

Die Mannschaft

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In recognition of our *Freundschaft* ‘friend.ship’ (which certainly has a friend in it), I will make a few remarks on the *Mannschaft* (lit. ‘man.ship’), which I know Léa likes (we may disagree on that) and which, linguistically speaking, does not need to have a man in it. This is a rather light linguistic note, intended more for casual reading than deep linguistic thoughts.

In the context of sports, *Mannschaft* simply means ‘team’—it is gender-neutral and the *Mann*-part does not contribute a grammatical male inference, in contrast to compounds with *Mann*.¹

- (1) a. *Die Mannschaft besteht nur aus Frauen.*
The man.ship consists only of women
‘The team consists only of women.’
b. *#das Männerteam besteht nur aus Frauen*
the men.team consists only of women
‘The men-team consists only of women.’

Mann in *Mannschaft*, behaves more like the homophonous impersonal pronoun *man_G*,² which is also not specified for semantic gender. Sociological factors and context may lead to certain inferences, but with the right context, *man_G*, like *Mannschaft* can refer to solely male, solely female, or mixed groups.

- (2) a. *Als Mann muss man viel arbeiten.*
as man must one much work
‘As a man, one has to work a lot.’
b. *Als Frau muss man mehr arbeiten.*
as man must one more work
‘As a woman, one has to work more.’

Thus from a synchronic linguistic perspective, *Mannschaft* would perhaps be more appropriate with the spelling *Manschaft*.

Although *man_G* is unspecified for semantic gender, it is (strongly) masculine morphosyntactically (Fenger 2018), as shown in (3), where a pronoun coreferent with *man_G* must be masculine, rather than feminine, even in contexts where the referent is clearly female.

- (3) *Wenn man hochschwanger ist, kann man oft seine / *ihre Schuhe nicht mehr zubinden.*
When one highly.pregnant is, can one often his / *her shoes not anymore tie.
‘When one is far advanced in pregnancy, one often is not able to tie one’s shoes anymore.’

¹The element *-schaft*, glossed as *-ship* here, is typically considered a suffix in contemporary German, which goes back to the word *Beschaffenheit* ‘nature, quality, consistency’. Derivations such as *Mannschaft* may be considered as lexicalized expressions now, however, as this squib will show, speakers typically still find the parts transparent.

²To avoid confusion between the English noun *man* and the German pronoun *man*, I use *man_G* in the text whenever the German word is intended.

Because masculine grammatical gender is often associated with male semantic gender, some people have suggested new elements to address and visualize various gender inequalities. In the context of *man_G*, and to my own surprise also *Mannschaft*, this involved the artificially created *frau* and *Frauschaft*.³ Like *man_G*, *frau* is related to a gender noun, namely *Frau* ‘woman’, and the lack of capitalization was intended to indicate an impersonal pronominal use, parallel to *man_G*. Currently, many examples of capitalized *Frau* can also be found, see for instance (4), which due to the missing determiner and the interpretation still indicate the impersonal use. Similarly, *Frauschaft* has been created (it is already listed in the standard German dictionary *Duden*⁴), to refer to exclusively female teams.

- (4) a. *Das trägt Frau jetzt.*
 This wears woman now.
 ’This is what women wear now.’⁵
- b. 1. *Frauschaft*
 1st woman-ship
 ‘first femal team’⁶

There are many heated debates about the pros and cons of gendering and the validity of gendered forms for synchronic language (such as the question of whether these new expressions have already been acquired by children, or are simply learned), all of which this squib will not engage in. Instead, I will point out some grammatical properties of *frau*, which may lead to the conclusion that, from a grammatical perspective, the presumed goal to create a counterpart to *man_G* has not been fully achieved.

Frauschaft and *frau*, in contrast to *Mannschaft* and *man_G*, are specified for semantic and grammatical gender—they can only refer to female groups and cannot be used as generic terms to refer to mixed groups. This can be illustrated with cases where *man_G* is not possible, but *frau* is. The pronoun *man_G* can only occur with nominative case (Zifonun 2000), whereas *frau* can occur in any case context. As shown in (5), despite the unavailability of *man_G*, *frau* can still only refer to an exclusively female group and cannot be interpreted gender-neutrally.

- (5) a. **Das geht man schnell auf die Nerven.*
 that.NOM goes one.DAT quickly on the nerves
 Intended: ‘One is quickly annoyed by that.’
- b. *Das geht frau schnell auf die Nerven.*
 that.NOM goes woman.DAT quickly on the nerves
 ‘Women are quickly annoyed by that.’
 *‘One is quickly annoyed by that.’
- c. **Das zwingt man zum Handeln.*
 that.NOM forces one.ACC to.the acting
 Intended: ‘This forces one to act.’
- d. *Das zwingt frau zum Handeln.*
 that.NOM goes woman.DAT to.the acting
 ‘This forces women to act.’
 *‘This forces one to act.’

Although *man_G* and *frau* differ in whether gender-neutral uses are possible, the creation of *frau* has brought up yet another interesting development, namely the “exposure” of the man in *man_G*. In contexts such as (6), the gender neutral pronoun *man_G* is used first, followed by a separation of the female and male groups via *mann* and *frau*. There is no uniformity in the spelling of this element, but for clarity, I use *mann* to indicate that it is neither the impersonal pronoun *man_G* ‘one’, nor the noun *Mann* ‘man’. In cases like (6), both *mann* and *frau* occur without determiners, distinguishing this use from the regular use of the nouns

³The discussion of *frau* goes back to joint work with W. Öller.

