

Grammatical gender and linguistic complexity

Volume II: World-wide comparative
studies

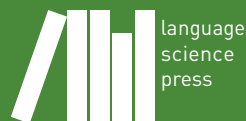
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Studies in Diversity Linguistics ??



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Di Garbo, Francesca, Bruno Olsson & Bernhard Wälchli (ed.). 2019. *Grammatical gender and linguistic complexity: Volume II: World-wide comparative studies* (Studies in Diversity Linguistics ??). Berlin: Language Science Press.

This title can be downloaded at:

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Indexed in EBSCO

ISBN: 978-3-96110-180-1 (Digital)

978-3-96110-181-8 (Hardcover)

ISSN: 2363-5568

no DOI

Source code available from www.github.com/langsci/237

Collaborative reading: paperhive.org/documents/remote?type=langsci&id=237

Cover and concept of design: Ulrike Harbort

Fonts: Linux Libertine, Libertinus Math, Arimo, DejaVu Sans Mono, SIL Doulos, Sarabun Light, SIL Annapurna, ITF Hind Madurai

Typesetting software: Xe_{La}TeX

Language Science Press

Unter den Linden 6

10099 Berlin, Germany

langsci-press.org

Storage and cataloguing done by FU Berlin

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1 The evolving complexity of gender agreement systems | |
| Francesca Di Garbo & Matti Miestamo | 1 |
| Index | 48 |

Chapter 1

The evolving complexity of gender agreement systems

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This paper proposes to integrate the diachronic dimension to the typological study of gender complexity, and focuses on the morphosyntactic encoding of gender distinctions via agreement patterns. After investigating the processes of language change that foster the reduction, loss, expansion and emergence of gender agreement in a sample of fifteen sets of closely related languages (N= 36 languages), we discuss how gender agreement systems in decline and on the rise pattern in terms of complexity. We show that declining and emerging gender agreement systems may exhibit increase or decrease in complexity and discuss how this relates to the fact that they represent transitional stages between absence of gender and full-fledged gender systems. In our analysis, we make use of typological implicational hierarchies in the domain of agreement as a tool to account for diachronic variation and for the patterns of simplification/complexification in the agreement systems of the sampled languages.

Keywords: agreement hierarchy, agreement redistribution, gender emergence, gender expansion, gender loss, gender reduction, morphophonological erosion, complexification, simplification

1 Introduction and key notions

Within the last decade, pioneering research on the complexity of grammatical gender has contributed to identify a number of dimensions along which gender systems may vary in complexity (see [Audring 2014; 2017](#); [Di Garbo 2016](#) for



gender-specific complexity measures¹), and to apply these dimensions of complexity variation to research on the typology of gender systems within specific language families and areas of the world (Di Garbo 2016). The approach followed in these studies has been predominantly synchronic. In this paper, we argue that integrating the diachronic dimension to the typological study of gender complexity is essential to understand how gender systems vary in complexity (i.e., along which dimensions of the proposed metrics) and how this variation is distributed crosslinguistically.

We investigate the evolution of complexity in the domain of grammatical gender by using a diachronic approach to the study of linguistic diversity in line with Greenberg (1978a). Greenberg addressed possible pathways of change between different types of structures and languages and argued that there would likely be a diachronic connection between all language types in a typology in the sense that change from any given type to any other type would be possible. This diachronic route would not always be direct, but rather mediated by other types, and the relative stability of the different types would differ, with some types qualifying as *stable*, *persistent*, and others as *unstable*, *transitional*. In this paper, we describe the patterns of language change whereby complexification and simplification in gender systems take place, explore possible functional explanations to the unfolding of these changes, and show how these explanations are ultimately grounded in well-known implicational tendencies in the typology of gender systems. In addition, by operationalizing gender complexity as a dynamic, evolving variable, we explore the relationship between the complexity and stability of gender systems.² The questions we attempt to answer are:

- Which complexities are most stable in the domain of grammatical gender?
- Which other aspects of gender complexity are more likely to change?
- To what extent can we identify complexification or simplification in the processes of emergence and expansion of gender on the one hand, and reduction and loss of gender on the other?

¹In addition, see Passer (2016) for a discussion of gender complexity in comparison with other nominal classification strategies; and Leufkens (2015) for a discussion of grammatical gender in the context of a general model of complexity and transparency in grammar.

²On the stability of gender systems see the pioneering large-scale typological investigation by Nichols (1992) as well as the more recent overview by Nichols (2003). For a study of the diachrony and stability of grammatical gender in the Indo-European family, see Matasović (2004).

Following Miestamo (2006; 2008) we define complexity in absolute, theory-oriented, objective terms, paying attention to the number of elements in a system and connections between these. In an information-theoretic perspective, complexity can ultimately be reduced to description length: of two entities, for instance two grammatical systems, the less complex one is the one whose shortest possible description is shorter. In other words, the simpler entity can be compressed into a smaller space without losing information. This approach also aligns with complexity theories outside linguistics and thereby allows linguistic complexity to be viewed in a cross-disciplinary perspective as well. The notions of cost and difficulty of processing and learning are related to complexity, and some authors, such as Kusters (2003), take a relative, user-oriented, subjective approach, equating complexity with cost and difficulty. In a user-oriented approach, those aspects of language that increase processing load and learning difficulty are defined as complex. Dahl (2004) and Miestamo (2006; 2008) discuss some obvious problems with the cost- and difficulty-based approach and point out that it is important to keep the notions of complexity and difficulty apart. However, to what extent and in what ways complexity and difficulty are correlated is a highly interesting question. We believe that keeping these notions apart is a prerequisite for adequately addressing this issue.

Miestamo (2006; 2008) proposes two principles by which grammatical complexity can be measured:

- The Principle of Fewer Distinctions, which, paying attention to grammatical meaning, defines as less complex a grammatical system in which, other things being equal, fewer semantic/pragmatic distinctions are made grammatically.
- The Principle of One-Meaning–One-Form, which, paying attention to the relationship between meaning and form, defines as less complex those systems and structures in which, other things being equal, each meaning is expressed by one form and each form corresponds to only one meaning.

Violations of these two principles increase complexity.

To take some examples, by the Principle of Fewer Distinctions, a gender system with two grammaticalized gender distinctions is less complex in this respect than a gender system with, say, five grammaticalized distinctions. By the Principle of One-Meaning–One-Form, we can identify a higher degree of complexity in a gender system system in which: (a) the formal expression of one or more genders is combined with other categories in one morpheme (fusion, multiple exponence);

(b) one or more gender distinctions are expressed with multiple/discontinuous morphemes (fission); (c) the markers of one or more gender distinctions show two or more variants (allomorphy); and/or (d) the markers of some gender distinctions are identical in some grammatical contexts (syncretism).

While the Principle of One-Meaning–One-Form can handle the relation between meaning and form relatively exhaustively (relevant subcriteria need of course to be defined and refined), the Principle of Fewer Distinctions only covers parts of complexity on the level of meaning. Things get more complicated when we look at the interaction between different functional domains (e.g., gender and number). Dahl (2004) discusses the notion of choice structure, i.e. the dependency of available choices on choices made earlier (cf. also the notion of dependency hierarchies by Aikhenvald & Dixon 1998). To take an example from the domain of grammatical gender, in many languages gender distinctions are available only in the singular, but are neutralized in the plural. This is, for instance, the case in Russian (Indo-European, Slavic). In order to account for interactions between functional domains and their effect on the complexity of individual domains, Di Garbo (2014; 2016) proposes the Principle of Independence.

- The Principle of Independence defines as less complex those systems and structures which, other things being equal, are *independent* of other systems and structures.

Under the Principle of Independence, a gender system whose formal realization is dependent on number distinctions is more complex than a gender system which is not constrained by number distinctions.

The three principles, the Principle of One-Meaning–One-Form, the Principle of Fewer Distinctions, and the Principle of Independence, are all operationalized in the gender complexity metric proposed by Di Garbo (2014; 2016), as well as in the discussion of gender complexity and canonicity by Audring (2019 [in Volume I]).³ In this paper, we will be especially concerned with the way in which morphosyntactic and semantic properties of reducing and emerging gender systems may be accounted for as violations of one of these principles.

The paper is organized as follows. §2 presents some of the parameters along which gender systems may vary, and the sampling method followed in the study. In §3, attention is given to the factors that explain synchronic variation in the domain of gender agreement and to the extent to which these can be mapped on

³Audring (2019 [in Volume I]) uses a different terminology for the Principle of One-Meaning–One-Form and the Principle of Fewer Distinctions. In her own terminology, these are the Principle of Transparency and the Principle of Economy, respectively.

diachronic change, too. Reducing gender agreement systems are presented in §4 whereas §5 focuses on emerging gender agreement systems, and §6 on expanding gender agreement systems. In §7, we discuss how changes in the domain of gender agreement affect the complexity of gender systems. Concluding remarks are given in §8.

2 The evolution of gender complexity

In this paper, we explore synchronic distributions of types of gender systems among closely related languages, and, based on these synchronic distributions, we try to infer how gender systems change through time becoming more or less complex. We draw our observations from a sample of fifteen language sets. Each set consists of two to three genealogically related languages. In addition, the sample includes one isolate within the Austronesian family, Chamorro, and one mixed language, Michif. The total number of languages is 36. The map in Figure 1 illustrates the geographic distribution and genealogical affiliations of the sampled languages. A list of the sampled languages can be found in Appendix 8.

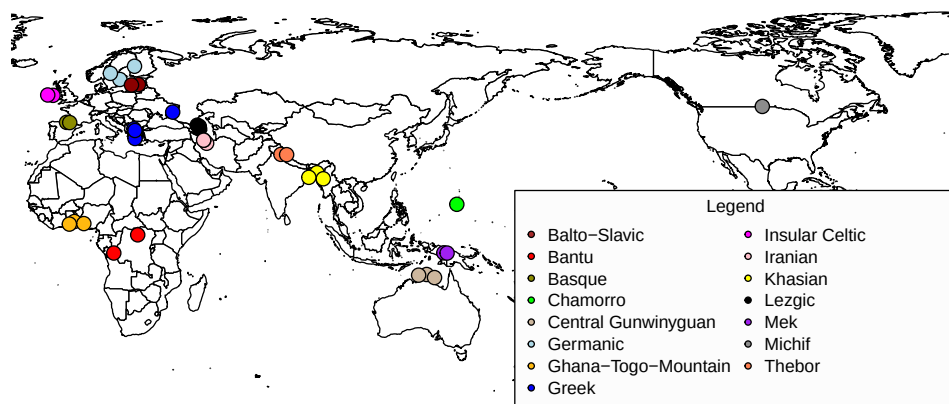


Figure 1: The language sample

The data set studied stems from a larger project on the sociohistorical correlates of the evolution of gender complexity led by Francesca Di Garbo (for details, see [Di Garbo forthcoming](#)). The diachronic processes examined in the study are somewhat biased towards instances of contact-induced change, even though language-internal developments are also discussed. While the pace and nature of these developments may thus be specific to the type of contact situation in which they unfold, we believe that the data set under study offers insights of

rather general relevance with respect to the diachrony of gender marking systems. Data were collected based on a questionnaire (Di Garbo 2015), as well as on consultation of reference grammars and language experts.

Typological research on grammatical gender systems has mostly focused on three broad domains of analysis:

- Number of genders
- Number and/or type of gender assignment rules
- Formal marking through agreement patterns.

We argue that these domains of synchronic variation can also be used to investigate how gender systems change through time. However, we suggest that any change in the number of gender values or the number and nature of gender assignment rules must ultimately hinge on variation and change in the domain of agreement patterns, that is, in the morphosyntactic encoding of gender distinctions. For instance, a gender value is lost when the corresponding gender agreement patterns fall out of use. Similarly, changes in the nature and distribution of gender assignment rules are reflected by the gender agreement patterns that the nouns affected by these changes trigger in discourse. For instance, we know that a former masculine noun is re-analyzed as neuter if patterns of neuter agreement are selected when the noun is used. Thus, we argue that studying synchronic and diachronic variation in patterns of gender agreement enables us to make generalizations about variation and ongoing change in the number of genders and/or the nature of the gender assignment rules that languages have. This suggestion aligns with recent observations in the literature on gender complexity where complexity in the domain of gender agreement has been shown to interact with complexity at the level of gender values and assignment rules (Audring 2017; Di Garbo 2016).⁴

We explore simplification and complexification of gender systems by focusing on reducing, emerging and expanding patterns of gender agreement. The sample languages are thus selected so as to represent instances of (1) reduction, (2) loss, (3) emergence, and (4) expansion of gender agreement. These are then compared with instances of retention or lack of gender agreement as attested in closely related languages. Naturally, loss, reduction and expansion presuppose the pre-existence of a gender system within the relevant language sets, whereas emergence of gender presupposes absence of gender within the relevant language sets.

⁴For instance, Di Garbo (2016) shows that manipulable gender assignment tends to presuppose rather pervasive gender agreement systems in the languages of her sample.

The data in Table 1 and the map in Figure 2 illustrate how the patterns of change in focus are distributed within the languages of the sample.⁵

Table 1: Patterns of change attested in the languages of the sample

| Family by macroarea | Language | Pattern of change |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Eurasia | | |
| Khasian | Khasi | Expansion |
| | Lyngngam | Retention |
| | Pnar | Expansion |
| Basque | Standard Basque | Lack |
| | Lekeitio Basque | Emergence |
| Balto-Slavic | Latvian | Retention |
| | Tamian Latvian | Loss |
| Greek | Modern Greek | Retention |
| | Pontic Greek | Reduction |
| | Rumeic Greek | Reduction |
| Cappadocian Greek | Cappadocian Greek | Loss |
| Insular Celtic | Irish | Reduction |
| | Irish (Ros Much) | Retention |
| North Germanic | Elfdalian | Retention |
| | Karleby Swedish | Reduction |
| | Standard Swedish | Reduction |
| Northwestern Iranian | Eshtehardi | Expansion |
| | Kafteji | Expansion |
| | Kelasi | Loss |
| Lezgetic | Archi | Retention |
| | Aghul | Loss |
| | Udi | Loss |
| Thebor | Shumcho | Emergence |
| | Jangshung | Emergence |
| Papunesia | | |
| Chamorro | Chamorro | Emergence |
| Mek | Nalca | Emergence |
| | Eipo | Emergence |

⁵For language classification we follow the Glottolog (Hammarström et al. 2018).

| Family by macroarea | Language | Pattern of change |
|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Africa | | |
| Bantu | Kinshasa Lingala | Reduction |
| | Makanza Lingala | Expansion |
| Ghana-Togo-Mountain | Selee | Retention |
| | Igo | Reduction (near loss) |
| | Ikposo | Loss |
| Australia | | |
| Gunwinggu | Kunwinjku | Retention |
| | Kundjeyhmi | Reduction |
| | Kune | Loss |
| North America | | |
| Mixed Language | Michif | Expansion |

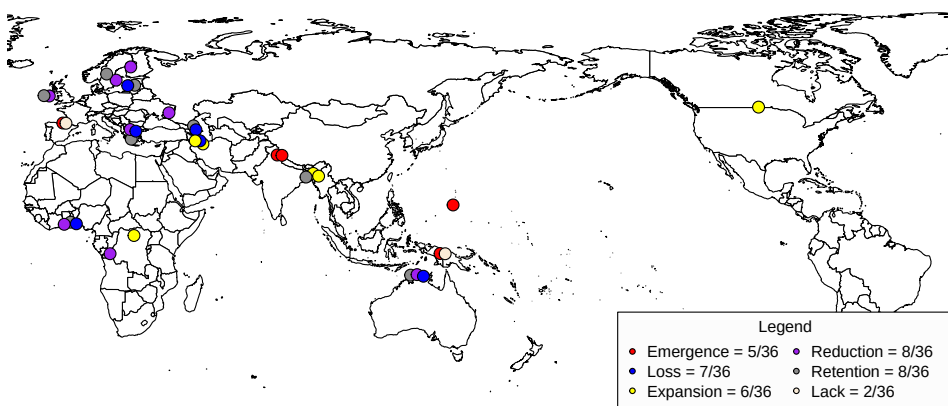


Figure 2: Distribution of patterns of change

It can be hypothesized that gender agreement systems in decline represent instances of reducing complexity, while gender agreement systems on the rise or under expansion represent instances of increasing complexity. A further possible hypothesis is that gender agreement systems on the rise or in decline are less complex than the more pervasive systems that they are moving towards or away from. We will come back to these hypotheses in §7 and evaluate them against our data.

3 The evolution of gender complexity in the domain of agreement

Starting with the pioneering work by Corbett (1979; 1991), a great deal of research has focused on unraveling constraints on the distribution of gender distinctions on different types of agreement targets. This research has shown that certain agreement targets (e.g., personal pronouns) are more likely than others (e.g., attributive modifiers) to index semantic rather than grammatical properties of nouns. In the terminology proposed by Corbett (1979; 1991), this is known as an opposition between *semantic* and *syntactic* agreement patterns. Preferences towards semantic or syntactic agreement per type of agreement target are captured in the form of an implicational hierarchy, which is known as the Agreement Hierarchy. The Agreement Hierarchy – illustrated in (1) – was first proposed by Corbett (1979) and is further discussed in Corbett (1991; 2000; 2006). It expresses the likelihood of semantic agreement to occur with different types of agreement targets as well as the degree of syntactic cohesion between agreement targets and their controllers.

(1) The Agreement Hierarchy (adapted from Corbett 2010)

- SEMANTIC AGREEMENT
attributive > predicate > relative pronoun > personal pronoun
- SYNTACTIC COHESION
attributive < predicate < relative pronoun < personal pronoun

The directions of the arrows – “>” or “<” – stand for different directionalities in the two main chains of implications entailed by the hierarchy. The first row indicates that semantic agreement on any of the targets to the left implies the presence of semantic agreement on the targets to the right, with attributive modifiers being the least likely candidate for semantic agreement. The second row indicates that syntactic cohesion between nouns and any of the targets to the right of the hierarchy implies at least the same level of syntactic cohesion with any of the targets to the left, with personal pronouns being the agreement targets with the loosest syntactic integration to nouns. These hierarchical effects are connected with the fact that pronouns tend to be linearly more distant from their antecedents (low syntactic cohesion) as compared, for instance, with definite articles (high syntactic cohesion), which tend to occur linearly closer to the controller nouns.⁶ Pronouns are therefore more prone to index semantic proper-

⁶Different types of agreement targets may occur within the noun phrase (articles, quantifiers, numerals etc.) and further hierarchical effects between such targets cannot be excluded. This, however, falls outside the scope of the present investigation.

ties of the discourse referent rather than lexico-grammatical properties of nouns, such as grammatical gender. Mismatches between the agreement patterns associated with different types of targets are especially likely to occur when the controller nouns are *hybrid nouns*. In the case of gender, these are nouns whose inherent gender assignment is in conflict with their semantics. A classic example is the German noun for ‘girl’, *Mädchen*, which is grammatically neuter, but denotes a human entity. Let us consider the types of gender agreement mismatches attested in German with the noun *Mädchen*.

