

# **Gender**

## **PLIN0020 Advanced Semantic Theory**

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# Gender Agreement: Greek and Russian

## *Modern Greek*

ο νεαρός άνδρας

ο nearos andras

the.m young.m man

‘the young man’

η νεαρή γυναίκα

ι neari gineka

the.f young.f woman

‘the young woman’

το νεαρό παιδί

το nearo pedhi

the.n young.n child

‘the young child’

## *Russian*

один новый дом

odin novyj dom

one.m new.m house

‘one new house’

одна новая книга

odna novaja kniga

one.f new.f book

‘one new book’

одно новое письмо

odno novoe pis'mo

one.n new.n letter

‘one new letter’

If different nouns require different forms of determiners, adjectives, predicates, etc. then they have different genders (controlling for number, definiteness, etc.)

Greek and Russian have three genders.

Dutch, Danish, Standard French, and Spanish have two genders.

Zande (Niger-Congo) has four genders.

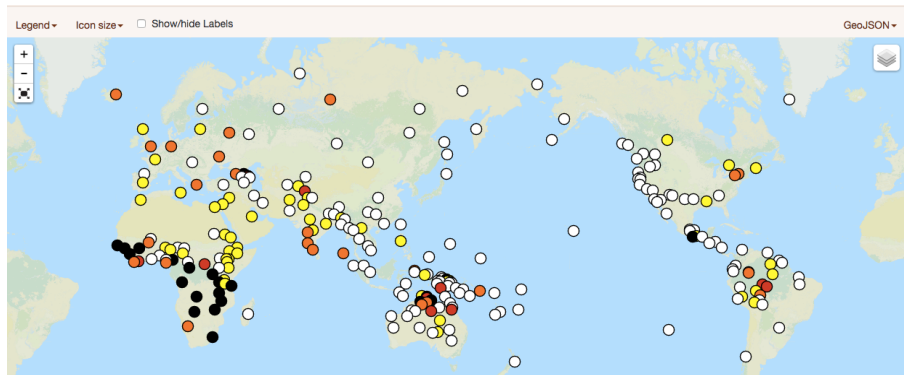
# Cross-linguistic Variation

No (or one) gender: English, Japanese, Korean, Turkish, Mandarin, etc.

This feature is described in the text of chapter 30  by Greville G. Corbett

You may combine this feature with another one. Start typing the feature name or number in the field below.

<input type="radio"/>	None	145
<input type="radio"/>	Two	50
<input type="radio"/>	Three	26
<input type="radio"/>	Four	12
<input type="radio"/>	Five or more	24



Common **exponents** of gender include:

- Determiners/articles
- Adjectives
- Numerals
- Demonstratives
- Possessives
- Verbs
- Participles
- Relative pronouns

See Corbett (1991: Ch.5) for data.

# Demonstrative and Participle Agr in Russian

- a. **тот** журнал лежащ**ий** на столе  
**tot** žurnal ležašč**ij** on table  
that.m magazine lying.m on table  
'that magazine lying on the table'
- b. **та** книга лежащ**ая** на столе  
**ta** kniga ležašč**a****ja** on table  
that.f book lying.f on table  
'that book lying on the table'
- c. **то** письмо лежащ**ее** на столе  
**to** pis'mo ležašč**ee** on table  
that.n letter lying.n on table  
'that letter lying on the table'

(adapted from Corbett1991:106)

# More Exotic Exponents of Gender

## *Adverbial Agr in Lak*

k'i-**j**-a ars ša-**w**-a     $\emptyset$ -ušār.  
two.I son at.home.I I-be  
'Two sons are at home.'

## *Postpositional Agr in Abkhaz*

Àxra **yə**-zə  
Axra 3sg.human.m-for  
'for Axra'

## *C Agr in West Flemish*

- a. ... **datje** (jij) komt  
that (he) comes
- b. ... **dase** (zie) komt  
that (she) komt
- c. ... **dat** (et) komt  
that (it) comes

(Corbett 1991:113)

# What is not Gender

Complication: If we include ‘agreement’ with pronouns in the definition of gender, English will have multiple genders.

- a. Each **boy** painted \*her/**his** room.
- b. Each **girl** painted **her**/\*his room.