⁴<https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Frauschaft>

⁵<https://www.pinterest.de/pin/520306563199270231/>

⁶<https://sckriens.ch/1-frauschaft/>

Mann and *Frau* which are impossible as bare nouns in the singular. The new expressions *frau* and *mann* thus behave like pronouns, which refer exclusively to female or male groups, respectively (the examples are from Wurmbrand and Öller 2018).⁷

- (6) a. *In Österreich spricht man Deutsch. Nicht nur mann, auch frau.*
 In Austria speaks one German. Not only man, also woman
 ‘In Austria, they speak German. Not only men, women, too.’
 b. *Bei dieser Veranstaltung muss man Krawatte tragen. Hoffentlich nur mann, nicht frau.*
 At this event must one tie wear. Hopefully only man, not woman
 ‘At this event, one must wear a tie. Hopefully only men, not women.’

Importantly, in the use of *mann*, the case restriction observed for *man_G* does not hold. As shown in (7), *mann*, like *frau*, can occur in non-nominative contexts, and as above, then refers to exclusively male groups. Note that there are also intonational differences between *man_G*, which is always unstressed, and *mann*, which forms its own prosodic domain and is typically set off with a pause before it. The case difference between *man_G* and *mann* shows that we are dealing with two different elements or constructions in morphosyntax, and not just a pragmatic narrowing of *man_G* to a male-only group.

- (7) a. *Das geht mann schnell auf die Nerven.*
 that.NOM goes MANN.DAT quickly on the nerves
 ‘Men are quickly annoyed by that.’
 b. *Das zwingt mann zum Handeln.*
 that.NOM forces MANN.ACC to.the acting
 ‘This forces men to act.’

A further formal difference can be observed for pronouns referring back to *man_G*, *mann*, and *frau*. As shown in (8), *man_G* can only be referred back to by another *man_G*, whereas *frau* and *mann* can also be referred back to by the personal pronouns ‘she’ and ‘he’, respectively.

- (8) a. *Wenn man in Italien ist, isst *er / man Nudeln.*
 When one in Italy is, eats *he / one pasta
 ‘When one is in Italy, one eats pasta.’
 b. *Wenn frau in Italien ist, isst sie / frau Nudeln.*
 When woman in Italy is, eats she / woman pasta
 ‘When a woman is in Italy, she eats pasta.’
 c. *Wenn mann in Italien ist, isst er / mann Nudeln.*
 When man in Italy is, eats he / man pasta
 ‘When a man is in Italy, he eats pasta.’

The paraphrases given for the *frau* and *mann* versions in (8) are, as suggested in Wurmbrand and Öller (2018), indicative of the structure of these expressions. Whereas *man_G* is a true pronoun, *frau* and *mann* appear to have more in common with indefinite noun phrases. Several other properties are given there (word order, clitic use, ability to host clitics, plural ability) that all point to the conclusion that syntactically, *frau* and *mann* pattern with *eine Frau* ‘a woman’ and *ein Mann* ‘a man’, rather than with *man_G*. The attempt to create a feminine counterpart to *man_G* thus only shows limited linguistic success (note again that this squib is not the place to evaluate the socio-political success of these expressions, which is an entirely different matter). On the one hand, *frau* is a determiner-less pronoun-like expression, which refers exclusively to women. But on the other hand, it is syntactically not a pronoun, but a true noun (phrase), which due to the determiner-less use in the singular constitutes a grammatical entity that does not exist otherwise.

The mixed behavior of *frau/mann* is further illustrated by the ability to refer back to an identical expression. As shown in (9), in this case, *frau* behaves like a pronoun in that it can be repeated (and

⁷This version of *mann* is of course often used humorously and satirical, as, for instance, in the title of the book *MANN gönnt sich ja sonst nichts* ‘Men don’t indulge themselves otherwise’.

coreferent), whereas a full indefinite noun phrase, *eine Frau* ‘a woman’, cannot be referred back to by another occurrence of the same indefinite, and only marginally by a definite, version of that noun phrase.

- (9) a. *Wenn frau in Italien ist, isst frau Nudeln.*
 When woman in Italy is, eats woman pasta
 ‘When a woman is in Italy, she eats pasta.’
 b. *Wenn eine Frau in Italien ist, isst sie / *eine / ?? die Frau Nudeln.*
 When a woman in Italy is, eats she / *a / ?? the woman pasta
 ‘When a woman is in Italy, a woman eats pasta.’

The properties discussed in this note are summarized in Table 1.

Properties	man	mann	frau	eine Frau
Female group	yes	no	yes	yes
Male group	yes	yes	no	no
Mixed group	yes	no	no	no
Semantic gender	neutral	masculine	feminine	feminine
Morphological gender	masculine	masculine	feminine	feminine
Non-nominative case	no	yes	yes	yes
Being referred back to with personal pronoun	no	yes	yes	yes
Can refer back to same element	yes	yes	yes	no

Table 1: man, mann, frau

I will not fully resolve the puzzling mixed behavior of the new expressions *frau* and *mann*, but simply point out that a structure is required that is in-between a pronoun and a full noun phrase. Since the structure of pronouns is itself a complex matter, a full syntactic account is left for another occasion. But returning to our original observations regarding the *Mannschaft*, we can conclude that the attempt to take the (semantic) man out of *Mannschaft* and *man_G* caused a very interesting chain of developments: the creation of the feminine expressions *Frauschaft* and *frau*, to stand alongside the gender-neutral versions, and following that, in the context of the pronouns, the creation of a purely masculine version *mann* in analogy to *frau*. One thing we may learn from the elaborations about the grammar of *frau*, *mann*, and *man_G* is that the grammar has its own internal logic, and the effort to gender the impersonal pronoun instead seems to have led to new grammatical entities, representing a configuration which German did not have before: bare (determiner-less) count nouns.

References

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