- (2) German (Indo-European, Germanic; Corbett 1991: 228)
Schau dir dieses Mädchen an, wie gut sie/es Tennis spielt
 look you this.N girl at, how good she/it tennis plays
 ‘Look at this girl, see how well she plays tennis.’

The example shows that while gender agreement within the noun phrase (i.e., on the demonstrative) can only conform to the lexical gender of the noun (*dieses*, N), speakers can choose between feminine and neuter agreement for personal pronouns. Feminine agreement indexes the fact that the discourse referent is female (as in *sie*, F); neuter agreement indexes the fact that the noun for ‘girl’ is grammatically neuter (as in *es*, N).⁷ Conflicts between “semantic” and “syntactic” agreement can also be understood in terms of mismatches between *referential* and *lexical* gender, as these terms are used by Dahl (2000) (see also the study of the evolution of gender marking in medieval English by Siemund & Dolberg 2011).

There are at least two ways in which the Agreement Hierarchy can be used to describe synchronic variation in gender complexity, one pertaining to the types and number of attested agreement domains, and one pertaining to the type and number of preferred agreement patterns per domain. Concerning type and number of attested agreement domains, a language that exhibits gender agreement in all the agreement domains represented along the hierarchy is, in this respect, more complex than a language that, other things being equal, has agreement in fewer domains. This is, for instance, the way in which the amount of gender agreement or gender indexation is treated in the metric proposed by Di Garbo (2016).⁸ Concerning type and number of preferred agreement patterns, a lan-

⁷Corbett (1991: 228) further mentions that the older the age of the young woman that is being talked about, the more likely it is for speakers to use feminine agreement.

⁸For some observations on possible implicational tendencies constraining which agreement domains are more likely to be targets of gender marking in a sample of 20 languages from New Guinea see Svärd (2019 [in Volume I]).

replaced
‘with the
personal
pro-
nouns,
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and
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guage in which gender agreement is only syntactic with all agreement targets is, in this respect, less complex than a language that, other things being equal, exhibits variation between syntactic and semantic agreement at any point along the hierarchy. For a broader discussion about the use of typological implicational hierarchies as cross-linguistic measures of complexity, see [Miestamo \(2009\)](#).

In this paper, we explore the extent to which not only synchronic, but also diachronic variation in the domain of gender agreement can be mapped onto the Agreement Hierarchy (for an overview of the role of the Agreement Hierarchy in the diachrony of nominal classification see also [Seifart 2010](#)). With respect to types and number of agreement domains, we find that, in the languages of our sample, both the rise and the decline of gender agreement tend to start off from the agreement domains at the two opposite ends of the Agreement Hierarchy, i.e., either from attributive modifiers or from personal pronouns and/or other type of anaphoric constructions, such as light nouns with anaphoric functions (for the latter, see also [Wälchli 2019](#) [this volume]). With respect to types and number of preferred agreement patterns per domain we find that, in the languages of the sample, at least the decline and loss of gender agreement tend to be directional, and that the attested lines of directionality are reminiscent of the two opposite pulling forces described by the Agreement Hierarchy: syntactic cohesion between controllers and targets, and spread of semantic agreement. However, we make no claims about the universality of these tendencies, and we do not exclude that, in languages other than those sampled for this study, diachronic change in the morphosyntax of gender agreement occurs on other types of agreement targets first. Finally, while we argue that the hierarchy is a useful tool to *describe* tendencies in how gender marking systems change, we make no claims about it having a *predictive/explanatory* value concerning the spreading of such changes. On the contrary, we argue that explanations should be sought in the realm of those functional pressures that are reflected in the hierarchy.

In §4, we focus on reducing gender agreement systems; emerging gender agreement systems are discussed in §5 whereas the expansion of gender agreement patterns is treated in §6.

4 Reducing gender agreement systems

4.1 Attested processes of change

In our data, the reduction and, in some cases, the loss of gender agreement result from two distinct diachronic processes: (1) *morphophonological erosion* and (2) *redistribution* of agreement patterns.

By morphophonological erosion we refer to the wholesale patterns of change that lead to the loss of inflection. Sound changes (e.g., changes in stress patterns resulting in the loss of word-initial or word-final segments) can cause loss of segmental morphology, which ultimately determines the neutralization of previously overtly coded grammatical distinctions and the overall restructuring of inflectional paradigms. This process is also known in the literature under the label *deflection*. Within the domain of nominal morphology, morphophonological erosion often affects gender marking along with the marking of other nominal inflectional features, such as number and case, which are frequently cumulatively encoded with gender. It has been suggested (see [Priestly 1983](#) for Indo-European; [Audring 2009](#) for Germanic languages) that, when morphophonological erosion affects the encoding of gender distinctions, the word classes that are likely to lose gender marking first are the nouns themselves (in case of overt gender systems), followed by the agreement targets that are more adjacent to nouns, i.e., adnominal modifiers, such as definiteness markers, demonstratives, adjectives and numerals, with definiteness markers generally being yet more stable than, say, numerals or adjectives. Personal pronouns (both dependent and independent) are more likely to retain the encoding of gender distinctions as a means to signal semantic properties of the discourse referents. In other words, under morphophonological erosion, gender agreement is more likely to be retained on those agreement targets where it is most functional to reference tracking and reference identification, i.e. demonstrative and/or personal pronouns. These may then tend to inflect based on semantically transparent principles of gender assignment (animacy and/or biological gender). In English, for instance, the encoding of gender distinctions underwent massive erosion as part of a general weakening of inflectional morphology. As a result of this deflection process, gender marking was lost on all of the agreement targets (as well as on nouns) except for the personal pronouns, which nowadays signal the biological gender of discourse referents, and for the relative pronouns which make a distinction of the human/non-human type ([Curzan 2003](#)).

By *redistribution of agreement*, we refer to the process whereby one of the several agreement patterns available in a language (for instance, the neuter) starts being used with nouns that would normally trigger agreement in other genders (for instances, with nouns that are semantically inanimate, but grammatically masculine or feminine). If the redistribution of one agreement pattern comes to affect all agreement domains, and to effectively replace all the other competing

agreement patterns independently of semantic or morphological properties of the controller nouns, then gender distinctions become neutralized. In many of the cases attested in our sample, the redistribution of agreement patterns appears to be at least initially semantically motivated: semantic oppositions generally pertaining to the domain of animacy start affecting the criteria according to which certain nouns trigger gender agreement on at least some targets. In general, the higher the number of nouns involved in the restructuring of the assignment criteria, the higher the chance that the overall gender assignment rules of a language may change. Similarly, the higher the number of agreement targets that align with the new assignment criteria, the more reasons to speak of an increase or decrease in the number of gender distinctions. For instance, when the semantic agreement patterns that are being redistributed are based on animacy, their generalization to all agreement targets may eventually lead to a bipartite, animate vs. inanimate, type of gender system, where gender assignment is semantically predictable. This is for instance the case of the Bantu language Kinshasa Lingala, in which all productive agreement targets index the animacy of the noun, whereas the nouns themselves retain prefixal remnants of the old, no longer productive system of gender distinctions (Maho 1999: 130–132; Meeuwis 2013: 28–29). In other cases, the most frequent (default) pattern of gender agreement is the one that takes over. This is for instance the case of Tamian Latvian (Indo-European, Balto-Slavic), where the masculine agreement pattern has replaced nearly all instances of feminine agreement leading to loss of grammatical gender. The redistribution of agreement patterns is ultimately a process of analogical levelling: the gender agreement system of a language is restructured on the basis of the more semantically motivated and/or more frequent agreement pattern, which gradually spreads at the expenses of others.

Table 2 illustrates the distribution of patterns of reduction and loss of gender agreement within the languages of the sample, and specifies whether these are due to morphophonological erosion, redistribution of agreement, a combination of both, or whether the exact pattern of change cannot be inferred based on the data at our disposal. For each of the relevant languages, the table also specifies if directionality applies, and if the distribution of a given pattern of change is at any rate semantically motivated. Given the limited size of our sample, the analysis proposed here is merely qualitative and we draw no generalization based on the relative frequencies of the observed patterns of change. Examples for each of the possible scenarios are discussed in §4.2, 4.3 and 4.4.

Table 2: Morphophonological erosion and redistribution of agreement in the languages of the sample where gender agreement reduction and loss are attested

| | Languages | Directionality | Semantics |
|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------|
| Morphophonological erosion | Standard Swedish | YES | NO |
| | Kelasi | Not clear | NO |
| Redistribution | Cappadocian Greek | YES | YES |
| | Pontic Greek | YES | YES |
| | Rumeic Greek | YES | YES |
| | Irish | YES | YES |
| | Kune | Not clear | No data |
| Both | Igo | YES | Not clear |
| | Karleby Swedish | Not clear | Partially |
| | Kinshasa Lingala | YES | YES |
| | Tamian Latvian | Partially | Partially |
| Not clear | Aghul | – | – |
| | Kundjeyhmi | – | – |
| | Lezgian | – | – |
| | Udi | – | – |

Table 3: Personal Pronouns in Standard Swedish

| | M | F | PL |
|------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Nominative | <i>han</i> ‘he’ | <i>hon</i> ‘she’ | <i>de</i> ‘they’ |
| Genitive | <i>hans</i> ‘his’ | <i>hennes</i> ‘her’ | <i>deras</i> ‘their’ |
| Accusative | <i>honom</i> ‘him’ | <i>henne</i> ‘her’ | <i>dem</i> ‘them’ |

4.2 Reduction and loss by morphophonological erosion

In Standard Swedish, the opposition between masculine and feminine gender is retained in the inflectional paradigm of the independent third person pronouns (see Table 3), but has been lost elsewhere.⁹

The Masculine and Feminine singular forms of the third person pronouns are used to signal the biological gender of human and other animate referents.¹⁰

⁹In written language, a masculine suffix *-e* may still sometimes be used on adjectives to mark masculine agreement.

¹⁰During the last decade, a biological gender-neutral form, *hen* has been introduced. Its frequency of use has rapidly increased, both in written and spoken Swedish discourse.

With non-animate entities, the demonstrative pronouns *den*, Common Gender, and *det*, Neuter Gender, are used instead, and the choice between the two is based on the lexical gender of nouns. In sum, in the pronominal domain, Standard Swedish has a four-way gender distinction: Masculine, Feminine, Common, Neuter, with a split between animate and inanimate referents governing the distribution of these gender values. Within the domain of adnominal modification, Swedish distinguishes between a Common and a Neuter Gender only: *en person* ‘a person’ (Common Gender), and *ett hus* ‘a house’ (Neuter Gender). Historically, the Common Gender is the result of a merger between the Feminine and Masculine genders. Many nonstandard varieties of Swedish, as well as many other Scandinavian varieties, retain a tripartite gender system. Tripartite gender systems were found all over Scandinavia before the standard varieties with a bipartite gender system, such as Danish and Swedish, started spreading.¹¹ One of the Swedish dialects which still retains a fully productive tripartite gender system is Elfdalian, spoken in the Swedish region of Northern Dalarna by approximately two thousand people.¹² In Elfdalian, the opposition between Masculine, Feminine and Neuter gender runs productively through the whole agreement system. A tripartite gender system of the type retained by Elfdalian is also attested in Old Swedish texts.¹³ The Masculine-Feminine merger in the domain of adnominal modification appears to be due to a combination of various morphophonological processes, such as the erosion and loss of the masculine *-er* ending in the inflectional paradigm of strong adjectives, the loss of the masculine suffix *-r* before the definite suffix in the nominative form of the noun, and the loss of final consonant length in the inflectional paradigm of the definite suffixes (Duke 2010: 652–654). Finally, pervasive reduction in gender agreement domains is attested in Karleby Swedish, the variety of Swedish spoken in the town of Karleby, located in the Finnish region of Ostrobothnia.¹⁴ Gender agreement reduction in Karleby Swedish is best described as an instance of both morphophonological erosion and agreement redistribution. It is therefore discussed in §4.4.

¹¹Before the spread of the standard languages, bipartite gender systems were only attested in Denmark, southern Sweden, the Mälaren valley in Sweden, and pockets of Norway where varieties heavily influenced by Danish were spoken (Östen Dahl, personal communication).

¹²Data from Åkerberg (2012), as well as from Östen Dahl (personal communication).

¹³The use of the Masculine and Feminine pronouns with inanimate antecedents continued in the written language until the nineteenth century, even though this distinction was lost in all other domains of nominal inflection and no longer maintained in spoken use (Östen Dahl, personal communication).

¹⁴It is worth mentioning that, contrary to Karleby Swedish, some other Ostrobothnian varieties of Swedish display quite conservative gender systems (for more details see Huldén 1972: 40–50.) However, it is perhaps unsurprising, that the near loss of gender distinctions is attested in the northernmost corner of the Swedish speaking area of Finland.

Loss of gender in Kelasi, a Northwestern Iranian language of the Tatic sub-branch, is also the result of a process of morphophonological erosion. [Stilo \(to appear\)](#) proposes a historical-comparative analysis of gender loss in Kelasi whereby the decline of gender marking is explained as originating from the domain of noun inflection. In Kafteji, a closely related language spoken at a distance of twelve kilometers from Kelasi, gender distinctions are still retained. However, in Kafteji, overt marking of gender on nouns is dropped when nouns are used in a generic sense or as citation forms, and gender is never marked on agreement targets when these occur in isolation. Based on this comparative evidence, [Stilo \(to appear: 27\)](#) hypothesizes that, at some point in the history of Kelasi, gender marking became increasingly optional and “went through gradual stages of erosion by becoming more and more rarely used in speech”, to be finally dropped in all domains of encoding. Even though the individual stages of this process of erosion are not known, nouns – “the crucial locus of gender in the grammar” of Kelasi ([Stilo to appear: 27](#)) – are viewed as the word class from which the decline of gender marking originated. This is why we classify Kelasi as an instance of gender loss by morphophonological erosion.

The reduction and loss of gender inflections as a result of a more general erosion of nominal morphology are widely attested across different genera of the Indo-European language family. See [Audring \(2009: chapter 9\)](#) for an overview of patterns of gender reduction and loss across Germanic languages; [Priestly \(1983\)](#) for a broader overview of the Indo-European language family, and, in particular, of pronominal relics of the neuter gender in Romance (e.g., Italian, French) and Baltic (e.g., Lithuanian) languages.

4.3 Reduction and loss by redistribution of agreement

Gender reduction and loss as a result of the redistribution of agreement patterns are widely attested in our sample. In this section, we discuss a selection of the attested cases.

The Asia Minor Greek dialects are a group of Greek varieties that are or, prior to the 1923 population exchange between Greece and Turkey, used to be spoken in Turkey. [Karatsareas \(2014\)](#) identifies five main dialects within the Asia Minor Greek cluster: Cappadocian, Pharasiot, Pontic, Silliot, and Rumeic. While the first four varieties were spoken in different areas of modern Turkey, Rumeic is the variety spoken by the Greek inhabitants of Mariupol, Ukraine, and can be considered as the historical descendant of the Pontic spoken by Greek settlers in Crimea.

Due to their long-lasting history of isolation from mainland varieties of Greek, and, partially, to a history of prolonged contact and bilingualism with Turkish, the Asia Minor Greek dialects exhibit a wealth of grammatical innovations among which a significant reorganization of the gender agreement and gender assignment patterns. This is attested in all Asia Minor Greek varieties but Silliot, which rather retains a conservative system similar to the one attested in Standard Greek and in other Modern Greek varieties outside the Asia Minor area (Karatsareas 2014: 83). Examples (3), (4), (5), and (6) illustrate the innovations attested in the domain of gender agreement and gender assignment in four out of the five groups of Asia Minor Greek dialects. We present data from the dialects that display renewed gender systems and compare them with equivalent structures in Standard Greek, where these innovations are not attested.¹⁵

In Pontic, example (3), the inanimate feminine noun for ‘door’ triggers neuter agreement with agreement targets non-immediately adjacent to nouns. In the corresponding Standard Greek sentence, agreement is feminine with all targets.

- (3) a. Argyroúpolis Pontic (Indo-European, Greek; Karatsareas 2014: 79)
i pórtá (...) móno ímoson óran estéknen
 DEF.F.SG door.F.SG (...) only half.N.SG hour.F.SG stay.PST.3SG
anixtón
 open.N.SG
 ‘The door would stay open for only half an hour’.
- b. Standard Greek (Indo-European, Greek; Karatsareas 2014: 80)
i pórtá móno misí óra émene anixtí
 DEF.F.SG door.F.SG only half.F.SG hour.F stay.PST.3SG open.F.SG
 ‘The door stayed open for only half an hour.’

In Pontic, the criteria of gender assignment are reorganized based on the animacy of the noun: semantically inanimate, but grammatically masculine and feminine nouns are to a large extent treated as neuter. This semantic reorganization is reflected at the level of agreement: semantic (neuter) agreement with inanimate masculine and feminine nouns is attested on all agreement targets but prenominal definite articles, which instead agree with the grammatical gender of the nouns (i.e. they take masculine or feminine inflection).

In Rumeic, example (4), the pattern of semantic agreement observed in Pontic is generalized to all targets: the inanimate noun for ‘winter’ (which is masculine in Standard Greek) triggers neuter agreement with all agreement targets.

¹⁵Notice that the Standard Greek examples reported by Karatsareas (2014) can be either full or partial translations of the corresponding example in one of the Asian Minor Greek dialects.

