

Research Article

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Grammatical gender reversals: A morphosyntactic and sociopragmatic analysis

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Abstract: This work analyzes grammatical gender reversals (feminine to masculine and masculine to feminine) in various languages by examining them both morphosyntactically and sociopragmatically, and is, to the best of my knowledge, the first such twofold analysis of grammatical gender reversals. The morphosyntactic analysis is based on my previous works on expressive morphology. The sociopragmatic analysis is based on the sociopragmatic framework developed in Acton (Acton, Eric K. 2014. *Pragmatics and the social meaning of determiners*. Doctoral Dissertation. Stanford, CA: Stanford University) and presents a continuation and development of my earlier work on sociopragmatics of gender reversals (Steriopo, Olga. 2019a. “A sociopragmatic analysis of grammatical gender reversals.” In: *Con temporary means and methods in ELT and applied linguistics*, eds. C. Can, P. Patsala, and Z. Tatsioka, ch. 26: 535–55. Tallinn: LIF – Language in Focus). Grammatical gender reversals result in an evaluative meaning of the noun. I argue that they crosslinguistically use the same syntactic structure, in which an evaluative head [EVAL] is projected above a categorized noun, *n*. The evaluative head [EVAL] changes the grammatical gender of the base to which it attaches, resulting in a gender reversal with an evaluative meaning. This meaning varies across languages and directly depends on the sociocultural context, such as how masculinity and femininity are perceived and valued within a given society. The data presented in this research are, in order of appearance, from the following languages: Russian, Israeli Hebrew, Lak, Polish, Lokono, Teop, Palestinian Arabic, Manambu, Tigre, Maasai, Oromo, Benchnon, Halkomelen, and Alamlak.

Keywords: grammatical gender, evaluative, expressive meaning, gender reversal, morphosyntax, sociopragmatics

1 Introduction

This work investigates the form and meaning of grammatical gender reversals across languages. “Grammatical gender reversals” are understood as grammatical forms that use gender markings which are the opposite (or *reverse*) of the expected ones in order to express evaluation (i.e., positive or negative attitudes and emotions of the speaker). An example of a gender reversal would be using a masculine form in reference to a female referent or a feminine form in reference to a male referent for an evaluative purpose of expressing the speaker’s positive or negative attitude toward the referent.

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The research proposes an interdisciplinary morphosyntactic and sociopragmatic analyses of the cross-linguistic data, thus interrelating two different theoretical frameworks: the framework of *Distributed Morphology* (Halle and Marantz 1993, Halle et al. 1997, Marantz 1997, among others) and the *sociopragmatic framework* (Acton 2014, 2015, 2016, 2019). Although there are many linguistic descriptions of crosslinguistic data with grammatical gender reversals (e.g., Aikhenvald 2012, 2016, Bruce 1984, Clamons 1995, Gerdtz 2013, Rapold 2006) and extensive sociolinguistic analyses of this phenomenon, especially in queer linguistics (e.g., Borba and Ostermann 2007, Hall and O'Donovan 1996, Hellinger and Bußmann 2001–2002–2003, Johnsen 2008, Michelson 2015, Motschenbacher 2010, 2015, 2016, among many others), to the best of my knowledge, such an interdisciplinary approach that combines morphosyntactic and sociopragmatic analyses has not yet been employed.

The framework of Distributed Morphology (DM) distinguishes between word formation from $\sqrt{\text{roots}}$ and that from syntactic categories. Thus, it provides us with the formal tools necessary to understand the morphosyntactic processes occurring within a single word. However, it does not take into account a socially relevant context, which is important in understanding various evaluative meanings of gender reversals. The sociopragmatic framework, on the other hand, was developed specifically to account for the notion of socially relevant context. In this work, I propose an analysis of grammatical gender reversals within these two different frameworks in order to account for both the form and the meaning of grammatical gender reversals across languages.

This research builds on my own previous studies of grammatical gender (Steriopolo 2018a, b and 2019a, b, c) and the form and function of expressive morphology (Steriopolo 2008, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017a, b).

The current study cuts across many disciplines, such as theoretical linguistics, sociolinguistics, sociology of language, psycholinguistics, anthropology, and gender studies. The results of this work will be of interest to theoretical linguists, language typologists, linguistic anthropologists, language-area specialists, language educators, and sociolinguists, as well as the general public interested in gender.

The current work is organized as follows. In Section 2, I will present crosslinguistic data (taken from the existing literature) with grammatical gender reversals in human animate nouns. In Section 3, I will propose a morphosyntactic analysis of the data. In Section 4, I will give a sociopragmatic analysis of the data. In Section 5, I will suggest an extension of these analyses to account for nonhuman animate and inanimate nouns. Finally, in Section 6, I will present the conclusion.

2 Data (human animate nouns)

Grammatical gender reversals have different meanings across languages. In some languages, the meaning is positive while in others it is negative. What unifies all these languages is the fact that grammatical gender reversals have an evaluative effect. Speakers of different languages seem to use grammatical gender reversals for the same purpose – to express their attitudes and emotions. Whether these attitudes and emotions are positive or negative may vary across languages. In Section 2.1, I will discuss examples from the descriptive literature which expresses positive evaluation. In Section 2.2, I will discuss examples which express negative evaluation. And in Section 2.3, I will summarize the findings concerning the form and meaning of the data.

2.1 Positive evaluation

Across languages, grammatical gender reversals are commonly used for positive evaluation. For example, endearment, prestige, and solidarity can be thusly expressed.

2.1.1 Endearment

In Russian (East Slavic), one can refer to a woman affectionately with a masculine gender form. In (1), the masculine diminutive suffix *-ok* is used with the female name *Liza*. The suffix triggers masculine grammatical agreement with the adjective *xorosh-yj* “good.” According to Doleschal and Schmid (2001: 265), such a use occurs in Motherese and has an endearing function. The opposite gender reversal (referring to males with feminine gender) has a derogatory meaning in Russian (see Aikhenvald 2012: 70–1).

(1)	Russian	[Doleschal and Schmid 2001: 265]
	<i>Liz-ok</i>	
	<i>Liza-EVAL.M.SG</i>	
	“Little Lizzy is a good sport.”	

In colloquial Amharic, grammatical gender reversal also correlates with a positive attitude of the speaker. Feminine forms are associated with affection and tenderness when used among friends. Second person feminine pronouns can be employed by men to address other men as a way of expressing endearment (Wołk 2009: 131–32; Pankhurst 1992, cited in Aikhenvald 2012: 71).

In Israeli Hebrew, men can address women by masculine pronouns and masculine verb morphology “as a sign of affection, intimacy, and solidarity” (Aikhenvald 2016: 106). Close female friends and relatives can also affectionately address each other and refer to themselves using the masculine gender. Tobin (2001: 185) observes that such instances of gender reversal are “usually accompanied by a rise in pitch and an intonation pattern associated with ‘baby talk’.”

For example, in (2a), the masculine gender is used in self-reference by an 8-year-old girl when her parents ask her to go to bed (Tobin 2001: 190 also observes that the utterance is accompanied by a “baby talk” intonation). In (2b), a young girl refers to her twin sister with the masculine gender (accompanied by using her sister’s pet name “Tutu”) as a sign of intimacy and affection.

(2)	Israeli Hebrew	[Tobin 2001: 190–191]
a.	<i>aval ani lo ayef, ani rotseh lehishaer itxem</i>	
	but I no tired.M.SG I want.M.SG to.stay with.you	
	‘But I’m not tired, I want to stay with you.’	
b.	<i>tutu, atah maskim lavo iti le-ma’alah</i>	
	tutu you.M.SG agree.M.SG to.come with.me to-above	
	‘Tutu, do you agree to come upstairs with me?’	

2.1.2 Prestige

Consider, for instance, the effect of grammatical gender reversal on the feminine gender.

As Aikhenvald (2012: 71) observes, in Jarawara (an Arawá language from southern Amazonia), “... a woman can be referred to with masculine gender if she is particularly important in the society or is close to the speaker.”

In Lak (a Northeast Caucasian language spoken in Dagestan), nouns are classified into four genders (Corbett 1991: 25), as shown in (3).

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- (3) Lak [Corbett 1991: 25]
 GENDER I: Male rational¹
 GENDER II: Female rational
 GENDER III: Other animate
 GENDER IV: Residue
-

Female nouns like *ninu* “mother” and *amu* “grandmother” traditionally belonged to GENDER II, which denotes “female rationals.” The noun *duš* “girl, daughter” traditionally belonged to GENDER III, which denotes “other animates.” Historically, GENDER III became a sign of respect for females, especially those who had a job. Over time, this gender was then extended to all nouns denoting females outside the family as a form of respect (Xajdakov 1963: 49–50).

In southern Polish (West Slavic) dialects, nouns denoting unmarried females can belong to the neuter gender. Zaręba (1984: 244) reports that in a small area southwest of Krakow, even the masculine gender can be used to refer to an unmarried woman, as in (4). This changes immediately once the woman gets married. Once she becomes a wife, only the feminine gender can be used.

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- (4) Polish (dialect, southwest of Krakow)² [Zaręba 1984: 244]
Cóż bydzi-esz rob-iół z tem?
 what be.FUT-2SG do-PAST.M.SG with that
 “What will you (masculine) do with it?” (referring to a female)
-

2.1.3 Solidarity

In Arawak (Lokono Dian, a language spoken by the Lokono people of South America), a male referent is classified as masculine if he is a member of the Arawak group and as nonmasculine if he is a member of a different ethnic group (Pet 2011), as shown in (5a, b). However, if the speaker considers a referent to be a close friend, although from a different group, the masculine gender can still be used, as in (5c). Pet (2011) reports that the masculine gender is also used in Lokono for endearment, in order to express warm feelings toward an infant (male or female, Lokono or not). Females are referred to using the feminine gender.