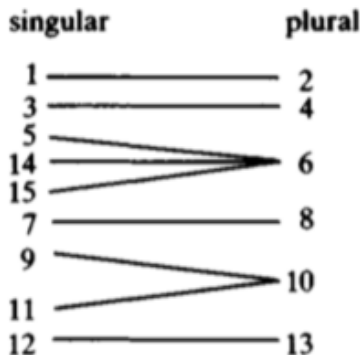
Corbett (1991:135) stresses that classifiers in Japanese, Mandarin, etc. are not gender agreement.



# Gender and Number: Bantu

The Bantu language family has 22 noun classes/genders across languages, but each of them has between 10-20.

E.g. Chibemba



(Corbett 1991: 156)

# Gender and Number: Romanian

bărbatul e bun-Ø.  
man.the is good  
'The man is good.'

scaunul e bun-Ø.  
chair.the is good  
'The chair is good.'

fata e bun-ă  
girl.the is good  
'The girl is good.'

bărbații sînt bun-i.  
men.the are good  
'The men are good.'

scaunele sînt bun-e.  
chairs.the are good  
'The chairs are good.'

fetele sînt bun-e  
girls.the are good  
'The girls are good.'

(Corbett 1991: 149f)

# **Semantics and Gender Assignment**

# Semantic Transparency: Tamil

- ▶ Nouns denoting male humans and gods are masculine.
- ▶ Nouns denoting female humans and gods are feminine.
- ▶ Other nouns (including animal nouns) are neuter.

Gender	Examples	
masculine	aan civan	‘man’ ‘Shiva’
feminine	pen kaal	‘woman’ ‘Kali’
neuter	maram viiṭu	‘tree’ ‘house’

(Corbett 1991:9)

There are very few exceptions, and they are semantically systematic (e.g. nouns denoting heavenly bodies are masculine).

# Grammatical Gender

Some languages have nouns whose gender cannot be predicted by the meaning (**grammatical gender**, alt.: arbitrary gender).

*Russian* (Corbett 1991:35)

Masculine		Feminine		Neuter	
žurnal	‘magazine’	gazeta	‘newspaper’	pis’mo	‘letter’
dom	‘house’	škola	‘school’	zdanie	‘building’
čaj	‘tea’	voda	‘water’	vino	‘wine’
avtomobil’	‘car’	mašina	‘car’	taksi	‘taxi’
večer	‘evening’	noč’	‘night’	utro	‘morning’
flag	‘flag’	‘emblema’	‘emblem’	znamja	‘banner’
zakon	‘law’	glastnost	‘openness’	doverie	‘trust’

# Grammatical Gender (cont.)

*French*

(Fathi & Lowenstamm 2016:(2))

Masculine		Feminine	
soleil	‘sun’	lune	‘moon’
toit	‘roof’	porte	‘door’
clou	‘nail’	vis	‘screw’
pied	‘foot’	main	‘hand’
sable	‘sand’	terre	‘dirt’
ocean	‘ocean’	mer	‘sea’
jour	‘day’	nuit	‘night’
sang	‘blood’	lymphe	‘lymph’
fleuve	‘stream’	rivière	‘river’
jus	‘juice’	sauce	‘sauce’

# Animate Nouns with Grammatical Gender

There might be grammatical gender among human denoting nouns too.

E.g.

*personne* ‘person’ in French is feminine.

Greek has a number of neuter animate nouns.

κορίτσι	koritsi	‘girl’
αγόρι	agori	‘boy’
παιδί	pedhi	‘child’
μέλος	melos	‘member’

# Natural vs. Grammatical Gender

Every language with multiple genders has nouns with semantically interpreted gender (**natural gender**):

*[A purely formal] system is not found in any natural language: gender always has a basis in semantics. Furthermore, when semantic and formal criteria are both involved in gender assignment, they always overlap to some extent. (Corbett 1991:63)*



# Types of Natural Gender

- ▶ Independent masculine-feminine forms:  
e.g. *brother-sister*
  - ▶ Related masculine-feminine forms:  
e.g. *αδερφός* (brother)-*αδερφή* (sister) in Greek,  
*waiter-waitress*
  - ▶ One form that is compatible with multiple genders  
(**epicene nouns**):  
e.g. *врач* (*doctor*) in Russian (for some speakers)  
*γιατρός* (*doctor*) in Greek
- (NB: Epicene nouns are different from gender-invariant nouns, e.g. French *génie* ‘genius’ is always masculine.)

# Morphological Markedness

It is often considered that in language like Indo-European languages, masculine is *less marked* relative to feminine.