- (4) a. Rumeic (Indo-European, Greek; Karatsareas 2014: 79)
tu ko mas to fumós en xlísku
 DEF.N.SG POSS.N.SG 1PL.GEN DEF.N.SG winter.N.SG be.PRS.3SG tepid.N.SG
 ‘Our winter is tepid’.
- b. Standard Greek (Indo-European, Greek; Karatsareas 2014: 80)
o ðikós mas o çimónas
 DEF.M.SG POSS.M.SG 1PL.GEN DEF.M.SG winter.M.SG
 ‘our winter’

In Rumeic, the gender system has been restructured based on semantic grounds: male entities are assigned to the Masculine Gender, female entities to the Feminine and inanimate entities to the Neuter.

A different path is taken by Pharasiot and Cappadocian, where the redistribution of the neuter gender agreement pattern leads to a more pervasive erosion of the gender system. In Pharasiot, as illustrated in example (5), the animate noun for ‘woman’ (feminine in Standard Greek) triggers neuter agreement with all targets but the definite article adjacent to the noun.

- (5) a. Pharasiot (Indo-European, Greek; Karatsareas 2014: 79)
férinke adzíno i néka xortáre
 bring.PST.3.SG DEM.DIST.N.SG DEF.F.SG woman.F.SG herb.PL
 ‘that woman used to bring herbs.’
- b. Standard Greek (Indo-European, Greek; Karatsareas 2014: 80)
ecíni i jinéka
 DEM.DIST.F.SG DEF.F.SG woman.F.SG
 ‘that woman’

In Pharasiot, the neuter agreement has been generalized to all nominal types (animate and inanimate) and the semantic opposition between animate and inanimate entities has been neutralized. Only the agreement targets that are most adjacent to nouns retain agreement with the original grammatical gender of the noun (in this case with the Feminine).

Finally, in Cappadocian, example (6), the neuter agreement pattern is generalized to all nouns, irrespective of animacy and type of target (the noun for ‘wall’ is masculine in Standard Greek).

- (6) a. Axó Cappadocian (Indo-European, Greek; Karatsareas 2014: 79)

t spitçú ta ndix(u)s xtizména
DEF.SG.GEN house.SG.GEN DEF.PL wall.PL built.PL

‘The walls of the house (are) built.’

- b. Standard Greek (Indo-European, Greek; Karatsareas 2014: 80)

i tíçi ine xtixméni
DEF.M.PL wall.M.PL be.PRS.3PL built.M.PL

‘the walls are built’.

In Cappadocian, pervasive redistribution of the neuter agreement pattern has led to complete gender loss, whereby agreement patterns only index number distinctions, in this case that the noun is plural.¹⁶

Using internal reconstruction, historical data, and data from contemporary varieties of Pontic spoken in Greece, Karatsareas (2014) shows that two main orders of facts account for the rise and spread of semantic agreement in Pontic. On the one hand, the triggers of semantic agreement are nouns at the bottom of the Individuation Hierarchy (Sasse 1993), that is, inanimate mass and abstract nouns that are grammatically assigned to the masculine or feminine genders. These are typical instances of hybrid nouns, i.e., nouns whose denotational semantics is in conflict with their grammatical gender assignment (these nouns denote inanimate entities, but are grammatically masculine or feminine). On the other hand, according to Karatsareas’ reconstruction, the spreading of semantic agreement starts from the personal (and demonstrative) pronouns. In Pontic, the sole agreement targets that are left untouched by these redistribution patterns are those that are most adjacent to nouns, i.e., pronominal definite articles. Rumeic is the only Asia Minor Greek dialect where semantic agreement has become generalized to all nouns and targets leading to a gender system which is still tripartite (Masculine, Feminine, Neuter), but in which assignment rules and agreement patterns are entirely semantic. Conversely, in Pharasiot and Cappadocian, the generalization of the neuter agreement pattern to human nouns has paved the way for a more pervasive erosion of gender marking.¹⁷ This process of erosion has turned into complete loss in (varieties of) Cappadocian only. The loss of gender in Cappadocian Greek is seen by Karatsareas (2014: 99) as reasonably connected

¹⁶Feminine and masculine agreement survive in the singular form of definite articles preceding nouns only in the Delmesó, Potámbia, and Silata varieties of Cappadocian (Karatsareas 2014: 97).

¹⁷A similar development is attested in some more recent varieties of Pontic, where at least human nouns denoting female referents systematically trigger neuter agreement (Karatsareas 2014: 96–97).

with the fact that, among all Asia Minor Greek varieties, this is the one with the longest and tightest history of contact and bilingualism with Turkish. A summary of the patterns of agreement redistribution attested in Pontic, Rumeic, and Cappadocian Greek is given in Figure 3.

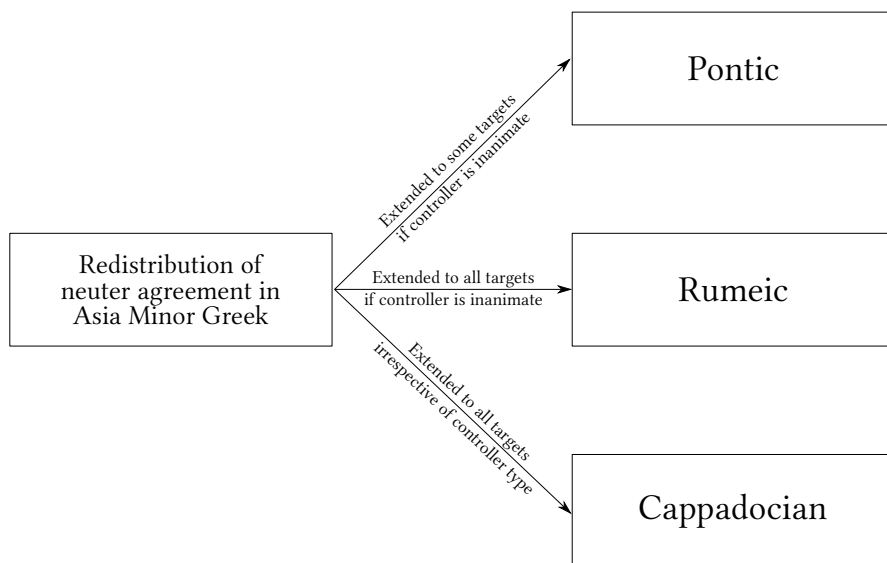


Figure 3: Neuter Agreement in the Asia Minor Greek dialects

Semantically motivated redistribution of gender agreement patterns also occurs in contemporary varieties of urban Irish as documented by [Frenda \(2011\)](#). In these non-standard varieties of Irish (which Frenda classifies as “non-native”), masculine agreement is increasingly used as the default agreement pattern for grammatically feminine nouns denoting inanimate entities. The redistribution is very pervasive in the domain of personal pronouns where the gender assignment system appears to be largely based on an opposition between “female referent” (marked by the Feminine Pronoun) and “everything else” (marked by the Masculine Pronoun). In the domain of adnominal modification, controller nouns that are grammatically feminine but semantically inanimate still trigger feminine agreement (this is attested in 88% of the examined cases; see [Frenda 2011: 17](#), Figure 1).

In sum, the data from our sample suggest that patterns of agreement redistribution tend to be constrained by the syntactic cohesion between controller nouns and agreement targets. Those agreement targets that are most adjacent to nouns are the ones that are affected last by the spreading of innovations.

4.4 Combined and unclear cases

In some cases, both morphophonological erosion and agreement redistribution are attested in one and the same language, albeit not necessarily as the result of co-occurrent patterns of change. One such case is Igo, a Ghana-Togo-Mountain language of the Kwa subfamily of the Atlantic-Congo family, spoken by approximately 6.000 people (Gblem-Poidi 2007). In general, the Ghana-Togo-Mountain languages represent an ideal test case for an intragenealogical study of the diachrony of gender systems and their evolving complexity (for a historical-comparative overview, see also the contribution by Güldemann & Fiedler 2019 [in Volume I]). Some languages within the family, such as Selee (Agbetsoamedo 2014) and Siwi (Dingemans 2009), display very productive gender systems characterized by a high number of (non-sex-based) gender distinctions, pervasive agreement and overt marking of gender on nouns. Some other languages (e.g., Animere) present heavily eroded and completely semanticized systems of gender assignment and gender agreement, whereby gender assignment and agreement are animacy-based, and traditional noun class marking on nouns is retained merely as a means of marking singular/plural distinctions. Finally, a few other languages, such as Ikposo (Soubrier 2013), have lost gender completely and retain relics of the extinct gender marking system only on nouns. Igo provides us with an example of a system in transition from animacy-based gender distinctions (of the Animere type) to complete loss of gender (of the Ikposo type). Gblem-Poidi (2007) argues that the original gender system of Igo consisted of eleven non-sex-based genders whose distribution paralleled the eleven pairings of singular and plural nominal prefixes still in use in the language. Nowadays, however, in formal registers of Igo,¹⁸ only an animate/inanimate type of distinction is marked on the agreement targets. It can thus be assumed that this animacy-based gender system is already an eroded system, and that this process of erosion may have occurred through the spreading of semantic, animacy-based agreement. Albeit preferred in formal registers and still in use among the older generations, the animacy-based gender system of Igo is described by Gblem-Poidi (2007) as under threat, highly eroded in the speech of middle-aged speakers, and practically unused by the younger speakers. The ongoing loss of gender distinctions in Igo is the result of the erosion of segmental gender morphology. Gender agreement morphemes are omitted in actual discourse while their tonal patterns are retained in the form of floating tones that encroach upon the immediately fol-

¹⁸Those in use in the literacy program and in the New Testament Translation (Honorine Gblem-Poidi, personal communication).

lowing tonal segments. Interestingly, in spoken use, the former animate gender agreement markers (*ù-* and *bù-*) are resumed and reanalyzed as nominal number markers, whereby *ù-* marks the singular with both animate and inanimate nouns, and *bù-* the plural, but only with animate nouns. Example (7) shows overt plural marking with animate nouns and zero marking with inanimate.

- (7) Igo (Niger-Congo, Kwa, Ghana-Togo-Mountain; Gblem-Poidi 2007: 59)
- a. *bégù l̥ b̥ dā wūlū*
 children DEF PL PROG.SBJ dry.out
 ‘The children are losing weight’.
 - b. *ātī l̥ dāā wūlū*
 trees DEF PROG.SBJ dry.out
 ‘The trees are dying out’.

Based on the data at our disposal, it is not possible to determine whether the loss of segmental gender marking affects all agreement targets at once or is gradually spreading from one agreement domain to the other.

Another instance of pervasive reduction of gender agreement morphology which seemingly results from a combination of morphophonological erosion and agreement redistribution is Karleby Swedish. In this variety of Swedish, gender distinctions have been lost on all agreement targets except for the definite articles (immediately adjacent to nouns) and the demonstrative and personal pronouns. These retain a tripartite distinction between Masculine, Feminine and Neuter gender. The masculine and feminine forms are however used only when the controller noun denotes human beings; in all other cases only one form (the Neuter) is used both in the domain of definite and indefinite articles and with demonstrative and anaphoric pronouns (Huldén 1972; Hultman 1894). It is reasonable to think that this superimposed animacy-based distinction (whereby only nouns denoting humans trigger a masculine/feminine distinction) might have spread from the domain of anaphoric pronouns (where, for instance, it is also found in Standard Swedish) to the definite articles.

In the Tamian dialects of Latvian, loss of gender marking is also the result of a complex interplay between morphophonological erosion and agreement redistribution. According to the recent comparative study by Wälchli (2017), the loss of short vowels in final syllables caused the neutralization of the opposition between masculine and feminine gender in the accusative plural of nominal paradigms. The neutralization pattern later extended to the demonstratives. This paved the way to several processes of redistribution that led to the gradual generalization of masculine agreement to other types of targets (for instance,

past participles and predicative adjectives), but never to all instances of gender agreement. As underscored by Wälchli (2017), and contrary to what suggested in previous literature (Rudzite 1980), the unfolding of these developments varies substantially across different Tamian varieties and cannot be subsumed under one unitary model of change.

For three of the sampled languages, Kundjeyhmi (Central Gunwinyguan), Udi (Lezgi), and Aghul (Lezgi), the patterns of change behind the reduction and loss of gender agreement patterns cannot be fully inferred based on the data at our disposal.

4.5 Reducing gender agreement systems: summary

In our data, the reduction and loss of gender agreement can be described as the result of two distinct processes: morphophonological erosion and redistribution of agreement. We also found evidence for some directional effects in the way in which these developments spread. The morphophonological erosion of gender inflections tends to spread from nouns to those agreement targets that are syntactically more adjacent to nouns (i.e., adnominal modifiers). Conversely, the redistribution of agreement patterns affects anaphoric pronouns (i.e., the agreement targets that are least adjacent to nouns) first. In our sample, these directional effects are attested across different language families and different types of gender systems, which makes it reasonable to hypothesize that they may respond to more general, possibly universal, tendencies in language change. Furthermore, we believe that these directional effects are due to two distinct types of functional constraints: the syntactic cohesion between agreement targets and their controllers, on the one hand, and the sensitivity of agreement targets to semantic properties of discourse referents, on the other hand. The higher the syntactic cohesion (e.g. with definite and indefinite articles), the lower the sensitivity to referential properties, and vice versa (personal pronouns have looser syntactic cohesion with nouns and are therefore more sensitive to semantics). We suggest that the Agreement Hierarchy, a generalization over observed tendencies in the distribution of syntactic and semantic agreement, makes it possible to detect and describe the connection between these two opposite tendencies. This is because, as also outlined in §3, the two ends of the scale, attributive modifiers and personal pronouns, represent instances of highest and lowest degree of syntactic cohesion, and lowest and highest likelihood of semantic agreement, respectively. In §7 we discuss how these different diachronic developments pattern with the evolution of gender complexity.

5 Emerging gender agreement systems

The literature on the rise of grammatical gender is vast, and cannot be reported here in detail. Broadly speaking, two opposite scenarios have been proposed in order to account for the origin of grammatical gender systems. According to the first scenario, the development of classificatory strategies precedes the rise of gender agreement patterns. Gender systems originate from classifiers and classificatory nouns that grammaticalize as agreement markers and, eventually, as gender markers on nouns (Greenberg 1978b; Corbett 1991). According to the second scenario, the development of agreement precedes the development of classificatory distinctions. Nichols (1992: 139–142) argues that the development of classificatory distinctions encroaches on preexisting (person and/or number) agreement patterns whose distribution may be based on covert, in the sense of not morphosyntactically realized, animacy distinctions or on other highly cognitively salient types of distinctions. Against this background, the debate on the origins of grammatical gender systems has focused on a diverse variety of gendered language families, such as Indo-European (Matasović 2004; Luraghi 2011), Atlantic-Congo (Greenberg 1978b; Williamson 1994), Eastern Nilotic (Heine & Vossen 1983), or on individual languages such as the Boran language Miraña (Seifart 2005) or the Southern Daly language Ngan'gityemerri (Reid 1997).

In this section we focus on the hitherto understudied semantic and morphosyntactic properties of young, non-mature (in the sense of Dahl 2004) gender systems. Two main types of young gender agreement systems are brought to attention in this work: (1) emerging gender systems that result from the grammaticalization of light nouns, such as the noun for “woman”, as generalized anaphoric devices (see Wälchli 2019 [this volume]) and (2) emerging gender systems that result from the rise of marginal agreement patterns in the domain of adnominal modification, which we discuss in this section. In line with the tendencies also observed for the decline and loss of gender agreement, the two types of emerging gender agreement systems discussed in this volume appear to flag the agreement domains at the two opposite ends of the Agreement Hierarchy (the attributive domain and the anaphoric domain). Neither of these systems, however, originates from classifiers or pre-existing agreement patterns.¹⁹

While it is impossible to predict whether these emergent patterns of gender agreement will develop into more grammaticalized types of systems, we believe

¹⁹The emergence of gender agreement from the grammaticalization of classificatory light nouns is studied, for instance, by Grinevald & Seifart (2004) and Seifart (2005), with a special focus on Amazonian languages.

that they offer a unique insight into the rise of complexity in the domain of gender marking as well as into its stability and transmissibility. In the languages of our sample, the emergence of gender agreement in the domain of adnominal modification can result either from language-internal developments or from language contact. These two cases are discussed separately in the remainder of this section.

5.1 Language-internal development of gender: Nalca

Nalca is a Mek language of the Nuclear Trans-New Guinea family spoken in the Highlands of Tanah Papua. The gender system of Nalca is described by Wälchli (2018), both from a synchronic and diachronic perspective. Nalca has a sex-based gender system, with five gender distinctions and semantic and formal (phonological) assignment; gender distinctions are not overtly coded on nouns and the sole targets of gender agreement are a set of function words, which, beside marking gender, also work as case and deictic marking hosts. The gender markers of Nalca and their respective labels are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Gender in Nalca

| Gender | Marker |
|---|------------|
| Masculine (some human males) | <i>be-</i> |
| Feminine (some human females) | <i>ge-</i> |
| Neuter/nouns with Consonant + Vowel phonotactic structure (CV), ‘the thing(s) that...’ | <i>ne-</i> |
| Default Noun | <i>e-</i> |
| Default Phrase (locative, adverbs) | <i>a-</i> |

Gender agreement in Nalca is noun phrase internal and strongly tied to linear adjacency between controller nouns and agreement targets. When the adjacency condition is not fulfilled, or when the controller noun is not preceded by attributive adjectives (which favor the expression of gender), inherent gender distinctions are neutralized and the agreement pattern triggered on the case/deictic host is that of the Default Phrase gender *a-*, which is typically used with non-prototypical controllers. This illustrated in (8).

(8) Nalca (Mek; Wälchli 2018: 71)

me: a-ra gelelinga sovb-vka
 child(CV) DP-TOP unnoticed enclose.in.netbag-CVB
bo-ba-lam-e:k. Nauba me: ne:-ra al-biyvk. Me:k
 carry-go-HAB/IPVF-PST.3PL. big child(CV) CV-TOP 3SG-alone. small
me: ne:-ra sovb-vka bo-ba-lam-e:k
 child.CV CV-TOP enclose.in.netbag-CVB carry-go-HAB/IPVF-PST.3PL
 ‘They carried the boy away secretly in a netbag. A big boy went by himself. A small boy they carried in a netbag.’

