. Frankfurt: Lang.

↗ Sieburg, Heinz (ed.) (1997): Sprache – Genus/Sexus. Frankfurt: Lang.

# What is grammatical gender?



↗ Weber, Doris (2001): Genus. Zur Funktion einer Nominalategorie exemplarisch dargestellt am Deutschen. Frankfurt: Lang.

↗ Sieburg, Heinz (ed.) (1997): Sprache – Genus/Sexus. Frankfurt: Lang.

# Jacob Grimm (1890)

„Das natürliche des substantivs gründet sich auf **beobachtung der sexualverschiedenheit am lebenden wesen, d.h. dem menschen und den thieren.** [...] Das grammatische geschlecht ist eine, aber im frühesten zustande der sprache schon vorgegangene anwendung oder übertragung des natürlichen auf alle und jede nomina.“

“The natural essence of a noun is **based on the sexual difference between animate entities, i.e. human beings and animals.** [...] Grammatical gender is a very early application or transference from natural gender to each and any noun.“ [translation & emphasis, M.W.]

„das masculinum scheint das frühere, größere, festere, sprödere, raschere, das thätige, bewegliche, zeugende; das femininum das spätere, kleinere, weichere, stillere, das leidende, empfangende; das neutrum das erzeugte, gewirkte, stoffartige, generell unterentwickelte, collective.“

“The **masculine** gender seems to be the earlier, **bigger, tougher, rougher,** faster, **active,** agile, **generative** gender; the **feminine** gender [is] the later, **smaller, softer, calmer, the suffering, the accepting one;** the **neuter** gender [is] the **generated,** the wrought, materialesque, generally **underdeveloped,** collective gender.“ [transl. & emphasis, M.W.]

# Grimm (1831: 403)

Bemerkenswerth ist die einstimmung unserer mit der lat. und griech. sprache darin, daß die *hand* als kleiner, zierlicher *weiblich*, der *fuß* als größer und stärker *männlich* vorgestellt wird. Goth. *fótus*, ahd. *vuoz*, altf. angf. *fót*, altn. *fótr*, gerade wie lat. *pes*, gr. *πούς*, litth. *pedas* masc. Goth. *handus*, ahd. *hant*, altf. *hand*, agf. *hond*, altn. *hönd*, fem. wie lat. *manus*, gr. *χείρ*, litth. *ranka* \*). Die *hand* heißt sonst noch ahd. *prēta* (palma) gl. cass. 854<sup>a</sup> f gall. 191. fem.,

Remarkable in our [German] language is [...] that the hand [*die Hand* **FEM.**] is imagined as **smaller, more petite feminine**, but the foot [*der Fuß* **MASC.**] is imagined as **bigger and stronger**.

- ⇒ **Not generalizable** for all genus-languages, see e.g. Greek (both NTR), Arabic (both FEM), ....
- ⇒ **Highly discriminating (> stereotypes) > ‚sexist theory‘ (Weber 2001)**
- ⇒ **Not followed up in contemporary linguistics**
- ⇒ **Highly influential in public discourse until today!**
- ⇒ **lack of a formal, grammatical definition**

# Feminist approaches (e.g. Pusch)

- genus = sexus, i.e. genus masculinum is „male“, cf. *Lehrer* ‚male teacher‘, i.e. the ‚unmarked‘ is male **due to patriarchal dominance**:

Zufällig ist es nun so, daß **die Grammatik des Englischen** (und auch des Chinesischen) **weniger sexistisch** und **damit leichter therapierbar** ist als **die Grammatik der europäischen Genus-Sprachen**, die bekanntlich dem Maskulinum die Krone zuerkennen.  
[Luise Pusch, [www.luisepusch.de/sprache.html](http://www.luisepusch.de/sprache.html), 2014/04/07]

Incidentally, **the grammar of English** (as well as Chinese) **is less sexist** and, hence, **it can be treated more easily than the grammar of European genus-languages** in which, as is generally known, the masculine is dominant.