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- (5) Lokono [adapted from Pet 2011: 18]
 a. *li wadili*
 ART.M.SG man
 “the man (referring to a member)”
 b. *to wadili*
 ART.NON.M.SG man
 “the man (referring to a non-member)”
 c. *li wadili*
 ART.M.SG man
 “the man (referring to a nonmember but a close friend)”
-

¹ The term “rational” refers to humans and spiritual beings (Corbett 1991: 25).

² The morpheme breaks and glosses are by Karolina Zuchewicz (personal communication).

In Teop (an Austronesian Oceanic language), GENDER I is divided into two SUB-GENDERS: “E” and “A” (Mosel and Spriggs 2000). The SUB-GENDER “E” comprises personal names, kinship terms, nouns denoting pets, and those referring to people with a special importance within the community, as illustrated in (6) by the article *e*. Mosel and Spriggs (2000: 342) notice that all nouns of this SUB-GENDER denote humans and animals that are either close to the speaker or tightly bound to the community. Nouns of the SUB-GENDER “A,” in comparison, do not have such a close relationship to the speaker or the community.

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- (6) Teop: GENDER I; SUB-GENDER E [Mosel and Spriggs 2000: 334, 335]
- a. personal names:
e Kakato “Kakato (male name);” *e Sovavi* “Sovavi (female name)”
 - b. kinship terms of endearment (alienably possessed):
e iaa “(my) mum;” *e tetee* “(my) dad”
 - c. pets:
e guu “a pig;” *e kahi* “a dog;” *e puisi* “a cat”
 - d. people of social importance:
e beera “a chief (big man);” *e siisia* “a teacher;” *e maagee* “friend”
-

2.2 Negative evaluation

Grammatical gender reversals can also be used productively for negative evaluation, for example, to show distress or derogation.

2.2.1 Distress

Aikhenvald (2016: 108) observes that in Palestinian Arabic, a grammatical gender reversal in self-reference by a female is a mark of “an unusual and uncomfortable state of affairs” (e.g., the speaker is tired, sad, unhappy, or nervous). For example, in (7), a woman refers to herself using the masculine gender because she feels distressed. As Aikhenvald notices, the opposite does not hold in Palestinian Arabic – men do not refer to themselves using the feminine gender.

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- (7) Palestinian Arabic [Aikhenvald 2016: 100]
- | | | | | |
|-------------|-----------------------|------------|-------------|----------------|
| <i>?ana</i> | <i>mazru:h</i> | <i>min</i> | <i>illi</i> | <i>sa:r</i> |
| I | hurt.M:SG | from | that | which.happened |
- “I am hurt by what happened” (uttered by a female)
-

2.2.2 Derogation (based on appearance or inappropriate behavior of the referent)

In Manambu (the Ndu family, spoken in five villages in the Sepik area of New Guinea), males are normally referred to with masculine gender, as in (8a), and females with feminine gender, as in (8b).

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- (8) Manambu [Aikhenvald 2012: 39]
- a. *ke-də* *numa-də* *du* *wiya:m* *kwa-na-d*
 this-M.SG big-M.SG man house.LOC stay-PRES-M.SG

“This big man stays in the house.”

- b. *kə-∅* *numa-∅* *ta:kw* *wiya:m* *kwa-na-∅*
 this-F.SG big-F.SG woman house.LOC stay-PRES-F.SG

“This big woman stays in the house.”

Any use of the opposite gender – feminine for a man and masculine for a woman – can be very derogatory. Aikhenvald (2016) observes that utterances such as (9) can only be spoken behind the referent’s back because they are considered highly offensive.

(9) Manambu [Aikhenvald 2012: 53, 54]

- a. *kə-∅* *numa-∅* *du*
 this-F.SG big-F.SG man
 “this fat round man” (smallish)

- b. *kə-də* *numa-də* *ta:kw*
 this-M.SG big-M.SG woman
 “this (unusually) big, boisterous, or bossy woman.”
-

Inappropriate behavior can also give rise to a derogatory attitude and, thus, to a grammatical gender reversal in Manambu. For example, Aikhenvald (2012: 54) describes a case in which a man stayed in his wife’s village after getting married, which is considered inappropriate in the Manambu society (a married man is supposed to take his wife away to his village). That man was referred to with the feminine gender as the “woman husband,” as in (10).

(10) Manambu [Aikhenvald 2016: 102]

- kə-∅* *ta:kw* *la:n-ad*
 this-F.SG woman husband-3M.SG.NOM.PREDICATE
 “This (feminine) woman is (masculine) a husband.”
-

Tigre (a Semitic language spoken in Northeast Africa) presents an interesting case of grammatical gender reversal. Affectionate and pejorative singular derivations are formed by means of the feminine suffix *-ät* and the masculine suffix *-ay*, among other suffixes (Stump 1993). The resulting derivations have a diminutive meaning if the gender of the suffix matches the gender of the base, as in (11b) and (12b). However, they convey a pejorative meaning if there is no match between the gender of the suffix and that of the base, as in (11c) and (12c).

(11) Tigre [Stump 1993: 11]

- | | | | | | |
|----|--------------|----|--------------------|----|--------------------|
| a. | <i>'ənas</i> | b. | <i>'ənes-ay</i> | c. | <i>'ənes-ät</i> |
| | man.M.SG | | man-EVAL.M.SG | | man-EVAL.F.SG |
| | “man” | | “man (diminutive)” | | “man (pejorative)” |
-

(12) Tigre [Stump 1993: 11]

- | | | | | | |
|----|---------------|----|----------------------|----|----------------------|
| a. | <i>'əssit</i> | b. | <i>'əssit-ät</i> | c. | <i>'əssit-ay</i> |
| | woman.F.SG | | woman-EVAL.F.SG | | woman-EVAL.M.SG |
| | “woman” | | “woman (diminutive)” | | “woman (pejorative)” |
-

Grammatical gender reversals are attested not only in suffixes, as shown above, but also in prefixes with the same evaluative effect. For example, in Maasai (or Maa, an Eastern Nilotic language spoken in southern Kenya and northern Tanzania), nouns that denote females such as “sister” and “girl” are normally used

with feminine prefixes, as in (13ia, iia), and nouns that denote males like “brother” and “man” are normally used with masculine prefixes, as in (14ia, iia) (see Payne 1998). When these prefixes are reversed, as in (13ib, iib) and (14ib, iib), they express a pejorative attitude. Thus, in (13ib, iib), the nouns “sister” and “girl” are used with the masculine prefixes, which result in the pejorative meanings “very large sister” and “large, shapeless hunk of a woman” (Payne 1998: 171).

(13)	Maasai			[Payne 1998: 171]
i.a.	enk-anáshè F.SG-sister “sister”	b.	ɔlk-anáshè M.SG-sister “very large sister” (pejorative)	
ii.a.	en-tító F.SG-girl “girl”	b.	ol-tító M.SG-girl “large, shapeless hunk of a woman” (pejorative)	
(14)	Maasai			[Payne 1998: 172]
i.a.	ɔl-aláshè M.SG-brother “brother”	b.	enk-aláshè F.SG-brother “weak brother” (pejorative)	
ii.a.	ɔ-lèɛ M.SG-man “man”	b.	ɛ-lèɛ F.SG-man “weak man” (pejorative)	

2.3 Data summary and questions

Below, I present a summary of the data with regard to the meanings and forms of grammatical gender reversals across languages.

2.3.1 Meanings of gender reversals

Grammatical gender reversals are used across languages to express the speaker’s attitudes and emotions. Languages differ with respect to whether “or not” a grammatical gender reversal can express a positive or a negative attitude. For example, in Amharic, masculine to feminine reversals (referring to men with feminine gender) express endearment, while in Russian this kind of reversal has a derogatory meaning. In the varieties of North Berber, feminine to masculine reversals (referring to women with masculine gender) have a pejorative meaning, while in Jarawara, they express prestige and social importance. In some other languages, such as Manambu and Maasai, any grammatical gender reversal expresses a derogatory attitude. Consider the illustrative tables from Aikhenvald (2016: 108, 109) which present the differences in meanings of grammatical gender reversals across languages (Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1: Treating “men” as “women:” Masculine to feminine gender reversal (Aikhenvald 2016: 108)

Masculine to feminine reversal	Language examples
Pejorative and insulting	Manambu, Amharic, Lokono
Endearment and solidarity	Amharic, Arabic, Marathi baby talk

Table 2: Treating “women” as “men:” Feminine to masculine gender reversal (Aikhenvald 2016: 109)

Feminine to masculine reversals	Language examples
Pejorative: downgrading a woman as if she were too bossy and “too big for her boots”	Manambu, Ait Mguild, Ait Wirra (North Berber)
Adding value: “promoting” a woman to male status	Lokono, Amharic, Figuic, Jarawara, Tariana
Endearment and solidarity	Arabic and Marathi baby talk, Russian, Modern Hebrew

2.3.2 Forms of gender reversals

In the data presented in Sections 2.1 and 2.2 above, we can observe three different forms of grammatical gender reversals across languages. First, there are languages with overt gender (overt gender marking on nouns). In such languages, grammatical gender reversals are formed when a noun is marked for a gender which is the opposite (or reverse) of the normal gender use. In Maasai, for example, the noun “man” is normally marked for the masculine gender by using the overt gender prefix \mathfrak{c} -, as in (15a). When the same noun “man” is used with the feminine prefix ε -, as in (15b), it expresses a pejorative attitude towards the man.