The Nalca noun for ‘child’ *me:* is Neuter (it has a CV type of phonotactic structure). However neuter agreement is marked only when the noun is accompanied by the attributive modifiers for ‘big’ and ‘small’. When it occurs on its own, as in the first of the three sentences exemplified in (8), the Default Phrase gender agreement *a-* is selected.

Wälchli (2018) describes gender in Nalca as a recent innovation within Mek languages. The gender markers of Nalca have cognates in all related Mek languages, but in none of these languages are these markers part of a system of classificatory distinctions in paradigmatic opposition with each other. In Nalca, an emergent system of nominal classification has resulted from a complex array of multiple, independent patterns of language change. The onset of this evolutionary process is the reinterpretation of a uniqueness/saliency marker targeting the top end of the Animacy Hierarchy (*bi-*) as an agreement marker in opposition with *a-*, probably marking non-uniqueness and low animacy (Wälchli 2018). This type of system is attested in the neighboring languages Eipo and Una, where a high degree of animacy is flagged by the marker *bi-*.

5.2 Contact-induced gender emergence

Contact-induced gender emergence presupposes borrowing of agreement patterns, a phenomenon which is argued to take place only in the context of prolonged contact between two or more speech communities, presupposing child bi-/multilingualism (Thomason & Kaufman 1992; Thomason 2001; Trudgill 2011). The three languages discussed in this section – Chamorro (Austronesian), Lekeitio Basque (Basque), Shumcho (Sino-Tibetan) – fit this scenario in that: (1) they show instances of borrowed gender agreement, (2) they are spoken in a situation of intense and prolonged contact with the languages from which the agreement patterns are borrowed.

We begin our overview of contact-induced gender systems with Chamorro, an independent branch within the Austronesian family, spoken in the Northern Mariana Islands. If borrowed patterns of gender agreement are excluded, in Chamorro, nominal classification is restricted to a small set of classifiers, which are almost exclusively used in possessive constructions. Definite articles vary depending on the information structure status of the nominal they modify (they are sensitive to focus), and there is no gender marking on personal pronouns nor noun-phrase internal agreement, apart from optional multiple plural marking (Stolz 2012: 111). Contact between Chamorro and Spanish starts on an occasional basis during the 16th century, it reaches its apex during the Spanish colonization (between the 17th to end of the 19th century), before it starts declining with the advent of the US occupation, and terminates after World War I. The emergent gender system of Chamorro is described in detail by Stolz (2012). Sex-based gender distinctions manifested through agreement on adnominal modifiers emerged in the language as a result of borrowing of nouns and property words from Spanish. The gender system of Spanish is based on a masculine vs. feminine type of opposition with a combination of semantic, morphological and opaque assignment rules. In Chamorro, the Spanish gender assignment rules are reanalyzed into a predictable system of semantic assignment. Agreement with human female controllers is marked by *-a* (Spanish feminine agreement) while human male controllers, as well as any other type of controller nouns, trigger *-o/-u* agreement (Spanish masculine agreement). This is illustrated in example (9).

- (9) Chamorro Feminine (a) and Non-Feminine (b) Gender (Austronesian; Stolz 2012: 123)

- a. *Ma-nobena-na-ye i mi-milagros-a na Bithen.*
 PASS-novena-RED-REF DEF RED-miraculous-F LINK Virgin
 ‘A novena is being conducted for the abundantly miraculous Virgin’.
- b. *desde antitites na tiempo esta gof bunit-u na siuda i ya*
 since RED:before LINK time already very nice-NF LINK town DEF TN
Hagâtña.
Hagâtña
 ‘A very long time ago, Hagâtña was a very pretty town already’.

In (9b) the Spanish-borrowed noun for town, *siuda*, triggers non-feminine agreement. However its correspondent in Spanish, *ciudad*, is grammatically feminine. Gender assignment in Chamorro is thus predictable based on semantic properties of the controller nouns, and does not fully comply with the assign-

ment rules of the donor language. The Chamorro corpus used by [Stolz \(2012\)](#) reveals 300 pairs of words that are sensitive to the distinction between Feminine and Non-Feminine gender. These can be both property words and nouns. Semantically, they cover a wide range of meanings from physical properties to character traits, from names of professions to kinships, ethnonyms, and young animals with sexual dimorphism ([Stolz 2012: 117](#)). Of these gender-sensitive lexical items, the property word *bunitu/a* ‘pretty, nice, handsome’ is the most frequent token for the encoding of sex-differentiation and agreement. With respect to the productivity of gender marking on nouns, [Stolz \(2012\)](#) finds that Spanish derivational rules for the encoding of gender distinctions on nouns may in some cases extend to Chamorro and English nominal stems as in *dander/a* ‘male/female musician’ from the Chamorro verb stem *dandan* ‘to play music’, and in *apostero/a* ‘male/female upholsterer’ from the English noun *upholsterer*. With respect to the productivity of gender marking outside nouns, adjectival adnominal modifiers borrowed from Spanish may index Feminine Gender when modifying a Chamorro noun denoting a female entity. However, the only set of words that are morphosyntactically suited to mark agreement are adnominal modifiers of Spanish origin. Finally, not all Spanish loanwords are sensitive to gender distinctions and there is a considerable amount of intra-speaker and regional variation as to which words are part of the system of gender distinctions and which are excluded; the range of this variation is still to be studied. In sum, Chamorro displays a semi-productive sex-based type of gender system, where gender assignment is semantically predictable and the only targets of gender agreement are a subset of property words borrowed from Spanish. While the system originated through prolonged and intense contact with Spanish, the evolution of gender agreement in Chamorro grammar and usage continues beyond the disappearance of Spanish as a local contact language, and follows patterns of development that do not completely overlap with those of the donor language.

Lekeitio Basque is another example of a language without gender in which marginal patterns of nominal gender marking and gender agreement have intruded through the borrowing of a (small) set of nouns and property words from Spanish, and are used to index semantic properties of discourse referents. Lekeitio Basque is a variety of western Basque spoken in Lekeitio, a town located in the province of Bisqay, within the Spanish Basque Country. According to [Hualde et al. \(1994: 1–2\)](#), Basque is the preferred language of interaction among Lekeitians, even though Lekeitio is a largely bilingual town, with the majority of speakers having an active command of both Basque (standard and local variety) and Spanish. In addition, the authors report that, even though Standard Basque

replaced
‘gender-
less lan-
guage’

is the official language of instruction, the local variety is generally preferred to the standard language in everyday communication outside the class environment as well as in formal registers of communication (e.g., communication from the mayor and other local authorities, at church). In Lekeitio Basque, *-a* is used to express reference to female entities, whereas *-o* is used for males. Similarly to the Chamorro case, the borrowed gender suffixes appear both on borrowed nouns, where they qualify as a word formation strategy for the overt coding of natural gender distinctions, and on borrowed modifiers, where they qualify as an instance of gender agreement. Examples of borrowed nouns and modifiers with overt gender distinctions are: *enano/a* ‘dwarf’; *álto/a* ‘tall’; *alúmno/a* ‘student’; *tónto/a* ‘stupid, silly’, *txúlo/a* ‘arrogant’ (Hualde et al. 1994: 108–109). Interestingly, gender marking on nouns and adjectives is also extended to Basque lexemes: *gixájo/a* ‘poor man/poor woman’; *sorrísto/a* ‘lousy’; *txotxólo/a* ‘stupid, short witted’ (Hualde et al. 1994: 109). Finally, when gender-sensitive adjectives are used as a base to derive verbs, gender markers are retained. In such cases, gender is marked through a suffix occurring between the root and the derivational suffix, leading to a pattern of affixation which is unknown to Spanish morphology. This pattern is shown in example (10).²⁰

- (10) Deadjectival verbs indexing natural gender in Lekeitio Basque (Hualde et al. 1994: 109)

morenotu = ‘to become tanned (a male)’ < *moréno* ‘dark (male)’

morenatu = ‘to become tanned (a female)’ < *moréna* ‘dark (female)’

majotu = ‘to become handsome (a male)’ < *májo* ‘handsome (male)’

majatu = ‘to become handsome (a female)’ < *mája* ‘handsome (male)’

Contact-induced emergence of gender agreement is also attested in the Thebor (Bodic, Sino-Tibetan) language Shumcho, spoken in the Kinnaur district of Himchal Pradesh in the Indian Himalaya, a highly multilingual area at the crossroads between Bodic and Indo-Aryan languages, where Hindi is the language of administration and mass media. In general, natural gender distinctions in Shumcho are encoded lexically; there is no morphological gender marking on nouns and no gender agreement on adjectives and verbs. However, there exist a number of nouns and adjectives for which gender distinctions can be marked suffixally (*-a* = masculine; *-e* = feminine), e.g. *šara/a* ‘beautiful’, ‘young person’;

²⁰ An alternative analysis of the patterns illustrated in (10) is, of course, that the gender-differentiating adjectives are stored as independent lexical items.

laṭa/e ‘deaf, dumb’, ‘deaf/dumb one’.²¹ In the majority of cases, these words are of clear Indo-Aryan origin, other cases are less clear. Whenever gender-sensitive adjectives modify nouns denoting humans, gender must be marked, independently of whether the head noun is of Bodic or Indo-Aryan origin (Christian Huber, personal communication). With non-human animates and inanimate nouns gender-sensitive adjectives are invariably feminine. In naturally occurring discourse, however, speakers may sometimes choose to index the biological gender of animals, especially if they feel emotionally attached to them (Christian Huber personal communication; Huber 2011: 76). Some instances of masculine/feminine gender distinctions of the type attested in Shumcho are also found in Jangshung, the other Thebor language included in our sample, as well as in almost all West Himalayish languages; their origin is often connected with loanwords from neighboring Indo-Aryan languages (Christian Huber, personal communication). The distribution and spread of these marginal gender marking systems in the languages of the area are, however, still poorly investigated.

In sum, the three instances of borrowed gender agreement patterns attested in our sample and discussed in this section share a number of characteristics both at the morphosyntactic and semantic level:

1. They result from borrowing of nouns and adjectives, which leads to the emergence of instances of nominal gender marking and of gender agreement patterns, respectively.
2. They are noun-phrase internal.
3. They have purely semantic assignment rules: whatever the gender assignment rules of the donor language, the borrowed agreement patterns are used to signal semantic properties of nouns, and, typically, natural gender distinctions.

Finally, the productivity of these borrowed gender agreement patterns varies a great deal in native speakers’ usage and from language to language.

5.3 Emerging gender systems: summary

The number of languages examined in this section is too small to formulate any valid generalization on crosslinguistic properties of young gender systems with

²¹Gendered adjectives can also be used as nouns, in the absence of an overt nominal head (Christian Huber, personal communication).

gender agreement restricted to the domain of adnominal modification. Yet, a couple of remarks can be made on what appear to be recurrent properties of such systems.

Firstly, all four languages examined exhibit non-pervasive gender agreement, which is restricted to one type of target only (case marking hosts in the case of Nalca, borrowed adnominal modifiers in the case of Chamorro, Leiketio Baque, and Shumcho). In all four languages, then, the syntactic cohesion between controllers and targets is maximal, and, in the case of Nalca, also tied to a rather rigid principle of linear adjacency.

Secondly, in all four languages, gender marking is *conditional* rather than *absolute* in the sense that it is constrained by (1) syntactic properties of noun phrases, whereby gender agreement occurs only if the target and the controller noun are adjacent to each other, as in Nalca, or (2) lexical restrictions, whereby only borrowed adjectival modifiers can agree in gender, as in Chamorro, Leiketio Basque, and Shumcho.

Crosslinguistic similarities between the examined systems are even more striking in the case of contact-induced gender systems. As mentioned before, in the languages examined in this section, emergent gender agreement patterns result from lexical borrowing. Gender marking patterns are transferred along with borrowed nominal and adjectival stems, and the assignment principles that underpin their use in the donor languages are reanalyzed. The resulting assignment systems in the recipient languages are purely semantic in that they especially target the encoding of natural gender distinctions with human (or highly animate) referents. This is suggestive of a possible hierarchical tendency whereby semantic gender assignment rules are preferred to mixed types (semantic and formal) of assignment rules, even if the donor language has both semantic and formal rules. Finally, in the cases examined here, the recipient languages are not genealogically related (apart from Shumcho and Jangshung); they belong to language families that are typically genderless and that, prior to contact, display agreement in other grammatical domains (such as number or person).

It remains to be seen whether the similarities between the three contact-induced emerging gender systems are due to the fact that the donor languages themselves (Spanish, Indo-Aryan languages) have rather homologous, and in fact, genealogically related, gender systems, or whether these similarities speak of more general tendencies with respect to the kind of gender agreement systems that can emerge as a result of language contact (e.g. only semantic, only noun-phrase internal etc.). Only a larger crosslinguistic survey could tackle this question. However, what the instances of contact-induced gender emergence ex-

amined here suggest is that borrowing should be counted as a possible source scenario for the rise of gender systems crosslinguistically.

In §7, we will address how the emergent gender systems surveyed here pattern in terms of complexity.

6 Expanding gender agreement systems

In our sample, the expansion of gender agreement systems is attested under three different scenarios: (1) through the extension of gender marking to new agreement domains via grammaticalization processes (as in the Northwestern Iranian languages Kafteji and Eshtehardi, and in the Khasian languages Pnar and Khasi); (2) as a consequence of contact between languages with different types of gender systems (Michif); and (3) as a result of language planning and standardization (Makanza Lingala). The three scenarios are briefly surveyed in the following.

While the erosion and loss of gender distinctions is not uncommon within Northwestern Iranian varieties (as we observed with the Kelasi case discussed in Section 4.2), in some languages of this group new patterns of gender agreement have grammaticalized in the domain of verbal morphology. In Kafteji, for instance, all tense forms of the intransitive past verb stems inflect for gender in all three singular persons. In Eshtehardi, gender inflection in the domain of verbal morphology is somewhat less pronounced. While intransitive past verbs and copula verbs inflect for gender in the third person singular, only copula verbs inflect for gender even in the first and second person singular. According to *Stilo (to appear)*, the construction through which gender agreement expanded to these domains of verbal inflection is: “PARTICIPLE^{M/F} + COPULA”. This construction consisting of participial forms inflecting for gender, followed by copula verb forms, later grammaticalized into a new type of synthetic perfect retaining the gender inflection of the original participial form. The marking of gender distinctions on these recently grammaticalized verb forms is thus directly connected with the source constructions from which these forms originate. The extent to which gender distinctions are marked on verbs across the three person values varies across languages (*Stilo to appear*: 29).

When compared with each other, the Khasian (Austroasiatic) languages Lyngngam, Pnar and Khasi display a continuum of increasing gender agreement domains. Lyngngam has a pronominal gender system, with gender distinctions marked on personal pronouns and deictic pronominal bases. In Pnar and Khasi, pronominal and deictic markers are used as pre-nominal gender clitics, which mark gender within the noun phrase. In Khasi, the encoding of gender distinc-

tions has also extended to the verbal domain. According to Anne Daladier (personal communication) the pervasiveness of gender agreement and the degree of predictability of assignment rules in these three languages are inversely correlated: the higher the number of agreement targets, the less semantically transparent the gender assignment rules. The distribution of gender agreement systems across the three Khasian languages included in the sample is illustrated in Figure 4. These observations should be tested on a wider set of languages within the family.

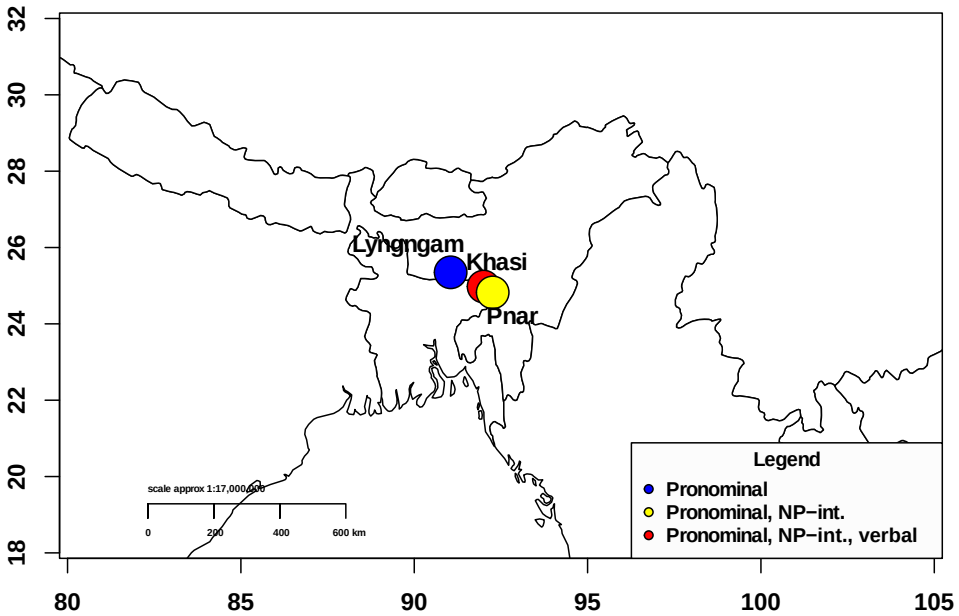


Figure 4: Expansion of gender agreement within Khasian

Michif (scenario 2) is a nearly extinct mixed language originated through intense contact and multilingual practices between female Cree speakers and male French speaking fur trade workers (thoroughly described by Bakker 1997). As a result of these intriguing dynamics of language contact and transmission, the lexicon and morphosyntax of Michif are split into two: nominal lexicon and morphosyntax are French-based while verbal lexicon and morphosyntax are Cree-based. Accordingly, Michif has two co-existing gender systems, with two different systems of gender assignment – sex-based and animacy-based – that manifest themselves through a sharp division between gender agreement within the noun phrase and gender agreement on verbs (with the exception of demonstratives,

which comply to the verb-phrase agreement pattern). The noun-phrase gender system is taken from French, while the verb-phrase gender system is based on Cree. This unique split system of gender agreement is illustrated in (11) where the controller noun for ‘mare’ triggers feminine agreement within the noun phrase and animate agreement on the verb.