- ⇒ **„genus“ as a socio-grammatical notion, no differentiation**
- ⇒ **no reference to other linguistic genus-theories**
- ⇒ **prescriptive, not descriptive grammar**

# Consequences of feminism

- Double forms for German such as:  
*Lehrerinnen und Lehrer – Lehrer/innen – LehrerInnen – Lehrer\_Innen*
- **Consequences of prescriptivism already exist** in some contexts, cf.:

E	Olga is a beautiful dancer.	= ok
G	Olga ist ein schöner Tänzer (M).	= ?
G	Olga ist eine schöne Tänzerin (F).	= ok
G	Olga ist Dozent (M) an der FU Berlin.	= ok
- **In some contexts and varieties** (e.g. Austria vs. Germany, cf. Wissik 2012) of German, gendered forms seem better than ungendered forms.

## **BUT:**

- How to prevent from discriminating other social gender roles (such as trans-persons, cis-gender, gender-fluid)? Is the men-women-dichotomy really sufficient?
- Is doing un-gender really less discriminating than gendering (consider English)?
- What about genus neutrum – in some languages used for the plural of persons (consider Proto-Germanic (Paul 1919: 185) and Icelandic (Corbett 1991: 298))?

- ↗ Wissik, Tanja (2012): Terminologische Variation in der Rechts- und Verwaltungssprache. Eine korpusbasierte Untersuchung der Hochschulterminologie in den Standardvarietäten des Deutschen in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz. Dissertation. Universität Wien.
- ↗ Paul, Hermann (1919): Deutsche Grammatik. Halle: Niemeyer.
- ↗ Corbett, Greville (1991): Gender. Cambridge: CUP.



# Diachrony of *-in*

- the **sexus**-semantics is **secondary**: until ENHG times with a different, original semantics (P. O. Müller 1993: 478; cf. G. *\*-in* ‚affiliation, membership to sth/so‘): *duererin* ‚kin, family of Dürer (a person)‘, later semantic narrowing to ‚woman of x‘-semantics by extralinguistic influence (a person dependent on s.o. = wife)
- Process **collective** > **fem. sexus** crosslinguistically attested, even for languages without genus, see e.g. Korean (Vogel 1996: 149):  
*nam.còng.ne* ‚men, menship‘ (collective)  
*Sun l-ne* ‚mother of Sun‘ (archaic)
- many parallels to other lexemes (*Stute* ‚mare‘ – originally ‚group of (female) horses‘; *Weib* ‚women (pejor.)‘ – originally ‚group of women‘ – consider OE *wīfman* lit. ‚s.o. from women‘ – i.e. a singulative formation to a *wīf*-collective!).

↗ Vogel, P. M. (1996): Wortarten und Wortartenwechsel. Berlin / New York: de Gruyter.

↗ Müller, Peter O. (1993): *Substantiv-Derivation in den Schriften Albrecht Dürers. Ein Beitrag zur Methodik historisch-synchroner Wortbildungsanalysen*. Berlin, New York: de Gruyter.

# Sexus from genus fem.

- **common principle** (see below): ABSTRACT/COLLECTIVE > CONCRETE:
  - > adjectival infl.: *die Schöne* ‘beautiful women’, but OHG *sconî* ‘beauty’ (abstract N; cf. *Größe, Breite, Höhe*)
  - potentially constructable synchronically:
    - Die Schönheit geht die Straße entlang.*  
‘The beauty is walking along the street.’
    - MONOSEMIZED for [+ female] through extra-ling. circumstances
- “**abstractum pro concreto**” in trad. GR or cf. Grimshaw 1990 – i.e. not only restricted to the sexus-reading:
  - a. The **examination** of the patients took a long time. (Complex)
  - b. The **examination** took a long time. (Simple)
  - c. The **examination** was on the table. (Result)(from Alexiadou & Grimshaw 2008: 2)