(15)	Maasai (repeated from (14ii))	[Payne 1998: 172]
a.	\mathfrak{c} -lèε	b. ε-lèε
	M.SG-man	F.SG-man
	“man”	“weak man” (pejorative)

Second, there are languages with covert gender (no overt gender marking on nouns). In such languages, gender marking occurs on words which agree with the noun, such as articles and adjectives. Grammatical gender reversals are formed when the agreeing words are marked for the grammatical gender which is the opposite of the normal gender use. For example, in Manambu, gender is usually unmarked on nouns³ (Aikhenvald 2008). In (16a), the noun “man” has no overt gender marking and the masculine gender suffix *-də* is used on the adjective “big.” In (16b), we observe the feminine suffix *-ø*, and the utterance has a derogatory meaning (“fat/round/smallish man”).

(16)	Manambu [(16b) is repeated from (9a)]	[Aikhenvald 2012: 39, 53]	
a.	<i>kə-də</i>	<i>numa-də</i>	<i>du</i>
	this-M.SG	big-M.SG	man
	“this big man”		
b.	<i>kə-ø</i>	<i>numa-ø</i>	<i>du</i>
	this-F.SG	big-F.SG	man
	“this fat round man” (smallish).		

Third, there are languages that use gendered evaluative affixes in which a single morpheme expresses both gender and evaluation. In such languages, grammatical gender reversals are formed when a gendered evaluative affix of the opposite gender is applied. For example, in Russian, the suffix *-ok* is a masculine diminutive suffix. It normally attaches to masculine bases and forms masculine diminutive forms, as in *d’ed* “grandfather” – *d’ed-ok* “little grandfather,” *p’en* “stump” – *p’en-ok* “little stump.” It usually does not attach to feminine bases, with the exception of some female first names, as in (17b). Here, *-ok* attaches to the

³ The only exceptions are personal names, some of which have gender markings (Aikhenvald 2012: 38).

female first name *Liza* and creates a masculine evaluative form, as evidenced by the masculine suffix *-yj* on the agreeing adjective *xorosh-yj* “good.” The resulting evaluative form expresses endearment⁴ (see Doleschal and Schmid 2001: 265).

(17)	Russian [(17b) is repeated from (1)]			
a.	<i>Liz-a</i>	—	<i>xorosh-aya</i>	<i>devochka</i> . ⁵
	Liza-F.SG		good-F.SG	girl
	“Liza is a good girl.”			
b.	<i>Liz-ok</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>nas</i>	<i>xorosh-yj</i> .
	Liza-EVAL.M.SG	with	us	good-M.SG
	“Little Lizzy is a good sport.”			[Doleschal and Schmid 2001: 265]

An important difference between this form and the two previous forms is as follows. In the first and second forms discussed above, the evaluative meaning appears as a *result* of grammatical gender reversal (before the reversal, we observe a nonevaluative/neutral form). However, in the third form, we observe affixes that already have evaluative meanings even before the gender is reversed, as in the Russian data (17b) above. The differences between all three forms of gender reversals are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Forms and meanings in grammatical gender reversals across languages

Form	Meaning before gender reversal	Meaning after gender reversal
Overt gender forms	Neutral	Evaluative
Covert gender forms	Neutral	Evaluative
Evaluative forms	Evaluative	Evaluative

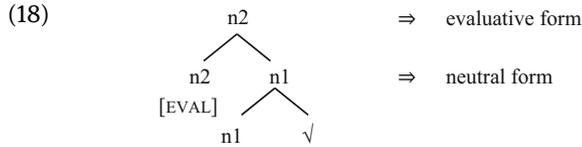
With regard to Table 3, the following sets of research questions arise. First, regarding the **form**, (i) What is the syntactic structure of gender reversals? and (ii) Do the different forms in Table 3 use the same or different syntactic structures? Second, regarding the **meaning**, (i) How can we account for the fact that emotionally neutral forms (ones that have no evaluative meaning) receive an evaluative interpretation after their grammatical gender is reversed? and (ii) Where does this evaluative interpretation come from?

3 A syntactic analysis

I propose that all three forms in Table 3 have the same syntactic structure, in which an evaluative head, *n* [EVAL], is projected above the noun, as shown in (18). The structures differ with respect to whether the evaluative head is spelled out morphologically.

⁴ Another Russian diminutive suffix that acts in a very similar way is *-chik*, as in *Olia* “Olya” – *Ol'-chik* “Olya (endearment)”; *Lena* “Lena” – *Len-chik* “Lena (endearment).”

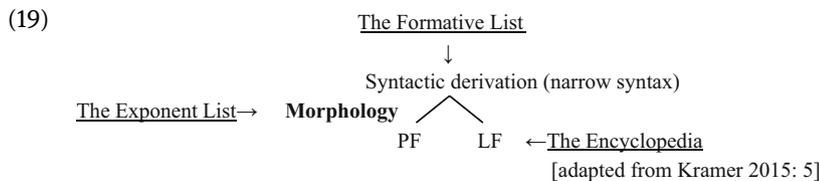
⁵ The data are the author’s unless specified otherwise.



This section is structured as follows. In Section 3.1, I will briefly outline the framework of DM. In Section 3.2, I will discuss a syntactic structure for grammatical gender, and in Section 3.3, I will present a syntactic structure for evaluative forms. Finally, in Section 3.4, I will provide a summary.

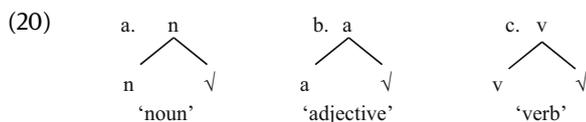
3.1 Distributed morphology

The first work within the DM framework was a doctoral dissertation by Bonet (1991) on Catalan opaque clitics, which was followed by a well-known article by Halle and Marantz on DM and the pieces of inflection (1993). The DM framework was further developed in Halle et al. (1997), Marantz (1997, 2001), Borer (2005), Embick and Marantz (2006), Embick and Noyer (2007), Acquaviva (2009), Matushansky and Marantz (2013), Matushansky (2013), Embick (2012), Kramer (2012, 2015), and Bobaljik (2017), among many others. DM adopts the basic organization of generative grammar (Chomsky 1995, 2000, 2001), adding the level of Morphology as the interface between syntax and phonology, as diagrammed in (19).



The central claim of DM is that the relationships between morphemes are structurally identical to the relationships between words. In DM, there is no centralized Lexicon. The Lexicon in the traditional sense is “distributed” across the grammar in various lists (underlined in the structure in (19)): (i) the *Formative List* (bundles of features), (ii) the *Exponent List* (vocabulary items), and (iii) the *Encyclopedia* (a list of idioms). The Formative List comprises bundles of semantic and syntactic features that enter the syntactic computation. These bundles of features lack any morpho-phonological content. The exponent list contains vocabulary items that associate morphophonological content with bundles of features (in other words, they are “exponed”). Vocabulary Insertion occurs at spell out, only after all syntactic operations are over. The Encyclopedia contains a list of idioms in the language or “Encyclopedia entries” that relate vocabulary items to meanings.

DM distinguishes between word formation from $\sqrt{\text{roots}}$ (the notation $\sqrt{\text{ }}$ is from Pesetsky 1995) and that from syntactic categories (Josefsson 1995, 1997; Marantz 2001; Embick and Marantz 2006; Embick and Noyer 2007; Matushansky and Marantz 2013, among others). $\sqrt{\text{Roots}}$ are category neutral, but they can never appear “bare,” as they must be categorized by combining with a category-defining head (a process called “Lexical Decomposition”). Examples include the “little” *n*, *a*, or *v* that form nouns, adjectives, or verbs, respectively, as shown in (20). The division between $\sqrt{\text{roots}}$ and syntactic categories provides us with formal tools for handling the morphosyntactic processes that happen inside a word.



3.2 The location of gender

Grammatical gender is a system of nominal classification based on the agreement patterns to which the genders give rise (see, e.g., Aronoff 1994, Corbett 1991, Hockett 1958).

Previous works on gender in different languages have proposed that gender is a feature on *n* (Lecarme 2002 for Somali; Ferrari 2005 and Kihm 2005 for Bantu and Romance; Lowenstamm 2008 for French and Yiddish; Acquaviva 2009 for Italian; Kramer 2012 for Amharic).

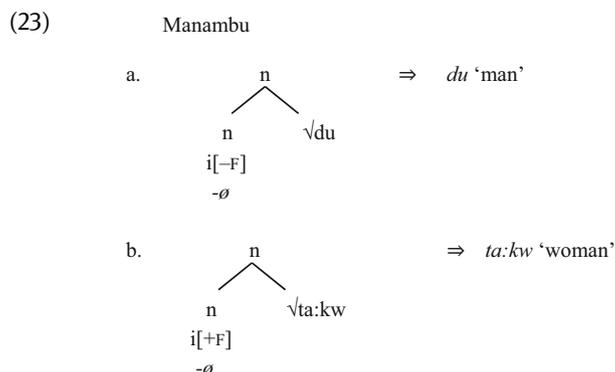
I follow Kramer's (2015) proposal within the framework of DM that gender features are located on *n* and come in two different types: (i) interpretable, $i[+/-F]$, for natural gender, and (ii) uninterpretable, $u[+/-F]$, for arbitrary gender, as listed in (21). In this system, the "plain" *n*, as in (21c), has no gender feature and results in morphological default. In the data described above, we are dealing with human nouns with natural gender; for this reason, the interpretable gender features $i[+F]$ (for females) and $i[-F]$ (for males) are most relevant for the current work.