- (11) Michif (Mixed Language, Canada and US; Bakker 1997: 87)
la žyma: ki:-aja:w-e:w æ pči pulæ
 DEF.AN.F.SG mare PST-have-TA.3→3^I INDEF.AN.M.SG little foal
 ‘The mare had a foal.’

The last instance of expanding gender agreement systems in our sample is Makanza Lingala (scenario 3). In this variety of Lingala, non-sex-based, arbitrary gender distinctions (and corresponding gender agreement patterns) were reintroduced during the standardization process that the language underwent between 1901 and 1902 under the influence of the Scheutist missionaries, who wanted to create an official language that looked more like a ‘proper Bantu language’. Kinshasa Lingala, which is nowadays the most widely spoken variety of Lingala and which did not undergo the standardization process attested in Makanza Lingala, exhibits a heavily reduced gender system where gender distinctions and gender agreement patterns are exclusively animacy-based. This reduced gender system is the result of the pidginization and creolization processes that are at the very origins of the history of Lingala, which is the historical descendent of the Bangala pidgin, developed at the Bangala state post on the northwestern banks of the Congo River (for more details on the history of different varieties of Lingala and their gender systems see Bokamba 1977; Di Garbo 2016; Meeuwis 2013).

To summarize, our data suggest that the patterns of change through which languages may acquire more domains of gender inflection tend to be rather heterogeneous and language-specific. However, the limited number of cases examined here does not allow us to formulate any far reaching generalization on the dynamics of gender agreement expansion. While this calls for further investigation, patterns of gender agreement expansion will not be discussed further in the remainder of the paper.

7 How simple/complex are gender agreement systems on the rise and/or in decline?

In §2, we brought up two hypotheses about the complexity of gender systems. Firstly, in viewing the complexity of gender as an evolving variable, instances

of gender systems in decline could be considered as reducing complexity and instances of gender systems on the rise/under expansion as emerging/increasing complexity. Secondly, both reducing and rising gender systems could be expected to show less complexity than their full-fledged counterparts. The data presented in this paper do not, however, support these hypotheses. In this section, we show that many of the processes of reduction and emergence of gender agreement attested in our data contribute to increase the complexity of gender systems as matched against the proposed measures of gender complexity.

Starting with reducing gender agreement, we suggest that especially in those cases in which patterns of reduction only affect sub-parts of the agreement system, whether as a result of morphophonological erosion or of redistribution of agreement, this cannot be described as a straightforward simplification process. In Standard Swedish, for instance, the merger between the Masculine and Feminine genders in the domain of noun-phrase internal agreement gave rise to: (1) a sex-based, referential system of gender assignment, which is active only in the domain of pronominal agreement and for nouns that denote entities at the top end of the animacy hierarchy (humans and, occasionally, higher animals); (2) a non-sex-based, semantic and formal type of gender assignment system, which is active through agreement in the domain of adnominal modification. When mapped onto the model of gender complexity proposed by Audring (2017), this split in the type of classificatory distinctions that agreement targets are sensitive to qualifies as an increase in gender complexity, as illustrated in (12). (The symbol “<” here, as well as in (13), (14) and (15), reads as “less complex than”).

- (12) Split agreement system and gender complexity (adapted from Audring 2017)

Matching values (between targets) < Mismatching values (between targets)

This effect can be analyzed as a violation of the Principle of Independence in that the type and number of gender distinctions available in a language vary depending on the type of agreement targets that inflect for gender. Mismatching gender values across different types of targets need to be separately specified in the description of a gender system, which leads to an increase in description length and thus in complexity.

Similarly, we saw that the redistribution of agreement is usually triggered by the reanalysis of the gender assignment of hybrid nouns. In the Asia Minor Greek dialects, for instance, the critical items are nouns that are grammatically masculine or feminine, but semantically denote inanimate entities. In some Asia Minor

Greek varieties (such as Pontic), the ongoing reanalysis of the gender assignment rules associated with these nouns is reflected through mismatching agreement patterns whereby targets adjacent to nouns retain syntactic agreement and non-adjacent targets agree semantically. In Audring's model of gender complexity, hybrid nouns qualify as a "complexifying phenomenon in a gender system" because they engender mismatches in the agreement patterns that they control. This is schematized in (13) and (14).

- (13) Hybrid nouns and gender complexity (Audring 2017)

Consistent controller < Hybrid controller

- (14) Semantic agreement and gender complexity (Audring 2017)

Targets do not have a choice in value < Targets have a choice in value

When, due to mismatches between grammatical gender and semantic properties of hybrid nouns, agreement targets have a choice in value, these choices need to be specified in the description of a gender system. This increases the description length of the system, and thus its complexity.

Conversely, when the reduction, loss or semantic reanalysis of gender agreement patterns are more pervasive, this usually results in an uncontroversial simplification of the gender agreement system. Under morphophonological erosion, this is for instance the case of English, where sex-based gender distinctions are only preserved on third personal and possessive pronouns and index purely semantic distinctions.²² Under agreement redistribution, this is the case of Rumeic Greek, where the gender system has become completely semanticized. Nouns denoting male entities are masculine, nouns denoting female entities are feminine, and nouns denoting inanimate entities are neuter.

Moving on to the emergence of gender agreement, the young gender systems examined in this paper also exhibit some features of high complexity when measured against the dimensions proposed by Audring (2017). We observe that, under contact-induced gender emergence, only a subset of lexical items within a given word class (nouns and/or adjectives) is sensitive to gender distinctions. For instance, in Chamorro, only property words borrowed from Spanish can inflect for gender, and there is a great deal of intraspeaker variation as for how productively gender agreement is used. Similarly, in Nalca, where the emergent gender

²²On the use of the pronouns 'he' and 'she' with inanimate referents in varieties of American and Australian English see Pawley (2004).

system is the result of a language internal development, gender marking is also not fully productive, and it can be switched off whenever certain syntactic conditions within the noun phrase are not met. Low productivity and optionality in gender marking count as complexifying factors according to Audring (2017): they introduce variability in the gender agreement system of a language as a result of lexical and/or grammatical idiosyncrasies that are, in fact, independent of gender.

(15) Low productivity and gender complexity (Audring 2017)

Gender marking is obligatory < Gender marking is optional

Gender marking is fully productive < Only a subset of lexical items per agreement target mark gender

When gender is not fully obligatory or fully productive, specifying explicitly under which circumstances gender marking occurs adds to the system's description length, which means higher complexity. Conversely, the emergent gender systems examined in this paper are rather simple with respect to domains of gender agreement, given that they all display one agreement target, which in all cases examined is confined to the domain of adnominal modification.

Reducing and emerging gender systems represent transitional stages between the *absence of gender* and *full-fledged gender systems*, two rather stable stages in the history of individual languages and language families. These transitional stages are to a large extent associated with phenomena that, we think, increase gender complexity as a side-effect of ongoing language change. In the case of gender reduction, we observed, for instance, a pervasive occurrence of mismatching agreements, which is due to the fact that innovations (a) do not immediately reach all available agreement targets, but rather spread gradually across agreement domains; and (b) do not immediately affect all controller nouns, but rather those with ambiguous semantics (that is, hybrid nouns) first. Under gender emergence, gender agreement tends to be non-obligatory and thus non-frequent. Therefore the main factors underlying increased complexity in reducing and emerging gender systems are partial distributions and optionality, which are ultimately connected to ongoing variation and change.²³ While we hope to have shown that some crosslinguistically recurrent patterns can be associated with these systems in transition, we think that their relative stability is harder to generalize over and depends on the interplay between internal and external dynamics of change, the understanding of which falls outside the scope of this paper.

²³This has also been pointed out to us by Jenny Audring.

8 Concluding remarks and prospects for future research

We consider the main contribution of this paper to be bringing diachrony in focus in the typological study of gender complexity. We hope to have shown that investigating closely related languages enables us to formulate empirically grounded diachronic inferences about the decline, rise and expansion of gender agreement, as well as about how these dynamics of change affect the complexity of gender systems. In particular, we found that both gender agreement patterns in decline and gender agreement patterns on the rise feature properties of increased complexity when assessed against existing gender complexity metrics. We suggested that emerging and declining patterns of gender agreement represent transitional stages between two poles: genderless languages and full-fledged gender agreement systems. These poles often appear as less complex than the transitional stages, as represented in our sample. Whether this can be generalized over all cases of emerging and declining gender systems is a hypothesis that should be tested on a larger data set and, possibly, with the support of quantitative methodologies.

We think that one additional contribution of this paper is to have shown that implicational hierarchies can be used as schemas for investigating complexity variation across languages in a meaningful way, not only at the synchronic level (as previously suggested by [Miestamo 2009](#)), but also diachronically. In this respect, we found that, in the languages of our sample, the agreement domains at the two opposite ends of the Agreement Hierarchy, attributive modifiers and personal pronouns, often function as the place from which processes leading to both the rise and the decline of gender agreement begin. Furthermore, our data suggest that at least the reduction and loss of gender agreement tend to be directional in nature, and that the type of directionality at stake is predicted by whether loss and reduction are due to morphophonological erosion or redistribution of agreement patterns.

We hope that these results may spark further research on the relationship between the complexity of gender systems and other well-known implicational universals in the domain of gender marking, such as the series of implicational universals on the availability of gender distinctions in the plural as opposed to the singular (e.g., Universal 37), or in pronouns as opposed to nouns (e.g., Universal 43), formulated by [Greenberg \(1963\)](#). We believe that this line of research is particularly promising to shed new light on synchronic and diachronic interactions between gender and other grammatical domains, and their effect on the complexity of gender systems.

Finally, one important question that is left out from this paper is whether there are any external factors that contribute to explain why and under which conditions gender agreement systems complexify or simplify. Even though many of the instances of change discussed in this paper clearly involved language contact as a causal factor, the question of the relationship between the evolution of gender agreement systems and language ecology was not addressed systematically here. Thus the answer to this question must be left to further studies. Our impression so far is that gender agreement patterns – whose evolutionary dynamics we have tried to unravel in this paper – might be a better match for the study of the sociolinguistic correlates of gender complexity than, say, sheer number of genders and/or type of assignment systems. Patterns of gender agreement directly hinge on inflectional morphology, which has so far been one of the main foci of research in testing the effects of social structures and language ecologies on the rise and transmissibility of linguistic complexity.

Acknowledgments

We thank two anonymous reviewers, as well as Jenny Audring, Johanna Nichols, and Bernhard Wälchli for providing constructive comments on previous versions of the paper. For financial support, Francesca Di Garbo is thankful to the Wenner-Gren Foundations.

Special abbreviations

The following abbreviations are not found in the Leipzig Glossing Rules:

| | | | |
|-------|------------------------------|------|-------------------------|
| 3→3 | 3rd person animate obviative | LINK | linker |
| AN | animate | HAB | habitual |
| CV | consonant + vowel | NF | non-feminine |
| | phonotactic structure | RED | reduplication |
| DP | default phrase gender | TA | transitive animate verb |
| INAN | inanimate | TN | toponym |
| INDEF | indefinite | | |

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Appendix

The sampled genealogical units are listed by macroarea and higher levels of classification are mentioned, if applicable. (Q) indicates that, for any particular language, data have been collected through full questionnaire responses; (p.c.) stands for personal communication (i.e., data collected through consultation of language experts but no full questionnaire response).

| Family by macroarea | Language | Glottocode | Source |
|--|-------------------|------------|--|
| AFRICA | | | |
| Bantu (Atlantic-Congo) | | | |
| | Kinshasa Lingala | ling1263 | Bokamba (1977); Meeuwis (2013) |
| | Makanza Lingala | ling1269 | de Boeck (1904); Bokamba (1977); Meeuwis (2013) |
| Ghana-Togo-Mountain (Atlantic-Congo) | | | |
| | Selee | sele1249 | Agbetsoamedo (2014) |
| | Igo | igoo1238 | Gblem-Poidi (2007; p.c.) |
| | Ikposo | ikpo1238 | Soubrier (2013); Ines Fiedler (p.c.) |
| AUSTRALIA | | | |
| Gunwinggu (Central Gunwinyguan, Gunwinyguan) | | | |
| | Kunwinjku | gunw1252 | Evans (2003) |
| | Kundjeyhmi | gunw1252 | Evans (2003) |
| | Kune | gunw1252 | Evans (2003) |
| EURASIA | | | |
| Khasian (Austroasiatic) | | | |
| | Khasi | khas1269 | Anne Daladier (p.c.) |
| | Lyngngam | lyng1241 | Anne Daladier (p.c.) |
| | Pnar | pnar1238 | Anne Daladier (p.c.) |
| Basque | | | |
| | Standard Basque | basq1248 | Hualde & Ortiz de Urbina (2003) |
| | Lekeitio Basque | bisc1236 | Hualde et al. (1994) |
| Balto-Slavic (Indo-European) | | | |
| | Latvian | latv1249 | Balode & Holvoet (2001), Anna Kalnaca (p.c.) |
| | Tamian Latvian | latv1249 | Balode & Holvoet (2001); Thomason (2015); Koptjevskaja-Tamm & Wälchli (2001) |
| Greek (Indo-European) | | | |
| | Modern Greek | mode1248 | Karatsareas (2009; 2014) |
| | Pontic Greek | pont1253 | Karatsareas (2009; 2014) (Q) |
| | Rumeic Greek | mari1411 | Karatsareas (2009; 2014) |
| | Cappadocian Greek | capp1239 | Karatsareas (2009; 2014) |

| Continued | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|------------|--------------------------------------|
| Family by macroarea | Language | Glottocode | Source |
| EURASIA | | | |
| Insular Celtic (Indo-European) | Irish | iris1253 | Frenda (2011) |
| | Irish (Ros Much) | conn1243 | Frenda (2011) |
| North Germanic (Indo-European) | Elfdalian | dic (ISO) | Åkerberg (2012); Östen Dahl (Q) |
| | Karleby Swedish | oste1241 | Hultman (1894); Huldén (1972) |
| | Standard Swedish | swed1254 | Duke (2010); Mikael Parkvall (Q) |
| Northwestern Iranian (Indo-European) | Eshtehardi | esht1238 | Stilo (to appear); Yarshater (1969) |
| | Kafteji | kaba1276 | Stilo (to appear; p.c.) |
| | Kelasi | kaba1276 | Stilo (to appear; p.c.) |
| Lezgic (Nakh-Daghestanian) | Archi | arch1244 | Michael Daniel, Nina Dobrushina (Q) |
| | Aghul | aghu1253 | Nina Dobrushina (Q) |
| | Udi | udii1243 | Nichols (2003); Wolfgang Schulze (Q) |
| Thebor (Bodic, Tibeto-Burman) | Shumcho | shum1243 | Huber (2011; p.c.) |
| | Jangshung | jang1254 | Huber (2011; p.c.) |
| NORTH AMERICA | | | |
| Mixed Language | Michif | mich1243 | Bakker (1997) |
| PAPUNESIA | | | |
| Chamorro (Austronesian) | Chamorro | cham1312 | Stolz (2012) |
| | | | |
| Mek (Nuclear-Trans-New-Guinea) | Nalca | nalc1240 | Wälchli (2018) |
| | Eipo | eipo1242 | Wälchli (2018) |

Name index

- Abbott, Miriam, 180
Acquaviva, Paolo, 314
Adelaar, Willem F. H., 180
Agbetsoamedo, Yvonne, 36, 60, 306, 307
Ahland, Colleen Anne, 173
Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y., 18, 99, 110, 135, 136, 140, 142, 144, 145, 149, 152, 155, 161–164, 173, 179, 180, 206, 258, 259, 265–267, 289, 296, 324
Åkerberg, Bengt, 30, 61
Aksenov, A. T., 217
Allan, Keith, 274
Alungum, John, 141, 179
Anderson, Judi Lynn., 221
Anderson, Neil, 84
Andrason, Alexander, 138
Andronov, Michail S., 95, 102
Angerer, Martin, 290
Applegate, Richard B., 176
Appleyard, David L., 173
Arensén, Jonathan E., 173
Arppe, Antti, 149
Årsjö, Britten, 83, 95, 178, 317
Artawa, Ketut, 177
Atkinson, Quentin D., 169
Audring, Jenny, 1, 15, 18, 20, 27, 31, 50, 51, 65, 66, 135, 212–216, 231, 234, 361
Baayen, R. Harald, 151, 168, 169
Baird, Louise, 177, 179
Baker, Mark, 207
Bakker, Peter, 47, 48, 61, 335
Balode, Laimute, 60
Barlow, Michael, 279
Barr, Dale J., 151, 158, 168, 169
Bates, Douglas, 148, 168, 169
Beam de Azcona, Rosemary Grace, 176
Becher, Jutta, 268
Beguinot, Francesco, 258
Benton, Joseph. B., 85
Bentz, Christian, 136, 146, 147, 149
Berry, Christine, 179
Berry, Keith, 179
Betts, LaVera, 95
Bhattacharya, Sudhibhushan, 175
Bickel, Balthasar, 138, 143, 146, 147, 150, 155, 162, 166, 169, 171
Bietenhard, Ruth, 304
Binzell, John, 291
Birk, David B. W., 174
Bisang, Walter, 139
Blasi, Damian E., 333
Bliese, Loren F., 173
Boas, Franz, 176
Bokamba, Eyamba, 49, 60
Bond, Oliver, 283
Borgman, Donald M., 181
Bornkessel-Schlesewsky, Ina, 162
Bosch, Peter, 70, 231, 275, 283