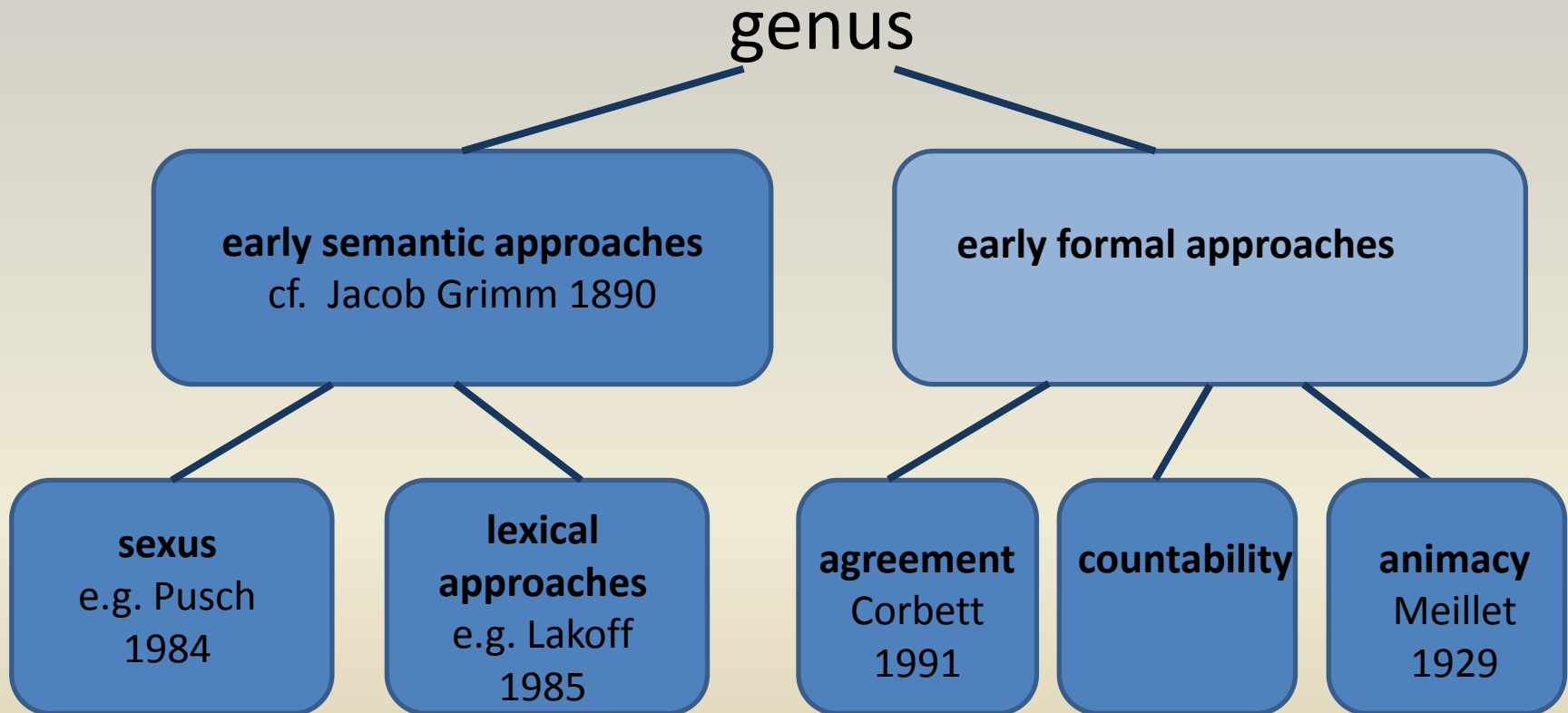
↗ Grimshaw, Jane (1990) : Argument structure. MIT Press.

↗ Alexiadou, Artemis / Grimshaw, Jane (2008): Verbs, nouns, and affixation. MS.

# What about male sexus?

- In contrast, **male sexus** is provided **inferentially** through **Ns marked for feminine sexus**:  
*Studentinnen und Studenten* as compared to *Studentendemonstration* for both: **generic masc. genus**).
- Rare sexus masc. suffixes such as *-erich* develop in contrast to nouns with fem. genus denoting animals (*epicoena*):
  - *Ente* (F) 'duck', but *Ente und Enterich* 'female duck & male duck'
  - *Katze* (F) 'cat', but *Katze (Kätz-in) und Kater/\*Kätzerich*  
→ suffixes for male sexus are not productive anymore  
(\**Studenterich*, \**Lehrerich*) and **pejorative** → **discrimination**

# What is grammatical gender?



↗ Weber, Doris (2001): Genus. Zur Funktion einer Nominalategorie exemplarisch dargestellt am Deutschen. Frankfurt: Lang.

↗ Sieburg, Heinz (ed.) (1997): Sprache – Genus/Sexus. Frankfurt: Lang.