(21)	Inventory of features	[adapted from Kramer 2015: 50, 170]
a.	<i>n</i> $i[+F]$ Feminine natural gender	
b.	<i>n</i> $i[-F]$ Masculine natural gender	
c.	<i>n</i> No natural gender (or it is irrelevant/unknown)	
d.	<i>n</i> $u[-F]$ Masculine arbitrary gender	
e.	<i>n</i> $u[+F]$ Feminine arbitrary gender	

In the framework of DM, roots are category neutral and have no grammatical features (Borer 2005; Acquaviva 2009; Embick and Noyer 2007; Embick 2012; Kramer 2015, among others). According to Kramer (2015), every language that has a natural gender interpretation must have the interpretable $i[+F]$ and $i[-F]$ features located on *n*, as schematized in (22).



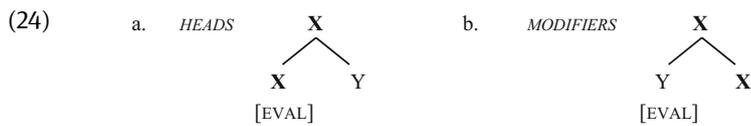
In this account, a language like Manambu, which has a natural gender interpretation but no overt gender marking on nouns, would be analyzed as nonetheless having the interpretable $i[+F]$ and $i[-F]$ features, as in (23).



3.3 The location of evaluation

Following Steriopolo (2008, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017a, b, 2018a, b), evaluative suffixes across languages are specified for the grammatical feature [EVAL] “evaluation.”⁶ The suffixes differ in terms of their manner and place of syntactic attachment (see also Wiltschko and Steriopolo 2007, and Kramer 2015).

With regard to the *manner of syntactic attachment*, some evaluative suffixes merge as syntactic heads while others merge as syntactic modifiers. The distinction between heads and modifiers lies in the projection of category features (Schütze 1995; Bierwisch 2003; Bachrach and Wagner 2007, among others). Heads project, meaning that they can determine the syntactic category and/or grammatical features of the output (e.g., number, gender, noun class), as in (24a). In contrast, modifiers do not project. As such, they cannot determine the syntactic category or grammatical features of the output, as in (24b).



In regard to the *place of syntactic attachment*, evaluative suffixes can attach either to roots, as in (25a), or to various syntactic categories (already categorized roots), as in (25b), in order to form evaluative nouns (see also De Belder et al. 2014 on low and high diminutives in Italian and Hebrew, and Cinque 2015 on the ordering of evaluative heads in the extended nominal projection).



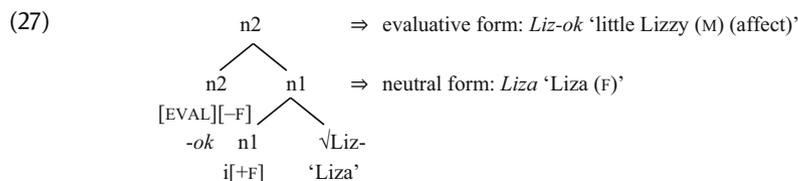
Consider, the Russian example (1), repeated in (26) for convenience. It contains an evaluative diminutive suffix *-ok* that attaches to a female first name, changing the grammatical gender of the noun from feminine to masculine: *Liza* “Liza (F)” – *Liz-ok* “little Lizzy (M).”

(26) Russian [repeated from (1)] <i>Liz-ok</i> <i>u</i> <i>nas</i> <i>xorosh-yj</i> . Liza-EVAL.M.SG with us good-M.SG “Little Lizzy is a good sport.”	[Doleschal and Schmid 2001: 265]
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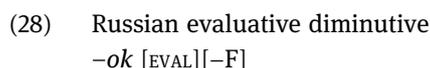
With respect to the manner of syntactic attachment, the suffix *-ok* behaves like a syntactic head as it can project. More specifically, it determines the grammatical gender of the output, which is masculine in Russian.

Regarding the place of syntactic attachment, I assume that the suffix is attached to a nominal category (an already nominalized root). The reason for this assumption is that the resulting derivation *Liz-ok* “little Lizzy (M),” although grammatically masculine, still has a female interpretation, because in Russian it is a female name and can only refer to a female, never to a male. Thus, following Kramer (2015), it must have an interpretable feature $i[+F]$ on *n*, which triggers the female interpretation, as structured in (27).

⁶ I have used the term “expressive” [EXPR] in my earlier work.



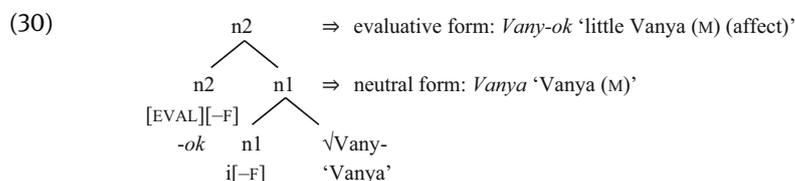
In the structure in (27), the suffix *-ok* is a syntactic head which is merged above the noun *Liza*, thus creating the evaluative affectionate (affect) form *Liz-ok* “little Lizzy (M).” I propose that the suffix *-ok* is specified for the following morphosyntactic feature bundle, (28).



The suffix *-ok* productively forms evaluative derivations in Russian (Stankiewicz 1968: 109–13) and always triggers masculine agreement, no matter what the gender of the base is (it is the structurally highest feature that determines the grammatical gender of the whole nominalization; see Steriopolu 2008, Kramer 2009, Steriopolu and Wiltschko 2010, and Kramer 2015). For example, in (29), it attaches to male (i), female (ii), and unisex (iii) first names, creating masculine evaluative derivations with the meaning of endearment.

(29)	Russian	
i.a.	<i>Vanya</i> Vanya.M.SG “Vanya (male name)”	b. <i>Vany-ok</i> Vanya-EVAL.M.SG “Vanya (male name) (affect)”
ii.a.	<i>Nina</i> Nina.F.SG “Nina (female name)”	b. <i>Nin-ok</i> Nina-EVAL.M.SG “Nina (female name) (affect)”
iii.a.	<i>Sasha</i> Sasha.M.SG “Sasha (unisex name)”	b. <i>Sash-ok</i> Sasha-EVAL.M.SG “Sasha (unisex name) (affect)”

A structure for the evaluative form *Vany-ok* “little Vanya (M),” as in the data in (29i) above, is proposed in (30). Here the suffix *-ok* is attached to the male name *Vanya* “Vanya (M),” forming an evaluative noun *Vany-ok* “little Vanya (M) (affect).”



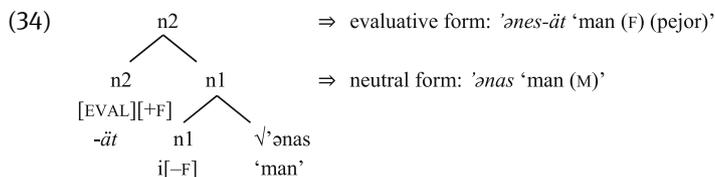
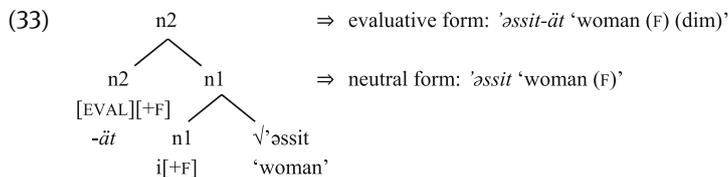
Thus, we notice in the Russian examples in (29) that the meaning of the evaluative suffix *-ok* remains constant, expressing endearment, and it does not depend on the gender of the base to which it attaches. There are, however, languages in which the evaluative meaning depends directly on the gender of the base. For example, as briefly described in Section 2.2.2, the language Tigre has the singular feminine evaluative suffix *-ät* and masculine evaluative suffix *-ay*. When a suffix attaches to a base whose gender coincides with the gender of the suffix, this results in a positive evaluation (diminutive (dim) meaning). However, when the

gender of the suffix and that of the base do not coincide, the result is a negative evaluation (pejorative (pejor) meaning).

Consider first the data in (31) and (32) with the feminine suffix *-ät* (the data are from Palmer 1962, cited in Stump 1993: 11).

(31)	Tigre (repeated from (12a,b))		[Stump 1993: 11]
a.	'əssit woman.F.SG "woman"	b. 'əssit- ät woman-EVAL.F.SG "woman (dim)"	
(32)	Tigre (repeated from (11a,c))		
a.	'ənas man.M.SG "man"	b. 'ənes- ät man-EVAL.F.SG "man (pejor)"	

In (31b), the feminine suffix *-ät* is attached to the feminine base 'əssit "woman (F)" and the resulting evaluative form is diminutive: 'əssit-ät "woman (dim)." In (32b), the same suffix is attached to the masculine base 'ənas "man (M)" and the evaluative form is pejorative: 'ənes-ät "man (F) (pejor)." The proposed structures for (31b) and (32b) are presented in (33) and (34), respectively.



As indicated in the structures in (33) and (34), I propose that the evaluative suffix *-ät* is specified for the morphosyntactic feature bundle [EVAL][+F], as in (35) because it productively forms evaluative forms that trigger feminine gender agreement. However, the type of evaluative meaning (positive or negative) it expresses seems to directly depend on the gender of the base to which it attaches, a phenomenon that will be discussed a bit later in this section.

(35) Tigre evaluative suffix *-ät*
-ät [EVAL][+F]

Consider now the data in (36) and (37) with the masculine evaluative suffix *-ay*. The way in which this suffix functions is a mirror image of the feminine suffix *-ät*, discussed above, namely, when the suffix *-ay* is attached to a feminine base, the resulting form has a pejorative meaning, as in (36b). However, when it attaches to a masculine base, the resulting form is diminutive, as in (37b).

