Sex-based Gender

Differentiation in languages with gender categories (see Grammatical Gender) may be based on or linked to a biological differentiation between male and female referents, as in Ushojo ‎(1). In languages with a masculine-feminine differentiation, nouns denoting inanimates or non-humans can be assigned masculine or feminine gender too.

1. Ushojo [ush] (Indo-Aryan)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| a. | ek | **pʰoː** | asil-**u**, | se | seːkel-aː | jaː | aːl-**u** |
|  | one | boy(m) | be.pst-msg | 3sg.nom | bicycle-loc | going | come.pfv-msg |
|  | ‘There was a boy, he came riding on a bicycle.’ (USH-PS-AH:001) | | | | | | |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| b. | ek | **pʰui** | ... | seːkal-aː | jaː | muɕiːn | tarapaja | aːl-**i** |
|  | one | girl(f) |  | bicycle-loc | going | to.near | in.direction | come.pfv-fsg |
|  | ‘A girl… came in his direction, riding on a bicycle.’ (USH-PS-AH:012) | | | | | | | |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| c. | axeːr | **oːɕ** | ɕoku | bil-**i** |
|  | finally | wind(f) | quiet | become.pfv-fsg |
|  | ‘Finally the wind gave up.’ (USH-NW-AH:007) | | | |

A large majority of our sample languages display evidence of sex-based noun classification. Only a fourth of the languages lack this property.

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| Feature value | # of varieties displaying it | % |
| Present | 45 | 76 |
| Absent | 14 | 24 |
| Indeterminate | 0 | 0 |