# Genus as a formal distinction of Ns

Some aspects seem have been taken into consideration:

a) paradigms (> minimal pairs; oppositions)

b) grammatical (i.e. formal) properties (firstly formulated by Brugmann 1897 for IDE. languages)

c) evidence from language typology and diachrony

↗ Brugmann , Karl (1897): The nature and origin of the noun genders in the Indo-European languages. A lecture delivered on the occasion of the sesquicentennial celebration of Princeton University. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

# Where is genus?

- Genus as a grammatical category should influence any noun. However, this is not the case:
- German:
  - 3 genders: F, M, N
  - each noun belongs to one gender:  
*Lampe* (F), *Tisch* (M), *Bett* (N) → **inherent genus**  
→ **lexicalized**

- Nouns **genus-marked** (Wegener 2000) by suffixes:  
→ **grammaticalized**

M: *Lingu-ist*, *Bohr-er* 'drill', *Ausrutsch-er* 'slip'

F: *Linguist-in* 'female linguist', *Klug-heit* 'wisdom'

N: *Alter-tum* 'antiquity', *Finster-nis* 'eclipse'

↗ Wegener, Heide (2000): German gender in children's second language acquisition. In: UNTERBECK, Barbara, RISSANEN, Matti (eds.): *Gender in Grammar and Cognition*, 511–544

↗ Werner, Martina (2012): *Genus, Derivation und Quantifikation*. Berlin / Boston: de Gruyter.

# Facts about suffixed nouns

- Consider markedness for genus:

**F after M:**      *Linguist-ik* (F) – *Linguist* (M)

**F before M:**    *Mathemat-ik* (F) – *Mathemat-ik-er*

- markedness for sexus:

the feminine sexus is formally based on the masculine, not vice versa:

*Lingu-ist-in*, *Mathemat-ik-er-in* // \**Mathematik-in-er*, \**Lingu-in-ist*

- From a formal and diachronical point of view, masc. N with suffixes do not directly signify male sex, cf.:

*Fernseh-er*; *Fäustling*                      “nomen instrumenti“

*Lehr-er*; *Ankömm-ling*                      “nomen agentis“

*Ausrutsch-er*; *Bück-ling*                      “nomen acti“

➔ Where is the similarity between all of these Ns???

➔ **Not all** of the semantic features [ - male sex], [- animacy], [- person], [- thing], fail ...

# Facts about genus

- Greenberg's universal # 36:

The existence of gender implies the existence of number, or in short:  
**genus > numerus**

- Number <-> **countability**

- Corbett (2000: 272):

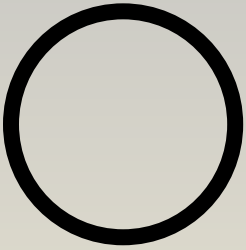
“The category with which number has closest relations is gender, and it is typically gender which is dependent on number.”

↗ Greenberg, Joseph (1963): Universals of language. London/Cambridge: MIT Press.

↗ Corbett, Greville (2000): Number. Cambridge: CUP.



# Genus & countability



## masculinum

individuitive

[+ count]

**PL: ok**

*Lacher* 'laugh(er)'

*Ausrutscher* 'slip'

*Dreh* 'turn'

*Bohrer* 'drill'

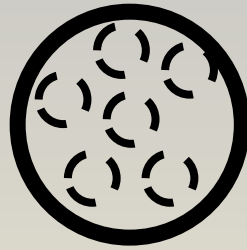
*Blauton* 'shade of blue'

(*der*) *See* '(the) lake'

NHG (*der*) *Kristall* '(the) crystal'

OHG *buoh* 'chapter'

OE *tungol* 'star'



## femininum

collective/abstract

[± count]

**PL: ok**

*Lacherei* 'laughing'

*Ausrutscherei* 'slipping'

*Drehung/-erei* 'turning'

*Bohrung/-erei* 'drilling'

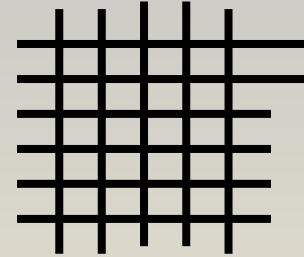
*Blauheit/Bläue* 'blueness'

(*die*) *See* '(the) sea'

–

*buoh* 'Holy Bible, volume'