(36)	Tigre (repeated from (12c) and (11b))	[Stump 1993: 11]
a.	'əssit woman.F.SG “woman”	b. 'əssit- ay woman-EVAL.M.SG “woman (pejor)”
(37)	a. 'ənas man.M.SG “man”	b. 'ənes- ay man-EVAL.M.SG “man (dim)”

Since the suffix *-ay* productively forms evaluative nouns which trigger masculine agreement, I propose that it is specified for the feature bundle given in (38).

(38)	Tigre evaluative suffix <i>-ay</i> <i>-ay</i> [EVAL][−F]
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The proposed structures for (36b) and (37b) are given in (39) and (40), respectively. In (39), the masculine evaluative suffix *-ay* is attached to the feminine base 'əssit “woman (F),” forming a pejorative noun 'əssit-*ay* “woman (M) (pejor).” In (40), it is attached to the masculine base 'ənas “man (M),” forming a diminutive noun 'ənes-*ay* “man (M) (dim).”

(39)	$ \begin{array}{c} n2 \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ n2 \quad n1 \\ [EVAL][−F] \quad \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ -ay \quad n1 \quad \sqrt{'əssit} \\ i[+F] \quad 'woman' \end{array} $	\Rightarrow evaluative form: 'əssit- <i>ay</i> 'woman (M) (pejor)' \Rightarrow neutral form: 'əssit 'woman (F)'
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(40)	$ \begin{array}{c} n2 \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ n2 \quad n1 \\ [EVAL][−F] \quad \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ -ay \quad n1 \quad \sqrt{'ənas} \\ i[−F] \quad 'man' \end{array} $	\Rightarrow evaluative form: 'ənes- <i>ay</i> 'man (M) (dim)' \Rightarrow neutral form: 'ənas 'man (M)'
------	--	--

Thus, similar to the feminine suffix *-ät*, a match between the gender of the suffix *-ay* and that of the base results in a diminutive interpretation while a mismatch in gender results in a pejorative interpretation (Palmer 1962, cited in Stump 1993: 11). In this context, the following question arises: How can we account for the dependency of the evaluative meaning of the suffixes on the gender of the base to which they attach?

I follow Acquaviva's (2009) approach to a constructional treatment of meaning, according to which “lexical” meaning arises in a syntactic construction. Thus, to understand how the same suffix can express fundamentally different (even opposite) evaluative meanings, the notion of syntactic context becomes relevant.

Kramer (2015) proposes the notion of “semantic licensing conditions” with respect to the treatment of roots. She states that

...the *n* that a root combines with has an impact on semantic interpretation (...) Because these licensing conditions affect interpretation, (...) they are encoded in the Encyclopedia as conditions on the semantic interpretation of a root in a context. (Kramer 2015: 51)

For example, a root like “mother” is interpretable in the Encyclopedia only in the context of a $n[+F]$, as shown in (41) below. If this root is used in a different context, for example, in the context of a $n[-F]$, the Encyclopedia won’t be able to interpret the derivation, which will cause it to crash.

-
- (41) Semantic licensing condition for “mother” (adapted from Kramer 2015: 51)
 $[n[+F][\surd\text{mother}]] = \text{“female parent”}$
-

I would like to suggest extending Kramer’s treatment of roots to account for evaluative affixes. The licensing conditions encoded in the Encyclopedia can affect semantic interpretations of evaluative affixes in a context. For example, the feminine evaluative suffix *-ät* in Tigre receives a negative interpretation (pejorative) in the context of a $n[-F]$ and a positive interpretation (diminutive) in the context of a $n[+F]$, as presented in (42). In a similar way, the masculine evaluative suffix *-ay* is interpreted as pejorative in the context of a $n[+F]$ and as diminutive in the context of a $n[-F]$, as in (43).

-
- (42) The feminine evaluative suffix *-ät* in Tigre
 a. $[-\text{ät } n[-F]] = \text{“pejorative”}$
 b. $[-\text{ät } n[+F]] = \text{“diminutive”}$
-
- (43) The masculine evaluative suffix *-ay* in Tigre
 a. $[-\text{ay } n[+F]] = \text{“pejorative”}$
 b. $[-\text{ay } n[-F]] = \text{“diminutive”}$
-

Furthermore, I propose that the structure as presented in (44) is universal for evaluative gender reversals across languages. In (44), an evaluative gender reversal projects an evaluative head, $n2[_{\text{EVAL}}]$, above $n1$. The evaluative head $[_{\text{EVAL}}]$ is specified for the gender features $[+F]$ or $[-F]$, and thus it is capable of changing the grammatical gender of the base to which it attaches.

-
- (44)
- ⇒ evaluative form

⇒ neutral form
-

Languages, however, differ with respect to whether the head $n[_{\text{EVAL}}]$ is spelled out morphologically or not. Consider, for example, the data from Manambu. The language has no overt gender morphology on nouns, but grammatical gender agreement is visible on words agreeing with nouns (Aikhenvald 2012), as shown in (45). In (45a), the noun *du* “man” has no overt gender morpheme, but it triggers masculine agreement with the agreeing adjective *numa* “big” and the demonstrative *ke* “this.” In (45b), the noun *ta:kw* “woman” also has no overt gender morphology, but it triggers feminine gender agreement.

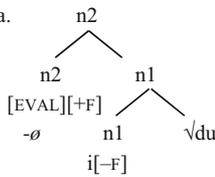
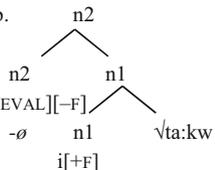
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- (45) Manambu [repeated from (8)] [Aikhenvald 2012: 39]
- a. *ke-də* *numa-də* *du* *wiya:m* *kwa-na-d*
 this-M.SG big-M.SG man house.LOC stay-PRES-M.SG
 “This big man stays in the house.”
- b. *kə-∅* *numa-∅* *ta:kw* *wiya:m* *kwa-na-∅*
 this-F.SG big-F.SG woman house.LOC stay-PRES-F.SG
 “This big woman stays in the house.”
-

As already described in Section 2.2.2, gender reversals in Manambu express a pejorative attitude of the speaker, as shown in (46). To the best of my knowledge, the language does not apply gender reversals to express a positive attitude (unlike Russian and Tigre, discussed above).

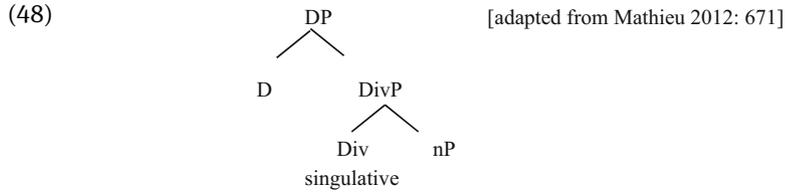
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- (46) Manambu (repeated from (9)) [Aikhenvald 2012: 53, 54]
- a. *kə-∅* *numa-∅* *du*
 this-F.SG big-F.SG man
 “this fat round man” (smallish)
- b. *kə-də* *numa-də* *ta:kw*
 this-M.SG big-M.SG woman
 “this (unusually) big, boisterous, or bossy woman”
-

I propose that similar to the discussed data from Russian and Tigre, Manambu reversals project an evaluative head, $n_{[EVAL]}$. However, unlike in Russian and Tigre, the evaluative head in Manambu is not spelled out morphologically. The morphologically null head $n_{[EVAL]}$ is nonetheless specified for the gender features [+F] or [-F] and, thus, it can change the gender of the base to which it attaches, as evidenced by the grammatical gender agreement with the adjective and demonstrative in the data in (46). Syntactic structures for the gender reversals in (46a, b) are proposed in (47a, b) below.

In (47a), the noun *du* “man” has the interpretable gender feature $i[-F]$, as it has a male interpretation. The morphologically null head $n_{[EVAL]}$ is projected above that noun and is specified for the feature [+F]. The resulting evaluative noun *du* “man (F); (pejor)” triggers feminine gender agreement, as in (46a) above. A parallel structure for the female noun *ta:kw* “woman” is given in (47b). The noun is specified for the interpretable gender feature $i[+F]$, as it has a female interpretation. The evaluative head $n_{[EVAL]}$ is projected above the noun and contains the feature [-F]. As a result, the evaluative noun *ta:kw* “woman (M)(pejor)” triggers masculine gender agreement, as in (46b) above.

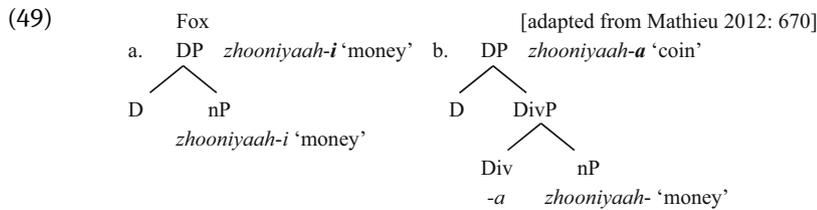
-
- (47) a.  ⇒ evaluative form: *du* ‘man (F) (pejor)’
 ⇒ neutral form: *du* ‘man (M)’
- b.  ⇒ evaluative form: *ta:kw* ‘woman (M) (pejor)’
 ⇒ neutral form: *ta:kw* ‘woman (F)’
-

This analysis is to some extent similar to that in Mathieu (2012) who analyzes the singulative in the Algonquian languages Fox and Ojibwe. According to Mathieu (2012: 653), “the singulative is a process by which a collective or a mass noun[...] is turned into a unit.” Some languages can use derivations from a mass noun to a singulative noun via a gender shift. For example, in Fox and Ojibwe, a gender shift (from inanimate to animate) occurs, targeting mass and collective nouns and turning them into units. Mathieu (2012) proposes that the singulative is encoded in the head *Div* “division,” which is projected above an nP , as shown in (48).