Name Name index

- Bowles, Joshua Wayne, 181
Bradley, David P., 107
Braine, Jean Critchfield, 175
Brandao, Ana, 180
Breslow, Norman E., 147
Bresnan, Joan, 163, 310
Brightman, Robert, 222, 230
Brixhe, Claude, 334
Brody, Michal, 176
Bromley, H. Myron, 179
Brown, Jessica, 178
Bruce, Leslie P., 178
Bunn, Gordon, 102
Burling, Robbins, 175
Burton, Michael L., 171
Bybee, Joan, 65, 269, 367
Börstell, Carl, 314, 315
- Campbell, Barbara, 179
Campbell, Carl, 179
Campbell, Judy, 179
Campbell, Lyle, 146, 148
Canonici, Noverino N., 173
Capell, Arthur, 174, 224, 266, 269
Capen, Carole Jamieson, 107
Carlin, Eithne, 173
Carlson, Robert, 174
Carlson, Terry, 179
Caro Reina, Javier, 226
Carstairs, Andrew, 307
Carter, Hazel, 256
Caughley, Ross Charles, 176
Chafe, Wallace, 176
Chandralai, Dileep, 175
Charachidzé, Georges, 175
Chumakina, Marina, 283
Church, Kenneth Ward, 79
Clayton, David G., 147
Clendon, Mark, 174
- Comrie, Bernard, 238, 296
Contini-Morava, Ellen, 86, 160, 163, 220, 255, 271, 291, 312
Corbett, Greville G., 1, 23–25, 38, 64, 68, 70, 135, 136, 140, 143, 144, 148, 151, 152, 156, 163, 166, 173–181, 206, 207, 210, 217, 224, 230, 234, 252, 253, 255, 267, 268, 270–273, 275, 277–279, 285, 296, 297, 299, 306, 313, 318–322, 360, 363
Corris, Miriam, 178
Craig, Colette, 109, 176
Crazzolaro, Joseph Pasquale, 246, 247
Creissels, Denis, 260, 306
Croft, William, 70, 207, 209, 217, 218, 232, 237, 277, 280, 298, 363
Crouch, Sophie Elizabeth, 177
Curnow, Timothy J., 180
Curzan, Anne, 27
Cysouw, Michael, 76, 146, 147, 164, 166
- Da Silva Facundes, Sidney, 180
Dahl, Östen, 1, 17, 18, 25, 39, 64, 65, 67, 76, 113, 137, 138, 155, 163, 164, 166, 206, 207, 217, 236, 253, 254, 263, 271, 276, 296, 333, 365
Daladier, Anne, 308
Dale, Rick, 333
Danziger, Eve, 86, 220, 291, 312
Davies, William D., 176
Day, Christopher, 110, 176
De Boeck, Egide, 60
De Earl, Catalina, 108
De Hollenbach, Elena E, 240
De Kondo, Riena W., 104

- De Suárez, Yolanda Lastra, 176
 De Vries, Lourens, 179
 Dediu, Dan, 164, 166
 DeLancey, Scott, 312
 Delbrück, Berthold, 268
 Dench, Alan, 174
 Derbyshire, Desmond C., 144, 151, 179–181
 Di Garbo, Francesca, 1, 15, 16, 18–20, 25, 49, 67, 96, 135, 212–215, 231, 249, 254, 257, 259, 260, 276, 306, 307, 312, 320, 332–335
 Dickens, Patrick, 173
 Dietze, Joachim, 225, 226
 Dimmendaal, Gerrit, 274
 Dingemanse, Mark, 36
 Dixon, Robert M. W., 18, 135, 140, 174, 179, 180, 209, 218, 223, 224, 242, 262, 289, 296, 312, 332
 Doble, Marion, 179
 Dobson, Rose M., 95
 Dol, Philomena, 179
 Dolberg, Florian, 25, 219
 Doleschal, Ursula, 301
 Donohue, Mark, 171, 296
 Dost, Ascander, 270
 Dougherty, Janet W. D., 178
 Dravniece, Sofija, 249
 Dressler, Wolfgang, 301
 Dryer, Matthew, 146
 Dryer, Matthew S., 145, 146, 152, 210, 217, 219, 258, 305, 313, 315, 316
 Duke, Janet, 30, 61
 Dunn, Michael, 147, 169
 Durie, Mark, 175
 Dutton, Tom E., 179
 Earl, Roberto, 108
 Eaton, Helen, 174
 Ebert, Karen, 311, 312
 Edenmyr, Niklas, 173
 Elias, David Lyndon, 173
 Elliott, Eric Bryant, 177
 Emeneau, Murray B., 143, 161
 Enger, Hans-Olav, 270, 273
 England, Nora C., 109
 Epps, Patience, 180, 241
 Erbaugh, Mary, 274
 Evans, Nicholas, 60, 103, 222, 224, 269, 294, 305, 333, 334
 Everett, Daniel L., 180
 Faarlund, Jan Terie, 273
 Farr, Cynthia, 179
 Fedden, Sebastian, 68, 89, 140, 179, 210, 223, 232, 244, 255, 317, 361
 Feldman, Harry, 178
 Fiedler, Ines, 35, 208, 269, 270, 306
 Fife, James, 286
 Fischer, Olga, 236
 Fleischer, Jürg, 329, 332
 Foley, William A., 178, 232
 Foreman, Velma, 178
 Forstmeier, Wolfgang, 158
 Fortune, George, 173
 Frantz, Donald, 304
 Fraser, Norman, 273
 Frenda, Alessio, 34, 35, 61
 Fung, Pascale, 79
 Gabelentz, Georg von der, 251
 Gandour, Jack, 139
 Garland, Roger, 84
 Garland, Susan, 84

- Gblem-Poidi, Massanvi Honorine, 35, 36
- Gelman, Andrew, 147, 149
- Georgopoulos, Carol Perkins, 178
- Gerdts, Donna B., 177, 221, 223, 367
- Ghosh, Arun, 161, 175
- Gibson, Lorna F., 324
- Gil, David, 136, 142–145, 151, 152, 163, 173–181
- Givón, Talmy, 68
- Glinert, Lewis, 174
- Good, Jeff, 139
- Gore, Edward Cline, 174, 219
- Goswami, G. C., 175
- Goudswaard, Nelleke Elisabeth, 177
- Granberry, Julian, 176
- Graudina, Milda, 330
- Green, Diana, 136
- Green, Ian, 333
- Greenberg, Joseph H., 16, 38, 39, 53, 148, 206, 231, 267
- Greyerz, Otto von, 304
- Gribanova, Vera, 270
- Gries, Stefan Th., 168
- Grimm, Scott, 174
- Grinevald Craig, Colette, 110, 232
- Grinevald, Colette, 39, 140, 142, 267, 301
- Guirardello, Raquel, 180
- Güldemann, Tom, 35, 208, 269, 270, 287, 293, 306
- Güldemann, Tom, 260
- Haan, Johnson Welem, 178
- Haas, Mary, 177, 266
- Hagman, Roy Stephen, 173
- Haiman, John, 179
- Halekoh, Ulrich, 148, 158
- Hammarström, Harald, 21, 171, 218, 331
- Handschuh, Corinna, 227
- Hanna, H. Morcos, 173
- Harbour, Daniel, 324
- Hardin, James W., 168
- Harrell, Frank E., 310
- Harrell, Richard S., 173
- Harris, Alice C., 148
- Hart, Helen, 180
- Harvey, Mark, 174
- Haspelmath, Martin, 97, 100, 145, 209, 277, 293, 294, 322, 360
- Haude, Katharina, 180
- Haugen, Einar, 363
- Hawkins, John A., 160
- Hayward, Dick, 173
- Hayward, Richard J., 253, 318–320
- Heath, G. R., 176
- Heath, Jeffrey, 174, 232
- Heeschen, Volker, 98
- Heine, Bernd, 39, 206, 229, 236, 246, 247, 274, 301, 327
- Hemmilä, Ritva, 179
- Henadeerage, Deepthi Kumara, 175
- Hengeveld, Kees, 279
- Her, One-Soon, 142
- Herrmann, Tania, 236
- Hess, H. Harwood, 176
- Hesse, Ronald, 179
- Hilbe, Joseph W., 168
- Hill, Jennifer, 147, 149
- Himmelmann, Nikolaus, 228
- Hinch, Heather H., 174, 224, 266
- Hinkson, Mercedes O., 177
- Hintikka, Jaakko, 71
- Hockett, Charles F., 64
- Hoffman, Carl, 173

- Højsgaard, Søren, 148, 158
Holvoet, Axel, 60
Hopper, Paul J., 298
Horton, A. E., 173
Hualde, José Ignacio, 43, 44, 60
Huber, Christian, 44
Huber, Juliette, 179
Hudson, Joyce, 239
Huldén, Lars, 30, 37, 61
Hultman, Oskar Fredrik, 37, 61
Hundius, Harald, 139
Hunn, Eugene S., 108
Hunt, Katharine Dorothy, 177
Huntley, David, 225, 297
Hurd, Conrad, 178
Hurd, Phyllis W., 178
Hymes, Dell Hathaway, 176

Ingkaphirom, Preeya, 139
Inglis, Douglas, 139
Ishiyama, Osamu, 100, 102, 327
Iwasaki, Shoichi, 139

Jaeger, T. Florian, 136, 147, 148
Jakobi, Angelika, 173
Janhunen, Juha, 151
Jendraschek, Gerd, 178
Jensen, John Thayer, 178
Jespersen, Otto, 235
Johnston, Raymond Leslie, 227
Jones, Paula, 180
Jones, Wendell, 180
Jukes, Anthony, 178
Jun, Akamine, 178
Jung, Ingrid, 86
Jurafsky, Daniel, 362

Kaiser, Stefan, 175
Kalnaca, Anna, 175

Kamwangamalu, Nkonko Mudi-
panu, 173
Kanerva, Jonni, 310
Karatsareas, Petros, 31–34, 60, 218,
231, 334
Kaufman, Terrence, 41
Kaufman, Terrence S., 176
Kayser Alois, MSC., 242
Keels, Jack, 104
Kennard, Edward, 177
Kern, Barbara, 180
Kibrik, Andrej A., 70, 89, 96, 97, 102,
232, 233
Kiessling, Roland, 173
Kilarski, Marcin, 135, 160, 163, 206,
255, 271
Killian, Don, 98, 173, 223, 233, 253,
254, 263, 266, 286, 288, 309
Kimball, Amelia E., 168, 169
King, Gareth, 286
Kirby, Simon, 327
Kirk, Paul L., 324
Klaiman, M. H., 175
Klamer, Marian, 179
Kliegl, Reinhold, 168, 169
Klinken, Catharina Williams-van,
177
Kohnen, Fr. Bernardo, 247
Koptjevskaja-Tamm, Maria, 60, 247,
314
Kosaka, Ryuichi, 176
Kramer, Ruth, 163
Kretzschmar Jr., William A., 138
Kroeker, Menno H., 103
Krute, Laurence Dana, 180
Kuhn, Jonas, 278
Kulas, Jack, 71
Kusters, Wouter, 17, 137, 162, 212

- Kuteva, Tania, 238, 327
Kölver, Ulrike, 139
- Lass, Roger, 327
Laycock, Donald C., 178
Lee, Alan, 103
Leeding, Velma J., 222
Lehmann, Christian, 208, 236, 243, 281, 294, 295
Leslau, Wolf, 173
Leufkens, Sterre, 16
Levinson, Stephen C., 71, 147
Li, Charles N., 142, 143
Lichtenberk, Frantisek, 178
Liljegren, Henrik, 210, 215, 296, 312, 332
Lindström, Eva, 178, 249
Lock, Arjen, 84, 143, 178
Lomas, G. C. J., 179
Loos, Eugene, 180
Loughnane, Robyn, 229
Louwerse, John, 179
Lowe, Ivan, 103
Lowing, Aretta, 84
Lowing, Richard, 84
Luoma, Pirkko, 179
Lupyan, Gary, 333
Luraghi, Silvia, 39, 64, 148, 163, 164, 207, 301, 309, 324
Lynch, John, 178
Lyons, Christopher, 226
- Macaulay, Monica, 107, 176
Machal, Marcelo, 104
Macri, Martha J., 107
Maddieson, Ian, 167
Maechler, Martin, 148, 169
Maho, Jouni, 28
Malkiel, Yakov, 268
- Matasović, Ranko, 16, 39, 175
Mathiot, Madeleine, 221
Matras, Yaron, 164
McGregor, Ronald S., 175
McGregor, William B., 174
McKenzie, Parker, 323, 324
McWhorter, John, 1, 162, 163, 214
Meeuwis, Michael, 28, 49, 60, 173, 334
Meillet, Antoine, 225
Mellow, Greg, 111, 233, 268, 310
Merchán, Hernanda Ana Joaquina, 104
Merlan, Francesca C., 174
Merrifield, William R., 324
Mettouchi, Amina, 260, 308
Meyer, David, 148
Miestamo, Matti, 17, 25, 53, 136, 137, 139, 160, 167, 212–215, 231, 249, 276, 312, 332, 334
Mihas, Elena, 180
Milles, Karin, 98
Minor, Eugene E., 104
Mithun, Marianne, 151, 176, 275, 298, 302, 303
Moore, Denny, 181
Moran, Dorothy, 179
Moran, Paul, 179
Moravcsik, Edith, 208, 237
Morris, Cliff, 177
Moscati, Sabatino, 308
Mosel, Ulrike, 178
Mous, Maarten, 85, 87, 173, 319
Mpaayei, J. Tompo Ole, 274
Müller, Adam, 179
Munshi, Sadaf, 175
Murane, Elizabeth, 178
Mushin, Ilona, 174

- Muysken, Pieter C., 180
- Nagaraja, Keralapura Shreenivasa-
iah, 332
- Nau, Nicole, 249, 271
- Newman, Paul, 268
- Nichols, Johanna, 1, 16, 39, 61, 67, 136,
141, 143–145, 155, 156, 163,
164, 166, 169, 173–179, 207,
209, 212–216, 233, 234, 331–
334
- Nicolova, Ruselina, 175
- Nordlinger, Rachel, 174
- Oakes, Michael P., 177
- Olsson, Bruno, 210, 222, 223, 255, 313,
315–317, 325, 333
- Oomen, Antoinette, 268
- Orkaydo, Ongaye Oda, 321
- Ortiz de Urbina, Jon, 60
- Osborne, C. R., 174
- Otanes, Fe T., 177, 227
- Otsuka, Yuko, 178
- Owens, Jonathan, 173
- Pandharipande, Rajeshwari, 175
- Paradis, Carole, 99, 123
- Parker, Enid M., 253
- Passer, Matthias Benjamin, 2, 16, 140,
144, 163, 166, 181, 209, 242,
253, 279, 302, 310
- Pawley, Andrew, 51, 220, 221
- Payne, David L., 180
- Payne, Doris L., 96, 144, 145, 151, 173,
179–181, 274, 301, 308
- Peeke, M. Catherine, 181
- Penchoen, Thomas, 173, 256
- Pensalfini, Robert, 174
- Pet, Willen Jan Agricola, 180
- Peterson, David A., 155
- Petrollino, Sara, 259
- Phillips, Colin, 178
- Plank, Frans, 70, 289, 290
- Plaster, Keith, 148, 155, 224, 262–264
- Polinsky, Maria, 148, 155, 224, 262–
264, 268, 296, 329
- Poppe, Nicholas, 174
- Premrsirat, Suwilai, 175
- Priestly, Tom M. S., 27, 31
- Quesada, J. Diego, 176
- Quigley, Susan R., 179
- Rabel-Heymann, Lili, 262, 263, 271
- Ramirez, Henri, 181
- Rau, Der-Hwa Victoria, 177
- Reed, Irene, 176
- Reesink, Ger P., 179
- Reh, Mechthild, 173, 229, 236, 274,
301
- Rehg, Kenneth L., 178
- Reid, Nicholas, 39, 244–246, 267, 274,
296, 301
- Rennison, John R., 174
- Rich, Rolland G., 181
- Riddle, Elizabeth M., 162, 163
- Ring, Hiram, 138, 139, 143, 175, 235,
247, 248, 271
- Rissanen, Matti, 237
- Rizzi, Luigi, 281
- Roberts, Marjorie, 221
- Roberts, Sarah J., 163
- Robinson, Stuart Payton, 179
- Ross, Malcolm, 178
- Rudzite, Marta, 37, 330
- Russell, Bertrand, 226
- Saad, George, 180

- Sadler, Louisa, 278
 Sagna, Serge, 257
 Sakel, Jeanette, 180
 Samarin, William J., 174
 Sampson, Geoffrey, 213
 Sándalo, Filomena, 84
 Sanders, Arden G., 89
 Sanders, Joy, 89
 Sands, Bonny, 173
 Santos, Rosine Sachot, 256
 Sapir, J. David, 174
 Sarvasy, Hannah Sacha, 82
 Sasse, Hans-Jürgen, 34, 218, 364
 Schachter, Paul, 177, 227
 Schellinger, Wolfgang, 70
 Schielzeth, Holger, 158
 Schiffman, Harold F., 175
 Schlesewsky, Matthias, 162
 Schuh, Russell G., 173, 296
 Schultze-Berndt, Eva, 174
 Schuster-Šewc, Heinz, 299
 Scorza, David, 179
 Scott, Graham, 84
 Seifart, Frank, 25, 39, 70, 114, 140, 148, 164, 206, 209, 231, 242, 253, 262, 266, 267, 301, 332, 333
 Senft, Gunter, 241, 242
 Serzisko, Fritz, 140
 Seuren, Pieter A. M., 284
 Sharpe, Margaret C., 174
 Shklovsky, Kirill, 142
 Shosted, Ryan K., 136, 167
 Siemund, Peter, 25, 218, 219
 Siewierska, Anna, 167
 Silverstein, Michael, 218
 Singer, Ruth, 258, 303–305
 Sinnemäki, Kaius, 136, 137, 139, 140, 145, 146, 160, 162, 167, 212, 214, 215, 247, 251, 296, 297, 333
 Skopeteas, Stavros, 176
 Skribnik, Elena, 174
 Small, Priscilla C., 107, 239, 240
 Smith, Kenny, 327, 328
 Smith-Stark, Thomas Cedric, 360
 Sohl, Damian G., 178
 Soubrier, Aude, 36, 60
 Spagnolo, Lorenzo M., 235
 Speck, Charles H., 107, 108
 Spriggs, Ruth, 178
 Spruit, Arie, 175
 Sridhar, Shikaripur N., 175
 Staley, William E., 179
 Stark, Sharon L., 106
 Stebbins, Tonya, 178
 Steever, Sanford B., 161, 162
 Stilo, Donald, 30, 31, 47, 61
 Stolz, Thomas, 41, 42, 61, 312
 Straus, Anne Terry, 222, 230
 Suter, Edgar, 333
 Sutton, Logan, 176, 323
 Svärd, Erik, 25, 178, 179, 210, 227, 253, 258, 263, 266, 296, 309, 317
 Svärd, Erik, 179
 Swanton, John R., 176, 223
 Tamuli, Jyotiprakash, 175
 Tang, Chih-Chen Jane, 178
 Tasmowski-De Ryck, Liliane, 278
 Tayul, Julius, 178
 Teleman, Ulf, 276, 304
 Terrill, Angela, 178
 Tharp, Doug, 178
 Thiesen, Wesley, 180, 243
 Thomason, Lucy Grey, 232, 272, 310
 Thomason, Sarah G., 41, 60
 Thompson, Sandra A., 142, 143, 298