-



## neutrum

continuative

[- count]

**no PL**

*Lachen* 'laughing'

*Ausrutschen* 'slipping'

*Drehen* 'turning'

*Bohren* 'drilling'

(*etwas*) *Blaues* 's.th. blue'

–

(*das*) *Kristall* 'crystal glass'

*buoh* 'codex, book content'

*tungol* 'group of stars („Gestirn“)'

➤ Leiss, E. (2005): Derivation zum Aufbau von Genusdifferenzierungen im Deutschen. In: Leuschner, T. et al. (ed): Grammatikalisierung im Deutschen. Berlin / New York: de Gruyter, 11-30.

➤ Werner, M. (2012): Genus, Derivation und Quantifikation. Berlin / Boston: de Gruyter.

# Summary

- **Genus** in German is formally marked by suffixes encoding **countability**
- genus masculinum is a morph. marked category for count nouns, cf.: *Lehr-er, Bohr-er, Ausrutsch-er*
- the primary function of genus femininum is abstractness/collectivity (like in deverbal Ns like *Abdrehung* and deadj. Ns like *Schönheit*)
- Both sexus-readings (male & female) originate **from** genus, not vice versa:
  - **female sexus (the *-in-nouns*)** by a crosslinguistic, diachronic systematic **shift of meaning induced by extra-ling. circumstances indicating the dependency of s.o.** (which were typically wives)
  - **male sexus** is provided **inferentially**, in contrast to fem. sexus, **not marked explicitly**. Male sexus morphemes not productive in German.
- Genus is organized in an equipollent opposition, while sexus in privative opposition (see also Plank 1981: 88).

↗ Plank, Frans (1981): Morphologische (Ir-)regularitäten. Aspekte der Wortstrukturtheorie. (SDG, 13) Tübingen Narr.

# Genus in favor of agreement

- genus is strictly formally defined, i.e. without grammatical semantics
- constituents more easily recognizable through genus:  
    *d-er*     *gut-e*     *Hund*     ‘the good dog’  
    *d-as*     *gut-e*     *Kind*     ‘the good child’
- no genus-exclusive definition, only in relation to other nominal categories (case, number)

## BUT:

- genus-languages without agreement
- agreement-languages without gender
- Claudi (1985) on Zande: agreement is an epiphenomenon of genus, i.e. it is a later development
- Parallels to German and other Germanic languages (cf. e.g. Krifka 2009):

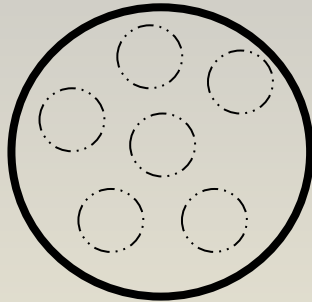
*w-er* – *w-as* – *w-ie*  
*d-er* – *d-as* – *d-ie*  
MAS – NTR – FEM

↗ Corbett, Greville (1991): *Gender*. Cambridge: CUP.

↗ Claudi, Ulrike (1985): *Zur Entstehung von Genussystemen. Überlegungen zu einigen theoretischen Aspekten, verbunden mit einer Fallstudie des Zande*. Hamburg: Buske.

↗ Krifka, Manfred (2009): *Case syncretism in the German feminines: Typological, functional and structural aspects*. In Patrick Steinkrüger & Manfred Krifka (eds.), *On inflection*, 141-172. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

# feminine vs. neuter collectives



## femininum

collective/abstract

**[+ PL]**

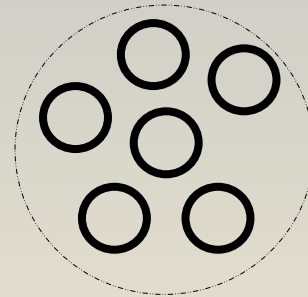
*Lacherei* ,laughing‘

*Ausrutscherei* ,slipping‘

*Drehung/-erei* ,turning‘

*Bohrung/-erei* ,drilling‘

*Professorenschaft* ,group of p.s‘



## neutrum

collective/abstract

**[- PL]**

*Ge-lach-e*

*Aus-ge-rutsch-e*

*Ge-dreh-e*

*Ge-bohr-e*

*Professorentum* ,p.ship‘