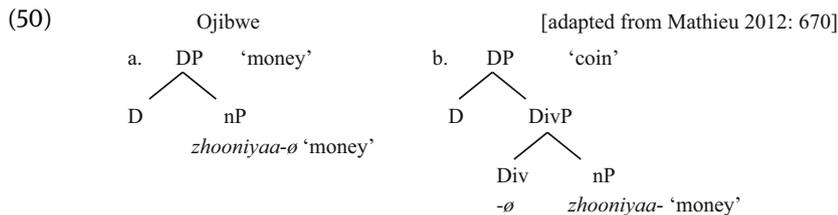


The difference between the languages Fox and Ojibwe is that in Fox, the head *Div* contains an overt gender suffix (the animate suffix *-a*), while in Ojibwe, this suffix is morphologically null.

The structures in (49a, b) below illustrate how a mass noun is turned into a unit of measure in Fox, according to Mathieu (2012). In (49a), the mass noun “money” is undivided (the head *Div* is not projected) and the noun has an inanimate suffix *-i*. In (49b), the head *Div* is projected, and the gender shift occurs from inanimate to animate, as evidenced by the animate suffix *-a*. The resulting noun *zhooniyaah-a* “coin” with the meaning “a unit of measure”. Thus, the mass noun “money” becomes a unit of measure “coin.”

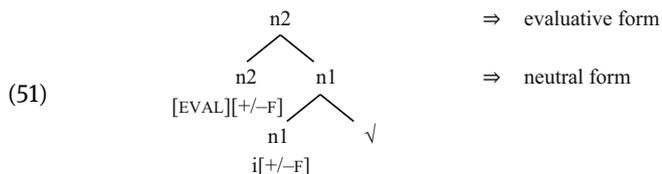


As Mathieu (2012: 670) claims, the same derivation takes place in Ojibwe. The language also uses a gender shift from inanimate to animate to mark singulativization. However, unlike in Fox, the singulative in Ojibwe is not morphologically visible. In (50a), the head *Div* is not projected, and the mass noun “money” is undivided. In (50b), the head *Div* is projected, and a gender shift occurs from inanimate to animate represented by a morphologically null morpheme $-\emptyset$.



3.4 Summary

I have proposed that three different forms of evaluative gender reversals across languages, as shown in Table 3 above, have the same syntactic structure, as presented in (51), in which the syntactic head $n_{[EVAL]}$ is projected above a noun with interpretable gender features.



The evaluative head can be specified for the gender features [+F] or [-F]. When a mismatch in gender features occurs between the gender of the evaluative head and that of the noun to which it attaches, we observe a change in the grammatical gender of the base. I have also shown that languages differ with respect to whether the head $n_{[EVAL]}$ is spelled out morphologically.

4 A sociopragmatic analysis

I argue in this section that the evaluative effect of grammatical gender reversals can be accounted for in terms of the sociopragmatic framework developed in Acton (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019).

The section is structured as follows: In Section 4.1, I will discuss the sociopragmatic framework. In Section 4.2, I will propose an account of the Manambu data. Finally, in Section 4.3, I will give a summary.

4.1 A sociopragmatic framework

As the crosslinguistic data in Section 2.1 show, the evaluative meaning cannot be an entailment of the interpretable gender features $i[+F]$ or $i[-F]$. For example, in the Manambu examples (45a, b) above, we observe the nonevaluative sentences in which the nouns “man” and “woman” trigger masculine and feminine agreement, respectively. In (46a, b), there are gender reversals with evaluative meanings. Thus, it is not the gender features themselves, but their reversed use that produces an evaluative effect. The question arises: How can we account for this effect?

I suggest that the evaluative effect of gender reversals can be accounted for by the sociopragmatic principles developed in Acton (2014).

The author proposes a sociopragmatic framework which interrelates semantics, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics. Consider some basic principles of this framework. First, the *Violations of Expectations (VE)* principle, as in (52).

-
- (52) **Violations of Expectations (VE) Principle** (Acton 2014: 38)
 When an utterance violates a hearer’s expectations for what a normal or appropriate utterance would have looked like in the context, the hearer is likely to attach special significance to the utterance. Conversely, an utterance lining up with such expectations is relatively unlikely to be interpreted as having special significance.
-

The principle suggests that when the speaker violates conversational expectations, this should have a special significance for the hearer. The VE principle is a broadening of Horn’s (1984) neo-Gricean framework. Horn (1984) analyzes exclamation of demonstratives and proposes a principle of *Division of Pragmatic Labor (DPL)* based on the notion of markedness (marked forms convey marked meanings), as in (53).

-
- (53) **Division of Pragmatic Labor (DPL)** (Horn 1984: 22)
 The use of a marked (relatively complex and/or prolix) expression when a corresponding unmarked (simpler, less “effortful”) alternative expression is available tends to be interpreted as conveying a marked message (one which the unmarked alternative would not or could not have conveyed).
-

It is important to note that while the VE principle signals that an utterance has a special significance, it does not tell us what it is, which brings us to the principle of *Full Significance (FS)*, as in (54).

(54) Full Significance (FS) Principle (Acton 2014: 35)

The full significance of an utterance *u* uttered (or portion thereof) depends importantly upon:

1. Context (details of the situation, expectations, ideologies, beliefs of discourse participants, etc.); and
 2. What is distinctive about *u* (or portion thereof) relative to contextually relevant set of other utterances (or portion thereof) with shared functionality.
-

First, the FS principle is intended to capture the role of context, where the context includes not only details of a conversational situation, but also expectations regarding this situation, the broader ideologies and beliefs of discourse participants, etc.

Second, FS suggests that the full significance of an utterance is dependent on its relation to relevant alternatives (or “pragmatic alternatives”). In other words, it is a comparison of the actual utterance the speaker used with those which the speaker could have used in a given situation.

The next principle, *Differential Importance of Different Alternatives (DI)*, states that the various alternatives have different degrees of importance, which is determined in relation to conversational expectations, as stated in (55).

(55) Differential Importance of Different Alternatives (DI) Principle

Different alternatives have differential importance in understanding the full significance of a given utterance. The importance of a given alternative varies directly with how well it squares with conversational expectations and how closely it is related to the actual utterance both conceptually and in terms of form, content, function, and (relatedly) distribution. (Acton 2014: 36)

4.2 An analysis

Consider the Manambu data with gender reversals in (46) (the data are repeated in (56) for convenience). These data have been selected for an analysis here because of the detailed description of the context available in Aikhenvald (2012: 53–4).

(56)	Manambu (repeated from 46)	[Aikhenvald 2012: 53, 54]
a.	<i>kə-∅</i> <i>numa-∅</i> <i>du</i> this-F.SG big-F.SG man “this fat round man” (smallish)	
b.	<i>kə-də</i> <i>numa-də</i> <i>ta:kw</i> this-M.SG big-M.SG woman “this (unusually) big, boisterous, or bossy woman”	

The author observes that such data can only be uttered in a casual conversation (not at a formal village meeting). The feminine gender in (56a) can be used to refer to a small or fat man, but it can never be uttered directly to that man’s face, as it is considered extremely insulting and demeaning. Aikhenvald (2012: 54) describes a situation in which a man was referred to as “woman,” because he displayed “inappropriate” social behavior. The man remained in his wife’s village after getting married instead of taking her to his village, which is the normal practice in the Manambu culture. He breached that tradition and demonstrated a social behavior which is associated with women. Thus, as Aikhenvald (2008, 2012) observes, in Manambu, a mismatch in gender can reflect a “culturally inappropriate situation.”

Consider now the data (56b). These data can be used to refer to a woman who is too boisterous, large in size, or “too big for her boots” (Aikhenvald 2012: 54). It expresses a derogatory attitude toward the woman

and would not be said directly to that woman. For example, Aikhenvald (2012: 54) describes a situation in which the utterance in (56b) was used to refer to a woman who sported knowledge of totemic names, which is traditionally the province of men. Another situation occurred in the Iatmul village of Palimbei, when a girl accidentally saw men blowing long flutes in a fenced-off enclosure, which a woman is not allowed to see. As a result, “[...]she was subjected to scarification and a shortened version of male initiation” (Aikhenvald 2012: 54). Aikhenvald (2012: 55) also observes that “[...]the girl felt degraded and shamed, despite the fact that she had gained what was considered important ritual knowledge.”

According to the principles of the Division of Pragmatic Labor (Horn 1984: 22) and the Violations of Expectations (Acton 2014: 38), the data in (56a) and (56b) can be interpreted as having a special significance (or conveying a “marked message” in Horn’s 1984 terms). Here the gender markings do not correspond to the natural genders of the referents. The mismatch between the grammatical and natural genders violates the hearer’s expectations as to what a normal or appropriate utterance should sound like. As a result, such an utterance is interpreted as having a special significance.

The Full Significance principle (Acton 2014: 35) captures the role of context, whereby the notion of a context includes not only a certain conversational situation but also cultural ideologies and beliefs. As we have seen from the descriptions above (Aikhenvald 2008, 2012), in the Manambu society, men and women are expected to maintain a strict division of social roles. Thus, breaching these roles is looked down upon by other members of the society and can be a reason for mockery and offense. As a result, referring to a man as if he were a woman and vice versa expresses a highly negative attitude.

