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Feature Ontology: A Case Study of Grammatical Gender

Grammatical gender is a formal property of nouns which influences other grammatical properties such as agreement inside a nominal phrase and at the clausal level. Given that agreement is typically modelled by way of formal features, this strongly suggests that grammatical gender should be modelled by similar features. Such an approach raises questions regarding what these features are and how they should be represented. Furthermore, a feature ontology for grammatical gender should also be independent of the number of grammatical genders in a particular language. Despite the prevalence of grammatical gender/noun classes in the world's languages, these ontological issues have not received substantial discussion in the literature. The goal of the present talk is to explore the questions raised here based on a case study of Norwegian.