E.g. Feminine forms are often morphologically more complex:

*French*

Masculine	Feminine	
/etydiã/	/etydiât/	‘student’
/ʒapɔnɛ/	/ʒapɔnɛz/	‘Japanese’
/ša/	/šæt/	‘cat’
/læpɛ/	/læpin/	‘rabbit’
/ʁənæʁ/	/ʁənæʁd/	‘fox’
/ljõ/	/ljɔn/	‘lion’
/lu/	/luv/	‘wolf’

Masculine	Feminine	
Elefant	Elefantin	‘elephant’
Hund	Hündin	‘dog’
Ungar	Ungarin	‘Hungarian’
Ausländer	Ausländerin	‘foreigner’
Österreicher	Österreicherin	‘Austrian’
Pilot	Pilotin	‘pilot’
Student	Studentin	‘student’
Stadtrat	Stadträtin	‘city councillor’
Rektor	Rektorin	‘headmaster, headmistress’
Leiter	Leiterin	‘principle’
Kunde	Kundin	‘customer’
Prinz	Prinzessin	‘prince, princess’
König	Königin	‘king, queen’
Graf	Gräfin	‘count, countess’
Baron	Baronin	‘baron, baroness’
Enkel	Enkelin	‘uncle, aunt’
Schwäger	Schwägerin	‘brother-in-law, sister-in-law’

In addition, for some plural masculine-feminine pairs, the masculine form can be used to describe mixed-gendered groups, but the feminine form.

## *French pronouns*

- a. ils (they.m)  $\Rightarrow$  at least one male
- b. elles (they.f)  $\Rightarrow$  all female

## *Greek*

- a. δάσκαλοι (dhaskali) ‘teachers.m’  $\Rightarrow$  at least one male
- b. δασκάλες (dhaskales) ‘teachers.f’  $\Rightarrow$  all female

# Food for thought

See Corbett (1991:Ch.7) and Kramer (2015:Ch.5) for languages where feminine is unmarked.

French has both masculine and feminine gender-invariant nouns:

Masculine		Feminine	
génie	‘genius’	vigie	‘lookout’
tyran	‘tyrant’	sentinelle	‘sentry’
individu	‘individual’	brute	‘brute’
modèle	‘model’	personne	‘person’
pilote	‘pilot’	sage-femme	‘midwife’
capitaine	‘captain’	vedette	‘star’
kangourou	‘kangaroo’	hyène	‘hyena’
leopard	‘leopard’	girafe	‘giraffe’
serpent	‘snake’	tortue	‘turtle’
corbeau	‘crow’	souris	‘mouse’

(adapted from Fathi & Lowenstamm 2016: (8),(10))

# **Morphology and Gender Assignment**

# Gender vs. Inflection Classes

It is important to distinguish gender and **inflection/declension types**.

Inflection classes are defined by inflectional patterns and are purely morphological.

There are often correlations between genders and noun classes, but the correlations are not free from exceptions. Thus, we need to distinguish these two notions.

(See e.g. Ralli (2002), Alexiadou (2004), Lowenstamm (2012), Fathi & Lowenstamm (2016))

## Example: Russian

		I	II	III	IV
Sg.	Nominative	zakon	škola	kost'	vino
	Accusative	zakon	školu	kost'	vino
	Genitive	zakona	školy	kosti	vina
	Dative	zakonu	škole	kosti	vinu
	Instrumental	zakonom	školoj	kost'ju	vinom
	Locative	zakone	škole	kosti	vine
Pl.	Nominative	zakony	školy	kosti	vina
	Accusative	zakony	školy	kosti	vina
	Genitive	zakonov	škol	kostej	vin
	Dative	zakonam	školam	kostjam	vinam
	Instrumental	zakonami	školami	kostjami	vinami
	Locative	zakonax	školax	kostjax	vinax
		‘law’	‘school’	‘bone’	‘wine’

(Corbett 1991:36)



## Example: Russian (cont.)

Correlation with inflection classes and gender:

- ▶ Most nouns in Class I are masculine.
- ▶ Most nouns in Classes II and III are feminine.
- ▶ Most nouns in Class IV are neuter.

However, there are some discrepancies:

- ▶ *Дядя (djadja)* ‘uncle’ and *дедушка (deduška)* ‘grandfather’ are Class II nouns, but they are masculine.
- ▶ *Путь (put’)* ‘way’ is a Class III noun but is masculine.
- ▶ *Врач (vrač’)* ‘doctor’ is a Class I noun, but when it denotes a female doctor, its gender (optionally) becomes feminine, i.e. it’s an epicene noun.