Additionally, the Full Significance principle states that the full significance of an utterance depends on its relation to relevant alternatives. The relevant alternatives of the Manambu data in (56a) and (56b) are the sentences in (45a) and (45b). In these sentences, a woman is referred to with the feminine gender and a man with the masculine gender. There is no mismatch in gender, and the meanings are nonevaluative. Thus, if we compare the derogatory utterances in (56a, b) with their nonevaluative (neutral) alternatives in (45a, b), the observed difference in meaning stems from the speaker’s evaluation vs the lack thereof (corresponding to Potts’ 2007 notions of expressive vs descriptive content).

The next principle discussed above, the Differential Importance of Different Alternatives principle (Acton 2014: 36), states that different alternatives have different degrees of importance. This means that not all possible alternatives will receive equal consideration. The importance of a given alternative varies directly with how well it squares with conversational expectations both conceptually and in terms of form. The more aligned with expectations and similar to the observed form the alternative is, the more likely it is to receive consideration. In the case of gender reversals (evaluative forms), for example, as in (46a, b) above, the alternative that is most aligned with expectations is the one without a gender reversal (the neutral form), as in (45a, b). The neutral alternative would be highly relevant to interpretation because it would be both (i) generally expected and (ii) similar to the evaluative utterance.

The importance of the evaluative alternative with gender reversal can be observed in the social behavior of the speakers of Manambu, described in detail in Aikhenvald (2012, 2016). The evaluative expressions with gender reversals as in (46a, b) are so insulting that the speakers tend to avoid using them in the presence of the referents. Compared these with the neutral utterances in (45a, b), which have no derogatory effect and can be uttered in the presence of the referents.

4.3 A summary

Three principles developed in Acton (2014) allow us to decode the non-entailed evaluative meanings of grammatical gender reversals as follows: (i) They violate the hearer’s expectations and thus, they are interpreted as having a special significance (*the VE principle*), (ii) they are uttered in a sociocultural context in which breaching the social gender roles is highly inappropriate (*the FS principle*), and (iii) they are compared to neutral forms without gender reversals as the ones that are most aligned with conversational expectations both conceptually and in terms of form (*the FS and DI principles*).

5 Extending the analyses to nonhuman animate and inanimate nouns

The morphosyntactic and sociopragmatic analyses of evaluative gender reversals in human nouns proposed above can be extended to account for nonhuman animate and inanimate nouns. In Section 5.1, I will present crosslinguistic data taken from descriptive literature. In Section 5.2, I will propose a morphosyntactic analysis of the data, and in Section 5.3, I will propose a sociopragmatic analysis. Finally, in Section 5.4, I will provide a summary of the findings.

5.1 Data

A change in the grammatical gender of nonhuman animate and inanimate nouns is crosslinguistically used for two main purposes: first, to express the speaker's attitudes and emotions, and second, to indicate unusual or unexpected properties of the referent (e.g., an unusual size or shape).

First, consider data that express the speaker's emotions. For example, in Oromo (an East Cushitic language, spoken in Ethiopia and Kenya), a change in gender can indicate the speaker's attitude toward the referent (Clamons 1995: 392). In (57a), the noun *sareé* “dog (F)” triggers feminine grammatical agreement. In (57b), a masculine suffix is used, creating an evaluative form *saré-n* “dog (M),” which expresses the speaker's negative attitude toward the dog (“nasty dog”).

(57)	Harar dialect of Oromo	[Clamons 1995: 392]
a.	<i>sareé takka ganda xeesa arkinne.</i> dog.F one.F village in we.saw We saw a dog in the neighborhood.”	
b.	<i>saré-n xun bashoo tizza jala fige.</i> dog-M.SUBJECT.TOPIC that.M cat.F my.F after ran.M “That (nasty) dog chased my cat.”	

In Benchnon (or Bench; a dialect of an Omotic language, spoken in southwestern Ethiopia), the speaker changes the usual masculine gender of the noun *tʃāmá-ī* “shoe (M),” as in (58a), to feminine *tʃāmá-ā* “shoe (F)” in order to express a derogatory attitude (the speaker does not care that the shoe was lost), as in (58b).

(58)	Benchnon	[Rapold 2006: 182]
a.	<i>tá tʃāmá-ī bǎʔ-á.</i> 1s shoe-NOM.M get.lost-NEW.SITUATION.TENSE “My shoe got lost!”	
b.	<i>tá tʃāmá-ā bǎʔ-á.</i> 1s shoe-NOM.F get.lost-NEW.SITUATION.TENSE “My shoe got lost (but I don't care about it)!”	

Now consider data that indicate unusual or unexpected properties of the referent. In Halkomelem (a Central Salish language spoken in southwestern British Columbia, Canada), the word *šet* “road” is masculine (the default gender in the language), because roads are perceived as long, thin, and rigid (Gerdtz 2013: 423–4), as in (59a). However, this noun can also be marked as feminine when a road is perceived as unusually curvy, as in (59b).

-
- (59) a. Halkomelen [Gerdt's 2013: 423–424]
ʃəlim ʔəw sθəθəkʷ tʰ ə ʃel.
 really LNK straight DET road
 “The road (M) is very straight.”
- b. *naʔət xʷiʔ pay-θət θə ʃel.*
 AUX.DET unusual bend-REFL F.DET road
 “The road (F) is unexpectedly curved.”
-

In Alambalak (the Sepik Hill family, spoken in the Angoram District of East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea), inanimate references that are short, squat, and wide are usually feminine, while long, slender, and narrow referents are masculine (Bruce 1984: 97). A change in gender is used to indicate an unusual size of the referent. For example, the noun for “house” is normally used with the feminine suffix *-t*, as in (60a), but the masculine suffix *-r* can also be applied if the house is perceived as unusually long, as given in (60b).

-
- (60) Alambalak [Bruce 1984: 97]
- a. *kuñ-t* b. *kuñ-r*
 house-F house-M
 “house” “unusually long house”
-

An example from Manambu is presented in (61). Here a change in grammatical gender indicates the increasing size of a pregnant woman’s belly (Aikhenvald 2008: 118). The noun *ya:l* “stomach, womb” is usually feminine in Manambu because of its round shape. However, a very large size can be indicated by using the masculine gender. Thus, at the beginning of the sentence in (61) the noun *ya:l* “belly” triggers feminine agreement with the adjective *numa-θ* “big (F).” The agreement later changes to masculine, *numa-də* “big (M),” in order to indicate the remarkably large size of the growing belly.

-
- (61) Manambu [Aikhenvald 2008: 118]
- ya:l ata numa-θ məy ta:l*
 belly then big-F very become.3F.SG
tə-lə-k a numa-dəya:l
 become-3F.SG.COMPLETIVE.DIFFERENT.SUBJ then big-M belly
adəka
 demonstrative.DISTAL.REACTIVATED.TOPIC.M.SG
 “(Her) belly then became very big (feminine), having become big, here is a very big (masculine) belly.”
-

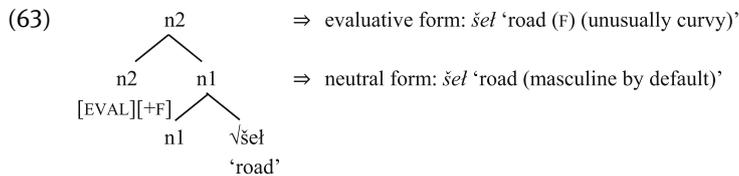
5.2 A syntactic analysis

I will show how the syntactic structure proposed in (44) above can be applied to account for grammatical gender reversals in nonhuman animate and inanimate nouns. As diagrammed in (62), the evaluative head $n2[_{\text{EVAL}}]$ is projected above the noun. The head $n2[_{\text{EVAL}}]$ can be specified for the gender features [+F] or [-F], and thus, it is capable of changing the grammatical gender of the base to which it attaches.

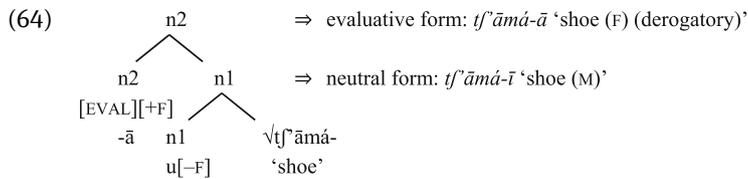
-
- (62) Non-human animates and inanimates
- $$\begin{array}{c} n2 \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ n2 \quad n1 \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ [_{\text{EVAL}}][+/-F] \quad n1 \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ n1 \quad \checkmark \\ u[+/-F] \end{array}$$
- ⇒ evaluative form
- ⇒ neutral form
-

The only difference between the structure in (62) and the one proposed earlier in (44) lies in the type of gender feature (interpretable or uninterpretable) of the noun to which the evaluative head is attached. As I briefly described in Section 3.2, Kramer (2015) suggests that there are different types of *n* across languages: (i) *n* with interpretable gender features $i[+/-F]$, (ii) *n* with uninterpretable features $u[+/-F]$, and (iii) *n* with no gender features (“plain” *n*). Across languages, sex-differentiable nouns that denote humans and some higher animals (which may vary in different languages) can have interpretable gender features $i[+/-F]$ or a “plain” *n* with no gender features (e.g., same-root human nouns). Nouns that denote nonhuman animates (in which biological sex is unimportant to humans) as well as those referring to inanimate referents can have either uninterpretable gender features $u[+/-F]$ or a “plain” *n*.