- Thurgood, Graham, 175
Thurman, Robert C., 103
Tomasello, Michael, 73, 88
Topping, Donald M., 177
Traill, Anthony., 287, 293
Tripp, Robert, 180
Trudgill, Peter, 1, 41, 67, 162, 163, 334
Trussel, Stephen, 67
Tsegaye, Mulugeta, 321
Tucker, A.N., 274

Universals Archive, 237
Usher, Timothy, 333

Vafaeian, Ghazaleh, 92
Vajda, Edward J., 304
Van den Berg, Helma, 175
Van den Heuvel, Wilco, 298
Van der Meer, Suzanne, 314
Van der Voort, Hein, 180
Van Driem, Georg, 86, 311
Van Engelenhoven, Aone, 177
Van Everbroeck, Ezra, 268, 329
Van Rijn, Marlou, 279
Van Staden, Miriam, 179
Van Valin, Robert D., 177, 232, 297
Velie, Daniel, 180
Verhaar, John W. M., 235, 239
Verkerk, Annemarie, 260, 306
Verluyten, Paul, 278
Vincent, Lois E., 83
Vossen, Rainer, 39, 246, 247

Wade, Terence, 175
Wälchli, Bernhard, 60, 65, 76, 113, 314
Wash, Suzanne, 176
Waterhouse, Viola, 177
Watkins, Laurel J., 323, 324
Watters, John Robert, 173

Weber, David, 243
Weber, David John, 180
Weidert, Alfons, 224
Westrum, Peter N., 179
Wheeler, Alva Lee, 180
Wickham, H., 148
Widmark, Gun, 273
Willett, Thomas Leslie, 177
Williamson, Kay, 39
Wilson, Patricia R., 178
Winter, Bodo, 136, 146, 147, 149
Wolfart, H. Christoph, 176, 230
Wonderly, William L., 323, 324
Wonnacott, Elizabeth, 327, 328
Wu, Jing-Ian Joy, 177
Wunderlich, Dieter, 294
Wälchli, Bernhard, 26, 37, 39–41, 61,
67, 76, 85, 96, 227, 228, 231,
241, 249, 268, 271, 272, 282–
284, 286, 288, 291, 292, 298,
302, 308, 309, 312, 327, 330,
334

Yarshater, Ehsan, 61

Z'graggen, John, 178
Zaicz, Gábor, 176
Zaliznjak, Andrey A., 321
Zavala, Roberto, 110
Zeileis, Achim, 148
Zipf, George Kingsley, 276

Language index

Abau, 84, 85, 127, 143, 178, 229, 265, 309

Abkhaz, 175

Abun, 179

Acehnese, 175

Acoli, 246, 247

Acoma, 176

Adang, 178

Afar, 252

Afrikaans, 88, 89, 126, 327, 328

Afro-Asiatic, 66, 87, 131, 173, 174, 256, 258, 266, 268, 296, 317–319, 321, 331, 332

Agaw, 317

Aghul, 22, 29, 37, 61

Ainu, 174

Akan, 5

Akateko, 79, 80, 99, 109, 110, 123

Alagwa, 173

Alamblak, 178

Alawa, 174

Albanian, 175

Albanian, Gheg, 126

Alemannic, 126, 329, 332

Algic, 132, 176, 222, 230, 232

Algonquian, 176, 222, 225, 230, 232, 271, 309

Altaic, 131, 174

Alto-Orinoco, 180

Ama, 66, 67, 80, 83, 85, 89, 91, 95, 127, 178, 266, 267, 317

Amarakaeri, 180

Amazonian, 39, 301

Ambulas, 127, 178

Amele, 179

Amharic, 127, 173

Amis, 177

Amwi, 224

Anatolian, 334

Ancient Greek, 326, 334

Angami Naga, 79, 123

Angan, 179

Anim, 7, 222, 223, 294, 317, 333

Animere, 36

Anindilyakwa, 222

Ankave, 123

Apurinã, 128, 180

Arabela, 181

Arabic, 308

Arabic (Egyptian), 173

Arabic (Moroccan), 173

Arai, 66, 132

Arapesh, 179

Arapesh (Mountain), 179

Arapesh, Bumbita, 127

Arauan, 133, 179

Araucanian, 133, 180

Arawak, 180

Arawakan, 66, 75, 87, 133, 136, 160, 162, 180

Arawan, 223, 224, 265, 289

Arbore, 173

- Archi, 22, 61, 70, 92, 283, 294, 295, 338
Argyrouópolis Pontic, 32
Arhuacic, 180
Armenian, 75, 175
Arosi, 268, 288
Asháninka, 87, 88, 128
Ashéninka Pajonal, 87, 88, 128
Ashéninka Perené, 180
Ashéninka, Pichis, 87, 128
Aslian, 174
Assamese, 175
Atakapa, 176
Atayal, 177
Atayalic, 177
Ateker, 274
Athapaskan, 176
Atlantic, 174, 256, 257, 260, 268, 307
Atlantic-Congo, 35, 39, 60, 219, 256, 257, 260, 268, 307, 331, 332
Au, 91, 93, 94, 127, 179
Auhelawa, 83
Australian, 132
Australian Kriol, 239
Austroasiatic, 47, 60, 110, 132, 138, 161, 174, 175, 224, 229, 234, 235, 248, 331, 332
Austronesian, 7, 19, 41, 42, 61, 67, 75, 100, 109, 111, 132, 156, 173, 175, 177, 178, 226, 227, 233, 241, 242, 254, 268, 298, 302, 331, 332
Avar, 86, 88, 126, 175
Avar-Andic-Tsezic, 175
Awa, 84, 129
Awa Pit, 180
Awara, 179
Awju-Dumut, 179
Awtuw, 178
Axó Cappadocian, 33
Aymaran, 133, 180
Aztecán, 177
Bagvalal, 175
Baining, 178
Baiso, 318–320, 322, 324, 325
Bajau (Sama), 178
Balinese, 177
Baltic, 31, 175, 249, 268, 271, 273, 300, 330
Balto-Slavic, 21, 28, 60
Bana, 127
Bangala, 49
Baniwa, 180
Bantoid, 144, 173
Bantu, 5, 21, 28, 49, 60, 256, 260, 307, 309
Baré, 180
Barasana Eduria, 128
Barasano, 180
Barbacoan, 133, 180
Barbareño, 176
Bari, 234, 235, 246, 247, 251, 265, 274, 338
Barito, 173
Barupu, 178
Baruya, 86
Basque, 21, 41, 43, 44, 60, 86, 131, 175
Basque, Lekeitio, 21, 41, 43–45, 60
Batak (Karo), 177
Begak-Ida'an, 177
Beja, 317
Belize Kriol, 91
Belize Kriol English, 92, 93, 115, 127
Bengali, 149, 161, 175
Berber, 173, 256, 258, 261, 308
Berik, 179
Biak, 298

- Biangai, 86
Bimin, 127
Binanderean, 179
Bine, 89, 128
Bininj Kun-Wok, 245, 252, 269, 304, 333, 334
Bird's Head, 179
Biu-Mandara, 173
Bodic, 44, 61, 175
Bodo-Garo, 175
Bora, 101, 105, 125, 180, 231, 242–244, 250, 266
Boran, 39, 140, 180, 231, 242, 243, 262, 267, 333
Border, 178
Bougainville, East, 178
Brahui, 175
Breton, 126, 286
British English dialects, 236
Buglere, 130
Bukiyip, 127
Bulgarian, 126, 175, 270
Bunuban, 174
Burarra, 127
Buriat, 174
Burmese, 176
Burmese-Lolo, 176
Burmeseo, 296
Burushaski, 8, 175

Cacua, 128
Cahuapanan, 133, 180
Camling, 312
Camsa, 133
Candoshi-Shapra, 133
Canela-Krahô, 180
Cantonese, 176
Capanahua, 180
Caquinte, 87, 88, 128

Carapana, 79, 80, 128
Carib, 133
Caribbean, 180
Catalan, 126, 226
Cayuga, 302
Cayuvava, 180
Celebic, 177
Celtic, 22, 61, 285
Chadic, 173, 268, 296
Cham, 175
Chamorro, 19, 22, 41–43, 45, 51, 61, 177, 312
Chapacura-Wanham, 180
Chayahuita, 180
Chechen, 86–88, 126, 175
Chepang, 176
Cherokee, 275, 302
Cheyenne, 222, 230
Chibcha-Duit, 180
Chibchan, 133, 176, 180
Chicheŵa, 310
Chichimec, 176
Chichimeca-Jonaz, 176
Chimakuan, 176
Chimariko, 176
Chinantec, Comaltepec, 221
Chinese, 92, 176, 274
Chinook (Upper), 176
Chipaya, 128, 134
Chiquihuitlan, 106
Chiquitano, 128
Chitimacha, 176
Chitral, 8, 215, 332
Choco, 133, 180
Choctaw, 176
Chontal (Huamelultec Oaxaca), 177
Chuave, 100, 101, 103, 123
Chuj, 109, 110, 123

- Chukchi, 175
Chukotko-Kamchatkan, 175
Chumash, 176
Chuvash, 174
Classical Tibetan, 312, 331
Coastal Marind, 7, 222, 223, 255, 294, 313, 315–317, 320, 322–325, 338, 339
Coos (Hanis), 176
Coosan, 176
Cornish, 232
Cree, 47, 48, 230, 335
Cree (Plains), 176
Croatian, 126, 297
Cross River, 173
Cubeo, 128
Cuiba, 101, 104, 125
Cuicatec, 87, 107
Cuicatec, Tepeuxila, 106, 124
Cuicatec, Teutila, 86, 87, 123
Culina, 179
Cushitic, 87, 90, 173, 252, 266, 268, 317–321, 325
Czech, 126, 275
Daga, 178
Dagaare, 174
Daghestanian, 295
Dameli, 312
Dangaléat, 127
Dani, 179
Dani (Lower Grand Valley), 179
Danish, 30, 126, 231
Dargwa, 175
Datooga, 173
Dawro, 127
Defoid, 173
Dení, 179
Desano, 128
Diegueño (Mesa Grande), 176
Diola-Fogny, 174
Dizi, 173
Djambarrpuyngu, 129
Djingili, 174
Dravidian, 95, 100, 102, 131, 161, 175, 252
Drehu, 177
Dumo, 178
Dutch, 126, 327
Dyirbal, 174, 224, 225, 262–265
East Bird's Head, 132
East Papuan, 132
East Taa, 286
East !Xõo, 286, 287, 292, 293
Eegimaa, 257, 258
Eipo, 22, 41, 61, 227, 288
Ejagham, 173
Ekari, 179
Elfdalian, 22, 30, 61
Endo, 83, 129
Engan, 179
English, 9, 25, 27, 42, 43, 51, 65–67, 70–72, 76–78, 80–82, 88, 91, 92, 100, 103, 114, 115, 126, 142, 151, 175, 208, 218–221, 223, 231, 234–239, 250, 304, 313–315, 326
Epena Pedee, 180
Erromangan, 177
Eshtehardi, 22, 46, 47, 61
Eskimo-Aleut, 133, 176
Esperanto, 85, 95, 123
Estonian, 77, 238, 239, 249, 334
Evenki, 174
Faiwal, 127
Faroese, 126

- Fasu, 129
Fijian, 178
Finisterre-Huon, 179
Finnic, 176, 238, 249, 330, 334
Finnish, 30, 176, 238
Folopa, 84, 130
Fore, 84, 130
Formosan, 177
French, 31, 47, 48, 89, 126, 141, 175, 232, 268, 278, 329, 334
Fula, 174
Fur, 173
Futuna-Aniwa, 178

Gaagudju, 174, 304
Galela, 127
Gamo, 127
Garifuna, 66, 77, 80, 128
Garig-Ilgar, 305
Garo, 175
Garrwa, 174
Gavião, 181
Gbaya-Manza-Ngbaka, 174
Gbeya Bossangoa, 174
Ge-Kaingang, 180
Geelvink Bay, 132
Georgian, 175
German, 24, 25, 74, 89, 91, 93, 126, 175, 216, 219, 230, 239, 250, 275, 284, 289–291, 298–300, 329, 332
Germanic, 22, 27, 31, 61, 175, 216, 230, 236, 273, 275, 284, 285, 290, 299, 300, 304, 327, 328
Ghana-Togo-Mountain, 5, 21, 35, 60
Gitksan, 177
Gitonga, 256, 257, 259
Godoberi, 293–295
Gofa, 127

Golin, 100–103, 123
Gooniyandi, 174
Greek, 22, 31–34, 50, 60, 77, 126, 231, 334
Greek, Cappadocian, 22, 29, 33, 34, 60, 334
Greek, Phrasiot, 33, 34
Greek, Pontic, 22, 29, 32, 34, 50, 60, 334
Greek, Rumeic, 22, 29, 32–34, 51, 60
Greek, Silliot, 31
Guahiban, 100, 104, 105, 133
Guahibo, 104, 125
Guaicuruan, 84
Guang, 5
Guaraní, 181
Guayabero, 101, 104, 125
Gude, 127
Gujarati, 86, 88, 126
Gumuz, 173
Gunin, 174
Gunwinyguan, 37, 60, 174, 222, 245, 304
Gur, 174
Gurung, 175

Hadza, 173
Haida, 176
Halkomelem, 177, 221, 223, 224
Halmaheran, 179
Hamar, 259
Harakmbet, 133, 180
Hatam, 179
Hausa, 66, 80, 127, 173, 268
Hawaiian, 178
Hawaiian Pidgin, 127
Hebrew, 174
Hindi, 44, 86–88, 91, 94, 126, 143, 175, 293, 294

- Hindu Kush Indo-Aryan, 8, 312, 332
Hixkaryana, 180
Hmong Daw, 175
Hmong-Mien, 132, 175
Hokan, 133, 176
Hua, 179
Huave, 84, 129
Huavean, 133
Huitoto, 105, 125, 180
Huitoto, Minica, 101, 104, 105, 125
Huitoto, Murui, 101, 105
Huitotoan, 180, 333
Huli, 179
Hungarian, 176
Hunzib, 175
Hup, 180, 241–244, 250

Iaai, 178
Iatmul, 127, 178
Icelandic, 126
Igbo, 174
Ignaciano, 128
Igo, 21, 29, 35, 36, 60
Ika, 180
Ikposo, 21, 36, 60
Imonda, 178
Indic, 143, 161, 175
Indo-Aryan, 8, 44–46, 87, 90, 161, 218, 293, 294, 332
Indo-European, 16, 18, 25, 27, 28, 31–33, 39, 60, 61, 65, 70, 71, 75, 79, 80, 93–95, 131, 143, 146, 161, 175, 216, 218, 225, 226, 230, 236, 249, 255, 268, 270, 273, 275, 278, 282, 284, 285, 290, 293, 294, 299–301, 304, 309, 321, 325, 327, 330–332
Indonesian, 77, 177
Ineseño, 176

Ingush, 175
Iranian, 8, 22, 30, 46, 47, 61, 75, 161, 175
Iraqw, 85–88, 127, 173
Iraya, 84, 129, 302
Irish, 22, 29, 34, 61, 221, 285
Iroquoian, 133, 176, 274, 275, 302–304
Iroquois, Five Nations, 275
Italian, 31, 126, 255, 281, 282, 293, 294, 300, 301, 322
Iwaidja, 305
Iwaidjan, 174
Iwam, 127, 178
Ixil, 109, 110, 123

Jacalteco, 97, 99, 109, 110, 123, 176, 232
Jamamadi, 179
Jaminjung, 174
Jangshung, 22, 44, 46, 61
Japanese, 84, 97, 99–102, 112, 123, 131, 175, 326, 327, 329
Jaqaru, 180
Jarawara, 179, 223, 224, 289
Javanese, 177
Jivaro, 180
Jivaroan, 133, 180
Ju Kung, 173
Jur Modo, 127
Jul'hoan, 173

Kâte, 179
Kabyle, 79, 88, 127
Kadai, 176
Kadiweu, 84–86, 130
Kadu, 173
Kadugli, 173
Kafa, 127
Kafteji, 22, 30, 46, 47, 61
Kahua, 227, 268, 288

- Kaingang, 79, 80, 125
Kalasha, 8, 215, 312, 332
Kam-Tai, 176
Kamasau, 89, 127
Kambera, 177
Kana, 161, 173
Kanjobalan, 99
Kannada, 100–102, 126, 175, 252
Kanuri, 174
Karkar-Yuri, 132
Karok, 176
Kartvelian, 175
Kashmiri, 8
Kayabi, 85, 95, 125, 229
Ke'o, 177
Kebai, 179
Kegboid, 161
Kelasi, 22, 29–31, 47, 61
Kemant, 173
Keresan, 176
Ket, 265, 304
Kewa, 179
Khalkha, 174
Khasi, 21, 46, 47, 60, 229, 262–265, 271, 293, 308, 332
Khasian, 21, 46, 47, 60, 138, 143, 175, 224, 229, 234, 235, 248, 308, 332
Khmer, 97, 109, 123, 175
Khmu', 175
Khoe, 229, 327
Khoe-Kwadi, 173
Khoekhoe, 173, 229
Khoisan, 286
Khowar, 8, 215, 312, 332
Kilivila, 178, 241, 242, 250, 251
Kinshasa Lingala, 28, 29, 49, 60, 307
Kiowa, 176, 323–325
Kiowa-Tanoan, 176, 304, 323–325
Kiranti, 311, 331
Kiribati, 67, 68, 73, 84, 100, 101, 105, 114, 123
Kiwai, 178
Klamath, 176
Klamath-Modoc, 176
Klon, 179
Kobon, 179
Koiari, 179
Koman, 6, 173, 223, 233, 254, 286
Kombai, 179
Kombio-Arapesh, 179
Komi-Zyrian, 176
Konso, 266, 320–325
Konua, 179
Korafe, 179
Kordofanian, 173
Korean, 131, 175
Koreguaje, 128
Korku, 175
Koromfe, 174
Koyra Chiini, 174
Kriol, Australian, 239
Krongo, 173
Kuliak, 173
Kundjeyhmi, 21, 29, 37, 60
Kune, 21, 29, 60, 333
Kunwinjku, 21, 60, 333
Kuot, 81, 127, 178
Kurdish, 91, 94, 126
Kutenai, 176
Kwa, 35, 36
Kwanga, 127
Kwazá, 180
Kwoma, 127
Kx'a, 173
Kxoe, 229, 236