# Derivational Morphology and Gender

Some affixes in German determine the gender (Corbett 1991:49f):

<i>-ung, -heit, -erei, -schaft, -keit</i>	→	feminine
diminutive suffixes <i>-lein, -chen</i>	→	neuter
collective prefix <i>ge-</i>	→	neuter

e.g. *Strauch* 'bush' (masculine) → *Gesträuch* 'shrubbery' (neuter)

Greek derivational affixes that determine the gender (Ralli 2002):

<i>-tis, -mos</i>	→	masculine
deverbal <i>-ia, -isa</i>	→	feminine
<i>-ma, -aki</i>	→	neuter

# **Phonology and Gender Assignment**

# Phonologically Transparent Gender Assignment

In some languages, the phonological form of the noun is a good predictor of its gender.

Corbett (1991:§3.2.1) discusses Qafar (Cushitic; Ethiopia, Djibouti), which has two genders, masculine and feminine.

- ▶ If the citation form of a noun ends in an accented vowel, the noun is feminine;
- ▶ If not, it is masculine.

Only few exceptions, e.g. *doònìk* ‘sailboat’ is feminine, *abbà* ‘father’ is masculine.

(Ralli 2002 argues that phonology is not a reliable predictor for gender in Greek, although she presents no numerical evidence)

Masculine		Feminine	
bàxa	‘son’	baxà’	‘daughter’
toobokòyta	‘brother’	toobokoytà	‘sister’
barisèyna	‘male teacher’	bariseynà	‘female teacher’
kùta	‘dog’	kutà	‘bitch’
cedèr	‘supper time’	catò	‘help’
gilàl	‘winter’	karmà	‘autumn’
tàmu	‘taste’		
baànta	‘trumpet’		

(Corbett 1991:51)

French has two genders, masculine and feminine.

One can identify morphological rules, e.g.

Compound nouns formed with a verb are masculine.  
e.g. *porte-monnaie* ‘purse’ is masculine  
(although *monnaie* ‘money’ is feminine).

However, phonological rules alone account for the majority of cases in the case of French.

Tucker et al.’s (1977) rules classify 84.5% of the nouns in the *Petit Larousse* correctly, only from the phonological forms.

# Final Segments and Gender in French

Final C	# of nouns	%Masc	Final V	# of nouns	%Masc
/ʒ/	1453	94.2	/œ/	17	100
/m/	1406	91.9	/ɑ̃/	1963	99.3
/f/	301	89.0	/ɛ̃/	938	99.0
/r/	5175	76.8	/ø/	189	97.4
/g/	235	73.2	/o/	865	97.2
/k/	833	66.6	/ɛ/	625	90.2
/b/	129	65.1	/u/	171	87.7
/l/	1581	58.4	/a/	970	82.6
/t/	2269	51.2	/y/	201	71.6
/p/	214	48.6	/e/	2791	50.1
/ŋ/	69	39.0	/ɔ̃/	2665	29.8
/s/	1380	38.5	/i/	2336	24.6
/d/	714	38.1			
/ʃ/	290	34.0			
/j/	352	32.4			
/v/	143	31.5			
/n/	1135	31.5			
/z/	612	10.0			

(Corbett 1991:59)

# Non-Final Segments

When non-final segments are included, the predictions become more reliable:

- ▶ 92.6% (924/997) of /te/ are feminine. 73.9% (1325/1794) of the rest of /e/ are masculine.
- ▶ 99.8% (1689/1693) of /sjǔ/ are feminine. This includes all the *-ation* nouns. Similarly, 98.4% (62/63) of /zjǔ/, 100% (5/5) of /ʒjǔ/, 76.5% (13/17) of /tjǔ/ are feminine. 92.9% (157/169) of the other /jǔ/ are masculine.
- ▶ 97.1% of /ǔ/ but not /zǔ/ or /jǔ/ are masculine.
- ▶ 80.9% (72/89) of /zǔ/ are feminine. Among /zǔ/, 98.5% (64/65) of /ɛzǔ/ are feminine, and 66.7% (16/24) of the rest are masculine.