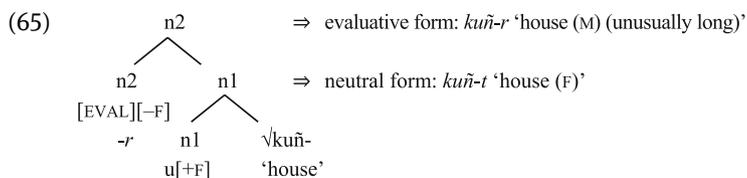
Consider, for example, Halkomelem. In this language, masculine is the unmarked gender (Gerdtts 2013). I propose that the noun *šel* “road” in the data in (59a) above is masculine by morphological default and corresponds to the “plain” *n* in Kramer’s (2015) terms, as structured in (63). The evaluative head $n_{[EVAL]}$ is specified for the feature $[+F]$. Thus, the resulting evaluative form triggers feminine grammatical agreement with the determiner: $\theta\partial$ *šel* “the (F) road (unusually curvy),” as in the data in (59b).



In Benchnon (the data in 58), the noun $tʃ\bar{a}m\bar{a}-\bar{i}$ “shoe (M)” is marked for the uninterpretable feature $u[-F]$. In the structure in (64), the evaluative head $n2_{[EVAL]}$ is projected above this noun and contains the feature $[+F]$. The resulting noun $tʃ\bar{a}m\bar{a}-\bar{a}$ “shoe (F) (derogatory)” is evaluative “adding a derogative sense to the utterance” (Rapold 2006: 184).



In example (60) above from Alablak, the noun $ku\tilde{n}-t$ “house (F)” is feminine. I propose that it is specified for the uninterpretable feature $u[+F]$, as shown in (65). When the head $n2_{[EVAL]}$ with the feature $[-F]$ is projected, the resulting evaluative form $ku\tilde{n}-r$ “unusually long house (M)” has masculine gender.



If we compare the examples above in terms of their evaluative meanings, we observe that they have different evaluative interpretations. For example, by using an evaluative form in Benchnon, the speaker expresses a negative attitude (derogation) while in Halkomelem and Alablak, the speaker indicates an

unusual physical form of the referent (it is the unusual property of a physical form that makes it evaluative). A sociopragmatic analysis will allow us to account for the differences in these evaluative interpretations.

5.3 A sociopragmatic analysis

The Violations of Expectations principle (Acton 2014) and the Division of Pragmatic Labor principle (Horn 1984) address cases in which a violation of conversational expectations (or a “marked expression” in Horn’s terms) has occurred. For example, when a noun which normally triggers feminine agreement unexpectedly triggers masculine agreement, it violates the hearer’s expectations. Thus, such an utterance is likely to be interpreted as having a special significance (or conveying a marked message).

The Full Significance principle captures the role of the sociocultural context, which differs in Benchnon and Alamlak. Consider how grammatical gender is assigned in these languages.

In Alamlak, the gender of nonhuman nouns can be assigned on the basis of the size and shape of the referent. Inanimate objects that are tall, long, slender, and narrow are usually treated as masculine, while objects that are short, squat, or wide are usually treated as feminine (Bruce 1984: 97). For example, the terms for “house” and a “short/squat tree” are normally feminine, while the terms for “arrows,” a “signal trumpet,” and a “tall slender tree” are normally masculine (Bruce 1984: 97). Thus, a change in grammatical gender is perceived as a sign of something unusual in the object’s physical form. For example, the conversational expectation for the noun “house” is feminine, because of its wide shape. According to the Full Significance principle, the observed form is compared to relevant alternatives. In this example, the feminine gender is expected on the noun “house,” but what we see is the masculine gender. Since the masculine gender in this language correlates with long and narrow inanimate objects, it stands to reason that the speaker is suggesting that not only is the particular house of an unusual form, but more specifically that it is unusually long, which is consistent with the masculine gender marking in the language.

In Benchnon, gender is assigned according to the principles that differ from those in Alamlak. Thus, nouns denoting animates (human and nonhuman) usually have sex-based gender – masculine for males and feminine for females, while nouns denoting inanimates usually trigger masculine agreement (masculine is the default gender in Benchnon). In contrast to Alamlak, gender in Benchnon is not assigned on the basis of the size and shape of the referent; it is either sex based (for animates) or masculine default (for inanimates). As Rapold (2006: 184) points out, a change in gender is perceived as a sign of the speaker’s attitude. For example, in the data in (58b) above, the gender of the inanimate noun “shoe,” which is normally masculine by default, is changed to feminine, expressing derogation. In this language, deviation from the expected default gender seems to indicate a negative attitude of the speaker. Observe in addition the data (66) below, in which a man is referred to with the feminine gender, also expressing a negative attitude. In this example, too, we see deviation from the expected masculine gender with the resulting derogative attitude on the part of the speaker.⁷

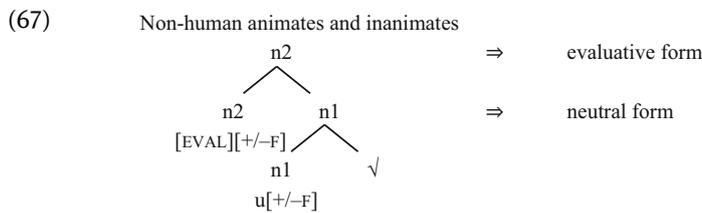
(66)	Benchnon		[Rapold 2006: 184]
	<i>āts</i>	<i>hàn-ā</i>	<i>tá gám-s-á-ā.</i>
	person	this.F-NOM.F1SG	weak-CAUS-NEW.SITUATION.TENSE-MEDIATIVE _{DECL}
	“This man is annoying me/I cannot bear this man.” (From the context, it is clear that a specific man is being referred to)		

⁷ It would be interesting to investigate whether the same holds for the expected feminine gender, e.g., whether a female noun that is usually marked with the feminine gender would be used with the masculine gender marking. Would it also indicate a negative attitude of the speaker? More data are needed to answer this question.

According to the Full Significance and Differential Importance principles, an utterance is interpreted based on its relation to relevant alternatives which the speaker could have used in a particular discourse situation. The most obvious alternatives for the evaluative expressions in Benchnon (58b) and Alambak (60b) are their nonevaluative counterparts, as in (58a) and (60a) above. The nonevaluative counterparts carry the normally used gender markings, which would correspond to the hearers' conversational expectations. A violation of these expectations in (58b) and (60b) results in the evaluative interpretation of the utterances.

5.4 Summary

I have proposed that grammatical gender reversals in nonhuman animate and inanimate nouns across languages can be accounted for by using the same syntactic structure and sociopragmatic principles which were applied to account for human nouns, as described in Sections 3 and 4. The only difference between the accounts for human and nonhuman nouns concerns the interpretability of gender features on the head n to which $n_{[EVAL]}$ is attached. In human nouns, we deal with the interpretable gender features $i_{[+/-F]}$, while in nonhuman animates and inanimate nouns, there are either the uninterpretable features $u_{[+/-F]}$ or the “plain” n with no gender features, as in (67).



6 Conclusions

This work has presented syntactic and sociopragmatic analyses of evaluative nouns with grammatical gender reversals across languages. I have proposed that such nouns universally project the same syntactic structure, namely, one in which an evaluative head $n_{[EVAL]}$ is attached above a categorized noun, n . The evaluative head itself can be specified for the gender features $[+F]$ or $[-F]$ and thus, it can change the gender of the base noun to which it attaches. In other words, when a mismatch occurs between a gender feature of the evaluative head and that of the base, we observe grammatical gender in the resulting evaluative noun which is different from the gender of the base noun.

I have also shown that we can account for the different evaluative interpretations of grammatical gender reversals across languages by applying the sociopragmatic principles as developed in Acton (2014) and subsequent work. The evaluative interpretation (positive vs negative) varies across languages and seems to depend directly on the sociocultural context, such as how masculinity and femininity are perceived and valued across different cultures and societies. For example, in Manambu, gender reversals in both genders are considered highly offensive. In this language, inanimate objects are usually classified according to their shape and size. Thus, when a gender reversal occurs in reference to humans, they feel “downgraded to the status of an inanimate referent” (Aikhenvald 2016: 54), which may explain the highly negative associations with gender reversals referring to humans. In contrast, in Russian, the masculine gender is associated with prestige, thus feminine to masculine reversals create positive associations and have an endearing function (Doleschal and Schmid 2001). In Marathi baby talk, it is the feminine gender that has an endearing function (Aikhenvald 2016: 108), and thus, masculine to feminine reversals have positive associations. More studies of the connection between grammatical gender reversals and the

sociocultural context are required to better understand the cross-cultural differences that can impact evaluative meanings of gender reversals in various languages.

In addition, more research is needed to investigate the asymmetries between masculine to feminine and feminine to masculine gender reversals. For example, in Manambu, there seems to be no asymmetry in human nouns, as any kind of human gender reversal is treated as highly offensive (Aikhenvald 2008, 2012). In contrast, in Russian, we observe an asymmetry, as feminine to masculine reversals in human nouns are perceived as positive, while masculine to feminine reversals are considered negative (Doleschal and Schmid 2001). In Palestinian Arabic, there is also an asymmetry, because feminine to masculine reversals used in self-reference by a female are signs of distress, while the opposite (masculine to feminine) gender reversals do not exist (Aikhenvald 2016).

As mentioned earlier, this work is the first attempt to account for gender reversals across languages both morphosyntactically and sociopragmatically. Hopefully it will spike interest in this fascinating topic for further research.

Abbreviations

ART	article
AUX	auxiliary
CAUS	causative
DECL	declarative
DET	determiner
EVAL	evaluative
F	feminine
FUT	future
LNK	linker
LOC	locative
M	masculine
NOM	nominative
NON-M	non-masculine
PAST	past
PL	plural
PRES	present
REFL	reflexive
SG	singular
SUBJ	subject

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