- Lachi, 176
Lahu, 176
Lak, 275
Lak-Dargwa, 175
Lakhota, 177, 297, 298
Lango, 173
Latin, 89, 91, 94, 126, 226, 268, 273, 284, 326, 329
Latvian, 21, 28, 29, 37, 60, 80, 88, 89, 91, 94, 126, 175, 249, 250, 270, 271, 283, 300, 330, 334
Latvian, Dundaga, 249, 250, 284, 330
Latvian, Kandava, 330
Lavukaleve, 178
Left May, 66, 132, 178, 317
Lendu, 327
Leti, 177
Lezgian, 29, 175
Lezgic, 22, 37, 61, 175, 283
Limbu, 86, 311
Lingala, 21, 46, 48, 49, 60, 173, 307, 334
Lithuanian, 31, 126, 249, 272, 273
Livonian, 249, 330, 334
Low Saxon, 126
Lower Sepik, 178
Lower Sepik-Ramu, 178
Luganda, 144, 173
Lugbara, 173
Luisenño, 177
Luvale, 173
Lyngngam, 21, 47, 60, 332
Máku, 180
Maasai, 173, 274
Machiguenga, 88, 128
Macro-Ge, 133, 180
Macuna, 128
Macushi, 180
Madang, 179
Magahi, 161
Mahakiranti, 176
Maidu, 176
Makasae, 179
Makassar, 178
Makira languages, 288
Maku, 134
Malagasy, 173
Malakmalak, 174
Malayalam, 95, 123
Malayo-Polynesian, 177
Malayo-Sumbawan, 175, 177
Mali, 178
Maltese, 88, 127
Malto, 161, 162
Mam, 109
Mam, Todos Santos, 109, 123
Manambu, 259, 265
Mandan, 177
Mandarin, 92, 142–144, 148, 176, 274, 276
Mande, 173
Mandinka, 173
Mangarrayi, 174
Mangarrayi-Maran, 174
Mapudungun, 180
Marathi, 126, 143, 175
Margi, 173
Maricopa, 176
Marithiel, 333
Martuthunira, 174
Mataco-Guaicuru, 134
Mawng, 174, 224, 258, 303–305
Maya, Mopán, 86, 220, 233, 291, 312, 339
Mayan, 90, 99, 109, 110, 133, 141, 142, 176, 220

- Maybrat, 179
Mazatec, 106, 107
Mazatec, Ayautla, 83, 129
Mazatec, Chiquihuitlan, 107, 124
Mek, 22, 40, 41, 61, 85, 98, 113, 179, 227, 228, 288, 291, 292, 309, 331
Mende, 127
Menominee, 222
Meskwaki, 232, 271, 310, 339
Mian, 89, 127, 179, 229, 232, 243, 244, 250, 251, 265, 316, 317, 339
Michif, 19, 22, 46–48, 61, 334
Micronesian, 67
Minangkabau, 177
Miraña, 140, 231, 242, 266, 301
Mirndi, 174
Miskito, 176
Misumalpan, 176
Miwok, 177
Mixe-Zoque, 133
Mixtec, 86, 107, 240, 241, 243, 250, 251
Mixtec, Atatlahuca, 124
Mixtec, Ayutla, 241
Mixtec, Chalcatongo, 97, 107, 176
Mixtec, Coatzacoapan, 86, 107, 124, 239, 240, 243, 244, 250
Mixtec, Diuxi-Tilantongo, 124
Mixtec, Jamiltepec, 124
Mixtec, Ocotepec, 124
Mixtec, Peñoles, 124
Mixtec, Pinotepa Nacional, 124
Mixtec, San Juan Colorado, 124
Mixtec, San Miguel, 106, 107, 124
Mixtec, Silacayoapan, 124
Mixtec, Southern Puebla, 124
Mixtec, Tezoatlan, 124
Mixtec, Yosondúa, 124
Mixtecan, 176
Mixtepec Zapotec, 108
Miya, 173, 296
Mocoví, 84–86, 130
Mohawk, 275, 276, 302, 303
Mokilese, 178
Monde, 181
Mongolic, 174
Mordvin, 176
Moru-Ma'di, 173
Mosetén, 180
Motuna, 178, 258
Mountain Koiali, 84, 130
Movima, 180
Mpur, 179
Mufian, 127, 141, 179
Muinane, 105, 125
Muisca, 180
Munda, 175
Mundurukú, 144, 145, 181
Mundurukú, 144
Mura, 180
Murle, 173
Murriny Patha, 333
Murui, 125
Muskogean, 176
Mwaghavul, 85, 86, 127
Na-Dene, 70, 133, 176
Naasioi, 123
Nadahup, 180
Nafusi, 258
Nagatman, 179
Nahuatl (Tetelcingo), 177
Nakanai, 227
Nakh, 175
Nakh-Daghestanian, 61, 70, 90, 92, 175, 275, 283, 293, 294, 296

- Nalca, 22, 40, 41, 45, 51, 61, 81, 82, 84–86, 129, 179, 227, 228, 233, 268, 269, 272, 288, 289, 291–293, 309, 330, 331, 338
- Nama, 229
- Nambikuara, 100, 101, 103, 125
- Nambiquaran, 103, 134
- Nanai, 174
- Nangikurrunggurr, 244, 246, 332
- Nasioi, 178
- Nauru, 242
- Navajo, 70, 176
- Ndu, 259
- Ndyuka, 180
- Nebaj, 109, 110
- Nen, 294
- Nenets, 176
- Nepali, 143
- Ngalum, 127
- Ngan'gityemerri, 39, 244–247, 250, 251, 267, 274, 276, 295, 296, 301, 312, 332, 333
- Ngiyambaa, 174
- Nicobarese, 175
- Niger-Congo, 5, 36, 75, 99, 131, 140, 144, 161, 173, 174, 306
- Nilo-Saharan, 131
- Nilotic, 39, 173, 234, 235, 246, 247, 251, 274
- Nivkh, 175
- No, 29, 236, 254
- Nomatsiguenga, 87, 128, 180
- North Bougainville, 265
- North Caucasian, 131
- North Halmaheran, 84
- Northern Daly, 174
- Northern Khmer, 110
- Norwegian, 126, 231, 270, 271, 273
- Nubian, 173
- Nubian (Dongolese), 173
- Numic, 177
- Nunggubuyu, 174
- Nuristani, 8
- Nyanja, 310
- O'odham, 177
- Ocaina, 180
- Oceanic, 177, 178, 227, 233, 237, 241, 242, 254, 268, 288, 310
- Ojibwa, 222
- Ok, 7, 75, 179, 229, 244, 316, 317, 333
- Oksapmin, 123, 229, 244, 339
- Old High German, 329
- Old Russian, 225
- Old Saxon, 329
- Old Spanish, 268
- Olo, 127, 179
- Omo-Tana, 319
- Omotic, 259
- Oregon Coast, 176
- Orejón, 180
- Orig, 173
- Oromo (Harar), 173
- Otomí (Mezquital), 176
- Otomanguean, 90, 105, 109, 114, 133, 160, 176, 221, 239, 240, 331, 332
- Otomian, 176
- Owa, 79, 80, 109, 111, 112, 123, 227, 233, 268, 269, 288, 310
- Paez, 86, 134
- Paiute, 177
- Paiwan, 178
- Palai, 217
- Palauan, 178
- Palaung-Khmuic, 175

- Palikur, 136, 160, 180
Pama-Nyungan, 174, 262, 331
Panare, 180
Panjabi, Eastern, 86, 88, 126, 218
Panoan, 134, 180
Parecis, 85, 180
Pashai, 8
Paumari, 81, 128, 179, 265, 267, 289, 296, 339
Peba-Yaguan, 134, 180
Penutian, 176, 177
Permic, 176
Persian, 175
Pharasiot, 33
Piapoco, 128
Piaroa, 180
Pileni, 178
Pipil, 177
Pirahã, 180
Piratapuyo, 128
Piro, 180
Pnar, 21, 46, 47, 60, 138, 139, 143, 175, 234, 235, 246–250, 271, 298, 338, 339
Pohnpeian, 178
Polish, 126, 275, 276, 297
Popoloca, 106, 107, 112, 114
Popoloca, San Marcos Tlalcoyalco, 86, 124
Popoloca, Tlalcoyalco, 106, 114
Portuguese, 126
Punjabi, 218
Purus, 180
Qafar, 173
Qaqet, 127
Quechua (Huallaga), 180
Quechua (Imbabura), 180
Quechuan, 75, 134, 160, 180
Quileute, 176
Ram, 178
Rapanui, 178
Rashad, 173
Rawa, 83, 129
Rendille, 268
Retuara, 162
Rikbaktsa, 125
Romance, 31, 141, 175, 228, 255, 268, 278, 282, 300, 329, 332
Romani, Sinte, 126
Romani, Vlax, 126
Romanian, 126, 329
Ros Much, 61
Rotokas, 127, 179, 265
Russian, 18, 126, 175, 225, 226, 243, 253, 273, 297, 321, 322
Sáliban, 180
Sabaot, 83, 129
Safeyoka, 83, 129
Sahaptin (Umatilla), 177
Saharan, 174
Salinan, 177
Salish, 177, 221, 223
Sama-Bajaw, 178
Samoyedic, 176
Sandawe, 174
Sanskrit, 102
Santali, 161, 175
Sanuma, 181
Satere-Mawe, 84, 129
Sawu, 177
Scandinavian, 30, 76, 273, 274
Selee, 21, 36, 60
Semelai, 174
Semitic, 173, 174, 308
Seneca, 176

- Sentani, 178
Sepik, 127, 132, 143, 178, 229, 309
Sepik Hill, 178
Serbian, 297
Shilluk, 247
Shipibo-Konibo, 180
Shona, 173
Shumashti, 8
Shumcho, 22, 41, 44–46, 61
sign languages, 315, 360
Sinhala, 175
Sino-Tibetan, 41, 44, 75, 100, 102, 132, 142, 175, 176, 311, 312, 331, 332
Siona, 128, 180
Siouan, 177, 297
Siriano, 128
Siwai, 258
Sko, 265
Skou, 178, 265
Slavic, 18, 175, 225, 226, 268, 270, 275, 297, 299, 309, 321, 338
Slavonic, Old Church, 126
Slovak, 275
So, 173
Somali, 127
Songhay, 174
Sorbian, 299
Sorbian, Upper, 299
South Tairora, 83, 102
Southern Daly, 39, 244, 246, 332, 333
Southern Puebla, 86
Southern Rincón Zapotec, 108
Southern Tiwa, 304
Spanish, 41–44, 46, 51, 107, 126, 268, 272–274, 278, 312
Standard Greek, 32, 33
Sudanic, 173, 327
Suena, 179
Sulka, 178
Supyire, 174
Surmic, 173
Swahili, 173
Swedish, 22, 28–30, 37, 49, 61, 76, 77, 98, 116, 126, 230, 231, 273, 276, 304, 305
Swedish, Karleby, 29, 30, 37, 61
Swedish, Ostrobothnian, 30
Swiss German, 275, 276, 304
Taa, 286–289, 293
Taba, 178
Tabaru, 127
Tacanán, 134
Tachelhit, 88, 127, 256, 257
Tagalog, 177, 226, 230, 233, 338
Tai-Kadai, 176
Tainae, 179
Tairora, 83, 102, 129
Takelma, 177
Talamanca, 176
Tama Sepik, 178
Tamasheq, 88, 127
Tamil, 126, 175
Tanah, 40
Tarahumara, Low, 83
Tat, 284
Tatar, 174
Tatic, 30
Tatuyo, 128
Taulil, 178
Tawala, 178
Tehit, 179
Teiwa, 179
Telefol, 128, 179
Telugu, 102
Tenharim, 95, 125, 229

- Teop, 178, 227, 254
Tepehua (Tlachichilco), 177
Tepehuan, 177
Tepiman, 177
Tequistlatecan, 177
Teribe, 176
Terêna, 180
Tetun, 177
Thai, 138, 139, 176
Thebor, 22, 44, 61
Thompson, 177
Tibeto-Burman, 8, 61, 312, 331
Ticuna, 128, 134
Tidore, 179
Tigré, 173
Timor-Alor-Pantar, 178
Tiwi, 174, 224, 304
Tlingit, 176
Tobelo, 127
Tok Pisin, 77, 81, 82, 234–236, 238, 239
Tol, 134, 177
Tongan, 178
Toqabaqita, 178
Tor-Orya, 179
Torricelli, 6, 132, 141, 179, 305
Totonacan, 133, 177
Trans-New Guinea, 7, 40, 75, 84, 98, 100, 132, 160, 179, 228, 229, 244, 288, 291, 292, 331, 332
Trinitario, 128
Trique, 240
Triqui, 106, 107
Triqui, Copala, 124
Triqui, San Martin Itunyoso, 124
Trumai, 180
Tsez, 296
Tsimane, 128, 134
Tsimshian, 177
Tucano, 128, 181
Tucanoan, 75, 90, 134, 160, 162, 180, 181
Tukang Besi, 177
Tungusic, 174
Tunica, 177, 223, 265, 266
Tupi, 134
Tupi-Guaraní, 181
Tupian, 85, 95, 144, 181, 229
Turkana, 274
Turkic, 8, 75, 174
Turkish, 31, 34, 71, 72, 77, 80, 92, 174, 334
Tuu, 286, 287, 293
Tuvaluan, 178
Tuvan, 174
Tuyuca, 128, 181
Tzeltal, 176
Tzeltal, Petalcingo, 141, 142
Tzutujil, 176
Uab Meto, 84, 129
Ubangi, 174, 219
Udi, 22, 29, 37, 61
Uduk, 6, 74, 98, 115, 123, 173, 223, 233, 253, 254, 263, 266, 286, 288, 309, 338
Ugric, 176
Ukrainian, 126
Ulithian, 178
Umbu-Ungu, 83, 129
Una, 41, 179, 227, 228, 231, 288
Ungarinjin, 174
Upper Pokomo, 81, 82
Uradhi, 174
Uralic, 131, 176, 238
Urarina, 134
Urdu, 293, 294

Language index

- Urim, 179
Uru, 134
Usan, 179
Uto-Aztecan, 75, 133, 160, 177
- Viet-Muong, 175
Vietnamese, 111, 175
- Wè Northern, 99, 123
Waigali, 175
Waimaha, 128
Walman, 6, 217, 219, 258, 305, 313, 315, 316, 322, 324, 325
Wambaya, 174
Wamey, 256, 257, 307
Waorani, 134, 181
Wapei-Palei, 179
Wappo, 177
Wappo-Yukian, 177
War-Jaintia, 224, 332
War-Jaintia, Amwi variety, 224
Warapu, 178
Wardaman, 174
Warekena, 180
Wari', 180
Warndarang, 174
Waurá, 180
Wayuu, 128
Welsh, 89, 91, 94, 126, 285, 286
West Himalayish, 44
West Papuan, 132, 160
West Xoon, 286
West !Xõo, 286, 287
Western Daly, 333
Wissel Lakes-Kemandoga, 179
Witotoan, 100, 104, 105, 134
Wojokeso, 83, 129
Wolaytta, 127
Wolof, 268
- Worora, 174
Worrorran, 174
- Xaasongaxango, 81
- Yagua, 88, 96, 128, 145, 180, 301, 308
Yale, 98, 99, 113, 179
Yangmanic, 174
Yanomam, 134, 181
Yapese, 178
Yau, 81
Yawa, 127
Yawelmani, 177
Yessan-Mayo, 127, 178
Yidiñ, 99, 174, 262, 263
Yimas, 178
Yine, 128
Yingkarta, 174
Yokuts, 177
Yonggom, 127
Yoruba, 173
Yucatec, 176
Yuchi, 177
Yucuna, 128, 162
Yukaghir, 176
Yukaghir, Kolyma, 176
Yuman, 176
Yup'ik, 176
Yuracare, 134
Yurok, 176
- Zande, 174, 219, 327
Zaparoan, 134, 181
Zapotec, 107, 108
Zapotec (Coatlán), 176
Zapotec, Amatlan, 106, 125
Zapotec, Chichicapan, 85, 130
Zapotec, Lachixio, 125
Zapotec, Miahuatlan, 80, 85, 130

Zapotec, Ozoltepec, 124
Zapotec, Quioquitani Quieri, 124
Zapotec, Rincon, 124
Zapotec, Santo Domingo Albar-
radas, 125
Zapotec, Southern Rincon, 125
Zapotec, Texmelucan, 86, 107, 108,
125
Zapotecan, 85, 176
Zome, 100–102, 111, 112, 123
Zulu, 173
Zuni, 177
ꞤAni, 327

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Grammatical gender and linguistic complexity

The many facets of grammatical gender remain one of the most fruitful areas of linguistic research, and pose fascinating questions about the origins and development of complexity in language. The present work is a two-volume collection of 13 chapters (plus an introductory chapter in each volume) on the topic of grammatical gender seen through the prism of linguistic complexity. The contributions discuss what counts as complex and/or simple in grammatical gender systems and whether the distribution of gender systems across the world's languages relates to the language ecology and social history of speech communities. Contributors demonstrate how the complexity of gender systems can be studied synchronically, both in individual languages and over large cross-linguistic samples, and diachronically, by exploring how gender systems change over time. Volume two consists of three chapters providing diachronic and typological case studies, followed by a final chapter discussing old and new theoretical and empirical challenges in the study of the dynamics of gender complexity.

This volume is preceded by volume I: *General issues and specific studies*, which, in addition to three chapters on the theoretical foundations of gender complexity, contains six chapters on grammatical gender and complexity in individual languages and language families of Africa, New Guinea, and South Asia.

ISBN 978-3-96110-180-1



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