## French: Some Complications

Lowenstamm (2012) points out the possibility that most of the /ʒ/-final nouns (94.2% masculine) involve the productive suffix *-age*, which creates a masculine noun. If these cases are excluded, the gender is not so productive for /ʒ/-final nouns.

Phonology alone doesn't explain homophonous pairs (Fathi & Lowenstamm 2016: (1)):

	Masc	Fem		Masc	Fem
/vis/	'vice'	'screw'	/fil/	'thread'	'queue'
/fwa/	'liver'	'faith'	/sɛl/	'salt'	'saddle'
/sɔl/	'ground'	'sole (fish)'	/kɔl/	'collar'	'glue'
/tuʁ/	'turn'	'tower'	/livʁ/	'book'	'pound'
/bæʁ/	'pub'	'bar'	/bæl/	'dance'	'ball'

## French: Some Complications (cont.)

Fathi & Lowenstamm (2016) list nouns for which many native speakers do not have clear intuitions:

tentacule	‘tentacle’	hémisphère	‘hemispher
pétale	‘petal’	après-midi	‘afternoon’
effluve	‘exhalation’	balustre	‘baluster’
câpre	‘caper’	oasis	‘oasis’
HLM	‘city council apartment’	clope	‘fag, ciggy’
taffe	‘puff of cigarette’	tique	‘tick’

They raise these as evidence for the irrelevance of phonology. But they could be used as evidence for the relevance of phonology: Most of these nouns have phonological properties that do not correlate strongly with either gender.

# **The Syntax of Gender in Nouns**

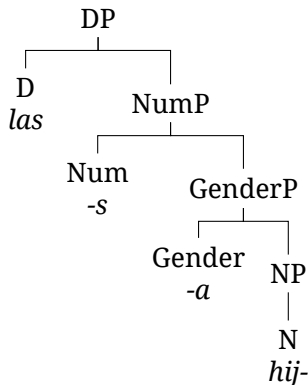
Where is the gender stored? It seems natural to assume that nouns are specified for gender in the lexicon.

However:

- ▶ Epicene nouns, e.g. *врач* (*vrač*) in Russian, *γιατρός* (*jatros*) in Greek, can agree in masculine or feminine, depending on the meaning. This suggests that gender is not simply lexically specified, at least for some nouns.
- ▶ For masculine-feminine pairs like *chat-chatte* (cat) in French and *αδερφός-αδερφή* (sibling) in Greek, it seems attractive to decompose them into a gender-less stem and some other component, encoding the gender.

# Gender is in GenderP

Gender has its own projection GenderP (in analogy with vP) (Picallo 1991):



Ritter (1993), Alexiadou (2004) and Kramer (2015) criticize this approach. For example, Picallo is conflating gender and inflectional classes.

# Gender is on Num

Ritter (1993) claims that gender is on Num in Romance languages and on N in Hebrew.

She observes that gender is a derivational suffix in Hebrew:

Masculine		Feminine	
magav	‘wiper’	magev-et	‘towel’
magav-im	‘wipers’	magav-ot	‘towels’
maxsan	‘warehouse’	maxsan-it	‘magazine’
maxsan-im	‘warehouses’	maxsani-ot	‘magazines’
amud	‘page’	amud-a	‘column’
amud-im	‘pages’	amud-ot	‘columns’

Kramer (2015) claims that gender is on *n*.

There are a number of masculine-feminine pairs that share the same root.

*Amharic* (Kramer 2015:32)

hakim-u	doctor-def.m	‘the male doctor’
hakim-wa	doctor-def.f	‘the female doctor’

*Greek*

αδερφ-ός	adherfos	‘male sibling, brother’
αδερφ-ή	adherfi	‘female sibling, sister’

# Gender is on *n* (cont.)

Kramer's (2015) analysis of Amharic:

(1) *Types of n in Amharic*

- a. *n* i[+Fem]    natural feminine
- b. *n* i[−Fem]    natural masculine
- c. *n*                no natural gender
- d. *n* u[+Fem]    grammatical feminine

- ▶ Natural gender: Kramer assumes that certain roots  $\sqrt{mist}$  'wife' and  $\sqrt{bal}$  'husband' are licensed only under (1a) and (1b), respectively. Roots like  $\sqrt{tämari}$  'student' are licensed under both (1a) and (1b).
- ▶ Grammatical gender: Masculine inanimates are those roots that are licensed under (1c). Feminine inanimates are those roots that are licensed under (1d).



# References

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